

# **Ben Jonson's Complete Plays: Retellings**

**David Bruce**

**Dedicated to Carl Eugene Bruce and Josephine Saturday  
Bruce Poetaster**

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**Educate Yourself**

**Read Like A Wolf Eats**

**Be Excellent to Each Other**

**Books Then, Books Now, Books Forever**

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In this retelling, as in all my retellings, I have tried to make the work of literature accessible to modern readers who may lack the knowledge about mythology, religion, and history that the literary work's contemporary audience had.

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## CHAPTER 1: Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*

### CAST OF CHARACTERS (*The Alchemist*)

#### THE CON ARTISTS

**Subtle:** The alchemist. The word “subtle” used to mean cunning in a crafty and/or deceitful way. It also meant devious and underhand. Subtle is an older man.

**Face:** The housekeeper, Lovewit's Jeremy the butler. The housekeeper is the person in charge of taking care of the house. While the owner of the house is away, Face takes care of it; he is a house-sitter. During part of the play, he is known as Captain Face because he often wears a Captain's uniform in order to con people. He is also known as Lungs because he supposedly manages the bellows in the alchemical laboratory. As you can tell, he wears many faces; he is also double-faced. Face is bearded for most of the play.

**Doll Common:** The co-conspirator of Subtle and Face. She is a prostitute, a doll who is common to all and who will sleep with men for money or other materialistic advantage. “Doll” is a nickname for “Dorothy.”

#### THE MASTER

**Lovewit:** The owner of the house in which Subtle sets up his work. He appreciates the wit, aka intelligence, of his servant Jeremy the butler, who is intelligent enough to get himself out of trouble by enriching his employer. In this society, bosses are called “Master.” Lovewit is an older man.

#### THE VICTIMS

**Dapper:** A lawyer's clerk. He wants Subtle to help him win in gambling by giving him a familiar spirit. (Witches have familiar spirits; usually, they take the form of an animal or a fly.) Apparently, Dapper wears dapper clothing and is a clean, neat person.



**Abel Drugger:** A tobacco merchant. He wants Subtle to assist him through magic in setting up a new, successful tobacco shop. “Nab” is a nickname for Abel.

**Sir Epicure Mammon:** A Knight. He wants Subtle’s help to become very wealthy. “Mammon” is a negative word for money and wealth, which can have an evil influence on human beings and can be an object of worship — the word “worship” means “adoration.” An Epicurean is a person who devotes himself to sensual pleasure. The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus was an atheist and a materialist.

**Tribulation Wholesome:** A pastor of Amsterdam. Both Tribulation Wholesome and Ananias, who are called the brethren in the play, are Anabaptists. Anabaptists were commonly regarded as members of an extremist sect of Puritanism.

**Ananias:** A deacon, colleague of Tribulation Wholesome. These religious brothers want Subtle’s help in getting money to help establish Anabaptism in Britain.

**Kastril:** The angry boy, recently come into an inheritance. He wants Subtle to teach him the protocol for quarreling. A kestrel is a small falcon. While hunting, it hovers in the air with rapidly beating wings. Kastril wants to be a roaring boy, a well-born boy who quarrels with other well-born boys. “Coistrel” is an archaic word for a troublemaker.

**Dame Pliant:** A widow, sister of Kastril. She wants to know her fortune in marriage. Dame Pliant is compliant.

## **A CLEAR-SIGHTED MAN**

**Pertinax Surly:** A gamester, aka gambler. He sees through the deceptions. The Latin word *pertinax* means stubborn, obstinate, resisting, unyielding, firm. By the way, Pertinax (1 August 126 – 28 March 193) was a Roman Emperor who unsuccessfully tried to implement many reforms.

## **MINOR CHARACTERS**

Neighbors, Police Officers, Attendants.

## **SCENE**

The action takes place in Lovewit's house in London and on the street outside. Lovewit is mostly away in the country to escape the plague.

## **UNITY OF ACTION, TIME, AND PLACE**

Ben Jonson's play has one main plot, with no subplots.

Ben Jonson's play takes place within one day.

Ben Jonson's play takes place in one location.

## **FIRST PERFORMED**

Ben Jonson's play was first performed in 1610. The years 1609 and 1610 were plague years in London.

## **A NOTE ON SUBTLE**

The serpent of the Garden of Eden was subtle.

Genesis 3:1 — King James Version (KJV)

*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*

## **Relevant Bible Quotations**

1 Timothy 6:10 — King James Version (KJV)

*10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Matthew 6:21 — King James Version (KJV)

*21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Ecclesiastes 5:10 — King James Version (KJV)

*10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.*

Matthew 6:41 — King James Version (KJV)

*41 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

## ARGUMENT (*The Alchemist*)

The sickness hot, a master quit, for fear,  
His house in town, and left one servant there;  
Ease him corrupted, and gave means to know

A cheater, and his punk; who now brought low,  
Leaving their narrow practice, were become<sup>[SEP]</sup>  
Cozeners at large; and only wanting some<sup>[SEP]</sup>  
House to set up, with him they here contract,  
Each for a share, and all begin to act.  
Much company they draw, and much abuse,  
In casting figures, telling fortunes, news,  
Selling of flies [familiar spirits], flat bawdry with the stone,  
Till it, and they, and all *in fume* are gone.

“*In fume*” is Latin for “in smoke.”

The “argument” is the plot in brief of a play or other work of art. Ben Jonson, clever man whom he was, made the argument of his play *The Alchemist* an acrostic: The first letter of each line spells out “THE ALCHEMIST.”

In modern English, this is the “argument” of *The Alchemist*:

When the plague was raging in London, the master of a house left London out of fear of catching the plague. He left behind one servant; this servant, left on his own, became

corrupted through lack of an overseer, and he became acquainted with a con man and his prostitute. These two were at a low position on the Wheel of Fortune, and so they were branching away from their small-scale illegal activities and were becoming swindlers on a greater scale. To help them engage in their illegal activities, they needed a house to set up shop in, and so they made an agreement with the servant: They would act in concert to cheat suckers and then share equally in the spoils — one third to each of the three. They were able to draw many suckers to the house, and they were able to cheat and abuse them by doing such things as making and selling horoscopes, telling fortunes and gossip, selling familiar spirits of the kind that are aides to witches, and selling immorality such as prostitution, along with pretending to create a philosopher's stone, which believers supposed to be able to turn base metals such as iron and lead into silver and gold. The three con artists engaged in such swindling until their supposed philosopher's stone, and they themselves, and everything else went up in smoke.

## PROLOGUE (*The Alchemist*)

For the few short hours it takes to read this book, the authors — Ben Jonson and David Bruce — wish away Lady Fortune, who favors fools, both for the sakes of you judging readers and for our sakes. We desire, in the place of the dumb luck of non-deserving celebrities who are rich and famous simply because they are rich and famous without having done anything (other than perhaps a sex tape) to deserve such wealth and fame, to find that you believe that the authors deserve the justice of a careful reading of this book and to find that you will show grace to this book.

The scene of our book is London because we would make known to all of you that no country causes mirth and is laughed at more than our own — Ben Jonson was born, lived, and died in London, while David Bruce is an Anglophile.

No region breeds better material for writing. London provides whores, bawds, pimps, impostors, and many more types of persons, whose chief characteristics, which were once called humors, feed the actors on the stage and the ink on the pages between book covers and the electrons on computer screens and eBook readers, and which have always been subject to the rage or the spite of comic writers.

We, the wielders of a pen and of a computer keyboard, have never aimed to afflict men, both those with and without wombs, but instead we have always aimed to better and improve men and womb-men.

However, the ages we lived or live in endure the vices that those ages — and all ages — breed, rather than to endure their cure.

But when the wholesome remedies are sweet, and in their working gain and profit meet, we authors hope to find no spirit so much diseased, but that it will with such fair

corrective medicine be pleased. In other words, satire is funny medicine that can make a belly laugh and a brain think and a character reform.

We authors are not afraid that you will get to know our characters and think, *Hey, I know people just like that!* In fact, that's what we want to happen. It would be even better if you were to think, *Hey, I'm just like that!*

Are any of you readers willing to sit so near to the stream that you can see what's in it? (These days, sewage no longer runs in the streets, but how many sewage treatment plants dump sewage into a river near you?)

If you are willing to look carefully, you shall find things that you would think or wish were finished and over and done. Those things are very natural follies, but we will show them to you in the pages of this book, which is a safe place where even if you recognize that you do the same foolish things, yet you need not admit that to anyone else — or to yourself.

People may no longer believe in the philosopher's stone or the Queen of Fairy, but the love of money is still very much with us.

By the way, although it is true that no region other than London and England breeds better material for writing, it has at least two close runners-up: Ireland and the United States of America.

When Jonathan Swift died, he left £10,000 to be used for the founding of an Irish Hospital for Idiots and Lunatics. That was his final joke. As he had written earlier:

*“He gave the little wealth he had*

*“To build a house for fools and mad [insane],*

*“And shew'd [showed] by one satiric touch,*

*“No nation wanted [needed] it so much.”*

And as everyone knows, the United States of America is so arrogant that it ignores the existence of Canada, Mexico, Central America, and South America and calls itself “America” instead of “USAmerica.”

But let us be fair to USAmericans: Many of them don’t know that such places as Central America and South America exist.



## ACT 1 (*The Alchemist*)

### — 1.1 —

In the year 1610, Face and Subtle were in the midst of an argument in a room in Lovewit's house. Subtle was arguing that he deserved a bigger share of the profits, and Face was strenuously objecting. Face, who had a notable beard, was wearing a Captain's uniform, and he had drawn his sword. Subtle was carrying a vial of liquid. A worried Doll Common was also in the room.

Face threatened, "Believe it, I will."

Subtle responded, "Do your worst. I fart at you."

He turned around, bent over, and farted.

Doll, worried that passersby would hear the argument, said, "Have you lost your wits? Why, gentlemen! For the love of \_\_\_"

Ignoring Doll, Face said to Subtle, "Sirrah, I'll strip you —"

He was using "Sirrah" as an insult. It was a term used by a person of high social rank to address a man of low social rank.

Subtle said, "So you can do what? Lick the figs sticking out of my —"

Face interrupted before Subtle could end his question with the word "ass." Figs are hemorrhoids.

Face said, "Rogue, rogue, I want you to get out and stop all of your cons."

Doll said, "No. Look, Sovereign. Look, General. Are you madmen?"

Wanting the two men to stop quarreling, she had given them high and mighty titles.

Subtle said to Face, “Oh, let the wild sheep loose.”

“Mutton” is a slang word for a prostitute. Face had grabbed hold of Doll, who was standing in between the two men in an attempt to keep them from physically fighting. “Wild” means “licentious.”

Subtle continued talking to Face, “I’ll gum your silks with good strong water, if you come near me.”

The silks were fancy clothing, and the strong water was the acid in the vial that Subtle was carrying. He was threatening to throw acid on Face’s clothing and ruin it.

Doll said, “Will you have the neighbors hear you? Will you ruin everything? Do you want everyone to know what we are up to?”

“Listen! I hear somebody.”

Face began, “Sirrah —”

Subtle interrupted, “I shall mar all that the tailor has made, if you approach me.”

A tailor-made man is quite different from a self-made man. The clothing of a tailor-made man is worth more than the man wearing the clothing.

Face said, “You most notorious whelp — you pup! You insolent slave! Do you dare to do that?”

“Yes, indeed. Indeed, yes.”

Face said, “Why, who do you think I am, my mongrel! Don’t you know who I am?”

“I’ll tell you who you are,” Subtle said, “since you yourself don’t know who you are.”

Face said, “Speak lower, rogue. Don’t yell.” He did not like what he was hearing.

Subtle said, “Yes, you were once (the time is not long past) the good, honest, plain, livery-three-pound-thrum, who kept your master’s house here in the Blackfriars district during the vacations — the periods of time when the law courts are not active, and fashionable people leave London.”

He was calling Face a lowly and low-paid servant. Livery is the distinctive clothing a servant wears. Three pounds was Face’s annual salary. Thrum is poor-quality cloth — which Face’s livery was made of.

Face said, “Must you be so loud?” He did not like what he was hearing.

Subtle said, “Since then, by my means, you have been transformed into a suburb-Captain.”

Subtle had gotten a Captain’s uniform for Face to assist him in playing his part in the cons they were attempting to pull off. Face, of course, could not pass as a Captain in the army, but in the suburbs — the disreputable places outside the city — he could very well pass as a Captain.

Face said, “By your means, Doctor Dog!”

Alchemists would combine sulphur (thought of as male) and quicksilver (thought of as female). The combining was sometimes referred to as the copulation of dog and bitch.

Subtle said, “Within man’s memory, I have done all this I speak of.”

“Within man’s memory” means “You ought not to have forgotten this.”

Face said, “Why, I ask you: Have I been countenanced by you, or you by me?”

The word “countenance” is a verb meaning “support,” but Face was also punning on its meaning as a noun meaning “face.” Both Face and Subtle had helped each other to put on false “faces” that would help them to con people. Both were helping the other to put on a front.

Face added, “Do but recollect, sir, where I first met you.”

“I do not hear well,” Subtle said. He did not like what he was hearing.

Possibly, Face was trying to keep his voice low in an attempt to keep anyone outside the house from hearing the argument. (People came to the house and waited outside until they were admitted.) But if Subtle had previously been convicted of crimes, his ears could have been cut off and the loss of the shells of his ears could interfere with his hearing whispers. Subtle could possibly be wearing a headpiece that would hide his mutilation.

“Not when you hear what I have to say, I think,” Face said. “But I shall remind you, sir, of where I first met you — at Pie Corner, taking your meal of steam in from cooks’ stalls.”

Pie Corner is near Smithfield. It gets its name from the Magpie Inn, but many shops there sold meat pies. Subtle then had no money to buy food, so he was dining on the smell of the food.

Face continued, “In Pie Corner, as you were the father of hunger, you walked piteously, suffering from constipation. You had no money to buy food, and the result was that your body produced nothing that would relieve constipation. Your nose was long and thin and pinched with hunger — or syphilis — as if it were a shoehorn. Your complexion was sallow and unhealthy, and on your face were black and

melancholic marks, blackheads that looked like the smuts left by grains of gunpowder on the faces of people practicing their aim with firearms on the targets in the Artillery Garden.”

Subtle said sarcastically, “I wish you could raise your voice a little.” He did not like what he was hearing.

Face continued, “Your clothing consisted of several rags pinned together that you had raked and picked from dunghills before daybreak. You wore moldy slippers on your feet because of the chilblains on your heels. You wore a hat of cheap wool and your cloak was threadbare and was scarcely long enough to cover the meager buns that you call your buttocks —”

“Sir!” an outraged Subtle objected.

Face said, “When all your alchemy and your algebra, and your minerals, plants, and animals, your conjuring, your cheating, and your dozen of trades could not relieve the corpse you call your body with as much underwear as would give you enough tinder to start a fire” — scraps of linen were used to start fires — “I gave you countenance. I gave you support, and I gave you enough credit to get your coal, your stills for distilling liquids, your vials, and your materials. I built you an oven for your alchemy. I drew in customers for you. I advanced all your black arts. I lent you, in addition, a house to pull your cons in —”

“It is your master’s house!” Subtle said.

“And there you have studied the more thriving skill of bawdry since,” Face said. “You have made my house a brothel.”

“Yes, I have been a pimp in your master’s house,” Subtle said. “I have done that in a house where you and the rats live. Don’t pretend not to know about the rats.

“I know you were a man who would keep the pantry always locked and keep the scraps of leftover food that ought to have been given to the poor. I know that you would keep the leftover beer that ought to have been given to the poor and instead sell it to the aqua-vita men who would distill it and sell the result as better liquid than it was. By pulling such cons, and by making Christmas tips by providing gambling chips for post-and-pair card games, you made yourself a ‘pretty’ stock of money, some twenty marks or approximately thirteen pounds sterling. This made you wealthy enough to converse with the cobwebs that are here in this house since your master’s wife’s death has broken up the house.”

“You might talk softer, rascal,” Face said. He did not like what he was hearing.

“No, you dung beetle,” Subtle said. “I’ll use my voice to thunder you into pieces. I will teach you how to beware to enrage a Fury again, a Fury who carries a tempest in his hand and voice.”

A Fury is an avenging spirit that rises from Hell to take vengeance on criminals such as people who murder their parent. The tempest in Subtle’s hand was the acid in the vial.

“The place has made you valiant,” Face said.

He meant the place — position, and place to live — that he, Face, had given Subtle.

“No, your clothes,” Subtle replied. He meant that Face’s undeserved Captain’s uniform had made him, Subtle, valiant. He was facing a spurious, not a real, Captain, and so he was not afraid.

Face can be forgiven if he thought that Subtle was referring to the good-quality clothing that Face had provided for him.

Face had talked about the way that he had supported and helped Subtle, but Subtle had then begun talking about the way that he had supported and helped Face.

According to Subtle, he had transformed Face — for example, from a lowly servant to a high-ranking Captain. This transformation was similar to the transformation wrought in alchemy, which was thought to be able to produce a philosopher's stone that would transform base metals such as iron and lead into valuable metals such as silver and gold.

Subtle said, "I have taken you, vermin, out of dung. You were so poor, so wretched, that no living thing would keep you company except a spider or worse. I have raised you from brooms, and dust, and watering pots. I have *sublimed* you, and *exalted* you, and *fixed* you in the *third region*, which is called our state of grace. I have wrought you to *spirit*, to *quintessence*, by taking pains that would twice have won me the *philosopher's work*. I have worked so hard at bettering you that if I had applied that work to alchemy, I could have created two *philosopher's stones*."

Subtle was using many alchemical terms. According to Subtle, he had metaphorically vaporized (*sublimed*) Face, concentrated (*exalted*) him, and stabilized (*fixed*) his volatility. All of this results in a state of purification. By doing so, he had brought Face to the *third region*, which is the highest and purest of the three regions of air. According to alchemy, when matter is heated and purified, the result is *spirit* — essence, which rises into the air. *Quintessence* is a fifth essence. The first four essences are the four elements — earth, air, fire, and water — which, according to alchemy, make up all material things. *Quintessence* is incorruptible and pure and is able to transform the first four essences into a harmonious whole. *Quintessence* is the purest form and is what alchemists think celestial bodies are made of.

Subtle believed that he had raised Face from a humble servant to a man who was on the verge of becoming rich through successful cons.

Subtle continued, “I taught you how to speak properly and how to dress fashionably. I made you fit for more than fellowships in taverns and common eating places.

“I taught you the rules for how to properly swear oaths and the rules for how to properly quarrel. I taught you the rules for how to cheat at horseraces, cockfights, card games, games of dice, and whatever other gallant tinctures that exist.”

In alchemy, a tincture can make a substance seem golden. Subtle was saying that he had taught Face how to appear to be more than a common servant.

Subtle said, “I made you a second in my own great art. I have taught you the tricks of alchemy.

“And this is what I have for thanks!

“Do you rebel now? Do you fly out in the *projection*! Would you be gone now?”

To fly out is to explode. The *projection* is the final stage of the production of the philosopher’s stone. If the *projection* is unsuccessful, the result is an explosion that would destroy the alchemist’s laboratory.

Subtle was saying that he had been working hard to turn Face into a philosopher’s stone that would create a lot of silver and gold, but if Face chose to rebel now the result would be a failure of all their efforts. In other words, very soon they would make a lot of money from their cons, but if Face chose to rebel now the result would be the loss of all the money they could have made.



Doll said, “Gentlemen, what do you mean to accomplish by arguing? Will you mar all? Will you ruin everything?”

The two men continued to argue.

Subtle said to Face, “Slave, you had no name, no reputation, no nothing —”

Doll said, “Will you ruin yourselves with civil war?”

Subtle continued, “You would never have been known, past *equi clibanum*, the heat of horse dung, underground, in cellars, or in an ale house darker than that of Deaf John’s. You would have been lost to all Mankind, except laundresses and tapsters, had I not come and raised you up.”

Again, Subtle was using alchemical language. “*Equi clibanum*” is Latin for “Horses’ Oven.” Horse dung produces heat as a result of decomposition. This mild heat was used in the earliest stages of trying to produce the philosopher’s stone. Subtle was saying that Face was previously in the lowest parts of society, but that he, Subtle, had taught him how to rise to much higher parts of society.

Doll said to Subtle, “Do you know who hears you, Sovereign?”

Doll was hearing Subtle. Although she knew and had known Subtle, she was still a prostitute. She had not risen in society.

Face began to say to Subtle, “Sirrah —”

Doll interrupted and said to Face, “No, General, I thought you were civil.”

She still wanted the two men to stop quarreling and not use the word “Sirrah.”

Face ignored Doll and said to Subtle, “I shall turn desperate, if you speak so loud.”

A desperate man can be a violently angry man.

Subtle said, “Go hang yourself! I don’t care if you grow desperate and out of desperation hang yourself.”

A desperate man can be a suicidal man.

Face said, “Hang yourself, collier.”

A collier is a dealer in coal and charcoal. They often had dirty faces and a reputation for cheating customers by giving incorrect weights for coal purchased. As an alchemist, Subtle used lots of coal and sometimes had a sooty face.

Face continued, “And you can go hang all your pots and pans. In a picture, I will hang you since you have angered me —”

The picture would be a publicly posted notice to alert the general public that Subtle is a con man. It would have Subtle’s picture on it.

Doll said, “Oh, this will overthrow and ruin all our work.”

Face said to Subtle, “I will write a bill and post it publicly at Saint Paul’s Cathedral. In it, I will tell everyone that you are a pimp. I will reveal all your tricks of cheating.

“I will tell how you hollow out a piece of coal, fill it with silver shavings, plug the hole with a piece of wax, burn the coal, and then show your sucker the silver in the pan — the supposed result of your alchemy.

“I will tell how you pretend to find things by using a witching device made of a sieve and scissors.

“I will tell how you use your imagination to make up horoscopes and tables of the houses — divisions — of the zodiac.

“I will tell how you use your imagination to look for the shadows — the ‘spirits’ — that appear in a crystal ball.

“I will tell all of these things in a large bill with the words written in red ink and with a woodcut of your face, which is worse than the hideous mask worn by the highwayman Gamaliel Ratsey while he committed his robberies.”

According to a pamphlet titled “Ratseis Ghost,” Gamaliel Ratsey once paid some actors to perform for him. The next day he robbed the actors of the money he had paid them.

“Are you of sound mind?” Doll asked. “Are you still in your right senses, masters, or have you lost your minds?”

Face continued, “I will create a book, one that barely covers your many, many cons, but which will still prove to be a true philosopher’s stone to printers. So many people will buy such a scandalous book that it will be very, very profitable.”

Subtle said, “Go away, you trencher-rascal! You are good for nothing except to eat other people’s food!”

A trencher is a wooden plate.

Face said, “Get out, you dog-doctor! Get out, you quack! You are the vomit of all prisons —”

Doll asked, “Will you be your own destructions, gentlemen?”

Face continued, “— always spewed out as a result of eating more than your share of the scraps of food provided for the prisoners!”

Subtle said, “Cheater!”

Face said, “Bawd!”

“Cowherd!”

“Conjurer!”

“Cutpurse! Pickpocket!”

“Male witch!”

Doll said, “Oh! We are ruined. We are lost! Have you no more regard for your reputations? Where’s your judgment? By God’s light, have yet some concern about me, who am of your republic —”

Doll made a part of the group of swindlers along with Subtle and Face, and so she was a part of their republic. In addition, the Latin *respublica* means “common thing.” In this society, one meaning of “thing” was genitals. As a prostitute who had sexual relations with members of the general public, Doll had a public thing. In fact, you could say that she worked in public relations. Both Subtle and Face may have slept with Doll.

Face said, “Take away this bitch! I’ll bring you, rogue, to court on account of the statute against sorcery, passed into law in *tricesimo tertio* — the thirty-third year — of the reign of King Henry VIII.”

In 1604, under King James I, the statute against sorcery was passed again.

Face continued, “Yes, and perhaps I’ll bring your neck within a noose, for laundering gold and barbing it.”

Gold coins were laundered by being washed in acid, which would remove some of the gold, which would be recovered and sold later. Barbing gold coins meant shaving off some of the edges of the coins. Both laundering and barbing — barbering — gold coins were punishable by death or by having one’s ears cut off.

Doll snatched Face’s sword and said, “You’ll bring your head within a cockscomb, will you?”

Many professional Fools wore hats that looked like a cockscomb — the comb, aka crest, of a rooster. Doll meant that Face was behaving like a fool.

Doll knocked Subtle's vial out of his hand and said, "And you, sir, with your menstrue — gather it up."

A menstrue is a strong solvent.

Doll said, "Damn, you abominable pair of stinkards, leave off your barking and become one team again, or by the light that shines, I'll cut your throats. I'll not be made a prey for the Marshal, for never a snarling dog-bolt of you both."

As a prostitute, Doll wanted to stay away from the Marshal, who would punish prostitutes by whipping them.

A dog-bolt is a blunt arrow. Doll was saying that the two men were doing a lot of barking but no biting.

Doll continued, "Have you two been swindling all this while, and swindling all the world, and shall it now be said that you've made the most 'courteous' decision to swindle yourselves?"

She said to Face, "You will accuse him! You will bring him into the court on account of the statute against sorcery! Who shall believe your words? You are a whorson, upstart, apocryphal — fake — Captain, whom not a Puritan in Blackfriars will trust so much as for a feather."

Feathers were used for personal adornments. Surprisingly, Puritan shopkeepers in the Blackfriars area sold feathers.

Doll said to Subtle, "And you, too, you will argue your case for a bigger share of the profits — ha! You will insult Face and me, and you will claim a primacy in the division of profits! You want the biggest portion! You must be chief! As if only you had the powder to project with!"

The powder was pulverized philosopher's stone that was sprinkled on the base metal that was to be transformed into silver or gold. This was part of the alchemical procedure called projection. Doll meant, *As if only you were pulling this con!*

She continued, "As if the work were not begun out of equality! As if the venture and the risk were not tripartite? As if all things were not in common! As if we three were not equal partners and no one has priority!"

She paused and then said to both men, "By God's death! You perpetual curs, make up and become a team together. Cozen kindly, and heartily, and lovingly, as you should, and don't lose the beginning of a term."

"To cozen" means "to cheat" and "to deceive" and "to con." Doll wanted the two men to cheat other men; she also wanted them to be on as good terms as if they were closely related cousins.

The beginning of the term was the beginning of one of the periods of the years when the law courts were in session. During those periods, London was filled with people and with opportunities for swindlers.

Doll continued, "If you don't make up and become friends, I shall grow factious, too, and take my own part, and quit you. I will form a faction of one, leave you two, and strike out on my own."

Face said, "It is his fault; he always moans, and he makes a fuss about the pains he is suffering and is taking, and he says that the heavy lifting of all our cons lies upon him."

Subtle said, "Why, so it does."

Doll replied, "How does it? Don't Face and I do our parts?"

Subtle said, "Yes, but they are not equal to mine."

Doll said, “Why, if your part exceeds our parts today, I hope that ours may, tomorrow, match it.”

Subtle said, “Yes, they *may*.”

Doll said, “*May*, murmuring mastiff! Yes, and they *do*. Death on me!”

By “Death on me!” Doll may have meant that she would be happy to be responsible for Subtle’s death and even to be hung for causing that death.

She grabbed Subtle by the throat and said to Face, “Help me throttle him.”

Subtle cried, “Dorothy! Mistress Dorothy! By God’s precious blood, I’ll do anything. What do you want?”

Doll said, “I’m doing this because of your fermentation and cibation —”

These were two of the stages of creating the philosopher’s stone. Cibation is the process of adding new materials while heating the mixture that was supposed to result in the philosopher’s stone, something necessary because of evaporation.

Doll was saying that Subtle’s brain had been fermenting with ideas to add more of the profits of the group cons to his pile of profits than were due to him.

Subtle said, “I’m not guilty of that, I swear by Heaven —”

Doll interrupted, “— and by your Sol and Luna.”

Sol, aka Sun, is an alchemical term for gold, and Luna, aka Moon, is an alchemical term for silver.

Subtle was silent.

Doll said to Face, “Help me strangle him.”

Subtle said, “If I were guilty of that, I wish that I would be hanged! I’ll behave. I’ll conform myself to your wishes.”

“Will you, sir?” Doll said. “Do so then, and quickly. Swear.”

Subtle asked, “What should I swear?”

Doll replied, “To leave your faction of one, sir, and labor kindly in the common work. Become a member of a team of three equal partners again.”

Subtle said, “Let me not breathe if I meant anything besides that. I used those speeches only as a spur to him.”

Doll said to Face, “I hope we need no spurs, sir. Do we?”

Face said, “By God’s eyelid, we’ll have a competition today to see who shall shark — swindle — best.”

“Agreed,” Subtle said.

Doll said, “Yes, and work together in a close and friendly fashion.”

Subtle said, “By God’s light, the knot among us shall grow all the stronger as a result of this quarrel, as far as I’m concerned.”

Subtle and Face shook hands.

Doll said, “Why, so it ought to be, my good baboons! Shall we go make a group of sober, scurvy, puritanical neighbors, who scarcely have smiled twice since James I became King, a feast of laughter? They will be happy to laugh at our follies.”

King James I had made some decisions that made Puritans unhappy. In 1603 at the Hampton Court Conference, he had rejected Puritan requests for ecclesiastical reforms. However, Puritans wanted people to know the Bible without intermediaries, and King James had commissioned the



translation of the Bible that became known as the King James Version. The translation began in 1604 and was completed in 1611.

Doll continued, “These rascals would run themselves out of breath in order to come and to see me ride in a cart, or to see you two thrust your heads into a hole and have your ears cropped as rent for the time you spend in the pillory.”

Whores such as Doll could be shamed by being stripped to the waist and whipped as they walked behind a cart. Or whores could be made to ride in a cart to the place of punishment where they would be publicly whipped.

The alchemist Edward Kelley (1555-1597), an assistant of the astrologer Dr. John Dee, was punished for coining, aka forging, by being put in a pillory and having his ears cut off. Afterwards, he always wore a cap that hid his mutilation.

Doll continued, “Shall we be a feast of laughter for such people? No. Let’s agree that we shall not.

“My noble Sovereign and my worthy General, let’s agree that we hope Don Provost may provide a feast of laughter while wearing his old velvet jacket and stained scarves for a very long time before we contribute a new crewel garter to his most worsted worship the hangman.”

“Don” is an undeserved title for a Provost like “Sovereign” and “General” are when applied to Subtle and Face. Criminals convicted of serious crimes would ride in a cart to the place where they would be hung.

Doll was saying that it would be much better to be publicly whipped and provide laughter to onlookers than it would be to be hanged. Of course, she and the others were hoping to avoid being whipped.

The man who hanged criminals was entitled to the clothing of the people he hanged. The word “crewel” meant “worsted,” which is a kind of fabric. Doll also was punning on the word “cruel” when she said “crewel garter” — a cruel “garter” is a hangman’s rope and noose.

“Worsted” also meant “defeated” or “baffled.” Doll and her associates were hoping to continue to defeat the hangman by continuing to be not hanged by him.

The two men appreciated the jokes.

Subtle said, “Royal Doll! Spoken like Claridiana, and yourself.”

Claridiana is a character in the romance *Mirror of Princely Deeds and Knighthood* (1578). She was a daughter of Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, and she inherited Penthesilea’s armor. As a female Knight, she encroached upon social roles usually performed only by men.

By forcibly making Subtle agree to play his part in the cons without demanding a greater share of the profits, Doll Common had encroached upon a social role usually performed only by men.

Face said, “For which at supper, you shall sit in triumph, and not be stiled Doll Common, but Doll Proper, Doll Singular. Whoever draws the longest straw, this night, shall win you as his Doll Particular.”

Face was saying that he and Subtle would draw straws to see who would sleep with Doll Common that night.

A bell rang.

“Who’s that?” Subtle said. “Someone is ringing. Go to the window, Doll, and see who it is.”

Doll went to the window.

Subtle said, “Pray to Heaven, Face, that your master does not trouble us for this quarter. We don’t want him to show up unexpectedly.”

“Oh, don’t worry about that,” Face said. “As long as someone dies each week from the plague, he won’t even think about returning to London. Besides, he’s busy at his hop yards now; I have received a letter from him. If he does decide to return, he’ll send me orders to air out the house in advance, and you shall have sufficient time to leave it. Even if we have to break up within a fortnight, it doesn’t matter. We’ll have plenty of time.”

A fortnight is two weeks. “Fortnight” is short for “fourteen nights.”

Subtle asked, “Who is it, Doll?”

Doll Common replied, “A fine young quodling.”

A quodling is an unripe apple. A raw youth was at the door.

Face said, “Oh, he’s a lawyer’s clerk. I lighted on him last night, in Holborn, at the Dagger Inn. He wants to have — I told you about him — a familiar spirit to help him gamble on horse races and pick the horse that wins. He also wants the familiar spirit to help him win at cups and ball.”

Familiar spirits often take the form of an animal or fly; they assist witches or other people.

Cups and ball is a scam in which the con man has three cups and one ball, and the sucker has to guess under which cup the ball is. Actually, the ball is secreted in the con man’s hand and so the sucker will lose except for the times, which are infrequent, when the con man wants the sucker to win. (It’s not good business to have the suckers *always* lose.)

Doll Common said, “Oh, let him in.”

“Wait,” Subtle said. “Who shall con him?”

Face said, “Get your alchemist’s robes on. I will pretend that I am just leaving and meet him at the door.”

Doll Common asked, “And what shall I do?”

“Not be seen,” Face said. “Leave!”

Doll Common exited.

Face said to Subtle, “Seem to be very reserved. Seem reluctant to take his money.”

“Agreed,” Subtle said.

He exited to put on his robes.

Face said loudly so that the young man outside would hear, “God be with you, sir. Please let him know that I was here. His name is Dapper. I would gladly have stayed, but —”

— 1.2 —

Dapper — the young man outside — said, “Captain, I am here.”

Face said loudly so that the young man outside would hear, “Who’s that? He’s come, I think, Doctor.”

He opened the door and allowed Dapper to enter the room.

Face, still dressed in his Captain’s uniform, said, “Truly, sir, I was going away. I was just leaving.”

Dapper said, “Truly, I am very sorry to hear that, Captain Face.”

Face said, “But I thought that for sure I should meet you.”

Dapper said, “Yes, I am very glad. I had a scurvy legal document or two to make, and I had lent my watch last night

to one who dines today with the Sheriff, and so I was robbed of my pass-time.”

In this society, watches were rare and expensive. If the person Dapper had lent his watch to was dining in the Sheriff’s jail, Dapper was literally robbed. But if the person really was dining with the Sheriff, Dapper was “robbed” of his watch for only a short time. Possibly, however, Dapper owned no watch but wanted to appear as if he did.

A watch is a “pass-time” because it shows time passing.

Subtle entered the room, wearing a learned man’s velvet cap and gown.

Dapper asked, “Is this the cunning-man?”

A cunning-man is a man who is knowledgeable in such things as astrology and alchemy and other occult matters.

“This is his worship,” Face replied.

“Is he a Doctor?”

“Yes.”

“And have you broached with him the matter I wish to talk to him about, Captain Face?”

That matter was a request for a familiar spirit to help him win at gambling. Such requests occurred in this society. In the 1570s, Adam Squire sold gambling flies — spirits supposedly sometimes took the form of flies. This nearly got him expelled as Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

“Yes.”

“And how did he respond?”

“He is making a lot of objections to the matter, sir, so I don’t know what to say.”

“Say it isn’t so, Captain Face.”

“I wish that I were fairly rid of this business, believe me.”

“Now you make me grieve, sir. Why should you wish that? I dare to assure you that I’ll not be ungrateful.”

“I cannot think you will be ungrateful, sir,” Face said. “But the law is a thing that demands consideration — and then he points out that Read’s matter has been in the news recently.”

“Read!” Dapper said scornfully. “He was an ass, and he dealt, sir, with a fool.”

In November 1607, Simon Read, a Doctor, had invoked three spirits to help him recover money that had been stolen from one of his clients. Presumably, the client — Toby Matthews — was the “ass” to whom Dapper was referring. In February 1608, Simon Read was pardoned.

“He was a clerk, sir,” Face said.

Dapper, who was a clerk, said, “A clerk!”

Face said, “Listen to me, sir, you know the law better, I think \_\_\_”

“I should, sir, and the danger, too,” Dapper said. “You know, I showed the statute to you.”

“So you did,” Face said.

“And will I tell then!” Dapper said.

He meant that since he knew the consequences of breaking the law against occult practices that he would not inform on Subtle and Face because he, himself, would also be guilty of breaking that law.

Dapper continued, “By this hand of flesh, I swear that I wish it might never write good court-hand any more if I reveal

what the cunning-man does for me. What do you think of me? Do you think that I am a *chiaus*?”

“What’s that?” Face asked.

“The Turk who was here,” Dapper replied.

In 1607, a Turk arrived in London and falsely said that he was the ambassador of the Turkish Sultan. While in England, he was lavishly entertained and all his expenses were paid. As a result, *chiaus* — related to the Turkish word for “messenger” — became an English synonym for “cheat.”

Dapper continued, “As one would say, do you think that I am a Turk?”

“I’ll tell the Doctor,” Face said.

He would tell Subtle that Dapper was no Turk — for one thing, Dapper wasn’t intelligent enough to be very successful as a con man.

“Do, good sweet Captain Face.”

Face said to Subtle, “Come, noble Doctor, I request that you will let us prevail and help us. This is the gentleman, and he is no *chiaus*.”

“Captain Face, I have already told you my answer,” Subtle said.

He then said to Dapper, “I would do much, sir, for your friendship — but this I neither may, nor can, do.”

“Tut, do not say so,” Face said. “You deal now with a noble fellow, Doctor. He is a man who will thank you richly, and he is no *chiaus*. Let that, sir, persuade you to help him.”

Subtle said, “Please, stop —”

Face said, “He has four angels here.”

Angels are gold coins depicting the archangel Michael combating a dragon.

“You do me wrong, good sir,” Subtle said, declining to take the money.

“Doctor, how do I do you wrong?” Face said. “By tempting you with these spirits?”

“You tempt my art and love, sir, to my peril,” Subtle said. “Before Heaven, I scarcely can think you are my friend, not when you would draw me to manifest danger by tempting me to disobey the law.”

Raising spirits was a crime with severe penalties.

“I draw you!” Face said. “May a horse draw you, and to a halter. You, and your familiar spirits together —”

He was pretending to be angry and to wish that Subtle would be drawn by a horse and cart to the gallows.

Dapper said, “No, good Captain Face.”

Face said to Subtle, “You are unable to distinguish between men — men who blab, and men who can keep a secret.”

“Use good words, sir,” Subtle said. “Don’t say angry words.”

“Good deeds, sir, Doctor Dogs’ Meat,” Face said, still pretending to be angry. “By God’s light, I bring you no cheating Clim o’ the Cloughs, or Claribells, who look as big as five-and-fifty and flush, and who spit out secrets like hot custard —”

Clim o’ the Clough was an outlaw in a ballad, and Claribell was a Knight who constantly loved excessively in Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queen*. “Claribell” may be related to Latin *clarus bellum* — “famous [in] war.” Or Edmund Spenser may have used the name to suggest that Claribell is so fond



of the ladies that he has a lady's name. However, Face may have meant that Claribell was a deceiver because he bore a deceiving name. He was a male Knight with a lady's name.

Five-and-fifty and flush is an unbeatable hand in the card game primero.

Mark Twain once put a spoonful of soup in his mouth, but it was so hot that he spit it out, shocking his fellow diners. But he was unperturbed and said, "Some darn fools would have swallowed that!"

"Captain Face!" Dagger said.

Face continued, "I did not bring him any melancholic under-scribe who would tell the vicar-general about our secret doings; instead, I brought him a special gentleman who is the heir to forty marks a year, who consorts with the small poets of the time, who is the sole hope of his old grandmother, who knows the law, and who can write for you six fair hands, who is a fine clerk and has his bookkeeping perfect, who will take his oath on the Greek Xenophon, if need be, in his pocket, and who can court his girl out of his reading of Ovid."

Consorting with small poets is the best society that Dapper can muster.

Dapper does have skills: He can write six kinds of handwriting: court-hand, secretary (both English and French), Italic, Roman, and chancery.

If Dapper needs to, he can take his oath on the Greek Xenophon he keeps in his pocket. Xenophon was an ancient Greek historian. People of the time swore on Greek Bibles, and at times Dapper might try to fool an uneducated person by swearing on a Greek Xenophon in order to avoid making a religious oath. Similarly and for the same reason, according to malicious gossip, Irish men of the time would

kiss their thumbnail rather than the Bible when swearing oaths they did not want to keep.

Ovid wrote a manual of love poetry, or seduction poetry: *Ars Amatoria — The Art of Love*. This is the first line: “*Siquis in hoc artem populo non novit amandi, / Hoc legat et lecto carmine doctus amet.*” J. Lewis May translated it in 1930: “If there be anyone among you who is ignorant of the art of loving, let him read this poem and, having read it and acquired the knowledge it contains, let him address himself to Love.”

Dapper said, “No, dear Captain Face —”

“Did you not tell me so?” Face asked.

“Yes, but I want you to treat the Master Doctor with some more respect.”

“Hang him, the proud stag, with his broad velvet head!” Face said.

He was punning on “velvet,” which referred both to the Doctor’s velvet cap and to the velvet of a stag’s antlers.

Face said to Dapper, “But for your sake, I’d choke before I would exchange an article of breath with such a puck-fist.”

“Puck-fist” is the puffball fungus; it does not have an open cap like many mushrooms, and its spores are produced inside the closed cap. Face was referring to Subtle’s fist, which was empty of everything except air because he refused to accept Dapper’s money.

Face said to Dapper, “Come on, let’s go.”

He pretended to be leaving.

Subtle said, “Please let me speak with you.”

Dapper called after Face, “His worship is calling you, Captain Face.”

Face complained, “I am sorry that I ever embarked in such a business.”

Dapper said, “Good sir, he did call you.”

Face asked, “Will he take then?”

“Take” referred to “take on this business” and “take your money.”

Subtle said, “First, hear me —”

“Not a syllable, unless you take,” Face interrupted.

“Please, sir,” Subtle said.

Face said, “Upon no terms, but an *assumpsit*.”

An *assumpsit* is a verbal legal agreement. In practice, it is made binding by the payment of money.

“Your preference must be law,” Subtle said.

He took the four angels from Dapper.

Face said to Subtle, “Why now, sir, talk. Now I dare hear you with my honor. Speak. This gentleman — Dapper — may speak, too.”

“Why, sir —” Subtle said.

He began to whisper to Face, who said, “No whispering.”

This was sure to make Dapper listen carefully.

Subtle said, “Before Heaven, you do not apprehend the loss you do to yourself in this matter.”

“Loss?” Face said. “What loss?”

“By the Virgin Mary, I say that you do yourself loss by demanding that I help this man who, when he has a familiar spirit to help him gamble, will ruin you all. He’ll win all the money in the town.”

“What!” Face said.

“Yes, and he will blow up — bankrupt — gamester after gamester, just as people blow up firecrackers in a puppet-play. If I give him a familiar spirit, you may as well just give him all the money you are gambling for and with; never bet against him for he will win it all.”

“You are mistaken, Doctor,” Face said. “Why, he is asking for a small familiar spirit to help him win only at cups and horses. We aren’t talking about one of your great familiar spirits.”

Dapper said, “Actually, Captain Face, I want a familiar spirit to help me win at all games.”

“I told you so,” Subtle said to Face.

Face said to Dapper, “By God, that is a new business! I understood that you would be a tame bird and fly twice in a term, or so, on Friday nights, after you had left the office, for a nag worth forty or fifty shillings. I thought that we were talking about small stuff.”

“Yes, it is true that we did talk about small stuff, sir,” Dapper said, “but I think now that I shall quit my job and leave the law, and make my living as a gambler, and therefore —”

“Why, this changes everything,” Face said. “Do you think that I dare persuade him to give you a great familiar spirit?”

Great familiar spirits are powerful demons.

“If you please, sir,” Dapper said, “do it. All’s one to him, I see. Great familiar spirit? Small familiar spirit? All’s one to him, I’m sure.”

“What!” Face said. “By my conscience I cannot persuade him for that money, nor should you make the request, I think.”

“No, I won’t, sir,” Dapper said. “I mean to pay more money for a great familiar spirit.”

“Why, then, sir, I’ll try,” Face said.

Face whispered to Subtle, “Let’s say that the familiar spirit were for all games, Doctor. What then?”

Face and Subtle whispered, but they made sure to whisper loud enough for Dapper to overhear them.

Subtle whispered, “I say then that not a mouth shall eat at any inn except on credit because of him winning all the money. He has the mouth of a gambler, believe me.”

“Indeed!” Face whispered.

“He’ll win all the treasure of the realm, if it is staked against him.”

“Do you know this because of your occult knowledge?”

“Yes, sir,” Subtle whispered, “and I know it from my use of reason, too, which is the foundation of knowledge. He is the type of man the Queen of Fairy loves.”

“What!” Face said. “Is he?”

“Shh!” Subtle said. “He’ll overhear you. Sir, should she but see him —”

“What would happen?”

“Don’t you tell him!”

“Will he win at cards, too?” Face asked.

“You’d swear that the spirits of the dead Dutch alchemist John Holland and the living Dutch alchemist John Isaac Holland were in him because he would have such a vigorous luck that it cannot be resisted. Indeed, he’ll win all the expensive clothing of six of your gallants and leave each of them only a cloak to conceal their nakedness.”

Face said, “This is a strange and rare success that some man shall be born to!”

“He overhears you, man —” Subtle said.

Dapper said, “Sir, I’ll not be ingrateful.”

He meant that he would not be an ingrate and he would not be ungrateful.

Face said, “By my faith, I swear that I have confidence in his good nature. You heard him — he says he will not be ingrateful.”

“Why, do as you please,” Subtle said to Face. “I will go along with whatever you decide.”

“Truly, I think you should do it, Doctor. You should give him a great and powerful familiar spirit. Think that he is trustworthy, and make him.”

Dapper thought that Face was saying, *Make him (Dapper) rich*, but Face was actually saying, *Make him (Dapper) a mark — dupe him*.

Face continued, “He may make us both happy and rich in an hour. He may win some five thousand pounds, and send us two of it.”

“Believe it, and I will, sir,” Dapper said.

He was promising to send them two thousand — or just two — pounds.

“And you shall, sir,” Face said to Dapper. “Did you overhear everything we said?”

“No, what was it you said?” Dapper lied. “I overheard nothing, not I, sir.”

“Nothing!” Face said.

“I overheard a little, sir.”

“Well, a rare star reigned at your birth,” Face said.

“At mine, sir!” Dapper said. “No.”

“The Doctor swears that you are —”

“No, Captain Face, you’ll tell all now,” Subtle said.

Face continued, “— related to the Queen of Fairy.”

“To whom? Am I?” Dapper said. “Believe it, there’s no way that —”

“Yes,” Face said, “and the Doctor says that you were born with a caul on your head.”

A caul is the amniotic membrane that encloses a fetus. In this society, being born with the caul or part of the caul on top of the baby’s head was regarded as a sign of good luck for the baby.

“Who says so?” Dapper asked.

“Come on,” Face said. “You know well enough that this is true, although you are pretending not to know it.”

“I’fac, I do not,” Dapper said. “You are mistaken.”

“I’fac” was a weak version of “in faith.” It was a very weak oath, so weak in fact that Dapper would soon say that it is not a real oath.

“What!” Face said. “Swear by your ‘i’fac,’ and in a thing so well known to the Doctor? How shall we, sir, trust you in the other matter — the matter of the great familiar spirit? Can we ever think that when you have won five or six thousand pounds, you’ll send us shares in it, if you won’t tell the truth about this?”

“By Jove, sir, I’ll win ten thousand pounds, and send you half,” Dapper said. “‘I’fac’ is not a real oath.”

Subtle said, “He was only jesting when he said that.”

“Hmm,” Face said. Then he said to Dapper, “Go thank the Doctor. He’s your friend; he must be if he interprets in this way what you said.”

“I thank his worship,” Dapper said.

“So!” Face said. “Pay another angel.”

“Must I?” Dapper asked.

“Must you!” Face said. “By God’s light, what else are thanks! Will you be petty?”

He then said, “Doctor?”

Subtle held out his hand, and Dapper gave him the money.

Face asked Subtle, “When must he come for his familiar?”

“Shall I not take it with me when I leave?” Dapper asked.

“Oh, good sir!” Subtle said. “A world of ceremonies must be performed first. You must be bathed and fumigated first. Besides, the Queen of Fairy does not rise until noon.”



“Definitely not before noon, if she danced last night,” Face said.

“And she must bless the familiar spirit,” Subtle said.

“Have you ever seen her royal grace?” Face asked Dapper.

“Whom?” Dapper asked.

“Your aunt of Fairy,” Face replied.

An aunt is an older female relative; in the slang of the time, an aunt is also a bawd or a prostitute.

Subtle said, “Not since she kissed him in the cradle, Captain Face. I can answer your question.”

Face said to Dapper, “Well, see her grace, whatever it costs you, because of a thing that I know. Seeing her will be somewhat hard to do, but nevertheless see her. You are a made man, believe it, if you can see her. Her grace is an unmarried woman, and very rich; and if she takes a fancy to you, she will do exceptional things.”

The exceptional things could be done for — or to — Dapper. Face, however, wanted Dapper to think that the Queen of Fairy would remember him in her fairy will.

Face continued, “See her, in any case. By God’s eyelid, she may happen to leave you all she has — it is the Doctor’s fear.”

Subtle “feared” that the Queen of Fairy would make Dapper so lucky that he would win and own everything and then inherit even more from the Queen of Fairy.

Of course, fairies, if they existed, were supposed to be very long-lived, so the Queen of Fairy, if she existed, would be likely to long out-live Dapper, but greed often short-circuits anything resembling logical thinking.

“How will it be done, then?” Dapper asked.

“Leave it to me,” Face said. “Don’t you worry about it. Just say to me, ‘Captain Face, I’ll see her grace.’”

Dapper said, “Captain Face, I’ll see her grace.”

“Good enough,” Face said.

Knocking sounded at the door.

Subtle shouted at the door, “Who’s there? I’m coming.”

He said to Face, “Take Dapper out by the back way.”

He then said to Dapper, “Sir, before one o’clock prepare yourself. Until then you must fast. Put three drops of vinegar up your nose, two in your mouth, and one in each ear. Then bathe your fingers’ ends and wash your eyes, to sharpen your five senses, and cry ‘hum’ thrice and ‘buzz’ thrice, and then come here.”

He went to answer the door.

Face asked Dapper, “Can you remember what he said?”

“Yes, I promise you,” Dapper said.

“Well, then, go,” Face said. “All that is left is for you to bestow some twenty nobles among her grace’s servants.”

Twenty nobles was a considerable amount of money.

Face continued, “And put on a clean shirt. You do not know what grace her grace the Queen of Fairy may do for you if you wear clean linen.”

Fairies love cleanliness.

Face and Dapper exited.

Subtle opened the door and said to the man waiting there, “Come in!”

To the women waiting outside to consult him, he said, “Good wives, I ask that you wait. Truly, I can do nothing for you until the afternoon.”

He shut the door, and said to the man, “What is your name? Are you Abel Drugger?”

Face gathered information about the suckers and gave the information to Subtle.

“Yes, sir.”

“Are you a seller of tobacco?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Umph,” Subtle said. “Are you a Freeman of the Grocers’ Company?”

The Grocers’ Company was a guild that regulated trade in tobacco.

“Yes, if it pleases you, sir,” Abel Drugger said. He was a Freeman of the guild — a junior member who was said to have the freedom of the company.

“Well,” Subtle said, “what is your business with me, Abel?”

“This, if it pleases your worship,” Drugger said. “I am a young beginner, and I am building a business, a new shop, if it pleases your worship, just at a corner of a street.”

He showed Subtle a diagram and said, “Here is the building layout.”

He continued, “I would like to learn from your magical art, sir, from your worship, where I should put my door, from

your magical necromancy, and where I should put my shelves, and which shelves should be for boxes, and which should be for pots. I would be glad to thrive, sir, and I was recommended to your worship by a gentleman, one Captain Face, who says you know astrology and men's planets, and men's good angels, and their bad."

Today, we might say that Subtle claimed to have a knowledge of *feng shui*, which <oxforddictionaries.com> defines as "(in Chinese thought) a system of laws considered to govern spatial arrangement and orientation in relation to the flow of energy (*qi*), and whose favorable or unfavorable effects are taken into account when siting and designing buildings."

Subtle said, "I do know men's good and bad angels, if I see them —"

Face returned and said, "What! My honest Abel! You are well met here."

"Truly, sir, I was speaking, just as your worship came here, about your worship. I ask you to speak for me and give me a good recommendation to Master Doctor."

Face said to Subtle, "He shall do anything. — Doctor, do you hear me? — This is my friend, Abel. He is an honest fellow. He lets me have good tobacco, and he does not adulterate it with sack-lees or oil, nor washes it in muscadel and grains, nor buries it in gravel, underground."

Tobacco was imported, and this society had not yet discovered how to cure — preserve — it, and so the tobacco often arrived either dried out or moldy. Dried-out tobacco could be moistened with sack-lees (wine dregs) or oil or muscadel wine or grains of cardamom spice. It could also be buried in gravel, underground, so that ground water could moisten it.

Face continued, “He keeps his tobacco in fine ornamental lily pots, that, opened, smell like the perfume made from roses, or like the sweet-smelling flowers of French — broad — beans.”

Dapper’s tobacco store was a place where people could smoke, as well as buy tobacco, and so he had the necessary equipment for doing that.

Face continued, “He has his maple block, his silver tongs, Winchester pipes, and fire of juniper.”

Tobacco was shredded on a maple block, silver tongs were used to hold a burning juniper-wood coal that would light the fine pipes that came from Winchester. Juniper wood was used because it burned slowly.

Face continued, “Drugger is a neat, spruce, honest fellow, and he is no goldsmith.”

Goldsmiths engaged in banking and were usurers. Face was saying that Drugger did not overcharge for his tobacco.

By the way, saying that Drugger was no goldsmith was an in-joke. Robert Armin, who first played the role on stage, was a goldsmith’s apprentice before he became an actor.

Subtle said, “He is a fortunate fellow, that I am sure of.”

Face said, “Sir, have you found his future already? Listen, Abel!”

Subtle said, “And he is headed in the right way toward riches —”

“Sir!” Face said.

Subtle said, “This summer he will be wearing the livery of the Grocers’ Company; he will be a Liveryman, a higher rank than his current rank of Freeman.”

A Liveryman is a full member of the guild or company, and he wears special clothing to indicate that.

Subtle continued, “And next spring he will be called to wear the scarlet clothing of a Sheriff. My advice to him is this: Spend what he can.”

“Spend” can refer to spending money or time or effort. An old-fashioned definition of “spend” is to leap or spring. Subtle’s advice seems to be for Drugger to be ambitious and to expend what money and time and effort he can to leap to higher positions — positions that will lead him to his fortune. He will have to spend money and time and effort to be successful. Of course, Subtle wanted Drugger to spend much money — all he can — in tips to Subtle.

Face said, “What, and he has so little beard! He is so young!”

Subtle said, “Sir, you must be aware that he may have a recipe to make hair grow on his face, but he’ll be wise, preserve his youth, and be fine for it. He’ll also pay a fine to get out of being Sheriff. His fortune looks for him another way.”

People who were chosen to be Sheriff could get out of filling the position by paying a fine.

“Doctor, how can you know his future so quickly? I am astonished by that!”

Subtle replied, “By a rule, Captain Face, in metoposcopy — the art of reading character by looking at the forehead — which I do work by.

“Drugger has a certain star on the forehead, which you don’t see. A chestnut or olive-colored face, which Drugger has, never fails, and his long ears show he has promise.”

Star on the forehead, chestnut or olive-colored face, long ears — this sounds like a description of an ass. Some donkeys have marks resembling a star on their forehead.

Subtle continued, “I knew his future, by certain spots, too, in his teeth, and on the nail of his mercurial finger.”

“Which finger is that?” Face asked.

“His little finger,” Subtle said. “Look.”

He asked Drugger, “You were born on a Wednesday?”

“Yes, indeed, sir.”

“The thumb, in chiromancy, aka palm reading, we give to Venus,” Subtle said. “The forefinger, to Jove; the middle finger, to Saturn; the ring finger, to Sol; the little finger, to Mercury, who was the lord, sir, of his horoscope, his house of life being Libra. This foreshowed that Drugger should be a merchant, and should trade with balance.”

In astrology, the first house is the house of life. The sign of the zodiac ascending the horizon when one is born governs the first house. Whatever planet rules the sign of the zodiac is the lord of the horoscope. Drugger was a Libra, whose symbol is a pair of scales. According to Subtle, this showed that Drugger would be a businessman, since merchants weigh some things that are for sale.

Subtle said that the planet Mercury is the lord of Drugger’s horoscope; actually, the planet Venus is the lord of Drugger’s horoscope. Subtle had made the change because Mercury is the Roman god of business. (Fittingly in this case, Mercury is also the Roman god of thieves.)

“Why, this is exceptional!” Face said. “Isn’t it, honest Nab?”

“Nab” is a nickname for Abel.

Subtle said, “There is a ship now, coming from Hormus, an island in the Persian Gulf, that shall yield him such a commodity of drugs!”

He looked at the layout of Drugger’s shop. Pointing, Subtle asked him, “This is the west, and this the south?”

“Yes, sir,” Drugger replied.

“And those are your two sides?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Make your door, then, in the south; make your broad side, west. On the east side of your shop, aloft, write the names of these spirits: Mathlai, Tarmiel, and Baraborat. Upon the north side, write the names of these spirits: Rael, Velel, and Thiel. They are the names of those Mercurial spirits that will frighten away flies and keep them from getting into your boxes of tobacco.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And beneath your threshold, bury a magnet to draw in gallants who wear metal spurs. The rest of your customers will be seen to follow them.”

“Keep that a secret, Nab!” Face said. “This is your special way of gaining customers.”

Subtle said, “And, on your stall — the display-table in front of your shop — have a mechanical puppet that can be made to move by wires or levers. Also, have some makeup that is worn by the ladies at the royal court. That will draw in the city ladies; they will want to imitate the court ladies. You shall deal much with minerals.”

Drugger said, “Sir, I have at home, already —”

Subtle interrupted, “Yes, I know you have arsenic, vitriol (aka sulphuric acid), sal-tartar (aka carbonite of potash),



argol (aka tartar), alkali (aka caustic soda), and cinnabar (aka red mercuric sulphide). I know all.”

He said to Face, “This fellow, Captain, will come, in time, to be a great distiller, and he will attempt to make — I will not say he will definitely succeed, but he has a fair chance of succeeding — the philosopher’s stone.”

“Why, what you do you think about that, Abel?” Face said.

Face then asked Subtle, “Is this true?”

Subtle nodded yes.

Drugger asked, “Good Captain Face, what must I give to the cunning-man?”

“No, I’ll not advise you,” Face said. “You have heard what wealth — he advises you to spend what you can — you are likely to come to.”

Drugger said, “I would give him a crown.”

Face said, “Only a crown! And toward such a fortune? My friend, you should rather give him your shop than just a crown. Haven’t you any gold on you?”

“Yes, I have a portague, a Portuguese gold coin, that I have kept this half year,” Drugger said.

“Out with it, Nab. That’s a proper gratuity. You shall keep it no longer — I’ll give it to him for you.”

He took the coin from Drugger and said, “Doctor, Nab asks your worship to take this and buy drinks with it, and he swears that he will demonstrate more gratitude as your skill raises him in the world.”

“I would entreat another favor of his worship,” Drugger said.

“What is it, Nab?” Face asked.

“Only to look over, sir, my almanac, and cross out my unlucky days, so that I may neither bargain nor give credit on those days.”

“That he shall, Nab,” Face said. “Leave your almanac; it shall be done by this afternoon.”

Subtle said, “And I will write instructions for how to organize and stock his shelves.”

“Now, Nab,” Face said. “Are you well pleased, Nab?”

“Sir, I thank both your worships,” Druggier said.

“You may leave now,” Face said.

Druggier exited.

Face said to Subtle, “Why, now, you smoky persecutor of nature!”

As an alchemist, Subtle made a lot of fires. Alchemists are persecutors of nature because they torture base metals with fire and chemicals in their attempts to turn the base metals into silver and gold.

Face continued, “Now do you see that something’s to be done, beside your beech-coal, and your corrosive waters, your crosslets, crucibles, and cucurbites!”

All of these things were used in alchemy. Charcoal made of beech wood was very good charcoal. Corrosive waters are acids. Crosslets and crucibles are melting pots. Cucurbites are retorts, which are containers with a long downward-curving neck and a bulb at the end.

Face continued, “You must have stuff brought home to you, to work on.”

Here the “stuff” was suckers, whom it was Face’s job to find and bring to Subtle.

Face continued, “And yet you think that I am at no expense in searching out these veins, then following them, and then trying them out. Before God, I swear that my intelligence — the information I find out about suckers — costs me more money than my share of our profits often comes to in these rare works.”

Subtle said, “You are pleasant, sir.”

This meant, *I’m sure you are exaggerating.*

— 1.4 —

Doll Common entered the room.

Subtle asked, “What is it? What says my dainty Dollkin?”

Doll said, “The fishwife outside will not go away. And also waiting is your giantess, the bawd of Lambeth.”

Many criminals and prostitutes lived in Lambeth, which is south of the Thames River.

Subtle said, “Sweetheart, I cannot speak with them.”

Doll said, “Not before night, I have told them in a voice, through the speaking-tube, like one of your familiars.”

One of the tricks they engaged in was to use a speaking-tube to communicate with spirits and familiars. To the suckers, it seemed as if a disembodied voice were speaking.

Doll continued, “But I have spied Sir Epicure Mammon —”

“Where?” Subtle asked.

“Coming along, at the far end of the lane,” Doll said. “His feet were moving slowly, but his tongue was wagging quickly as he talked with a companion.”

Subtle ordered, “Face, go and change your clothes. Get out of the Captain’s uniform.”

Face exited.

Subtle said, “Doll, you must immediately get ready, too.”

“Why, what’s the matter?” Doll asked.

“Oh, I looked for Sir Epicure Mammon to show up here at dawn,” Subtle said. “I marvel that he could sleep. This is the day I am to perfect for him the magisterium, our great work, the philosopher’s stone, and yield it, once it is made, into his hands. About this stone he has, all this month, talked as if he were possessed.”

“Possessed” meant both “in possession of something” and “possessed by spirits, aka insane.”

Subtle continued, “He keeps thinking about what he will do with it once he has it. In his imagination he’s dealing pieces of the philosopher’s stone away.”

Some people believed that powdered philosopher’s stone could be mixed into a drink that would cure diseases and make old people young. This was known as the elixir of life. Some people even thought that drinking it made one immortal.

Of course, the philosopher’s stone doesn’t exist, and so ideas about it varied. Some people thought that the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life were two separate things and that powdered philosopher’s stone was not part of the elixir of life.

Subtle continued, “I think I see him entering inns and dispensing the cure for venereal diseases, and entering houses infected with the plague and handing out his cure, walking Moorfields to find the lepers there, and offering citizens’ wives pomander bracelets.”

Pomander bracelets are bracelets with balls containing aromatic substances, or bracelets made of aromatic paste,

and they were thought to ward off the plague. The pomander bracelets would contain some of the elixir — Sir Epicure Mammon believed that smelling it would offer immunity to the plague.

Subtle continued, “He will search the charity houses for the indigent and the diseased in order to make bawds young again, and he will search the highways for beggars to make rich.

“I see no end of his labors. He will make Nature ashamed of her long sleep when Art, who’s only a stepmother, shall do more than Nature, in her best love to Humankind, ever could.”

Art includes alchemy. If alchemy can produce the philosopher’s stone and the elixir of life, then Art can cure Humankind of diseases that come from Nature.

Stepmothers had the reputation of being less kind to children than mothers are.

Subtle continued, “If his dream lasts, he’ll turn the age to gold. This will be a Golden Age.”

Sir Epicure Mammon had done a lot of talking to Subtle about what he would do with the philosopher’s stone. That talk was all about philanthropy.

We shall see if all his desires are philanthropic.

## ACT 2 (*The Alchemist*)

### — 2.1 —

Sir Epicure Mammon and Pertinax Surly were talking together in a room in Lovewit's house.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, "Come on, sir. Now, you set your foot on shore in *Novo Orbe*, the rich New World. This room is the rich Peru. And there within, sir, are the golden mines, Great Solomon's Ophir! He was sailing to it, three years, but we have reached it in ten months."

To Sir Epicure Mammon, Lovewit's house was the New World, source of riches. He believed that he would soon have the philosopher's stone and he would be very rich. He believed, along with many others, that Solomon, son of King David, got his vast wealth from possession of the philosopher's stone. The gold was made in Ophir, and every three years a fleet of ships brought gold to him.

1 Kings 10:22 states, "*For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks*" (King James Bible).

Apparently, for ten months, Sir Epicure Mammon had been giving money to Subtle the alchemist to create a philosopher's stone for him.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, "This is the day, wherein, to all my friends, I will pronounce these happy words: BE RICH; THIS DAY YOU SHALL BE *SPECTATISSIMI*."

The Latin word "*SPECTATISSIMI*" means "regarded as very special, very much looked up to."

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, as if he were speaking to all his friends, "You shall no more deal with the hollow die, or the frail card."

A hollow die is a loaded die; “die” is the singular of dice. The die would be hollowed out and then filled with lead so that a certain number would be more likely to come up. A frail card is a card that is easily broken. Here it is a playing card that can be easily marked. Sir Epicure Mammon was saying that his friends would no longer have to cheat at gambling in order to make money.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “You shall no more be in charge of keeping the livery-punk for the young heir, who must sign and seal a contract, at all hours, in his shirt. No more, if he denies having signed and sealed the contract, will you have to have him beaten until he admits having signed and sealed the contract — just as the young heir shall be sure to beat the person who brings him the commodity.”

This was another unethical way to make money. A livery-punk is a prostitute kept under contract. The prostitute would find a young heir to sleep with, the couple would be interrupted in their lovemaking, and the young heir would be induced to sign a contract before he could go back to his lovemaking. The contract could be a form of blackmail so that his indiscretion would not be revealed. The contract would be for a loan, but only part of the loan was given to the young heir in cash money. The rest was given to the young heir in much-overvalued commodities. For example, the contract might be for a loan of one hundred pounds: thirty pounds in money and seventy pounds in a commodity such as lute-strings, but the lute-strings would be worth much less than seventy pounds. Such a scam was highly profitable.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “No more shall the thirst for satin or the covetous hunger for a velvet lining for a rude-spun cloak, which would be displayed at Madam Augusta’s brothel, either make the sons of sword and hazard fall before the golden calf, and on their knees, whole nights, commit

idolatry with wine and trumpets, or go a-feasting after drum and ensign.”

In other words, no more shall greed for fancy clothing and visits to brothels make gambling soldiers (“the sons of sword and hazard”) worship the golden calf, aka commit the idolatry of worshipping money. They won’t be tempted to drink and carouse and gamble — perhaps by playing craps while kneeling — in gambling places all night, and they won’t have to get their feasts by following the drum and battle flag. Instead, they will already have the money for prostitutes and feasts.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “There shall be no more of this. You shall beget young viceroys, and have your punks, and punketees, my Surly.”

A viceroy rules a province on behalf of a King. Punks are prostitutes, and punketees are young prostitutes.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “And unto you I speak it first, BE RICH.”

He then said, “Where is my Subtle, there! Within, ho!”

Face, from inside the door, said, “Sir, he’ll come to you soon.”

Recognizing Face’s voice, Sir Epicure Mammon said, “That is Subtle’s fire-drake, his Lungs, his Zephyrus, his servant who puffs his coals until he firk nature up, in her own center.”

A fire-drake is literally a fiery dragon, which was thought to be able to live in fire; metaphorically, it is the alchemist’s assistant who uses bellows to make fires burn. “Lungs” is a nickname for an alchemist’s assistant. Zephyrus is the west wind. To “firk” is to stir up.



Sir Epicure Mammon said to Surly, “You have no belief in alchemy, sir. But tonight, I’ll change all that is metal in my house to gold, and early in the morning, I will send people to all the plumbers and the pewterers and buy up their tin and lead, and I will send people to Lothbury to buy up all the copper there.”

Surly said, “What, and turn that into gold, too?”

“Yes, and I’ll purchase the tin and copper mines in Devonshire and Cornwall and make them perfect Indies! I will make them gold mines!”

The Indies were thought to be rich in gold.

Sir Epicure Mammon asked Surly, “Do you marvel now?”

“No, truly I do not.”

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “But when you see the effects of the great medicine, aka philosopher’s stone, of which one part projected on a hundred parts of Mercury (aka quicksilver), or Venus (aka copper), or the Moon (aka silver), shall turn them to as many of the Sun (aka gold). Nay, to a thousand, and so on *ad infinitum* (aka to infinity), then you will believe me.”

A small amount of the philosopher’s stone was believed to change much base metal into gold.

Surly said, “Yes, when I see it, I will believe it. But if my eyes con me into seeing that without me giving them a good reason to do so — such as drinking way too much — I will be sure to have a whore piss on them the following day and put them out.”

Urine is usually acidic and can irritate the eyes. By the way, piss is one kind of golden shower.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Do you think I am telling fables to you? I assure you that a man who has once the flower of the Sun, the perfect ruby, which we call elixir — all of these are synonyms for the philosopher’s stone — not only can do that, but by the stone’s virtue and strength, can confer honor, love, respect, and long life and can give safety, valor, yes, and victory, to whomever he will. In just twenty-eight days, I’ll make an old man of eighty a child again.”

“No doubt; he’s that already,” Surly said. “A man of that age is in his second childhood.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “No, I don’t mean senility. I mean that I will restore his years and renew him, like an eagle, to the fifth age.”

This is part of Psalms 103:5: “*thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s*” (King James Version).

Some people believed that eagles renewed their youth by flying high up into the fiery region, plunging into the ocean, and then molting their feathers.

The fifth age is mature manhood.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “Drinking the elixir of life will make the once-old man beget sons and daughters — young giants — as our philosophers the ancient patriarchs have done before the great flood.”

Many of the patriarchs were long-lived, according to the Bible. This is Genesis 5:1-8 (King James Bible)

*1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;*

*2 Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.*

*3 And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image; and called his name Seth:*

*4 And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters:*

*5 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.*

*6 And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos:*

*7 And Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters:*

*8 And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.*

According to the alchemists, Adam and the other patriarchs had possession of the philosopher's stone.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, "Just by taking, once a week, on a knife's point, the quantity of a grain of mustard of the philosopher's stone, they became as magnificent as Mars, god of war, and like Mars, they begot young Cupids."

Cupid was the result of an adulterous affair between Mars and Venus.

Surly said, "The decayed vestals of Pict Hatch would thank you. They keep the fire alive, there."

Pict Hatch was a neighborhood of thieves and prostitutes. In classical antiquity, vestal virgins would tend the fire of a temple. The "decayed vestals of Pict Hatch" are shagged-out prostitutes who tend the fire of syphilis and keep it alive. Syphilis causes a burning sensation during urination.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, "The elixir of life is the secret of nature naturized against all infections. It cures all diseases that come from all causes. It can cure a month's

suffering in a day, a year's suffering in twelve days, and an even longer suffering, no matter how much longer, in a month. It surpasses all the medicinal doses of your drugging doctors. Once I have possession of the philosopher's stone, I'll undertake, moreover, to frighten the plague out of the Kingdom of England in three months."

Surly said, "And I'll be bound that the players shall sing your praises, then, without their poets."

The players are theatrical actors. Whenever deaths from the plague exceeded forty per week, the theaters were forced to shut down. The actors would praise Sir Epicure Mammon for making it possible for them to keep the theaters open, and they would do it *ex tempore* without the need for playwrights to write the words for them.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, "Sir, I'll do it. In the meantime, I'll give so much preservative to my servant that it shall serve the whole city. Each week, each house shall receive a dose, and at the rate —"

Surly interrupted, "As he who built the waterworks does with water!"

In 1582, Peter Moris built a pump-house to deliver, for a fee, water from the Thames River to private houses, and in 1594, Bevis Bulmer built a second pump-house for the same purpose. In 1610, a new aqueduct was under construction.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, "You are incredulous. You don't believe me."

Surly said, "Indeed, my character is such that I would not willingly be gulled, aka cheated. Your stone cannot transmute me. It cannot change my character."

Sir Epicure Mammon said, "Pertinax Surly, will you believe antiquity? Will you believe records? I'll show you a book

where Moses and his sister and Solomon have written of the alchemical art. Yes, and I will show you a treatise penned by Adam.”

“Pertinax” means “stubborn.”

Some people believed that Adam, the first man, was also the first alchemist. Some people mistakenly conflated Miriam, the sister of the Biblical Moses, with Mary the Jewess, an alchemist who lived in the third century C.E. Some people thought that the Song of Solomon was a coded alchemical text.

“What!” Surly said.

“Adam wrote a treatise on the philosopher’s stone, and in High Dutch.”

Today, we call High Dutch High German.

Surly asked, “Did Adam write, sir, in High Dutch?”

“He did, which proves it was the primitive tongue.”

In 1569, Johannes Goropius Becanus wrote *Origines Antwerpianae*. In it, he stated that Adam and Eve spoke High Dutch in the Garden of Eden.

Surly asked, “What paper did Adam write on?”

“He wrote on cedar board.”

Surly asked, “Oh, that, indeed, they say, will last against worms.”

Cedar is a long-lasting wood that is resistant to rotting.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “It is like your Irish wood is against cobwebs.”

Saint Patrick was said to have blessed Irish wood by giving it protection against spiders.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “I have a piece of Jason’s fleece, too, which was no other than a book of alchemy, written on a large sheepskin, a good fat ram-vellum.”

Jason and the Argonauts sailed to acquire the Golden Fleece, which alchemists believed to have a book of alchemy written on the skin side.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Such was Pythagoras’ thigh and Pandora’s tub, or box.”

Some people thought that Pythagoras, best known today for his Pythagorean theorem (the square of the hypotenuse — which is the side opposite the right angle — is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides), had a thigh made of gold.

Some people thought that Pandora’s box, in which were the evils that afflict Humankind, was either made of gold or contained the secret of creating the philosopher’s stone.

The alchemists believed that much ancient history contained references to alchemy. For example, Sir Epicure Mammon will now tell Surly that Jason’s quest for the golden fleece is an allegory for an alchemist’s quest for the philosopher’s stone.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Such was all that fable of Medea’s charms; it explained the manner of our work.”

Jason and the Argonauts sailed to Colchis, which was on the shore of the Black Sea. There, the young witch Medea fell in love with Jason and helped him acquire the golden fleece. Jason first used fire-breathing oxen to plow a field, and then he sowed it with dragon’s teeth. Armed warriors grew from the dragon’s teeth. Medea had told Jason to throw a stone into the midst of the warriors. Not knowing where the stone had come from, the warriors fought and killed each other. Jason then went to the tree on which hung the golden fleece.

A dragon guarded the golden fleece, but Medea gave Jason a potion that put the dragon to sleep.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “In the allegorical fable the fire-breathing bulls represent the alchemical furnace, which continually breathes fire.

“The dragon represents the alchemical *argent vive*, which is quicksilver and which is symbolized by a dragon in alchemical texts.”

*Argent vive* is Latin for “living silver.”

He continued, “The dragon’s teeth represent mercury sublimate, aka chloride of mercury, that keeps the whiteness, hardness, and the biting.

“And the dragon’s teeth are gathered into Jason’s helm, aka helmet, which represents the alchemical piece of equipment known as the alembic (the upper part of the distilling apparatus), and then sowed in Mars’ field (another piece of alchemical equipment: an iron vessel; Mars was the god of iron) and thence sublimed (refined) so often until they’re fixed (solid and stabilized).

“The story of Jason’s quest for the golden fleece, the Hesperian garden, Cadmus’ story, Jove’s shower, the boon of Midas, Argus’ eyes, Giovanni Boccaccio’s Demogorgon, and thousands more stories are all abstract allegories about the philosopher’s stone.”

The Hesperides, who are nymphs of the evening, had a garden in which golden apples, guarded by a dragon, grew. One of Hercules’ famous labors was to get possession of these golden apples.

Cadmus sowed a field with dragon’s teeth. Armed warriors grew from the teeth, and then Cadmus fought them until only

five were left alive. Cadmus and those five warriors founded the city of Thebes.

King Midas of Phrygia asked for and received a gift from the god Bacchus: Anything he touched would turn to gold.

Jove appeared before the mortal Danaë in a shower of gold in order to have sex with her.

Argus was a giant with one hundred eyes.

The Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio wrote in his *De Genealogia Deorum (On the Genealogy of the Gods)* that Demogorgon was the origin of all things.

— 2.2 —

Face, wearing the clothing of an alchemist's assistant, entered the room. His face was bearded and sooty.

“What is it?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked. “Do we succeed? Has our day come? How is it going?”

Face said, “The evening will set red upon you, sir. You have color for it: crimson. The red ferment has done its work. Three hours from now you will see projection — the final part of the process. You will see the philosopher's stone.”

People believed that the philosopher's stone was red.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Pertinax, my Surly, again I say to you, out loud, BE RICH. This day, you shall have ingots of precious metal, and, tomorrow, you shall insult proud lords by looking them directly in the face rather than being obsequious to them.”

He said to Face, “Is it, my Zephyrus, right? Does the bolt's-head flask blush red?”



Zephyrus is the west wind; Sir Epicure Mammon used the word as a new nickname for Face, aka Lungs, who used bellows to keep the fire at the right temperature.

Face replied, “It blushes like a wench, sir, whose pregnancy was just now revealed to her master.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Excellent, witty Lungs!”

He added, “My only care is where to get enough base metal now to project on and turn to gold. This town will not half serve me.”

“It won’t, sir?” Face said. “Then buy the covering off of churches. Their roofs are made of lead.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “That’s true.”

“Yes,” Face said. “Let the churches stand bare-headed, as do their congregations, or cap them — give them a new roof — with wooden shingles.”

“No, good thatch,” Sir Epicure Mammon said. “Thatch will lie light upon the rafters, Lungs.”

With all his wealth, he wanted to re-roof the church with inexpensive thatch — a fire hazard. In 1613, the Globe Theater burned down after its thatch roof caught on fire.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Lungs, I will free you from the furnace, I will restore your complexion to you, Puff — your complexion that you lost in the embers — and I will repair this brain of yours that has been hurt by the fumes of the metals.”

Alchemists’ assistants tended to have wan complexions.

Face said, “I have blown the bellows, sir, hard for your worship. I have thrown to the side many a coal when it was not beech wood, which is needed to create a steady

temperature. I have exactly weighed those I put in, in order to keep the heat of the fire always even.

“These bleared eyes of mine have waked to read the several colors, sir, of the creation of the philosopher’s stone.

“These bleared eyes of mine have seen the pale citron: yellow.

“These bleared eyes of mine have seen the green lion: green.

“These bleared eyes of mine have seen the crow: black.

“These bleared eyes of mine have seen the peacock’s tail: multi-colored.

“These bleared eyes of mine have seen the plumed swan: white.”

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, “And, finally, you have descried the flower, the *sanguis agni*: red?”

“*Sanguis agni*” is Latin for “blood of the lamb.” Red is the color seen in the last stage of creating the philosopher’s stone.

“Yes, sir,” Face said.

“Where’s your master?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

“He’s at his prayers, sir,” Face replied. “Good man that he is, he’s doing his devotions for the success of this project.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Lungs, I will set an end to all your current labors. You shall be the master of my seraglio — my harem.”

“Good, sir,” Face said.

“But do you hear? I’ll geld you, Lungs,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

In order to prevent Face, aka Lungs, from having sex with any of the women in Sir Epicure Mammon's harem, Sir Epicure Mammon would castrate him.

He added, "For I intend to have a list of wives and concubines equal with those of Solomon, who had the philosopher's stone as will I."

1 Kings 11:1-3 states this:

*1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites:*

*2 Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.*

*3 And he had seven hundred wives, Princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.*

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, "And with the use of the elixir of life, I will make my back as tough as the back of Hercules, in order to sleep with fifty women a night."

According to mythology, Hercules had sex with and impregnated the fifty daughters of King Thespius in a single night. (Some sources say only forty-nine of the fifty daughters.)

Sir Epicure Mammon then asked, "You are sure you saw the color of blood?"

"Both blood and spirit, sir," Face said. "I saw both the correct color and the correct quality."

Sir Epicure Mammon said, "I will have all my beds blown up with air, not stuffed. Down is too hard. And I will then

have my room filled with such pictures as Tiberius took from Elephantis, and dull Aretine only coldly imitated.”

The Roman Emperor Tiberius had paintings illustrating passages from Elephantis’ pornographic books, and Aretine wrote erotic poems imitating such passages and pictures. Sir Epicure Mammon believed that Aretine’s erotic poetry was dull; it could not compete with his own erotic daydreams.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “Then I will have my mirrors cut in more subtle angles to disperse and multiply the figures, as I walk naked between my succubae.”

Succubae are demons who take the form of women and have sex with men. The word is also used for sluts and prostitutes, but Sir Epicure Mammon may very well have wanted to have sex with female demons.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “I’ll have built a mechanism that will spray perfume into the air of the room so that we can lose ourselves in it, and my baths will be big like pits to fall into. From these my succubae and I will come forth and roll ourselves dry in gossamer and roses.”

He asked Face, “Is it arrived at ruby-red?”

Without waiting for a reply, he continued, “Where I spy a wealthy citizen, or a rich lawyer who has a sublime, pure wife, to that fellow I’ll send a thousand pounds for him to be my cuckold.”

Face, who was interested in money, asked, “And shall I carry it to him?”

Sir Epicure Mammon replied, “No. I’ll have no bawds except fathers and mothers. They will do it best, better than all others.”

He wanted fathers and mothers to be bawds and sell their daughters to satisfy his lust.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “And my flatterers shall be the purest and gravest of divines that I can get for money. My mere Fools shall be eloquent Members of Parliament, and then my poets will be the same who wrote so subtly of the fart — I will employ them to write about that subject.”

In 1607, Sir Henry Ludlow, Member of Parliament, loudly and famously farted during a session of the House of Commons: It was his commentary on a message from the House of Lords.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “There are a few men who would give out themselves to be studs at court and in town and everywhere. These men tell lies about ladies who are known to be very innocent of any sexual contact with these braggarts. These men I will hire and I will make them eunuchs. And they shall fan me with ten ostrich tails apiece — tails gathered in a plume to create wind when waved.”

Using another nickname for Face, he continued, “We will be brave, Puff, once we have the medicine, the Philosopher’s Stone.

“My food shall all come in, in Indian shells, dishes of agate set in gold, and studded with emeralds, sapphires, the precious stones known as hyacinths, and rubies.

“I will eat the tongues of carps, dormice, and camels’ heels, boiled in a distillate of gold, and dissolved pearl — Apicius’ diet, against the epilepsy.”

Apicius was a Roman glutton who spent his fortune on food and then committed suicide. As protection against the plague (not epilepsy, as Sir Epicure Mammon had stated), he ate such foods as camels’ heels.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “And I will eat these broths with spoons of amber that are decorated with diamond and carbuncle.

“My footboy shall eat pheasants, calvered salmons, knots, godwits, and lamprey eels.”

Calvered salmons are salmon that have been sliced up while still alive. Sir Epicure Mammon was willing for this to happen if it would make a good dish for his footboy to eat.

Knots and godwits are species of birds.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “I myself will eat the beards of barbels served, instead of salads.”

The “beards of barbels” are fleshy filaments of a species of fish. They hang from the fish’s mouth and look like beards.

He continued, “I will eat oiled mushrooms, and I will eat the swelling unctuous paps of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off and dressed with an exquisite and poignant sauce.”

According to the Roman historian Pliny, a sow’s paps tasted best when cooked after the sow had given birth but before it had suckled its piglets. Sir Epicure Mammon was willing for this to happen if it would make a good dish for him to eat.

He continued, “For which, I’ll say to my cook, ‘There’s gold for you; go forth, and be a Knight.’”

In the reign of King James I, people could purchase Knighthoods.

Face said, “Sir, I’ll go look a little, and see how the alchemical process is going and how the color heightens.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Do.”

Face exited.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “My shirts I’ll have made of the fine silk cloth known as taffeta-sarsnet, which is as soft and light as cobwebs, and as for all my other raiment, it shall be

such as might provoke the Persian, if he were to teach the world about riotous and dissipated behavior again.”

The Persian is Sardanapalus, a King of Ninevah who was renowned for luxurious living.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “My gloves will be made of fishes’ and birds’ skins, perfumed with gums of paradise, and eastern air —”

“Gums of paradise” are perfumes from the Middle East, where people believed the Garden of Eden was located.

Surly asked, “And do you think to have the philosopher’s stone with all this?”

Sir Epicure Mammon replied, “No, but I do think to have all this with the philosopher’s stone.”

Surly said, “Why, I have heard, the man who gets the philosopher’s stone must be *homo frugi* — a frugal man, an honest and temperate man, a pious and holy and religious man, a man free from mortal sin, and a man who is a complete virgin.”

Sir Epicure Mammon replied, “The man who makes the philosopher’s stone must be such a man, sir, but I am buying, not making, it. My investment brings it to me. Subtle the alchemist is an honest wretch; he is a notable, superstitious-in-the-sense-of-believing-religion, good soul. He has worn his knees bare and his slippers bald by praying and fasting for the philosopher’s stone, and, sir, let him do it alone, for me, always.”

Seeing Subtle entering the room, Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Here he comes. Don’t say a profane word in front of him; it is poison.”

This was the day the philosopher's stone was supposed to be completed. Of course, it would not be completed because no such thing as a philosopher's stone exists or ever will exist. Therefore, Subtle and Face and Doll Common needed to prepare Sir Epicure Mammon for the inevitable failure that would become apparent later. They already knew the excuse they would use, but they had to prepare Sir Epicure Mammon to accept that excuse.

Subtle and Face also needed to keep Sir Epicure Mammon believing in alchemy. They did that by using many alchemical terms as they talked about “creating” the philosopher's stone. Basically, this was to appear knowledgeable about alchemy and to baffle Sir Epicure Mammon with bullshit.

Much alchemy was about uniting materials, materials often referred to as male and female. In fact, one piece of alchemical equipment — the bolt's-head flask — was often decorated with illustrations of copulating couples. The alchemist, however, was supposed to be pure and neither greedy nor immorally horny. Purity was important in the production of the philosopher's stone.

Sir Epicure Mammon said to Subtle the alchemist, “Good morning, father.”

He was addressing Subtle as if he were a priest — a religious father.

Picking up on that, Subtle said, “Gentle son, good morning, and good morning to your friend there. Who is this man who is with you?”

“He is a heretic, whom I brought along with me in hopes, sir, to convert him,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.



Subtle said, “Son, I fear that you are covetous because thus you meet your time in the just point — you are punctual, or actually, more than punctual. This is the day the philosopher’s stone will be completed, but you have some hours before its completion. You anticipate the success that will occur late in the day by appearing here in the morning. This is evidence that makes me fear that you have a burdensome, unrelenting, and carnal appetite.

“Be careful so that you do not cause the blessing of the philosopher’s stone to leave you on account of your ungoverned haste.”

Earlier, Pertinax Surly had stated that the person who got the philosopher’s stone was supposed to be a man of temperance. Such things as greed and lust could cause failure in the attempt to make a philosopher’s stone. Greed could appear in haste to complete the making of the philosopher’s stone.

Subtle continued, “I would be sorry to see my labors, which are now at the point of perfection, got by staying awake and watching long hours during the night and by much patience, not prosper where my love and zeal has placed them.

“My labors in all aims — I call on Heaven along with yourself, to whom I have poured my thoughts, to witness that what I say is true — have looked no way but to the public good, to pious uses, and to dear charity, which men these days regard as an abnormality.

“Regarding my labors in creating the philosopher’s stone, I say that if you, my son, should now prevaricate and wander from the straight and narrow path of virtue, and to your own particular and personal lusts employ so great and catholic, aka universal, a bliss, be sure that a curse will follow, yes, and overtake and strike a blow against your subtle and most secret ways.”

“I know that, sir,” Sir Epicure Mammon said. “You shall not need to fear me. I have come so early only to have you prove this gentleman wrong in his opinion that alchemy is worthless.”

Surly said, “I am, indeed, sir, somewhat constipative when it comes to producing belief in your philosopher’s stone. I am a man who does not want to be gulled.”

Given his choice of words, Surly regarded belief in the philosopher’s stone as shit.

Subtle said to Sir Epicure Mammon, “Well, son, all that I can convince your friend in is this: THE WORK IS DONE. Bright sol is in his robe — the essence of gold is ready to do its work, just as a judge is who has put on his robe. We have a medicine of the triple soul, the glorified spirit. Thanks be to Heaven, and may Heaven make us worthy of it!”

By “triple soul,” Subtle may have meant the three spirits (vital, a spirit produced in the heart; natural, a spirit produced in the liver; and animal, a spirit produced in the brain) that linked soul to body.

Subtle called for Face, “Ulen Spiegel!”

Till Eulenspiegel is a German trickster figure. By calling Face Ulen Spiegel, Subtle was subtly acknowledging Face as a con man.

Face entered the room and said, “At once, sir!”

Now Subtle and Face began to pile on the alchemical jargon to baffle their visitors with bullshit.

Subtle ordered, “Look well to the register, and let your heat still lessen by degrees, to the aludels.”

Face said, “Yes, sir.”

Subtle and Face began to make it appear that they were running simultaneous operations by using letters to refer to different apparatus.

“Did you look at the bolt’s-head yet?”

“On which apparatus? On D, sir?”

Subtle replied, “Yes. What’s the complexion?”

Face said, “Whitish.”

“Infuse vinegar, to draw the volatile substance and the tincture, and let the water in glass E be filtered, and put into the gripe’s egg. Lute it well, and leave it closed in balneo.”

“I will, sir.”

Surly said to himself, “What a brave, splendid language is being used here! It’s next to canting.”

“Canting” is using jargon used by thieves; “cant” is thieves’ jargon. Surly meant that the alchemical terms were at least close to being thieves’ terms.

Subtle said to Sir Epicure Mammon, “I have another work going on, son, that you have never seen. Three days since past the philosopher’s wheel, in the lent heat of Athanor this work has become the Sulphur of Nature.”

The Sulphur of Nature is purified sulphur.

“Is it for me?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

“What do you need it for?” Subtle asked. “You have enough in that philosopher’s stone, which is perfect.”

“Oh, but —”

Subtle said, “Why, this is covetousness!”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “No, I assure you that I shall employ it all in pious uses. I will found colleges and grammar schools. I will marry young virgins. I will build hospitals, and now and then a church.”

He probably meant for Subtle to think that he — Sir Epicure Mammon — would get young virgins married by providing dowries for them, but readers can be forgiven if they thought that Sir Epicure Mammon would “marry” young virgins for one night and discard them the following morning.

Face returned.

“What is it?” Subtle asked.

Face said, “Sir, if it pleases you, shall I not change the filter?”

“By the Virgin Mary, yes. And bring me the complexion of glass B.”

Face exited.

“Have you another?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

He was asking if they were making a second philosopher’s stone.

Subtle replied, “Yes, son. If I were sure that your piety is firm, we would not lack the means to glorify it, but I hope the best. I mean to tinct C in a bath of sand to diffuse the heat tomorrow, and give it imbibition.”

Sir Epicure Mammon, who had been around Subtle the alchemist long enough to recognize some of the alchemical terms, asked, “Of white oil?”

“No, sir, of red,” Subtle said. “F is come over the helm, too, I thank my maker, in Saint Mary’s bath, and shows *lac virginis*. Blessed be Heaven!”

“*Lac virginis* is Latin for “milk of the virgin.” Alchemists used it to refer to mercury.

Subtle continued, “I sent you of his sediment there calcined. Out of that calx, I have won the salt of mercury.”

“By pouring on your rectified water?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

“Yes,” Subtle replied, “and reverberating in Athanor.”

Face returned.

“What’s the news?” Subtle asked. “What color is it?”

“The ground is black, sir,” Face said.

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, “That’s your crow’s head?”

Surly said to himself, “Your cockscomb, is it not?”

Some professional Fools wore a hat resembling a cockscomb.

Subtle said to Sir Epicure Mammon, “No, it is not perfect. I wish it were the crow! That work lacks something.”

Surly said to himself, “Oh, I looked for this.”

He knew that Subtle and Face were con men and would not be able to produce the philosopher’s stone. He figured that they would say that something had gone wrong in their attempt to make the philosopher’s stone.

Surly said to himself, “The hay’s a pitching.”

A rabbit’s burrow has two holes, two ways to enter and exit. Trappers would pitch (throw) a hay (net) over one of burrow holes and send a ferret down the other hole. To escape the ferret, the rabbit would come out of the hole and be caught in the net. Surly believed that Subtle and Face were preparing a trap for Sir Epicure Mammon.

Subtle asked Face, “Are you sure you loosed them in their own menstrue!”

Face replied, “Yes, sir, and then married them, and put them in a bolt’s-head nipped to digestion, according as you bade me, when I set the liquor of Mars to circulation in the same heat.”

Bolt’s-head flasks can be connected to other pieces of equipment. Marriage was an important concept in alchemy and referred to union of pieces of equipment or to union of materials in a flask.

Subtle said, “The process then was right.”

Face replied, “Yes, by the token, sir, the retort broke, and what was saved was put into the pelican, and signed with Hermes’ seal.”

The pelican is a distilling flask with a neck that curves down and joins to itself. It is called a pelican because people thought it resembled a pelican biting itself. People at this time thought that pelicans bit themselves to draw blood to feed their young.

Instead of saying “Hermes’ seal,” we now say “hermetically sealed.”

Subtle said, “I think it was right. We should have a new amalgama.”

Surly said to himself, “Oh, this ferret is as rank and stinky as any polecat.”

Subtle added, “But I don’t care. Let it even die; we have enough besides in embrion. H has its white shirt on?”

“In embrion” means “in the early stages.”

“Has its white shirt on” means “has turned white.”

“Yes, sir,” Face said. “It’s ripe for inceration; it stands warm in its ash-fire. I wish that you wouldn’t let any die now, if I might counsel you, sir, for luck’s sake to the rest. Letting some die is not good.”

“He says the right thing,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

Surly said to himself, “Have you — Sir Epicure Mammon — bolted from your burrow and been caught in the net?”

Face said, “I know it, sir. I have seen the ill fortune that comes from letting some of it die. What we need is some three ounces of fresh materials.”

“No more than that?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

“No more, sir,” Face said. “We need three more ounces of gold to amalgame with some six ounces of mercury.”

“Go and get the materials,” Sir Epicure Mammon said. “How much money do you need?”

“Ask him, sir,” Face said.

Sir Epicure Mammon asked Subtle, “How much?”

“Give him nine pounds,” Subtle said. “No, you better give him ten.”

Surly said to himself, “Yes, give him twenty pounds, and you’ll be cheated, if you do.”

“There it is,” Sir Epicure Mammon said, giving Face the money.

“This is not necessary,” Subtle said, “except that you will have it so, so that you can see the conclusions of all of it: You don’t want to see any of it die.”

He paused and then added, “Two of our inferior works are at fixation, but a third is in ascension.”

As Face knew, he was referring to Dapper and Drugger as the inferior works; they were small fish — and suckers — in comparison to Sir Epicure Mammon, who was the man they were making the most money from.

Subtle then said to Face, “Go,” but he added, “Have you set the oil of luna in kemia?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And the philosopher’s vinegar?”

“Yes,” Face said, and then he exited.

Hearing the references to oil and vinegar, Surly said to himself, “We shall have a salad!”

He was punning. He knew something about alchemy, which is why he knew it is a scam, and he knew that “salad” was a real alchemical term referring to a mixture of certain materials.

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, “When do you make projection?”

Subtle replied, “Son, don’t be hasty. I exalt our medicine, by hanging him in *balneo vaporoso*, and giving him solution, and then congeal him, and then dissolve him, and then again congeal him.”

*Balneo vaporoso* is a steam bath in which Subtle would suspend a glass flask.

Subtle continued, “For look, as often as I iterate the work, so many times I add to the philosopher stone’s virtue and strength.”

He was referring to multiplication, which is refining the philosopher’s stone to increase its potency so that a little of the philosopher’s stone will turn a vast quantity of base metal



into gold. Multiplication involved, in part, what alchemists referred to “solution.”

Subtle continued, “As, if after one solution one ounce of the philosopher’s stone will convert a hundred ounces of base metal into gold or silver, after its second solution one ounce of the philosopher’s stone will convert a thousand ounces of base metal into gold or silver.

“After its third solution, one ounce of the philosopher’s stone will convert ten thousand ounces of base metal into gold or silver.

“After its fourth solution, one ounce of the philosopher’s stone will convert a hundred thousand ounces of base metal into gold or silver.

“After its fifth solution, one ounce of the philosopher’s stone will convert a thousand thousand ounces of base metal into gold or silver.

“This will be pure gold or silver, as will be shown by all examinations; it will be as good as the gold or silver that comes out of a natural mine.

“Bring your metal stuff here in preparation for this afternoon so that it can be turned into precious metals. Bring here your brass, your pewter, and your andirons.”

Andirons hold the burning logs in a fireplace.

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, “Not those of iron?”

“Yes, you may bring them, too,” Subtle said. “We’ll change all kinds of base metals.”

Sir Epicure Mammon thought that Subtle would change all kinds of base metals into gold or silver.

Surly said to himself, “I believe you when you say that.”

Surly believed that Subtle would change possession of all kinds of base metals from Sir Epicure Mammon to Subtle.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Then may I send my spits?”

Subtle replied, “Yes, and your racks.”

Racks support the spits when they are used for roasting meat.

Surly asked, “And shall he bring dripping-pans, and pot-hangers, and hooks?”

Subtle replied, “If he pleases —”

Surly interrupted, “— to be an ass.”

“What do you mean, sir?” Subtle asked.

Sir Epicure Mammon said to Subtle, “You must bear with this gentleman. I told you he had no faith.”

“And little hope, sir,” Surly said. “But much less charity, if I should gull and deceive myself.”

1 Corinthians 13:13 states, “*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity*” (King James Bible).

Subtle asked Surly, “Why, what have you observed, sir, in our art of alchemy, that seems so impossible?”

Surly replied, “Only your whole work of alchemy, no more. That you should hatch gold in a furnace, sir, just like they hatch eggs in a furnace in Egypt!”

According to the Roman historian Pliny, eggs were incubated in Egypt.

Subtle asked Surly, “Sir, do you believe that eggs are hatched so?”

“What if I do?” Surly asked.

Subtle replied, “Why, I think that the greater miracle is a chicken being produced from — hatching out of — an egg. The lesser miracle is gold being produced from a base metal. An egg is much more different from a chicken than lead is from gold.”

“That cannot be,” Surly said. “The egg’s ordained by nature to that end; the egg is a chicken *in potentia*.”

“*In potentia*” is Latin for “potentially.”

Subtle said, “We alchemists say the same thing about lead and other metals: They would become gold, if they had enough time.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “The art of alchemy is to speed that process up; alchemists change lead into gold much more quickly than it happens naturally.”

Subtle said, “That is true. It would be absurd to think that nature bred perfect gold in the earth in an instant. Gold did not come from nothing. Something existed before gold. Remote matter must have existed.”

According to alchemy, remote matter is what came before gold and everything else. Remote matter is the original indeterminate matter and/or essence from which everything else developed.

Surly asked, “What is that?”

Subtle began, “Indeed, we alchemists say —”

Sir Epicure Mammon interrupted, “— now it heats. Stand, father, pound him to dust.”

Subtle continued, using much alchemical jargon, “It is, of the one part, a humid exhalation, which we call *materia liquida*, or the unctuous water.”

“*Materia liquida*” is Latin for “liquid matter.”

Subtle continued, “On the other part, a certain crass and viscous portion of earth; both which, concorporate, do make the elementary matter of gold, which is not yet *propria materia*, but is common to all metals and all stones.”

“Concorporate” means “united in one body.”

“*Propria material*” is Latin for “a particular substance.”

Subtle continued, “For, where it is forsaken of that moisture, and has more dryness, it becomes a stone.

“Where it retains more of the humid fatness, it turns to sulphur, or to quicksilver, which are the parents of all other metals.

“Nor can this remote matter suddenly progress so from extreme to extreme as to grow gold immediately and leap over all the intermediate steps.

“Nature first begets the imperfect, and then she proceeds to the perfect.

“From that airy and oily water, mercury is engendered. From the fat and earthy part, sulphur is engendered.

“The latter, sulphur, supplies the place of male, while mercury supplies the place of female, in all metals. The male is active and acts, while the female is passive and suffers.

“Some alchemists believe in hermaphrodeity — that both do act and suffer.

“But these two make the rest ductile, malleable, extensive.

“And they are even in gold, for we alchemists find seeds of them, by our fire, and gold in them. And we alchemists can produce the species of each metal more perfect, by our fire, than nature does in earth.”

Alchemists thought that it was possible to produce the essence of each metal. This included the essence of gold, which would produce more gold. The philosopher's stone is the essence of gold, and throwing powdered philosopher's stone on a base metal would turn the base metal to gold.

Subtle continued, "Besides, who does not see in daily practice that art can beget bees, hornets, beetles, and wasps out of the carcasses and dung of creatures."

This society believed that carcasses and dung could produce living insects. It was unaware that insects lay eggs on carcasses and dung.

We would say that nature begets bees, hornets, beetles, and wasps out of the carcasses and dung of creatures, but Subtle claimed that art — human intervention — "can beget bees, hornets, beetles, and wasps out of the carcasses and dung of creatures." In fact, some people believed that the carcasses of cattle could be used to produce bees, while the carcasses of horses and donkeys were good only to produce wasps and hornets.

Subtle continued, "Yes, and scorpions can be produced from the herb basil, being ritely and rightly placed.

"And these are living creatures, which are far more perfect and excellent than metals."

Sir Epicure Mammon said, "Well said, father!"

He then said to Surly, "If he take you in hand, sir, with an argument, he'll bray — pound and crush — you to powder in a mortar."

Proverbs 27:22 states, "*Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him*" (King James Version).

Surly said, “Please, sir, wait a moment. Rather than I’ll be brayed, sir, I’ll believe that alchemy is a pretty kind of game, somewhat like tricks of the cards, to cheat a man with magic.”

“Sir?” Subtle said.

Surly said, “What else are all your terms, whose meaning no one of your writers agrees with another!”

Often, what an alchemist calls mercury is not what we call mercury. We are likely to refer to the element mercury, which is found in nature, but an alchemist may or may not be referring to philosophic or philosophical mercury. Many alchemical terms have more than one meaning or are used differently by different alchemists. Many alchemists don’t even agree on the steps needed to produce the philosopher’s stone. After all, alchemy is false science.

Surly continued, “What else are your elixir, your *lac virginis*, your philosopher’s stone, your great medicine, and your chrysosperme?”

“What else are your sal, your sulphur, and your mercury?”

“What else are your oil of height, your tree of life, your blood, your marchesite, your tutie, your magnesia, your toad, your crow, your dragon, and your panther?”

“What else are your Sun, your Moon, your firmament, your adrop?”

“What else are your lato, azoch, zernich, chibrit, heautarit?”

“And then what else are your red man, and your white woman, with all your broths, your menstrues, and materials of piss and eggshells, women’s terms (menses), man’s blood, hair of the head, burnt rags, chalk, merds (turds, aka shit), and clay, powder of bones, scalings of iron, glass, and

worlds of other strange ingredients that would burst a man to name?”

All these things Surly had named were used in the production of the philosopher’s stone, which is the essence of gold and is used to produce more gold. Therefore, we can say that if alchemy were true, then gold is literally made of such things as piss, menstrual discharge, and shit. (All of these things are natural and the result of valuable and necessary human biological functions, but they are not the sorts of things we value for themselves.)

Of course, alchemy cannot produce a philosopher’s stone. Instead, con men deal in the greed for gold. The con men are greedy for the gold, aka wealth, of other people, and the people the con men cheat are greedy for the gold that they think possession of the philosopher’s stone will give them. We may want to say that the greed for gold is like piss, menstrual discharge, and shit.

1 Timothy 6:10 (the first of Saint Paul’s letters to Timothy) states, *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (King James Version).

Subtle replied, “All these names and terms were created with one intention: Our alchemical writers used them to obscure their art. They wrote about secret things, and they wrote in such a secret way so that the uninitiated would not understand the alchemical writings.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said to Subtle, “Sir, I told him that. The alchemists wrote that way because the simple idiot should not learn the art of alchemy and make it vulgar and commonplace.”

Subtle asked Surly, “Wasn’t all the knowledge of the Egyptians written in the mystic symbols of the hieroglyphs?”

Don't the scriptures often speak in parables? Aren't the choicest fables of the poets, fables that are the fountains and first springs of wisdom, wrapped in perplexing allegories?"

Sir Epicure Mammon said to Subtle, "I made that argument to him, and I explained to him that Sisyphus was damned to roll the ceaseless stone only because he would have made our stone — the philosopher's stone — common."

Sisyphus was condemned in the Land of the Dead to roll a stone eternally up a hill, only to have the stone roll down again before it reached the top. According to Sir Epicure Mammon, this was Sisyphus' punishment for attempting to reveal the secret of how to make the philosopher's stone.

Just as Sir Epicure Mammon said the word "common," a well-dressed Doll Common appeared at the door.

Seeing her, Sir Epicure Mammon asked, "Who is this?"

Pretending to be upset, Subtle cursed, "By God's precious blood!"

He then said to Doll Common, "What do you mean by coming here? Go inside the other room, good lady — please!"

She exited.

Still pretending to be upset, Subtle then shouted, "Where's that varlet?"

Face entered the room and said, "Sir."

Subtle said, "You complete knave! Is this how you treat me!"

"What do you mean, sir?" Face asked.

Pointing at the door where Doll had appeared, Subtle said, "Go in that room and see, you traitor. Go!"



Face exited.

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, “Who is she, sir?”

“No one, sir; no one,” Subtle replied.

“What’s the matter, good sir?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.  
“I have not seen you this upset. Who is she?”

Subtle attempted to resume the argument about alchemy:  
“All arts have always had, sir, their adversaries, but ours are  
the most ignorant —”

Face returned.

“What now?” Subtle said.

“It was not my fault, sir,” Face said. “She wants to speak  
with you.”

“She wants to, does she, sir!” Subtle said. “Follow me.”

He exited through the door through which Doll had exited.

Face started to follow him, but Sir Epicure Mammon said to  
him, “Stay, Lungs.”

“I dare not stay, sir,” Face replied.

“Stay, man,” Sir Epicure Mammon repeated. “Who is she?”

“She is a lord’s sister, sir,” Face said.

“She is!” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

Face attempted to exit, but Sir Epicure Mammon said,  
“Please, stay.”

Face said, “She’s mad, insane, sir, and she was sent here —  
but I need to leave or Subtle will be mad, too.”

“I will protect you from his anger,” Sir Epicure Mammon  
said, and then he asked, “Why was she sent here?”

“Sir, to be cured,” Face said.

Subtle called from the other room, “Why, where are you, you rascal?”

“Look, you. I said this would happen,” Face said to Sir Epicure Mammon.

He then called, “Coming, sir!”

He exited.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Before God, I say that she is a Bradamante, a splendid piece.”

Bradamante was a female Christian Knight in Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, a popular epic. She possessed a spear that made her invincible.

Knowing Sir Epicure Mammon, he meant that Doll Common was both a splendid masterpiece and a splendid piece of ass.

Surly said, “By God’s heart, this is a bawdy house! I am willing to be burnt as a heretic if that is not the case.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Oh, by this light, no — this is not a bawdy house. Do not wrong Subtle the alchemist by saying that. He’s too scrupulous to avoid such things: It is his vice.

“No, he’s a splendid physician, so do him right. He is an excellent Paracelsian, and he has done remarkable cures with mineral medicine. He deals all with spirits, he; he will not hear a word of Galen, or his tedious recipes.”

A Paracelsian is a follower of Paracelsus, who rejected the teachings of the Greek physician Galen. This was a good thing because many physicians blindly followed Galen, who lived many centuries earlier. Paracelsus advocated finding new knowledge about how to cure patients. He was right to

do this, but many of his ideas were incorrect and not scientific. The spirits dealt with could be either distilled spirits or supernatural spirits or both.

Face entered the room.

Seeing him, Sir Epicure Mammon asked, "What's going on, Lungs?"

Face replied, "Quietly, sir. Speak quietly. I meant to have told your worship everything you want to know about the woman."

He indicated Surly and said, "This man must not hear."

Sir Epicure Mammon said, "No, he can listen. He will not be 'gulled.' Let him alone. He can listen."

"You are very right, sir," Face said. "The woman is a most splendid scholar, and she has gone mad by studying the works of Hugh Broughton, one of whose challenging and controversial works is about Hebrew genealogy. If you but name a word touching the Hebrew, she falls into her fit, and she will discourse so learnedly of genealogies that you would run mad, too, to hear her, sir."

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, "What might one do to have conference with her, Lungs?"

"Conference" meant a conversation, but knowing Sir Epicure Mammon, we have to think that he wanted to have "conference" with her in bed.

Face replied, "Oh, many men have run mad upon the conference. I do not know, sir. I have been sent to quickly fetch a vial."

Surly said, "Don't be gulled, Sir Mammon. Don't be a fool."

"Gulled in what?" Sir Epicure Mammon said. "Please, be calm."

“Yes, as you are,” Surly said. “Be calm and trust confederate knaves and bawds and whores.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said to Surly, “You are too foul, believe it.”

He added, “Come here, Ulen. One word.”

Face said, “I dare not stay, in good faith.”

He attempted to leave, but Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Stay, knave.”

A knave is a servant who ranks well below a knight. Sir Epicure was a knight.

Face said, “Subtle the alchemist is extremely angry that you saw her, sir.”

Mammon gave him some money and said, “Drink that.”

He then asked Face, “What is she like when she’s out of her fit — when she’s sane?”

Face replied, “Oh, she is the most affable woman, sir! So merry! So pleasant! She’ll mount you up, like quicksilver, over the helm, and she will circulate like oil, a true stimulant.”

Face’s words had a double meaning. He was using alchemical terms that stated that Doll Common was a volatile substance. His words also had a bawdy interpretation. Doll would mount a man and be on top over the helmet-shaped tip of his penis, and she would be slippery like oil and circulate and move and be a stimulant to the man.

Face added, “She will discourse about politics, about mathematics, about bawdry, about anything.”

This interested Sir Epicure Mammon: She was willing to talk about bawdry and to perform it.

He asked Face, “Is she in any way accessible? Can I meet her? Is there any means, any trick to give a man a taste of her ... intelligence ... or so?”

Subtle called from the other room, “Ulen!”

Face said to Sir Epicure Mammon, “I’ll come back to you again, sir.”

Face exited.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Surly, I did not think one of your breeding would speak badly about personages of worth.”

Surly replied, “Sir Epicure, I am your friend and I am at your service, yet always I am loath to be gulled: I do not want to be cheated. I do not like your philosophical bawds. Their philosopher’s stone is lechery enough to pay for without this bait.”

At this time, “lechery” meant “luxurious pleasure” in addition to “lewd indulgence.” The philosopher’s stone would give many people luxurious pleasure. The bait — sexual, of course — was Doll Common.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “You abuse yourself; you are wrong.”

He then lied, “I know the lady, and her friends, and her means. I know the origin of this disaster. Her brother has told me everything.”

Surly, who knew that Sir Epicure Mammon had not recognized Doll Common, said, “And yet you never saw her until just now!”

Sir Epicure Mammon lied, “Oh, yes, I have seen her before, but I forgot. I have, believe it, one of the most treacherous memories, I think, of all Mankind.”

Surly asked, “What is her brother’s name?”

“My lord —” Sir Epicure Mammon began.

He thought for a moment and then said, “He will not have his name known, now I think about it.”

Surly said, “You certainly do have a very treacherous memory!”

Sir Epicure Mammon began, “By my faith —”

Surly interrupted, “Tut, if you have it not about you, forget it, until we next meet.”

The “it” could mean “faith” or “the brother’s name.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “I swear by this hand of mine that it is true. Her brother is a man whom I honor, and he is my noble friend, and I respect his family.”

Surly said, “Can it be that a grave sir, a rich man, who has no need, a wise sir, too, at other times, should thus with his own oaths and arguments work so hard to gull himself? I am talking about you.

“If this is your elixir, your *lapis mineralis*, and your lunary, give me your honest trick yet at primero, or gleek — and you can have your *lutum sapiensis*, your *menstruum simplex*! I’ll have gold before you, and with less danger of the quicksilver or the hot sulphur.”

Surly used many alchemical terms, but his meaning was that if this is alchemy, then he would prefer to take his chances gambling at the card games primero or gleek. A trick is a hand of cards, but Surly’s use of it included the meaning of cheating. Card sharpening, to Surly, was a more honest way of being cheated than paying money for the creation of the philosopher’s stone. In a card game with a card sharp, there is still a chance of being lucky with cards and walking away

a winner. Therefore, Surly would have gold before Sir Epicure Mammon would. (And Surly himself might be the card sharp.) Also, considering the absence of Doll Common, Surly would have less chance of contracting a venereal disease that would need to be treated with quicksilver or a contagious skin disease that would need to be treated with hot sulphur.

Face returned.

Face said to Surly, “A messenger has come from Captain Face, sir, to tell you that Captain Face wants you to meet him in the Temple Church, approximately a half hour from now, upon earnest business.”

Currently, Face was acting as Lungs, assistant to Subtle the alchemist; he was not disguised as Captain Face.

Face handed Surly a note, and as Surly read it, Face whispered to Sir Epicure Mammon, “If you please to leave us for now, and come back again in approximately two hours, my master Subtle will be busy examining the alchemical works, and I will steal you in, in private, to the woman, so that you may see her converse.”

He then said out loud to Surly, “Sir, shall I say that you’ll meet Captain Face?”

“Yes, sir, I will meet him,” Surly replied.

Surly thought to himself, *I will meet him, but by attorney, and for a second, different purpose than his.*

“By attorney” meant “not in his own person.” Surly was already forming a plan to expose the con men.

Surly thought to himself, *Now I am sure it is a bawdy house. I’d swear to it if the Marshal were here to thank me. The naming of this commander confirms it. Don Face! Captain Face! Why, he’s the most authentic dealer in these*

*commodities, the superintendent to all the quainter traffickers in town!*

In this society, the word “quaint” also meant “cunt.” The “commodities” Captain Face was known to deal in were prostitutes. “Quainter traffickers” are bawds and pimps.

Surly thought to himself, *Captain Face is the Visitor, and he appoints who lies with whom, and at what hour, at what price, and which gown and smock and other clothing.*

A Visitor in this context is an inspector or superintendent who makes sure that everything is running smoothly.

Surly thought to himself, *I will test him, by a third person — myself in disguise — in order to find the subtleties, by which I mean tricks and deceits, of this dark labyrinth.*

Alchemists often described the search for the philosopher’s stone as a kind of labyrinth.

Surly thought to himself, *If I do discover these subtleties, dear Sir Mammon, you’ll give me, your poor friend, permission, although I am no philosopher, to laugh, for you who are a philosopher, it is thought, shall weep.*

Democritus was known as the laughing philosopher, and Heraclitus was known as the crying philosopher. Democritus laughed at human follies, while Heraclitus cried over human follies.

Face said to Surly, “Sir, he asks you to please not forget to meet him.”

Surly replied, “I will not forget, sir.”

He then said, “Sir Epicure, I shall leave you.”

As Surly exited, Sir Epicure Mammon said, “I will follow you quickly.”



“Do so, good sir, to avoid suspicion that you will meet with the woman later,” Face said. “This gentleman Surly has a parlous head.”

Surly’s mind was dangerous because it was sharp.

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, “But will you, Ulen, keep your promise?”

“I will be as careful to keep my promise as I am careful to keep my life, sir.”

“And will you insinuate what I am, and praise me, and say that I am a noble fellow?”

“Oh, what else, sir?” Face said. “And I’ll tell her that you’ll make her royal, an Empress, with the philosopher’s stone, and that you’ll make yourself the King of Bantam, capital of the very wealthy island Java.”

“Stone” meant the philosopher’s stone, but the word was also slang for “testicle.” Sir Epicure Mammon would use the wealth that he got from the philosopher’s stone to make her royal, and he would use his stones to treat her another way.

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, “Will you do that?”

“I will, sir,” Face replied.

“Lungs, my Lungs! I love and respect you.”

Face said, “Send your metal items, sir, so that my master may busy himself about projection and turning them into gold.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said affectionately, “You have bewitched me, rogue. Take this money, and go.”

He gave Face some money.

Face said, “Bring your jack, and all your other metal, sir.”

A jack was an iron mechanism using metal weights on chains to turn the spit in a fireplace.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “You are a villain. I will send my jack, and the weights, too. Slave, I could affectionately bite your ear. Go away, you do not care for me.”

“Don’t I, sir?” Face asked.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Come, I was born to make you, my good weasel, sit on a bench, and have you twirl a chain with the best lord’s vermin of them all.”

The chain was an insignia of office; the steward of a wealthy household had a chain. Lords wore ermine trimming on their robes; the ermine trimming was jokingly called vermin. Sir Epicure Mammon was saying that he was born to make Face rise in the world. (Earlier he had said that he would castrate Face and put him in charge of Sir Epicure’s harem.)

“Leave now, sir,” Face said.

Sir Epicure Mammon began, “A Count — no, a Count Palatine —”

A Count Palatine had more power and status than a mere Count.

Face interrupted, “Good sir, go.”

Sir Epicure Mammon finished, “— shall not advance you in life better, nor faster, than I will.”

He exited.

#### — 2.4 —

Subtle and Doll Common entered the room.

Using a fishing metaphor, Subtle asked about Sir Epicure Mammon, “Did he bite? Did he bite?”

Face replied, “Yes, and he has swallowed the bait, too, my Subtle. I have given him line, and now he plays, indeed.”

“And shall we twitch the pole and hook him?” Subtle asked.

“Yes, and through both gills,” Face said. “A wench is a rare bait with which a man no sooner’s taken, but he immediately moves briskly and madly — he firks madly.”

Such movements can be made during sex.

Subtle said, “Doll, you who will be my Lord What’t’s’hum’s sister, you must now bear yourself *statelych*.”

*Statelych* is Dutch for “stately and aristocratically.”

“Oh, leave it to me,” Doll said. “I’ll not forget my race, I promise you.”

She meant both that she would not forget her background and that she would not forget who she was going to pretend to be.

She added, “I’ll keep my distance, laugh, and talk aloud, have all the tricks of a proud scurvy lady, and be as rude as her woman servant.”

A proud scurvy lady’s woman servant would be rude to someone such as Doll Common.

Face said, “Well said, Sanguine!”

A sanguine person is thought to be amorous, optimistic, and brave.

Subtle asked, “But will he send his andirons?”

“Yes,” Face replied. “He will send his jack, too, and his iron shoeing-horn. I have spoken to him.”

Referring to Surly, Face added, “Well, I must not lose my wary gamester yonder.”

Subtle said, “He is Monsieur Caution, who will not be gulled.”

Face said, “Yes. If only I can strike a fine hook into him, now! I have cast my hook at the Temple Church. Well, pray for me. I’ll go about it.”

Knocking sounded at the door.

Subtle said, “What, more gudgeons!”

Gudgeons were small fish that were thought to swallow anything.

Subtle said, “Doll, scout, scout!”

Doll Common went to the window to see who was knocking.

Subtle said, “Wait, Face, you must go to the door. I pray to God that the knocker is my Anabaptist.”

Anabaptists were members of what was thought to be an extreme Protestant sect. They believed in adult baptism, common ownership of property, and theocracy. Some Anabaptists wanted to ban all books except the Bible.

Subtle asked, “Who is it, Doll?”

“I don’t know him,” Doll answered. “He looks like a gold-end man.”

A gold-end man would buy bits and pieces of gold and silver.

“Good,” Subtle said. “It is the man the Anabaptist said he would send. He said he would send . . . what do you call him? Ah, the sanctified elder, who would bargain to buy Sir Epicure Mammon’s jack and andirons.

“Let him in.”

Face exited.

Subtle said to Doll, “Wait, first help me take off my gown.”

A gown is a loose, flowing upper garment.

Doll helped him take it off, and then Subtle said to her, “Go, Madam, to your withdrawing chamber.”

Doll exited, carrying the gown.

Subtle said to himself, “Now, in a new tune, with a new gesture, but using old language. This fellow is sent from one who is negotiating with me about the philosopher’s stone, too. He is negotiating on behalf of the holy brethren of Amsterdam, the exiled saints, who hope to raise their discipline and increase its power and influence by it.”

The holy brethren of Amsterdam and the exiled saints were the Anabaptists.

In 1534, the Anabaptist John of Leiden seized control of Münster, Germany, and called himself King of Münster. The Anabaptists also tried but failed to take control of some Dutch towns, including Amsterdam. After a long siege, the city was taken back and John of Leiden was tortured and executed. This event made people believe that Anabaptists were dangerous radicals. Many Anabaptists left Amsterdam and resided in England.

In 1604, many Anabaptists left England and went into exile in Amsterdam because they refused to accept the 39 Articles that spelled out the beliefs and doctrines of the Church of England.

Ben Jonson’s play *The Alchemist* was first performed in 1610.

Subtle said to himself, “I must treat him in some strange fashion, now, to make him wonder at me.”

Ananias entered the room.

Subtle said loudly, “Where is my drudge?”

Face entered the room and said, “Sir!”

It was time to baffle Ananias with alchemical bullshit.

Subtle ordered, “Take away the recipient, and rectify your menstrue from the phlegma. Then pour it on the Sol, in the cucurbite, and let them macerate together.”

The recipient is the vessel in which distilled matter collects.

“Yes, sir,” Face said. “Should I save the ground?”

The ground is the residue left over after sublimation. Another name for it is *terra damnata*, which is Latin for “damned ground.”

“No,” Subtle replied. “*Terra damnata* must not have entrance in the work.”

Pretending to see Ananias for the first time, Subtle asked him, “Who are you?”

“A faithful brother, if it pleases you,” Ananias replied.

By “faithful brother,” Ananias meant “Anabaptist,” but Subtle deliberately misunderstood him to say that he was a fellow alchemist — the Faithful Brothers were a group of Arabian alchemists in the tenth century C.E.

“What’s that?” Subtle asked. “Are you a Lullianist — a follower of the alchemist Raymond Lully! Are you a follower of the alchemist George Ripley? Are you a *filius artis*?”

*Filius artis* is Latin for “son of the art,” aka alchemist.

Subtle asked, “Can you sublime and dulcify? Can you calcine? Do you know the *sapor pontic*? *Sapor stiptic*? Or what is homogene, or heterogene?”

*Sapor* is Latin for “savor,” or “taste.” Some people at this time believed that there were nine tastes; five were caused by heat, and four were caused by cold.

“I understand no heathen language, truly,” Ananias said.

The Anabaptists believed that Latin was a heathen language. The only non-heathen language was Hebrew because Adam spoke it in the Garden of Eden, Anabaptists believed.

“Heathen!” Subtle said. “You Knipperdolling!”

Bernt Knipperdolling was one of the Anabaptists who had taken over the city of Münster. He was tortured and executed after the city was retaken.

Subtle asked, “Is *ars sacra*, or *chrysopoeia*, or *spagyrica*, or the *pamphysic*, or *panarchic* knowledge, a heathen language!”

*Ars sacra* is Latin for “the sacred art.” Subtle used this Latin phrase to mean alchemy.

“It is heathen Greek, I take it,” Ananias said.

“What!” Subtle said. “Heathen Greek!”

“All languages are heathen except the Hebrew,” Ananias said.

Subtle said to Face, “Sirrah, my varlet, stand forth and speak to him like a philosopher.”

Face was supposed to be Subtle’s assistant. The word “varlet” meant “assistant.”

Subtle was going to question Face as if Subtle were a university professor and Face were a student.

Subtle then said to Face, “Answer my questions in the alchemical language. Name the vexations, and the martyrizations of metals in the work.”

Subtle used alchemical terms, but he used a few alchemical terms that were similar, at least in sound, to religious terms. He wanted Ananias to think that alchemical language was not a heathen language.

Face answered, “Sir, putrefaction, solution, ablution, sublimation, cohobation, calcination, ceration, and fixation.”

Subtle said to Ananias, “This is heathen Greek, to you, is it!”

He then asked Face, “And when does vivification come?”

Face answered, “After mortification.”

Subtle asked, “What’s cohobation?”

Face answered, “It is the pouring on your *aqua regis*, and then drawing him off, to the trine circle of the seven spheres.”

Alchemists often referred to materials as “him” or “her” and as “masculine” or “feminine.” They also often referred to “your” materials.

*Aqua regis* is Latin for “King’s water.” It was a mixture of acids that could dissolve gold.

Subtle asked, “What’s the proper passion of metals?”

Face answered, “Malleation.”

Subtle asked, “What’s your *ultimum supplicium auri*?”

*Ultimum supplicium auri* is Latin for “the ultimate punishment of gold.”



Face answered, “Antimonium.”

This is a substance that keeps gold from being malleable; to alchemists, not being malleable is the ultimate punishment of gold.

Subtle said to Ananias, “This is heathen Greek to you!”

He then asked Face, “And what’s your mercury?”

Face answered, “A very fugitive, he will be gone, sir.”

Mercury is a liquid at room temperature and is difficult or impossible to pick up using only your fingers.

Subtle asked, “How do you know him?”

“Him” referred to mercury.

Face answered, “By his viscosity, his oleosity, and his suscitability.”

Subtle asked, “How do you sublime him?”

Face answered, “With the calce of eggshells, white marble, talc.”

Subtle asked, “Your magisterium, now, what’s that?”

The “magisterium” is the “mastery of alchemy.” The person who has mastered alchemy can create the philosopher’s stone. Some people equated the magisterium with the philosopher’s stone.

Face answered, “Shifting, sir, your elements — dry into cold, cold into moist, moist into hot, hot into dry.”

According to alchemy, subjecting a primary material to this sequence of shifting would drive away everything that was not the essence of the primary element. Do this to the primary element gold and you will be left with the essence of gold, aka the philosopher’s stone.

Subtle said to Ananias, “This is heathen Greek to you still!”

Subtle asked Face, “What is your *lapis philosophicus*?”

*Lapis philosophicus* is Latin for “philosopher’s stone.”

Face answered, “It is a stone, and not a stone. It is a spirit, a soul, and a body. If you dissolve it, it is dissolved. If you coagulate it, it is coagulated. If you make it fly, it flies.”

Subtle said, “Enough.”

Face exited.

Subtle said to Ananias, “This is heathen Greek to you! Who are you, sir?”

Ananias answered, “If it should please you, I am a servant of the exiled brethren, who deal with widows and with orphans’ goods, and make a just account unto the saints. I am a deacon.”

The saints were Anabaptists; they were not Catholic saints. Anabaptists regarded themselves as the elect — the elect were chosen by God to receive eternal life.

Subtle said, “Oh, were you sent from Master Wholesome, your teacher?”

Ananias said, “Yes, from Tribulation Wholesome, our very zealous pastor.”

Many Puritans had names such as Tribulation Wholesome because they believed that common names such as William or Ben were too worldly. Ananias’ name came from the Bible.

“Good!” Subtle said. “I have some orphans’ goods coming here.”

Ananias asked, “Of what kind, sir?”

Subtle answered, "Pewter and brass, andirons and kitchenware, and metals that we must use our medicine on. The brethren may have these for a good price, as long as it is ready money."

Ananias asked, "Were the orphans' parents sincere professors of the Anabaptists' faith?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because if they were, we are then to deal justly, and pay money, in truth, to the items' utmost value."

Subtle said, "By God's eyelid, if the orphans' parents were not of the faithful, you'd cheat them! I will not trust you, now I think about it, until I have talked with your pastor. Have you brought money to buy more coals?"

"No, indeed."

"No! Why not?"

Ananias answered, "The brethren told me to say to you, sir, that indeed they will not venture any more money until they may see projection."

"What!" Subtle said, pretending to be angry.

Ananias said, "You have had, for the instruments, such as bricks, and loam, and glasses, already thirty pounds. And for materials, they say, some ninety pounds more. And they have heard since that an alchemist at Heidelberg made the philosopher's stone from an egg and a small paper of pin-dust."

Heidelberg was a center of alchemy. Pin-dust is metal dust that is left over from the manufacture of metal pins.

Subtle asked, "What's your name?"

"My name is Ananias."

In Acts 5:1-10, we read that Ananias cheated his fellow Christians by selling a piece of property and keeping part of the money obtained.

Pretending to be angry, Subtle said, “Get out, you varlet who cheated the apostles! Leave! Go away! Flee, mischief! Didn’t your holy consistory have no name to send me, of another sound, than wicked Ananias? Send your elders here to make atonement for you, quickly, and to give me satisfaction, or out goes the fire; and down go the alembecs, and the furnace *Piger Henricus*, and what not.”

*Piger Henricus* is Latin for “Lazy Henry.” It is a type of furnace that has one fire providing the heat for many side chambers.

Subtle continued, “You wretch! Both sericon and bufo shall be lost; tell them that. All hope of rooting out the bishops, or the anti-Christian hierarchy, shall perish, if they stay away threescore minutes: one hour.”

The Anabaptists wanted to establish a theocracy with themselves as rulers. They definitely did not want Catholics to be the heads of the theocracy.

Subtle continued, “The aqueity, terreity, and sulphureity shall run together again, and all shall be annulled, you wicked Ananias!”

In other words, unless Ananias’ superiors came to Subtle within one hour, all the alchemical work he had done so far would be ruined.

Ananias exited.

Subtle said to himself, “This will fetch them, and make them hasten towards their gulling more. A man must deal like a rough nurse, and frighten those who are obstinate and give them an appetite.”

Face, who was now wearing his Captain's uniform, entered the room. Abel Drugger followed him.

Captain Face said to Drugger, "The alchemist is busy with his spirits, but we'll see him."

Subtle said, "What is it? What mates and what Bayards have we here?"

"Mates" are "low fellows." "Bayard" is a common name for a horse. The proverb "as bold as blind Bayard" referred to blundering into places where the blunderer did not belong.

Captain Face said to Drugger, "I told you that he would be furious."

He then said to Subtle, "Sir, here's Nab. He has brought you another piece of gold to look on."

"Nab" is a nickname for Abel.

He said to Drugger, "We must appease him. Give the gold piece to me."

Drugger gave the gold coin to Face, who gave it to Subtle, saying, "He asks that you would devise for him — what is it, Nab?"

"A sign, sir."

"Yes," Face said. "A good lucky one, a thriving sign, doctor."

"I was devising now," Subtle said.

He meant that he had been creating Drugger's horoscope.

Face whispered to him, "By God's light, do not say so. Drugger will repent he gave you any more gold."

He then said out loud, “What say you to his constellation — Libra — Doctor? Should the balance be his sign?”

Subtle decided to do something different from that. He did not want Drugger to repent giving more gold.

“No, that way is stale, and common,” Subtle said. “A townsman born in Taurus gives the bull, or the bull’s-head, as his sign. A townsman born in Aries gives the ram as his sign. It’s a poor device!

“No, I will have Drugger’s name formed in some mystic characters whose emanations, striking the senses of the passersby, shall, by a powerful influence, breed inclinations, such as a powerful desire for tobacco, that may benefit the party who owns the sign. Let me think.”

Subtle was going to create a rebus for Abel Drugger. A rebus is a cryptic representation of a name, word, phrase, or sentence, using pictures and letters.

Face said excitedly, “Nab!”

Subtle said, “He shall have a bell, that’s Abel. And by it standing a man whose name is Dee, wearing a rug gown, aka an academic’s coarse wool gown.”

Dee is Dr. John Dee (1527-1608), an English alchemist and astrologer.

Subtle continued, “There’s D, and Rug, that’s drug. And right against him a dog snarling grr. There’s Drugger, Abel Drugger. That’s his sign. And here’s now mystery and hieroglyphic!”

Face said, “Abel, you are made.”

Drugger replied, bowing, “Sir, I do thank his worship.”

Face said, “Six more of your bows will not do it, Nab. They won’t be enough to thank the doctor properly.”

Face said to Subtle, “He has brought you a pipe of tobacco, doctor.”

Perhaps Drugger had been carrying the pipe of tobacco for his own use.

“Yes, sir,” Drugger said.

He gave the tobacco to Face, who gave it to Subtle.

Drugger added, “I have another thing I would like to say —”

“Out with it, Nab,” Face said.

Drugger said, “Sir, there is lodged, very near to me, a rich young widow.”

“Good,” Face said. “A *bona roba*?”

A *bona roba* is a fashionably dressed woman; in slang, the phrase means a prostitute.

Drugger said, “She is only nineteen, at the most.”

“Very good, Abel,” Face said.

“She’s not in fashion yet,” Drugger said. “She wears a French hood, but it stands acop.”

French hoods were not in fashion; hats were. But the young widow did wear it on top of her head instead of at the back. “Acop” meant “on top.”

“That doesn’t matter, Abel,” Face said.

Drugger said, “And I do now and then give her a fucus —”

A fucus is a kind of cosmetic.

Face said, “What! Do you deal, Nab?”

He meant deal in products other than tobacco.

Subtle said, "I did tell you, Captain Face."

He wanted Drugger to believe that he — Subtle — had said that he had told Captain Face that Drugger would be successful. One sign of success is branching out and selling more and different products.

Drugger continued, "— and medicine, too, sometimes, sir, for which she trusts me with all her mind. She's come up here for the purpose of learning the latest fashions."

Face said, "Good."

He whispered to Subtle, "If she goes to Drugger for advice about fashion, she's as foolish as he is."

He said out loud, "Go on, Nab."

Drugger said, "And she very greatly longs to know her fortune."

"By God's eyelid, Nab," Captain Face said, "send her to Doctor Subtle here."

"Yes, I have spoken to her about his worship already," Drugger said, "but she's afraid that gossip about it will be blown abroad, and hurt her prospects for marriage."

"Hurt her prospects for marriage!" Captain Face said. "Why, it is the way to heal her prospects, if they were hurt. It is the way to make marriage with her more pursued and sought. Nab, you shall tell her this: If she comes here, she'll be more known, more talked about — and your widows are never of any good price until they are famous. The honor of widows lies in their multitude of suitors. Send her; it may be your good fortune."

Drugger shook his head no.

Captain Face said, "What! You do not know."



Drugger said, “No, sir, it won’t be my good fortune. She’ll never marry anyone of less social status than a Knight: Her brother has made a vow.”

“What!” Captain Face said, “and do you despair, my little Nab, knowing what Doctor Subtle has predicted for your future, and seeing so many wealthy tradesmen of the city dubbed a Knight by King James I in return for money?”

“One glass of your water, with a madam — a witch — I know will make her fall in love with you, Nab. The witch can turn your urine into a love potion.

“Who is her brother? Is he a Knight?”

“No, sir,” Drugger said. “He is a gentleman newly warm in his land, sir. He has just inherited it. He is scarcely twenty-one years old, and he governs his sister here, and he is a man himself of some three thousand pounds a year, and he has come up to London to learn to quarrel and to live by his wits, and he will go down again and die in the country.”

Like his sister, the gentleman wanted to be fashionable. Some young men of the time were known as roaring boys. They enjoyed picking quarrels, and they followed rules for doing so.

“What?” Face said. “How to quarrel?”

“Yes, sir,” Drugger said, “to carry quarrels, as gallants do; to manage them by line.”

“By line” meant “according to the rules.”

Face said, “By God’s eyelid, Nab, Doctor Subtle is the only man in Christendom for him. He has made a diagram, with mathematical demonstrations, concerning the art of quarrels: He will give the widow’s brother written instructions for quarreling.

“Go, bring them both: him and his sister the widow. And, as for you, the doctor perhaps may persuade her to love you.

“Go on. You shall give his worship a new damask suit on the basis of what I just said.”

Fine clothing was expensive.

Subtle said, “Oh, good Captain Face!”

“He shall,” Face said to Subtle. “He is the honestest fellow, Doctor.”

Face then said to Drugger, “Don’t wait for the proposal of marriage. Bring the damask and the parties here.”

“I’ll try my power, sir,” Drugger said. “I’ll do my best.”

“And try your will, too, Nab,” Face said. The word “will” meant both “inclination to do something” and “sexual desire” for the widow.

Smoking the pipe Drugger had brought, Subtle said, “This is good tobacco! What does it cost per ounce?”

“He’ll send you a pound, Doctor Subtle,” Face said.

“Oh, no,” Subtle said, pretending that he did not want such an expensive gift.

“He will do it,” Face said. “He is the goodest soul!”

He then said, “Abel, go about it. You shall know more soon. Go away, be gone.”

Abel Drugger exited.

Face said to Subtle, “Drugger is a miserable rogue, and lives on cheese, and has the worms. That was the reason, indeed, why he came here just now. He dealt with me in private to get a medicine for the worms.”

“And he shall get it, sir,” Subtle said. “This is working out well.”

“A wife, a wife for one of us, my dear Subtle!” Face said. “We’ll draw lots on equal terms, and he who fails shall have the more in goods because the other will have more in tail.”

Face was punning. “Entail” was a legal term about one kind of inheritance. “In tail” was slang for “in pussy.”

Subtle replied, “Rather the less in goods, for the widow may be so light that she may lack grains.”

In addition to meaning “light in weight,” “light” was slang for “promiscuous.” A light woman’s heels were light and were easily raised in the air with her knees apart. If the widow were light (and promiscuity would lower her value because no man wants to be a cuckold), her husband would need more in goods (a grain = a unit of weight) in order to have a share equal with that of the con man who did not marry her.

Face said, “Yes, or she may be such a burden that a man would scarcely endure her for the whole.”

“Whole” was another pun. If the widow were a bad wife, her husband might scarcely endure her for the whole take of the cons. Face’s use of “whole” also meant “hole,” and so if the widow were a bad wife, her husband might scarcely endure her although she has a vagina.

Subtle said, “Indeed, it’s best we see her first, and then determine what to do.”

“That’s fine by me,” Face said, “but Doll must hear no words about this.”

“I will be mum,” Subtle said. “Go now, and meet your Surly yonder; catch him.”

Face said, "I pray to God that I have not stayed too long."

"I fear that you may have," Subtle said.

### ACT 3 (*The Alchemist*)

#### — 3.1 —

Tribulation Wholesome and Ananias talked together outside the house where the cons were taking place. Ananias was complaining about Subtle.

Tribulation Wholesome said, “These chastisements are common to the saints, and such rebukes we of the separation must bear with willing shoulders as they are trials sent forth to tempt our frailties.”

“Separation” meant “exile.” In times of persecution, Anabaptists would go from one country to another country to escape that persecution. At the then-current time, many Anabaptists were in the Netherlands.

Saints often face tribulations, and these Anabaptists regarded themselves as saints — people destined for eternal life — separated from ordinary men.

Ananias said, “In pure zeal and from a purely Christian point of view, I do not like the man. He is a heathen, and he speaks the language of Canaan, truly.”

Tribulation Wholesome said, “I think him a profane person indeed.”

“He bears the visible mark of the beast on his forehead,” Ananias said.

Anyone who bears the mark of the beast is irrevocably damned.

Ananias continued, “And as for his philosopher’s stone, it is a work of darkness, and with philosophy it blinds the eyes of man.”

Tribulation Wholesome said, “Good brother, we must yield to all means that may give furtherance to the holy cause.”

“Which his cannot,” Ananias said. “The sanctified cause should have a sanctified course. A sanctified course of action will lead to the sanctified result we want.”

“A sanctified means or course of action is not always necessary,” Tribulation Wholesome said. “The children of perdition are often made instruments even of the greatest works.

“Beside, we should concede somewhat to this man Subtle’s nature and the place he lives in. He is always near the fire and the fumes of metals that intoxicate the brain of man and make him prone to feel violent emotions.

“Being around fire is dangerous.

“Where do you have greater atheists than your cooks?”

Anabaptists preferred plainness in all things, including clothing, hairstyles, and food.

Tribulation Wholesome continued, “Who is more profane or choleric and prone to anger than your glass-blowers?”

Glass-blowers make items used in alchemy and in Catholic churches.

Tribulation Wholesome continued, “Who is more anti-Christian than your bell-founders, who cast bells out of molten metal?”

Bells are often used in the Catholic Mass and in Catholic churches.

Tribulation Wholesome continued, “I ask you, what makes the devil Satan, our common enemy, so devilish except his being perpetually around the fire and boiling brimstone and arsenic?”

“We must yield, I say, to the stimulations and the stirrers up of strong feelings in the blood. It may be so, when the work

is done and the philosopher's stone is made, that this heat of his may turn into a religious zeal, and stand up for the beauteous discipline of Anabaptism against the menstruous cloth and rag of Rome.”

The Anabaptists detested the Pope and Catholics. What they called “the menstruous cloth and rag of Rome” was the surplice worn by Catholic priests. The Anabaptists compared the surplice to a rag used to soak up menstrual blood.

Tribulation Wholesome continued, “We must await his calling and the coming of the good Holy Spirit to him. You did wrong when you upbraided him with the brethren's blessing of creating the philosopher's stone in Heidelberg. You will realize that when you consider what need we have to hasten on the work for the restoring of the silenced saints, which will never happen unless we get the philosopher's stone.”

The silenced saints were the Puritans who were not allowed to preach because they did not accept the 39 Articles that spelled out the beliefs and doctrines of the Church of England.

Tribulation Wholesome continued, “A learned elder, one of Scotland, assured me that we need the philosopher's stone. For one thing, *aurum potabile* is the only medicine for the civil magistrate to incline him to a feeling of our religious cause and must be daily used in the disease.”

*Aurum potabile* is Latin for “drinkable gold.” It was supposed to be an alchemist's elixir, but Tribulation Wholesome was using the term to mean bribes. The Anabaptists would use the gold created by the philosopher's stone to bribe civil officials to treat their religion kindly — and to give the Anabaptists political power.

Ananias replied, “I have not been edified more, truly, by any man than by you here and now — not since the beautiful light of Anabaptism first shone on me, and I am sad that my religious zeal has so offended.”

“Let us call on Subtle the alchemist then,” Tribulation Wholesome said.

“The impulse to knock is good, and it is of the spirit,” Ananias said. “I will knock first.”

He knocked and shouted, “Peace be within!”

The door was opened, and they entered.

— 3.2 —

Subtle said to Tribulation Wholesome, “Oh, have you come?”

He pointed to an hourglass and said, “It was time. Your threescore minutes were at the last thread, you see, and down had gone *furnus acediae*, *turris circulatorius*: Alembec, bolt’s-head, retort, and pelican had all been cinders.”

The word “thread” referred to the thread of life. A few minutes longer, and Subtle — he said — would have killed the process of making the philosopher’s stone. He would have destroyed everything, including the *furnus acediae* (Latin for “furnace of sloth”; it is another term for “lazy Henry”) and the *turris circulatorius* (circulating tower).

Seeing Ananias, Subtle said, “Wicked Ananias! Have you returned? Well, then, I will still destroy the apparatus making the philosopher’s stone.”

Tribulation Wholesome said, “Sir, be appeased. Ananias has come to humble himself in spirit, and to ask your patience if too much religious zeal has carried him aside from the due path.”



“Why, this does qualify!” Subtle said.

“Qualify” is an alchemical term meaning “dilute.” Subtle was saying that his rage was becoming diluted and weaker.

Tribulation Wholesome said, “The brethren had no intention, truly, to give you the least grievance. Instead, they are ready to lend their willing hands to any project the Holy Spirit and you direct them to.”

“This qualifies more!” Subtle said.

Tribulation Wholesome said, “And as for the orphans’ goods, let them be valued. And whatever else is needed for the holy work of making the philosopher’s stone, it shall be paid in ready money. Here, in my person, the saints throw down their purse before you.”

Revelation 4:10 begins, “*The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne*” (King James Version).

“This qualifies most!” Subtle said, “Why, this is how it should be — now you understand.

“I have talked to you about our philosopher’s stone and about the good that it shall bring your cause.

“I have shown you other benefits in addition to the main point of hiring forces abroad and drawing the Hollanders, your friends, from the Indies, to serve you, with all their fleet.”

With the gold made with the philosopher’s stone, the Anabaptists could hire mercenaries and the Netherlands’ mighty fleet of ships that protected their trade interests in the Indies. Subtle was hinting that the Anabaptists could be traitors to England; they could use the mercenaries to attack and take control of England.

Subtle continued, “I have said that even the medicinal use of the philosopher’s stone — the elixir of life — shall make you a faction and party in the realm. You shall have political power. For example, let’s say that some great man in government has the gout. Why, if you send him three drops of your elixir of life, you will help him immediately, and you will have made him a friend of Anabaptism. Let’s say that another has the palsy, aka tremors, or the dropsy, aka edema; he takes some of your incombustible stuff — your elixir — and he’s young again. Here again you have made a friend of Anabaptism.”

Literally, people with dropsy retain water and their body swells up. Two salt-related symptoms of adrenal fatigue are the swelling of edema and a craving for salt. Subtle’s clients also suffer from cravings — for money and/or power.

“Let’s take a lady who has aged and is no longer able to physically have sex, although she still thinks about it. Her face has aged so much that the use of makeup will no longer help her look beautiful. With the alchemical medicine known as the oil of talc, you restore her youth, her beauty, and her ability to have sex. There you have made a friend — and you have made all her friends your friends.”

By “her friends,” Subtle meant “her lovers.”

Subtle continued, “Take a lord who has leprosy, a Knight who has the bone-ache, or a squire who has both of these medical problems. You make them smooth and sound with a mere rubbing on of your alchemical medicine, and again you increase the number of your friends.”

The bone-ache is syphilis.

Tribulation Wholesome said, “What you say is very pregnant of promise and a convincing argument.”

Subtle said, “And then the turning of this lawyer’s pewter to plate at Christmas —”

Ananias interrupted, “At Christ-tide, please.”

Some Anabaptists did not want to say the syllable “mas” or the word “mass” because of the Catholic Mass.

“Yet, Ananias!” Subtle said. “Do you still bother me?”

“I have finished talking,” Ananias said.

Subtle continued, “— turning of this lawyer’s pewter to plate at Christmas or changing his parcel gilt — partially gilded silver — to massy, aka solid, gold.”

He had deliberately used the word “massy.”

Subtle continued, “You cannot but increase the number of your friends. Indeed, you will have the power to pay an army on the battlefield, to buy the King of France out of his realms, or to buy the Indies from the King of Spain.”

King Henri IV of France had been assassinated on 14 May 1610, a little earlier than the present time. His son who succeeded him was only eight years old. In 1607, King Philip III of Spain had gone bankrupt because of a lack of silver shipments from the Indies.

The Anabaptists were businessmen as well as religious men, and they had a reputation for driving hard bargains. Subtle was saying that they were very capable of taking advantage of a child and of a man down on his luck.

Subtle continued, “What can you not do against lords, whether spiritual or temporal, who shall oppose you?”

“Verily, what you say is true,” Tribulation Wholesome said. “We may be temporal lords ourselves, I take it.”

Temporal lords are not members of the clergy.

Temporal lords need not say prayers or preach sermons or sing in church, which are things Anabaptists presumably want to do.

Subtle replied, “You may be anything you want, and you may leave off to make — stop or take time off from doing something in order to make — long-winded exercises.”

The Anabaptists had reputations for making very long sermons and prayers.

Subtle continued, “Or you may suck up your *ha!* and *hum!* in a tune.”

They could also make singing *ha!* and *hum!* a part of the church service.

The *ha!* and *hum!* referred to an Anabaptist practice of making these sounds during prayers and sermons.

Subtle continued, “I do not deny that people who are powerless in a state, may, for their own ends, be adverse and contrary to the state in their religion, and get a tune to call the flock together. You can gain followers in your religion and use them to gain political power; one way to gain religious followers is through religious music. For, to say the truth, a tune does much with women and other phlegmatic — unemotional and calm — people; it is your bell. Like a church bell, tunes will call people to worship.”

Ananias objected, “Bells are profane; a tune may be religious.”

Subtle said to Ananias, “You don’t listen to warnings! So then I say ‘farewell’ to my patience. By God’s light, I shall destroy the apparatus for making the philosopher’s stone. I will not be thus tortured.”

“Please, sir—” Tribulation Wholesome began.

Subtle interrupted, “Everything shall perish. I have spoken it.”

“Let me find grace and mercy, sir, in your eyes,” Tribulation Wholesome said. “The man Ananias stands corrected. His religious zeal did not allow a tune somewhere except as you yourself had said a tune could be used. You agreed on that point. But now, since the philosopher’s stone is nearly completed, we shall not need tunes.”

Since the Anabaptists would have gold to make friends, they wouldn’t need to have tunes to make friends, and so there was no need to worry about whether or not tunes are comparable to church bells.

Subtle replied, “No, you shall not need tunes, nor your holy vizard, aka holy mask, to win widows to give you legacies or make zealous wives rob their husbands for the common cause, nor shall you need to take advantage of bonds whose terms have been broken only one day and say that their collateral is forfeited by providence. Nor shall you need all night to eat huge meals so that you can better celebrate your next day’s fast while the brethren and the sisters, humbled, abate the stiffness of the flesh.”

“Abate” means “cause to become smaller.” “Stiffness” has two meanings. It means “pride”; however, “the stiffness of the flesh” also means “erection.”

Subtle continued, “Nor shall you need to cast before your hungry hearers scrupulous bones.”

If the Anabaptists became temporal lords, they need not concern themselves with much that they concerned themselves with.

“Scrupulous bones” are petty points of religious contention. Here the points of contention are about the proper behavior of an Anabaptist.

Subtle continued, “For example, whether a Christian may hawk or hunt, or whether matrons of the holy assembly may lay their hair out to create fashionable and elaborate hairstyles, or wear doublets, which are properly worn by men only, or have that idol starch about their linen.”

The Anabaptists opposed hunting with hawks and hunting in general. They also opposed elaborate hairstyles for women, women wearing men’s clothing, and the use of starch on clothing. The Anabaptists opposed many things on the grounds that they were worldly and/or vain and/or opposed to Biblical strictures.

Deuteronomy 22:5 states, “*The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God*” (King James Version).

Ananias said about starch, “It is indeed an idol.”

Tribulation Wholesome said to Subtle, “Don’t mind him, sir.”

He then said to the spirit that he believed — or pretended to believe — was within Ananias, “I do command you, spirit of religious zeal, but also trouble, to be silent and calm within him!”

He said to Subtle, “Please, sir, go on.”

Subtle said, “Nor shall you need to libel the prelates, and shorten your ears in preparation for the hearing of the next wire-drawn grace.”

The Puritans sometimes severely criticized the officials of the Church of England. Punishment for doing this could include being placed in a pillory and having one’s ears cut off. This was the punishment for seditious libel.

People created wire by drawing or pulling and stretching metal. Puritan prayers before a meal — grace — were long and drawn out, and Subtle was saying that having one's ears cut off was good preparation for experiencing a Puritan grace.

Subtle continued, "Nor shall you of necessity rail against plays, to please the alderman whose daily custard you devour."

Many aldermen were hostile to the theater because they felt that play-going spread the plague. Since all actors at this time were male, boys or young men playing women would wear women's clothing, which violated the stricture against wearing women's clothing found in Deuteronomy 22:5. Also, many aldermen felt that going to plays encouraged workers to waste time.

Subtle continued, "Nor shall you lie with zealous rage until you are hoarse. Not one of these so singular arts will you need to perform. Nor shall you need to call yourselves by names such as Tribulation, Persecution, Restraint, Long-patience, and so on, which are affected by the whole family or collection of you only for glory and to catch the ear of the disciple."

With the wealth created by the philosopher's stone, Anabaptists would no longer need to act like Anabaptists. Great wealth does things like that.

Tribulation Wholesome said, "Truly, sir, they are ways that the godly brethren have invented for propagation of the glorious cause as very notable means, and whereby also the godly brethren themselves grow quickly and profitably famous."

Subtle replied, "Oh, but all's idle to the philosopher's stone! Nothing compares to it! It is the art of angels, nature's

miracle, the divine secret that flies in clouds from east to west, and whose tradition is not from men, but spirits.”

The Catholic Church followed and respected religious traditions. The Anabaptists rejected religious tradition and followed only what they found in the Bible.

Ananias said, “I hate traditions; I do not trust them.”

Tribulation Wholesome said, “Peace! Silence!”

“Traditions are all Popish,” Ananias said. “I will not be silent! I will not!”

Tribulation Wholesome warned, “Ananias!”

Ananias responded, “To please the profane, and to grieve the godly — I may not.”

Subtle said, “Well, Ananias, you shall overcome.”

Tribulation Wholesome said to Subtle, “It is an ignorant zeal that haunts him, sir. But truly, other than that, he is a very faithful brother, a tailor who repairs garments and so is an example of frugality, and a man who has by revelation a competent knowledge of the truth.”

Subtle asked, “Has he a competent sum there in his money bag to buy the goods inside? I have been made the guardian of these orphans and must for the sake of charity, and conscience, now see the most is made for my poor orphans although I also want the brethren to be gainers: In this situation, I am trying to make a win-win bargain. The orphans’ goods are inside. When you have viewed and bought them and taken the inventory of what they are, they will be ready for projection. There will be nothing more to do than cast on the alchemical medicine and transmute the metal. As much silver as there is tin inside, and as much gold as there is brass inside, I will give to you. I will transmute it for you, weight for weight. The weight of tin now will be the



weight of silver later, and the weight of brass now will be the weight of gold later.”

Tribulation Wholesome asked, “But how long a time, sir, must the saints wait yet?”

Subtle replied, “Let me see, how’s the Moon now? Eight, nine, ten days hence, he will be silver potato, then three days must pass before he citronise. In some fifteen days, the magisterium — the philosopher’s stone — will be perfected.”

Ananias said, “About the second day of the third week, in the ninth month!”

He avoided the names of days and months because so many were based on the names of pagan gods or pagans. For example, August is named after Caesar Augustus, and Thursday is “Thor’s day.” Thor is a Nordic god.

Ananias was using an old-fashioned calendar that began with March — Anabaptists believed that God created the world in March. Today was November 1, and the philosopher’s stone would be ready on November 16.

“Yes, my good Ananias,” Subtle said.

Tribulation Wholesome asked Subtle, “What will the price of the orphans’ goods come to, do you think?”

Subtle said, “Approximately a hundred marks; the metal goods are as much as three filled carts, which are unladed now. You’ll make six millions from them — but I must have more coals purchased and brought in.”

“What!” Tribulation Wholesome said.

“Another load,” Subtle said, “and then we have finished. We must now increase our fire to *ignis ardens*, we are past *fimus equinus*, *balnei*, *cineris*, and all those lesser heats.”

*Ignis ardens* is the hottest fire; *fimur equinus* is the fire of horse dung, the least hot fire. In “creating” the philosopher’s stone, alchemists went from the least hot fire to the hottest fire.

Subtle said, “If the holy purse should with this draught fall low and the saints need a ready sum of money, I have a trick to melt the pewter you shall buy now, immediately, and with a tincture to color the pewter you shall make as good Dutch dollars as any are in Holland.”

Subtle was advising the Anabaptists to counterfeit Dutch currency. Dutch dollars were silver coins.

“Can you do that?” Tribulation Wholesome asked.

“Yes, and they shall pass the third examination,” Subtle replied.

The counterfeit coins would be so good that they could pass repeated close inspections.

Ananias said, “This will be joyful tidings to the brethren.”

“But you must keep this secret,” Subtle said.

One punishment for counterfeiters in the Middle Ages was being boiled alive; another was being pilloried and having their ears cut off.

Tribulation Wholesome said, “Yes, but wait. This act of coining, is it lawful?”

Ananias was eager to be a counterfeiter: “Lawful? We know no magistrate, or if we did, this is foreign coin.”

Anabaptists believed in no civil magistrate when it came to religious matters. When it came to religious matters, the only lawgiver was God.

Contrary to what Ananias thought, whether the money being counterfeited was foreign or not didn't matter; in England, it was illegal to counterfeit foreign money as well as domestic money.

Subtle said, "It is no coining, sir. It is only casting metal."

"Ha! You distinguish the two well," Tribulation Wholesome said. "Casting of money may be lawful."

Coining money and casting money in this case were the same action; both were counterfeiting money. If a government casts money, it is lawful. If alchemists or Anabaptists cast money, it is NOT lawful. Subtle was parodying Anabaptist casuistry.

"It is, sir," Ananias said.

"Truly, I take it to be so," Tribulation Wholesome said.

"There is no scruple, sir, to be made about it," Subtle said. "Believe Ananias: This case of conscience he is studied in. He knows the right thing for an Anabaptist to do."

Tribulation Wholesome said, "I'll bring this matter to the attention of the brethren."

"The brethren shall approve it as lawful," Ananias said. "Don't doubt that. Where shall it be done?"

Knocking sounded at the door.

"We'll talk about that soon," Subtle said. "There's someone who has come to speak with me. Go inside, please, and view the portions of metal. Inside is the whole inventory. I'll come to you soon."

Tribulation Wholesome and Ananias went inside.

Subtle asked, "Who is it?"

He opened the door and said, “Face! Come inside.”

— 3.3 —

Face, wearing the Captain’s uniform, came inside.

Subtle asked him, “How are you now? Did you get a good prize? Did you get a good profit?”

“Good pox!” Face complained. “Yonder costive cheater — Surly — never showed up.”

“Costive” means “constipated.” Face was using the word as an insult.

Subtle asked, “What happened?”

“I walked around the rotunda at the Temple Church until now, and no Surly showed up.”

“And have you quit him?” Subtle asked. “Have you given up on him?”

“Quit him!” Face said, “If Hell would quit — and acquit — him, too, he would be happy. By God’s light! Would you have me stalk like a mill-jade — a horse walking around and around in a circle to grind grain — all day, for one who will not yield us grains of profit? I know him of old — I know his type.”

“Oh, if we had gulled and cheated him,” Subtle said, “it would have shown our mastery — it would be something to boast about!”

“Let him go, black boy!” Face said. “Don’t think about him.”

Subtle’s face was black with soot. Although a philosopher’s stone could never be created, he kept a laboratory stocked with at least a few chemicals and he kept a fire going at least sometimes. A sooty face helped show that he was an alchemist.

Face continued, “Instead, turn your attention to this — here’s some fresh news that may possess and interest you. My dear delicious comrade and my fellow part-time pimp, I need to tell you that a noble count, a Don of Spain, who has come here to England because of his religious convictions as a Protestant, and who has brought munition — money and clothing — with him, six great Dutch slops, aka baggy trousers, bigger than three Dutch hoys, aka small coastal ships, besides round trunk-hose, aka another kind of odd clothing, furnished with pistolets, aka Spanish gold coins, and pieces of eight, aka Spanish dollars, will soon be here, my rogue, to enjoy a bath (that is the reason he gives for coming here) and to make his battery upon our Doll Common, our castle, our Cinque Port, our Dover pier, our what you will.”

Bathhouses were whorehouses, and the Spanish Don intended to sleep with Doll. Face humorously described this as a Spanish Armada making an assault upon England’s ports.

Face continued, “Where is she? She must prepare perfumes, delicate linen, the bath in chief, a banquet, and her wit, for she must milk his epididimas.”

At higher-class brothels, the john received a bath before having sex with a prostitute. An epididimas is a tube carrying sperm from the testicles. Doll was supposed to milk his balls; that is, cause him to ejaculate.

Face asked, “Where is the doxy?”

A doxy is a prostitute.

“I’ll send her to you,” Subtle said. “I need to dispatch my brace of little John Leidens, and come here again myself.”

A brace is a pair, and John Leiden was an Anabaptist. Subtle was referring to Tribulation Wholesome and Ananias.

“Are they inside then?” Face asked.

“Yes,” Subtle said. “They are numbering the sum they will pay for Sir Epicure Mammon’s metal goods.”

“How much?” Face asked.

“A hundred marks, boy,” Subtle said, and then he exited.

Face said, “Why, this is a lucky day. Ten pounds from Mammon! Three from my clerk! A Portuguese gold coin from my grocer/tobacconist! A hundred marks from the brethren! In addition, there will be reversions, aka future profits, and estates to come in with the widow, and additional profits from my Spanish Count! My share of the profits today will not be bought for forty —”

Doll Common entered the room.

“What do you want?” she asked.

“Pounds, dainty Dorothy!” Face said. “I want money! Are you so near?”

He meant, *Do you want what I want?*

“Yes,” Doll replied. “Say, lord General, how fares our camp?”

Face replied, “As with the few who had entrenched themselves safe, by their discipline, against a world, Doll, and laughed within those trenches, and grew fat with thinking on the booty and profit, Doll, brought in daily by their small raiding parties.”

To “laugh and grow fat” meant “hearty enjoyment” — they laughed until they grew sweaty because their cons were successful at bringing in booty and profit.

Face continued, “This dear hour, a doughty Don is taken with my Doll; and you may make his ransom what you will, my Dousabel.”

“Dousabel” comes from the French “*douce et belle*,” which means “sweet and pretty.”

Face continued, “He shall be brought here fettered with your fair looks, before he sees you; and he will be thrown on a down-bed, as dark as any dungeon, where you shall keep him awake with your drum — your drum, my Doll, your drum — until he is as tame as the poor blackbirds were in the great frost, or bees are with a basin, and so you throw him in the swan-skin coverlet, and cambric sheets, until he work honey and wax, my little God’s-gift.”

The Spanish Don would come here, and Doll would bed him. She would use her “drum” to keep him awake until he ejaculated and became tame. “To work honey” means “to use his penis to engage in sticky sexual caresses” and the “wax” he produced would be semen. Wax is a substance secreted by bees, but “to wax” means “to grow,” and the Spanish Don’s penis would grow.

During winters that were so cold that the Thames River was covered with ice, blackbirds became so hungry that they were “tame” — they would take food from the hands of a human. According to folklore, bees would return to the hive if a basin were drummed.

Doll’s “drum” was used in a rhythmic sexual pounding.

“Doll” is a nickname for “Dorothy,” which is derived from the Greek *Dorothea*, which means “God’s-gift.”

“Who is this man, General?” Doll asked.

Face replied, “He is an *adalantado*, a grandee, girl.”

An *adalantado* is a Spanish *grandee*; a *grandee* is a Spanish nobleman of the highest rank.

Face asked, "Hasn't my Dapper been here yet?"

"No," Doll replied.

"Nor my Drugger?"

"He has not, either," Doll replied.

"A pox on them!" Face said. "They are taking so long to collect money to give to us! Such stinkards should not be seen upon these festival days."

Subtle entered the room.

Face asked, "How is everything? Have you finished with the Anabaptists?"

"All is done," Subtle said. "They are gone. The sum of money they paid is put away safe and sound, my Face. I wish we knew another businessman now who would buy Mammon's metal objects outright. I have sold them once, but if I sold them twice we would have twice the profit."

Face said, "By God's eyelid, Nab shall buy them in the expectation that he will marry the widow. He will buy the metal items in order to furnish his household."

"Excellent idea," Subtle said. "Good thinking. I pray to God he comes here soon."

Face said, "I pray that he keeps away until our new business with the Spanish Don is over and done."

Subtle asked, "But, Face, how did you come to learn about this secret Don?"

Another meaning of "secret" is "pertaining to mystical, occult matters."



Face replied, "A spirit brought me the intelligence in a paper here, as I was conjuring yonder in my circle for Surly; I have my personal spiritual attendants abroad. Your bath is famous, Subtle, by my means."

He was referring to the rotunda of Temple Church as a magician's circle, but all that had happened was that while he was walking in the rotunda looking for Surly, someone handed him a note. The note was about finding a whore to have sex with.

Face continued, "Sweet Doll, you must go tune your virginals without losing any time. Listen. Give good action. Firk like a flounder. Kiss like a scallop, close. And tickle him with your mother tongue."

Virginals was a musical instrument like the harpsichord, but Face was using the word in a sexual sense: He wanted Doll to get ready to have sex with the Spanish Don.

"Firk" is to "fuck" as "dern" is to "damn." Flounders undulate when they swim. A scallop is a shellfish; the two pieces of the shell are close together. "Tickle him with your mother tongue" is fellatio.

Face continued, "His great Verdugoship has not a jot of the English language; this will make him so much the easier to be cheated, my Dolly."

The Spanish word "*verdugo*" means either "hangman" or "a young shoot of a tree." The second meaning may mean that Face thinks the Spanish Don is young and naïve and so will be easy to cheat. The first meaning is simply an insult.

Face continued, "He will come here in a hired coach, in secret, accompanied by our own coachman, whom I have sent as guide, and no one else."

Knocking sounded at the door.

Face asked, “Who’s that?”

Doll exited to find out.

Subtle asked, “Isn’t that the Spanish Don?”

Face replied, “Oh, no. It’s too early for it to be him.”

Doll returned.

“Who is it?” Subtle asked.

“Dapper, your clerk,” Doll replied.

“This is God’s will then,” Face said.

He said to Doll, “Queen of Fairy, put your costume on.”

Doll exited.

Face said to Subtle, “And, Doctor, put on your academic robes. Let’s get this business over and done with, for God’s sake.

“It will take some time,” Subtle said.

“That’s true,” Face said. “Take the cues I give you, and the time shall be brief enough.”

Face went to the window, looked out, and said, “By God’s light, here are two more! I see Abel Drugger, and I think he has with him the angry boy, the heir, who wants to learn how to quarrel.”

“Is the widow with them?” Subtle asked.

“No, not that I see,” Face said. “Leave and get dressed.”

Subtle exited.

— 3.4 —

Dapper entered the room.

Face, who was dressed like a Captain, said to him, “Oh, sir, you are welcome. The Doctor is inside working for you. I have had to take many pains to persuade him to do it!

“He swears you’ll be the darling of the dice. He says that he never heard her highness the Queen of Fairy dote until now. Your aunt has spoken about you the most gracious words that can be thought on.”

“Shall I see her grace?” Dapper asked.

“You shall see her, and kiss her, too,” Face replied.

Abel Drugger entered the room, followed by Kastril.

Face said, “What, honest Nab! Have you brought the damask?”

“No, sir,” Drugger said. “Here’s the tobacco.”

Face said, “That is well done, Nab. Will you bring the damask, too?”

“Yes,” Drugger said. “Captain Face, here’s the gentleman, Master Kastril, whom I have brought to see the Doctor.”

“Where’s the widow?” Captain Face asked.

Drugger replied, “Sir, if Kastril likes what happens here, his sister, he says, shall come.”

“Is that so?” Captain Face said. “All in good time.”

He then asked, “Is your name Kastril, sir?”

Kastril replied, “Yes, and I’m the best of the Kastrils. I’d be sorry otherwise by fifteen hundred pounds a year.”

He was the oldest male son and so had inherited the bulk of his late father’s estate.

He asked, “Where is the Doctor? My mad tobacco-boy, here, tells me that the Doctor is a man who can do things. Has the Doctor any skill?”

“In what, sir?” Captain Face asked.

“To carry out the business of dueling — that is, to manage a quarrel fairly, upon fit terms and according to the rules,” Kastril said.

“It seems, sir, you are new to London,” Face said, “since you wonder about his ability to do that.”

Kastril, who was from the country, said, “Sir, I am not so young, but I have heard some speech of the angry boys, and seen them take tobacco in Drugger’s shop, and I can take tobacco, too, and I would like to be one of the angry boys, and go down and practice being angry in the country.”

The angry boys, aka roaring boys, were upper-class hooligans who smoked tobacco and who insulted and fought people. Dueling was illegal in England, but many people died in duels in France. The angry boys wanted to learn the rules for insulting and fighting people because the rules would let them know to what extent they could insult other people without having to fight a duel.

Face said, “Sir, as for the *duello*, the Doctor, I assure you, shall inform and educate you to the least shadow of a hair; and he will show you a document he has written. When you report to him a quarrel you are involved in, he can tell you how serious the quarrel is, and how safe or dangerous it is, and whether or not a duel to the death must be fought.

“He will let you know how the quarrel may be borne, whether in a right line, or a half circle, or else may be cast into an angle that is blunt, if not acute. All this he will demonstrate. And then, he will teach you rules for giving and receiving insults about being a liar.”

“What?” Kastril said. “To take the insult of being called a liar?”

Face replied, “Yes, in oblique he’ll show you how to take the insult, or in a circle he’ll show you how to take the insult, but never in diameter.”

To be directly accused of being a liar — for example, “You lie in your throat” — was an insult that required a duel to settle. Being accused indirectly of lying, however, need not result in a duel. There were other ways to handle the issue.

Face continued, “The whole town of London studies his theorems about quarreling, and disputes and discusses them ordinarily at the eating academies.”

The “eating academies” were ordinaries — places for eating and drinking and gambling. Face was playing with language.

Kastril asked, “Does he teach living by the wits, too?”

A person who lives by his wits is able to survive and advance himself with his intelligence. A person who lives by his wits lacks a regular source of income and often is forced to cheat others. Possibly, Kastril thought that living by one’s wits meant being witty and making puns.

Face replied, “He teaches anything whatsoever. You cannot think of any subtle subject but he reads and understands it.

“Can he teach living by one’s wits? Look at me. He made me a Captain. I was a stark pimp previously and was a novice to gambling like you, before I met with him. That was not even two months ago. I’ll tell you his method: First, he will introduce you at some ordinary eating and drinking place. He will enter you there as if you were a student.”

Apparently, Face wanted Kastril to think that Face had become a Captain as a result of winning at gambling — something he had learned from Doctor Subtle.

“No,” Kastril said. “I’ll not go there. You shall pardon me.”

“Why not, sir?” Captain Face asked.

“There’s gambling there, and tricks, and cheating.”

“What!” Face said. “Do you want to be a gallant and not gamble?”

“Yes, gambling will financially ruin a man. It will spend a man.”

“Spend a man” meant “waste a man’s wealth.”

“Spend you!” Face said. “It will repair you when you are spent. How do they live by their wits there, who have spent six times your fortunes?”

Kastril said, “What? Three thousand pounds a year!”

Apparently, this was his annual income. If he had been a younger son, he would have been poorer by fifteen hundred pounds per year. But possibly his real annual income was five hundred pounds a year, and he had been exaggerating his annual income earlier.

Face said, “Yes, forty thousand.”

Forty thousand pounds would produce a good annual income.

Face may have been stating that Kastril would definitely lose all his money gambling. Kastril wanted to learn how to live by his wits, and people with steady sources of income do not need to live by their wits.

Kastril asked, “Are there such men?”

“Yes, sir,” Captain Face replied. “And they are still gallants and dress well.”

He pointed to Dapper and said, “Here’s a young gentleman who was born to nothing. He has forty marks a year, which I count as nothing. He is to be initiated into the world of gallantry and receive a familiar spirit from the Doctor to help him win at gambling. Dapper will win, by irresistible luck, within this fortnight, enough to buy a Barony for himself. His Barony and the money he wins will cause people to treat him with great respect. They will set him at the head of the table, the position of honor, at the groom-porter’s all the Christmas season.”

A groom-porter was a court officer of the English Royal Household. He managed gambling and resolved disputes related to gambling.

Captain Face continued, “And for the whole year through, at every place, where there is gambling, they will present him with the chair of honor, the best service, the best drink and sometimes will present him with two glasses of Canary wine and pay nothing.”

Captain Face may have wanted Kastril to think that Dapper would pay nothing, but actually he had said that whoever presented Dapper with two glasses of Canary wine would pay nothing — and would possibly drink one of the glasses of wine.

Captain Face continued, “They will present him with the purest linen and the sharpest knife. The partridge will be next to his plate, and somewhere he will be presented with a dainty bed, in private, with the dainty.”

The dainty is a dainty woman — a prostitute.

All of this would be the result of the money that Dapper expected to win at gambling.

Captain Face continued, “You shall have your ordinaries bid for him, as playhouses bid for a poet.”

Poets such as William Shakespeare wrote plays. A good poet was highly valued, and Shakespeare did well financially.

Captain Face continued, “The master of the ordinary will ask him to say aloud what dish he wants, which must be buttered shrimps, and those who drink to no mouth else, will drink to his, as being the splendid president mouth of all the board. Yes, those who drink toasts to no one else will drink toasts to him.”

Kastril asked, “Do you not gull one? Are you deceiving me?”

“As God is my life, do you think that?” Captain Face said. “A cast-off commander — an unemployed military commander — who has little credit and can get only two pairs of gloves or two pairs of spurs without paying in advance, will, as swiftly as post-horses, by dealing with Doctor Subtle, arrive at competent means and money to keep himself, a woman for heterosexual sex, and a naked boy for homosexual sex in excellent fashion and be admired for it.”

Apparently, if you have enough money, you can be admired for unethical behavior. This is as true now as it was then. Quite a few highly respected rock stars have allegedly slept with underage girls. A rich USAmerican President has boasted about grabbing women “by the pussy.”

Kastril asked, “Will the Doctor teach this?”

Captain Face said, “He will do more, sir, when your land is gone, as men of spirit hate to keep earth long —”

He was saying clearly that Kastril would lose his land and so lose his income. Kastril would probably do this through gambling — Kastril had neglected to ask for a familiar spirit as Dapper had done to help him win at gambling. (Not that a familiar spirit would help him win at gambling.)



Kastril no doubt thought that being a man of spirit was a good thing.

Captain Face continued, “— in a vacation, when small money is stirring, and ordinaries are suspended until the term —”

London was much quieter during vacations between law terms.

Captain Face continued, “— he’ll show you a perspective, where on one side you shall see the faces and the persons of all sufficient young heirs in town, whose bonds are current for commodity. On the other side, you shall see the merchants’ forms, and others, who without the help of any second broker who would expect a share, will trust such parcels. In the third square, you shall see the exact street and sign where the commodity is, and does but wait to be delivered, be it pepper, soap, hops, or tobacco, oatmeal, woad (a plant used to make blue dye), or cheeses. All of these things you may so handle, to enjoy to your own use, and never stand obliged to pay for them.”

As a man who had lost his money and land and the rest of his inheritance through gambling, Kastril would have to live by his wits. The “perspective” — possibly a magic mirror — that Doctor Subtle would supposedly show him would let him know who are the young men who are being cheated in the commodities swindle — taking out a loan and getting part of the loan in much overvalued commodities. It would also show him the merchants and others who would profit from supplying the commodities. Finally, it would show him where the commodities were stored. The heirs would get the commodities, have little use for them, and store them. Kastril, who was living by his wits, would break in and steal the commodities.

“Really!” Kastril said. “Is he such a fellow?”

He thought that getting the commodities without paying for them would be wonderful.

Face replied, "Why, Nab here knows him. And then for making wedding matches for rich widows, young gentlewomen, heirs, he's the most fortunate man who can deliver the greatest amount of fortune when arranging a match. Doctor Subtle's sent to, from far and near, from all over England, by people who want to have his counsel, and to know their fortunes."

"By God's will, my suster shall see him," Kastril said.

He was a country boy, and he used the country-boy pronunciation of "sister."

"I'll tell you, sir, what he told me about Nab," Captain Face said. "It's a strange thing!"

He then said to Drugger, "By the way, you must eat no cheese, Nab. It breeds melancholy, and that same melancholy breeds worms, but forget it."

Captain Face said to Kastril, "He told me that honest Nab here was never in a tavern but once in his life."

Drugger said, "That's the truth, and no more than once."

Captain Face said, "And then he was so sick —"

With a hangover, no doubt.

Drugger said, "Could he tell you that, too?"

"How else would I know it?" Captain Face replied.

Drugger said, "In truth we had been out shooting and had a piece of fat ram-mutton for supper, and it lay so heavy on my stomach —"

Captain Face interrupted, “And he has no head to bear any wine; for what with the noise of the fiddlers, and care of his shop, for he dares to keep no servants —”

Drugger did not trust servants, and so he ran the shop by himself.

Drugger said, “My head did so ache —”

Captain Face said, “And he was eager to be brought home, Doctor Subtle told me, and then a good old woman —”

Drugger interrupted, “— yes, indeed, she dwells in Sea-coal Lane, and she did cure me with boiled ale and the plant known as pellitory of the wall. It cost me only two-pence.”

He hesitated and said, “I had another sickness that was worse than that.”

Captain Face said, “Yes, that was with the grief you suffered for being assessed at eighteen-pence for the water-work.”

Pump houses were being built in London to provide Thames River water to houses.

Drugger said, “That’s the truth, and it was likely to have cost me almost my life.”

“Your hair fell out?” Captain Face asked.

“Yes, sir,” Drugger said.

Baldness can be a sign of syphilis.

Drugger added, “The high assessment was done out of spite.”

Captain Face said, “That’s correct — so says Doctor Subtle.”

Kastril said, “Please, tobacco-boy, go fetch my suster. I’ll see this learned boy before I go, and so shall she.”

Captain Face said, “Sir, he is busy now, but if you have a sister to fetch hither, perhaps your own efforts may bring her here sooner, and he by that time will be free.”

Kastril said, “I am leaving.”

He exited.

Captain Face said, “Drugger, the widow is yours! You shall marry her! The damask!”

Abel Drugger exited.

Captain Face thought, *Subtle and I must wrestle to decide who marries the widow.*

Subtle was an older man, so Face would almost certainly win the wrestling match.

Face said out loud, “Come on, Master Dapper, you see how I turn clients here away so that we can give your cause swift dispatch. Have you performed the ceremonies we prescribed for you?”

Dapper replied, “Yes, I used the vinegar, and I put on a clean shirt.”

Captain Face said, “That’s good. That clean shirt may do you more good than you think. The Queen of Fairy, your aunt, is on fire, although she will not show it, to have a sight of you. Have you provided for her grace’s servants?”

Dapper was supposed to bring money for the servants of the Queen of Fairy.

Dapper replied, “Yes, here are six score Edward shillings.”

“Good!” Captain Face said.

These were shillings minted during the reign of King Edward VI.

“And an old Harry’s sovereign.”

This was a sovereign minted during the reign of King Henry VIII.

Coins were identified by whose reign they were minted in because the amount of precious metal in the coins varied from sovereign to sovereign.

“Very good!” Captain Face said.

“And three James shillings, and an Elizabeth groat. Altogether, they are exactly twenty nobles.”

The sovereigns were King James I and Queen Elizabeth I.

“Oh, you are too exact,” Captain Face said.

He would have preferred that Dapper bring more than exactly twenty nobles.

He added, “I wish you had had the other noble in Maries.”

Queen Mary I was the sovereign between King Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth I. After she married, both her portrait and her husband’s portrait appeared on coins.

Dapper said, “I have some Philip and Maries.”

These were coins bearing the faces of Queen Mary of England and her husband, the future King Philip II of Spain. Maries were rare because Bloody Mary reigned only one year before marrying Philip. She began her reign in July 1553 and married Philip of Spain on 25 July 1554. Philip of Spain became King Philip II of Spain on 16 January 1556, and Queen Mary died on 17 November 1558.

Captain Face said, “Yes, those are the best of all.”

Those coins were the best of all because they were in addition to the coins he had already received. Or Face may

have been making a joke because those two sovereigns were NOT the best of all. Queen Mary I attempted to make England a Catholic nation again. Some Protestant bishops, including Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, were burnt at the stake, and other violence broke out, resulting in her being known as Bloody Mary. As King Philip II of Spain, Philip attempted to invade England with the Spanish Armada in 1588. Fortunately, England decisively defeated the Spanish Armada.

Captain Face asked, "Where are they?"

Dapper handed the coins to Captain Face, who said, "Listen, I hear the Doctor."

— 3.5 —

Subtle, disguised as and wearing the costume of a Priest of Fairy, entered the room. He was carrying a strip of cloth.

Using a feigned voice, Subtle asked, "Has her grace's cousin come yet?"

Captain Face said, "He has come."

"And is he fasting?" Subtle asked.

"Yes."

"And has he cried 'hum'?"

Face said to Dapper, "Thrice, you must answer."

Dapper said, "Thrice."

Subtle asked, "And as often has he said 'buzz'?"

Face said to Dapper, "If you have, say so."

Dapper said, "I have."

Subtle said, “Then, to her cuz, aka nephew, hoping that he has vinegared his senses as he was bid, the Fairy Queen dispenses by me this robe, the petticoat of Lady Fortune. This petticoat he immediately must put on, she importunes. And though to Lady Fortune near be her petticoat, yet nearer is her smock, the Queen does note.”

A smock is a ladies’ undergarment. Subtle was identifying Lady Fortune and the Queen of Fairy as the same person.

Subtle, disguised as a Priest of Fairy, continued, “And therefore, a piece of her smock the Queen of Fairy has sent. When Dapper was a child, a piece of her smock was rent to wrap him in, and she requests that for a scarf he now will wear it with as much love as then her grace did tear it, around his eyes to show he is fortunate.”

They used the piece of ladies’ underwear to blindfold Dapper’s eyes.

Subtle continued, still using a feigned voice, “And, trusting to her to make his fortune and estate, the Queen of Fairy wants him to throw away all worldly pelf — all money and valuables — that are on him. Once he has performed that, she will not doubt him.”

“She need not doubt him, sir,” Face said to the disguised Subtle. “Alas, he has nothing, except what he will part with as willingly, upon her grace’s word —”

He said to Dapper, “Throw away your wallet.”

He said to Subtle, “— as she would ask it.”

He said to Dapper, “Throw away handkerchiefs and all.”

He said to Subtle, “Whatever she orders, he’ll obey.”

Dapper threw away his wallet and handkerchiefs. In this society, handkerchiefs were expensive.

Face said to Dapper, “If you have a ring on you, cast it away, or if you have a silver seal at your wrist, throw it away, too. Her grace will send her fairies here to search you; therefore, deal directly with her highness. If they find that you conceal a mite, you are ruined.”

A mite is a small coin of little monetary value.

In Luke 20:45-47 and 21:1-4 we read:

45 Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples,

46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;

47 Which devour widows’ houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

*1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.*

*2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.*

*3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:*

*4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. (King James Version)*

The same story is told in Mark 12:38-44.

Face and Subtle are much more like the scribes who devour widows’ houses than they are like the widow.

Dapper said, “Truly, that’s all.”

“All what?” Face asked.



“All my money,” Dapper said. “I am telling the truth.”

Face said, “Keep nothing that is transitory about you.”

“Transitory” means “belonging to this transitory world.” That includes money and other wealth.

Face whispered to Subtle, “Tell Doll to play music.”

He then said to the blindfolded Dapper, “Look, the elves have come—”

Doll played on a cittern in the next room.

Face continued, “— to pinch you, if you are not telling the truth. You have been warned.”

Face and Subtle pinched the blindfolded Dapper, who said, “Ow! I have a paper with a spur-royal in it.”

A spur-royal is a coin — a royal that has the design of a Sun and Sunbeams on it. The Sun and Sunbeams look like the rowel of a spur. A rowel is a small wheel with radiating spokes.

Face and Subtle began to speak in “Fairy,” using feigned voices. When Face translated the Fairy language, he used his normal voice. Subtle used two disguised voices: one for the Priest of Fairy, and one for the fairy.

Face said, “*Ti, ti.*”

“They knew it, they say.”

Subtle said, “*Ti, ti, ti, ta.*”

“He has more yet.”

Face said, “*Ti, ti-ti-ti.*”

“In the other pocket?”

Subtle said, “*Titi, titi, titi, titi, titi.*”

“The fairies must pinch him or he will never confess, they say.”

Face and Subtle pinched Dapper again.

Dapper said, “Ow! Ow!”

Face said, “No, please hold back — he is her grace’s nephew.

“*Ti, ti, ti?*”

“The fairies say this: What do you care? In good faith, you shall care.”

Face then said to Dapper, “Deal plainly, sir, and shame the fairies. Show that you are an innocent.”

The phrase “an innocent” means both “a not-guilty person” and “a fool.”

Dapper said, “I swear by this good light, I have nothing.”

Subtle said, “*Ti, ti, ti, ti, to, ta.*”

“He does equivocate, she says.”

“To equivocate” means “to conceal the truth by using deceptive language.”

Subtle continued, “*Ti, ti do ti, ti ti do, ti da.*”

“And he swears by the light when he is blinded.”

Dapper said, “I swear by this good dark, I have nothing but a half-crown of gold about my wrist, that my love gave me, and I have a leaden heart I have worn since she forsook me.”

Face said, “I thought it was something. And would you incur your aunt’s displeasure for these trifles? Come, I had rather you had thrown away twenty half-crowns.”

Indeed, he would. Twenty half-crowns are worth twenty times one half-crown.

Dapper took off the half-crown that he was wearing as a bracelet.

Face told him, “You may wear your leaden heart still.”

Lead is not a precious metal.

Doll entered the room hastily.

Face and Subtle went to Doll and talked to her quietly so that Dapper would not overhear them.

Face asked, “What is it?”

Subtle asked, “What is your news, Doll?”

Doll replied, “Yonder’s your Knight, Sir Mammon.”

Face said, “By God’s eyelid, we never thought of him until now! Where is he?”

Doll replied, “Here next to this room; he is at the door.”

Subtle said to Face, “And you are not ready to meet him! You are dressed as Captain Face, not as Lungs!”

He then ordered, “Doll, get Lungs’ suit of clothing.”

Doll exited.

Subtle said to Face, “He must not be sent back.”

Face said, “You are correct. We must keep him here. What shall we do with this puffin we have here, now he’s on the spit?”

The puffin was Dapper. Puffins were seabirds whose young puffed up their feathers and looked plump and were considered a delicacy. (By the way, in this culture, proud people were called puffins.)

Dapper was metaphorically on the spit, ready to be roasted. Face and Subtle were getting everything of value that they could get from him.

Subtle said, “Why, we’ll lay him back awhile, with some excuse. Let’s put him on the back burner. Sir Epicure Mammon is the big prize — the one we can get the most money from.”

Doll came back with the clothes Face wore when he was Lungs, the alchemist’s assistant.

Subtle said loudly, “*Ti, ti, ti, ti, ti, ti.*”

“Would her grace speak with me? I am coming.”

He then said quietly, “Help me dress Face quickly, Doll!”

They began to dress him.

Knocking sounded on the door.

Face asked, “Who’s there?”

Hearing the answer, he said, “Sir Epicure, my master’s in the way of my coming to you — he can’t know you’re here. Please walk three or four turns around the room, just until Subtle’s back is turned, and I’ll be able to serve you.”

He then whispered, “Quickly, Doll!”

Subtle went to Dapper and said out loud, “Her grace the Queen of Fairy commends her kindly to you, master Dapper.”

“I long to see her grace,” Dapper replied.

Subtle said, “She now is eating dinner in her bed, and she has sent you from her own private plate a dead mouse and a piece of gingerbread to be merry with and appease your

hunger, lest you faint with fasting. Yet if you could hold out until she sees you, she says, it would be better for you.”

Face said, “Sir, he shall hold out, even if it were for two hours, for her highness, I can assure you of that. We will not lose all we have done.”

Subtle said, “He must neither see nor speak to anybody until then.”

Face said, “For that reason we’ll put, sir, a gag in his mouth.”

“A gag of what?” Subtle asked.

“Of gingerbread,” Face said. “You put it in. He who has pleased her grace thus far shall not now shrink back because of a little inconvenience.”

He said to Dapper, “Open your mouth, sir, and let him put the gag in.”

Subtle put the gingerbread in Dapper’s mouth.

Subtle and Doll spoke quietly together so that Dapper could not hear them.

Subtle asked, “Where shall we put him now?”

Doll replied, “In the privy.”

A privy is a latrine.

Subtle said to Dapper, “Come along, sir, I now must show you Lady Fortune’s privy lodgings.”

“Privy lodgings” are “private rooms.”

Face asked, “Are they perfumed, and is his bath ready?”

“All is ready,” Subtle said. “Only the fumigation’s somewhat strong.”

One meaning of “fumigating” is “perfuming with aromatic plants.” Another meaning is “generating odorous fumes.”

Yes, the fumigation of a privy can be somewhat strong.

Subtle led Dapper away, and Doll Common carried away Face’s Captain’s uniform.

Face said, “Sir Epicure, I am yours, sir, by and by.”

He finished dressing as Lungs while Subtle, Doll, and Dapper exited.

## ACT 4 (*The Alchemist*)

### — 4.1 —

Face, now dressed as Lungs, opened the door, let in Sir Epicure Mammon, and said, “Sir, you have come here at the absolute best time.”

“Where’s your master?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

“He is now preparing for projection, sir,” Face said. “Your metal stuff will all be changed into precious metals shortly.”

“Into gold?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

“Into gold and silver, sir.”

“I don’t care for silver.”

“Yes, sir,” Face said, “but there will be a little silver that you can give to beggars.”

“Where’s the lady?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

“She is at hand here,” Face said. “I have told her such brave and splendid things about you, especially about your generosity and your noble spirit.”

“Have you?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

“Yes, so much that she is almost in her fit because she is so eager to see you. But, good sir, speak about no theology in your conference with her for fear of putting her in a rage — a mad fit.”

“I promise you I won’t,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

Face said, “If you do, six men will not hold her down, and then, if the old man — Doctor Subtle — should hear or see you —”

“Don’t worry about that,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

Face continued, “— the whole house, sir, would run mad. You know it. You know how scrupulous he is, and violent, against the least act of sin.

“Medicine, or mathematics, poetry, affairs of state, or bawdry, as I told you, she will endure, and never be startled at hearing about them, but say to her no word of religious controversy.”

“You have schooled me well, good Ulen.”

“And you must praise her family, remember that,” Face said, “and her nobility.”

“Leave it to me,” Sir Epicure Mammon said. “No genealogist at the College of Heralds, no, nor antiquary, aka student of history, Lungs, shall do it better. Go.”

Face thought, *Why, this is yet a kind of modern happiness, to have Doll Common thought to be a great lady.*

In this society, “happiness” meant both “good fortune” and “fitness,” and “modern” meant “common,” “trivial,” and “current.”

In other words, this is one of the things that Face was thinking: *In our modern society, how fitting it is that a prostitute such as Doll Common should be thought to be a great lady.*

Face exited to get Doll.

Alone, Sir Epicure Mammon said to himself, “Now, Epicure, heighten yourself.”

By “heighten yourself,” he meant, “Raise your level of discourse, and talk like a courtier.” Readers may be forgiven if they thought he meant, “Heighten and raise a certain part of my body.”



He continued, “Talk to her all in gold. Rain on her as many showers as Jove did drops on his Danaë.”

Jupiter, the Roman King of the gods, had appeared to Danaë after taking the form of a shower of gold. He made her pregnant, and she gave birth to the hero Perseus.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “Show that the god is a miser, compared with me, Mammon. What! The philosopher’s stone will do it. She shall feel gold, taste gold, hear gold, sleep gold; indeed, we will *concupere* gold.”

*Concupere* is Latin for “to have sex.”

He continued, “I will be puissant and mighty in my talk to her.”

He heard a noise and said, “Here she comes.”

Face and Doll entered the room. Doll was richly dressed.

Face whispered to Doll, “Up and at him, Doll. Suckle him and nurse him along as if he were a baby.”

He then said out loud, “This is the noble Knight, I told your ladyship —”

Sir Epicure Mammon interrupted, “Madam, with your pardon, I kiss your vesture.”

“Vesture” is elevated language for “clothing” or “dress.”

Doll replied, “Sir, I would be uncivil if I were to endure that. My lip to you, sir.”

To kiss a lady’s dress is often not acceptable. When Doll replied, “My lip to you, sir,” she had her choice of two responses: 1) Doll could curl her lip at Sir Epicure Mammon to show that she was rejecting his uncivilized behavior, or 2) Doll could kiss him. Doll had to decide whether to play hard to get.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “I hope my lord your brother is in health, lady.”

Doll replied, “My lord, my brother is, although I am no lady, sir.”

One meaning of “lady” is “the female equivalent of a lord.” It has another meaning that also did not pertain to Doll.

Face thought, *Well said, my Guinea bird.*

“Guinea bird” is slang for “prostitute.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Right noble madam —”

Face thought, *Oh, we shall have most fierce idolatry — make it iDOLLatry.*

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “— it is your prerogative; it is your right to be called ‘lady.’”

Doll replied, “Rather, it is your courtesy that makes you call me ‘lady.’”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Even if there were nothing else to make known your virtues to me, your answers reveal your breeding and your blood.”

Doll said, “Blood we boast none, sir. I am a poor Baron’s daughter.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Poor! And he begat you? Don’t be profane. Had your father slept all the happy remnant of his life after that act of procreation, just lying there still and panting, he would have done enough to make himself, his issue, and his posterity noble.”

Doll said, “Sir, although we may be said to lack the gilt and trappings, the dress of honor, yet we strive to keep the seeds and the materials.”

She was using the language of alchemy. “The seeds and the materials” meant “the essential elements.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “I see that the old ingredient, virtue, was not lost, nor was lost the drug money used to make your compound.”

He also was using the language of alchemy.

He continued, “There is a strange — foreign — nobility in your eye, this lip, that chin! I think you resemble one of the Austrian Princes.”

The Austrian Princes were Hapsburgs; the Hapsburg lip was a prominent lower lip. Look up images of the Hapsburg lip, and you will see that his attempt to flatter Doll was an abject failure. Being of royal blood does not necessarily mean that one is good looking. Chances are, Sir Epicure Mammon knew little about what the Austrian Princes looked like.

Face thought, *Very likely! Her father was an Irish costermonger. He sold fruit from a cart.*

A “coster” is an apple, but costermongers sold other kinds of fruit, too.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “The house of Valois had just such a nose, and such a forehead the Medici of Florence still boast.”

Doll said, “Truly, I have been likened to all these Princes.”

Face thought, *I’ll be sworn that it is true because I heard it.*

Some guys, such as Sir Epicure Mammon, will say anything to get laid. In Doll’s case, “How much?” and “OK” are usually all that need to be said.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “I don’t see how! You don’t resemble any one Prince; rather, you have the very best of all their features.”

Face thought, *I'll go into another room and laugh.*

He exited.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “You have a certain touch, or air, that sparkles a divinity, beyond an earthly beauty!”

Doll said, “Oh, you are playing the role of a courtier.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Good lady, give me permission —”

Doll interrupted, “Truly, I may not give you permission to mock me, sir.”

Sir Epicure Mammon finished, “— to burn in this sweet flame of love. The phoenix never knew a nobler death.”

The phoenix was a mythological Arabian bird that lived for five hundred years, burned itself up, and rose reborn from the ashes.

Doll said, “Now you court the courtier.”

She meant that he was out-doing the courtier — speaking more extravagant praise than even a courtier would speak.

She continued, “You destroy what you would build. This art, sir, that you put in your words calls your whole faith into question. By speaking such extravagant praise, you make me question your praise.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “By my soul —”

Doll interrupted, “Oaths are made of the same air, sir. You can swear exaggerated oaths just like you say exaggerated praise.”

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “— Nature never bestowed upon mortality a more unblemished, a more harmonious

physical appearance. She played the stepdame in all other faces.”

Stepmothers were thought to be less generous and caring than mothers.

He said, “Sweet madam, let me be particular —”

This society used “particular” to mean “familiar, intimate, close, friendly,” but Doll deliberately interpreted “particular” to mean *sexually* “familiar, intimate, close, friendly.”

She interrupted, “‘Particular,’ sir! I hope you know your distance!”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “I don’t mean ‘particular’ in any ill sense, sweet lady, but merely to be friendly enough to you to ask how your fair graces pass the hours? I see you are lodged here in the house of a rare and splendid man, an excellent artist, but what’s that to you? Why are you here?”

Doll said, “Yes, he is a rare and splendid man, sir. I study mathematics and astrology, as well as distillation and alchemy, here.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Oh, I see! I beg your pardon. He’s a divine instructor! He can extract the souls of all things by his art. He can call all the virtues and the miracles of the Sun into a temperate furnace. He can teach dull Nature what her own forces are. He is a man whom the Emperor has courted above Kelley and has sent him medals and chains — necklaces — to invite him to come to his court.”

Edward Kelley was an associate of John Dee; he was also an alchemist who claimed to have the philosopher’s stone. Because of this claim, Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II of Germany invited him to his court. When Edward Kelley failed to make gold, Rudolph II had him imprisoned. In this

society, chains can be necklaces, but Edward Kelley wore a different kind of chains in prison.

Doll said, “Yes, and for his medical art, sir —”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “His medical art is above the medical art of Aesculapius, who drew the envy of the Thunderer! I know all this, and more.”

Aesculapius was an ancient Greek doctor who could revive the dead. Out of fear that Aesculapius would make humans immortal, Zeus — known as the Thunderer because of the thunderbolts he threw as weapons — killed him.

Doll said, “Indeed I am wholly taken, sir, with these studies that contemplate Nature.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “That is a noble quality to have, but this form of yours was not intended to so dark a use. Had you been crooked, foul, of some coarse mold, a cloister would have done well as a place for you, but for such a physical appearance as yours, which might stand up the glory of a Kingdom, to live as a recluse is a complete solecism, even if it were in a nunnery.”

A solecism is an error; Sir Epicure Mammon believed it would be an “error” for Doll to sleep alone. A woman like her ought not to be “sole” — alone.

He continued, “It must not be. I wonder that my lord your brother would permit it. You should spend half my land first, if I were he. Doesn’t this diamond look better on my finger than in the quarry?”

“Yes,” Doll said.

“Why, you are like this diamond,” Sir Epicure Mammon said. “You were created, lady, for the light. Here, you shall wear it; take it, this is the first pledge of what I will say now. This will bind you to believe me.”

Taking the diamond, Doll asked, “To bind me in chains of adamant?”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Yes, the strongest bands. And hear a secret, too: Here, by your side, stands at this time the happiest man in Europe.”

“Happiest” meant “most fortunate” and “with the most fortune.”

Doll asked, “You are contented, sir?”

“Yes, in truth I am the envy of Princes and the fear of states.”

Princes would envy him because of his large amount of gold, and states — governments — would fear him because such a surplus of gold could wreck the economy.

“Do you say so, Sir Epicure?”

“Yes, and you shall be the proof of it, daughter of honor. I have cast my eye upon your beautiful form, and I will raise this beauty above all titles of rank.”

“You mean no treason, sir?” Doll asked.

“No, I will take away that suspicion from you,” Sir Epicure Mammon said. “I am the lord of the philosopher’s stone, and you are the lady of it.”

“What, sir!” Doll said. “Do you really have that?”

“I am the master of the mastery,” he said.

He meant that he was the master of the alchemist who had mastered the art of making the philosopher’s stone.

He continued, “This day the good old wretch of the house here has made the philosopher’s stone for us. Now he’s busy at projection. Think therefore what is your first wish now. Let me hear it, and it shall rain into your lap. It will be no

shower of gold, but instead it will be floods of gold, whole cataracts, a deluge, that will beget a nation's inhabitants with you."

Zeus had used one shower of gold to be able to sleep with Danaë, and they had had one son. Sir Epicure Mammon intended to use whole floods of gold to sleep many times with Doll and to have many children with her.

Doll said, "You are pleased, sir, to work on the ambition of our sex."

Apparently, according to Doll the ambition of women is to be very rich and to have many children.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, "I am pleased the glory of her sex should know that this nook, here, of the Blackfriars area is no climate for her to live obscurely in and learn medicine and surgery that would be fit for the constable's wife living in part of a county in Essex."

The constable's wife could learn medicine and surgery that she could use to help other people, or someone such as Doll could learn medicine and surgery in order to help people such as the constable's wife. Either way, people would be helping people — constables certainly also help other people by keeping law and order. This is in contrast to the life that Sir Epicure Mammon wanted Doll and himself to lead — life that is purely selfish.

He continued, "Instead, you should come forth, and taste the air of palaces. You should eat and drink the toils of empirical physicians, and their boasted practice. Their remedies include tincture of pearl, and coral, gold, and amber."

Tincture of pearl was supposed to help the heart. Coralline was a sea-moss that was supposed to increase strength. *Aurum potabile*, Latin for "drinkable gold," was an



alchemical medicine. People wore amber bracelets in an attempt to find love.

He continued, “You should be seen at feasts and triumphs. You should have people ask about you, ‘What miracle is she?’ You should set all the eyes of people at court on fire, like a magnifying glass that is used to start fires, and you should burn their eyes to cinders because the jewels of twenty states adorn you, and the light emanating from the jewels and you strikes out the stars with the result that, when your name is mentioned, Queens look pale. You and I, just by showing our love, can cause Nero’s Poppaea to be lost in story! Thus will we have it.”

Poppaea was first the Roman Emperor Nero’s mistress and then his second wife. Odd stories were told about her and Nero, such as that Nero murdered his mother and divorced and later murdered his first wife so he could marry Poppaea. Supposedly, she bathed in the milk of asses. Nero is said to have killed her by kicking her in the abdomen while she was pregnant.

Sir Epicure Mammon, by saying that the romance of Doll and himself would make the romance of Nero and Poppaea become only a story when contrasted to their real romance, showed a lack of knowledge of ancient history.

Doll said, “I could well consent to living this kind of life, sir. But, in a monarchy, how will this be? The Prince will soon take notice, and seize both you and your philosopher’s stone, it being a wealth unfit for any private subject.”

Sir Epicure Mammon could very well end up in prison if word got out that he had a philosopher’s stone because flooding the economy with excessive amounts of gold could cause economic and political upheaval. Kings would prefer to have and control that gold themselves. Alchemists tried to work in secret because of the danger of imprisonment.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Yes, that could happen if the Prince knew of it.”

Doll said, “You yourself boast of having the philosopher’s stone, sir.”

If Sir Epicure Mammon boasted about having it, the Prince would sooner or later learn about it.

“I boast about it to you, my life,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

Doll said, “Oh, but beware, sir! You may come to end the remnant of your days in a loathed prison if you speak about the philosopher’s stone.”

“That is no idle fear,” he replied. “We’ll therefore go with what we have, my girl, and live in a free state.”

A free state is a republic.

He continued, “There we will eat our mullets, soaked in high-country wines, sup on pheasants’ eggs, and have our cockles boiled in silver shells.”

Mullets are fish that were Roman delicacies. Cockles are mollusks. Sir Epicure Mammon greatly desired fancy foods.

He continued, “Our shrimps will swim again, as they did when they lived, but this time they will swim in a rare butter made of dolphins’ milk, whose cream looks like opals, and with these delicate meats we will set ourselves high for pleasure, and take us down again, and then renew our youth and strength with drinking the elixir of life, and so enjoy a perpetuity of life and lust!”

A certain part of his body would certainly rise high and then lower again.

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “And you shall have a wardrobe that is richer than Nature’s, and will be able always

to change your clothing, and vary it oftener, for your pride, than Nature, or than Art, her wise and almost-equal servant.”

Face entered the room and said, “Sir, you are too loud. I heard your every word in the laboratory. Go to some fitter place: the garden or the great chamber upstairs.”

He paused and then asked quietly, “How do you like her?”

Sir Epicure Mammon replied, “Excellent! Lungs, here’s something for you.”

He gave Face some money.

Face said quietly, “But listen to me. Good sir, beware, make no mention of the rabbis to her.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “We don’t even think about them.”

Face said, “Oh, that is well, sir.”

Sir Epicure Mammon and Doll exited.

Face’s complaint about the noise they were making was simply an excuse to have Sir Epicure Mammon and Doll move to a place where they could have sex. Having sex with Sir Epicure Mammon was part of Doll’s contribution to the con game.

Face called, “Subtle!”

— 4.2 —

Subtle entered the room.

Face asked, “Aren’t you laughing?”

“Yes, I am,” Subtle said. “Are they gone?”

“All’s clear.”

“The widow has come.”

“And your quarrelling disciple, Kastril?”

“Yes.”

Face said, “I must put on my Captain’s uniform again then.”

“Wait,” Subtle said. “In the character of Lungs, bring them in first.”

“I meant to,” Face said. “What is she? A *bonnibel*?”

A “*bonnibel*” is an attractive woman. The French *bonne et belle* means “good and beautiful.”

“I don’t know,” Subtle said.

“We’ll draw lots to see who marries her,” Face said. “You’ll agree to that?”

She was rich, so good looks weren’t essential.

Subtle replied, “What else?”

Face said, “Oh, for a Captain’s suit, to fall now like a curtain! Flap! Right into my lap!”

He needed to make a quick costume change.

“Go and answer the door, man,” Subtle said.

Face said, “You’ll be able to kiss her first because I am not ready. She won’t let Lungs kiss her, although she will let Captain Face kiss her.”

Subtle said, “Yes, I will kiss her first, and perhaps hit you through both the nostrils.”

The modern idiom for “hit you through both the nostrils” is “put your nose out of joint,” which means “irritate you.”

Face asked at the door, “Who do you want to speak with?”

Kastril, standing outside, asked, “Where’s Captain Face?”

Face replied, “Gone, sir. He went to see about some business.”

“Gone!”

Face said, “He’ll return quickly. But Master Doctor Subtle, his Lieutenant, is here.”

He opened the door, and Kastril, followed by Dame Pliant, came into the room.

Subtle said to Kastril, “Come near, my worshipful boy, my *terrae fili* — that is, my boy of land — make your approach.”

*Terrae fili* is Latin (vocative case). Literally, it means “son of the earth.” As an idiom, it means “bastard” — someone without property rights. If Kastril were to achieve his dream and live by his wits, he would have no land and no property rights.

Kastril and Dame Pliant walked over to him.

Subtle continued, “Welcome. I know your lusts, and your desires, and I will serve and satisfy them. Begin, charge me from thence, or thence, or in this line. Here is my center: ground your quarrel.”

His “center” was his stance. “Ground your quarrel” meant “State the reasons for your quarrel.”

Kastril wanted to learn to be an angry boy, and Subtle was starting the tutoring by asking Kastril to quarrel with him.

Kastril responded, “You lie.”

This was a great insult that could result in a duel to the death.

Subtle asked, “What, child of wrath and anger! The loud lie? For what reasons do you make that charge, my impulsive boy?”

Kastril said, “No, you look to the reasons. I am beforehand — I have made the first move.”

The art of quarreling and dueling had rules and protocol that Kastril did not know.

Normally, the accusation of lying was not made so abruptly. Also, the accuser was supposed to give reasons for making the accusation. If the accuser did not, his opponent would have the advantage of making the choice of weapons.

Subtle said, “Oh, this is no true grammar, and it is as ill logic!”

He was comparing the rules of quarreling to the rules of grammar and of logic. Earlier, Face had compared them to the rules of geometry.

Subtle continued, “You must render reasons, child, your first and second intentions, know your canons and your divisions, moods, degrees, and differences, your predicaments, substance, and accident, series extern and intern, with their causes — efficient, material, formal, and final — and have your elements perfect.”

“What is this!” Kastril said. “What is this angry tongue he talks in?”

Subtle said, “That false precept, of being beforehand, has deceived a number of people and made them enter quarrels, often, before they were aware, and afterward, against their wills.”

Many people enjoyed quarreling, but they disliked risking their lives in a duel. These drama queens wanted to make a scene, but they did not want to die. Not knowing the rules of quarreling sometimes meant that they ended up in a duel they did not want to fight.

“How must I do this then, sir?” Kastril asked.

“I ask this lady for mercy and forgiveness,” Subtle said. “I should have greeted her first.”

He kissed her and said, “I call you ‘lady,’ because you are to be one before long, my soft and buxom widow.”

In this society, the word “buxom” meant “pliant.”

“Is she going to be a lady, indeed?” Kastril said.

One way to be a lady — the female equivalent of a lord — is to be married to a wealthy and distinguished man who is a lord. The wife of a Knight or a Baron or a Count is a lady.

“Yes, or my art is an egregious liar,” Subtle replied.

“How do you know?”

“By inspection of her forehead, and subtlety of her lip, which must be tasted often in order to make a judgment.”

He kissed her again.

One meaning of the word “subtlety” is “a confection chiefly made of sugar.”

Subtle said, “By God’s light, she melts like a myrobolane — a plum-like fruit.”

Looking at her forehead, he said, “Here is yet a line, *in rivo frontis*, that tells me the man she will marry is no Knight.”

This could mean she will marry “no mere Knight.” If so, Dame Pliant’s new husband would have a higher rank. Or it could mean that Dame Pliant would marry someone of lower rank than a Knight.

“*In rivo frontis*” is Latin for “the vein of the forehead.”

Again, Subtle was baffling the mark — the intended victim — with bullshit. However, it should be pointed out that the terms he used, whether of alchemy or of the art of quarreling

or of astrology or of phrenology or of the art of palm reading were real terms, used correctly. Subtle was a learned man when it came to bullshit.

Dame Pliant asked, “What is he then, sir?”

Subtle said, “Let me see your hand. Oh, your *linea fortunae*, aka line of fortune, makes it plain. So does the *stella*, aka star, here in *monte Veneris*, aka the hill of Venus at the bottom of your thumb. But, most of all, the *junctura annularis*, aka joint of the ring finger, makes it clear.”

Subtle continued, “The man you will marry is a soldier, or a man of art, lady, but he shall have some great honor shortly.”

The soldier was Captain Face; the man of art was Subtle. The great honor to come was marriage to Dame Pliant, and possibly, lots of money from successful cons.

Dame Pliant said to her brother about Subtle, “Brother, he’s a rare and splendid man, believe me!”

Face, wearing his Captain’s uniform, entered the room.

Kastril said to his sister, “Hold your peace. Be quiet. Here comes the other rare and splendid man.”

He then said, “May God save you, Captain Face.”

“Good master Kastril!” Captain Face said. “Is this your sister?”

“Yes, sir. Will it please you to kuss her, and be proud to know her?”

“Kuss” was his country way of saying “kiss.”

“I shall be proud to know you, lady,” Face said, and then he kissed her.

Dame Pliant said, “Brother, he calls me ‘lady,’ too.”



“Yes, be quiet,” Kastril replied. “I heard it.”

He took her aside and talked to her quietly.

Face said to Subtle, “The Spanish Count has come.”

“Where is he?”

“At the door.”

“Why, you must entertain him.”

“What will you do with Kastril and Dame Subtle in the meantime?”

“Why, have them up in another room, and show them some fustian book, or the dark glass.”

“Fustian” means “worthless” and “bogus.” Originally, fustian was a cloth that was worth much less than silk but was often substituted for silk.

A dark glass is a fortune-teller’s crystal ball.

Captain Face said, “Before God, I say that Dame Pliant is a delicate dabchick! I must have her.”

A dabchick is a small waterfowl. Of course, Face was using it to mean “cute woman.”

Captain Face exited to see to the Spanish Count.

“You must, must you!” Subtle said. “Yes, if your fortune will, you must.”

He then said to Kastril, “Come, sir, Captain Face will come to us soon. I’ll take you to my chamber of demonstrations, where I will show you both the grammar and logic of quarrelling and the rhetoric of quarrelling. I will show you my whole method drawn out in tables, and I will show you my written instructions that have the several scales and degrees of quarreling drawn upon it. These instructions shall

make you able to quarrel about the breadth of a straw when seen by moonlight.”

In other words, he would teach him how to quarrel about inconsequential things, things that other people would not even notice.

He added, “And, lady, I’ll have you look in a crystal ball some half an hour so you can clear your eyesight in preparation for the time you see your fortune, which is greater than I may judge in so short a time, trust me.”

Subtle exited, followed by Kastril and Dame Pliant.

— 4.3 —

Captain Face entered the room and asked, “Where are you, Doctor Subtle?”

From another room, Subtle said, “I’ll come to you quickly.”

Captain Face said to himself, “I will have this widow, Dame Pliant, now I have seen her, on any terms.”

Subtle entered the room.

“What do you have to say?” Subtle asked.

“Have you disposed of them?” Captain Face asked. “Have you found a way to keep Kastril and his sister the widow busy?”

“I have sent them up to another room,” Subtle said.

Captain Face said, “Subtle, truly I must have this widow.”

“Is that the main thing you want to talk to me about?”

“No, but hear me out.”

“Bah,” Subtle said. “If you rebel once, Doll shall know it all. Therefore be quiet, and see how your future turns out.”

Captain Face said, “You are so violent now. Do but conceive that you are old, and you cannot service —”

A bull services and impregnates a cow; Captain Face was saying that Subtle was incapable of servicing and impregnating Dame Pliant.

“Who cannot? I?” Subtle said. “By God’s light, I will service her along with you, for a —”

Either Subtle was proposing a threesome in which both he and Face would service Dame Pliant, or he was saying that he was potent enough to service both Dame Pliant and Face.

Captain Face interrupted, “Please understand that I mean to give you monetary compensation if you let me have her.”

“I will not bargain with you,” Subtle said. “What! Sell my fortune? It is better than my birthright.”

Dame Pliant had money. Whoever married her would have access to her vagina and her money.

Subtle continued, “Do not murmur and complain. Win her, and carry her. If you grumble, Doll will know about this directly.”

Apparently, Doll was a jealous woman. Or perhaps she wanted all profits to be shared equally, and unfortunately for her, those profits would not include the rich widow’s estate. Or perhaps she simply wanted the three members of the gang — Subtle, Face, and Doll — to work together.

Subtle and Face would continue to compete for Dame Pliant, but if Face could win her consent to marry him, then he could carry her across a threshold.

Captain Face said, “Well, sir, I am silent. Will you go and help to fetch in the Spanish Don ceremoniously?”

He exited.

“I follow you, sir,” Subtle said to himself. “I know what kind of man you are. Doll and I must keep Face in awe, or he will look down on us like a tyrant.”

Captain Face returned with the Spanish Don, who was extravagantly dressed in fancy clothing, including a ruff around his neck. Neither Face nor Subtle thought that the Spanish Don could speak English, but the Spanish Don was actually Surly in disguise. Surly was hoping to get evidence to prove to Sir Epicure Mammon that Face and Subtle were con men.

Subtle, seeing the Spanish Don’s fancy clothing, said, “Brain of a tailor! Who comes here? Don John!”

Don John was the English version of Don Juan; Juan is a common Spanish name. Don Juan was a famous Spanish libertine.

The disguised Surly said, “*Senores, beso las manos a vuestras mercedes.* [Sirs, I kiss your honors’ hands.]”

Subtle said, “I wish that you had stooped a little and kissed our *años*.”

Neither Subtle nor Face knew much Spanish. In this encounter with the Spanish Don, they would sometimes speak garbled Spanish and sometimes speak a deliberate parody of Spanish.

*Años* is Spanish for “years,” but Subtle knew that Face would understand it as “anus.”

“Peace, Subtle,” Face said. “Be calm.”

“Stab me,” Subtle said. “I shall never be able to keep from laughing.”

He looked at the enormous ruff that the Spanish Don was wearing, and then he added, “He looks in that deep ruff like

a head on a platter, served in by a short cloak upon two trestles.”

The trestles were legs.

Face joined in on the fun: “Or, what do you say to a collar of brawn, cut down beneath the souse, and wriggled with a knife?”

The head being served could be a pig’s head. A “collar of brawn” is the meat of a pig’s neck. A “souse” is a pig’s ear. “Wriggled with a knife” meant that the knife would be used to carve the lines of a ruff into the pig’s neck.

Subtle said, “By God’s blood, he looks too fat to be a Spaniard.”

Face said, “Perhaps some Fleming or some Hollander begot him during the time of Fernando Alvarez, Duke of Alva.”

During 1567-1573, Fernando Alvarez was the Governor-General of the Netherlands.

Face added, “This Spanish Don could be Count Egmont’s bastard.”

In 1568, Fernando Alvarez executed Netherlands patriot and rebel Count Egmont.

Subtle said, “Don, your scurvy, yellow, Madrid face is welcome.”

“*Gratias* [Thank you],” the disguised Surly said.

Subtle said, “He speaks out of a fortification. Pray God he have no squibs in those deep sets.”

“Squibs” are explosives. “Deep sets” were the deep folds of the ruff, which Subtle was likening to the crenels of a castle’s fortifications.

The disguised Surly said, “*Por dios, senores, muy linda casa!* [By God, sirs, a very nice house!]”

Subtle asked, “What is he saying?”

“He is praising the house, I think,” Face replied. “I know no more than what he communicates with his gestures.”

Subtle said, “Yes, the *casa* [house], my precious Diego, will prove fair enough to cheat you in. Are you paying attention? You shall be cheated, Diego.”

Like Juan, Diego is a common Spanish name. From it, we get the derogatory word “*dago*” that is used to refer to native speakers of Spanish, Italian, or Portuguese.

Face said, “Cheated, do you see, my worthy Donzel, cheated.”

“Donzel” was a word Face made up: a diminutive of “Don.”

The disguised Surly said, “*Entiendo.* [I understand.]”

He did.

Not knowing what “*entiendo*” meant, Subtle said, “Do you intend it! So do we, dear Don. Have you brought the coins called pistolets or portagues, my solemn Don?”

He asked Face, “Do you feel any?”

Face felt the disguised Surly’s pockets and said, “Full.”

Subtle said, “You shall be emptied, Don, pumped and drawn dry, as they say.”

They intended for him to be emptied financially and sexually. Doll would have sex with him for money.

“You will be milked, truly, sweet Don,” Face said.

Subtle said, “You will see all the monsters; you will see the great lion of all, Don.”

Metaphorically, this meant that he would see all the sights. Lions were kept at the Tower of London. Monsters were people with disabilities: sideshow attractions. Literally, the Spanish Don would see Doll — and Subtle and Face.

The disguised Surly said, “*Con licencia, se puede ver a esta senora?* [With your permission, may I see the lady?]”

“What is he saying now?” Subtle asked.

“He is talking about the *senora* [lady].” Face replied.

Subtle said, “Oh, Don, that is the lioness, which you shall see also, my Don.”

Face said, “By God’s eyelid, Subtle, what shall we do?”

“What do you mean?”

“Why, Doll’s employed, you know. She’s with Sir Epicure Mammon.”

“That’s true,” Subtle said. “Before heaven, I don’t know what to do. He must wait, that’s all.”

“Wait!” Face said. “By no means must he be made to wait.”

“No!” Subtle said. “Why not?”

“He can’t wait unless you want to ruin everything,” Face said. “By God’s light, he will suspect that he is getting sloppy seconds, and then he will not pay, not half as well. This is a travelled punk-master, and he knows all the delays. He is a notorious hot-and-horny rascal, and he looks already rampant.”

A rampant lion is a lion that is standing on its hind legs. Face meant that the Spanish Don was horny and ready to have sex — now.

Subtle swore, “God’s death!”

He added, “And Mammon must not be troubled. He can’t be interrupted.”

“No way can he be interrupted!” Face said.

“What shall we do then?” Subtle asked.

“Think,” Face said. “You must be quick.”

The disguised Surly said, “*Entiendo que la senora es tan hermosa, pue codicio tan verla, coma la bien aventuranza de mi vida.* [I understand that the lady is so beautiful that I desire to see her as greatly as the greatest good fortune of my life.]”

Face said, “*Mi vida!* [My life!]”

In his mouth, the words sounded similar to “my widda,” aka “my widow.”

He added, “By God’s eyelid, Subtle, he puts me in mind of the widow. What do you say to persuading her to do it? Ha! What do you say to convincing her to sleep with the Spanish Don, and telling her it is her fortune? All our venture now lies on this. It is only one more man she will sleep with, and that need not concern either you or me, whichever of us ends up with her. After all, she’s a widow, and no longer a virgin. There’s no maidenhood to be feared or lost. What do you think about it, Subtle?”

“Who, I? Why —”

“The reputation of our house, too, is engaged,” Face said. “We have a reputation as a bawdy house to live up to.”



“You made me an offer for my share in the widow a short while ago,” Subtle said. “What will you give me, in faith?”

“Oh, by the light of these new circumstances,” Face said. “I’ll not buy your share of the widow now. You can have her. You know what you said to me. Just take your lot, and take your chances, sir. I say to you, Win her, and wear her out, as for me.”

“Win her and wear her” was a phrase about courting and marrying a woman. “Wear her” meant “consummate the marriage.” Face was saying to Subtle, *You can win her and wear her out in the marriage bed, as far as I’m concerned.*

Subtle said, “By God’s light, I’ll not work her as a prostitute for this Spanish Don then.”

He did not want to marry a whore.

“It is for the common cause; therefore, think about it,” Face said. “Doll otherwise must know about it. As you threatened me then, so I threaten you now.”

Presumably, Doll would be in favor of Dame Pliant sleeping with the Spanish Don if it would increase their — including Doll’s — profits. At least Face thought so.

“I don’t care,” Subtle said to himself but loud enough for Face to hear him.

He meant that he had changed his mind and didn’t care if Dame Pliant slept with the Spanish Don.

The disguised Surly said, “*Senores, porque se tarda tanto?* [Sirs, why so much delay?]”

Subtle said to himself but loud enough for Face to hear him, “Indeed, I am not fit. I am old.”

Subtle was admitting that he, Subtle, was impotent. Earlier, Face had said that Subtle was impotent, but Subtle had

denied it. But even earlier, Face had said that he and Subtle would draw straws to see who would sleep with Doll. Face believed even then that Subtle was impotent, and he was teasing him.

Subtle was admitting to himself that he was impotent and he was trying to convince himself that he did not care if Dame Pliant slept with the Spanish Don. Why should he care who had her if he could not? Still, the idea of marrying a whore bothered him. Even an impotent man does not want to be a cuckold.

Face said, "That's now no reason, sir."

He meant that Subtle's impotence was no reason not to persuade Dame Pliant to sleep with the Spanish Don. It might be a reason not to marry the widow, but that was not relevant now.

The disguised Surly asked, "*Puede ser de hazer burla de mi amor?* [Can it be that you are making fun of my love?]"

Face said, "You hear the Don, too! I swear by this air, I will call Doll, and I will loosen the hinges of our agreement to work together."

Doll, Face, and Subtle were supposed to work for the common good of each other and to share equally the profits.

Face called, "Doll!"

Subtle cursed, "A plague of hell —"

"Will you do it, then?" Face asked.

"You are a terrible rogue!" Subtle said. "I'll remember this."

What Face was doing was venal. Dame Pliant was a respectable woman who had probably slept with only one man: her late husband. Face was turning her into a whore.

He wanted to trick her into sleeping with the Spanish Don by saying that the Don would marry her.

Subtle then asked, “Will you, sir, call the widow here?”

Face said, “Yes, and I’ll take her, too, with all her faults, now I think on it better.”

“You are welcome to her with all my heart, sir,” Subtle said. “Am I discharged of the lot?”

If Face would marry the widow, Subtle was willing to persuade the widow to sleep with the Spanish Don. He did not like Face, and Face’s marrying a prostitute would be a form of revenge on him.

Face replied, “As you please.”

Subtle said, “Shake on it.”

They shook hands.

Face said, “Remember now, that upon any change of events, you will never claim the widow as yours.”

“Much good joy, and health to you, sir,” Subtle said. “Marry a whore! Fate, let me wed a witch first.”

If Dame Pliant could be persuaded to sleep with the Spanish Don, that would make her a whore in Subtle’s eyes.

The disguised Surly said, “*Por estas honradas barbas*— [By this honorable beard —]”

Subtle translated, “He swears by his beard. Go, and call the brother, too, as well as the widow.”

Face exited.

The disguised Surly said, “*Tengo duda, senores, que no me hagan alguna traycion*. [I think, sirs, that you are tricking me.]”

Hearing “*traycion*,” Subtle said, “What? Issue on?”

Using a mixture of mangled “Spanish” and English, he said, “Yes, *praesto, sennor* [quickly, señor?]. Please you *enthraitha* [enthrall?] the *chambratha* [bedchamber?], worthy Don, where if you please the Fates, in your *bathada* [bath?], you shall be soaked, and stroked and tubbed, and rubbed, and scrubbed, and fubbed, dear Don, before you go.”

As part of the Spanish Don’s sexual experience, he would be given a sensual bath — and he would be given a financial bath. The word “fubbed” meant “cheated.”

Subtle added, “You shall truly, my scurvy baboon Don, be curried, clawed and flayed, and tawed, indeed.”

He was using words that described the tanning of leather. “Curried” meant “rubbed and beaten.” “Clawed” meant “scraped.” “Flayed” meant “skinned.” “Tawed” meant “soaked in alum and salt to make it supple” or “beaten to make it flexible.”

Subtle added, “I will with greater heart go about it now, and make the widow a prostitute so much the sooner in order to be revenged on this impetuous Face. The quickly doing of it is the grace.”

#### — 4.4 —

In another room of the house, Face, Kastril, and Dame Pliant talked. Face wanted to convince Dame Pliant to sleep with the Spanish Don. One way to do that was to convince her — and her brother — that she would marry the Spanish Don. Face, however, still intended to marry the widow.

Captain Face said, “Come, lady. I knew that Doctor Subtle would not leave off until he had found the exact turning point of her fortune.”

Kastril said, “She will be a Countess, you say, a Spanish Countess, sir?”

Dame Pliant asked, “Is that better than an English Countess?”

“Better!” Face said. “By God’s light, how can you ask that question, lady?”

“She is a fool, Captain Face, you must pardon her,” Kastril said.

Captain Face said, “Ask anyone from your courtier, to your inns-of-court man, aka lawyer, to your mere milliner, and they all will tell you that your Spanish horse is the best horse, your Spanish bow is the best style of bow, your Spanish beard is the best cut of beard, your Spanish ruffs are the best ruffs to wear, your Spanish pavin is the best dance, your Spanish titillating perfume in a glove is the best perfume, and as for your Spanish pike and Spanish blade, let your poor Captain speak —”

Spanish pikes and Spanish sword blades from Toledo were of very high quality.

He heard a noise and said, “Here comes Doctor Subtle.”

Subtle, carrying a paper, entered the room.

Subtle said to Dame Pliant, “My most honored lady, for so I am now to style you, having found by this horoscope I made for you that you are to undergo an honorable fortune, very shortly.”

A now obsolete meaning of the word “undergo” is to “submit.” Face and Subtle wanted Dame Pliant to submit to the Spanish Don and have sex with him.

Subtle continued, “What will you say now, if some —”

Face interrupted, "I have told her all, sir, and I have told her right worshipful brother here that she shall be a Countess; do not delay them, sir. A Spanish Countess. Do not postpone that happiness for them."

Subtle said, "Always, my scarcely worshipful Captain Face, you can't keep a secret!"

He then said to Dame Pliant, "Well, since he has told you, madam, forgive him, and I will do the same."

"She shall do that, sir," Kastril said. "I'll look to it; it is my charge. I tell my suster what to do."

Subtle said, "Well, then. Nothing remains except to fit her love now to her fortune."

Dame Pliant said, "Truly I shall never endure a Spaniard."

"No!" Subtle said.

"Never since eighty-eight could I abide them," Dame Pliant said, "and that was some three years before I was born, in truth."

In 1588, the English Navy defeated the attacking Spanish Armada. Because of the attempted invasion of England, many English people hated Spanish people. King James I, however, wanted better international relations with Spain. Because of his efforts, Spanish things were growing fashionable at court.

Dame Pliant was born in 1591, and so she was nineteen years old.

Subtle said, "Come, you must love him, or be miserable. Choose which you will."

Captain Face picked up a rush and said, "By this good rush, persuade her, or she will cry 'strawberries' and become a seller of fruit before twelve months have passed."

In this culture, green rushes, a plant, were used as floor coverings instead of carpets.

A rush is an onslaught as well as a plant. Captain Face and Subtle would do their best to get Dame Pliant to sleep with the Spanish Don. Her brother unwittingly would help.

Face was saying that if Dame Pliant did not accept the Spanish Don, she would end up a poor fruit seller within a year.

Subtle said, “No, she will cry ‘herring and mackerel,’ which is worse. She will sell fish in the marketplace.”

“Indeed, sir!” Captain Face said.

Kastril said to his sister, “By God’s eyelid, you shall love him, or I’ll kick you.”

Dame Pliant replied, “Why, I’ll do what you want me to do, brother.”

Kastril said, “You better, or with this hand I’ll maul you.”

Face said, “Good sir, don’t be so fierce.”

“There is no need for you to be fierce, my enraged child,” Subtle said. “She will do what you tell her to do. Why, when she comes to taste the pleasures of a Countess! To be courted \_\_\_”

Face interrupted, “And kissed, and ruffled!”

To be “ruffled” is to be “fondled,” but Face was also thinking of the Spanish Don’s ruff.

Subtle said, “Yes, behind the wall hangings.”

Wall hangings in inns often hid an alcove in which sex could take place.

Face said, “And then come forth in pomp!”

Subtle said, “And know her state!”

Her state is her social rank, which would be higher than it is now if she were to marry a Spanish Count.

Face said, “She would keep all the idolaters of the chamber — the courtiers — barer to her than they are at their prayers!”

The chamber could be a reception chamber or a bedchamber. People wore hats inside, but took them off to show respect. To Dame Pliant, they would bare their head — and perhaps more.

Subtle said, “She would be serviced upon the knee!”

In other words, her servants would bend their knee to her, Or, perhaps, she would get on her knees and her servants would service her from behind the way a bull services a cow.

Face said, “And she would have her pages, ushers, footmen, and coaches —”

Subtle interrupted, “Her six mares —”

Face interrupted, “No, eight!”

Subtle continued, “— to hurry her through London, to the Exchange, Bedlam, the china-houses —”

These were places of interest in London. The New Exchanges had many dress shops and hat shops. Bedlam was a hospital for the insane; people could pay a fee to look at the patients. China-houses were shops that sold goods from the Orient.

Face said, “Yes, and have the citizens gape at her, and praise her clothing and my lord’s goose-turd bands of attendants who ride with her!”



The attendants would wear livery the color of goose-turds: dark green.

Kastril, who was impressed by social status, said, “Very splendid! By this hand of mine, you are not my suster, if you refuse to marry the Spanish Don.”

“I will not refuse, brother,” Dame Pliant said.

Disguised as the elaborately dressed Spanish Don, Surly entered the room and said, “*Que es esto, senores, que no venga? Esta tardanza me mata!* [What is this, gentlemen, that she does not come? This delay kills me!”

Face said, “The Spanish Count has come. By his art Doctor Subtle knew he would be here.”

In a poor attempt at Spanish, Subtle said, “*En gallanta madama, Don! Gallantissima!* [A gallant lady, Don! Very gallant!”]

The disguised Surly said, “*Por todos los dioses, la mas acabada hermosura, que he visto en mi vida!* [By all the gods, the most beautiful beauty whom I have seen in my life!”]

Face said, “Isn’t it a gallant language that they speak?”

“An admirable language!” Kastril said. “Is it French?”

“No, Spanish, sir,” Face replied.

Kastril said, “It goes like law French, and that, they say, is the courtliest language.”

Law French was a form of French used at the time in English courts of law, and so, yes, law French was a “courtly” language. Law French, however, was a bastard form of French that bore little resemblance to the French spoken in France.

“Listen, sir,” Face said.

The disguised Surly said, “*El sol ha perdido su lumbre, con el esplendor que trae esta dama! Valgame dios!* [The Sun has lost its light, on account of the splendor this lady brings! Oh, my God!]”

Face said to Kastril, “He admires your sister.”

“Shouldn’t she curtsy to him?” Kastril asked.

Subtle said, “By God’s will, she must go to him, man, and kiss him! It is the Spanish fashion for the women to make the first courting move.”

Face said to Kastril, “He is telling you the truth, sir. His art knows all.”

All, except for Spanish, among other things, such as ethics.

The disguised Surly asked, “*Porque no se acude?* [Why doesn’t she come to me?]”

Kastril said, “He speaks to her, I think.”

“That he does, sir,” Face replied.

The disguised Surly said, “*Por el amor de dios, que es esto que se tarda?* [For God’s sake, why is she waiting?]”

Kastril said, “She refuses to understand him!”

He then said to his sister, “Gull! Noddy! Fool!”

Dame Pliant asked him, “What did you say, brother?”

“Ass, my suster,” Kastril replied. “Go kuss him, as the cunning-man would have you. I’ll thrust a pin in your buttocks else.”

“Kuss” was his country way of pronouncing “kiss.”

Face said, “Oh, no, sir.”

The disguised Surly said, “*Senora mia, mi persona esta muy indigna de allegar a tanta hermosura.* [My lady, my person is very unworthy of attaining such beauty.]”

Dame Pliant kissed the disguised Surly, who returned her kiss.

Face said, “Does he not use her bravely?”

One meaning of “use” is “treat.”

“Bravely, indeed!” Kastril said.

Face said, “He will use her better.”

One meaning of “use” is “fuck.”

“Do you think so?” Kastril said, still thinking of “use” as “treat.”

The disguised Surly said, “*Senora, si sera sererida, entremonos.* [Lady, if it will please you, let’s go in.]”

Surly and Dame Pliant exited.

Kastril asked, “Where is he taking her?”

“Into the garden, sir,” Face said. “You have nothing to worry about. I must interpret for her.”

He was implying that he would chaperone them, although he had no intention of doing that.

Subtle whispered to Face, “Give Doll the word.”

He would give her the word that it was time for her to put on a mad act — to act as if she were suffering a fit of madness.

Face exited.

Subtle said to Kastril, “Come, my fierce child, come with me. We’ll go to our quarrelling lesson again.”

Subtle wanted to keep Kastril away from his sister and the Spanish Don.

“Agreed,” Kastril said. “I love a Spanish boy with all my heart.”

Subtle said, “Good, and by this means, sir, you shall be brother-in-law to a great Count.”

Kastril said, “Yes, I knew that right away. This match will advance the house, aka family, of the Kastrils.”

Subtle said, “I pray to God that your sister proves to be pliant!”

“Why, her name is ‘Pliant,’ by her other — first — husband,” Kastril said.

“What!” Subtle said.

“She is the Widow Pliant,” Kastril said. “Didn’t you know that?”

“No, indeed, sir,” Subtle said. “Yet, by erection of her figure, I guessed it.”

“Erection of her figure” meant “casting of her horoscope.” The phrase could also mean her posture or that her figure caused erections.

Subtle said, “Come, let’s go practice the art of arguing.”

Kastril said, “Yes, but do you think, doctor, I shall ever quarrel well?”

“I promise that you will,” Subtle said.

— 4.5 —

In another room of the house, Doll was acting as if she were suffering from a fit of madness. Sir Epicure Mammon was with her. Doll’s ravings were based on Hugh Broughton’s

book *A Concoct of Scripture* (1590). Some religious people are insane, or at least their writings make them seem to be insane.

Doll said, “For after Alexander the Great’s death —”

Mammon attempted to calm her: “Good lady —”

Doll said, “Perdiccas and Antigonus were slain, and the two who stood, Selucus and Ptolemy —”

These four people were Alexander the Great’s generals. After Alexander the Great died, these four generals divided his Kingdom and then began jousting for additional power.

Sir Epicure Mammon tried again: “Madam —”

Doll continued, “— make up the two legs, and the fourth beast, that was Gog-north, and Egypt-south, which after was called Gog-iron-leg, and South-iron-leg —”

Sir Epicure Mammon tried again: “Lady —”

Doll continued, “— and then Gog-horned. So was Egypt, too. Then Egypt-clay-leg, and Gog-clay-leg —”

Sir Epicure Mammon tried again: “Sweet madam.”

Doll continued, “— and last Gog-dust, and Egypt-dust, which fall in the last link of the fourth chain. And these are stars in story, which none see, or look at —”

Sir Epicure Mammon said to himself, “What shall I do?”

Doll continued, “— for, as he says, unless we call the rabbis, and the heathen Greeks —”

Sir Epicure Mammon tried again: “Dear lady.”

Doll continued, “— to come from Jerusalem, and from Athens, and teach the people of Great Britain —”

Wearing the clothing of the alchemical assistant Lungs, Face entered the room hastily and asked Sir Epicure Mammon, “What’s the matter, sir?”

Doll continued, “— to speak the tongue of Eber, and Javan —”

Sir Epicure Mammon replied to Face, “Oh, she’s having a fit of madness.”

Doll continued, “— we shall know nothing —”

Face said, “Death, sir, we are undone!”

Doll continued, “— where then a learned linguist shall see the ancient used communion of vowels and consonants —”

Face said, “My master, Doctor Subtle, will hear her!”

Doll continued, “— a wisdom, which Pythagoras held most high —”

Sir Epicure Mammon said to her, “Sweet honorable lady!”

Doll said, “— to comprise all sounds of voices, in few marks of letters —”

Face said, “You must never hope to lay her now.”

“Lay her” meant 1) allay, aka calm, her, and 2) take her to bed.

Doll said, “— and so we may arrive by Talmud skill, and profane Greek, to raise the building up of Helen’s house against the Ismaelite, King of Thogarma, and his Habergions brimstony, blue, and fiery, and the force of King Abaddon, and the beast of Cittim, which rabbi David Kimchi, Onkelos, and Aben Ezra do interpret to be Rome.”

As Doll babbled, Face and Sir Epicure Mammon talked.

Face asked, “How did you put her into this fit of madness?”

Sir Epicure Mammon replied, “Unfortunately, by chance I talked about a fifth monarchy I would erect with the philosopher’s stone, and she immediately started blabbing about the other four monarchies.”

Some people who studied the end times believed that a fifth monarchy would destroy the four previous monarchies that were connected in some way to the four monarchies created by the four generals who divided Alexander the Great’s empire after Alexander died. During the thousand years of the fifth monarchy, Satan would be tied up and saints would rule in the name of Jesus. Sir Epicure Mammon’s fifth kingdom was quite different. With the elixir of life, he would live for a thousand years and have sex multiple times a day.

Face recognized the source of Doll’s ideas: “Straight out of Hugh Broughton’s works! I told you so! By God’s eyelid, stop her mouth! Make her be quiet!”

“Is that the best thing to do?”

“She’ll never leave otherwise. If the old man hears her, we are but feces, sediment after alchemical distillation, and ashes.”

From another room, Subtle shouted, “What’s going on in there?”

Face, “Oh, we are lost!”

Doll stopped babbling.

Face said, “Now that she hears him, she is quiet.”

Subtle entered the room, and Doll, Face, and Sir Epicure Mammon ran in different directions, looking for exits.

Doll exited, but Sir Epicure Mammon was slower to escape.

He said, “Where shall I hide myself!”

Subtle said, “What! What sight is here? Secret deeds of darkness, and deeds that shun the light!”

He said to Face about Sir Epicure Mammon, “Bring him back. Who is he? What, my son! Oh, I have lived too long!”

Sir Epicure Mammon lied, “No, good, dear father, there was no unchaste purpose.”

“There wasn’t! Ha! And yet you fled from me, when I came in this room!”

“That was my error.”

“Your error!” Subtle said. “That was your guilt — guilt, my son. Give it the right name. It’s no wonder that I have run into problems with our great work in the laboratory since such affairs as these were happening!”

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, “Have you run into problems?”

Subtle said, “It has stood still this past half hour. And all the rest of our works — the lesser works — have regressed. Where is the instrument of wickedness — Face, my lewd and false drudge?”

Face exited — quickly.

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “No, good sir, don’t blame him. Believe me, it was against his will or knowledge. I saw her by chance.”

Subtle said, “Will you commit more sin by making excuses for a varlet?”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “I swear by my hope, it is true, sir.”

He could have been swearing by his hope for an afterlife in Heaven or by his hope for the philosopher’s stone.



Subtle said, “Then since you saw her by accident, I wonder less that you, for whom the blessing was prepared, would so tempt Heaven and lose your fortunes.”

“What do you mean, sir?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

Subtle replied, “This will retard the work for a month at least.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Why, if it does, what is the remedy? But don’t think it will happen, good father.”

He lied about himself and Doll, “Our purposes were honest; they were pure and chaste.”

Subtle said, “As they were, so the reward will prove. If your purposes were pure and chaste, you have nothing to fear. If you had sex with her, you have much to fear — the philosopher’s stone will be ruined.”

A loud explosion sounded.

Subtle said, “What now! Ah, me! God and all saints, be good to us.”

Face entered the room.

Subtle asked him, “What was that explosion?”

Face replied, “Sir, we are defeated! Everything is ruined! All the alchemical works are blown *in fumo* — up in smoke. Every glass is burst. The furnace, and everything else is torn down! It is as if a thunderbolt had been driven through the house. Retorts, receivers of distilled liquids, pelicans, bolt-heads, and all the rest of our alchemical equipment has been struck into splinters and shards!”

Subtle pretended to faint.

Face said to Sir Epicure Mammon, “Help, good sir! Coldness and death are invading him. Now, Sir Mammon,

do the fair offices of a man! You stand, shell-shocked, as if you were readier to depart this life than he.”

Knocking sounded. Doll was knocking hard on the door. She kept knocking.

Face asked, “Who’s there?”

He looked out the window and said, “My lord, the mad lady’s brother has come.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “What, Lungs!”

Face said, “His coach is at the door. Avoid his sight, for he’s as furious and hot-tempered as his sister is mad.”

“I’m in serious trouble!”

Face said, “My brain is quite undone with the fumes from the explosion, sir. I never can hope to fully recover and be myself again.”

“Is all lost, Lungs?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked. “Will nothing be preserved of all our cost?”

“Indeed, very little, sir,” Face said. “A peck of coals or so, which is cold comfort, sir.”

Sir Epicure Mammon mourned, “Oh, my horny mind! I am justly punished.”

“And so am I, sir.”

“I am cast from all my hopes —”

“Not hopes — certainties, sir.”

“— by my own base affections.”

Pretending to recover a little from fainting, Subtle said, “Oh, the curst fruits of vice and lust!”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Good father, it was my sin. Forgive it.”

Subtle said, “Why is my roof still hanging over us? Why hasn’t it fallen upon us and justly punished us because of this wicked man!”

Subtle hung his head.

Face said to Sir Epicure Mammon, “Look, sir, you grieve him now by staying in his sight. Good sir, the nobleman will come, too, and capture you, and that may breed a tragedy.”

“I’ll go,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

“Yes,” Face said, “and repent at home, sir. It may be that for some good penance you may have it yet — say, a hundred pounds donated in the charity box at Bedlam —”

The box was for money to support the insane.

“Yes,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

Face thought, — *for the restoring of such people as ... have their wits.*

“I’ll do it,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

“I’ll send someone to you to receive it,” Face said.

That someone would collect the hundred pounds but would not put it in the charity box. The money would go to the restoring of Doll, Face, and Subtle, who have their wits.

“Do,” Sir Epicure Mammon said. “Is no projection left?”

“All is blown to bits, or stinks, sir,” Face said.

“Will anything be saved that’s good for medicine, do you think?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked.

He was hoping that even if he could not have enough of the philosopher's stone to turn base metal to gold, he might have at least a little of the elixir of life.

"I cannot tell, sir," Face said. "There will be perhaps something gotten from scraping the shards that will cure the itch."

Scraping the shards on itchy skin will relieve the itch.

Face thought, *Though not your itch of mind, sir.*

He meant the itch of greed for gold.

He continued, "It shall be saved for you, and sent to your home. Good sir, exit this way for fear the lord should meet you."

Mammon exited.

Subtle raised his head and said, "Face!"

"Yes."

"Is he gone?"

"Yes, and as heavily as if all the gold he hoped for were in his blood," Face said. "Let us be lighthearted, though."

Subtle got up from the floor and said, "Yes, let us be as light as balls and jump and hit our heads against the roof for joy. There's so much of our care now cast away. Now we don't need to worry about Sir Epicure Mammon expecting to possess the philosopher's stone."

Face said, "Now we need to turn our attention to our Spanish Don."

Subtle said, "Yes, your young widow by this time has been made a Countess, Face; she has been working hard with the Spanish Don to produce a young heir for you."

In this case, Subtle believed that the honeymoon had taken place before the wedding. He was happy that Face would marry a whore.

“Good, sir,” Face said.

Sometimes people are excessively polite when they very much dislike each other.

“Take off your alchemist’s assistant’s costume, and go and greet her kindly, as a bridegroom should, after these common hazards we have been through.”

“Very well, sir,” Face said. “Will you go fetch Don Diego away, while I take care of the widow?”

Diego was a common Spanish name that Face was using to refer to the Spanish Don.

“And I will get the better of him, too, if you’ll be pleased, sir,” Subtle said. “I wish that Doll were in the widow’s place so she could pick the Spanish Don’s pockets now!”

Face said, “Why, you can do it as well as she could, if you would set your mind to it. I hope that you will prove your skill at pickpocketing.”

“I will, for your sake, sir,” Subtle said.

— 4.6 —

Surly and Dame Pliant were talking together in another room of the house. Surly was still wearing the costume of the Spanish Don, but he had revealed his true identity to Dame Pliant. Surly was being honorable, and he had not had sex with Dame Pliant.

Surly said, “Lady, you see into what hands you have fallen! You see that you are among such a nest of villains! And you see how near your honor was to have certainly caught a clap, aka a misfortune, through your credulity, if I had only been

as punctually forward as place, time, and other circumstances would have made most men. You're a beautiful woman; I wish that you were wise, too!"

Another meaning of "clap" was the venereal disease "gonorrhoea," and another meaning of "punctually forward" was "point forward." You can guess what was pointing.

Surly continued, "I am a gentleman who came here disguised only in order to find out the knaveries of this citadel, and because I might have wronged your honor and have not, I claim some interest in your love. You are, they say, a widow who is rich, and I'm a bachelor who is financially worth nothing. Your fortune in money may make me a man, as my fortune in life has preserved your reputation as a respectable woman. Think upon this, and decide whether I have deserved you or not."

"I will, sir," Dame Pliant replied.

Surly said, "And as for these household rogues, let me alone to deal with them."

Subtle entered the room, still thinking that the Spanish Don spoke no English.

He asked, "How does my noble Diego, and my dear madam Countess? Has the Count been courteous, lady? Has he been liberal and open?"

The word "liberal" at this time also meant "licentious."

Subtle continued, "Donzel, I think you look melancholic, after your *coitum* [Latin for 'sex'], and you look scurvy. Truly, I do not like the dullness of your eye. It has a heavy cast, it is upsee Dutch, and it says you are a lumpish whoremaster."

"Upsee Dutch" meant "in the manner of the Dutch," who were reputed to be heavy drinkers. In other words, Subtle

was accusing the Spanish Don of looking as if he had a hangover.

Subtle said, “Be lighter, just as I will make your pockets lighter.”

He attempted to pick the Spanish Don’s pockets.

Surly said, “Will you, Don Bawd and Pickpocket?”

He hit Subtle hard and said, “What do you think now? Are you reeling! Stand up, sir, you shall find, since I am so heavy, I’ll give you equal weight.”

Subtle shouted, “Help! Murder!”

Surly said, “No, sir, there’s no such thing as murder intended. A good cart and a clean whip shall ease you of that fear.”

The punishment that Surly intended for Subtle was being tied behind a cart and whipped as the cart was driven through public places.

Surly continued, “I am the Spanish Don whom you wanted to cheat, do you see — cheat! Where’s your Captain Face, that part-time dealer in stolen items and that full-time bawd — that wholly rascal?”

Wearing his Captain’s uniform, Face entered the room. Seeing the commotion, he looked closely at the Spanish Don and said, “What! Surly!”

“Oh, make your approach, good Captain,” Surly said. “I have found from whence your copper rings and spoons come, now, with which you cheat abroad in taverns.”

The copper rings and spoons were treated so that they looked like gold and could be sold at high prices.

Surly continued, “It was here that you learned to anoint your boot with brimstone, then rub men’s gold on it for a kind of touchstone, and say the gold was worthless, when you had changed the color of the touch so that you might have the gold for nothing.”

People used touchstones to test the purity of gold. Gold would be rubbed on the touchstone and the color it left revealed the purity of gold. In Face’s con, real gold would appear to be base metal, and Face could pocket it or buy it for much less than it was worth.

Surly continued, “And this Doctor Subtle, your sooty, smoky-bearded peer, will enclose so much gold in a flask, and turn aside and substitute for it another flask containing sublimed mercury that shall burst in the heat and fly out all *in fumo* — in lots of smoke! The gold appears to be lost, but instead Doctor Subtle has it.”

Surly had probably heard the noise of the recent explosion, and he could guess — more or less — what had happened.

He added, “Then weeps Sir Epicure Mammon. Then faints his worship: Doctor Subtle.”

Face slipped out of the room as Surly looked at Subtle.

Surly continued, “Or, he is the Faustus, who casts horoscopes and can conjure, and who cures plagues, hemorrhoids, and syphilis by the astrological almanacs, and who exchanges information with all the bawds and midwives of three shires, while you — Captain! What! Has he gone? — send in pregnant women, barren wives, or waiting-maidens who suffer from the green sickness.”

Faustus used black magic — he received help from demons rather than from angels. Surly was accusing Subtle of using black magic to medically treat people, especially women suffering from sex-related problems. The green sickness was



a form of anemia suffered by some women when they reached puberty, but people in this culture believed that it was caused by unrequited love.

Subtle may have been giving women abortions. One cure for the green sickness was thought to be sex, so he may also have been helping, or using Face to help, young women to need abortions.

Subtle attempted to leave, but Surly grabbed him and said, “No, sir, you must tarry, although Face has escaped, and you must answer by the ears, sir.”

He meant that Subtle would be placed in a pillory and have his ears cut off.

— 4.7 —

Face had gone to get help. He now returned with Kastril.

Face said to Kastril, “Why, now’s the time, if you will ever quarrel well, as they say, and be a true-born child. Both the doctor and your sister are being abused.”

“Where is the abuser?” Kastril asked. “Which is he? He is a slave, whatever he is, and the son of a whore.”

He asked Surly, “Are you the man, sir, I would know?”

Surly replied, “I am loath, sir, to confess so much.”

No one wants to confess to being an abuser, a slave, and the son of a whore.

Kastril replied, “Then you lie in your throat!”

In this culture, this insult was worse than the previous insults.

“What!” Surly said.

Face said to Kastril, "He is a very arrant rogue, sir, and a cheater. He was employed to come here by another conjurer who does not love Doctor Subtle, and would cross and thwart him, if he knew how."

Surly said to Kastril, "Sir, you are being abused and treated badly. You are being lied to."

Kastril replied, "You lie. And it is no matter."

Kastril was still bad at quarreling. He had made the strong insult of "Then you lie in your throat!" without providing evidence. And he ought not to have meant it when he said, "And it is no matter." It was an important matter indeed. People dueled to the death over insults such as being directly accused of lying. No one should say, "You lie in your throat," and then say, "And it is no matter."

"Well said, sir!" Face said. "He is the most impudent rascal \_\_\_"

Surly said to Face, "*You* are the most impudent rascal indeed."

Then he said to Kastril, "Will you hear me out, sir?"

Face said to Kastril, "By no means. Tell him to be gone."

Kastril said to Surly, "Be gone, sir, and quickly."

Surly said, "This is strange!"

He then said to Dame Pliant, "Lady, tell your brother what is going on."

Face said to Kastril, "There is not such a cheater as this man in all the town. The doctor knew immediately that this man is a cheater, and finds still that the real Spanish Count will come here."

Face whispered, "Bear up, Subtle. Go along with this."

Subtle said to Kastril, “Yes, sir, the real Spanish Count will appear within this hour.”

Face said, “And yet this rogue would come in a disguise, after being tempted by another spirit, to trouble our art, although he could not hurt it!”

Kastril said, “Yes, I know.”

His sister whispered in his ear, and Kastril said, “Go away, you talk like a foolish mauther.”

“Mauther” was country dialect for “girl or young woman.”

Dame Pliant exited.

Surly said to Kastril, “Sir, everything she says is the truth.”

Face said to Kastril, “Do not believe him, sir. He is the lyingest swabber! Keep on the path you are traveling, sir.”

A swabber is a low-ranking sailor who swabs (mops) the deck.

Surly said, “You are valiant when you are in the midst of people backing you up!”

“Yes, and so what, sir?” Kastril asked.

Carrying a roll of damask cloth, Drugger entered the room.

Face said, “Here’s an honest fellow, too, who knows Surly, and all his tricks.”

He whispered to Abel Drugger, “Make good what I say, Abel. Back me up. This cheater — Surly — would have cheated you out of the widow.”

Face then said out loud, “Surly owes this honest Drugger here seven pounds — a debt that he has acquired by buying from him many, many two-penny worths of tobacco.”

At the time, a pound was worth 240 old pence. Therefore, Face was accusing Surly of charging and never paying for 840 purchases of two-penny worths of tobacco.

“Yes, sir,” Drugger said, “And he has damned himself by swearing falsely for three terms to pay me.”

The terms were periods of times in which the law courts were in session.

Face asked Drugger, “And what does he owe for lotium?”

Lotium is stale urine; it was used as a hair tonic.

Drugger replied, “Thirty shillings, sir. And he owes for six syringes.”

Surly said, “Hydra of villainy!”

The Hydra was a mythological multi-headed monster that Hercules had killed. Each time he cut off one of its heads, two more grew in its place. Hercules killed the Hydra by cutting off a head and then immediately cauterizing it.

Surly’s naming of the Hydra was fitting; his enemies were multiplying.

Face said to Kastril, “Sir, you must quarrel him out of the house.”

“I will,” Kastril replied.

He said to Surly, “Sir, if you get not out of doors, you lie and you are a pimp.”

“Why, this is madness, sir,” Surly said. “It is not valor in you; I must laugh at this.”

Kastril said, “It is my disposition. You are a pimp and a trig, and an Amadis de Gaul or a Don Quixote.”

A “trig” is a “dandy.” Surly was dressed in fancy Spanish clothing. Amadis de Gaul is a hero in a Spanish romance; Don Quixote is the protagonist of a satire of Spanish romances.

Drugger said, “Or a Knight of the curious cockscomb, do you see?”

Surly was wearing a fancy Spanish hat.

Ananias the Anabaptist entered the room and said, “Peace to the household!”

To this common greeting, Kastril, the wanna-be angry boy, said, “I’ll keep my peace for no man.”

Ananias said to Subtle, “The casting of dollars is concluded to be lawful.”

Kastril asked, “Is he the constable?” He did not want to get in trouble for quarreling.

Subtle said, “Peace, Ananias. Be quiet.”

The casting of dollars is NOT lawful, and Subtle did not want too many people to associate him with the casting of dollars.

Face said to Kastril, “No, sir. He is not the constable.”

Kastril said to Surly, “Then you are an otter, and a shad, a whit. A very tim.”

Otters are difficult to classify. Are they fish or flesh? Kastril may have been saying that he found Surly’s sexual preference difficult to ascertain.

A “shad” is a herring. A “shotten herring” was an insult meaning “worthless.” Literally, a “shotten herring” is a herring that has spawned.

A “whit” is something small. As an insult for a man, it means the man has a small penis.

A “tim” is perhaps a timid man.

Surly asked, “You’ll listen to me, sir?”

“I will not,” Kastril said.

In this culture, the two quarreling men were supposed to talk to ascertain facts and to see if any extenuating circumstances existed.

Ananias asked Subtle, “What is the motive? Why are they quarreling?”

The word “motive” has a Puritan meaning: “supernatural prompting.”

Subtle replied, “Zeal in the young gentleman, against the other man’s Spanish breeches.”

Ananias said, “The Spanish breeches are profane, lewd, superstitious, and idolatrous.”

Spain was and is largely a Catholic country; Ananias, as an Anabaptist, hated Catholics.

Surly said, “Here are new rascals!”

Kastril said to Surly, “Will you be gone, sir?”

Ananias said, “Leave, Satan! You are not of the light! That ruff of pride about your neck betrays you; it is the same with that which the unclean birds, in the year fifteen seventy-seven, were seen to swagger on diverse coasts.”

Catholic priests were persecuted for a time in England, and so priests coming to England would wear disguises rather than clerical clothing. Some priests coming from Spain would wear Spanish ruffs. In 1577, large Spanish ruffs of the

kind that Surly was wearing came into fashion. Around 1577, priests began wearing Spanish ruffs. In June 1577, some priests were arrested in Cornwall, and the English authorities began a crackdown on priests.

Puritans such as Ananias called Catholic priests “unclean birds” in part because of Revelation 18:2:

*And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. (King James Version)*

In addition, they called priests “unclean birds” because of reaction to a book. In 1580, Robert Persons, a Jesuit in England, anonymously published a book titled *A Brief Discours contayninge certayne Reasons Why Catholiques refuse to goe to Church* that defended Catholics and argued that Catholics refused to go to the Anglican Church on religious grounds, not on treasonous grounds. He used the pseudonym “I. Howlet”: a howlet is an owl. People responding to and criticizing the book seized on “Howlet” and referred to Catholic priests as “unclean birds.”

Ananias added, “You look like the Antichrist, in that lewd hat.”

Surly’s Spanish hat reminded Ananias of the Pope’s hat; Ananias regarded the Catholic Pope as the Antichrist.

Surly said, “I must give way to my enemies.”

Kastril said, “Be gone, sir.”

Surly began, “But I’ll be revenged on you —”

Ananias said, “Depart, proud Spanish fiend!”

Surly ended, “— Captain Face and Doctor Subtle.”

Ananias said, “Child of perdition!”

Kastril said, “Go away from here, sir!”

Surly exited.

Kastril asked, “Didn’t I quarrel bravely and splendidly?”

“Yes, indeed, you did, sir,” Face said.

“Indeed, if I give my mind to it and try hard, I shall quarrel properly,” Kastril said.

“Oh, you must follow him, sir,” Face said, “and threaten him until he is tame; otherwise, he’ll turn and come back here.”

Kastril said, “I’ll re-turn him then and have him face the exiting direction.”

He exited.

Subtle took Ananias aside and talked to him quietly.

Face said, “Drugger, this rogue forestalled us from helping you. We had determined that you would have come here wearing a Spanish suit of clothing and courted the widow, but he — a pimping slave! — put the Spanish suit of clothing on himself.”

He then asked, “Have you brought the damask?”

“Yes, sir,” Drugger replied.

Face said, “You must borrow a Spanish suit of clothing. Do you have any credit with actors?”

Actors would have items of Spanish clothing in their collection of costumes.

Drugger said, “Yes, sir; didn’t you ever see me play the Fool?”

This was an in-joke. Acting troupes would have a lead comic actor to play the major comic roles such as professional



Fools — and fools such as Drugger. Robert Armin, the comic actor who originated the part of Drugger, had played the Fool in William Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

Face replied, "I don't know if I have, Nab."

He thought, *But you shall play the fool, if I have anything to do with it.*

He continued, "Hieronimo's old cloak, ruff, and hat will serve. I'll tell you more when you bring me those items of clothing."

Hieronimo was the protagonist of Thomas Kyd's play *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Drugger exited.

Ananias said to Subtle, "Sir, I know the Spaniards hate the Puritan brethren and have spies to watch their actions, and I have no doubt that this Spanish Don was one of those spies.

"But the holy Synod — the ecclesiastical assembly — have been in prayer and meditation about the matter of coining, and it is revealed no less to them than to me that the casting of money is most lawful."

"That is true," Subtle said, "but I cannot do it here. If the house should happen to be suspected, all that Face and I are doing, including making the philosopher's stone, would be revealed and we would be locked up in the Tower of London forever, to make gold there for the state. We would never come out of the Tower of London, and then you would be defeated in your purpose of getting much money for your cause."

Ananias said, "I will tell this to the elders and the weaker brethren so that the whole company of the separation may join in humble prayer again."

“And so they may join in fasting,” Subtle said.

“Yes, for some fitter place in which to cast money,” Ananias said. “May peace of mind rest within these walls!”

“Thanks, courteous Ananias,” Subtle said.

Ananias exited.

Face and Subtle were alone.

“What did Ananias come here about?” Face asked.

“He came about the casting of dollars,” Subtle replied. “He wanted to start doing it immediately and without taking any more thought about it. And so I told him that a Spanish minister came here to spy against the faithful —”

“I understand,” Face said. “Come, Subtle, you are so downcast when you suffer the least disaster! What would you have done if I had not helped you out?”

“I thank you, Face, for the angry boy, indeed,” Subtle replied.

Face said, “Who would have expected that Surly would have been the Spanish Don? He had dyed his beard and done everything else needed to impersonate a Spaniard.”

He pointed to the cloth that Drugger had brought and said, “Well, sir, here’s damask to make you a suit of clothing.”

“Where’s Drugger?” Subtle asked.

“He has gone to borrow for me a Spanish suit of clothing,” Face said. “I’ll be the Spanish Count, now, and marry the widow.”

“But where’s the widow?” Subtle asked.

“Inside, with my lord’s sister,” Face said. “Madam Doll is entertaining her.”

Subtle said, "Pardon me, Face, but now that I know the widow is still honest and chaste, I will stand again."

He meant that he would compete again with Face for the widow's hand in marriage. The word "stand" also had the meaning of "erection."

"You will not attempt to compete for her hand in marriage!" Face said.

"Why not?"

"You must stand to your word," Face said. "You said that you would not marry her. Or — here comes Doll. I will tell \_\_\_"

"You are tyrannous still," Subtle said.

"I am strict when it comes to my rights," Face said.

Doll entered the room hastily.

Face said, "Hello, Doll! Have you told her that the Spanish Count will come?"

"Yes, but another person has come, a person you little looked for!"

"Who is that?"

"Your master," Doll answered. "The master of the house."

People in this society called the boss "master."

Subtle said, "What, Doll!"

Face said, "She lies. This is some trick. Come, put your tricks aside, Dorothy."

"Look out the window, and see for yourself," Doll said.

Face went to the window.

“Are you telling the truth?” Subtle asked.

“By God’s light, forty of the neighbors are about him, talking,” Doll said.

“It really is my master,” Face said. “I swear it by this good day.”

Doll said, “It will prove to be an ill day for some of us.”

Face said, “We are undone, we are ruined, and we will be caught in the act.”

“We are lost, I’m afraid,” Doll said.

Subtle complained to Face, “You said he would not come as long as one person died each week within the liberties.”

The liberties were the suburbs outside the city walls.

Face said, “No. I said within the city walls.”

That area was much smaller, but actually Face had not specified this.

“Is that so?” Subtle said. “Then I beg your pardon. I thought it was in the liberties. What shall we do now, Face?”

“Be silent,” Face said. “Don’t say a word if my master calls or knocks. I’ll shave my beard and put on my old clothes again and meet him as the person he thinks I am: Jeremy the butler.

“In the meantime, you two pack up all the goods and profits that we can carry in the two trunks. I’ll keep my master away from the house at least for today, if not longer, and then at night, I’ll ship you both away down the Thames River to Ratcliff, where we will meet tomorrow, and there we’ll share the goods and profits.

“Let Sir Epicure Mammon’s brass and pewter stay in the cellar. We’ll have another time to deal with that. But, Doll, please go and quickly heat a little water. Subtle must shave me: All my Captain’s beard must come off to make me appear again as smooth-faced and smooth-talking Jeremy the butler.”

He asked Subtle, “Will you do it? Will you shave me?”

“Yes, I’ll shave you as well as I can.”

“And not cut my throat, but trim me?”

“You shall see, sir.”

The words “shave” and “trim” also mean “cheat.”

## ACT 5 (*The Alchemist*)

### — 5.1 —

Outside the house, Lovewit — the master of the house — was talking with several neighbors.

Lovewit said, “Has there been such visiting, you say?”

Neighbor #1 said, “Daily, sir.”

Neighbor #2 said, “And nightly, too.”

Neighbor #3 said, “Yes, and some visitors were dressed as splendidly as lords.”

Neighbor #4 said, “There were ladies and gentlewomen.”

Neighbor #5 said, “Citizens’ wives.”

Neighbor #1 said, “And Knights.”

Neighbor #6 said, “In coaches.”

Neighbor #2 said, “Yes, and women who sell oysters.”

Neighbor #1 said, “Beside other gallants.”

Neighbor #3 said, “Sailors’ wives.”

Neighbor #4 said, “Tobacco men.”

Neighbor #5 said, “Another Pimlico!”

Pimlico was a crowded tavern in a resort area.

Lovewit asked, “What would my servant Jeremy the butler advertise to draw this large company of people? Did he hang out any banners advertising a strange calf with five legs to be seen, or a huge lobster with six claws?”

Neighbor #6 said, “No, sir.”

Neighbor #3 said, “We would have gone in the house if he had, sir.”

Lovewit said, “He has no gift of teaching in the nose that I ever knew of.”

Puritans were reputed to preach — a kind of teaching — with a nasal twang.

Lovewit asked the neighbors, “Did you see any bills set up that promised the cure of fevers or the toothache?”

Neighbor #2 said, “We saw no such thing, sir.”

Lovewit asked, “Did you ever hear a drum struck to advertise the chance to see baboons or puppets?”

Neighbor #5 said, “We never have, sir.”

Lovewit said, “What kind of a scheme did Jeremy the butler bring forth now? I love an abundant wit and intelligence as I love my nourishment. I pray to God that Jeremy the butler has not kept such open house that he has sold my hangings and my bedding! I left him nothing else that he could sell. If he has ‘eaten’ them, then I say, ‘A plague on the moth!’ Or surely he has gotten some bawdy pictures to call together all this gang of people. He has been showing a bawdy picture of the friar and the nun, or a bawdy picture of the Knight’s courser sexually covering the parson’s mare, or a bawdy picture of a six-year-old boy with an enormous penis. Or perhaps, he has a flea circus in which fleas run at full tilt upon a table, or he has a dancing dog.”

He then asked, “When did you last see him?”

Neighbor #1 asked, “Who, sir, Jeremy?”

Neighbor #2 said, “Jeremy the butler? We haven’t seen him at all this month.”

“What!” a shocked Lovewit said.

Neighbor #4 said, "Not for the past five weeks, sir."

Neighbor #6 said, "For the past six weeks at the least."

"You amaze me, neighbors!" Lovewit said.

Neighbor #5 said, "To be sure, if your worship doesn't know where he is, he's slipped away."

Neighbor #6 said, "Pray to God that he has not been made away. Pray to God that he has not been murdered."

Lovewit said, "In that case, it's not the time to ask questions."

He knocked on the door of his house.

Neighbor #6 said, "About three weeks ago, I heard a doleful cry as I sat up mending my wife's stockings."

"It is strange that no one will answer the door!" Lovewit said. "Did you hear a cry, did you say?"

Neighbor #6 said, "Yes, sir, it was like the cry of a man who had been strangled for an hour and could not speak."

Neighbor #2 said, "I heard it, too, exactly three weeks ago at two o'clock this coming morning."

Lovewit said, "These are miracles, or you make them seem like miracles! A man was strangled for an hour and could not speak, and yet both of you heard him cry out?"

Neighbor #3 said, "Yes, downward, sir."

Neighbor #3 may have meant that the cry came from the cellar.

Lovewit said, "You are a wise fellow. Give me your hand."

They shook hands, and Lovewit asked, "Please, what is your trade?"



Neighbor #3 said, “I am a blacksmith, if it pleases your worship.”

“A blacksmith!” Lovewit said. “Then lend me your help to get this door open.”

Neighbor #3 said, “That I will immediately, sir, but let me fetch my tools.”

He exited.

Neighbor #3 said, “Sir, it’s best to knock again, before you break down the door.”

— 5.2 —

Lovewit said, “I will.”

A freshly shaven Face appeared on the scene outside Lovewit’s house. Face was wearing his butler’s livery.

Face asked, “What are you doing, sir?”

Some of the neighbors recognized him and said, “Oh, here’s Jeremy the butler!”

Face said to Lovewit, “Good sir, go away from the door.”

“Why, what’s the matter?” Lovewit asked.

“Move away farther,” Face said. “You are still too close.”

Lovewit said, “In the name of wonder, what does the fellow mean?”

“The house, sir, has been visited,” Face said.

“What, with the plague? In that case, *you* stand further away from me.”

“Don’t worry, sir,” Face said. “I didn’t catch the plague.”

“Who had it then?” Lovewit asked. “I left no one other than you in the house.”

“Yes, sir, my fellow, the cat that kept the buttery, had it on her a week before I spied it, but I got her conveyed away in the night —”

Domestic cats can catch the three major kinds of plague: bubonic, septicemic, and pneumonic.

Face continued, “— and so I shut the house up for a month —”

“What!” Lovewit said. This contradicted what the neighbors had told him.

Face said, “I intended to fumigate the house by burning treacle, tar, and vinegar infused with rose petals, which would have made the house sweet, so that you would never have known that plague had visited here because I knew the news would only upset you, sir.”

“Breathe less toward me, and from farther away! Why, this is stranger: The neighbors here all tell me that the doors have always been open —”

“What, sir!” Face said, pretending to be shocked.

Lovewit said, “Gallants, men and women, and people of all sorts, rag-tag, have been seen to flock here in threaves, these ten weeks, as to a second Hogsden in the days of Pimlico and Eye-bright.”

By “threaves,” Lovewit meant “crowds.” A “threave” of corn is twenty-four sheaves of corn. Hogsden was a popular resort; now it is named Hoxton. Pimlico and Eye-bright were popular taverns.

“Sir, their wisdoms will not say so,” Face said.

Lovewit replied, “Today they speak of coaches and gallants. A woman in a French hood went in, they tell me, and another woman was seen in a velvet gown at the window.”

The woman in a French hood was Dame Pliant; the woman in a velvet gown was Doll.

Lovewit continued, “Many other people were seen to pass in and out.”

“They passed through the doors then, or the walls, I assure their eyesights and their spectacles,” Face said, “for here, sir, are the keys, and here they have been, in this my pocket, now more than twenty days, and as for before, I kept the fort alone there.

“Except that it is not yet late in the afternoon, I would believe that my neighbors had seen double through the black pot of beer, and created these apparitions in their minds! I swear on my Christian faith to your worship that for these three weeks and upwards, the door has not been opened.”

“This is strange!” Lovewit said.

Neighbor #1 said, “In good faith, I think I saw a coach outside here.”

Neighbor #2, “And so did I, I’d have been sworn.”

“Do you think it now?” Lovewit asked. “And was it only one coach?”

Neighbor #4 said, “We cannot tell, sir. Jeremy is a very honest fellow.”

Face asked, “Did you see me at all?”

Neighbor #1 said, “No; that we are sure of.”

Neighbor #2 said, “I’ll be sworn to that.”

Lovewit said, “You are fine rogues to have your testimonies built on!”

Neighbor #3, the blacksmith, returned with his tools.

Seeing Face, he asked, “Has Jeremy come!”

Neighbor #1 said, “Oh, yes; you don’t need your tools. We were deceived, he says.”

Neighbor #2 said, “He has had the keys, and the door has been shut these three weeks, he says.”

Neighbor #3 said, “That is likely enough.”

Lovewit said, “Peace, be silent, and go away from here, you changelings.”

Some of the neighbors exited.

Lovewit called the neighbors changelings because they had changed their testimony so quickly. Changelings were also idiots; according to folklore, fairies would sometimes steal an intelligent, healthy human child and leave a stupid child of their own in its place.

In the theater, “changeling” was a clever clue for some of the neighbors to leave. Some of the actors performing as neighbors doubled other roles and needed to leave to get into the costumes of Kastril, Ananias, and Tribulation Wholesome.

Surly and Sir Epicure Mammon entered the scene.

Face said to himself, “Surly has come! And he has acquainted Mammon with all the facts! They’ll tell everything to my master. How shall I beat them off? What shall I do? Nothing’s more wretched than a guilty conscience.”

Surly said sarcastically to Sir Epicure Mammon, “No, sir, he was a great physician. This, it was no bawdy house, but an absolute church! You knew the lord and his sister.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Good Surly —”

Surly continued, “The happy word, BE RICH —”

Sir Epicure Mammon continued, “Don’t play the tyrant.”

Surly continued, “— should be today pronounced to all your friends. And where are your andirons now? And your brass pots that should have been golden flagons and great wedges of precious metals — large ingots of gold and silver?”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Let me just say something. What! They have shut their doors, I think!”

“Yes, now it is holiday with them,” Surly said.

Sir Epicure Mammon and Surly began to knock on the doors.

“Rogues, cheaters, impostors, bawds!” Sir Epicure Mammon shouted.

Face asked, “What do you mean by knocking at this house, sir?”

Face was freshly shaven and he was wearing a servant’s livery, and so Sir Epicure Mammon and Surly did not recognize him.

Sir Epicure Mammon replied, “To enter it if we can.”

“Another man’s house!” Face said. “Here is the owner, sir: turn to him, and state your business.”

“Are you, sir, the owner?” Sir Epicure Mammon asked Lovewit.

“Yes, sir,” Lovewit replied.

“And are those knaves within your cheaters?”

“What knaves? What cheaters?”

“Subtle and his Lungs,” Sir Epicure Mammon replied.

“The gentleman is distracted, sir!” Face said. “No lungs nor lights have been seen here for the past three weeks, sir, within these doors, upon my word.”

The word “lights” was a pun. In this society, it meant “lungs.”

Surly said, “Do you swear to that, arrogant groom!”

“Yes, sir, I am the housekeeper,” Face said, “and I know the keys have not been out of my hands.”

“This is a new Face,” Surly said.

He did not recognize Face; he meant that here was a new person who was as arrogant as Face.

“You have mistaken this house for another, sir,” Face said. “What sign was the one you are seeking?”

Brothels and taverns and ordinaries had signs hanging outside.

“You rascal!” Surly said.

He said to Sir Epicure Mammon, “This is one of the confederacy of villains. Come, let’s get police officers and force open the doors.”

Lovewit said, “I ask you to wait, gentlemen.”

“No, sir,” Surly said. “We’ll come back with a warrant.”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “Yes, and then we shall have your doors opened.”

Sir Epicure Mammon and Surly exited.

Lovewit asked Face, "What is the meaning of this?"

"I cannot tell, sir," Face replied.

Neighbor #1 said, "These are two of the gallants whom we think we saw."

"Two of the fools!" Face said. "You talk as idly as they do."

He said to Lovewit, "Truly, sir, I think the Moon has crazed them all."

Seeing Kastril coming, he said to himself, "Oh, me, the angry boy has come, too! He'll make a noise, and never go away until he has betrayed us all."

Kastril knocked on the doors and shouted, "Rogues, bawds, slaves! You'll open the door, immediately! Punk, cockatrice, my suster! By this light I'll fetch the marshal to you. You are a whore to keep your castle —"

"Cockatrice" is a slang word for a whore, perhaps because the word contains the words "cock" and "trice." The word "trice" means "very quickly," so the word "cockatrice" can be understood as meaning "cock in a very short time."

Kastril was afraid that his sister had slept with the Spanish Don — or with someone else.

The freshly shaven Face asked, "Who would you speak with, sir?"

Kastril said, "The bawdy Doctor, and the cheating Captain, and puss my suster."

Lovewit said, "There's something to this, surely."

Face said, "Upon my trust, the doors were never open, sir."

Kastril said, “I have heard all their tricks told me twice over by the fat Knight and the lean gentleman. They have told me the cons going on here.”

Sir Epicure Mammon and Surly were the fat Knight and the lean gentleman.

Lovewit said, “Here comes another group.”

Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome walked over to the group.

Face said to himself, “Ananias, too! And his pastor!”

Tribulation Wholesome knocked loudly on the doors and said, “The doors are shut against us.”

“Come forth, you seed of sulphur, sons of fire!” Ananias shouted. “Your stench of evil has broken forth; abomination is in the house.”

“Yes, my suster’s there,” Kastril said.

Ananias said, “The place, it has become a cage of unclean birds.”

Kastril said, “Yes, I will fetch the scavenger and the constable.”

The scavenger was a public official who hired people to clean the streets.

Tribulation Wholesome said to Kastril, “You shall do well if you do that.”

Ananias said, “We’ll join together in order to weed them out.”

Kastril shouted, “You will not come then, punk-device, my sister?”



“Punk” means “whore.” “Point-device” means “perfect attention to detail.” By calling his sister a punk-device, Kastril was calling her a “whore in every detail.”

Ananias said, “Don’t call her ‘sister’; she’s a harlot verily.”

To Ananias, a “sister” was a “female Puritan.”

Kastril said, “I’ll raise the street — I’ll call people here to help us.”

Lovewit said, “Good gentleman, a word.”

Ananias said, “Satan, leave us, and do not hinder our religious zeal!”

Ananias, Tribulation Wholesome, and Kastril exited.

“The world’s turned Bedlam,” Lovewit said. “Everyone’s gone crazy.”

Face said, “These people have all broken loose out of St. Katherine’s Hospital, where they are accustomed to keep the better sort of mad-folks.”

Neighbor #1 said, “All these persons we have seen going in and out of here.”

Neighbor #2 said, “Yes, indeed, sir.”

Neighbor #3 said, “These were the parties.”

“Silence, you drunkards!” Face said.

Then he said to Lovewit, “Sir, I wonder at this. If it would please you to give me permission to touch the door, I’ll test it to see if the lock has been changed.”

“This amazes me!” Lovewit said.

Face went to the door and said, “Truly, sir, I believe there’s no such thing. This is all *deceptio visus* — a hallucination.”

*Deceptio visus* is Latin for “the deception of sight.”

Face thought, *I wish could get my master away from here.*

From inside the house, Dapper shouted, “Master Captain! Master Doctor!”

Lovewit asked Face, “Who’s that?”

Face thought, *He’s Dapper, our clerk within, whom I forgot about!*

He replied, “I don’t know, sir.”

From inside the house, Dapper shouted, “For God’s sake, when will her grace be at leisure?”

He was referring to the Queen of Fairy.

Face said, “Ha! Illusions! Some spirit of the air!”

He thought, *Dapper’s gag of gingerbread has melted, and now he is displaying his throat by shouting.*

From inside the house, Dapper shouted, “I am almost stifled \_\_\_”

Face thought, *I wish you were entirely stifled.*

Lovewit said, “The shouting is from inside the house. Ha! Listen.”

Face said, “Believe me, sir. The shouting is in the air. It’s spirits.”

“Be silent, you,” Lovewit said.

From inside the house, Dapper shouted, “My aunt’s grace is not treating me well.”

From inside the house, Subtle said, “You fool, be quiet. You’ll ruin everything.”

Face spoke to Subtle through the keyhole, “If he doesn’t, you will.”

Unfortunately, Lovewit had moved closer to the door and Face had spoken loudly enough for Lovewit to overhear him.

“Oh, is that so?” Lovewit said. “Then you converse with spirits! Come, sir. No more of your tricks, good Jeremy. Tell me the truth, the shortest way — quickly and directly.”

Face requested, “Dismiss this rabble, sir.”

He was referring to the remaining neighbors.

Face thought, *What shall I do? I have been caught!*

Lovewit said, “Good neighbors, I thank you all. You may depart.”

The remaining neighbors exited.

Lovewit then said to Face, “Come, sir, you know that I am an indulgent master, and so therefore conceal nothing. What’s your medicine that can draw so many several sorts of wild fowl here?”

The medicine was a quack remedy that could be sold to “wild fowl” such as geese, aka fools. Without intending or knowing it, Lovewit was also referring to the alchemical medicine known as the elixir of life.

Face said, “Sir, you have been accustomed to appreciate mirth and wit — but in the street is no place to talk. Just give me permission to make the best of my fortune, and only pardon me the abuse of your house: It’s all I beg. In recompense for your forgiveness, I’ll help you to a widow, whom you shall give me thanks for. She will make you seven years younger, and she will make you a rich man. All that you will have to do is put on a Spanish cloak. I have the

widow inside the house. You need not fear entering the house; it was not visited by the plague.”

Lovewit replied, “But it was visited by me, who came sooner than you expected.”

Face said, “That is true, sir. I ask that you forgive me.”

Lovewit said, “Well, let’s see your widow.”

They went inside the house.

— 5.4 —

Subtle was with Dapper in a room in the house. Dapper was no longer blindfolded.

Subtle said, “What! Have you eaten your gag?”

“Yes, indeed. It crumbled away in my mouth,” Dapper replied.

“You have spoiled everything then.”

“No! I hope my aunt of Fairy will forgive me.”

“Your aunt’s a gracious lady,” Subtle said, “but indeed you are to blame.”

“The fumes overcame me, and I ate the gingerbread gag to calm my stomach,” Dapper said. “Please explain that to her grace.”

Face entered the room. He was wearing his Captain’s uniform and a fake beard.

Dapper said, “Here comes Captain Face.”

Face said to Subtle, “What is this! Is Dapper’s mouth open?”

Subtle replied, “Yes, he has spoken!”

Face said quietly to Subtle, “Damn! I heard him when I was outside, and I heard you, too.”

He said loudly so Dapper could hear him, “He’s ruined then.”

He said quietly to Subtle, “I have been obliged to say that the house is haunted with spirits in order to keep the churl back.”

A “churl” is a country fellow. Face was referring to Lovewit, who had been in the country inspecting his hop yards.

“And have you succeeded in keeping him away?” Subtle asked quietly.

“Yes, for this night,” Face replied.

He was lying.

“Why, then triumph and sing of Face so famous, the precious King of present wits,” Subtle said, praising Face for his supposed success.

Face asked, “Didn’t you hear the disturbance at the door?”

“Yes, I did, and I dwindled with fear because of it,” Subtle said.

“Let’s show Dapper his aunt the Queen of Fairy, and then let’s get rid of him,” Face said. “I’ll send her in to you.”

Face exited.

Subtle said loudly to Dapper, “Well, sir, your aunt her grace will see you quickly, at my request and the Captain’s word that you did not eat your gingerbread gag in any contempt of her highness.”

“I certainly did not do it in any contempt of her highness, sir,” Dapper said.

Doll, dressed like the Queen of Fairy, entered the room.

Subtle said to Dapper, “Here she is. Get down on your knees and grovel. She has a stately presence.”

Dapper knelt, and then he groveled towards her.

Subtle said, “Good! Go nearer, and tell her, ‘God save you’!”

Dapper said, “Madam!”

“And your aunt,” Subtle prompted.

“And my most gracious aunt,” Dapper said. “May God save your grace.”

The disguised Doll said, “Nephew, we thought to have been angry with you, but that sweet face of yours has turned the tide, and made it flow with joy, although it recently ebbed of love.

“Arise, and touch our velvet gown.”

Subtle said, “Kiss her skirts.”

Dapper did.

Subtle said, “Good!”

The disguised Doll said, “Let me now stroke that head. Nephew, much shall you win, and much shall you spend. Much shall you give away, and much shall you lend.”

“Yes, much indeed,” Subtle said.

He then said to Dapper, “Why do you not thank her grace?”

Dapper said, “I cannot speak for joy.”

Subtle said to the disguised Doll, “See, the kind wretch! He is filled with love for his relative — you, his aunt. He is your grace’s true kinsman.”

The disguised Doll said to the air, "Give me the bird."

She was pretending that the familiar spirit she was giving to Dapper was a bird in the fairy world.

In modern times, this can be a funny line because to "give someone the bird" means to boo them. On the New York opening night of *Bitter Sweet*, Noël Coward walked into Evelyn Laye's dressing room and presented her with a silver box. When she opened the box, a mechanical bird emerged, flapped its wings, and sang. Mr. Coward said, "I wanted to be the first to give you the bird."

The disguised Doll then gave an item to Dapper and said, "Here is your fly in a purse, which you will hang about your neck, nephew."

The fly was the familiar spirit in the human world. In this society, many people believed that demons assumed the form of flies.

She added, "Wear it, and feed it in about a week from this day on your right wrist."

Subtle said, "Open a vein with a pin and let it suck blood just once a week; until then, you must not look at it."

The disguised Doll said, "That is correct, and nephew, be sure to bear yourself worthy of the blood you come from."

Subtle said, "Her grace would have you eat no more Woolsack pies, nor Dagger frumety."

"Frumety" was wheat cakes boiled in milk and then seasoned. Woolsack and Dagger were taverns.

The disguised Doll said, "And he should not break his fast in Heaven and Hell."

Heaven and Hell were also taverns.

Subtle said, “She’s with you everywhere!”

He added, “Nor should you play with costermongers — sellers of fruit — at the game of mum-chance, the game of tray-trip, and the game of God-make-you-rich, which your aunt has done.”

The game of God-make-you-rich was a variant of backgammon.

Subtle added, “Instead, you must keep the gallantest company, and play the best games —”

“Yes, sir,” Dapper interrupted.

Subtle continued, “— such as gleek and primero, and be true to us and give us a share of what you win.”

Dapper said, “I swear by this my hand that I will.”

Subtle said, “You may bring us a thousand pounds before tomorrow night, even if only three thousand pounds are being gambled over — if you are willing.”

“I swear I will,” Dapper said.

“Your fly will teach you all games,” Subtle said.

Face whispered to Subtle from another room, “Have you done there?”

Subtle asked the disguised Doll, “Does your grace have any other duties to command him to do?”

“No,” the disguised Doll said, “except to come and see me often. I may chance to leave him three or four hundred chests of treasure and some twelve thousand acres of fairy land, if he gambles well and decorously with good gamesters.”

Fairies are thought to be long-lived, so even if fairies existed, Dapper would be unlikely to inherit these things.



Subtle said to Dapper, “There’s a kind aunt! Kiss her departing part.”

Dapper kissed the train of her gown — although her “departing part” could have been interpreted as her butt.

Subtle added, “But you must now sell your assets that earn you forty marks a year.”

“Yes, sir, I mean to,” Dapper said.

“Or, give those assets away,” Subtle said. “A pox on them!”

“I’ll give them to my aunt,” Dapper said. “I’ll go and fetch the legal papers.”

“That’s a good idea,” Subtle said. “Go now.”

Subtle knew, because Face had told him, that Dapper was “the sole hope of his old grandmother,” but Subtle was willing to con Dapper out of his inheritance.

Dapper exited.

Face entered the room and asked Doll, “Where’s Subtle?”

“Here I am,” Subtle said. “What’s the news?”

Face said, “Drugger is at the door. Go take from him his Spanish suit of clothing, and tell him to fetch a parson immediately. Tell him that he shall marry the widow. You shall earn and then spend a hundred pounds by doing this service!”

Subtle exited.

Face said, “Now, Queen Doll, have you packed up everything?”

“Yes.”

“And how do you like the Lady Pliant?”

“She is a good dull innocent.”

An “innocent” is a fool, someone innocent of the evil in the world.

Subtle returned, carrying a bundle, and said, “Here’s your Hieronimo’s Spanish cloak and hat.”

Face said, “Give them to me.”

“And the ruff, too?” Subtle asked.

“Yes,” Face said. “I’ll come back to you quickly.”

He took the clothing and exited.

Subtle said, “Doll, now he is gone about his project, the one I told you about, for the widow.”

Doll said, “It is directly against our agreement. We are supposed to share everything equally, and no one is supposed to have precedence.”

By marrying Dame Pliant, Face would gain Dame Pliant’s fortune.

Subtle said, “Well, we will fix him, wench.”

The word “wench” was often used affectionately.

He asked, “Have you gotten Dame Pliant’s jewels or bracelets from her?”

“No, but I will do it,” Doll replied.

Subtle said, “Soon at night, my Dolly, when we are shipped, and all our goods are aboard, eastward for Ratcliff, we will turn our course and instead go westward to Brainford, if you say the word, and take our leaves of this overweening, conceited, cocksure rascal — this peremptory Face.”

“Good idea. I’m weary of him,” Doll said.

Subtle said, “You have reason to be since the slave will run and get a wife, Doll, against the agreement that was drawn among us three.”

Doll said, “I’ll pluck his bird — Dame Pliant — as bare as I can.”

Subtle said, “Yes, tell her that she must by any means address and give some present to the cunning-man — me — to make him amends for wronging his art with her suspicion; she must send him a ring or a pearl necklace. If she does not, tell her that she will be tortured extremely in her sleep and have strange things — nightmares — come to her. Will you do this?”

“Yes.”

Subtle said, “My fine flitter-mouse, my bat, my bird of the night!”

A bird is a young woman. As a prostitute, Doll was a lady of the night.

Subtle added, “We’ll tickle it at the Pigeons, when we have everything and may unlock the trunks, and say that this is mine, and this is thine; and this is thine, and this is mine.”

They kissed.

“Tickle” meant “celebrate,” including “celebrate sexually.” They would tickle their throats with alcohol, and they would tickle other things. Subtle might be impotent, but there are multiple ways to have fun in bed.

Face returned and said, “What now! Busy a-billing?”

When doves caress each other, they are billing.

“Billing” also means “making a list,” something that Subtle and Doll had been doing with the profits before they kissed.

Subtle said, "Yes, we are a little high-spirited with the good passage of our work here."

Face said, "Nab Drugger has brought his parson; take the parson inside, Subtle, and send Nab back again to wash his face."

"I will," Subtle said, "and shall I have him shave himself?"

"If you can get him to do it," Face said.

"You are hot upon something, Face, whatever it is!" Doll said. "You are up to something!"

Face said, "I am up to a trick that shall allow Doll to spend ten pounds a month."

He was lying.

Subtle returned.

Face asked, "Is Drugger gone?"

Subtle said, "The chaplain is waiting for you in the hall, sir."

"I'll go and take him where he needs to be," Face said.

He exited.

Doll said, "He'll now marry her, immediately."

"He cannot yet," Subtle said. "He is not ready."

Face was not wearing the Spanish clothing.

Subtle added, "Dear Doll, cheat Dame Pliant of everything you can. To deceive Face is no deceit; instead, it is only justice because Face is willing to break such an inextricable tie as ours was."

"Leave it to me to fix him," Doll said.

Face returned and said, "Come, my partners. You have packed up everything? Where are the trunks? Bring them forth."

"Here they are," Subtle said, pointing.

"Let's see them," Face said. "Where's the money?"

Subtle pointed to a trunk and said, "Here, in this one."

Face opened the trunk and said, "Sir Epicure Mammon's ten pounds. Eight score pounds from previously. Here is the brethren's money. Here is Druggier's money, and here is Dapper's money."

He pointed and asked, "What paper's that?"

Doll said, "It contains the jewel of the waiting maid's, who stole it from her lady, in order to know for certain —"

Face interrupted, "— if she should rise in social status and have precedence over her mistress?"

Doll replied, "Yes."

Face asked, "What box is that?"

Subtle said, "It contains the fish-wives' rings, I think, and the ale-wives' small coins."

He asked, "Is that right, Doll?"

She replied, "Yes, and it contains the silver boatswain's whistle that the sailor's wife brought to you in order to learn whether her husband was with Captain Ward, the famous pirate."

Face said, "We'll wet it tomorrow, along with our silver beakers and tavern cups."

He meant that they would sell the whistle and use the money obtained to buy drinks to wet their whistles.

He then asked, “Where are the French petticoats and girdles and hangers?”

The hangers were ornamental loops that could be put on a belt and used to hold swords.

Subtle said, “Here, in this trunk, and so are the bolts of fine linen.”

Face asked, “Is Drugger’s damask there, and the tobacco?”

Subtle replied, “Yes.”

“Give me the keys,” Face said.

“Why should you have the keys?” Doll asked.

“It doesn’t matter, Doll,” Subtle said, “because we shall not open the trunks before he comes.”

Of course, he intended to open them before Face arrived because he thought that Face would never arrive.

Face said to Subtle, “That is true: You shall not open them, indeed. Nor shall you take them forth, do you see?”

He looked at Doll and said, “Doll, you shall not take them away from here.”

“No!” an angry Doll said.

“No, my smock-rampant,” Face said.

On coats of arms, an animal could be shown rampant — on its rear legs and ready to attack.

As a prostitute, Doll did much of her work in a smock — ladies’ underwear. Right now, she looked very much ready to attack.

Face said, “The truth is, my master knows all, he has pardoned me, and he will keep the trunks. Doctor, this is true

— you look dumbfounded — despite all the horoscopes you cast.”

Face then lied, “I sent for my master to come here, indeed.”

He then said, “Therefore, good partners, both of you — both he and she — must be satisfied, for here ends our agreement: the indenture tripartite made among Subtle, Doll, and Face. All I can do for you now is to help you over the wall in the back of the house or lend you a sheet to save your velvet gown, Doll.”

Subtle and Doll could either escape by climbing over the back wall, or stay and be arrested. If they were arrested, Doll could be forced to make a walk of penitence wearing nothing but a sheet.

Face added, “Here will be police officers very quickly, so you need to think of some course of action immediately if you intend to escape the prisoners’ dock, for there you will end up if you don’t escape.”

Loud knocking sounded on the doors.

Face said, “Listen to the sound of thunder.”

Subtle said, “You are a precious and ‘precious’ fiend!”

One meaning of “precious” is expensive. Face had cost Subtle and Doll much wealth, so Subtle’s use of the word with that meaning was not sarcastic. Another meaning is “of great moral and spiritual value.” Face was not of great moral and spiritual value, so Subtle’s use of the word with that meaning was sarcastic.

A police officer shouted, “Open the door!”

Face said, “Doll, I am sorry indeed for you, but listen to me. It shall go hard with me, it shall be unpleasant for me, but I

will place you somewhere. You shall have my letter of recommendation to Mistress Amo —”

Doll said, “Go get hanged!”

Face continued, “— or Madam Caesarean.”

Mistress Amo and Madam Caesarean were typical nicknames for women who ran brothels.

*Amo* is Latin for “I love you.”

Doll said, “A pox upon you, rogue. I wish I had time to beat you!”

Face said, “Subtle, let me know where you set up shop next. I will send you a customer now and then, for old acquaintance’s sake. What new course of action are you considering?”

Subtle replied, “Rogue, I’ll hang myself, so that I may walk as a greater devil than you, and haunt you in the flock-bed and the buttery.”

A flock-bed was stuffed with wool; the buttery was the pantry where food and drink were stored. As a butler, Face was in charge of the pantry.

Subtle was saying that he would kill himself so that he could haunt the places Face spent a lot of time.

Doll Common and Subtle exited.

—5.5—

Lovewit, wearing Spanish clothing, stood talking with the parson.

Loud knocking sounded at the door.

At the door, Lovewit asked, “What do you want, my masters?”



Sir Epicure Mammon replied, "Open your door, cheaters, bawds, conjurers."

A police officer with him threatened, "Or we will break it open."

"What warrant do you have?" Lovewit asked.

"Warrant enough, sir," the police officer replied. "Don't doubt that, if you'll not open it."

"Is there an officer out there?" Lovewit asked.

The police officer replied, "Yes, two or three in case they are needed."

Lovewit said, "Have a little patience, and I will open it in a moment."

Face entered the room; he was beardless and dressed as a butler.

Face asked Lovewit, "Sir, have you finished the ceremony? Is it a marriage? Is it duly and legally performed?"

"Yes, my brain," Lovewit said, complimenting Face, aka Jeremy the butler.

"Then take off your ruff and cloak," Face said. "Be yourself, sir."

Lovewit removed the Spanish clothing.

Surly shouted from outside, "Knock down the door!"

Kastril shouted, "By God's light, beat it open."

Opening the door, Lovewit said, "Wait, wait, gentlemen, what is the meaning of this violence?"

Sir Epicure Mammon, Surly, Kastril, Ananias, Tribulation Wholesome, and the police officers rushed in.

“Where is this collier?” Sir Epicure Mammon shouted.

A collier is a man who deals in coal. Sir Epicure Mammon was referring to Subtle, who used much coal in his trade of alchemy.

Surly shouted, “And where is Captain Face?”

Sir Epicure Mammon began, “These day owls —”

“— that are birding in men’s wallets,” Surly finished.

Owls hunt at night, but Subtle and Face went birding — hunting — by day in other men’s wallets. Subtle and Face were thieves.

Sir Epicure Mammon mentioned another person who had conned him and whose whereabouts he wanted to know: “Madam Suppository.”

A suppository is a plug used to give medicine vaginally or rectally. Doll had pretended to Sir Epicure Mammon that she was studying medicine. Unknown to but possibly suspected by Sir Epicure Mammon, Doll was a prostitute who very well might be called Madame Suppository. She was also a supposed lady who was not really a lady.

Kastril mentioned someone he wanted to see: “Doxy, my suster.”

A doxy is a whore.

“Locusts of the foul pit,” Ananias said.

“Profane as Bel and the dragon,” Tribulation Wholesome said.

“Bel and the Dragon” is a section of the extended Book of Daniel. These stories are part of the biblical apocrypha. Bel (a statue) and the dragon were both falsely worshipped; Daniel convinced the people not to worship them.

The people who worshipped Bel and the dragon were worshipping idols. Such things occurred in Ben Jonson's day and in our day, but modern idols tend to be money and the bad things that money can buy.

"Worse than the grasshoppers, or the lice of Egypt," Ananias said.

Lovewit said, "Good gentlemen, listen to me."

The commotion continued.

He asked, "Are you police officers, and you cannot stop this violence?"

The first police officer ordered, "Keep the peace."

"Gentlemen, what is the matter?" Lovewit asked. "Who do you seek?"

"The chemical cozener," Sir Epicure Mammon said.

"And the Captain pander," Surly said.

"The nun who is my suster," Kastril said.

"Nun" was an ironic way of saying "whore."

"Madam Rabbi," Sir Epicure Mammon said.

Doll had pretended to have religious knowledge while she was deceiving him.

"Scorpions and caterpillars," Ananias said.

Lovewit said, "Fewer speak at once, please."

The second police officer ordered, "Speak one person at a time, gentlemen. Take turns speaking. So I order you, by virtue of my staff."

His staff was a symbol of his authority as a police officer.

Ananias said, “They are the vessels of pride, lust, and the cart.”

The cart was used in punishing criminals. A criminal could be placed on the cart and driven to the place of punishment, or the criminal could be bound and walk behind the cart while being whipped.

Lovewit said to Ananias, “Good zeal, lie still for a little while.”

“Peace, Deacon Ananias,” Tribulation Wholesome said. “Be quiet.”

Lovewit said, “The house here is mine, and the doors are open. If there are any such persons as you seek, use your authority and search the house in God’s name.”

He was hinting that perhaps the people they were seeking did not really exist.

He added, “I have only recently come to town, and to tell you truly, finding this tumult about my doors somewhat bewildered me until my butler here, fearing my greater displeasure, told me he had done something somewhat insolent — he had rented my house (probably he was presuming on my known aversion to any air of the town while there was present the sickness of plague) to a Doctor and a Captain. Who they are, what they are, and where they may be, he doesn’t know.”

Sir Epicure Mammon asked, “Are they gone?”

“You may go in and search, sir,” Lovewit invited.

Sir Epicure Mammon, Ananias and Tribulation went into the interior rooms of the house.

Lovewit said, “Here, I find the empty walls worse than I left them; they are smoked, with a few cracked pots and glasses

and a furnace, and the ceiling filled with graffiti made from the candle smoke and a drawing of 'Madam with a Dildo' written on the walls. I have met only one gentlewoman here. She is within, and she said that she was a widow —”

Kastril said, “Yes, that’s my suster. I’ll go thump her. Where is she?”

He went inside.

Lovewit continued, “— and she should have married a Spanish Count, but he, when he came to it, neglected her so grossly, that I, a widower, am gone through with her.”

He had gone through the wedding ceremony with her.

Surly said, “What! Have I lost her then!”

“Were you the Spanish Don, sir?” Lovewit asked. “Truly, now, she does blame you extremely, and she says that you swore and told her you had taken the pains to dye your beard and darken your face with umber and had borrowed a suit of Spanish clothing and a ruff, all for her love — and then you did nothing. What an oversight and lack of putting forward an effort, sir, was this!

“An old musketeer can still fare well; he could prime his powder, and give fire, and hit, all in the twinkling of an eye!”

Lovewit, an older man, was hinting that he had consummated the marriage.

Sir Epicure Mammon returned and said, “The whole nest has fled!”

“What sort of birds were they?” Lovewit asked.

“A kind of choughs, or thievish daws, sir, who have picked my purse of eight score and ten pounds within these five weeks.”

Choughs are a kind of crow, and daws are jackdaws. These are birds that sometimes steal shiny items.

He continued, “In addition, I paid for the first materials — coals and chemicals — and my goods are lying in the cellar, which I am glad they have been left because I may still take them home.”

“Do you think so, sir?” Lovewit said.

“Yes.”

“You may have them by order of law, sir, but not otherwise,” Lovewit said. “A court must rule that these are your goods.”

“I can’t have my own goods!” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

“Sir, I can have no knowledge that they are yours, except by public laws,” Lovewit said. “If you can bring a legal certificate that you were gulled of them, or out of a court law any formal writ that you did cheat yourself, I will not hold them.”

Lovewit knew what had happened. Sir Epicure Mammon had cheated himself by trusting con men. And, of course, he had been cheated. As a later con man, W.C. Fields, would say, “You can’t cheat an honest man.”

“I’d rather lose them,” Sir Epicure Mammon said.

If he were to testify in a court of law, everyone would know what a fool he had been.

Lovewit said, “You shall not lose your goods because of me, sir. Upon these terms I have given, they are yours. Were they all to have been, sir, turned into gold?”

Sir Epicure Mammon said, “No, I cannot tell — it may be they would have been — what then?”

He was unwilling to admit that an alchemist had cheated him.

Lovewit said, "What a great loss in hope you have sustained!"

"Not I," Sir Epicure Mammon said. "The commonwealth has."

He was thinking of all the good he could have done with the alchemical gold, and he was not mentioning the decadent lifestyle he would have lived.

Face said, "Yes, he would have built the city anew and made around it a silver ditch, which would have run with cream from Hogsden so that, every Sunday, in Moorfields, the youngers and tits and tomboys would have drunk the cream, *gratis*."

Youngers are young men, tits are young women, and tomboys are boisterous girls. "*Gratis*" means "free of charge."

Sir Epicure Mammon said, "I will go and mount a turnip cart, and preach the end of the world, within these two months."

Itinerant preachers often stood on a farm cart to preach.

He looked at Surly and said, "Surly, wake up! Are you in a dream?"

Surly had been thinking about his own losses: Dame Pliant and her fortune. If he had married her without revealing that he was not a Spanish Don, she would be his. Instead, he had been honest and had revealed to her who he really was. Also, he had left her to reveal to his friend Sir Epicure Mammon that Sir Epicure was being cheated.

Surly said, “Must I necessarily cheat myself with that same foolish vice of honesty! Come, let us go and search for the rogues. That Face I’ll mark for mine, if ever I meet him.”

He meant that he would single Face out for punishment and that he would mark Face’s face with his fists.

Face said, “If I ever hear of him, sir, I’ll bring word to your lodging, for indeed they were strangers to me. I thought they were as honest as myself, sir.”

Lovewit appreciated the wit.

Sir Epicure Mammon and Surly exited. So did the police officers.

Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome returned.

Tribulation Wholesome said to Ananias, “It is well; the saints shall not lose all yet. Go, and get some carts —”

“For what, my zealous friends?” Lovewit asked.

Ananias said, “To bear away the portion of the righteous out of this den of thieves.”

“What is that portion?” Lovewit asked.

“The goods that used to be the orphans’, that the brethren bought with their silver pence,” Ananias replied.

“What, those in the cellar that the Knight Sir Epicure Mammon claims?” Lovewit asked.

Ananias said, “I do defy the wicked Mammon, as do all the brethren, you profane man! I ask you with what conscience you can advance that idol against us, who have the seal of God?”

He was referring to Revelation 9:4: “*And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither*



*any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads*” (King James Version).

Ananias continued, “Were not the shillings numbered that made the pounds? Were not the pounds counted out, upon the second day of the fourth week, in the eighth month, upon the table, the year of the last patience of the saints, six hundred and ten?”

By “the second day of the fourth week, in the eighth month,” he meant 23 October. In the calendar Anabaptists used, the first month was March.

By the “last patience of the saints,” he meant the thousand years before the Second Coming.

By “six hundred and ten,” he meant the year 1610. According to Ananias, the Second Coming would occur in the year 2000 C.E.

Lovewit said to Ananias, “My earnest vehement botcher and deacon also, I cannot dispute religion with you verbally, but unless you get yourselves away from here very soon, I shall confute you with a cudgel.”

A botcher can be 1) someone who performs a task poorly, and/or 2) a tailor who repairs clothing rather than making new items of clothing.

“Sir!” Ananias said.

“Be calm, Ananias,” Tribulation Wholesome said.

“I am strong, and I will stand up, well girt, against a host of enemies who threaten Gad in exile,” Ananias said.

Genesis 49:19 predicted eventual victory for Gad: “Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last” (King James Version).

Lovewit said, "I shall send you to Amsterdam, to your cellar."

"I will pray there against your house," Ananias said. "May dogs defile and pee on your walls, and wasps and hornets breed beneath your roof, this seat of falsehood, and this cave of cheating!"

Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome exited.

Drugger arrived.

Lovewit asked, "Another one, too?"

Drugger replied, "Not I, sir, I am no brother."

He meant that he was not a Puritan brother.

Lovewit beat him and said, "Go away, you Harry Nicholas! Dare you talk?"

By "Harry Nicholas," Lovewit meant Harry Niclaes, an Anabaptist mystic whose sect Queen Elizabeth I suppressed and banned in 1580.

Drugger exited.

Face said to Lovewit, "No, he was no Anabaptist. This man was Abel Drugger."

He then said to the parson, "Good sir, go and give him information. Tell him all is over: The widow has been married. He stayed at home too long, washing his face. He shall hear of the Doctor Subtle at Chester and of Captain Face at Yarmouth or some other good port town, waiting for a good wind so he can sail away."

Drugger would either go on a wild goose chase or simply not try to find the Doctor and the Captain and instead stay at home.

The parson exited.

Face said to Lovewit, “If you can get rid of the angry child, now, sir —”

Kastril entered the room, dragging in his sister.

Kastril said to her, “Come on, you ewe, you have matched most sweetly, haven’t you? Didn’t I say that I would never have you tuppéd except by a dubbed boy so that you would be made a lady-tom?”

When a ram has sex with an ewe, the ram is said to have tuppéd the ewe, according to Kastril’s country language. “A dubbed boy” is a Knight, and Kastril had wanted his sister to marry a Knight so that she could be a lady. “Tom” is short for “tomboy,” but Dame Pliant was hardly a boisterous girl.

Kastril added, “By God’s light, you are a mammet! Oh, I could touse you, now.”

A mammet is a doll or puppet. By “touse,” Kastril meant “beat.”

He added, “Death, must you marry a pox!”

Lovewit said, “You lie, boy. I am as sound — as healthy and as free of the pox, aka syphilis — as you, and I’m aforehand with you.”

Lovewit knew the rules of arguing. He drew his sword.

Kastril asked, “Do you want to duel at once?”

“Come, will you quarrel?” Lovewit said. “I will frighten you away, Sirrah. Why don’t you draw your weapon?”

Kastril was ok with beating his sister; he was not ok with being killed by Lovewit. Therefore, Kastril said, “By God’s light, this is as fine an old boy as ever I saw!”

“Do you change your tune now?” Lovewit said. “Proceed.”

He waved his sword and said, “Here stands my dove. Swoop at her, if you dare.”

Kastril said, “By God’s light, I must love and respect him! I cannot choose not to, indeed, even if I should be hanged for it!”

He then said, “Suster, I protest that I honor you for this wedding match.”

“Oh, you do, do you, sir?” Lovewit said.

“Yes,” Kastril said, “and if you can take tobacco and drink, old boy, I’ll give her five hundred pounds in dowry for her marriage — five hundred pounds in addition to her own estate.”

“Fill a pipe full, Jeremy,” Lovewit ordered.

“Yes, but go in and smoke it there, sir,” Face, aka Jeremy, replied.

“We will,” Lovewit said. “I will be ruled by you in anything, Jeremy.”

Lovewit really did love wit — intelligence and quick thinking.

Kastril said, “By God’s light, you are not hidebound — you are a jovy boy!” Come, let us go in, please, and take our whiffs of tobacco.”

A “jovy” boy is a jovial boy.

Lovewit replied, “Whiff in with your sister, brother boy.”

Kastril and his sister went inside.

Lovewit now said directly to you, the audience, “Any master who has received such happiness by means of a servant, in

being provided with such a widow and so much wealth, would be very ungrateful if he would not be a little indulgent to that servant's wit and help that servant's fortune, though with some small strain of his own honor and reputation."

Lovewit had kept property that he knew belonged to other people.

He continued, "Therefore, gentlemen and kind spectators, if I have outstripped an old man's gravity or strict standard of conduct for an actor playing an old man, think what a young wife and a good brain may do."

The brain belonged to Face, aka Jeremy.

Lovewit added, "They may stretch age's truth sometimes, and crack it, too. I have behaved perhaps more vigorously than you would think an old man could, but so what?"

Lovewit then said to Face, aka Jeremy, "Speak for yourself, knave."

"So I will, sir," Face, aka Jeremy, replied.

Lovewit exited.

Face, aka Jeremy, then said directly to you, the audience, "Gentlemen, my part a little fell in this last scene, yet it was within the limits of what a character like mine can plausibly do. I started out doing good for myself only, but then I did good for my master. Please note that I did good only so that I could get out of trouble. I am as much of a scoundrel now as I was at the beginning. And although I have cleanly got away from Subtle, Surly, Sir Epicure Mammon, Doll, hot-tempered Ananias, Dapper, Drugger, and all with whom I traded and conned, yet I wish to avoid being punished by you. Therefore, I put my fate to you, who are my jury. Please know that if you acquit me, then this loot that I have gotten

remains here, and I will feast you often, and I will invite new guests.”

Face, aka Jeremy, may have thought this: *You don't think I'm going to let Lovewit have the loot, do you? No, I have promised these readers that I will use the loot to feast them if they find me innocent. (There's a name for that. What is it? Oh, yeah, a bribe.) And, of course, I will then treat the members of the audience the way I treat everyone else: I will cheat them, and I will find new people to cheat.*

But the actor playing Face, aka Jeremy, may have thought this: *Yes, the character I was playing cleanly got away from Subtle, Surly, Sir Epicure Mammon, Doll, hot-tempered Ananias, Dapper, Drugger, and all with whom my character traded and conned, yet I the actor playing him wish to avoid being punished by you, the audience. Therefore, I put my fate to you, who are my jury. Please know that if you acquit me, then this loot — the cause of your laughter that I have gotten — remains here, and I will feast you often, and I will invite new guests. You can either see this play in the theater, or re-read this retelling in this book. Either way, the cause of much laughter still remains here, and I hope that new audience members and new readers will enjoy it.*

## NOTES (*The Alchemist*)

### Steps of Creating the Philosopher's Stone

Probably some alchemists really believed that the philosopher's stone could be created, while others were merely con men. Since alchemy is not a science, we ought not to be surprised that different numbers of steps are said by different authors to be needed to create the philosopher's stone. And we ought not to be surprised that alchemists sometimes give alchemical terms different definitions in their writings.

When in the presence of Sir Epicure Mammon and other people they wish to con, Subtle and Face use many alchemical terms. These are real terms, but they are used to confuse the hearers and make Subtle and Face seem intelligent and knowledgeable. You readers of this book ought not to be worried about understanding the terms used by Subtle and Face because they are trying to confuse you, too.

In case you are interested, here are the twelve gates (steps) of creating the philosopher's according to English alchemist George Ripley (c. 1415-1490):

1. Calcination: *"The breaking down of a substance by fierce heating and burning usually in an open crucible."*

Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alch-pro.html>

2. Solution (or Dissolution): Dissolution is *"[t]he dissolving or transforming of a substance into a liquid."*

Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alch-pro.html>

3. Separation: *"The making of two opposite components separate from each other. Often alternated with the conjunction process."*

Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alch-pro.html>

4. Conjunction: *“The joining of two opposite components, often seen as the union of the male and female, the subtle and gross, or even the elements.”*

Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alch-pro.html>

5. Putrefaction: *“The rotting of a substance, often under a prolonged gentle moist heat. Usually the matter becomes black.”*

Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alch-pro.html>

6. Congelation: *“Congelation is the process by which something congeals, or thickens.”*

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congelation>

7. Cibation: *“The feeding of the substance being acted upon in a flask, with some reagent, usually a liquid.”*

Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alch-pro.html>

8. Sublimation: *“This occurs when a solid is heated and gives off a vapour which condenses on the cool upper parts of the vessel as a solid, not going through a liquid phase. An example is sal ammoniac.”*

Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alch-pro.html>

9. Fermentation: *“The rotting of a substance, usually of an organic nature, often accompanied by the release of gas bubbles.”*

Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alch-pro.html>

10. Exaltation: *“An operation by which a substance is raised into a purer and more perfect nature.”*

Source: <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/alch-pro.html>



11. Multiplication: This is refining the philosopher's stone to increase its potency so that a little of the philosopher's stone will turn a vast quantity of base metal into gold.

12. Projection: After the philosopher's stone was created, a small part of it would be cast onto molten base metal; the philosopher's stone would then turn the base metal to gold.

### ***Equi clibanum* (Act 1, Scene 1)**

This is a quote from John French — *The Art of Distillation* — Book I:

*If you would make a heat with horse dung, the manner is this, viz., make a hole in the ground. Then lay one course of horse dung a foot thick, then a course of unslaked lime a foot thick, and then another of dung, as before. Then set in your vessel, and lay around it lime and horse dung mixed together. Press it down very hard. You must sprinkle it every other day with water. When it ceases to be hot, then take it out and put in more.*

Source: [http://www.alchemywebsite.com/jfren\\_1.htm](http://www.alchemywebsite.com/jfren_1.htm)

### **Cart and Horse (Act 1, Scene 1)**

The long quotation below comes from William Andrews (1848-1908), *Medieval Punishments: An Illustrated History of Torture*. Skyhorse Publishing; 1st edition (August 1, 2013). P. 227. I ran across it while researching the punishment of cart and whip and found it interesting, so I wanted to share it with you.

*A fire occurred at Olney in 1783, and during the confusion a man stole some ironwork. The crime was detected, and the man was tried and sentenced to be whipped at the cart's tail. [William] Cowper [1731-1800], the poet, was an eyewitness to the carrying out of the sentence, and in a letter to the Rev. John Newton gives an amusing account of it.*

*“The fellow,” wrote Cowper, “seemed to show great fortitude; but it was all an imposition. The beadle [parish constable, who was usually unpaid and part-time, according to Wikipedia] who whipped him had his left hand filled with red ochre [earthy pigment, aka color, in this case red], through which, after every stroke, he drew the lash of the whip, leaving the appearance of a wound upon the skin, but in reality not hurting him at all. This being perceived by the constable, who followed the beadle to see that he did his duty, he (the constable) applied the cane, without any such management or precaution, to the shoulders of the beadle.*

*“The scene now became interesting and exciting. The beadle could by no means be induced to strike the thief hard, which provoked the constable to strike harder; and so the double flogging continued, until a lass of Silver End, pitying the pitiful [full of pity] beadle, thus suffering under the hands of the pitiless [without pity] constable, joined the procession, and placing herself immediately behind the constable, seized him by his capillary club, and pulling him backward by the same, slapped his face with Amazonian fury.*

*“This concentration of events has taken up more of my paper than I intended, but I could not forbear to inform you how the beadle thrashed the thief, the constable the beadle, and the lady the constable, and how the thief was the only person who suffered nothing.”*

### **The Seven Ages of Man (Act 2, Scene 1)**

The long quotation below is from *The Treasury of ancient and modern Times* (1613). It is the seven ages of man, supposedly as according to the Greek author Proclus.

*The FIRST AGE is called Infancy, containing the space of foure years. [Birth-4 years old)*

*The SECOND AGE containeth ten years, until he attain to the yeares of fourteen: this age is called Childhood. [4-14 years old]*

*The THIRD AGE consisteth of eight yeares, being named by our auncients Adolescencie or Youthhood; and it lasteth from fourteen, till two and twenty yeares be fully compleate. [14-22 years old]*

*The FOURTH AGE paceth on, till a man have accomplished two and fortie yeares, and is termed Young Manhood. [22-42 years old]*

*The FIFTH AGE, named Mature Manhood, hath (according to the said author) fifteen yeares of continuance, and therefore makes his progress so far as six and fifty yeares. [42-56 years old]*

*Afterwards, in adding twelve to fifty-six, you shall make up sixty-eight yeares, which reach to the end of the SIXT AGE, and is called Old Age. [56-68 years old]*

*The SEAVENTH and last of these seven ages is limited from sixty-eight yeares, so far as four-score and eight, being called weak, declining, and Decrepite Age. [68-88 years old]*

*If any man chance to goe beyond this age, (which is more admired than noted in many) you shall evidently perceive that he will returne to his first condition of Infancy againe. [88 years old and over]*

I divided the quotation into paragraphs.

The source is a footnote to this book:

*As you like it. All's well that ends well*

By William Shakespeare, Joseph Dennie, Isaac Reed, Samuel Johnson, George Steevens, William Richardson, Edmond Malone, Edward Capell.

<http://tinyurl.com/m4qbw3t>

Here is Jacques speaking about the seven ages of man in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*:

*All the world's a stage,*

*And all the men and women merely players;*

*They have their exits and their entrances;*

*And one man in his time plays many parts,*

*His acts being seven ages. [First Age] At first the infant,*

*Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;*

*[Second Age] And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel*

*And shining morning face, creeping like snail*

*Unwillingly to school. [Third Age] And then the lover,*

*Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad*

*Made to his mistress' eyebrow. [Fourth Age] Then a soldier,*

*Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,*

*Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,*

*Seeking the bubble reputation*

*Even in the cannon's mouth. [Fifth Age] And then the justice,*

*In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,*

*With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,*

*Full of wise saws and modern instances;*

*And so he plays his part. [Sixth Age] The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;  
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. [Seventh Age] Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion;  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*

### **The Parliament Fart (Act 2, Scene 2)**

*“The Censure of the Parliament Fart”*

*Never was bestowed such art  
Upon the tuning of a Fart.  
Downe came grave auntient Sir John Crooke<sup>1</sup>  
And redd his message in his booke.  
Fearie well, Quoth Sir William Morris, Soe:  
But Henry Ludlowes Tayle cry'd Noe.  
Up starts one fuller of devotion  
Then Eloquence; and said a very ill motion  
Not soe neither quoth Sir Henry Jenkin  
The Motion was good; but for the stincking  
Well quoth Sir Henry Poole it was a bold tricke*

*To Fart in the nose of the bodie pollitique  
Indeed I must confesse quoth Sir Edward Grevill  
The matter of it selfe was somewhat uncivill  
Thanke God quoth Sir Edward Hungerford  
That this Fart proved not a Turdd  
Quoth Sir Jerome the lesse there was noe such abuse  
Ever offer'd in Poland, or Spruce [Prussia]  
Quoth Sir Jerome in folio, I sweare by the Masse  
This Fart was enough to have brooke all my Glasse  
Indeed quoth Sir John Trevor it gave a fowle knocke  
As it lanced forth from his stincking Docke [arse].  
I (quoth another) it once soe chanced  
That a great Man farted as hee danced.  
Well then, quoth Sir William Lower  
This fart is noe Ordinance fitt for the Tower.  
Quoth Sir Richard Houghton noe Justice of Quorum  
But would take it in snuffe [take offence] to have a fart lett  
before him.  
If it would beare an action quoth Sir Thomas Holcrofte  
I would make of this fart a bolt, or a shafte.  
Quoth Sir Walter Cope 'twas a fart rarely lett  
I would 'twere sweet enough for my Cabinett.  
Such a Fart was never seene*

*Quoth the Learned Councill of the Queene.  
Noe (quoth Mr Pecke I have a President [precedent] in store  
That his Father farted the Session before  
Nay then quoth Noy 'twas lawfully done  
For this fart was entail'd from father to sonne  
Quoth Mr Recorder a word for the cittie  
To cutt of the aldermens right weere great pittie.  
Well quoth Kitt Brookes wee give you a reason  
Though he has right by discent he had not livery & seizin  
Ha ha quoth Mr Evans I smell a fee  
It's a private motion heere's something for mee  
Well saith Mr Moore letts this motion repeale  
Whats good for the private is oft ill for comonweale3  
A good yeare on this fart, quoth gentle Sir Harry3  
He has caus'd such an Earthquake that my colepitts  
miscarry3  
'Tis hard to recall a fart when its out  
Quoth [...] with a loude shoote*

Source:

[http://www.earlystuartlibels.net/htdocs/parliament\\_fart\\_section/C1i.html](http://www.earlystuartlibels.net/htdocs/parliament_fart_section/C1i.html)

Note: The above poem appeared in the *Musarum Deliciae* (1656). The Latin means *The Muses' Delight*.

Note: The fart emitted from Sir Henry Ludlow's butt in 1607: It was his commentary on a message from the House

of Lords. Sir Henry Ludlow was a Member of Parliament. Ben Jonson mentions the fart in his Epigram 133.

Note: The lines “I (quoth another) it once soe chanced / That a great Man farted as hee danced” alludes to Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, who had the misfortune of farting in front of Queen Elizabeth I.

This is a short quotation from John Aubrey’s *Brief Lives*:

*This Earle of Oxford, making of his low obeisance to Queen Elizabeth, happened to let a Fart, at which he was so abashed and ashamed that he went to Travell, 7 yeares. On his returne the Queen welcomed him home, and sayd, My Lord, I had forgott the Fart.*

Source: [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/John\\_Aubrey](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/John_Aubrey)

### ***Succubae* versus *Succubi* (Act 2, Scene 2)**

Late Latin *succuba* means “paramour,” “whore,” or “strumpet.” The plural is *succubae*. By 1587 (*Oxford English Dictionary*), it had come to mean “demon in female form.”

The plural is *succubi*.

Sir Epicure Mammon’s *succubae* may be whores with demonic overtones; however, it is likely that Sir Epicure Mammon would enjoy sleeping with female demons.

An *incubus* is a male demon who has sex with sleeping women. *Succuba* may have become *succubus* in imitation of *incubus*.

### **Begetting Life from Carcasses (Act 2, Scene 3)**

The below is an excerpt from this source:

“The Creation of Life in Cultural Context: From Spontaneous Generation to Synthetic Biology”



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Germany

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<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6781/c3bd07a155c7c252b874e5fc720f9b85601f.pdf>

*In contrast to Aristotle, late antique and early medieval authorities (such as Virgil, Ovid, Pliny, and Isidor of Sevilla), rather than performing their own investigations, collected the available folk knowledge and myths to build a growing standard set of views on how to make living beings. Such sets typically recommended the carcasses of cows for creating the useful bees, an art called bougonia that greatly flourished, whereas those of horses and donkeys were only able to produce wasps and beetles, respectively. Late medieval Christian authorities, such as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, basically repeated the received views but emphasized the importance of astrological influence. When some Renaissance authors tried to incorporate folk myths about goose and lambs growing on trees, criticism arose, but views on the spontaneous generation of simple animals and plants remained, with few exceptions (see Section 4), largely intact through the 18th century. Francis Bacon, in his utopia *New Atlantis* (1628), even devised an entire research program. Starting from freshly made simple organisms, higher species should be bred that perfectly meet human needs.*

*Bougonia* is also known as *bugonia*. *Bugonia* gets many more hits on computer searches.

Wikipedia's article on "Bugonia" states this:

*In the ancient Mediterranean region, **bugonia** or **bougonia** was a ritual based on the belief that bees were spontaneously (equivocally) generated from a cow's carcass, although it is*

*possible that the ritual had more currency as a poetic and learned trope than as an actual practice.*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bugonia>

Part of Book 4 of Virgil's *Georgics* is about the autogenesis of bees in a carcass of a bull prepared by human beings for this purpose. John Dryden translated the below lines:

*First, in a place, by Nature closs, they build*

*A narrow Flooring, gutter'd, wall'd, and til'd.*

*In this, four Windows are contriv'd, that strike*

*To the four Winds oppos'd, their Beams oblique. (420)*

*A Steer of two Years old they take, whose Head*

*Now first with burnish'd Horns begins to spread:*

*They stop his Nostrils, while he strives in vain*

*To breath free Air, and struggles with his Pain.*

*Knock'd down, he dyes: his Bowels bruis'd within, (425)*

*Betray no Wound on his unbroken Skin.*

*Extended thus, in this obscene Abode,*

*They leave the Beast; but first sweet Flow'rs are strow'd*

*Beneath his Body, broken Boughs and Thyme,*

*And pleasing Cassia just renew'd in prime. (430)*

*This must be done, e're Spring makes equal Day,*

*When Western Winds on curling Waters play:*

*E're painted Meads produce their Flow'ry Crops,*

*Or Swallows twitter on the Chimney Tops.*

*The tainted Blood, in this close Prison pent, (435)*  
*Begins to boyl and through the Bones ferment.*  
*Then, wondrous to behold, new Creatures rise,*  
*A moving Mass at first, and short of Thighs;*  
*'Till shooting out with Legs, and imp'd with Wings,*  
*The Grubs proceed to Bees with pointed Stings: (440)*  
*And more and more affecting Air, they try*  
*Their tender Pinions, and begin to fly:*  
*At length, like Summer Storms from spreading Clouds,*  
*That burst at once, and pour impetuous Floods;*  
*Or Flights of Arrows from the Parthian Bows, (445)*  
*When from afar they gaul embattel'd Foes;*  
*With such a Tempest thro' the Skies they Steer;*  
*And such a form the winged Squadrons bear.*  
*What God, O Muse! this useful Science taught?*  
*Or by what Man's Experience was it brought? (450)*

### **A Note on Ananias (Act 2, Scene 5)**

Ananias appears in Acts 5:1-10; he is a man who withholds money that belonged to the community.

Acts 5:1-10 — King James Version (KJV)

*I But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife,  
sold a possession,*

*2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

*3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*

*4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*

*5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.*

*6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.*

*7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.*

*8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.*

*9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.*

*10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.*

A different, better Ananias — a man who baptized Saul of Tarsus, who became Saint Paul — appears in Acts 9:10-18:

Acts 9:10-18 — King James Version (KJV)

*10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.*

*11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,*

*12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.*

*13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:*

*14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.*

*15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:*

*16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*

*17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*

*18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.*

The Ananias of this play is perhaps named after the good Ananias of Acts 9:10-18, but Subtle pretends to believe that he was named after the bad Ananias of Acts 5:1-10.

## Rebus (Act 2, Scene 6)

A rebus is a cryptic representation of a name, word, phrase, or even sentence, using pictures and letters. Subtle creates a rebus for Abel Drugger in Act 2, Scene 6.

In his memoir of W. Camden, Thomas Moule wrote this:

*Did not that amorous youth mystically express his love to Rose Hill, whom he courted, when in the border of his painted cloth, he caused to be painted, as rudely as he devised grossly, a Rose, an Hill, an Eye, a Loaf, and a Well? That is, if you will spell it:*

*“Rose Hill I love well.”*

I can't say I understand the use of the picture of a loaf. It seems to me that the sentence should be this:

*“Rose Hill I bred well.”*

Or, if the picture of the loaf is supposed to represent a word that sounds like “loaf,” it seems to me that the sentence should be this:

*“Rose Hill I loath well.”*

“Loaf” as a verb means “to form a loaf” (the *Oxford English Dictionary* has a citation from 1578). Perhaps the sentence should be this:

*“Rose Hill I put a bun in her oven well.”*

But “loaf” as “love” may be correct. Today's online Urban Dictionary has an entry for “I loaf you,” which it defines in this way:

*meaning “I love you” but in a friendly yet mocking way. Noting [Nothing?] about love and relationship. All about nonsense and real friendship.*

Source:

<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=I%20loaf%20you>

By the way, a footnote tells this joke:

*This reminds us of a Down-South in the days of our grandfathers, who replied to an offer of marriage with a stroke produced by the end of a burnt stick and a lock of wool pinned to the paper, "I wull!" ["I wool!" aka "I will!"]*

Source:

<http://tinyurl.com/ycn5x58a>

### **Urine and Love Potion (Act 2, Scene 6)**

Captain Face knows a witch who can make a love potion from a glass of Druggers' water, aka urine.

As shown in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, disgusting ingredients are used in magic.

Here is an example of a love potion, one of whose ingredients is urine from the woman the man wishes would love him:

*"When a young man is trying to win the love of a reluctant girl he consults the medicine-man, who then tries to find some of the urine and saliva which the girl has voided, as well as the sand upon which it has fallen. He mixes these with a few twigs of certain woods, and places them in a gourd, and gives them to the young man, who takes them home, and adds a portion of tobacco. In about an hour he takes out the tobacco and gives it to the girl to smoke; this effects a complete transformation in her feelings." — ("Conversation with Muhongo," an African boy from Angola, translated by Rev. Mr. Chatelain.)*

Source: *SCATALOGIC RITES OF ALL NATIONS. A Dissertation upon the Employment of Excrementitious Remedial Agents in Religion, Therapeutics, Divination, Witchcraft, Love-Philthers, etc., in all Parts of the Globe, Based upon Original Notes and Personal Observation, and upon Compilation from over One Thousand Authorities.* BY CAPTAIN JOHN G. BOURKE, Third Cavalry, U. S. A. NOT FOR GENERAL PERUSAL. WASHINGTON, D.C. W. H. LOWDERMILK & CO. 1891.

<https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/ocr/nlm:nlmuid-101486300-bk>

### **Quarrels (Act 2, Scene 6)**

In William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Touchstone, a Professional Fool, aka Jester, explained the rules for quarreling. This is a retelling of that conversation in modern English:

“Let me explain, sir. I disliked the cut of a certain courtier’s beard. He sent me word that if I said his beard was not cut well, he was of the opinion that it was cut well. This is called the Retort Courteous.

“If I sent him word again that it was not well cut, he would send me word that he cut it to please himself. This is called the Quip Modest.

“If I sent him word again that it was not well cut, he would send me word that he did not value my judgment. This is called the Reply Churlish.

“If I sent him word again that it was not well cut, he would answer that I did not speak the truth. This is called the Reproof Valiant.



“If I sent him word again that it was not well cut, he would say that I lied. This is called the Counter-cheque Quarrelsome.

“The two that are left are the Lie Circumstantial and the Lie Direct.”

“How often did you say that his beard was not well cut?” Jaques asked.

“I dared go no further than the Lie Circumstantial, and he dared not give me the Lie Direct, and so we measured swords, said that they were uneven in length and therefore fighting a duel would not be fair combat, and we parted.”

The above is an excerpt from my book *William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose*.

### **Pillory and Ears Cut Off (Act 3, scene 2)**

The below is a quotation from an article titled “Anglicans and Puritans”:

*When James died in 1625 he was replaced by his son Charles I. The Puritans became very angry when Charles married Henrietta Maria, a Catholic Princess. They also became worried when Catholic lords began to be given important posts in Charles' court.*

*In 1633 Charles appointed William Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud soon began to introduce changes. For example, he ordered that the wooden communion table should be replaced by a stone altar. This area was also separated from the congregation by wooden railings. He also insisted that ministers should display candles and ornaments.*

*The Puritans claimed that Laud was trying to make English churches look like those in Catholic countries. When Puritans complained about these reforms. Laud had them*

*arrested. In 1637 John Bastwick, Henry Burton and William Prynne had their ears cut off for writing pamphlets attacking Laud's views.*

Source:

<http://spartacus-educational.com/TUDanglicans.htm>

John Bastwick, Henry Burton and William Prynne were all Puritans.

The quote below is from the Wikipedia article on Alexander Leighton:

*Leighton published his controversial pamphlet Zion's plea against Prelacy: An Appeal to Parliament in 1628 in Holland. In this publication, he criticised the church, and in particular the Bishops who then ruled the Church of Scotland, condemning them as "anti-Christian and satanic". He was sentenced by Archbishop William Laud's High Commission Court to public whipping, to having the letters 'SS' branded on him (for 'Sower of Sedition'), and having his ears cut off. Medical records say that, "since he had been censured by the Star Chamber on religious grounds (& had had his ears cropped)", that he should now be 'infamis' in his profession, and he was permanently banned from further practice. John Taylor Brown, writing in Encyclopædia Britannica, expressed the opinion that Leighton's persecution and punishment "form one of the most disgraceful incidents of the reign of King Charles I".*

*Once the warrant for his arrest was issued by the High Commission Court, Leighton was taken to William Laud's house and then to Newgate prison without any trial. He was put in irons in solitary confinement in an unheated and uncovered cell for fifteen weeks, in which the rain and snow could beat in upon him. None of his friends nor even his wife were permitted to see him during this time. According to four doctors, Leighton was so sick that he was unable to attend*

*his supposed sentencing. Durant notes that Leighton also “was tied to a stake and received thirty-six stripes with a heavy cord upon his naked back; he was placed in the pillory for two hours in November’s frost and snow; he was branded in the face, had his nose split and his ears cut off, and was condemned to life imprisonment”. He was only released from jail when his son Robert was ordained as a Minister at Newbattle.*

*In the end, the Star Chamber’s sentence was not carried out in full. The Long Parliament released him from prison in 1640, when they cancelled his fine, and paid him 6000 pounds for his suffering. In 1642, Leighton was appointed Keeper of Lambeth House, which had been converted into a prison.*

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_Leighton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Leighton)

### **“and be admired for’t” (Act 3, Scene 4)**

Check out this article:

David Accomazzo, “11 Rock Stars Who Allegedly Slept With Underage Girls.” *Phoenix New Times*. 3 February 2016

<http://tinyurl.com/ya6365t4>

### **Queen of the Fairies Con (Act 3, Scene 5)**

Such cons as this really did happen in the time of Ben Jonson.

In 1595, Judith Philips, known as the Bankside cunning-woman, was whipped because she conned people into paying her money to meet the Queen of Fairy.

In 1609, Thomas Rogers, who believed that he was engaged to marry the Queen of Fairy, sued the conmen Sir Anthony Ashley and his brother in Chancery.

In 1613 (*The Alchemist* was first performed in 1610), Alice and John West were convicted of posing as the Queen and King of Fairy in order to get money from suckers who wanted fairy gold.

### **Subtle's Knowledge (Act 4, Scene 2)**

In this act and scene, Subtle shows a great knowledge of quarreling, palmistry, phrenology, and fortune telling. Of course, throughout *The Alchemist*, he shows a great knowledge of alchemy.

Jonson scholar F.H. Mares writes, "Subtle's palmistry, like his alchemy, is learned and can be documented. Jonson does not invent what he ridicules" (134).

Jonson, Ben. *The Alchemist*. Ed. F.H. Mares. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1867.

**"He owes this honest Druggier here, seven pound, He has had on him, in two-penny'orths of tobacco." (Act 4, Scene 7)**

Christopher M. Burlinson wrote this in "Ben Jonson's Money":

*[...] coins of higher denomination are worth considerable sums in modern money: an angel would be the equivalent of several hundred early twenty-first-century pounds, and every pound mentioned by Jonson would be worth thousands of pounds. Other indexes of purchasing power (see 'How Much is that Worth Today?' website), though, suggest that a pound from c. 1600 is worth closer to a hundred pounds from c. 2000. The truth may be not just that the difficulty of comparing costs of living and ways of life over hundreds of years will always make these comparisons rather arbitrary, but that many of the sums mentioned in Jonson's plays are so large that it is their very magnitude, rather than their exact value, that we are meant to appreciate.*

Source: Christopher M. Burlinson, "Ben Jonson's Money."  
*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online.*

<http://tinyurl.com/yb9lnhxe>

Accessed 8 June 2017

### **Green Sickness (Act 4, Scene 6)**

According to this anonymous folk song, a cure for the green sickness is sex.

#### A REMEDY FOR THE GREEN SICKNESS

I

A handsome buxom lass lay panting on her bed,  
She looked as green as grass, and mournfully she said:  
Except I have some lusty lad to ease me of my pain,  
I cannot live, I sigh and grieve,  
My life I now disdain.

But if some bonny lad would be so kind to me,  
Before I am quite mad, to end my misery,  
And cool these burning flames of fire  
Which rage in this my breast,  
Then I should be from torments free and be forever blest.

I am both young and fair, yet 'tis my fortune hard,  
I'm ready to despair, my pleasures are debarred:  
And I, poor soul, cannot enjoy nor taste of lover's bliss,  
Whilst others meet, those joys so sweet,  
Oh! what a life is this.

Were but my passion known, sure some would pity me,  
That lie so long alone, for want of company.  
Had I some young man in my arms  
That would be brisk and brave,

My pains would end,  
He'd prove my friend,  
And keep me from my grave.

From this tormenting pain I cannot long endure,  
My hopes are all in vain if I expect a cure,  
Without some thund'ring lad comes in  
And with a courage bold,  
Grant me delight,  
I'd him requite,  
With silver and with gold.

## II

A gallant lively lad that in the next room lay,  
It made his heart full glad to hear what she did say.  
Into the room immediately this youngster he did rush,  
Some words he spoke,  
Love to provoke,  
But she straight cried out, Hush!

My father he will hear and then we're both undone,  
Quoth he, love do not fear, I'll venture for a son.  
The coverlet he then threw off and jumped into the bed,  
And in a trice,  
He kissed her twice,  
Then to his chamber fled.

And blushing all alone this damsel sweating lay,  
Her troubles they were gone, thus softly did she say:  
Had I but known that lover's bliss  
Had been so sweet a taste,  
I'd ne'er have stayed,  
Nor begged nor prayed,  
That so much time did waste.

This lusty youthful boy, that banished all my pain,  
I must his love enjoy ere it be long again.  
For gold and silver I'll not spare  
Can that his courage prove,  
He has an art, without all smart,  
Green sickness to remove.

A sigh she gave and said, Oh! come again to me,  
For I am half afraid I shall not cured be  
At this first bout, then prithee try  
To help me once again;  
Count me not bold, I'll give thee gold  
Enough for all thy pain.

Source: *Bagford Ballads* (Anonymous. 1682; from Part III).

<http://www.bartleby.com/334/708.html>

### **Birds in Seventy-Seven (Act 4, Scene 7)**

For more information, read this article:

“The ‘Vncleane Birds, in Seuenty-Seuen’: *The Alchemist*”

Author(s): Malcolm H. South

Source: *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 13,  
No. 2, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (Spring, 1973),  
pp. 331-343

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**CHAPTER 2: Ben Jonson's *The Arraignment, or Poetaster***

**CAST OF CHARACTERS (*The Arraignment, or Poetaster*)**

**Male Characters**

AUGUSTUS CAESAR. *Emperor of Rome.*

MAECENAS. *Poet and patron; counselor to Augustus Caesar.*

MARCUS OVID. *Father to PUBLIUS OVID.*

LUSCUS. *Servant to MARCUS and PUBLIUS OVID.*

TIBULLUS. *Elegiac poet.*

CORNELIUS GALLUS *Elegiac poet.*

PROPERTIUS. *Elegiac poet. Sextus Propertius.*

FUSCUS ARISTIUS. *Scholar and writer, friend of HORACE.*

PUBLIUS OVID. *Publius Ovidius Naso, elegiac poet. Referred to mostly as OVID in this book, and sometimes as young Ovid or Ovid the poet or Publius Ovid. His father will always be OVID SENIOR. Ovid wrote Ars Amatoria [The Art of Love] and Metamorphoses.*

VIRGIL. *Publius Virgilius Maro, epic poet, author of Aeneid.*

HORACE. *Quintus Horatius Flaccus, satirical poet, author of Satires.*

TREBATIUS. *Lawyer, friend of HORACE.*

LUPUS. *Tribune. Asinius Lupus.*



TUCCA. *Military man, sort of. He has a stutter and/or sputters at times, as when his emotions are strong or when he is pretending that his emotions are strong. Pantilius Tucca.*

CRISPINUS. *The Poetaster. Poetasters are poets who write bad poetry. Rufus Laberius Crispinus.*

HERMOGENES. *Musician and singer.*

DEMETRIUS FANNIUS. *Hack writer.*

ALBIUS. *Tradesman, husband to CHLOE.*

MINOS. *Apothecary, aka pharmacist.*

HISTRIO. *Actor.*

AESOP. *Actor.*

PYRGI. *Pages to TUCCA. The singular is Pyrgus.*

LICTORS.

EQUITES ROMANI. *Knights. Members of the Equestrian class.*

### **Female Characters**

JULIA. *Daughter to AUGUSTUS CAESAR.*

CYTHERIS. *PROPERTIUS' love.*

PLAUTIA. *TIBULLUS' love.*

CHLOE. *Wife to ALBIUS.*

MAIDS.

*In the Induction*

ENVY.

PROLOGUE. (*Heroic Virtue*). *The Prologue speaks the prologue at or near the beginning of the play.*

## **THE SCENE: ROME**

### **NOTES:**

An arraignment is a calling to account, such as calling an accused person into a courtroom to defend him- or herself. Or it can mean a denunciation.

In Ben Jonson's society, a person of higher rank would use "thou," "thee," "thine," and "thy" when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use "you" and "your" when referring to a person of higher rank.

"Sirrah" was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

The word "wench" in Ben Jonson's time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

The poetaster, Crispinus, is a parody of the playwright John Marston, with whom Ben Jonson had a feud. The two men were sometimes frienemies.

Ben Jonson's play conflates Julia the Elder (Augustus Caesar's daughter), and Julie the Younger (Augustus Caesar's granddaughter, the daughter of Julia the Elder).

### **Roman Offices**

Consuls: The office of Consul was the highest political office of the Roman Republic. Two Consuls were elected each year and served for one year.

Praetors: A Praetor can be 1) the commander of an army, or 2) a magistrate. The office of Praetor (magistrate) was the second highest political office of the Roman Republic. They

were subject only to the veto of the Consuls. Praetors could take the auspices, the performance of which was a religious rite. Taking the auspices was a way of (supposedly) foretelling the future.

Lictors: Lictors served the Consuls and carried rods and axes as symbols of the Senators' authority. Rods were symbols of the Consuls' power to inflict corporal punishment, and axes were symbols of their power to inflict capital punishment. Lictors executed punishments on people who had been convicted of serious crimes.

Tribunes: Tribunes were administrative officers. Some were judicial Tribunes, and some were military Tribunes.

Aediles: An Aedile was a Roman magistrate who was in charge of maintaining public buildings. They also organized public festivals and were in charge of weights and measures.

Censors: They supervised public morality and maintained the census.

Prefects: They had civil or military power, but that power was delegated to them from others.

Praecons: Heralds. Criers in meetings of the Senate. They cried loudly things during a trial, such as "Silence!"

## THE INDUCTION (*The Arraignment, or Poetaster*)

The induction — introduction — of this play began with the second sounding of a trumpet. The first sounding was a warning for the audience to begin taking their seats. The third sounding would be a notice that the play was starting. Envy arrived at the second sounding in order to speak before the real Prologue arrived.

Like other denizens of hell in plays, Envy arose from a trapdoor in the stage floor. Several snakes were entwined around her arms and hung from her neck.

Envy said to herself, “Light, I salute thee, but with wounded nerves, wishing that thy golden splendor were pitchy darkness.”

Some plays at this time had the title of the play written on a title board on stage.

Envy looked at the title board and said, “What’s here? *The Arraignment*? Aye: this, this is it that our sunken eyes have stayed awake and waited for all this while. Here will be the subject matter for my snakes and me.

“Cling to my neck and wrists, my loving worms — my loving snakes — and cast yourselves round in soft and amorous folds until I bid thee to uncurl. Then break your knots and shoot out yourselves at length, as if your forced stings would hide themselves within the regarded-with-malice sides of him to whom I shall apply you.”

Envy was hostile to Ben Jonson, the playwright. She wanted her snakes of envy to bite his sides, which she hated, and she would force them to do that.

Envy looked at the audience and the stage candles and said, “Wait! The shine of this assembly here offends my sight. I’ll

darken that first and outface — confront and disconcert — their grace.”

Envy blew out some candles that provided light for the stage.

She then said to the audience:

“Don’t marvel if I stare and glare at you. These past fifteen weeks — as long as it took Ben Jonson to turn the embryo of the plot into a finished play — have I with burning lights — my eyes — mixed vigilant thoughts in expectation of this hated play, which will criticize envious slanderers. But now at last I have arrived as its Prologue.

“Nor would I desire that you should look for other looks, gestures, or expressions of compliment and courtesy from me than what the infected bulk — breast — of Envy can furnish.

“For I have arisen here with a covetous hope to blast your pleasures and destroy your sports with wrong-headed wrestings of meanings, wrong-headed comments and explanations, wrong-headed applications of supposed allusions to real people and real events, spy-like suggestions, private whisperings, and a thousand such promoting sleights and sly tricks as these.

Envy was planning on traducing the play with her lies and false interpretations.

She said, “Closely notice how I will begin: the scene is —”

She then looked at the location signs on stage.

Envy said, “Ha! ‘Rome’? ‘Rome’? And ‘Rome’?”

She then said to herself:

“Crack, eye-strings, and let your eyeballs drop onto the earth! Let me be forever blind!

“I am forestalled; all my hopes are crossed, checked, and abated. Bah, a freezing sweat flows forth at all my pores; my entrails burn!

“What should I do? ‘Rome’? ‘Rome’?”

“O my vexed soul, how might I force an application of this play to the present state?”

In other words: If this play is set in Rome, how could it apply to England and its government and society?

Obviously, it could apply to England and its government and society and to many other countries and their governments and societies. And it could apply to many different times, not just the present time. Satire is like that.

Obviously, Ben Jonson knew that, but he was afraid of being sued for libel.

If you want to satirize an Englishman, the safe thing to do is to pretend that the Englishman is a Roman.

Envy peered into the audience and said:

“Are there no actors here? No poet-apes — poor poets who try to imitate real poets — who come with basilisks’ eyes, whose forked tongues are steeped in venom, as their hearts are steeped in gall?”

A basilisk was a mythological monster that could kill with a glance.

Envy continued:

“Either of these would help me; they could wrest, pervert, and poison all they hear or see with senseless glosses, interpretations, explanatory notes, and allusions.”

Envy began to address the “good” devils she hoped were in the audience:

“Now, if you are good devils, don’t flee from me.

“You know what dear, precious, and ample faculties I have endowed you good devils with; I’ll lend you more.

“Here, take my snakes among you, come, and eat, and while the squeezed juice flows in your black jaws, help me to damn the author.”

Black jaws are those that spew forth slander and malicious envy.

In art, Envy was often depicted as eating a snake.

Envy continued:

“Spit the juice forth upon his lines, and show your rusty — discolored and rotten — teeth at every word or accent.

“Or else each of you choose one of my longest vipers, to stick down in your deep throats, and let the heads come forth at your rank — gross and stinky — mouths so that he may see you armed with triple malice, to hiss, sting, and tear his work and him.

“The snake heads and their forked tongues may forge lies, and then declaim, traduce, corrupt, apply, spy and inform the authorities, suggest —

“Oh, these are gifts wherein your souls are blest.”

No “good devils” spoke up. No one was willing to defame Ben Jonson.

Envy said:

“What! Do you hide yourselves? Will none appear? None answer? What! Does his calm troop of audience members frighten you?

“Nay, then I do despair.”

She said to herself:

“Down, sink again. This travail is all lost with my dead hopes.”

Envy had traveled and labored — travailed — to say the prologue.

She continued:

“If in such bosoms spite have left to dwell,

“Envy is not on earth, nor scarcely in hell.”

Envy partially descended back into hell.

The trumpet sounded for the third time and the real Prologue, who was wearing armor, appeared on stage.

The Prologue said to Envy:

“Wait, monster, before thou sink beneath the stage.”

The Prologue placed a foot on Envy’s head and said:

“Thus on thy head we set our bolder, stronger foot, with which we tread thy malice into earth.”

As Envy descended into hell, the Prologue said, “So spite should die, despised and scorned by noble industry such as the industry spent in writing this play.”

Envy disappeared, and the Prologue said:

“If anyone should muse why I greet the stage in the guise of an armed Prologue, know that it is a dangerous age, wherein who writes had better present his scenes forty-fold proof against the conjuring, secretly-working-together means of base detractors and illiterate apes that fill up theater seats in fair and well-formed shapes.



“Against these we have put on this defense we are forced to wear, whereof the allegory and hidden sense is that a well-erected confidence can frighten their pride and laugh their folly away from here.

“Here now, suppose that our author should once more swear that his play were good — he implores you to not accuse him of arrogance, however much that common spawn of ignorance, our small-fry writers, may slime his fame and give his action that adulterated, corrupt name and title of arrogance.

“Such full-blown vanity he loathes more than base dejection; there’s a mean between both. With a constant firmness he pursues that mean, as one who knows the strength of his own muse. And this he hopes all free souls will allow.

“Others, who take with a rugged brow and frown of displeasure his assertion that this play is good,

“Their moods he rather pities than maliciously envies.

“His mind is above their injuries.”

**ACT 1 (*The Arraignment, or Poetaster*)**

**— 1.1 —**

Publius Ovid read out loud from the new poem he was working on:

*“Then, when this body falls in funeral fire,*

*“My name shall live, and my best part aspire.”*

He then said, “It shall go so: My poem will end with these lines.”

Luscus, his servant and the servant of Ovid’s father, Marcus Ovid, aka Ovid Senior, entered the room and said, “Young master, Master Ovid, do you hear me? God save me! Away with your songs and sonnets and on with your gown and cap, quickly — here, here —”

He handed Ovid the garments.

Law students in Ben Jonson’s England wore distinctive caps and gowns.

Luscus continued, “Your father will be a man of this room quickly. Come — nay, nay, nay, nay, be quick.”

He took Ovid’s poem from him and said, “These verses, too, a poison on them, I cannot abide them, they make me ready to vomit, by the banks of Helicon. Look what a rascally untoward — improper and foolish — thing this poetry is; I could tear them — your poems — now.”

Helicon was a mountain sacred to the Muses. Its springs were also sometimes called Helicon.

As he took back his poem, Ovid said, “Give it to me.”

He then asked, “How near is my father?”

Luscus answered, “By the heart of man! Get a law book in your hand; I will not answer you otherwise.”

Ovid picked up a law book.

Luscus continued, “Why, good; now there’s some formality in you. By Jove and three or four of the gods more, I am right of my old master’s humor and opinion about that — we have the same opinion about your poems: This villainous poetry will undo you, by the welkin, aka heavens.”

“What! Have thou buskins on, Luscus, that thou swear so tragically and high?” Ovid asked.

Buskins are thick-soled boots worn by actors in tragedies to give them added height and gravitas.

Luscus replied, “No, but I have boots on and I am prepared and ready for anything, sir, and your father also has boots on, too, by this time, for he called for them before I came from the lodging where he is staying in the city.”

“Why, was he no more dressed than that?” Ovid asked.

Luscus said, “Oh, no; and there was the mad skeldering — begging — captain with the velvet arms — weapons carried in velvet scabbards — ready to lay hold on him as he comes down from his room — he who presses every man he meets, with an oath, to lend him money, and cries, ‘Thou must do it, old boy, as thou are a man, a man of worship and worthiness.’”

“Who, Pantilius Tucca?” Ovid asked.

“Aye, he,” Luscus answered, “and I met little Master Lupus, the Tribune, going thither, too.”

Ovid said, “If my father is under their arrest — if Tucca and Lupus are detaining him — I may with safety enough read over my elegy before he comes here.”

He put down the law book and picked up his poem.

“God save me!” Luscus said. “What’ll you do? Why, young master, you are not Castalian-mad, lunatic, frantic, desperate? Huh? Are you?”

A Castalian-mad man is a poet made mad by poetic inspiration. The nymph Castalia turned herself into a spring at Delphi to escape the god Apollo. People who drank its waters became poetically inspired.

“What ails thou, Luscus?” Ovid said. “What is wrong with you?”

“God be with you, sir, and goodbye,” Luscus said. “I’ll leave you to your poetical fancies and furies. I’ll not be guilty of encouraging you in such pursuits, I.”

Luscus exited.

“Don’t be guilty of that, good Ignorance,” Ovid said.

“Good Ignorance” referred to Luscus.

Ovid continued:

“I’m glad thou are gone, for thus alone, our ear shall better judge the hasty errors of our morning muse.”

He began to read his new poem out loud:

*“Envy, why twitt’st thou me [by saying] my time’s spent ill*

*“And call’st my verse fruits of an idle quill?”*

*“Or that, unlike the [family] line from whence I sprung,*

*“War’s dusty honors I pursue not young?*

*“Or that I study not the tedious laws*

*“And prostitute my voice in every cause?”*

*“Thy scope is mortal, mine [is] immortal, fame,*

*“Which through the world shall ever chant my name.*

*“Homer will live whilst Tenedos stands, and Ide [Ida],*

*“Or to the sea fleet Simois doth [does] slide;”*

Ovid wished to pursue immortal fame as a poet rather than be a soldier or a lawyer. Homer and other poets had achieved immortal fame for their poetry.

Homer is the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These works will last as long as Tenedos (an island), Ida (a mountain), and the Simois (a river), all of which are mentioned in Homer’s epic poems, last.

To end the Trojan War, Odysseus came up with the idea of the Trojan Horse. The Trojan War had been fought for 10 years, and the forces of Agamemnon and the other Greeks had not been able to conquer Troy by might, and so Odysseus had the idea of using trickery to conquer Troy. The Greeks built a huge wooden horse and left it outside Troy, and then they seemed to sail away in their ships and return home. However, the Trojan Horse was hollow and filled with Greek soldiers, including Odysseus, and the ships sailed behind an island called Tenedos so that the Trojans could not see them. A lying Greek named Sinon stayed behind and pretended that he had escaped from Odysseus, who had wanted to kill him. Sinon told the Trojans that if they were to take the Trojan Horse inside the walls of Troy, then Troy would never fall. Amid great rejoicing, the Trojans took the Trojan Horse inside the walls of Troy. That night, the Greek warriors came out of the Trojan Horse, went to the gates of Troy, killed the Trojan guards, and opened the gates of Troy. Agamemnon and his troops were outside the gates, after returning from hiding behind the island. The Greeks then conquered Troy.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“And so shall Hesiod, too, while vines do bear*

*“Or crooked sickles crop the ripened ear.”*

Hesiod is the author of *Works and Days*, which praises labor and describes the five ages of Humankind, with the Age of Gold being the best.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“Callimachus, though in invention low,*

*“Shall still be sung, since he in art doth [does] flow.”*

Callimachus is a Greek poet whom some critics such as Ben Jonson thought was skillful but not inspired.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“No loss shall come to Sophocles’ proud vein;”*

Sophocles is the great Greek tragedian who wrote *Oedipus the King*, aka *Oedipus Rex*. In this tragedy, the Sphinx asks Oedipus this riddle: What goes on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening? If Oedipus cannot answer this riddle correctly, the Sphinx will kill him. Fortunately, Oedipus does answer the riddle correctly: Man, who goes on hands and knees as a crawling baby, two legs as a healthy adult, and two legs and a cane as an old person.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“With sun and moon, Aratus shall remain.”*

Aratus is a Greek poet who wrote about the constellations.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“Whilst slaves be false, fathers hard, and bawds be whorish,*

*“Whilst harlots flatter shall Menander flourish.”*

Menander is a Greek comic playwright who wrote *Dyskolos*, aka *The Misanthrope*.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“Ennius, though rude [uneducated], and Accius’ high-reared strain*

*“A fresh applause in every age shall gain.”*

Ennius, who used Greek literary models, is considered by some critics the father of Roman poetry.

Accius was a Roman tragedian who made free translations of plays by Greek tragedians, especially Aeschylus, who wrote the *Oresteia*, a trilogy of three tragedies: *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*. In the trilogy, Agamemnon returns home after he and the Greeks defeat Troy. His wife, Clytemnestra, who has taken a lover, murders him, and in turn, is murdered by their son, Orestes. The avenging spirits known as the Furies pursue him until finally the goddess Athena arranges a new function for them, transforming them into the Eumenides, aka the Kindly Ones.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“Of Varro’s name what ear shall not be told?*

*“Of Jason’s Argo, and the fleece of gold?”*

The Roman writer Varro wrote about the Latin language.

Jason and his Argonauts built a ship named the *Argo* and sailed to Colchis to get the Golden Fleece. With the help of the witch Medea, they got the Golden Fleece and sailed home with it.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“Then shall Lucretius’ lofty numbers [verses] die*

*“When earth and seas in fire and flames shall fry.”*

The Roman Lucretius wrote a book of philosophy titled *De Rerum Natura*, aka *Concerning the Nature of Things*.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“Tityrus, Tillage, Aenee [Aeneid] shall be read*

*“Whilst Rome of all the conquered world is head.”*

These were three major works by Virgil. Tityrus is a narrator in Virgil’s *Eclogues*, aka *Bucolics*, about pastoral life. The *Georgics* is about farming, or tillage. The *Aeneid* is Virgil’s masterpiece. It tells the story of the Fall of Troy and how the Trojan prince Aeneas journeyed to Italy by way of Carthage to become an important ancestor of the Romans.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“Till Cupid’s fires be out and his bow broken*

*“Thy verses, neat [elegant] Tibullus, shall be spoken.*

*“Our Gallus shall be known from east to west;*

*“So shall Lycoris, whom he now loves best.”*

Tibullus and Gallus were two of Ovid’s poet friends. Lycoris was the name Gallus gave to his lover in his poems.

Ovid continued to read out loud:

*“The suffering plowshare or the flint may wear,*

*“But heavenly poesy [poetry] no death can fear.*

*“Kings shall give place to it, and kingly shows,*

*“The banks over which gold-bearing Tagus flows.”*

The Tagus River divides Spain and Portugal.

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:



*“Kneel hinds [Boors kneel] to trash; me let bright Phoebus swell*

*“With cups full flowing from the Muses’ well.”*

In other words: “Boors kneel to trash; let bright Phoebus Apollo, god of poetry, fill me with inspiration.”

Ovid continued to read his poem out loud:

*“Frost-fearing myrtle [an evergreen shrub that symbolizes immortality] shall impale [encircle] my head,*

*“And by sad lovers I’ll be often read.*

*“Envy the living, not the dead, doth [does] bite,”*

In other words: Envy bites the living, not the dead.

Ovid continued to read out loud:

*“For after death all men receive their right.*

*“Then, when this body falls in funeral fire,*

*“My name shall live, and my best part aspire.”*

As an evergreen, myrtle does not fear literal frost; however, it does fear frost-brained poetasters who cannot write good poetry.

— 1.2 —

Ovid Senior, Luscus, Tucca, and Lupus entered the room.

Tucca was a military man, sort of. He was also a conman, definitely. Lupus was an official: a Tribune.

Ovid Senior, Ovid’s father, who had heard the end of his son’s poem, said:

“Your name shall live indeed, sir; you say true; but you don’t think about how infamously, how scorned and contemned in

the eyes and ears of the best and gravest Romans; you never so much as dream about that.

“Are these the fruits of all my travail and expenses? Is this the scope and aim of thy studies? Are these the hopeful courses wherewith I have so long flattered my expectation from thee?

“Verses? Poetry? Ovid, whom I thought to see the pleader in cases of law, has become Ovid the play-maker?”

“No, sir,” Ovid, his son, said.

Ovid Senior said:

“Yes, sir. I hear that a tragedy of yours is coming forth for the common actors there, called *Medea*.

“By my household gods, I swear that if I come to the acting of it, I’ll add one tragic part more than is yet expected to it; believe me when I promise it.”

The Roman household gods are the Lares and the Penates, the ancestral gods and the gods of the pantry. When Aeneas fled from fallen Troy, he carried his father on his back, and his father held the household gods.

Ovid Senior continued, “What! Shall I have my son a stager now? An ingle for actors? A gull? A rook? A shot-clog?”

A “stager” is a contemptuous term for a theater-man.

An “ingle” is a young boy who is used for homosexual sex, but the term can also refer to a friend.

Gulls and rooks are fools.

A shot-clog is a fool who is tolerated because he pays the bills.

Ovid Senior continued, “To make suppers and be laughed at? Publius, I will set thee on the funeral pile first.”

Publius Ovid, his son, said, “Sir, I beg you to have patience.”

Luscus said to Ovid:

“Nay, this it is to have your ears dammed up to good counsel.”

Luscus then said to the others:

“I did augur — predict — all this to him beforehand, without poring into an ox’s paunch for the matter, and yet he would not be scrupulous — that is, he would not be wary.”

Augurs are fortune-tellers who would examine the entrails of a sacrificed ox and then predict whether the future would be good or bad.

Tucca the military man said to Luscus:

“How is this now, goodman slave? What, roly poly? We are all rivals, rascal?”

A roly poly is a worthless person.

Tucca thought that Luscus, a servant, was trying to make himself the equal of Tucca and the others present.

Tucca was basically a beggar, and he was protective of what he regarded as his prerogatives. One way to build up yourself is to tear down others.

He then said to Ovid Senior:

“Why, my Master of Worship, do thou hear? Are these thy best projects?”

“Is this thy designs and thy discipline, to allow knaves to be competitors with commanders and gentlemen?”

Tucca then said to Luscus:

“Are we parallels, rascal? Are we equals?”

Tucca, a beggar of sorts, considered himself to be better than Luscus, who was a servant and worked for a living.

Ovid Senior said to Luscus, “Sirrah, go and get my horses ready. You’ll always be prating.”

Tucca said to Luscus, “Do, you perpetual stinkard, do — go, talk to tapsters and ostlers, you slave; they are in your element — go; here are the Emperor’s captains, you ragamuffin rascal, and not your comrades.”

Tapsters are bartenders, and ostlers take care of horses.

Luscus exited.

Lupus the Tribune (a magistrate) said to Ovid Senior:

“Indeed, Marcus Ovid, these actors are an idle generation — that is, an idle breed — and do much harm in a state. They corrupt young gentry very much. I know it. I have not been a Tribune thus long and observed nothing.

“Besides, they will rob us, us who are magistrates, of our respect, bring us upon their stages by representing us and make us ridiculous to the plebeians; they will play you, or me, the wisest men they can come by, always — me! — only to bring us in contempt with the vulgar people and make us cheap.”

The plebeians and the vulgar people were the common people. Patricians were the elite.

Lupus objected to being satirized in plays on stage.

Tucca said:

“Thee are in the right, my venerable cropshin — they will indeed.”

A cropshin is an inferior herring.

Tucca continued:

“The tongue of the oracle never twanged truer.”

Oracles prophesized; they did not twang.

Tucca continued:

“Your courtier cannot kiss his mistress’ slippers in quiet because of them, nor can your white — that is, pure — innocent gallant pawn his reveling suit — his party outfit — to buy his punk a supper.”

A punk is a prostitute.

Tucca, who was decayed (down on his luck) and whose honesty was questionable, continued:

“An honest decayed commander cannot skelder and con people, cheat, nor be seen in a bawdy house, but he shall immediately appear in one of their wormwood — bitter — comedies.

“They — the actors — are grown licentious, the rogues: They are libertines, complete libertines. They forget they are in the statute, the rascals.”

By statute, actors could be charged with being rogues or vagabonds unless their acting troupe had a high-ranking member of society as its patron.

Tucca continued:

“They are blazoned there; there they are tricked, they and their pedigrees; they need no other heralds, to be sure.

A blazon is a detailed heraldic description of a coat of arms or other heraldic device. A tricked coat of arms is an outline of a coat of arms. The Herald's College was authorized to issue coats of arms.

According to Tuca, the only kind of heralds that actors need is those who proclaim that the actors are scoundrels.

Ovid Senior said to his son the poet, "I think if nothing else, yet this alone, the reading of the public edicts against actors, should frighten thee away from commerce — contact — with them and give thee distaste enough of their actions. But this betrays what a student you are; this argues your 'proficiency' in the law."

He was arguing that his son in fact had contact with actors, so therefore his son was ignorant of or dismissive of the public edicts and so was a poor law student.

Ovid replied:

"They wrong me, sir, and do abuse you more, those who blow these untrue reports into your ears. I am not known to the open stage, nor do I traffic in their theaters."

An open stage is open for business, and/or it is a stage that is open to the elements — no roof.

Ovid continued:

"Indeed, I do acknowledge, at the request of some close friends and honorable Romans, I have begun a poem of that nature."

Ovid's poem was a play.

Ben Jonson considered himself a poet. He wrote poetry, and his plays contained verse as well as prose.

"You have, sir?" Ovid Senior said. "A poem? And where is it? Poetry is the 'law' you study."

“Cornelius Gallus borrowed it to read,” Ovid replied.

Ovid Senior said:

“Cornelius Gallus? There’s another gallant, fashionable gentleman, too, who has drunk of the same poison as you; and so have Tibullus, and Propertius.

“But these are gentlemen of means and revenue, now.

“In contrast, thou art a younger brother, and have nothing but thy bare exhibition, aka allowance or maintenance — which I protest shall be bare indeed if thou don’t forsake these unprofitable by-courses, and that timely, too.”

Under the principle of primogeniture, the oldest son inherited the bulk of the father’s wealth. Younger sons inherited little or nothing.

Ovid Senior was threatening to cut down or cut off Ovid’s allowance unless he stopped writing poetry.

Ovid Senior continued:

“Name me a professed poet whose poetry has ever afforded him so much as a competency: an adequate income.

“Aye, your god of poets there, whom all of you admire and reverence so much, Homer, he whose worm-eaten statue must not be spewed against — spit at — except with hallowed lips and groveling adoration, what was he? What was he?”

Tucca said to Ovid Senior, “By the Virgin Mary, I’ll tell thee, old swaggerer and quarreler: He was a poor, blind, rhyming rascal, who lived obscurely up and down in booths — temporary dwellings — and taphouses, and scarcely ever got a good meal even in his dreams, the whoreson hungry beggar.”

Actually, in Homer's *Odyssey*, the blind reciter of poetry, Demodocus, is well respected. After listening to him, Odysseus rewards him with the best cut of meat.

Homer's epic poems have poetic meter, but they do not rhyme.

Ovid Senior said to his son, Ovid:

"He says well.

"I know this nettles you, now, but answer me: Isn't it true? You'll tell me his name shall live, and that (now being dead) his works have eternalized him and made him divine. But could this divinity feed him while he lived? Could his name feast him?"

"Or purchase him a Senator's revenue?" Tucca asked. "Could it?"

Qualifying to be a Senator required much wealth.

The same was true of Knights in the Middle Ages.

Ovid Senior said, "Aye, or give him place — status — in the commonwealth? Respect or attendants? Make him be carried in his litter?"

Senators and other high-ranking people could be carried in litters.

Tucca said to Ovid Senior, "Thou speak sentences, old Bias."

Bias of Priene was a Greek sage; he was one of the Seven Sages.

"Sentences" are maxims. They can be wise.

Lupus said to Ovid, "All this the law will do, young sir, if you'll follow it."



In other words: To be successful, be a lawyer; to be a failure, be a poet.

Ovid Senior said, "If he is my son, he shall follow and observe what I will make him fit for, or I profess here openly and utterly to disown him."

Ovid replied:

"Sir, let me ask that you will forgo these moods.

"I will be anything, or study anything; I'll show that the unfashioned body of the law is pure elegance, and make her ruggedest strains run as smoothly as Propertius' elegies."

"Propertius' elegies?" Ovid Senior said sarcastically. "Good!"

"Nay, you take — judge — your son too quickly, Marcus," Lupus said to Ovid Senior.

"Why, he cannot speak, he cannot think, out of poetry," Ovid Senior said. "He is bewitched with it."

"Come, do not misprize him," Lupus responded.

"Misprize" means "undervalue." As a legal term, it means to commit a wrongful act or a wrongful omission.

Ovid Senior said, "'Misprize'? Aye, by the Virgin Mary, I would have him use some such words, now; they have some touch, some taste, of the law. He should make himself a style out of these, and let his Propertius' elegies go by."

Lupus said:

"Indeed, young Publius, he who will now hit the mark must shoot through the law; we have no other planet that reigns, and in that sphere you may sit and sing with angels."

Young Publius is young Ovid the poet, son of Ovid Senior.

In the medieval view of the cosmos, the Sun, planets and stars were encased in Spheres that revolved around the Earth. The outermost Sphere was the Primum Mobile, which moved and imparted movement to the other Spheres of the cosmos, and that movement caused the Music of the Spheres, something that living human beings normally do not hear.

Angels are also English coins. A person with many angels may very well sing.

Lupus continued:

“Why, the law makes a man happy without respecting and paying heed to any other merit; a simple, undistinguished scholar, or none at all, may be a lawyer.”

Tucca said to Ovid:

“He tells thee true, my noble neophyte; my little grammaticaster, he does.”

A grammaticaster is a pedantic grammarian.

Tucca continued:

“Law shall never put thee to and make thee work at thy mathematics, metaphysics, philosophy, and I don’t know what other supposed sufficiencies and accomplishments. If thou can but have the patience to plod enough, talk enough, and make noise enough, then be impudent enough, and it is enough.”

“Three books will furnish you,” Lupus said.

Tucca said:

“And the less art, the better.

“Besides, when it shall be in the power of thy cheverel — flexible — conscience to do right or wrong at thy pleasure, my pretty Alcibiades —”

Alcibiades was a gifted Athenian, but he sometimes fought for and sometimes fought against Athens during the Peloponnesian War that pitted Sparta against Athens. Ovid preferred poetry, but he was considering turning to law to please his father.

Lupus interrupted, “Aye, and to have better men than himself, by many thousand degrees, to observe him and stand bare —”

Tucca interrupted, “True, and he to carry himself proud and stately, and have the law on his side for it, old boy.”

Ovid Senior said to his friends:

“Well, the day grows old, gentlemen, and I must leave you.”

He then said to his son the poet:

“Publius, if thou will hold my favor, abandon these idle, fruitless studies that so bewitch thee. Send Janus home his back-face again and look only forward to the law: Focus on that. I will allow thee what allowance shall suit thee in the rank of gentlemen and shall maintain thy society with the best; and under these conditions I leave thee.”

Janus is a two-faced god who looks both forwards and backwards. Ovid Senior wanted his son, Ovid, to stop looking at poetry and instead look only at law.

Ovid Senior continued:

“My blessings will light upon thee if thou respect these conditions; if not, my eyes may drop tears for thee, but thine own heart will ache for itself; and so farewell.”

Luscus returned.

Ovid Senior asked him, "Are my horses ready?"

"Yes, sir, they are at the gate outside," Luscus answered.

"That's well," Ovid Senior said.

He then said, "Asinius Lupus, let me have a word with you."

He then said to Tucca, "Captain, shall I take my leave of you?"

"No, my little old boy," Tucca said.

He motioned toward Lupus and said to Ovid Senior, "Dispatch your business with Cothurnus there."

A cothurnus is a thick-soled boot that was worn by actors, such as those playing important men of state. Lupus considered himself an important man of state.

Tucca continued, "I'll wait on thee, I will."

Luscus said to himself, "To borrow some ten drachmas; I know his project."

Tucca's project was to get money from Ovid Senior and then spend it.

Ovid Senior said to Lupus, "Sir, you shall make me beholden to you."

He then asked, "Now, Captain Tucca, what do you have to say?"

Tucca answered:

"Why, what should I say? Or what can I say, my flower of the Equestrian order?"

The Equestrian order was Knights, who were just below the highest order: the Nobles.

Tucca continued:

“Should I say thou are rich? Or that thou are honorable? Or wise? Or valiant? Or learned? Or liberal?”

“Why, thou are all these, and thou know it, my noble Lucullus, thou know it; come, don’t be ashamed of thy virtues, old stump.”

Lucullus was a retired general and a wealthy patron of soldiers.

The word “stump” can refer to a short man or a blockhead.

Tucca continued:

“Honor’s a good brooch — metaphorical ornament — to wear in a man’s hat at all times. Thou are the man of war’s Maecenas, old boy.”

Maecenas was a friend to Augustus Caesar, and he was an important patron of the arts.

Tucca wanted Ovid Senior to be a patron of military men.

Tucca continued:

“Why shouldn’t thou be graced then by the men of war as well as he is by his poets?”

A Pyrgus entered the room. An assistant in Tucca’s cons, he had been waiting in the anteroom and listening for his cue to enter and assist in a con.

A Pyrgus is literally a tall, moveable structure used in sieges. Here, it is a joke name for Tucca’s short boy-pages.

Tucca said to the Pyrgus, “What is it now, my carrier? What is the news?”

The Pyrgus whispered to Tucca.

Luscus said to himself, “The boy has stayed within for his cue this half hour.”

Tucca said out loud to the Pyrgus, “Come, do not whisper to me, but speak it out. What? It is no treason against the state, I hope, is it?”

“Yes, against the state of my master’s purse,” Luscus said to himself.

“Sir, Agrippa desires you to be patient with him until the next week,” the Pyrgus said. “His moils are not yet come up.”

Agrippa is Augustus Caesar’s son-in-law and a wealthy military commander. Tucca will say that Agrippa owes him nearly a talent, which is thousands of British pounds or USAmerican dollars.

The Pyrgus was using the word “moils” to mean mules. The verb “moil” means “work hard.”

Tucca said:

“His moils?

“Now the bots, the spavin, and the glanders, and some dozen more diseases alight on him and his moils! What! Have they the yellow jaundice, his moils, that they come no faster? Or are they foundered and lame, huh? His moils have the staggers, likely, haven’t they?”

Tucca had named several diseases Agrippa’s mules might be suffering from.

The Pyrgus replied, “Oh, no, sir.”

He then said to himself, “Then your tongue might be suspected for one of his moils.”

Tucca stuttered and sputtered when angry — or when he pretended to be angry.

Tucca said out loud so that Ovid Senior could hear him:

“He owes me almost a talent, and he thinks to bear it away — a victory for him — with his moils, does he?”

He then said to the Pyrgus:

“Sirrah, you nutcracker, go on your way to him again, and tell him I must have money, I.”

“Nutcrackers” are apprentices who like to crack nuts while attending a play.

Tucca continued:

“I cannot eat stones and turfs, tell him.

“What! Will he clem — starve — me and my followers? Ask him if he will clem me; do, go. He would have me fry my jacket and eat it, would he?”

“Away, setter, away.

“Yet stay, my little tumbler.”

Setters and tumblers are hunting dogs. The Pyrgus was supposed to hunt for Agrippa.

The words are also slang words for assistants to conmen. A setter finds people who can be conned. A tumbler leads the victims to the conman.

Tucca motioned to Ovid Senior and said quietly to the Pyrgus, “This old boy shall supply money now.”

He said out loud, “I will not trouble Agrippa, I cannot be importunate, I; I cannot be impudent to him.”

“Alas, sir, no,” the Pyrgus said. “You are the most maidenly, blushing creature upon the earth.”

Tucca said to Ovid Senior, “Do thou hear, my little six-and-fifty or thereabouts? Thou are not to learn the humors and

tricks of that old bald cheater, Time; thou had not this chain for nothing.”

A chain can be worn as a necklace or as a symbol of authority.

Tucca was flattering Ovid Senior by telling him that he was a mature and knowledgeable man.

Time is bald. Once a moment is past, it cannot be possessed again. Time has no long hair that you can grab as Time passes by you.

Tucca continued: “Men of worth have their chimeras as well as other creatures; and they see monsters sometimes; they do, they do, brave boy.”

Chimeras were mythological monsters that were made of parts of various animals. The parts vary in different descriptions, but often the chimera is described as having a lion’s head, a goat’s body, and a serpent’s tail.

The Pyrgus said to himself, “At cheaper cost than if he — Tucca — shall see you, I warrant him.”

It’s better to have a chimera see you than to have Tucca see you.

Tucca said quietly to Ovid Senior, “Thou must let me have six, six — drachmas, I mean, old boy; thou shall do it; I tell thee, old boy, thou shall, and in private, too, do thou see? Go, walk off.”

Whenever Tucca mentioned a number, he had to think about what was the greatest amount of money he could get from a person. Should he ask for shillings, or for drachmas, or for sesterces?

He pointed and said, “There, there. Six is the sum. Thy son’s a gallant spark and must not be put out suddenly.”



Ovid Senior went to the side to search his pockets for money to give to Tucca.

Tucca then said to young Ovid, “Come here, Callimachus.”

Callimachus was a poet who inspired Ovid.

Tucca continued:

“Thy father tells me thou art too poetical, boy; thou must not be so, thou must leave them — leave the poets — young novice, thou must.

“They are a sort of poor, starved rascals, who are always wrapped up in foul linen — dirty clothing — and can boast of nothing but a lean visage peering out of a seam-rent — torn at the seams — suit: the very emblems and signs of beggary.

“No, do thou hear? Turn lawyer, thou shalt be my solicitor —”

Tucca was providing a kind of service for his six drachmas. He had given young Ovid the same advice that Ovid Senior had given. He had also advised Ovid Senior to go a little easy on his son: Don’t put out his son — and his son’s spark — suddenly.

Ovid Senior returned with money for Tucca.

Tucca asked Ovid Senior, “It is the right amount, old boy, isn’t it?”

“You had best tell — count — it, Captain,” Ovid Senior said.

“No,” Tucca said. “Fare thou well, my honest horseman.”

A horseman is 1) a person who rides a horse, or 2) a member of the Equestrian social rank — a Knight.

Tucca then said to Lupus, “And fare thou well, beaver.”

Beaver hats were expensive hats worn by gentlemen.

Tucca said to Ovid Senior:

“I ask thee, Roman, when thou come to town, see me at my lodging and visit me sometimes. Thou shall be welcome, old boy. Do not balk — avoid and disappoint — me, good swaggerer. May Jove keep thy chain from having to be pawned.

“Go thy ways; if thou lack money, I’ll lend thee some; I’ll leave thee to thy horse, now. Adieu.”

“Farewell, good Captain,” Ovid Senior said.

Tucca said quietly to the Pyrgus, “Boy, you can have but half a share now, boy.”

He meant half of the Pyrgus’ share in the profits of the con. Tucca owed everybody, including his pages.

Tucca and the Pyrgus exited.

Ovid Senior said, “It is a strange boldness that accompanies this fellow.”

Did Ovid Senior know he had been conned? Possibly. He could afford the loss of the “loan.”

“Come,” Ovid Senior said to Luscus.

Ovid said, “I’ll give attendance on you to your horse, sir, if it pleases you —”

His father replied, “No; stay in your chamber and fall to your studies. Do so; may the gods of Rome bless thee!”

Ovid Senior, Lupus, and Luscus exited, leaving Ovid the poet alone.

Ovid the poet said to himself:

“And may the gods give me stomach to digest this law — those are the words that should have surely followed his words, had I been he.

“O sacred poesy, thou spirit of arts, the soul of science and the queen of souls, what profane violence, almost sacrilege, has here been offered to thy divinities!

“That thine own guiltless poverty should arm Prodigious Ignorance to wound thee thus!

“For from poets’ poverty is all the force of argument drawn forth against poesy, or from the abuse of thy great powers in adulterated and corrupted brain.”

In other words: The major complaint many people make against poetry is that poets tend to be poor in wealth.

Ovid the poet continued:

“But if men would only learn to distinguish spirits, and to set and acknowledge a true difference between those jaded wits who run a broken pace of poetic meter for common hire, and the high raptures of a happy muse borne on the wings of her immortal thought that kicks at earth with a disdainful heel and beats at the gates of heaven with her bright hooves, they would not then with such distorted faces and desperate censures stab at poesy.”

Bad poets are like jades: inferior horses. Good poets are like Pegasus: a winged horse that ascends the heavens.

Ovid the poet continued:

“Men would then admire bright knowledge, and their minds should never descend on so unworthy objects as gold or titles; they would dread far more to be thought ignorant than to be known poor.

“The time was once, when wit drowned wealth; but now your only barbarism is to have wit, and want.

“No matter now who excels in virtue, he who has coin has all perfection else.”

In other words: Many men think that it is better to be wealthy and stupid than to be intelligent and impoverished.

—1.3 —

Tibullus, a poet and one of Ovid’s friends, entered the scene and said, “Ovid?”

“Who’s there?” Ovid asked.

Seeing Tibullus, he said, “Come in.”

“Good morning, lawyer,” Tibullus said.

“Good morning, dear Tibullus,” Ovid said. “Welcome. Sit down.”

“Not I,” Tibullus said. “What, so hard at it?”

He approached Ovid, who attempted to withhold his work.

Tibullus said, “Let’s see, what’s here? Nay, I will see it —”

“Please, stay away,” Ovid said.

They struggled, but Tibullus got hold of the paper.

Tibullus read Ovid’s writing out loud:

*“If thrice in field a man vanquish his foe,*

*“’Tis after in his choice to serve, or no.”*

The man is a soldier, and if he vanquishes three enemies on the battlefield, it is his decision whether he continues to serve as a soldier or goes home.

“What is this now, Ovid!” Tibullus said. “Law-cases in verse?”

“In truth, I don’t know,” Ovid said. “They run from my pen unwittingly, if they are verse.”

Ovid wrote verse whether he intended to or not. He couldn’t help it.

He then asked, “What’s the news in the outside world?”

“Off with this lawyer gown you are wearing!” Tibullus said. “I have come to have thee walk with me.”

Tibullus wanted Ovid to cease his study of law and do something different and, no doubt, more fun.

Ovid replied, “No, good Tibullus, I’m not now in case — I’m not now in a position to do that. Please leave me alone.”

“What! Not in case?” Tibullus said. “By God’s light, thou are in too much case, judging by all this law.”

Ovid’s room contained law books and his notes about the law.

“Truly, if I live, I will new-dress the law in sprightly poesy’s habiliments,” Ovid said.

“The hell thou will!” Tibullus said. “What, turn law into verse? Thy father has schooled thee, I see.”

He took out a letter, which he handed to Ovid.

Tibullus then said, “Here, read that. There’s subject for you — and, if I mistake not, a *supersedeas* to your melancholy.”

A *supersedeas* is a writ for a stay in proceedings.

In other words, the letter would cheer Ovid up.

Ovid opened the letter and said, “What! Signed ‘Julia’! O my life, my heaven!”

He read the letter silently to himself.

“Has your mood changed?” Tibullus asked.

Ovid said about the letter’s contents, “Music of wit! Note for the harmonious spheres!”

The note was 1) a musical note, and 2) Julia’s letter to Ovid.

He added, “Celestial accents, how you ravish me!”

“Accents” can be 1) utterances, and 2) marks on musical notes.

“What is it, Ovid?” Tibullus asked.

“That I must meet my Julia, the Princess Julia,” Ovid said.

“Where?” Tibullus asked.

“Why, at — by the Heart of God, I have forgotten,” Ovid said. “My passion — my strong emotion — so transports me.”

“I’ll save your trouble of trying to remember,” Tibullus said. “It is at Albius’ house, the jeweler’s, where the fair Lycoris lies.”

“Who? Cytheris, Cornelius Gallus’ love?” Ovid asked.

“Aye, he’ll be there, too, and my Plautia,” Tibullus said.

“And why not your Delia?” Ovid asked.

“Yes, and your Corinna,” Tibullus said.

Both Ovid and Tibullus wrote poetry about the women they loved; in their poetry they used pseudonyms for their loved ones.

Ovid loved Julia, and he wrote about her in his poetry, using the name Corinna.

Tibullus loved Plautia, and he wrote about her in his poetry, using the name Delia.

Ovid said:

“True, but my sweet Tibullus, keep that secret.

“I would not for all Rome have it thought that I veil bright Julia underneath that name: Julia, the gem and jewel — the Jule — of my soul, who takes her honors from the golden sky, as beauty takes all its luster from her eye.

“The air respire and breathes out again the pure Elysian — heavenly — sweets in which she breathes, and from her looks descend the glories of the summer. Heaven she is, praised in herself above all praise — Julia is more praiseworthy than any words that could be used to praise her — and he who hears her speak would swear the tuneful orbs — the musical Spheres — turned in his zenith only.”

In other words: Anyone who hears Julia speak thinks that he is hearing the Music of the Spheres.

“Publius, thou shall lose thyself,” Tibullus said.

Publius Ovid replied:

“Oh, in no labyrinth can I safelier err than when I lose myself in praising her.

“Go away from here, law, and welcome, Muses! Though you Muses are not rich, yet you are pleasing; let’s be reconciled and now made one.

“Henceforth I promise you my faith, and I promise all my serious hours to spend with you — with you, whose music strikes on my heart and with bewitching tones steals forth my spirit in Julia’s name. Fair Julia!

“Julia’s love shall be a law, and that sweet law I’ll study: the law and art of sacred Julia’s love.

“All other objects will prove to be only objects — object objects.”

“Come, we shall have thee as passionate as Propertius soon,” Tibullus said.

“Oh, how does my Sextus?” Ovid asked about Sextus Propertius.

“Truly, he is full of sorrow for his Cynthia’s death,” Tibullus answered.

“What, still?” Ovid asked.

“Still, and still more,” Tibullus said. “His griefs grow upon him as do his hours. Never did I know an understanding spirit so take to heart the common — universal — work of fate.”

Ovid said:

“O my Tibullus, let us not blame him, for against such occurrences the heartiest strife of virtue is not proof.

“We may preach constancy and fortitude to other souls, but had we ourselves been struck with the like planet, one with malign influences — had our loves, like his, been ravished from us by injurious death, and in the height and heat of our best days — it would have cracked our sinews, shrunk our veins, and made our very heartstrings jar and go out of tune, like his.”

Ben Jonson’s society believed that planets could influence our lives, and it believed that strings brace the heart, and that those strings could break. The figurative sense of “heartstrings” is one’s deepest feelings, such as passionate love.



Ovid continued:

“Come, let’s go and take him forth, and see if mirth or company will but abate — lessen — his passion.”

“I am happy to do so,” Tibullus said, “and I implore the gods that it may.”

They exited.

## ACT 2 (*The Arraignment, or Poetaster*)

### — 2.1 —

Albius and Crispinus talked together.

Albius was a tradesman, primarily a jeweler, who was married to Chloe.

Crispinus was a poetaster — a bad poet — who was carrying a folded sheet of paper.

Albius said:

“Master Crispinus, you are welcome. Please use a stool, sir.”

Stools were used to sit on in polite company. They were also used in to sit on in privies.

Albius continued:

“Your cousin Cytheris will come down soon. We are so busy for the receiving of these courtiers here that I can scarcely be a minute alone with myself because of thinking about them.

“Please sit, sir; please sit, sir.”

“I am very well, sir,” Crispinus said. “Never trust me but you are most delicately seated here, full of sweet delight and blandishment! An excellent air, an excellent air!”

By “blandishment,” Crispinus meant “allurement.”

Albius had a nice house in a nice location.

“Aye, sir, it is a pretty air,” Albius said.

He then said to himself, “These courtiers run in my mind still; I must look out —”

He then said to Crispinus, “For Jupiter’s sake, sit, sir. Or will it please you to walk into the garden? There’s a garden at the back side of the house — in the backyard.”

Jupiter is the King of the gods.

“I am most strenuously well, I thank you, sir,” Crispinus said.

“May it do you much good, sir,” Albius said.

He exited.

Chloe, Albius’ wife, entered with some maids who were carrying perfume and dried herbs to sweeten the air of the house.

Chloe, who did not notice Crispinus, said to her maids, “Come, bring those perfumes forward a little, and strew some roses and violets here.”

Albius entered the room.

Chloe noticed Albius.

Chloe said, “Bah, here are rooms that savor — stink — the most pitifully rank that ever I felt!”

Of course, she meant “smelled.”

She then said, “I cry the gods mercy, my husband’s in the wind of us.”

In other words, her husband stank.

Albius said to his wife, “Why, this is good, excellent, excellent. Well done, my sweet Chloe. Trim up your house most obsequiously — dutifully, and eager to please.”

“For Vulcan’s sake, breathe somewhere else!” Chloe said. “In truth, you overcome our perfumes exceedingly; you are too predominant.”

Vulcan, the gifted blacksmith god, was, like Albius, married; in fact, he was married to Venus, goddess of beauty and sexual passion, who was not faithful to him. Venus had an

affair with Mars, the god of war. Vulcan learned of the affair, so he set a trap for the illicit lovers. He created a fine net that bound tightly, he placed the net above his bed, and then he pretended to leave his mansion to journey abroad. Mars ran to Venus, and together they ran to bed. Mars and Venus lay down in bed together, and then the fine net snared them, locked in lust.

“Just hear my opinion, sweet wife,” Albius said.

He tried to hug her and pin her in his arms, but she fended him off and hit him on the head.

Chloe said:

“A pin for your ’pinion.”

A pin is an almost worthless small item used in sewing.

Chloe continued:

“In sincerity, if you are thus fulsome — offensive — to me in everything, I’ll be divorced. God save my body! You know what you were before I married you. I was a gentlewoman born, I. I lost all my friends to be a citizen’s wife, because I heard, indeed, that they kept their wives as fine as ladies, and that we might rule our husbands like ladies, and do whatever we wanted.

“Do you think I would have married you otherwise?”

Albius said, “I acknowledge, sweet wife —”

He then whispered to Crispinus, “She speaks the best of any woman in Italy, and moves as mightily, which makes me prefer that she should make bumps on my head as big as my two fingers than I would offend her.”

“Moves ... mightily” can mean “persuades well in speech” or “strikes hard with her fist.”

When Albius mentioned “two fingers,” he held up two fingers.

In this society, cuckolds — men with unfaithful wives — were said to have invisible horns growing on their heads. Readers may be forgiven for thinking of those horns when Albius held up two fingers.

He then said to Chloe, “But, sweet wife —”

“Yet again?” his wife said. “Isn’t it grace enough for you that I call you husband and you call me wife, but you must still be poking me against my will to things?”

One kind of poking is sexual poking. One meaning of “thing” is “penis.”

Albius replied, “But you know, wife: Here are the greatest ladies and most gallant gentlemen of Rome to be entertained in our house now; and I would like to advise thee to entertain them in the best sort, indeed, wife.”

Chloe said:

“In sincerity, did you ever hear a man talk so idly? You would seem to be the master of me? You would have your spoke in my cart?”

Hmm. There’s a sexual meaning there.

Chloe continued:

“You would advise me to entertain ladies and gentlemen? Because you can marshal your pack needles, horse combs, hobbyhorses, and wall candlesticks in your warehouse better than I, therefore you can tell how to entertain ladies and gentlefolks better than I?”

Albius said:

“O my sweet wife, don’t upbraid me with that!

“Gain savors sweetly from anything.”

“Gain” is profit.

Albius continued:

“He who respects” — he meant “expects” — “to get a profit must relish all commodities alike, and admit no difference between woad [a plant used to make blue dye] and frankincense, or the most precious balsamum and a tar barrel.”

Albius was a tradesman who dealt in jewelry, but he also dealt in other less prestigious items that made a profit.

Chloe said:

“By the Virgin Mary, bah!

“You sell candle-snuffers, too, if you remember, but I ask you to let me buy them out of your hand, for I tell you true, I take it highly in snuff — I highly resent — to learn how to entertain gentlefolks by your instruction at these years of mine, indeed.

“Alas, man, there was not a gentleman who came to your house in your other wife’s time, I think? Nor a lady? Nor one or more musicians? Nor masques?”

Masques were entertainments at which people wore masks.

Chloe continued:

“Neither you, nor your house were so much as spoken of before I disbased myself from my hood and my fartingale to these bum-rolls and your whalebone bodice.”

By “disbased,” she meant “debased.”

Before becoming a tradesman’s wife, she had worn a French hood and a farthingale (not a “fartingale”).

After becoming a tradesman's wife, she wore the items of clothing usually worn by a tradesman's wife: Bum-rolls were rolls of cloth around the hips; a skirt was draped over them. A whalebone bodice was a bodice stiffened with whalebone.

Albius said:

“Look here, my sweet wife.”

He lay his finger on his lips and said:

“I am mum, my dear mummia, my balsamum, my spermaceti, and my very city of —”

Hmm. My very city of ... sperm? Yes. He was still referring to his wife. A city is a site.

Mummia, balsamum, and spermaceti are expensive items.

Mummia is a medicinal preparation made from the preserved flesh of a mummy.

Balsamum is aromatic resin used as an ointment.

Spermaceti is a waxy substance produced in sperm whales; it was used as an ointment.

Albius then said quietly to Crispinus, “She has the most best, true, feminine wit in Rome!”

Crispinus replied, “I have heard so, sir, and do most vehemently desire to participate” — he meant “partake of” — “the knowledge of her fair features.”

“Ah, peace,” Albius said. “You shall hear more soon; be not seen yet, please — not yet. Observe.”

He exited.

Chloe said, “By God's body, give husbands the head a little more, and they'll be nothing but head shortly.”

To give a horse the head means to loosen the reins and give it freedom. If Chloe gives her husband the head, soon he will be her head — her boss.

Ephesians 5:23 states, *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body”* (King James Bible).

Chloe, who had noticed her husband talking to Crispinus, motioned toward him and asked her maids, “Who’s he there?”

“I don’t know, forsooth,” the first maid said.

“Forsooth” means “indeed” or “in truth.”

The second maid asked Crispinus, “Who would you speak with, sir?”

He answered, “I would speak with my cousin Cytheris.”

The second maid said to Chloe, “He is one, forsooth, who would speak with his cousin Cytheris.”

“Is she your cousin, sir?” Chloe asked.

“Yes, in truth, forsooth, for lack of a better,” Crispinus said.

For lack of a better cousin.

“Is she a gentlewoman?” Chloe asked.

“Or else she should not be my cousin, I assure you,” Crispinus said.

“Are you a gentleman born?” Chloe asked.

“That I am, lady,” Crispinus said. “You shall see my arms, if it will please you.”



“No, your legs do sufficiently show you are a gentleman born, sir; for a man borne upon little legs is always a gentleman borne,” Chloe said.

“Yet I ask you, permit me to show you the sight of my arms, mistress,” Crispinus said, “for I bear them about me, to have them seen.”

Yes, bare arms can be seen.

He pulled out a design of a coat of arms and held it up.

He then said:

“My name is Crispinus, or Cry-spinas, indeed, which is well expressed in my arms: a face crying, in chief; and beneath it a bloody toe between three thorns pungent.”

*Spina* is Latin for “thorn.”

“In chief” means the top part of the shield.

“Pungent” means “sharp-pointed” (the thorns) and “stinky” (the toe).

“Then you are welcome, sir,” Chloe said. “Now that I know you are a gentleman born, I can find in my heart to welcome you; for I am a gentlewoman born, too, and I will bear my head high enough, although it were my fortune to marry a tradesman.”

Crispinus replied, “No doubt of that, sweet feature” — he may have meant “creature” — “your carriage shows it in any man’s eye that is carried upon you with judgment.”

“Carriage “ can mean bodily deportment as well as a kind of wheeled vehicle.

By “carried,” he meant “cast.”

Albius returned. In the next few minutes, he would be continually going in and out of the room. He really, really wanted to make a good impression on the VIPs coming to his home.

“Dear wife, don’t be angry,” he said.

“God’s my passion!” Chloe said.

“Listen to me about one thing,” Albius said. “Don’t let your maids set cushions in the parlor windows, nor in the dining-chamber windows, nor upon stools in either of them, in any case, for it is tavern-like; but lay them one upon another in some outer-room or corner of the dining chamber.”

“Go, go,” Chloe said. “Meddle with your bedchamber only, or rather with your bed in your chamber only, or rather with your wife in your bed only; or, on my faith, I’ll not be pleased with you only.”

Hmm. Sounds as if someone will shortly be a cuckold.

Albius said, “Look here, my dear wife, entertain that gentleman kindly, I ask you —”

Chloe made a gesture as if she were going to hit him.

Albius lay his finger on his lips and said, “Mum.”

That meant, he would stay quiet.

“Go! I need your instruction, indeed!” Chloe said sarcastically.

She added, without sarcasm, “Anger me no more, I advise you.”

Albius exited.

Chloe said to herself, “City-sin, did he say! She’s a wise gentlewoman, indeed, who will marry herself to the sin of the city.”

“City-sin” is a citizen. The “sin of the city” is something different.

Albius entered the room and said, “Just this one time and no more, by heaven, wife. Hang no pictures in the hall nor in the dining chamber, in any case, but in the gallery only, for it is not courtly else, on my word, wife.”

Chloe replied, “By God’s precious, are you never done!”

Albius said, “Wife —”

She raised her fist and threatened to hit him.

He exited.

Chloe asked, “Don’t I bear a reasonable corrigible hand over him, Crispinus?”

“Corrigible” means “corrective.”

Crispinus replied, “By this hand, lady, you hold a most sweet hand over him.”

Albius entered the room and said, “And then for the great gilt andirons —”

“Again!” Chloe said. “I wish that the andirons were in your great guts, as far as I’m concerned.”

“I vanish, wife,” Albius said.

He exited.

Chloe asked:

“What shall I do, Master Crispinus?”

“Here will be all the most splendid ladies in court soon, to see your cousin Cytheris. O the gods! How might I behave myself now so as to entertain them most courtly?”

Crispinus answered, “By the Virgin Mary, lady, if you will entertain them most courtly, you must do thus:

“As soon as ever your maid or your man brings you word they have come, you must say, ‘A pox on them! What are they doing here?’

“And yet when they come, speak to them as fair words as can be and give them the kindest welcome in words that can be.”

“Is that the fashion of courtiers, Crispinus?” Chloe asked.

“I assure you it is, lady,” Crispinus said. “I have observed it.”

Chloe said, “As for your ‘pox,’ sir, it is easily hit on; but it is not so easy to speak fair after, I think?”

The pox is syphilis, which is easily hit on, or acquired. Once one learns that it has been acquired, one is unlikely to say fair words.

Albius entered the room and said, “Oh, wife, the coaches have come, on my word, a number of coaches, and courtiers.”

“A pox on them!” Chloe said. “What are they doing here?”

“What is this now, wife!” Albius said. “Would thou not have them come?”

“Come?” Chloe replied. “Come, you are a fool, you.”

She then said to Crispinus, “He doesn’t know the trick of it.”

In other words, he doesn’t understand courtly etiquette.

Chloe then ordered her maids, "Call Cytheris, please."

A maid exited.

Chloe then said, "And good Master Crispinus, you can observe, you say; let me entreat you for all the ladies' behaviors, jewels, jests, and attires, that you marking as well as I, we may put both our marks together when they are gone, and confer about them."

A mark is a close observation, or an object. Chloe was unintentionally talking about putting two sexual objects together.

"I assure you, sweet lady, that I do so," Crispinus said. "Let me alone to observe until I turn myself to nothing but observation."

Cytheris entered the room.

Crispinus said, "Good morning, cousin Cytheris."

"Welcome, kind cousin," Cytheris said. "What! Have they come?"

"Aye, your friend Cornelius Gallus, Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, with Julia the Emperor's daughter and the lady Plautia, have alighted at the door, and with them Hermogenes Tigellius, the excellent musician."

Julia was the daughter of Augustus Caesar, the Roman Emperor.

"Come, let us go meet them, Chloe," Cytheris said.

"Observe them, Crispinus," Chloe said.

"At a hair's breadth, lady, I assure you," Crispinus said. "I will very closely observe them."

Gallus, Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, Hermogenes the musician, Julia, and Plautia entered the scene.

Ovid loved Julia, and Tibullus loved Plautia.

Gallus kissed Chloe and said, “Health to the lovely Chloe!”

He then said to Cytheris, “You must pardon me, mistress, that I give preference to this fair gentlewoman.”

A mistress is a woman to whom a man is devoted. The word “mistress” need not imply a sexual liaison.

Gallus and the other guests do and will show much courtesy to Chloe, who is much concerned about social rank.

“I pardon and praise you for it, sir —” Cytheris said.

She then said to Julia, “— and I beseech Your Excellence, receive her beauties into your knowledge and favor.”

Julia replied, “Cytheris, she has favor — good looks — and behavior that commands as much of me; and, sweet Chloe, know that I do exceedingly love you, and that I will approve of and second any grace that my father the Emperor may show you.”

She motioned toward Albius and asked, “Is this your husband?”

“For lack of a better, if it pleases Your Highness,” Albius said.

Chloe said to Cytheris, “God’s my life! How he shames me!”

Cytheris replied, “Not a whit, Chloe; they all think you politic and witty; wise women don’t choose husbands for the eye, merit, or birth, but for wealth and sovereignty.”

“Sovereignty” in this context means “rule.” Wise women choose husbands who are wealthy and whom they can rule over — or in some cases, when they prefer it, who will rule over them.

Ovid said to Albius, “Sir, we all come to congratulate you for the good report of you.”

Tibullus said to Albius, “And we would be glad to deserve your love, sir.”

Albius replied, “My wife will answer you all, gentlemen. I’ll come to you again soon.”

He exited.

Plautia motioned toward Chloe and said, “You have chosen for yourself a very fair companion here, Cytheris, and a very fair house.”

“To both of which you and all my friends are very welcome, Plautia,” Cytheris said.

These were words that should be spoken by the hostess, who was Chloe. Cytheris was a lodger.

Chloe, the real hostess, said, “With all my heart, I assure Your Ladyship.”

“Thanks, sweet Mistress Chloe,” Plautia said.

“You must come to court, lady, indeed, and there be sure your welcome shall be as great to us,” Julia said to Chloe. “You will be as welcome to us as we are to you.”

Ovid said to Julia, “She will well deserve it, madam. I see even in her looks gentry and general worthiness.”

“I have not seen a more certain token of an excellent disposition,” Tibullus said.

Albius returned and said, "Wife."

Chloe said to her husband, "Oh, they do so commend me here, the courtiers! What's the matter now?"

"For the banquet, sweet wife," Albius answered.

The banquet consisted of light refreshments: fruit, sweets, and wine.

"Yes," Chloe said. "And I must come to court, and be welcome, the princess says."

She and her husband exited.

Now that the respectable host and hostess were gone, Gallus said, "Ovid and Tibullus, you may be bold to welcome your mistresses here."

The couples embraced.

"We find it so, sir," Ovid said.

"And we thank Cornelius Gallus," Tibullus said.

Ovid said to Propertius, "Nay, my sweet Sextus, in faith, thou are not sociable."

"In faith, I am not, Publius, nor can I be," Sextus Propertius replied. "Sick minds are like sick men who burn with fevers, who, when they drink, are pleased with the taste for a moment, but afterward endure a more impatient fit."

He then said to all present, "Please, let me leave you; I offend you all, and myself most."

"Wait, sweet Propertius!" Gallus said.

"You yield too much to your griefs and fate, which never hurts except when we say it hurts us," Tibullus said.



The Stoic philosophers believed that suffering could be avoided by not acknowledging it.

Propertius said:

“Oh, peace, Tibullus!

“Your philosophy lends you too rough a hand to probe my wounds. Let they who know how to sigh and grieve speak about griefs. The free and unconstrained spirit does not feel the weight of my oppression.”

Propertius exited.

“Worthy Roman!” Ovid said. “I think I taste his misery, and I could sit down and chide at his malignant stars.”

“I think I love him because he loves so truly,” Julia said.

Cytheris said, “This is the most perfect love — one that lives after death.”

“Such is the constant ground of virtue always,” Gallus said.

“It puts on an inseparable face,” Plautia said.

Chloe returned, and she and Crispinus talked together apart from the others.

“Have you closely observed everything, Crispinus?” Chloe asked.

“Everything, I promise you,” Crispinus said.

“What gentlemen are these?” Chloe asked. “Do you know them?”

“Aye, they are poets, lady,” Crispinus said.

“Poets?” Chloe said. “They did not talk about me since I left, did they?”

“Oh, yes, and extolled your perfections to the heavens,” Crispinus said.

“Now, in sincerity, they are the finest kind of men whomever I knew,” Chloe said. “Poets! Couldn’t one get the Emperor to make my husband a poet, do you think?”

“No, lady, it is love and beauty that make poets,” Crispinus said, “and since you like poets so well, your love and beauties shall make me a poet.”

“What! Shall they?” Chloe said. “And such a one as these?”

“Aye, and a better one than these,” Crispinus said. “I would be sorry else.”

“And shall your looks change? And your hair change? And all, like these?” Chloe asked.

“Why, a man may be a poet and yet not change his hair, lady,” Crispinus said.

“Well, we shall see your cunning; yet if you can change your hair, please do,” Chloe said.

Girls changed hairstyles when they became women, so why shouldn’t men change hairstyles when they became poets?

Really, a haircut can help make a person look like the popular image of a poet, but of course, a good poet can look different from the popular image of a poet.

Albius returned and said, “Ladies and lordings, there’s a slight banquet that awaits within for you; please draw near and accost it.”

“We thank you, good Albius,” Julia said. “But when shall we see those excellent jewels you are praised for having?”

One meaning of the word “jewels” is “testicles.”

Albius said, “At Your Ladyship’s service.”

He then said to himself, “I got that speech by seeing a play yesterday, and it did me some grace now. I see it is good to collect such quotations sometimes. I’ll frequent these plays more than I have done, now that I come to be familiar with courtiers.”

Gallus approached Hermogenes and asked, “Why, how are you now, Hermogenes? What? Do thou ail, I wonder?”

“I am a little melancholy,” Hermogenes said. “Let me alone, I ask thee.”

“Melancholy!” Gallus said. “Why so?”

“With riding,” Hermogenes said. “A plague on all coaches for me!”

Chloe pointed to Hermogenes and asked, “Is that hard-favored — scowling — gentleman a poet, too, Cytheris?”

“No; this is Hermogenes — he is as humorous as a poet, though; he is a musician,” Cytheris said.

“Humorous” can refer to moods.

“A musician?” Chloe said. “Then he can sing.”

“That he can excellently,” Cytheris said. “Have you never heard him?”

“Oh, no,” Chloe said. “Will he be persuaded to sing, do you think?”

“I don’t know,” Cytheris said.

She then said to Gallus, “Friend, Mistress Chloe would like to hear Hermogenes sing. Do you have any influence over him?”

Gallus answered, "No doubt his own humanity and courtesy will command him so far, to the satisfaction of so fair a beauty; but rather than fail, we'll all be suitors to him."

"I cannot sing," Hermogenes said.

"Please, Hermogenes," Gallus said.

"I cannot sing," Hermogenes said.

Gallus pointed to Chloe and said, "For honor of this gentlewoman, to whose house I know thou may be ever welcome."

"That he shall in truth, sir, if he can sing," Chloe said.

Ovid, Julia, Tibullus, and Plautia joined the group around Hermogenes.

"Who's that?" Ovid asked.

"This gentlewoman is wooing Hermogenes for a song," Gallus said.

Ovid said:

"A song? Come, he shall not deny her.

"Hermogenes?"

"I cannot sing," Hermogenes said.

Gallus said to the others, "No, the ladies must persuade him; he waits just to have their thanks acknowledged as a debt to his skill."

"That shall not be lacking," Julia said. "We ourself will be the first who shall promise to pay him more than thanks upon a favor so worthily granted."

She was using the majestic plural.

"Thank you, madam, but I will not sing," Hermogenes said.

Tibullus said, "Tut, the only way to win him is to abstain from entreating him."

Crispinus said quietly to Chloe, "Do you love singing, lady?"

"Oh, surpassingly," Chloe said.

"Entreat the ladies to entreat me to sing, then, I beseech you," Crispinus said.

Chloe pointed to Crispinus and said to Julia, "I beg Your Grace, entreat this gentleman to sing."

"That we will, Chloe," Julia said. "Can he sing excellently?"

Chloe answered, "I think so, madam, for he entreated me to entreat you to entreat him to sing."

Crispinus said quietly to Chloe, "Heaven and earth! Why would you tell her that?"

Julia said to Crispinus, "Good sir, let's entreat you to use your voice."

"Alas, madam, I cannot, in truth," Crispinus said.

"The gentleman is modest," Plautia said. "I guarantee you that he sings excellently."

"Hermogenes, clear your throat," Ovid said. "I see by the look of him that here's a gentleman who will worthily challenge you."

"Not I, sir. I'll challenge no man," Crispinus said.

"That's your modesty, sir," Tibullus said, "but we, out of an assurance of your excellency, challenge him on your behalf."

"I thank you, gentlemen," Crispinus said. "I'll do my best."

Hermogenes said to Crispinus, “Let that best be good, sir. It will be best for you to be good.”

“Oh, this contention is excellent,” Gallus said.

He then said to Crispinus, “What is it you will sing, sir?”

Crispinus replied, “‘If I freely may discover,’ etc. Sir, I’ll sing that.”

Ovid said to Hermogenes, “It’s one of your own compositions, Hermogenes. He offers you advantage enough.”

Crispinus said, “Nay, truly, gentlemen, I’ll challenge no man — I can sing but one stanza of the ditty, and no more.”

“All the better,” Gallus said. “Hermogenes himself will be entreated to sing the other.”

Crispinus sang:

*“If I freely may discover [reveal]*

*“What would please me in my lover,*

*“I would have her fair and witty,*

*“Savoring more of court than city;*

*“A little proud, but full of pity;*

*“Light and humorous [full of fancies] in her toying,*

*“Oft [Often] building hopes, and soon destroying,*

*“Long, but sweet, in the enjoying [in having sex];*

*“Neither too easy nor too hard:*

*“All extremes I would have barred.”*

Gallus said to Crispinus, “Believe me, sir, you sing most excellently.”

“If there were a praise above excellence, the gentleman highly deserves it,” Ovid said.

Hermogenes said to Crispinus, “Sir, all this does not yet make me envy you, for I know I sing better than you.”

Tibullus said to all the others, “Listen to Hermogenes now.”

Hermogenes sang:

*“She should be allowed her passions,*

*“So [So long as] they were [would be] but used as fashions:*

*“Sometimes froward [hard to please], and then frowning,*

*“Sometimes sickish, and then swooning [swooning],*

*“Every fit with change still crowning.*

*“[Crowning every fit with change always.]*

*“Purely jealous I would have her,*

*“Then only constant when I crave her;*

*“’Tis a virtue should not save her.*

*“Thus, nor her delicacies [delights] would cloy me*

*“Neither her peevishness annoy me.”*

This was an anti-love song. The final five lines can be paraphrased like this:

“I would have her be completely jealous,

“But then when I desire her I would have her be completely chaste.

“Her virtue of chasteness would not save her from my dislike.

“Thus, her sexual delights would not cloy me,

“And neither would her peevishness annoy me.”

Julia said, “Nay, Hermogenes, your merit has long since been both known and admired by us.”

“You shall hear me sing another song,” Hermogenes said. “Now will I begin.”

Gallus motioned toward Albius and said, “We shall do this gentleman’s banquet that waits for us, ladies, too much wrong.”

To ignore the banquet would wrong it.

Julia said, “That is true; and well thought on, Cornelius Gallus.”

The company began to move towards the dining chamber.

Hermogenes said, “Why, it is but a short air; it will be done quickly; please stay.”

He said to the musicians in the gallery, “Strike, music!”

Ovid said, “No, good Hermogenes; we’ll end this difference — this dispute about who is the better singer — inside.”

Julia said to Ovid, “It is the common disease of all your musicians, that they know no mean to be entreated either to begin or end.”

Musicians are difficult to convince to begin and difficult to convince to stop.

Albius said to the others, “Will it please you to lead the way, gentles?”

Because the gentles were of a higher social rank, they would lead the way to the banquet.

The gentles replied, “Thanks, good Albius.”



Everybody except Albius and Crispinus exited.

Albius said to himself:

“Oh, what a charm — a chorus — of thanks was here put upon me! O Jove, what a setting forth of social status it is to a man to have many courtiers come to his house! Sweetly was it said by a good old housekeeper, ‘I had rather lack meat — food — than lack guests’ — especially if they are courtly guests.”

Good guests are better than good food.

Albius continued:

“For never trust me if one of their good legs — that is, bows — made in a house is not worth all the good food and drink a man can make them. He who would have fine guests, let him have a fine wife; he who would have a fine wife, let him come to me.”

“By your kind leave, Master Albius,” Crispinus said.

Crispinus was interested in Albius’ fine wife.

“What! You have not gone in to the banquet, Master Crispinus?” Albius said.

“Indeed, I have a project that draws me away from here,” Crispinus said. “Please, sir, make an excuse for me to the ladies.”

“Will you not stay and see the jewels, sir?” Albius asked. “I ask you, stay.”

“Not for a million, sir, now,” Crispinus said. “Let it suffice, I must relinquish; and so, in a word, please expiate this compliment.”

By “relinquish,” he meant “leave.”

By “expiate,” he meant “expedite.”

By “compliment,” he meant “excuse.”

Albius said, “Mum.”

“Mum” meant “Silent.”

If Crispinus could misuse words, so could Albius.

Albius exited.

Alone, Crispinus said to himself, “I’ll presently go and ingle some pawnbroker for a poet’s gown and bespeak a garland; and then, jeweler, look to your best jewel, indeed.”

By “ingle,” he meant “wheedle.”

Pawnbrokers dealt in second-hand goods.

Poets tend to be impoverished, and any good clothing they own must eventually end up in a pawnbroker’s shop.

By “bespeak a garland,” Crispinus meant that he was going to order a poet’s wreath.

Albius’ best jewel was his wife: Chloe.

Crispinus exited.

### ACT 3 (*The Arraignment, or Poetaster*)

#### — 3.1 —

Alone on Holy Street, aka *Via Sacra*, Horace, a fine poet, said to himself, “Hmm? Yes. I will begin an ode so; and it shall be to Maecenas.”

Crispinus entered the scene and said, “By God’s eyelid, yonder’s Horace! They say he’s an excellent poet; Maecenas loves him. I’ll fall into his acquaintance if I can. I think he is composing as he goes in the street. Hmm? It is a good humor — poetic characteristic — if he is; I’ll compose, too.”

Horace recited to himself:

*“Swell me a bowl with lusty wine*

*“Till I may see the plump Lyaeus [the god Bacchus] swim*

*“Above the brim;*

*“I drink as I would write,*

*“In flowing measure filled with flame and sprightly spirit.”*

Crispinus said:

“Sweet Horace, may Minerva and the Muses stand auspicious to thy projects!”

Minerva is the goddess of wisdom, and the Muses are goddesses of the arts.

Crispinus continued:

“How do thou fare, sweet man? Frolicsome? Rich? Gallant? Huh?”

“Not greatly gallant, sir,” Horace said. “Like my fortunes, I am well. I’m bold to take my leave, sir. You’d want nothing else with me, sir, would you?”

Horace wanted to leave Crispinus' presence.

Crispinus said, "Indeed, no, but I could wish thou did know us, Horace. We are a scholar, I assure thee."

"A scholar, sir?" Horace said. "I shall be covetous of your fair knowledge."

"Gramercy, good Horace," Crispinus said. "Thank you. We are newly turned poet, too, which is more; and a satirist, too, which is more than that. I write just in thy vein, I. I am for your odes or your sermons, or anything, indeed. We are a gentleman, besides: our name is Rufus Laberius Crispinus. We are a pretty Stoic, too."

Horace wrote books titled *Odes* and *Satires*. The *Satires* were sometimes called *Sermones*, which means *Conversations*.

"To the proportion — the length — of your beard, I think it, sir," Horace said.

Long beards are sometimes regarded as signs of wisdom. The actor playing Crispinus would have little or no beard, or a false beard.

Crispinus said, "By Phoebus, here's a most neat fine street, isn't it? I protest to thee I am enamored of this street, now, more than I am of half the streets of Rome, again; it is so polite and terse! There's the front of a building, now. I study architecture, too; if ever I should build, I'd have a house just of that prospective."

The word "terse" means "not using many words."

"Polite and terse" is a compliment when applied to people.

A prospective is a place that provides a good view. Or it may be simply the attractive front of a building.

Horace said to himself, “Doubtless this gallant’s tongue has a good turn when he sleeps.”

How about a good turn when the gallant is awake? Not so much.

Crispinus said, “I make verses when I come in such a street as this. Oh, the city ladies, they sit in every shop like the Muses — offering the Castalian dew and the Thespian liquors to as many as have just the sweet grace and audacity to sip of their lips.”

The wives of tradesmen would sit in the windows of shops and encourage customers to shop there.

Castalia was a spring sacred to the Muses.

Thespis was the father of Greek tragedy. From his name we get the word “thespian” — actor.

Crispinus asked, “Did you ever hear any of my verses?”

Horace answered, “No, sir.”

He said to himself, “But I am in some fear I must hear your verses now.”

Crispinus said, “I’ll tell thee some (if I can but recover them) that I composed just now about a hair dressing I saw a jeweler’s wife wear, who indeed was a jewel herself. I prefer that kind of headdress, now.”

He was talking about Chloe.

Crispinus then asked, “What’s thy opinion, Horace?”

“With your silver bodkin, it does well, sir,” Horace said.

A bodkin is a long pin used in hair dressings or as a cap decoration.

Horace was talking about Crispinus.

Crispinus said:

“I cannot tell why, but it stirs me more than all your court-curls or your spangles — sequins — or your tricks — knick-knacks. I don’t like these high gable ends, these Tuscan tops, nor your coronets, nor your arches, nor your pyramids.”

These were then-current styles in ladies’ hairdressings.

Crispinus continued:

“Give me a fine, sweet — little delicate dressing, with a bodkin, as you say, and I don’t give a mushroom for all your other ornatures — embellishments.”

“Isn’t it possible to make an escape from him?” Horace said to himself.

Crispinus was a bore.

“I have remitted my verses all this while,” Crispinus said. “I think I have forgotten them.”

“Remit” means “refrain from inflicting a punishment.” Crispinus had forgotten his poems and so he could not inflict them on Horace.

Crispinus had only recently decided to be a poet. In fact, he had written his first poem a couple of minutes ago. No wonder Horace had not heard any of Crispinus’ verses.

“Here’s a person — me — who could wish you had, if not,” Horace said to himself.

“I pray Jove that I can entreat them from my memory,” Crispinus said.

“You put your memory to too much trouble, sir,” Horace said.

“No, sweet Horace, we must not have thee think so,” Crispinus said.

“I beg your pardon,” Horace said.

He then said to himself, “Then they are my ears that must be tortured. Well, you must have patience, ears.”

“Please, Horace, observe,” Crispinus said.

By “observe,” he meant “listen.” Crispinus had remembered his poem.

Horace looked him over and said, “Yes, sir. Your satin sleeve begins to fret at the rug that is underneath it, I do observe; and your ample velvet bases are not without evident stains of a hot disposition naturally.”

Crispinus’ sleeve had two layers. The outer expensive satin layer was wearing away, revealing the rough “rug,” a kind of cloth, underneath. And his middle-lower men’s garment — velvet bases — showed sweat stains, or possibly, stains of sexual activity, revealing that he had a lustful temperament.

“Oh, I’ll dye them into another color at my pleasure,” Crispinus said. “How many yards of velvet do thou think they contain?”

Velvet was an expensive fabric. Clothing with lots of velvet would be expensive.

Horace said to himself, “By God’s heart! I have put him now in a fresh way to vex me more.”

He then said to Crispinus, “Indeed, sir, your mercer’s book will tell you with more patience than I can.”

He then said to himself, “For I am crossed, and your mercer’s book is not crossed, I think.”

A mercer is a dealer in fine fabrics such as velvet. Merchants gave credit to some customers. When a customer paid off the debt, the debt was crossed off in the tradesman's account book.

“By God's light, these verses have lost me again,” Crispinus said. “I shall not invite them to my mind now.”

“Rack not your thoughts, good sir,” Horace said. “Rather defer it to a new time. I'll meet you at your lodging or wherever you please. Until then, Jove keep you, sir.”

Horace started to leave.

“Nay, gentle Horace, stay,” Crispinus said. “I have it now. I remember my poem now.”

“Yes, sir,” Horace said.

He then prayed silently, “Apollo, Hermes, Jupiter, look down upon me.”

Crispinus recited his poem out loud:

*“Rich was thy hap [fortune], sweet, dainty cap [a city fashion]*

*“There to be placed:*

*“Where thy smooth black, sleek white may smack [kiss loudly],*

*“And both be graced.”*

The woman's cap was lucky because it could kiss — touch — the woman's forehead.

Crispinus then said:

“‘White’ is there usurped” — he meant “substituted” — “for her brow: her forehead; and then ‘sleek,’ as the parallel to



‘smooth’ that went before. A kind of paranomasy or agnomination; do you conceive, sir?”

Paranomasy and agnomination are names for the same figure of speech, one that involves using a word to allude to a different word, or using the same word but with two different meanings (a pun).

“Excellent,” Horace said. “Indeed, sir, I must be abrupt and leave you.”

“Why, what haste do thou have?” Crispinus said. “Please, stay a little. Thou shall not go yet, by Phoebus Apollo.”

“I shall not?” Horace said.

He then said to himself, “What remedy — plan — can I come up with to leave? Bah, how I sweat with suffering!”

Crispinus said, “And then —”

He was ready to recite another poem.

“Please, sir, give me leave to wipe my face a little,” Horace said.

Of course, he would have liked to have leave — permission — to leave.

“Yes, do, good Horace,” Crispinus said.

“Thank you, sir,” Horace said.

He then said to himself:

“By God’s death! I must beg his permission to piss, soon, or beg his permission to leave so that I may go away from here with half my teeth — before I am an old man. I am in some such fear.

“This tyranny is strange, to take my ears up by commission whether or not I am willing, and make them lay-stalls —

repositories of worthless stuff — to his lewd solecisms and worded trash.”

Solecisms are irregularities in language. One meaning of “lewd” is “unlettered.”

Horace continued saying to himself:

“Happy are thou, bold Bolanus, now, I say, whose freedom and impatience of this fellow would long before this have called him ‘fool,’ and ‘fool,’ and ‘rank and tedious fool,’ and have slung jests as hard as stones until thou had pelted him out of the place, while my tame modesty suffers — allows — my wit to be made a solemn ass to bear his fopperies.”

Bolanus, a friend to Cicero, had a hot temper and would not put up with someone such as Crispinus but would be intentionally rude to him and so get rid of him.

Crispinus said, “Horace, thou are miserably desirous to be gone, I see. But — please, let’s prove — attempt — to enjoy thee awhile. Thou have no business, I assure myself. To where is thy journey directed, huh?”

“Sir, I am going to visit a friend who is sick,” Horace said.

“A friend? Who’s he? Do I know him?” Crispinus asked.

“No, sir, you do not know him,” Horace said.

He then said to himself, “And your not knowing him is not the worse for him.”

“What’s his name? Where’s he lodged?” Crispinus asked.

“Where I shall be fearful to draw you out of your way, sir: a great distance from here,” Horace said. “Please, sir, let’s part.”

“Nay, but where is it?” Crispinus said. “I ask thee, tell me.”

Horace answered, "On the far side of the Tiber River."

He pointed and said, "Yonder, by Caesar's gardens."

These were the gardens that Julius Caesar had left to the Roman people in his will.

"Oh, that's my course directly," Crispinus said. "I am ready to go with you. Come, go. Why do thou stand here?"

"Yes, sir," Horace said. "By the Virgin Mary, the plague is in that part of the city; I had almost forgotten to tell you, sir."

"Bah!" Crispinus said. "That doesn't matter; I fear no pestilence. I have not offended Phoebus."

Phoebus Apollo was the god of plague.

Horace said to himself, "I have offended Phoebus Apollo, it seems, or else this heavy scourge could never have alighted on me —"

"Come along," Crispinus said. "Let's go."

Horace pointed in a different direction from the one he had first pointed to, and he said, "I am to go down some half mile this way, sir, first, to speak with his physician; and from thence to his apothecary, where I shall stay during the mixing of many different drugs —"

"Why, it's all one," Crispinus said. "I have nothing to do, and I don't love to be idle; I'll bear thee company. What do thou call the apothecary?"

Horace said to himself, "Oh, I wish that I knew a name that would frighten him, now!"

He then said out loud, "Sir, his name is Rhadamanthus; Rhadamanthus, sir. There's one so called by the same name who is a just judge in hell and inflicts strange vengeance on all those who here on earth torment poor patient spirits."

Dante has no circle exclusively for boors in his *Inferno*. An oversight? Perhaps boors are punished where thieves are punished: Boors steal time.

“He dwells at the Three Furies, by Janus’ temple?” Crispinus asked.

“Your apothecary does, sir,” Horace said.

“By God’s heart, I owe him money for sweetmeats, and he has brought a legal action to arrest me, I hear,” Crispinus said, “but —”

Horace interrupted, “Sir, I have made a most solemn vow: I will never bail any man.”

Horace would not pay Crispinus’ debt to the apothecary.

“Well, then, I’ll swear and speak fair words to him, if the worst should come,” Crispinus said. “But his name is Minos, not Rhadamanthus, Horace.”

“That may be, sir,” Horace said. “I just guessed at his name by his sign. But your Minos is a judge, too, sir!”

Minos is another judge in the Underworld.

Crispinus said:

“I protest to thee, Horace, do but taste me — try me out — once. If I know myself and my own virtues truly, thou will not make that esteem of Varius, or Virgil, or Tibullus, or any of them indeed, as now in thy ignorance thou do, which I am content to forgive.”

In other words: If you, Horace, get to know me better, you will not hold in such high esteem Varius, or Virgil, or Tibullus, or your other poet-friends.

Lucius Varius Rufus, a poet-friend of Virgil, the author of the *Aeneid*, had introduced Horace to Maecenas.

Crispinus continued:

“I would like to see which of these could pen more verses in a day, or with more facility, than I; or see who could court his mistress, kiss her hand, make better sport with her fan or her dog —”

“I cannot bail you yet — for all that — sir,” Horace interrupted.

Crispinus continued:

“— or who could move his body more gracefully, or dance better. You should see me dance, if we were not in the street —”

“Nor yet,” Horace said.

He still would not pay Crispinus’ debt to the apothecary.

Crispinus said, “Why, I have been a reveler, and at my cloth of silver suit and my long stocking in my time, and will be again —”

“My cloth of silver suit and my long stocking” were party clothes. “Cloth of silver” was expensive fabric sewn with silver thread. Dancers wore long stockings.

Horace said, “If you may be trusted, sir.”

Crispinus will dance again if mercers will trust him and give him credit to buy fancy cloth and clothing.

“And then for my singing,” Crispinus said, “Hermogenes himself envies me. He is the only master of music that you have in Rome.”

“Is your mother living, sir?” Horace asked.

“Au!” Crispinus said. “Convert thy thoughts to something else, please.”

“Au” is an expression of woe.

“You have much of the mother in you, sir,” Horace said.  
“Your father is dead?”

“The mother” means “hysteria.” But Horace may have meant that Crispinus was effeminate.

“Aye, I thank Jove, and my grandfather, too, and all my kinsfolks, and they are well composed in their urns,” Crispinus said.

“Well composed” means “at peace.”

“Well ’composed” means “well decomposed.”

Horace said to himself, “The more their happiness, who rest in peace, free from the abundant torture of thy tongue. I wish that I were with them, too.”

“What’s that, Horace?” Crispinus asked.

Horace said, “I now remember, sir, a sad fate a cunning woman, a fortune teller, one Sabella, sung when in her urn she cast — forecast by casting lots — my destiny, when I was just a child.”

“What sad fate was it, please?” Crispinus asked.

Horace answered:

“She told me I should surely never perish by famine, poison, or the enemy’s sword. The hectic fever, cough, or pleurisy should never hurt me, nor the movement-retarding and late-in-life-coming gout. But in my time I should be once surprised and taken unawares by a strong, tedious talker, who should vex me and almost bring me to consumption.

“Therefore, she warned me if I were wise to shun all such long-winded monsters as my bane. For if I could but escape

that one discourser, I might, no doubt, prove to become an old, aged man.”

Ready to leave, he said, “By your leave, sir?”

Crispinus said:

“Tut, tut, abandon this idle humor; it is nothing but melancholy.

“Before Jove, now that I think of it, I am to appear in court here to answer to one who has a lawsuit against me.

“Sweet Horace, go with me. This is my hour; if I neglect it, the law will proceed against me. Thou are familiar with these things. Please, if thou respect me, go with me.”

Horace said:

“Now let me die, sir, if I know the laws or have the power to stand still half so long in the laws’ loud courts, while a case is argued.

“Besides, you know, sir, where I am to go, and the necessity —”

Crispinus interrupted, “That is true —”

Horace said to himself, “I hope that the hour of my release has come! He will upon this consideration discharge me, surely.”

“Indeed, I am doubtful what I may best do: whether to leave thee, or my affairs, Horace,” Crispinus said.

“O Jupiter!” Horace said. “Leave me, sir; leave me, by any means. I beseech you, leave me, sir.”

“No, in faith, I’ll risk ignoring my affairs for now,” Crispinus said. “Thou shall see I love and respect thee. Come, Horace.”

“Nay, then, I am desperate and out of hope,” Horace said. “I follow you, sir. It is hard contending with a man who overcomes resistance in this way.”

“And how deals Maecenas with thee?” Crispinus asked. “Liberally, huh? Is he open-handed? Bountiful?”

Maecenas was a patron to Roman poets such as Horace.

“He’s still himself, sir,” Horace answered.

Crispinus said:

“Truly, Horace, thou are exceedingly happy and fortunate in thy friends and acquaintances: They are all the most choice spirits and of the first rank of Romans.

“I don’t know any poet, I declare, who has used his good fortune more prosperously than thou have. If thou would make me known to Maecenas, I should second thy well-deserved good fortune well. Thou should find a good, sure assistant of me: one who would speak all good of thee in thy absence and be content with the place just under yours, not envying thy reputation with thy patron. Let me not live if I don’t think thou and I, in a small time, should lift them all out of favor, both Virgil, Varius, and the best of them, and enjoy him wholly to ourselves.”

Crispinus wanted to bring Horace’s friends — Virgil, Varius, and the best of the other poets — out of favor with Maecenas.

Horace said to himself, “Gods, you do know it, I can hold myself back no longer. This breeze — this horsefly — has pricked my patience.”

He said to Crispinus, “Sir, Your Silkness clearly mistakes Maecenas and his house, to think there breathes a spirit beneath his roof subject to those poor affections and



emotions of undermining envy and detraction — moods proper only to base, groveling minds.”

Such as the mind of Crispinus.

Horace continued:

“There is no place in Rome, I dare affirm, that is purer or freer from such low, common evils than Maecenas’ house. In the house of Maecenas, no man is grieved that this man is thought richer or this other man is thought more learned. Each man has his place, and to each man’s merit Maecenas gives his reward of grace, which with a mutual love they all embrace.”

“You report a wonder!” Crispinus said. “It is scarcely credible, this.”

“I am no torturer to force you to believe it, but it is so,” Horace said.

“Why, this inflames me with a more ardent desire to be his than before,” Crispinus said. “But I fear I shall find the entrance to his familiarity — to himself and to his intimate circle — somewhat more than difficult, Horace.”

“Tut, you’ll conquer him as you have conquered me,” Horace said. “There’s no standing against and resisting you, sir; I see that. Either your importunity or the intimation of your good qualities, or —”

Crispinus was unwilling to rely on his “good” qualities, so he said:

“Nay, I’ll bribe his porter and the servants of his chamber, and make his doors open to me that way first; and then I’ll observe my times to see the best time to approach him.

“If he should extrude and expel me from his house today, shall I therefore desist, or abandon my suit tomorrow? No.

I'll attend him, follow him, meet him in the street, the highways, run by his coach, never leave him.

“What! Man has nothing given to him in this life without much labor.”

Horace said, under his breath:

“And impudence.

“Archer of heaven, Phoebus, take thy bow and with a full-drawn arrow-shaft nail to the earth this Python, so that I may yet run away from here and live.”

Phoebus Apollo killed a python that guarded Delphi. Afterward, Delphi became a site sacred to Apollo.

Horace continued saying to himself:

“Or, brawny Hercules, come down and — although thou make it thy thirteenth labor — rescue me from this Hydra of discourse here.”

Hercules' second labor of twelve was killing the Lernaean Hydra. In accomplishing this labor, Hercules had the help of a nephew named Iolaus. The Hydra of Lerna had nine heads, the middle of which was immortal. Hercules and Iolaus traveled to Lerna and found the Hydra's lair. Hercules forced the Hydra to leave its lair by shooting flaming arrows into the lair. Hercules fought the Hydra, but he discovered that each time a mortal head was cut off, two more heads grew in its place. Hera gave Hercules even more trouble by sending an enormous crab to fight him, but Hercules crushed the crab. Hercules then got help from Iolaus. Each time Hercules cut off one of the Hydra's mortal heads, Iolaus cauterized it with a torch, thus preventing more heads from growing. Hercules then cut off the immortal head and placed it under a boulder. The blood of the Hydra was poisonous, and before

leaving, Hercules dipped the heads of his arrows into the Hydra's blood.

— 3.2 —

Fuscus Aristius, a scholar and writer, and one of Horace's friends, entered the scene.

"Horace, we are well met," Aristius said.

Horace said quietly to Aristius, "Oh, welcome, my reliever! Aristius, as thou love and respect me, ransom me."

"What ails thou, man?" Aristius asked.

Horace said quietly:

"By God's death, I am seized on here by a land-remora."

A remora was a kind of sucking fish that was thought to be able to attach itself to a ship and retard its progress.

He continued quietly:

"I cannot stir, cannot move, except as he please."

"Will thou go, Horace?" Crispinus asked.

Horace said quietly:

"By God's heart! He cleaves to me like Alcides' shirt, tearing my flesh and sinews."

"Alcides" means "Hercules, aka Heracles."

A Centaur named Nessus once tried to rape Deianira, Hercules' wife. Hercules and Deianeira had to cross a river. Nessus offered to carry Deianeira across the river, but then he attempted to rape her. Hercules shot him with an arrow whose head had been dipped into the poisonous blood of the Hydra. Before Nessus died, he told Deianeira that his blood had a magical quality; it was a love potion. He said that if

Deianeira were to ever think that Hercules was in love with someone else, she could make him love her again by smearing Nessus' blood on the inside of a robe and then giving it to Hercules to wear. Deianeira believed him, but it was a trick. She thought that Hercules was falling in love with someone else, so she did what Nessus had told her to do, but Hercules' arrow had poisoned the blood of the Centaur. When Hercules put on the robe, Nessus' blood, which was infected by the poisonous blood of the Hydra, burned Hercules like acid, as Nessus had known it would. In agony, Hercules climbed on a funeral pyre, lit it, and burned himself to death. Once dead, he became a god and lived on Mount Olympus.

Horace continued quietly:

“Oh, I have been vexed and tortured with him beyond forty fevers.

“For Jove's sake, find some means to take me from him!”

Aristius said loudly, “Yes, I will, but I'll go first and tell Maecenas.”

Crispinus said to Horace, “Come, shall we go?”

Aristius said loudly, “The jest will make his eyes run with tears of laughter, indeed.”

He started to leave.

“Nay, Aristius?” Horace said.

“Farewell, Horace,” Aristius said, leaving.

“By God's death! Will he leave me?” Horace said.

He called after him, “Fuscus Aristius, do you hear me? Gods of Rome!”

Aristius returned, and Horace said, “You said you had something to say to me in private.”

“Aye, but I see that you are now employed with that gentleman,” Aristius said. “It would be an offence to trouble you. I’ll take some better opportunity; farewell.”

He exited.

Horace said, “Mischief and torment! O my soul and heart, how you are cramped with anguish! Death itself brings not the like convulsions. O this day! That ever I should view the day’s tedious face —”

“Horace, what passion, what humor is this?” Crispinus asked.

“Away, good monster,” Horace said. “Don’t afflict me.”

He said to himself, “Crispinus? A friend, and mock me thus! Never was a man so left under the axe.”

Was the axe used in sacrifice or in execution?

He then asked, “What is this now?”

### — 3.3 —

Minos and two Lictors entered the scene. Lictors had the power to arrest people. Minos was the apothecary to whom Crispinus owed money.

A short distance from Crispinus, Minos pointed him out to the Lictors and said, “That’s he in the embroidered hat there, with the ash-colored feather: His name is Laberius Crispinus.”

The two Lictors came forward, and the First Lictor said, “Laberius Crispinus, I arrest you in the Emperor’s name.”

“Me, sir?” Crispinus asked. “Do you arrest me?”

“Aye, sir, at the suit of Master Minos the apothecary,” the First Lictor answered.

Horace said to himself, “Thanks, great Apollo! I will not let slip — will not overlook — thy favor offered me in my escape, for my fortunes.”

He definitely did not want to let slip his chance to escape.

Unobserved by Crispinus, Horace exited.

“Master Minos? I know no Master Minos,” Crispinus said.

He looked around and said, “Where’s Horace? Horace? Horace?”

Coming forward, Minos asked, “Sir, don’t you know me?”

Seeing him, Crispinus said, “Oh, yes, I know you, Master Minos, I beg your pardon. But Horace? God’s me, has he gone?”

“Aye, and so would you, too, if you knew how,” Minos said.

He then said to the First Lictor, “Officer, look to him.”

The Lictors approached Crispinus to arrest him and take him away.

“Listen, Master Minos,” Crispinus said. “Please let us be treated like a man of our own fashion. By Janus and Jupiter, I meant to have paid you next week every drachma I owe you. Don’t seek to eclipse and darken my reputation thus vulgarly and publicly.”

“Sir, your oaths cannot serve you,” Minos said. “You know I have forborne you a long time.”

He had waited a long time for the debt to be repaid, and the debt had not been repaid.

“I am conscious of it, sir,” Crispinus said.

The Lictors grabbed him and began to haul him away.

Crispinus said, “Nay, I beg you, gentlemen, do not exhale me thus; remember my debt is only for sweetmeats —”

By “exhale me,” he meant “haul me away.”

“Sweet meat must have sour sauce, sir,” the First Lictor said. “Come along.”

The Lictors began to drag Crispinus away.

“Sweet Master Minos!” Crispinus said. “I am forfeited to eternal disgrace if you do not commiserate.”

He wanted Minos to take pity on him.

He said to the First Lictor, “Good officer, be not so officious — so zealous in your work.”

### — 3.4 —

Tucca entered the scene with two of his Pyrgi.

Tucca said to the Lictors, “Why, how are you now, my good pair of bloodhounds? Whither do you drag the gentleman? You mongrels, you curs, you bandogs, we are Captain Tucca who is talking to you, you inhumane — inhuman and uncivilized — pilchers.”

Bandogs are attack dogs that are kept chained up.

A pilcher is a worthless person.

Minos said to Tucca, “Sir, he is their prisoner.”

“Their pestilence!” Tucca said. “Who are you, sir?”

“A citizen of Rome, sir,” Minos said.

“Then you are not far distant from a fool, sir,” Tucca said.

“I am an apothecary, sir,” Minos said.

“I knew thou weren’t a physician,” Tucca said. “I can tell by the smell.”

He sniffed Minos and then said, “Bah! Get out of my nostrils! Thou stink of lotium and the syringe. Away, quacksalver!”

“Lotium” is stale urine, used as a hair dressing.

A quacksalver is a quack: a bad physician.

Tucca said to the first Pyrgus, “Follower, my sword!”

The first Pyrgus handed him his sword and said, “Here, noble leader.”

He then said to himself, “You’ll do no harm with it, I’ll trust you.”

Tucca said to the First Lictor:

“Do you hear, you, goodman slave? Hook, ram, rogue, catchpole!”

Arresting officers sometimes used a staff with a hook. Battering-rams were used to batter down doors. Catchpoles were officers who arrested debtors.

Tucca continued:

“Let loose the gent’man, or by my velvet arms —”

The First Lictor kicked Tucca’s heels and knocked him to the ground.

Catching Tucca’s sword, the First Lictor said, “What will you do, sir?”

“Kiss thy hand, my honorable active varlet, and embrace thee, like this,” Tucca said, attempting to perform the actions.



The First Pyrgus said to himself, “Oh, patient metamorphosis!”

Tucca had quickly metamorphosed into a patient man.

Tucca said to the First Lictor, “My sword, my tall — brave and valiant — rascal.”

“Nay, not so fast, sir,” the First Lictor said. “Some of us are wiser than some others.”

“What! And a wit, too!” Tucca said. “By Pluto, thou must be cherished, slave.”

He gave the First Lictor money and said, “Here’s three drachmas for thee; hold.”

He meant for the Lictor to hold off from arresting this man.

The First Pyrgus said to himself, “There’s half his lendings gone.”

Tucca’s “lendings” consisted of the six drachmas he had “borrowed” — that is, conned — from Ovid Senior.

Tucca said to the First Lictor, “Give me the sword.”

“No, sir, your first word shall stand,” the First Lictor said. “I’ll hold all.”

He would hold on to the sword and the money.

Tucca started to argue, “Nay, but, rogue —”

The First Lictor said, “You would make a forcible rescue of our prisoner, sir, would you?”

“I, a rescue?” Tucca said. “Go away, inhuman varlet! Come, come, I never relish above one jest at most; do not disgust me with your jests, sirrah, do not. Rogue, I tell thee, rogue, do not.”

“What, sir? ‘Rogue’?” the First Lictor said.

“Aye,” Tucca said. “Why, thou are not angry, rascal? Are thou angry?”

“I cannot tell, sir,” the First Lictor said. “I am little better than angry at these terms you are calling me.”

Tucca said:

“Ha! Gods and fiends! Why, do thou hear? Rogue, thou, give me thy hand. I say unto thee, give me thy hand, rogue.”

The First Lictor did not shake hands with him.

Tucca continued:

“What? Don’t thou know me? Not me, rogue? Not Captain Tucca, rogue?”

Minos said to the First Lictor, “Come, please surrender the gentleman’s sword to him, officer; we’ll have no fighting here.”

Tucca asked Minos, “What’s thy name?”

“Minos, if it pleases you.”

“Minos?” Tucca said. “Come here, Minos; thou are a wise fellow, it seems. Let me talk with thee.”

Crispinus said, “Was ever any wretch as wretched as unfortunate I?”

Tucca and Minos talked together quietly.

Tucca flattered Minos, “Thou are one of the Centumviri, old boy, aren’t thou?”

The Centumviri were a group of Romans who could be selected to serve as jurors in a civil court. The position was prestigious.

“No, indeed, Master Captain,” Minos said.

“Come, thou shall be, then,” Tucca said. “I’ll have thee made one, Minos. Take my sword from those rascals, do thou see? Go, do it; I cannot attempt the deed with patience.”

Tucca then said out loud, “What does this gent’man owe thee, little Minos?”

“Fourscore sesterces, sir,” Minos answered.

Tucca said, “What? No more? Come, thou shall release him, Minos. Tell you what, I’ll be his bail and put up security for his repayment of the debt; thou shall take my word, old boy, and cashier — dismiss — these Furies. Thou shall do it, I say, thou shall, little Minos, thou shall.”

Literally, Furies are female avenging spirits from hell. Figuratively, they are the two Lictors.

“Yes; and as I am a gentleman and a reveler, I’ll make a piece of poetry, and absolve — pay back — all within these five days,” Crispinus said.

He was planning to write a poem for which Maecenas, patron of poets, would reward him with money.

Tucca said to Crispinus, “Come, Minos is not to learn — he already knows — how to treat a gent’man of quality, I know.”

He then said to Minos, “Give me my sword. If he — Crispinus — does not repay thee, I will and I must, old boy. Thou shall be my apothecary, too. Have thou good eringoes, Minos?”

Eringoes are a kind of sweetmeat: candied sea holly root.

“The best in Rome, sir,” Minos said.

“Go to, then,” Tucca said.

“Go to” is commonly used in the phrase “Go to hell,” but Tucca wanted to go to Minos’ shop.

He said to his two Pyrgi, “Vermin, know the house.”

In other words: Case Minos’ shop for things that Tucca can con out of Minos.

“I promise you we will, Colonel,” the First Pyrgus said.

Indicating Crispinus, Tucca said to Minos, “What about this gent’man, Minos?”

“I’ll take your word, Captain,” Minos said.

He would take Tucca’s word that he would repay Crispinus’ debt if Crispinus did not.

“Thou have it,” Tucca said. “My sword —”

A military man needed a sword. It was a disgrace for him to be without one.

“Yes, sir,” Minos replied.

He then said to Crispinus, “But you must discharge the arrest, Master Crispinus. You must pay the Lictors for their service.”

In this society, police officers — Lictors — were paid to make an arrest.

“What, Minos!” Tucca said. “Look in the gent’man’s face and just read his silence.”

In other words: He is silent and distressed because he has no money.

Tucca then said, “Pay the Lictors, pay them; releasing a gent’man is the honorable thing to do, Minos.”

Minos paid the Lictors, who released Crispinus.

Ignoring Minos, who was of a lower social class than he, Crispinus said to Tucca, “By Jove, sweet Captain, you do most infinitely endear and oblige me to you.”

“Tut, I cannot compliment, by Mars; but may Jupiter love me as I love good words and good clothes, and there’s an end to this,” Tucca said. “Thou shall give my boy that girdle and hangers when thou have worn them a little more —”

Not being a true military man, Tucca could not compliment by Mars, god of war. “To compliment” means “to use ceremonious language.”

A girdle is a belt. This belt had hangers: loops that could be used to carry weapons.

“O Jupiter!” Crispinus said. “Captain, he shall have them now, immediately.”

He said to the First Pyrgus, “May it please you to be acceptive, young gentleman.”

“Yes, sir, fear not,” the First Pyrgus said. “I shall accept.”

He then said to himself, “I have a pretty, foolish humor of taking, aka stealing, if you — Crispinus — knew all.”

Tucca said to the First Pyrgus, “Not now. You shall not take, boy.”

“By my truth and earnest, but he shall, Captain, by your leave,” Crispinus said.

Tucca said to the First Pyrgus, “Well, if he swear by his truth and earnest, take it, boy. Do not make a gent’man forsworn.”

Crispinus took off and gave his belt and hangers to the First Pyrgus while Tucca talked to the Lictors.

The First Lictor gave Tucca the sword he had confiscated and said, “Well, sir, there is your sword; but thank Master

Minos. You would not have carried it — the sword and the situation — off as you do now, otherwise.”

The Lictors started to leave.

Tucca said, “Minos is just, and you are knaves, and —”

The First Lictor turned back and said, “What did you say, sir?”

Tucca said:

“Pass on, my good scoundrel, pass on. I honor thee.”

The Lictors started to leave.

Tucca added:

“But except that I hate to have action with such base rogues as these, you should have seen me unrip their noses now, and have sent them to the closest barber’s for stitching; for, do you see —”

At this time, barbers also served as doctors.

The Lictors turned back.

Tucca hastily said:

“I am a man of humor, and I do love the varlets, the honest varlets; they have intelligence and valor, and are indeed good, profitable and useful —”

The Lictors exited.

Tucca concluded:

“— arrant rogues as any who live in an empire.”

Tucca then said quietly to Crispinus, “Listen, poetaster. Second me. Back me up.”

He said loudly, “Stand by me, Minos. Get close to me.”

He said to Crispinus and Minos, "Gather closer yet. Good."

He said, "Sir," and then whispered to Crispinus, "thou shall have a quarter share; be resolute."

Tucca wanted to con Minos, and he wanted Crispinus to help in the con. If Crispinus helped, he would get part of what was conned from Minos.

Tucca then said loudly to Crispinus, "You shall, at my request, take Minos by the hand here, little Minos. I will have it so: all friends, and a toast to good health. Be not inexorable."

He then said to Minos:

"And thou shall impart — provide — the wine, old boy; thou shall do it, little Minos, thou shall; make us pay for it in our bill for medicine.

"What! We must live and honor the gods sometimes: Now Bacchus, now Comus, now Priapus — every god a little."

Bacchus is the god of drinking, Comus is the god of partying, and Priapus is the god of sex.

Histrion, an actor, entered the scene.

Tucca said:

"Who's he who stalks by there?"

"Boy, Pyrgus, you were best to let him pass, sirrah. Do, ferret, let him pass, do."

"He is an actor, sir," the First Pyrgus said.

Learning that the man was only an actor, Tucca said:

"An actor? Call him; call the lousy slave hither.

“What! Will he sail by and not once strike or vail to a man-of-war, huh?”

A lesser ship would lower its flag as a sign of respect to a war ship. Tucca wanted the actor to take off his hat to honor him.

Tucca called to Histrio, “Do you hear me? You, actor, rogue, stalker! Come back here! No respect to men of worship, you slave?”

Histrio turned back and approached Tucca.

Tucca said:

“What! You are proud, you rascal? Are you proud, huh? You grow rich, do you? And purchase possessions, you twopenny tearmouth?”

Twopenny tearmouths were actors who ranted and raved and pleased audience members in the two-penny seats.

Tucca continued:

“You have Fortune and the good year on your side, you stinkard? Have you? Have you?”

“What the goodyear!” meant “What the Dickens!” The phrase “the goodyear” was used negatively in imprecations.

“Nay, sweet Captain, be confined to some reason,” Histrio said. “I protest — declare — I didn’t see you, sir.”

Tucca replied:

“You did not? Where was your sight, Oedipus?”

Oedipus blinded himself in Sophocles’ tragedy *Oedipus Rex*.

Tucca continued:

“You sleepwalk with hare’s eyes, do you?”



Hares were believed to sleep with their eyes open.

Tucca continued:

“I’ll have them glazed, rogue; if you say the word, they shall be glazed for you.”

“Glazed” means 1) wear eyeglasses, or 2) beat you so that your eyes are glazed with tears.

Tucca continued:

“Come, we must have you turn fiddler again, slave, get a bass — or base — violin at your back and march in a tawny coat with one sleeve — a minstrel’s costume with only one sleeve due to poverty — to Green Goose Fair.”

Many actors were also musicians.

Tucca continued:

“— and then you’ll know us; you’ll see us then. You will, you gulch — you drunk and glutton — you will.”

Mimicking a strolling musician, Tucca said, “Then you’ll say, ‘Will it please Your Worship to have any music, Captain?’”

Laughing, Histrio said, “Nay, good Captain.”

Tucca said:

“What! Do you laugh, Owlglass? Do you laugh, jester?”

Owlglass was the hero of a German jest book: *Til Eulenspiegel*. The German name *Eulenspiegel* means “Owl Mirror.” A glass is a mirror.

Tucca continued:

“By God’s death, you perstemptuous varlet, I am none of your fellows; I have commanded a hundred and fifty such rogues, I!”

“Perstemptuous” is Tucca-speak for “presumptuous.” And, possibly, it is a portmanteau word that includes the meanings of “contemptuous” and “preposterous.”

The First Pyrgus said to himself, “Aye, and most of that hundred and fifty have been leaders of a legion.”

That is, a legion of lice.

“A hundred and fifty” is a unit of infantry.

“If I have exhibited — presented and manifested — wrong, I’ll tender satisfaction, Captain,” Histrio said.

“Say thou so, honest vermin?” Tucca said. “Give me thy hand; thou shall make us a supper one of these nights.”

“Make us a supper” means “pay for a meal for us at a tavern.”

“When you please, by Jove, Captain, most willingly,” Histrio said.

Pleased by the answer, Tucca said:

“Do thou swear? Tomorrow, then. Say and hold, slave: Perform what you say you will perform. Some of you actors are honest gent’manlike scoundrels and suspected to have some wit as well as your poets, both at drinking and breaking of jests, and are companions for gallants. A man may skelder — con — ye now and then of half a dozen shillings or so.”

He pointed at Crispinus and asked:

“Don’t thou know that Pantolabus there?”

Pantolabus is a bankrupt parasite who lives at others' expense in William Fullonius' *Acolastus*, a Latin school play of the sixteenth century. John Palsgrave translated the play into English.

"No, I assure you, Captain," Histrio said.

Tucca said:

"Go and be acquainted with him, then. He is a gent'man, a parcel-poet, aka part-poet, you slave. His father was a man of worship, I tell thee. Go! He pens high, lofty, in a new stalking strain, bigger than half the rhymers in the town, again; he was born to fill thy mouth, Minotaurus, he was."

A Minotaurus is the Minotaur, a part-man, part-bull monster that bellows like a bull.

According to Tucca, Crispinus was born to fill Histrio's mouth with words to speak on the stage.

Tucca continued:

"He will teach thee, rascal, to tear and rand — rend and rant. Go to him; cherish his muse, go! Thou have forty, forty — shillings, I mean, stinkard. Give them to him in earnest — as an advance — do. He shall write for thee, slave."

Whenever Tucca mentioned a number, he had to think about what was the greatest amount of money he could get from a person. Should he ask for shillings, or for drachmas, or for sesterces?

Tucca continued:

"If he pen for thee once, thou shall not need to travel with thy pumps full of gravel any more after a blind jade — broken-down horse — pulling a cart with a hamper containing costumes, and stalk upon boards and barrel heads to the accompaniment of an old, cracked trumpet —"

Sometimes, barrels held up the boards forming the stage.

According to Tucca, if Crispinus writes a play for Histrio, Histrio won't need to be an impoverished actor any longer.

Apparently, either Histrio will become a rich actor or will be forced to find work different from acting.

"In truth, I think I have not so much money about me, Captain," Histrio said.

Tucca said:

"It doesn't matter; give him what thou have, Stiff toe."

Tragic actors wore stiff leather boots called buskins.

Tucca continued:

"I'll give my word for the rest. Though it lack a shilling or two, it skills not — it doesn't matter. Go, thou are an honest shifter; I'll have the statute repealed for thee."

An honest shifter is an honest haggler.

By statute, actors could be charged with being rogues or vagabonds unless their acting troupe had a high-ranking member of society as its patron.

Histrio went aside to take out his money from his purse so he could pay a down payment for Crispinus to write a play.

Tucca said, "Minos, I must tell thee, Minos" — he pointed to Crispinus — "thou have dejected yonder gent' man's spirit exceedingly by having him arrested. Do thou observe? Do thou note, little Minos?"

"Yes, sir," Minos said.

"Go to work, then," Tucca said. "Raise, recover his spirits, do. Don't allow him to droop in the sight of an actor, a rogue, a stager. Put twenty into his hand, twenty — sesterces, I

mean, and let nobody see. Go, do it, the work shall commend itself: It is a good deed. Be Minos, a just person; I'll pay back the money."

"Yes, truly, Captain," Minos said.

He approached Crispinus.

The Second Pyrgus said to the First Pyrgus, "Don't we serve a notable sharker and con man?"

While Tucca and Histrio talked, Minos gave money to Crispinus.

Tucca said to Histrio, "And what new matters have you now afoot, sirrah, huh? I would eagerly come with my cockatrice" — a cockatrice is a prostitute — "one day and see a play, if I knew when there were a good bawdy one; but they say you have nothing but humors, revels, and satires that gird — sneer — and fart at the time, you slave."

Histrio said:

"No, I assure you, Captain, not we. Those plays are on the other side of the Tiber River."

Actually, the Thames River. Despite the play's setting of Rome, Ben Jonson's play is about London and Englishmen. No doubt Ben Jonson's satires were playing on the other side of the river.

Histrio continued:

"We have as much ribaldry in our plays as can be, as you would wish, Captain. All the sinners in the suburbs come and applaud our action daily."

Lots of people in the suburbs liked to see a play with the accompaniment of a prostitute.

Tucca said:

“I hear you’ll bring me on the stage there: You’ll play me, they say. I shall be presented by a set of copper-laced scoundrels of you.”

Tucca thought he would be satirized in a play in which the actor portraying him would be wearing copper lace instead of expensive gold lace.

Tucca continued:

“By the life of Pluto, if you stage me, stinkard, your mansions shall sweat for it, your tabernacles [tents and pavilions], varlets, your Globes and your triumphs!”

If Tucca finds out that he has been satirized on stage, his anger will be so great that the buildings — such as the Globe Theatre — the plays are staged in will feel his wrath.

Histrion replied, “Not we, by Phoebus, Captain. Do not do us imputation without desert — don’t criticize us unless we deserve it.”

Tucca said, “I would not, my good twopenny rascal.”

Would not do what?

Would not “do us imputation without desert”?

Would not “not do us imputation without desert”?

Tucca continued:

“Reach me thy neuf.”

“Neuf” is Tucca-speak for “nieve,” aka fist, aka hand.

They shook hands.

Tucca continued:

“Do thou hear me? What will thou give me a week for my brace of beagles here, my little point-trussers?”

Points are laces that tie men's hose (tights) to their doublets (jackets).

Tucca wanted to hire out his two Pyrgi as boy-actors.

Tucca continued:

“You shall have them act among ye.”

“Ye” is the plural of “you.”

Tucca said to the First Pyrgus, “Sirrah, you, pronounce —”

He then said to Histrio, “Thou shall hear him speak in King Darius' doleful strain.”

The First Pyrgus recited:

*“O doleful days! O direful deadly dump!*

*“O wicked world! and worldly wickedness!*

*“How can I hold [back] my fist from crying ‘thump’*

*“In rue of this right rascal wretchedness!”*

Tucca then said to the First Pyrgus, “In an amorous vein — manner — now, sirrah.”

He then said to the others, “Peace. Quiet.”

The First Pyrgus recited:

*“Oh, she is wilder and more hard withal*

*“Than beast or bird, or tree or stony wall.*

*“Yet might she love me to uprear her state;*

*“Aye, but perhaps she hopes some nobler mate.*

*“Yet might she love me to content her sire;*

*“Aye, but her reason masters her desire.*

*“Yet might she love me as her beauty’s thrall;*

*“Aye, but I fear she cannot love at all.”*

Tucca said to the Second Pyrgus, “Now the horrible fierce soldier: you, sirrah.”

The Second Pyrgus recited:

*“What? Will I brave [defy] thee? Aye, and beard thee [pull thy beard], too!*

*“A Roman spirit scorns to bear a brain*

*“So full of base pusillanimity.”*

“Excellent!” Histrio said.

Tucca said to Histrio, “Nay, thou shall see that which shall ravish — enchant — thee soon; prick up thine ears, stinkard.”

He then said to his two Pyrgi, “The ghost, boys.”

The First Pyrgus recited, *“Vindicta!”*

The Second Pyrgus recited, *Timoria!”*

The First Pyrgus recited, *“Vindicta!”*

The Second Pyrgus recited, *“Timoria!”*

The First Pyrgus recited, *“Veni!”*

The Second Pyrgus recited, *“Veni!”*

*“Timoria!”* means “Retribution!”

*“Vindicta!”* means “Revenge!”

*“Veni!”* means “I come!”

Tucca said to the Second Pyrgus, “Now thunder, sirrah: you, the rumbling actor.”



Drums could be used to simulate thunder.

The Second Pyrgus said, “Aye, but somebody must cry ‘murder!’ then, in a small voice.”

A small voice is a female’s high voice.

“Your fellow sharer there shall do it,” Tucca said.

The two sharers have shares in the profits of Tucca’s cons.

Tucca said to the First Pyrgus, “Cry, sirrah, cry.”

The Second Pyrgus beat a drum roll.

In a high voice, the Second Pyrgus cried, “*Murder! Murder!*”

The Second Pyrgus cried, “*Who calls out ‘murder’?*”

He then said to the First Pyrgus, “*Lady, was it you?*”

“Oh, admirably good, I declare,” Histrio said.

Tucca said to the Second Pyrgus, “Sirrah boy, brace your drum a little straiter — stretch the drumskin tighter — and do the other fellow there, he in the — what do thou call him?”

He said to the First Pyrgus, “And ‘*yet stay,*’ too.”

In Thomas Kidd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* is a conversation between the villain Lorenzo and a servant. Tucca was trying to remember some of the character’s dialogue since he couldn’t remember the character’s name.

The Second Pyrgus beat another drum roll.

He recited:

“*Nay, an [if] thou dalliest, then I am thy foe,*

“*And fear shall force what friendship cannot win.*”

*“Thy death shall bury what thy life conceals:*

*“Villain! Thou diest for more respecting her —”*

The First Pyrgus recited, *“Oh, stay, my lord!”*

The Second Pyrgus continued reciting:

*“— than me.*

*“Yet speak the truth, and I will guerdon [reward] thee;*

*“But if thou dally once again, thou diest.”*

“Enough of this, boy,” Tucca said.

The Second Pyrgus continued reciting:

*“Why then, lament therefore! Damned be thy guts*

*“Unto King Pluto’s hell and princely Erebus!*

*“For sparrows must have food.”*

Histrion said, “Please, sweet Captain, let one of them do a little of a lady.”

“Oh, he will make thee eternally enamored of him there,” Tucca said.

He said to the First Pyrgus, “Do, sirrah, do; it will allay your fellow’s fury a little.”

The First Pyrgus said in a high voice:

*“Master, mock on; the scorn thou givest me,*

*“Pray Jove, some lady may return on thee.”*

The Second Pyrgus said, “No, you shall see me do the Moor.”

He said to Tucca, “Master, lend me your scarf for a little while.”

The scarf was an English officer's sash.

The Second Pyrgus was going to recite some dialogue from George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*; the sash would be used for the turban of the Moor Muly Mahamet.

"Here," Tucca said, handing over the scarf. "It is at thy service, boy."

The Second Pyrgus said, "You, Master Minos, hark hither a little. Come here and let's talk."

He drew Minos to the side and spoke to him.

Minos and the Second Pyrgus then withdrew to make themselves ready for the scene.

Tucca said to Histrio, "How do thou like him? Are thou not rapt? Are thou not tickled, now? Don't thou applaud, rascal? Don't thou applaud?"

"Yes," Histrio said. "What will you ask for them to act for a week, Captain?"

Tucca answered:

"No, you mangonizing slave, I will not part from them; you'll sell them for ingles, you will."

"Mangonizing" means "trafficking in slaves," and one meaning of "ingle" is a boy used for homosexual purposes.

Tucca continued talking, this time about the guests for the upcoming supper to be hosted by Histrio:

"Let's have good cheer tomorrow night at supper, stalker, and then we'll talk. Good capon and plover, do you hear, sirrah? And do not bring your eating actor with you there; I cannot tolerate him; he will eat a leg of mutton while I am still eating my porridge, the lean Poluphagos; his belly is like

Barathrum, he looks like a midwife in man's apparel, the slave."

Capons and plovers are kinds of fowl.

The words "Poluphagos" and "Barathrum" are related to eating excessively. "Polyphagous" means a voracious eater. "Barathrum" was a deep pit in Athens, Greece; the word is also applied to gluttons with a deep pit for a stomach.

Tucca continued:

"Nor bring with you the villainous out-of-tune fiddler Enobarbus; don't bring him."

"Enobarbus" means "Redbeard."

Tucca then asked:

"How much money have thou there? Six-and-thirty, huh?"

Histrion replied, "No, here's all I have, Captain: some five-and-twenty."

He gave Tucca the money and said:

"Please, sir, will you present and accommodate — give it in a way appropriate to him — to the gentleman?"

"For my own part, I am a mere stranger to his humor — I have no idea how to appropriately give him the money.

"Besides, I have some business that invites me away from here, with Master Asinius Lupus, the Tribune."

Tucca said:

"Well, go thy ways, pursue thy projects; let me alone with this design."

A design is 1) a plan, or 2) a trick.

The trick might be to keep the money for himself and not give it to Crispinus.

Tucca continued:

“My poetaster shall make thee a play, and thou shall be a man of good parts in it.”

“A man of good parts” can mean 1) a character with good qualities, or 2) an actor with many good parts. Actors sometimes performed more than one role in plays.

Tucca again considered the guest list:

“But wait, let me see: Do not bring your Aesop, your ‘politician’ who deals with officials, unless you can ram up his mouth with sweet-smelling cloves; the slave smells ranker than some sixteen dunghills and is seventeen times more rotten.

“By the Virgin Mary, you may bring Frisker, a zany clown; he’s a good skipping swaggerer; and your fat fool there, my Mango, bring him, too —”

“Mango” means “Pimp” in this context.

Tucca continued:

“— but don’t let him beg rapiers or scarves from the audience in his over-familiar playing face to use in his comic sketches, nor roar out his barren bold jests with a tormenting laughter, between drunk and dry, aka sober.

“Do you hear, Stifftoe? Give him warning, admonition, to forsake his saucy insolence and glavering — deceitful flattering — grace and his goggle eye; it does not become him, sirrah; tell him so.

“I have stood up and defended you, I, to gent’men, when you have been said to prey upon puisnes — naïve youths — and honest citizens for socks or boots to use in a play, or when

they have called you usurers or brokers, or said you were able to help someone to a piece of flesh — a prostitute; I have sworn to these accusers that I did not think so.

“Nor that you were the common retreats for punks — prostitutes — decayed in the practice of their trade. I cannot believe it of you —”

Actually, Captain Tucca was one of many who brought prostitutes to see plays.

Histrion said, “Thank you, Captain. May Jupiter and the rest of the gods confine your modern delights without disgust!”

Histrion was wishing that the gods would show favor to Tucca: to let him continue indulging in his delights without him becoming sated — bored — with them.

Histrion started to leave.

Tucca said:

“Wait, thou shalt see one of my Pyrgi play the Moor before thou go.”

Demetrius entered the scene.

Tucca asked:

“Who’s he with the half arms there, who salutes us out of his cloak like a motion, huh?”

“Half arms” may mean that the elbows of his clothes were torn and covered up by his cloak. His efforts to keep the holes covered meant that he kept the upper half of his arms inside his cloak.

A “motion” is a puppet.

Histrion said:

“Oh, sir, his doublet’s a little decayed, a little worn out; he is otherwise a very simple, honest fellow, sir, one Demetrius, a dresser of plays about the town here.”

A doublet is a man’s upper garment: a jacket.

Dressers wrote, adapted, and modified plays. They worked often with collaborators.

Histrion continued:

“We have hired him to abuse Horace and make him a character in a play with all his gallants, such as Tibullus, Maecenas, Cornelius Gallus, and the rest.”

“And why so, stinkard?” Tucca said.

“Oh, it will get us a huge deal of money, Captain, and we have need of it, for this winter has made us all poorer than so many starved snakes,” Histrion said. “Nobody comes to attend our plays: not a gentleman, nor a —”

Possibly, he was going to say “prostitute.”

Tucca interrupted, “— but you know nothing about Horace, do you, to make a play about him?”

“Indeed, not much, Captain,” Histrion said, “but our author — Demetrius — will devise something that shall serve in some fashion.”

Tucca said:

“Why, my Parnassus here shall help him if thou want.”

Parnassus is a mountain sacred to the Muses. Tucca was using the word as a name for Crispinus.

Tucca then asked:

“Can thy author do it impudently enough?”

“Oh, I promise you, Captain, he can, and spitefully enough, too,” Histrio said. “He has one of the most overflowing rank wits in Rome. He will slander any man who breathes, if he is disgusted by him.”

Tucca said:

“I’ll know the poor, egregious, nitty rascal, if he has these commendable qualities.”

“Nitty” means “infested with nits” — the eggs of lice.

Tucca continued:

“I’ll cherish him — wait, here comes the Tartar — I’ll make a gathering for him, I will: a purse of money, and put the poor slave in fresh rags.”

A purse is a container for money.

In slang, a Tartar is a thief or beggar.

The “poor slave” was Demetrius.

The Tartar is a character whom the Second Pyrgus would perform.

Since the Tartar is a tall character, the Second Pyrgus was sitting on Minos’ shoulders.

Tucca said to Histrio, “Tell him — tell Demetrius — about the purse of money, to comfort him.”

He then said to the Second Pyrgus, “Well done, boy.”

The Second Pyrgus recited:

*“Where art [are] thou, boy? Where is Calipolis [the Tartar’s wife]?”*

*“Fight, earthquakes, in the entrails of the earth,*

*“And eastern whirlwinds in the hellish shades!”*



*“Some foul contagion of the infected heavens*

*“Blast all the trees, and in their cursed tops*

*“The dismal night-raven and tragic owl*

*“Breed, and become forerunners of my fall!”*

Tucca said to Histrio:

“Well, now fare thee well, my honest penny-biter.”

Tucca was saying that Histrio was an honest collector of the fees for seeing the play from audience members. He would bite a penny to make sure it was genuine.

Tucca continued:

“Commend me to Seven-shares-and-a-half — the majority share-holder — and remember tomorrow’s supper. If you lack a service, you shall play in my name, rascals, but you shall buy your own clothing, and I’ll have two shares for my countenance — my patronage.”

He would be the patron — the sponsor — of the company.

By statute, actors could be charged with being rogues or vagabonds unless their acting troupe had a high-ranking member of society as its patron.

Histrio and Demetrius started to exit, but Tucca said to Histrio, “Let thy author stay with me.”

Demetrius, the author, said to Tucca, “Yes, sir. “

Histrio exited.

Tucca said to Minos, “It was well done, little Minos, thou did stalk well. Forgive me that I said thou stunk, Minos; it was the savor of a poet I met sweating in the street, the stink hangs yet in my nostrils.”

Crispinus asked, “Who was it? Horace?”

“Aye, it was he,” Tucca said. “Do thou know him?”

“Oh, he forsook me most barbarously, I declare,” Crispinus said.

Tucca said, “Hang him, the fusty- and stale-smelling satyr, he smells all of goat; he carries a ram under his armholes, the slave. I am the worse when I see him.”

Tucca and Crispinus then spoke quietly together a little distance from Minos and Demetrius.

Tucca asked, “Did Minos impart money to you?”

Showing Tucca the money, Crispinus said, “Yes, here are twenty drachmas he did convey to me.”

Hmm. Drachmas? More likely, sesterces. Unless Minos was suddenly generous.

Tucca said, “Well said. Keep them; we’ll share soon.”

He then said loudly, “Come, little Minos.”

Crispinus said, “Indeed, Captain, I’ll be bold to show you a mistress of mine, a woman to whom I pay attention, a jeweler’s wife, a gallantly and fashionably dressed woman, as we go along.”

Tucca replied:

“There spoke my genius — my guardian spirit. Minos, some of thy eringoes, little Minos, send them to us.”

Eringoes were supposed to be aphrodisiacs. Tucca wanted to be prepared, just in case he needed to be prepared.

Tucca said to Crispinus:

“Come hither, Parnassus.”

He indicated Demetrius and said:

“I must have thee become familiar with my little locust —  
Demetrius — here; it is a good vermin, they say.”

He looked around and said:

“Look, here’s Horace and old Trebatius, the great lawyer, in  
his company. Let’s avoid him now; he is too well seconded.”

In other words, Horace had too strong a supporter to be  
approached now.

— 3.5 —

Horace the poet and Trebatius the lawyer spoke together.  
Their conversation consisted of a defense of poetry and  
satire, and it was rhymed.

Horace said:

“There are those to whom I seem excessively sour,

“And past a satire’s law seem to extend my power;

“[And seem to extend my power past a satire’s law;]

“Others, who think whatever I have writ [written]

“Wants pith and matter to eternise it,

“[Lacks force and content to make it eternal,]

“And that they could in one day’s light disclose [to the  
world]

“A thousand verses such as I compose.”

Horace, Virgil, and Ben Jonson were all criticized for  
writing slowly.

Horace then asked:

“What shall I do, Trebatius? Tell me.”

Trebatius answered:

“Surcease. [Stop.]”

Horace said:

“And shall my muse admit no more increase?

“[And shall my muse allow no more writing of satire?]”

Trebatius answered:

“So I advise.”

Horace said:

“An ill death let me die

“If it were not best;

“[Let me die a bad death if I don’t agree that your advice is best;]

“but sleep avoids my eye,

“And I use [the time to write] these [verses], lest nights should tedious seem.”

Trebatius said:

“Rather contend to sleep, and live like them

“Who, holding golden sleep in special price,

“Rubbed with sweet oils, swim silver Tiber thrice,

“And every evening with neat wine steeped be.”

Trebatius was advising Horace to court sleep by being rubbed with oil before engaging in the vigorous exercise of swimming back and forth across the Tiber River three times, and drinking wine.

Trebatius said:

“Or, if such love of writing ravish thee,

“Then dare to sing unconquered Caesar’s deeds,

“Who cheers such actions with abundant meeds [rewards].”

Trebatius was advising Horace that if he didn’t like the first advice he had been given, then he could instead praise Augustus Caesar in his poetry — Augustus Caesar rewarded such writing.

Horace said:

“That, father, I desire.”

Tiberius was older than Horace, and Horace used the word “father” as a title of respect.

Horace continued:

“But when I try,

“I feel defects in every faculty [capacity].

“Nor is it a labor fit for every pen

“To paint the horrid troops of armed men,

“The lances burst in Gallia’s slaughtered forces,

“Or wounded Parthians tumbled from their horses.

“Great Caesar’s wars cannot be fought with words.”

Gallia and Parthia are geographical locations.

Praise of Augustus Caesar would involve praise of his generalship and his military victories, something that Horace did not think his skills were suited to do.

Trebatius said:

“Yet what his virtue in his peace affords,

“His fortitude and justice, thou can show,

“As wise Lucilius honored Scipio.”

Gaius Lucilius, the father of Roman satire, was a poet who wrote about and honored Scipio Aemilianus, a general who oversaw the defeat and destruction of Carthage in the third and final Punic War.

Horace replied:

“Of that my powers shall suffer no neglect,

“When such slight labors may aspire [to] respect.”

In other words: I will endeavor to do so, since such slight works may hope to be recognized.

Horace continued:

“But if I watch not a most chosen time,

“The humble words of Flaccus cannot climb

“The attentive ear of Caesar.”

Horace’s name was Quintus Horatius Flaccus. He worried that even if he wrote poetry praising Augustus Caesar, the Roman Emperor might not become aware of it.

Horace continued:

“Nor must I

“With less observance shun gross flattery,

“For he, reposed safe in his own merit,

“Spurns back the glozes [smooth deceiving compliments] of  
a fawning [flattering] spirit.”

Horace was aware that if he wrote such praising poetry, he must be careful not to overdo the praise because Augustus Caesar disliked fawning flattery.

Trebatius said:

“But how much better would such accents sound

“Than with a sad and serious verse to wound

“Pantolabus, railing in his saucy jests?

“Or Nomentanus, spent [exhausted] in riotous feasts?

“In satires, each man (though untouched) complains

“As [if] he were hurt, and hates such biting strains.”

Pantolabus was a buffoon, and Nomentanus was a spendthrift. In real life, Horace satirized both.

Horace replied:

“What shall I do? Milonius shakes his heels

“In ceaseless dances when his brain once feels

“The stirring fervor of the wine ascend

“And that his eyes false number apprehend

“Castor his horse, Pollux loves handy fights;

“[Where there are] A thousand heads, [there are also] a thousand choice delights.

“My pleasure is in feet my words to close,

“As, both our better, old Lucilius does.”

In other words:

People follow their passions.

Milonius loves to get drunk and dance. Castor loves his horses. Pollux loves to fight hand to hand in boxing matches.

Horace loves to write satires like his inspiration, old Lucilius, who is superior to both Horace and Trabatius, and Horace loves to put his words in metrical feet.

Horace continued:

“He as his trusty friends his books did trust

“With all his secrets, nor in things unjust

“Or actions lawful ran to other men.”

Lucilius put his secrets, good or bad, in his books, treating them like trustworthy friends. Because he did that in books, he did not need to confide those things to other men.

Horace continued:

“So that the old man’s life described was seen

“As in a votive table, in his lines.”

A votive table is a panel with an image of a danger that has been survived. People would make vows in times of danger, such as illness or shipwreck. When they had survived the danger and fulfilled the vow, they would hang a votive table in a sacred place such as a church.

Horace continued:

“And to his [Lucilius’] steps my genius inclines,

“Lucanian or Apulian, I not whether [I don’t know which],

“For the Venusian colony plows either,”

In other words: Horace’s guardian spirit has guided him and shaped his character to make him want to write satire. Of course, our environment helps shape our character. Horace



came from Venusia, which was settled by farmers and other people from Lucania and Apulia.

Horace continued:

“Sent thither when the Sabines were forced thence

“(As old fame sings), to give the place defense

“’gainst such as, seeing it empty, might make road [inroads, aka raids]

“Upon the empire, or there fix abode —

“Whether the Apulian borderer it were

“Or the Lucanian violence they fear.”

The Romans captured Venusia from the Sabines, and then the Romans settled loyal-to-Rome people from Lucania and Apulia in Venusia lest people hostile to Rome settled there. This helped prevent raids by enemies into Roman territory.

Horace continued:

“But this my style no living man shall touch

“If first I am not forced by base reproach;

“But, like a sheathed sword, it [my style and my writing instrument] shall defend

“My innocent life.”

In other words:

Horace is a defender, not an attacker. He will defend himself in his satire if he is attacked, but he will not attack first. His pointed writing instrument is like a sheathed sword: When needed, it can become a dangerous weapon. Because people know that, chances are they will leave him alone.

The Latin word *stylus* can mean 1) style, 2) sword, and 3) pointed writing instrument.

Horace continued:

“For why should I contend [strive]

“To draw it out, when no malicious thief

“Robs my good name, the treasure of my life?

“O Jupiter, let it with rust be eaten

“Before it touch or insolently threaten

“The life of any with the least disease [disquiet];

“So much I love and woo a general peace.

“But he who wrongs me, better, I proclaim,

“He never had assayed to touch my fame [reputation].

“For he shall weep, and walk with every tongue

“Throughout the city infamously sung.”

In other words: If you attack me with libel and slander, I will attack you with satire.

Horace continued:

“Servius the Praetor threats [threatens] the laws and urn

“If any at his deeds repine or spurn;

“The witch Canidia, that Albucius got [begot],

“Denounceth [Proclaims] witchcraft where she loves not;

“Thurius the judge does thunder worlds of ill

“To such as strive with his judicial will.

“All men affright [frighten] their foes in what they may;

“Nature commands it, and men must obey.”

In other words: People defend themselves with what weapons they have. A Praetor can threaten to defend himself with laws and urns — jurors would place votes of guilty or not guilty in an urn. A witch can threaten to defend herself with witchcraft. A judge can threaten to defend himself by giving a heaping helping of hurt to his enemies.

Horace continued:

“Observe with me: The wolf his tooth does use,

“The bull his horn[s]. And who does this infuse

“But Nature?”

In other words: Who but Nature inspires these threats against enemies?

Horace continued:

“There’s luxurious Scaeva; [en]trust

“His long-lived mother with him, his so just

“And scrupulous right hand no mischief will,

“No more than with his heel a wolf will kill,

“Or [an] ox with jaw. Marry [By the Virgin Mary], [if you] let him alone

“With tempered [mixed] poison to remove [he will kill] the crone.”

In other words: Scaeva likes luxuries and is waiting for his aged mother to die so he can get her inheritance. His right hand will do her no harm, just as a wolf will do no harm with a heel or an ox will do no harm with a jaw. But a wolf has jaws and an ox has horns, and Scaeva has a sinister — left

— hand that will serve poison to her quickly if he has the opportunity.

Horace continued:

“But briefly: If to age I destined be,

“Or that quick death’s black wings environ [wrap around] me;

“If rich, or poor; at Rome, or fate command

“I shall be banished to some other land;

“What hue soever my whole state shall bear,

“I will write satires still, in spite of fear.”

In other words: Whether I live for a long time or I live for a short time, whether I live at Rome or I am exiled, whether I have a not-dark, fortunate life or a dark, unfortunate life, I will always write satires, even if I am afraid of the effects of doing so.

Trebatius replied:

“Horace, I fear thou draw’st no lasting breath,

“And that some great man’s friend will be thy death.”

In other words: I am afraid that you won’t live long, and that having Lucilius, the friend of Scipio Aemilianus, aka Scipio Africanus the Younger, as your satiric influence will result in your death.

Horace said:

“What? When the man who first did satirize

“Durst [dared] pull the skin over the ears of vice

“And make who stood in outward fashion clear

“Give place, as foul within, shall I forbear?”

In other words: My satiric influence, Lucilius, the father of Roman satire, did such things as metaphorically flay the ears of a man of vice and show that a man who appeared to be good was actually bad. If he was able to do such things, should I decide not to do them out of fear?

Horace continued:

“Did Laelius, or the man so great with fame

“That [Who] from sacked Carthage fetched his worthy name,

“Storm that Lucilius did Metellus pierce

“Or bury Lupus quick in famous verse?”

In other words: Gaius Laelius was a soldier and consul who was called *Sapiens*, aka “the Wise.” He was friends with Scipio Amelianus, aka Scipio Africanus Minor (the Younger), a Roman hero of the Third Punic War against Carthage in North Africa. Neither of them objected when Lucilius satirized Metellus or Lupus. Metellus was a Censor; he and Scipio disagreed about some things, but without animosity. Lucius Cornelius Lentulus Lupus, who was Consul in 156 BCE, was metaphorically buried quick — alive — by Lucilius’ satire.

Lucilius died in 103 BCE.

Horace’s life dates are 65 BCE to 8 CE.

Augustus Caesar reigned as Roman Emperor from 27 BCE. to 14 CE.

Horace continued:

“Rulers and subjects by whole tribes he checked,

“But virtue and her friends did still protect.”

In other words: Lucilius satirized both the high-born and the low-born, but he always protected virtuous people.

Horace continued:

“And when from sight or from the judgment seat

“The virtuous Scipio and wise Laelius met

“Unbraced with him, in all light sports [entertainments] they shared,

“Till their most frugal suppers were prepared.”

In other words: Scipio and Laelius often met with Lucilius in private, where they relaxed — unbraced themselves — and had a meal together.

Horace continued:

“Whatever I am, though both for wealth and wit

“Beneath Lucilius I am pleased to sit,

“Yet Envy, [in] spite of her empoisoned breast,

“Shall say I lived in grace [in favor] here with the best;

“And, seeking in weak trash [worthless people] to make her wound,

“Shall find me solid [impervious], and her teeth unsound —

“less learned Trebatius’ censure disagree.”

In other words:

Horace was OK with being honored less than Lucilius both for wealth and wit, and he was willing to sit lower at the supper table than him: Lucilius would have the seat of honor.

Horace would still have a very good life, and malicious Envy would be able to do him no harm.

Nevertheless, he wanted to hear his friend Trebatius' opinion and whether it opposed his view.

Trebatius replied:

“No, Horace, I of force [I by the force of your strong arguments] must yield to thee.

“Only take heed, as being advised by me,

“Lest thou incur some danger. Better pause

“Than rue thy ignorance of the sacred laws;

“There's justice, and great action may be sued

“'gainst such as wrong men's fames with verses lewd.”

Trebatius agreed that Horace must follow his Muse and write satire, but he advised Horace to be careful about libeling anyone in his writing. Writing libelous verses could result in great legal punishments.

“Lewd” meant 1) evil, and 2) bungling.

Horace said:

“Aye, with lewd verses such as libels be,

“And aimed at persons of good quality;

“I reverence and adore that just decree.

“But if they shall be sharp yet modest rhymes

“That spare men's persons and but just tax [attack only] their crimes,

“Such shall in open court find current pass

“Were Caesar judge, and with the Maker's grace.”

In other words: Yes, libelous satire ought to be punished, but good satire whose target is a crime or sin instead of a person is legal. This is true even if Augustus Caesar were the judge, and such attacks against crimes and sins meet with the Creator's — God's — favor.

Trebatius said:

“Nay, I'll add more: If thou thyself being clear

“Shall tax in person a man fit to bear

“Shame and reproach, his suit shall quickly be

“Dissolved in laughter, and thou thence set free.”

In other words: Let me add that if you satirize a man who is disreputable and notorious, the lawsuit will quickly be thrown out of court and you will be free.

In Horace's society, anyone who wanted to be cleared of imputations of criminal behavior first had to provide character witnesses and other evidence that he was a man of good character.



ACT 4 (*The Arraignment, or Poetaster*)

— 4.1 —

Chloe and Cytheris talked together in a room in Albius and Chloe's house. With them were one or two maids carrying a muff, a dog, a fan, and a mask.

"But, sweet lady, tell me, am I well enough attired for the court, seriously?" Chloe asked.

"Well enough?" Cytheris said. "Excellent well, sweet Mistress Chloe. This strait-bodied — tight-fitting — city attire, I can tell you, will stir a courtier's blood more than the finest loose sacks the ladies are accustomed to be put in."

"Loose sacks" are loosely fitting dresses.

Cytheris added, "And then you are as well jeweled as any of them; your ruff and linen about you is much more pure white than theirs; and as for your beauty, I can tell you, there's many of them who would defy the painter — the cosmetician — if they could exchange looks with you. By the Virgin Mary, the worst thing is, you must look to be envied and endure a few court frumps — jeers — for it."

"Oh, Jove, madam, I shall buy them too cheap!" Chloe said.

In other words: Enduring a few jeers is a small price to pay for triumphs in fashionable company.

Jove is Jupiter, King of the gods.

Chloe ordered a maid, "Give me my muff and my dog there."

Fashionable ladies carried a muff and a dog.

Chloe then said to Cytheris, "And will the ladies be at all friendly with me, do you think?"

"Oh, Juno!" Cytheris said.

Juno is the wife of Jupiter, King of the gods.

She continued, “Why, you shall see them flock about you with their puff wings and ask you where you bought your lawn, and what you paid for it, who starches you — and entreat you to help them to some pure laundresses out of the city.”

Puff wings are pieces of cloth that hide the join between a sleeve and the body of a garment. Sometimes fashionable people slashed the upper layer of material and pulled out some of the lower layer of material to create a puff.

Lawn was an expensive linen fabric.

Laundresses washed and starched clothing and kept white fabric white.

“Oh, Cupid!” Chloe said.

She ordered a maid, “Give me my fan, and my mask, too.”

Fashionable ladies also carried around a fan and a mask.

She then asked Cytheris, “And will the lords and the poets there treat one well, too, lady?”

Cytheris said:

“Don’t doubt that.

“You shall have kisses from them go pit-pat, pit-pat, pit-pat upon your lips as thick as stones out of slings at the assault of a city.

“And your ears will be so furred with the breath of their compliments that you cannot catch cold in your head even if you wanted to, for three winters afterward.”

In other words: Compliments whispered in her ears would keep her ears so warm that she would be unable to catch cold.

“Thank you, sweet lady,” Chloe replied. “Oh, heaven! And how must one behave herself among them? You know all.”

Cytheris answered:

“Indeed, one must behave impudently enough, Mistress Chloe, and well enough.

“Carry not too much underthought — deference — between yourself and them; nor your city-mannerly word ‘forsooth.’ Don’t use it too often in any case, but instead say plain ‘aye, madam’ and ‘no, madam.’ Nor never say ‘Your Lordship’ nor ‘Your Honor,’ but ‘you,’ and ‘you, my lord’ and ‘my lady’; the other they count too simple and minisitive — too mincing sensitive and too humble and affected.

“And although they desire to kiss heaven with their titles, yet they will account as fools those who give them too humbly and deferentially.”

“Oh, intolerable! Jupiter!” Chloe said. “By my truth, lady, I would not for a world have missed out on you staying in my house; and indeed you shall not pay a farthing for your board nor your chambers.”

“Oh, sweet Mistress Chloe!” Cytheris said.

“Indeed, you shall not, lady,” Chloe said.

Cytheris started to speak, but Chloe said, “Nay, good lady, do not offer it.”

— 4.2 —

Gallus and Tibullus entered the scene. They were elegiac poets.

“Come, where are these ladies?” Gallus said. “With your permission, bright stars, this gentleman and I have come to man you — escort you — to court, where your recent kind

entertainment is now to be requited with a heavenly banquet.”

The recent kind entertainment was the buffet that Chloe and Albius had hosted.

“A heavenly banquet, Gallus?” Cytheris said.

“No less, my dear Cytheris,” Gallus said.

Tibullus said, “That would not be strange, lady, if the epithet of ‘heavenly’ were only given for the company invited thither: yourself and” — indicating Chloe — “this fair gentlewoman.”

“Are we invited to court, sir?” Chloe asked.

“You are, lady,” Tibullus said, “by the great princess Julia, who longs to greet you with any favors that may worthily make you an often — a frequent — courtier.”

“In sincerity, I thank her, sir,” Chloe said. “You have a coach, haven’t you?”

“The princess has sent her own, lady,” Tibullus said.

“Oh, Venus! That’s well,” Chloe said. “I do long to ride in a coach most vehemently.”

“But, sweet Gallus, please explain to me why you give that heavenly praise to this earthly banquet?” Cytheris asked.

“Because, Cytheris, it must be celebrated by the heavenly powers,” Gallus answered. “All the gods and goddesses will be there; to two of which you two must be exalted.”

“A pretty fiction, in truth,” Chloe said.

“A fiction indeed, Chloe, and fit for the fit of a poet,” Cytheris said.

“Fit” can mean 1) suitable, 2) a poetic episode of inspiration, and 3) a section of a poem or song.

Gallus said, “Why, Cytheris, may not poets, from whose divine spirits all the honors of the gods have been deduced, entreat so much honor of the gods to have their divine presence at a poetical banquet?”

Gallus was referring to the belief that poets were the first priests because they were the first to praise and honor the gods.

“Suppose that to be no fiction,” Cytheris said, “yet where are your abilities to make us two goddesses at your feast?”

“Who doesn’t know, Cytheris, that the sacred breath of a true poet can blow any virtuous humanity up to deity?” Gallus answered.

Tibullus said:

“To tell you the female truth (which is the simple, uncomplicated truth), ladies, and to show that poets, in spite of the world, are able to deify themselves, at this banquet to which you are invited, we intend to assume the figures of the gods, and to give our various loves the forms of goddesses.

“Ovid will be Jupiter; the Princess Julia will be Juno; Gallus here will be Apollo; you, Cytheris, will be Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom; I will be Bacchus; and my love, Plautia, will be Ceres.”

Bacchus is the god of grapes, and Ceres is the goddess of grain. The god of wine and the goddess of food are appropriate deities for a banquet.

Tibullus continued:

“And to install you and your husband, fair Chloe, in honors equal with ours, you shall be a goddess and your husband shall be a god.”

“A god?” Chloe said. “O my god!”

“A god, but a lame god, lady,” Tibullus said, “for he shall be Vulcan, and you shall be Venus, and this will make our banquet no less than heavenly.”

Venus cuckolded Vulcan.

“In sincerity, it will be sugared — it will be a treat,” Chloe said. “Good Jove, what a pretty foolish thing it is to be a poet!”

She then said quietly to Cytheris, “But listen, sweet Cytheris: couldn’t they possibly leave out my husband? I think a body’s husband does not so well at court; a person’s friend or lover, or such, will do well — but a husband, it is like your clog to your marmoset, for all the world and the heavens.”

A marmoset is a monkey. Its leg or neck could be affixed to a clog — a block of wood — that would restrict its movement.

Chloe did not want her husband to restrict her movements at the party.

Cytheris replied, “Tut, never fear, Chloe; your husband will be left outside in the lobby or the great chamber, when you shall be put in in the closet — private room — by this lord and by that lady.”

This, of course, would provide an opportunity for Chloe’s husband, Albus, to be cuckolded.

“Then I am reassured,” Chloe said. “My husband shall go.”

Horace entered the scene.

“Horace! Welcome,” Gallus said.

“Gentlemen, did you hear the news?” Horace asked.

“What news, my Quintus?” Tibullus asked.

Horace’s name was Quintus Horatius Flaccus.

Horace answered, “Our melancholic friend, Propertius, has enclosed himself in his Cynthia’s tomb, and he will by no entreaties be drawn away from there.”

Albius arrived and ushered in Crispinus, Tucca, and Demetrius.

“Good Master Crispinus, please bring the gentleman near,” Albius said.

The gentleman was Tucca.

Horace said to his companions, “Crispinus? Hide me, good Gallus; Tibullus, shelter me!”

Crispinus said to Tucca, “Make your approach, sweet Captain.”

“What does this mean, Horace?” Tibullus asked.

Horace said to his companions, “I am surprised — ambushed — again; farewell.”

“Stay, Horace,” Gallus requested.

Horace replied, “What, and be tired on — that is, attacked and torn at — by yonder vulture? No, Phoebus defend me!”

Horace exited — quickly.

“By God’s light!” Tibullus said. “I hold my life this is the same man who met him in Holy Street.”

Of course, that man was Crispinus.

“Indeed, it is likely enough,” Gallus said.

He then said, “This act of Propertius seems very strange to me.”

Tucca said to Crispinus, “By thy leave, my neat scoundrel. What! Is this the mad boy you talked about?”

One kind of “mad boy” in Ben Jonson’s society was the “roaring boy.” They were fashionable men who liked to argue, bully, and fight. Of course, Albius was not a roaring boy.

Crispinus answered, “Aye, this is Master Albius, Captain.”

Tucca said to Albius, “Give me thy hand, Agamemnon; we hear abroad thou art the Hector of citizens. What do thou say? Are we welcome to thee, noble Neoptolemus?”

Agamemnon was the leader of the Greeks against the Trojans in the Trojan War. Neoptolemus was the son of Achilles, a Greek who was the greatest warrior in the Trojan War. Hector was the greatest Trojan warrior.

Albius said, “Welcome, Captain! By Jove and all the gods in the Capitol —”

“No more; we conceive thee,” Tucca said. “Which of these is thy wedlock, Menelaus? Thy Helen? Thy Lucrece? So that we may do her honor, mad boy?”

“Thy wedlock” means “your wife.”

Menelaus was the King of Sparta, whose wife, Helen, after being forcibly kidnapped by or voluntarily running away with Paris, Prince of Troy, became Helen of Troy.



Lucrece was an ancient Roman gentlewoman who committed suicide after being raped. The son of King Tarquin of Rome, who was also named Tarquin, raped her. After her suicide, King Tarquin was overthrown. Rome ceased to be a kingdom and instead became a republic.

Tucca was comparing Albius to Menelaus, a wronged husband, and he was comparing Albius' wife, Chloe, to Helen and Lucrece, two women connected with unethical sex.

Tucca wanted to seduce Chloe.

“She in the little fine dressing, sir, is my mistress,” Crispinus said.

By “mistress,” he meant a woman he served and was devoted to.

“For lack of a better, sir,” Albius said.

Tucca said, “A better, profane rascal?”

He then said, “I ask thee mercy, my good scroil, was it thou who said that?”

“Scroil” is Tucca-speak for “scoundrel.”

“No harm, Captain,” Albius said.

“She is a Venus, a Vesta, a Melpomene!” Tucca said.

Venus is the goddess of sexual passion. Vesta is the goddess of the hearth. Melpomene is the goddess of tragedy.

Tucca said to Chloe, “Come hither, Penelope.”

Penelope is the faithful wife of Odysseus, both of whom are in Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus' Roman name is Ulysses.

Tucca and Chloe talked together a short distance away from the others.

“What’s thy name, Iris?” Tucca asked.

Iris is the goddess of the rainbow; she is a messenger-goddess.

“My name is Chloe, sir. I am a gentlewoman.”

“Thou are in merit to be an Empress, Chloe, for an eye and a lip,” Tucca said. “Thou have an Emperor’s nose.”

The Roman Emperor was Augustus Caesar.

A Roman nose is large.

He kissed her and said, “Kiss me again.”

She kissed him.

He said, “It is a virtuous punk.”

One meaning of “punk” is “prostitute.” Now that Chloe, a married woman, has kissed him, he will call her that often.

Tucca said, “Good. Before Jove, the gods were a sort of goslings when they suffered so sweet a breath to perfume the bed of a stinkard. Thou had ill fortune, Thisbe; the Fates were infatuate; they were, punk, they were.”

He was already criticizing her husband to her.

Thisbe and Pyramus were lovers. Thisbe ran away from home to marry Pyramus. She saw a lion with blood on its mouth from hunting, and she ran away from it, leaving her cloak behind. The lion tore the cloak, getting blood on it. A little later, seeing the bloody cloak, Pyramus thought that Thisbe had been killed by the lion, and he committed suicide. She found his body, and she committed suicide.

“Infatuate” means “infatuated” as an adjective.

“Infatuated” can mean “utterly foolish.”

As a verb, “infatuate” can mean “make people foolish.”

Possibly, Tucca meant that the fates of Thisbe and Pyramus were foolish. In other words: It is foolish to commit suicide because of love. In addition, according to Tucca, the Fates, who are usually portrayed as old women, were being utterly foolish in giving Pyramus and Thisbe this fate. “Foolish” is the opposite of what the Fates usually are.

Meanwhile, Propertius was in the tomb of his lover. We shall hear no more about him. His friends were getting ready to party.

“That’s sure, sir,” Chloe said. “Let me crave — have — your name, I ask you, sir.”

“I am known by the name of Captain Tucca, punk; the noble Roman, punk; a gent’man and a commander, punk,” Tucca said.

“In good time!” Chloe said.

She thought that she was fortunate to meet him.

She continued, “A gentleman and a commander? That’s as good as a poet, I think.”

She walked aside.

Crispinus picked up a viol and said, “A pretty instrument!”

A viol is a kind of stringed musical instrument.

He asked Albius, “It’s my cousin Cytheris’ viol, this is, isn’t it?”

Cytheris said to Crispinus, “Play, cousin, play it. It lacks only such a voice and hand to grace it as yours is.”

“Alas, cousin, you are merrily inspired,” Crispinus said.

“Please play, if you love me,” Cytheris said.

“Yes, cousin,” Crispinus replied. “You know I do not hate you.”

Tibullus said to Gallus, “A most subtle, cunning wench! How she has baited him with a viol yonder, for a song!”

Crispinus said to Cytheris, “Cousin, please call Mistress Chloe; she shall hear an essay — an example — of my poetry.”

“I’ll call her,” Tucca said.

He approached Chloe and said, “Come hither, cockatrice; here’s one who will set thee up, my sweet punk — set thee up.”

In other words, he will praise you in song.

“Cockatrice,” like “punk,” can mean “prostitute.”

Chloe said to Crispinus, “Are you a peewit so soon, sir?”

A peewit is a lapwing: its cry is similar to “peewit.”

Chloe may have thought the word meant “poet.” Or she may have meant that he was a metaphorical songbird.

Albius said, “Wife, be mum.”

Crispinus sang:

*“Love is blind and a wanton;*

*“In the whole world, there is scant*

*“One such another;*

*“No, not his mother.*

*“He has plucked her doves and sparrows*

*“To feather his sharp arrows,*

*“And alone prevaieth*

*“Whilst sick Venus wai leth.*

*“But if Cypris once recover*

*“The wag, it shall behoove her*

*“To look better to him,*

*“Or she will undo [ruin] him.”*

“Cypris” is a name for Venus, who had a cult center at Cyprus.

Doves were symbols of love; sparrows were symbols of lust.

Both were birds sacred to Venus.

The song said that Cupid has much power and that Venus may ruin him by giving him too much freedom.

At the soon-to-occur masked party, Ovid (Jupiter) would give the guests much freedom.

Albius said, “Oh, most odoriferous — pleasing — music!”

Tucca said to Albius, “Aha, stinkard! Another Orpheus, you slave, another Orpheus! An Arion riding on the back of a dolphin, rascal!”

Orpheus was a mythical poet and musician. Arion was another mythical poet and musician. According to one story, when pirates threw Arion overboard, a dolphin rescued him and carried him on its back to shore.

Gallus asked Crispinus, “Have you a copy of this ditty, sir?”

“Master Albius has,” Crispinus replied.

“Aye, but in truth, they are my wife’s verses,” Albius said. “I must not show them.”

They were the verses of Crispinus, handed to Albius to give to his wife, Chloe.

“Show them, bankrupt, show them,” Tucca said. “They have salt in them and will brook the air, stinkard.”

The verses have salt — 1) a preservative, and 2) wittiness — in them, and so they can endure the air without being harmed.

Gallus took the verses and read them: “What! ‘*To his bright mistress, Canidia*’?”

Crispinus, supposed author of the words, said, “Aye, sir, that’s just a borrowed name; such as Ovid’s Corinna, or Propertius’ Cynthia, or your Nemesis or Delia, Tibullus.”

Tibullus wrote poems about women whom he named Nemesis and Delia. Delia was his first love, and Nemesis was his last love.

“It’s the name of Horace’s witch, as I remember,” Gallus said.

Canidia is a sorceress in one of Horace’s *Satires*.

Tibullus took the verses from Gallus and examined them: “Why, the ditty’s all borrowed; it is Horace’s! Hang him, the plagiary! He’s a plagiarist!”

Crispinus was the plagiarist: He had stolen lines from Horace.

The historical Horace did not write the words. The Horace in Ben Jonson’s play is a fictional character somewhat based on the real poet and did not write the words. Ben Jonson wrote this play and so the words are his, and he was called “Horace,” a poet whom he loved and respected, in satires about him such as Thomas Dekker’s *Satiromastix*.

Tucca said:

“What! He borrow from Horace? He shall pawn himself to ten brokers first.”

Tucca was taking Crispinus' side. Either he did not believe that Crispinus was a plagiarist, or he was pretending not to believe that Crispinus was a plagiarist.

Tucca continued:

“Do you hear me, poetasters? I know you to be men of worship.”

“Men of worship” are men who are respected.

Tucca then said to the others, “He shall write with Horace for a talent, and let Maecenas and his whole college of critics take his part.”

Tucca wanted Horace and Crispinus to compete in a writing contest for a considerable amount of money. Maecenas and his colleagues would be the judges.

Tucca then said to Crispinus, “Thou shall do it, young Phoebus; thou shall, Phaeton; thou shall.”

Phaeton went to his father, the god Apollo, and asked to be allowed to drive the Sun-chariot across the sky and bring light to the world. But Phaeton, doomed youth, was unable to control the stallions, and they ran wildly away with the Sun-chariot, wreaking havoc and destruction upon Humankind and the world. The King of the gods, Jupiter, saved Humankind and the world by throwing a thunderbolt at Phaeton and killing him.

Crispinus was being set up for a fall, perhaps unintentionally.

Demetrius, taking Crispinus' side, said to Tucca, “Alas, sir, Horace! He is a mere sponge, nothing but humors and observation; he goes up and down sucking from every society, and when he comes home, he squeezes himself dry again. I know him, I do.”

Tucca replied:

“Thou say the truth, my poor poetical fury.

“Horace will pen all he knows. He is a sharp, thorny-toothed, satirical rascal — flee from him. He carries hay in his horn; he will sooner lose his best friend than his least jest.”

Farmers tied hay to the horns of dangerous bulls as a warning to people to avoid them.

Tucca continued:

“What Horace once drops on paper against a man lives eternally to upbraid him in the mouth of every slave tankard-bearer or waterman.

“There is not a bawd or a boy who comes from the bakehouse but shall point at him.”

The places where people got water and baked goods were also places where they gossiped. According to Tucca, they gossiped about Horace.

Tanker-bearers carried water. Watermen were boatmen.

Tucca continued:

“It is all dog and scorpion; Horace carries poison in his teeth and a sting in his tail.

“Bah, body of Jove! I’ll have the slave whipped one of these days for his satires and his humors by one cashiered — discharged — clerk or another.”

“We’ll undertake — rebuke — him, Captain,” Crispinus said.

Demetrius said:

“Aye, and tickle him — beat him — indeed, for his arrogancy and his impudence in commending his own



things, and for his translating; I can trace him — trace his sources — indeed.”

Ben Jonson used the writing of ancient writers in his own writing, changing things as needed. He did not regard that as plagiarism but as emulation.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb “emulate” as “To strive to equal or rival (a person, his achievements or qualities); to copy or imitate with the object of equaling or excelling.”

Ben Jonson will emulate Lucian’s *Lexiphanes* later in his play when he has a character vomit words.

Demetrius continued:

“Oh, he is the most open fellow living. I had as lief as a new suit I were at it.”

In other words, he was as eager to get started as if he were to get a new suit of clothing.

“Open” can mean 1) obvious, and 2) frank and generous.

Tucca said:

“Say no more, then, but do it; it is the only way to get thee a new suit. Sting him, my little newts; I’ll give you instructions; I’ll be your intelligencer: your informant and spy.

“We’ll all join and hang upon him like so many horse-leeches, the actors and all.”

Horse-leeches are large leeches; metaphorically, they are parasites.

Tucca continued:

“We shall sup together soon; and then we’ll conspire, indeed.”

Tucca, Crispinus, Demetrius, and Albius — all conspirators against Horace — walked apart from the others.

Gallus and Tibullus were supporters of Horace.

Gallus said to Tibullus, “Oh, I wish that Horace had stayed and were still here!”

Tibullus replied, “I do not wish that” — he pointed to Crispinus and Demetrius — “because both of these men would have turned Pythagoreans then.”

“What, mute?” Gallus asked.

“Aye, as mute as fishes, indeed,” Tibullus said.

Pythagorean novices observed a rule of silence.

If Horace were present, Tucca and the others would not be criticizing him.

Tibullus then said to Cytheris and Chloe, “Come, ladies, shall we go?”

“We await you, sir,” Cytheris said. “But Mistress Chloe asks if you have not a god to spare” — she pointed to Tucca — “for this gentleman?”

“Who, Captain Tucca?” Gallus asked.

“Aye; he,” Cytheris answered.

“Yes, if we can invite him along, he shall be Mars,” Gallus said.

“Has Mars anything to do with Venus?” Chloe asked.

Mars had cuckolded Vulcan by sleeping with Vulcan’s wife: Venus.

Chloe would be Venus at Julia's entertainment.

"Oh, most of all, lady," Tibullus said.

Chloe said, "Then, I ask to let him be invited. And who shall Crispinus be?"

"Mercury, Mistress Chloe," Tibullus said.

According to one myth, Mercury and Venus were the parents of Cupid. In another myth, Mars was Cupid's father.

"Mercury? That's a poet, isn't it?" Chloe asked.

"No, lady; but somewhat inclining that way," Gallus said.

Mercury was the god of thieves. A plagiarist is a kind of thief.

But Mercury also invented the lyre, and so he invented the musical instrument that poets used to accompany the lyrics they had written.

"He is a herald at arms," Gallus said.

Mercury was a messenger god; medieval heralds carried messages to and from the commanding officers of enemy armies.

"A herald at arms?" Chloe said. "Good. And Mercury? Pretty. He has to do with Venus, too?"

"A little," Tibullus said. "With her face, lady, or so."

Mercury, aka quicksilver, was often used in cosmetic preparations.

"It is very well," Chloe said. "Please, let's go. I long to be at it."

Cytheris said to Crispinus and Tucca, "Gentlemen, shall we ask your companies to come along?"

Crispinus replied, "You shall not only pray, but prevail, lady."

He then said to Tucca, "Come, sweet Captain."

"Yes, I follow," Tucca said.

Tucca then said to Albius, "But thou must not talk of this now, my little bankrupt."

He was referring to the conspiracy against Horace.

Albius said, "Captain, look here."

He put his finger to his lips and said, "Mum."

Demetrius said to Tucca, "I'll go write, sir."

Tucca said:

"Do, do.

"Wait."

He gave Demetrius a coin and said, "Here's a drachma to purchase gingerbread for thy muse."

Everyone exited.

— 4.4 —

Lupus and Histrio were in a room in Lupus' house, accompanied by a Lictor. Histrio was holding a letter.

Lupus the Tribune said, "Come, let us talk here; here we may be private. Shut the door, Lictor."

He then said to Histrio, "You are an actor, you say."

"Aye, if it pleases Your Worship," Histrio said.

"Good; and how are you able to give this intelligence — this news?" Lupus asked.

“By the Virgin Mary, sir, they directed a letter to me and my fellow sharers in my acting company,” Histrio answered.

“Speak lower; you are not now in your theater, stager,” Lupus said.

He then said to the First Lictor, “My sword, knave.”

The First Lictor fetched Lupus’ sword.

Lupus said to Histrio, “They directed a letter to you and your fellow sharers; go forward. Continue.”

“Yes, sir,” Histrio said. “The purpose of the letter was to hire some of our properties, such as a scepter and a crown for Jove, and a caduceus for Mercury, and a petasus —”

A caduceus is a herald’s wand. Mercury carried one that was entwined with two snakes. He also wore a petasus: a hat with a low crown and a wide brim. Mercury often wore a winged hat and/or winged sandals.

Lupus said, “‘Caduceus’? And ‘petasus’? Let me see your letter.”

He took the letter from Histrio and scanned it.

He said, “This is a conjuration — a conspiracy, this is.”

Actually, of course, the items were for a costume party.

Lupus then said to the Lictor, “Quickly, on with my buskins!”

The First Lictor fetched Lupus’ buskins. Such buskins — boots — were worn by Tribunes and by tragic actors.

The First Lictor helped Lupus put his boots on.

Lupus said to Histrio, “I’ll act a tragedy, indeed. Will nothing but our gods serve these poets to profane?”

He said to the First Lictor, "Dispatch! Hurry!"

He then said to Histrio, "Actor, I thank thee. The Emperor shall take knowledge of thy good service. He will be informed."

A knock sounded at the door.

"Who's there now?" Histrio asked.

He then said to the First Lictor, "Look and see who it is, knave."

The First Lictor went to the door.

Lupus re-examined the letter and said, "A crown and a scepter?"

He then said sarcastically, "This is good! Rebellion now?"

The First Lictor returned and said, "It is your apothecary, sir: Master Minos."

Lupus said:

"Why do thou tell me about apothecaries, knave? Tell him I have affairs of state in hand; I can talk to no apothecaries now.

"By the heart of me!

"Stay the apothecary there! Keep him there!"

The First Lictor went to the door.

Lupus said to Histrio:

"You shall see, I have fished out a cunning piece of plot now: They have had some intelligence that their project has been discovered, and now they have arranged with my apothecary to poison me — it is so — knowing that I meant to take medicine today; as sure as death, it is there!

“Jupiter, I thank thee that thou have yet made me so much of a politician.”

A politician can be a politic — shrewd — person, in addition to the usual meaning.

Two or more Lictors entered with Minos the apothecary.

Lupus said to Minos, sarcastically, “You are welcome, sir!”

He then said to the Lictors, “Take the potion from him there.”

He said to Minos, “I have an antidote more than you know of, sir. “

He said to the Lictors, “Throw it on the ground there.”

A Lictor poured the potion onto the floor.

“Good! Now fetch in the dog,” Lupus said. “And yet we cannot tarry to try experiments now.”

The experiment would have been to have the dog taste the potion. If the dog got sick or died, the potion would be proven to be poisonous. But Lupus was too busy to try the experiment.

Lupus said to the Lictors about Minos, “Arrest him.”

The Lictors placed Minos under guard.

Lupus said to Minos, “You shall go with me, sir. I’ll tickle you, apothecary; I’ll give you a glister, indeed.”

A glister is a clyster: an enema or suppository.

He said to himself, “Have I the letter? Aye; it is here.”

He then said to the Lictors, “Come, your fasces, Lictors! The half-pikes and the halberds, take them down from the Lares there!”

The fasces were bundles of rods, each bundle containing an axe. Lictors carried them before magistrates as a symbol of the magistrates' power. Half-pikes and halberds are weapons. The Lares were in a lararium: a household shrine devoted to the household gods.

“Actor, assist me!” Lupus said to Histrio.

They armed themselves.

Maecenas and Horace entered the scene.

“Whither now, Asinius Lupus, with this armory?” Maecenas asked.

“I cannot talk now,” Lupus said. “I order you, assist me. Treason! Treason!”

“What!” Horace said. “Treason?”

Lupus replied, “Aye; if you love the Emperor and the state, follow me!”

They exited with Minos, who was under guard.

— 4.5 —

Twelve people in costumes entered a large reception room for Julia's entertainment:

- 1) Ovid was costumed as Jupiter, King of the gods.
- 2) Julia was costumed as Juno, Jupiter's wife.
- 3) Gallus was costumed as Phoebus Apollo, the Sun-god and god of archery.
- 4) Cytheris was costumed as Pallas Athena, a warrior goddess who was also the goddess of wisdom.
- 5) Tibullus was costumed as Bacchus, god of grapes and wine.



- 6) Plautia was costumed as Ceres, goddess of grain and agriculture.
- 7) Albius was costumed as Vulcan, the blacksmith god.
- 8) Chloe was costumed as Venus, the goddess of sexual passion.
- 9) Tucca was costumed as Mars, the god of war.
- 10) Crispinus was costumed as Mercury, the messenger-god.
- 11) Hermogenes (the singer) was costumed as Momus, god of ridicule. Momus is a critical fault-finder.
- 12) A Pyrgus was costumed as Ganymede, a pretty boy who was Jupiter's cupbearer.

The room contained bottles of wine, wine glasses, a table, and chairs to sit on.

Ovid, costumed as Jupiter, and Julia, costumed as Juno, sat at the head of the table.

Ovid (Jupiter) said to the guests:

“Gods and goddesses, take your various seats.”

Ovid (Jupiter) then said to Crispinus (Mercury):

“Now, Mercury, move your caduceus and in Jupiter's name command silence.”

Crispinus (Mercury) said, “In the name of Jupiter, silence!”

“The crier of the court has too clarified a voice,” Hermogenes (Momus) said.

“Clarified” means “pretentious.”

The crier of the court was Crispinus (Mercury), who would make announcements as directed by Ovid and Julia.

Hermogenes (Momus) disliked Crispinus (Mercury) because they had recently been rivals in song.

“Peace, Momus,” Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) said. “Silence.”

“Oh, he is the god of reprehension; let him alone,” Ovid (Jupiter) said to Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) about Hermogenes (Momus). “It is his office and his duty.”

Momus is the god of ridicule.

Ovid (Jupiter) said to Crispinus (Mercury), “Mercury, go forward and proclaim after Phoebus our high pleasure to all the deities who shall partake of this high banquet.”

“Yes, sir,” Crispinus (Mercury) replied.

He would repeat the words of Gallus (Phoebus Apollo).

Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) said:

“The great god Jupiter ...”

Crispinus (Mercury) repeated:

“The great god Jupiter ...”

Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) said:

“Of his licentious goodness ...”

Crispinus (Mercury) repeated:

“Of his licentious goodness ...”

Crispinus continued repeating every line after Gallus had spoken it.

Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) said:

“Willing to make this feast no fast from any manner of pleasure, nor to bind any god or goddess to be anything the more god or goddess because of their names, the great god

Jupiter gives them all free license to speak no wiser than persons of baser titles and to be nothing better than common men or women.

“And therefore no god shall need to keep himself more strictly to his goddess than any man does to his wife, nor any goddess shall need to keep herself more strictly to her god than any woman does to her husband.

“But since it is no part of wisdom, in these days, to come into bonds, it shall be lawful for every lover to break loving oaths, to change their lovers, and make love to others, as the heat of everyone’s blood and the spirit of our nectar shall inspire, and Jupiter save Jupiter!”

Although these banqueters were dressed as gods, they need not act like dignified gods at this banquet.

Nectar is the drink of the gods.

“Heat of blood” can mean “heat of sexual desire.”

This was the kind of drinking party at which adultery and cuckolding could take place.

Tibullus (Bacchus) said, “So; now we may play the fools by authority.”

Jupiter, King of the gods, had given them permission to be foolish and immoral. Or at least Ovid had.

The company ate and drank.

“To play the fool by authority is wisdom,” Hermogenes (Momus) said.

Julia (Juno) said to Hermogenes (Momus), “Away with your mattery sentences, Momus; they are too grave and wise for this meeting.”

“Mattery sentences” are maxims with serious matter.

Serious matter was not welcome in this drinking party.

Ovid (Jupiter) pointed to Hermogenes (Momus) and said to Crispinus (Mercury), “Mercury, give our jester a stool; let him sit by, and hand to him some of our delicacies.”

Crispinus (Mercury) gave Hermogenes a stool, food, and a cup and made sure he was within reach of good food.

Tucca (Mars) said, “Do thou hear me, mad Jupiter? We’ll have it enacted: He who speaks the first wise word shall be made cuckold. What say thou? Isn’t it a good motion — a good proposal?”

“Deities, are you all agreed?” Ovid (Jupiter) asked.

All replied, “We are agreed, great Jupiter.”

Albius (Vulcan) said, “I have read in a book that to play the fool wisely is high wisdom.”

He had said something that could be regarded as wise.

Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) said, “What is this now, Vulcan! Will you be the first wizard?”

A wizard is a wise man.

Ovid (Jupiter) said to Tucca (Mars), “Take his wife, Mars, and make him a cuckold, quickly.”

Tucca (Mars) said to Albius’ wife, Chloe (Venus), “Come, cockatrice.”

Chloe (Venus) said to Ovid (Jupiter) about her husband, “No, let me alone with him, Jupiter — leave him to me.”

She then said to Albius (Vulcan), “I’ll make you take heed, sir, while you live. I say, if there should be twelve in a company, that you would not be the wisest of them.”

There were twelve in this particular company.

Albius (Vulcan) replied, “Say no more; I will not, indeed, wife, hereafter; I’ll be here” — he touched his lips — “mum.”

Using the royal plural, Ovid (Jupiter) said to the Pyrgus (Ganymede), “Fill for us a bowl of nectar, Ganymede; we will drink to our daughter Venus.”

The Pyrgus (Ganymede) poured wine.

Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) said to Albius (Vulcan), “Look after your wife, Vulcan. Pay attention to her. Jupiter begins to court her.”

Tibullus (Bacchus) said, “Nay, let Mars look to it; Vulcan must do as Venus does: bear.”

Mars was Tucca, who was paying attention to Chloe (Venus), who was ignoring him so she could pay attention to Ovid (Jupiter).

Venus would bear — carry — the weight of a lover in bed; Vulcan would bear — endure — the ignominy of being a cuckold.

Tucca (Phoebus Apollo) said to the Pyrgus (Ganymede), “Sirrah boy; catamite! Look you play Ganymede well now, you slave.”

A “catamite” is a boy used for homosexual purposes. The mythological Ganymede was sometimes thought to be a catamite.

Tucca (Phoebus Apollo) continued, “Do not spill your nectar. Carry your cup even; good. You should have rubbed your face with whites of eggs, you rascal, until your brows had shone like our sooty brother’s here” — he pointed to Albius (Vulcan, the sooty blacksmith god) — “as sleek as a hornbook, or have steeped your lips in wine until you made them so plump that Juno might have been jealous of them.”

The whites of eggs were used as a cosmetic.

Vulcan and Mars are brothers because they are sons of Jupiter and Juno.

Hornbooks were children's primers that were covered with transparent horn, allowing the characters underneath the horn to be read.

"Punk, kiss me, punk," Tucca (Mars) said to Chloe (Venus).

Ovid (Jupiter) took his cup, and to forestall a kiss between Tucca and Chloe, said, "Here, daughter Venus, I drink to thee."

"Thank you, good father Jupiter," Chloe (Venus) said.

Tucca (Mars) said to Julia (Juno), "Why, mother Juno! Gods and fiends! What, will thou endure this ocular temptation?"

Ovid was ogling Chloe.

Juno was a jealous wife.

Tibullus (Bacchus) said, "Mars is enraged; he looks big and begins to sputter for anger."

"Well played, Captain Mars," Hermogenes (Momus) said, happy that Tucca's kiss had been forestalled.

Tucca (Mars) said, "Well said, minstrel Momus; I must put you in, must I? When will you be in good fooling of yourself, fiddler? Never?"

Tucca was asking Hermogenes whether Tucca needed to be the butt of his jokes. Couldn't Hermogenes make better jokes without needing Tucca to be the butt?

This particular drinking party was turning into a burlesque of the gods' banquet at the end of the first book of Homer's *Iliad*. In it, Zeus and Hera (the Roman names are Jupiter and

Juno) quarreled, Hephaestus (the Roman name is Vulcan) made jokes to calm the situation, and then they all enjoyed a banquet, followed by listening to music.

Hermogenes (Momus) replied, “Oh, it is our fashion to be silent when there is a better fool in place, always.”

“Thank you, rascal,” Tucca (Mars) said.

Ovid (Jupiter) said to the Pyrgus (Ganymede), “Fill our cup to honor our daughter Venus, Ganymede. She fills her father with affection.”

The Pyrgus continued to serve wine.

“Will thou be ranging, Jupiter, before my face?” Julia (Juno) asked.

“Why not, Juno? Why should Jupiter stand in awe of thy face, Juno?” Ovid (Jupiter) replied.

“Because it is thy wife’s face, Jupiter,” Julia (Juno) answered.

Ovid (Jupiter) said, “What! Shall a husband be afraid of his wife’s face? Will she paint it with makeup so horribly? We are a King, you cotquean — you scolding woman — and we will reign in our pleasures; and we will cudgel thee to death if thou find fault with us.”

Jupiter sometimes threatened his wife with violence.

Julia (Juno) said:

“I will find fault with thee, King cuckold-maker.”

A horny god, Jupiter made many husbands cuckolds.

Julia (Juno) continued:

“What! Shall the King of gods turn into the King of good fellows, and have no fellow in wickedness? This makes our

poets, who know our profaneness, live as profane as we. By my godhead, Jupiter, I will join with all the other gods here, bind thee hand and foot, throw thee down into earth, and make a poor poet of thee, if thou abuse me thus.”

Juno and some other gods and goddesses once attempted to bind Jupiter, but the sea-nymph Thetis rescued him.

“A right smart-tongued goddess; a right Juno,” Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) said.

A right Juno is a true Juno. Juno was known for her jealousy, and Julia was being jealous.

“Juno, we will cudgel thee, Juno,” Ovid (Jupiter) said. “We told thee so yesterday, when thou were jealous of us because of Thetis.”

Thetis was a sea-nymph and the mother of Achilles, the greatest warrior of the Trojan War. Jupiter desired Thetis, but when he learned of a prophecy that she would give birth to a son who would be greater than his father, he decided to have her marry a mortal.

The Pyrgus (Ganymede) said to Ovid (Jupiter), “Today she had me in inquisition, too.”

Apparently, Julia, like Juno, was jealous and had questioned the Pyrgus about any other women Ovid showed interest in.

Tucca (Mars) said to the Pyrgus (Ganymede), “Well said, my fine Phrygian fry; inform, inform.”

Ganymede’s father was the King of Phrygia in Asia Minor (roughly, modern Turkey).

Tucca was OK with the Pyrgus informing Ovid about the questioning.

Tucca (Mars) said to Crispinus (Mercury), “Give me some wine, King of heralds, so I may drink to my cockatrice.”



Refusing wine from the Pryrus (Ganymede), Ovid (Jupiter) said, “No more, Ganymede.”

He then said to Julia (Juno), “We will cudgel thee, Juno; by Styx, we will.”

When a god swore by the Styx River, he was making an inviolable oath.

Julia (Juno) replied, “Aye, it is well; gods may grow impudent in iniquity, and they must not be told of it —”

Ovid (Jupiter) said, “Yea, we will knock our chin against our breast and shake thee out of Olympus into an oyster boat for thy scolding.”

Oyster wives — women who sold oysters — were known for having loud voices.

Gods sometimes nodded the head while making a vow.

When Jupiter made an inviolable vow to Thetis to make the Trojans victorious for a while in Homer’s *Iliad*, he nodded his head.

Julia (Juno) said:

“Your nose is not long enough to do it, Jupiter, even if all thy strumpets thou have among the stars took thy part.”

Ovid’s name is Publius Ovidius Naso. “Naso” means “large-nosed.”

“Nose” sometimes meant “penis.”

She continued:

“And there is never a star in thy forehead but shall be a horn, if thou persist in abusing me.”

The horns would be the invisible horns of a cuckold.

To get revenge on Jupiter's sleeping with other women, Juno would sleep with other men.

Some of the women Jupiter slept with became stars, such as Maia, the leader of the Pleiades. Jupiter and Maia were the parents of Mercury.

Some of Jupiter's children by women other than Juno also became stars or constellations. For example, Castor and Pollux, sons of Jupiter and Leda; and Hercules, son of Jupiter and Alcmena.

"A good jest, indeed," Crispinus (Mercury) said.

Ovid (Jupiter) said, "We tell thee thou anger us, cotquean; and we will thunder thee in pieces for thy cotqueanity."

"Another good jest," Crispinus (Mercury) said.

Julia (Juno) may have held up two fingers, symbolizing the horns of a cuckold.

Albius (Vulcan) said, "O my hammers and my Cyclops! This boy Ganymede does not fill cups with enough wine to make us kind to one another."

Cyclops are one-eyed giants who help Vulcan forge thunderbolts for Jupiter.

Tucca (Mars) said to Albius (Vulcan), "Nor have thou collied — blackened — thy face enough, stinkard."

Taking a wine container, Albius (Vulcan) said, "I'll ply the table with nectar, and make them friends."

"Heaven is likely to have only a lame skinker, then," Hermogenes (Momus) said.

A skinker is a person who serves drinks.

Vulcan was born lame.

Albius (Vulcan) said:

“Wine and good livers make true lovers.”

The liver was thought to be the seat of passion.

“Good livers” can also mean people who live well.

He continued:

“I’ll sentence them together.”

Pouring wine for Ovid and Julia, he said:

“Here, father; here, mother; for shame, drink yourselves drunk and forget this dissension. You two should cling together before our faces and give us an example of unity.”

Albius (Vulcan) went around the table pouring wine.

“Oh, excellently spoken, Vulcan, suddenly!” Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) said.

“Jupiter may do well to prefer — promote — his tongue to some official position for his eloquence,” Tibullus (Bacchus) said about Albius (Vulcan).

“His tongue shall be gent’man usher to his wit, and always go before it,” Tucca (Mars) said.

In other words: Albius (Vulcan) will always speak before he thinks.

“An excellent fit office!” Albius (Vulcan) said.

“Aye, and an excellent good jest, besides,” Crispinus (Mercury) said.

Hermogenes (Momus) said to Tucca (Mars), “What, have you hired Mercury to cry and proclaim your jests you make?”

“Momus, you are envious,” Ovid (Vulcan) said.

Tucca (Mars) said to Hermogenes (Momus), “Why, you whoreson blockhead, it is your only block of wit in fashion, nowadays, to applaud other folks’ jests.”

A blockhead was a piece of wood used to shape hats.

Hermogenes (Momus) said to Tucca (Mars), “True — with those who are not artificers — creators — of jests themselves.”

Hermogenes (Momus) said to Albius (Vulcan), “Vulcan, you nod; and the mirth of the feast droops.”

“He has filled nectar so long that his brain swims in it,” the Pyrgus (Ganymede) said.

Albius (Vulcan) was drunk from breathing in the fumes of the wine.

“What, do we nod, fellow gods?” Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) said. “Let music sound, and let us startle — rouse — our spirits with a song.”

“Do, Apollo; thou are a good musician,” Tucca (Mars) said to Gallus (Phoebus Apollo).

“What does Jupiter say?” Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) asked.

“Huh? Huh?” Ovid (Jupiter) said.

He was one of the ones who were nodding off and so had not been paying attention.

“Shall we have a song?” Gallus (Phoebus Apollo) asked.

“Why, do, do, sing,” Ovid (Jupiter) said.

“Bacchus, what do you say?” Plautia (Ceres) asked.

“Ceres?” Tibullus (Bacchus) said to Plautia (Ceres).

Tibullus (Bacchus) had also been nodding off and not paying attention.

“But what do you say to this song?” Plautia (Ceres) asked.

“Sing, as far as I’m concerned,” Tibullus (Bacchus) answered.

“Your belly weighs down your head, Bacchus,” Julia (Juno) said. “Here’s a song toward — imminent.”

Tibullus (Bacchus) said, “Begin, Vulcan —”

“What else? What else?” Albius (Vulcan) replied.

Tucca (Mars) said, “Say, Jupiter —”

Ovid (Jupiter) said, “Mercury —”

Crispinus (Mercury) said, “Aye, say, say —”

Albius (Vulcan) began the song, and others joined in:

*“Wake, our mirth begins to die.*

*“Quicken [Enliven] it with tunes and wine;*

*“Raise your notes; you’re out. Fie, fie, [Bah, bah,]*

*“This drowsiness is an ill sign.*

*“We banish him [from] the choir [company] of gods*

*“That [Who] droops [and nods] again;*

*“Then all are men,*

*“For here’s not one but nods.”*

No one present could be gods, for all were drowsy and nodding.

Ovid (Jupiter) said:

“I don’t like this sudden and general heaviness — sleepiness — among our godheads; it is somewhat ominous.

“Apollo, command for us louder music, and let Mercury and Momus contend to please and revive our senses.”

Hermogenes (Momus) sang:

*“Then in a free and lofty strain*

*“Our broken tunes we thus repair;”*

Crispinus (Mercury) sang:

*“And we answer them again,*

*“Running division [Singing musical embellishments] on the panting air;”*

Both Hermogenes and Crispinus sang:

*“To celebrate this feast of sense*

*“As free from scandal as offence.”*

Hermogenes (Momus) sang:

*“Here is beauty for the eye;”*

Crispinus (Mercury) sang:

*“For the ear, sweet melody;”*

Hermogenes (Momus) sang:

*“Ambrosiac odors for the smell;”*

Crispinus (Mercury) sang:

*“Delicious nectar for the taste;”*

Both Hermogenes and Crispinus sang:

*“For the touch, a lady’s waist,*

*“Which doth [does] all the rest excel!”*

Ovid (Jupiter) said:

“Aye; this has awakened us.”

He then said to Crispinus (Mercury), “Mercury, our herald, go from ourself, the great god Jupiter, to the great emperor, Augustus Caesar; and command him from us (of whose bounty he has received his surname, Augustus) that for a thank-offering to our beneficence he presently sacrifice as a dish to this banquet his beautiful and wanton daughter Julia. She’s a curst quean — a shrewish strumpet — tell him, and plays the scold behind his back; therefore, let her be sacrificed.”

The sacrifice could be a sexual sacrifice.

He continued:

“Command him this, Mercury, in our high name of Jupiter *Altitonans*: Jupiter who thunders from on high.”

Julia (Juno) said:

“Wait, feather-footed Mercury, and tell Augustus from us, the great Juno Saturnia: daughter of Saturn —”

Mercury’s sandals had feathered wings.

She continued:

“— that if he thinks it hard to do as Jupiter has commanded him and sacrifice his daughter, that he had better to do so ten times than suffer her to love the well-nosed poet Ovid — whom he shall do well to whip, or cause to be whipped, about the Capitol, for soothing — encouraging — her in her follies.”

The Capitol is the Capitoline Hill.

Augustus Caesar, Maecenas, Horace, Lupus, Histrio, and Minos entered the scene. Minos was guarded by some Lictors.

Looking at the revelers, his daughter Julia among them, Augustus Caesar said:

“What sight is this? Maecenas! Horace!”

Using the majestic plural, he said:

“Tell me, do we have our senses? Do we hear and see? Or are these just imaginary objects drawn by our imagination?”

He said to Maecenas and Horace:

“Why don’t you speak?”

He had heard some of the revelers’ conversation and now repeated:

“Let us do sacrifice?”

He continued:

“Are they the gods?”

“Reverence, amazement, and fury fight in me.”

The banqueters knelt before him.

Augustus Caesar continued:

“What? Do they kneel? Nay, then I see that what I thought impossible is true. Oh, impious sight!”

He turned his face away and said:

“Let me divert my eyes; the very thought everts — sets upside down — my soul with passion. Don’t look, man.



There is a panther, whose unnatural eye will strike thee dead.”

The man was Augustus himself, and the panther was Julia.

Turning towards his daughter Julia, he said to himself:

“Turn, then, and die on her with her own death!”

He moved as if he would kill his daughter, fighting her as if she were an enemy whom he would kill even if it meant his own death.

Maecenas and Horace put themselves between Augustus Caesar and Julia and said, “What does imperial Caesar intend to do?”

Augustus Caesar said to Maecenas and Horace:

“What, would you have me let the strumpet live who for this pageant earns so many deaths?”

Tucca said quietly to the Pyrgus, “Boy, slink, boy.”

He wanted to make an escape.

The Pyrgus said quietly to Tucca, “I pray to Jupiter that we are not followed by the scent, Master.”

They smelled strongly of wine.

Tucca and the Pyrgus exited without calling attention to themselves.

Augustus Caesar asked Albius, “Tell me, sir, who are you?”

“I play Vulcan, sir,” Albius said.

“But who are you, sir?” Augustus Caesar asked.

“Your citizen and jeweler, sir,” Albius said.

Augustus Caesar said to Chloe, “And who are you, dame?”

The word “dame” was not used for upper-class women.

“I play Venus, forsooth,” Chloe said.

The word “forsooth” was not used by upper-class women.

Augustus Caesar said, “I ask not who you play, but who you are?”

“Your citizen and a jeweler’s wife, sir,” Chloe answered.

Augustus Caesar asked Crispinus, “And you, good sir?”

“Your gentleman parcel-poet, sir,” Crispinus answered.

A parcel-poet is a part-poet: a sort of poet.

“Oh, that profaned name!” Augustus Caesar said.

The name of “poet” was profaned by parcel-poets such as Crispinus.

Augustus Caesar said to Julia:

“And are these seemly — fit — company for thee, thou degenerate monster?”

He said to Horace and Maecenas:

“All the rest I know, and I hate all my knowledge of them because of their hateful sakes.”

He hated the drunken poets before him whom he had caught in the presence of his daughter Julia.

Augustus Caesar said to Ovid, Gallus, and Tibullus:

“Are you, who first the deities inspired with skill of their high natures and their powers, the first abusers of their useful light, profaning thus their dignities in their forms, and making them like you, only counterfeits?”

Augustus Caesar distrusted theater, regarding it as only counterfeit and not real. He also regarded these poets as not real poets and not capable of writing correctly about the gods, whom they profane instead of praise, although the gods had given them poetic inspiration.

He continued:

“Oh, who shall follow virtue and embrace her, when her false bosom is found to be nothing but air? And yet from those embraces Centaurs spring who war with human peace and poison men.”

Embracing false virtue creates bad things, as did Ixion, who embraced a counterfeit Juno.

Ixion, the King of the Lapiths, tried to rape Juno. Jupiter made a cloud in the shape of Juno. Ixion coupled with it, and from this union came Imbros, aka Centaurus, who mated with mares and created the Centaurs, most of whom were wild.

The Centaurs did such things as try to rape Hippodamia and the female guests at her wedding to King Pirithous of the Lapiths. Theseus (Pirithous' best friend) and other men were able to defeat the Centaurs in a battle that came to be known as the Centauromachy.

Augustus Caesar continued:

“Who shall with greater comforts — solace — comprehend virtue's unseen being and her excellence, when you, who teach and should eternize her, live as if she were no law to your lives, nor lived herself except with your idle breaths?”

In other words: Virtue is real, and the poets should teach others about her, but you counterfeit poets treat virtue as if she exists only in your idle words: You live as if virtue isn't

real. How then can anyone take comfort in understanding virtue?

Using the majestic plural, Augustus Caesar continued:

“If you think gods but feigned, and virtue painted, know that we sustain an actual residence.”

In other words: Maybe you counterfeit poets don’t believe in gods and virtue, but let me tell you that I have a real residence.

Augustus Caesar continued:

“And with the title of an Emperor I retain an Emperor’s spirit and imperial power, by which —”

He turned to Ovid and continued:

“— in imposition too remiss, licentious and lascivious Naso, for thy violent wrong in soothing the declined affections — the degraded and perverse inclinations — of our base daughter — we exile thy feet from all approach to our imperial court, on pain of death.

“Thy misbegotten love — Julia — we commit to the patronage of iron doors, since her soft-hearted sire cannot contain — control — her.”

In other words: Julia will be guarded behind closed doors.

“Oh, my good lord, forgive her,” Maecenas said. “Be like the gods.”

“Let royal bounty, Caesar, mediate,” Horace said.

Augustus Caesar said:

“There is no bounty to be shown to such people who have no real or royal goodness.

“Bounty is a spice — a species — of virtue; and what virtuous act can take effect on them who have no power of equal habitude — moral disposition — to apprehend and understand it, but live in worship of that idol, vice, as if there were no virtue except shape — something unreal — that is imposed by strong imagination?”

“This shows that their knowledge is mere ignorance.

“This shows that their far-fetched dignity of soul is a fancy.

“And this shows that all their solemn pretension to gravity is a mere vainglory.”

He said to the Lictors:

“Hence, away with them. Take them away from here.”

The Lictors placed Ovid and Julia under separate guard and began to clear the room of banqueters.

Augustus Caesar then said:

“I will prefer to know no one but such as rule their lives by knowledge, including knowledge of virtue, and can be calm all the sea of humors — whims and fancies — with the marble trident of their strong spirits.

“Others fight below

“With gnats and shadows; others nothing know.”

In the Land of the Dead, some souls — shadows — of soldiers exist. When Aeneas visited the Land of the Dead in the *Aeneid*, the shadows of Greek soldiers tried to utter war cries, but they could manage only feeble whispers. When Odysseus visited the Land of the Dead in the *Odyssey*, the shadows, except for the prophet Tiresias, knew nothing — not even who they are — until they drank some of the blood from the sacrifice that Odysseus made for them.

Tucca, Crispinus, and the Pyrgus talked together.

Tucca said to Crispinus, “What’s become of my little punk: Venus? And the poltfoot stinkard, her husband, huh?”

“Poltfoot” means club-footed and refers to the lame blacksmith god, Vulcan, whom Albius played in the masquerade. Venus, of course, is Chloe.

“Oh, they have ridden home in the coach as fast as the wheels can run,” the Pyrgus said.

Tucca said:

“God Jupiter is banished, I hear, and his cockatrice, Juno, locked up. By God’s heart, if all the poetry in Parnassus should get me to be an actor again, I’ll sell the other actors my share for a sesterce — a very small amount.

“But this is Humors, Horace, that goat-footed envious slave!”

“Goat-footed” refers to satyrs and satirists. A satyr is a half-human, half-goat nature spirit who loves wine, women, and song.

Ben Jonson wrote plays about humors, and Tucca gave Horace (and Ben Jonson) that name now.

Humors can be defining personal characteristics. Horace’s main humor is being a poet.

Tucca continued:

“He’s turned into a fawner now, a toady, an informer, the rogue; it is he who has betrayed us all. Didn’t you see him with the Emperor, crouching?”

According to Tucca, Horace toadies up to Augustus Caesar.

“Yes,” Crispinus said.

Tucca said:

“Well, follow me. Thou shall libel and I’ll cudgel the rascal.”

He said to the Pyrgus:

“Boy, provide me a truncheon — a club.”

Tucca then said to both the Pyrgus and Crispinus:

“Revenge shall ‘gratulate’ him, *tam Marti, quam Mercurio*.”

“Gratulate him” means 1) welcome him, and 2) thank him.

The Latin means “as much for Mars as for Mercury.”

Tucca played Mars in the masquerade, and Crispinus played Mercury. Tucca had been threatening to beat Horace, and Crispinus intended to slander Horace, thereby stealing his good name. Mars is the god of war, and Mercury is the god of thieves.

The Pyrgus said, “Aye, but master, take heed how you let this be known; Horace is a man of the sword.”

Ben Jonson once killed a fellow actor in a duel.

“That is true, indeed; they say he’s valiant,” Crispinus said.

“Valiant?” Tucca said. “So is my arse. Gods and fiends! I’ll blow him into air when I meet him next. He dares not fight with a puckfist: a puffball mushroom.”

“Master, here he comes,” the Pyrgus said.

Horace walked near them.

Tucca asked:

“Where?”

Seeing Horace, he said politely to him:

“Jupiter save thee, my good poet, my noble prophet.”

Then he added under his beath:

“My little fat Horace!”

Tucca then said quietly to Crispinus and the Pyrgus:

“I scorn to beat the rogue in the court, and I saluted him thus politely so that he would not suspect anything, the rascal.”

Fighting within the court was illegal.

He added:

“Come, we’ll go see how forward our journeyman is toward the untrussing of him.”

A journeyman craftsman can be hired by the day. Demetrius was the journeyman.

“Untrussing” meant undressing; the plotters were planning to “expose” Horace.

“Do you hear me, Captain?” Crispinus said. “I’ll write nothing in it but what is innocent and harmless, because I want to be able to swear that I am innocent.”

Tucca, Crispinus, and the Pyrgus exited. Horace was still present.

Maecenas entered the scene. From another door arrived Lupus, with the Lictors and Histrio.

Horace said to Lupus, “So, why don’t you pursue the Emperor for your reward now, Lupus?”

Lupus, suspecting treason, was the person who had brought Augustus Caesar to the masquerade at which Caesar banished Ovid and Julia.

Maecenas said to Asinius Lupus, who had started to leave:



“Wait, Asinius. Wait, you and your stager — actor —and your band of Lictors.

“I hope your service merits more respect than thus, without a thanks, to be sent away from here!”

“Well, well, jest on, jest on,” Histrio said.

Horace said to Histrio, “Thou base, unworthy groom —”

A groom is a serving-man.

“Aye, aye, it is good,” Lupus said sarcastically.

Horace said to Lupus:

“Was this the treason? Was this the dangerous plot thy clamorous tongue so bellowed through the court? Had thou no other project to increase thy grace with Caesar but this wolfish train, to prey upon the life of innocent mirth and harmless pleasures, bred of noble wit?”

The name “Lupus” means “wolf” in Latin.

The word “train” can mean 1) scheme, and/or 2) group of followers.

Horace continued:

“Go away! I loathe thy presence!

“Those who are such as thou are the moths and scarabs — dung beetles — of a state, the bane of empires, and the dregs of courts, who, to endear themselves to any employment, don’t care whose fame they blast, whose life they endanger.

“And under a disguised and cobweb — flimsy — mask of love for their sovereign, they vomit forth their own prodigious malice; and pretending to be the props and columns of his safety, the guard to his person and his peace, they disturb it most with their false lapwing cries.”

Lapwings are birds that nest on the ground, and they are loudest when away from their nest to keep enemies away from their nestlings. Sometimes they pretend to have an injured wing and cry while leading enemies away from the nest. When the enemy is a safe distance from the nest, the lapwing takes flight. A group of lapwings is called a deceit of lapwings.

“Good. Caesar shall know of this, believe it,” Lupus said.

Lupus, Histrio, and the Lictors exited.

Maecenas said:

“Caesar does know it, wolf, and in accordance with his knowledge he will, I hope, reward your base endeavors.

“Princes who will but hear or give access to such officious spies can never be safe:

“They take in poison with an open ear,

“And, free from danger, become slaves to fear.”

Some poisons, including poisonous words, are poured into the victim’s ear.

— 4.8 —

Alone, Ovid mourned being separated from Julia by her father. He said to himself:

“Banished from the court? Let me be banished from life, since the chief end of life is there concluded and confined.”

Ovid’s relationship with Julia was concluded — ended — with her confinement to her chamber.

Ovid continued:

“Within the court is all the kingdom bounded and contained, and as her sacred sphere does comprehend ten thousand

times so much as so much place in any other part of all the empire, so everybody moving in her sphere contains ten thousand times as much in him as any other her choice orb excludes.”

According to Ptolemaic astronomy, the Sun and the planets were fixed in spheres that moved around the Earth, which was the center of the universe.

According to Ovid, the court was a sphere in which was that which was ten thousand times more valuable than any other sphere in the empire. Anyone moving within the court’s orbit had ten thousand times as much in him as any other man whom the court’s sphere excluded.

Julia, however, was in the court, and the pronoun “her” encompassed Julia in addition to the court.

Ovid continued:

“As in a circle a magician then is safe against the spirit he excites, but out of it the magician is subject to his rage and loses all the virtue of his art, so I, exiled from the circle of the court, lose all the good gifts that in it I enjoyed.”

Magicians would draw a circle in which they would stand to be safe from any evil demon they called up.

Some circles are vaginas, and some stands are erections.

Ovid continued:

“No virtue is current, except with her stamp, and no vice is vicious, but is blanched with her white hand.”

Current coinage is legal coinage with the sovereign’s — Queen Elizabeth I’s — stamp of approval.

Ovid continued:

“The court is the abstract — the epitome — of all Rome’s desert and merit, and my dear Julia is the abstract — the epitome — of the court.

“I think, now I come near her, I respire — breathe in — some air of that recent comfort I received, and while the evening with her modest veil — the dusk of evening — gives leave to such poor shadows — ghosts — as myself to steal abroad, I, like a heartless ghost, without the living body of my love will here walk and attend her.”

Ovid had received comfort from Julia: a note saying where she was imprisoned.

Ovid continued:

“For I know that she is imprisoned not far from here, and she hopes to bribe her strict guardian to allow her so much admittance as to speak to me and cheer my fainting spirits with her breath.”

In Julia’s note, she had written that she hoped to be able to bribe her guardian so that she could speak to him.

— 4.9 —

Julia appeared at the window of her chamber.

“Ovid? My love?” she said.

“Here, heavenly Julia,” Ovid said.

Julia said:

“Here and not here!”

Ovid was here, but he was banished. And he was here, but he was below and he was not standing by her.

Julia continued:

“Oh, how that word ‘here’ plays with both our fortunes, differing like our selves: Both one, and yet divided as if we were opposed to each other as enemies!

“I high, thou low! Oh, this our plight of place doubly presents the two lets — hindrances — of our love, local and ceremonial height and lowness; in both ways I am too high and thou are too low.”

The two hindrances of their love were height and lowness. Julia was high in her chamber, and Ovid was low on the ground; in addition, Julia’s social position was higher than Ovid’s.

“Local” referred to location, and “ceremonial” referred to society.

Julia continued:

“Our minds are even, yet; oh, why should our bodies, which are their slaves, be so without their rule?”

In other words: Our minds are equal, so why shouldn’t our bodies be ruled by the same principle of equality?

Julia continued:

“I’ll cast myself down to thee; if I die, I’ll forever live with thee. No height of birth, of social position, of duty, or of cruel power shall keep me from thee.

“Even if my father would lock this body up within a tomb of brass, yet I’ll be with thee.

“If the forms of love I hold now in my soul be made one substance with it, if that soul is immortal, and if it is the same as it is now, then death cannot raze the affects — the desire — she now retains — and then she may be anywhere she will.”

Plato believed in Forms. The Forms are the highest form of reality, and they are eternal and unchanging. Plato believed that there were many Forms. There is a Form for Tree, of which individual physical trees are only images. There is also a Form for Human Being and Forms for other physical objects. In addition, there are Forms for Beauty, Truth, Justice, Excellence, Piety, etc.

Julia was saying that in her soul was the Form for Love. Both the Form of Love and her soul were immortal, and if the two were united, then her death would not erase knowledge of that Form of Love.

The phrase “forms of love” with a lower-case ‘f’ means manifestations of the Form of Love. One such manifestation was her love for Ovid, which participated in the Form of Love.

In other words: She loved Ovid now, and since her soul was immortal and Love was immortal, she would continue to love him after death.

Julia continued:

“The souls of parents do not rule children’s souls when death sets both in their dissolved estates — when death separates the soul and body of the child and of each parent — then there is no child, nor father; and then eternity frees all from any temporal respect and obedience due to parents.

“I come, my Ovid; take me in thine arms and let me breathe my soul into thy breast!”

She made a movement as if to throw herself down.

Ovid said:

“Oh, stay, my love! The hopes thou conceive of thy quick — swift and living — death and of thy future life are not authentic and valid.

“Thou choose death so thou might enjoy thy love in the other life.

“But know, my princely love, when thou are dead thou only must survive in perfect and unalloyed soul; and in the soul are no affections.”

Affections are passions and desires, including sexual desires.

Ovid continued:

“We pour out our affections with our blood, and with our blood’s affections fade our loves.

“No life has love in such sweet state as this.

“No essence is so dear to moody sense as flesh and blood, whose quintessence — innermost nature — is sense.

“Beauty composed of blood and flesh moves more and is more plausible — acceptable, agreeable, pleasing — to blood and flesh than spiritual beauty can be to the spirit.

“Such apprehension — perception — as we have in dreams when sleep, the bond of senses, locks them up, such shall we have when death destroys them quite.

“If love is then thy object, exchange not life for death. Live high and happy still; I, still below, close with my fortunes, in thy height shall enjoy.”

Ovid will be “close” — that is, hidden away — because of his banishment. In addition he will be “close” — near to — his low fortune. But he will still rejoice that Julia is alive.

Julia said:

“Woe is me, that virtue, whose brave eagle’s wings with every stroke blow stars in burning heaven, should like a swallow preying toward storms fly close to earth, and with

an eager plume — fierce flight — pursue those objects that none else can see, but seem to all the world the empty air.”

In other words: In our case, virtue is like an eagle that flies close to the earth (like a swallow flying into the winds of a storm as it hunts) and pursues sustenance that no one can see.

Because Ovid and Julia are separated, their love lacks sustenance. The two cannot fly high, as they would in a world in which her father did not oppose their love.

Julia continued:

“Thus thou, poor Ovid, and all virtuous men must prey like swallows on invisible food, pursuing flies, or nothing; and thus love and every worldly fancy is transposed and transformed by worldly tyranny into whatever plight — peril — it wishes.”

She then addressed her father, who was not present, in an apostrophe:

“O father, since thou did not give me my mind, don’t strive to rule it; take only what thou gave me — my body — into thy control. Thy affections and inclinations don’t rule me. I must bear all my griefs. Let me use and enjoy all my pleasures. Virtuous love was never scandal to a goddess’ state.”

Julia had acted the role of Juno, but her doing so was not scandalous.

Julia then said:

“But my father is inflexible! And, my dear love, Ovid, thy life may perhaps be shortened by the length of my unwilling speeches to depart.



“Farewell, sweet life. Even though thou, Ovid, are yet exiled from the officious — interfering — court, enjoy me amply still.

“My soul in this my breath enters thine ears, and on this turret’s floor I will lie dead until we may meet again.”

She knelt and said:

“In this proud height I kneel beneath thee in my prostrate love and kiss the happy sands that kiss thy feet.”

She kissed the literal floor of the turret and the metaphorical happy sands on which Ovid stood, and then she rose.

Julia continued:

“Great Jove submits — reduces — a scepter to a cell, and lovers, rather than part, will meet in hell.”

Julia’s high birth had turned into a prison cell for her. Nevertheless, Julia’s love for Ovid was stronger than her father’s power over her. She would not stop loving Ovid.

Ovid said:

“Farewell, all company, and if I could, all light, with thee! Hell’s shade should hide my brows until thy dear beauty’s beams redeemed my vows.”

He would commit suicide if he were capable of it.

Ovid started to leave.

Julia called him back:

“Ovid, my love! Alas, may we not stay a little longer, do thou think, undiscerned?”

Turning back, Ovid said:

“For thine own good, fair goddess, do not stay.

“Who would engage — put at risk — a firmament of fires shining in thee, for me, a fallen star?”

“Be gone, sweet life-blood. If I should discern thyself but touched for my sake, I should die.”

Julia could be touched in a way that would hurt her, and Ovid would literally die.

But “to die” can mean “to have an orgasm,” and if Ovid could touch Julia, he would figuratively die.

Julia said, “I will be gone, then, and not heaven itself shall draw me back.”

She started to leave.

Ovid said, “Yet, Julia, if thou will, a little longer stay.”

Julia returned and said, “I am content to stay a little longer.”

Ovid said, “O mighty Ovid! What the sway of heaven could not retire — draw back — my breath has turned back.”

“Who shall leave first, my love?” Julia said. “My passionate — sorrowful — eyes will not endure seeing thee turn from me.”

“If thou go first, my soul will follow thee,” Ovid said.

“Then we must stay,” Julia said.

Ovid said:

“Woe is me, there is no stay in amorous pleasures.”

The word “no stay” meant 1) no permanence, and 2) no stopping.

Ovid continued:

“If both stay, both die.”

If both stay and are caught by Julia's father, both will die.

But the word "die" in Elizabethan times also meant "have an orgasm," and so the words also mean, If both of us stay and have sex, both of us will have orgasms.

Ovid said:

"I hear thy father — hence, my deity!"

Julia exited.

Alone, Ovid said to himself:

"Fear forges sounds in my deluded ears. I did not hear thy father; I am mad with love.

"There is no spirit under heaven that works with such illusion; yet let such witchcraft kill me, before a sound mind without it save my life!"

He preferred to die while mad with love rather than live without love.

Ovid knelt and said:

"Here, on my knees, I worship the blest place that held my goddess, and the loving air that enclosed her body in its silken arms.

"Vain Ovid! Kneel not to the place nor air. She's in thy heart."

Ovid rose and said:

"Rise, then, and worship there.

The truest wisdom silly men can have is dotage on the follies of their flesh."

The word "silly" meant "deserving of sympathy and compassion."



## ACT 5 (*The Arraignment, or Poetaster*)

### — 5.1 —

Augustus Caesar was sitting on his throne. With him, standing, were Gallus, Tibullus, Maecenas, and Horace.

Using the majestic plural, Augustus Caesar pardoned Gallus and Tibullus:

“We who have conquered always to spare the conquered, and we who have loved to make inflictions feared, not felt, have grieved to reprove and was joyful to reward, and have been more proud of reconciliation than revenge, say this:

“Return again into the recent state of our love and respect, worthy Cornelius Gallus and Tibullus.

“You both are gentlemen.

“You, Cornelius, are a soldier of renown and the first Provost who ever let our Roman eagles fly on swarthy Egypt, quarried with her spoils.”

Elevated by Augustus Caesar from humble origins, Gallus had led the Roman army into Egypt and had become the country’s first Provost, or ruling overseer.

Hunting hawks were rewarded with part of the prey — quarry — after a successful hunt. Rome was rewarded with Egyptian riches.

Eagles were the insignia on Roman standards.

The people of Egypt were swarthy: of dark complexion.

Augustus Caesar continued:

“Yet, not to bear cold forms nor men’s outer conditions without the inward fires and lives of men, you both have virtues shining through your shapes to show your titles are

not written on posts or hollow statues — the best men without Promethean stuffings reached from heaven are nothing but posts and hollow statues.”

Prometheus gave divine sparks to Humankind.

In mythology, Prometheus created Humankind from clay and breathed life into Humankind. He also stole fire from the gods and gave it to Humankind.

A man — even the best man (best in appearance and social status) — without those Promethean divine sparks is like a post or a hollow statue.

The Promethean divine sparks are virtues.

Augustus Caesar continued:

Gallus and Tibullus have inward virtues that shine outward so that Humankind can see them.

“Sweet poesy’s sacred garlands crown your gentry. Poesy is, of all the faculties — abilities — on Earth, the most abstract and perfect, if she is true born and nursed with all the sciences — branches of knowledge.

“She can so mold Rome and her monuments within the liquid marble of her lines that they shall stand fresh and miraculous even when they mix with innovating — changing — dust.”

The oxymoron “liquid marble” refers to flowing lines of eternal poetry. Even after the Roman Coliseum is a literal ruin, Rome’s poetry — such as Virgil’s *Aeneid*, in which Aeneas, a surviving Trojan, becomes an important ancestor of the Roman people — shall stand fresh and miraculous and keep Rome and the Roman Coliseum fresh and miraculous.

Augustus Caesar continued:

“In poetry’s sweet streams shall our brave Roman spirits chase and swim after death, with their choice deeds shining on their white shoulders; and therein shall Tiber and our famous rivers fall with such attraction that the ambitious — closely encircling — line of the round world shall to her center shrink to hear their music; and for these high qualities Caesar shall reverence the Pierian arts.”

In other words:

Poetry shall make Rome and the Roman people remembered, as indeed do Virgil’s *Aeneid* and the works of Horace.

The entire world shall come to its center — Rome — either literally or figuratively to hear the music of its poetry.

The Muses lived in Pieria and frolicked by its streams.

Maecenas said:

“Your Majesty’s high grace to poesy shall stand against all the dull detractions of leaden souls, who, for the vain assumings — pretensions — of some, quite worthless of her sovereign wreaths, contain — regard — her worthiest prophets in contempt.”

In other words: Augustus Caesar’s appreciation of true poetry will be a bulwark against bad poets who denigrate true poets.

Gallus said:

“Happy is Rome of all earth’s other states, to have so true and great a president — governor and precedent, aka model — for her inferior spirits to imitate as Caesar is, who adds to the Sun influence and luster, in increasing thus his inspirations, kindling fire in us.”

In other words: Augustus Caesar honors Phoebus Apollo, the Sun-god and the god of poetry, by praising poetry. Caesar is also a good model for Roman citizens to imitate.

Horace said:

“Phoebus Apollo himself shall kneel at Caesar’s shrine and deck it with bay garlands dewed with wine to reward the worship Caesar does to him.”

In other words: Apollo himself will reward Augustus Caesar with laurel wreaths for defending poetry.

Horace continued:

“Whereas other princes, hoisted to their thrones by Fortune’s passionate and disordered power, sit in their height like clouds before the sun, hindering his — the sun’s — comforts; and by their excess of cold in virtue and cross heat in vice, thunder and tempest on those learned heads whom Caesar with such honor does advance.”

In other words, other princes who have been elevated by luck, not merit, block Apollo’s gift of poetry to Humankind and storm against true poets such as those whom Augustus Caesar promotes and rewards. These bad princes are coldly indifferent to virtue and hotly in pursuit of sin.

Tibullus said:

“All human business Fortune does command without all order, and with her blind hand she, blind, bestows blind gifts that always have nursed they see not who nor how, but always the worst.”

In other words: Tibullus believes that Lady Fortune is blind and hands out her gifts blindly and without order to bad people.

Using the third person, Augustus Caesar said:



“Caesar, as regards his rule and as regards whatever resources Lady Fortune puts in his hand, shall dispose it as if his hand had eyes and soul in it: with worth and judgment.”

In other words: When Augustus Caesar gave gifts, he did so with open eyes: He would reward the deserving virtuous people, including poets.

Augustus Caesar continued:

“Hands that part with gifts either will restrain their use, without desert or with a misery — miserliness — numbed to virtue’s right, work as if they had no soul to govern them, and quite reject her, severing their estates — condition of life, and material wealth — from human order.

“Whosoever can and will not cherish virtue is no man.”

In other words: Hands that give gifts or withhold gifts without considering the virtue of those who receive or do not receive them are soulless and do not value virtue.

Some Roman equites — Knights — entered the scene.

The Knights were the social class immediately below the noble class.

“Virgil is now at hand, imperial Caesar,” a Knight said.

“Rome’s honor is at hand, then,” Augustus Caesar said.

Virgil was and is the greatest Roman poet.

Augustus Caesar said to the Knights:

“Fetch a chair and set it on our right hand, the place of honor, where it is fitting that Rome’s honor, and our own, should always sit.”

The Knights set the chair in place; then they exited.

Augustus Caesar said, “Now that Virgil has come out of Campania in west central Italy, I don’t doubt that he has finished all the books of his *Aeneid*, which like another soul I long to enjoy.”

The *Aeneid* consists of 12 books, but if the *Aeneid* were written today, we would call them chapters.

Augustus Caesar said to Maecenas, Gallus, and Tibullus:

“What do you three think of Virgil, gentlemen, you who are of his profession, though ranked higher?”

Virgil was ranked higher critically, but his birth in the social order was lower. His father was a farmer, but a farmer with much land.

Augustus Caesar then said:

“Or, Horace, what do thou say, thou who are the poorest and likeliest to envy or to detract?”

Ben Jonson’s father was a bricklayer.

The Roman Horace had inherited a small estate, but he had fought against Augustus Caesar and so had lost it. Augustus Caesar gave him amnesty.

In his reply, Horace pointed out that knowledge is more important than wealth:

“Caesar speaks in the manner of common men in this to make a difference of me for my poorness, as if the filth of poverty sunk as deep into a knowing spirit as the bane of riches does into an ignorant soul.

“No, Caesar, they are pathless, moorish — boggy — minds that, being once made rotten with the dung of damned riches, forever afterward sink beneath the steps of any villainy.”

In other words: Ignorant souls, when poisoned by wealth, become pathless and the only imprints they receive are from the metaphorical steps of villainy.

Horace continued:

“But knowledge is the nectar that keeps sweet a perfect soul even in this grave of sin: the body, and society.

“And as for my soul, it is as free — unfettered by poverty and generous — as Caesar’s, for what I know is due I’ll give to all.

“He who detracts or envies virtuous merit

“Is always the covetous and the ignorant spirit.”

Augustus Caesar replied:

“Thanks, Horace, for thy free and wholesome sharpness, which pleases Caesar more than servile fawnings.

“A flattered prince soon turns into the prince of fools, and for thy sake we’ll put no difference more between the great and good for being poor.

“Tell us then, beloved Horace, thy true thought and opinion about Virgil.”

Horace said:

“I judge him to be of a rectified — refined — spirit, by many revolutions of discourse in his bright reason’s influence, refined from all the tartarous — unrefined — moods of common men.

“He bears the nature and similitude of a right heavenly body; he is most severe in fashion and collection — shaping and composing — of himself, and then as clear and confident as Jove.”

Virgil's spirit is more refined than the spirits of common men. Virgil's spirit is in the heavens because of his bright reason, while the spirits of common men are tartarous.

Tartarus is the Underworld, especially the part where evil-doers are punished. The word "tartarous," however, is derived from tartarous acid, an early name for tartaric acid.

Gallus said, "And yet so chaste — pure — and tender is his ear in suffering any syllable to pass that he thinks may become the honored name of issue to his so examined self that all the lasting fruits of his full merit in his own poems he does still distaste, as if his mind's piece, which he strove to paint, could not with fleshly pencils have her right."

Virgil is very critical of his own work — even his best work.

In fact, the *Aeneid* was not quite completed at his death — a few lines are only half-lines. On his deathbed, Virgil requested that the manuscript be burned, but Augustus Caesar denied that request. The thought of the *Aeneid* being burned and not being passed down to us gives some classicists such as Elizabeth Vandiver nightmares.

Tibullus said:

"But to confirm that his works have sovereign worth, this observation, I think, more than serves, and is not common:

"That which he has written is with such judgment labored and distilled through all the necessary uses of our lives that, could a man remember but Virgil's lines, the man should not touch at any serious point but he might breathe Virgil's spirit out of him."

In other words: In his works, Virgil has written important passages about all serious subjects.

In the Middle Ages, people concerned about an important question or subject would open the *Aeneid* and point to a

passage at random. Sometimes, the passage shed light on the answer to the question. Some people have done this with the Bible.

Augustus Caesar said, “You mean he might repeat part of his works, as fit for any conference — discussion and reasoning — he can use?”

In any conversation, a man could use quotations from Virgil’s works and they would be fitting for the conversation. They would contribute to the conversation, not be a distraction.

“True, royal Caesar,” Tibullus said.

“Worthily observed, and a most worthy virtue in his works,” Augustus Caesar said.

He then said, “What does material — full of good sense — Horace think of Virgil’s learning?”

Horace said:

“His learning does not labor the school-like gloss that most consists in echoing words and terms and soonest wins a man an empty name, nor does his learning labor any long or far-fetched circumstance wrapped in the curious generalities of arts.

“Instead, his learning has a direct and analytic sum of all the worth and first effects of arts.”

In other words: Virgil’s learning is not abstruse and overly difficult but instead it clearly reveals the worth and value of knowledge and skill.

Horace continued:

“And as for his poesy, it is so rammed — crammed — with life that it shall gather strength of life with being and live hereafter more admired than now.”

In other words: Virgil's poetry is so good that it will become more admired in the future than now: It will become a classic.

Augustus Caesar said, "This one consent in all your dooms — judgments — of him, and mutual loves of all your individual merits, argues a truth of merit in you all."

— 5.2 —

Virgil entered the scene. Some Roman Knights escorted him.

"Look, here comes Virgil," Augustus Caesar said. "We will rise and greet him."

He stood up.

Augustus Caesar then said:

"Welcome to Caesar, Virgil. Caesar and Virgil shall differ but in sound; to Caesar, Virgil, because of his expressed greatness, shall be made a second surname; and to Virgil, Caesar shall be made a second surname."

Romans were given an additional name as an honor. For example, Publius Cornelius Scipio was given the name "Africanus" in honor of his defeat of Hannibal and Carthage in North Africa in the Second Punic War.

Augustus Caesar then said:

"Where are thy famous books of the *Aeneid*? Do us the grace to let us see them, and surfeit on their sight."

Virgil replied:

"Worthless they are of Caesar's gracious eyes if they were perfect.

"Much more are they worthless with their faults, which yet are more than my time could supply the remedy.

“And if great Caesar’s expectation could be satisfied with any other service, I would not show them to him.”

Virgil was saying that even if his verses were perfect, they would still not be worthy enough for Augustus Caesar to see them.

“Virgil is too modest or seeks in vain to make our longings more,” Augustus Caesar said. “Show them, sweet Virgil.”

Virgil replied, “Then, in such due fear as befits presenters of great works to Caesar, I humbly show them.”

Augustus Caesar accepted the manuscript from Virgil and said:

“Let us now behold a human soul made visible in life, and more refulgent — radiant — in a senseless paper than in the sensual complement — ceremony — of Kings.”

In other words: A paper containing words of true poetry reveals a human soul and makes it more radiant than does the sensuous, luxurious ceremony of Kings.

He returned the manuscript and said:

“Read, read it thyself, dear Virgil. Let me not profane one accent with an untuned tongue. Best matter, badly shown, shows worse than bad.”

He indicated the chair on his right and said:

“See then this chair, on purpose set for thee to read thy poem in.”

Virgil made a motion as if to refuse the seat.

Augustus Caesar said:

“Don’t refuse it.

“Virtue without presumption place may take

“Above best kings, whom only she should make.”

Virgil said:

“It will be thought a thing ridiculous to present eyes, and to all future times a gross untruth, that any poet, void of birth or wealth or temporal dignity, should with fitness and decorum transcend and surpass Caesar’s chair.

“Poor virtue raised, high birth and wealth set under,

“Crosses heaven’s courses and makes worldlings wonder.”

Heaven’s courses are the orbits or spheres of planets. According to Virgil, even a virtuous poet ought not to ascend higher than those of high birth and wealth.

Augustus Caesar said, “The course of heaven and fate itself in this will Caesar cross; much more all worldly custom.”

He was willing to raise Virgil above high birth and wealth.

Horace said:

“Custom in course of honor ever errs,

“And they are best whom Fortune least prefers.”

“In course of honor” means either “in pursuit of honor” or “in bestowing honor.”

Augustus Caesar said:

“Horace has but more strictly spoken our thoughts. The vast, rude swinge — uneducated power — of general confluence — the common mob — is in particular ends exempt from sense, and therefore reason, which in right should be the special rector — ruler — of all harmony, shall show we are a man distinct by it from those whom custom enraptures in her press.”



Augustus Caesar will be different from common people who follow conventional thought because he will follow reason rather than custom.

Caesar took and opened the manuscript of the *Aeneid* at random and said, “Ascend, then, Virgil, and, where first by chance we here have turned thy book, do thou first read.”

Virgil said:

“Great Caesar has his will. I will do what he wishes and will ascend to the dais.

“It would be a simple injury to his free hand, which sweeps the cobwebs from unused virtue and makes her shine proportioned to her worth, to be more nice — more reluctant and unwilling — to entertain his grace than he is choice and liberal to afford it.”

Virgil mounted his chair on the dais and prepared to read.

Augustus Caesar said to the Knights, “Gentlemen of our chamber, guard the doors and let none enter. Peace and silence.”

He then said, “Begin, good Virgil.”

Virgil began to read a passage from Book 4 of the *Aeneid*, which is about the love affair of Aeneas and Dido, the Queen of Carthage. In this passage, Aeneas and Dido consummate their love in a cave. Quickly, rumors of their love affair spread throughout Carthage and the surrounding territory.

Virgil read:

*“Meanwhile the skies began to thunder, and in tail*

*“Of that, fell pouring storms of sleet and hail.*

*“The Tyrian lords and Trojan youth each where [everywhere],*

*“With Venus’ Dardan nephew, now in fear*

*“Seek out for several [different, separate] shelter through  
the plain,*

*“Whilst floods come rolling from the hills amain  
[violently].”*

The Tyrian lords are men from Tyre. Dido and the Carthaginians are from the Phoenician city of Tyre.

The Dardan — Trojan — nephew of Venus is Ascanius, Aeneas’ son and Venus’ grandson. The Latin word for “grandchild” is *nepos*. Elizabethan English gives a wide meaning to the word “nephew.”

Virgil continued reading:

*“Dido a cave, the Trojan prince [Aeneas] the same*

*“Lighted upon [Alighted upon, aka discovered]. There  
Earth, and heaven’s great dame*

*“That [Who] has the charge of marriage [Juno, goddess of  
marriage], first gave sign*

*“Unto this contract; fire and air did shine,*

*“As guilty of the match, and from the hill*

*“The nymphs with shriekings do the region fill.*

*“Here first began their bane. This day was ground*

*“Of all their ills. For now nor [neither] rumor’s sound*

*“Nor nice respect of state moves Dido aught [at all];*

*“Her love no longer now by stealth is sought;*

*“She calls this wedlock, and with that fair name*

*“Covers her fault. Forthwith the bruit and fame [gossip and rumor]*

*“Through all the greatest Libyan towns is gone;*

*“Fame, a fleet evil, than which is swifter none,*

*“That moving grows and flying gathers strength,*

*“Little at first, and fearful, but at length*

*“She dares attempt the skies, and stalking proud*

*“With feet on ground, her head doth [does] pierce a cloud!*

*“This child our parent Earth, stirred up with spite*

*“Of all the gods, brought forth; and, as some write,*

*“She was last sister of that giant race*

*“That thought to scale Jove’s court; right swift of pace*

*“And swifter far of wing; a monster vast*

*“And dreadful. Look how many plumes are placed*

*“On her huge corpse, so many waking eyes*

*“Stick underneath; and, which may stranger rise*

*“In the report, as many tongues she bears,*

*“As many mouths, as many list’ning ears.*

*“Nightly in midst of all the heaven she flies,*

*“And through the earth’s dark shadow shrieking cries;*

*“Nor do her eyes once bend to taste sweet sleep.*

*“By day on tops of houses she doth [does] keep,*

*“Or on high towers, and doth [does] thence affright  
[frighten]*

*“Cities and towns of most conspicuous site.*

*“As covetous she is of tales and lies*

*“As prodigal of truth. This monster [Rumor] ....”*

Below is an excerpt from David Bruce’s *Virgil’s Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose* that retells the above passage.

“[...] a storm hurled hail at them. All scattered and sought shelter. Dido and Aeneas found and entered the same cave. Here the goddesses Earth and Juno lit what resembled wedding torches. Here nymphs sang what resembled a wedding song. Here the sky witnessed what resembled a wedding. But although Juno provided the trappings of a wedding, this was not a legal wedding. Aeneas did not hold the torch that a groom holds in a real marriage. Aeneas did not make the vows that a groom makes in a real marriage.

“Dido called her relationship with Aeneas a marriage, but it was really an affair. Dido used the word ‘marriage’ to lessen her feeling of guilt.

“Rumors of the affair spread quickly to all the cities of Libya. Evil moves quickly, and of all evils, rumor moves the quickest. Rumor is the daughter of Mother Earth, who bore her after Jupiter had killed two of her sons: the Titan Coeus and the Giant Enceladus. Mother Earth gave birth to Rumor as a way to get revenge for the death of these sons.

“Rumor has wings and many feathers. Her many eyes never sleep, and she has many tongues and many ears. By night she flies, and by day she watches and listens. She values lies as much as she values truths.”

— 5.3 —

Virgil continued reading briefly as Lupus entered the scene, but Virgil’s words were drowned out by noise.

Holding a paper, Lupus came through the door, meeting the Knights on guard. He was attended by some Lictors.

Tucca, Crispinus, Demetrius, and Aesop attempted to crowd in after Lupus.

Aesop was an actor.

“Come, follow me, assist me, second me!” Lupus said to Tucca, Crispinus, Demetrius, and Aesop.

He then asked the Knights, “Where’s the Emperor?”

“Sir, you must pardon us,” the First Knight said.

“Caesar is private now,” the Second Knight said. “You may not enter.”

“Not enter?” Tucca said.

He then said to Lucca, “Charge them upon their allegiance, cropshin.”

A cropshin is an inferior herring.

“We have an order to the contrary, sir,” the First Knight said.

“I pronounce you all traitors, horrible traitors!” Lupus said. “What! Do you know my affairs? I have matter of danger and state to impart to Caesar!”

“What noise is there?” Augustus Caesar asked. “Who’s that who names Caesar?”

“A friend to Caesar!” Lupus said. “One who for Caesar’s good would speak with Caesar!”

“Who is it?” Augustus Caesar said. “Go and look, Cornelius.”

Cornelius Gallus started to go to the door, but the First Knight said, “Asinius Lupus is here.”

“Oh, tell the turbulent informer to leave,” Augustus Caesar said. “We have no vacant ear, now, to receive the unseasoned — unseasonable — fruits of his officious tongue.”

Maecenas said to the Knights, “You must get rid of him there. Dismiss him.”

The Knights forced Lupus and his companions back to the door.

“I conjure thee as thou art Caesar to respect either thine own safety or the safety of the state or both, Caesar!” Lupus said. “Hear me! Speak with me, Caesar! It is no common business I come about, but such as, being neglected, may concern the life of Caesar!”

“The life of Caesar? Let him enter,” Augustus Caesar said.

He then said, “Virgil, keep thy seat.”

Lupus and the Lictors approached the dais.

The Knights said to Tucca, Crispinus, Demetrius, and Aesop, “Bear back, there! Where are you going! Keep back!”

Crispinus, Demetrius, and Aesop were pushed back.

Tucca pushed past the Knights and said, “By your leave, goodman usher. Mend thy peruke; good.”

A peruke is a wig, then fashionable. In pushing past the Knight, Tucca had knocked it awry. The Knight pulled it back into the right place.

“Lay hold on Horace there, and on Maecenas, Lictors!” Lupus said.

The Lictors placed them under guard. Gallus and Tibullus started forward.

Lupus said, “Romans, offer no rescue, upon your allegiance.”

He gave Caesar the paper and said, “Read, royal Caesar.”

He then said to Horace, “I’ll tickle you, satyr!”

“He will, Humors, he will,” Tucca said. “He will squeeze you, poet puckfist.”

A puckfist is a puffball mushroom.

Tucca was calling Horace “Humors” as well as a mushroom — a social upstart.

Ben Jonson wrote plays about humors — personal characteristics and quirks.

Humors can also be bodily fluids. Thus Tucca’s “squeeze.”

Lupus said to Horace, “I’ll lop you off for an unprofitable branch, you satirical varlet!”

Tucca said, “Aye, and” — he pointed to Maecenas — “Epaminondas, your patron here, with his flagon chain.”

A chain is a necklace; sometimes, a small flagon of perfume hung from it.

Epaminondas was a Theban general.

Tucca then said to Maecenas, “Come, resign it. Give it up. Even if it were your great-grandfather’s, the law has made it mine now, sir.”

He took Maecenas’ chain.

Tucca then said to the Lictors, “Look to him, my particolored rascals; look to him.”

The “particolored rascals” were the Lictors, who wore multi-colored uniforms.

Pointing to the paper, Augustus Caesar said, “What is this, Asinius Lupus? I don’t understand it.”

“Not understand it?” Lupus said. “It is a libel, Caesar. A dangerous, seditious libel! A libel in picture.”

“A libel?” Augustus Caesar said.

“Aye, I found it in this Horace’s study, in Maecenas’ house, here,” Lupus said. “I call for the penalty of the laws against them!”

Tucca said to Lupus, “Aye, and remember to beg their land promptly, before some of these hungry, greedy court-hounds scent it out.”

In Elizabethan England, a person who turned in a traitor would be rewarded with all or part of that person’s land and wealth. This was called begging their land. Tucca had already claimed Maecenas’ flagon chain.

Handing the paper to a Lictor, Augustus Caesar said, “Show it to Horace. Ask him if he knows it.”

“Know it?” Lupus said. “His handwriting is on it, Caesar.”

“Then it is no libel,” Augustus Caesar said.

Augustus Caesar knew and trusted Horace enough to believe that he was not libelous or treasonous.

Horace glanced at the paper and said, “It is the imperfect — incomplete — body of an emblem, Caesar, that I began to create for Maecenas.”

An emblem is a symbolic picture, often accompanied by a maxim and sometimes by explanatory verses.

“An emblem?” Lupus said. “Right. That’s Greek for a libel. Do but notice how confident he is.”



Horace said:

“A just man cannot fear, thou foolish Tribune.

“Not though the malice of traducing tongues, the open vastness of a tyrant’s ear, the senseless rigor of the wrested laws, or the red eyes of strained authority should in a point meet all to take his life.

“His innocence is armor against all these.”

“Innocence? Oh, impudence!” Lupus said.

He took back the paper and said:

“Let me see, let me see.

“Isn’t here an eagle? And isn’t that eagle intended to mean Caesar? Huh? Doesn’t Caesar bear the eagle as insignia?”

He asked Horace, “Answer me; what do thou say?”

“Have thou any evasion, stinkard?” Tucca asked Horace.

“Now he’s turned dumb,” Lupus said.

He then said to Horace, “I’ll tickle you, satyr.”

Horace then said to express his contempt for Lupus, “Pish.”

He began to laugh: “Ha! Ha!”

“Do thou pish me?” Lupus said.

He said to the Lictor carrying his sword, “Give me my long-sword.”

Horace said:

“With reverence to great Caesar: worthy Romans” — he pointed to Lupus — “just observe this ridiculous commenter. The soul to my device was in this distich, aka couplet:

“*Thus, oft [often] the base and ravenous multitude*

“*Survive to share the spoils of fortitude,*”

“Which in this body I have figured here: A vulture —”

“A vulture?” Lupus interrupted. “Aye, now it is a vulture. Oh, abominable! Monstrous! Monstrous! Hasn’t your vulture a beak? Hasn’t it legs? And talons? And wings? And feathers?”

Tucca said to Lupus, “Touch him, old Buskins.”

Buskins are boots.

In fencing, a touch scores a hit. The fencer touches his opponent with his weapon.

“And therefore it must be an eagle?” Horace asked.

“Don’t pay him any attention, good Horace,” Maecenas said. “Describe your emblem.”

“A vulture and a wolf —”

“A wolf?” Lupus interrupted. “Good. That’s I; I am the wolf. My name’s Lupus; I am meant by the wolf. Go on, go on: a vulture and a wolf —”

Horace continued, “— preying upon the carcass of an ass —”

“An ass?” Lupus interrupted. “Good still: that’s I, too. I am the ass. You mean me by the ass —”

His name was Asinius Lupus. In Latin, *asinus* means “ass,” and *lupus* means “wolf.”

Maecenas said to Lupus, “Please, stop braying then.”

Horace said to Lupus, “If you will needs take it, I cannot with modesty give it from you.”

Lupus was claiming that he was the ass, and so Horace was claiming that he could not give the title of “ass” to anyone or anything else.

Maecenas pointed out that to the Egyptians, the ass was a noble beast: “But the old Egyptians were accustomed to use the ass as a figure in their hieroglyphics to represent patience, frugality, and fortitude. We can suspect you of having none of these qualities, Tribune.”

Augustus Caesar asked, “Who was it, Lupus, who informed you first that this should be meant by us? Or was it your comment — your own explanation?”

He was asking, Who told you that this figure represented us?

The figure was the eagle or vulture.

Lupus answered, “It’s not my own explanation, Caesar: An actor gave me the explanation at the first sight of it, indeed.”

“Aye, an honest sycophant-like slave, and a politician — a person of intrigue — besides,” Tucca said.

“Where is that actor?” Augustus Caesar asked.

“He is outside, but he is here,” Tucca said.

“Call him in,” Augustus Caesar said.

Tucca said to the Knights, “Call in the actor there: He is Master Aesop. Call him.”

The Knights called, “Actor! Where is the actor?”

Aesop the actor entered. Crispinus and Demetrius attempted to enter, but the Knights barred their way and said, “Keep back! None but the actor may enter.”

Tucca pointed to Crispinus and Demetrius and said, “Yes, this gent’man and his Achates must enter.”

Achates was one of Aeneas' subordinates in Virgil's *Aeneid*.  
Tucca was using "Achates" to refer to Demetrius.

"This gent'man," aka Crispinus, would then be Aeneas.

Crispinus said to a Knight, "Please, master usher; we'll stand close by, here."

Aesop approached the dais; Crispinus and Demetrius went inside the room.

Indicating Crispinus, Tucca said, "He is a gent'man of quality, this, although he is somewhat out of clothes, I tell ye."

He then asked the actor, "Come, Aesop; have thou a bay leaf in thy mouth?"

Aesop nodded.

The bay leaf could be aromatic and cover the smell of alcohol or bad breath, or Aesop could hold it in his mouth in the hope that it would make him eloquent. Laurel — bay — wreaths were given as an honor to exceptional people.

Tucca said, "Well done; don't be at a loss for words, stinkard. Thou shall have a monopoly of acting confirmed to thee and thy covey — thy brood — under the Emperor's broad seal, for this service."

Augustus Caesar asked Lupus about Aesop, "Is he the actor?"

"Aye, Caesar, this is he," Lupus said.

Augustus Caesar said:

"Let him be whipped.

"Lictors, take him away from here."

Some Lictors exited with Aesop.

Augustus Caesar said:

“And, Lupus, for your fierce — zealous — credulity —

“One of you outfit him with a pair of larger ears — ass’ ears.

“It is Caesar’s sentence, and it must not be revoked. We hate to have our court and peace disturbed with these quotidian — mundane — clamors.

“See that it is done.”

“Caesar!” Lupus said.

“Gag him, so we may have his silence,” Augustus Caesar said.

Lupus was gagged.

Virgil said:

“Caesar has acted like Caesar. Fair and just is his award against these brainless creatures.

“It is not the wholesome, sharp morality or modest anger of a satiric spirit that hurts or wounds the body of a state, but the sinister application of the malicious, ignorant, and base interpreter who will distort and strain the general scope and purpose of an author to his particular and private spleen, aka resentment.”

Augustus Caesar said, “We know it, our dear Virgil, and esteem it a most dishonest practice in that man who will seem too witty in another’s work.”

Some critics will be witty at another’s expense even if the other person does not deserve it. Caustic critic John Simon once wrote this about a young, beautiful actress: “Diana Rigg is built like a brick mausoleum with insufficient flying buttresses.” (After a few weeks of embarrassment, Ms. Rigg began to think the quotation was funny.)

Gallus and Tibullus approached Caesar.

Augustus Caesar asked, “What do Cornelius Gallus and Tibullus want?”

While the three men quietly conferred, Tuca said to Maecenas:

“Nay, but as thou are a man — do thou hear? — a man of worship, and honorable —

“Wait, here, take thy chain again. Resume it, mad Maecenas. Reclaim it.

“What! Do thou think I meant to have kept it, bold boy? No; I did it just to frighten thee, I, to test how thou would take it.

“What! Will I turn shark — swindler — upon my friends? Or my friends’ friends? I scorn it with my three souls.”

Aristotle believed that human beings have a tripartite soul that consists of these three parts: 1) vegetative, 2) animal, and 3) rational.

Tuca continued saying to Maecenas:

“Come, I love bully Horace as well as thou do, I. It is an honest hieroglyphic.”

In Tuca’s culture, if you are called a bully, it means you are being called a jolly, fine fellow.

Tuca then said to Horace: “Give me thy wrist, Helicon.”

By “wrist,” he meant “hand.”

Mount Helicon was sacred to the Muses.

Tuca continued, “Do thou think I’ll second ever a rhinoceros — sneerer — of them all against thee? Huh?”

He pointed to Maecenas and said, “Or thy noble Hippocrene, here? I’ll turn stage actor first, and be whipped, too; do thou see, bully?”

Hippocrene is the spring of the Muses on Mount Helicon.

Maecenas is like the Hippocrene in that he keeps the patronage flowing to people such as Horace, who is like Mount Helicon in that he is a giant of literature.

Augustus Caesar said to Gallus and Tiberius:

“You have your will — what you want — from Caesar; use it, Romans.

“Virgil shall be your Praetor, and ourself will here sit by, spectator of your sports, and think it no impeach of — no discredit to — royalty.”

Praetors are basically second in command to Consuls, just as Executive Officers are second in command to Commanding Officers.

Gallus, Tibullus, and Maecenas conferred apart.

Augustus Caesar said to Virgil:

“Our ear is now too much profaned, grave Maro, with these distastes, to take thy sacred lines.”

The “distastes” were the annoyances of Lupus and Aesop.

Virgil’s name was Publius Virgilius Maro.

The sacred lines were lines of the *Aeneid*.

Augustus Caesar continued:

“Put up thy book, until both the time and we are fitted with more hallowed circumstance for the receiving of so divine a work.”

He then said to Gallus, Tibullus, and Maecenas, "Proceed with your plan."

They replied, "We give thanks to great Caesar."

Gallus said:

"Tibullus, draw up the indictment, then, while Horace arrests them on the statute of calumny. Maecenas and I will take our places here.

"Lictors, assist Horace in making the arrest."

"I am the worst accuser under heaven," Horace said.

"Tut, you must do it," Gallus said. "It will be noble mirth and entertainment."

"I take no knowledge that they do malign me," Horace said.

In other words, he ignores their insults.

"Aye, but the world takes knowledge — it takes notice," Tibullus said.

"I wish the world knew how heartily I wish a fool should hate me!" Horace said.

If a fool hates someone, that is a compliment.

Crispinus and Demetrius were brought to the bar. They would be put on trial.

Seeing this, Tuca became worried and said to himself:

"By the body of Jupiter!

"What! Will they arraign my brisk poetaster and his poor journeyman, huh?

"I wish that I were abroad skeldering — conning — for a drachma, so that I would be out of this labyrinth again; I do feel myself turn stinkard already.



“But I must set the best face I have upon it now.”

The best thing Tucca could do for himself now was to metaphorically throw his acquaintances under the bus.

He said out loud, “Well said, my divine, deft Horace, bring the whoreson detracting slaves to the bar, do. Make them hold up their spread golls; I’ll give in evidence for thee, if thou are willing.”

Golls are hands. They are held up when people take oaths. “Spread golls” are “open hands.”

Tucca and Crispinus quietly spoke apart from the others.

Tucca said, “Take courage, Crispinus. I wish that thy man had a clean band — a clean collar!”

“Thy man” was Demetrius.

“What must we do, Captain?” Crispinus asked.

“Thou shall see soon,” Tucca said. “Do not make division with thy legs so.”

Crispinus’ knees were shaking and knocking together because he was afraid. According to Tucca, the knocking sounded like a rapid passage — division — in a piece of music.

Pointing to Tucca, Augustus Caesar asked, “Who’s he, Horace?”

“I know him only for a motion, Caesar,” Horace answered.

A motion is literally a puppet, as in a puppet show. Figuratively, it is a human figure of fun.

Hearing them, Tucca said, “I am one of thy commanders, Caesar. I am a man of service and action. My name is

Pantilius Tucca. I have served in thy wars against Mark Antony, I.”

“Do you know him, Cornelius?” Augustus Caesar asked Gallus, who had been a general.

Cornelius Gallus answered, “He’s one who has had the mustering or convoy — recruitment or escort — of a company now and then; I never noted him by any other employment.”

“We will observe him better,” Augustus Caesar said.

Having finished writing the indictment, Tibullus said, “Lictor, proclaim silence in the court.”

“In the name of Caesar, silence!” the Lictor said.

“Let the parties, the accuser and the accused, present themselves,” Tibullus said.

“The accuser and the accused: Present yourselves in court,” the Lictor said.

“Here,” Crispinus and Demetrius said.

“Read the indictment,” Virgil ordered.

Tibullus ordered, “Rufus Laberius Crispinus and Demetrius Fannius, hold up your hands.”

Tibullus then read out loud:

*“You are before this time jointly and severally — individually — indicted, and here immediately to be arraigned upon the statute of calumny, or Lex Remmia, aka Roman defamation law, the one by the name of Rufus Laberius Crispinus, alias Crispinus, poetaster and plagiarist; the other by the name of Demetrius Fannius, play dresser and plagiarist; that you, not having the fear of Phoebus Apollo or his shafts before your eyes, contrary to*

*the peace of our liege lord, Augustus Caesar, his crown and dignity, and against the form of a statute in that case made and provided, have most ignorantly, foolishly, and (more like yourselves) maliciously gone about to deprave — that is, defame — and calumniate the person and writings of Quintus Horatius Flaccus here present: poet, and priest to the Muses; and to that end have mutually conspired and plotted, at sundry times as by several means and in sundry places, for the better accomplishing your base and envious purpose; taxing him falsely of self-love, arrogancy, impudence, railing, filching by translation, etc.*

*“Of all which calumnies and every one of them, in manner and form aforesaid, what do you answer?”*

*“Are you guilty or not guilty?”*

Tucca said to Crispinus and Demetrius, “Say, ‘Not guilty.’”

Crispinus and Demetrius pleaded, “Not guilty.”

“How will you be tried?” Tibullus asked.

Tucca said to Crispinus and Demetrius, “Say, ‘By the Roman gods and the noblest Romans.’”

Crispinus and Demetrius said, “By the Roman gods and the noblest Romans.”

Virgil said to Crispinus and Demetrius, “Here sit Maecenas and Cornelius Gallus. Are you content to be tried by these?”

Tucca said to Crispinus and Demetrius, “Say, ‘Aye, so long as the noble captain may be joined with them in commission.’”

Crispinus and Demetrius said, “Aye, so long as the noble captain may be joined with them in commission.”

Virgil said to Horace, “What says the plaintiff?”

“I am content,” Horace answered.

“Captain, then take your place,” Virgil said.

Tucca said to Virgil:

“Alas, my worshipful Praetor, it is more of thy gent’ness than of my deserving, iwis.”

Tucca’s “gent’ness” means “gentleness,” aka courtesy.

“Iwis” means “certainly.”

Tucca continued:

“But since it has pleased the court to make choice of my wisdom and gravity —”

He said to Crispinus and Demetrius:

“— come, my calumnious varlets: Let’s hear you talk for yourselves now an hour or two.

“What can you say? Make a noise. Act, act!”

Virgil said to the judges Gallus, Maecenas, and Tucca:

“Wait; turn and face Virgil and take an oath first.

“You shall swear by thunder-darting Jove, the King of gods, and by the genius of Augustus Caesar, by your own white and uncorrupted souls and the deep reverence of our Roman justice, to judge this case with truth and equity, as bound by your religion and your laws.”

When taking an oath, a person would swear by the genius — guardian spirit — of the person’s household. Augustus Caesar was the father of his country, and he wished to be regarded as its guardian spirit.

Rome, in fact, engaged in Emperor worship.

Virgil said to Tibullus, “Now read the evidence.”

Tibullus took out two papers.

Virgil added, "But first ask each prisoner if that writing is theirs."

Tibullus gave a Lictor one paper and ordered, "Show this to Crispinus."

He then asked, "Crispinus, is it yours?"

Tucca said to Crispinus, "Say, 'Aye.'"

Crispinus hesitated.

Tucca said to him, "What, do thou stand upon it, pimp? Do not deny thine own Minerva, thy Pallas, the issue of thy brain!"

Minerva is the Roman name of Pallas Athena, who, according to mythology, was born fully grown from her father Jupiter's head. She was the goddess of wisdom.

"Yes, it is mine," Crispinus said.

The Lictor returned the paper to Tibullus.

Giving the Lictor the other paper, Tibullus ordered, "Show that to Demetrius."

He then asked, "Is it yours?"

"It is," Demetrius answered.

The Lictor returned the paper to Tibullus.

"There's a father who will not deny his own bastard, now, I warrant thee," Tucca said.

"Read the papers out loud," Virgil ordered.

The papers were poems by Crispinus and Demetrius criticizing Horace.

Tibullus began to read out loud the first paper, which was by Crispinus:

*“Ramp up, my genius! Be not retrograde [regressive],*

*“But boldly nominate [call] a spade, a spade.*

*“What! Shall thy lubrical [slippery] and glibbery [shifty] muse*

*“Live as if she were defunct [slackly], like [a] punk in stews?”*

“Ramp up” means “rear up.” A ramping lion is a lion standing on its hind legs.

A punk in stews is a whore in a brothel.

Tucca said to himself, “Excellent!”

Tibullus continued to read Crispinus’ poem out loud:

*“Alas! That were [would be] no modern [ordinary] consequence,*

*“To have cothurnal buskins [bootish boots] frightened [frightened] hence.*

*“No! Teach thy incubus to poetize,*

*“And throw abroad [scatter] thy spurious snotteries [snot, aka filth]*

*“Upon that puffed-up [vainglorious] lump of barmy froth —*  
*”*

An incubus is a male evil spirit that comes to and sleeps with women in the night.

“Barm” means the froth on fermenting malt liquor. The froth comes from yeast. “Barmy” can mean “frothing,” and “froth” can mean “bubblehead.”

Tucca said to himself, “Aha!”

Tibullus continued to read Crispinus’ poem out loud:

*“Or clumsy [numbed with cold] chilblained judgment, which  
with oath*

*“Magnificates [Magnifies] his merit, and bespawls  
[splatters with spit]*

*“The conscious time with humorous foam, and brawls*

*“As if his organons of sense [sensory organs] would crack*

*“The sinews of my patience. Break his back [Ruin him],*

*“O poets all and some, for now we list [wish]*

*“Of strenuous ven-ge-ance to clutch the fist!*

*“Subscri. Cris.”*

The last line means “I have signed. Crispinus.”

Tucca said, “Aye, by the Virgin Mary, this was written like a Hercules in poetry, now!”

“Excellently well threatened!” Augustus Caesar said.

“Aye, and as strangely worded, Caesar,” Virgil said.

Crispinus had used the fanciest words at his disposal.

“We observe it,” Augustus Caesar said.

Virgil said to Tibullus, “Read the other poem out loud, now.”

Tucca pointed to Demetrius and said, “This is a fellow of a good prodigal tongue, too; this’ll do well.”

Tibullus began to read out loud the second paper, which was by Demetrius:

*“Our muse is in mind for the untrussing [exposing] a poet;*

*“I slip by his name, for most men do know it.*

*“A critic whom all the world bescumbers [shits]*

*“With satirical humors and lyrical numbers.”*

The poem describes a critic who shits on all the world by means of his satirical poetry.

Tucca said quietly to himself, “Are thou there, boy? Have you caught on that?”

Tibullus continued to read Demetrius’ poem out loud:

*“And for the most part, himself does advance*

*“With much self-love and more arrogance.”*

“Good again,” Tucca said to himself.

Tibullus continued to read Demetrius’ poem out loud:

*“And, but that I would not be thought a prater,*

*“I could tell you he were a translator.*

*“I know the authors from whence he has stole,*

*“And could trace him, too, but that I understand them not full and whole.”*

Tucca said to himself, “That line has broken loose from all his fellows; chain him up shorter, do.”

According to Demetrius, Horace is a plagiarist who steals from other authors who did not write in English.

Tibullus continued to read Demetrius’ poem out loud:

*“The best note I can give you to know him by*

*“Is, that he keeps gallants company,*

*“Whom I would wish in time should him fear,*



*“Lest after [afterward] they buy repentance too dear [at too high a price].*

*“Subscri. Deme. Fan.”*

The last line means “I have signed. Demetrius Fannius.”

“Well said,” Tucca said. “This carries palm with it.”

Palm leaves are signs of victory. Tucca was highly praising Demetrius’ poem.

Horace said to Demetrius:

“And why, thou motley gull?”

A gull is a fool. “Motley” is multi-colored clothing worn by a jester. Demetrius’ clothing consists of odds and ends of various colors.

Horace continued:

“Why should they fear? When have thou known us to wrong or tax a friend? I dare thy malice to betray it. Speak. Now thou curl up, thou poor and nasty snake, and shrink thy poisonous head into thy bosom.”

Demetrius was hanging his head in shame.

Horace continued:

“Out, viper, thou that eat thy parents, hence!”

In this society, people believed that vipers were born by biting their way out of the parent’s body. Vipers were symbols of ingratitude.

Horace continued:

“Rather such speckled creatures as thyself should be eschewed and shunned, such as will bite and gnaw their absent friends, not care for their friends’ reputation; catch at

the loosest laughters, and affect to be thought jesters; such as can devise things never seen or heard, to impair men's names and gratify their credulous adversaries; will carry tales, do basest offices, cherish divided fires, and still increase new flames out of old embers; will reveal each secret that's committed to their trust."

"Divided fires" indicate hatred between people.

Eteocles and Polynices were two brothers who agreed to take turns ruling the city of Thebes. One brother was supposed to rule for a year, and then the other brother would rule for a year, and so on. Eteocles ruled for the first year, but then he refused to give up the throne so that his brother could rule for a year. Angry, Polynices gathered an army together and marched against Thebes, creating the story of the Seven [Champions] Against Thebes. The two brothers killed each other in combat, and when their corpses were cremated together, the flame split in two over their corpses because even in death they were still angry at each other.

In Dante's *Inferno*, Ulysses and Diomedes are encased in flame together because they are angry at each other; the tip of the flame is divided in two. Both of them mourn the fall of Troy, and Diomedes is angry at Ulysses because he thought up the trick of the Trojan Horse, which finally resulted in Troy's fall.

Horace continued:

"Such men as these are black — evil — slaves; Romans, take heed of these."

Tucca said, "Thou twang — sing — right, little Horace, they are indeed: a couple of chapfallen — slack-jawed — curs."

He then said to Gallus and Maecenas, "Come, we of the bench, let's rise and go to the urn and condemn them quickly."

Jurors cast their votes — guilty or not guilty — into an urn.

As Augustus Caesar's representative, Virgil used the majestic plural as he gave instructions to the jurors Gallus, Maecenas, and Tucca:

“Before you jurors withdraw and consult together, worthy Romans, we are to tender our opinion and give you those instructions that may add to your even, impartial judgment and verdict in the case —

“Which thus we do commence. First, you must know that where there is a true and perfect merit there can be no dejection and lowering of standards, and the scorn of humble baseness often so works in a high soul upon the grosser spirit that to the grosser spirit's bleared and offended sense there seems a hideous fault blazed in the object and published to the world, when only the disease is in his eyes.”

Often, a superior person's lack of false modesty appears to be a fault to a lesser person, but the fault is in the lesser person and not in the superior person.

Virgil continued:

“Because of that, it happens that our Horace now stands taxed of — charged with — impudence, self-love, and arrogance by these men, who share no merit in themselves, and therefore think his portion is as small as theirs.

“For they from their own guilt assure their souls that if they should confidently praise their works, in them it would appear inflation and self-conceit.

“But this in a full and well-digested — well-read and well-disposed and well-ordered — man cannot receive that foul abusive name of self-conceit, but instead will receive the fair title of erection — that is, advancement and elevation.

“And for his true use of translating the works of other men, it always has been a work of as much palm — success — in clearest judgments as to invent or make poetry.

“His satiric sharpness is most excusable, as being forced out of a suffering virtue oppressed with the license of the time.

“And howsoever fools or jerking — scourging — pedants, actors, or suchlike buffoonish, barking wits may with their beggarly and barren trash tickle and please base, vulgar ears with their despite and contumely,

“This maxim, like Jove’s thunder, shall their pride control:

“The honest satyr — truthful satirist — has the happiest soul.

“Now, Romans, you have heard our thoughts. Withdraw when you please.”

Tibullus said to the Lictors, “Remove the accused from the bar.”

Tucca asked, “Who holds the urn up to us so we can vote, huh?”

He then whispered to Crispinus and Demetrius, “Fear nothing. I’ll acquit you, my honest pitiful stinkards. I’ll do it.”

Crispinus said, “Captain, you shall eternally gird me to you, on my word as a generous, magnanimous man.”

“Go to,” Tucca said. “I’m blushing. Really, I am.”

Maecenas, Gallus, and Tucca withdrew and consulted among themselves.

Augustus Caesar said, “Tibullus, let there be a case of vizards — a pair of masks — privately provided; we have found a subject to bestow them on.”

“It shall be done, Caesar,” Tibullus said.

“Here are words, Horace, able to bastinado — beat — a man’s ears,” Augustus Caesar said.

Horace replied, “Aye. If it pleases great Caesar, I have pills about me mixed with the whitest kind of hellebore — the best medicine of this kind — that would give him a light vomit, which should purge his brain and stomach of those tumorous heats — those swollen inflammations — if I could have permission to administer these pills to him.”

“Oh, be his Aesculapius, gentle Horace!” Augustus Caesar said. “You shall have permission, and he shall be your patient.”

Aesculapius was the first physician. When he died, he became the god of medicine.

Augustus Caesar then said, “Virgil, use your authority; command him to come forth.”

Virgil said, “Caesar is concerned about your health, Crispinus, and he himself has chosen a physician to treat you; take his pills.”

Crispinus was brought to Horace and accepted the medicine. He swallowed a pill.

Horace said, “They are somewhat bitter, sir, but very wholesome. Take yet another. Good. Stand nearby, they’ll work good.”

Tibullus said:

“Romans, return to your individual seats.

“Lictors, bring forward the urn, and set the accused at the bar.”

The jurymen sat.

Tucca said to Crispinus and Demetrius, “Quickly, you whoreson egregious varlets! Come forward. What! Shall we sit in judgment all day upon you? You make no more haste now than a beggar upon pattens, or a physician to a patient who has no money, you pilchers.”

Pattens are thick-soled shoes. Pilchers are worthless people.

Some Lictors brought the accused to the bar and brought the urn to the jurymen, who marked and placed their ballots in it. The urn was brought to Tibullus.

Tibullus said, “Rufus Laberius Crispinus and Demetrius Fannius, hold up your hands. You have, according to the Roman custom, put yourselves upon trial to the urn, for diverse and sundry calumnies whereof you have before this time been indicted and are now presently arraigned. Prepare yourselves to hearken to the verdict of your triers.”

Tibullus took the ballots from the urn, looked at them and said:

“Caius Cilnius Maecenas pronounces you, by this handwriting, guilty.

“Cornelius Gallus, guilty.

“Pantilius Tucca —”

Tucca interrupted: “— parcel-guilty, I.”

This means “partly guilty.” Tucca was trying to have it both ways, but his vote was actually either guilty or not guilty, since those were the only verdicts allowed.

Demetrius said, “He means himself; for it was he, indeed, who suborned us to the calumny.”

Tucca said to Demetrius, “I, you whoreson cantharides? Was it I?”

A cantharides is a beetle that can cause human skin to blister. Tucca was accusing Demetrius of blistering his reputation.

“I appeal to your conscience, Captain,” Demetrius said to Tucca.

Tibullus said to Demetrius, “Then you confess it now.”

“I do, and I crave the mercy of the court,” Demetrius said.

“What does Crispinus say?” Tibullus asked.

Crispinus groaned and said, “Oh, the captain, the captain —”

“My medicine begins to work with my patient, I see,” Horace said.

“Captain, stand forth and answer,” Virgil said to Tucca.

Tucca replied, “Hold thy peace, poet Praetor; I appeal from thee to Caesar, I.”

“Poet Praetor” resembles “poet prater.”

Tucca then said to Augustus Caesar, “Do me right, royal Caesar.”

Augustus Caesar replied, “By the Virgin Mary, and I will, sir.”

He then ordered, “Lictors, gag him, do, and put a pair of masks over his head, so that he may look bifronted, just as he speaks.”

The masks on his head would face in opposite directions — forward and backward — because Tucca was duplicitous: two-faced.

Tucca said:

“Gods and fiends! Caesar! Thou will not, Caesar, will thou?”

The Lictors approached him with a gag and two masks.

Tucca said:

“Away, you whoreson vultures, away! You think I am a dead corpse now, because Caesar is disposed to jest with a man of mark and distinction, or so.”

The Lictors put their hands on him.

Tucca said:

“Hold your hooked talons out of my flesh, you inhuman harpies! Go to, do it!”

Harpies are half-bird, half-woman creatures.

Tucca continued:

“What! Will the royal Augustus cast away a gent’man of worship, a captain and a commander, for a couple of condemned caitiff calumnious cargoes?”

“Caitif” means “wretched,” or “captive.”

“Dispatch, Lictors,” Augustus Caesar ordered. “Do it.”

“Caesar!” Tucca appealed.

The Lictors gagged and masked Tucca, and then they moved him aside.

“Continue, Tibullus,” Augustus Caesar said.

Virgil said to Tibullus, “Demand what cause — what reason — they had to malign Horace.”

Demetrius said, “In truth, no great cause, not I, I must confess, but that he kept better company (for the most part) than I; and that better men loved him than loved me; and that his writings thrived better than mine, and were better liked, and graced; nothing else.”



“Thus envious souls repine at others’ good,” Virgil said.

Horace said to Demetrius:

“If this is all, truly, I forgive thee freely.

“Envy me always, as long as Virgil loves me, Gallus, Tibullus, and the best-best Caesar, my dear Maecenas. While these, with many more, whose names I wisely slip, shall think me worthy their honored and adored society, and read, and love, approve, and applaud my poems, I would not wish but such as you should regard my poems with spite and contempt.”

Crispinus groaned, “Oh —”

Tibullus asked, “How are thou now, Crispinus?”

He replied, “Oh, I am sick —”

Horace said, “A basin, a basin quickly! Our medicine is working.”

He then said to Crispinus, “Don’t faint, man. ”

A receptacle was brought and held up for Crispinus.

Crispinus retched and said, “Oh — retrograde — reciprocal — incubus —”

“What’s that, Horace?” Augustus Caesar asked.

Augustus Caesar was far enough away that he did not clearly hear Crispinus, and so Horace reported on the words that Crispinus was vomiting.

Horace said, “‘Retrograde’ and ‘reciprocal incubus’ have come up.”

“Thanks be to Jupiter,” Gallus said.

Crispinus retched and said, “Oh — glibbery — lubrical — defunct — oh! —”

“Well said; here’s some abundance of inflated, pretentious words,” Horace said.

“What are they?” Virgil asked.

Horace replied, “‘Glibbery,’ ‘lubrical,’ and ‘defunct.’”

“Oh, they came up easy,” Gallus said.

Crispinus retched and moaned, “Oh — oh! —”

“What’s that?” Tibullus asked.

“Nothing yet,” Horace answered.

Crispinus retched and said, “Magnificate!”

“‘Magnificate’?” Maecenas said. “That came up somewhat hard.”

Crispinus retched and said, “Oh, I shall cast up my — spurious — snotteries —”

Horace said to Crispinus, “Good. Again.”

Crispinus retched and said, “Chilblained — oh! — oh! — clumsy —”

“That ‘clumsy’ stuck terribly,” Horace said.

“What’s all that, Horace?” Maecenas asked.

Horace answered, “‘Spurious snotteries,’ ‘chilblained,’ ‘clumsy.’”

“Oh, Jupiter!” Tibullus said.

“Who would have thought there should have been such a deal of filth in a poet?” Gallus said.

Crispinus retched and said, “Oh — barmy froth —”

“What’s that?” Augustus Caesar asked.

Crispinus retched and said, “Puffy — inflate — turgidous — ventositous —”

“Turgidous” means “swollen.”

“Ventositous” means “flatulent” or “windy.”

Horace said, “‘Barmy froth,’ ‘puffy,’ ‘inflate,’ ‘turgidous,’ and ‘ventositous’ have come up.”

“Oh, terrible windy words!” Tibullus said.

“A sign of a windy brain,” Gallus said.

Crispinus retched and said, “Oh — oblatrant — furibund — fatuate — strenuous —”

“Oblatrant” means “railing.”

“Furibund” means “furious.”

“Fatuate” means “speak or act foolishly.”

Horace said, “Here’s a deal: ‘oblatrant,’ ‘furibund,’ ‘fatuate,’ ‘strenuous.’”

“Now all’s come up, I think,” Augustus Caesar said. “What a tumult he had in his belly!”

“No, not yet,” Horace said. “There’s the frequent ‘conscious damp’ behind, still.”

Crispinus retched and said, “Oh — conscious — damp.”

“It’s come up, thanks to Apollo and Aesculapius,” Horace said.

Observing Crispinus, he said, “Yet there’s another; you had best take another pill.”

Crispinus said, “Oh, no.”

Then he moaned, “Oh! — oh! — oh! — oh!”

“Force yourself, then, a little with your finger,” Horace said.

Putting his finger down his throat, Crispinus said, “Oh — oh! — prorumped!”

“Prorumped” means “burst forth.”

Tibullus said, “‘Prorumped’? What a noise it made! As if his spirit would have prorumped with it.”

Crispinus moaned, “Oh — oh! — oh!”

“Help him,” Virgil said. “It sticks strangely in his throat, whatever it is.”

Crispinus retched and said, “Oh — clutched.”

Horace said, “Now it’s come: ‘clutched.’”

“‘Clutched’?” Augustus Caesar said. “It’s well that’s come up! It had only a narrow passage.”

Crispinus retched and moaned, “Oh —”

“Again,” Virgil said. “Hold him; hold his head there.”

Horace supported Crispinus’ head over the receptacle.

Crispinus retched and said, “Snarling gusts — quaking custard.”

“Snarling gusts” can be “snarling outbursts of words.”

A “quaking custard” is a “trembling coward.”

“How are you now, Crispinus?” Horace asked.

Crispinus retched and said, “Oh — obstupefact!”

“Obstupefact” means “stupefied.”

“We are all that, I assure you,” Tibullus said.

“How do you feel?” Horace asked.

“Pretty well, I thank you,” Crispinus said.

Virgil said:

“These pills can but restore him for a time, not cure him quite of such a malady, caught by so many surfeits, which have filled his blood and brain thus full of crudities.

“It is necessary, therefore, that he observe a strict and wholesome diet.”

Virgil gave advice to Crispinus:

“Look that you take a good draught each morning of old Cato’s principles, next your heart (that is, on an empty stomach) and then walk until it is well digested.”

Some schools began teaching before breakfast, and so some learning began on an empty stomach.

Cato the Censor’s style of writing was simple and straightforward, a good remedy for Crispinus’ overly elaborate style.

Virgil continued giving advice to Crispinus:

“Then come home and taste a piece of Terence the comic playwright; suck his phrase instead of licorice.

“And at any hand — by all means — shun Plautus and old Ennius; they are meats too harsh for a weak stomach.

“Become accustomed to read (but not without a tutor) the best Greeks:

“These include Orpheus, Musaeus, Pindar, Hesiod, Callimachus, Theocritus, and high Homer.

“But beware of Lycophron: He is too dark and dangerous a dish.”

Orpheus and Musaeus were mythical singers. Orpheus was able to make trees, stones, and floods come to him when he played. He traveled to the Land of the Dead in an attempt to rescue his wife. To get past Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog of hell, he played his lute and sang. Cerberus, put under a spell by the music, fell asleep. Orpheus was allowed to take his wife back to the Land of the Living provided that he did not look at her until she was in the Land of the Living. He led her back, stepped into the Land of the Living, and turned around to face her. Just one step away from the Land of the Living, she said to him, “Farewell,” and went back down to the Land of the Dead.

Pindar was a Greek lyric poet. Theocritus was a Greek lyrical poet. Homer, of course, authored the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Lycophron used obscure words in his plays.

Virgil continued giving advice to Crispinus:

“You must not hunt for wild, outlandish terms to stuff out a peculiar — idiosyncratic — dialect, but instead let your matter — your content — run before your words.

“And if at any time you chance to meet some Gallo-Belgic phrase, you shall not immediately rack your poor verse to give it entertainment, but let it pass, and do not think yourself much damnified — damaged — if you do leave it out, when neither your understanding nor the sense could well receive it.”

A semi-annual news periodical called the *Mercurius Gallobelgicus* was written in Latin.

Some phrases are not good for communicating sense.

Virgil continued giving advice to Crispinus:

“This fair abstinence in time will render you more sound and clear.

“And this I have prescribed to you, in place of a strict sentence, which until he shall perform this prescription, attire him in that robe.”

Virgil pointed to it, and a Lictor dressed Crispinus in an undergraduate’s gown. Crispinus would begin an education in the arts.

Virgil continued giving advice to Crispinus:

“And henceforth learn to bear yourself more humbly: not to swell, or breathe your insolent and idle spite on him whose laughter can frighten your worst attempt to slander him.”

Tibullus said to the Lictors, “Take him away.”

“May Jupiter guard Caesar!” Crispinus said.

Virgil said, “And for a week or two, see that he is locked up in some dark place removed from company. He will talk idly otherwise after his medicine.”

People who were thought to be insane were treated by being kept alone in dark places.

Crispinus was led aside.

Virgil now said to Demetrius:

“Now to you, sir. The extremity of law awards you to be branded on the forehead for this your calumny; but since it pleases Horace, the party wronged, to entreat of Caesar a mitigation of that juster doom, with Caesar’s tongue thus we pronounce your sentence.

“Demetrius Fannius, thou shall here put on” — he pointed to a fool’s costume — “that coat and cap; and henceforth, think thyself no other than they make thee: a fool.

“Vow to wear them in every fair and generous assembly, until the best sort of minds shall take to knowledge as well thy satisfaction as thy wrongs.”

Demetrius will wear the fool’s outfit until the best minds know and acknowledge both his atonement and his offenses.

Demetrius put on the fool’s clothing.

Horace said to Virgil, “Only, grave and respected Praetor, here in open court I ask that the oath for good behavior may be administered to both Crispinus and Demetrius.

“Horace, it shall,” Virgil said.

He ordered, “Tibullus, give it to them.”

Tibullus began to administer the oath:

“Rufus Laberius Crispinus and Demetrius Fannius, lay your hands on your hearts.”

They did as asked.

Tibullus continued:

“You shall here solemnly attest and swear that never after this instant, either at booksellers’ stalls, in taverns, twopenny rooms at the theater for those who pay two pennies to see a play, attiring-houses and dressing rooms, noblemen’s butteries, puisnes’ chambers, aka chambers for junior law students (the best and farthest places where you are admitted to come), you shall once attempt or dare (thereby to endear yourself the more to any actor, fan or friend, or guilty fool in your company) to malign, traduce, or detract the person or the writings of Quintus Horatius Flaccus or any other eminent man transcending you in merit whom your envy shall find reason to work upon, either for that or for keeping himself — the envious man — in better acquaintance or enjoying better friends.”



Crispinus and Demetrius had to swear that wherever they went, they would not malign Horace or any other man better than they were, whether for the reason of tearing down the better man or for the reason of hoping to elevate themselves and to have better friends.

Tibullus continued:

“Or if — transported by any sudden and desperate resolution — you do, that then you shall not under the bastoun, or in the next presence, being an honorable assembly of his favorers, be brought as voluntary gent — a volunteer gentleman — to undertake the forswearing of it.”

In other words: If you do libel a good person, then you shall not deny it because you fear a beating under the bastoun — a beating with a stick — or because you are in the presence of the man you libeled and of many of his friends who will defend him.

Tibullus continued:

“Neither shall you at any time (ambitiously affecting the title of the untrussers or whippers of the age) allow the itch of writing to overrun your performance in libel, upon pain of being taken up for lepers in wit, and — losing both your time and your papers — be irrecoverably forfeited to the Hospital of Fools.”

In other words: If you succumb to the itch of libeling a better man than you are, you shall be forever sentenced to the Hospital for Fools.

Tibullus concluded:

“So help you our Roman gods and the genius of great Caesar.”

Crispinus and Demetrius swore to obey the oath.

“Good,” Virgil said. “Now dissolve the court.”

Horace, Tibullus, Gallus, Maecenas, and Virgil all said,  
“And thanks to Caesar, who thus has exercised his patience.”

Augustus Caesar said:

“We have indeed, you worthiest friends of Caesar.

“It is the bane and torment of our ears to hear the discords of those jangling rhymers who, with their bad and scandalous practices, bring all true arts and learning in contempt.

“But don’t let your high thoughts descend so low as these despised objects: Crispinus and Demetrius. Let them decline, along with their flat, groveling souls.

“Be you yourselves.

“And as with our best favors you stand crowned, so let your mutual loves be always renowned.

“Envy will dwell where there is want [lack] of merit,

“Though the deserving man should crack his spirit.”

“Crack his spirit” is like “break his heart.”

All then sang this song:

*“Blush, folly, blush! Here’s none who fears*

*“The wagging of an ass’ ears,*

*“Although a wolfish case — exterior — he wears.*

*“Detraction is but baseness’ varlet,*

*“And apes are apes, though clothed in scarlet.”*

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*Rumpatur, quisquis rumpitur invidia.*

The Latin quotation, which is from Martial 9.97, means, “Let him burst, whoever is bursting with envy!”

**NOTES (*The Arraignment, or Poetaster*)**

This Comical Satire was first  
acted in the year  
1601

By the then Children of  
Queen Elizabeth's Chapel.

The principal comedians were:

NATHAN FIELD  
JOHN UNDERWOOD  
SALOMON PAVY  
WILLIAM OSTLER  
THOMAS DAY  
THOMAS MARTON

With the allowance of the Master of Revels.

— 2.1 —

ALBIUS

*Look here, my sweet wife:* [He lays his finger on his lips.] *I am mum, my*

*dear mummia, my balsamum, my spermaceti, and my very city of* [Aside to 55

Crispinus] *She has the most best, true, feminine wit in Rome!*

(2.1.54-56)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 50.

Here is an interesting excerpt from an article on mummia, which is part of a corpse used in preparing medicine:

*The last line of a 17th century poem by John Donne prompted Louise Noble's quest. "Women," the line read, are not only "Sweetness and wit," but "mummy, possessed."*

*Sweetness and wit, sure. But mummy? In her search for an explanation, Noble, a lecturer of English at the University of New England in Australia, made a surprising discovery: That word recurs throughout the literature of early modern Europe, from Donne's "Love's Alchemy" to Shakespeare's "Othello" and Edmund Spenser's "The Faerie Queene," because mummies and other preserved and fresh human remains were a common ingredient in the medicine of that time. In short: Not long ago, Europeans were cannibals.*

Source of Above:

Dolan, Maria: "The Gruesome History of Eating Corpses as Medicine: The question was not 'Should you eat human flesh?' says one historian, but, 'What sort of flesh should you eat?'" *The Smithsonian Magazine*. 6 May 2012

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-gruesome-history-of-eating-corpses-as-medicine-82360284/>

*We know it, our dear Virgil, and esteem it 125*

*A most dishonest practice in that man*

*Will seem too witty in another's work.*

(5.3.125-127)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 147.

The following anecdote appears in David Bruce's book *The Funniest People in Theater: 250 Anecdotes*:

After seeing actress Diana Rigg in a brief nude scene in the play *Abelard and Heloise*, caustic critic John Simon wrote, "Diana Rigg is built like a brick mausoleum with insufficient flying buttresses." The next day, as Ms. Rigg went to the theater, she hoped that no one would recognize her. Fortunately, all of the cast members knew better than to mention the review. After a few weeks, however, she began to think the review funny and soon started quoting it. (By the way, Ms. Rigg knows an actress — not herself — who saw Mr. Simon in a New York restaurant and took the opportunity to dump a plate of potato salad on his head.)

Source: Source: Diana Rigg, compiler, *No Turn Unstoned*, pp. 8, 42, 114.

The anecdote was retold in David Bruce's own words from Ms. Rigg's book:

Rigg, Diana, compiler. *No Turn Unstoned: The Worst Ever Theatrical Reviews*. Los Angeles, CA: Silman-James Press, 1982.

— 5.3 —

*And if at any time you chance to meet  
Some Gallo-Belgic phrase, you shall not immediately 490  
Rack your poor verse to give it entertainment,  
But let it pass, and do not think yourself  
Much damnified if you do leave it out,  
When neither your understanding nor the sense  
Could well receive it.*

(5.3.489-495)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 164.

This is one of John Donne's Epigrams:

*MERCURIUS GALLO-BELGICUS.*

*Like Esop's fellow-slaves, O Mercury,  
Which could do all things, thy faith is ; and I  
Like Esop's self, which nothing. I confess  
I should have had more faith, if thou hadst less.  
Thy credit lost thy credit. 'Tis sin to do,  
In this case, as thou wouldst be done unto,*

*To believe all. Change thy name ; thou art like  
Mercury in stealing, but liest like a Greek.*

Source: Donne, John. "Epigrams." Poems of John Donne.  
Vol II. E. K. Chambers, Editor. London: Lawrence &  
Bullen, 1896.

<http://www.luminarium.org/editions/donneepigrams.htm>

This is one of Bren Jonson's Epigrams:

Source text:

X C I I.

*The New Cry.*

*Ere Cherries ripe, and Straw-berries be gon,  
Unto the Crys of London I'll add one;  
Ripe Statesmen, ripe: They grow in every Street;  
At six and twenty, ripe. You shall 'em meet,  
And have 'em yield no favour, but of State.  
Ripe are their Ruffs, their Cuffs, their Beards, their  
Gate,  
And Grave as ripe, like mellow as their Faces.  
They know the States of Christendom, not the  
Places:  
Yet have they seen the Maps, and bought 'em too,  
And understand 'em, as most Chapmen do.  
The Counsels, Projects, Practices they know,  
And what each Prince doth for Intelligence owe,  
And unto whom: They are the Almanacks*



*For Twelve Years yet to come, what each State  
lacks.*

*They carry in their Pockets Tacitus,  
And the Gazetti, or Gallo-Belgicus:  
And talk reserv'd, lock'd up, and full of fear,  
Nay, ask you, how the Day goes in your Ear:  
Keep a Star-Chamber Sentence close, Twelve Days:  
And whisper what a Proclamation says.*

*They meet in Sixes, and at every Mart,  
Are sure to con' the Catalogue by heart;  
Or, every Day, some one at Rimee's looks,  
Or Bills, and there he buys the Names of Books.*

*They all get Porta, for the sundry ways  
To write in Cypher, and the several Keys,  
To ope' the Character. They've found the slight  
With Juice of Limons, Onions, Piss, to write;  
To break up Seals, and close 'em. And they know,  
If the States make Peace, how it will go  
With England. All forbidden Books they get.  
And of the Powder-Plot, they will talk yet.*

*At naming the French King, their Heads they shake,  
And at the Pope, and Spain slight Faces make.  
Or 'gainst the Bishops, for the Brethren, rail,*

*Much like those Brethren; thinking to prevail  
With ignorance on us, as they have done  
On them: And therefore do not only shun  
Others more modest, but contemn us too,  
That know not so much State, wrong, as they do.*

Source of Above: *Epigrams*. Book. The Holloway Pages.

<https://hollowaypages.com/jonson1692epigrams.htm>

## CHAPTER 3: Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*

### CAST OF CHARACTERS (*Bartholomew Fair*)

#### MALE CHARACTERS

JOHN LITTLEWIT, a Proctor. A proctor is a legal agent, an attorney in the ecclesiastical courts. LITTLEWIT is known for being jolly. "Wit" is intelligence.

ZEAL-OF-THE-LAND BUSY, Suitor to Dame PURECRAFT. He is a Banbury Man; many Puritans lived in Banbury. Zeal-of-the-land Busy worked previously as a baker. Puritans are opposed to gluttony and drunkenness, but Zeal-of-the-land Busy has a large waist and he occasionally grows faint and must be revived with medicinal alcohol.

NED WINWIFE, his rival, a Gentleman.

TOM QUARLOUS, companion to WINWIFE; a Gamester. A gamester is a gambler. "Quarulous" is a portmanteau name combining "quarrelous" and "parlous," meaning dangerously quarrelsome. He is dangerously clever.

BARTHOLOMEW COKES, an Esquire of Harrow. A "cokes" is a silly, foolish fellow, aka dupe. An "esquire" is a member of the landed gentry. His sister is Mrs. OVERDO. He is nineteen years old and tall.

HUMPHREY "NUMPS" WASP, his Man, aka Servant. "Numps" is a nickname for Humphrey. A waspish man is an angry or grumpy man. Numps is a little old man.

ADAM OVERDO, a Justice of the Peace. He takes his duties and responsibilities seriously, but he overdoes it. At the beginning of the play, he does not know Mr. WINWIFE.

LANTERN LEATHERHEAD, a Hobbyhorse Seller (Toyman). He sells toys, including hobbyhorses. Among

other things, a hobbyhorse is a child's toy: a stick with the figure of a horse's head at the top.

EZEKIEL EDGWORTH, a Cutpurse.

NIGHTINGALE, a Ballad-Singer.

MOONCALF, Tapster to URSLA. A mooncalf is a monster, or a person with a deformity. A tapster is a bartender.

JORDAN KNOCKEM, a Horse-courser, and a Ranger of Turnbull. A horse-courser is a horse dealer who buys and sells broken-in horses. The word "knock" is slang for "have sex." A ranger is a gamekeeper of a park. The "park" here is Turnbull Street in London, and the "game" is the prostitutes who work there. The street was famous for its brothels. A jordan is a chamber pot. He is occasionally called Daniel.

VAL CUTTING, a Roarer. A famous highwayman was nicknamed "Cutting Dick." A roarer is a bully or roisterer or rowdy.

CAPTAIN WHIT, a Bawd. A bawd is a pimp. Whit speaks with an odd Irish accent. A "whit" is a very little thing: a very small amount, a bit, an iota, a jot.

TROUBLEALL, a bearded Madman.

OLIVER "DAVY" BRISTLE, a Watchman. Bristle may be Welsh and called "Davy" because St. David is the patron saint of Wales. Similarly, an Irishman may be called "Paddy" because St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland.

TOBY HAGGIS, a Watchman. A haggis is a sausage made of entrails.

POACHER, a Beadle; also a Watchman.

FILCHER, Doorkeeper to the puppet-play. To "filch" something means to steal something.

SHARKWELL, Doorkeeper to the puppet-play. To “shark” meant to victimize or to act like a “shark,” aka a swindler or sharper.

SOLOMON, JOHN LITTLEWIT’S Man.

NORDERN, a Clothier (a Northern Man). In the North, much wool was woven.

PUPPY, a Wrestler (a Western Man). A “puppy” is a man who is conceited, foolish, or impertinent. It can also mean a “naïve or inexperienced young man.”

MOUSETRAP-MAN, a seller of items such as mousetraps and tinderboxes.

## **FEMALE CHARACTERS**

WIN LITTLEWIT, JOHN LITTLEWIT’S Wife. “Win” is a nickname for her real name: Win-the-fight. She comes from a Puritan family, and she is pregnant.

DAME PURECRAFT, her Mother, and a Widow. “Craft” means deceit. “Pure” means 1) unadulterated or 2) virtuous.

DAME ALICE OVERDO, Justice OVERDO’S Wife. Her brother is BARTHOLOMEW COKES.

GRACE WELLBORN, Ward to Justice OVERDO.

JOAN TRASH, a Gingerbread-Woman.

URSLA, a Pig-Woman. Her name means “little she-bear.” She is obese. Her name is really Ursula, but she goes by the nickname “Ursla.”

PUNK ALICE, Mistress of the game. “A mistress of the game” is a prostitute. So is a punk. She works on Turnbull Street.

## **OTHER (MINOR) CHARACTERS**

Costardmonger. A costardmonger is a fruit seller. A costard is a kind of apple.

Corncutter. He cuts corns from people's feet. A corn is thick, hardened skin.

Stagekeeper. He is a stagehand.

Bookholder. He is a prompter of actors, and he takes care of the playscripts.

Scrivener. He is a clerk or scribe.

Porters.

Puppets: Leander. Hero. Damon. Pythias. Cupid (disguised as Jonas, a bartender). Cole. Dionysius.

Passersby.

Mob.

Boys.

Etc.

## **NOTES**

The action of the play takes place in one day.

On this day, Quarlous meets Humphrey Wasp, Miss Grace Wellborn, and Troubleall for the first time.

**THE PROLOGUE TO THE KING'S MAJESTY**  
***(Bartholomew Fair)***

*Your Majesty is welcome to a Fair;  
Such place, such men, such language, and such ware  
You must expect: with these, the zealous noise  
Of your land's Puritan faction, scandalized by trifles,  
Such as dolls, hobbyhorses, puppet-plays,  
And such-like, rage at, whereof the petulant ways  
Yourself have known, and have been vexed with long.  
These for your entertainment, without particular wrong,  
Or just ground of complaint of any private man,  
Who of himself either shall think well or can,*

[Anyone who thinks well of himself or can think well of himself will not be hurt by satire; self-esteem will prevent that. In other words, if you think well of yourself, then 1) you will not think that you are being satirized, or 2) if you do think you are being satirized, you will think it is a fair and just satire, or 3) if you do think you are being satirized, the satire will not bother you even if it is not a fair and just satire.]

*The maker [playwright] does present: and hopes, tonight  
To give you for a fairing, true delight.*

Notes:

Ben Jonson wrote the Prologue for a performance at the court of King James I on 1 November 1614.

Particular wrongs are satire of a particular individual rather than a particular class or group of people. Mr. Jonson is a satirist.

Hobbyhorses are figures of a horse that are fastened around the waist of a Morris dancer. Fake legs are part of the costume so that it looks like the comic dancer is on horseback. Also, hobbyhorses are toy horses in general.

A fairing is a gift bought at a fair.

Both King James I and Ben Jonson had trouble with the Puritans. Mr. Jonson objected to the Puritans because they wanted the playhouses closed because they regarded plays as immoral.

This Prologue took the place of the Induction when the play was presented to King James I of England. The previous day, 31 October 1614, the world premiere was played at the Hope Theatre.



## THE INDUCTION ON THE STAGE (*Bartholomew Fair*)

The Stagekeeper speaks directly to you, the audience:

“Gentlemen, have a little patience, the characters are coming and will be here almost instantly. The character who should begin the play, Mr. John Littlewit, the proctor, has a stitch newly fallen in his black silk stocking; his stocking will have a run in it if it is not repaired right away. Fortunately, his stocking will be mended before you can count to twenty. The character plays one of the Arches and dwells near the hospital, and he has a very pretty part.”

John Littlewit is a proctor; that is, he is a lawyer. In particular, he is a lawyer in the Court of Arches, which is at Bow Church on Cheapside Street in London. This church had stone bows, aka arches.

The Stagekeeper continued, “But as for the whole play, will you hear the truth about it?”

He looked around him and said, “I am looking lest the poet/playwright Ben Jonson should hear me, and lest his man, aka servant, Mr. Brome, should be hiding behind the arras, the wall hanging at the back of this stage.”

Ben Jonson’s servant and protégé, Richard Brome, became a successful playwright like Mr. Jonson.

The Stagekeeper continued, “This play is likely to be a very conceited scurvy one, in plain English.

“When the play once comes to Bartholomew Fair, you might just as well go to Virginia, for anything there is of Smithfield in this play.”

Bartholomew Fair was held at Smithfield.

The Stagekeeper continued, “The playwright has not hit the humors; he does not know them.”

“Humors” are characteristic behaviors. The stagehand was saying that Ben Jonson was not rendering the characters’ personalities and actions correctly. However, the Stagekeeper had in mind a particular set of characters. He wanted to see an old-fashioned kind of play with certain stock characters, and Mr. Jonson, a noted satirist, was doing something different in his play.

The Stagekeeper continued, “The playwright has not conversed with the Bartholomew birds, as they say.”

Think of jailbirds. Bartholomew birds are people, many of whom do things that are against the law, who frequent Bartholomew Fair each year.

The Stagekeeper continued, “The playwright does not have a sword-and-buckler man in his Fair.”

Sword-and-buckler men were swashbucklers, aka swaggering men who fought with the old-fashioned sword and buckler, aka a small round shield. The modern weapons of the time were rapier and dagger. The Stagekeeper enjoyed old-fashioned plays with flamboyant characters such as Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*.

The Stagekeeper continued, “Nor does the playwright have in his play a little Davy, to take toll of the bawds there, as in my time.”

Davy was a stereotype character who was a bully and would take a toll, aka payment, from the bawds who made their living selling female flesh.

The Stagekeeper continued, “Nor does the playwright have in his play a Kindheart, if anybody’s teeth should chance to ache in his play.”

Kindheart was an itinerant tooth puller; a stock character based on him appeared in some old-fashioned plays.

The Stagekeeper continued, “Nor does the playwright have in his play a juggler with a well-educated ape, to come over the chain for a King of England, and back again for the Prince, and sit still on his arse for the Pope and the King of Spain.”

The “well-educated ape” is a well-trained monkey or chimpanzee that obeys commands by people portraying English royalty but will not obey commands by people portraying the Pope or the King of Spain. At the time, many English Protestants were anti-Catholic, and many English were anti-Spanish.

The Stagekeeper complained, “This play has none of these fine sights!”

He continued, “Nor does the playwright have the canvas-cut in the night, for a hobbyhorse man to creep in to his she-neighbor and take his leap there. Nothing! No!”

A canvas-cut is a cut in a canvas tent for someone to enter for purposes that someone does not want to be made public. “Cut” is also slang for “cunt.” “Canvas” or “canvass” means “solicit,” so a canvas-cut is a prostitute. A “hobbyhorse” is either a child’s imitation horse or a prostitute, so called because of the riding movement of sex. When horses have sex, it is called leaping. “To leap upon” means to spring upon the female for sex.

The Stagekeeper continued, “If some writer whom I know had had the penning of this matter, he would have made you such a jig-a-jog in the booths, you would have thought an earthquake had been in the fair!”

The “jig-a-jog” is the jiggling and jogging of such things as female breasts during sex. The “jig-a-jog” would occur in the booths of Bartholomew Fair.

The Stagekeeper continued, “But these master poets, they will have their own absurd courses; they will be informed of nothing. Ben Jonson has (I beg your pardon, Sir Reverence) kicked me three or four times around the attiring-house — the place where the actors dress. I thank him for that (I am being sarcastic), but all I did was to advise him with the benefit of my experience.

“I’ll be judged by you, gentlemen, now, but I’ll be judged for only one idea of mine. Would not a fine pump upon the stage have done well for a stage property now? The play could have a prostitute’s head set under the pump, and her stern — her butt — upward, and she would be soused by my witty young masters of the Inns of Court.”

Prostitutes were publicly humiliated; being drenched with water was one such punishment. The Stagekeeper believed that such a sight would be fine public entertainment. The young masters of the Inns of Court were supposedly law students, but many of them simply wanted to party.

The Stagekeeper continued, “What do you think of this idea for a show, now? But the playwright will not hear of this! He says that I am an ass! I! And yet I kept the stage in master Tarlton’s time, I thank my stars.”

Tarlton was a quick-witted comic actor who died in 1588, but who was fondly remembered long afterward.

The Stagekeeper continued, “Ha! If Tarlton had lived to have played in *Bartholomew Fair*, you would have seen him come in and be cozened, aka cheated, in the cloth-quarter, so finely!”

The cloth-quarter was located along the north wall of Saint Bartholomew's Church. The fair had a commercial purpose: the buying and selling of cloth. In fact, one of Tarlton's jests was telling about the time a thief stole his clothes.

The Stagekeeper continued, "And you would have seen John Adams, the rogue who was Tarlton's fellow comic actor, leap and caper upon and around him, and have dealt his vermin about, as though they had cost him nothing!"

The vermin were fleas, which the Stagekeeper said would fall off John Adams' clothing as he leaped and capered around.

The Stagekeeper continued, "And then you would have seen a big, substantial watchman steal in upon them, and then take them away, with mistaking words, as the fashion is in the stage-practice."

"Mistaking words" are malapropisms. On the stage, watchmen were portrayed as constantly making mistakes in their choice of words.

The Bookholder and a Scrivener arrived. A Bookholder is a prompter, and a Scrivener is a clerk or scribe.

The Bookholder said to the Stagekeeper, "How are you? What splendid discourse are you speaking, hmm? Have you found any familiars here who make you so outspoken! What's happening?"

The Stagekeeper replied, "Nothing, but the understanding gentlemen of the ground here asked my judgment."

The "understanding gentlemen of the ground" were the spectators who stood in the pit, which was lower than stage level. These spectators were sometimes called groundlings.

The Bookholder said, “Your judgment, rascal! For what? Sweeping the stage, or gathering up the broken apples for the bears within?”

The play was being performed at the Hope Theatre, an outdoor theater in Bankside, Bear Garden. One day out of fourteen the Hope Theatre was used for bear-baitings. A bear would be tied to a stake, and dogs would bait — bite and attack — it.

The Bookholder continued, “Go away, rogue, it’s come to a fine degree in these spectacles when such a youth as you pretends to make a judgment.”

The Stagekeeper, who was not a youth, having worked with Tarlton many years ago, exited. Possibly, the Bookholder was referring to a second childhood.

The Bookholder continued, “And yet he may make a judgment concerning most of this matter, truly, for the author has written this play just to his meridian and the scale of the grounded judgments here, his playfellows in wit and intelligence.”

According to the Bookholder, Mr. Jonson had written *Bartholomew Fair* to the height of the Stagekeeper’s understanding, and on a scale that the groundlings would understand and enjoy. In other words, Mr. Jonson had written a play that most people could understand and enjoy.

The Bookholder came forward and said to the audience, “Gentlemen, not for lack of a prologue, but by way of a new one, I am sent out to you here, with a Scrivener and certain articles drawn out in haste between our author and you, which if you please to hear them, and if they appear reasonable to approve of, the play will follow immediately.”

Mr. Jonson had written a quasi-legal contract between himself as the playwright and the members of the audience.

The purpose of the contract and the entire induction was to give the audience some idea of what they were to witness on the stage and how to react to it.

The Bookholder said, “Read, Scribe. Give me a copy of the contract.”

The Scrivener read out loud:

*“Articles of agreement, formal and legal, between the spectators or hearers, at the Hope Theatre on the Bankside in the county of Surry, on the one party; and the author of Bartholomew Fair, in the said place and county, on the other party: the one and thirtieth day of October, 1614, and in the twelfth year of the reign of our sovereign lord JAMES, by the grace of God, king of England, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith; and of Scotland the seven and fortieth.”*

In 1614, the King of England still claimed to be the legal King of France. This claim would not be given up until 1802.

The Scrivener continued:

*“Imprimis, aka first. It is covenanted and agreed, by and between the parties aforesaid, and the said spectators and hearers, the finicky and spiteful as well as the favoring and judicious, as also the grounded judgments and understandings, do for themselves individually covenant and agree to remain in the places their money or friends have put them in, with patience, for the space of two hours and an half, and somewhat more. In this time the author promiseth to present them by us, with a new and sufficiently likeable play, called Bartholomew Fair, which is merry and as full of noise as it is of entertainment, and which is made to delight all and to offend none, provided they have either the wit or the honesty to think well of themselves.”*

Grounded judgments are those that are well grounded on good evidence and good principles; also, grounded judgments are the judgments of the groundlings.

Anyone who thinks well of himself or can think well of himself will not be hurt by satire; self-esteem will prevent that. In other words, if you think well of yourself, you will not think you are being satirized. Or, if you do think you are being satirized, then you will also think that the satire is fair and just. Or, if you do think you are being satirized, the satire will not bother you even if it is not a fair and just satire.

The Scrivener continued:

*“It is further agreed that every person here have his or their free will of judgment to like or dislike at their own charge, the author having now put his play forth among the public. It shall be lawful for any man to judge his six-pence worth, his twelve-pence worth, and so on up to the worth of his eighteen pence, two shillings, half a crown — all the way up to the value of his place — provided always his place does not get above his wit and intelligence. And if he has paid for half a dozen guests, he may make the judgment of the play’s worth for all of them, too, as long as he will undertake that they shall be silent. He shall put in for critical judgments here as they do for lots at the lottery. For example, if he pays but six pence at the door, and will censure a crown’s worth, we must agree that there is no conscience or justice in that.”*

The Scrivener was making a joke when he mentioned the prices paid for tickets — the prices he mentioned were higher than would normally be charged. Since the Hope Theatre stank on account of the bears and dogs used in bear-baitings, some audience members might even hope for a discount rather than pay a higher price.

The Scrivener continued:



*“It is also agreed that every man here exercise his own judgment, and not form a judgment due to the contagious nature of other people’s opinions, or because he trusts the voice or face of another person who sits by him, even if that person is the most senior member of the Commission of Knowledgeable Theatre Critics.*

*“It is also agreed that every man here be fixed and settled in his judgment so that what he approves or does not approve today, he will do the same tomorrow; and if tomorrow, the next day, and so on the next week, if need be, and not to be brought to change his opinion of the play by any who sits on the bench with him, even if they indite and arraign and judge plays daily. He who will swear that Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, or *Hieronimo is Mad Again* or *William Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus* are the best plays yet shall pass unchallenged here as a man whose judgment shows that it is constant, and has stood still these twenty-five or thirty years. Though such constancy shows ignorance — these plays are old-fashioned, and much better plays are available now — it is a virtuous and staid, aka fixed, ignorance; and next to truth, a confirmed error does well; such a one the author knows where to find him.*

*“It is further covenanted, concluded, and agreed that how great soever the expectation be, no person here is to expect more than he knows, or better ware than a fair such as *Bartholomew Fair* will afford. Each spectator will not look back to the sword and buckler age of *Smithfield*, but instead content himself with the present.”*

Smithfield, the location of *Bartholomew Fair*, was known as a fighting ground back when people fought with the sword and buckler, aka a kind of small shield. The modern way of fighting was with a rapier and dagger.

The Scrivener continued:

*“Instead of a little Davy — a bully — to take toll of the bawds, the author promises that you will see on stage a strutting horse-courser with a sly and underhand drunkard, and two or three people to serve him, in as good a retinue as you would wish.*

*“And instead of Kindheart the tooth-puller, the author promises that you will see on stage a fine oily pig-woman with her tapster, aka bartender, to bid you welcome, and he promises that you will see on stage a consort of roarers — loud swaggerers — to provide the ‘music.’ The author also promises that you will see a wise Justice of the Peace meditant, instead of a juggler with an ape.*

*“You will also see a civil cutpurse searchant, you will see a sweet singer of new ballads allurant, and you will see as fresh a hypocrite, as ever was broached, rampant.”*

A civil cutpurse is a well-dressed pickpocket. Dressing and speaking like a gentleman helped a cutpurse to pick wealthier pockets.

A hypocrite is a Puritan, according to many people of the time.

The Scrivener continued:

*“If there be never a servant-monster in the fair, who can help it, the author says. He says the same thing about a nest, aka gang, of antics, aka grotesque dancers. The author is loath to make nature afraid in his plays, like those that beget tales, tempests, and such-like drolleries to mix his head with other men’s heels.”*

*Bartholomew Fair* will not have in it some things that appear in other plays such as William Shakespeare’s late romances. It will not have in it a servant-monster such as Caliban, the son of a witch, who appears in Shakespeare’s *Tempest*. It will not have in it grotesque dances such as the dance of the

satyrs in *The Tempest*. In Shakespeare's late romances, nature does not act naturally. The magician Prospero commands storms in *The Tempest*, and what is supposed to be a statue comes to life in *The Winter's Tale*.

The Scrivener continued:

*“Let the concupiscence of jigs and dances reign as strong as it will amongst you, yet if the puppets will please any body, they shall be entreated to come in.”*

*Bartholomew Fair* will not have any jigs or dancers, as so many contemporary plays did, yet it will have a puppet-play. This may seem incongruous, but Mr. Jonson will use the puppet-play as part of his satire.

The Scrivener continued:

*“In consideration of all of these things, it is finally agreed by the aforesaid hearers and spectators that they neither in themselves conceal, nor suffer by them to be concealed, any state-decipherer, or politic pick-lock of the scene so solemnly ridiculous, as to search out who was meant by the gingerbread-woman, who by the hobbyhorse man, who by the costardmonger, and whoever else by their wares.*

*“Or who will pretend to affirm on his own inspired ignorance, what Mirror of Magistrates is meant by the justice, what great lady by the pig-woman, what concealed statesman by the seller of mouse-traps, and so of the rest.”*

Mr. Jonson was leery of being accused of satirizing particular individuals in *Bartholomew Fair*. He did not want anyone to look at the character of Justice Overdo, for example, and say, “Oh, that's the Lord Mayor of London.” According to Mr. Jonson, he satirized types of people, not individual people.

He was also leery of being accused of sedition, as had happened to him in the past. If an accuser would identify one of Mr. Jonson's characters with a VIP, Mr. Jonson could be in real trouble.

George Whetstone wrote *A Mirror of Magistrates of Cities* (1584). In it, he encouraged political leaders to go incognito to places where people congregated so they could find and eradicate vice. This is something Justice Overdo does in *Bartholomew Fair*.

The Scrivener continued:

*“But it is agreed that such person or persons, so found, be left revealed to the mercy of the author, as a forfeiture to the stage, and your laughter aforesaid.”*

If anyone were to insist that one of Mr. Jonson's characters is based on a real person, that anyone should know that Mr. Jonson reserves the right to make fun of that anyone in his next play.

The Scrivener continued:

*“As also such as shall so desperately, or ambitiously play the fool by his place aforesaid, to challenge the author of scurrility, because the language somewhere savors of Smithfield, the booth, and the pigbroth, or of profaneness, because a madman cries, ‘God quit you, or bless you’!”*

Yet another thing that Mr. Jonson was leery of was being accused of scurrility. A playwright could be fined if his play were found to be blasphemous. Mr. Jonson believed that since lower-class people and criminals were to be found at the real Bartholomew Fair, he needed to be able to use their language in his play. However, he did have his character Troubleall say, “Save you” rather than “May God save you.”

The Scrivener continued:

*“In witness whereof, as you have preposterously used your seals already, which is your money, you will now add the other part of approval, your hands.”*

According to the Scrivener, the playgoers had already agreed to the terms of the contract by paying the admission price, which he likened to the seal on the contract. Coming soon would be the hands, aka applause. The Scrivener likened this to handwriting — signing the contract. So the playgoers had used first the seal and then the signature. This is preposterous — what ought to be done last is done first, and vice versa.

The Scrivener continued:

*“The play shall immediately begin. And though the fair is not kept in the same region that some here, perhaps, would have it; yet think that therein the author hath observed a special decorum, the place being as dirty as Smithfield, and every whit as stinking.”*

Smithfield, the site of Bartholomew Fair, could get muddy, overcrowded, and stinky because of the fair. Hope Theatre, like the site of Bartholomew Fair, could also get stinky on account of the bears used in bear-baitings — and, no doubt, on account of at least some members of the audience.

The Scrivener continued:

*“However, the author asks you to believe that his ware — this play — is still the same, else you will make him justly suspect that an audience member who is so loath to look on a baby or an hobbyhorse here would be glad to take up a commodity of them, at any laughter or loss in another place.”*

In other words, the play is a good play like the author’s other good plays, despite its being presented at Hope Theatre. Anyone who objects to the play on account of the theater

where it is being performed could very well go elsewhere and be swindled by paying for a lesser play.

The word “commodity” may bring to mind the commodity swindle. Someone who needed money would get a loan, but if that person were desperate or foolish, he could be induced to accept part of the loan in the form of shoddy goods of various kinds, such as dolls and hobbyhorses. These would be sold at a loss. The swindle was a way to get around laws limiting the amount of interest that could be demanded for a loan. Often, the man being swindled was a young gallant who consorted with prostitutes.

A “baby” is a child’s doll, and a “doll” is a prostitute. A “hobbyhorse” is also a child’s toy, or a prostitute. The entertainment being sought in preference to *Bartholomew Fair* need not be another play.

## ACT 1 (*Bartholomew Fair*)

### — 1.1 —

John Littlewit stood alone in a room in his house.

He said to himself, “This is a pretty turn of phrase, and it is well worth the finding! I have the good fortune to always spin out these fine things, and, like a silkworm, I spin them out of myself. They are original with me.”

He looked at a marriage license as he said, “Here’s Mr. Bartholomew Cokes, of Harrow o’ the Hill, in the county of Middlesex, esquire, taking out his license to marry Miss Grace Wellborn, of the said place and county.”

He then said, “And when does he take out the marriage license? Today! The four and twentieth of August! Bartholomew Day! Bartholomew upon Bartholomew! Bartholomew Cokes takes out his marriage license upon Bartholomew Day!

“There’s the clever turn of phrase! Who other than me would have noticed such a leapfrog chance now!”

The leapfrog chance, aka occurrence, was “Bartholomew upon Bartholomew.”

He continued, “This truly had a less chance of occurring than getting snake eyes on two dice!

“Well, keep on keeping on, John Littlewit, proctor John Littlewit: You are one of the pretty wits of St. Paul’s Cathedral. You are one of the gallants who meet other gallants at St. Paul’s Cathedral. You are the Littlewit of London, so you are called, and something beside.”

Being called a Littlewit — little wit? — is not necessarily a good thing. Same with being called “something beside.”

Referring to himself as “you,” he continued, “When a quip or a pun does escape you, and you do not see and apprehend it, and bring it before the constable of conceit (even now, I speak with verbal agility), then let them carry you out of the Archdeacon’s Court — the Court of Arches, where I work — into his kitchen, and make a Jack of you, instead of a John. There I go again!”

He was right; he was making a pun. “Jack” is a nickname for “John,” and a jack is a device for turning the spit on which meat is being roasted. A jack is also a rogue; punning is a roguish wit.

His wife, Mrs. Win Littlewit, entered the room. She was well dressed, especially for a Puritan.

He said, “Win, good morning, Win. Aye, marry, Win.”

Another pun, meaning both “I marry Win” and “Yes, indeed, Win.”

“Marry” was an oath meaning “By Saint Mary.” It was sometimes used to give emphasis to the words one spoke.

He continued, “Now you look finely indeed, Win! This hat is stunning! You would prefer not to have worn it, Win, nor to have had it made of velvet, for you would have preferred it to be made of a rough country beaver, with a copper band, like the hat worn by the woman of Budge Row who sells rabbit skins.”

His wife, Win, was a Puritan. She was wearing a small velvet hat. This hat was fashionable, but the wives of aldermen wore a larger version. Her husband was teasing her a little by saying that she would have preferred a hat made of beaver skin. Puritans preferred simplicity in dress, and beaver hats were expensive. Actually, Win would perhaps have preferred a hat less fine than the small velvet hat she was wearing. Or, possibly, she may have wanted a finer hat.



He said, “Sweet Win, let me kiss it!”

He may have been speaking baby talk to her. “Let me kiss it” could mean “Let me kiss you.” It could, however, mean that he wanted to kiss her hat.

Mr. John Littlewit continued, “And her fine high shoes, like the Spanish lady! Good Win, walk a little; I would like to see you pace, pretty Win. By this fine hat, I could never leave, aka stop, kissing on it.”

The Spanish lady was an English widow who had traveled to Spain and thereafter continued to wear Spanish clothing, even after returning to England.

“Kissing on it” may have been more baby talk. It could mean “kissing you.” It could, however, mean that he wanted to kiss her pace — one meaning of “pace” is “path,” and therefore he may have meant that he wanted to kiss the ground she walked on. And since the buttocks are used in pacing, he may have meant that he wanted to kiss her butt.

Mrs. Win Littlewit teased him, “Come off it; indeed, you are always such a fool!”

He replied, “No, I am only half a fool, Win, you are the other half: Man and wife make one fool, Win. That’s a good one!”

Yes, a man and a wife are needed to make one fool — a baby.

He continued, “Is there the proctor, or doctor indeed, in the diocese, who ever had the fortune to win him such a Win! There I go again! I feel witty turns of phrasing coming upon me, more than I am able to turn tongue to.”

He then began to criticize men whom he considered to have inferior wit: “A pox on these pretenders to wit! Your Three Cranes, Mitre, and Mermaid men!”

The Three Cranes, Mitre, and Mermaid are three inns. The Mermaid was located close to the theater district, and many actors and playwrights frequented it and engaged in battles of wit. Some of the “pretenders to wit” at the Mermaid whom Mr. John Littlewit was criticizing were Ben Jonson, William Shakespeare, Francis Beaumont (of Beaumont and Fletcher fame) and John Donne. Mr. Beaumont once wrote in a letter to Mr. Jonson, “... what things we have seen, / Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been / So nimble, and so full of subtil flame, / As if that everyone from whence they came, / Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest, / And had resolved to live a fool the rest / Of his dull life.”

Mr. John Littlewit continued, “There is not a grain of true salt, not a grain of right mustard among them all. Their wit has no pungency. They may compete for places in anticipation of the next wit-fall, aka battle of wits, and pay two-pence in a quart more for their canary wine than other men. But give me the man who can start up a justice of wit out of six-shillings beer, and read the riot act to all the poets and poet-suckers in town.”

Beer was less expensive than wine.

A poet-sucker was a young poet. Many poets, however, were playwrights, and people paid money to attend plays, and so a poet-sucker was also a playwright who sucked money out of people’s pockets.

Thinking of the pride of the playwrights, Mr. John Littlewit said, “They are proud because they are the actors’ familiar friends! By God’s eyelid! Other men have wives as fine as the actors, and as well dressed.”

Actors frequently portrayed members of royalty, and acting companies sometimes bought used clothing from members of the upper class to use as costumes.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Come here, Win!”

He kissed her.

— 1.2 —

Mr. Winwife entered the room. He was courting Dame Purecraft, Mrs. Win Littlewit's mother and Mr. John Littlewit's mother-in-law. Dame Purecraft was a widow.

Mr. Winwife said, "Why, what are you doing now, Mr. John Littlewit! Measuring of lips, or molding of kisses? Which is it?"

Mr. John Littlewit replied, "Truly, I am a little taken with my Win's clothing here. Doesn't she look fine, Mr. Winwife? What do you think, sir? She would not have worn this clothing."

As a Puritan, Mrs. Win Littlewit resisted — at least to some extent — wearing such fashionable clothing.

Mr. John Littlewit continued, "I challenge all Cheapside to show such another pretty sight as my wife in her outfit here. Can any woman in Moorfields, Pimlico-path, or the Exchange, in a summer evening, with a lace hemming on her clothing like my wife's clothing, match the pretty sight that is my wife in her outfit?"

He then said, "Dear Win, let Mr. Winwife kiss you. He comes a wooing our mother and mother-in-law, Win, and he may become our stepfather perhaps, Win. There's no harm in him, Win."

Mr. Winwife said, "None in the earth, Mr. John Littlewit."

He kissed Mrs. Win Littlewit.

Mr. John Littlewit said, "I grudge no man my delights and delicacies, sir."

Mr. Winwife said, "Alas, you always have the garden where they grow! A wife here with a strawberry breath, cherry lips,

apricot cheeks, and a soft velvet head, like a peach grafted onto a quince tree.”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “That’s a good one, in faith! Now dullness must be upon me, that I had not thought of that before him, that I should not light on it as well as he! Velvet head!”

Peach velvet is peach fuzz.

Young male deer do not have true antlers; they have velvet antlers that have not yet calcified and grown hard.

In this society, cuckolds — men with unfaithful wives — were said to have invisible horns growing on their foreheads. Mrs. Win Littlewit was faithful to her husband, and so he was not a full cuckold, but he was allowing another man to kiss his wife. This can be innocent, but this can also be dangerous.

Mr. Winwife said, “But my taste, Mr. John Littlewit, tends to fruit of a later kind: the sober matron, your wife’s mother.”

Dame Purecraft was Mrs. Win Littlewit’s mother.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Yes, we know you are a suitor, sir. Win and I both wish you well. By this marriage license here in my hand, I swear that I wish you had won her and that your two names were as securely written on this marriage license as are the names of another couple! Win would like to have a fine young father-in-law with a feather, so that her mother might hood it and chain it with Mrs. Overdo.”

Feathers, hoods, and chains were all status symbols. A fashionable gentleman such as Mr. Winwife would wear a hat with a large feather in it. A fashionable, well-to-do woman would wear a hood. Some careers required the wearing of a chain of office. Mrs. Overdo wore a hood and

her husband possessed a chain of office. If Dame Purecraft were to marry Mr. Winwife, her social status would increase.

Mr. John Littlewit continued, “But you do not take the right course in wooing Dame Purecraft, Mr. Winwife.”

“I don’t, Mr. John Littlewit? What am I doing wrong?”

“You are not mad enough.”

“Mad” can mean insane, but it can also mean “madcap.” It can also mean a zealot, such as a Puritan.

“What!” Mr. Winwife said. “Is being mad the right way to woo her?”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “I say nothing, but I wink at Win. You have a friend, a certain Mr. Quarlous, who comes here sometimes.”

“Why, he doesn’t woo her, does he?”

“Not a tokenworth that ever I saw, I assure you, but —”

A tokenworth is a very small amount.

Mr. Winwife asked, “But what?”

“He is the more madcap of you two,” Mr. John Littlewit said.

He looked at Mr. Winwife and said, “You don’t understand me.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, “You have a hot coal in your mouth, now; you cannot hold back from telling.”

She was misremembering this proverb: It is as hard to keep a secret in the mouth as to hold a burning coal in the hand.

Mr. John Littlewit requested, “Let me out with it, dear Win.”

“I’ll tell him myself,” she replied.

“Do, and take all the thanks, and may it do much good to your pretty heart, Win,” he said.

Mrs. Win Littlewit said to Mr. Winwife, “Sir, my mother has had her nativity-water cast lately by the cunning-men in Cow Lane, and they have told her fortune to her, and they do assure her that she shall never have a happy hour, unless she marry within this sen’night; and when she marries, it must be to a madman, they say.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit was mixing up two kinds of casting. Astrologers would cast nativities, aka horoscopes. Doctors would cast water; that is, they would look at a patient’s urine in an attempt to determine the health of the patient. Very dark urine is a sign of bad health, as is blood in the urine.

Some cunning-men are male witches. Cunning-men are supposed to have occult knowledge.

A sen-night is a seven-night, or week.

Mr. John Littlewit added, “Yes, but it must be a gentleman madman.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, “Yes, so the other man of Moorfields says.”

“But does she believe them?” Mr. Winwife asked.

Mr. John Littlewit replied, “Yes, and she has been at Bedlam twice since every day to inquire if any mad gentleman are there, or will come there mad.”

Bedlam was a lunatic asylum.

“Why, this is a confederacy,” Mr. Winwife said. “It is a complete piece of trickery played upon her by these impostors.”

“I tell her that,” Mr. John Littlewit said, “or else I say that the cunning-men mean some young madcap gentleman, for

the Devil can equivocate as well as a shopkeeper, and therefore I advise you, Mr. Winwife, to be a little madder than Mr. Quarlous hereafter.”

One meaning of “to equivocate” is “to deceive with equivocating language.” Equivocating language is language that can be interpreted in more than one way.

Mr. Winwife asked, “Where is Dame Purecraft? Is she up and about yet?”

It was still early in the morning.

“Up and about?” Mr. John Littlewit said. “She is stirring! Yes, and studying an old elder come from Banbury, a suitor who puts in here at meal-tide, to praise the painful, aka pains-taking, brethren, or pray that the sweet singers may be restored.”

One of Dame Purecraft’s suitors was Zeal-of-the-land Busy, a Puritan from Banbury. As an elder, he was high in the local Puritan hierarchy. As a Puritan, he avoided the syllable “-mas” as being too similar to the Catholic word “mass.” He referred to Christ-mas as Christ-tide; the word “tide” meant “time.” Mr. John Littlewit was gently mocking this Puritan use of language by saying “meal-tide.” Puritans referred to themselves as brethren and sweet singers. Some Puritans were not allowed to preach because they were opposed to the Church of England; Zeal-of-the-land Busy prayed that these Puritans would be restored to the pulpit.

Mr. John Littlewit continued, “He says a grace as long as his breath lasts him!”

Puritans were known for saying long prayers. Unfortunately, long prayers are often unwelcome right before meals.

Mr. John Littlewit continued, “Sometimes the spirit is so strong with him, it gets quite out of him, and then my mother,

or Win, are fain to revive him again with malmsey or *aqua caelestis*.”

Puritans frowned on drunkenness, but Zeal-of-the-land Busy occasionally needed some medicinal malmsey or *aqua caelestis*. Malmsey is a strong sweet wine, and *aqua caelestis* is brandy or distilled wine. Puritans also frowned on gluttony, but Zeal-of-the-land Busy had a big belly and may occasionally have eaten himself into a stupor, thereby necessitating the malmsey or *aqua caelestis*.

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, “Yes, indeed, we have such a tedious life with him for his diet, and his clothes, too! He breaks his buttons and cracks his seams at every saying he sobs out.”

The breaking of the buttons may have been due to the spiritedness with which he talked about religion, or his buttons may have popped off his clothing and his seams may have split because of the spiritedness with which he wielded his fork.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “He cannot abide my vocation, he says.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit added, “No; he told my mother that a proctor was a claw of the beast, and that she had little less than committed abomination in marrying me the way she has done. Zeal-of-the-land Busy is totally against my being married to my husband.”

Puritans were totally against the Catholic Church, and they regarded the Church of England as being an English version of the Catholic Church. Mr. Littlefield, a proctor, practiced in the Bishop’s Court, an ecclesiastical court of the Church of England.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Every line, Zeal-of-the-land Busy says, that a proctor writes, when it comes to be read in the



Bishop's Court, is a long black hair combed out of the tail of the Antichrist.”

Revelation 13 describes the Beast of the Apocalypse. According to the Puritans, the Beast is the Antichrist.

“When did this proselyte come here?” Mr. Winwife asked.

A proselyte is a convert.

“Some three days ago,” Mr. John Littlewit answered.

— 1.3 —

Quarlous entered the room.

Seeing Mr. Winwife, he said, “Oh, sir, have you taken soil here?”

The phrase “take soil” is used when a closely hunted deer takes to water to escape hunting dogs. The word “soil” is also used to refer to mud and mire that a boar wallows in. “Night soil” is excrement deposited into a chamber pot at night.

Quarlous continued, “It’s well a man may yet reach you after three hours’ running! What an unmerciful companion you are, to leave your lodging at such ungentlemanly hours! None but a scattered covey of fiddlers, aka triflers and wasters of time, or one of these rag-rakers in dunghills, or some marrow-bone man at most, would have been up when you were gone abroad, by all description.”

Quarlous was complaining because Mr. Winwife had gotten up early and left his home at a time when, according to Quarlous, only people who were triflers or whose work required them to be up early would be awake and working. Such people included street cleaners who raked the streets. They also included rag-rakers and marrow-bone men, aka rag-and-bone men. Rag-rakers went through piles of rubbish and salvaged what they could. The bones of cattle were

collected so that the marrow could be extracted from them and used in English meat pies and meat puddings.

Quarlous continued, "I ask you what is ailing you so that you cannot sleep? Do you have thorns in your eyelids, or thistles in your bed?"

"I cannot tell," Mr. Winwife said. "It seems that you had neither in your feet since you took this trouble to find me."

Quarlous said, "No, I have no thorns or thistles in my feet. If I had, instead of me coming after you, all the leased hunting hounds of the city would have come after you by following your scent."

He then said, "Mr. John Littlewit! May God save you, sir. It was a hot night with some of us last night, John. Shall we pluck a hair of the same wolf today, Proctor John?"

"Hair of the same wolf" is "hair of the same dog," which is short for "hair of the same dog that bit us." In other words, Quarulous was asking if they should have a drink in order to reduce some of the effects of a hangover.

Mr. John Littlewit asked, "Do you remember, Mr. Quarulous, what we talked about last night?"

"No, I don't, John," Quarulous said. "I remember nothing that I either talked about or did; at such times of drunkenness, I forfeit all to forgetfulness."

In other words, he was accustomed to getting blackout drunk.

"No!" Mr. John Littlewit said. "You don't remember what you said concerning Win, my wife? Look, there she is, and dressed as I told you she would be. Pay attention, sir."

He whispered to Quarulous, "Have you forgotten?"

Quarlous replied, "By this head of mine, I swear that I'll beware how I keep you company, John, when I drink, if you have this dangerous memory. That's for certain."

"Why, sir?" Mr. John Littlewit asked.

"Why!" Quarlous said.

He then said to the others, "We were all a little stained last night, sprinkled with a cup or two of alcoholic drinks, and I agreed with Proctor John here to come and do somewhat with Win (I don't know what it was) today; and he puts me in mind of it now; he says he was coming to fetch me."

Some of this language is close to having a risqué meaning: "To do someone" means "to have sex with that person." That is close to "do somewhat with Win."

He said to Mr. John Littlewit, "Before truth, I swear that if you have that fearful quality, John, to remember when you are sober, John, what you promise when you are drunk, John, I shall take heed of you, John. But for this once, I am content to wink at you and not notice your fault. Where's your wife?"

He then said, "Come here, Win."

He kissed her; she did not like his kissing her.

"Why, John!" Mrs. Win Littlewit said. "Do you see this, John? Look! Help me, John!"

Her husband replied, "Oh, Win, fiddlesticks! What do you mean, Win? Be womanly, Win. Will you like a little girl make an outcry to your mother, Win! Mr. Quarlous is an honest gentleman, and he is our worshipful good friend, Win, and he is Mr. Winwife's friend, too, and Mr. Winwife comes as a suitor to your mother, Win, as I told you before, Win, and he may perhaps be our stepfather, Win.

“Mr. Quarlous and Mr. Winwife will do you no harm, Win. They are both our worshipful good friends. Mr. Quarlous! You must know Mr. Quarlous, Win; you must not quarrel with Mr. Quarlous, Win.”

Quarlous said, “No, we’ll kiss again, and fall in.”

Quarlous kissed her again.

“Fall in” had two meanings: 1) be reconciled, and 2) have sex. Two people would fall in bed.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Yes, do, good Win.”

One meaning of the word “do” is “f\*k.”

“Truly, you are a fool, John,” she replied.

“A fool-John, she calls me,” Mr. John Littlewit said. “Did you hear that, gentlemen? Did you hear what the pretty Littlewit of velvet called me? A fool-John.”

He was taking the word “fool” as an endearment.

Quarlous thought, *She may call you an apple-John, if you use this.*

He was referring obliquely to the word “apple-squire,” which meant “pander.” The phrase “use this” meant “have sex with.” In this context, it meant “put your wife to work sexually.” Mr. John Littlewit was not protecting his wife.

“Use this” also meant “make a habit of this” — that is, make a habit of allowing other men to kiss your wife.

An “apple-john” is a type of apple that is eaten after it has been stored two years and is wrinkled and withered. Mr. John Littlewit was older than his wife.

Quarlous kissed Mrs. Win Littlewit again. This was his third kiss.

Mr. Winwife said, "Please stop this, for my sake, somewhat."

Quarlous and Mr. Winwife spoke quietly together while Mr. John Littlewit and his wife talked a short distance away. It's a good thing that Mrs. Win Littlewit could not hear them because Quarlous would say some negative things about old women such as Win's mother.

"Hey-day!" Quarlous, who was surprised, said. "How concerned about good etiquette you have become all of a sudden! I fear this family will make you 'reformed,' too. I hope that you come around to my opinions again."

"Are you concerned about respectability because Mrs. Win Littlewit may possibly become your stepdaughter, and she may ask you for a customary blessing hereafter, when she acts like a courtier and goes to Tottenham to eat cakes and cream!"

"Well, I will forbear, sir; but indeed, I wish thou would stop thy exercise of widow-hunting once and for all. Stop this drawing after an old reverend smock by the splay-foot!"

The words "thou" and "thy" and "thine" were informal and were used among friends, but they were also used when a superior spoke to an inferior.

A smock is a ladies' undergarment, and so it is a term meaning "woman." Quarlous was saying that Mr. Winwife continually chased reverend skirts. Actually, he was chasing old reverend, aka Puritan, skirts — old women who have splayed feet, which are feet turned outward. A cynical person might think that quite possibly, the feet are turned out because the old women's legs are spread with the feet raised in the air. Quarlous' cynicism took the opposite direction; he would say that the old women have lacked sex for forty years.

“By the splay-foot” was word-play on “hunting dry-foot,” which meant tracking by scent alone. “Drawing after” meant tracking by scent.

Quarlous continued, “There cannot be an ancient tripe or trillibub in the town, but thou are immediately nosing it.”

“Tripe” and “trillibub” are terms meaning “entrails” and are used to refer to fat people. The old women are fat bags of guts.

Quarlous continued, “And it is a fine occupation thou will confine thyself to, when thou have got one.”

The occupation was marriage to an old woman. By marrying an old woman, Mr. Winwife would gain control of her wealth. Such was the law in this sexist society.

Quarlous continued, “Thou will be scrubbing a piece of buff, as if thou had the perpetuity — tenure for life — of Pannier Ally to stink in, or perhaps worse, currying a carcass that thou have bound thyself to alive.”

Pannier Alley was a place where buff leather was sold. Treating leather can be a noisome — stinky — occupation.

According to Quarlous, Mr. Winwife would be rubbing the bare skin of an old woman for the rest of her life — bare skin that was like leather.

One meaning of “curry” is “to ride with haste.” A carcass is something from which the life or spirit has gone. As the old woman’s husband, Mr. Winwife would be currying her spiritless body in bed.

Quarlous continued, “I’ll be sworn, some of them whom thou are, or have been suitor to, are so old, as no chaste or married pleasure can ever come to them; the honest instrument of procreation has for forty years since ceased to belong to them.”

According to Quarlous, the women whom Mr. Winwife courted were so old that they hadn't had the services of "the honest instrument of procreation" — a penis — for the past forty years.

Quarlous continued, "Thou must visit them as thou would visit a tomb, with a torch or three handfuls of link, flaming hot, and so thou may happen to make them feel thee and after come to inherit a fortune according to thy inches."

The torch Quarlous was talking about had three handfuls of link — the tow and pitch that burned at the head of the torch. That is a very large head. To make the old woman feel anything in her vagina, Mr. Winwife would have to have a very large "flaming hot" penis. If he were fortunate enough to have a penis many inches long, he could very well acquire a sizeable fortune from the old woman.

Quarlous continued, "A sweet course for a man to waste the brand of life for, to be continually raking himself a fortune in an old woman's embers!"

According to Quarlous, Mr. Winwife would be wasting his "brand of life" — his penis — in the embers of an old woman's vagina.

One meaning of "rake" is to behave like a rake, aka morally dissolute man. Marrying an old woman just for her money is morally dissolute.

Quarlous continued, "We shall have thee, after thou have been but a month married to one of them, look like the quartan ague and the black jaundice met in a face, and walk as if thou had borrowed the legs of a spider and the voice of a cricket."

The quartan ague was a fever that visited every four days. The black jaundice was an illness that turned the skin black.

Quarlous continued, “I would prefer to endure to hear fifteen sermons a week before I would endure her, and such coarse and loud sermons, as some of them must be! I would even beg of Fate that I might dwell in a drum, and take in my sustenance with an old broken tobacco-pipe and a straw.”

Anyone who dwelled in a drum would hear very loud drumming.

Quarlous continued, “Do thou ever think to bring thine ears or stomach to the patience of a dry grace as long as thy tablecloth; and droned out by thy potential stepson, Mr. John Littlewit here (who is so old that he might be thy father), until all the food on thy plate has forgotten it was that day in the kitchen?”

He had been criticizing old women and their wooers. Now he began to focus more on criticizing Puritans, who were known for saying very long prayers before meals.

Quarlous continued, “Or to endure the noise made in a question of predestination by the good laborers and painful — pains-taking — eaters assembled together, put to them by the matron your possible spouse, Dame Purecraft, who acts as a moderator with a cup of wine, always and immediately, and a moral maxim out of the writings of John Knox between?”

If Mr. Winwife were to marry Dame Purecraft, who was a Puritan, he would have to put up with listening to long-winded religious conversations during mealtimes. Dame Purecraft sometimes had Puritans such as Zeal-of-the-land Busy over for meals.

Quarlous continued, “Or the perpetual spitting before and after a sober-drawn exhortation of six hours, whose better part was the hum-ha-hum? Or to hear prayers groaned out over thy iron chests containing valuables, as if they were charms to break them? And to endure all this for the hope of



two apostle-spoons! And a cup to eat a caudle — a warm medicinal drink — in! For that will be thy monetary legacy. She'll have conveyed her state safe enough from thee, if she is a right widow.”

If Mr. Winwife were to marry Dame Purecraft, he would have to put up with listening to long-winded religious sermons and long-winded prayers in which the speaker frequently said “hum-ha-hum.” And what would he get for it? According to Quarlous, Mr. Winwife would get two apostle-spoons — two silver spoons with the figures of the apostles on the handles. That and a cup. Why wouldn't he get all Dame Purecraft's money? She would have conveyed her estate to a trustee — probably a Puritan — to keep it out of Mr. Winwife's hands.

Hearing about the possible transfer of Dame Purecraft's wealth to a trustee, Mr. Winwife said, “Alas, I am quite off that scent now. I have lost the scent of Dame Purecraft.”

“How so?” Quarlous asked.

“I have been put off her scent by a brother of Banbury, a Puritan, one who, they say, has come here and governs everything already,” Mr. Winwife said.

“What is his name?” Quarlous asked. “I knew many of those Banburians when I was in Oxford.”

“Mr. John Littlewit can tell us his name,” Mr. Winwife said loudly.

“Sir!” Mr. John Littlewit said to Mr. Winwife.

He then said, “Good Win, go in, and if Mr. Bartholomew Cokes' servant comes for the marriage license (I mean the little old fellow), let him speak with me.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit exited.

“What are you talking about, gentlemen?” Mr. John Littlewit asked.

Mr. Winwife asked him, “What is the name of the reverend elder you told me of, your Banbury man the Puritan?”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Rabbi Busy, sir; he is more than an elder, he is a prophet, sir.”

Matthew 23:8 states, “*But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren*” (King James Version).

Zeal-of-the-land Busy did not call himself a Rabbi.

“Oh, I know him!” Quarlous said. “He’s a baker, isn’t he?”

“He was a baker, sir, but he dreams now and see visions,” Mr. John Littlewit said. “He has given up his trade as a baker.”

Quarlous said, “I remember him giving up his business, too, out of a scruple he took in spiced conscience because those cakes he made were served at bride-ales, Maypole celebrations, Morris dances, and such profane feasts and meetings.”

An obsolete meaning of “spiced” is “over-scrupulous.”

Puritans felt that Maypole celebrations and Morris dances were based on pagan fertility rituals. At bride-ales, the bride served ale and people generously tipped her.

Quarlous continued, “His Christian name is Zeal-of-the-land.”

“Yes, sir,” Mr. John Little said. “Zeal-of-the-land Busy.”

Mr. Winwife said, “What! What kind of a name is that!”

“Oh, the Puritans all have such names, sir,” Mr. John Littlewit said. “He was witness for Win here — they will not be called godfathers and therefore call themselves witnesses — and named her Win-the-fight. You thought her name was Winifred, didn’t you?”

“Indeed, I did,” Mr. Winwife said.

“He would have thought himself a stark reprobate, if she had been named Winifred.”

“Yes, for there was a blue-starch woman of the name at the same time,” Quarlous said.

Many Puritans were against starch, considering it a sign of vanity. Blue starch was worse than regular starch because it was expensive — why pay lots of money to indulge the sin of vanity? — and because it was used on large ruffs, a vain fashion, according to the Puritans.

Quarlous continued, “He is a notable hypocritical vermin; I know him. He is one who stands upon his face, more than his faith, at all times.”

“Stands upon his face” means “relies on his effrontery.”

Quarlous continued, “He is always in seditious political agitation, and criticizing others as being guilty of vainglory; he is of a most lunatic conscience and spleen, and he practices the violence of singularity in everything he does.”

Puritans felt that King James I should be subordinate to the church when it came to religious matters. King James I objected, and some Puritans were accused of sedition.

“Singularity” means “deviating from the norm.” Here, it means deviating from the social norms concerning ethical behavior. Religious people who believe that they are divinely inspired may believe that they need not follow the standards of ethical conduct that other people obey.

Quarlous continued, “Zeal-of-the-land Busy has ruined a grocer here in Newgate Market, who did business with him and trusted him with currants, as arrant a zeal as he, that’s by the way.”

Apparently, Zeal-of-the-land Busy never paid the grocer for the currants, which were used in baking cakes.

According to Quarlous, Zeal-of-the-land Busy’s zeal is arrant. A religious person ought to be zealous in doing the work of God, but Zeal-of-the-land Busy’s zeal is arrant, which calls to mind the phrase “arrant thief,” aka an “out-and-out thief.”

The phrase “that’s by the way” meant either “this is a parenthetical anecdote” or “Zeal-of-the-land Busy put his religious zeal aside” when he ruined the trusting grocer, or both.

Quarlous continued, “By his profession he will always be in the state of innocence, though, and childhood.”

Some religious people can believe that by converting to a certain religion they will be cleansed of sin forever.

Quarlous continued, “He derides all the knowledge of antiquity because it is pagan, and he defies any other learning than inspiration; and what discretion his however many years of age should afford him, it is all forestalled by his original ignorance.”

Some religious people believe that all the knowledge they need is religious knowledge.

Quarlous continued, “Have nothing to do with him, for he is a fellow of a most arrogant and invincible dullness, I assure you.”

He saw someone coming into the room and asked, “Who is this?”

Mrs. Win Littlewit escorted Humphrey Wasp into the room. He was the servant of Bartholomew Cokes, and he had come to get the marriage license that Mr. John Littlewit had prepared.

Humphrey Wasp was a waspish — an irritable — man.

“By your leave, gentlemen, with all my heart to you,” Humphrey Wasp said, “and may God give you a good morning!”

He then said, “Mr. John Littlewit, my business is with you. Is this license ready?”

“I have it for you here in my hand, Mr. Humphrey,” Mr. John Littlewit replied.

Humphrey Wasp said, “That’s well. No, you don’t need to open it or read it to me — it’s labor in vain, you know. I am no clerk or scribe. I scorn to be saved by my book, indeed. I’ll hang first.”

At the time, people could avoid being hung for a crime if they could prove that they could read Latin. This was called “benefit of clergy” because when the law was first made, it was mainly clergy who could read Latin.

The verse that usually was translated was Psalm 51:1: “*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions*” (King James Version).

Humphrey Wasp continued, “Fold it up on your word, and give it to me. What amount of money must you have for it?”

“We’ll talk about that later, Mr. Humphrey,” Mr. John Littlewit said.

Humphrey Wasp said, “We’ll talk about it now, or not at all, good Mr. Proctor. I am for no later, I assure you.”

Mr. John Littlewit said to his wife, “Sweet Win, tell my clerk Solomon to send me the little black box in my study.”

Legal documents were carried in black boxes.

Humphrey Wasp said, “Yes, and do it quickly, Win, I ask you, for I have both eggs on the spit and iron in the fire.”

This meant that he was in a hurry to return home. Eggs on spits have to be carefully watched to ensure they are cooked correctly. Iron in a blacksmith’s fire must be carefully watched to ensure it is taken out at the right time and hammered.

Mrs. Win Littlewit exited.

Humphrey Wasp said, “Say what amount of money you must have, good Mr. Littlewit.”

“Why, you know the price, Mr. Numps,” Mr. John Littlewit replied.

“Numps” is a nickname for “Humphrey.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “I know! I know nothing, I.”

Someone could hear that last sentence as “I know nothing, aye,” aka “I know nothing, yes.”

He continued, “Why are you talking to me about knowing? Now I am in haste, sir, I do not know, and I will not know, and I scorn to know, and yet, now I think about it, I will and do know as well as another: You must have a mark, aka thirteen shillings and four pence, for your thing here, and eight-pence for the box. I could have saved two-pence on that, if I had bought a black box ahead of time and brought it, but here’s fourteen shillings for you.”

He gave Mr. John Littlewit the money and said, “Good Lord, how long your little wife stays! I hope to God that Solomon, your clerk, is not looking in the wrong box, Mr. Proctor.”

The wrong box would be Mrs. Win Littlewit’s box, aka vagina.

“In good faith, no, he isn’t,” Mr. John Littlewit said. “I assure you that Solomon is wiser than to do that, sir.”

He was not upset by the reference to his wife’s “box”; instead, he appreciated the opportunity to make a joke about Solomon.

Humphrey Wasp said, “Fie, fie, fie, by your leave, Mr. Littlewit, I say that this is scurvy, idle, foolish, and abominable. I do not like it.”

He walked aside.

Mr. Winwife, who had been listening, said to Quarlous, “Did you hear that!”

He then asked, “Jack Littlewit, what business does your pretty head think this fellow may have, that he is making such a fuss?”

Quarlous asked, “Is his business more than buying of gingerbread in the cloister here (for that we allow him) or a gilt pouch in the fair?”

During Bartholomew Fair, the cloister was used to house merchants’ stalls, so Humphrey Wasp could, if he wanted, buy gingerbread or a gilt pouch there.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Mr. Quarlous, do not be mistaken about him; he is his master’s both-hands, I assure you.”

He meant that Humphrey Wasp was his master’s right-hand man *and* left-hand man.

Quarlous asked, “What does he do? Pulls on his master’s boots in the mornings, or his stockings, does he?”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Sir, if you have a mind to mock him, mock him quietly, and look the other way, for if he once realizes that you are mocking him, he will fly at you immediately. He is a terrible, testy old fellow, and his name is Humphrey Wasp, too.”

“He is a pretty insect!” Quarlous said. “Pamper him as if he were a child.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “A plague on this box, and the pox, on it, too, and on him who made it, and her who went for it, and everyone who should have sought it, sent it, or brought it! Do you understand, sir?”

“No, good Mr. Humphrey Wasp,” Mr. John Littlewit said.

“Good Mr. Hornet, turd in your teeth, hold your tongue,” Humphrey Wasp said.

The word “hornet” hinted that Mr. John Littlewit had horns and was a cuckold.

The word “turd” meant then what it does now.

Humphrey Wasp continued, “Don’t I know you? Your father was an apothecary, and he sold enemas, more than he gave, indeed, and turd in your little wife’s teeth, too.”

He then said, “Here comes your wife.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit, carrying the black box, entered the room.

He continued, “The turd will make her spit, as fine as she is, for all her velvet custard on her head, sir.”

A “custard” is a kind of pie. “Velvet custard” referred to the pie-shaped velvet hat she was wearing.



Mr. John Littlewit requested, “Oh, be civil, Mr. Numps.”

“Why, let’s say I have an inclination not to be civil,” Humphrey Wasp said. “What then? Who shall compel me to be civil? You?”

“Here is the black box now,” Mr. John Littlewit said.

“Why, a pox on your box, once again! Let your little wife piss in it, if she will,” Humphrey Wasp said. “Sir, I would have you to understand, and these gentlemen, too, if they please —”

“With all our hearts, sir,” Mr. Winwife said.

“— that I have a charge, a responsibility, gentlemen,” Humphrey Wasp said.

“Sir, they apprehend — they understand,” Mr. John Littlewit said.

Humphrey Wasp replied, “Pardon me, sir, neither they nor you can apprehend me yet. You are an ass.

“I have a young master. He is now upon his making and marring, aka coming of age; the whole care of his well-doing is now mine. His foolish schoolmasters have done nothing but run up and down the country with him to beg sausages and cake from his tenants, and they have almost spoiled him; he has learned nothing but to sing catches and snatches of songs, and repeat ‘Rattle bladder rattle’ and ‘O Madge!’”

“Rattle bladder rattle” was a tongue-twister: “Three blue beans in a blue bladder, rattle bladder rattle.”

“O Madge” was a ballad.

Humphrey Wasp continued, “I dare not let him walk alone, for fear that he will learn vile tunes that he will sing at supper, and during sermons! If he should meet a cartman in the street, and if I don’t talk to him to keep him away from

the cartman, he will whistle all the cartman's tunes at night in his sleep! He has a head full of bees! He has bees in his bonnet!

"I am obliged now, for this little time I am absent, to leave him in charge of a gentlewoman. It is true she is a Justice of the Peace's wife, and a gentlewoman who wears a fashionable hood, and his natural sister, but what may happen under a woman's government, there's the doubt and the worry.

"Gentlemen, you do not know him; he is a different kind of individual than you think him to be. He is only nineteen years old, and yet he is taller than either of you by a head, God bless him!"

"Well, I think this is a fine fellow," Quarlous said.

Mr. Winwife said, "Humphrey Wasp has made his master a finer man by this description, I should think."

"Indeed, they are about the same. It's a toss-up: either heads or tails. There's not a farthing's worth of difference between them."

Humphrey Wasp said, "I'll tell you, gentlemen —"

Mr. John Littlewit asked, "Will it please you to have a drink, Mr. Humphrey Wasp?"

It was customary to give a departing visitor a drink.

Humphrey Wasp replied, "Why, I have not talked so long as to be dry, sir. You see no dust or cobwebs come out of my mouth, do you? You'd have me gone, would you?"

"No, but you were in a hurry to leave just now, Mr. Numps."

"What if I were! I still am, and yet I will stay, too. Meddle with your match, your equal, your Win there; she has as little wit as her husband, it seems. I have others to talk to."

Mr. John Littlewit said, “She’s my match indeed, and as Littlewit as I, myself!”

It was hard to insult Mr. John Littlewit because he could turn insults into jokes.

Humphrey Wasp said, “We have been only a day and a half in town, gentlemen, it is true, and yesterday in the afternoon we walked around London to show the city to the gentlewoman he shall marry, Miss Grace Wellborn, but before I will endure such another half day with him, I’ll be drawn with a good tomcat through the great pond at home, as his uncle Hodge was.”

A rural practical joke was to bet someone that a cat could drag him across a pond. One end of a rope would be tied to the victim, and the other end taken across the pond and tied with a string to a cat. Some strong men would be appointed to guide the cat, but they and not the cat would drag the victim across the pond.

“Hodge” is a name for a rustic; it is related to the name “Roger.”

Humphrey Wasp continued, “Why, we could not meet any heathen thing all the day, but he would stop; he would look at the pictures on the signs everywhere, as he went, and describe them out loud, and wherever he spied a parrot or a monkey, there he was pitched with all the little longcoats male and female around him; there was no getting him away!”

Children, both males and females, wore longcoats, aka petticoats.

He continued, “I thought he would have run mad on account of the black boy in Bucklersbury who takes the scurvy, roguey tobacco there.”

Because of illiteracy, signs displayed pictures that advertised what was being sold in the shops. A store that sold tobacco could have a sign with a picture of a black youth smoking tobacco. At this time, many people regarded tobacco as being good for one's health.

Mr. John Littlewit said, "You say the truth, Mr. Numps; there's such a sign there indeed."

"It doesn't matter whether there is such a sign there or not," Humphrey Wasp said. "What's it to you?"

Quarlous said to Mr. Winwife, "He will not allow John Littlewit to make a comment on anything or on any account."

— 1.5 —

Bartholomew Cokes, Mrs. Overdo, and Miss Grace Wellborn entered the room.

The wedding license that Mr. John Littlewit had drawn up was for Bartholomew Cokes and Miss Grace Wellborn, who was the ward of Justice Overdo.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Oh, Numps! Are you here, Numps? Look where I am, Numps, and Miss Grace Wellborn, too! No, do not look angrily, Numps. My sister — Mrs. Overdo — is here and all; I have not come without her."

Humphrey Wasp said, "Why the mischief have you come with her, or she with you?"

Bartholomew Cokes replied, "We all came to seek you, Numps."

"To seek me!" Humphrey Wasp said. "Why, did you all think I was lost, or run away with your fourteen shillings' worth of small items — the marriage contract and black box

— here? Or that I had exchanged your fourteen shillings at the fair for hobbyhorses?”

A hobbyhorse is a toy horse, or a prostitute.

He continued, “By God’s precious blood — to seek me!”

Mrs. Overdo, the sister of Bartholomew Cokes, said, “Now, good Mr. Numps, show some discretion, even though my brother’s behavior is outrageous, as Mr. Overdo says. Show some discretion even if it is just for the preservation of the peace.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “By marry gip, goody She-justice, Mrs. French-hood! Turd in your teeth, and turd in your French hood’s teeth, too, to do you service, do you see!”

He was certainly in a bad mood. “By marry gip” was the oath “By Mary the Gypsy,” referring to St. Mary of Egypt. Gypsies tended to be dark-skinned, and this society valued light skin. “Goody” was short for “Goodwife,” a term used to refer to a wife in humbler circumstances than those of Mrs. Overdo. A French hood was an item of dress. Apparently, Humphrey Wasp disliked French hoods because he was putting Mrs. Overdo down in his address to her.

He continued, “Must you quote your Adam to me!”

“Adam” was her husband, Mr. Adam Overdo; he was a Justice of the Peace.

Humphrey Wasp continued, “You think you are Madam Regent still, Mrs. Overdo, when I am in place, but my being in place doesn’t matter to you. I assure you, your reign is out when I am in, Dame Overdo.”

A regent rules when the real ruler is unable to.

Mrs. Overdo said, “I am content to be out of power for a while, sir, and to be governed by you — so should young

Bartholomew Cokes, too, if he did well, but it is also expected of you that you should govern your passions.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “You want me to be civil, forsooth!”

“Forsooth” was a trivial oath, often made by ladies. Humphrey Wasp was continuing to mock Mrs. Overdo.

He added, “Good Lord, how sharp you are from visiting Bedlam yesterday! Whetstone has set an edge upon you, has he?”

Bedlam was a hospital for the insane. Citizens sometimes visited it to be entertained by the antics of the inmates, one of whom was William Whetstone. In part, Humphrey Wasp was punning on Whetstone’s name. A proverb stated, “A whetstone, though it cannot itself cut, makes tools cut.” Another proverb stated, “The dullness of the fool is the whetstone of the wits.”

Mrs. Overdo said, “If you don’t know what belongs to your dignity, I still know what belongs to mine.”

“Very well then,” Humphrey Wasp said.

“Is this the marriage license, Numps?” Bartholomew Cokes said. “For love’s sake let me see it. I have never seen a marriage license.”

“Haven’t you?” Humphrey Wasp said. “Why, in that case you shall not see it.”

“If you respect me, good Numps, let me see it,” Bartholomew Cokes requested.

“Sir, I respect you, and yet I do not respect you when you engage in these fooleries of yours,” Humphrey Wasp said. “Set your heart at rest, there’s no reply forthcoming to your request except hard words — and for what reason would you see the marriage license?”

Bartholomew Cokes said, "I want to see the length and the breadth of it, that's all, and I will see it now, so I will."

"You shall not see it here," Humphrey Wasp said.

Bartholomew Cokes replied, "Then I'll see it at home, and I'll look upon the case — the black box — here."

"Why, do so," Humphrey Wasp said.

He then said to the others present, "A man must give way to him a little in trifles, gentlemen. These are errors, diseases of youth, which he will mend when he comes to judgment and knowledge of matters. I hope that you think so, and I thank you, and I ask you to pardon him, and I thank you again."

Referring to Humphrey Wasp, Quarlous said quietly and sarcastically to Mr. Winwife, "Well, this dry nurse, I still say, is a delicate man."

A wet nurse breastfeeds an infant. A dry nurse serves as a nanny for a child.

Mr. Winwife replied quietly, "And I am for the cosset who is his charge."

A "cosset" is a lamb that has been raised by hand; it is also a term for a spoiled child.

Quarlous and Mr. Winwife were trying to decide who was the greater fool: Humphrey Wasp or Bartholomew Cokes.

Mr. Winwife continued talking about Bartholomew Cokes, "Did you ever see a fellow's face more accuse him of being an ass?"

"Accuse him!" Quarlous said. "It confesses that he is one without his having been accused. What a pity it is that yonder wench — Miss Grace Wellborn — should marry such a Bartholomew Cokes!"

The word “wench” meant “young woman” and was often used affectionately; it was not always a negative term.

“That’s true,” Mr. Winwife said.

Quarulous said, “She seems to be discreet, and as sober as she is attractive.”

“Yes,” Mr. Winwife said, “and if you closely watch her, what a restrained scorn she casts upon all Bartholomew Cokes’ behavior and speeches!”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Well, Numps, I am now for another piece of business more — the fair, Numps. And then —”

Humphrey Wasp interrupted, “Bless me! Deliver me from my pain and tribulation! Help me! Hold me up! The fair!”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “No, don’t pace nervously up and down, Numps, and vex yourself. I am resolute Bartholomew in this; I’ll make no request to you about going to the fair. It was the entire purpose of my journey indeed, to show Miss Grace Wellborn my fair. I call it my fair, because of Bartholomew: You know my name is Bartholomew, and the name of the fair is Bartholomew Fair.”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “That was a joke I invented previously, gentlemen — just this morning. I invented that joke, indeed, when I was working on his marriage license. Believe me, he is making this joke after I made it.”

Quarulous said, “Come on, John, this ambitious wit of yours, I am afraid, will do you no good in the end.”

“No!” Mr. John Littlewit said. “Why not, sir?”

Quarulous said, “You grow so insolent, so beyond the bounds of propriety, with it, and over-doing it, John, that if you look



not to it, and tie it up, in time it will bring you to some obscure place, and there it will leave you.”

In other words, someday Mr. John Littlewit’s making of jokes would get him in trouble.

Mr. Winwife said, “Do not trust it too much, John. Be more sparing in your use of wit, and use it only now and then. A wit is a dangerous thing to have in this age; do not overbuy it.”

Mr. John Littlewit would pay for his wit by getting in trouble; he needed to be careful not to overpay for his wit, or to buy too much wit.

“Do you think so, gentlemen?” Mr. John Littlewit said. “I’ll take heed and be careful hereafter.”

“Yes, do, John,” Mrs. Win Littlewit said.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “She is a pretty little soul, this Mrs. Win Littlewit. I wish that I could marry her!”

Miss Grace Wellborn said to herself, “I also wish you could marry her, or anybody else, as long as I wouldn’t have to marry you!”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Numps, I will see it, Numps. It is decreed, so don’t be melancholy about the matter.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Why, see it, sir, see it, do, see it. Who is stopping you? Why don’t you go and see it? By God’s eyelid, see it.”

“The fair, Numps. The fair is what I want to see,” Bartholomew Cokes said.

Humphrey Wasp said, “I wish the fair, and all the drums and rattles in it, were in your belly, as far as I’m concerned! They are already in your brain. He who had the means to travel in your head now would see finer sights than any that are in the

fair, and he would make a finer voyage of it. He would see your head all hung with cockle shells, pebbles, fine wheat straws, and here and there a chicken's feather, and a cobweb."

Yes, Bartholomew Cokes' head was filled with trivial things, including cobwebs.

Quarlous said quietly to Mr. Winwife, "Indeed, Bartholomew Cokes looks, I think, if you look closely at him, like someone who was made to catch flies, with his Sir-Cranion legs."

A cranion is a long-legged spider. Apparently, Sir-Cranion legs are very long legs, indeed. *Cranion* is Greek for "skull," and so apparently Bartholomew Cokes also had bony knees.

Mr. Winwife said quietly to Quarlous, "And his Numps was made to flap the flies away."

Humphrey Wasp said to Bartholomew Cokes, "May God be with you, sir, there's your bee in a box, and much good may it do you."

"May God be with you" meant "goodbye."

Humphrey Wasp handed Bartholomew Cokes the box containing the bee, aka trouble: the marriage license.

Bartholomew Cokes replied, "Why, 'Your friend,' and 'Bartholomew,' if you be so contumacious."

"'Your friend,' and 'Bartholomew'" was another way of saying "goodbye." It was a complimentary close of a letter.

The word "contumacious" means "willfully disobedient to an authority figure."

Quarlous asked, "What do you mean, Numps?"

He took Humphrey Wasp aside as Numps was going out. He wanted to know why Humphrey Wasp was going to let Bartholomew Cokes go to the fair without him.

Humphrey Wasp said, "I'll not be guilty, I, gentlemen."

Mrs. Overdo asked her brother, "You will not let him go, brother, and lose him?"

Bartholomew Cokes replied, "Who can hold back someone who is determined to go away? I had rather lose him than the fair, indeed."

Humphrey Wasp said, "You do not know the inconvenience, gentlemen, you are trying to persuade me to endure, nor what trouble I have with him when he is in this kind of mood. If he goes to the fair, he will buy everything up to and including a doll there, and he will buy household things for the doll, too. If a leg or an arm did not grow on him, he would lose it in the press of the crowd.

"Pray to Heaven that I bring him away from the fair with one stone! And then he is such a ravener after fruit! — you will not believe what a fuss I had the other day to compound, aka settle, a business between a Catherine-pear woman and him about snatching. It is intolerable, gentlemen."

Much of what he said had a bawdy meaning. "Stone" can mean "testicle." "Ravener after fruit" can mean "being hungry for doing the deed that can lead to the birth of a child." "Compound" can mean "beget." "Business" can mean the "act of sex." "Pear" can mean "vulva," or "penis and scrotum." "Snatching" can mean "shoplifting" or "fast f\*\*king."

Mr. Winwife said, "Oh, but you must not leave him now to these hazards, Numps."

Humphrey Wasp replied, “No, he knows too well I will not leave him, and that makes him presume.”

He then said to Bartholomew Cokes, “Well, sir, will you go now? If you have such an itch in your feet to foot it to the fair, why do you stop — am I one of your tarriers? Am I stopping you? Go, will you go, sir? Why do you not go?”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Oh, Numps, have I brought you round to my point of view? Come, Miss Grace, and sister, I am resolute Bat, indeed, still.”

Nicknames for Bartholomew include Bat.

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Truly, I have no such desire as to go to the fair, nor any ambition to see it. No one who goes there is of any quality or fashion.”

By “quality,” she meant “high birth,” and by “fashion,” she meant “good breeding.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Oh, Lord, sir! You shall pardon me, Miss Grace, we ourselves are enough to make it a fashion, and as for qualities, leave it to Numps alone — he’ll find qualities.”

By “fashion,” he meant “trend,” and by “qualities,” he meant “aspects of character.”

Bartholomew Cokes, Humphrey Wasp, Mrs. Overdo, and Miss Grace Wellborn exited to go to Bartholomew Fair.

Quarlous said, “What a rogue in comprehension is this man who understands her language no better than that!”

Mr. Winwife said, “Yes, and he wants to marry her! Well, I will leave the chase of my widow for today, and go directly to the fair. These flies cannot, this hot season, but engender us excellent creeping entertainment.”

The flies were Humphrey Wasp and Bartholomew Cokes. In this society, flies were thought to generate spontaneously in hot weather without the need of such things as parents and eggs. These two particular “flies” would engender — create — entertainment for whoever would follow them and observe them.

“Any man who has even a spoonful of brain would agree with you,” Quarlous said.

He then said to Mr. John Littlewit, “Farewell, John.”

Quarlous and Mr. Winwife exited to go to Bartholomew Fair.

Alone with his wife, Mr. John Littlewit said, “Win, you see it is in fashion to go to the fair, Win; we must go to the fair, too, you and I, Win. I have an affair in the fair, Win, a puppet-play of my own creation — say nothing! — that I wrote for the puppet-show man, which you must see, Win.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, “I wish I could, John, but my mother will never consent to such a profane puppet-play and proposal, as she will call it.”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Tut, we’ll have a device, a plot, a dainty one, to get you there. Now, Wit, help at a pinch, good Wit, come, come, good Wit, if it be thy will!

“I have it, Win, I have it indeed, and it is a fine plot. Win, fake a craving to eat the meat of a suckling pig, sweet Win, in the fair, do you see, in the heart of the fair, not at Pie Corner.”

Pie Corner, with its many food shops, was located near Bartholomew Fair, which was known for its suckling pig.

He continued, “Your mother will do anything, Win, to satisfy your craving for food, you know, because you are pregnant. Please fake a craving for suckling-pig meat

immediately, and be sick all of a sudden, good Win. I'll go in and tell her; cut thy laces in the meantime, and play the hypocrite, sweet Win."

Women at this time wore bodices with laces. When the woman was faint, the laces would be loosened or untied to enable her to breathe more easily.

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, "No, I'll not make myself unready — undressed — for the fair. I can be hypocrite enough even though I were never so strait-laced."

She was punning. "Strait-laced" could refer to a bodice with tightly fastened laces, or to a person with strict morality.

The word "hypocrite" is interesting. It can mean "actor," as in a theatrical actor. A hypocrite pretends to be someone else. It can also refer to someone who only pretends to be morally strict.

Mr. John Littlewit said, "You say the truth, you have been bred in the family, and brought up to it. Your mother — mt mother-in-law — is a most elect hypocrite, and she has maintained us all these seven years with it, like gentlefolks."

In other words, Win was brought up in her family to be a hypocrite. That is a good thing for theatrical families, but maybe not so good for religious families.

The "elect" are those people who have been predestined to go to Heaven after they die. Some of the "elect" can be so sure that they will go to Heaven after they die that they feel they have no need to avoid committing sins in this life.

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, "Yes, she has supported us well, so let her alone, John. She is not a wise willful widow for nothing; nor is she a sanctified sister for a song."

The word "willful" means "obstinately determined to do what one wants to do."

She added, “And let me alone, too. I have somewhat of the mother in me, as you shall see.”

She was punning again. “I have somewhat of the mother in me” meant both 1) She had some of her mother in her; that is, in some ways, she took after her mother, and 2) She had some of the mother, which was a medical condition also known as hysteria. It was called the “mother” because it was believed to originate in the womb.

She then said, “Fetch her, fetch my mother.”

Her husband exited to get Dame Purecraft.

She then moaned and pretended to faint.

— 1.6 —

Her husband returned with her mother.

Dame Purecraft said, “Now may the blaze of the beauteous discipline frighten away this evil from our house!”

The “beauteous discipline” was Puritanism.

She then said, “How are you, Win-the-fight, child? How are you? Sweet child, speak to me!”

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, “Yes, indeed.”

Dame Purecraft said, “Look up, sweet Win-the-fight, and do not allow the enemy to enter you at this door.”

The “door” was the craving to eat the meat of a suckling pig, but there was a suggestion of the enemy entering her vagina. Witches sometimes testified at trials that an incubus or demon had seduced them.

She continued, “Remember that your education has been with the purest. Which polluted one was it that mentioned first the unclean beast to you, child?”

The unclean beast was the pig. The Puritans took the Old Testament seriously.

Leviticus 5:2 states, *“Or if a soul touch any unclean thing, whether it be a carcase of an unclean beast, or a carcase of unclean cattle, or the carcase of unclean creeping things, and if it be hidden from him; he also shall be unclean, and guilty”* (King James Version).

Deuteronomy 14:8 states, *“And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase”* (King James Version).

Mrs. Win Littlewit moaned.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “I didn’t mention the unclean beast to her, not I, I swear on my sincerity, mother-in-law! She craved pig meat for over three hours before she would let me know it.”

He then asked, “Who was it, Win?”

She replied, “A profane black thing with a beard, John.”

This was a description of an incubus or a demon.

Dame Purecraft said, “Oh, resist it, Win-the-fight, it is the tempter, the wicked tempter, you may know it by the fleshly desire for pig; be strong against it, and its foul temptations, in these assaults, whereby it pierces flesh and blood, as it were on the weaker side. Pray against its carnal provocations. Good child, sweet child, pray.”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Good mother-in-law, I beg you to allow her to eat some pig, and her bellyful, too. Do not cast away your own child, and perhaps one of mine, with your tale of the tempter.”



His wording was ambiguous: “perhaps one [a child] of mine” made it sound as if he were not the man responsible for his wife’s pregnancy. Possibly, he meant that his wife’s pregnancy was so far advanced that even if she died there was a chance the baby would live.

He then asked, “How do you do, Win? Are you very sick?”

“Yes, a great deal, John,” Mrs. Win Littlewit replied, and she moaned.

Dame Purecraft said, “What shall we do? Call our zealous brother Zeal-of-the-land Busy. He will be a faithful fortification against this charge of the adversary.”

“Brother” meant “brother in Christ,” not biological or legal brother.

Mr. John Littlewit exited to get Zeal-of-the-land Busy.

Dame Purecraft said, “Child, my dear child, you shall eat pig. Be comforted, my sweet child.”

“Yes, but in the fair, mother,” Mrs. Win Littlewit said.

Dame Purecraft said, “Yes, I mean in the fair, if it can be in any way made or found lawful.”

A religious person — such as Zeal-of-the-land Busy — was needed to make a ruling that the Puritan religion permitted Win to go to Bartholomew Fair and eat suckling pig.

Mr. John Littlewit returned.

Dame Purecraft asked, “Where is our brother Busy? Won’t he come?”

She then said to her daughter, “Look up, child.”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “He will come right away, mother-in-law, as soon as he has cleaned his beard. I found him

fastened by the teeth to the cold turkey-pie in the cupboard, with a great white loaf of bread on his left, and a glass of malmsey wine on his right.”

Dame Purecraft said, “Don’t slander the brethren, wicked one.”

Mr. John Littlewit replied, “Here he is now, purified, mother-in-law.”

“Purified” meant “cleansed of sin” and “with his beard wiped.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy entered the room.

Dame Purecraft said, “Oh, brother Busy! Your help is needed here to edify and raise us up in a scruple of conscience. My daughter, Win-the-fight, has been visited with a natural disease of women, called a longing to eat pig.”

“Yes, sir, a Bartholomew pig,” Mr. John Littlewit said, “and at Bartholomew Fair.”

Dame Purecraft said, “And I would be satisfied from you, religiously wise, whether a widow of the sanctified assembly, or a widow’s daughter, may commit the act of eating pig without offence to the weaker sisters.”

Jewish Rabbis would allow such things as eating during fast days if it were necessary to save the person’s life.

Someone could argue that if a pregnant woman — Mrs. Win Littlewit — had a craving for a certain food, it might be because that food had nutrients that the baby she was carrying needed and that therefore the pregnant woman ought to be allowed to eat that food. That reasoning applied to pregnant women, but Dame Purecraft was not pregnant. She just wanted to eat the meat of a suckling pig and so she wanted a ruling that it was OK for her, as well as her daughter, to eat pig.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Verily, for the disease of longing, it is a disease, a carnal disease, or appetite, incident to women; and as it is carnal and incident, it is natural, very natural. Now pig, it is a meat, and a meat that is nourishing and may be longed for, and so consequently eaten; it may be eaten; it may be very exceedingly well eaten. But in the fair, and as a Bartholomew pig, it cannot be eaten, for the very calling it a Bartholomew pig, and to eat it so, is a kind of idolatry, and you make the fair no better than one of the high places. This, I take it, is the state of the question: a high place.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy believed that calling a roasted suckling pig a Bartholomew pig was idolatrous because Bartholomew was the name of a Catholic saint.

The Bible refers to high places that were the locations of idolatry. For example, Leviticus 26:30 states, “*And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you*” (King James Version).

“Yes, but in state of necessity,” Mr. John Littlewit said, “place should give place, Mr. Zeal-of-the-land Busy.”

He was punning on “place,” which can mean 1) a physical location, and 2) social standing.

He thought, *I can still make a pun.*

Dame Purecraft said, “Good brother Zeal-of-the-land, think to make it as lawful as you can.”

“Yes, do that, sir,” Mr. John Littlewit said, “and as soon as you can, for the eating of pig must be permitted, sir — you see the danger my little wife is in, sir.”

Dame Purecraft said, “Truly, I do love my child dearly, and I would not have her miscarry, or hazard her first-fruits, if it might be otherwise.”

The “first-fruits” were the firstborn children.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Surely, it may be otherwise, but it is subject to construction, subject, and has a face — an appearance — of offence with the weak, a great face, a foul face; but that face may have a veil put over it, and be shadowed as it were; it may be eaten, and in the fair, I take it, in a booth, the tents of the wicked: the place is not much, not very much, we may be religious in the midst of the profane, so long as the pig is eaten with a reformed mouth, with sobriety and humbleness, and not gorged in with gluttony or greediness — there’s the danger: For, should she go there, as taking pride in the place, or delight in the unclean dressing, to feed the vanity of the eye, or lust of the palate, it were not well, it were not fit, it were abominable, and not good.”

The Bible may say not to eat swine because it is an unclean animal, but according to Zeal-of-the-land Busy, swine can be eaten with a “reformed” mouth — that is, a Puritan mouth. In other words, he wanted to eat the meat of a suckling pig.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “I knew that before, and I told Win that — but take courage, Win, we’ll be humble enough, we’ll seek out the homeliest booth in the fair, that’s for certain; rather than fail to eat pig, we’ll eat it on the ground.”

Dame Purecraft said, “Yes, and I’ll go with you myself, Win-the-fight, and my brother Zeal-of-the-land shall go with us, too, for our better consolation.”

This was good consolation for Zeal-of-the-land Busy because he wanted to eat pig.

Mrs. Win Littlewit moaned.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Yes, and Solomon shall go, too, Win — the more the merrier.”

He whispered to her, “Win, we’ll leave Rabbi Busy in a booth.”

He then said loudly, “Solomon! Bring me my cloak.”

Solomon entered the room, carrying Mr. John Littlewit’s cloak.

“Here it is, sir,” Solomon said.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “In the way of comfort to the weak, I will go and eat. I will eat exceedingly, and prophesy; there may be a good use made of eating pig, too, now I think about it. By the public eating of swine’s flesh, I will profess the Puritans’ hatred and loathing of Judaism, whereof the brethren stand accused of favoring too much. I will therefore eat, yes, I will eat exceedingly.”

Casuistry is reasoning applied to solving religious and ethical problems. It can be done either well or badly. When done badly, it can be used to justify incorrect decisions and be used as a basis to do what one wants to do rather than what one ought to do.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy was saying that he would go to the fair and pig out on pig as a way to provide comfort to the weak and as a way to show that Puritans such as himself were not overly sympathetic to the Jews although both religious groups took the Old Testament seriously.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Good, indeed, I will eat heartily, too, because I will be no Jew. I could never abide that stiff-necked generation that rejects Jesus as the Christ, and truly, I hope my little one will be like me, my little one who cries for pig so in the mother’s belly.”

“That is very likely, exceeding likely, very exceeding likely,” Zeal-of-the-land Busy said.

## ACT 2 (*Bartholomew Fair*)

### — 2.1 —

At Bartholomew Fair, a number of booths were set up. Lantern Leatherhead, Joan Trash, and others were sitting by the wares they had for sale. Lantern Leatherhead sold toys such as hobbyhorses, and Joan Trash sold gingerbread.

Justice Adam Overdo, disguised as mad Arthur of Bradley, talked to himself. He was dressed like a Fool, aka professional jester.

He said, “Well, in justice’s name, and King James I’s, and for the commonwealth, aka public welfare, defy all the world, Adam Overdo, to see you in this disguise, and to see you through your fictional backstory, for you have furnished yourself with an excellent disguise, I swear.

“I would like to meet a Linceus now, that eagle’s eye, that piercing Epidaurian serpent (as my Quintus Horace calls him) who could discover a Justice of the Peace (and lately of the quorum) under this covering.”

Linceus was one of the Argonauts of Jason and the Argonauts fame. He was reputed to have such excellent eyesight that he could see what lay beneath grass. The serpents of Aesculapius, the god of medicine who was worshipped at Epidaurus, also had excellent eyesight.

Horace had criticized in a satire those who search for the faults of their friends with eyesight like that of an Epidaurian serpent; of course, such people are not so vigilant when searching for their own faults.

This is C. Smart’s 1863 translation of the passage: “When you look over your own vices, winking at them, as it were, with sore eyes; why are you with regard to those of your

friends as sharp-sighted as an eagle, or the Epidaurian serpent?”

Adam Overdo was a Justice of the Peace, and he had recently been one of those experienced justices who were needed to make up a quorum.

Justice Overdo continued, “They may have seen many a Fool in the clothing of a justice; but never until now, a justice in the clothing of a Fool. Thus must we do, though, who stay awake and are on guard for the public good; and thus has the wise magistrate done in all ages.

“There is a doing of right out of wrong, if the way be found. Never shall I enough commend a worthy worshipful man who was once a leading member of this city, London, for his high wisdom in this point, who would wear now the distinctive clothing of a porter, now of a cartman, now of the dog-killer in this month of August, and in the winter the distinctive clothing of a seller of tinderboxes.”

Dogs were killed during times of plague because people thought animals carried the plague. Many dogs were killed during the dog days — the hot days following the rise of the star Sirius, aka the Dog Star, in Europe — of August. Traditionally, August was associated with the spread of rabies.

Justice Overdo continued, “And what would he do in all these shapes? Indeed, go into every alehouse, and down into every cellar; measure the length of sausages; calculate the volume of black pots and cans, yes, and of custards, with a measuring stick; and measure their circumference with a thread; weigh the loaves of bread on his middle finger.”

One of the most common offenses at Bartholomew Fair was selling underweight foodstuffs. Many verses of the Old Testament are very much concerned with giving proper weights. Not giving proper weight is a form of stealing.



Justice Overdo continued, “And if he found that the foodstuffs were underweight, then he would directly collect them and give the sausages to the poor, the bread to the hungry, the custards to his children, and he would break the pots and burn the cans himself. He would not trust his corrupt officers; instead, he would do it himself.

“I wish that all men in authority would follow this worthy precedent! For unfortunately, as we are public persons, what do we know? Indeed, what can we know? We hear with other men’s ears, and we see with other men’s eyes. A foolish constable or a sleepy watchman is the source of all our information. If he slanders a gentleman by the authority of his place, as he calls his office, then we, by the vice of ours, must believe him.

“Just a while ago, they made me — yes, me! — incorrectly take an honest zealous pursuivant, aka an officer with the power to search and to make arrests, to be a seminary, aka a Catholic priest who was educated in a seminary abroad. A constable, because of his position, can feel that he is able to slander a person of high position. And they made me incorrectly take a proper young bachelor of music to be a bawd — a pimp!

“We who have a high place in society are subject to this. All of our information is worthless, and most of those who provide information to us are knaves; and, by your leave, we ourselves are thought to be little better than, if not complete, fools for believing them.

“I, Adam Overdo, am resolved therefore not to pay money to informers hereafter, and instead to make my own discoveries. Many are the yearly enormities of this fair, in whose Pie-Powders Courts I have had the honor, during the three days, sometimes to sit as judge.”

“Enormities” was his word for “crimes.”

When people are assembled in large numbers, almost certainly some of those people are going to break the law. The Pie-Powders Court assembled at Bartholomew Fair in order to quickly judge those accused of offenses. The name was a corruption of the French *pied-poudreux*, which means “dusty feet.” Many people walked long distances to get to the fair.

Justice Overdo continued, “But this is the special day for detection of those foresaid enormities. Here is my black book for the purpose; this is the cloud that hides me; under this covert disguise I shall see and not be seen.”

He intended to write the names of offenders in his black book. In ancient epics, a god or goddess would hide a hero in a cloud so that other people would not notice him.

Justice Overdo continued, “On, Junius Brutus. And as I began, so I’ll end: in justice’s name, and the King’s, and for the commonwealth!”

Lucius Junius Brutus pretended to be a fool in order to deceive Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, the last of the Roman Kings. He was able to banish King Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, thereby establishing the Roman Republic. He then became a judge and acquired a reputation for being a very strict judge after sentencing his own sons to death when they were discovered plotting to reestablish Tarquinius as King.

Justice Overdo went close to the booths and stood near enough to eavesdrop on Lantern Leatherhead and Joan Trash.

## — 2.2 —

Lantern Leatherhead complained to Joan Trash, “The fair’s as dead as if the plague were abroad, I think. People are not coming abroad to the fair today, whatever the matter is.

“Do you hear me, sister Trash, lady of the basket? Sit farther away with your gingerbread progeny there, and don’t block the sightline of my shop, or I’ll have it proclaimed in the fair what ingredients your gingerbread men are made of.”

The gingerbread progeny consisted of gingerbread men.

Joan Trash said, “Why, what ingredients they are made of, brother Leatherhead? Nothing but what’s wholesome, I assure you.”

The word “brother” can mean simply “male fellow human being,” as it does here.

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Yes, stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger, and dead honey, you know.”

Honey has so much sugar that it won’t go bad, but it can crystalize, although that is not necessarily bad.

Justice Overdo wrote in his black book while saying quietly to himself, “Have I met with enormity so soon?”

“I shall mar your market, old Joan,” Lantern Leatherhead said.

Joan Trash said, “Mar my market, thou too-proud peddler! Do thy worst, I defy thee, I, and thy stable of hobbyhorses. I pay for my ground as well as thou do. If thou wrong me, for all thou are parcel-poet and an engineer, I’ll find a friend who shall right me, and make a ballad about thee, and thy cattle all over.”

Lantern Leatherhead was aggressive, but he had been using the respectful pronouns “you” and “your”; still, he had gotten Joan Trash angry, and she was using the pronouns “thou” and “thy” and “thee” when referring to him. A person of higher class would use these pronouns when talking to a person of lower class. Friends, however, could use the

pronouns “thou” and “thy” and “thee” when talking to each other.

The word “cattle” referred to the hobbyhorses.

She called Lantern Leatherhead a parcel-poet, aka a part-poet, and an engineer, aka an inventor or devisor. In addition to selling toys, he did such things as devise puppet-plays.

The two had to pay money to rent land on which to place their booths.

One way to get revenge on someone was to write a scurrilous ballad about that person.

She added, “Are you puffed up with the pride of your wares? Your arsedine?”

Arsedine was imitation gold leaf used to decorate toys.

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Ha, old Joan, I’ll talk with you soon, and humble you and take you down, too, before Justice Overdo: He is the man who must charm — subdue — you. I’ll have you in the Pie-Powders Court.”

Joan Trash said, “Charm me! I’ll meet thee face to face, before his worship, when thou dare, and although I am a little crooked in my body, I shall be found as upright in my business dealings as any woman in Smithfield, I will — charm me!”

Justice Overdo said quietly to himself, “I am glad to hear my name is their terror yet; this is the doing of justice.”

A number of fairgoers showed up and walked by them.

Lantern Leatherhead shouted, “What do you lack? What is it you are buying? What do you lack? Rattles, drums, toy halberds, toy horses, the best dolls, the finest fiddles!”

A halberd is a weapon: a spear combined with a battleax.

Costardmonger, followed by Nightingale, arrived. Costardmonger sold fruit, and Nightingale sold and sang ballads.

Costardmonger shouted, “Buy pears, pears, fine, very fine pears!”

Joan Trash shouted, “Buy gingerbread, gilt gingerbread!”

Gingerbread was decorated with fake gold gilt made with copper and zinc.

Nightingale shouted, “Hey,” to draw attention to himself.

Then he sang this song:

*“Now the fair’s a filling!*

*“Oh, for a tune to startle*

*“The birds o’ the booths here billing [courting],*

*“Yearly with old Saint Bartle [Bartholomew]!*

*“The drunkards they are wading [staggering, half seas over — aka half-drunk],*

*“The punks [prostitutes] and chapmen [merchants] trading;*

*“Who’d see the fair without his lading [without buying something]?”*

*“Buy any ballads, new ballads?”*

Ursla the pig-woman came out from her booth. She was one of those who served pig at the fair.

“Damn it,” she said. “Who would wear out their youth and prime like this, in the roasting of pigs, who had any cooler vocation? Hell’s a kind of cold cellar to this, a very fine cool vault, I swear on my conscience!”

She shouted, “Mooncalf!”

A mooncalf is a born fool or a person with a deformed body. Mooncalf was also the name of her employee.

Mooncalf said, "Here I am, boss."

Nightingale asked, "How are you now, Ursla? In a heat, in a heat? In a temper?"

Ursla said to Mooncalf, "Bring me my chair, you false faucet, you; and my morning's draught, quickly, a bottle of ale, to quench me, rascal."

A faucet is used to drain beer from a barrel, but Ursla was using the word to refer to Mooncalf, who served her as a bartender and server.

She then said, "I am all fire and fat, Nightingale. I shall quite melt away to the first woman, and be only a rib again, I am afraid. I water the ground in knots, as I go, like a large garden watering pot; you may follow me by the S's I make."

"Knots" are intricate designs. When she talked about watering the ground, she could have meant with her sweat or with her urine.

Nightingale said, "That's a pity, good Urse!"

He then asked, "Was Ezekiel here this morning?"

"Ezekiel?" Ursla asked. "Who's Ezekiel?"

"Ezekiel Edgworth, the civil cutpurse, you know him well enough," Nightingale said. "He is the one who always talks bawdy to you. I call him my secretary, aka keeper of secrets."

A civil cutpurse is a well-dressed, seemingly gentlemanly pickpocket.

"He promised to be here this morning, I remember," Ursla said.

Nightingale said, “When he comes, ask him to stay here. I’ll be back again quickly.”

“Best take your morning’s dew and due in your belly, Nightingale,” Ursla said.

By “morning’s dew and due,” she meant the first drink of the day.

Mooncalf came back with a chair and a bottle of ale for Ursla.

“Come, sir, set it here,” Ursla said. “Didn’t I say you should get a chair let out on the sides for me so that my hips might have room to move? You’ll never think of anything until your boss — me — has a chafed rump. You think this is a good chair, changeling, because it can accommodate your skinny grasshopper’s thighs — you care for nothing more than your own comfort.”

A “changeling” is an ugly or foolish fairy baby the fairies have left in exchange for an attractive human baby.

Ursla continued, “Now, you look as if you had been in the corner of the booth, burning the fleas in your breeches with a candle’s end, and accidentally set fire to the fair.”

In other words, perhaps, he looked as if he had set his fart on fire and thereby accidentally set the fair on fire.

She continued, “Fill my glass, Stote, fill it.”

“Stote” is an obsolete form of “stoat,” the name of an animal of the weasel family. It is thin.

Mooncalf poured her some ale, which she drank.

The disguised Justice Overdo wrote and said quietly to himself, “I know this pig-woman, and I will put her name in my black book, for my second enormity. She has been before

me, punk, pinnacle, and bawd, any time these two and twenty years upon record in the Pie-Powders.”

Ursla was an enormity because of both her great size and her criminality. A “punk” is a prostitute, and a “pinnacle” is a go-between — the pinnacle goes between the prostitute and the customer.

Ursla ordered Mooncalf, “Fill my glass again, you unlucky vermin!”

Mooncalf said, “Please don’t be angry, mistress. I’ll have the chair widened soon.”

Ursla said, “No, no, I shall steadily dwindle in weight until I fit in the chair. That will happen before the fair is over, as you may think, now you have heated me with anger. I am a poor vexed thing. I feel myself dropping in weight already as fast as I can; two stones of suet a day is my estimate of what I am losing.”

A “stone” is a measure of weight: fourteen pounds. “Suet” is fat.

She continued, “I can hold life and soul together only with this.”

She lifted her glass and said, “Here’s to you, Nightingale.”

She drank and then continued, “And with a whiff of tobacco at most. Where’s my tobacco pipe now? Not filled!”

She said to Mooncalf, “You arrant incubee.”

An “incubee” is the child of a woman and the night-demon known as the incubus.

Nightingale said, “Careful, Ursla, or you’ll chafe between the tongue and the teeth with fretting, now.”



Ursla complained about Mooncalf, “How can I hope that he’ll ever discharge his place of trust as a tapster, a man of reckoning under me, who remembers nothing I say to him?”

A “man of reckoning” is 1) “a VIP,” or 2) “a man who reckons.” Mooncalf reckoned up the bills of people at Ursla’s booth.

“Under me” meant “my employee,” but it could also mean “under me sexually.”

Nightingale exited.

Ursla said to Mooncalf, “But look to it, sirrah. It is best for you to look after doing your job right.”

She then thought out loud about money, “Three-pence a pipe-full, I will have made, of all my whole half-pound of tobacco, and a quarter of a pound of the weed known as colt’s-foot mixed with it, too, to adulterate and eke it out. I, who have dealt so long in the fire, will not be at a loss in smoke, now.

“Then six and twenty shillings a barrel I will raise from my beer, and fifty shillings a hundred on my bottle-ale.”

This was more than a barrel of beer was normally worth, but she had tricks to use to get more money from her beer and to sell more beer.

She continued talking to Mooncalf, ‘I have told you the ways how to raise the amount of money we get for our alcohol. Froth your mugs well in the filling, at length, rogue.’”

By holding the beer mugs well below the faucet while filling them, she and Mooncalf would be selling more froth and less beer.

She added, “And jog your bottles on the buttocks, sirrah.”

Hitting the bottles of ale on the buttocks would cause the ale to froth up. Some would be spilled, causing the drinker to buy more and thus increase Ursla's profits.

She continued, "Then always pour out the first glass, and drink with all companies, although you will be sure to be drunk; you'll misreckon the better, and be less ashamed of it."

Pouring out the first drink for a customer was good service and a chance to get friendly with the customer so the bartender could drink with him. When bills were misreckoned, they were always misreckoned in Ursla's favor and never in the customer's.

She continued, "But your true trick, rascal, must be, to be always busy, and mis-take away the bottles and mugs, in haste, before they are half drunk off, and never hear any body call (if they should chance to see you) until you have brought fresh drinks, and be able to forswear them. Give me a drink of ale."

Justice Overdo said quietly while writing, "This is the very womb and bed of enormity! It is as gross as she herself is! This must all be written down for enormity, all of it, every whit of it."

He then knocked on her booth.

Ursla said, "Look who's there, sirrah. Five shillings a pig is my price, at least. If it is a sow pig, sixpence more. If the customer is a great-bellied, pregnant wife, and she longs for it, then sixpence more for that."

Justice Overdo said to himself, "*Oh, tempora! Oh, mores!*"

He was quoting Cicero's *First Oration Against Catiline*. The Latin meant, "Oh, the times! Oh, the customs!" Cicero was

saying that the age and society that would produce a rebel such as Catiline was bad.

Justice Overdo then said to himself, "I would not have lost my discovery of this one grievance, for my honorable position on the judicial bench. How the poor customer is abused here! Well, I will fall in with her, and with her Mooncalf, and seek out wonders of enormity."

He came forward so that Ursula could see him and said, "I walk in here by your leave, goodly woman, and the fatness of the fair, as oily as the King's constable's lamp, and as shining as his shoeing-horn!"

Horn, when sliced thinly, is transparent and is used in lanterns. Because of this, horn became associated with brightness, and proverbially a drunkard's nose was as bright as a shoeing-horn.

The disguised Justice Overdo asked, "Does your ale have virtue, or your beer strength, so that the tongue of man may be tickled, and his palate pleased in the morning? Let your pretty nephew here go search and see."

The pretty nephew was Mooncalf. At the time, "pretty" meant "clever" as well as its usual meaning.

Ursula and Mooncalf were not necessarily biologically related.

"What new roarer — roisterer — is this?" Ursula asked.

Mooncalf said, "Oh, Lord! Don't you know him, boss? He is mad Arthur of Bradley, who makes orations."

He then said, "Excellent mister, old Arthur of Bradley, how are you? Welcome to the fair! When shall we hear you again talk about your concerns with your back against a booth, hmm? I have been one of your little disciples, in my days. I have heard your orations before."

The disguised Justice Overdo said, “Let me drink, boy, with my love, your aunt, here, so that I may be eloquent. But let me drink of your best, lest it be bitter in my mouth, and my words fall foul on people attending the fair.”

Ursla asked Mooncalf, “Why don’t you fetch him something to drink, and ask him to sit?”

“Is it ale or beer you want, Mr. Arthur?” Mooncalf asked.

The disguised Justice Overdo said, “I want your best, pretty stripling, your best. I want the same that your turtledove drinks and that you pour on religious holy days.”

Ursla said, “Bring him a sixpenny bottle of ale. They say that a Fool’s handsel is lucky.”

A “handsel” is the first money taken in for the day.

The disguised Justice Overdo said, “Bring both, child.”

He sat down and said, “Ale for Arthur, and Beer for Bradley. And bring ale for your aunt, boy.”

Mooncalf exited.

The disguised Justice Overdo thought, *My disguise is working to the full extent of my desires. I shall, by the benefit of this, discover enough, and more, evidence of wrongdoing, and yet get off with the reputation of what I am pretending to be: a certain middling thing in between a Fool and a madman.*

### — 2.3 —

Jordan Knockem arrived. He was a horse-courser who bought and sold horses.

He said to Ursla, “What! My little lean Ursla! My she-bear! Are you still alive with your litter of pigs to grunt out another Bartholomew Fair? Ha!”

*Ursula* is a feminine derivative from the Latin *ursus*, which means “bear.”

Jordan Knockem’s humor, like the humor of other Bartholomew Fair lowlifes, was low and vulgar. Pregnant women were said to grunt out a baby; here, he was saying that *Ursula* would grunt out another Bartholomew Fair. Grunting is also done in defecation.

*Ursula* said, “Yes, and to amble a foot, when the fair is done, to hear you groan out of a cart going up the heavy hill —”

A heavy hill is a sorrowful hill. *Ursula* was referring to Holborn Hill, which criminals would travel as they were taken from Newgate prison to Tyburn gallows to be hung.

Jordan Knockem said, “I suppose you mean Holborn, *Ursula*. For what, for what, pretty *Urse*, would I be hung?”

“For cutting halfpenny purses, or for stealing little pennyworth toy dogs out of the fair,” she replied.

A criminal could be hung for petty thief. At the time men carried what they called purses, although we would probably call them moneybags. They were bags of money tied to the person with a string. A cutpurse would cut the string and steal the purse and its contents.

Jordan Knockem said, “Oh! Say good words, not those words, *Urse*.”

Justice Overdo thought, *Another special enormity. He is a cutpurse of the sword, the boot, and the feather! Those are his marks.*

Gentlemen often wore a sword and boots, and they often wore a feather in their hat.

Mooncalf returned with the ale and beer.

Ursula said to Jordan Knockem, “Are you one of those horse-leeches who spread the rumor that I was dead, in Turnbull Street, of a surfeit of bottle-ale and tripes?”

A horse-leech is either a veterinarian or a bloodsucker.

Prostitutes populated Turnbull Street.

Jordan Knockem said, “No, it was better food, Urse. It was cow’s udders — cow’s udders!”

Ursula said, “Well, I shall get even with your mumbling mouth one day.”

Jordan Knockem said, “What! You’ll poison me with a newt in a bottle of ale, will you? Or with a spider in a tobacco-pipe, Urse? Come, there’s no malice in these fat folks. I shall never fear fat people like you, as long as I can escape your lean Mooncalf here. Let’s drink our quarrel away, good Urse, and no vapors!”

“Vapors” was a favorite word of his, and it meant basically whatever he wanted it to mean. Often, it referred to quarrels, and often it referred to a person’s mood, especially a bad mood (unless qualified by the adjective “good”).

Ursula exited. She had to keep an eye on the roasting meat.

The disguised Justice Overdo said quietly to Mooncalf so that Jordan Knockem could not hear him, “Did you hear that, boy?”

He gave Mooncalf some money and said, “There’s for your ale, and the remnant is a tip for you.”

He then said, “Speak in your faith as a faucet, aka a bartender, now. Is this goodly person before us here, this ‘vapors,’ a knight of the knife?”

Mooncalf asked, “What do you mean by that, Mr. Arthur?”

The disguised Justice Overdo replied, “I mean a child of the horn-thumb, a babe of booty, boy, a cutpurse.”

Cutpurses wore a thimble made of horn over their thumb so they would not cut themselves while cutting the string of a purse.

Mooncalf said, “Oh, Lord, sir! He is far from it. This is Mr. Daniel Knockem: Jordan the ranger of Turnbull. He is a horse-courser, sir.”

He ranged over Turnbull Street and bought and sold horses.

The disguised Justice Overdo said, “Your dainty dame, Ursla, though, called him a cutpurse.”

Mooncalf replied, “Likely enough, sir, she’ll say forty such things in an hour (if you listen to her and keep count) for her recreation, if the whim takes residence in the greasy kerchief she wears on her head. Such language makes her fat, you see; she battens and grows fat with it.”

The disguised Justice Overdo thought, *Here I might have been deceived now and have put a fool’s blot upon myself, if I had not played an after-game of discretion!*

An after-game is a second game played in an attempt to recover losses from the first game.

Ursla returned, dripping with sweat.

Jordan Knockem said, “Alas, poor Urse! This is an ill season for you.”

“Go and hang yourself, hackney-man!” Ursla said.

A hackney-man kept horses to rent out. Prostitutes were sometimes called hackneys because they were ridden, and so a hackney-man could be a pimp.

Jordan Knockem said, “What! What! Urse! Vapors? Has exertion bred vapors in you?”

Ursla said, “Vapors! Don’t tusk, nor twirl your dibble, good Jordan. Don’t sneer at me and show your fangs, nor twirl the end of your beard.”

The word “tusk” as a verb meant to beat the bushes to scare out game. By sneering at Ursla, Jordan Knockem was trying to bait her into a quarrel.

She continued, “I know what you’ll take to the drop.”

In other words, she knew what he was capable of to the smallest quantity.

She continued, “Although you are Captain of the roarers, and fight well at the case of piss-pots, you shall not frighten me with your lion-jaws, sir, nor your fangs. You think you are angry, but you are hungry. Come, a pig’s head will stop your mouth, and stay your hunger at all times.”

The roarers are roisterers, aka rowdies. A case of pistols is a pair of pistols, but Ursla punned on his name — a jordan is a chamber pot — by saying “case of piss-pots.”

Jordan Knockem replied, “You are such another mad, merry Urse, still! Truly I feel guilty for vexing you, now in the dog-days, in this hot weather, for fear of foundering you in the body, and melting down a pillar of the fair.”

As a dealer of horses, he frequently used the terms of his trade. A foundering horse was an ill horse.

He continued, “Please take your chair again, and keep state like a Queen on a throne, and let’s have a fresh bottle of ale, and a pipe of tobacco, and no vapors: I’ll have this belly of yours taken up, and your grass scoured, wench.”



A horse's belly could be taken up — reduced — through diet, including scouring — purging — its grass.

— 2.4 —

Ezekiel Edgworth, who was a gentleman-resembling cutpurse, walked toward them.

Jordan Knockem saw him and said, “Look, here's Ezekiel Edgworth; he is as fine a boy of his inches as any boy is in the fair! He always has money in his purse, and he will pay for everything with a kind heart and with good vapors.”

Ezekiel Edgworth was a young and small man, but a man who was willing to pick up the check. Of course, as a cutpurse, he paid the check with other people's money.

He said, “That I will indeed, willingly, Mr. Knockem.”

He then ordered, “Fetch some ale and tobacco.”

Mooncalf exited to fill the order.

Things were picking up at the fair. More customers were arriving.

Lantern Leatherhead shouted, “What do you lack, gentlemen? Maiden, look at this fine hobbyhorse for the young boy you look after; it will cost you only a token amount per week for his provender.”

This was a joke. Toy horses don't need provender, and of course, small boys don't eat much.

Nightingale, a singer and seller of ballads, came back. Arriving at the same time were Corncutter, a man who cut people's corns from their feet; and the mousetrap-man, who also sold tinderboxes.

Corncutter shouted, “Have you any corns on your feet and toes?”

The mousetrap-man shouted, “Buy a mousetrap, a mousetrap, or a trap for fleas?”

Joan Trash shouted, “Buy some gingerbread!”

Nightingale shouted, “Ballads, ballads! Fine new ballads!”

He then shouted, “Hear for your love, and buy for your money.”

In other words, “Hear ballads for your love, and buy ballads in exchange for your money.”

The ballads were here and could be heard — Nightingale sometimes sang the ballads he had for sale — and young gallants would, of course, want to buy ballads for the ladies they loved, and to do that took money.

Nightingale shouted, “I have a delicate ballad about the ferret and the coney.”

Literally, ferrets and coney are animals. A coney is a rabbit. In criminals’ language, however, a ferret is a criminal and a coney is a sucker, but many obscene ballads used “ferret” to mean “penis” and “coney” to mean “lady.” For example:

*“I put it in again.*

*“It found her out at last.*

*“The coney then between her legs*

*“Held my ferret fast.”*

Nightingale shouted, “I have ‘A Preservative Against the Punk’s Evil.’”

A punk is a prostitute, and the punk’s evil is venereal disease. “A Preservative Against the Punk’s Evil” is a strange name for a song. Perhaps Nightingale meant that his

ballads were a preservative against the punk's evil. Singing instead of f\*\*king is a way to avoid the punk's evil.

He added, "Another ballad is about goose-green starch and the Devil."

In this song, a vain woman was dissatisfied with the way her ruffs were starched and she vowed to go to the Devil before she wore one of those ruffs again. The Devil appeared to her in the guise of a handsome young man and starched her ruffs to perfection. She wore one of the ruffs, and he strangled her.

"Goose-green" is often called "goose-turd-green." It is a yellowish-green color.

Nightingale shouted more titles:

"A Dozen of Divine Points.'

"The Godly Garters."

"A Dozen of Divine Points" is a song containing twelve moral maxims.

"The Godly Garters" is a song about garters that religiously inclined young men could wear to keep their socks from falling down. Some items of clothing such as vestments are thought to be godly, so why not garters?

Nightingale shouted, "The fairing of good counsel, of an ell and three-quarters."

Possibly, this was the title of a song: "The Fairing of Good Counsel." A fairing is a gift bought at a fair.

Some of Nightingale's ballads were moral in nature and contained good counsel, and the paper on which they were printed was long. An ell is forty-five inches.

Nightingale shouted, "What is it you want to buy?"

“‘The Windmill Blown Down by the Witch’s Fart’?

“Or ‘Saint George, Who — Oh! — did Break the Dragon’s Heart’?”

One way to break a dragon’s heart is to pull it out of the dragon’s body, as St. George did in one song.

Mooncalf returned with ale and tobacco.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Mr. Nightingale, come here, leave your selling for a little while.”

Nightingale went over to him and said, “Oh, my secretary — my keeper of secrets! What does my secretary want to say to me?”

They began to talk quietly.

The disguised Justice Overdo asked, “Child of the bottles, who is he? Who is he?”

He pointed to Ezekiel Edgworth.

Mooncalf replied, “Mr. Arthur of Bradley, he is a civil young gentleman who keeps company with the roarers and always disburses money to all of them. He always has money in his purse; he pays for them, and they roar for him. One does good offices for the other. They call him the secretary, but he serves nobody. He is a great friend of the ballad-man’s; they are never asunder.”

The roarers assisted Ezekiel Edgworth. They created a distraction for him as he cut purses, and they served as bodyguards to him.

The disguised Justice Overdo said, “What a pity it is that so civil a young man should haunt this debauched company! Here’s the bane of the youth of our time apparent. He is a proper penman. I see it in his countenance that he has a good clerk’s look, and I warrant that he has a quick hand.”

The disguised Justice Overdo meant that Ezekiel Edgworth could write quickly.

Mooncalf said, "He has a very quick hand, sir."

He meant that Ezekiel Edgworth could cut purse strings quickly.

Mooncalf exited.

Ezekiel Edgworth, Nightingale, and Ursula were whispering together. Justice Overdo could not hear them.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, "All the purses, and purchase, aka profit and booty, I give you today by conveyance, bring here to Ursula's immediately. Here we will meet at night in her lodge, and share. Look that you choose good places for your standing in the fair, when you sing, Nightingale."

They would work together at stealing. Nightingale would draw a crowd with his singing. Ezekiel Edgworth would cut the purse strings and stealthily give the purses to Nightingale, who would immediately take them to Ursula, who would hide them until everybody met that night and divided up the booty.

Ursula said, "Yes, sing near the most crowded passageways; and often change where you sing."

Ezekiel Edgworth said, "And in your singing, you must use your hawk's eye nimbly, and always fly the purse to a mark, where it is worn, and on which side. That information you may give me by making a sign with your beak, or hang your head that way in the tune."

"Use your hawk's eye nimbly, and always fly the purse to a mark" meant "always watch where people put away their purse on their person and communicate that information to me." He was using the language of hunting. A trained hawk would indicate to a hunter where the quarry had gone; it

would fly after the quarry and mark, aka notice and show, where the quarry was hidden.

Ursula said, “Enough, talk no more about it. Your friendship, masters, is not now to begin: You have worked together before. Drink your draught of indenture, your sup of covenant, and leave.”

The “draught of indenture” and the “sup of covenant” meant drinking a draught — draft beer — to an agreement, a business contract. “Covenant” is a religious term that many people would say ought not to be used in this particular context.

Ursula continued, “The fair fills quickly, customers begin to come in, and I haven’t a pig ready yet.”

“Well said!” Jordan Knockem exclaimed. “Fill the cups, and light the tobacco. Let’s give fire in the works, and noble vapors.”

Ezekiel Edgworth asked, “And shall we have smocks, Ursula, and good whimsies!”

“Whimsies” are found between the legs of prostitutes.

“Come, you are in your bawdy vein!” Ursula said. “You will have the best the fair will afford, Ezekiel, if Captain Whit the bawd keeps his word.”

Mooncalf returned.

“How are the pigs doing, Mooncalf?” Ursula asked.

“They are very passionate, boss,” Mooncalf replied. “One of them has wept out an eye.”

This indicated that the meat was close to being completely roasted.

“Master Arthur of Bradley is melancholy here,” Mooncalf said. “Nobody talks to him. Will you have some tobacco, Mr. Arthur?”

“No, boy,” the disguised Justice Overdo replied. “Let my meditations alone.”

Mooncalf said, “He’s preparing so he can make an oration, now.”

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “If I can with this day’s travail, and all my policy, only rescue this youth here out of the hands of the lewd man and the strange woman, I will sit down at night, and say with my friend Ovid, *‘Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis / nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.’*”

This is a public-domain translation by Frank Justus Miller of Ovid’s passage: “And now my work is done, which neither the wrath of Jove, nor fire, nor sword, nor the gnawing tooth of time shall ever be able to undo.” The work was Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which was first published in 8 C.E.

Justice Overdo wanted to rescue Ezekiel Edgworth, whose conversation with the others he had heard. A “strange woman” is a harlot.

Jordan Knockem, who was not in on the conversation, said, “Here, Ezekiel, here’s a health to Ursla, and a kind vapor; you always have money in your purse, and abundance! How do you come by it? I beg you to vapor your friends some in a courteous vapor.”

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Half of what I have, Mr. Daniel Knockem, is always at your service.”

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “He has a sweet nature! What hawk would prey upon such a lamb?”

Jordan Knockem said, "Let's see what half comes to, Ezekiel. Count it."

He said to Mooncalf, "Come, fill his glass so he can drink a toast with me."

— 2.5 —

Mr. Winwife and Quarlous arrived.

Mr. Winwife said, "We have gotten here before Bartholomew Cokes and the others, I think."

"That's all the better," Quarlous said. "We shall see them come into the fair, now."

Lantern Leatherhead shouted in order to sell his toys, "What do you lack, gentlemen? What is it you lack? A fine horse? A lion? A bull? A bear? A dog? Or a cat? An excellent fine Bartholomew-bird? Or a musical instrument? What is it you lack?"

He had toy birds and fiddles for sale.

Quarlous said, "By God's lid! Here's Orpheus among the beasts, with his fiddle and all!"

Orpheus was a famous musician from mythological times who was reputed to be able to charm people, beasts, and even stones with his musical ability. His wife died, and he made his way to the Land of the Dead in order to convince Hades, King of the Dead, to release her. His music charmed Hades, who agreed to let her return to the Land of the Living on one condition: Orpheus could not look at her until after she had stepped into the Land of the Living. If Orpheus looked at her before then, she would return to the Land of the Dead. Orpheus agreed, and they made their way back toward the Land of the Living. Orpheus stepped into the Land of the Living and turned to face his wife, but she had one more step



to go to reach the Land of the Living. She said, “Farewell,” and returned to the Land of the Dead.

Joan Trash shouted, “Will you buy any comfortable bread, gentlemen?”

Gingerbread is a comfort food.

Quarlous said, “And here Ceres is selling her daughter’s picture in gingerwork.”

Ceres was the mother of Proserpina, who was kidnapped by Hades. Ceres mourned, and since she was the goddess of agriculture, when she mourned nothing would grow. She was able to make an arrangement in which her daughter would spend six months of the year with her and be Queen of the Land of the Dead the other six months.

Proserpina and Ceres are Roman names. Proserpina’s Greek name is Persephone, and Ceres’ Greek name is Demeter.

Bartholomew Fair was something like Hell, with Ursula’s hot fire for roasting pigs the center of Hell. People such as Orpheus and goddesses such as Ceres could grapple with Hades, but they could win at best only partial victories.

Mr. Winwife said, “I can’t believe that these people are so ignorant as to think us customers for them! Do we look as if we would buy gingerbread or hobbyhorses?”

Quarlous replied insightfully, “Why, they know no better wares than they have, nor better customers than come to the fair, and our very being here makes us fit to be asked to buy their wares, as well as others. I wish that Bartholomew Cokes would come! He would be a true customer for them.”

Jordan Knockem said to Ezekiel Edgworth, “How much is it? What’s half of what you have? Thirty shillings?”

He looked up and said, “Who’s yonder! Ned Winwife and Tom Quarlous, I think! Yes.”

He said to Ezekiel Edgworth, “Give it all to me! Give it all to me!”

Jordan Knockem shouted, “Mr. Winwife! Mr. Quarlous! Will you take a pipe of tobacco with us?”

He said to Ezekiel Edgworth, “Do not discredit me now, Ezekiel.”

Ezekiel Edgworth handed him the money.

Mr. Winwife said to Quarlous, “Pretend not to see him. He is the roaring horse-courser. I plead to you: Let’s avoid him. Let’s turn and go down this way.”

Quarlous said, “By God’s blood, I’ll see him, and roar with him, too, even if he should roar as loud as Neptune. Please go with me.”

Neptune, god of the ocean, roars loudly during hurricanes and other sea-storms.

Mr. Winwife said, “You may draw me to as likely an inconvenience, when you please, as this.”

In other words: If you want to inconvenience me as much as you can do now, you can do so at another time when you please. So don’t inconvenience me now, but do so at a later time.

Quarlous said, “Bah, come along; we have nothing to do, man, but to see the sights now.”

Mr. Winwife didn’t want to see Jordan Knockem, but he also didn’t want to lose Quarlous’ company. They had plans to enjoy watching Bartholomew Cokes make a fool of himself at the fair.

Mr. Winwife and Quarlous went to the booth where Jordan Knockem was sitting.

Jordan Knockem greeted them: “Welcome, Mr. Quarlous and Mr. Winwife. Will you take any froth and smoke with us?”

Quarlous said, “Yes, sir, but you’ll pardon us if we knew not of so much familiarity between us before.”

Quarlous and Mr. Winwife were higher up in society than Jordan Knockem.

Jordan Knockem asked, “So much familiarity as what, sir?”

Quarlous replied, “To be so lightly invited to smoke and froth.”

“A ‘good’ vapor!” Jordan Knockem said. “Will you sit down, sir? This is old Ursla’s ‘mansion’; how do you like her bower?”

It wasn’t a mansion, but tree boughs shaded it, so it was a bower.

Jordan Knockem continued, “Here you may have your punk and your pig in state, sir, both piping hot.”

A punk is a prostitute. He wanted a sexually hot prostitute.

Quarlous said, “I had rather have my punk cold, sir.”

He wanted a prostitute who was not feverish as a result of being infected with venereal disease.

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “There’s information for me: Punk! And pig!”

From inside, where the pigs were roasting, Ursla called, “Mooncalf, you rogue!”

Mooncalf shouted back, “Coming! The bottle is almost empty, boss.”

He poured some ale and said, “Here, Mr. Arthur.”

Ursula shouted, “I’ll part you and your playfellow there in the braid-trimmed coat, if you don’t sunder yourself from him damn quickly.”

The disguised Justice Overdo was not wearing the Fool’s old-fashioned motley costume, but instead a newer fashion for Fools: a long coat with braid trimming and embroidery.

Jordan Knockem said, “Mr. Winwife, you are proud, I think. You are not talking, nor are you drinking. Are you proud?”

“Not of the company I am in, sir, nor of the place, I assure you,” Mr. Winwife replied.

“You do not take exception to the company, do you!” Jordan Knockem asked. “Are you in vapors, sir?”

Mooncalf said, “Now, good Mr. Daniel Knockem, respect my mistress’s bower, as you call it. For the honor of our booth, let’s have none of your vapors here.”

Ursula appeared, carrying a firebrand.

She said to Mooncalf, “Why, you thin, lean polecat you! If they have a mind to be in their vapors, must you hinder them? How would you know, vermin, if they would have lost a cloak, or such another ‘trifle’?”

Losing a cloak was not a trifling matter; fine clothing is and was expensive.

She continued, “Must you be breathing the air of pacification here, while I am tormented within by the fire, you weasel?”

Mooncalf said, “Good boss, it was in behalf of your booth’s credit and reputation that I spoke.”

Ursula said, “Why, would my booth have broken, if they had fallen out in it, sir? Or would their heat have set it on fire? Go in, you rogue, and baste the pigs, and tend the fire, so that the pigs won’t fail, or I’ll both baste and roast you until your eyes drop out like those of the pigs. Leave the bottle behind you, and be curst awhile!”

One then-current meaning of the word “baste” was “beat.”

Since Ursula’s fire was the center of the “Hell” of Bartholomew Fair, Mooncalf would be cursed for a while as he tended the fire.

Mooncalf exited.

Quarlous said, “Body of the fair! What’s this? Who is she? Mother of the bawds?”

Jordan Knockem said, “No, she’s mother of the pigs, sir, mother of the pigs.”

Mr. Winwife said, “Mother of the Furies, I think, judging by her firebrand.”

The Furies were avenging goddesses with snakes for hair. They punished wrongdoers in ancient Greece.

Quarlous said, “No, she is too fat to be a Fury.”

Fat people are supposed to be jolly. The Furies were thin.

He continued, “She is surely some walking sow made of tallow!”

Mr. Winwife said, “She is an inspired vessel of kitchen stuff!”

An “inspired vessel” is a religiously inspired person who is filled with religious spirit.

Quarlous said, “She’ll make excellent stuff for the coach-makers here in Smithfield; they can use her tallow to anoint wheels and axletrees.”

“To anoint” means “to rub with oil as part of a religious ritual.”

While they were insulting her, Ursula had been drinking and listening. Now she spoke up and said, “Aye, aye, funsters, mock a plain plump soft wench of the suburbs, do, because she’s juicy and wholesome.”

The suburbs had less onerous laws than London, and so disreputable businesses congregated in the suburbs. Brothels and theaters were located in the suburbs.

She continued, “You must have your thin pinched ware, pent up in the compass of a dog-collar (or it will not do), that looks like a long striped conger eel, set upright and displaying a green feather, like fennel in the mouth of the eel.”

In other words, these men preferred thin ware, aka thin prostitutes.

Jordan Knockem said, “Well said, Urse, my good Urse! Go after them, Urse!”

Quarlous asked, “Is she your quagmire, Daniel Knockem? Is this your bog?”

“Quagmire” and “bog” in this context meant “vagina.”

Nightingale said, “We shall have a quarrel soon.”

Jordan Knockem said, “What! Bog! Quagmire? Foul vapors! Humph!”

“Foul vapors” in this context unintentionally meant “stinky crotch.”

Quarlous said, “Yes, he who would venture for her bog, I assure him, might sink into her and be drowned for a week before any friend he had could find out where he had disappeared.”

Mr. Winwife said, “And then he would be a fortnight raising him up again.”

“Raising him up again” meant both 1) lifting him out of her vagina, and 2) giving him another erection.

Quarlous said, “It would be like falling into a whole shire of butter; it would take a team of Dutchmen to draw him out.”

A stereotype of Dutchmen was that they loved butter.

Jordan Knockem said, “Answer them, Urse. Where’s your Bartholomew wit now, Urse? Where’s your Bartholomew wit?”

Ursla said, “Hang them, the rotten, roguey cheaters, I hope to see them plagued one day (poxed with venereal disease they are already, I am sure) with lean playhouse poultry that has the bony rump, sticking out like the ace of spades, or the point of a partisan, so that every rib of them is like the tooth of a saw; and will so grate them with their hips and shoulders, as (take them altogether) they might as well lie with and have sex with a rake.”

“Lean playhouse poultry” referred to the thin prostitutes who picked up customers in and around the theaters.

A partisan is a long-handled (and therefore skinny) spear.

Quarlous said, “Damn her, look at how she drips with sweat! She’s able to give a man the sweating sickness if he just looks at her.”

Ursula said, “By Saint Mary, you had better look off since you have a patch on your face, and a dozen in your breeches, although they are made of scarlet, sir.”

Quarlous’ breeches were dyed scarlet, which was an expensive dye used on expensive clothing. In this society, patches were used to cover the sores of venereal disease. Ursula was saying that although Quarlous and Mr. Winwife were well-to-do, they were also well infected with venereal disease.

She continued, “I have seen people with as fine outsides as either of yours bring lousy linings to the brokers, before now, twice a week.”

“Bring lousy linings to the brokers” had two meanings: 1) Bring lice-infected underwear to the pawnbrokers, and 2) Bring venereal disease-infected genitals to the bawds.

Quarlous said, “Do you think there may be a fine new cucking-stool in the fair, to be purchased: one large enough, I mean? I know there is a pond big enough for her.”

The cucking-stool was a ducking-stool. Scolding women were publicly humiliated by being dunked into a pond.

Ursula said, “Use it for your mother, you rascal! Get out, you rogue, you hedge-bird, you pimp, you pannier-man’s bastard, you!”

A hedge-bird was either someone born under a hedge, and therefore lower-class, or someone who stood near a hedge, such as a vagrant or a highwayman who robbed while on foot.

Quarlous laughed mockingly.

Ursula said to him, “Do you sneer, you dog’s-head, you trundle-tail!”



A trundle-tail is a mongrel with a curly tail.

She continued, “You look as if you were begotten on top of a cart in harvest time, when the whelp — the bitch — was hot and eager. Go and sniff after your brother’s bitch, Mistress Commodity.”

A commodity can be many things, including female flesh. “Mistress Commodity” can mean “whore.” The reference to “brother” was to Mr. Winwife, who had also insulted her and whom she did not know was single.

She continued, “That’s the livery you wear; it will be out at the elbows shortly. It’s time you went to it for the other remnant.”

“Livery” is the clothing of a servant. She meant that Quarlous served a whore, perhaps as pimp, perhaps as servant. If as pimp, he needed to go back to work and make money off the whore so that he could replace his fine clothing when it wore out at the elbows. If as customer, his satiety would soon be worn out and he needed to go back and make use of the whore before she was completely shagged out.

Jordan Knockem said, “Peace, Urse. Peace, Urse.”

He whispered to Nightingale and Ezekiel Edgworth, “They’ll kill the poor whale, and make oil of her.”

He then said to Ursla, “Please, go inside your booth.”

Ursla said, “I’ll see them poxed first, and piled, and double piled.”

“Poxed” meant infected with syphilis.

“Piled” meant bald as a result of treatment for venereal disease.

“Double-piled” referred to layers of cloth. They would have two layers: 1) their regular breeches, and 2) cloth bandages for their venereal sores.

Mr. Winwife said to Quarlous, “Let’s go away now. Her language grows greasier than her pigs.”

Ursula said, “Does it now, Snotty-nose? Good lord! Are you sniveling? You were engendered on a she-beggar in a barn when the bald thrasher, your sire, was scarcely warm.”

According to Ursula, the thrasher — Mr. Winwife’s father — was bald, meaning in this context that he lacked any kind of vital force. That is, he was scarcely warm while having sex. This was an insult to Mr. Winwife as well as to his father. Being begotten by a sire who is hot at the planting of his semen is much better than having a sire who is scarcely warm at the planting of his semen.

Mr. Winwife said to Quarlous, “Please, let’s go now.”

Quarlous said, “No, indeed. I’ll stay for the end of her ranting now. I know she cannot last much longer. I find by her similes she is waning quickly.”

Ursula said, “Am I now? I’ll get you gone. Let me get my pig-pan here in a little bit, and I’ll scald you away from here, if you will not go.”

She exited to get a dripping-pan that was used to catch the hot fat dripping from the roasting pigs.

Jordan Knockem said, “Gentlemen, these are very strange vapors, and very idle vapors, I assure you.”

Quarlous said, “You are a very serious ass, we assure you.”

Jordan Knockem said, “Humph, ‘ass’! And you are serious! Well, then pardon me my vapor. I have a foolish vapor,

gentlemen. Any man who does vapor me the ass, Mr. Quarlous —”

Quarlous interrupted, “What then, Mr. Jordan?”

Jordan Knockem said, “I do vapor him the lie.”

To say that a man is lying is a serious insult — one serious enough to lead to a duel.

Quarlous said, “Indeed, and to any man who vapors me the lie, I do vapor that.”

Quarlous hit Jordan Knockem.

Jordan Knockem said, “Now then, vapors upon vapors.”

They fought.

Ursla returned, carrying a dripping-pan full of hot pig-fat.

Ezekiel Edgworth shouted, “Beware of the pan, the pan, the pan!”

Nightingale shouted, “Here she comes with the pan, gentlemen!”

In the midst of all the fighting and confusion, Ursla fell with the pan, the contents of which splashed on her.

Ezekiel Edgworth shouted, “God bless the woman!”

Ursla screamed in pain.

Quarlous and Mr. Winwife ran away.

Joan Trash ran over and asked, “What’s the matter?”

The disguised Justice Overdo said, “Good woman!”

Mooncalf said, “Boss!”

Ursla shouted, “Curse of Hell! That ever I saw these fiends! Oh! I have scalded my leg, my leg, my leg, my leg! I have

lost a limb in the service! Run for some cream and salad oil, quickly.”

They would be used to treat the burn.

Mooncalf knelt to look at the burn.

Ursla said, “Are you looking up my skirt, you baboon?”

She then said, “Rip off my hose, if you are men, men, men.”

Her stockings needed to be taken off so that her burn could be treated.

Mooncalf said to Joan Trash, “Run for some cream, good mother Joan. I’ll look after your basket of gingerbread.”

Joan Trash exited to get the cream.

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Best sit up in your chair, Ursla.”

He then requested, “Help, gentlemen.”

They lifted her into the chair.

Jordan Knockem said, “Be of good cheer, Urse; you have hindered me the currying of a couple of stallions here, that abused the good race-bawd of Smithfield; it was time for them to go.”

“The currying of a couple of stallions here” meant “my beating Quarlous and Mr. Winwife.” “Race bawd” meant that she was “the breeder of bawds.” Bartholomew Fair was located at Smithfield.

Nightingale said quietly to Ezekiel Edgworth, “Indeed, when the pan came — they would have made Jordan Knockem run if not for that.”

He added quietly, “This would have been a fine time for cutting purses, if you had ventured to try it.”

Ezekiel Edgworth, an experienced cutpurse, replied, “Not a whit — these fellows were too fine to carry money.”

Many wealthy people carry little money; wealthy people can usually get credit when they want it. A wealthy person who bought cloth at the fair, for example, would probably buy a lot of expensive cloth on credit and have it delivered.

Jordan Knockem said, “Nightingale, get some help to carry her leg out of the air. Take off her shoes.”

He looked at her legs and said, “Body of me! She has the mallanders, the scratches, the crown scab, and the quitter bone in the other leg.”

All these terms referred to horse diseases of the legs and hooves.

Ursla said, “Oh, damn it! Why do you remind of my leg like that? It makes it prick and shoot with pain! Would you have me in the hospital before my time?”

Going to the hospital meant having a very serious, life-threatening injury or sickness. Many people died in the hospital.

Jordan Knockem said, “Patience, Urse, be calm and have a good heart. It is only a blister as big as a windgall.”

A windgall is another horse’s illness: a soft tumor on a leg.

He added, “I’ll treat it with the white of an egg, a little honey and hog’s grease, and I’ll have your pasterns well rolled, and you shall walk again by tomorrow.”

“Pasterns” referred to part of a horse’s leg.

He added, “I’ll tend your booth, and look after your affairs all the while. You shall sit in your chair, and give orders, and shine like *Ursa Major*.”

*Ursa Major* is the constellation that is known as the Big Bear.

Jordan Knockem and Mooncalf exited, carrying Ursula in her chair.

— 2.6 —

Bartholomew Cokes, who was carrying his box with the marriage license in it, arrived at the fair with Humphrey Wasp, Mistress Overdo, and Grace Wellborn.

The disguised Justice Overdo stood up and began to deliver an oration against vice: “These are the fruits of bottle-ale and tobacco! The foam of the one, and the fumes of the other! Wait, young man, and despise not the wisdom of these few hairs that are grown grey in the care of you.”

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Nightingale, wait a little while. Indeed, I’ll hear some of this!”

Bartholomew Cokes said to Humphrey Wasp, “Come, Numps, come, where are you?”

He then said, “Welcome to the fair, Miss Grace.”

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “By God’s light, he will call an audience to hear his oration, you shall see, and give us an opportunity to ply our illegal trade in a moment.”

The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “Thirst not after that frothy liquor, ale; for who knows when he opens the stopple, what may be in the bottle? Has not a snail, a spider, and yes, a newt, been found there? Thirst not after it, youth; thirst not after it.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “This is a brave fellow, Numps, so let’s hear him.”

By “brave,” he meant “splendid.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “By God’s blood! How brave is he? He is wearing a coat trimmed with braid!”

By “brave,” he sarcastically meant “finely dressed.” The disguised Justice Overdo was wearing a coat that Fools of his time wore.

Humphrey Wasp continued, “You had best do a swap with him. Go ahead and strip quickly, and trade clothing with him — it will become you.”

He continued, “Why will you listen to him? Because he is an ass, and may be akin to the Bartholomew Cokeses?”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Oh, good Numps.”

The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “Neither should you lust after that tawny weed tobacco —”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “These are brave — splendid — words!”

The disguised Justice Overdo continued, “— whose complexion is like the Indian’s who sells it.”

Tobacco shops often had a sign with an illustration of a Native American on it.

Bartholomew Cokes asked, “Are they not brave words, sister?”

The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “And who can tell, if before the gathering and making up thereof, the alligator has not pissed on the tobacco?”

Humphrey Wasp said to Bartholomew Cokes, “By God’s heart, let them be brave words, as brave as they will! If they were all the brave words in a country, what then? Will you go away now? Have you had enough of him?”

He then said, “Miss Grace, leave now; please don’t be an accessory to this foolishness.”

He then said to Bartholomew Cokes, “If you lose your license, or something else, sir, by listening to his fables, say that Numps is a witch; with all my heart, do say so.”

He would be called a male witch because he had correctly predicted the future: He had said that Bartholomew Cokes would be robbed.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Avoid in your satin doublet, Numps.”

“Avoid” meant “get lost” and was used to order the Devil to leave, as in “Avoid, Satan!”

The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “The creeping venom of which subtle serpent — the alligator — as some recent writers affirm, neither the cutting of the perilous plant, nor the drying of it, nor the lighting or burning, can any way lessen or assuage. The venom is still present in all its power.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “This is good, indeed! Isn’t it, sister?”

The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “Hence it is that the lungs of the tobacconist are rotted, the liver spotted, the brain smoked like the backside of the pig-woman’s booth here, and the whole body within as black as the outside of her pan that you saw just now.”

Bartholomew Cokes said to Ezekiel Edgworth, “That was a fine comparison, that was, sir! Did you see the pan?”

Smoke from the fire that roasted the pigs blackened the outside of the pan.

Ezekiel Edgworth replied, “Yes, sir.”



The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “Indeed, the hole in the nose here of some tobacco-smokers, or the third nostril, if I may so call it, which makes it possible that they can vent the tobacco out, like the ace of clubs, or rather the flower-de-lis, is caused from the tobacco, just by tobacco!”

The ace of clubs and the flower-de-lis (fleur-de-lis) have curves like swirls of tobacco smoke.

He continued, “The poor innocent pox, which has nothing to do with the third nostril, is miserably and most unconscionably slandered and blamed for what the tobacco does.”

He was wrong about the cause of the third nostril. It was the pox (and its treatment), not tobacco, which caused the bridge of the nose to collapse. The pox is syphilis.

Bartholomew Cokes asked, “Who would have missed this, sister?”

Mrs. Overdo said, “No one except for Numps.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “He does not understand.”

Ezekiel Edgworth, who was picking Bartholomew Cokes’ pocket and stealing one of the purses he was carrying, thought, *Nor do you feel.*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “What would you have, sister, of a fellow who knows nothing but a basket-hilt, and an old fox on it?”

He was referring to Humphrey Wasp and saying that he was old-fashioned. The basket-hilt was part of an old-fashioned sword; the basket-hilt was shaped like a basket and protected the hand. Some old-fashioned swords had foxes engraved on the hilt. Over time, the word “fox” became a name for these old-fashioned swords.

Bartholomew Cokes continued, “The best music in the fair will not move a log.”

The “log” was Humphrey Wasp.

Ezekiel Edgworth gave the purse to Nightingale and said, “Go in the booth to Ursula, Nightingale, and give her the comfort of this purse. Make sure the money in it is counted. This fellow was sent to us by Lady Fortune to be our first fairing.”

A “fairing” is something acquired at a fair.

As a cutpurse, Ezekiel Edgworth was competent. It is good to have accomplices such as Nightingale and Ursula to carry away and hide the purse. That way, when the purse was missed, it would not be found on the cutpurse. It is also good to have the money counted so that later Ursula could not claim that a lesser amount was in the purse.

Nightingale exited.

The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “But why do I speak about the diseases of the body, children of the fair?”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “‘Children of the fair.’ That means us, sister. This is splendid, indeed!”

The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “Listen, oh, you sons and daughters of Smithfield! And hear what maladies tobacco causes the mind. It causes swearing, it causes swaggering, it causes sniffing with contempt and snarling, and now and then it causes an injury.”

Mrs. Overdo said, “He has something of my husband, Justice Overdo, in him, I think, brother.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “I thought the same thing, sister. He has very much of Justice Overdo, my brother-in-law, in him, and it is noticeable when he speaks.”

The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “Look into any out-of-the-way corner of the town, the Straits, or the Bermudas, where the quarrelling lesson is read, and how do they pass the time, but with bottle-ale and tobacco? The lecturer is on one side, and his pupils on the other; but the seconds — the assistants — are still bottle-ale and tobacco, for which the lecturer reads, and the novices pay. Thirty pounds a week in bottle-ale! Forty pounds in tobacco! And ten more pounds in ale again. Then for a suit to drink in, so much, and, that being slobbered on, so much for another suit, and then a third suit, and a fourth suit! And still the bottle-ale gets slobbered on the suits, and the tobacco stinks it up.”

Fashionable, well-to-do young men could study dueling, although Justice Overdo’s description of the study was exaggerated, especially in the costs. The lecturer would die from so much alcohol and tobacco.

Humphrey Wasp said to Bartholomew Cokes, “Heart of a madman! Are you rooted here? Will you never leave? What can any man find in this bawling, orating fellow that makes it worthwhile to stay here and grow here?”

He said to Mrs. Overdo, “Your brother is a few inches taller; he has grown that much in the very long time he has spent listening to the orator.”

He then asked Bartholomew Cokes, “Will you fix and root yourself here, and set up a booth, sir?”

The disguised Justice Overdo orated, “I will conclude briefly \_\_\_”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Hold your peace and be quiet, you roaring rascal, or I’ll stick my head in between your jaws to shut you up.”

He then said to Bartholomew Cokes, “It would be best for you to build a booth, and hire him; if you say the word, you

can make your will and make him your heir! Dear friend, I never knew anyone to be so taken with a two-gallon mouth before. By this light, I swear I'll carry you away on my back, if you will not go away willingly."

He got Bartholomew Cokes up on his back in piggyback style.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Wait, Numps, wait, set me down. I have lost my purse, Numps. My purse! One of my fine purses is gone!"

Mrs. Overdo asked, "Is it gone indeed, brother?"

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Yes, as I am an honest man, I say it is true. If I am lying, I wish I would be an arrant rogue! A plague on all damned roguery cutpurses — that's how I feel about them."

He examined his pockets.

Humphrey Wasp said sarcastically, "Bless them with all my heart, with all my heart, do you see! Now, as I am no unbelieving infidel as far as I know, I am glad about it. Yes, I am — here's my testimony — do you see, sir? I did not tell you about pickpockets' tricks! No, no, I am a dull dray horse, I am. I know nothing. Are you not justly served, in your conscience, now? Answer in accordance with your conscience. I say much good may it do you with all my heart, and much good may it do the good heart of him who has your purse, I say with all my heart again."

Ezekiel Edgworth thought, *This fellow is very "charitable." I wish he had a purse, too! But I must not be too bold all at one time. I need to refrain from being greedy and taking excessive risks.*

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Numps, it is not my best purse."

Humphrey Wasp said, “Not your best! Death! Why should it be your worst? Why should it be any, indeed, at all? Give me an answer to that. Give me a reason: Why should it be any? Why should you have any purse stolen?”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Nor was it my gold, Numps. I still have that.”

He took out his other purse, which had gold in it, and showed it to his sister, saying, “Look here, sister.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Why, so there’s all the feeling he has!”

Bartholomew Cokes had been only briefly upset at finding out his pocket had been picked. Now he was calm again.

Mrs. Overdo said, “Please take better care of that purse, brother.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “So I will, I promise you. Let him catch this who can catch it. I would like to see him get this — look here!”

He waved his purse in the air.

Humphrey Wasp said, “So, so, so, so, so, so, so, so! Very good.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “I would like to have him come again now, and just try to steal this purse. Sister, will you take notice of a good jest? I will put this purse just where the other purse was, and if we have good luck, you shall see a delicate, fine trap to catch the cutpurse nibbling.”

Ezekiel Edgworth thought, *Indeed, the cutpurse will try to steal it before you are out of the fair.*

He had the advantage of knowing exactly where the purse was located on Bartholomew Cokes’ body.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Come, Miss Grace, please don't be melancholy for my misfortune; sorrow will not bring my purse back, sweetheart."

Grace Wellborn replied, "I don't think about your stolen purse, sir."

Bartholomew Cokes said, "It was just a little scurvy white money, hang it! It may hang the cutpurse one day."

White money means silver coins.

The cutpurse could definitely hang one day because his crime was a capital one.

Bartholomew Cokes said to Grace Wellborn, "I have gold left to give you a fairing yet, as hard as the world goes. Nothing angers me but that nobody here looked like a cutpurse, unless it were Numps."

"What!" Humphrey Wasp said. "I? I look like a cutpurse? Death! Your sister's a cutpurse! And your mother and father, and all your kin were cutpurses! And here is a rogue who is the bawd of the cutpurses, whom I will beat to begin with."

Confusion broke out with everybody speaking at the same time and with Humphrey Wasp beating the disguised Justice Overdo.

The disguised Justice Overdo said, "Restrain your hand, child of wrath, and heir of anger, make it not Childermass Day in your fury, or the feast of the French Bartholomew, parent of the massacre."

Childermass was the feast of the Innocents, held on December 28 in memory of the young children whom Herod had ordered to be killed in an attempt to kill the young Jesus. This was known as the Massacre of the Innocents.

Matthew 2:16 (King James Version) states this:

*“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.”*

The French Bartholomew was the massacre of thousands of French Protestants — Huguenots — by Catholics in France on Saint Bartholomew’s Day in 1572.

Bartholomew Cokes shouted, “Numps! Numps!”

Mrs. Overdo shouted, “Good Mr. Humphrey!”

Humphrey Wasp shouted at the disguised Justice Overdo, “You are the Patrico, are you? The patriarch of the cutpurses? You share, sir, they say; let them share this with you. Are you in your hot fit of preaching again? I’ll cool you.”

The Patrico was a hedge-priest who married vagabonds.

Humphrey Wasp beat the disguised Justice Overdo again.

The disguised Justice Overdo ran away, shouting, “Murder! Murder! Murder!”

Humphrey Wasp ran after the disguised Justice Overdo. Bartholomew Cokes and Mrs. Overdo ran after Humphrey Wasp.

### ACT 3 (*Bartholomew Fair*)

#### — 3.1 —

Lantern Leatherhead, Joan Trash, and others were sitting by their wares.

Whit, Haggis, and Bristle arrived and began to talk together. Whit was a pimp who made extra money by being an informer. Haggis and Bristle were watchmen. Whit would inform these watchmen about troublemakers at the fair, the watchmen would accept a bribe from the troublemakers who wanted to stay out of trouble, and Whit would get a cut of the bribe.

Whit spoke with an odd Irish accent:

G sometimes became SH. GENTLEMEN became SHENTLEMEN.

S sometimes became SH. 'TIS became 'TISH. SUFFICIENT became SHUFFISHIENT.

TH sometimes became D. THIS became DISH. OTHER became ODER.

TH sometimes became T. THOU became TOU.

W sometimes became V. WISE WATCHMAN became Vishe Vatchman.

WH sometimes became PH. WHEN became PHEN.

Whit frequently said, “an’t be,” which seems to have a number of meanings: indeed, really, to be sure, if that’s what you want, if that’s how things are, and be it as it may be.

Whit was complaining about the watchmen, aka officers, being hard to find when he wanted to report a disturbance. They were supposed to be at Ursla’s but had been occupied elsewhere when he wanted to report a noisy disturbance



involving gallants with money — money that the gallants would have paid out in bribes to avoid additional trouble. The gallants may have been Quarlous and Mr. Winwife, and/or Bartholomew Cokes.

Whit said, “Nay, ’tish all gone, now! Dish ’tish, phen tou wilt not be phitin call, master offisher, phat ish a man te better to lishen out noyshes for tee, an tou art in an oder ’orld, being very shuffishient noyshes and gallantsh too? one o’ their brabblesh would have fed ush all dish fortnight, but tou art so bushy about beggersh still, tou hast no leshure to intend shentlemen, an ’t be.”

[Whit said, “It is all gone, now! That is what happens when you will not be within calling distance, mister officers. What good does it do a man to listen out for noisy disturbances for you, if you are in another world, and these are very sufficient noisy disturbances and with gallants, too? One of their noisy brabbles would have fed us all for this fortnight, but you are always so busy about beggars that you have no leisure to attend to gentlemen, if they are involved.”]

Haggis said, “Why, I told you, Davy Bristle.”

Bristle replied, “Come, come, you told me a pudding, Toby Haggis; you told me a matter of nothing; I am sure it came to nothing.”

A pudding is partially made of tripe. He was engaging in wordplay on the food called haggis, which is one kind of pudding.

Bristle continued, “You said, ‘Let’s go to Ursla’s,’ indeed. But then you met the man with the monsters, and I could not get you from him. You are an old fool who has not stopped looking at monsters such as five-legged cattle yet!”

Haggis said, “Why, who would have thought anybody would have been quarrelling so early; or that the ale of the fair would have been up so soon?”

Excessive drinking of ale leads to quarrels.

Whit said, “Phy, phat a clock tost tou tink it ish, man?”

[Whit said, “Why, what time do you think it is, man?”]

Haggis said, “I don’t know.”

Whit said, “Tou art a vishe vatchman, i’ te mean teeme.”

[Whit said, “You are a wise watchman, in the meantime.”]

Haggis said, “Why, should the watch go by the clock, or the clock by the watch, I ask?”

Bristle said, “One should go by another, if they did well.”

He meant that the watchman and the clock should agree about the time.

Whit said, “Tou art right now! Phen didst tou ever know or hear of a shuffishient vatchman, but he did tell the clock, phat bushiness soever he had?”

[Whit said, “You are right now! When did you ever know or hear of a sufficient — competent — watchman, but he did tell the clock, whatsoever business he had?”]

One meaning of “tell the clock” is “count the hours” until he could go home.

Bristle said, “That’s most true: A sufficient watchman knows what time it is.”

Whit said, “Shleeping or vaking: ash well as te clock himshelf, or te Jack dat shtrikes him.”

[Whit said, “Sleeping or waking, the watchman knows the time as well as the clock himself, or the Jack that strikes him.”]

The jack was a figure — a mechanical man — that would strike the clock to toll the hours. Awake, the watchman would know the time as well as the clock. Asleep, the watchman would know the time as well as the Jack — a real man — who struck him: It’s time to wake up!

Bristle said, “Let’s inquire for information from Mr. Leatherhead or Joan Trash here.”

He said, “Mr. Leatherhead, do you hear me, Mr. Leatherhead?”

Whit said, “If it be a Ledderhead, ’tish a very tick Ledderhead, tat sho mush noish vill not piersh him.”

[Whit said, “If it is a leather head, it is a very thick leather head, if so much noise will not pierce it.”]

Lantern Leatherhead said, “I’m a little busy now, good friends, so do not trouble me.”

Whit said, “Phat, because o’ ty wrought neetcap, and ty phelvet sherkin, man? Phy, I have sheene tee in ty ledder sherkin, ere now, mashter o’ de hobbyhorses, as bushy and stately as tou sheemest to be.”

[Whit said, “What, you don’t want to be bothered because of your embroidered nightcap, and your velvet jerkin, aka jacket, man? Why, I have seen you in your leather jerkin, before now, master of the hobbyhorses, as busy and stately as you seem to be.”]

Whit was basically saying, “Are you too proud to talk to us because of your fancy clothing? I have seen you wear plain clothing before.”

Lantern Leatherhead was wearing an expensive velvet jacket. His hat was embroidered, so it was fancy, but he was somewhat eccentric in his choice of clothing because it was a nightcap of the kind that well-to-do people would wear at home. (They tended to wear plain nightcaps in bed.)

Joan Trash said, “Why, what if you have seen him in a plain leather jacket, Captain Whit? He has his choice of jackets, as you may see by that, and his choice of caps, too, I assure you, when he pleases to be either sick or employed.”

Lantern Leatherhead said, “God-a-mercy, Joan, answer for me. Answer their questions so I won’t have to.”

Whit looked up and saw Quarlous and Mr. Winwife coming, so he said to the watchmen, “Away, be not sheen in my company, here be shentlemen, and men of vorship.”

[Whit looked up and saw Quarlous and Mr. Winwife coming, so he said to the watchmen, “Leave, don’t be seen in my company; here come gentlemen, and men of worship.”]

“Men of worship” are “well-to-do men.”

Haggis and Bristle exited.

### — 3.2 —

Quarlous and Mr. Winwife arrived.

Quarlous said, “We have had wonderfully bad luck to miss this prologue of the purse, but the best thing is that we shall have five acts of him before night. He’ll be spectacle enough, I am sure.”

He and Mr. Winwife had not been present when Bartholomew Cokes had had his first purse stolen, but Quarlous was sure that the theft was only the prologue to a metaphorical five acts’ worth of foolishness.

Recognizing him, Whit said, “O Creesh, duke Quarlous, how dosht tou? Tou dosht not know me, I fear: I am te vishesht man, but justish Overdo, in all Bartholomew Fair now. Give me twelve-pence from tee, I will help tee to a vife vorth forty marks for’t, and’t be.”

[Recognizing him, Whit said, “Oh, Christ, Duke Quarlous, how are you? You don’t recognize me, I fear: I am the wisest man, except for Justice Overdo, in all Bartholomew Fair now. Give me twelve-pence from yourself, and I will help you to a wife worth forty marks for it, be it as it may be.”]

“Duke” was an honorary, flattering title for Quarlous.

The “wife” was a temporary one — a prostitute.

Quarlous said roughly, “Go away, rogue; pimp, go away.”

Whit said to Mr. Winwife, “And she shall shew tee as fine cut orke for’t in her shmock too as tou cansht vish i’faith; vilt tou have her, vorshipful Vinwife? I will help tee to her here, be an’t be, into pig-quarter, gi’ me ty twelve-pence from tee.”

[Whit said to Mr. Winwife, “And she shall show you as fine cut work for it in her smock, too, as you can wish indeed; will you have her, worshipful Winwife? I will help you to her here, be it as it may be, in the pig-quarter. Give me your twelve-pence from yourself.”]

Mr. Winwife gave him the money and said, “Why, there’s twelve-pence. Please, won’t you be gone?”

The money was a bribe for Whit to let Quarlous and Mr. Winwife alone. Neither man wanted to recognize Whit in public.

Whit said, “Tou art a vorthy man, and a vorshipful man still.”

[Whit said, “You are a worthy man, and a worshipful man always.”]

Quarlous said, “Get you gone, rascal. Leave!”

Whit said, “I do mean it, man. Prinsh Quarulous, if tou hasht need on me, tou shalt find me here at Ursla’s, I will see phat ale and punque ish i’ te pigsty for tee, bless ty good vorship.”

[Whit said, “I do mean it, man. Prince Quarulous, if you have need of me, you shall find me here at Ursla’s. I will see that ale and punk, aka a prostitute, are in the pigsty for you, bless your good worship.”]

Whit exited into Ursla’s booth.

Quarlous looked up and said, “Look and see who is coming here: John Littlewit!”

Mr. Winwife said, “And his wife and her mother, who is my widow: The whole family is coming here.”

Quarlous said, “By God’s light, you must give them all fairings — gifts from the fair — now.”

“Not I,” Mr. Winwife said. “I’ll pretend not to see them.”

“They are going afeasting,” Quarulous said. “What schoolmaster is that who is with them?”

Mr. Winwife said, “That’s my rival for the widow, I believe: the baker.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy, Dame Purecraft, John Littlewit, and Mrs. Win Littlewit came toward Ursla’s booth.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “So, walk on in the middle way, straight away, turn neither to the right hand nor to the left; let not your eyes be drawn aside with vanity, nor your ear with noises.”

Quarlous said, “Oh, I know him by that start.”

He meant that he recognized him from the way he had begun to speak. Possibly, Zeal-of-the-land Busy also had a peculiar way of walking that Quarlous also recognized.

Lantern Leatherhead shouted, “What do you need? What are you buying, Mrs.? A fine hobbyhorse, to make your son a tilter, aka jouster? A drum to make him a soldier? A fiddle to make him a reveler? What is it you lack? Little dogs for your daughters? Or baby dolls, male or female?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Don’t look toward them. Don’t listen to them. The place is Smithfield, or the field of smiths, the grove of hobbyhorses and trinkets. The wares are the wares of Devils, and the whole fair is the shop of Satan. There are hooks and baits — definitely baits — that are hung out on every side, to catch you, and to hold you, as it were, by the gills, and by the nostrils, as the fisher does; therefore, you must not look nor turn toward them.”

Normally, we think of fishers of men as a good thing, but Zeal-of-the-land Busy was thinking of Devils fishing for men’s souls by using the baits available at Bartholomew Fair.

Matthew 4:19 states, “*And he [Jesus] saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*” (King James Version).

Zeal-of-the-land Busy continued, “The heathen man could stop his ears with wax against the harlot of the sea; do you the like with your fingers against the bells of the beast.”

Many Puritans disliked bells because they were sometimes used in Catholic masses.

The heathen man is Odysseus, whom Circe told to plug the ears of his men with wax so they would not hear the Sirens’

song. Odysseus had the option of doing this, but he wanted to hear the song of the Sirens, so he had his men tie him to the mast so he could hear the song and yet be unable to jump overboard and swim to the Sirens, who would destroy him.

Mr. Winwife said, "What flashes come from him!"

He was referring to flashes of inspiration, but he was being sarcastic: He knew that there were more than one Siren.

Quarulous said, "Oh, he has those flashes from his oven; he was a notably hot baker when he plied the peel; he is leading his flock into the fair now."

The peel is a baker's long-handled shovel for removing loaves of bread and other baked items from the oven. Each time the oven door is opened, the baker is hit with a flash of heat.

Mr. Winwife said, "Rather, he is driving them to the pens, for he will let them look upon nothing."

Jordan Knockem and Whit came out of Ursula's booth.

Jordan Knockem said to Dame Purecraft and Mrs. Win Littlewit, "Gentlewomen, the weather's hot; where are you walking? Take care of your fine velvet caps, for the fair is dusty. Take a sweet, delicate, delightful booth, with boughs, here in the way, and cool yourselves in the shade, you and your friends."

He said to Mr. John Littlewit, "Here is the best pig and bottle-ale in the fair, sir. Old Ursula is the cook. There you may read it."

He pointed to a sign that had an illustration of a pig's head with writing in large letters under it.



He continued, "The pig's head says it. Poor soul, old Ursla has had an injury called the maryhinchco, but she's prettily amended. She is healing."

The maryhinchco was a horse's illness affecting the legs.

Whit said, "A delicate show-pig, little mistress, with shweet sauce, and crackling, like de bay-leaf i' de fire, la! tou shalt ha' de clean side o' de table-clot, and di glass vash'd with phatersh of dame Annesh Cleare."

[Whit said, "A delicate, delightful sow, little mistress, with sweet sauce, and crackling, like the bay leaf in the fire, la! You shall have the clean side of the tablecloth, and your glass washed with the spring waters of Dame Agnes Clare."]

Dame Agnes Clare was a wealthy widow who married a courtier who wasted all her wealth, leaving her destitute. She committed suicide by drowning in the waters of a spring that was then named after her.

Mr. John Littlewit looked at the sign and said, "This is truly fine. Here are the best pigs, and she does roast them as well as ever she did, the pig's head says."

Jordan Knockem said to Mrs. Win Littlewit, "Excellent, excellent, Mrs. She roasts them with a fire made of aromatic juniper and rosemary branches!"

He then said to Mr. John Littlewit, "That shows the oracle of the pig's head is true, sir."

Dame Purecraft said to Mr. John Littlewit, "Son-in-law, weren't you warned of the vanity of the eye? Have you forgotten that wholesome admonition so soon?"

Mr. John Littlewit said, "Good mother-in-law, how shall we find a pig, if we do not look around for it? Will it run off of the spit and into our mouths, do you think, as in Lubberland, and cry, 'Wee, wee'?"

Lubberland was a fantasyland in which roasted pigs ran around asking people to eat them.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “No, the pig won’t do that, but your mother-in-law, who is religiously wise, understands that the pig may offer itself by other means to the senses, as by way of smell-carrying steam, which I think it does here in this place” — sniff, sniff — “yes, it does.”

He was sniffing the air like a hound.

He continued, “And it would be a sin of obstinacy, great obstinacy, high and horrible obstinacy, to decline or resist the good titillation of the famelic — hunger-inducing — sense, which is the smell. Therefore, be bold” — sniff, sniff, sniff — “and follow the scent. Enter the tents of the unclean, for just this once, and satisfy your wife’s frailty. Let your frail wife be satisfied; your zealous mother and my suffering self will also be satisfied.”

A suffering Puritan is one who suffers hardship for the sake of religion. Zeal-of-the-land Busy was going to suffer the “hardship” of pigging out on roast pig so that he could show that Puritans were not partial to Jews.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Come, Win, we might as well winny here as to go farther and see nothing.”

“Winny” meant “stay.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “We escape so much of the other vanities by our early entering into this booth and eating pig.”

Dame Purecraft said, “It is an edifying consideration.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit said quietly to her husband, “This is scurvy — that we must come into the fair, and not look around and enjoy ourselves.”

“Win, have patience, Win,” her husband replied quietly. “I’ll tell you more soon.”

He wanted to ditch the others so that he and his wife could enjoy the fair together.

Mr. John Littlewit, Mrs. Win Littlewit, Zeal-of-the-land Busy, and Dame Purecraft went into Ursla’s booth.

Jordan Knockem called to Mooncalf, who was inside the booth, “Mooncalf, entertain within there. Give them the best pig in the booth, a pork-like pig — one with a lot of meat on it. These are Banbury-bloods, of the sincere, genuine breed, come a pig-hunting.”

Banbury-bloods were Puritans.

He then said, “Whit, wait, Whit, look after your business.”

Whit’s business was informing on others to the police and prostituting women. Possibly, Jordan Knockem was telling him to go inside the booth and keep an eye on Dame Purecraft and Mrs. Win Littlewit, who could be made prostitutes if separated from the others. Or he may have simply meant for Whit to help Ursla and Mooncalf by serving food and drink.

Whit went into Ursla’s booth.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said from the booth, “Prepare a pig immediately; let a pig be prepared for us.”

Mooncalf and Ursla came out from inside the booth.

Mooncalf asked Jordan Knockem, “By God’s light, who are these people you sent in to us?”

Ursla asked, “Is this the good service, Jordan, you’d do me?”

Jordan Knockem said, “What, Urse? What, Urse? You’ll have vapors in your leg again soon, so please go in, or else your injury may become the scratches.”

The scratches is a horse disease of the ankle.

Ursla said, “Hang your vapors, they are stale, and they stink like you! Are these the guests of the game you promised to fill my pit with today?”

The “game” is prostitution. Ursla sold roast pigs and helped sell the services of prostitutes, and Jordan Knockem’s job was to send both kinds of customers to her.

Jordan Knockem asked, “Yes, what is wrong with them, Urse? Do they ail?”

Ursla said, “Do they ail? They are all sippers, sippers of the city; they look as though they would not drink off two pennyworths of bottle-ale amongst them.”

The city is London, home of many Puritans. People of the suburbs were much more likely to drink much more. Ursla was worried that these Puritans would sip ale rather than guzzle it, thus lessening her profits.

Mooncalf said, “A body may read that in their small printed, aka precisely folded, ruffs.”

Puritans frowned on vain things such as large starched ruffs, and so they wore small, precisely folded ruffs without starch.

Jordan Knockem said, “Go away, you are a fool, Urse, and your Mooncalf is a fool, too. You are in your ignorant vapors now! Leave! They are good guests, I say; they are complete hypocrites and good gluttons. Go in, and set a couple of pigs on the board, and half a dozen of the biggest ale-bottles in front of them, and tell Whit to come to me.”

Mooncalf exited.

Jordan Knockem continued, “I do not love to hear innocents abused; these are fine ambling hypocrites! And one of them is a stone Puritan with a sorrel head and beard!”

A stone Puritan is a male Puritan; the word “stone” was slang for “testicle” in this society. Jordan Knockem was saying that Ursla would not only make money from the guests’ gluttony, but also from Zeal-of-the-land Busy’s lechery.

The word “sorrel” means “chestnut” and is used to refer to the coloring of horses.

He continued, “They are good-mouthed gluttons; two of them eat up one pig, so go and serve them.”

Ursla asked, “Are you sure they are such gluttons?”

Jordan Knockem said, “They are of the right breed — you shall see that by looking at their teeth, Urse.”

He then called, “Where’s this Whit?”

Whit came out of Ursla’s booth. He was in a good mood and sang this song:

*“Behold, man, and see,*

*“What a worthy man am ee! [me!]*

*“With the fury of my sword,*

*“And the shaking of my beard,*

*“I will make ten thousand men afeard [afraid].”*

Jordan Knockem said, “Well said, brave Whit! Go in, and fear, aka frighten, the ale out of the bottles and into the bellies of the brethren and the sisters. Drink to the cause of Puritanism and pure vapors.”

Jordan Knockem, Whit, and Ursla went into her booth.

Quarlous said, “My roarer — Jordan Knockem — has turned bartender, I think. Now would be a fine time for you, Winwife, to lay aboard your widow. Get right up next to her and prepare to board her. You shall never be master of a better time or place; a woman who will venture herself into the fair and into a pig-booth will admit any assault, be assured of that.”

Mr. Winwife said, “I don’t care for enterprises of that suddenness, though.”

Quarlous said, “I’ll promise you, then, no wife out of the hundred of widows.”

A man unwilling to take action to court a widow will not get even one widow out of a hundred available widows.

Another meaning of “hundred” was “a district that had its own law court” and therefore was sizable. Again, Quarulous’ meaning was that a man who is unwilling to take action to court a widow will not get even one widow out of many available widows.

Quarlous said, “If I had only as much title to her as to have breathed once on that straight stomacher of hers, I would now be assured that I could carry her, yet, before she went out of Smithfield; or she should carry me, which were the fitter sight, I confess.”

The stomacher was a piece of women’s clothing that covered part of her torso: her stomach and part of her chest. Quarulous meant that if he had talked previously to her, he could now carry her — that is, be successful at courting her.

In part, he was being bawdy. If she would carry him, she would carry — bear — his weight during sex.

Quarlous continued, “But you are a modest undertaker, by circumstances and degrees.”

In other words: You, Mr. Winwife, are an unadventurous wooer, going about your wooing circuitously and little by little.

Quarlous continued, “Come, it is a real disease in you, not a subjective judgment I am making about you. If I were in your position, I would make an all-out attempt at winning the widow.”

The disguised Justice Overdo showed up.

Seeing him, Quarlous said, “Look, here’s the poor fool again, the fool who was stung by the Humphrey Wasp just a while ago.”

### — 3.3 —

The disguised Justice Overdo talked to himself:

“I will make no more orations that shall draw on these tragic conclusions.”

Wisely, he wanted to avoid making orations that would get him beaten. Immediately, he began to make an oration, but only to himself. Mr. Winwife and Quarlous could see but not hear him.

The disguised Justice Overdo continued, “And I begin now to think that by a kind of collateral justice, I, Adam Overdo, deserved this beating, for I, the said Adam, was one cause (but only a by-cause) why the purse was lost — and it was my wife’s brother’s purse, too, but they don’t know yet that I was a partial cause of the purse’s being stolen.

“But I shall make very good mirth with it at supper. The story of my being beaten will be some entertainment, and it will put my little friend, Mr. Humphrey Wasp, quite out of countenance when he hears what he did in his anger.

“He will be nonplussed when, sitting at the upper end of my table, as I am accustomed, and drinking to my brother-in-law Bartholomew Cokes, and Mrs. Alice Overdo, my wife, as I will, for their good affection to old Bradley, I will relate the story to them and tell them that it was I who was cudgeled, and show them the marks.”

Justice Overdo had disguised himself as old mad Arthur of Bradley, England.

He continued, “To see what bad events may peep out of the tail of good purposes!”

This is a poor image. “To peep out of the tail” sounds like “peep out of the ass.”

He continued, referring to Ezekiel Edgworth, “The concern I had for that civil young man I took a liking to this morning (and have not left it yet) drew me to that exhortation, which indeed drew a company of people, which drew the cutpurse, who withdrew the money from the purse, which drew my brother Bartholomew Cokes’ loss, which drew on Humphrey Wasp’s anger, which drew on my beating: a pretty series of causes and conclusions!

“And they shall have my story in their dish, indeed, at night for fruit; it shall make a nice dessert. I love to be merry at my table.

“I had thought once, at one special blow he gave me, to have revealed my real identity, but then (I thank you, fortitude) I remembered that a wise man, one who is always so great a part of the commonwealth in himself — and I am one such man because I am a Justice — ought not, on account of a particular, personal disaster, to abandon a public good design and plan.



“The husbandman, aka farmer, ought not, on account of one unthankful year, to forsake the plow. The shepherd ought not, for one scabbed sheep, to throw away his tar-box.”

The tar-box was filled with tar that was used to treat some diseases of sheep.

He continued, “The pilot ought not, for one leak in the poop of the ship, to quit the helm. Nor ought the alderman, for one custard more at a meal, to give up his cloak, the badge of his office.”

A part of the alderman’s job was to be hospitable and entertain and feed people such foods as custards. A custard is an open pie in which such ingredients as meat, fish, fruit, nuts, beaten eggs, milk, cream, and broth are baked.

He continued, “The constable ought not to break his staff, and forswear the watch, for one roaring night, nor ought the piper of the parish, *ut parvis componere magna solebam*, to put up his pipes for one rainy Sunday.”

“*Ut parvis componere magna solebam*” is Latin for “For I was accustomed to compare great things to small.”

Virgil’s *Eclogues* 1:23 has the same Latin words except that Virgil used *sic* (thus) instead of *ut* (for).

He continued, “These are certain decisive conclusions, out of which I am resolved, come what can come — come beating, come imprisonment, come infamy, come banishment, indeed, come the rack, come the hurdle (I welcome all) — I will not reveal who I am until the due and right time; and yet still all shall be, as I said, always in the name of justice and the King and for the commonwealth.”

The rack is an instrument of torture. The hurdle is a frame or sled used to take a criminal to the place of execution.

The disguised Justice Overdo exited.

Mr. Winwife asked, “Why does he talk to himself, and act so seriously, poor fool!”

Seeing some people coming, Quarlous said, “It doesn’t matter. Here’s fresher matter for debate coming. Attend to that.”

— 3.4 —

Bartholomew Cokes, Mrs. Overdo, and Grace Wellborn arrived. Following them was Humphrey Wasp, who was carrying an armload of toys that Bartholomew Cokes had purchased.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Come, Miss Grace. Come, sister. Here’s more fine sights yet, indeed. By God’s eyelid, where’s Numps?”

Lantern Leatherhead shouted, “What do you lack, gentlemen? What is it you buy? Fine rattles, drums, babies, little dogs, and birds for ladies? What do you lack?”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Good honest Numps, keep in front of me. I am so afraid that you will lose something; my heart was at my mouth when I missed you just now.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “You had better buy a whip and have it in your hand to drive me.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Don’t be disagreeable, Numps. You are so apt to take what I say the wrong way! I would simply watch out for the goods you are carrying. You see, just now the treble fiddle you are carrying was almost lost.”

Humphrey Wasp replied, “Please be careful not to lose yourself. Your best way to do that is to get up on my back and ride on me for more safety. Buy a farthing’s worth of great pins so you can fasten yourself to my shoulder.”

Lantern Leatherhead shouted, “What do you lack, gentlemen? Fine purses, pouches, pin cases, pipes? What is it you lack? A pair of smiths to wake you in the morning? Or a fine whistling bird?”

The pair of smiths would be jacks in the form of blacksmith figures that would make the alarm clock sound in the morning.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Numps, here are finer things by some extent than any we have bought! And more delicate hobbyhorses, a great deal more delicate. Good Numps, wait, and come over here.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Will you deal with him? You are in Smithfield, where you may outfit yourself with a fine easy-going street-nag, for your saddle horse, in preparation for the upcoming Michaelmas term of the high Court of Justice.”

Smithfield had plenty of places where Bartholomew Cokes could buy a real horse that he could really use; he need not buy another toy horse.

Humphrey Wasp continued, “Has he also a little odd cart for you to make a luxury carriage of so you can ride in the country with four dappled hobbyhorses? Why the measles should you stand here, with your train of fellows, bargaining for toy dogs, birds, and babies? You have no children to bestow them on, have you?”

Bartholomew Cokes replied, “No, not yet, but someday I shall have children, Numps, so your objection doesn’t hold up.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Do, do, do, do.”

One meaning of “do” is “f\*k.”

He continued, “How many children shall you have, do you think? If I were like you, I’d buy for all my tenants, too; they

are a kind of savages living in a civilized country, and they will part with their children for trifles such as rattles, pipes, and knives. You had best buy a hatchet or two and barter with them.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Good Numps, hold that little tongue of yours, and save it such labor. I am a resolute Bat — you know that.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “You are a resolute fool, I know, and you are a very sufficient coxcomb — I say that I know this with all my heart.”

Professional Fools sometimes wore hats resembling coxcombs.

Humphrey Wasp continued, “There you have it, sir. You have my opinion of you, and if you are angry, then I say ‘turd in your teeth’ twice, if I have not said it once before, and much good may it do you.”

Mr. Winwife and Quarlous had been watching and listening.

Mr. Winwife said to Quarlous about Humphrey Wasp, “Was there ever such a self-affliction, and so impertinent?”

Quarlous said, “Alas, the person he is supposed to be taking care of — Bartholomew Cokes — is getting close to making him crazy. Let’s go over and comfort him.”

Mr. Winwife and Quarlous came forward.

Humphrey Wasp said, “I wish that I had been set in the ground, all except my head, and then had my brains bowled at, or threshed out, when first I underwent this plague of a charge! I would rather be dead than try to take care of Bartholomew Cokes!”

Humphrey Wasp had a kind of protectorship of Bartholomew Cokes; he was supposed to look out for the young man and keep him from doing foolish things.

Quarlous said, “How are you now, Numps? Almost tired in your protectorship? Overparted? Are you overparted?”

A part is a role in a play. Quarlous was asking if Humphrey Wasp had taken on too big of a role — one he was unsuited for — in real life.

Humphrey Wasp said, “Why, I cannot tell, sir; it may be that I have. Does it grieve you?”

Quarlous said, “No, I swear it does not, Numps. That is the answer to your question.”

“Numps” is a familiar nickname; it should not be used by a mere acquaintance.

Humphrey Wasp said, ““Numps’! By God’s blood, you are very familiar. How long have we been acquainted, I ask you?”

Quarlous replied, “I think that may be remembered, Numps. We have been acquainted since this morning, I am sure.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Why, I hope I know it well enough, sir; I did not ask to be told.”

He had asked a rhetorical question that did not need to be answered.

Quarlous said, “No! Why did you ask me, then?”

Humphrey Wasp said, “It does not matter why.”

He added, “You see with your eyes now what I said to you earlier today. Will you believe what I say at another time?”

Earlier, he had complained about the childishness of Bartholomew Cokes. Quarlous could see for himself that what Humphrey Wasp had said was true.

Quarlous said, “Are you removing the fair, Numps?”

He was punning. His question meant two things: 1) Are you leaving the fair, Numps? And (referring to the large load of toys Humphrey Wasp was carrying) 2) Are you carrying away the entire fair on your back?

Humphrey Wasp said, “That is a pretty question, and a civil one! Yes, indeed, I have my lading, aka load, you see, or shall have a complete load soon; you may know whose beast I am by my burden. If the pannier-man’s jack were ever better known by his loins of mutton, I’ll be flayed, and feed dogs in place of him — the jack — when his time comes.”

A pannier is a waiter; a jack is a jackass. At Bartholomew Fair were many people serving food. Jackasses carried food such as mutton-loins to the fair. The mutton-loins were a more valuable load than toys, and so when the time came for one of the beasts of burden to be killed, flayed, and fed to the dogs, Humphrey Wasp would be killed before the pannier-man’s jackass — according to Humphrey Wasp.

Actually, he was punning. A pannier is 1) a waiter in the Inns of Court; he blew the horn to announce the meal and also brought in provisions, 2) a basket that could be used for carrying food such as mutton-loins, and 3) a server in general, such as could be at Bartholomew Fair. A jack is 1) a jackass, 2) a mechanism for roasting meat such as mutton-loins, 3) a representative common man of the working class, and so one who could be an assistant, and 4) a figure that would strike a bell on a clock and so one who was metaphorically a workingman.

Mr. Winwife said, “How melancholy Miss Grace is yonder! I say, let’s go enter ourselves in grace with her.”

“In grace” meant “in favor,” but there is a bawdy meaning to “enter ourselves in Grace.”

Standing in front of Lantern Leatherhead’s booth, Bartholomew Cokes said, “I’ll have those six hobbyhorses, friend —”

Humphrey Wasp said, “What!”

Bartholomew Cokes continued, “And the three Jew’s-harps, and half a dozen of toy birds, and that drum (I have one drum already) and your smiths; I like that device of your smiths, very prettily done; and four toy halberts — and, let me see, that fine painted great lady, and her three women for state, aka to make her appear stately, I’ll buy.”

Humphrey Wasp said sarcastically, “No, the shop; buy the whole shop, it will be best, the shop, the shop!”

Out to make a profit, Lantern Leatherhead said, “Yes, if his worship pleases to do so.”

Humphrey Wasp said to Lantern Leatherhead, “Yes, and he will keep it during the fair, bobchin.”

A bobchin is a kind of fool whose chin bobs up and down as he says something unwanted and unwonted.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Peace, Numps. Don’t be angry.”

He then said to Lantern Leatherhead, “Friend, do not meddle with him, if you are wise and want to show your head openly and freely. He will sting you through your fancy nightcap, believe me.

“A set of these violins I would buy, too, for a delicate young noise I have in the country, who are every one a size less than another, just like your fiddles.”

The violins were toys, and the delicate young noise was a group of children who would play with the toy violins. A “noise” of musicians is a band of musicians.

Bartholomew Cokes continued, “I would like to have a fine young masque at my marriage, now I think about it.”

By “young,” he meant “new” or “recently created,” or possibly a masque whose entertainers are children and young people. A masque is an entertainment with music, dancing, and costumes.

He continued, “But I want such a number of things! And Numps will not help me now, and I dare not speak to him.”

Joan Trash said, “Will your worship buy any gingerbread, very good bread, comfort-food bread?”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Gingerbread! Yes, let’s see it!”

He ran to her shop.

Humphrey Wasp said, “There’s the other springe.”

Literally, a springe is a trap for birds, some species of which are reputed to be bird-brained. Metaphorically, it is a trap for fools.

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Is this good behavior, Goody Joan, to interrupt my market in the midst of my making a sale, and call away my customers? Can you defend this behavior at the Pie-Powders Court?”

“Goody” is short for “Goodwife,” a way to address a female head of a household. The equivalent for men is “Goodman,” which is used to address a male head of a household below the rank of gentleman.

Joan Trash replied, “Why, if his mastership has a mind to buy, I hope my ware lies as open as another’s; I may show my ware as well as you may show yours.”



By “ware,” she meant gingerbread, which was the thing she had for sale.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Be at peace; I’ll make both of you happy. I’ll buy up his shop of toys, and your basket of gingerbread.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Will you, indeed?”

Lantern Leatherhead asked, “Why should you stop him from doing it, friend?”

Humphrey Wasp said, “I beg your mercy! You’d be sold too, would you? What’s the price of you, jacket and all, as you stand?”

The word “sold” meant “cheated,” as in “persuaded to buy goods of low quality at a higher price than ought to be set,” and it meant “bought by someone.”

Humphrey Wasp asked Lantern Leatherhead, “Have you any accomplishments?”

Joan Trash replied for him, “Yes, good man, angry man, you shall find he has accomplishments if you ask the price for — the worth of — him.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “By God’s soul, you are in charge of selling him! What are his accomplishments? Will they be bought for love or money?”

Joan Trash replied, “For love or money? No, indeed, sir.”

Humphrey Wasp asked, “For what then? Food?”

Joan Trash said, “He scorns food, sir; he has bread and butter at home, thanks be to God! And yet he will do more for a good meal, if the fancy takes him in the belly. Indeed, then they must not set him at the lower end of the table; if they do, he’ll go away, although he does not eat and will fast. But

put him a-top o' the table, where his place is, and he'll do you forty fine things."

The less important guests were at the lower end of the table, and the more important guests, including the jester, aka Professional Fool, were at the higher end of the table, where the jester entertained the guests.

She continued, "He has not been sent for, and sought out for nothing, at your great city-suppers, to put down Coriat and Cokely, and been laughed at for his labor; he'll play you all the puppets in the town over, and the players, every company, and his own company, too; he spares nobody."

Coriat and Cokely were famous clowns. According to Joan Trash, Lantern Leatherhead was much sought-after and was funnier than them. Lantern Leatherhead's accomplishments included providing the voices for the puppets and acting.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Indeed? Is that true?"

Joan Trash said, "He was the first, sir, who ever baited the fellow in the bear's skin, if it please your worship. No dog has ever come near him since."

In a bear-baiting, a bear would be tied to a stake, and dogs would be set on the bear to torment it. Recently, a man had put on a bearskin and then been "baited" by other men costumed as dogs. Lantern Leatherhead had been the first of the "dogs" to "bait" the "bear" and had been so good at it that he was better than real dogs. In fact, according to Joan Trash, according to Joan Trash, he had been so good at it that real dogs left him alone.

Joan Trash added, "And he is renowned for fine motions!"

One of Lantern Leatherhead's accomplishments was putting on puppet-plays, aka motions.

Bartholomew Cokes asked, “Is he good at those, too? Can he produce a masque, do you suppose?”

Joan Trash replied, “Oh, lord, Mr.! He is sought far and near for his inventions, and he monopolizes it all — he makes all the puppets in the fair.”

The inventions are devices — toys and puppets — and also shows as a whole.

Bartholomew Cokes said to Lantern Leatherhead, “Do you do all that? Truly? Do you, you in the old velvet jerkin? Give me your hand.”

Joan Trash said, “Sir, you shall see him in his velvet jerkin, and a scarf, too, at night, when you hear him put on Mr. Littlewit’s puppet-play.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Speak no more, but shut up shop immediately, friend. I’ll buy both it and you, too, to carry the contents away with me, and I will buy her hamper of gingerbread beside. Your shop shall furnish out the masque, and her shop shall furnish the dessert. I cannot do any less, if I want to provide entertainment that will suit the occasion well.

“What’s the price, at a word, of your whole shop, case and all, as it stands?”

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Sir, it stands me in — costs, and is worth to me — six and twenty shillings seven-pence halfpenny, besides three shillings to rent the ground on which my booth stands.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Well, thirty shillings will pay for all, then!”

He gave him the money.

He then asked Joan Trash, “And what does yours come to?”

Joan Trash replied, “Four shillings and eleven-pence, sir, ground and all, if it pleases your worship.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Yes, it does please my worship very well, poor woman: That’s five shillings more, rounded up.”

He gave her the money, and then he added, “What a masque shall I furnish, for forty shillings, which is twenty Scotch pounds — and a dessert of gingerbread! There’s a stately thing!

“Numps? Sister?

“And my wedding gloves, too! I never thought of that before!”

Gloves were an expensive traditional gift for wedding guests.

He continued, “All my wedding gloves will be made of gingerbread! Oh, me! What a joke will that be — my guests will eat their fingers’ ends!”

In other words, they will eat the gingerbread and then lick their fingers.

He continued, “And delicate brooches for the bridemen — male attendants for the bride — and all!”

A fashion had been for men to wear ornaments on their hats — Bartholomew Cokes wanted the ornaments to be gingerbread.

He continued, “And then I’ll have this poesy put to them, ‘For the best grace,’ meaning Miss Grace — that will be my wedding poesy.”

A poesy is a brief poetic expression. He would have it written on the gingerbread.

Grace said, “I am beholden to you, sir, and to your Bartholomew wit.”

“Bartholomew wit” is not a good thing. Bartholomew Cokes was a fool, and Miss Grace did not approve of his plans for celebrating their wedding. Giving guests cheap gingerbread instead of the expensive traditional gloves seemed cheap.

Humphrey Wasp also disapproved of Bartholomew Cokes’ plans: “You do not mean this, do you? Is this your first purchase?”

A “purchase” is “an attempt to bring about something.” This was Bartholomew Cokes’ first attempt at planning a big social event.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Yes, indeed, and I do not think, Numps, but you shall say that it was the wisest act that I ever did in my wardship.”

He was young and still in his wardship. And he probably thought that he was being economical and therefore wise, but both Humphrey Wasp and Miss Grace probably thought that he was wasting money on toys he did not need and skimping on things that he ought to pay money for, such as wedding gloves.

Humphrey Wasp said sarcastically, “That is likely enough! I shall say anything at all, I shall!”

### — 3.5 —

Ezekiel Edgworth, Nightingale, and some fairgoers arrived, followed at a distance by the disguised Justice Overdo.

The disguised Justice Overdo said quietly to himself, “I cannot beget a project, even with all my shrewd, political brain, yet. My project is how to fetch off this proper young man from his debauched company.”

He was referring to Ezekiel Edgworth, who of course he did not know was a cutpurse.

The disguised Justice Overdo continued, “I have followed him all over Bartholomew Fair, and always I find him with this songster, and I begin shrewdly to suspect their familiarity.”

The songster was Nightingale.

He continued, “And I suspect the young man of a terrible taint — poetry! If he is infected with that idle disease, there’s no hope of him ever enjoying a political career. *Actum est* of him for a commonwealth’s-man, if he even once goes to it in rhyme.”

*Actum est* is Latin for “It is over” or “He is finished.” If people should ever hear him sing even one song, he has no chance of a career in politics.

Ezekiel Edgworth said to Nightingale about Bartholomew Cokes, “Yonder he is buying gingerbread. Move in quickly, before he parts with too much of his money.”

Nightingale advanced and sang, “*My masters, and friends, and good people, draw near —*”

Bartholomew Cokes ran to Nightingale and exclaimed, “Ballads! Listen! Listen! Please, fellow, stay a little while here.

“Good Numps, look after the goods I have purchased.

“What ballads do you have? Let me see! Let me see for myself!”

Humphrey Wasp said to Quarlous and Mr. Winwife, “Why! He’s flown to another lime-bush. There he will flutter as long as it takes for him to have not even one feather left. Is

there a vexation like this, gentlemen? Will you believe me now, hereafter? Shall I have credit with you?"

Bushes were coated with sticky birdlime to catch foolish birds.

Quarulous said, "Yes, indeed, you shall have credit with us, Numps. We will believe you, for you are worthy of being believed — you are sweating for it."

He said quietly to Mr. Winwife, "I never saw a young pimp-errant and his squire better matched."

The obsolete verb "pimper" meant "pamper and coddle," so a "pimp-errant" is a wandering spoiled child, and Humphrey Wasp is a squire — someone subordinate to him but also someone who is supposed to take care of him.

Mr. Winwife said, "Indeed, the sister comes after them well, too."

The sister is Bartholomew Cokes' sister: Mrs. Overdo.

Miss Grace Wellborn said, "Indeed, if you saw Justice Overdo, her husband and my guardian, you would have a group of four well-matched to sit together for a meal — he is such a 'wise' one in his way —"

Mr. Winwife said, "I wonder why we don't see him here."

Miss Grace Wellborn said, "Oh, he is too serious for this place, and yet he is better entertainment when he is serious than the other three are, I assure you, gentlemen. This is true wherever he is, even if it is on the judicial bench."

Bartholomew Cokes said to Nightingale, "What do you call this song? 'A Caveat Against Cutpurses!'"

The word "caveat" means "warning."

He continued, “A good jest, indeed. I would like to see that demon, that cutpurse you talk of, that delicate-handed Devil. They say he walks hereabouts. I would like to see him walk now.”

He then said to his sister, “Look, sister, look here, here” — he showed her his remaining purse, the one with the gold — “let him come, sister, and welcome.”

He then said to Nightingale, “Balladman, do any cutpurses haunt hereabout? I ask you to conjure up and raise one or two for me. Begin, and show me a cutpurse.”

Nightingale said, “Sir, this song is a spell against them. It is spick and span new, and it is made as if it were in and for my own person, and I sing it in my own defense against cutpurses. But it will cost you a penny for this ballad alone, if you buy it.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “The price doesn’t matter. You don’t know me, I see. I am an odd Bartholomew.”

Mrs. Overdo asked, “Has it a fine picture, brother?”

The lyrics of ballads were printed on paper that was also illustrated with a picture of some kind.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Oh, sister, do you remember the ballads over the nursery chimney at home? I myself did the pasting up.”

Ballads were often pasted up on walls or chimneys in alehouses and sometimes in private residences.

He said to Nightingale, “Those are splendid pictures; they are a different kind of pictures than these, friend.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Yet these will serve to pick the pictures out of your pockets, you shall see.”



Coins had pictures of Kings on them. Humphrey Wasp's words could be applied to a pickpocket picking the pictures — and the coins on which the pictures were printed — out of someone's pocket.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "So I heard them say!"

He then said to Nightingale, "Please don't mind him, fellow; he'll have an oar — and stick his nose — in everything."

Ballad-singers were sometimes thought to be in league with cutpurses: The ballad-singer would draw a crowd and the cutpurse would pick pockets. Nightingale, who really was in league with a cutpurse, was leery of Humphrey Wasp's words.

Nightingale said, "This song was intended, sir, as a protection against a purse's being cut in my presence now. I may be held blameless, though, as by the sequel will more plainly appear."

One sequel was the singing of the song, which was clearly an admonition against cutpurses. Another sequel, as would soon become apparent, was the picking of a purse.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "We shall find that in the sequel. Please begin."

Nightingale said, "To the tune of 'Paggington's Pound,' sir."

"Paggington's Pound" was a well-known tune. Most copies of ballads had the lyrics and a woodcut picture on them. As far as music was concerned, a note would indicate the tune, as here: "To the tune of 'Paggington's Pound.'"

Bartholomew Cokes knew the tune and began singing, "*Fa, la la la, la la la, fa, la la la!*"

He then said to Nightingale, "I'll put you in tune and all; this will be my own country dance! Please begin."

Nightingale replied, "It is a gentle admonition, you must know, sir, both to the purse-cutter and the purse-bearer."

He may have said this in part as a warning to Ezekiel Edgworth. Humphrey Wasp's words may have caused Nightingale to be wary, and he perhaps thought that maybe now was not the time to cut Bartholomew Cokes' purse.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Not a word more that is not part of the tune, if you respect me. *Fa, la la la, la la la, fa, la la la.*"

Growing impatient, he said, "Come on! When will you begin to sing?"

Nightingale began to sing, and as he sang, Bartholomew Cokes provided his own commentary.

Nightingale sang:

*"My masters, and friends, and good people, draw near,*

*"And look to your purses, because of what I do say."*

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Ha, ha, this chimes! This rings true. This is good counsel right from the start."

Nightingale sang:

*"And though little money in them you do bear,*

*"It costs more to get, than to lose in a day."*

Bartholomew Cokes said, "This is good!"

Nightingale sang:

*"You oft [often] have been told,*

*"Both the young and the old,*

*"And bidden [advised to] beware of the cutpurse so bold."*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Well said! He would be to blame who would not beware of cutpurses, to be sure!”

Nightingale sang:

*“Then if you take heed not, free me from the curse,*

*“Who give you both warning, for [you] and the cutpurse.*

*“Youth, youth, you had better been starved by your nurse,*

*“Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse.”*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “This is good, indeed. What do you say, Numps? Is there any harm in this?”

Nightingale sang:

*“It has been upbraided to men of my trade,*

*“That oftentimes we are the cause of this crime.”*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “The more coxcombs are they who did it, certainly.”

Nightingale sang:

*“Alack and for pity, why should it be said?*

*“As if they regarded or [either] places or time!*

*“Examples have been*

*“Of some that [who] were seen*

*“In Westminster Hall, yea the pleaders between;*

*“Then why should the judges be free from this curse,*

*“More than my poor self, for cutting the purse?”*

Westminster Hall was a site where several law courts met, so a cutpurse could very well regard as a challenge the picking of a pocket there.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “God-a-mercy for that! Why should they be more free indeed?”

The archaic phrase “God-a-mercy” expresses gratitude or thanks.

Nightingale sang the chorus again:

*“Youth, youth, you had better been starved by your nurse,*

*“Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse.”*

Bartholomew Cokes requested, “Sing that again, good ballad-man, sing that again.”

Nightingale and Bartholomew Cokes sang the chorus together:

*“Youth, youth, you had better been starved by your nurse,*

*“Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse.”*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Oh, splendid! I would like to rub my elbow now, but I dare not pull out my hand.”

To rub elbows meant to hug oneself with delight. Bartholomew Cokes would have liked to do that, but he was keeping his hand tightly closed around his purse.

He continued, “Sing on, please; he who made this ballad shall be the poet-playwright of my masque.”

Nightingale sang:

*“At Worcester, it is known well, and even in the jail,*

*“A knight of good worship did there show his face,*

*“Against the foul sinners, in zeal for to rail,*

*“And lost ipso facto his purse in the place.”*

The Latin phrase *ipso facto* means “for that very reason” or “inevitably.”

Some cutpurses have been known to cut purses on the day before they were to be hung for cutting purses.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Is it possible?”

Nightingale sang:

*“Once from the seat*

*“Of judgment so great,*

*“A judge there did lose a fair pouch of velvete.”*

“Velvete” is velvet.

Bartholomew Cokes asked, “Is that true?”

According to one story, Sir Thomas More was annoyed by a judge who criticized the victims of cutpurses, saying that the victims ought to have been more careful, so Sir Thomas More persuaded a cutpurse to steal the judge’s purse during the cutpurse’s trial. When the judge noticed that his purse was missing, Sir Thomas More gave it back to him along with the advice to not blame the victims of cutpurses.

Nightingale sang:

*“Oh, Lord, for your mercy, how wicked or worse,*

*“Are those who so venture their necks for a purse!*

*“Youth, youth, you had better been starved by your nurse,*

*“Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse.”*

Bartholomew Cokes sang the refrain after Nightingale had sang it, and then he said to Nightingale, “Please, stay a little while, friend.”

He then asked, “Yet on your conscience, Numps, speak, is there any harm in this?”

Humphrey Wasp replied, “To tell you the truth, the song is too good for you, unless you have the grace to follow the song’s advice.”

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “It does reveal the enormity of the sin of purse-cutting. I’ll listen to it some more. I have not liked a paltry piece of poetry as well for a good long while.”

Bartholomew Cokes sang the refrain again:

*“Youth, youth, you had better been starved by your nurse,  
Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse.”*

He then said, “Where’s now this youth who became a cutpurse? A man must call upon him for his own good, and yet he will not appear. Look here, here’s for him” — he displayed his purse and tossed it from hand to hand — “handy dandy, which hand will he have?”

Handy-dandy is a game in which children guess which hand an item is in.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Sing on, please. Sing the rest of the song. I do hear of him, but I cannot see him. I do not see this master youth, the cutpurse.”

Nightingale sang:

*“At plays, and at sermons, and at the [law] sessions,  
It is daily their practice such booty to make.  
Yes, under the gallows at executions,  
They stick not the stare-about’s purses to take.”*

In other words, they even steal the purses of people who are watching the executions of such people as cutpurses.

*“Nay, one without grace,*

*“At a [far] better place,*

*“At court, and in Christmas, before the King’s face.”*

On Christmas Day of 1611, John Selman cut a purse in the King’s Chapel at Whitehall. He did this while King James I was going forward to celebrate the sacrament of communion. John Selman was executed on 7 January 1612.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “That was a fine fellow! I would like to have him here now.”

Nightingale sang:

*“Alack then for pity must I bear the curse,*

*“That only belongs to the cunning cutpurse?”*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “But where’s the cutpurses’ cunning now, when they should use it? They are all chained up in prison now, I promise you.”

He sang the refrain again:

*“Youth, youth, you had better been starved by your nurse,*

*“Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse.”*

He then sang extempore, “*The rat-catchers’ charme, are all fools and asses to this.*”

The comma showed where he paused briefly while singing.

The word “charme” is an obsolete spelling of “charm.” The context shows that the word is plural. We would use the word “charms” today.

His sentence means this: “The rat-catchers’ charmed ones are all fools and asses compared to this cutpurse I am trying to trap.”

The word “charme” as used in this sentence is a noun. By metonymy, it means “charmed ones.” The phrase “to this” means “compared to this.” “This” refers to the cutpurse whom Bartholomew Cokes was trying to entice to steal his purse.

Rat-charmers were supposed to be able to charm rats with enchanted songs that would kill them. In Ireland, rat-catchers were said to rhyme rats to death. Sometimes, the charms were said to drive rats out of the country.

One meaning of “charm” as a verb is “subdue.”

Because the rat-catchers were able to kill rats or to drive them out of the country, the rats were fools and asses compared to this cutpurse, who was staying safe by staying hidden.

The word “charm” has other meanings that come into play here. As a verb, “to charm” means “to enchant” or “to bewitch,” and so as a noun, “a charm” means “an enchantment” or “a bewitchment.” Also as a noun, “a charm” is “a blending of voices” (possibly a choir) or “a song,” and “charm” means “singing.”

Bartholomew Cokes continued, “I hope that the cutpurses will suffer from the pox because they will not come here! It’s a shame that a man should have such a desire for a thing, and lack that thing!”

He wanted to see a cutpurse, but so far no cutpurse was forthcoming.

Quarulous said to Mr. Winwife, “Before God I say that I’d give half the fair, if it were mine, for a cutpurse for him, to



satisfy his longing. I'd give half of Bartholomew Fair for a cutpurse to go to him and cut his purse."

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Look, sister."

He showed her his purse, and then quickly put it in one pocket and then another, saying, "Here it is. Here it is. Where is it now? Which pocket is it in? Do you want to make a wager?"

Humphrey Wasp said to him, "I ask you to leave your wagers, and let the singer end his song, if that is possible."

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Oh, are you edified by the song, Numps? Have you gained moral enlightenment from hearing it?"

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, "Indeed, Bartholomew Cokes interrupts the singer too much. There Numps spoke to good purpose."

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Sister, I am an ass. I cannot keep my purse!"

He showed his purse to his sister, and then he put it away and said to Nightingale, "Go on. Continue, please, friend."

Nightingale sang the refrain again:

*"Youth, youth, you had better been starved by your nurse,*

*"Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse."*

Mr. Winwife said to Quarlous, "Will you see something entertaining? Look, there's a fellow going over to Bartholomew Cokes, see."

As Nightingale sang, Ezekiel Edgworth went over to Bartholomew Cokes and tickled him in the ear with a straw twice to draw his hand out of his pocket.

Ezekiel Edgworth then put his hand in one of Bartholomew Cokes' pockets.

Quarulous said, "Good, indeed! Oh, he has lighted on the wrong pocket."

Ezekiel Edgworth then put his hand in Bartholomew Cokes' other pocket.

Mr. Winwife said, "He has it! He has the purse. Before God, I say that he is a brave, splendid fellow. It would be a pity if he were detected and handed over to the police."

Nightingale sang:

*"But oh, you vile nation of cutpurses all,*

*"Relent [cease your sinning] and repent, and amend and be sound,*

*"And know that you ought not, by honest men's fall,*

*"Advance your own fortunes, to die above ground;"*

People who are hung die above ground.

*"And though you go [about] gay*

*"In silks, as you may,*

*"It is not the highway to heaven (as they say).*

*"Repent then, repent you, for better, for worse,*

*"And kiss not the gallows for cutting a purse.*

*"Youth, youth, you had better been starved by your nurse,*

*"Than live to be hanged for cutting a purse."*

All cried, "An excellent ballad! An excellent ballad!"

Ezekiel Edgworth said to Nightingale, "Friend, let me buy the first copy of the ballad! Let me have the first, please."

As Nightingale handed him a copy of the ballad, Ezekiel Edgworth slipped the purse into his hand.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Pardon me, sir. First come, first served — and I'll buy the whole bundle of ballads, too."

Mr. Winwife said to Quarlous, "That conveyance of the purse to the ballad-singer was better than even the theft. Did you see it? He has given the purse to the ballad-singer."

Quarlous said, "Has he!"

Ezekiel Edgworth said to Bartholomew Cokes, "Sir, I beg your pardon. I'll not hinder the poor man's profit; please, don't think I would stop you from buying his ballads. Don't mis-take me."

Bartholomew Cokes replied, "Sir, I take you for an honest gentleman, and I don't think that is mis-taking you. I met you earlier today."

He reached into his pocket and shouted, "Oh, Lord! My purse is gone, my purse, my purse, my purse!"

Humphrey Wasp said, "Come, do not cry and make a stir and make yourself an ass throughout Bartholomew Fair before your time."

He did not believe that the purse was missing.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Why, do you have it, Numps? Good Numps, how did you come to get it, I wonder?"

Humphrey Wasp said, "Please seek some other gamester to play the fool with. You may lose your purse soon enough, despite all your Bartholomew Fair wit."

Bartholomew Cokes said, "By this good hand, glove and all, I have lost it already if you don't have it. Feel my pocket, and I have lost Miss Grace's handkerchief, too, out of the other pocket."

The handkerchief was an expensive embroidered gift that Miss Grace had given to him.

Humphrey Wasp said sarcastically, “Why, this is good, very good, exceedingly pretty and good.”

Ezekiel Edgworth asked, “Are you sure you have lost it, sir?”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Oh, Lord! Yes, as I am an honest man, I had it but just now, as I was singing ‘Youth, youth.’”

Nightingale asked, “I hope you don’t suspect me, sir?”

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “You! That’s very funny, indeed! Do you think that the gentleman is foolish? Where did you have your hands, I ask you? Nowhere near his pockets. Go away, ass, go away!”

Nightingale exited to give the stolen purse to Ursula.

The disguised Justice Overdo said, “I shall be beaten again, if I am seen.”

He attempted to slip away without being noticed.

Ezekiel Edgworth said to Bartholomew Cokes, “Sir, I suspect an odd fellow, yonder, who is stealing away.”

Mrs. Overdo said, “Brother, it is the preaching fellow we saw and heard earlier. You must suspect him. He was present when your other purse was stolen, you know!”

She said to the disguised Justice Overdo, who was actually her husband, “No, stay, sir, and view the work you have done; if you are given a position at the gallows, and preach there, thank your own handiwork.”

Criminals on the gallows were allowed to make a speech of repentance before they were hung.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Sir, you shall take no pride in your preferment; you shall be silenced quickly.”

The preferment was being given a position on the gallows. Bartholomew Cokes was saying that the disguised Justice Overdo, who he supposed was the cutpurse, would be quickly hung.

The men present seized the disguised Justice Overdo, who asked, “What do you mean, sweet buds of gentility?”

By “buds,” he meant “young folks.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “To have my pennyworth’s out of you, bud.”

He wanted his money back, or if it was not forthcoming, he wanted his money’s worth of revenge.

He continued, “No less than two purses a day will serve you! I thought you were a simple fellow, when my man Numps beat you this morning, and I pitied you.”

Mrs. Overdo said, “So did I. I’ll be sworn that I did, brother, but now I see he is a lewd and pernicious enormity, as Justice Overdo would call him.”

The disguised Justice Overdo thought, *My own words are being turned upon me like swords!*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Can’t you let a man’s purse lie quietly in the owner’s pocket? Instead, you must entice it out of the pocket, and debauch it!”

Men carried away the disguised Justice Overdo.

Humphrey Wasp said to Bartholomew Cokes, “Sir, sir, keep your ‘debauch,’ and your other fine Bartholomew terms to yourself, and make as much of them as you please. But give me this from you in the meantime. Please, let’s see if I can look after this.”

He attempted to get the black box containing the marriage license from Bartholomew Cokes, who asked, “Why, Numps?”

Humphrey Wasp replied, “Why? Because you are an ass, sir, there’s the reason expressed in the shortest and most direct way I can tell you, if you must know the reason.

“Now that you have got the trick of losing things, you’d lose your pants if they were loose. I know you, sir, come, deliver the box to me.”

He took the box from him.

He continued, “You’ll go and crack the vermin you breed now, will you?”

This meant that Bartholomew Cokes wanted to catch and strike the cutpurses whom he had created by daring people to steal his purse. Another meaning was “speak contemptuously about someone or something.” Yet another meaning of the word “crack” was “break wind,” a meaning that can be associated with pants. Unfortunately, vermin can also be associated with pants; for some people in this society, the seams of pants were breeding grounds for lice.

Humphrey Wasp continued, “That’s very fine in theory, but will you have the truth of it? The cutpurses are reckless flies just like you, who breed cutpurses abroad in every corner. Your foolish handling of money creates cutpurses. If there were here no one wiser than I am, sir — that is, if I could have my way — the trade would lie open for you, sir, it would, indeed, sir.”

The word “trade” meant “path” at this time. If it were up to Humphrey Wasp, the path out of Bartholomew Fair would lie open for Bartholomew Cokes. Humphrey Wasp wanted Bartholomew Cokes to go home.

He continued, “I would teach your wit to come to your head, sir, as well as your land to come into your hand, I assure you, sir.”

He meant that he would teach him to have a well-regulated life that would bring him wealth.

Mr. Winwife said, “This is a pity, good Numps!”

Humphrey Wasp said, “No, gentlemen, don’t pity me. I am not worth it. If the Lord ever sends me home to Harrow o’ the Hill, again, then if I travel any more, call me Coriat with all my heart.”

Harrow on the Hill was a town northwest of London.

Coriat was a Fool who traveled extensively.

Humphrey Wasp, Bartholomew Cokes, and Mrs. Overdo exited. Humphrey Wasp was carrying the box. Still remaining were Ezekiel Edgworth, Quarlous, Mr. Winwife, and Miss Grace Wellborn.

Ezekiel Edgworth started to exit, but Quarlous stopped him and said, “Stay, sir, I must have a word with you in private. Do you hear me?”

“A word with me, sir?” Ezekiel Edgworth replied. “What do you want, good sir?”

Quarlous said, “Do not deny it: You are a cutpurse, sir. This gentleman here and I saw you. But we do not mean to reveal to the authorities what you have done, although we can sufficiently inform ourselves about the danger of concealing you, thereby becoming accessories after the fact — but you must do us a piece of service.”

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Good gentlemen, do not ruin me. I am a civil young man, and indeed I am only a beginner at this work.”

Quarlous replied, "Sir, your beginning shall bring on your ending as far as we are concerned. You can continue to do what you have begun to do. We are neither catchpoles nor constables."

Catchpoles are sheriff's officers.

Quarlous continued, "The piece of service that you are to undertake for us is this. Do you see the old fellow with the black box here?"

Ezekiel Edgworth replied, "The little old governor, sir?"

Quarlous replied, "The same. I see you have marked him as a possible mark already. I would have you get that box away from him, and bring it to us."

Ezekiel Edgworth said, "Would you have the box and all, sir, or only that which is inside it? I'll get you that, and leave him the box to play with still, which will be the harder of the two services, because I would gain your worship's good opinion of me."

Mr. Winwife said, "He speaks well. Getting the document and leaving the box will take a greater mastery of the art of thievery, and we will have the greater entertainment when what is in the box is missed."

Ezekiel Edgworth said, "Yes, and it will take longer to discover that it is missing, which will lengthen the entertainment."

Quarlous said, "But look you do it now, sirrah, and keep your word, or —"

"Sirrah" was a title given to a man of lower status than the speaker.

Ezekiel Edgworth interrupted, "Sir, if I ever break my word with a gentleman, may I never read word at my need."



People could get out of capital punishment if they could show that they could read Latin. Ezekiel Edgworth was saying that if he broke his word to Quarlous, then he was willing to be hung.

He then asked, “Where shall I find you?”

Quarlous said, “Somewhere in the fair, around here. Do this quickly.”

Ezekiel Edgworth exited.

Quarlous continued, “I would like to see Humphrey Wasp — the painstaking fool — deluded! Of all beasts, I love the serious ass: he who takes pains to be one and who plays the fool with the greatest diligence that can be.”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Then you would not choose, sir, but to love my guardian, Justice Overdo, who is answerable to that description in every hair of him. He is a painstaking fool.”

Quarlous said, “So I have heard. But how came you, Miss Grace Wellborn, to be his ward, or to first have any kind of relationship to him?”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Indeed, through a common calamity, he bought me, sir; and now he will marry me to his wife’s brother, this ‘wise’ gentleman whom you see; or else I must pay value of my land.”

She was an orphan and the heir of parents who held land from King James I. Because of this, she was the King’s ward, and because he wanted to raise money, the King had exercised his right to sell his guardianship of her. Justice Overdo had bought her guardianship, which allowed him to choose a husband for her, and he was now seeking to marry her to his wife’s brother: Bartholomew Cokes. He was not a suitable husband for her, but it was common for people to

misuse their guardianships to provide advantageous marriages for family members. Miss Grace Wellborn could refuse to marry Bartholomew Cokes, but doing that would cost her a significant part of her inheritance.

The selling of guardianships was a common catastrophe and would be abolished in a few years.

Quarlous said, “By God’s eyelid, is there no device of disparagement, or something similar? Talk with some crafty fellow, some picklock of the law. I wish I had studied a year longer in the Inns of Court, even if the result had been only that I could be in your case.”

This has a bawdy meaning. “Case” can mean “legal case” or “vagina.”

Mr. Winwife thought, *Mr. Quarlous, what are you proposing?*

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “You’d bring but little aid, sir.”

There were some limits on whom a guardian could choose as spouse for his ward. The two had to be similar in social status, and the spouse could not be an idiot. Bartholomew Cokes and Miss Grace Wellborn were of similar social status, and he could read, so he was not an idiot in the accepted legal sense.

Mr. Winwife thought about Quarlous, *I’ll keep an eye on you, indeed, gamester.*

He said out loud, “This is an unfortunate foolish tribe, aka family, you have fallen into, lady. I wonder that you can endure them.”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Sir, they who cannot work their fetters off must wear them.”

Mr. Winwife said, “You see what care they are taking of you — they have left you behind like this.”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Indeed, they take the same care of me that they take of themselves, sir. I cannot greatly complain, if this were all I had against them.”

Mr. Winwife said, “That is true, but will it please you to withdraw with us for a little while, so you can make them think they have lost you? I hope our manners and our language have been such as will give you no cause to fear for your safety while you are in our company.”

Miss Grace Wellborn replied, “Sir, I will give myself no cause or reason to fear my being in your company. I am so secure in my own conduct and morality that I will not suspect yours.”

She was positive that she would behave properly and that the two men would follow suit.

Looking up, Quarlous said, “Look, John Littlewit is coming.”

Mr. Winwife said, “Let’s leave. I don’t want to be seen by him.”

Quarlous said, “No, it is best for you that he not see you. He’d tell his mother, the widow.”

Mr. Winwife said, “What! What do you mean?”

Quarlous said, “I beg your pardon. Is that the way the wind blows? Must I not mention the widow?”

Both Quarlous and Mr. Winwife were interested in Miss Grace Wellborn. Mr. Winwife did not want the widow to be mentioned because he did not want Miss Grace Wellborn to know, or to remember, that he had been courting the widow.

Quarlous, Mr. Winwife, and Miss Grace Wellborn exited.

Mr. John Littlewit and his wife, Mrs. Win Littlewit, emerged from Ursula's booth, where they had been eating pig.

Mr. John Littlewit said, "Do you hear, Win, Win?"

Mrs. Win Littlewit asked, "What are you saying, John?"

Mr. John Littlewit said, "While they are paying the reckoning, Win, I'll tell you a thing, Win. We shall never see any sights in Bartholomew Fair, Win, unless you continue to have cravings, Win. So, good Win, sweet Win, long to see some hobbyhorses, and some drums, and rattles, and dogs, and fine devices, Win. Long to see the bull with the five legs, Win, and the immense hog. Now that you have begun with longing for pig, you may long for anything, Win, and so you can long to see my puppet-play, Win."

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, "But we shall not eat of the bull and the hog, John; how then shall I long for them?"

Mr. John Littlewit said, "Oh, you can, Win, you may long to see, as well as to taste, Win.

"Remember the apothecary's wife, Win, who longed to see the dissection of a corpse, Win?

"Remember the lady, Win, who desired to spit in the great lawyer's mouth, after his very eloquent pleading?"

In this society, hunters would spit in the mouths of hunting dogs as a way to encourage them. Hunting dogs did not mind this, although most lawyers would. However, the lawyer may have metaphorically spit out fancy words and in doing so may have literally and accidentally spit on the lady, which may have made her importunate and insistent about spitting in the great lawyer's mouth.

Mr. John Littlewit continued, "I assure you that these women longed, Win. Good Win, go inside, and long to see the sights of the fair."

Mr. John Littlewit and Mrs. Win Littlewit went back inside Ursula's booth.

Joan Trash and Lantern Leatherhead were still at their booths.

Joan Trash said, "I think we are rid of our new customer, brother Leatherhead. We shall hear no more of him."

The new customer was Bartholomew Cokes, who had bought all of their wares. He had paid the money for their wares, but in the excitement over having his purse cut, he had not taken possession of the wares he had bought.

Lantern Leatherhead said, "All the better; let's pack up everything and leave, before he finds us."

Joan Trash said, "Stay a little longer. Yonder comes a company of people. It may be that we may make some more money."

Joan Trash and Lantern Leatherhead were willing to make more money by reselling wares that Bartholomew Cokes had already paid money for.

Jordan Knockem and Zeal-of-the-land Busy came out of Ursula's booth. Zeal-of-the-land Busy had been trying to convert Jordan Knockem to Puritanism.

Jordan Knockem said, "Sir, I will take your advice, and cut my hair short like a Puritan, and leave vapors. I see that tobacco, and bottle-ale, and pig, and Whit, and even Ursula herself, is all vanity."

Zeal-of-the-land Busy, who had just eaten pig, said, “Only pig was not comprehended in my admonition. All the rest were.

“As for long hair, it is an ensign of pride, a banner, and the world is full of those banners, very full of banners.

“And bottle-ale is a drink of Satan’s, a drink prescribed by Satan. It is devised to puff us up, and make us swell in this latter age of vanity.

“The purpose of the smoke of tobacco is to keep us in mist and error.

“But the fleshly woman, which you call Ursla, is above all to be avoided, having the marks upon her of the three enemies of man: the World, as being in the fair; the Devil, as being in the fire; and the Flesh, as being herself.”

He used “which” to refer to Ursla rather than the word “whom,” which we use to refer to human beings.

Dame Purecraft came out of Ursla’s booth and said, “Brother Zeal-of-the-land! What shall we do? My daughter Win-the-fight is fallen into her fit of longing again.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “For more pig! There is no more, is there?”

Dame Purecraft said, “To see some sights in the fair.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Sister, let her flee from the impurity of the place swiftly, lest she partake of the pitch thereof. Oh, Smithfield, you are the seat of the beast, and I will leave you! Idolatry peeps out on every side of you.”

Jordan Knockem thought, *He is an excellent complete hypocrite! Now that his belly is full, he falls to railing and kicking the jade, aka metaphorical bad horse. A very “good” vapor! I’ll go in and entertain Ursla by telling her how her*

*pig works. He has eaten two and a half portions, and he has drunk a pail full of ale. He eats with his eyes, as well as his teeth.*

Zeal-of-the-land Busy had warned others not to look at the sights of the fair, but he was looking at them now as he criticized them.

Jordan Knockem went inside Ursula's booth.

Lantern Leatherhead shouted, "What do you lack, gentlemen? What is it you want to buy? Rattles, drums, doll babies —"

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, "Silence! Be quiet about your apocryphal wares, you profane publican. Be quiet about your bells, your dragons, and your Tobie's dogs."

Zeal-of-the-land Busy was alluding to parts of the Apocrypha, all of which the Puritans rejected. Those parts were the stories of Bel and the Dragon and of Tobit (Tobie).

He continued, "Your hobbyhorse is an idol, a very idol, a fierce and rank idol; and you, the Nebuchadnezzar, the proud Nebuchadnezzar of the fair, who set it up for children to fall down before and worship."

Nebuchadnezzar was a King of Babylon who forced his people to worship a golden idol.

Lantern Leatherhead shouted, "I beg your mercy, sir; will you buy a fiddle to fill up your noise?"

A noise is a group of musicians, but Lantern Leatherhead meant that the fiddle could be the accompaniment to the noise that Zeal-of-the-land Busy was making.

Mr. John Littlewit and Mrs. Win Littlewit came out of Ursula's booth.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Look, Win, do, look in God’s name, and save your craving. Here are fine sights.”

The word “save” meant “anticipate and take action to prevent.” Win’s way of taking action to prevent her craving was to satisfy her craving.

Dame Purecraft said to her, “Yes, child, as long as you hate them, as our brother Zeal-of-the-land Busy does, you may look at them.”

Lantern Leatherhead said to Zeal-of-the-land Busy, “Or what do you say to a drum, sir?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy replied, “It is the broken belly of the beast, and your bellows there are its lungs, and these pipes are its throat, those feathers are of its tail, and your rattles are the gnashing of its teeth.”

Joan Trash said, “And what’s my gingerbread, I ask you?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy replied, “The provender that pricks him up.”

“Pricks him up” meant “stimulates him.” The words included sexual imagery.

He continued, “Go away and take with you your basket of popery, your nest of images, and your whole legend of ginger-work.”

The Puritans rejected Catholic saints and such things as books of legends about Catholic saints. Joan Trash had gingerbread men, and Zeal-of-the-land Busy was likening them to images of Saint Bartholomew.

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Sir, if you are not quiet very quickly, I’ll have you clapped by the heels quickly into the stocks for disturbing the fair.”



Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “The sin of the fair provokes me! I cannot be silent!”

Dame Purecraft said, “Good brother Zeal!”

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Sir, I’ll make you silent, believe it.”

Mr. John Littlewit said quietly to Lantern Leatherhead, “I’ll give you a shilling if you do that, indeed, friend.”

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Sir, give me your shilling. I’ll give you my shop if I do not get him clapped into the stocks. In the meantime, I’ll leave my shop in pawn with you.”

Mr. John Littlewit gave him a shilling and said, “Agreed, but do it quickly.”

Lantern Leatherhead exited.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said to Dame Purecraft, “Don’t try to stop me, woman. I was moved in spirit to be here this day, in this fair, this wicked and foul fair — and fitter may it be called a foul than a fair — to protest against the abuses of it, the foul abuses of it, in regard of the afflicted saints, who are troubled, very much troubled, exceedingly troubled, with the opening of the merchandise of Babylon again, and the peeping of popery upon the stalls here, here, in the high places.”

The afflicted saints, Zeal-of-the-land Busy believed, are the Puritans.

He pointed to a yellow-haired doll and said, “Don’t you see Goldy-locks, the purple strumpet there, in her yellow gown and green sleeves?”

Purple is a color associated with repentance from sin, so it would have been better for Zeal-of-the-land Busy’s rhetorical purposes if the doll had been scarlet.

He continued, “Don’t you see the profane pipes, the tinkling timbrels? A shop of relics!”

He was criticizing Lantern Leatherhead’s toys, which he then attempted to seize in order to destroy them.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “I have to tell you not to do that. I have been entrusted to look after them.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy turned to Joan Trash and said about her gingerbread men, “And this idolatrous grove of images, this flasket of idols, which I will pull down —”

He hit the gingerbread basket and knocked much of the gingerbread onto the ground.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy was envisioning himself as emulating Jesus in the Temple of God chasing away the changers of money.

This is John 2:13-16 (King James Version):

*13 And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

*14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:*

*15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables;*

*16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.*

Joan Trash lamented, “Oh, my ware! My ware! God bless it!”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “In my zeal and glory I have been thus angered.”

Lantern Leatherhead returned, bringing with him some law officers, who were led by Poacher.

Lantern Leatherhead pointed to Zeal-of-the-land Busy and said, “Here he is; please lay hold of his zeal. We cannot sell a whistle because of him and his tune. Stop his noise first.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “You cannot; this is a sanctified noise. I will make a loud and most strong noise, until I have daunted the profane enemy. And for this cause —”

Lantern Leatherhead interrupted, “Sir, no man here is afraid of you, or your cause. You shall swear it in the stocks, sir.”

Ready to become a martyr, Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “I will thrust myself into the stocks, upon the pikes of the land.”

Pikes are long-handled weapons with points at the end.

The law officers seized him.

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Carry him away.”

Dame Purecraft shouted, “What are you doing, wicked men?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Let them alone. I don’t fear them.”

The law officers exited with him in custody, followed by Dame Purecraft.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Wasn’t this shilling well spent, Win, since it has gotten us our liberty? Now we may go play, and see all of the fair, and go where we want to go. My mother-in-law has gone after him, and let’s let her go, because it frees us to do what we want.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit replied, “Yes, John, but I don’t know what to do.”

“About what, Win?”

“For a thing I am ashamed to tell you, indeed, and it’s too far for me to go home.”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Please don’t be ashamed, Win. Come, I won’t make you feel ashamed. Is it anything about the hobbyhorse man? If it is, speak freely.”

He thought that she wanted to buy something.

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, “Hang him. He’s a base bobchin. I scorn him; no, I have very great what sha’ call ’um, John.”

She whispered to him that she urgently needed to pee.

He replied, “Oh, is that all, Win? We’ll go back to Captain Jordan, to the pig-woman’s, Win, he’ll help us, or she, with a dripping-pan, or an old kettle, or something.”

A dripping-pan is a clever term — or item — to use for a chamber pot.

Mr. John Littlewit continued, “The poor greasy soul loves you, Win, and afterward we’ll go all over the fair, Win, and see my puppet-play, Win; you know it’s a fine matter, Win.”

Mr. John Littlewit and Mrs. Win Littlewit exited.

Lantern Leatherhead said, “Let’s leave. I advised you to pack up before, Joan.”

Joan Trash said, “A pox on that Puritan’s Bedlam purity! He has spoiled half my ware, but the best thing is, we lose nothing if we can avoid our first customer.”

She meant Bartholomew Cokes.

Lantern Leatherhead said, “It shall be hard for him to find or know us, when we are transformed by disguising ourselves.”

## ACT 4 (*Bartholomew Fair*)

### — 4.1 —

Among booths, stalls, and a pair of stocks at the fair stood Bartholomew Cokes. With him were the law officers Bristle, Haggis, and others. Also present were the disguised Justice Overdo, who was in the custody of the law officers, and the madman Troubleall.

Troubleall said, “Sirs, I have no doubt that you are officers.”

Bristle asked, “What about it then, sir?”

Troubleall continued, “And you are the King’s loving and obedient subjects.”

“Obedient, friend!” Bristle said, “Be careful what you say, I — Oliver ‘Davy’ Bristle — advise you. His loving subjects, we grant you; but not his obedient, at this time, by your leave; we know ourselves to be a little better than that; we are to command, sir, and such as you are to be obedient. Here’s one of his obedient subjects going to the stocks; and we’ll make you such another, if you talk like that.”

Troubleall said, “You are all wise enough in your places, I know.”

“If you know it, sir, why do you bring it in question?” Bristle asked.

“I question nothing, pardon me,” Troubleall said. “I only hope you have a warrant for what you do, and if you do, quit ye and multiply ye.”

The words “quit ye and multiply ye” meant “may God reward you and may God make your family grow in number”; however, the word “God” was not mentioned because Troubleall feared committing blasphemy.

A warrant is an order authorizing an act.

Troubleall exited.

Haggis asked, “Who is he?”

He then said about the disguised Justice Overdo, “Bring him up to the stocks there. Why aren’t you bringing him up?”

The disguised Justice Overdo was brought forward.

Troubleall returned and said, “If you have Justice Overdo’s warrant, all is well and you are safe: His is the warrant of warrants. I wouldn’t give this button for any other man’s warrant.”

Bristle said, “That’s likely enough, sir, but let me tell you, if you play with your buttons like this, you will want and need them before night, for any abundance I see about you. You had best keep them, and save the need for pins to use on your clothing, indeed.”

Troubleall exited again.

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “Who is he, the man who esteems and praises my warrant? He seems a sober and discreet person: It is a comfort to a good conscience to be followed with a good reputation after his sufferings. The world will have a pretty taste — because of this — of how I can bear adversity; and it will beget a kind of reverence towards me hereafter, even from my enemies, when they shall see that I carry my calamity nobly, and that it neither breaks me nor bends me.”

Haggis said to the disguised Justice Overdo, “Come, sir, here’s a place for you to preach in. Will you put in your leg?”

These stocks restrained only one leg, rather than both legs, of the prisoner.

The disguised Justice Overdo said, “That I will, cheerfully.”

The law officers put him in the stocks.

Bristle said, “On my conscience, he is a seminary! He kisses the stocks.”

A seminary is a Catholic priest who was trained abroad and is serving in England.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Well, my sirs, I’ll leave him with you; now I see him bestowed, I’ll go look for my goods, and for Numps.”

He had paid Lantern Leatherhead and Joan Trash for all their wares, but because he thought that the disguised Justice Overdo had stolen his purse, he had gone away without collecting his purchases.

Haggis said, “You may leave, sir, I warrant you.”

Bartholomew Cokes exited.

Haggis said, “Where’s the other bawler? Fetch him, too. You shall find them both fast enough.”

The other bawler was Zeal-of-the-land Busy. Bawlers are religious people who bother other people with their sermonizing.

Some law officers exited.

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “In the midst of this tumult, I will yet be the author of my own rest, and not minding their fury, I will sit in the stocks in that calm as shall be able to trouble a triumph.”

Victorious Roman generals were given triumphs, parades in which their army marched and in which important prisoners were bound and forced to walk behind the general’s chariot.

Troubleall returned and said, “Do you assure me upon your words? May I vouch for you, if I am asked the question, that you have this warrant? Do you have the necessary warrant from Justice Overdo to carry out this punishment?”

Haggis asked, “Who is this fellow, for God’s sake?”

Troubleall said, “Do but show me Justice Adam Overdo, and I am satisfied.”

He exited again.

Bristle replied, “He is a fellow who is distracted — mad, they say. His name is Troubleall. He was an officer in the Pie-Powders Court here last year, and he was put out of his position by Justice Overdo.”

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “Oh!”

Bristle said, “After he lost his position on the court, he acquired a foolish obsession, and is run mad because of it, so that ever since he will do nothing except by Justice Overdo’s warrant. He will not eat a crust, nor drink a little, nor get dressed, without the warrant of Justice Overdo. His wife, begging your pardon, cannot get him to pee, or change his shirt, without the warrant of Justice Overdo.”

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “If this is true, this is my greatest disaster. I am bound to help this poor man who has so good a nature toward me but who is out of his wits, when I arrive at a time and place where I have no need for dissembling — no need to be in disguise.”

Troubleall returned and said, “If you cannot show me Adam Overdo, I fear for you; I am afraid you cannot answer the charges that will be made against you.”

Troubleall exited.

Haggis said, “I say, neighbor Bristle — now that I have had time to think better about it — Justice Overdo is a very parantory person.”

By “parantory,” he meant “peremptory.”



Bristle replied, “Oh, are you aware of that! And he is a severe justice-giver, by your leave.”

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “Do I hear ill from that side, too?”

He was now hearing ill things about himself coming from a law officer.

Bristle said, “He will sit as upright on the bench, if you observe him closely, as a candle in the socket, and he will give light to the whole court in every business.”

Haggis said, “But he will burn blue, and swell like a boil, God bless us, if he is angry.”

A candle flame that burns with a bluish tint is a bad omen.

Bristle said, “Yes, and he will be angry, too, when he wants to be, what’s more, and when he is angry, be it right or wrong, he always has the law on his side. I have noticed that, too.”

The disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “I will be more tender hereafter. I see that compassion may become a justice, although it is a weakness, I confess, and it is closer to being a vice than a virtue.”

Haggis said, “Well, take him out of the stocks again. We’ll go a sure way to work, and we’ll have the ace of hearts — the winning card — on our side, if we can.”

He did not want to get on Justice Overdo’s bad side.

They took the disguised Justice Overdo out of the stocks.

Poacher and the other law officers arrived with Zeal-of-the-land Busy in their custody. Dame Purecraft followed them.

Poacher said, “Come, bring him over to his fellow there.”

His fellow was the disguised Justice Overdo.

He then said, “Mr. Busy, we shall rule your legs, I hope, though we cannot rule your tongue.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “No, minister of darkness, no; you cannot rule my tongue; my tongue is my own, and with it I will both knock and mock down your Bartholomew abominations, until you are made an object to be hissed at by all the neighboring parishes round about here.”

Haggis said, “Let him alone. We have devised a better way to do things.”

Dame Purecraft asked, “And he shall not go into the stocks then?”

Bristle said, “No, Mrs., we’ll take them both to Justice Overdo, and let him judge over them as is fitting. That way, I and my friend Haggis and my beadle, aka law officer, whose name is Poacher, are relieved of our responsibility over them.”

Dame Purecraft said, “Oh, I thank you, blessed honest men!”

Bristle said, “No, you need not thank us, but thank this madman who is coming here! He put the idea in our heads.”

Troubleall returned.

Dame Purecraft said, “Is he mad? May Heaven now increase his madness, and bless it, and thank it.”

She said to Troubleall, “Sir, your poor handmaid thanks you.”

Troubleall asked, “Have you a warrant? If you have a warrant, show it.”

Dame Purecraft said, “Yes, I have a warrant out of the Word to give thanks for removing any scorn intended to the brethren.”

Puritans — the brethren — called the Bible the Word.

Everyone except Troubleall exited.

Troubleall said, “It is Justice Overdo’s warrant that I look for; if you have not that, then you keep your word and I’ll keep mine. Quit ye and multiply ye.”

— 4.2 —

Ezekiel Edgworth and Nightingale appeared.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Come away with me, Nightingale, please.”

“Where are you going?” Troubleall asked. “Where’s your warrant?”

“Warrant!” Ezekiel Edgworth asked. “For what, sir?”

Troubleall replied, “For what you go about doing, you know how fit it is; if you have no warrant, then bless you, and I’ll pray for you — that’s all I can do.”

He exited.

Ezekiel Edgworth asked, “What does he mean?”

“He’s a madman who haunts Bartholomew Fair,” Nightingale replied. “Don’t you know him? It’s a marvel he hasn’t more followers after his ragged heels.”

Sometimes, children followed Troubleall.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Curse him, he startled me. I thought he had known about our plot. Guilt’s a terrible thing. Have you prepared the costardmonger?”

“Yes, and we have agreed on a price for his basket of pears,” Nightingale said. “He is at the corner here, ready. And as for your prize, he comes down sailing that way all alone, without his protector; he is rid of him, it seems.”

The prize was Bartholomew Cokes, who was likened to a pirates’ prize — a ship that the pirates would seize and plunder.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Yes, I know; I should have followed his protectorship because of a feat I am going to do upon him, but this opportunity offered itself so opportunely, I could not let it pass by without taking advantage of it.”

Bartholomew Cokes’ protectorship was Humphrey Wasp, who was carrying the box whose contents Ezekiel Edgworth was going to steal.

Ezekiel Edgworth continued, “Here he comes, whistle; let this sport be called Dorrying the Dottrel.”

“Dorrying the Dottrel” means “Fooling the Simpleton.” A dorr is a sound that is known as a raspberry or a Bronx cheer, and a dottrel is a bird that is known to be easily caught.

Bartholomew Cokes arrived.

Nightingale whistled.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “By this light, I swear that I cannot find my gingerbread wife, nor my hobbyhorse man, in all the fair now, to get my money back, and I do not know the way out of the fair so I can go home for more money. Do you hear me, friend, you who whistle? What tune is it that you are whistling?”

Bartholomew Cokes wanted to get his money back so he could spend it again. Apparently, he would have Lantern Leatherhead and Joan Trash deliver the items he had bought to his home, and he would pay them upon delivery.

Nightingale said, "It's a new tune I am practicing, sir."

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Do you know where I am staying, I ask you?"

Bartholomew Cokes lived in the country; he was only visiting London and staying with his sister and her husband, and he did not know his way around.

He continued, "No, go on and practice your tune; I am in no haste for an answer. I'll practice with you."

The costardmonger arrived with a basket of pears and shouted, "Buy some pears, very fine pears, fine pears!"

Nightingale set his foot in front of him, and the costardmonger fell with his basket.

Boys at the fair began to scramble for the pears.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Gee! A scramble! A scramble! A scramble! A scramble!"

The costardmonger said, "Good gentlemen, my wares for sale! My wares! I am a poor man! Good sir, my wares!"

Bartholomew Cokes began to scramble to pick up pears.

Nightingale said to him, "Let me hold your sword, sir. It is getting in your way."

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Do, and hold my cloak if you will, and my hat, too."

He handed over all these items to a person he thought was doing a good deed.

Nightingale and Ezekiel Edgworth withdrew with Bartholomew Cokes' possessions.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, "He is a delightful overgrown boy! I think he out-scrambles them all. I cannot persuade myself

other than that he still goes to grammar school and is playing truant from school today.”

Nightingale said, “I wish he had another purse to cut, Ezekiel.”

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Purse! A man might cut out his kidneys, I think, and he would never feel them leaving his body because he is so earnest at the sport of scrambling for pears.”

Boys were grabbing pears and then running away.

Nightingale said, “His soul is halfway out of his body at the game.”

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Leave, Nightingale; go that way.”

Nightingale ran off with Bartholomew Cokes’ sword, cloak, and hat.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “I think I am furnished with enough Catherine pears for one afternoon snack. Give me my cloak.”

The costardmonger said, “Good gentleman, give me my pears.”

Bartholomew Cokes asked, “Where’s the fellow I gave my cloak to? My cloak and my hat! By God’s eyelid, has he gone? Thieves, thieves! Help me to raise a hue and cry, gentlemen.”

A hue and cry is a number of people shouting and running after a criminal to capture him or her.

Still carrying the pears, Bartholomew Cokes ran away, shouting and looking for the man who had taken his sword, cloak, and hat, all of which were expensive items.

Did Bartholomew Cokes mean to steal the pears? Was he going to pay for them so he could eat them honestly, and was he simply distracted by being robbed? Or was his soul halfway out of his body because he was willing to steal pears from a lowly fruit-seller? Since both of his purses had been stolen, perhaps he lacked the money to pay for the pears and so he may have deliberately stolen the pears. Earlier, Humphrey Wasp had complained about him snatching pears from a Catherine-pear woman.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Costardmonger, go to Ursula’s. We will meet there.”

The costardmonger exited.

Ezekiel Edgworth said to himself, “Talk of him having a soul! By God’s heart, if he has any more than a thing given him instead of salt just to keep him from stinking, I’ll be hanged before my time, immediately.”

Salt keeps food from rotting, and the soul keeps the body from rotting; once the soul departs from the body, the body begins to rot. Ezekiel Edgworth believed that Bartholomew Cokes had just enough soul to keep his body from rotting, but not enough soul to keep him from stealing pears.

Ezekiel Edgworth continued, “Where should it be, indeed? In his blood? He has not so much an amount of it in his whole body as will maintain a good flea!”

In other words, he was saying that yes, Bartholomew Cokes definitely lacks soul — and the things that go with it, such as morality. He was also saying that Bartholomew Cokes lacked blood. If he meant that literally, he meant that although Bartholomew Cokes was tall, he was skinny. If he meant that figuratively, he meant that Bartholomew Cokes lacked fighting spirit. Of course, he could have meant that both literally and figuratively.

“And if he continues to take this course of action, he will not have so much land left as to rear a calf, within this twelvemonth. Was there ever a green plover so pulled!”

This course of action was one of foolishness and innocence. Bartholomew Cokes had innocently handed over valuable clothing to a person he thought was doing a good deed for him, and he did that because he apparently wanted to scramble for and grab pears and keep them without paying for them (because he had lost his purses of money). Finders keepers, losers weepers.

A pulled green plover is an innocent, foolish bird that — or person who — has been plucked. Its feathers have been pulled from it. Some of Bartholomew Cokes’ feathers — his clothing — had been plucked from him.

Ezekiel Edgworth continued, “I wish that his little overseer had been here now, and been tall enough to see him steal pears in exchange for his beaver hat and his cloak!”

The little overseer was Humphrey Wasp.

Ezekiel Edgworth continued, “I must go and find him next, because of his black box, and his patent that it seems he has of his place, which I think the gentleman would have a reversion of — I mean the gentleman who spoke to me for it so earnestly.”

He was mistaken about the document in the black box. He thought it was a patent — a document giving Humphrey Wasp the right of guardianship over Bartholomew Cokes. He also thought that Quarlous wanted a reversion — the right of succession. In other words, Quarlous wanted to replace Humphrey Wasp as the guardian of Bartholomew Cokes.

Ezekiel Edgworth exited.



Bartholomew Cokes returned and said, “I wish that I would lose my jacket, and my stockings, too, as I am an honest man, and never again move around, if I think that there is anything but thieving and cheating in this whole fair. Bartholomew Fair — ha! If any Bartholomew has ever had that luck in it that I have had, I’ll be martyred for him, and in Smithfield, too.”

Actually, another Bartholomew had had worse luck in Smithfield, where the fair was held annually. In 1611, Bartholomew Legate was burned at the stake in Smithfield after being found guilty of heresy.

Bartholomew Cokes continued, “I have ‘paid’ for my pears with the loss of my clothing — may the pears rot! I’ll keep them no longer.”

He threw his pears away.

He continued, “You were choke-pears to me. I would have done better to have gone to mum-chance for you — I wish I had done that.”

Choke-pears are not fit for eating; they are used to make an alcoholic drink.

Mumchance is a gambling game using dice.

He continued, “I think the fair should not have treated me like this, if only because of my namesake, Saint Bartholomew. I would not have treated a dog named Bartholomew like this. Oh, Numps will triumph now! He will say, ‘I told you so!’”

Troubleall returned.

Bartholomew Cokes said to him, “Friend, do you know who I am, or where I am staying? I do not know myself, I’ll be sworn. Do but take me home, and I’ll make you happy. I have money enough there at home. I have lost myself, and

my cloak, and my hat, and my fine sword, and my sister, and Numps, and Miss Grace, a gentlewoman whom I would have married, and an openwork embroidered handkerchief she gave me, and two purses, today, and I have lost my purchase of hobbyhorses and gingerbread, which grieves me worst of all.”

Silly as always, he was grieved most of all by the loss of his toys and gingerbread.

Troubleall asked, “By whose warrant, sir, have you done all this?”

“Warrant!” Bartholomew Cokes said. “You are a ‘wise’ fellow indeed — as if a man would need a warrant to lose anything!”

Troubleall said, “Yes, a man may gain and lose with Justice Overdo’s warrant, I swear.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Justice Overdo! Do you know him? I am staying there, he is my brother-in-law, he married my sister. Please show me the way there. Do you know the house?”

Troubleall replied, “Sir, show me your warrant. I know nothing without a warrant, pardon me.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Why, I warrant you. Come along. You shall see I have embroidered pillows there, and cambric sheets, and sweet bags filled with aromatic herbs to perfume the linen, too. Please guide me to the house.”

Troubleall said, “Sir, I’ll tell you what. You go there first by yourself alone, tell your worshipful brother your mind, and bring me just three lines of his handwriting, or his clerk’s, with Adam Overdo’s signature underneath. I’ll stay here and wait for you, I’ll obey you, and I’ll guide you to the house immediately.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “By God’s eyelid, this man is an ass. I have found him out. A pox upon me! What am I doing talking to such a dull fool!”

He said to Troubleall, “Farewell! You are a complete coxcomb. You are a complete fool, do you hear me?”

Troubleall replied, “I think I am; if Justice Overdo signs a warrant to it, I am, and so are we all. He’ll quit us all, multiply us all.”

Troubleall’s last sentence was troublesome. He was putting Justice Overdo in the place of God, Who is the Being Who will “quit [requite] us all, multiply us all.”

— 4.3 —

In another part of the fair, Miss Grace Wellborn, Quarlous, and Mr. Winwife were talking. Quarlous and Mr. Winwife had drawn their swords.

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Gentlemen, this is no good way to act; you are only breeding trouble and offence for one another, and you are giving me no contentment at all. I am not a woman who wants to be fought over, or to have my name or fortune made the question of men’s swords.”

Quarlous said, “By God’s blood, we love you.”

Miss Grace Wellborn replied, “If you both love me, as you say you do, your own reason will tell you that only one of you can enjoy me, and to that point there leads a more direct line, than by my infamy, which must follow, if you fight.

“It is true, and I have professed it to you without any pretense, that rather than be yoked with this bridegroom — Bartholomew Cokes — who has been appointed to be my husband, I would take up any husband almost without any inquiry into his credentials. I know that a cunning mind would say to me that Bartholomew Cokes is a fool, and he

has an estate, and I could order him around and enjoy a lover on the side. But these are not my aims; I must have a husband I can love, one who is worthy of my love, or I cannot live with him. I shall badly make one of these cunning, shrewd wives — that is not the kind of thing I could or would do.”

Mr. Winwife said, “Why, if you can like either of us, lady, say which of us you prefer, and the other shall swear instantly to desist. Choose one of us to marry.”

Quarlous said, “Good idea! I agree to that willingly.”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Surely, you think that I am a woman of an extreme levity, gentlemen, or a strange fancy, if, meeting you by chance in such a place as this, both at the same time, and not yet knowing you two gentlemen for two hours, and neither of you appearing to be more deserving than the other to me, I should so forsake my modesty (although I might prefer one more particularly than the other) as to say, this is the man I will marry, and name him.”

Quarlous asked, “Why, for what reason shouldn’t you do that? What would hinder you from doing that?”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “If you will not allow my modesty to be my reason for not choosing so quickly, then allow my reason to be my intelligence. Believe that I am enough of a woman and have enough cunning not to betray myself unsuitably. How can I judge between you, so far as to making a choice of whom to marry, without knowing you more and better? You are both equal and alike to me yet, and so impartially and equally esteemed by me, that each of you might be the man I would choose to marry, if the other were away, because you are reasonable creatures and you have understanding and rationality and gracious speech, and if fate will send me an understanding husband, I don’t doubt at all but that my own manners shall make him a good husband.”

Quarlous said, "I wish that I were put forth to making for you then."

"Put forth to making" meant "sent out for training." The words referred to the training of animals, but Quarlous meant that he wanted to be trained to be a good husband for her. Another meaning of "make" was "mate with," and so the sentence also meant that he wanted to have sex with her and perhaps make a baby.

Miss Grace Wellborn said, "It may be you will; you don't know what is in store for you."

She then asked both men, "Will you consent to a proposal of mine, gentlemen?"

Mr. Winwife said, "Whatever it is, we'll presume that it is reasonable because it comes from you."

Quarlous added, "And we'll presume it's fitting and suitable, too."

She said, "I saw one of you buy a pair of writing notebooks, just now."

Mr. Winwife said, "Yes, here they are, and they are maiden ones, too — they are unwritten in."

Miss Grace Wellborn said, "All the better for what they may be employed in. Each of you shall write here in this notebook a word or a name, whatever you like best, but of only two or three syllables at most; and the next person who comes this way, because Destiny has a high hand in business of this nature, I'll demand which of the two words he or she approves of better, and, according to that sentence, fix my resolution and affection without change. I will marry the man whose word is chosen."

"Agreed," Quarlous said, "I have already chosen my word."

Mr. Winwife added, "And I shall quickly choose my word."

Miss Grace Wellborn said, "But you shall promise, gentlemen, not to be curious to know which of you it is — which person's word has been chosen; instead, give me permission to conceal that until you have brought me either home or to a place where I may safely tender myself."

"Tender myself" meant either 1) take care of myself, or 2) offer myself.

"Why, that's only fair," Mr. Winwife said.

"We are pleased to agree," Quarlous said.

She said, "I will bind both of you to endeavor to work together friendly and jointly each to the other's fortune, and I will have myself fitted with some means to make the man who is forsaken a part of amends. You two shall be friends and help each other, and I shall find a way to give some compensation to the man who does not marry me."

"These conditions are very courteous," Quarlous said. "Well, my word is out of the romance *Arcadia* by Sir Philip Sydney: I choose the name Argalus."

Mr. Winwife said, "And the name I choose is out of the romance *The Two Noble Kinsmen* by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher: Palamon."

Argalus and Palamon were both young men who loved young women. Both names were from romances, which is fitting. Miss Grace Wellborn had said that "Destiny has a high hand in business of this nature," and this is certainly true in romances.

Quarlous and Mr. Winwife each wrote his preferred name in a notebook.

Troubleall showed up and asked, “Have you any warrant for this, gentlemen?”

Quarlous and Mr. Winwife laughed: “Ha!”

Troubleall said, “There must be a warrant had, believe it.”

“Had for what?” Mr. Winwife asked.

“For whatsoever it is, anything indeed, no matter what,” Troubleall replied.

Quarlous said, “By God’s light, here’s a fine ragged prophet dropped down in the nick of time!”

Troubleall said, “May Heaven reward you, gentlemen!”

“Stay a little while,” Quarulous requested.

He then said to Miss Grace Wellborn, “Good lady, let him choose the name he prefers.”

Miss Grace Wellborn asked, “You are OK with that, then?”

“Yes, yes,” Quarulous and Mr. Winwife said.

Miss Grace Wellborn said to Troubleall, “Sir, here are two names written —”

“Is the name Justice Overdo one of them?” Troubleall asked.

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “What, sir? Please read them to yourself; it is for a wager between these gentlemen; and with a checkmark, or any other symbol, mark which you approve of best.”

Troubleall replied, “They may be both worshipful names for all I know, Miss; but the name ‘Adam Overdo’ would be worth three of them, I assure you in this place — I say this in plain English.”

“This man amazes me,” Miss Grace Wellborn said to Quarlous and Mr. Winwife.

She then said to Troubleall, “I ask you to like one of them more than the other, sir.”

Troubleall marked the notebook and said, “I like him there; that name has the best warrant.”

He added, “Miss, to satisfy your longing, and to multiply him, it may be this.”

Although he did not know the purpose of choosing one of the names, Troubleall’s sentence was accurate enough. His choosing the name may satisfy her longing for a husband she can love, and it may increase her husband’s family — if he gets her pregnant.

Troubleall then said, “But I am still for Justice Overdo, that’s my conviction; and quit you.”

“Quit you” could mean 1) May God reward you, 2) May Justice Overdo reward you, or 3) I am leaving you.

He exited.

Mr. Winwife asked, “Is it done, lady? Has the choice of whom you will marry been made?”

Miss Grace Wellborn replied, “Yes, and as strangely as ever I saw. What fellow is this, I wonder? Who is he?”

Quarlous said, “No matter who he is, we have made him a fortune-teller. Which is it? Which is it? Which name did he choose?”

“I won’t tell you,” Miss Grace Wellborn said. “Didn’t you promise not to ask that?”

Ezekiel Edgworth arrived.



Quarlous said, “By God’s eyelid, I forgot that. Please pardon me.”

Seeing Ezekiel Edgworth, he said, “Look, here’s our Mercury; the marriage license arrives in the finest time, too! All we have to do is scratch out Bartholomew Cokes’ name, and the marriage license will serve for either me or Mr. Winwife.”

Mercury is the god of thieves. Ezekiel Edgworth, of course, is a thief.

Mr. Winwife said, “How now, lime-twig, have you committed the theft?”

Birdlime was used to catch birds. Sticky birdlime was smeared on branches, and birds stuck to the branches. Metaphorically, a lime-twig is a thief because whatever the thief touches sticks to his hand.

Ezekiel Edgworth replied, “Not yet, sir. Unless you want to go with me and see the theft, it is not worth speaking about. The act is nothing without a witness. Yonder he is, your man with the box, fallen into the finest company, and so transported with vapors!”

The man with the box, of course, was Humphrey Wasp, who had fallen into bad company, including Jordan Knockem, who constantly spoke about vapors.

Ezekiel Edgworth continued, “In their assembly is a Northern clothier named Norder, and a man called Puppy who is from the west of England and has come to wrestle before my Lord Mayor soon.”

Wrestling matches were part of the opening-day entertainment of the fair.

He continued, “And there’s Captain Whit, and one Val Cutting, who helps Captain Jordan to roar — Jordan Knockem is a circling boy.”

Jordan Knockem was a bully, a roaring boy who picked fights by telling people to step into a circle of friendship. If they don’t step into the circle, they aren’t his friend and he quarrels with them. If they do step in the circle, he asks them for a favor that he knows they cannot and/or will not grant and then he quarrels with them.

Ezekiel Edgworth continued, “Your Numps is so taken with Jordan Knockem that you may strip him of his clothes, if you want to. I’ll undertake to geld him for you, if you will just have a surgeon ready to cauterize him. And Mrs. Justice Overdo there is the goodest woman! She does so love them all over in terms of justice and the style of authority, with her hood upright that — I beg you to come with me, gentlemen, and see it.”

Quarlous said, “By God’s light, I would not miss it for the fair. What will you do, Ned Winwife?”

Mr. Winwife said, “Why, I will stay here in place of you. Miss Grace Wellborn must not be seen.”

Quarlous replied, “Do that, and find a priest in the meantime; I’ll bring the marriage license.”

He then said to Ezekiel Edgworth, “Lead on. Which way is it?”

Ezekiel Edgworth replied, “Here, sir, you are at the back of the booth already; you may hear the noise.”

— 4.4 —

In Ursula’s booth were Jordan Knockem, Whit, Norderm, Puppy, Val Cutting, Humphrey Wasp, and Mrs. Overdo, all of them drunk.

During a lull in the noise, Jordan Knockem said quietly, “Whit, tell Val Cutting to continue the vapors for a lift, Whit, for a lift.”

A lift is a theft. The game of vapors is a rowdy game in which people insult each other. The insults start out jocularly, but they can escalate until a fight breaks out. During the fight, a thief can find an opportunity to steal.

A Scotsman, Nordern said, “I’ll ne mare, I’ll ne mare; the eale’s too meeghty.”

[A Scotsman, Nordern said, “I’ll [drink] no more, I’ll [drink] no more; the ale’s too mighty [strong].”]

Jordan Knockem said, “What? My Galloway nag has the staggers, ha!”

Galloway horses were Scottish horses with a good reputation for endurance. The staggers are diseases that cause a horse to stagger.

Jordan Knockem recommended some cures for the staggers: “Whit, give him a slit in the forehead. Cheer up, man; we need a needle and thread to stitch his ears. I’d cure him now with a little butter and garlic, long-peppers and grains, if I had it. Where’s my drenching-horn for giving medicine to horses? I’ll give him a mash immediately that shall take away this dizziness.”

Puppy, who spoke a west-country dialect, asked, “Why, where are you, zurs? Do you vlinch, and leave us in the zuds now?”

[Puppy, who spoke a west-country dialect, asked, “Why, where are you, sirs? Do you flinch, and leave us in the suds now?”]

“In the suds” meant “in trouble.”

Nordern said, "I'll ne mare, I is e'en as vull as a paiper's bag, by my troth, I."

[Nordern said, "I'll [drink] no more, I am even as full as a bagpiper's bag, indeed I am."]

Puppy asked, "Do my Northern cloth zhrink i' the wetting, ha?"

[Puppy asked, "Does my Northern cloth shrink in the wetting, ha?"]

Shrinkage was a common complaint made against cloth manufactured in the North.

Jordan Knockem said, "Why, well said, old flea-bitten; you'll never tire, I see."

A flea-bitten horse was a dappled horse, aka a horse with bay or sorrel spots. Such horses were supposed not to tire easily.

They began to play the game of vapors again.

Val Cutting said, "No, sir, for he may tire if it pleases him."

Whit, who spoke with an Irish accent, said to Jordon Knockem, "Who told dee sho, that he vuld never teer, man?"

[Whit, who spoke with an Irish accent, said, "Who told you so, that he would never tire, man?"]

Val Cutting said, "It doesn't matter who told him so, as long as he knows."

Jordan Knockem said, "I know nothing, sir. Pardon me there."

Ezekiel Edgworth and Quarlous entered Ursula's booth.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, "They are at it still, sir; this is the game they call vapors."

Whit said, “He shall not pardon dee, Captain: dou shalt not be pardoned.

“Pre’dee, shweet-heart, do not pardon him.”

[Whit said, “He shall not pardon you, Captain. You shall not be pardoned.

[“Please, sweetheart, do not pardon him.”]

The Captain was Jordan Knockem, Captain of the roarers; Whit himself was also sometimes called Captain. The “sweetheart,” aka friend, was Val Cutting.

Val Cutting said, “By God’s light, I’ll pardon him, if I wish, no matter whosoever says nay to it.”

“Where’s Numps?” Quarlous said. “I don’t see him.”

Humphrey Wasp spoke up and said, “Why, I say nay to it.”

The “nay” meant “I agree with Whit: Don’t pardon Captain Jordan Knockem.”

Quarlous said, “Oh, there he is.”

Jordan Knockem asked, “To what do you say nay, sir?”

They were continuing to play their game of vapors, which was nonsense. Every man was supposed to oppose the last man who spoke, whether it concerned him, or not, although occasionally they could agree — but then almost immediately again disagree.

Drunk like the others playing the game, Humphrey Wasp said, “To anything, whatsoever it is, as long as I do not like it.”

Whit said, “Pardon me, little man, dou musht like it a little.”

[Whit said, “Pardon me, little man, you must like it a little.”]

Val Cutting said, “No, he must not like it at all, sir. There you are in the wrong.”

Whit said, “I tink I bee; he musht not like it indeed.”

[Whit said, “I think I am [in the wrong]; he must not like it indeed.”]

Val Cutting said, “In that case, then he both must and will like it, sir, in spite of you.”

Jordan Knockem said, “If he has a reason, he may like it, sir.”

Whit said, “By no meensh, Captain, upon reason, he may like nothing upon reason.”

[Whit said, “By no means, Captain [Jordan Knockem], upon reason, he [Humphrey Wasp] may like nothing upon reason.”]

Humphrey Wasp said, “I have no reason, nor I will hear of no reason, nor I will look for no reason, and he is an ass who either knows any reason, or looks for any reason from me.”

Val Cutting said, “Yes, in some sense you may have reason, sir.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Yes, in some sense, I don’t care if I grant you.”

Whit said, “Pardon me, thou ousht to grant him nothing in no shensh, if dou do love dyshelf, angry man.”

[Whit said, “Pardon me, you ought to grant him nothing in no sense, if you do love yourself, angry man.”]

Humphrey Wasp said, “Why, then I do grant him nothing; and I have no sense.”

Val Cutting said, “It is true, you have no sense indeed.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “By God’s eyelid, but I have sense, now I think on it better, and I will grant him anything, do you see?”

Jordan Knockem said, “He is in the right, and he utters a sufficient vapor.”

Val Cutting objected, “No, it is no sufficient vapor neither. I deny that.”

Jordan Knockem said, “Then it is a sweet vapor.”

Val Cutting agreed, “It may be a sweet vapor.”

Humphrey Wasp disagreed, “No, it is no sweet vapor neither, sir; it stinks, and I’ll stand to it.”

Whit said, “Yes, I tink it dosh shtink, Captain. All vapor dosh shtink.”

[Whit said, “Yes, I think it does stink, Captain. All vapor does stink.”]

Humphrey Wasp said, “No, then it does not stink, sir, and it shall not stink.”

Val Cutting said, “By your leave, I say it may stink, sir.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Yes, by my leave it may stink. I know that.”

Whit said, “Pardon me, thou knowesht nothing; it cannot by thy leave, angry man.”

[Whit said, “Pardon me, you know nothing; it cannot [stink] by your leave, angry man.”]

Humphrey Wasp asked, “How can it not stink?”

Jordan Knockem said, “No, don’t question what he says, for he is in the right.”

Whit said, “Yesh, I am in de right, I confesh it, so ish de little man, too.”

[Whit said, “Yes, I am in the right, I confess it, [and] so is the little man [Humphrey Wasp, in the right], too.”]

Whit said it did not stink, and Humphrey Wasp said it did stink, so both cannot be in the right. In this “game,” people argued for the sake of arguing.

Humphrey Wasp said, “I’ll have nothing confessed that concerns me. I am not in the right, nor never was in the right, nor never will be in the right, while I am in my right mind.”

Val Cutting said, “Mind! Why, here’s no man minds you, sir, nor anything else.”

He meant this: No man here is paying attention to you, sir, or to anything else.

Except for Norderm, they drank again, although they were so drunk that no one needed to take a drink.

Puppy said to Norderm, “Vriend, will you mind this that we do?”

[Puppy said to Norderm, “Friend, would you mind [doing] this that we are doing?”]

He offered Norderm the drinking cup.

Norderm replied, “I’ll ne mare. My waimb warkes too mickle with this auredy.”

[Norderm replied, “I’ll [drink] no more. My stomach works too much with what I have drunk already.”]

Quarlous said to Ezekiel Edgworth, “Do you call this vapors! This is such belching of quarrel as I never heard. Will you do your business, sir?”



The business was stealing the marriage license out of the box that Humphrey Wasp was still carrying.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, "You shall see, sir."

He went over to Humphrey Wasp.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, "Will you take that, Mr. Humphrey Wasp? He insulted you when he said that nobody should mind you!"

Humphrey Wasp asked, "Why, what have you to do with this? Is it any business of yours?"

Ezekiel Edgworth said, "No, but I think that you should not be unminded, though."

Humphrey Wasp said, "And I would not be, now I think about it. Do you hear, new acquaintance? Does no man mind me, you say?"

Val Cutting said, "Yes, sir, every man here minds you, but how do they mind you?"

Humphrey Wasp said, "I care as little how they mind me as you do; that was not my question."

Whit said, "No, noting was ty question, tou art a learned man, and I am a valiant man, i'faith la, tou shalt speak for me, and I will fight for tee."

[Whit said, "No, nothing was your question. You are a learned man, and I am a valiant man; indeed, la, you shall speak for me, and I will fight for you."]

Jordan Knockem said, "Fight for him, Whit? That's a gross vapor — he can fight for himself!"

Humphrey Wasp said, "It may be I can, but it may be I would not, so what then?"

Val Cutting said, “Why, then you may choose.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Why, then I’ll choose whether I choose or not.”

Jordan Knockem said, “I think you may, and it is true; and I allow it for a resolute vapor.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Then I think you do not think, and it is no resolute vapor.”

Val Cutting said, “Yes, in some sort he may allow you.”

“In some sort” meant “to some extent.”

Jordan Knockem said, “In no sort, sir; pardon me, I can allow him nothing. You mistake the vapor.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “He mistakes nothing, sir, in no sort.”

Whit said, “Yes, I pre dee now, let him mistake.”

“Pre dee” meant “pray thee” or “prithee,” aka “ask you please.”

[Whit said, “Yes, I ask you to please now let him mistake.”]

Humphrey Wasp said, “A turd in your teeth, never pre dee me, for I will have nothing mistaken.”

Jordan Knockem said, “Turd! Ha, turd? A noisome vapor.”

He then said quietly to Whit, “Hit him, Whit. Start a fight.”

While Whit and Humphrey Wasp fought, Ezekiel Edgworth stole the marriage license out of the box, and exited.

Mrs. Overdo said, “Why, gentlemen, why, gentlemen, I order you upon my authority to preserve the peace. In the King’s name, and my husband’s, put up your weapons, I shall be driven to commit you myself, otherwise.”

She meant that she would commit them to prison, but Quarlous laughed because in this society “commit” also had the meaning of “commit adultery” or “fornicate.”

Humphrey Wasp asked, “Why do you laugh, sir?”

Quarlous replied, “Sir, you’ll allow me my Christian liberty; I may laugh, I hope.”

Val Cutting said, “In some sort you may, and in some sort you may not, sir.”

The first “in some sort” possibly meant “to some extent,” and the second “in some sort” possibly meant “in some company.”

Jordan Knockem said, “In some sort, sir, he may neither laugh nor hope in this company.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Yes, then he may both laugh and hope in any sort, if it should please him.”

Quarlous said, “Indeed, and I will then, for it does please me exceedingly.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Not exceedingly neither, sir.”

Jordan Knockem said, “No, that vapor is too lofty.”

Quarlous said, “Gentlemen, I do not play well at your game of vapors. I am not very good at it, but —”

Val Cutting drew a circle on the ground and said, “Do you hear, sir? I would speak with you in the circle.”

Quarlous, not sure what this meant, asked, “In the circle, sir! Why would you want to speak with me in the circle?”

Val Cutting asked, “Can you lend me a piece, a Jacobus, in the circle?”

A Jacobus was a valuable gold coin also known as a sovereign. Val Cutting had just met Quarlous, and he was asking him for money as a pretext to starting a fight.

Quarlous said, “By God’s eyelid, your circle will prove more costly than your vapors, then. Sir, no, I will not lend you a Jacobus.”

Val Cutting said, “Your beard’s not well turned up, sir.”

He pulled Quarlous’ beard — a deadly insult.

Quarlous said, “What, rascal! Are you pulling my beard? I’ll break the circle with you.”

Val Cutting and Quarlous drew their swords and fought.

Puppy and Norderm wanted peace: “Gentlemen! Gentlemen!”

Jordan Knockem said quietly to Whit, “Gather up, Whit. Gather up, Whit, good vapors.”

Jordan Knockem exited while Whit took others’ cloaks, etc., and concealed them. Then Whit exited to summon the watchmen.

Mrs. Overdo said, “What do you mean? Are you rebels, gentlemen? Shall I send out a sergeant at arms, or a writ of rebellion, against you? I’ll commit you upon my womanhood, for a riot, upon my justice-hood, if you persist.”

Quarlous and Val Cutting exited.

Drunk, Humphrey Wasp said, “Upon my justice-hood! Indeed, shit on your hood. You’ll commit! Spoken like a true Justice of the Peace’s wife indeed, and a fine female lawyer! Turd in your teeth for a lawyer’s fee, now.”

Mrs. Overdo said, “Why, Numps, in Justice Overdo’s name, I order you to preserve the peace.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Good Mrs. Underdo, hold your tongue — shut up!”

Mrs. Overdo said, “Alas, poor Numps!”

The drunk Humphrey Wasp said, “Alas! And why alas from you, I ask you? Or why poor Numps, goodwife Rich?”

The Rich family owned the land that Bartholomew Fair was held on and made money from rents for booths, etc.

He continued, “Am I come to be pitied by your fancy tuft-taffata clothing now? Why, Mrs. Overdo, I knew Adam the clerk, your husband, when he was Adam Scrivener, and wrote for two-pence a sheet, as high as he bears his head now, or you your hood, dame.”

Bristle and some other watchmen, aka keepers of the peace, arrived. Whit, who had summoned them, came with them.

Humphrey Wasp asked, “Who are you, sir?”

Bristle said, “We are men, and no infidels. What is the matter here, and the reason for the noises, can you tell me?”

Humphrey Wasp said, “By God’s heart, what have you to do with it? Can’t a man quarrel in quietness, but you must interrupt him! Who are you?”

Bristle said, “Why, we are his majesty’s watchmen, sir.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Watchmen! By God’s blood, you are a sweet watch indeed. A body would think that if you watched well at nights, you would be contented to sleep at this time of day. Get you to your fleas and your flock-beds, you rogues, get you to your kennels, and lie down close.”

Flock-beds were beds with wool as the stuffing.

Bristle said, “Down! Yes, we will down, I promise you. Down with him, in his majesty’s name, down, down with him, and carry him away to the pigeon-holes.”

The pigeon-holes were the holes in the stocks used to restrain arms and legs.

Some of the watchmen seized Humphrey Wasp and carried him off.

Mrs. Overdo said, “I thank you, honest friends, in the behalf of the crown, and the peace, and in Justice Overdo’s name, for suppressing enormities.”

Whit said, “Stay, Bristle, here ish anoder brash of drunkards, but very quiet, special drunkards, will pay de five shillings very well.”

[Whit said, “Stay, Bristle, here is another brace of drunkards, but very quiet, special drunkards, who will pay you five shillings very well.”]

He pointed to Nordern and Puppy, who were drunk and asleep, on the bench. According to Whit, they would pay five shillings as a bribe to stay out of trouble.

Whit said, “Take ’em to de, in de graish o’ God: one of hem do’s change cloth for ale in the fair, here” — he pointed to Nordern — “te toder ish a strong man, a mighty man, my Lord Mayor’s man, and a wrastler. He has wrashed so long with the bottle here, that the man with the beard hash almosht streek up hish heelsh.”

[Whit said, “Take them into your custody, in the grace of God. One of them does exchange cloth for ale in the fair, here he is” — he pointed to Nordern — “the other is a strong man, a mighty man, my Lord Mayor’s man, and a wrastler. He has wrestled so long with the bottle here, that the man with the beard has almost struck up his heels.”]

The wrestler, of course, was Puppy. “The man with the beard” was a decoration on a beer mug. Puppy had drunk so much that he had almost taken to dancing and kicked up his heels or had almost fallen down drunk with his heels in the air or had almost started fighting with and kicking a man. He had also tilted the beer mug so much that the man with the beard had had his heels over his head.

Bristle said, “By God’s eyelid, the Clerk of the Market has been crying for him all the fair over here, for my lord’s service. The Clerk of the Market has been paging him to come and wrestle before the Mayor.”

The Clerk of the Market was an official who inspected the marketplace.

Whit said, “Tere he ish, pre de taik him hensch, and make ty best on him.”

[Whit said, “There he is, please take him hence, and make the best of him.”]

Bristle and the rest of the Watchmen exited with Norderm and Puppy.

Whit then said to Mrs. Overdo, “How now, woman o’ shilk, vat ailsh ty shweet faish? Art tou melancholy?”

[Whit then said to Mrs. Overdo, “How are you now, woman of silk? What ails your sweet face? Are you melancholy?”]

She wore fine clothing made of silk and velvet.

Mrs. Overdo said, “I am a little distempered with these enormities. Shall I ask you for a favor, Captain?”

Whit said, “Entreat a hundred, velvet voman, I vill do it, shpeak out.”

[Whit said, “Ask me for a hundred favors, velvet woman. I will do it. Speak out.”]

Mrs. Overdo said, “I cannot with modesty speak it out loud, but —”

She whispered to him.

Whit said, “I vill do it, and more and more, for de.

“What, Ursula, an’t be bitch, an’t be bawd, an’t be!”

[Whit said, “I will do it, and more and more, for you.

[“Hey, Ursula, you bitch, you bawd, you whatever you are!”]

Ursula arrived and said, “What now, rascal! What are you roaring for, you old pimp?”

Whit said, “Here, put up de clokes, Urs; de purchase. Pre de now, shweet Ursh, help dis good brave voman to a jordan, an’t be.”

[Whit said, “Here, put up the cloaks, Urs; put away the booty. Please now, sweet Urs, help this good splendid woman to a jordan.”]

The cloaks were the cloaks he had just stolen and hidden.

A jordan is a chamberpot.

Ursula said, “By God’s eyelid can’t you call your Captain Jordan to come to her?”

Whit said, “Nay, pre de leave dy consheits, and bring the velvet woman to de —”

[Whit said, “No, please put aside your jokes, and bring the velvet woman to the —”]

Ursula said, “I bring her! Hang her! By God’s heart, must I find a common pot for every punk in your purlieus?”

A punk is a prostitute, and the purlieus were the suburbs, places where prostitutes congregated. Mrs. Overall was



unaccompanied by a male protector, and that gave Ursula the idea that she must be one of Whit's whores.

Whit said, "O, good voordsh, Ursh, it ish a guest o' velvet, i'fait la."

[Whit said, "Oh, use good words! Use more genteel language! Urs, she is a guest who dresses in expensive velvet clothing, indeed."]

Ursula said, "Let her sell her hood, and buy a sponge, with a pox to her! My vessel is employed, sir. I have but one, and it is the bottom of an old bottle. An honest proctor and his wife are at it within; if she'll wait for her turn, so be it."

The sponge would be used to soak up the urine.

The honest proctor and his wife were Mr. John Littlewit and his wife, Mrs. Win Littlewit. According to Ursula, the two were at it — either taking turns peeing, or having sex.

Whit said, "As soon as tou cansht, shweet Ursh."

[Whit said, "As soon as you can, sweet Urs.]

Ursula exited.

Whit said, "Of a valiant man I tink I am te patientsh man i' the world, or in all Smithfield."

[Whit said, "As I am a valiant man, I think I am the most patient man in the world, or in all Smithfield."]

Jordan Knockem arrived and said, "How are you now, Whit! Close vapors, stealing your leaps! Covering in corners, ha!"

"Leaping" and "covering" were terms used to refer to the mating of animals. Jordan Knockem was implying that Whit had been having sex with Mrs. Overdo. Mrs. Overdo was unaccompanied by a male protector, and that gave Jordan Knockem the idea that she might be a whore.

Whit said, “No, fait, Captain, dough tou beesht a vishe man, dy vit is a mile hence now. I vas procuring a shmall courtesie for a woman of fashion here.”

[Whit said, “No, in fact or in deed, Captain. Although you are a wise man, your wit and intelligence are a mile away from here now. I was procuring a small courtesy for a woman of fashion here.”]

Mrs. Overdo said, “Yes, Captain, although I am a Justice of the Peace’s wife, I do love men of war, and the sons of the sword, when they come before my husband.”

Jordan Knockem said, “Do you say so, filly? You shall have a leap presently. I’ll horse you myself, otherwise.”

A “leap” is a “bout of sex.”

From inside her booth, Ursla called, “Come, will you bring her in now, and let her take her turn?”

Whit said, “Gramercy, good Ursh, I tank de.”

[Whit said, “By God’s mercy, good Urs, I thank you.”]

Mrs. Overdo said, “Justice Overdo shall thank her.”

She went inside Ursla’s booth.

— 4.5 —

Ursla came out of her booth with Mr. John Littlewit and Mrs. Win Littlewit.

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Good gammer Urse, Win and I are exceedingly beholden to you, and to Captain Jordan and Captain Whit.”

“Gammer” meant “old woman” or “grandmother.”

He then said to his wife, “Win, I’ll be so bold as to leave you in this good company, Win, for half an hour or so, Win,

while I go and see how my puppet-play goes forward and while I see if the puppets are word-perfect; and then I'll come and fetch you, Win."

Mrs. Win Littlewit asked, "Will you leave me alone with two men, John?"

Respectable gentlewomen tended to be accompanied by male protectors when out in public.

Mr. John Littlewit said, "Yes, they are honest gentlemen, Win, Captain Jordan and Captain Whit; they'll use you very civilly, Win."

The word "use" meant "treat," but it also meant "f\*\*k."

He then said, "May God be with you, Win," and exited.

Ursula asked, "What, is her husband gone?"

Jordan Knockem said, "On his false gallop, Urse, he's gone away."

Mr. John Littlewit's leaving his wife in this company was a false gallop — a foolish move.

Ursula said, "If you are really Bartholomew birds, now show yourselves to be so. We are undone for want of fowl in the fair here."

The word "fowl" meant "prostitutes."

She continued, "Here will be Ezekiel Edgworth, and three or four gallants with him at night, and I have neither plover nor quail for them."

The words "plover" and "quail" both metaphorically meant "prostitutes." Plovers were birds that were supposed to be easy to catch, and quail were birds that were supposed to be horny.

She continued, “Persuade this woman between you two to become a bird of the game, while I work on the velvet woman within, as you call her.”

Birds of the game were prostitutes. She wanted Jordan Knockem and Whit to persuade the obviously pregnant Mrs. Win Littlewit to become a prostitute, while she persuaded Mrs. Overdo to become a prostitute.

Jordan Knockem said, “I understand you, Urse. Go about your business.”

Ursla exited.

“Did you hear, Whit?” Jordan Knockem asked.

He then said about Mrs. Win Littlewit, describing her using terms that described a good horse, “Isn’t it a pity that my delicate dark chestnut here, with the fine lean head, large forehead, round eyes, even mouth, sharp ears, long neck, thin crest, close withers, straight back, deep sides, short fillets, and full flanks; with a round belly, a plump buttock, large thighs, knit knees, straight legs, short pasterns, smooth hoofs, and short heels, should lead a dull honest woman’s life, when she might live the life of a lady?”

“Life of a lady” could be 1) life of an upper-class woman, or 2) life of a lady of the night.

Whit replied, “Yes, by my fait and trot it is, Captain; de honest woman’s life is a scurvy dull life indeed, la.”

[Whit replied, “Yes, by my faith and truth, it is a pity, Captain; the honest woman’s life is a scurvy dull life indeed, la.”]

Mrs. Win Littlewit asked, “How, sir, is an honest woman’s life a scurvy life?”

An honest woman is a faithful woman; an honest wife is faithful to her husband.

Whit said, “Yes, fait, shweet-heart, believe him, de leef of a bond-woman! But if dou vilt hearken to me, I vill make tee a free woman and a lady; dou shalt live like a lady, as te Captain saish.”

[Whit said, “Yes, by my faith, sweetheart, believe him, it is the life of a bondwoman [female servant or slave]! But if you will listen to me, I will make you a free woman and a lady; you shall live like a lady, as the Captain says.”]

Jordan Knockem said, “Yes, and be honest, too, sometimes; shee shall have her wires and her tires, her green gowns and velvet petticoats.”

The wires held up a headdress or a ruff. “Tires” meant 1) dresses, and/or 2) headdresses.

Whit said, “Ay, and ride to Ware and Rumford in dy coash, shee de players, be in love vit ’em: sup vit gallantsh, be drunk, and cost de noting.”

[Whit said, “Yes, and ride to Ware and Rumford in your coach, see the actors and be in love with them, dine with gallants, be drunk, and it will cost you nothing.”]

Ware and Rumford were places commonly used for affairs.

It would cost her “noting.” In Whit’s accent, this meant “nothing,” but it would cost Mrs. Win Littlewit noting — her being a prostitute would eventually become noted and talked about.

Jordan Knockem said, “Brave vapors!”

Whit said, “And lie by twenty on ’em, if dou pleash, shweet-heart.”

[Whit said, “And you will have sex with twenty of them, if you please, sweetheart.”]

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, “What, and still be honest! That would be fine entertainment.”

Whit said, “Tish common, shweet-heart, tou may’st do it by my hand: it shall be justified to thy husband’s faish, now: tou shalt be as honeshst as the skin between his hornsh, la.”

[Whit said, “This is commonly done, sweetheart. You may do it, too, I swear by my hand. It shall be justified to your husband’s faith, now. You shall be as honest as the skin between his horns, la.”]

According to Whit, respectable women often became whores, and Win could very well become one, too. Win could justify her acting as a whore by blaming her husband’s faith in her. If he could leave her alone in such company as that of Whit and Jordan Knockem and Ursla, then he deserved what the obvious result would be. He deserved to be cuckolded; he deserved to have an unfaithful wife. If the fault was her husband’s, Win could still claim some degree of honesty.

A proverb of the time was “as honest as the skin between his brows.” Whit altered that to “as honest as the skin between his horns” to make a joke about the invisible horns that were said to grow on a cuckold’s head.

Jordan Knockem said, “Yes, and you shall wear a dressing, top and top-gallant, to compare with ever a husband of them all, for a foretop.”

She would wear a headdress as elaborate as the sails of a ship, a headdress that would compare with the horns of her husband.

He continued, "It is the vapor of spirit in the wife to cuckold her husband nowadays, as it is the vapor of fashion in the husband not to suspect. Your prying cat-eyed citizen is an abominable vapor."

In other words, nowadays wives are expected to cuckold their husbands, and the husbands are expected to not notice. Some citizens are sharp-eyed and will notice, but they are abominations.

His last sentence was partly true: People do find out. And "citizens" can mean "citizens of the world" who would accept that wives ought to cuckold their husbands. Such citizens are abominations.

But "citizen" can also mean a person who is spiritually pure and will become an inhabitant of Heaven. A citizen is also someone who is subject to the laws of a society.

Mrs. Win Littlewit said, "Lord, what a fool have I been!"

Did she mean that she had been a fool to have not become a whore earlier? Or did she mean that she was a fool for even talking to these men? Was she being sarcastic? Did she think being a whore was better than being a Puritan?

Whit said, "Mend then, and do every ting like a lady hereafter; never know ty husband from another man."

[Whit said, "Mend [your ways] then, and do everything like a lady hereafter; never know your husband from another man."]

Jordan Knockem added, "Nor any one man from another, but in the dark."

Whit said, "Ay, and then it ish no disgrash to know any man."

[Whit said, “Yes, and then it is no disgrace to know any man.”]

“Know” means to 1) have sex with (Biblically know), and 2) recognize socially. “Know” also means distinguish. Whit did not want her to distinguish her husband from other men when it came to sex. Jordan Knockem wanted her to Biblically know men in the dark.

From inside her booth, Ursla shouted, “Help! Help here!”

Jordan Knockem asked, “What’s going on now? What vapor’s there?”

Ursla came out from her booth and said, “Oh, you are a sweet ranger, and look well to your walks!”

Literally, rangers took care of forest walks. Figuratively, rangers were pimps who worked in a certain area.

Ursla said, “Yonder is your punk of Turnbull, Ramping Alice, who has fallen upon the poor gentlewoman within, and pulled her hood over her ears, and her hair through it.”

Ramping Alice was one of Jordan Knockem’s punks, aka prostitutes. “Ramping” meant 1) violent, like an animal, and 2) whorish. Turnbull Street was where she worked as a prostitute.

Ramping Alice and Mrs. Overdo came out of Ursla’s booth. Ramping Alice was beating Mrs. Overdo.

Mrs. Overdo shouted, “Help, help, in the King’s name!”

Ramping Alice said, “May evil fall on you! It is whores such as you who undo us and take our trade from us, with your tuft-taffata haunches.”

Ramping Alice was a common whore, with open legs to all. Her competition was private whores — the wives of respectable men. They would undo the common whores —



ruin them (undo them) by sleeping with (doing) their customers. Because the private whores were taking their customers, the common whores were undone, aka ruined and unf\*\*ked.

Jordan Knockem said, “What’s going on?”

Ramping Alice said, “The poor common whores can have no traffic because of the private rich ones.”

She then said to Mrs. Overdo, “Your caps and hoods of velvet call away our customers, and lick the fat from us. By taking away our customers, you take away our livelihood.”

Ursla said, “Peace, you foul ramping jade, you —”

A jade is a bad horse.

Ramping Alice said to Ursla, “By God’s foot, you bawd in grease, are you talking?”

“In grease” meant fattened up, and ready for slaughter.

Jordan Knockem said, “Why, Alice, I say.”

Ramping Alice said to Ursla, “You sow of Smithfield, you!”

Ursla replied, “You tripe of Turnbull!”

Jordan Knockem said, “Cat-a-mountain vapors, ha!”

A “cat” is a woman. A cat-a-mountain is a leopard, wildcat, or panther, or a whore with spirit.

Ursla said, “You know where you were tawed lately; you were both lashed and slashed in Bridewell.”

To “taw” is to make leather supple by beating it. Ursla was saying that Ramping Alice’s leathery skin had been beaten.

“Lashed” was whipped, and “slashed” was whipped so hard that it cut the skin.

Bridewell was a London prison for whores, bawds, and pimps.

Ramping Alice said, “Yes, and by the same token you rode in a cart that week, and broke out the bottom of the cart, you night-tub.”

Whores and bawds were humiliated publicly as they rode in a cart. A night-tub is used at night to catch night-soil, aka excrement.

Jordan Knockem said to Ramping Alice, “Why, lion face, ha! Do you know who I am? Shall I tear ruff, slit waistcoat, make rags of petticoat, ha! Go to, vanish for fear of vapors.”

Pimps controlled their whores by doing such things as beating them and tearing their clothing.

He then said, “Whit, a kick, Whit, in the parting vapor.”

A “kick in the parting vapor” is a “kick in the butt.”

They kicked out Ramping Alice.

He then said to Mrs. Overdo, “Come, brave woman, take a good heart; you shall be a lady, too.”

Whit said, “Yes, fait, dey shall all both be ladies, and write ‘Madam’: I vill do’t myself for dem. ‘Do’ is the word, and D is the middle letter of ‘madam.’ D D, put ’em together, and make deeds, without which all words are alike, la.”

[Whit said, “Yes, by my faith, they shall all both be ladies, and write ‘Madam’: I will do it myself for them. ‘Do’ is the word, and D is the middle letter of ‘madam.’ D D, put them together, and make deeds, without which all words are alike, la.”]

To write “Madam” is to sign and style oneself as Madam, aka a lady of rank. Of course, another kind of madam is associated with prostitutes.

The word is “do,” which means “f\*\*k.” “Deeds” are sexual deeds. Sexual deeds are those that employ the middles of bodies, which are put together. It is deeds that make words distinct and not similar. Is a whore really a whore if she does not do the deeds of a whore?

Jordan Knockem said, “That is true.”

He then ordered, “Ursla, take these two women inside, open your wardrobe, and dress them suitably for their calling. Green gowns, crimson petticoats, green women, my Lord Mayor’s green women!”

Giving a woman a green gown meant having sex with her while she lay on green grass. Green was a color associated with prostitutes.

He said, “They are true-bred guests of the game.”

The game was the game of prostitution.

He then said, “I’ll provide you with a coach to take the air in.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit asked, “But do you think you can get one?”

Was she sarcastic?

Jordan Knockem said, “Oh, they are common as wheelbarrows where there are great dunghills.”

By analogy, coaches equal wheelbarrows and whores (Mrs. Win Littlewit and Mrs. Overdo) equal huge heaps of sh\*t.

He continued, “Every pettifogger’s wife has a coach because first he buys a coach so that he may marry, and then he marries so that he may be made a cuckold in his coach, for if their wives ride not to their cuckolding, they do them no credit.”

A “pettifogger” is a bad lawyer.

The “right” way to be cuckolded is to be cuckolded while your wife ostentatiously displays your wealth by riding to an assignation in your coach.

Ursla, Mrs. Win Littlewit, and Mrs. Overdo went inside Ursla’s booth. Mrs. Win Littlewit and Mrs. Overdo perhaps knew they might be beaten if they did not.

Jordan Knockem continued, “Hide, and be hidden, ride and be ridden, says the vapor of experience.”

The kind of riding he meant was sexual riding.

— 4.6 —

Troubleall the madman arrived and asked, “By what warrant does it say so?”

Jordan Knockem said, “Ha, mad child of the Pie-Powders! Are you there? Fill us a fresh can of ale, Urse, so that we may drink together.”

Troubleall said, “I may not drink without a warrant, Captain.”

Jordan Knockem said, “By God’s blood, you’ll not pee without a warrant shortly.”

He then said, “Whit, give me pen, ink, and paper, I’ll draw him a warrant immediately so he can drink.”

This was a good deed on his part.

“It must be Justice Overdo’s warrant,” Troubleall said.

“I know, man,” Jordan Knockem replied, and then he said, “Fetch the drink, Whit.”

Whit said, “I pre dee now, be very brief, Captain, for de new ladies stay for dee.”

[Whit said, “I ask you please now to be very brief, Captain, for the new ladies are waiting for you.”]

He exited and then returned with a can of ale.

Jordan Knockem said, “Oh, I’ll be as brief as can be — the warrant is done already.”

He gave Troubleall a paper and said, “It’s a warrant from Adam Overdo.”

Troubleall said, “Why, now I’ll toast you, Captain.”

Jordan Knockem said, “Drink it all up, and I’ll come to you soon again.”

They exited.

In the back of Ursla’s booth, Justice Overdo was in the stocks.

Quarlous and Ezekiel Edgworth arrived. Quarlous had the marriage license that Ezekiel Edgworth had stolen.

Quarlous said, “Well, sir, you are now discharged; beware of being detected as a cutpurse hereafter.”

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Sir, if you please, you may enter in here at Ursla’s, and make use of a silken gown, a velvet petticoat, or a wrought smock; I am promised such, and I can spare a gentleman a part.”

Ezekiel Edgworth, who was inviting Quarlous to have sex with a prostitute, was generous in sharing what he stole and the perks of his trade. This made him popular with many people and helped keep him safe.

Quarlous was having none of it.

Quarlous said, “Keep it for your companions in beastliness; I am not one of your companions, sir. If I had not already

forgiven you a greater trespass, or thought you yet worth my beating, I would instruct your manners concerning to whom you made your offers.”

He meant that he would teach Ezekiel Edgworth manners — not to attempt to become friends with Quarlous — by beating him.

He added, “But go on your way, and don’t talk to me. Only the hangman is fit to discourse with you; the hand of the beadle is too merciful a punishment for your trade of life.”

The hand of the beadle whipped petty criminals.

Ezekiel Edgworth exited.

Quarlous said to himself, “I am sorry I employed this fellow, for he thinks me such a person as he is: *Facinus quos inquinat, aequat*.”

“*Facinus quos inquinat, aequat*” is a Latin quotation from Lucan’s *Pharsalia* and means, “Crime makes socially equal those whom it pollutes.”

Quarlous considered himself better than Ezekiel Edgworth, but he recognized that both had been engaged in theft.

He continued, “But it was for entertainment, and I wish I could make it serious — the getting of this license is nothing to me, unless other circumstances concur.”

He had gotten the marriage license so that he could marry Miss Grace Wellborn, but he would not be able to marry her unless Troubleall had chosen the name he — Quarlous — had written in the notebook.

Quarlous continued, “I think about how uselessly I labor, if the word is not mine that the ragged fellow — Troubleall — marked. I also think about what advantage I have given Ned Winwife in allowing him to have all this time now to work

on Miss Grace Wellborn and persuade her to marry him, even if the word Troubleall chose and marked is mine.

“Ned Winwife’ll go near to make her an image of what a ‘debauched rascal’ I am, and frighten her out of all her good opinion of me. I would do the same thing to him, I am sure, if I had the opportunity. But my hope lies still in her disposition, and my hope must necessarily be next to despair because it is grounded in any part of a woman’s discretion. I would give, I say truly now, all I could spare, up to but not including my clothes and my sword, to meet my tattered soothsayer — who kept asking about warrants — again, who was my judge in the question, to know for certain whose word he has damned or saved because until then I live but under a reprieve. I must seek him.”

Some people came, and he asked himself, “Who are these people?”

Bristle and some other watchmen arrived, with Humphrey Wasp in custody.

Humphrey Wasp said, “Sir, you are a Welsh cuckold, and a prating runt, and no constable.”

Bristle replied, “You speak very well.”

He then ordered the other watchmen, “Come, put his leg in the middle roundel, and let him hole there.”

The stocks had three holes, which could restrain three prisoners, if each prisoner put one leg in one hole.

The watchmen put Humphrey Wasp in the stocks beside the disguised Justice Overdo.

Humphrey Wasp said to Bristle, “You stink of leeks, metheglin, and cheese, you rogue.”

The Welsh were stereotypically fond of leeks, which are related to the onion; metheglin, which is a Welsh mead; and cheese.

Bristle replied, “Why, what is that to you, if you sit sweetly in the stocks in the meantime? If you have a mind to stink, too, your breeches sit close enough to your bum. Sit you merry, sir.”

A bum is a butt.

Quarlous asked, “How are you now, Numps?”

Humphrey Wasp replied, “It doesn’t concern you; please look away.”

Quarlous said, “I’ll not offend you, Numps; I thought you had sat there in order to be seen.”

Humphrey Wasp said, “And to be sold, didn’t you think? Please mind your own business, if you have any.”

Quarlous said, “I beg your mercy, Numps. Does your leg lie high enough?”

Haggis the watchman arrived.

Bristle asked, “How are you now, neighbor Haggis? What does Justice Overdo’s worship say about the other offenders?”

Haggis said, “Why, he says just nothing. What should he say, or where should he say? He is not to be found, man; he has not been seen in the fair here all this livelong day. He has not been seen since seven o’clock in the morning. His clerks don’t know what to think about it. There is no Court of Pie-Powders yet.”

He looked up and said, “Here they have returned.”



Some members of the watch returned with Zeal-of-the-land Busy in custody.

Bristle said, “What shall be done with them, then, in your discretion, aka judgment?”

Haggis replied, “I think it would be best to put them in the stocks in discretion, aka out of prudence (there they will be safe in discretion, aka separation) for the valor, aka length, of an hour or so until his worship comes.”

Bristle said, “It is but a hole matter if we do, neighbor Haggis.”

It would be a whole matter, as well as a matter of holes (in the stocks).

Bristle said to Humphrey Wasp, “Here is company for you.”

Then he ordered, “Heave open the stocks.”

As they opened the stocks, Humphrey Wasp put his shoe on his hand, and slipped it into the stock-hole instead of his leg.

Humphrey Wasp said to himself, “I shall pull a trick upon your Welsh diligence perhaps.”

Bristle said to Zeal-of-the-land Busy, “Put in your leg, sir.”

Quarulous looked and said, “What, Rabbi Busy! Has he come to this?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said to Haggis, “I obey you; the lion may roar, but he cannot bite. I am glad to be thus separated from the heathen of the land, and put apart in the stocks, for the holy cause.”

Humphrey Wasp asked, “Who are you, sir?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy replied, “One who rejoices in his affliction, and sits here to prophesy the destruction of fairs

and May-games, wakes and Whitson-ales, and one who sighs and groans for the reformation of these abuses.”

The Puritans were against frivolities such as fairs and country festivals such as May-games, wakes, and Whitson-ales.

Humphrey Wasp asked the disguised Justice Overall, “And do you sigh and groan, too, or do you rejoice in your affliction?”

The disguised Justice Overdo said, “I do not feel it, I do not think of it, it is a thing outside of me.”

He then said to himself, “Adam, you are above these batteries, aka heavy blows, and these contumelies, aka insults. *In te manca ruit fortuna*, as your friend Horace says; you are one *Quem neque pauperies, neque mors, neque vincula, terrent*. And therefore, as another friend of yours says, I think it is your friend Persius, *Non te quaesiveris extra*.”

“*In te manca ruit fortuna*” is Latin for “In attacking you, Fortune maims herself.”

“*Quem neque pauperies, neque mors, neque vincula, terrent*” is Latin for “Neither poverty nor death nor fetters terrify” the wise man.

The two Latin quotations above are from Horace’s *Satires* 2.7.83-8. The disguised Justice Overall slightly changed Horace in the first Latin quotation.

“*Non te quaesiveris extra*” is Latin for “Don’t look outside yourself.” The quotation is from Persius’ *Satires* 1.7.

The three quotations express Stoic ideas such as to endure quietly what you cannot change.

Overhearing the disguised Justice Overall, Quarulous said, “What’s here! A Stoic in the stocks? The Fool has turned into a philosopher.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Friend, I will cease to communicate my spirit with you, if I hear any more of those superstitious relics, those bits and pieces of Latin, the very rags of Rome, and patches of Popery.”

Puritans were against Latin because they were against Catholicism. For one thing, they objected to Latin services because most people could not understand Latin.

Humphrey Wasp said, “If you begin to quarrel, gentlemen, I’ll leave you. I have paid for quarrelling too recently. Look, here’s a trick. I put a hand instead of a foot in the hole. May God be with you.”

He slipped out his hand.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Will you then leave your brethren in tribulation?”

Humphrey Wasp said, “For this once, sir, I will.”

He ran away.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said after him, “You are a halting neutral.”

A neutral is not committed to either side: the side of the watchmen or the side of the people in the stocks; the side of Zeal-of-the-land Busy or the side of the disguised Justice Overdo; the side of the Puritans or the side of the Catholics.

1 Kings 18:21 states, “*And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word*” (King James Version).

Humphrey Wasp may also have been limping if his leg had fallen asleep in the stocks or if he had not taken the time to put on his shoe.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy then said to the watchmen, “Stop him there! Stop that man who will not endure the heat of persecution!”

Bristle said, “What is it now? What’s the matter?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said about Humphrey Wasp, “He has fled. He has fled, and he dares not sit his punishment out.”

Bristle said, “Has he made an escape! Which way did he go?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy pointed.

Bristle then ordered, “Go after him, neighbor Haggis.”

Haggis and some watchmen ran after Humphrey Wasp.

Dame Purecraft arrived.

Seeing Zeal-of-the-land Busy in the stocks, she said, “Oh, in the stocks! Have the wicked prevailed?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Peace, religious sister, it is my calling, comfort yourself; it is an extraordinary calling, and it is done for my better standing, my surer standing, hereafter.”

Troubleall the madman arrived, holding a can of ale.

He asked, “By whose warrant, by whose warrant, is this?”

Quarulous said to himself, “Here’s the man I was looking for.”

Recognizing Troubleall, the disguised Justice Overdo said, “Ah!”

Dame Purecraft said to Troubleall, "Oh, good sir, they have set the faithful here to be wondered at; and they have provided holes for the holy of the land."

The holes were in the stocks.

"Did they have a warrant for it?" Troubleall asked. "Was the warrant in Justice Overdo's handwriting or with his signature? If they had no warrant, they shall answer for it."

Toby Haggis the watchman returned.

Bristle said, "Surely you did not lock the stocks sufficiently well enough, neighbor Toby."

"No!" Haggis said. "See if you can lock them better."

Bristle looked at the stocks and said, "They are very truly and sufficiently locked, and yet something is the matter."

"That's true," Troubleall said. "Your warrant is the matter that is in question; by what warrant are you acting?"

Bristle said, "Madman, hold your peace. Be quiet, or else I will put you in his place in the very same hole in the stocks, do you see?"

"What!" Quarlous said, "Is he a madman?"

Troubleall said, "If you show me Justice Overdo's warrant, I will obey you."

"You are a mad fool," Haggis said. "Hold your tongue."

Haggis and Bristle exited.

Troubleall said, "In Justice Overdo's name, I drink to you, and here's my warrant."

He lifted his can of ale, which he believed that Justice Overdo had authorized him to drink.

“Alas, poor wretch!” the disguised Justice Overdo said to himself. “How my heart grieves for him!”

“If he is mad, it is in vain to question him,” Quarlous said to himself. “I’ll still try to question him, though.”

He asked Troubleall, “Friend, some hours previously there was a gentlewoman who showed you in a book two names, Argalus and Palamon, for you to mark one of them. Which of them was it you marked?”

“I mark no name but Adam Overdo,” Troubleall said. “That is the name of names. Only he is the sufficient magistrate, and that is the name I reverence. Show his name to me.”

Troubleall was putting Justice Overdo in the place of God.

“This fellow’s mad indeed,” Quarlous said to himself. “I am further off now than before.”

Before, he had some hope of finding out from Troubleall which name he had chosen, but now he had no hope of that.

The disguised Justice Overdo said quietly to himself about Troubleall, “I shall not breathe in peace until I have made him some amends.”

Quarlous said about Troubleall, “Well, I will make another use of him — an idea has come in my head. I have a nest of beards in my trunk-hose, and one of them is similar to his.”

Trunk-hose was stuffed with wool to make the thighs look huge. Apparently, Quarlous was something of an amateur actor because he used some trunk-hose as a storage area for his false beards. Or perhaps he had another use for false beards.

Bristle and Haggis returned.

Bristle complained about Troubleall, “This mad fool has made me so upset that I don’t know whether I have locked the stocks or not; I think I locked them.”

He opened the locks to inspect them.

Troubleall said, “Take Adam Overdo in your mind, and fear nothing.”

“By God’s eyelid, this is madness itself!” Bristle said. “Hold your peace, and take that.”

He struck Troubleall, who said, “You struck me without a warrant? Take that.”

They fought.

The locks on the stocks were still open.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “We are delivered by a miracle.”

He was thinking of the release by miracle of Paul and Silas from the stocks at Philippi, as recounted in Acts 16:19-34. Paul and Silas did not flee, but stayed and converted their captors.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said to the disguised Justice Overdo, “Fellow in fetters, let us not refuse the means; this madness was of the spirit: The malice of the enemy has mocked itself.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy and the disguised Justice Overdo escaped. So did Troubleall.

Dame Purecraft said about Troubleall, “Mad do they call him! The world is mad in error, but he is mad in truth: I love him all of a sudden (everything the cunning man said is true), and I shall love him more and more.”

The cunning man had said she needed to marry a madman within a week.

She continued, “How well it becomes a man to be mad in truth! Oh, that I might be his yoke-fellow, his wife, and be mad with him — what a many should we draw to madness in truth with us!”

According to St. Paul, true wisdom is being a fool for Christ.

Corinthians 4:10 states, “*We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised*” (King James Version).

She exited.

Bristle looked around and said, “Damn, all have escaped! Where’s the woman? It is witchcraft! The woman in the velvet hat is a witch, on my conscience or my key! She is the one responsible for this. The madman was a Devil, and I am an ass; so bless me, my place, and my office!”

Frightened, Bristle and Haggis exited.



## ACT 5 (*Bartholomew Fair*)

### — 5.1 —

Lantern Leatherhead, now dressed as a puppet-show man, stood at the location where he would put on a puppet-play. He was wearing very fine clothing and was disguised enough that Bartholomew Cokes would not recognize him. Lantern Leatherhead would provide the voices of the puppets in the show and act as master of ceremonies.

His assistants, Filcher and Sharkwell, were with him. Sharkwell carried a flag.

To “filch” meant to steal. To “shark” meant to victimize or to act like a “shark,” aka a swindler or sharper.

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead said, “Well, luck and Saint Bartholomew! Put out the sign advertising our show, in the name of wit, and beat the drum all the while to advertise our show. All the foul in the fair, I mean all the dirt in Smithfield — that’s one of Mr. Littlewit’s carwhitchets, aka puns, now — will be thrown at our banner today, if our show does not please the people.”

Lantern Leatherhead was producing the puppet-play written by Mr. John Littlewit.

He continued, “Oh, the puppet-plays that I, Lantern Leatherhead, have given light to, in my time, since my mentor, Mr. Pod, died! *Jerusalem* was a stately thing, and so was *Nineveh*, and *The City of Norwich*, and *Sodom and Gomorrah*, with the rising of the apprentices, and pulling down the bawdy houses there upon Shrove Tuesday, but *The Gunpowder Plot* — there was a get-penny, aka money-maker! I have presented that to an eighteen- or twenty-pence audience, nine times in an afternoon.”

*Jerusalem* told the story of the Romans' destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

*Nineveh* told the story of Jonah and the whale and the threatened destruction of the city of Nineveh.

*The City of Norwich* told the story of the raising of the city of Norwich in an hour, according to legend, or perhaps it told the story of Saint George and the Dragon. Norwich is associated with dragons.

*Sodom and Gomorrah* told the story of the destruction of these two sinful cities.

*The Gunpowder Plot* told about a then-recent event: Guy Fawkes' failed plot to blow up Parliament in 1605.

Apprentices were then accustomed to riot on Shrove Tuesday.

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead continued, "Your home-born projects always prove to be the best because they are so easy and familiar. Nowadays, playwrights put too much learning in their things, and I fear that is what will be the spoil and ruination of this puppet-play by Littlewit.

"Littlewit! Micklewit! If not too mickle!"

"Mickle" means "much."

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead was afraid that Mr. John Littlewit's puppet-play would be too intellectual for the audience.

He then ordered, "Look to your gathering there, goodman Filcher."

Filcher and Sharkwell would take money from the crowd gathering to see the puppet-play.

"I promise you that I will, sir," Filcher said.

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead said, “If there come any gentlefolks, take two-pence apiece for admission from them, Sharkwell.”

Sharkwell said, “I promise you that I will, sir, and three-pence if we can get it.”

— 5.2 —

In another part of the fair stood Justice Overdo, who was now disguised as a porter. Previously, he had been disguised as a Fool. Porters wore a distinctive costume: red cap, long coat, and a rope on the shoulders.

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “This most recent disguise, which I have borrowed from a porter, shall help me carry out all my great and good ends, which however interrupted were never destroyed in me. Nor has yet come the hour of my severity in chastising evil-doers. In that hour I will reveal myself, and in that hour, cloud-like, I will break out in rain and hail, lightning and thunder, upon the head of enormity.

“Two main works I have to accomplish. The first one is to invent some satisfaction for the poor kind wretch who is out of his wits for my sake, and yonder I see him coming. I will walk aside, and plan how to accomplish that main work.”

He stepped aside.

Mr. Winwife and Miss Grace Wellborn arrived.

Mr. Winwife said, “I wonder where Tom Quarlous is and why he has not returned. It may be that he has turned in here to seek us.”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Look, here’s our madman coming again.”

Quarlous arrived, disguised as Troubleall the madman. He was wearing a false beard and the clothing that Troubleall wore. As would be learned later, he had actually stolen the clothing from Troubleall. Dame Purecraft followed him.

The disguised Quarlous said to himself, "I have made myself as like him as his gown and cap will allow me to be."

Dame Purecraft said, "Sir, I love you, and I would be glad to be mad with you in truth."

Mr. Winwife said, "What! My widow is in love with a madman?"

Dame Purecraft said, "Verily, I can be as mad in spirit as you."

"By whose warrant?" the disguised Quarlous said. "Leave your canting."

Canting is specialized language, aka jargon. Criminals speak one kind of cant; Puritans speak another kind of cant.

He then said to Miss Grace Wellborn, "Gentlewoman, have I found you? Save you, quit you, and multiply you! Where's your book? It was a sufficient name I marked, let me see it, be not afraid to show it to me."

Miss Grace Wellborn said, "Why do you want to see it, sir?"

"To mark it again and to again be at your service," the disguised Quarlous said.

"Here it is, sir," Miss Grace Wellborn said, showing him the book. "This is the name you marked."

The disguised Quarlous read out loud, "Palamon!"

Then he said, "Fare you well. Fare you well. Farewell."

Palamon was the name that Mr. Winwife had written. Mr. Winwife would wed Miss Grace Wellborn.

“What! Palamon!” Mr. Winwife said.

“Yes, indeed, he has revealed it to you now, and therefore it would be vain to hide it longer,” Miss Grace Wellborn said. “I am yours, sir, by the benefit of your fortune.”

“And you have won a man, mistress, believe it, who shall never give you cause to repent her benefit,” Mr. Winwife said, “but will make you think that in this choice Lady Fortune had both her eyes open rather than blindfolded.”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “I desire to put it to no danger of protestation.”

She had no intention of objecting to what he had just said. She also wanted the marriage to occur quickly so that her legal guardian would be unable to formally protest and object to the marriage.

Miss Grace Wellborn and Mr. Winwife exited.

The disguised Quarlous said, “‘Palamon’ is the word marked, and Mr. Winwife is the man who will yoke himself to Miss Grace Wellborn!”

Dame Purecraft said, “Good sir, vouchsafe a yoke-fellow in your madness, and shun not one of the sanctified sisters, one who would draw as a yoke-fellow with you in truth. I want to marry you.”

The word “vouchsafe” meant “grant” or “give.”

The sanctified sisters are female Puritans, and Puritans were a group whom Quarlous was not fond of.

The disguised Quarlous said, “Go away. You Puritans are a herd of hypocritical proud ignorants, rather wild than mad;

you are fitter for woods and the society of beasts than for houses and the congregation of men.

“You are the second part of the society of canters, outlaws to order and discipline, and the only privileged church-robbers of Christendom.”

The first part of the society of canters was criminals such as cutpurses and other thieves.

When a theft occurred in a church, Puritans were sometimes accused of the theft because they disapproved of golden and jeweled items in churches.

The disguised Quarlous continued, “Let me alone. ‘Palamon’ is the word marked, and Mr. Winwife is the man who will yoke himself to Miss Grace Wellborn!”

Dame Purecraft said to herself, “I must reveal my secrets to him, or I shall never enjoy him as his wife, despite all the cunning men’s predictions that I must marry a madman.”

She then said to him out loud, “Good sir, listen to me. I am worth six thousand pounds, and my love to you has become my rack and torture. I’ll tell you everything and all of it is the truth, since you hate the hypocrisy of the party-colored brotherhood.”

A party-colored brotherhood is a factionalistic brotherhood or party. Factionalism can be quite bad if it leads one or more factions to behave evilly to advance their faction. In this society, a “color” is a trick.

Dame Purecraft continued, “These seven years I have been a willful holy widow only in order to draw feasts and gifts from my entangled suitors.

“I also have the position of an assisting sister of the deacons, and I am a devourer instead of a distributor of the alms.

“I am a special maker of marriages for our financially decayed Puritan brethren with our rich widows, for a third part of their wealth, when they are married, for the relief of the poor elect. I also make marriages for our poor pretty young Puritan virgins with our wealthy bachelors or widowers; I make the marriage so that I can make the women steal from their husbands, after I have confirmed the husbands in the faith, and got all put into their wives’ custodies.”

Women could be guaranteed a dower: a certain amount of money they would receive if the husband died before the wife did. Some women even in Elizabeth and Jacobean times could control at least some of their husbands’ money. Puritan women could be persuaded to make donations to the church.

She arranged financially beneficial marriages for Puritans for a cut of the spouse’s wealth, wealth that was supposed to go to good works such as helping poor Puritans. She, however, devoured the alms herself rather than distributing them to the poor.

Dame Purecraft continued, “And if I don’t get what I was promised, they may sooner turn a scolding drab into a silent minister than make me stop pronouncing reprobation and damnation upon them.

“Our elder, Zeal-of-the-land Busy, would have married me, but I know him to be the capital knave of the land, making himself rich by being made a caretaker in trust to deceased brethren and cheating their heirs by swearing that the inheritance was left to him and was his property when the actual trust was that he was named only as the trustee of the property, which had really been left to the heirs.”

In other words, Quarlous was right. The Puritans were unethical cheaters. Certainly, this was true of Dame

Purecraft and, if she had told the truth about him, of Zeal-of-the-land Busy.

She continued, “And thus having eased my conscience, and uttered my heart with the tongue of my love, I beg you to enjoy all my deceits together with me.”

She thought that the disguised Quarlous, whom she believed was Troubleall, would approve of her deceits and would be happy to share the profits.

She continued, “I should not have revealed this to you, except that opportunely I think you are mad, and in time I hope you’ll think me so, too, sir.

“So will you marry me?”

The disguised Quarlous said, “Stand to the side. I’ll give you an answer very quickly.”

He walked a short distance away and said to himself, “Why shouldn’t I marry this six thousand pounds, now I think about it, and a good trade, too, that she has besides, hmm?”

The good — profitable — trade was the trade of arranging marriages.

He continued, “The other wench — Miss Grace Wellborn — Mr. Winwife is sure of marrying; there’s no expectation for me there. Here I may recover for myself at least some of what I have lost by not marrying Miss Grace, if Dame Purecraft continues to be mad.”

He thought that Dame Purecraft had to be mad to propose marriage to a madman such as Troubleall.

He continued, “Will she continue to be mad until we are married — there’s the question. It is money that I want, so why shouldn’t I marry the money when it is offered to me? I have a marriage license and all that is needed to make a



legal marriage; all I have to do is erase one name, and write in its place another name. There's no playing with a man's fortune! I am resolved; I have made up my mind; I would be truly mad if I would not marry her!"

The disguised Quarlous then said to Dame Purecraft, "Well, we'll do what you want. Follow me, if you will be mad, and I'll show you a marriage warrant!"

Dame Purecraft said, "Most zealously I will follow you, for it is that which I zealously desire."

They started to walk away.

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo stopped the disguised Quarlous and said, "Sir, let me speak with you."

"By whose warrant?" the disguised Quarlous asked.

"By the warrant that you have regard for, value, and respect so much: Justice Overdo's. I am the man, friend Troubleall, though thus disguised (just as the magistrate who cares for the society he lives in ought to be sometimes) for the good of the republic in the fair, and the weeding out of enormity. Do you want a house, or food, or drink, or clothes? Tell me whatsoever it is that you want, and it shall be given to you. Tell me what you want."

"Nothing but your warrant," the disguised Quarlous said.

"My warrant! For what?"

"To be gone, sir."

"Please, stay," the porter-disguised Justice Overdo said. "I am serious, and I do not have many words to exchange or much time to spend with you. Think of something that may do you good."

“Your hand and seal will do me a great deal of good,” the disguised Quarlous said. “Nothing else in the whole fair that I know of will do me good.”

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo said, “If it were of any value, I would give you my warrant willingly.”

“Why, it will satisfy me and make me happy,” the disguised Quarlous said. “That’s value for me; if you will not give me your warrant, let me go.”

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo said, “It’s a pity you didn’t choose something valuable! You shall have my warrant immediately; I’ll just step into the notary’s shop here, and bring it. Do not go away.”

He entered the notary’s shop.

“Why, this madman’s shape will prove a very fortunate one, I think,” the disguised Quarlous said to himself. “Can a ragged robe produce these effects? If this really is the wise justice, and he brings me his signed warrant, I shall soon make some use of it.”

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo came out of the notary’s shop.

“Here he is again already!” the disguised Quarlous said to himself.

“Look!” the porter-disguised Justice Overdo said. “Here is my signature and my seal — those of Adam Overdo; if anything would be written above in that paper that you want now or at any time hereafter — think carefully about it — this is my deed and contract, and I will deliver what you want to you. Can your friend write?”

“She can sign it as a witness, and all will be well,” the disguised Quarlous said.

The porter-disguised Justice Overall said, “I agree to that with all my heart.”

He urged Dame Purecraft to sign the warrant, and she did.

The disguised Quarlous thought, *Why shouldn't I find the ability in my conscience to make this out for a bond of a thousand pounds now, or whatever else I want?*

If he were to write in words to make it a contract stating that Justice Overdo owed him, Quarlous, one thousand pounds, Justice Overdo would have to pay him one thousand pounds.

The porter-disguised Justice Overall said, “Look, there it is, and I deliver this warrant to you as my deed again.”

He gave the disguised Quarlous the blank warrant.

The disguised Quarlous said to Dame Purecraft, “Let us now proceed in madness.”

The disguised Quarlous and Dame Purecraft exited.

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo said, “Well, my conscience is much eased. I have done my part, although it does him no good. Still, Adam Overdo has offered him satisfaction. The sting is removed from hence!

“Poor man, he is much altered with his affliction; it has brought him low.

“Now for my other main work, recalling the young man whom I have followed so long in a kind of love from the brink of his bane to the center of safety.”

He was referring to Ezekiel Edgworth, whom he considered to be a good young man who hung out with the wrong company.

He continued, “Here, or in some similar vain place, I shall be sure to find him. I will wait for the opportune time to help him.”

— 5.3 —

Sharkwell and Filcher, carrying bills, stood in front of the puppet-show booth. Bartholomew Cokes, wearing a jacket and long stockings — his cloak, sword, and hat had been stolen — arrived. Some young children followed him.

Bartholomew Cokes said to Sharkwell, “How are you now? What’s going on here, friend? Are you the master of the monuments?”

Westminster Abbey had a master of the monuments, aka the effigies. That person was a guide; Bartholomew Cokes thought that Sharkwell was a kind of guide, too — one who could tell him what was the structure (the puppet-show stage) in front of him.

Sharkwell replied, “It is a show, if it pleases your worship.”

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo arrived, saw Bartholomew Cokes and said to himself, “My fantastical, capricious brother-in-law, Mr. Bartholomew Cokes!”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “A show! What kind of show?”

He then read the sign out loud: “*The ancient modern history of Hero and Leander, otherwise called the Touchstone of true Love, with as true a trial of friendship between Damon and Pythias, two faithful friends of the Bankside.*”

In Greek mythology, Leander was a man who loved the woman Hero. He used to swim across the Hellespont to see her, but drowned one night. The modern name for the Hellespont is the Dardanelles.

Damon and Pythias (who was also known as Phintias) were two close friends. Dionysius I of Syracuse, a tyrant, sentenced Damon to death. Damon requested that he be allowed to return to his home to say goodbye to his family and settle his affairs; Pythias volunteered to stay in Syracuse as a hostage until Damon returned. He would die in Damon's place if Damon did not return. Dionysius I of Syracuse was surprised when Damon did, in fact, return to face death, and impressed by the true friendship of Damon and Pythias, he allowed both of them to live.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Pretty words, indeed, but what's the meaning of it? Is it an interlude, or what is it?"

An interlude is a short, witty play.

Filcher said, "Yes, sir, if it pleases you to come near, we'll take your admission money inside."

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Keep these children back; they have been following me up and down!"

Mr. John Littlewit, who had written the puppet-play, arrived and attempted to enter, saying, "By your leave, friend."

Filcher said, "You must pay the admission fee, sir, if you go in."

"Who, I!" Mr. John Littlewit said. "I see that you don't know me; call the master of the show."

The master of the show was Lantern Leatherhead.

Recognizing Mr. John Littlewit, Sharkwell said, "Don't you know the author, fellow Filcher? You must take no money from him; he must come in free and *gratis*: Mr. Littlewit is a volunteer; he is the unpaid author."

Mr. John Littlewit said, "Quiet! Don't speak too loudly. I don't want anyone to know that I am the author until we see whether the show is a success or a failure."

Hearing the disturbance and looking around, Bartholomew Cokes asked, "Mr. John Littlewit, how are you?"

Mr. John Littlewit said, "Mr. Bartholomew Cokes! You are exceedingly well met: It's good to see you! What! You are wearing your jacket and long stockings, and you are without a cloak or a hat!"

Bartholomew Cokes said, "I wish that I might never move again, I swear as I am an honest man and by that fire, for the reason that I have lost everything in the fair, and I have lost all my acquaintances and friends, too."

The fire may have been the roasting fire in Ursula's booth, or, more generally, Hellfire. For Bartholomew Cokes, at least at times, Bartholomew Fair was a kind of Hell, with Ursula's fire at its center.

He continued, "Did you meet anybody whom I know, Mr. Littlewit? Did you meet my man-servant Numps, or my sister, Mrs. Overdo, or Miss Grace? Please, Mr. Littlewit, lend me some money to see the interlude here; I'll pay you again, as I am a gentleman. If you will only see me home, I have money enough there."

"Oh, sir, you shall have some of my money," Mr. John Littlewit said. "Will a crown be enough?"

"I think it will," Bartholomew Cokes said.

He asked Filcher and Sharkwell, "What do we pay for coming in, fellows?"

Filcher replied, "Two-pence, sir."

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Two-pence! There’s twelve-pence, friend.”

He had paid six times the admission price. This was noted, and during the puppet-play he would be treated well, even being allowed to interrupt the show with questions and comments.

He continued, “I am a gallant, despite being as humbly clothed and without a cloak and hat as I am now. You will know that I am a gallant if you see me with my man-servant and with my artillery — that is, my sword — again.”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Your man-servant Numps was in the stocks just now, sir.”

“Who?” Bartholomew Cokes asked. “Numps?”

“Yes, indeed.”

“For what, indeed?” Bartholomew Cokes asked. “I am glad that he was in the stocks; remember to tell me about it soon; I have enough information about it now.”

He then asked, “What manner of matter is this, Mr. Littlewit? What kind of play is it? What kind of actors have you gotten? Are they good actors?”

Mr. John Littlewit replied, “They are pretty youths, sir; they are all children, both old and young; here’s the master of them —”

At this time, many actors were children.

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead came over and whispered to Mr. John Littlewit, “Call me Lantern, not Leatherhead.”

He did not want Bartholomew Cokes to recognize him. Recently, he had defrauded him of thirty shillings.

Mr. John Littlewit continued, “— Mr. Lantern, who gives light to the business.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “At an opportune time, sir, I would be glad to see them. I would be glad to drink with the young company. Which is the tiring-house?”

The tiring-house was the attiring-house, or dressing-room.

Lantern Leatherhead replied, “Truly, sir, our tiring-house is somewhat little; we are still only beginners. Please pardon us; you cannot stand upright in it.”

“No!” Bartholomew Cokes said. “Not now, with my hat off? What would you have done with me, if you had had me, feather and all, as I was earlier today?”

“Have you none of your pretty impudent boys now, to bring stools, fill pipes with tobacco, fetch ale, and beg money, as they have at other houses?”

Some stools were placed on the stage for spectators to sit on.

He continued, “Let me see some of your actors.”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Show him the actors. Show him them. Mr. Lantern, this is a gentleman who is a favorer of the acting profession.”

Lantern Leatherhead exited to get the actors.

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “Yes, the favoring of this licentious acting profession is the consumption of many a young gentleman; it is a pernicious enormity.”

Lantern Leatherhead returned; he was carrying a basket.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “What! Do the actors live in baskets?”



Lantern Leatherhead replied, “They do lie in a basket, sir. They are some of the small players.”

He opened the covering of the basket and revealed the puppets.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “These be players minors — small players — indeed. Do you call these players?”

Lantern Leatherhead said, “They are actors, sir.”

The term “actors” was a more distinguished term than “players.” Actors delivered a better quality of performance.

He added, “And they are as good as any, none dispraised, for dumb shows; indeed, I am the mouth of them all.”

Dumb shows were silent shows with lots of action. The puppets would not speak; Lantern Leatherhead would do the speaking for them; he would also provide commentary.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Your mouth will hold them all. I think one tailor would go near to beat all this company with a hand bound behind him.”

Tailors had a reputation for cowardice, but even a tailor could probably beat up a company of puppets.

“Yes,” Mr. John Littlewit said, “and eat them all, too, if they were made of gingerbread.”

Tailors had a reputation for eating lots of bread.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “I thank you for that joke, Mr. Littlewit; it is a good jest!”

He then asked the disguised Lantern Leatherhead, “Which is your Burbage now?”

Richard Burbage was the leading actor of his time; he originated the title roles of William Shakespeare’s *Richard*

*III, Othello, Hamlet, and King Lear*. He also played leading roles in Ben Jonson's *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*.

Lantern Leatherhead asked, "What do you mean, sir?"

Bartholomew Cokes replied, "Which puppet is your best actor, your Field?"

Nathan Field was another leading actor of his time, and was probably playing the role of Mr. John Littlewit or Bartholomew Cokes during *Bartholomew Fair's* early performances.

Mr. John Littlewit said, "That was a good jest, indeed! You are even with me, sir."

Lantern Leatherhead held up a puppet and said, "This is our Field. He acts the role of young Leander, sir. He is extremely beloved by the womankind. The green gamesters who come here so affect his action!"

"Green gamesters" were young, relatively inexperienced prostitutes.

"Affect his action" meant 1) like his acting, and 2) desire his action in bed.

Lantern Leatherhead held up other puppets and identified them:

"And this is lovely Hero.

"This puppet with the beard is Damon.

"And this puppet is pretty Pythias.

"This puppet is the ghost of King Dionysius in the clothing of a scrivener, as you shall see soon in full."

"Well, they are a civil company," Bartholomew Cokes said. "I like them for that; they promise not to laugh scornfully,

nor jeer, nor crack jokes, as the great-sized players do, and then, there is not so much expense as to the feasting of them, or making them drunk by reason of their littleness, as opposed to the expenses for other great-sized actors.

“Are they accustomed to perform word-perfect? Are they ever flustered?”

“Sir, they are never flustered,” Lantern Leatherhead said. “No, sir, I thank my industry and management for it; they are as well governed a company, though I am the one to say it \_\_\_”

He meant that he ought to be modest and not be the one to praise his own industry and management.

He continued, “And here is young Leander, who is as proper an actor of his inches, and shakes his head like an Ostler.”

Another popular and successful actor around that time was William Ostler.

Bartholomew Cokes asked, “But do you play it according to the printed book? I have read that.”

The printed book was *Hero and Leander* by Christopher Marlowe.

“By no means, sir,” Lantern Leatherhead replied.

“No!” Bartholomew Cokes said. “How do you play it, then?”

“We play it a better way, sir,” Lantern Leatherhead said. “The printed book is too learned and poetical for our audience. Do they know what the Hellespont is? Do they know the meaning of ‘guilty of true love’s blood’? Do they know what ‘Abydos’ is? Do they know the meaning of ‘the other Sestos hight’?”

Marlowe’s poem began in this way:

*On Hellespont, guilty of true love's blood,  
In view and opposite two cities stood,  
Sea-borderers, disjoin'd by Neptune's might;  
The one Abydos, the other Sestos hight [is named].*

Bartholomew Cokes said, "You are in the right; I myself do not know the meaning of those things."

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead said, "I have entreated Mr. John Littlewit to take a few pains to reduce the printed book to a more familiar strain for our people."

Ben Jonson's plays were quite learned, and if a play of his failed, he sometimes blamed the failure on the audience.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "How, I ask you, good Mr. Littlewit, did you do that?"

Mr. John Littlewit said, "It pleases Lantern to make a big deal of it, sir; but it is not such a big deal, I assure you. I have only made it a little easier and have made it modern for the times, sir, that's all. In place of the Hellespont, I imagine our Thames here; and then I make Leander a dyer's son from around Puddle Wharf, and I make Hero a wench of the Bankside."

A wench of the Bankside was likely to be a prostitute.

He continued, "As Hero is crossing over the Thames one morning to Old Fish Street, Leander sees her land at Trig Stairs, and falls in love with her. Then I introduce Cupid, who, having metamorphosed himself into a bartender, strikes Hero in love with a pint of sherry."

This was ambiguous: It could mean that 1) Cupid used a pint of sherry to make Hero fall in love with someone, or 2) Cupid made Hero fall in love with a pint of sherry.

John Littlewit continued, “And there are other pretty passages about the friendship, passages that will delight you, sir, and please you men of judgment.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “I’ll be sworn that those passages shall please me. I am in love with the actors already, and I’ll be allied to them presently.

“The actors shall be my friends. The actors respect gentlemen, these fellows.”

He then matched the puppets with his fairings — things that he had bought, but lost, at the fair.

“Hero shall be my fairing, but which of my fairings? Let me see — indeed, she shall be my fiddle.

“Leander shall be my fiddlestick.

“Then Damon shall be my drum.

“And Pythias shall be my pipe.

“And the ghost of Dionysius shall be my hobbyhorse.

“All of the puppets are matched with my fairings.”

— 5.4 —

Mr. Winwife and Miss Grace Wellborn arrived.

“Look, yonder’s your Bartholomew Cokes gotten in among his playfellows,” Mr. Winwife said. “I was sure we could not miss him at such a spectacle.”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Let him alone; he is so busy he will never see us.”

Bartholomew Cokes grabbed one of the puppets — the one portraying Hero — and inspected it.

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead said to him, “No, good sir!”

“I promise you that I will not hurt her, fellow,” Bartholomew Cokes replied. “What! Do you think that I am uncivil? I ask you to be not jealous; I am engaged to a future wife.”

Mr. John Littlewit said, “Well, good Mr. Lantern, get ready to begin so that I may fetch my wife and bring her here, and see to it that you remember the lines perfectly, or else you will ruin my reputation.”

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead said, “I promise you I will, sir.”

His sentence was ambiguous.

He continued, “But don’t breed too great an expectation of your puppet-play among your friends; that’s the hurter of these things. Excessive expectations are difficult to meet.”

“No, no, no,” Mr. John Littlewit said. “I won’t do that.”

He exited in order to get his wife: Mrs. Win Littlewit.

“I’ll stay here and see the play,” Bartholomew Cokes said. “Please let me see it.”

Mr. Winwife said, “How diligent and pains-taking he is!”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “The place is suitable for him, I think.”

In other words, Bartholomew Cokes was so child-like that he was a good audience member for a puppet-play.

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “My ward, Miss Grace, is in the company of a stranger! I fear that I shall be compelled to reveal my true identity before my time.”

Jordan Knockem, Ezekiel Edgworth, and Mrs. Win Littlewit arrived. Whit followed them, supporting the drunken Mrs. Overdo. Mrs. Win Littlewit and Mrs. Overdo were wearing masks and green gowns.

Women sometimes wore masks while attending plays.

Filcher said to them, “Two-pence apiece, gentlemen, and it’s an excellent puppet-play.”

Jordan Knockem asked, “Shall we have fine fireworks, and good vapors?”

Fireworks can mean a display of wit, anger, or some other great emotion.

Sharkwell replied, “Yes, Captain, and waterworks, too.”

The scene portrayed in the puppet-play was on the Thames River and its banks.

Whit said, “I pree dee take care o’ dy shmall lady there, Edgworth; I will look to dish tall lady myself.”

[Whit said, “Please take care of the small lady there, Edgworth; I will look after this tall lady myself.”]

The small lady, who had a baby bump, was Mrs. Win Littlewit, and the tall lady was Mrs. Overdo.

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead said, “Welcome, gentlemen. Welcome, gentlemen.”

With his Welsh accent, Whit said, “Predee mashter o’ the monshtersh, help a very sick lady here to a chair to shit in.”

[With his Welsh accent, Whit said, “Please, master of the monsters, help a very sick lady here to a chair to sit in.”]

Mrs. Overdo was sick because she was drunk.

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead replied, “Immediately, sir.”

An assistant brought in a chair for Mrs. Overdo to sit in.

Whit said, “Good fait now, Ursula’s ale and aqua-vitae ish to blame for’t; shit down, shweet-heart, shit down and sleep a little.”

[Whit said, “Good faith now, Ursula’s ale and aqua vitae is to blame for it; sit down, sweetheart, sit down and sleep a little.”]

Ezekiel Edgworth said to Mrs. Win Littlewit, “Madam, you are very welcome here.”

Jordan Knockem said, “Yes, and you shall see very good vapors.”

The disguised Justice Overdo said about Ezekiel Edgworth, “Here is the young man I care and worry about! I like to see him in so good company, and yet I wonder that persons of such fashion should come to a puppet-play.”

Ezekiel Edgworth said to the masked Mrs. Win Littlewit, “There is a very private house, madam.”

Many stages for plays and other entertainments were large and open air and open to the general public. Others were small, inside, and restricted to higher-class audience members. Ezekiel Edgworth was joking about the small size of the puppet-show stage and spectator area.

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead said, “Will it please your ladyship to sit, madam?”

Mrs. Win Littlewit replied, “Yes, goodman.”

She then said to herself, “They do so all-to-be-madam me that I think they think I am a true lady.”



“Madam” was a title of respect for ladies, but it has other meanings. By making Mrs. Win Littlewit a prostitute, Jordan Knockem and Whit were perhaps making her a future madam, aka bawd.

In addition, in this society “all” was an intensifier, while “to” meant “asunder” or “into pieces.” By making Mrs. Win Littlewit a prostitute, Jordan Knockem and Whit were completely blowing into pieces any chance of her being a true lady.

Overhearing her, Ezekiel Edgworth said, “What else, madam?”

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo was watching Ezekiel Edgworth closely and also closely observing the masked woman — Mrs. Win Littlewit — Ezekiel Edgworth was with.

Regarding him as a potential customer, Mrs. Win Littlewit asked Ezekiel Edgworth, who knew her to be a prostitute, “Must I put off my mask to him?”

She meant, “Should I take off my mask and show him my face?”

Ezekiel Edgworth replied, “Oh, by no means.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit asked, “How should my ‘husband’ know me then?”

Her customer would be a temporary “husband” who would “know” her Biblically.

Jordan Knockem said, “Husband! That’s an idle vapor; he must not know you, nor you him — there’s the true vapor.”

He meant that there was no need for her and her customer to know each other any more than Biblically.

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “Hmm! I will observe more of this.”

He said quietly to Whit about the masked Mrs. Win Littlewit, “Is this woman a lady, friend?”

Whit said, “Ay, and dat is anoder lady, shweet-heart; if dou hasht a mind to ’em, give me twelve-pence from tee, and dou shalt have eder oder on ’em.”

[Whit said, “Yes, and that [the masked Mrs. Overdo] is another lady, sweetheart; if you have a mind to sleep with either of them, give me twelve-pence from your pocket, and you shall have either one of them.”]

The porter-disguised Justice Overdo said to himself, “Yes, this will prove the chiefest enormity I find at the fair. I will further investigate this.”

Ezekiel Edgworth asked, “Isn’t this a finer life, lady, than to be clogged with a husband?”

“Yes, a great deal better,” Mrs. Win Littlewit replied. “When will they begin, I wonder, in the name of the puppet-play?”

Ezekiel Edgworth replied, “By and by, madam; they are waiting only for the company.”

The company was the people associated with the theatrical troupe.

Jordan Knockem said, “Do you hear, puppet-master? These are tedious vapors. When will you begin?”

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead replied, “We are waiting only for Mr. John Littlewit, the author, who has gone to get his wife: We will begin soon.”

Mrs. Win Littlewit said to Ezekiel Edgworth, “That’s me! That’s me! I am Mr. Littlewit’s wife.”

Ezekiel Edgworth replied, "That was you, lady, but now you are no such poor thing."

Jordan Knockem said, "Hang the author's wife, a running vapor! Here are ladies who will wait for never a Delia of them all."

Delia was an unattainable married woman in poems by the Roman poet Tibullus and in poems by the English poet Samuel Daniel. Her name was an anagram of "ideal." Jordan Knockem, however, meant by "Delia" a "self-important woman."

Whit said, "But hear me now, here ish one o' de ladish ashleep, stay till shee but vake, man."

[Whit said, "But hear me now, here is one of the ladies asleep. Wait just until she wakes up, man."]

Humphrey Wasp arrived and asked, "How are you, friends? What's going on here?"

Filcher said, "Two-pence per person, sir, for the best puppet-play in Bartholomew Fair."

"I believe you are lying," Humphrey Wasp said, "If you are, I'll get my money back again, and beat you."

Mr. Winwife said to Miss Grace Wellborn, "Numps has come!"

Humphrey Wasp asked, "Did you see a master of mine come in here? He's a tall young squire of Harrow o' the Hill named Mr. Bartholomew Cokes."

Filcher replied, "I think there is such a person within."

"It would be best for you that he is inside," Humphrey Wasp said, "but it is very likely. I wonder that I didn't find him at all the other fair attractions. I have been at the eagle, and the black wolf, and the bull with the five legs and two pizzles —

he was a calf at Uxbridge Fair two years ago — and at the dogs that dance the Morris Dance, and the hare of the tabor; and I did not see him at all these!”

All of the places he had been were fair attractions.

A “pizzle” is a “penis.”

The hare of the tabor was a trained hare that played the drum known as the tabor.

He continued, “Surely this must be some fine sight that holds him so, if he is here to see it.”

An impatient Bartholomew Cokes said to the puppet master, “Come, come, are you ready now?”

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead replied, “Very soon, sir.”

Seeing Bartholomew Cokes, Humphrey Wasp said, “Hey! He’s at work in his jacket and long stockings!”

He asked him, “Listen, sir, are you employed as a workman here? Is that why you are bare-headed and so busy?”

“Hold your peace, Numps,” Bartholomew Cokes said. “Don’t criticize me. You have been in the stocks, I hear.”

Humphrey Wasp said to himself, “Does he know that! Well, then the date of my authority is out; I must think no longer to reign; my government is at an end. He who will correct another must lack fault in himself.”

His time of trying to control Bartholomew Cokes had come to an end; he could no longer exert any moral authority over him.

“Sententious Numps!” Mr. Winwife said to Miss Grace Wellborn. “I have never heard so much sense from him before.”

A sententious person is given to pompous moralizing.

“Surely, Mr. John Littlewit is not coming back,” the disguised Lantern Leatherhead said. “Please take your place, sir; we’ll begin.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Please begin the puppet-play. My ears long to hear it, and my eyes long to see it.

“Oh, Numps, you were in the stocks, Numps! Where’s your sword, Numps!”

His sword had been stolen along with others’ swords during the fight.

“Please watch your puppet-play, sir,” Humphrey Wasp said, “and let me alone.”

“Well, then we are even for everything,” Bartholomew Cokes said. “Come, sit down, Numps; I’ll explain the puppet-play to you.

“Did you see Miss Grace? It doesn’t matter, now I think about it. Tell me about her soon.”

Mr. Winwife said to Miss Grace Wellborn, “A great deal of love and concern he expresses for you!”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “Alas, would you have him express more love and concern than he has? That would be tyranny.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Silence, ho! Now! Quiet!”

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead, who as puppet master would provide the voices of the puppets and be the master of ceremonies, began the performance:

*“Gentles, [so] that no longer your expectations may wander,*

*“Behold our chief actor, amorous Leander.*

*“With a great deal of cloth, lapped about him like a scarf,  
“For he yet serves his father, a dyer at Puddle Wharf;  
“Which place we’ll make bold with, to call it our Abydus,  
“As the Bankside is our Sestos; and let it not be denied us.  
“Now as he is beating to make the dye take the fuller;”*

“The fuller” meant “more completely.” In the fulling of woolen cloth, the cloth is cleaned and beaten to make it thicker. Once the cloth is clean, the dye will adhere to the parts that had been dirty.

*“Who chances to come by, but fair Hero in a sculler;”*

A sculler is a small boat that is propelled by special oars called sculls. A sculler is also the person who sculls — rows with the special oars — the boat.

*“And seeing Leander’s naked leg and goodly calf,*

*“Cast at him from the boat a sheep’s eye and an half.”*

A “sheep’s eye” is a “loving look.”

*“Now she is landed, and the sculler come back,*

*“By and by you shall see what Leander does lack.”*

Puppet Leander called, *“Cole, Cole, old Cole!”*

“Cole” is a stereotypical name for a pander.

The disguised Lantern Leatherhead said as the puppet master, *“That is the sculler’s name without control.”*

“Without control” means “freely stated.”

Puppet Leander called, *“Cole, Cole, I say, Cole!”*

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, *“We hear you.”*

Puppet Leander called, "*Old Cole.*"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead joked, "*Old Coal! Is the dyer turned collier? How do you sell?*"

Calling a person a collier, aka a dealer in coal, was an insult because colliers were dirty from being around coal and because colliers had a reputation for cheating their customers.

Puppet Leander said, "*A pox on your manners! Kiss my hole here, and smell it!*"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, "*Kiss your hole and smell it! There's manners indeed.*"

Puppet Leander yelled, "*Why, Cole, I say, Cole!*"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead asked, "*Is it the sculler you need?*"

Puppet Leander replied, "*Yes, and be hanged.*"

Lantern Leatherhead said, "*Be hanged! Look yonder.*

*"Old Cole, you must go hang with Mr. Leander."*

Puppet Cole asked, "*Where is he?*"

Puppet Leander replied, "*Here, Cole. What fairest of fairs, "Was that fare whom you landed just now at Trig Stairs?"*

As puppet master, Lantern Leatherhead used a high-pitched voice.

Not yet used to the voice, Bartholomew Cokes asked him, "What was that, fellow? Please tell me. I scarcely understand what you are saying."

In his normal voice, puppet master Lantern Leatherhead replied, "Leander does ask, sir, what fairest of fairs, was the fare he landed just now at Trig Stairs?"

Puppet Cole answered Puppet Leander, "*It is lovely Hero.*"

Puppet Leander asked, "*Nero?*"

Nero was a tyrannical Roman emperor.

Puppet Cole replied, "*No, Hero.*"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, "*It is Hero*

*"Of the Bankside, he says, to tell you truth without erring,*

*"Is come over into Fish Street to eat some fresh herring.*

*"Leander says no more, but as fast as he can,*

*"Gets on all his best clothes, and will after [will go] to the Swan."*

The Swan is an inn.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "This is extremely good, isn't it!"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, "*Wait, sculler.*"

Puppet Cole replied, "*What did you say?*"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

*"You must stay [wait] for Leander,*

*"And carry him to the wench."*

Puppet Cole said, "*You rogue, I am no pander.*"

"He says that he is no pander," Bartholomew Cokes said.

"This is a fine language. I understand what the puppets are saying now."

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:



*“Are you no pander, goodman Cole? Here’s no man says you are;*

*“You’ll grow a hot [angry] Cole [pun on “hot, burning coal”], it seems; pray [please] you stay [wait] for your fare.”*

Puppet Cole asked, *“Will he come away?”*

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead asked, *“What do you say?”*

Puppet Cole answered, *“I’d have him come away.”*

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead asked:

*“Would you have Leander come away? Why, pray [please], sir, stay.*

*“You are angry, goodman Cole; I believe the fair maid*

*“Came over with you on trust: tell us, sculler, are you paid?”*

“On trust” means “on credit.” Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead was hinting that Puppet Hero had paid for her passage with sex.

Puppet Cole replied, *“Yes, goodman Hog-rubber of Pict-Hatch.”*

“Rub” is an action performed during sex, so Puppet Cole was charging puppet master Lantern Leatherhead with bestiality.

Pict-Hatch was an area known for its prostitutes and thieves.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, *“What! Hog-rubber of Pict-Hatch?”*

Puppet Cole replied, *“Yes, Hog-rubber of Pict-Hatch. Take that!”*

Puppet Cole hit the puppet master on the head.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, "*Oh, my head!*"

Puppet Cole said, "*Harm watch, harm catch!*"

In other words, if you look for trouble, you'll find it.

Bartholomew Cokes said, "Harm watch, harm catch, he says; that is very good, indeed."

He then said to the puppet master, "The sculler was likely to have beaten you, sirrah."

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead replied, "Yes, except that his fare called him away."

Puppet Leander said, "*Row apace, row apace, row, row, row, row, row.*"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, "*You are knavishly loaden [Devilishly loaded], sculler. Take heed where you go.*"

Puppet Cole said, "*Knave in your face, Goodman rogue.*"

"Knave in your face" meant "I call you a knave directly to your face."

Puppet Leander said, "*Row, row, row, row, row.*"

Bartholomew Cokes laughed and said, "He said, 'Knave in your face,' friend."

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead replied, "Yes, sir, I heard him, but there's no talking to these watermen — they will have the last word."

Bartholomew Cokes said, "God's my life! I am not allied to the sculler yet; he shall be 'Dolphin My Boy.'"

Earlier, he had matched the puppets with fairings that he had purchased but lost. For example, he had matched a fiddlestick to Puppet Leander.

“Dolphin My Boy” was part of a ballad, so he may have decided to match Puppet Cole with one of the ballads he had bought, or perhaps with a toy dolphin.

Talking about Puppet Leander, he continued, “But my fiddlestick does fiddle in and out too much. Please speak to him about it; tell him I would have him tarry in my sight more.”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead replied, “Please be patient; you’ll get enough of him, sir.”

He then continued with the puppet-play:

*“Now, gentles, I take it, here is none of you so stupid,*

*“But that you have heard of a little god of love called Cupid;*

*“Who out of kindness to Leander, hearing he but saw her,*

*“This present day and hour does turn himself to [into] a drawer [bartender].”*

Puppet Jonas (the disguised Cupid) came on stage as the bartender.

*“And because he would have their first meeting to be merry,*

*“He strikes Hero in love to him with a pint of sherry;*

*“Which he tells her from amorous Leander is sent her,*

*“Who after him into the room of Hero does venture.”*

Puppet Leander went into Mistress Hero’s room.

Puppet Jonas said, “*A pint of sack, score a pint of sack in the Coney.*”

The rooms in inns were given names, not numbers.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Sack! You said just now it would be sherry.”

He was unaware that “sack” was a generic name for white wine, and sherry is made from white grapes.

Puppet Jonas said to Bartholomew Cokes, “Why, so it is.”

Puppet Jonas then continued the puppet-play: “*Sherry, sherry, sherry.*”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Sherry, sherry, sherry! By my truth, he makes me merry. I must have a name for Cupid, too.

“Let me see, you might help me, now, if you would, Numps, in a pinch, but you are still dreaming about the stocks. Don’t worry about your being in the stocks. I have forgotten about it. It is just a nine days’ wonder, man, so don’t let it trouble you.”

Humphrey Wasp replied, “With all my heart, I wish that the stocks were around your neck, sir, on the condition that I would hang by the heels in them until the wonder would wear off from you.”

“Well said, resolute Numps!” Bartholomew Cokes said.

He then said to the puppet master, “But listen, friend, where’s the friendship all this while between my drum Damon and my pipe Pythias?”

Lantern Leatherhead replied, “You shall see very soon, sir.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “You think my hobbyhorse is forgotten, too; no, I’ll see them all in action and acting before I go, else I shall not know which to love best.”

Earlier, he had matched Puppet Dionysius with his hobbyhorse.

Growing irritated, Jordan Knockem said, “This gallant has interrupting vapors, troublesome vapors; Whit, puff with him.”

“Puff with him” meant “shut him up,” perhaps by fighting him and huffing and puffing, or by blowing smoke in his face, which could cause a fight.

Whit replied, “No, I pree dee, Captain, let him alone; he is a child, i’faith, la.”

[Whit replied, “No, I say, Captain, let him alone; he is a child, indeed, la.”]

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

*“Now, gentles, [let us turn] to the friends, who in number are two,*

*“And lodged in that alehouse in which fair Hero does do.”*

“Do” has three meanings applicable here: 1) work, 2) have sex, and 3) work as a prostitute.

*“Damon, for some kindness done him the last week,*

*“Is come, fair Hero, in Fish Street, this morning to seek:*

*“Pythias does smell the knavery of the meeting,*

*“And now you shall see their true-friendly greeting.”*

In other words, Damon and Hero have scheduled an assignation, but Pythias has found out about it.

Puppet Pythias said to Puppet Damon, *“You whore-masterly slave, you!”*

Bartholomew Cokes said, *“‘Whore-masterly slave, you!’ Very friendly and familiar, that.”*

Puppet Damon replied:

*“I call you ‘whore-master’ to your face,*

*“You have lain [have had sex] with her yourself, I’ll prove it in this place.”*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Damon says that Pythias has lain with her himself, he’ll prove it in this place.”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “Both of them are whore-masters, sir, that’s plainly the case.”

Puppet Pythias said to puppet master Lantern Leatherhead, “*You lie like a rogue.*”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead replied, “*Do I lie like a rogue?*”

Puppet Pythias said, “*A pimp and a scab.*”

A “scab” is a “scoundrel.”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “*A pimp and a scab?*”

“*I say, between you, you have both but one drab.*”

A “drab” is a “whore.”

Puppet Damon said, “*You lie again.*”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead asked, “*Do I lie again?*”

Puppet Damon said, “*Like a rogue again.*”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead asked, “*Like a rogue again?*”

Puppet Pythias said, “*And you are a pimp again.*”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “‘And you are a pimp again,’ he says.”

Puppet Damon said, “*And a scab again.*”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “‘And a scab again,’ he says.”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

“*And I say again, you are both whore-masters, again.*”

*“And you have both but one drab again.”*

Puppet Damon and Puppet Pythias said, *“Do you say so? Do you? Do you?”*

The puppets began to beat him.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, *“What! Both at once?”*

Puppet Pythias said, *“Down with him, Damon.”*

Puppet Damon said, *“Pink his guts, Pythias.”*

“Pink” means “stab.”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, *“What! So malicious?”*

*“Will you murder me, masters both, in my own house?”*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Ho! Well acted, my drum! Well acted, my pipe! Well acted still!”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Well acted, with all my heart.”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said to the puppets, *“Hold, hold your hands!”*

In other words: Stop beating me!

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Yes, both your hands, for my sake! For you have both done well.”

Puppet Damon said, *“Gramercy, pure Pythias.”*

“Gramercy” meant “Thank you.”

Puppet Pythias said, *“Gramercy, dear Damon.”*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Gramercy to you both, my pipe and my drum.”

Puppet Pythias and Puppet Damon said, *“Come, now we’ll go together to have breakfast with Hero.”*

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

*“It is well you can now go to breakfast to Hero.*

*“You have given me my breakfast, with a hone and honero.”*

*Hone* and *honero* are Gaelic words meaning “alas!”

Bartholomew Cokes asked, “What is it, friend? Have they hurt you?”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “Oh, no. Between you and me, sir, we do but make show.”

In other words: We’re acting.

He continued with the puppet-play:

*“Thus, gentles, you perceive, without any denial,*

*“Between Damon and Pythias here, friendship’s true trial.*

*“Though hourly they quarrel thus, and roar each with [the] other.*

*“They fight no more than does brother with brother;*

*“But friendly together, at the next man they meet,*

*“They let fly their anger, as here you might see it.”*

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Well, we have seen it, and you have felt it, whatsoever you say. What’s next? What’s next?”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

*“This [happened] while young Leander with fair Hero is drinking,*

*“And Hero grown drunk to any man’s thinking!*



*“Yet was it not three pints of sherry could flaw her,”*

“Flaw her” meant “make her drunk.”

*“Till Cupid distinguished [disguised] like Jonas the drawer  
[bartender],*

*“From under his apron, where his lechery lurks,*

*“Put love in her sack. Now mark how it works.”*

One meaning of the word “sack” is “vagina.”

Puppet Hero said:

*“Oh, Leander, Leander, my dear, my dear Leander,*

*“I’ll forever be your goose, so [as long as] you’ll be my  
gander.”*

A “goose” can be 1) a simpleton, and/or 2) a prostitute.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Excellently well said, fiddle, she’ll ever be his goose, so he’ll be her gander; wasn’t that what was said?”

He had paired Puppet Hero with his fiddle; Puppet Leander was paired with the fiddlestick.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “Yes, sir, but pay attention to his answer now.”

Puppet Leander said:

*“And sweetest of geese, before I go to bed,*

*“I’ll swim over the Thames, my goose, you to tread.”*

“Tread” meant “have sex”; the word was used of birds.

Bartholomew Coke said, “Splendid! He will swim over the Thames, and tread his goose tonight, he says.”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “Yes, peace, sir. Be quiet, sir. They’ll be angry if they hear you eavesdropping now while they are setting up their assignation.”

Puppet Leander said:

*“But lest the Thames should be dark, my goose, my dear friend,*

*“Let your window be provided with a candle’s end.”*

The candle would be his guide as he swam across the Thames.

Puppet Hero said:

*“Fear not, my gander, I protest I should handle*

*“My matters very ill, if I had not a whole candle.”*

“Matters” was a word that could refer to sexual matters; Hero’s words could be interpreted as saying that for at least some of her sexual matters, she used a whole candle as a dildo.

Puppet Leander said, *“Well, then, look to it, and kiss me to boot.”*

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

*“Now here come the friends again, Pythias and Damon,*

*“And under their cloaks they have of bacon a gammon.”*

A “gammon” is “part of a side of bacon.”

Puppet Pythias and Puppet Damon entered the puppet alehouse.

Puppet Pythias said, *“Drawer, fill some wine here.”*

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead ordered:

*“Hey, bring some wine there!*

*“There’s company already, sir, pray forbear.”*

“Pray forbear” meant “please be patient.”

Puppet Damon said about the company already present, *“It is Hero.”*

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

*“Yes, but she will not be taken,*

*“After sack and fresh herring, with your Dunmow bacon.”*

Dunmow bacon was a side of bacon that was presented to a married couple in Dunmow, Essex, if after being married for a year they could convince a jury of six bachelors and six maidens that they had not argued during the year or regretted being married.

Since Pythias and Damon possessed what puppet master Lantern Leatherhead called their “Dunmow bacon,” he was implying that they were a homosexual couple.

He was also saying that Hero was already satisfied with what Leander had given her.

Puppet Pythias said about the bacon, *“You lie, it’s Westfabian.”*

The Fabian priests of Pan were permitted much licentious license at the Roman festival Lupercalia. Flaunting Fabians were swaggerers and roisterers.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, *“Westphalian, you should say.”*

Westphalian ham had a reputation for being very good ham.

Puppet Damon said, *“If you hold not your peace, you are a coxcomb, I would say.”*

Puppet Leander and Puppet Hero kissed.

Puppet Damon said, "*What's going on here? What's going on here? Kiss, kiss, upon kiss!*"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

"*Yes, why shouldn't they? What harm is in this?*"

"*It is mistress Hero.*"

Puppet Damon said, "*Mistress Hero's a whore.*"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

"*Is she a whore?*"

"*Keep you quiet, or, sir knave out of door.*"

Puppet Damon asked, "*Knave out of door?*"

Puppet Hero said, "*Yes, knave out of door.*"

Puppet Damon said, "*Whore out of door.*"

Puppet Hero, Puppet Damon, and Puppet Pythias started fighting.

Puppet Hero said, "*I say, knave out of door.*"

Puppet Damon said, "*I say, whore out of door.*"

Puppet Pythias said, "*Yes, so say I, too.*"

Puppet Hero said, "*Kiss the whore on the arse [ass].*"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

"*Now you have something to do:*"

"*You must kiss her on the arse, she says.*"

Puppet Damon and Puppet Pythias said, "*So we will, so we will.*"

They kicked her.

Puppet Hero said, *“Oh, my haunches! Oh, my haunches! Stop! Stop!”*

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said to Puppet Leander:

*“Do you stand still?”*

*“Leander, where are you? Stand you still like a sot,*

*“And not offering to break both their heads with a pot?”*

*“See who’s at your elbow there! Puppet Jonas and Cupid.”*

Cupid, god of love, was disguised as Jonas, bartender.

Puppet Jonas said, *“Attack them, Leander, be not so stupid.”*

Puppet Leander said, *“You goat-bearded slave!”*

Puppet Damon said, *“You whoremaster knave!”*

The puppets fought.

Puppet Leander said, *“You are a whoremaster.”*

Puppet Jonas said, *“Whoremasters all.”*

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “See, Cupid, aka Jonas, with a word has taken up the brawl.”

The word was “whoremasters.” A whoremaster can be a whoremonger, aka one who has sex with whores. A whoremaster can also be a procurer, aka a pimp.

Jordan Knockem said, “These be fine vapors!”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “By this good day, they fight splendidly and bravely; don’t they, Numps?”

Humphrey Wasp said, “Yes, they lacked only you to be their second all this while.”

A “second” is a supporter in a duel.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said:

*“This tragical encounter falling out thus to busy us,*

*“It raises up the ghost of their friend Dionysius;*

*“Not like a monarch, but the master of a school,*

*“In a scrivener’s furred gown, which shows he is no fool:”*

A scrivener is a clerk. Dionysius II, not Dionysius I, of Syracuse was supposed to have become a schoolteacher after falling from power.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead continued:

*“For therein he has wit enough to keep himself warm.*

*“‘Oh, Damon,’ he cries, ‘and Pythias, what harm*

*“‘Has poor Dionysius done you in his grave,*

*“‘That after his death you should fall out thus and rave,*

*“‘And call amorous Leander [a] whoremaster knave?’”*

Puppet Damon said, *“I cannot, I will not, I promise you, endure it.”*

— 5.5 —

Rabbi Zeal-of-the-land Busy rushed in and shouted, “Down with Dagon! Down with Dagon! It is I, and I will no longer endure your profanations.”

Dagon was the god of the Philistines. One of the accusations that Puritans made against many plays was that they kept alive the memory of pagan gods such as Cupid.

By saying, “Down with Dagon! It is I,” Zeal-of-the-land Busy was grammatically identifying himself with Dagon.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead asked, “What do you mean by this, sir?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “I will remove Dagon there, I say, that idol, that heathenish idol, that remains, as I may say, a beam, a very beam — not a beam of the sun, nor a beam of the moon, nor a beam of a balance, neither a house-beam, nor a weaver’s beam — but a beam in the eye, in the eye of the brethren.”

The puppet-play was a beam in the eye of the Puritans, according to Zeal-of-the-land Busy. In other words, it was a blind spot.

Matthew 7:3-5 (King James Version) states:

*3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

*4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*

*5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.*

The Biblical passage stressed being aware of one’s own faults, but Zeal-of-the-land Busy was much more concerned with being aware of other people’s faults.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy continued, “It is a very great beam, an exceeding great beam, such as are your stage-players, rhymers, and Morris-dancers, who have walked hand in hand, in contempt of the brethren, and the cause; and been supported by instruments of no mean countenance.”

“Instruments of no mean countenance” meant “agents in high positions — agents of the Devil.” It also meant that these entertainments had received official encouragement.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “Sir, I present nothing but what is licensed by authority.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy replied, “You are all license, even licentiousness itself, Shimei!”

Shimei had cursed King David in 2 Samuel 16, but Zeal-of-the-land Busy, not puppet master Lantern Leatherhead, was doing the cursing here.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “I have the Master of the Revels’ signature on the license for the puppet-play, sir.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “You have the signature of the Master of the Rebels Against God. You have Satan’s signature! Hold your peace because of your scurrility, shut up your mouth, your profession is damnable, and in pleading for it you plead for the idol Baal. I have long opened my mouth wide, and gaped; I have gaped as the oyster for the tide, after your destruction, but cannot compass it by suit or dispute; so that I look for a bickering, before long, and then a battle.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy was using phrasing from two Puritan prayers:

1) *“We look for a bickering, ere long, and then a battle, which we cannot endure.”*

2) *“Our souls are constantly gaping after thee, O Lord, yea verily, our souls do gape, even as an oyster.”*

Jordan Knockem said, “Good Banbury vapors!”

Bartholomew Cokes said to puppet master Lantern Leatherhead, “Friend, you’d have an ill match of it, if you bicker with him here; although Zeal-of-the-land Busy is no man of the fist, he has friends who will fight for him.”



Bartholomew Cokes then said, “Numps, won’t you take our side?”

Ezekiel Edgworth said to Bartholomew Cokes, “Sir, there is no need for a fight; in my opinion the Puritan offers the puppet master a fairer course of action: to end it by formal disputation and argument.”

He then asked puppet master Lantern Leatherhead, “Do you have nothing to say for yourself in defense of your occupation?”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “Indeed, sir, I am not well-studied in these controversies between the hypocrites — the Puritans — and us. But here’s one of the puppets in my puppet-play — Puppet Dionysius — who shall undertake to debate the Puritan, and I’ll wager the case on the puppet’s defense.”

The Puritans, as should be already clear, were opposed to theatrical entertainments of all kinds.

The name Dionysius is close to the name Dionysus, which is the name of the ancient Greek god of theater and wine.

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Who? My hobbyhorse! Will he dispute with him?”

Puppet Dionysius had been matched with Bartholomew Cokes’ hobbyhorse. The puppet would engage in a battle of wits with Zeal-of-the-land Busy.

“Yes, sir,” puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “and make a hobby-ass of him, I hope.”

“That’s excellent!” Bartholomew Cokes said. “Indeed he looks like the best scholar of them all.”

He then said to Zeal-of-the-land Busy, “Come, sir, you must be as good as your word now.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy replied, "I will not fear to make my spirit and gifts known."

He prayed, "Assist me, zeal! Fill me, fill me, that is, make me full!"

"What a desperate, profane wretch is this!" Mr. Winwife said. "Is there any ignorance or impudence like his, to call on his religious zeal to fill him against a puppet?"

Miss Grace Wellborn said, "I know no fitter match than a puppet to join battle with a hypocrite!"

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said to Puppet Dionysius, "First, I say to you, idol, you have no calling."

He was using the word "calling" to mean "vocation." Puritans believed that people ought to engage in work and use the gifts that God had given to them. But the puppet replied as if the word "calling" referred to the name that one was called.

Puppet Dionysius replied, "You lie! I am called Dionysius."

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said to Zeal-of-the-land Busy, "The puppet says that you lie, he is called Dionysius in the puppet-play, and to that calling he answers."

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said to Puppet Dionysius, "By 'calling,' I mean you have no vocation, idol. You have no present lawful calling."

In fact, actors could be arrested as vagrants unless they were associated with a company that had a noble or royal person as a patron. This is why acting companies were named after their sponsors: The King's Men, Lady Elizabeth's Men, etc.

Puppet Dionysius asked, "Is yours a lawful calling?"

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said to Zeal-of-the-land Busy, "The puppet asks if yours is a lawful calling."

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Yes, my calling is of the spirit.”

Puppet Dionysius said, “Then the name ‘idol’ is a lawful calling.”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said to Zeal-of-the-land Busy, “He says that then the name ‘idol’ is a lawful calling; for you called him ‘idol,’ and your calling is of the spirit.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Well disputed, hobbyhorse.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said to Bartholomew Cokes, “Don’t take sides with the wicked, young gallant: He neighs and hinnies like a horse — all is but hinnying sophistry. I call him ‘idol’ again; always, I say, his calling, his profession is profane.”

He then said to the puppet, “It is profane, idol.”

Puppet Dionysius said, “It is not profane.”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said to Zeal-of-the-land Busy, “‘It is not profane,’ he says.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “It is profane.”

Puppet Dionysius said, “It is not profane.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “It is profane.”

Puppet Dionysius said, “It is not profane.”

All too many arguments are like this.

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead complimented Puppet Dionysius, “Well said. Confute him with ‘not,’ continually.”

He then said to Zeal-of-the-land Busy, “You cannot bear and wear him down with your base noise, sir.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “Nor he me, with his treble creaking, even if he creaks like the chariot wheels of Satan. I am zealous for the cause —”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead interrupted: “As zealous as a dog is for a bone.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy continued, “And I say, it is profane, as being the page of Pride, and the waiting-woman of Vanity.”

Puppet Dionysius said, “Indeed! What do you say about your attire- and dressmakers, then?”

Puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “Good point.”

The Puritans despised vain, flashy attire and dresses, yet Puritans made money by providing such things.

Puppet Dionysius continued, “What do you say about feather-makers in the Blackfriars district, who are of your faction of faith? Are not they with their perukes, and their puffs, their fans, and their huffs, as much pages of Pride and waiters upon Vanity? What do you say? What do you say? What do you say?”

Feathers were used in hats. Peruges were wigs. Puffs were ornamental items such as bunches of feathers or ribbons. Fans were often made with feathers. Huffs were shoulder pads.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “I will not answer for them.”

Puppet Dionysius said, “Because you cannot! Because you cannot! Is a bugle-maker a lawful calling?”

Bugle-makers made beads.

Puppet Dionysius continued, “Or the sweet-makers? They make such candy as you have there.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy, who had been a baker, was carrying some sweets.

Puppet Dionysius continued, “Or your tailors and dressmakers who make French fashions? You would have all the sin within yourselves, wouldn’t you, wouldn’t you?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy replied, “No, Dagon.”

Puppet Dionysius said, “What then, Dagonet?”

King Arthur’s Fool was named Dagonet.

Puppet Dionysius continued, “Is the occupation of a puppet worse than these occupations?”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy answered, “Yes, and my main argument against you is that you are an abomination; for the male among you puts on the apparel of the female, and the female of the male.”

Deuteronomy 22:5 states, “*The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God*” (King James Version).

In the theater of the time, no actresses appeared on stage. Men or boys played all the female roles. In some of the plays, a female character would disguise “herself” as a man.

Puppet Dionysius said, “You lie, you lie, you lie abominably.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Good, indeed! He has given him the lie thrice.”

Being told that you lied was a fighting offense.

Puppet Dionysius said, “It is your old stale argument against the actors, but it will not hold against the puppets; for we have neither male nor female amongst us.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy had referred to a passage in the Old Testament, but Puppet Dionysius had just now referred to a passage in the New Testament.

Galatians 3:28 states, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”* (King James Version).

Puppet Dionysius continued, “And so that you may see, if you will, like a malicious purblind zeal as you are, I lift up my garment.”

“Purblind” can mean either completely blind or partially blind.

Lifting up his garment, Puppet Dionysius revealed that he had no sex organs.

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “By my faith, there he has answered you, friend, with a plain demonstration.”

Puppet Dionysius said, “Indeed, I’ll prove, against ever a Rabbi of them all, that my standing is as lawful as his; that I speak by inspiration, as well as he does; that I have as little to do with learning as he; and that I do scorn her helps as much as he.”

Puppet Dionysius had plainly stated that Puritans cared little for scholarship.

Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “I am confuted. I have been proven wrong. The cause has failed me.”

He had been proven wrong when it came to puppet-plays, and with the use of Galatians 3:28, he had been proven wrong when it came to Christian actors.

Puppet Dionysius said, “Then be converted! Be converted.”

“Be converted, please,” puppet master Lantern Leatherhead said, “and let the play go on!”

“Let it go on,” Zeal-of-the-land Busy said, “for I am changed, and I will become a beholder with you.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “That’s splendid, indeed! You brought it off, hobbyhorse. You have won the debate. On with the play.”

The disguised Justice Overdo cast aside enough of his disguise to be recognized and said, “Stop! I now forbid the play to go on! I am Adam Overdo! Sit still, I order you.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “My brother-in-law!”

Miss Grace Wellborn said, “My wise guardian!”

Ezekiel Edgworth said, “Justice Overdo!”

Justice Overdo said, “It is time to take enormity by the forehead, and brand it; for I have discovered enough.”

He had modified the proverb “take opportunity by the forelock.”

— 5.6 —

Quarlous, still disguised as Troubleall, arrived, along with Dame Purecraft.

Quarlous said, “Come, mistress bride; you must do as I do, now. You must be mad with me, truly. I have here Justice Overdo for it.”

He wanted Justice Overdo to marry them.

Justice Overdo said, “Peace, good Troubleall. Be quiet! Come hither, and you shall trouble none. I will take charge of you, and of your friend, too.”

He then said to Ezekiel Edgworth, “You also, young man, shall be my concern; stand there.”

Ezekiel Edgworth said to himself, “May God now have mercy upon me.”

Jordan Knockem said quietly, “I wish we were away, Whit, because these are dangerous vapors. We had best fall off with our birds, for fear of the cage.”

He wanted to escape, leaving behind their newly recruited prostitutes, out of fear of being put in the cage that served as a temporary jail at the fair. Mrs. Overdo was still in a drunken stupor and unable to leave. Possibly, Mrs. Win Littlewit attempted to leave with them, or she may have decided to stay with Mrs. Overdo.

Jordan Knockem and Whit attempted to steal away, but Justice Overdo saw them.

Justice Overdo ordered, “Stop! Isn’t my name your terror?”

Whit said, “Yesh fait, man, and it ish for tat we would be gone, man.”

[Whit said, “Yes, by my faith, man, and it is for that we want to be gone, man.”]

Mr. John Littlewit arrived and said, “Oh, gentlemen! Have you seen my wife? I have lost my little wife, as I shall be trusted; I have lost my little pretty Win. I left her at the obese woman’s house in trust yonder, the pig-woman’s, with Captain Jordan and Captain Whit, who are very good men, and I cannot learn what has happened to her. Poor fool, I fear she’s stepped aside.”

“Stepped aside” meant lost her way. The phrase could mean literally or morally or both.

He asked Dame Purecraft, “Mother-in-law, have you seen Win?”



Justice Overdo said, "If this grave matron is your mother-in-law, sir, stand by her, *et digito compesce labellum.*"

The Latin quotation was from Juvenal (*Satires* 1:160) and meant "and control your lip with a finger." In other words, put a finger to your lips and be quiet.

Justice Overdo continued, "I may perhaps spring a wife for you soon."

"Spring" was a hunting term. It was used to describe causing a bird to rise from cover. Had Justice Overdo recognized Mrs. Win Littlewit despite her being masked? Mrs. Overdo knew Mr. John Littlewit, so it is possible that Justice Overdo knew one or both Littlewits.

Justice Overdo then said, "Brother-in-law Bartholomew Cokes, I am sadly sorry to see you so lightly given and such a disciple of enormity, along with your grave governor Humphrey Wasp. But stand you both there, in the middle place; I will reprehend and scold you in your course of action in turning toward enormity and sin."

Bartholomew Cokes and Humphrey Wasp were in the middle of the group. On one side were Quarlous and Dame Purecraft. On the other were Mr. Winwife and Miss Grace Wellborn.

Justice Overdo then said, "Miss Grace Wellborn, let me rescue you out of the hands of the stranger."

He thought that Mr. Winwife was a stranger to Miss Grace Wellborn.

"Pardon me, sir," Mr. Winwife said. "I am a kinsman of hers."

He meant that he would soon be married to her.

Justice Overdo said, "Are you! What is your name, sir?"

“Mr. Winwife, sir.”

Justice Overdo said, “Mr. Winwife! I hope you have won no wife of her, sir; if you have, I will examine the possibility of it at a suitable time.”

As her guardian, Justice Overdo had much say over whom she would marry.

Justice Overdo continued, “Now, let’s turn to my enormities, aka crimes and sins.”

He meant enormities he had witnessed and uncovered, although it sounded as if he meant that he was referring to enormities he himself had committed.

He continued, “Look upon me, London! And see me, Smithfield! I am the example of justice and the Mirror of Magistrates; I am the true top of legal form and the scourge of enormity.”

Justice Overdo regarded himself as a splendid example of a minister of justice.

He continued, “Hearken unto my labors, and but observe my discoveries; and compare Hercules of old with me, if you dare; or Columbus, Magellan, or our countryman Drake, of later times.”

Now he wanted to be compared to the PanHellenic hero Hercules, who accomplished twelve seemingly impossible labors, including sailing to the islands of Hesperia and Erytheia in the West. He also wanted to be compared to Christopher Columbus, who sailed all the way across the Atlantic Ocean and discovered the new world. He also wanted to be compared to the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, who led the expedition that first circumnavigated the world; Magellan himself died in the Philippines before completing the expedition. He also wanted to be compared

to the English explorer Sir Francis Drake, who led the first English expedition that circumnavigated the world. Sir Francis lived for another 16 years after completing the expedition.

Justice Overdo continued, “Stand forth, you weeds of enormity, and spread out.

“First, Rabbi Busy, you superlunatical hypocrite.”

He then said to Lantern Leatherhead, “Next you other extremity, you profane professor of puppetry, little better than poetry.”

Justice Overdo knew little about poetry. The puppet-show was nowhere close to being as good as the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, and *Divine Comedy*.

He then said to Whit, “Then you strong debaucher and seducer of youth; witness this compliant and honest young man.”

He pointed to Ezekiel Edgworth.

He then said to Jordan Knockem, “Now, you esquire of dames, madams, and twelve-penny ladies.”

Twelve-penny ladies are prostitutes who can be slept with for twelve pennies.

He said to the masked Mrs. Win Littlewit, “Now, my green madam herself of that price; let me unmask your ladyship.”

He removed Mrs. Win Littlewit’s mask.

Recognizing his wife, Mr. John Littlewit said, “Oh, my wife, my wife, my wife!”

“Is she your wife?” Justice Overdo asked. “*Redde te Harpocratem!*”

The Latin means “Make yourself like Harpocrates!” Harpocrates was the ancient god of silence, so Justice Overdo was telling Mr. John Littlewit, “Be quiet!”

Carrying a dripping-pan, Troubleall arrived. He was wearing few clothes and was covering his near-nakedness with the dripping-pan. Ursula and Nightingale followed him.

Seeing Justice Overdo, Troubleall said, “By your leave, stand by, my masters, be uncovered. Take off your hats to show respect to Justice Overdo.”

Ursula said, “Oh, stop him, stop him! Help me to cry out, Nightingale! My pan! My pan!”

Justice Overdo asked, “What’s the matter?”

Nightingale said about Troubleall, “He has stolen old Ursula’s pan.”

“Yes,” Troubleall said, “and I fear no man but Justice Overdo.”

“Ursula!” Justice Overdo said. “Where is she? Oh, the sow of enormity, this! Welcome.” Pointing to a place, he said, “Stand there.”

Pointing at Nightingale and then to a place, he said, “You, songster, stand there.”

Ursula said to Justice Overdo, “If it please your worship, I am in no fault; a gentleman stripped him in my booth, and borrowed his gown and his hat; and he — Troubleall — ran away with my goods here because of it.”

Justice Overdo said to Quarlous, who was still disguised as Troubleall, “Then this man is the true madman, and you are the enormity!”

“You are in the right,” Quarlous said, taking off his false beard. “I am mad only from the gown outward.”

Justice Overdo said, "Stand there."

"Wherever you please, sir," Quarlous said.

Waking up, sick and hungover, Mrs. Overdo said, "Oh, lend me a basin, I am sick, I am sick! Where's Mr. Overdo? Bridget, call hither my Adam."

She thought she was at home. Bridget was one of her servants.

Justice Overdo said, "What!"

He knew that his wife was dressed like a prostitute, and he was ashamed and fell silent.

Whit said, "Dy very own wife, i' fait, worshipful Adam."

[Whit said, "Your very own wife, indeed, worshipful Adam."]

"Won't my Adam come to me?" Mrs. Overdo asked. "Will I see him no more then?"

"Why don't you go on with the enormity?" Quarlous said to Justice Overdo. "Sir, are you oppressed with it? I'll help you.

"Listen, sir, I'll whisper it in your ear. Your innocent young man whom you have been so concerned about all this day is a cutpurse, and he has gotten all your brother-in-law Bartholomew Cokes' things and helped you to your beating and the stocks. If you have a mind to hang him now, and show him your magistrate's wit, you may, but I should think it would be better to recover the goods that Bartholomew Cokes lost, and to save your reputation by pardoning him."

Justice Overdo could lose much reputation through his wife's wearing the clothing of a prostitute and through his being beaten and put in the stocks. One way to save his reputation would be by showing mercy.

Quarlous showed Justice Overdo the blank warrant that he had given to him when he thought that the disguised Quarlous was Troubleall. Quarlous had filled it out to make himself the guardian of Miss Grace Wellborn, who was obliged to forfeit some of her wealth to her guardian if she were to marry someone against her guardian's consent.

Quarlous said out loud, "I thank you, sir, for the gift of your ward, Miss Grace Wellborn; look, here is your hand and seal, by the way.

"Mr. Winwife, may God give you joy. You are Palamon, you signed that name in the book, you have won Miss Grace as your wife, and you are possessed of the gentlewoman, but she must pay me wealth for marrying against my consent — here's the warrant for it."

Actually, Quarlous had given Miss Grace Wellborn permission to marry whoever had written the name that Troubleall had chosen, but it is also true that Miss Grace Wellborn had promised to find a way to give some compensation to the man whose name was not chosen; however, she had made Quarlous and Mr. Winwife agree to be friends and help each other and Quarlous was definitely not doing that.

Quarlous then handed over Troubleall's gown and cap to their rightful owner and said to him, "And, honest madman, there's your gown and cap again; I thank you for my wife."

He said to his future wife, Dame Purecraft, "I can still be mad, sweetheart, when I please. Don't be afraid I can't."

He next said, "Careful Numps, where's he? I thank him for my license."

"What!" Humphrey Wasp said.

"It is true, Numps," Quarlous said.

“I’ll be hanged then,” Humphrey Wasp said.

“Look in your box, Numps,” Quarlous said.

Humphrey Wasp looked in the box and discovered that the marriage license was missing.

Quarlous then said to Justice Overdo, “Don’t stand fixed here, like a stake in Finsbury, to be shot at, or like you are tied to the whipping post in the fair, but get your wife out of the air, or it will make her worse; and remember you are but Adam, flesh and blood.”

Archers shot at targets in Finsbury fields, which were north of London, and yes, there was a whipping post at Bartholomew Fair.

In this society, fresh air was thought to be bad for ill people.

Quarlous continued, “You have your frailty, forget your other name of Overdo, and invite us all to supper. There you and I will compare our discoveries; and we will drown the memory of all enormity in your biggest bowl of wine at home.”

Everything may seem to have worked out well for Quarlous, but he was a widow-hater who would soon be married to a widow.

(See 1.3 for Quarlous’ opinion of widows, including the widow he would soon marry.)

Bartholomew Cokes said, “How now, Numps? Have you lost the marriage license? I bet that you lost it when you were in the stocks. Why don’t you speak?”

Humphrey Wasp said, “I will never speak while I live again, for anything I know.”

Justice Overdo said, “No, Humphrey, if I am calm and patient, you must be so, too.”

Referring to Quarlous, he said, “This pleasant conceited gentleman has wrought upon my judgment, and prevailed.”

“Pleasant conceited” can mean “pleasant and witty” or “ridiculous and self-important.”

Justice Overdo said to Mrs. Win Littlewit, “Please take care of your sick friend: Mrs. Alice Overdo, my wife.”

He then began, “My good friends all —”

Quarlous interrupted, “And no enormities.”

Justice Overdo continued, “I invite you to go home with me to my house to supper. I will have no one fear to go along with me, for my intentions are *ad correctionem, non ad destructionem; ad aedificandum, non ad diruendum*, and so lead on.”

“*Ad correctionem, non ad destructionem; ad aedificandum, non ad diruendum*” is Latin for “for correction, not destruction; for building up, not tearing down.”

Bartholomew Cokes said, “Yes, and bring the actor-puppets along. We’ll have the rest of the puppet-play at home.”



## EPILOGUE (*Bartholomew Fair*)

Your Majesty has seen the play, and you  
Can best allow [license] it from your ear and view.  
You know the scope of writers, and what store  
Of leave [permission] is given them, if they take not more,  
And turn it into license: you can tell  
If we have used that leave [permission] you gave us well;  
Or whether we to rage or license break [break into madness  
or improper behavior],  
Or be profane, or make profane men speak:  
This is your power to judge, great sir, and not  
The envy [malice] of a few. Which [royal approval] if we  
have got,  
We value less what their dislike [the dislike of the malicious]  
can bring,  
If it [this play] so happy be, to have pleased the King.

\*\*\*

**NOTE:** This epilogue was written for the court performance with King James I in attendance on 1 November 1615.

## NOTES (*Bartholomew Fair*)

### **Induction: Tarlton**

One of Tarlton's jests was a story about his clothes being stolen, something that happens to Bartholomew Cokes in *Bartholomew Fair*:

#### ***How fiddlers fiddled away Tarlton's apparel.***

*It chanced that one Fancy and Nancy, two musicians in London, used often with their boys to visit Tarlton when he dwelt in Gracious Street, at the sign of the Saba, a tavern, he being one of their best friends or benefactors, by reason of old acquaintance, to requite which they came one summer's morning to play for him "The Hunt's Up" [the name of the tune played to wake the hunters and collect them together. It was also used for any morning song] with such music [musical instruments] as they had.*

*Tarlton, to requite them, would open his chamber door, and for their pains would give them muscadine wine, which a cony-catcher [a sharper, a cheat] noting, and seeing Tarlton come forth in his shirt and nightgown to drink with these musicians, the while this nimble fellow stepped in and took Tarlton's apparel, which everyday he wore, [the thief] thinking that if he were espied to turn it to jest, but it passed for current [he got away with it] and he goes his ways.*

*Not long after, Tarlton returned to his chamber, and looked for his clothes, but they were safe enough from him. The next day this was noised [gossiped] abroad, and one in mockage threw him in this theme, he playing then at the Curtain.*

*Tarlton, I will tell thee a jest*

*Which after turned to earnest.*

*One there was, as I heard say.*

*Who in his shirt heard music play.*

*While all his clothes were stolen away.*

*Tarlton, smiling at this, answered on the sudden [ad-libbed] thus:*

*That's certain, sir, it is no lie.*

*That same one in truth was I.*

*When that the thief shall pine and lack,*

*Then shall I have clothes to my back:*

*And I, together with my fellows,*

*May see them ride to Tiborne gallows.*

*[May see the clothes, worn by Tarlton, ride to Tiborne gallows, where Tarlton and his friends will see the thief hang.]*

I have modernized the language, punctuation, and paragraphing, as I have for the complete *Tarlton's Jests*.

Source: David Bruce, *Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling in Prose*. Available on online booksellers.

The Original *Tarlton's Jests*: Halliwell, Jeames Orchard. *Tarlton's Jests, and News Out of Purgatory*. London: Printed for The Shakespeare Society, 1844.

<https://ia801409.us.archive.org/28/items/tarltonsjestsan00c/hetgoog/tarltonsjestsan00chetgoog.pdf>

<http://tinyurl.com/y8w923uj>

### **Spit-roasting an Egg (1.4)**

Spit Roasting an Egg (YouTube)

Title says it all ...

<http://tinyurl.com/yaqd5uwj>

### **“O Madge” (1.4)**

This is a line from the play *Weeding Covent-Garden* by Richard Brome: “*O Madge how I do long thy thing to ding didle ding.*”

Source: Richard Brome, *Five nevv playes, 1659: English Moor, or mock-marriage. love-sick court, or ambitious politique, 1658. weeding Covent-Garden, or Middlesex-justice peace, 1658. new academy, or, new exchange, 1658. queen concubine. 1659.* P. 13.

<http://tinyurl.com/yamdsgrj>

“Thing” can mean “sex organ.”

Another title for the play is *Covent-Garden Weeded*.

Amazon has a reprint edition here:

<http://tinyurl.com/yc3d9ed7>

Richard Brome, *Five nevv playes, 1659: English Moor, or mock-marriage. love-sick court, or ambitious politique, 1658. weeding Covent-Garden, or Middlesex-justice peace, 1658. new academy, or, new exchange, 1658. queen concubine. 1659.* Forgotten Books. 2016.

### **Cranion (1.5)**

An online article about “daddy-long-legs” includes this information:

*The crane-fly is a slender two-winged fly with very long legs. The word is applied to any member of the family Tipulidae, which has many genera and species, in particular the large and common Tipula maxima.*

*In Great Britain, the crane-fly is popularly called daddy-long-legs. Similar names have been used. In 1753, A Supplement to Mr. Chambers's Cyclopaedia: or, Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences thus defined crane-fly:*

*a name given by some to the creature we commonly call father long-legs, and the authors of histories of insects, tipula terrestris.*

*In Transactions of the Philological Society (1859), Ernest Adams gave the following list of synonyms in an article titled On the names of Spiders:*

*Fly Cranion, Long-leggs, Tom-taylor, Long-legged-tailor, Jenny-spinner, Father-long-legs, Daddy-long-legs, Gramfer-long-legs, Harry-long-legs, Jacky-long-legs, and in Somersetshire Friars-flies. All these, except the last, explain themselves; but I can make nothing of the Friars.*

*The crane-fly is mentioned in this article about spiders because the author observes that "the long-legged 'Shepherd' [a spider] is frequently confounded in popular phraseology with the Crane-fly".*

*In fact, the term daddy-long-legs has also been used as a name for arachnids or spiders of similar appearance. An article published in The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction of 15th February 1834 contains the following:*

*An immense spider is, I understand, found in the county of Bucks, the body as large as a pigeon's egg, and covered, as well as the very long legs, with hair; it is said to live amongst the rank grass of the fields, and to be exceedingly venomous; but, though I have, during my residence in this county, seen several spiders of extraordinary size, and distinct from the Father Long-legs, or Harvest-man, of the harvest-*

*time, I cannot vouch for the existence of the sort I name upon ocular demonstration.*

Source: “daddy-long-legs.” 29 June 2015

<http://tinyurl.com/ydbesskl>

## **Dogs and Plague (2.1)**

People thought that dogs and cats carried plague, and therefore they killed many dogs and cats during the Great Plague of 1665 in England:

*People thought that animals might spread the disease so strays were killed by special dog killers — around 40,000 dogs and 200,000 cats were slaughtered.*

Source: Museum of London. “London plagues 1348–1665.” Accessed 25 September 2017.

<https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/application/files/5014/5434/6066/london-plagues-1348-1665.pdf>

<http://tinyurl.com/kzzyfof>

Here is a quote from *The Great Plague: The Story of London’s Most Deadly Year*, which is about the great plague of 1665:

*Rather than killing rats and mice, the Guildhall focused on killing their enemies — cats and dogs. Neighborhood beadles and constables had gone through the streets at the end of June telling householders to kill “all their dogs of what ort or kind soever before Thursday next at ye furthest.”*

Source: A. Lloyd Moote, Dorothy C. Moote, *The Great Plague: The Story of London’s Most Deadly Year*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, c2004. Pp. 115-116.

<http://tinyurl.com/ybrlce8z>

### **The Heathen Man (3.2)**

The heathen man is Odysseus. This is how he describes hearing the song of the Sirens in Homer's *Odyssey*:

*“Circe told me, ‘First you will come to the island of the Sirens, who enchant men with their lovely song. Sailors who hear their song crash their ships on the Sirens’ island, whose shores are strewn with the bones of men. Sail quickly past the Sirens! Your men must not hear their song. Soften beeswax and plug their ears with it. But if you must hear their song, have your men tie you to the mast so that you don’t jump overboard and swim to their island and die. Tell your men that when you order them to untie you, they must tie you tighter.’ [...]*

*“When Circe finished speaking to me, dawn arrived, and I went directly to my ship and we set sail. Circe sent us a favorable wind to help us on our way. I told my crewmembers, ‘I will tell you everything — everything that Circe told me. Dangers await us. We will come to the island of the Sirens. Circe said that only I would hear their song. You must tie me to the mast so that I cannot jump overboard, swim to their island, and die.’ I did not tell them everything, as I had promised. I did not tell them about Scylla — I feared a mutiny.*

*“As we approached the island of the Sirens, I melted beeswax and stopped the ears of the crewmembers with it so that they could not hear the song of the Sirens. They tied me tightly to the mast. I heard the song of the Sirens: ‘Come to us, Odysseus. Your fame has reached the sky. Hear our song and become wise. We know what happened at Troy, and we know what will happen on the Earth.’*

*“I wanted my crewmembers to untie me. They tied me tighter to the mast. They rowed quickly to escape from danger. Once we were past the island of the Sirens, they removed the beeswax from their ears and untied me.*

Source: David Bruce, *Homer’s Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose*. Available on online booksellers.

This is a reference to the story in Lucian’s *Nigrinus* 19:

*For, to give evil its due, believe me, there is no better school for virtue, no truer test of moral strength, than life in this same city of Rome. It is no easy thing, to withstand so many temptations, so many allurements and distractions of sight and sound. There is no help for it: like Odysseus, we must sail past them all; and there must be no binding of hands, no stopping of our ears with wax; that would be but sorry courage: our ears must hear, our hands must be free, — and our contempt must be genuine.*

Source: *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Translated by H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1905.

<http://tinyurl.com/ybsq6a2k>

**“The rat-catchers charme, are all fools and asses to this.”  
(3.5)**

This information comes from wordhippo.com:

*What’s the plural form of **charme**? Here’s the word you’re looking for.*

*The noun **charme** can be countable or uncountable.*

*In more general, commonly used, contexts, the plural form will also be **charme**.*



*However, in more specific contexts, the plural form can also be **charmes** e.g. in reference to various types of **charmes** or a collection of **charmes**.*

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/y9ntksce>

In my retelling, I interpret Bartholomew Cokes' sentence in one way. The sentence can also be interpreted in these ways:

- 1) "The rat-catchers' choir (of voices singing charms) are all fools and asses compared to this Nightingale (and me)."
- 2) "The rat-catchers' enchanted charms are all metaphorical fools and asses compared to this charm that is being sung by Nightingale (and me)."

However, if Bartholomew Cokes meant these meanings, would he be right or wrong?

It depends on the purpose of the rat-catchers' charm.

Suppose that the purpose of the charm is to attract the rats so they can be gotten rid of.

Most of us are familiar with the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin in which the piper used music to attract rats and lead them out of town and into a river where they drowned. The Pied Piper of Hamelin was effective at getting rid of rats, and so his singing and his charm were effective — more effective than the song of Nightingale and Bartholomew Cokes.

But suppose that the purpose of the charm is to keep the rats away. Getting rid of the rats is certainly the ultimate purpose of the charm.

Also certainly, the Pied Piper of Hamelin was effective at getting rid of rats, but the Pied Piper story is a folktale. In real life, rats will not be rhymed to death. In the real world, Bartholomew Cokes would say (until his purse is cut), his

and Nightingale's song is much more effective at keeping unwanted beings away.

### **Zeal-of-the-Land Busy and the Disguised Justice Overdo Escape from the Stocks (4.6)**

Acts 16:19-34 (King James Version)

*19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,*

*20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,*

*21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.*

*22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.*

*23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:*

*24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.*

*25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

*26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.*

*27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.*

28 *But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*

29 *Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,*

30 *And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

31 *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

32 *And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.*

33 *And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.*

34 *And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

#### **Westfabian (5.4)**

This is an excerpt from *Dictionary of Early English* by Joseph T. Shipley:

*Propertius used the phrase licens Fabius of the Fabian priests of Pan, who had the privilege of licentious conduct at the Lupercal; hence late 16<sup>th</sup> century references (Florio; Nashe) to a flaunting fabian, a roisterer.*

Source: Joseph T. Shipley, *Dictionary of Early English* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1955). P. 255.

<http://tinyurl.com/y95w6nme>

#### **Shimei (5.5)**

This is 2 Samuel 16:5-13 (King James Version):

5 *And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.*

6 *And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.*

7 *And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:*

8 *The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.*

9 *Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.*

10 *And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?*

11 *And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him.*

12 *It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.*

13 *And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.*

## CHAPTER 4: Ben Jonson's *The Case is Altered*

### CAST OF CHARACTERS (*The Case is Altered*)

COUNT FERNEZE, *a nobleman*

PAOLO FERNEZE, *his son, in love with Rachel de Prie*

CAMILLO FERNEZE, *the Count's long-lost son*

GASPAR, *friend to Chamont*

AURELIA, *the Count's daughter*

PHOENIXELLA, *another daughter*

MAXIMILIAN, *the general of the Milanese*

CHAMONT, *a French general, friend to Gaspar. Chamont's father surprised Vicenza.*

ANGELO, *a lady's man, friend to Paolo Ferneze*

FRANCISCO COLONNIA, *a visiting nobleman*

VALENTINE, *his servant*

JAQUES DE PRIE, *a miser*

MELUN, *former steward to Chamont's father*

RACHEL DE PRIE, *Jaques' daughter (perhaps biologically). The people who love, or claim to love, Rachel at various times are Paolo Ferneze, Onion, Christophero, Count Ferneze, and Angelo.*

ISABEL, *Chamont's long-lost sister*

JUNIPER, *a cobbler*

PETER ONION, *groom [servant] of the hall to Count Ferneze*

ANTONIO BALLADINO, *pageant poet of Milan*

CHRISTOPHERO, *steward to Count Ferneze.*  
*Christophero's nickname is Kit.*

SEBASTIAN, MARTINO, VINCENTIO, BALTHASAR,  
*servants to Count Ferneze*

PACUE, *Chamont's French page*

FINIO, *Francisco's Italian page*

BOY, *Paolo Ferneze's servant, aka serving-boy*

NUNTIUS, *a messenger*

SEWER (*a servant who superintended the serving of the food*)

SERVING-MEN

SOLDIERS

## **THE SCENE and TIME: MILAN in 1529**

### **Notes**

In this society, a person of higher rank would use “thou,” “thee,” “thine,” and “thy” when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use “you” and “your” when referring to a person of higher rank.

“Sirrah” was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

This society believed that the mixture of four humors in the body determined one's temperament. One humor could be predominant. The four humors are blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. If blood is predominant, then the person is sanguine (active, optimistic). If yellow bile is predominant, then the person is choleric (bad-tempered). If black bile is

predominant, then the person is melancholic (sad). If phlegm is predominant, then the person is phlegmatic (calm, apathetic, indolent).

A humor can be a personal characteristic.

A humor can also be a fancy or a whim.

The word “wench” at this time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

“The case is altered” means “The situation has changed.”

ACT 1 (*The Case is Altered*)

— 1.1 —

Juniper, a cobbler, was sitting at work in his shop and singing a song about troubled love:

*“Now, woeful wights [persons], give ear awhile,*

*“And mark the tenor [drift] of my style,*

*“Which shall such trembling hearts unfold*

*“As seldom hath [has] tofore [before] been told.*

*“Such chances rare and doleful [sorrowful] news.”*

Peter Onion, the servant of the hall to Count Ferneze of Milan, Italy, came into Juniper’s shop in a hurry and said, “Fellow Juniper! Peace, in God’s name! Stop singing!”

Juniper continued to sing:

*“As may attempt your wits to muse [contemplate].”*

“Godso, listen, man!” Onion said. “A pox of God on you!”

“Godso” is a mild curse word.

Juniper continued to sing:

*“And cause such trickling tears to pass,*

*“Except [Unless] your hearts be flint or brass.”*

Hearts made of flint or brass are hard hearts.

“Juniper! Juniper!” Onion cried.

Juniper continued to sing:

*“To hear the news which I shall tell,*

*“That in Castella [Castile] once befell.”*



He then complained, “By God’s blood, where did thou learn to corrupt a man in the midst of a verse, ha?”

A comic character, Jupiter frequently made malapropisms. By “corrupt,” he meant “interrupt.”

Onion replied, “By God’s eyelid, man, the food service is ready to go up, man. You must slip on your coat and come in. We lack waiters pitifully.”

Although Juniper was a cobbler, he was being asked to put on a coat and assist in serving a meal to members of Count Ferneze’s household.

“That is a pitiful thing to hear, for now must I from a merry cobbler become a mourning creature,” Juniper said.

Count Ferneze’s wife, the Countess Ferneze, had recently died, and so Juniper would put a black coat.

“Well, you’ll come?” Onion asked.

“*Presto*,” Juniper said. “Quickly. Bah, a word to the wise. Away, fly, vanish! Go, irritating thing!”

The full proverb is “A word to the wise is enough.”

Onion exited, and Juniper sang:

*“Lie there, the weeds [clothing] that I disdain to wear.”*

Antonio Balladino, the pageant poet of Milan, entered the scene and said, “May God save you, Master Juniper.”

“What! Signor Antonio Balladino!” Juniper said. “Welcome, sweet ingle.”

An “ingle” is 1) a lover, especially a boy in a homosexual relation with an older man, or 2) a close friend.

“And how do you do, sir?” Antonio Balladino asked.

Putting on a black coat, Juniper said, “Indeed, you see, I am put to my shifts here as poor servants often are.”

A shift is 1) an article of clothing, or 2) a trick.

Juniper continued:

“Sirrah Antony, there’s one of my fellows mightily enamored of thee and, indeed, you slave, now that you have come, I’ll bring you together.”

The two men — Peter Onion and Antonio Balladino — had never met, and Juniper’s fellow was not feeling romantic amour for Antonio Balladino, so it’s more accurate to say that the person respected Antonio Balladino because of his reputation.

Juniper continued:

“It’s Peter Onion, the servant of the hall. Do you know him?”

“No, not yet, I assure you,” Antonio Balladino answered.

Juniper said:

“Oh, he is one as right of thy humor and disposition as may be, a plain, simple rascal, a true follower of the philosopher-theologian Duns Scotus.

“By the Virgin Mary, he has been a notable villain in his time. He is in love, sirrah, with a wench, and I have recommended thee to him. Thou shall make him some pretty paradox or some allegory.”

Paradoxes are contradictions that contain truth.

Allegories are narratives with hidden spiritual or political meanings. In some works of art, a journey on a road may be allegorically interpreted as a journey through life.

“How does my coat sit? Well?”

“Aye, very well,” Antonio Balladino said.

Onion re-entered the scene and said, “Nay, Godso, fellow Juniper, come away!”

Juniper said:

“Are thou there, mad slave? Aye, come with a powder! Come impetuously!

“Sirrah fellow Onion, I must have you peruse this gentleman well and treat him with respect and kindness, as examples of why he deserves such respect and kindness shall be given.”

Juniper exited, and Onion turned to “this gentleman” — Antonio Balladino — and bowed.

“Nay, good master Onion, what do you mean? I pray you, sir, you are too respectful, in good faith,” Antonio Balladino said.

“I wish you would not think so, sir,” Onion said, “for although I have no learning, yet I honor a scholar in any ground of the earth, sir. Shall I request your name, sir?”

“My name is Antonio Balladino.”

“Balladino?” Onion said. “You aren’t the pageant poet to the city of Milan, sir, are you?”

Pageants were grand spectacles.

“I supply the place, sir, when a worse cannot be had, sir,” Antonio Balladino said.

A “worse” poet? Hmm. He was joking, but what does this say about pageants?

“I beg your pardon, sir,” Onion said. “I love you the better for that, sir. By Jesu, you must pardon me; I didn’t recognize

you, but I'd pray to be better acquainted with you, sir. I have seen some of your works."

"I am at your service, good master Onion," Antonio Balladino said. "But concerning this maiden whom you love, sir, who is she?"

"Oh, did my fellow Juniper tell you about her?" Onion said. "By the Virgin Mary, sir, she is, as one may say, only a poor man's child, indeed; and as for my own part, I am no gentleman born, I must confess, but 'My mind to me a kingdom is,' truly."

"My mind to me a kingdom is" is the title line of a poem by Edward Dyer.

"Truly, a very good saying," Antonio Balladino said.

"It is somewhat stale, but that doesn't matter," Onion said.

"Oh, staler is the better," Antonio Balladino said. "Such things are always like bread, which, the staler it is, the more wholesome."

"This is but a hungry comparison, in my judgment," Onion said.

A hungry comparison is a far-fetched comparison.

"Why, I'll tell you, Master Onion, I use as much stale stuff, although I say it myself, as any man does in that kind, I am sure," Antonio Balladino said. "Did you see the last pageant I set forth?"

"No, indeed, sir, but there goes a huge report on it," Onion said. "It has caused a lot of talk."

"Why, you shall be one of my Maecen-asses," Antonio Balladino said. "I'll give you one of the books. Oh, you'll like it admirably."

Maecenas was a patron of celebrated Roman authors such as Horace and Virgil. Onion could be Antonio Balladino's patron by reading and saying good things about a printed copy of one of Antonio's pageants.

"That's certain," Onion said.

It was certain that Onion would be a Maecen-ass.

Onion continued, "I'll get my fellow Juniper to read it."

Possibly, Onion was illiterate.

"Read it, sir?" Antonio Balladino said. "I'll read it to you."

"Tut, then I shall not choose but to like it," Onion replied.

Antonio Balladino said:

"Why, look, sir, I write so plainly and keep that old decorum that you must of necessity like it. By the Virgin Mary, you shall have some now — as, for example, in plays — who will have every day new tricks and write you nothing but humors."

Humors are dispositions such as being sanguine (active, optimistic), choleric (bad-tempered), melancholic (sad), or phlegmatic (calm, apathetic, indolent). A humor can also be a personal characteristic, or a fancy or whim.

Antonio Balladino continued:

"Indeed, this pleases the gentlemen, but the common sort, they don't care for it. They don't know what to make of it; they look for good matter, they do, and they are not edified with such trifles."

"Humors" was a fashionable term at the time, and many plays used the term. Ben Jonson himself wrote the plays *Every Man Out of His Humor* and *Every Man in His Humor*.

“The common sort” are the less-educated members of the audience. They tended to like spectacle for the sake of spectacle.

“You are in the right,” Onion said. “I’ll not give a halfpenny to see a thousand of them. I was at one the last term, but if I ever see a more roguish thing, I am a piece of cheese and no onion. Nothing but kings and princes in it; the fool came out not a jot.”

Onion liked comic plays in which fools had major parts. Tragedies and histories without fools were not to his liking.

“True, sir, they would have me make such plays, but as I tell them, even if they would give me twenty pounds a play, I’ll not raise my style of writing,” Antonio Balladino said.

The going rate for plays was six pounds.

“No, it would be a vain thing if you should, sir,” Onion said.

“Tut, give me the penny, give me the penny. I don’t care for the gentlemen, I. Let me have a good ground,” Antonio Balladino said. “No matter for the pen; the plot shall carry it.”

The groundlings — the common sort — paid a penny to see a play. They stood on the ground and were not seated while watching the play.

“Indeed, that’s right,” Onion said. “You are in print — known — already as the best plotter.”

“Aye, I might also have been noted for dumb shows, too,” Antonio Balladino said.

Dumb shows were portions of plays with no dialogue.

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, sir, I marvel that you were not,” Onion said. “Stand aside, sir, for a while.”

Antonio Balladino exited.

The Sewer — the servant who superintended the serving of the food — passed by, along with some half-dozen servants wearing mourning coats. All of them were carrying food and utensils.

Valentine, a servant of the visiting nobleman Francisco Colonna, entered the scene.

“How are you now, friend?” Onion said. “Who are you there? Be uncovered. Take off your hat. Do you want to speak with any man here?”

“Aye, or else I must have returned you no answer,” Valentine said.

If he would not speak to Onion, he could not answer Onion’s question.

“Friend, you are somewhat too peremptory and cheeky,” Onion said. “Let’s crave your absence. Go. Now. Nay, never scorn my words; I am a little your better in this place.”

“I do acknowledge it,” Valentine said.

“Do you acknowledge it?” Onion said. “Nay, then, you shall go forth. I’ll teach you how you shall acknowledge it another time. Go to another place, leave. I must have the hall purged. No setting up of a rest here. Pack off. Begone.”

“I ask you, sir,” Valentine said. “Isn’t your name Onion?”

“I am your friend, according to how you treat me, and I am Master Onion. Say what you have to say.”

“Master Onion with a murrain — a plague!” Valentine said. “Come, come, put off this lion’s hide; your ears have revealed you.”

In one of Aesop's fables, an ass finds and wears a lion's hide. The other animals are afraid of the ass until he brays with happiness at being feared, revealing his true identity.

Valentine then said to Peter Onion, "Why, Peter, don't I know you, Peter?"

"Godso, Valentine!" Peter Onion said, recognizing him.

"Oh, can you recognize me now, sir?" Valentine asked.

"Good Lord, sirrah, how thou are altered with thy travel!" Onion said.

"Nothing so much as thou are altered with thine office," Valentine said. "But, sirrah Onion, is the Count Ferneze at home?"

"Aye, bully, he is above on the second floor, and the Lord Paolo Ferneze, his son, and Madam Aurelia and Madam Phoenixella, his daughters, are with him. But, oh, Valentine!"

In this society, the word "bully" was not negative. One could call a friend "bully."

"How are thou now, man?" Valentine asked. "How are thou doing?"

"Indeed, I am sad, heavy, as a man of my coat ought to be," Onion said.

He was wearing a black coat as a sign of mourning.

"Why, man, thou were merry enough just now," Valentine said.

Onion replied:

"True, but as thou know,

"All creatures here sojourning



“Upon this wretched earth

“Sometimes have a fit of mourning

“As well as a fit of mirth.

“Oh, Valentine, my old lady is dead, man.”

“Dead!” Valentine said.

“Indeed,” Onion said.

“When did she die?” Valentine asked.

Onion replied:

“By the Virgin Mary, tomorrow shall be three months since she died. She was seen going to heaven, they say, about some five weeks ago.

“How are you now? Trickling tears, I see?”

Crying, Valentine said, “Indeed, thou have made me weep with this news.”

“Why, I have done but the part of an onion,” Onion said. “You must pardon me.”

Cutting onions makes one weep tears.

## — 1.2 —

The Sewer again passed by with servers carrying food and utensils. The servants acknowledged Valentine with nods when they saw him. The Sewer and other servants exited.

Juniper entered from his cobbler’s shop and greeted Valentine and handed Onion a dish.

“What! Valentine?” Juniper said. “Fellow Onion, take my dish, please.”

Onion exited, carrying the dish.

Juniper said to Valentine, “You rogue, sirrah, tell me how thou are doing, sweet ingle?”

“Indeed, Juniper, the better to see thee thus frolic and be merry,” Valentine said.

“Nay, by God’s eyelid, I am no changeling, I am Juniper still.”

A changeling is a baby left by fairies in place of a human baby. Juniper was saying here that he is not an imposter.

Juniper continued, “I keep the pristinate: the original state. Ha, you mad hieroglyphic, when shall we swagger?”

Juniper’s education was lacking. He was using the word “hieroglyphic,” which refers to Egyptian pictorial writing, as a term of friendship.

“Hieroglyphic?” Valentine said. “What do thou mean by that?”

“Mean?” Juniper said. “Godso, isn’t it a good word, man? What! Stand upon meaning with your friends? Pooh, *absconde*.”

The Latin word “*absconde*” means “*put away*.” Juniper wanted Valentine to put away — stop — such behavior.

“Why, but wait, wait,” Valentine said. “How long has this sprightly humor haunted thee?”

“Bah, humor?” Juniper said. “A foolish, natural gift we have in the equinoctial.”

A humor can be a passing fancy.

“Equinoctial” refers to the spring equinox and autumn equinox: the day when the lengths of the day and of the night are equal. Juniper’s use of the word was probably

nonsensical, similar to much of his vocabulary. Or he may have been saying that people have a humor twice a year.

“Natural?” Valentine said. “By God’s eyelid, it may be supernatural, this.”

The way Juniper used words was not natural.

“Valentine, I ask you to ruminate thyself welcome,” Juniper said. “What, *fortuna de la guerra*.”

By “ruminate,” Juniper meant “consider.”

*Fortuna de la guerra means “the fortune of war.”*

*The fortune of a war against words, yes.*

“Oh, how pitifully are these words forced, as though they were pumped out from his belly!” Valentine said to himself.

“Sirrah ingle, I think thou have seen all the strange countries in Christendom since thou went,” Juniper said.

“I have seen some, Juniper,” Valentine said.

“You have seen Constantinople?” Juniper asked.

“Aye, that I have,” Valentine said.

“And Jerusalem, and the Indies, and Goodwin Sands, and the tower of Babylon, and Venice, and all?” Juniper asked.

Most of these were places where foreign languages were spoken. Of course, foreign languages are unintelligible to those who cannot speak them.

Goodwin Sands was dangerous shoals near Kent, where English was spoken. But even English can be unintelligible when the speaker — e.g., Juniper — misuses words.

The story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis is a mythological explanation of how different languages arose in the world. The word “babel” means “unintelligible sounds.”

Genesis 11:9 states, *“Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth”* (King James Bible).

“Aye, all of them,” Valentine said.

He then said to himself, “It’s no marvel if he has a nimble tongue, if he uses it to vault thus from one side of the world to another.”

“Oh, it’s a most heavenly thing to travel and see countries, especially at sea, if a man had a patent — the privilege — not to be sick,” Juniper said.

Valentine said to himself, “Oh, seasick jest, and full of the scurvy!”

Scurvy was a disease, caused by a Vitamin C deficiency, that frequently afflicted sailors, who often lacked access to fresh fruit.

### — 1.3 —

Sebastian, Martino, Vincentio, and Balthasar entered the scene. They were servants to Count Ferneze. These servants should have been attending to serving the meal upstairs.

“Valentine, welcome, indeed,” Sebastian said. “How do thou do, sirrah?”

“How do you do, good Valentine?” Martino asked.

“Truly, Valentine, I am glad to see you,” Vincentio said.

“Welcome, sweet rogue,” Balthasar said.

“Before God, he never looked better in his life,” Sebastian said.

“And how is it, man?” Balthasar said. “What! *Allo coraggio!* Have courage!”

Valentine replied, “I was never better, gentlemen, indeed.”

“By God’s will, here comes the steward,” Juniper said.

Christophero, Count Ferneze’s steward, entered the scene.

“Why, how are you now, fellows, all here?” Christophero said. “And nobody to wait above now they are ready to rise from the table? Look smart, one or two of you, and go upstairs.”

Juniper, Martino, and Vincentio exited. Sebastian and Balthazar remained to talk with Valentine and Christophero.

Christophero said to Valentine, “Signor Francisco Colonna’s serving-man, how does your good master?”

“He is in health, sir,” Valentine said. “He will be here soon.”

“Has he come home, then?” Christophero asked.

“Aye, sir, he is not more than six miles from here,” Valentine said. “He sent me before him to learn if Count Ferneze were here and then return word to him.”

“Yes, my lord is here,” Christophero said, “and you may tell your master he shall come very happily to take his leave of Lord Paolo Ferneze, who is now very quickly to depart with other noble gentlemen upon special service.”

Paolo Ferneze was Count Ferneze’s son. He was departing so he could perform military service.

“I will tell him, sir,” Valentino said.

“Please do,” Christophero said. “Fellows, give him something to drink.”

Christophero wanted the others to make Valentino welcome.

Christophero exited to attend to his duties upstairs.

“Sirs, what military service is it they are employed in?” Valentino asked.

“Why, against the French,” Sebastian said. “They mean to have a fling at Milan again, they say.”

The year was 1529, and in 1510, the French had besieged the Italian town of Vicenza, which is about forty miles west of Venice. The French were and had been trying to control northern Italy. From 1500 to 1515, the French had occupied Milan.

“Who leads our forces?” Valentine asked. “Can you tell me?”

“By the Virgin Mary, Signor Maximilian does that,” Sebastian said. “He is above us on the second floor now.”

“Maximilian of Vicenza?” Valentine asked.

“Aye, he,” Balthazar said. “Do you know him?”

“Know him?” Valentine said. “Oh, yes, he’s an excellently brave soldier.”

“Aye, so they say, but he is also one of the most vainglorious men in Europe,” Balthazar said.

“He is, indeed, by the Virgin Mary, exceedingly valiant,” Valentine said.

“And that is rare,” Sebastian said.

“What?” Balthazar asked.

“Why, to see a vainglorious man valiant,” Sebastian answered.

A vainglorious man is overly proud: He is vain and thinks himself glorious.

“Why, he is so. He is valiant, I assure you,” Valentine said.

Juniper returned and said:

“What, no further along with the drinking yet?”

“Come on, you precious rascal, Sir Valentine. I’ll give you a health — a toast, indeed, for the heavens, you mad *capriccio*, hold, hook and line!”

A *capriccio* is a madcap: a fantastical person.

Fishermen can say, “Hold, hook and line,” when catching a fish. It was also a line said to encourage drinking.

— 1.4 —

Lord Paolo Ferneze, the son of Count Ferneze, entered the scene, with his serving-boy following him.

“Boy!” Paolo Ferneze said.

“My lord?” his serving-boy answered.

“Sirrah, go upstairs to Signor Angelo, and ask him, if he can, to devise some means to leave my father and come speak with me, ” Paolo Ferneze ordered.

Angelo was one of Paolo Ferneze’s friends.

“I will, my lord,” his serving-boy said as he exited.

Alone, Paolo Ferneze said to himself:

“Well, may heaven be auspicious in the event! For I do this against my genius, against my natural temperament, and yet

my thoughts cannot propose a reason why I should fear or faint thus in my hopes of having one whom I love so dearly.”

Paolo Ferneze was in love with Rachel De Prie, the daughter of Jaques De Prie, who was reputed to be a beggar. Paolo worried about his hopes of having her, although he could think of no reason why he should fear that she would not return his love.

Paolo Ferneze was going to ask his friend Angelo to help him win Rachel De Prie. Angelo had always been a loyal friend, but now Paolo was wondering if he would continue to be loyal.

Angelo was a lady’s man, and Rachel was a lady.

Paolo Ferneze continued:

“Some spark it is, kindled within the soul, whose light yet breaks not to the outward sense, that propagates this timorous suspect.”

Paolo Ferneze felt some mistrust of Angelo, but he had no evidence that would justify his mistrust. It was simply a feeling that he could not justify.

Paolo Ferneze continued:

“Angelo’s actions have never carried any appearance of change or weakness. Then I injure him in being thus skeptical of his faith and loyalty to me.”

He looked up and said, “Oh, here he comes.”

Angelo and the serving-boy entered the scene.

“How are you now, sweet lord?” Angelo asked. “What’s the matter?”

Paolo Ferneze said to himself, “Good faith, his presence makes me half-ashamed of my straying thoughts.”



He ordered his serving-boy, “Sirrah, bestow yourself elsewhere.”

The serving-boy exited.

Paolo Ferneze then asked, “Signor Angelo, where is my father?”

“By the Virgin Mary, he is in the gallery, where Your Lordship left him,” Angelo answered.

The gallery was a walking space. Count Ferneze was taking a walk after his meal.

Paolo Ferneze said:

“That’s well. So then, Angelo, I will be brief.

“Since time forbids the use of circuitous speech, let how well you are received in my affection appear by this one instance only: that now I will deliver to your trust the dearest secrets treasured in my bosom.

“Dear Angelo, you are not just any man, but you are one whom my considered judgment has designated as the true, proper object of my soul.

“I don’t urge this to insinuate my desert, or to soften your tried temper with soft phrases — true friendship loathes such oily compliment — but my speech is enforced and comes from the abundance of that love that flows through all my spirits.”

The friendship of Paolo Ferneze and Angelo was well-established.

Angelo replied, “Before Your Lordship proceeds too far, let me be bold to intimate thus much: that whatsoever your wisdom has to expose, whether it is the weightiest, richest affair that ever was included in your breast, my faith and loyalty shall be equal to it; if not —”

Paolo Ferneze interrupted, “— oh, no more! Those words have enthralled me with their sweet effects, so freely breathed and so responsible and answerable to that which I endeavored to extract, arguing a happy mixture of our souls.”

Angelo said, “Why, even if there were no such sympathy and union in feeling, sweet lord, yet the impressure — the mental impression — of those ample favors I have derived from your unmatched spirit would bind my faith to all duties.”

“What!” Paolo Ferneze said. “Favors, Angelo? Oh, don’t speak about them. They are mere paintings — they are only shows — and they import no merit. Is my true friendship for you apparent to you? On that friendship my hopes are placed. Faith that is bought with favors cannot last.”

True love and true friendship cannot be purchased.

Paolo’s serving-boy entered the room and said, “My lord!”

“What is it now?” Paolo asked.

“You are sought for all about the house inside,” the serving-boy said. “The Count, your father, calls for you.”

Paolo Ferneze said:

“God, what cross, contrary events thwart my purposes! Now my father will violently fret and grieve because I am absent.

“Boy, say I will come soon.”

His serving-boy exited.

Paolo said, “Sweet Angelo, I cannot now speak about particulars; I must serve the time. The main point of all this is, I am in love.”

He startled.

“Why does Your Lordship startle?” Angelo asked.

“I thought I heard my father coming here,” Paolo said.  
“Listen!”

“I don’t hear anything,” Angelo said. “It was only your imagination, surely.”

“No,” Paolo said.

“There is no sound, I assure Your Lordship,” Angelo said.

“I would work safely and securely,” Paolo said.

He was worried that his father would find out that he was in love with Rachel de Prie. His father was likely to disapprove.

“Why, has he no knowledge of it — your being in love — then?” Angelo asked.

Paolo said:

“Oh, no. No creature yet knows it except yourself in a third person — only you, I, and Rachel know — and believe me, friend, the world does not contain now another spirit to whom I would reveal it.

“Listen! Listen!”

Some servants were calling for him inside Count Ferneze’s house, “Signor Paolo! Lord Ferneze!”

“A plague upon those brazen-throated slaves!” Angelo said.  
“What, are they mad, do you think?”

Paolo said:

“Alas, don’t blame them. Their services are, clock-like, to be set backward and forward at their lord’s command.

“You know that my father is wayward and unreasonable, and his humor must not receive a check, for then all objects feed

both his grief and his impatience; and those affections in him are like powder, apt to inflame with every little spark and blow up reason.

“Therefore, Angelo, be at peace.”

From inside the house came voices:

Count Ferneze said, “Why, this is ‘excellent’! Isn’t he in the garden?”

“I don’t know, my lord,” Christophero replied.

“See if he is,” Count Ferneze said. “Call him.”

Paolo said, “He is coming this way. Let’s withdraw a little distance.”

Paolo and Angelo exited.

The servants called from inside the house: “Signor Paolo! Lord Ferneze! Lord Paolo!”

### — 1.5 —

Count Ferneze, Maximilian, Aurelia, Phoenixella, Sebastian, and Balthasar entered the scene. Maximilian was the general of the Milanese. Aurelia and Phoenixella were Count Ferneze’s daughters. Sebastian and Balthasar were two of the Count’s servants.

“Where should he be, do you think?” Count Ferneze said. “Did you look in the armory?”

The armory was where weapons were stored.

“No, my lord,” Sebastian answered.

“No? Why, go there!” Count Ferneze said. “Oh, who would keep such drones?”

He was complaining about his servants.

Sebastian and Balthasar exited.

Martino, another of the Count's servants, entered the scene.

"How are things now?" Count Ferneze asked. "Have you found him?"

"No, my lord," Martino answered.

"'No, my lord.' I shall have shortly all my family speak nothing but 'No, my lord,'" Count Ferneze said. "Where is Christophero?"

Christophero entered the scene.

Count Ferneze looked at Martino and said, "Look how he just stands there! You sleepy knave!"

Martino exited.

Count Ferneze asked Christophero, "Isn't my son in the garden?"

"No, my good lord," Christophero answered.

"Your 'good lord'? Oh, how this smells of fennel!" Count Ferneze said.

In this society, the herb fennel was associated with flattery.

Sebastian and Balthazar entered the scene.

"You have been in the garden, it appears," Count Ferneze said. "Well? Well?"

"We cannot find him, my lord," Balthazar said.

"He is not in the armory," Sebastian said.

"He isn't?" Count Ferneze said. "He is nowhere, is he?"

"Count Ferneze!" Maximilian said.

"Signor?" Count Ferneze replied.

“Preserve your patience, honorable count,” Maximilian said.

“Patience?” Count Ferneze said. “A saint would lose his patience to be crossed as I am with a sort of motley brains.”

The motley brains, according to the Count, were those of his servants.

The word “motley” described the clothing worn by Fools.

Common sayings of the times stated, “Enough to vex a saint” and “Enough to make a saint swear.”

Onion entered the scene as the Count continued, “See, see, how like a nest of rooks they stand, gaping on one another.”

According to the Count, his servants were standing around and staring at each other with open mouths.

A rook is 1) a crow, or 2) a simpleton.

Seeing Onion, Count Ferneze said, “Now, Diligence, what news do you bring?”

When giving Onion the name “Diligence,” Count Ferneze was being sarcastic.

“If it please Your Honor —” Onion began.

“Tut, tut, leave off pleasing of my honor,” Count Ferneze said. “Diligence, you double — you act deceitfully, you act double-faced — with me. Come.”

Onion said to himself, “What! Does he find fault with ‘please His Honor’? By God’s wounds, it has begun a serving-man’s speech ever since I belonged to the blue order.”

Servants normally wore blue coats, but now, as a sign of mourning, they were wearing black coats.

Onion continued speaking to himself, “I don’t know how it may show, now I am in black, but —”

“What’s that you mutter, sir?” Count Ferneze asked. “Will you proceed?”

Onion began, “If it like Your good Lordship —”

“Yet more!” Count Ferneze complained. “God’s precious!”

Onion said to himself, “What! Doesn’t this please him, either?”

“What are you saying, Sir Knave?” Count Ferneze said sarcastically.

Onion said out loud, “By the Virgin Mary, I say that Your Lordship would be best to set me to school again to learn how to deliver a message.”

“What!” Count Ferneze said. “Do you take exception at and argue with me, then?”

“Exception?” Onion said. “I take no exceptions but, by Godso, your humors and moods —”

“Bah,” Count Ferneze said. “You are a rascal. Hold your tongue.”

“Your Lordship’s poor servant, I am,” Onion said.

“Don’t tempt my patience,” Count Ferneze said.

“Why, I hope I am no spirit, am I?” Onion said.

“No spirit” means “no devil.” Devils tempt people, and Onion was tempting Count Ferneze to lose his temper.

Maximilian said to Count Ferneze, “My lord, command your steward to correct and discipline the slave.”

“Slave” meant “servant.”

“Correct him?” Onion said. “By God’s blood, come and correct him if you have a mind to it. Correct him! That’s a good jest, indeed. The steward and you both, come and correct him.”

Count Ferneze said to his other servants, “Nay, see, away with him. Pull his cloth over his ears.”

Stripping a servant of his coat was a way to fire a servant.

“Cloth?” Onion said. “You tell me of your cloth?”

He took off his black coat and said, “Here’s your cloth. If I mourn a minute longer, I am the rottenest onion that ever spoke with a tongue!”

The other servants thrust him outside.

Onion was fired; he left his black coat behind.

Maximilian said, “What do you call your hind, Count Ferneze?”

A hind is a servant.

“His name is Onion, signor,” the Count answered.

“I thought him some such saucy rascal,” Maximilian said.

“Signor Maximilian!” the Count said, shocked by the word “saucy,” which he did not regard as applying to Onion.

“Sweet lord?” Maximilian replied.

“Let me entreat you that you would not regard any contempt flowing from such a spirit to be so rude, so barbarous,” Count Ferneze said.

Count Ferneze actually liked Onion. The firing was temporary, and such firings probably happened frequently.

Maximilian said, “Most noble count, under your favor —”



“Under your favor” was a polite way to introduce a statement the hearer was unlikely to like.

Count Ferneze interrupted:

“Why, I’ll tell you, signor, Onion will bandy with me word for word — nay, more, he will put me to silence, strike me perfectly dumb, and so amaze me that often I don’t know whether to check or cherish his presumption.

“Therefore, good signor —”

Maximilian interrupted, “— sweet lord, know that I am not now to learn how to manage my affections, feelings, and emotions. I have observed and know the difference between a base wretch and a true man. I can distinguish them. The property of the wretch is, he would hurt and cannot; the property of the man is, he can hurt and will not.”

Aurelia laughed, and Count Ferneze now said to her, “Bah, my merry daughter. Oh, these looks agree well with your clothing, don’t they?”

She was wearing black, the color of mourning, because her mother had died.

Juniper entered the room while talking to Onion, who remained outside, “Tut, leave it to me.”

Looking at Maximilian, he said to Count Ferneze, “By your favor — if you don’t mind — this is the gentleman, I think.”

Using and misusing his vocabulary, he then said to Maximilian, “Sir, you appear to be an honorable gentleman. I understand and could wish for my own part that things were condent [conducted] otherwise than they are.”

Speaking about Onion, he said, “But, the world knows, a foolish fellow, somewhat proclive [headlong] and hasty; he did it — spoke rashly — in a prejudicate [precipitant, and in

such a way as to cause you to judge him before you know him] humor. By the Virgin Mary, now, upon better computation [consideration], he wanes, he melts, his poor eyes are in a cold sweat.

“Right noble signor, you can have only compunction. I love the man; tender [give] your compassion.”

“Compunction” is a feeling of guilt or distress that prevents or follows an evil action.

“Does any man here understand this fellow?” Maximilian asked.

“Oh, God, sir, I may say *frustra* to the comprehension of your intellection,” Juniper said.

The Latin *frustra* means “in vain.”

Juniper was criticizing Maximilian’s inability to understand him.

“Before the Lord, I swear that he speaks all in riddles, I think,” Maximilian said. “I must have a comment before I can conceive him.”

A comment? To understand Juniper, one needs an entire commentary.

“Why, he asks to have his fellow, Onion, pardoned, and you must grant it, signor,” Count Ferneze said.

“Oh, with all my soul, my lord,” Maximilian said. “Is that his proposition? Is that what he wants?”

Juniper said, “Aye, sir, and we shall retort [return] these kind favors with all the alacrity of spirit we can, sir, as may be most expedient [fit] as well for the quality [generosity] as the cause [decision, also a legal case]; until that time, in spite of this compliment [your kindness in listening to my words], I

rest, a poor cobbler, servant to my honorable lord here, your friend, and Juniper.”

Juniper exited.

“His name is Juniper?” Maximilian asked.

“Aye, signor,” Count Ferneze answered.

“He is a sweet youth,” Maximilian said. “His tongue has a happy turn when he sleeps.”

“Aye, for then it rests,” Count Ferneze replied.

Paolo Ferneze, Francisco Colonna, Angelo, and Valentine entered the scene.

Maximilian said to Paolo, “Oh, sir, you’re welcome. Why, God be thanked you are found at last.”

He then greeted Francisco Colonna, “Signor Colonna, truly you are welcome. I am glad to see you, sir, so well returned.”

Francisco Colonna replied, “I gladly thank Your Honor; yet, indeed, I am sorry for such a cause of sadness as has possessed Your Lordship in my absence.”

He was referring to the death of the Countess Ferneze.

Count Ferneze replied, “Oh, Francisco, you knew her — Countess Ferneze — and what she was!”

“She was a wise and honorable lady,” Francisco Colonna said.

Count Ferneze said:

“Aye, wasn’t she?”

“Well, don’t weep because she is gone.

“Passion’s dulled eye can make two griefs of one.

“Whomever Death marks out to die, neither virtue nor blood can save.

“Princes and beggars, all must feed the grave.”

Maximilian asked, “Are your horses and men ready, Lord Paolo?”

“Aye, signor, they wait for us at the gate,” Paolo replied.

Maximilian said, “Well, that is good.”

He said to Count Ferneze’s two daughters, Aurelia and Phoenixella, “Ladies, I will take my leave of you. May your fortunes be as yourselves: fair.”

He said to Paolo, “Come, let us get on horseback.”

He then said, “Count Ferneze, I bear a spirit full of thanks for all your honorable courtesies.”

“Sir, I could wish the number and value of them more in respect of your deservings,” Count Ferneze said. “But, Signor Maximilian, please, let me have a word with you in private.”

They walked to the side and talked.

Aurelia said to Paolo, “Indeed, brother, you are provided with a general — Maximilian — yonder. Curse my heart if I would not wish myself to become a man if I had Fortunatus’ hat here and go with you just to enjoy his presence.”

The fictional character Fortunatus’ magic hat took the wisher wherever he or she wished to go.

“Why, do you love him so well, sister?” Paolo asked.

“No, by my faith, but I have such an odd, singular, pretty apprehension of his humor that I think that I am even tickled with the idea of it,” Aurelia said. “Oh, he is a fine man.”

“And I think another man may be as fine as he is,” Angelo said.

“Oh, Angelo, do you think I would urge any comparison against you?” Aurelia said. “No, I am not so ill-bred as to be a defamer of your worthiness. Believe me, if I hadn’t some hope of your abiding with us, I would never desire to not wear black while I lived, and I would learn to speak in the nose and turn Puritan immediately.”

Angelo could abide — dwell — with Aurelia and her close relatives if he married her sister, Phoenixella.

The stereotype of Puritans was that they spoke through their nose, always wore black, and always lacked humor.

“I thank you, lady,” Angelo said. “I know you can flout, mock, and jeer.”

“Come, do you take it that way?” Aurelia said. “Indeed, you wrong me.”

Francisco Colonna and Phoenixella spoke together a short distance away from the others.

Colonna said, “Aye, but madam, thus to renounce all the feelings of pleasure may make your sadness seem too much affected and put on for show, and then the proper and true grace of it is lost.”

Phoenixella said:

“Indeed, sir, if I did put on this sadness only when I was outside and in society, and if I were merry and quick-humored in private, then it might seem affected and abhorred.

“But as my looks appear, such is my spirit, drowned up with confluence of grief and melancholy which like rivers run

through all my veins, quenching the pride and fervor of my blood.”

Maximilian and Count Ferneze talked apart from the others. Count Ferneze was worried about his son’s going to war.

Maximilian said, “My honorable lord, no more. There is the honor of my blood engaged for your son’s safety.”

“Signor, don’t blame me for looking after and being concerned about Paolo’s safety so much,” Count Ferneze said. “He is my only son, and that word ‘only’ has with its strong and repercussive, reverberating sound struck my heart cold, and given it a deep wound.”

Maximilian said, “Why, but wait a moment, I ask you. Has Your Lordship ever had any more sons than this?”

“Why, haven’t you heard the story, Maximilian?” Count Ferneze asked.

“Let my sword fail me, then, if I have heard it,” Maximilian said.

Count Ferneze said:

“I had one other son, younger born than this one, Paolo, by twice as many hours as would fill the circle of a year; his name was Camillo, whom in that black and fearful night I lost.”

His lost son Camillo and his son Paolo were separated by two years.

“It is now nineteen years ago at least, and yet the memory of it sits as fresh within my brain as if it were but yesterday.”

Count Ferneze continued:

“It was that night wherein the great Chamont, the general for France, surprised Vicenza.”

Vicenza had no previous notice or warning of the attack.

Count Ferneze continued:

“I think the horror of that clamorous shout his soldiers gave when they attained the wall still tingles in my ear.

“I think I see with what amazed looks, distracted thoughts, and confused minds, we who were citizens confronted one another. Every street was filled with bitter, self-tormenting cries, and happy was that foot that first could press the flowery champaign — meadow — bordering on Verona.

“Here I, employed about my dear wife’s safety, whose soul is now in peace, lost my Camillo, who surely was murdered by the barbarous soldiers, or else I should have heard something — my heart is great.

“Sorrow is faint, and passion makes me sweat.”

His young son Camillo apparently died in the fighting when the French forces took control of Vicenza.

Maximilian said:

“Don’t grieve, sweet count. Comfort your spirits. You have a son, Paolo, a noble gentleman. He stands face to face with honor as his equal. As for his safety, let that be no question. I am the master of my fortune and he shall share my fortune with me.”

He then said loudly:

“Farewell, my honorable lord.

“Ladies, once more, adieu.”

He said to Aurelia, “As for yourself, madam, you are a most splendid creature. I tell you so, be not proud of it, I love you.”

He then said, “Come, Lord Paolo, let’s mount our horses.”

Paolo said, “Adieu, good Signor Francisco. Farewell, sister.”

Francisco was Francisco Colonna.

Everyone departed, going in different directions, except for Maximilian, Paolo Ferneze, and Angelo.

Angelo said quietly to Paolo, “How shall we get him to leave?”

He was referring to Maximilian. Angelo and Paolo wished to speak privately.

Paolo replied quietly, “Why, easily enough.”

He said out loud, “Sweet Signor Maximilian, I have some small reason to stay here briefly. If it may please you, just go on horseback ahead of me. I’ll overtake you before your troops be ranged and set in order.”

“Your proposal does taste well,” Maximilian said. “Lord Ferneze, I go.”

He exited.

Paolo said to Angelo, “Now, if my love, fair Rachel, were so happy as just to look forth and come here.”

Rachel de Prie entered the scene.

Seeing her, Paolo said, “Look, fortune gives grace to me, before I can request it!”

He asked Rachel, “How are you now, my love? Where is your father?”

“He has gone away from home, my lord,” Rachel de Prie said.

“That’s well,” Paolo said.

“Aye, but I fear he’ll immediately return,” she said.



Paolo started to leave.

Rachel asked, "Are you now going, my most honored lord?"

"Aye, my sweet Rachel," Paolo said.

Angelo said to himself, "Before God, she is a sweet wench."

Paolo said, "Rachel, I hope I shall not need to urge the sacred purity of our affections, as if it hung in trial or suspense, since in our hearts and by our mutual vows it is confirmed and sealed in sight of heaven."

Rachel cried.

"Nay, do not weep," Paolo said.

She startled.

Paolo said:

"Why do you startle? Don't fear, my love. Your father cannot have returned so soon.

"Aye, please, do not look so sorrowfully. Thou shall lack nothing."

"No? Is your presence nothing?" Rachel said. "I shall lack that, and lacking that, I shall lack everything, for your presence is everything to me."

Paolo said:

"Content thee, sweetheart. Be content and happy.

"I have made choice here of a loyal friend, this gentleman, on whose zealous love I do repose more than on all the world, with the exception of thy beauteous self; and to him I have committed my dear care of thee, as if I had committed it to my genius — my attendant spirit — or my other soul."

Paolo continued:

“Receive him, gentle love, and what lacks my absence causes, his presence shall supply.

“The time is envious of our longer stay. I must leave.

“Farewell, dear Rachel.”

Rachel replied:

“My most dear lord, adieu.

“May Heaven and honor crown your deeds and you!”

She exited.

Paolo said, “Tell me truly, Angelo. How do thou like her?”

“Truly, I like her well, my lord, but shall I speak my mind?”  
Angelo replied.

“Aye, please do,” Paolo said.

Angelo said, “She is derived too meanly to be the wife to such a noble person as yourself, in my judgment.”

Rachel was lowly born, while Paolo was the son of a Count.

Paolo said:

“Nay, then, thy judgment is too mean-spirited, I see.

“Haven’t thou ever read, in differentiating good from evil,  
‘It is better to shine in virtue than in blood?’”

A proverb stated, “Virtue is the true nobility.”

“Come, you are so sententious, my lord,” Angelo said.

Jaques de Prie, Rachel’s father, entered the scene.

Seeing him, Paolo said to Angelo, “Here comes her father.”

He then asked, “How are thou, good Jaques?”

Angelo greeted him: “May God save thee, Jaques.”

Jaques was suspicious at being greeted so well: “What should this mean?”

He called, “Rachel, open the door.”

Rachel locked the doors when her father was not at home.

Jaques exited.

Angelo said, “By God’s blood, how the poor slave looks, as though he had been haunted by the spirit, Lar, or seen the ghost of some great Satrapas, wrapped in an unsavory sheet.”

A spirit is a ghost.

A Lar is a protective household god, worshipped by the Romans.

A satrap was a provincial governor in wealthy ancient Persia.

Ghosts appearing on stage wore sheets.

Paolo said:

“I wonder that he did not speak to us; likely he was amazed, coming so suddenly and unprepared upon us.

“Well, let’s go.”

## ACT 2 (*The Case is Altered*)

### — 2.1 —

Alone in his house, Jaques De Prie, the father of Rachel, said to himself:

“So now enough, my heart; beat now no more, at least for this cause of fright. What a cold sweat flowed on my brows and over all my bosom!

“Had I not reason to be frightened? To behold my door beset with unthrifths, and myself outside?”

“Unthrifths” are unthrifty people. In Jaques’ opinion, Paolo and Angelo were unthrifths.

Jaques continued:

“Why, Jaques, was there nothing in the house worth a continual eye, a vigilant thought, a watcher whose head should never nod, nor eyes once wink?

“Look on my coat, my thoughts, worn quite threadbare, which time could never cover with a nap, and by it learn never with naps of sleep to smother your thoughts of that which you keep.”

Jaques’ coat was threadbare, and so were his thoughts.

Jaques continued:

“But yet, I marvel why these gallant youths spoke to me so fairly, when I am thought to be a beggar!

“The goal of flattery is *gain* or *lechery*.

“If they seek gain from me, then they must think that I am rich, but they do not think that.

“As for their other goal, which is satisfaction of lechery, their goal is in my beautiful daughter, if it be in anything.

“And, by your leave, her beauty may tell them my beggary counterfeits because her neatness flows from some store of wealth, which breaks my coffers with this same engine: love for my own child.”

Although everyone thought of him as a poor beggar, Jaques was a rich miser who had money and seldom spent it, but he did spend it on his daughter, who was well-dressed.

Jaques continued:

“But this is answered: ‘Beggars will keep fine their daughters, being fair, though they themselves pine.’

“Well, then, their lecherous interest is for her, aye, it is surely for her, and I make her so brisk, smart, and finely dressed for some of them so that I might live alone with my gold once she is married.

“Oh, gold is a sweet companion, kind and true! A man may trust it when his father, brother, friend, or wife cheats him.

“Oh, wondrous wealth! That which makes all men false is true itself.

“But now this maiden is but supposed and thought to be my daughter, for I, being steward to a lord of France, of great estate and wealth, called Lord Chamont, once he had gone into the wars, I stole his treasure — but don’t overhear this, anything! — I stole his treasure, and I stole his daughter, who was only two years old, because the little girl loved me so much that she would leave the nurse herself to come into my arms, and, if I had left her, the child would surely have died.”

This Lord Chamont was the older Chamont: the one who had surprised Vicenza.

Jaques gave no reason for why “the child would surely have died.” This may just be an excuse for kidnapping her.

Jaques continued:

“Now herein I was kind and had a conscience. And, since her lady mother, who died in childbed delivering her, loved me surpassingly well, it may be the case that nature fashioned this affection, both in the child and her. But anyone who ransacks tombs and defaces the dead is ill-bred.

“I’ll therefore say no more; suppose the rest.”

Jaques may have had an affair with the Lady Chamont, Rachel’s mother. Perhaps Rachel really was his daughter and not Lord Chamont’s.

Jaques continued:

“Here have I changed my form, my name, and hers, and I live obscurely, to enjoy more safely my dearest treasure.

“But I must go outside.”

He called, “Rachel!”

Rachel appeared and asked, “What is your pleasure, sir?”

“Rachel, I must go outside,” Jaques said. “Lock thyself in, but yet take out the key, so that whosoever peeps in at the keyhole may yet imagine there is no one at home.”

“I will, sir,” Rachel said.

Jaques said:

“But, listen, Rachel.

“Say that a thief should come and peep in at the keyhole and not see the key; he would conclude indeed that no one was at home and so break in all the sooner.

“Open the door, Rachel, set it open, daughter. But sit in the doorway thyself and talk aloud, as if there were some more people in the house with thee.

“Put out the fire, kill the chimney’s heart, so that it may breathe no more than a dead man.

“The more we spare, my child, the more we gain.”

He exited.

— 2.2 —

Christophero, Juniper, and Onion talked together.

“What does my fellow Onion say?” Christophero said. “Come on.”

“All of a house, sir, but no fellows,” Onion said. “You are my lord’s steward.”

Onion was pointing out that although Christophero and he were servants in the same household, they were not fellows — that is, they were not equals. As Count Ferneze’s steward, Christophero ranked higher than Onion.

“But I ask you, what do you think of love, sir?” Onion asked.

“Of love, Onion?” Christophero said. “Why, it’s a very honorable humor.”

“Nay, if it is only worshipful, I don’t care,” Onion said.

In this society, “Your Honor” is a higher, better title than “Your Worship.”

“Bah, it’s honorable,” Juniper said. “Don’t recoil from the conceit — the idea — of the gentleman.”

“But in truth, sir,” Onion said, “you shall do well to think well of love, for in my opinion, it thinks well of you, I assure you.”

“Gramercy — thanks — fellow Onion, I do think well of love,” Christophero said. “Thou are in love, are thou?”

“Partly, sir, but I am ashamed to say wholly,” Onion said.

“Well, I will further it in thee to any honest woman or maiden, the best I can,” Christophero said.

Using and misusing his vocabulary as usual, Juniper said, “Why, now you come near Onion, sir. Onion does vail [take off his hat], he does remunerate [recompense], he does chaw the cud [ruminate] in the kindness of an honest imperfection [malapropism for ‘intervention’] by Your Worship.”

In other words, Onion wants your help, which you have agreed to give him.

“But who is it thou love, fellow Onion?” Christophero asked.

“By the Virgin Mary, a poor man’s daughter, but none of the honestest, I hope,” Onion answered.

“Honest” means “chaste.” Onion loved a poor man’s daughter, and he hoped that she was not overly chaste.

“Why, wouldn’t thou have her honest and chaste?” Christophero asked.

“Oh, no, for then I am sure she would not have me,” Onion replied. “The woman I love is Rachel de Prie.”

“Why, she has the name — and the reputation — of a very virtuous maiden,” Christophero said.

*Prie* is French for “pray.”

“So she is, sir; but the fellow talks in quiddits, he does,” Juniper said.

“The fellow” is Onion, and “quiddits” is a malapropism for “quibbles” and “quiddities.”

“Quiddities” are peculiarities, and quibbles are plays on words.



Christophero asked Onion, “What do thou want me to do in the matter?”

“Do nothing, sir, I pray you, but speak for me,” Onion said.

He wanted Christophero to say good things about him to Rachel.

“In what manner?” Christophero asked.

“My fellow Juniper can tell you, sir,” Onion replied.

Juniper said to Christophero, “Why, speak as thus, sir: Your Worship may commend him for a fellow fit for consanguinity, and may say that he shakes with desire of procreation, or so.”

“Consanguinity” means “blood mingling” and is a euphemism for sex.

“That would not be so good to tell her, I think,” Christophero said.

“No, sir? Why so, sir?” Juniper asked.

He then gave some examples of what Christophero could say to Rachel in Onion’s behalf:

“What if you should say to her, ‘Corroborate thyself, sweet soul; let me distinguish thy paps with my fingers, divine Mumps, pretty Pastorella,’” Juniper said.

“Corroborate” means “confirm.” Here it may mean, “Corroborate that you are loved.”

“Distinguish thy paps” means “feel thy breasts.”

“Mumps” is an affectionate nickname, and “Pastorella” is a name for a shepherdess.

Juniper continued with a suggestion of what Christophero could say to Rachel in Onion’s behalf:

“Look thou so sweet and bounteous? Comfort my friend here.”

The kind of comfort could be sexual in nature. The “friend” could be between Onion’s legs.

Christophero said, “Well, I perceive that you wish I should say something that may do him grace and show him in a good light and further his desires, and that, you can be sure, I will.”

“I thank you, sir. May God save your life, I pray to God, sir,” Onion said.

“Your Worship is too good to live long,” Juniper said to Christophero.

A proverb stated, “Those whom God loves do not live long.”

“You’ll contaminate me no service?” Juniper asked.

“‘Contaminate’?” Christophero said. “‘Command,’ thou meant to say. No, good Juniper.”

“May you have health and wealth, sir,” Juniper said.

Onion and Juniper exited.

Alone, Christophero said to himself, “This wench — Rachel — I will solicit for myself, letting my lord and master — Count Ferneze — in on the secret. And if he seconds me with his consent, I will proceed, as I have long before this thought her a worthy choice to make my wife.”

He exited.

### — 2.3 —

Aurelia and Phoenixella talked together.

Aurelia said:

“Make room for a pair of matrons colored black!”

They were wearing black clothing to show mourning for their dead mother: Countess Ferneze, who had died three months ago. Both had heavily mourned, but Aurelia was beginning to come out of her grief.

Aurelia continued:

“How motherly my mother’s death has made us!

“I wish I had some girls now to bring up. Oh, I could make a wench so virtuous that she would say grace for every bit of food and gape — open her mouth — no wider than a wafer’s thickness. And she should make French curtsies so very low that every touch should turn her over backward.”

The wench could fall backward and lie on her back with her legs wide open.

Phoenixella replied, “Sister, these merry words do not become your mourning attire, nor your having lost a mother. Our virtuous mother’s death should imprint deeper effects of sorrow in us than may be worn out in so little time.”

Aurelia said, “Sister, indeed, you take too much tobacco. It makes you as black within as you are without.”

Tobacco smoke colors lungs black.

Aurelia then said, “What, true-stitch, sister? Are both your sides alike?”

True-stitch is a type of embroidery that is the same on both sides. Phoenixella’s two sides — inside and outside — are both somber.

Aurelia continued, “Be of a slighter, less fussy work for, on my word, you shall be sold as dear, or rather dearer, if you are less fussy.”

If Phoenixella were to stop being melancholy, she would be sold — that is, married — and make a better match than if she stayed melancholy.

Aurelia continued:

“Will you be bound to customs and to rites?”

“Shed profitable tears, weep when it benefits you, or else do all things as you are inclined.

“‘Eat when your stomach is hungry,’ says the physician, ‘Not at eleven and six, the usual hours for meals.’”

“So if your mood is now affected with this heaviness, give me the reins and don’t hold back. Do as I do in this my appetite for pleasure.

“It is precisianism — Puritanism — to alter with austere judgment that which is given by nature.”

In other words: Our nature is to seek pleasure, and we ought not to restrain that nature without good reason. Mourning is a good reason, but mourning must at some time come to an end.

Aurelia continued:

“I wept, you saw, too, when my mother died, for then I found it easier to do so, and fitter with my mood than not to weep.

“But now it is otherwise. Another time perhaps I shall have such deep thoughts of her that I shall weep afresh, some twelve months from now, and I will weep, if I am so disposed, and put on black as grimly then as now.

“Let the mind — our mood — go always with the body’s stature — our body’s inclination!

“Judgment is fit for judges; give me nature.”

Aurelia believed that we ought to mourn when we are sorrowful, and we ought to show joy when we are happy.

— 2.4 —

Francisco Colonna and Angelo entered the scene.

“See, Signor Angelo, here are the ladies,” Francisco Colonna said. “Go and comfort one; I’ll go to the other and comfort her.”

“Therefore I come, sir,” Angelo said. “I’ll go to the eldest.”

Aurelia was the elder of the two sisters.

Angelo said, “God save you, ladies. These sad moods of yours, which make you choose these solitary walks, are hurtful for your beauties.”

“If we had them,” Aurelia said.

Aurelia was being modest when saying that she and her sister could not claim to be beautiful.

They split into two couples: Angelo and Aurelia, and Francisco Colonna and Phoenixella.

Angelo said to Aurelia, “Come, that condition might be for your hearts when you protest faith, since we cannot see them. But this same heart of beauty, your sweet face, is in my eye always.”

He was saying that he could not see into the sisters’ hearts, so perhaps such a comment as she had made was appropriate when referring to the sisters’ hearts, but nevertheless the sisters were obviously beautiful.

A person’s face can be beautiful, and yet the same person’s heart can lack beauty, as when the woman rejects a man’s love.

Because the sisters had been mourning, they had not been concerned with love and romance.

“Oh, you cut my heart with your sharp eye,” Aurelia said.

“Nay, lady, that’s not so,” Angelo said. “Your heart’s too hard.”

“My beauty’s heart?” Aurelia asked.

“Oh, no,” Angelo said, “I mean that regent of affection — that ruler of love — madam, which tramples on all love with such contempt in this fair breast.”

The ruler of love was Aurelia’s hard heart.

“No more,” Aurelia said. “Your drift is savored: I understand your words’ meaning. I had rather seem hard-hearted —”

Angelo interrupted, “— than hard-favored and ugly? Is that your meaning, lady?”

“Bah, sir,” Aurelia said. “Your wits are fresh, I know; they need no spur.”

The word “fresh” means 1) saucy, and 2) well-rested.

“And therefore you will ride them,” Angelo said.

This kind of riding can be sexual riding.

“Say that I do,” Aurelia said. “They will not tire, I hope.”

“No, not with you,” Angelo said. “Listen, sweet lady.”

They talked quietly.

Francisco Colonna said to Phoenixella, “It is very much a pity, madam, that you should have any reason to retain this sign and appearance of grief and mourning, much less the thing designed.”

In other words: It is very much a pity that you show signs of mourning and that you have reason to show such signs.

“Griefs are more fit for ladies than their pleasures,” Phoenixella said.

“That is for such ladies as follow nothing but pleasures,” Francisco Colonna said.

Some women who pursue only pleasure should sometimes feel grief. No ladies should always feel grief.

Colonna continued:

“But you ladies who temper them so well with virtues, using your griefs so, it would prove them to be pleasures, and you would seem to be in a situation of griefs and pleasures equally pleasant.”

Phoenixella said:

“Sir, so I do now.

“It is the excess of either that I strive so much to shun in all my tried, tested, and proved endeavors.

“Although perhaps to a general eye I may appear most wedded to my griefs, yet my mind forsakes no taste of pleasure — I mean that happy pleasure of the soul, divine and sacred contemplation of that eternal and most glorious bliss proposed as the crown to our souls.”

“I will be silent,” Francisco Colonna said. “Yet that I may serve but as a decade in the art of memory, to put you always in mind of your own virtues when your too serious thoughts make you too sad, accept me as your servant, honored lady.”

One popular memorization technique of the time put items to be memorized into sets of ten. Each set of ten was called a decade.

Francisco Colonna wanted to be Phoenixella's servant — that is, her male admirer.

Phoenixella replied, "Those ceremonies are too common, Signor Francis, for your uncommon gravity and judgment, and they are fitting only for those who are nothing but ceremony."

According to Phoenixella, his love-talk consisted of clichés, and such love-talk is fitting only for those who are just talk.

Angelo said to Aurelia, "Come, I will not sue stalely to be your servant; but I will use a new term: Will you be my refuge?"

He would still be her male admirer, but without using the word "servant."

"Your refuge?" Aurelia said. "Why, sir?"

"So that I might fly to you when all else fails me," Angelo said.

"If you are good at flying, be my plover," Aurelia said.

A plover is a bird, and the word "plover" is slang for "fool."

Angelo replied, "Nay, take away the 'p.'"

Take away the "p," and "plover" becomes "lover."

"Tut, then you cannot fly," Aurelia said.

"I'll promise you that I'll borrow Cupid's wings," Angelo said.

Aurelia replied:

"By the Mass, then I fear you'll do strange things.

"I pray you [Please], blame me not if I suspect you;

"Your own confession simply doth [does] detect you.



“Nay, if you be so great in Cupid’s books [lists of lovers],  
“It’ll make me jealous. You can with your looks,  
“I warrant [promise] you, inflame a woman’s heart,  
“And at your pleasure take love’s golden dart [golden arrow]  
“And wound the breast of any virtuous maid [maiden].  
“Would I [I wish I] were hence [away from here]! Good  
faith, I am afraid  
“You can constrain one, ere [before] they be aware,  
“To run mad for your love.”

Angelo said, “Oh, this is rare [splendid]!”

— 2.5 —

Count Ferneze entered the scene and said, “Close, intimate, and secret with my daughters, gentlemen? Well done. It is like yourselves and in accordance with your characters. Nay, lusty Angelo, don’t let my presence make you balk your sport. I will not break a minute of discourse between you and one of your fair mistresses.”

“One of my mistresses?” Angelo said. “Why, does Your Lordship think I have so many?”

“Many?” Count Ferneze said. “No, Angelo, I do not think thou have many. Some fourteen I hear thou have, even of our worthiest dames of any note in Milan.”

“Nay, my good lord, fourteen?” Angelo said. “It is not so.”

“By the Mass, that it is,” Count Ferneze said.

He gave Angelo a piece of paper and said, “Here are their names to show fourteen or fifteen to one. Good Angelo, you

need not be ashamed of any of them. They are all attractive and fashionable women.”

“By God’s blood, you are such a lord!” Angelo said.

He started to go, but Count Ferneze said, “Nay, stay, sweet Angelo. I am disposed to be a little more jocular than I usually am.”

Angelo exited.

Count Ferneze said:

“He’s gone, he’s gone. I have disgraced him shrewdly.

“Daughters, take heed of him; he’s a wild youth. Be careful about what he says to you, and don’t believe him. He will swear love to everyone he sees.

“Francisco, give them advice, good Francisco; I dare trust thee with both my daughters, but him with neither of my daughters.”

“Your Lordship yet may trust both of them with him,” Francisco Colonna said.

“Well, go on your ways,” Count Ferneze said. “Away!”

Everyone except Count Ferneze exited.

## — 2.6 —

Christophero entered the scene.

“How are you now, Christopher?” Count Ferneze asked. “What is the news with you?”

“I have a humble request to ask Your good Lordship,” Christophero answered.

“A request, Christopher?” Count Ferneze asked. “What request, I ask you?”

“I would crave pardon at Your Lordship’s hands if my request seems vain or simple or foolish in your sight,” Christophero said.

“I’ll pardon all simplicity, Christopher,” Count Ferneze said. “What is thy request?”

“Perhaps being now so old a bachelor, I shall seem half unwise to bend myself in strict affection to a poor young maiden,” Christophero said.

“Does your request concern love, Christopher?” Count Ferneze asked. “Are thou disposed to marry? Why, it is well.”

“Aye, but Your Lordship may imagine now that I, who am steward of Your Honor’s house, once I am married, will more concern myself with the maintenance of my wife and of my charge than with the due discharge of my place and office,” Christophero said.

“No, no, Christopher, I know thee to be honest,” Count Ferneze said.

Christophero said, “In good faith, my lord, Your Honor may suspect that I would put my family first, before yourself, but —”

Count Ferneze interrupted, “— then I should wrong thee. Thou have always been honest and true, and thou will still be honest and true, I know.”

“Aye, but often marriage alters men, and you may fear it will alter me, my lord,” Christophero said. “But before it should alter me, I will undergo ten thousand different deaths.”

“I know it, man,” Count Ferneze said. “Who would thou have as thy wife, I ask?”

“Rachel de Prie, if Your good Lordship will grant me your consent,” Christophero answered.

“Rachel de Prie? What! The poor beggar’s daughter?” Count Ferneze said. “She’s a very beautiful maiden, however poor, and thou have my consent, with all my heart.”

“I humbly thank Your Honor,” Christophero said. “I’ll now ask her father for permission to marry her.”

“Do so, Christophero,” Count Ferneze said. “Thou shall do well.”

Christophero exited.

Alone, Count Ferneze said to himself:

“It is strange, she being so poor, that he should love her, but this is stranger — that I myself should love her!

“I spied her lately at her father’s door, and if I did not see in her sweet face gentle birth and nobleness, never again believe anything I say.

“But Love wrought this persuasion that she is gentle and noble in me, that love being created with the maiden’s looks. For where Love is, he thinks his basest object gentle and noble.

“I am deep in love, and I shall be forced to wrong my honest steward, for I must sue and seek her for myself.

“However much my duty to my late dead wife and my own dear renown holds sway,

“I’ll go to her father straightaway.

“Love hates delays.”

Onion, Juniper, Valentine, Sebastian, Balthasar, and Martino talked together. All of them were servants, but Valentine served Francisco Colonna while the others served Count Ferneze.

Onion said, “Come on, indeed, let’s have some exercise or other, my hearts. Fetch the hilts.”

Martino exited.

The hilts were supposedly the hilts of swords and daggers, but Martino would bring them cudgels, aka clubs.

“Fellow Juniper, will thou play?” Onion asked.

This kind of “play” was fighting with cudgels.

Juniper replied, “I cannot resolve [satisfy] you. It is as I am fitted with the ingenuity, quantity, or quality of the cudgel.”

He was perhaps claiming to be well versed in the art of fighting with cudgels. With Juniper’s use and misuse of words, it’s hard to tell.

Since the ingenuity of a cudgel is that of a stick of wood, perhaps he was telling the truth when he said that he was “fitted with the ingenuity [...] of the cudgel.”

The quantity of a cudgel is one, and Juniper was one man.

The quality of a cudgel is regarded as less than the quality of a sword, and Juniper’s social quality was less than that of gentlemen, who wore swords.

“Why, do thou bastinado the poor cudgel with terms?” Valentino asked.

The word “bastinado” means “hit with a stick or cudgel.”

Juniper replied, “Oh, ingle, I have the phrases, man, and the anagrams, and the epitaphs [malapropism for ‘epigrams’ or ‘epithets’ or both] befitting the mystery of the noble science.”

Anagrams are words that are made of the letters of other words. E.g., “satin” is an anagram of “saint.” Epigrams are short, witty sayings or poems. E.g., “Man proposes but God disposes.” Epithets are descriptive words or phrases. E.g., Homer’s “wine-dark sea.”

“I’ll be hanged if Juniper were not misbegotten by some fencer,” Onion said.

“Sirrah Valentine, you can resolve — satisfy — me now,” Sebastian said. “Do they in other countries have their masters of defense as we have here in Italy?”

Masters of defense are fencing masters.

“Oh, Lord, aye, especially they in Utopia,” Valentine, who had traveled, replied. “There they perform their prizes and challenges — that is, participate in a fencing match — with as great ceremony as the Italian or any nation else.”

“Indeed?” Balthasar said. “How is the manner of it, for God’s love, good Valentine?”

Juniper said, “Ingle, please, make recourse to us. We are thy friends and familiars, sweet ingle.”

“Familiars” are 1) intimate associates and friends, and 2) attendant evil spirits such as the familiars of the witches in *Macbeth*.

Valentine said, “Why, thus, sir —”

Onion interrupted, “God-a-mercy, good Valentine, nay, go on.”

“God-a-mercy” means “thank you.”

Juniper said, “*Silentium, bonus socius Onionus.*”

The Latin words mean, “Be silent, good friend Onion.”

Juniper continued, “Good fellow, Onion, don’t be so ingenious and turbulent.”

He then said to Valentine, “So, sir. And how? How, sweet ingle?”

Valentine said, “By the Virgin Mary, first they are brought to the public theatre.”

“What?” Juniper said. “Have they theatre there in Utopia?”

“Theatres?” Valentine said. “Aye, and plays, too, both tragedy and comedy, and set forth with as much state as can be imagined.”

“By Godso, a man is nobody until he has travelled,” Juniper said.

In Ben Jonson’s time, travelers told exaggerated stories about the places they had visited.

Actually, Valentine’s Utopia sounds remarkably like the theater scene in Ben Jonson’s day.

“And how are their plays?” Sebastian said. “As ours are, extemporal?”

“Oh, no, they are all premeditated things, and some of them very good, indeed,” Valentine said. “My master used to visit them often when he was there.”

“Why, how, now, are they in a place where any man may see them?” Balthasar asked.

Valentine said:

“Aye, in the common theatres, I tell you.

“But the sport at a new play is to observe the sway and variety of opinion that passes judgment on the play. A man shall have such a confused mixture of judgment poured out in the throng there, as ridiculous as laughter itself. One says he does not like the writing; another does not like the plot; another does not like the acting.

“And sometimes a fellow who doesn’t come into a theater there past once in five years, at a Parliament time or so, will be as deep-mired in censuring as the best, and swear by God’s foot he would never stir his foot to see a hundred such as that is.”

Parliament time is when Parliament is in session. A man might come to London then on business and take the time to see a play.

“I must travel to see these things,” Onion said. “I shall never think well of myself otherwise.”

Juniper said, “Fellow Onion, I’ll bear thy charges [pay thy way] if thou will but pilgrimize it [go as a pilgrim] along with me to the land of Utopia.”

“Why, but I think such rooks — fools — as these should be ashamed to judge,” Sebastian said.

“Not a whit,” Valentine said. “The rankest stinkard of them all will take it upon himself as peremptorily as if he had written himself *in artibus magister*.”

*In artibus magister* is a Master of Arts, one who holds a Master of Arts degree.

“And do they stand to a popular censure — judgment — for anything they present?” Sebastian asked.

The plays are always judged.



Valentine said, “Aye, always, always, and the people generally are very acceptive and receptive and apt to applaud any meritable and meritorious work; but there are two sorts of persons who most commonly are infectious to a whole auditory.”

According to Valentine, two sorts of people were unhealthy for anyone who heard them. They infected their hearers with bad opinions.

“Who are they?” Balthasar asked.

“Aye, come, let’s know them,” Juniper requested.

“It would be good if they were noted and known,” Onion said.

Valentine said, “By the Virgin Mary, one is the rude, barbarous crew, a people who have no brains and yet grounded judgments. These will hiss anything that mounts above their grounded capacities.”

Valentine was describing the groundlings, who paid a penny to stand and watch a play. They had poor literary educations.

He continued, “But the others are worth the observation, indeed.”

The others asked, “Who are they? What kind of people are they?”

“Indeed, there are a few capricious gallants.”

They were young gentlemen who were subject to whims.

“‘Capricious’?” Juniper said. “Wait, that word’s for me.”

It is a word he liked, and one he would use.

Valentine continued:

“And they have taken such a habit of dislike in all things that they will approve nothing, be it never so clever and witty or elaborate, but they will sit dispersed, making faces and spitting, wagging their upright ears, and cry, ‘Filthy! Filthy,’ simply uttering their own condition describing themselves and using their contorted and twisted countenances instead of a Vice to turn the good countenances and gazes of all who shall sit near them from what they behold.”

The capricious gallants acted in such a way to make the audience look at them instead of the actors on stage.

Medieval morality plays had a character called the Vice who attempted to turn men from good to evil.

Onion said, “Oh, that’s well said.”

Martino returned carrying cudgels.

Onion said to Martino, “Lay them down.”

He then asked, “Come, sirs, who plays? Fellow Juniper, Sebastian, Balthasar? Somebody take them up, come.”

“Ingle Valentine?” Juniper said, suggesting that Valentine be a fighter.

“Not I, sir,” Valentine said. “I don’t claim to have knowledge of the art of fighting.”

“Sebastian?” Juniper suggested.

“Balthasar?” Sabastian suggested.

“Who, I?” Balthasar said.

“Come, just one bout of fighting,” Onion said. “I’ll give thee a cudgeling, indeed.”

“Why, here’s Martino,” Balthasar said.

“Bah, he?” Onion said. “Alas, he cannot play — fight — a whit, man.”

Juniper said:

“That’s all one. That makes no difference. No more could you *in stata quo prius*.”

He meant, “in the former state,” but the correct Latin is *in statu quo prius*.

Juniper continued:

“Martino, play with him. Every man has his beginning and conduction [malapropism for ‘conclusion’].”

“Won’t you hurt me, fellow Onion?” Martino asked.

“Hurt thee?” Onion said. “No. If I do, put me among pot-herbs and chop me to pieces.”

Pot-herbs are herbs that go in the cooking pot.

“Come on,” Onion invited.

Juniper said:

“By your favor, sweet bullies [companions], give them room. Back!

“So, Martino, do not look so thin and feeble upon the matter.”

Onion and Martino fought with cudgels.

Onion said:

“Ha, well played.

“Fall over to my leg now; so, to your guard again. Excellent!

“To my head now. Make home your blow; don’t spare me, make it home.

“Good! Good again!”

Martino then struck Onion on the head with a cudgel.

“Why, how are you now, Peter Onion?” Sebastian asked.

“Godso, Onion has caught a bruise,” Valentine said.

Juniper said, “*Coraggio!* Courage! Don’t be capricious. What?”

“Capricious?” Onion said. “Not I. I scorn to be capricious for a scratch. Martino must have another bout with me. Come!”

Onion was bleeding from his wound, and so Valentine, Sebastian, and Balthasar said, “No! No! Play no more! Play no more!”

Bleeding, Onion said, “Bah, it’s nothing, a fillip, a trifle, a lucky blow. Fellow Juniper, please, get me a plantain. I had much rather play with one who had skill.”

Plantains were broad leaves that were used to stop bleeding.

“By my truth, fellow Onion, it was against my will for me to hurt you,” Martino said.

“Nay, that’s not so,” Onion said. “It was against my head. But come, we’ll have one bout more.”

“Not a bout, not even a stroke,” Juniper said.

All except Onion said, “No more! No more!”

Martino exited.

Juniper said, “Why, I’ll give you a demonstration of how the injury came about.”

In demonstrating how the injury occurred, Juniper used fencing terms and pretended the cudgels were swords and

daggers. Fencers used a rapier to attack and a dagger to ward off attacks.

Juniper said to Onion, “Thou opened the dagger to falsify over with the back sword trick, and he interrupted before he could fall to the close.”

Onion replied, “No, no, I know best how it was, better than any man here. I felt his play presently, for, look here” — he demonstrated — “I gathered my strength upon him thus, thus — do you see? — for the double lock and took it single on the head.”

“Double lock” means “with both hilts”: the hilt of the sword and the hilt of the dagger.

“He says very truly,” Valentine said. “He took it single on the head.”

Onion was hit once on his head with the cudgel.

“Come, let’s go,” Sebastian said.

Martino returned with a cobweb and said, “Here, fellow Onion, here’s a cobweb.”

In this society, people used cobwebs to stop bleeding.

“What, a cobweb, Martino?” Onion said. “I will have another bout of fighting with you. By God’s wounds, do you first break my head and then give me a plaster — a bandage — in scorn? Come to it, I will have a bout of fighting with you.”

Martino said, “God’s my witness —”

“Tut, your witness cannot serve,” Onion said.

Juniper said, “By God’s blood, why, what, thou aren’t lunatic, are thou? If thou are lunatic, get thee gone, Mephistopheles!”

In this society, lunatics were thought to be possessed by evil spirits, and so Juniper was pretending to exorcize Onion.

Juniper continued, "Say the sign should be in Aries now, as it may be for all of us, where were your life? Answer me that."

Aries the Ram is a sign of the Zodiac.

"He says well, Onion," Sebastian said.

"Aye, indeed, he does," Valentine said.

Juniper said to Onion, "Come, come, you are a foolish naturalist [natural, aka fool]. Go, get a white of an egg and a little flax, and close the breach of the head. It is the most conducive [conducive] thing that can be."

He then said, "Martino, do not insinuate [presume] upon your good fortune, but play an honest part and carry away the bucklers."

"To carry away the bucklers" means "To come off as a winner."

Martino picked up the cudgels, and all exited.

### ACT 3 (*The Case is Altered*)

#### — 3.1 —

Alone, Angelo said to himself:

“My young and naïve friend, Paolo Ferneze, bound me with mighty, solemn conjurations and oaths to be true to him in his love to Rachel and to solicit the remembrance of him always in his forced absence. That is, he wants me to keep his memory alive in Rachel’s mind! That’s likely to happen, indeed! True to my friend in cases of affection?”

The word “case” can mean female genitals.

Angelo continued:

“In women’s cases? What a jest it is! How silly he is who imagines it! Any man is an ass who will keep his promises strictly in anything that checks and hinders his private pleasure, chiefly in love.

“By God’s blood, am I not a man? Haven’t I eyes that are free to look, and blood to be inflamed, as well as his? And when it is so, shall I not pursue my own love’s longings, but promote my friend’s love longings instead?

“Aye, he is a good fool who would do that. Do so, go ahead and hang me then, because I swore to protect his interest in Rachel.

“Alas, who does not know that lovers’ perjuries are ridiculous?”

A proverb stated, “Jove laughs at lovers’ perjuries.”

Angelo continued:

“Have at thee, Rachel!”

“Have at thee” meant “Get ready for an attack” — or, in this case, “Get ready for an ‘attack.’”

Angelo continued:

“I’ll go court her for sure, for now I know her father is abroad and out of the house.”

Jaques entered the scene.

Angelo said to himself, “By God’s blood! Look, he is here. Oh, what damned luck this is! This labor’s lost. I must by no means see him.”

He exited the scene, singing the nonsense syllables, “Tau, dery, dery.”

Or perhaps the syllables meant “Taw-dry, —dry.” Some of Angelo’s thoughts were tawdry indeed.

— 3.2 —

Alone, Jaques said to himself:

“Mischief and hell! What is this man, a spirit? Does he haunt my house’s ghost? Always at my door? He has been at my door; he has been in, in my dear door. I pray to God that my gold is safe!”

Jaques had earlier seen Paolo Ferneze and Angelo near his door.

Christophero entered the scene.

Jaques said, “God’s pity, here’s another!”

He called to his daughter, “Rachel! Ho, Rachel!”

Christophero walked up to him and said, “May God save you, honest father.”



Jaques again called to his daughter, “Rachel! By God’s light, come to me! Rachel, Rachel!”

He exited into his house.

“Now in God’s name, what is ailing him?” Christophero said. “This is strange! He loves his daughter so, I’ll wager my life, that he’s afraid, having been now abroad, that I come to seek her love unlawfully.”

Jaques re-entered the scene after checking on his gold at home and said, “It’s safe! It’s safe. They have not robbed my treasure.”

Christophero said, “Don’t let it seem offensive to you, sir —”

Jaques said to himself, “‘Sir’? God’s my life! ‘Sir,’ ‘sir,’ does he call me ‘sir’?”

“Good father, listen to me,” Christophero said.

“You are ’most welcome, sir,” Jaques said.

He said to himself, “I meant ‘almost.’”

He then said out loud, “And does Your Worship want to speak to me? Would you abase yourself by speaking to me?”

“It is not abasing, father,” Christophero said. “My intent is to do further honor to you, sir, than only speak to you. I want to be your son-in-law.”

Jaques said to himself, “My gold is in his nostrils! He has smelt it. Break, breast! Break, heart! Fall on the earth, my entrails, with this same bursting astonishment! He knows about my gold; he knows about all my treasure.”

He then said out loud, “How do you know, sir? Whereby do you guess?”

“Guess at what, sir?” Christophero asked. “What do you mean?”

Jaques said, “I ask, if it please Your gentle Worship, how you know — I mean, how I should make Your Worship know — that I have nothing — to give with my poor daughter? I have nothing. The very air, bounteous to every man, is scanty to me, sir.”

“I do think, good father, you are just poor,” Christophero said.

Jaques said to himself, “He thinks so. Listen! He just ‘do think’ so! He does not think so; he knows about all my treasure.”

He went inside his house to check on his treasure and see if it was still safe.

Alone, Christophero said to himself, “Poor man, he is so overjoyed to hear that his daughter may be better bestowed than he had hoped that between fear and hope, if I mean honestly, he is thus passionate.”

Christophero thought that a marriage between Rachel and him was a much better marriage for Rachel than her father, Jaques, could have hoped for.

Jaques returned, saying to himself, “Still, all is safe within. Is no one outside? Nobody is breaking down my walls?”

“What do you say, father?” Christophero asked. “Shall I have your daughter? Do you agree to let me marry her?”

“I have no dowry to bestow upon her,” Jaques said.

“I don’t expect one, father,” Christophero said.

“That is well,” Jaques said. “Then I ask Your Worship to make no question of that which you wish for. You can marry

my daughter. It is too much favor to me — it is more than I deserve.”

Christophero said to himself, “I’ll leave him now to give his passions a chance to breathe and calm down. Once his emotions are settled down, I will fetch his daughter. I shall but excite his emotions too much if I speak to him now.”

Christophero exited.

Jaques said:

“So, he’s gone.

“I wish that all were dead and gone,

“So that I might live with my dear gold alone!”

— 3.3 —

Count Ferneze entered the scene.

Seeing Jaques, he said, “Here is the poor old man.”

Seeing Count Ferneze, Jaques said to himself, “Bah, on my soul, another! Is he coming here?”

“Be not dismayed, old man,” Count Ferneze said. “I come to cheer you.”

Jaques said to himself, “He is coming to me, by heaven! Turn ribs to brass, turn voice into a trumpet to rattle out the battles of my thoughts! One comes to hold me in talk, while the other robs me.”

He went inside his house to check on his treasure and see if it was still safe.

Count Ferneze said, “He has forgotten who I am, surely. What should this mean? He fears that my authority and my lack of a wife will take his daughter from him to defame her

and ruin her reputation. He who has nothing on earth but one poor daughter may make this frenzy of care to keep her.”

Of course, Count Ferneze wanted to marry Rachel, but Jaques did not know that.

Jaques returned and said, “And yet, it is safe. They intend not to use force but to use fawning, coming here to flatter me. I shall easily know by his next question if he thinks that I am rich.”

He then said out loud, “Whom do I see? My good lord!”

He knelt before Count Ferneze.

“Stand up, good father,” Count Ferneze said.

Jaques stood up.

Count Ferneze said, “I don’t call thee father because of thy age but because I gladly wish to be thy son-in-law, in honorable marriage with thy beauteous daughter.”

Jaques said to himself, “Oh, so, so, so, so, so, this is for gold! Now it is sure. My daughter’s neatness makes them believe that I am rich.”

Rachel was well dressed.

Jaques said out loud, “No, my good lord, I’ll tell you all, how my poor, hapless daughter got that attire she wears from top to toe.”

“Why, father, this is nothing,” Count Ferneze said. “That doesn’t matter.”

“Oh, yes, it does, my good lord,” Jaques said.

“Indeed, it does not,” Count Ferneze said.

“Nay, sweet lord, pardon me,” Jaques said. “Do not pretend it doesn’t matter. Hear your poor beadsman speak.”

A beadsman recites prayers for a patron, counting the prayers on rosary beads. Here, Jaques meant that he was a humble servant to the Count.

Jaques continued, “It is requisite that I, so entirely a beggar, account for things that surpass my calling.”

If he were a beggar, then why was his daughter dressed so well?

Jaques said:

“She was born to enjoy nothing underneath the sun except the sun. If she had more than other beggars, she would be envied. I will tell you, then, how she acquired all she wears.

“Her warm shoes, God knows, a kind maiden gave her, seeing her go barefoot on a cold, frosty morning, may God reward the kind maiden!

“Her homely stockings —”

Count Ferneze said:

“Father, I’ll hear no more. Thou explain too much with thy too particular answer for thy daughter, who deserves a thousand times as much.

“I’ll be thy son-in-law, and she shall wear the attire of countesses.”

“Oh, my good lord, don’t mock the poor,” Jaques said. “Doesn’t Your Lordship remember that poverty is the precious gift of God, as well as riches?”

Mathew 5:3 states, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven*” (King James Version).

He knelt and said, “Tread upon me rather than mock my poorness.”

“Rise, I say,” Count Ferneze said. “When I mock poverty, may the heavens then make me poor!”

Jaques stood up.

— 3.4 —

Nuntius, a messenger, entered the scene.

Nuntius said to himself, “See, here’s the Count Ferneze. I will tell him about the hapless accident and bad luck of his brave son, so that he may seek the sooner to ransom him.”

Jaques exited.

Nuntius said to Count Ferneze, “God save Your Lordship!”

“You are very welcome, sir,” Count Ferneze said.

“I wish I brought such news as might deserve such a welcome,” Nuntius said.

“What! Do you bring me ill news?” Count Ferneze asked.

“It is ill news, my lord, yet it is such news as the usual chance of war affords, and for which all men are prepared who engage in it, and those who do not engage in it, except in the persons of their friends, or in their children,” Nuntius said.

A proverb stated, “The chance of war is uncertain.”

People who engage in war can be victorious, defeated, killed, maimed, or taken prisoner.

“Ill news about my son?” Count Ferneze said. “My dear and only son, I’ll lay my soul. Aye, me, I am curst! The thought of his death wounds me, and the report of it will kill me quite.”

“Aye, me” is an expression of mourning.

“It is not so ill, my lord,” Nuntius said.

“What is the news, then?” Count Ferneze asked.

“He has been taken prisoner, and that’s all,” Nuntius said.

Count Ferneze said:

“That’s enough, enough.

“I set my thoughts on love, on servile love, and forget my virtuous wife.

“I don’t feel the dangers, the bonds and wounds of my own flesh and blood, and therein I am a madman, therein I am plagued with the most just affliction under heaven.”

He felt guilty because he had been thinking about getting married and had not been thinking about the danger that his son was in because his son was a soldier.

Count Ferneze asked, “Has Maximilian been taken prisoner, too?”

“Nay, my good lord, he has returned with prisoners,” Nuntius said.

“Is it possible?” Count Ferneze said. “Can Maximilian return and view my face without my son, for whom he swore to take such care as for himself?”

“My lord, no amount of care and concern can change the events of war,” Nuntius said.

Count Ferneze said:

“Oh, in what tempests do my fortunes sail, still wracked and ruined with winds more foul and contrary than any northern gust or southern squall that ever yet enforced the sea to gape open and swallow the poor merchant’s merchandise up!

“First, in Vicenza I lost my first son.

“Next, here in Milan, I lost my most dear and loved lady, my wife.

“And now, my Paolo, prisoner to the French, which last, being printed with my other griefs, makes so huge a volume that my breast cannot contain them.

“But this is my love: I gave my love to Rachel and not to my son! Heaven has thrown this vengeance on me most deservedly, even if it were for nothing but the wronging of my steward.”

Count Ferneze had wished to wrong his steward, Christophero, by marrying Rachel after giving Christophero permission to marry her.

“My lord, since money — just money — may redress the worst of this misfortune, don’t be grieved,” Nuntius said. “Prepare his ransom, and your noble son shall greet your cheered eyes with the more honor.”

His was a problem that could be solved with money, and many other things are more valuable than money.

The larger the ransom, the more honor because the ransom showed how highly the prisoner was valued.

“I will prepare his ransom,” Count Ferneze said. “Gracious heaven, grant his imprisonment may be his worst fate — honored and soldier-like imprisonment — and that he is not manacled and made a drudge to his proud foe! And here I vow never to dream of unseemly, shameful amorous toys, nor aim at other joy on earth except the fruition of my only son: the pleasure of getting my son back safely.”

They exited.



Jaques came out of his house. He was carrying his gold and a scuttle — a container — full of horse dung.

Not seeing Count Ferneze, Jaques said:

“He’s gone. I knew it. This is our hot lover!

“I will believe them, aye. They may come in like simple wooers and be arrant thieves, and I would not know them. What servile villainies men will do for gold is not to be told.”

Referring to his gold, he said:

“Oh, it began to have a huge, strong smell, which, lying so long together in a place, I’ll give it ventilation.”

It must have acquired a huge, strong smell because Paolo Ferneze, Angelo, Christophero, and now Count Ferneze had been coming around his house. They must have smelled the gold.

Jaques continued:

“It shall have trick enough, and if the devil, which envies and is jealous of all goodness, has told them about my gold and where I kept it, I’ll set his burning nose once more to work, to smell where I removed it.”

He uncovered his gold and said, “Here it is! I’ll hide it and cover it with this horse dung.”

He buried his gold and covered it with horse dung.

Jaques continued:

“Who will suppose that such a precious nest is crowned with such a dunghill full of excrement?”

He now referred to his gold as if it were a child of his:

“Go in, my dear life. Sleep sweetly, my dear child, scarcely lawfully begotten, but yet gotten, and that’s enough.

“Rot, all hands that come near thee, except my own!

“Burn out, all eyes that see thee, except my own!

“All thoughts of thee be poison to their enamored hearts, except my own!”

He now referred to his gold as it were his ruler:

“I’ll take no leave, sweet prince, great emperor, but see thee every minute, king of kings.

“I’ll not be rude to thee and turn my back in going from thee, but go backward out, with my face toward thee, with humble curtsies.

“No one is within. No one overlooks my wall.

“To have gold and to have it safe, is all.”

As he exited, he kept facing and bowing to his gold.

## ACT 4 (*The Case is Altered*)

### — 4.1 —

Maximilian, Chamont (who had taken the identity of Gaspar), Gaspar (who had taken the identity of Chamont), and Pacue entered the scene. Some soldiers attending Maximilian also arrived.

Chamont and Gaspar were Maximilian's prisoners of war. They had exchanged identities because Chamont was a general, Chamont and Gaspar were friends, and Gaspar wanted to protect Chamont in case generals were not well treated. They had exchanged clothing so that Gaspar was dressed like a French general.

Pacue was a comic character, a boy who was likely to reveal Chamont's and Gaspar's identities through carelessness.

Maximilian said to Gaspar, who had taken the identity of Chamont, "Lord Chamont, and your valiant friend there, I cannot say 'welcome' to Milan. Your thoughts and that word are not musical and are not in harmony. But I can say you have come to Milan."

Pacue said, "*Mort Dieu!*"

[By God's death!]

He was laughing because Maximilian did not know his prisoners' true identities.

Wanting Pacue to be quiet, Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) said sharply, "*Garçon!*"

The French word means, "Boy!"

Maximilian said, "Gentlemen — I would call an emperor so — you are now my prisoners. I am sorry. By the Virgin Mary, I say this: Spit in the face of your fortunes, for your treatment shall be honorable."

He would treat his prisoners well.

Count Ferneze had prayed for the French to treat Paolo, his son who had been taken prisoner, well.

Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) said, “We know it, Signor Maximilian. The fame and reputation of all your actions sounds nothing else but perfect honor from Honor’s swelling cheeks.”

The artistic personification of Honor blows a trumpet to proclaim itself.

Maximilian had a reputation for behaving honorably.

“It shall do so still, I assure you, and I will give you reason why,” Maximilian said. “There is in this last battle, you know, a noble gentleman of our party and a truly valiant, semblably — similar to you — prisoner to your general as your honored selves to me, for whose safety this tongue has given warrant to his honorable father, the Count Ferneze.”

Who is “your general”? Chamont, whom Maximilian thought he was talking to (but he was actually talking to Gaspar), was a French general, but he had been captured. Paolo was now in the custody of another French general.

Because Paolo Ferneze had been taken prisoner, he was in a similar position as Maximilian’s two prisoners. Maximilian wanted Paolo to be treated well, and so out of empathy (and, no doubt, honor), he would treat his two prisoners well.

Maximilian asked, “Do you understand me?”

“Aye, signor,” Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) said.

“Well, then I must tell you, your ransoms will be to redeem him,” Maximilian said. “What do you think? What is your answer?”

The two men would be traded for Paolo Ferneze: Two men would be the ransom for one man.

Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) replied:

“By the Virgin Mary, with my lord’s leave here, I say, signor, this free and ample offer you have made agrees well with your honor, but not ours, for I don’t think other than that Chamont is as well born as is Ferneze. Then, if I am not mistaken, he scorns to have his worth so underprized that it should need an adjunct — an extra person — in exchange of any equal fortune.”

He was objecting that Chamont was so valuable a prisoner that he ought to be exchanged for Paolo: one man ought to be exchanged for one man. To add Gaspar to the ransom would be to undervalue Chamont. It would insult Chamont.

Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) continued:

“Noble signor, I am a soldier and I love Chamont. Before I would bruise his reputation with the least ruin of my own reputation in this vile kind, these legs should rot with irons, this body pine in prison until the flesh dropped from my bones in flakes like withered leaves, in the heart of autumn, from a stubborn oak.”

If Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) were exchanged for Paolo, that would leave the real Chamont a prisoner. He, however, would not be mistreated.

Maximilian said to Chamont (disguised as Gaspar), “Monsieur Gaspar — I take it that Gaspar is your name — don’t misunderstand me. I will trample on the heart, on the soul of him who shall say I will wrong you. What I purpose you cannot now know, but you shall know, and, doubt not, to your contentment.”

Maximilian would treat Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) well.

Maximilian then said to Gaspar (disguised as Chamont), “Lord Chamont, I will leave you. While I go in and present myself to the honorable count, until my return, so please you, your noble feet may measure this private, pleasant, and most princely walk.”

He then ordered, “Soldiers, watch them and respect them.”

Maximilian exited, and the soldiers guarded the prisoners. The soldiers were close to the prisoners but not so close that they could overhear their conversation.

Pacue said with a heavy French accent, “Oh, ver’ *bon!* [very good!] Excellenta gull [fool]! He take-a my Lord Chamont for Monsieur Gaspra and Monsieur Gaspra for my Lord Chamont! Oh, dis be excellent for make-a me laugha. Ha, ha, ha. Oh, my heart tickle-a!”

Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) said to Chamont (disguised as Gaspar):

“Aye, but Your Lordship does not know what hard fate might have pursued us; therefore, howsoever, the exchanging of our names was necessary, and we must now be careful to maintain this error strongly, which our own trick has thrust into their ignorant understandings.

“For should we, on the promise of this good fortune, appear again as ourselves — our real selves — it would both create in them a kind of anger and, perhaps, invert those honorable courses they intend.”

They needed to remain in disguise lest Maximilian become angry and treat them badly.

Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) said:

“True, my dear Gaspar, but this hang-by — this hanger-on, this Pacue — here will at one time or other, on my soul, reveal us and our trick.

“A secret in his mouth is like a wild bird put into a cage, whose door no sooner opens but it is out.”

He then said to Pacue, “But, sirrah, if I just learn thou have uttered this secret —”

“Uttera vat [what], Monsieur?” Pacue asked.

“That he is Gaspar and I am truly Chamont,” Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) said.

“Oh, *pardonnez-moi*, ’fore my tongue shall put out de secreta, shall breed de cankra [canker, open sore] in my mouth!” Pacue said.

“Don’t speak so loudly, Pacue!” Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) said.

“Faugh, you shall not hear de fool, for all your long ear [long ears],” Pacue said to the soldiers, but so quietly that they could not hear him. The long ears were asses’ ears.

He then said to Gaspar (disguised as Chamont), “*Regard* [Look], monsieur, you be de Chamont, Chamont be Gaspra.”

— 4.2 —

Count Ferneze, Maximilian, Francisco, Aurelia, Phoenixella, and Finio entered the scene. Finio was Francisco Colonna’s young Italian page.

Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) and Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) talked together quietly, apart from the others.

“Quiet, here comes Maximilian,” Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) said.

“Oh, it’s likely that old man is the Count Ferneze,” Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) said.

“Are those his daughters, do you think?” Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) asked.

“Aye, to be sure, I think they are,” Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) said.

“Fore God, the taller is a gallant lady,” Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) said.

The taller lady was Aurelia.

“Both ladies are gallant, believe me,” Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) said.

Maximilian pointed to Gaspar (disguised as Chamont), and said to Count Ferneze, “Truly, my honorable lord, Chamont was the father of this man.”

The elder Chamont had surprised Vicenza in 1510. His son bore his name: Lord Chamont, the friend of Gaspar.

“Oh, that may be, for when I lost my son, this man was but young, it seems,” Count Ferneze said.

“This man” was Gaspar (disguised as Chamont).

“Indeed, had Camillo lived, he would have been about the same age as this man, my lord,” Francisco Colonna said.

Camillo was Count Ferneze’s long-lost son.

“He would have been, indeed,” Count Ferneze said. “Well, speak no more of him.”

Maximilian said to Francisco Colonna, “Signor, perceive you the error? It was no good office in us to stretch the remembrance of so dear a loss.”



He then said, “Count Ferneze, let summer sit in your eye. Let there be no clouds or rain — let there be no tears. Look cheerfully, sweet count. Will you do me the honor to confine this noble spirit within the circle of your arms?”

Would he hug “this noble spirit”?

The noble spirit was Gaspar (disguised as Chamont).

Chamont was the son of the man who had surprised Vicenza, causing a battle in which Count Ferneze had lost his son.

Count Ferneze was unwilling to hug “this noble spirit,” but he did say, “Honored Chamont, reach me your valiant hand.”

He and Gaspar (disguised as Chamont), shook hands.

Count Ferneze then said:

“I could have wished some happier occurrence had introduced us to each other and had made the way to this mutual knowledge and acquaintanceship we each have with the other, but surely it is the pleasure of our fates that we should thus be wrecked on Fortune’s wheel.

“Let us prepare with steeled and settled patience to tread on Fortune’s torment, and, with minds confirmed, welcome the worst of the malice of Lady Fortune.”

Count Ferneze had suffered the loss of his son, and Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) had suffered being taken prisoner. Count Ferneze was recommending that they both stoically endure their fates.

Maximilian said to Count Ferneze: “Noble lord, this is the situation.”

He gestured toward Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) and said, “I have here, in my honor, set this gentleman free without ransom. He is now himself the master of his own destiny; his valor has deserved it, in the eye of my judgment.”

He then said to Chamont disguised as Gaspar, “Monsieur Gaspar, you are dear to me. *Fortuna non mutat genus.*”

The Latin proverb was “Fortune does not change kind.”

In other words: Good fortune does not change a bad man, who will remain bad. And bad fortune will not change a good man, who will remain good. Also, a nobly born man or woman will remain noble, despite his or her fortune/luck.

The proverb may not always be true, but events will show that the real Gaspar was and is a good man; the bad fortune in his past has not changed him.

Maximilian then said, “But let’s get to the main point.”

He said to Gaspar (disguised as Chamont), “If it may square with Your Lordship’s liking and his love, I could desire that he [Chamont disguised as Gaspar] were now immediately employed to go to your noble general and propose the exchange of Paolo Ferneze for yourself [Gaspar disguised as Chamont]. It is a business that requires the tender hand of a friend.”

Count Ferneze said, “Aye, and it would be with more speed effected if he would undertake it.”

“That is true, my lord,” Maximilian said.

He then said to Chamont (disguised as Gaspar), “Monsieur Gaspar, how stand you disposed to this motion? Do you agree with it?”

Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) replied, “My duty must attend His Lordship’s will.”

Maximilian then asked Gaspar (disguised as Chamont), “What does the Lord Chamont say?”

Gaspar (disguised as Chamont) replied, “My will then approves what these have urged. I agree with this proposal.”

Maximilian said, “Why, there is good harmony, good music, in this.”

He then said to Chamont (disguised as Gaspar), “Monsieur Gaspar, you shall waste no time. Only, I will give you a bowl of rich wine to the health of your general, another to the success of your journey, and a third to the love of my sword.”

They would drink together.

Maximilian then ordered, “Pass!”

“Pass” was an order for the soldiers to leave, too.

Everyone except Aurelia and Phoenixella exited.

Aurelia said:

“Why, how are you now, sister? In a motley muse?”

A motley muse is a variegated mood, one in which conflicting emotions exist.

Aurelia continued:

“Come on, there’s something in the wind — there’s something happening, I see. Indeed, this brown study — this reverie — suits not with your black.”

A brown study is a reverie; it occurs when someone is absorbed in his or her thoughts.

“Your clothing and your thoughts are of two colors.”

Her clothing was black, but her mood was light.

Phoenixella replied, “In good faith, I think that this young Lord Chamont [Gaspar, disguised as Chamont] resembles my mother. Sister, doesn’t he resemble our mother?”

“That is a motherly fancy and opinion,” Aurelia said. “Oh, blind excuse, blinder than Love himself!”

Aurelia believed that her sister had fallen in love.

Love, aka Cupid, is depicted blindfolded.

Aurelia continued, “Well, sister, well, Cupid has taken his stand in both your eyes — you have fallen in love. The case is altered.”

“The case is altered” means “The situation has changed.”

“And what of that?” Phoenixella asked.

Aurelia said, “Nay, nothing but a saint, another Bridget, one who for a face, aka reputation, would put down Vesta, in whose looks swim the very sweetest cream of modesty. And now are you to turn tippet?”

Saint Bridget of Ireland refused to marry, and she lived in a religious cell. In doing so, she did not follow Vesta, goddess of the hearth. The hearth is the center of family life.

A “tippet” is a garment. “To turn tippet” was then-current slang for “to change one’s behavior.” In a bad sense, a turn-tippet is a turncoat or renegade.

Phoenixella had been mourning and refusing to feel pleasure, but now she was falling in love.

Aurelia then said, “Ha, ha. Will you give a packing-penny to virginity?”

A penny was a gift given to someone whose presence was unwanted, such as a beggar. They were given a penny so they would pack off.

Aurelia continued, “I thought you’d dwell so long in Cyprus isle that you’d worship Madam Venus eventually.”

Phoenixella had been wearing the mourning fabric called cypress for a long time, and now Aurelia was joking that she

had finally started to worship the goddess of sexual love: Venus, who was born on the island of Cyprus.

Aurelia said, “But, come, the strongest fall, and why not you?”

Phoenixella frowned and Aurelia said, “Nay, do not frown.”

“Bah, you fool, adieu,” Phoenixella said.

She exited.

Alone, Aurelia said to herself:

“Well, I may jest or so, but Cupid knows that my falling in love is as bad or worse than hers.

“Oh, Monsieur Gaspar [Chamont (disguised as Gaspar)], if thou are a man, don’t be afraid to court me! Do but speak. Challenge thy right and wear it, for I swear, until thou arrived, never came affection here.”

She wanted Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) to pursue her.

### — 4.3 —

Pacue and Finio talked together. Pacue was Chamont’s French page, and Finio was Francisco Colonna’s Italian page. Both were comic characters, and both were boys.

Finio said, “Come on, my sweet, finical Pacue, the very prime — the first — of pages, here’s an excellent place for us to practice in. Nobody sees us here. Come, let’s get to it.”

They were going to practice courtly etiquette: hand-kissing, deep bowing, the saying of formulaic protestations, and so on. Their gestures shall not be described in any kind of detail; some of them perhaps ought not to be done in public.

Onion entered the scene.

Pacue replied to Finio, “Contenta. *Regardez, vous le premier.*”

[I am content with that. Look, you go first.]

“Sirrah Finio!” Onion said.

“*Mort Dieu, le pesant,*” Pacue said.

[My God, I am weighing it — I am considering my answer.]

“Did thou see Valentine?” Onion asked.

“Valentine?” Finio said. “No.”

“No?” Onion said.

He started to leave.

“No,” Finio said. “Sirrah Onion, where are you going?”

“Oh, I am vexed!” Onion said. “He who would trust any of these lying travelers —”

Travelers frequently told outrageous lies about their travels.

Finio interrupted, “— please, stay, good Onion.”

Pacue said, “Monsieur Onion, *venez ça*, come hidera, *je vous prie* [come here, come hither, I beg you]. By gar [By God], me ha’ see [I have seen] two, tree, four hundra tousand [hundred thousand] of your cousin hang. “

Onions for sale were strung on a rope in the marketplace. (And some people named Onion were occasionally hung as punishment for their crimes.)

Pacue continued, “Lend me your hand; shall pray for know you bettra.”

[Shake hands with me. I desire to know you better].

Onion shook his hand and replied, "I thank you, good Signor Parlez-vous."

He then said quietly to himself, "Oh, that I were in another world, in the Indies or somewhere, so that I might have room to laugh!"

Overhearing Onion, Pacue said, "*Ah, oui, fort bien.*"

[Ah, yes, very well.]

He then said to Finio, "Stand. You be dere now; me will come to you. *Bonjour*, monsieur."

Pacue and Finio now practiced one form of greeting each other.

They embraced each other under the arm.

"Good morrow, good signor," Finio said.

Pacue replied, "By gar, be mush glad for see you."

[By God, I am very glad to see you.]

"I return you most kind thanks, sir," Finio said.

Amused by their practicing courtly etiquette, Onion said to himself, "What! What! By God's blood, this is rare!"

Overhearing Onion, Pacue said, "Nay, shall make you say 'rare' by and by."

"Rare" can mean "splendid."

Pacue and Finio now practiced another form of greeting each other.

They embraced each other over the shoulder: one arm over the other's shoulder, and one arm under the other's shoulder.

Pacue said, "*Regard* [Look], Monsieur Finio."

“Signor Pacue!” Finio said,

“*Dieu vous garde* [God save you], monsieur,” Pacue said,

“God save you, sweet signor,” Finio replied.

Pacue then asked, “Monsieur Onion, is it not *fort bien* [very good]?”

Onion misheard *bien* as “bean.”

Onion said, “‘Bean,’ said he? I wish that I were in debt of a pottle of beans; I could do as much.”

A pottle is two quarts.

For two quarts of beans — enough to pay off the debt — Onion would act as Finio and Pacue were acting.

“Welcome, signor,” Finio said. “What’s next?”

What was the next form of greeting they would practice?

Pacue replied, “Oh, here, *vois de grand admiration*, as should meet perchance, Monsieur Finio!”

[Oh, here, see the grand admiration, if we should meet by chance, Monsieur Finio!]

Pacue performed an exaggerated act of courtesy, one that Onion would soon comment on.

Finio bowed back and said, “Monsieur Pacue!”

Pacue said, “Jesu! By gar, who think we shall meet here?”

[Jesus! By God, who would have thought that we two would meet here?]

“By this hand, I am not a little proud of it, sir,” Finio said.

Onion said, “This trick is only for the chamber; it cannot be cleanly done in public.”



Some acts of etiquette, such as embracing someone's knees, are more intimate than others.

Pacue said, "Well, what say you for dis, den, Monsieur?"

He demonstrated a courteous gesture.

"Nay, please, sir," Finio said.

"*Par ma foi, vous bien encounters!*" Pacue said.

[By my faith, you are good at encounters!]

"What do you mean, sir?" Finio said. "Let your glove alone."

Pacue had used the glove in the greeting.

"*Comment se porte la santé?*" Pacue said.

[How is your health?]

"Indeed, exceeding well, sir," Finio said.

"Trot, be mush joy for hear," Pacue said.

[Truly, it gives me much joy to hear that.]

"And how is it with you, sweet Signor Pacue?" Finio asked.

"Fait, *comme vous voyez*," Pacue answered.

[Truly, it is as you can see.]

Onion said, "Young gentlemen, spirits of blood [gentlemen of courage and breeding], if ever you'll taste of a sweet piece of mutton, do Onion a good turn now."

Mutton means both 1) a kind of food, and 2) a sexually available woman.

Pacue asked, "*Quoi? Quoi? Parlez*, monsieur, what is it?"

[What? What? Speak, monsieur, what is it?]

“Indeed, teach me one of these tricks,” Onion requested.

He wanted to learn one of their greetings even though he was not in debt for a pottle of beans..

Pacue answered, “Oh, me shall do presently. Stand you dere; you signor, dere; myself is here. So, *fort bien* [very good]. Now I *parle* to Monsieur Onion, Onion *parle* to you, you speaka to me, so, and as you *parle*, change the bonnet [remove your hat], Monsieur Onion.”

*Parle* meant “speak.”

They greeted one another with comically extravagant gestures.

“Monsieur Finio!” Onion said.

“Monsieur Pacue!” Finio said.

“Pray, be covera,” Pacue said.

[Please, put your hat back on.]

“Nay, I beseech you, sir,” Onion said.

“What do you mean?” Finio asked.

“*Pardon-moi*, shall be so,” Pacue said.

“Oh, God, sir,” Onion said.

“Not I, in good faith, sir,” Finio said.

“By gar, you must,” Pacue said.

Onion said to Pacue, “It shall be as you wish.”

Pacue and Finio had been arguing about whether Onion should or should not wear his hat. Pacue wanted him to wear his hat; Finio did not.

Onion had agreed to wear his hat.

“Nay, then, you wrong me,” Finio said.

Onion said, “Well, if ever I come to be great —”

Some people rise and become great men.

Pacue interrupted, “— you be big enough for de Onion already.”

“I mean a great man,” Onion said.

“Then thou would be a monster,” Finio said.

Onion said:

“Well, God doesn’t know what fortune may do.

“Command me; use me from the sole to the crown and the crown to the sole, meaning not only from the crown of the head and the sole of the foot, but also the foot of the mind and the crowns of the purse.”

Presumably the “foot of the mind” has a sole, or soul.

Onion continued:

“I cannot stay now, young gentlemen, but — time was, time is, and time shall be.”

They exited.

— 4.4 —

Chamont (disguised as Gaspar) and Gasper (disguised as Chamont) talked together. Chamont, a free man, was leaving, while Gaspar, a prisoner, was staying. Chamont was going to arrange a prisoner exchange that would free Gaspar. They were talking privately with no one around to overhear them.

Chamont said:

“Sweet Gaspar, I am sorry we must part, but strong necessity forces it to happen.

“Don’t let the time seem long to you, my friend, until my return, for I swear by our love — the sacred sphere wherein our souls are knit — I will endeavor to effect this business of the prisoner exchange with all industrious care and happy speed.”

Gaspar replied, “My lord, these declarations would come well to one less capable of deserving your favor than I, in whom your merit is confirmed with such authentic and grounded proofs.”

“Well, I will use up no more time. Gaspar, adieu,” Chamont said.

“Farewell, my honored lord,” Gaspar said.

“Commend me to the lady, Aurelia, my good Gaspar,” Chamont said.

“I would have remembered that, even if you had not,” Gaspar said.

“Once more, adieu, sweet Gaspar,” Chamont said.

“My good lord!” Gaspar said.

Gaspar exited.

Chamont said:

“Thy virtues are more precious than thy name.”

Jasper is a precious gemstone.

Chamont continued:

“Kind gentleman! I would not sell thy love for all the earthly objects that my eyes have ever tasted. Surely, thou are nobly

born, however fortune has obscured thy birth, for native honor sparkles in thine eyes.

“How may I bless the time wherein Chamont, my honored father, did surprise Vicenza, where this my friend, known by no name, was found, being then a child and scarcely able to speak, to whom my father gave this name of Gaspar, and my father considered Gaspar as his own until his — my father’s — death.

“Since that time we two have shared our mutual fortunes with equal spirits and, except for death’s rude hand, no violence shall dissolve this sacred bond.”

Gaspar was a gentleman by nature. Was he also a gentleman by birth?

— 4.5 —

Juniper was in his cobbler’s shop, singing. Onion walked over to him.

Peter Onion said, “Fellow Juniper, no more of thy songs and sonnets, sweet Juniper, no more of thy hymns and madrigals. Thou sing, but I sigh.”

“What’s the matter, Peter, ha?” Juniper asked. “What, in an academy still, still in sable and costly black array, ha?”

University scholars wore black robes.

“Please, rise,” Onion said. “Mount, mount, sweet Juniper, for I go down the wind and yet I puff, for I am vexed.”

Juniper stood up, but part of Onion’s meaning was metaphorical.

“Down the wind” meant “in the direction of the wind.” Onion was being blown in a certain direction — toward Rachel — by Love.

“Ha, bully, vexed?” Juniper said. “What, intoxicate? Is thy brain in a quintessence, an idea, a metamorphosis, an apology?”

In other words, is your brain in a turmoil?

Juniper continued, “Ha, rogue? Come, this love feeds upon thee, I see by thy cheeks, and this love drinks healths of vermilion tears, I see by thine eyes.”

Onion’s cheeks were hollow, a sign of unrequited love. His eyes were red and teary.

“Healths” are “toasts.” So are “carouses.”

“I confess Cupid’s carouse,” Onion said. “He plays *super negulum* with my liquor of life.”

*Super ungulem* means “on the fingernail.” Drinkers would pour the last couple of drops on their left thumbnail to show that the cup was empty.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *supernaculum* means “to the last drop.” Cupid, aka Love, has drunk Onion’s vital life essence to the last drop.

“Tut, thou are a goose to be Cupid’s gull, aka fool,” Juniper said. “Bah, no more of these contemplations and calculations, thoughts and schemes. Don’t mourn, for Rachel’s thine own.”

“As for that, let the higher powers work,” Onion said. “But, sweet Juniper, I am not grieved on account of her, and yet I am grieved on account of her in a second person or, if not so, yet in a third.”

The “second person” would turn out to be Valentine, as Onion would soon make known.

“What! Second person?” Juniper said. “Away! Away! In the crotchets already? What’s the longitude and latitude? Where are you? What second, what person, huh?”

“Juniper, I’ll betray and expose myself before thee, for thy company is sweet to me,” Onion said, “but I must entreat thy helping hand in the case.”

Juniper replied, “Tut, no more of this surquedry — this arrogance and presumption. I am thine own, *ad unguem* [to the fingernail, aka to the end], upsy Friese, pell mell.”

“Upsy Friese” means the Frisian way of drinking deeply.

“Pell mell” means “in a disordered rush.”

Juniper then asked, “Come, what case, what case?”

“Case” can mean 1) female genitalia, 2) matter, and/or 3) a legal case.

“As for the case, it may be any man’s case as well as mine — Rachel, I mean — but I’ll meddle with her soon,” Onion said.

One meaning of “meddle with” is “have sex with.”

Onion continued, “In the meantime, Valentine is the man who has wronged me.”

“What! My ingle wrong thee?” Juniper said. “Is it possible?”

“Your ingle?” Onion said. “Hang him, infidel! Well, and if I am not revenged on him, let Peter Onion, by the infernal gods, be turned in to a leek or a scallion! I spoke to him about a ditty for this handkerchief.”

He had spoken to Valentine about writing a poesy to be embroidered on a handkerchief that would be given to Rachel as a gift.

“Why, hasn’t he done it?” Juniper asked.

“Done it?” Onion said. “Not a verse, I swear by this hand.”

“Oh, *in diebus illis!*” Juniper said.

*In diebus illis* is Latin for “in those days.” It basically means, “Once upon a time.”

Juniper continued:

“Oh, preposterous! Well, come, be blithe. The best inditer — writer — of them all is sometimes dull.

“Fellow Onion, pardon my ingle. He is a man, and he has imperfections and declinations as other men have. His muse sometimes cannot curvet nor prognosticate and come off, as it should.”

“Imperfectons” are faults.

By “declinations,” Juniper may have meant “instances of declining to do something.” In this case, it meant not keeping a promise.

“Curvet nor prognosticate” meant “dance nor prophesy.” In other words, Valentine’s muse sometimes takes the day off.

Juniper continued:

“No matter. I’ll hammer out a paraphrase for thee myself.”

He meant that he would write a short poesy for Onion.

“No, sweet Juniper, no,” Onion said. “Danger breeds delay; love makes me choleric. I can bear it no longer.”

The proverb actually is this: “Delay breeds danger.”

“Not bear what, my mad meridian slave, not bear what?” Juniper asked.



“Meridian” means “relating to noon,” when the sun is at its highest. Jupiter is using the word to mean “supreme.”

“I can’t bear Cupid’s burden, which is love,” Onion said. “It is too heavy, too tolerable [he meant ‘intolerable’]. And as for the handkerchief and the posey, I will not trouble thee. But if thou will go with me into her father’s backside, old Jaques’ backside, and speak for me to Rachel, I will not be ingratitude [be ungrateful]. The old man is abroad — out of his house — and all.”

“Backside” can mean “the backyard of the house.” You already know the other meaning.

“Are thou sure of it?” Juniper asked.

“As sure as a legal obligation,” Onion said.

“Let’s leave, then,” Juniper said. “Come, we spend time in a vain circumference [useless dilly-dallying]. Trade, I cashier [dismiss] thee until tomorrow. Fellow Onion, for thy sake I finish this workaday [workday].”

He was going to take the day off so he could help Onion.

Onion said, “God-a-mercy, thank you, and for thy sake I’ll at any time make a holiday and take a day off so I can help you.”

— 4.6 —

Angelo and Rachel talked together.

Angelo said, “Nay, I say to thee, Rachel, I come to comfort thee. Don’t be so sad.”

“Oh, Signor Angelo,” Rachel said, “no comfort but Paolo’s presence can remove this sadness from my heart.”

Angelo said:

“Nay, then, you’re fond, and you lack that strength of judgment and election that should be attendant on your years and form and body shape.”

“Fond” can mean “foolish” or “in love.”

Angelo continued, “Will you, because your lord has been taken prisoner, blubber and weep and keep a peevish stir, as though you would turn turtle with the news?”

Turtledoves have a mournful cry.

Angelo continued:

“Come, come, be wise.

“By God’s blood, let’s say that your lord dies, and you go mar your face as you begin to do now with your mourning, what would you do, do you think? Who would care for you?

“But this is how it is:

“When nature will bestow her gifts on such as don’t know how to use them, you find some who, had they but one quarter of your fair beauty, they would make it show a little otherwise than you do this, or they would see the face-painter [cosmetician] twice an hour.

“And I commend them, aye, who can use the art of cosmetology with such good skill and judgment.”

“You talk idly,” Rachel said. “If this is your best comfort for me, keep it still. My senses cannot feed on such sour delicacies.”

“And why, sweetheart?” Angelo said.

“Nay, stop, good signor,” Rachel said.

“Come, I have sweeter foods yet in store,” Angelo said.

Juniper, out of sight but within hearing, said to Onion, “Aye, in any case.”

He then called, “Mistress Rachel!”

“Rachel?” Angelo said.

“For God’s pity, Signor Angelo, I hear my father!” Rachel said. “Leave, for God’s sake!”

Angelo said, “By God’s blood, I am between the impulse to go and the impulse to stay, I think. This is twice now I have been interrupted thus.”

Earlier, in 2.5, Rachel’s father had interrupted his intended pursuit of Rachel.

Angelo exited.

Rachel said, “I pray to God that Angelo does not meet my father!”

She thought that the man calling her — who was actually Juniper — was her father.

— 4.7 —

Onion and Juniper entered Jaques’ backside, aka backyard.

“Oh, splendid! She’s yonder,” Onion said.

Rachel exited.

“Oh, terrible! She’s gone,” Onion said.

Juniper said, “Yea, so nimble in your dilemmas and your hyperboles? ‘Hey, my love,’ ‘Oh, my love,’ ‘At the first sight,’ by the Mass.”

“At the first sight” is “love at first sight.”

Onion said, “Oh, how she scudded! Oh, how she darted nimbly! Oh, sweet, hurried scud! Oh, sweet movement! How she tripped! Oh, delicate trip-and-go!”

To “scud” is to “move briskly.”

A “scud” is a brisk movement.

A scut, which Onion may have been thinking of, is 1) a rabbit’s or deer’s short tail, or 2) female genitalia.

A trip is a skip or a light, quick walk.

“Come, thou are enamored with the influence of her profundity,” Juniper said.

Rachel’s “profundity” may be her fundament, or backside.

He continued, “But, sirrah, listen a little.”

“Oh, rare!” Onion said. “What! What! Surpassing, indeed. What is it! What is it!”

“What will thou say now if Rachel were to stand now and play hity-tity through the keyhole to behold the equipage of thy person?” Juniper asked.

In other words, what if Rachel is standing behind the door and playing bo-peep with her eyes through the keyhole in order to observe Onion’s “equipage.”

The equipage is appurtenances. What appurtenances? Perhaps a bulge in his pants.

“Oh, sweet equipage!” Onion said. “Try, good Juniper, tickle her, talk, talk. Oh, drare!”

“Drare” is a portmanteau word combining “dare” and “rare.” He wanted to take a chance for a splendid outcome. If Rachel were behind the door, and if Juniper could speak the right words to her, then Rachel could become Onion’s wife.

Juniper called through the door, “Mistress Rachel!”

He said to Onion, “Watch then in case her father comes.”

He called, “Rachel, Madonna, Rachel!”

He then said to Onion, “No answer.”

“Say I am here, Onion or Peter or so,” Peter Onion said.

“No, I’ll knock,” Juniper said. “We’ll not stand upon horizons and tricks but fall roundly to the matter.”

“Horizons” are “orisons” or “entreaties.”

“Fall roundly” may mean “fall into a round,” or “fall’ into a vagina.”

He knocked.

“Well said, sweet Juniper,” Onion said. “Horizons? Hang ’em! Knock, knock!”

From inside the house, Rachel said, “Who’s there? Father?”

“Father?” Juniper said. “No, and yet a father, if you please to be a mother.”

Onion wanted to be the father of her children.

“Well said, Juniper,” Onion said. “Speak to her again: a smack or two more of the mother.”

Juniper called to Rachel, “Do you hear, sweet soul, sweet Rhadamant, sweet  
<https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/works/case/facing/Machiavel?> One word, Melpomone. Are you at leisure?”

Rhadamant is a judge in the Land of the Dead. Machivel is Machiavelli, who had the reputation of being unscrupulous

when it came to politics. Melopomone is the Muse of Tragedy.

Not many, if any, women would want to be called Rhadamant, Machivel, or Melopomone.

“At leisure?” Rachel said. “To do what?”

“To do what?” Juniper said. “To do nothing but be liable to the ecstasy of true love’s exigent or so. You smell [detect] my meaning?”

“Exigent” means “necessity,” but Onion thought that Juniper had said “excrement.”

“Smell?” Onion said. “Filthy, fellow Juniper, filthy! Smell? Oh, most odious!”

“How ‘filthy’?” Juniper said.

“Filthy, by this finger!” Onion said. “Smell? Smell a rat, smell a pudding.”

“To smell a rat” means “to smell trouble.”

“Pudding” can mean 1) entrails, or 2) a food consisting of a stuffed stomach or other entrail.

“Away!” Onion said.

He wanted Juniper to get away from Rachel’s door and let him do the talking.

Onion continued, “These tricks are for trulls. A plain wench loves plain dealing and straight talking. I’ll <https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/works/case/facing/>go talk to her, myself. Smell, to a marchpane wench!”

A trull is a prostitute.

“Marchpane” is marzipan, a sweet dish. Rachel is a sweet wench.

“With all my heart,” Juniper said. “I’ll be legitimate and silent as an apple-squire. I’ll see nothing and say nothing.”

By “legitimate,” Juniper may have meant “intimate.”

An apple-squire is a pimp.

Juniper was saying that he would be as quiet as a pimp standing at a door behind which a prostitute and her customer were transacting “business.”

“Sweetheart! Sweetheart!” Onion called to Rachel.

“And bag pudding,” Juniper said. “Ha, ha, ha!”

A bag pudding is a pudding that has been boiled in a bag.

Juniper had mentioned together a sweet heart and a bag pudding (stuffed stomach or other entrail).

Not my kind of humor, but Juniper thought his joke was funny.

Jaques, Rachel’s father, called, “What, Rachel, my girl? What, Rachel!”

“By God’s eyelid!” Onion said.

“What, Rachel!” Jaques called.

“Here I am,” Rachel answered from behind the door.

“What rakehell calls Rachel?” Onion said. “Oh, treason to my love!”

He had not recognized her father’s voice.

A “rakehell” is a scoundrel.

“It’s her father, on my life,” Juniper said. “How shall we entrench and edify [hide and fortify] ourselves from him?”

“Oh, coney-catching Cupid!” Onion said.

A coney can be 1) a rabbit, 2) a fool, or 3) a lady.

Cupid, aka Love, makes fools of many people.

Jaques entered the scene and said, “What! In my backside? Where? What did they come for?”

There were two possible answers: 1) Rachel, and 2) his gold.

Onion climbed a tree.

Jaques said, “Where are they? Rachel! Thieves! Thieves!”

He seized Juniper and said, “Stay, villain, slave!”

He called, “Rachel, untie my dog!”

He then said to Juniper, “Nay, thief, thou cannot escape.”

“I beg you, sir,” Juniper said.

“A pitiful Onion!” Onion said, hiding in the tree. “I wish that thou had a rope!”

Onions for sale in the marketplace were strung on a string.

“Why, Rachel!” Jaques said. “When will you do what I say? Let loose my dog! Garlic, my mastiff! Let him loose, I say!”

“For God’s sake, hear me speak!” Juniper said. “Keep your cur tied up!”

“I don’t fear Garlic,” Onion said to himself. “He’ll not bite Onion, his kinsman. I pray to God he comes out, and then they’ll not smell me.”

“Well, then, deliver,” Jaques said. “Come, deliver, slave.”



“Deliver” means “give me your valuables,” as in a highwayman’s order to “stand [still] and deliver [your valuables].”

Jaques thought that Juniper had stolen his gold, and he wanted his gold back.

“What should I deliver?” Juniper asked.

“Oh, thou would have me tell thee, would thou?” Jaques said. “Show me thy hands. What do thou have in thy hands?”

Juniper held out his hands and said, “Here are my hands.”

“Wait,” Jaques said. “Aren’t thy fingers’ ends begrimed with dirt? No, thou have wiped them.”

Jaques was afraid that Juniper had dug up his gold.

“Wiped them?” Juniper asked.

“Aye, thou villain!” Jaques said. “Thou are a subtle knave. Take off thy shoes. Come, I will see them.”

He called, “Give me a knife here, Rachel.”

He then told Juniper, “I’ll rip the soles.”

In the tree, Onion said to himself, “It’s doesn’t matter. He’s a cobbler; he can mend them.”

“What, are you mad?” Juniper asked. “Are you detestable? Would you make an anatomy of me? Do you think that I am not true orthography?”

“Anatomy” is a body used for dissecting.

“Orthography” is the study of proper spelling.

“‘Orthography’? ‘Anatomy’?” Jaques said.

Like most people, he frequently did not understand Juniper.

“For God’s sake, be not so inviolable [‘unable to be violated,’ but Juniper meant ‘impervious to argument’],” Juniper said. “I am no *ambuscade* [person lying in ambush]. What predicament [situation] call you this? Why do you intimate [hint] so much?”

Jaques patted Juniper’s body, searching for gold, and said, “I can feel nothing.”

Onion said to himself, “By our Lady, but Onion feels something.”

He may have felt fear.

Jaques said to Juniper, “Wait, sir, you are not yet gone. I have not yet finished. Shake your legs, come, and your arms. Be brief, wait.”

Juniper shook his arms and legs, but no gold fell to the ground.

Jaques began searching Juniper’s breeches, whose then-current style was wide and baggy and stuffed with hair.

Jaques said, “Let me see these drums, these kilderkins [casks], these bombard slops [baggy trousers]. What is it crams — stuffs — them so?”

Jaques thought that his gold might be hidden in Juniper’s wide, baggy trousers.

“Nothing but hair,” Juniper said.

“That’s true,” Jaques said, finishing his search of Juniper’s trousers.

He then began to search Juniper’s hair, saying, “I had almost forgot this rug, this hedgehog’s nest, this hay-mow, this bear’s skin, this heath, this furze-bush.”

A “hay-mow” is a hay-stack.

A “heath” is uncultivated land.

“Oh, let me go!” Juniper said. “You tear my hair, you revolve [spin about] my brains and understanding!”

Jaques said to himself:

“Heart, thou are somewhat eased. Half of my fear has taken its leave of me; the other half still keeps possession in despite of hope, until these amorous eyes of mine court my fair gold.

“Dear, I come to thee!”

He then said to Juniper, “Fiend, why are thou not gone? Leave, my soul’s vexation! Satan, go hence! Why do thou stare at me? Why do thou stay? Why do thou pore — stare — on the ground with thievish eyes? What do thou see there, thou cur? What do thou stare open-mouthed at? Go away from my house!”

He called, “Rachel, send Garlic forth!”

“I am gone, sir. I am gone,” Juniper said. “For God’s sake, stop!”

Juniper exited.

“Pack off and thank God thou escape so well away!” Jaques said.

Still in the tree, Onion said to himself, “If I escape from this tree, Destinies, I defy you.”

The three Destinies are the Three Fates. One Fate spins the thread of life, a second Fate measures the thread of life, and the third Fate cuts the thread of life.

Thinking himself alone, Jaques said to himself:

“I cannot see by any characters — signs — written on this earth that any felonious foot has taken acquaintance of this hallowed ground.

“No one sees me.

“Knees, do homage to your lord — to your gold.”

He knelt and dug up the gold.

Seeing the gold, he said:

“It is safe. It is safe. It lies and sleeps so soundly that it would do one good to look on it. If this bliss should be given to any man who has much gold, justly to say, ‘It is safe,’ then I say, ‘It is safe.’

“Oh, what a heavenly round — a circular dance — these two words dance within me and without — outside — me!

“First, I think them, and then I speak them, then I watch — heed and listen to — their sound, and drink it greedily with both my ears, then think, then speak, then drink their sound again, and racket round about this body’s court these two sweet words: ‘It is safe.’

“Wait, I will feed my other senses.”

Jaques smelled the gold and said, “Oh, how sweet it smells!”

Still in the tree, Onion said, “I marvel he doesn’t smell Onion, being so near it.”

Burying the gold, Jaques said:

“Down to thy grave again, thou beauteous ghost!

“Angels, men say, are spirits; spirits are invisible. Bright angels, are you so?

“Be you invisible to every eye, except only these eyes of mine.”

Angels are 1) attendant spirits, and 2) coins.

Jaques then said:

“Sleep. I’ll not break your rest, although you break mine because I worry about you.

“Dear saints, adieu, adieu!

“My feet part from you, but my soul dwells with you.”

Jaques exited.

“Has he gone?” Onion asked himself

Climbing down from the tree, Onion said:

“Oh, Fortune my friend, and not Fortune my foe,

“I come down to embrace thee and kiss thy great toe!”

Juniper returned to Jaques’ backyard and said, “Fellow Onion? Peter?”

“Fellow Juniper!” Peter Onion said.

Juniper said, “What, has the old panurgo gone, departed, cosmographied, ha?”

A “panurgo” is a deceitful old man.

By “cosmographied,” Juniper meant that Jaques had vanished into the cosmos.

“Oh, aye, and listen, sirrah,” Onion said.

Then he reconsidered telling Juniper about the gold: “Shall I tell him? No.”

Juniper said, “Nay, be brief and declare. Stand not upon conundrums now. Thou know what contagious [malapropism for ‘outrageous’] speeches I have suffered for thy sake. If he should come again and invent me here —”

The Latin *invenire* means “locate” or “encounter.”

Juniper meant that he was worried that Jaques would find him here.

Onion said to himself, “He says the truth; he suffered for my sake. I will tell him.”

He said out loud, “Sirrah Juniper —”

Then he reconsidered: “And yet I will not.”

“What do thou say, sweet Onion?” Juniper asked.

Onion said, “If thou had smelled the scent of me when I was in the tree, thou would not have said so.”

Juniper would not have told Jaques where Onion was hiding.

Onion continued, “But, sirrah, the case is altered with me. My heart has given love a box of the ear — a smash on the side of the head — made him kick up the heels, indeed.”

One meaning of “kick up the heels” is to trip someone.

The gold had made Onion fall out of love. He wanted the gold more than he wanted Rachel.

Juniper said, “Do thou say that to me, mad Greek? How did that happen? How did that chance to happen?”

Greeks were proverbially madcap.

Onion said to himself, “I cannot hold it inside myself.”

He then said out loud, “Juniper, have an eye. Look. Keep an eye on the door. Watch for Jaques.”

He dug up the gold, which was hidden under horse dung.

Then he said:

“The old proverb’s true, I see: ‘Gold is but muck.’

“Nay, Godso, Juniper, look to the door! An eye to the main chance! Here, you slave, have an eye!”

The main chance was the main issue: the chance to get rich by stealing the gold. The way to do that was to keep an eye out for Jaques.

“O inexorable, O infallible, O intricate, divine, and superficial Fortune!” Juniper said, looking at the gold.

The word “superficial” seems not to go with the other adjectives. “Sufficient” is more appropriate. Or “super-sufficient.”

“Nay, it will be sufficient soon,” Onion said. “Here, look here!”

“O insolent good luck!” Juniper said.

Another odd use of an adjective.

Perhaps Juniper meant “insolvent good luck,” or “good luck to someone who is insolvent.”

Juniper asked, “How did thou produce the intelligence [gain the knowledge] of the gold minerals?”

“I’ll tell you that soon,” Onion said.

He handed Juniper some gold and said, “Here, make shift, do your best, convey, cram.”

In other words, hide the gold on your person.

“I’ll teach you, Jaques, how you shall call for Garlic again, indeed,” Onion said.

Juniper said, “By God’s blood, what shall we do with all this? We shall never bring it to a consumption.”

In other words, they would never be able to spend this much money. There was too much wealth to consume in spending.

“Consumption?” Onion said. “Why, we’ll be most sumptuously attired, man.”

“By this gold, I will have three or four most stigmatical suits soon,” Jaques said.

“Stigmatical” means “villainous.”

In this culture, there were rules saying that people could not dress above their social class. If Juniper and Onion were to wear sumptuous clothing, they would be breaking those rules. For them, such clothing would be a stigma: a mark of infamy.

“I’ll go in my footcloth,” Onion said. “I’ll turn gentleman.”

A “footcloth” is an ornamental cloth for a horse. Onion meant that he would ride a horse that wore a footcloth, but it sounded as if Onion would be wearing the footcloth.

“So will I,” Juniper said.

“But what badge shall we display?” Onion asked. “What cullison?”

Badges and cullisance were signs of nobility.

Juniper answered, “As for that, let’s use the infidelity and commiseration [corruption and sympathetic consideration] of some harrot [herald] of arms; he shall give us a gudgeon.”

Juniper was using the word “gudgeon,” which is a kind of fish, but he had meant the word “scutcheon,” which refers to a shield that displays a coat of arms.

A herald could be bribed to give them a coat of arms; the herald could take the bribe and say that he gave them the coat of arms out of sympathetic consideration for them.

“A ‘gudgeon’?” Onion said. “A scutcheon, thou should say, man.”



“A scutcheon or a gudgeon,” Juniper said. “All is one and the same.”

“Well, our arms are good enough,” Onion said. “Let’s look to our legs.”

They had decided to get coats of arms; now they needed to run away.

“I am content,” Juniper said. “I agree. We’ll be jogging.”

They would be jogging their body as they ran. They would also be jingling the gold coins.

“Rachel, we retire,” Onion said. “Garlic, God be with you.”

“Farewell, sweet Jaques,” Juniper said.

“Farewell, sweet Rachel,” Onion said.

He then said about Garlic, “Sweet dog, adieu.”

They exited Jaques’ backyard.

— 4.8 —

Maximilian, Count Ferneze, Aurelia, Phoenixella, and Pacue talked together.

The scheme of Gaspar and Chamont exchanging identities had been discovered. Maximilian, Count Ferneze, and the others knew now that Chamont, a noble, had been released, and that Gaspar still remained as their prisoner. Now Count Ferneze worried that Paolo, his son, would not be ransomed because why would the French exchange Paolo, the son of a Count, for a nobody like Gaspar.

Maximilian and Count Ferneze were in the middle of an argument.

Maximilian said, “Nay, but sweet Count —”

“Away!” Count Ferneze said. “Leave! I’ll hear no more. Never was a man so palpably abused: My son has been so basely marketed and sold, and I myself am made the subject of your mirth and scorn.”

“Count Ferneze, you tread too hard upon my patience,” Maximilian said. “Don’t persist, I advise Your Lordship.”

“I will persist, and to thee I speak,” Count Ferneze said. “Thou, Maximilian, thou have injured me.”

“Before the Lord —” Maximilian began.

“Sweet signor —” Aurelia began.

“Oh, my father!” Phoenixella said.

“Lady, let your father thank your beauty,” Maximilian said to Phoenixella.

Maximilian could fight Count Ferneze as an act of honor: Count Ferneze had insulted his honor. Phoenixella, however, was beautiful and Maximilian liked her, and so Maximilian would grant her wish that the two men would not fight.

Pacue said to himself, “By gar [god], me shall be hang for tella dis same. Me tella mademoiselle, she tell her fadera [father].”

Which mademoiselle? Aurora? Phoenixella? Don’t know.

As Chamont and Gaspar had feared, Pacue had told the secret.

Count Ferneze complained, “The true Chamont set free, and one left here, of no descent, clad barely in his name!”

Gaspar was noble in nature, but he had no name — no family — of nobility, as far as anyone knew.

Count Ferneze said to Pacue, “Sirrah boy, come here, and be sure you speak the simple truth.”

“Oh, *pardonnez-moi* [excuse me], monsieur,” Pacue said.

“Come, leave your ‘pardons’ and directly say what villain is the same who has usurped the honored name and person of Chamont,” Count Ferneze ordered.

“Oh, monsieur, no *point* villain, brave chevalier, Monsieur Gaspar!” Pacue said.

“No *point* villain” means “no villain at all.” The French “*ne ... point*” means “not at all.”

“Monsieur Gaspar!” Count Ferneze said. “On what occasion did they exchange their names? What was their policy — their plot — or their pretext?”

“Me can no tell, *par ma foi* [by my faith], monsieur,” Pacue said.

“My honorable lord —” Maximilian began.

Count Ferneze interrupted, “Tut, tut, be silent!”

“Silent? Count Ferneze, I tell thee, if Amurath, the ruthless great Turk, were here, I would speak and he should hear me!” Maximilian said.

“So will I not,” Count Ferneze said.

“By my father’s hand, but thou shall, count,” Maximilian said. “I say, until this instant I was never touched — hurt — in my reputation. Hear me. You shall know that you have wronged me, and I will make you acknowledge it. If I cannot, my sword shall.”

“By heaven, I will not hear you,” Count Ferneze said. “I will stop my ears. My senses loathe the savor of thy breath. It is poison to me. I say, I will not hear you. What shall I know?”

It is you who have injured me. What will you make? Make me acknowledge it?"

He went to the door and ordered, "Fetch forth that Gaspar, that base, wicked counterfeit."

Some serving-men entered the room with Gaspar.

Count Ferneze said to Maximilian, "I'll make him to your face prove your wrongs. I'll make him show that you have wronged me."

He then said to Gaspar, "Come on, false substance, shadow to Chamont! Had you no one else to work upon and trick but me? Was I your fittest project? Well, confess what you intended by this secret plot, and by whose policy it was contrived. Speak the truth, and you will be treated courteously. But speak deceitfully to me, and you must resolve to suffer the most extreme torment that I can inflict."

"My honored lord, hear me with patience," Gaspar said. "Neither hope of favor nor the fear of torment shall sway my tongue from uttering the truth."

"It is well," Count Ferneze said. "Proceed, then."

Gaspar said, "The morning before this battle did begin, wherein my Lord Chamont and I were captured, we vowed one mutual fortune, good or bad, that day should be embraced of us both, and, thinking that things might turn out badly after we had made our vow, we there concluded to exchange our names."

One way for things to turn out badly would be for both of them to be taken prisoner. Since Chamont was a general, he might face bad treatment. Paolo was willing to share that bad treatment or even to take it on himself, and so he and Chamont had exchanged names.

“Then Maximilian mistook you for Chamont,” Count Ferneze said.

“True, noble lord,” Gaspar said.

“It is false, ignoble wretch!” Count Ferneze said. “It was but a plot to betray my son.”

“Count, thou liest in thy bosom, count!” Maximilian said.

These were fighting — dueling — words.

“Lie?” Count Ferneze said.

“Nay, I beseech you, honored gentlemen,” Gaspar said. “Don’t let the untimely ruin of your love follow as a consequence of these slight occurrents. Be assured, Chamont’s return will heal these wounds again and break the points of your too piercing thoughts.”

Maximilian and Count Ferneze were fighting with words, but their fight was unnecessary because soon Chamont would return and bring Paolo with him. So Gaspar said, but Count Ferneze did not believe him.

Count Ferneze said:

“Return? Aye, when? When will Chamont return? He’ll come to fetch you, will he? Aye, it is likely. Ha! You’d have me think so; that’s your devious trick.

“No, no, young gallant, your trick is stale. You cannot feed me with so vain a hope.”

“My lord, I am not feeding you with a vain hope,” Gaspar said. “I know assuredly that he will return and bring your noble son along with him.”

“Aye, I dare bet my soul he will return,” Maximilian said.

“Oh, impudent derision, open scorn, intolerable wrong!” Count Ferneze said. “Isn’t it enough that you have played upon me and fooled me all this while, but still to mock me, still to jest at me?”

He said to his serving-men, “Fellows, take him away.”

He said to Gaspar, “Thou ill-bred slave, who sets no difference between a noble spirit and thy own slavish humor, do not think but I’ll take worthy vengeance on thee, wretch.”

Gaspar said:

“Alas, these threats are idle, like the wind,

“And breed no terror in a guiltless mind.”

Count Ferneze replied, “Nay, thou shall lack no torture: Know that and be ready to be tortured.”

He ordered his serving-men, “Take him away!”

Gaspar said:

“I welcome the worst. I suffer for a friend.

“Your tortures will, but my love shall never, end.”

Maximilian, Aurelia, Phoenixella, and Pacue remained.

Phoenixella said to herself about the absent Gaspar:

“Alas, poor gentleman! My father’s rage is too extreme, too stern and violent. Oh, I wish that I knew, with all my strongest powers, how to remove it from thy patient breast! But that I cannot do.”

She wanted her father not to be angry at the patient – calm and collected — Gaspar.

Phoenixella continued:

“Yet my willing heart shall minister, in spite of tyranny, to thy misfortune. Something there is in him who does force this strange affection with more than common rapture in my breast.

“For, being but Gaspar, he is still as dear

“To me as when he did as Chamont appear.”

She loved him when she thought he was Chamont; she still loved him when she knew he was Gaspar.

Aurelia said, “But in all seriousness, signor, do you think Chamont will return?”

“Do I see your face, lady?” Maximilian answered.

Yes, he saw her face, and yes, he thought that Chamont would return.

“Aye, to be sure, if love has not blinded you,” Aurelia said.

Maximilian said, “That is a question; but I will assure you, no, I am not blinded by love. I can see, and yet love is in my eye. Well, the Count, your father, simply has dishonored me, and this steel shall engrave it on his burgonet.”

A burgonet is a kind of helmet.

Count Ferneze had called him a liar; by doing so, he had dishonored him.

“Nay, sweet signor,” Aurelia said.

“Lady, I prefer my reputation to my life, but you shall rule me,” Maximilian said. “Come, let’s march.”

“I’ll follow, signor,” Aurelia said.

Maximilian exited with Phoenixella and Pacue.

Alone, Aurelia said to herself:

“Oh, sweet queen of love, Venus, sovereign of all my thoughts, and thou, fair Fortune, who, more to honor my affections, have thus translated Gaspar to Chamont!

“Let both your flames now burn in one bright sphere and give true light to my aspiring hopes!

“Hasten Chamont’s return! Let him love me,

“Even if father, friends, and all the world reject me.”



ACT 5 (*The Case is Altered*)

— 5.1 —

Angelo and Christophero talked together. Christophero's nickname was Kit, and he was carrying gold coins.

Angelo said:

“Sigh for a woman? Would I fold my arms, rave in my sleep, talk idly being awake, pine and look pale, make love-walks in the night, to steal cold comfort — small consolation — from a day-star's eyes?”

In this culture, folded arms were a sign of melancholy.

Literally, the day-star is the sun; metaphorically, it is Rachel.

Angelo continued:

“Kit, thou are a fool. Will thou be wise? Then, lad, renounce this boy-god Cupid's foolish idolatry. Don't insist on compliment and wooing tricks.

“Thou love old Jaques' daughter, do thou?”

“Love her?” Christophero asked.

“Come, come, I know you do,” Angelo said. “Be ruled and take my advice, and she's thine own. Thou will say her father Jaques, the old beggar, has pledged his word to thee that none but thou shall be his son-in-law?”

“He has,” Christophero said.

Angelo said:

“He has? Will thou believe him and be made a rook — a fool — to wait on such an antique weathercock? Why, he is more inconstant than the sea; his thoughts, chameleon-like, change every minute.”

These three things change: weathervanes, the sea, and chameleons. According to Angelo, a fourth thing also changes: Jaques.

Angelo continued:

“No, Kit, work soundly. Steal the wench away, wed her and bed her, and, when that is done, then say to Jaques, ‘Shall I be your son-in-law?’”

“But come, to our plot. Where is this gold?”

Showing him some gold coins, Christophero said, “Here, Signor Angelo.”

Angelo said:

“Bestow it. Bid thy hands shed golden drops. Let these bald French crowns be uncovered in open sight to do obeisance to Jaques’ staring eyes when he steps forth.”

The French crowns — gold coins — will shine like French heads — heads made bald because of the French disease: syphilis.

Angelo continued:

“Jaques, the needy beggar, will be glad of gold. So now keep aloof, and, as he treads this gilded path, stretch out his ambling hopes with scattering more and more gold that he will walk after to collect, and, as thou go, cry, ‘Jaques! Jaques!’”

“Tush, leave it to me,” Christophero said.

Angelo said:

“First I’ll play the ghost. I’ll call him out of his house but not be seen.

“Kit, stand to the side.”

“But, Signor Angelo, where will yourself and Rachel wait for me, after the trick has ended?” Christophero asked.

“By the Mass, that’s a good question,” Angelo said. “At the old priory behind Saint Foy’s.”

A priory is a monastery or a nunnery.

“Agreed; there is no better place,” Christophero said. “I’ll meet you there.”

He withdrew, dropping gold coins on the ground.

Angelo said to himself, “Do, good fool, do, but I’ll not meet you there. Now to this trick.”

He stepped to the side to hide himself and called, “Jaques! Jaques! What! Jaques!”

From inside his house, Jaques said, “Who calls? Who’s there?”

“Jaques!” Angelo called.

Jaques asked, “Who calls?”

Angelo said to Christophero, who was Count Ferneze’s steward, “Steward, he comes, he comes.”

He called again, “Jaques!”

Jaques stepped out of his house and said, “What voice is this? Nobody here? Wasn’t I called? I was, and one cried ‘Jaques’ with a hollow voice. I was deceived.”

He saw a gold coin and said, “No, I was not deceived. See, see, it was an angel that called me forth! Gold, gold, man-making gold!”

A man with much gold is a made man.

Jaques saw another gold coin and said, “Another star! Do they drop from heaven? No, no, my house, I hope, is haunted with a fairy! My dear Lar, my household god, my fairy. On my knees.”

He knelt, all the better to pick up the gold.

In this society, fairies were reputed to sometimes strew gold around.

Lars are protective household spirits.

Christophero called, “Jaques!”

He exited, leaving a trail of gold coins behind him so that Jaques would follow them, pick them up, and leave his daughter, Rachel, unattended.

Jaques said, “My Lar calls me! Oh, sweet voice, musical as the spheres! See, see, more gold!”

In Ptolemaic astronomy, the planets and stars were encased in spheres that moved around the Earth. These spheres made music: the Music of the Spheres. This music was thought to be beautiful.

Out of sight, Christophero called, “Jaques!”

Rachel entered the scene.

“What, Rachel, Rachel!” Jaques said. “Lock my door. Look after my house.”

Christophero called again, “Jaques!”

“Shut fast my door,” Jaques said to Rachel.

He picked up a gold coin, “A golden crown! Jaques shall be a king.”

He exited.

Angelo said to himself about Jaques, “To a fool’s paradise that path will bring thee and thy household Lar.”

“What does my father mean?” Rachel said to herself. “I wonder what strange mood he is in?”

Angelo came out of hiding, walked over to her and said, “Come, sweet soul, stop wondering. Don’t be startled. It was I who laid this plot to get thy father out of the house.”

“Oh, Angelo!” Rachel said.

“O me no O’s, but listen,” Angelo said. “My lord, your love, Paolo Ferneze, has returned from war. He lingers at Pont Valerio, and from thence by post at the most recent midnight I was entreated to accompany you thither. Do not insist on replies. A horse is saddled for you, if you will go, and I am at your service. If you will stay, why, so be it.”

A pont is a bridge.

“Oh, Angelo, every minute is a day until my Ferneze comes to me,” Rachel said. “Come, we’ll go, sir.”

She exited.

Angelo said to himself:

“Sweet soul, I guess thy meaning by thy looks. At Pont Valerio thou shall see thy love, but not Ferneze.

“Steward Christophero, fare you well. You wait for Rachel, too. When will you see her, can you tell?”

The answer to “When will you see her, can you tell?” is “Never.”

Angelo exited.

Jaques returned and said:

“Oh, in what a golden circle have I danced!”

Fairies were thought to dance in circles.

Jaques continued:

“Milan, these odorous and enflowered fields are none of thine. No, here’s Elysium. Here blessed ghosts do walk.”

Elysium is the part of the Land of the Dead where the good souls go to enjoy the afterlife.

Jaques continued:

“This is the court and glorious palace where the god of gold shines like the sun of sparkling majesty.”

Plutus is the god of gold and other forms of wealth.

Jaques said to the gold coins he had picked up:

“Oh, fair-feathered, my red-breasted birds, come fly with me!”

Angels have wings, and another kind of angels is gold coins.

In this society, the color of gold was sometimes called red.

Jaques continued:

“I’ll bring you to a choir, whose consort — musical harmony — being sweetened with your sound, the music will be fuller, and each hour these ears shall banquet with your harmony.”

He sang, “Oh! Oh! Oh!”

He then left to go to his backyard and dig up his gold so he could add these new gold coins.

Christophero entered the scene and said to himself, “At the old priory behind Saint Foy’s, that was the place of our appointment, I am sure. I hope he will not make me lose my gold, and mock me, too. Perhaps they are within. I’ll knock.”

He knocked at Jaques' door.

Discovering that his gold was gone, Jaques said to himself, "Oh, God, the case is altered!"

Christophero called, "Rachel! Angelo! Signor Angelo!"

Jaques said, "Angels? Aye, where? My angels? Where's my gold? Why, Rachel —"

He then said to Christophero, "Oh, thou thievish cannibal! Thou eat my flesh in the stealing of my gold!"

"What gold?" Christophero asked.

"What gold!" Jaques said.

He called, "Rachel, call help! Come forth!"

Jaques then said to Christophero, "I'll rip thine entrails but I'll have my gold!"

He called, "Rachel, why don't thou come? I am ruined!"

He said to himself, "Aye, me, she doesn't speak."

"Aye, me" is an expression of mourning.

He said to Christophero, "Thou have slain my child!"

He exited into his house.

Christophero said to himself:

"Is the man possessed, do you suppose? This is strange.

"Rachel, I see, has gone with Angelo.

"Well, I'll once again go to the priory, and see if I can meet them."

Christophero exited.

Jaques returned and said:

“It is too true, thou have made away with my child, Rachel, and thou have my gold!

“Oh, what hyena called me out of doors?

“The thief is gone! My gold’s gone! Rachel’s gone!

“All’s gone except I, who expend my cries in vain,

“But I’ll go from here, too, and die, or end this pain.”

— 5.2 —

Juniper, Onion, Finio, and Valentine talked together.

Valentine was Francisco Colonna’s serving-man, and Finio was Colonna’s Italian page.

Juniper and Onion were both wearing fine clothes, and they were pretending to be fine gentlemen. In fact, they thought that they were fine gentlemen. They wore rapiers and used dueling terms.

Pretending to fight a duel, Juniper said, “By God’s wounds, let me go! *Hai, cazzo!*”

*Hai* is an Italian word said when thrusting a sword; it means “You have it!” *Cazzo* is Italian slang for “penis.”

Juniper shouted, “Catch him alive! I call, I call, boy. I come, I come, sweetheart.”

Onion said to Finio, “Page, hold my rapier while I hold my friend here.”

He gave his rapier to Finio.

Valentine said to himself about Juniper and Onion, “Oh, here’s a sweet metamorphosis: a couple of buzzards turned into a pair of peacocks.”



“Signor Onion, lend me thy boy to unhang — take off — my rapier,” Juniper said.

Finio was acting as Onion’s page.

Onion said, “Signor Juniper, for once or so you may borrow him, but the truth is you must inveigle and tempt, as I have done, my lord’s page here, a poor follower of mine.”

Onion had tempted Finio to become his page.

Juniper said, “Heigh-ho! Your page, then, shall not be superintendent upon me?”

Juniper used the word “superintendent” to mean “be super intent” on serving him.

Juniper added, “He shall not be addicted?”

The verb “addict” means someone who devotes himself to the service of another person. The adjective “addicted” means “had been attached by compulsion to a person.”

Juniper then said, “He shall not be incident, he shall not be incident, he shall not be incident, shall he?”

The noun “incident” means “likely to attach itself to something.” The adjective “incident” means “naturally attaching.”

Juniper drew his rapier and thrust it.

“Oh, sweet Signor Juniper!” Finio said.

“By God’s blood, stand away, princox — saucy boy! Do not aggravate my joy,” Juniper said.

“Nay, good master Onion,” Valentine said, seeing that Onion was ready to duel Juniper.

Taking back his rapier from Finio, Onion said, “Nay, if he have the heart to draw my blood, let him come.”

“I’ll slice you, Onion, I’ll slice you!” Juniper shouted.

“I’ll cleave you, Juniper!” Onion shouted.

“Why, stop, stop, ho!” Valentine said. “What do you mean?”

“Let him come, ingle,” Juniper replied.

He said to Finio, “Stand by, boy.”

He then said, “His alabaster blood cannot fear me.”

“Alabaster” means white. Alabaster blood is cowardly blood.

By “cannot fear me,” Juniper meant, “cannot make me afraid.” Readers can be forgiven for thinking Juniper’s words meant, “Even a coward cannot be afraid of me.”

“Why, listen, sweet signor,” Finio said to Juniper. “Let there not be any contention between my master and you about me. If you want a page, sir, I can help you to a proper, handsome stripling.”

“Can thou?” Juniper said. “What parentage, what ancestry, what genealogy is he?”

“A French boy, sir,” Finio said.

“Has he his French linguist [Juniper meant ‘language’], has he?” Juniper said.

“Aye, sir,” Finio replied.

“Then, transport [bring] him,” Juniper said. “Here’s a crusado for thee.”

He gave Finio a crusado: a Portuguese coin.

“You will not embezzle my servant with your benevolence, will you?” Onion said. “Wait, boy, there’s a portmanteau for thee.”

A portague — the word Onion meant — is a different Portuguese coin.

“Lord, sir!” Finio said.

This was a good tip.

“Do take it, boy,” Onion said. “It’s three pounds, ten shillings, a portmanteau.”

Finio took the money and said, “I thank Your Lordship.”

Finio exited.

Juniper said to Valentine, “Sirrah ningle [a favorite], thou are a traveler, and I honor thee. Please, discourse. Cherish thy muse; discourse.”

“On what topic, sir?” Valentine asked.

“Discourse on whatever topic thou will,” Juniper said. “By God’s blood, hang sorrow.”

“Please, Valentine, assoil [clear up for] me one thing,” Onion said.

“It would be a pity to soil you, sir, in your new apparel,” Valentine said.

“By the Mass, thou say the truth,” Onion said. “Apparel makes a man forget himself.”

Onion was wearing fine apparel, and he had forgotten that he was not a gentleman.

“Begin,” Juniper said. “Find your tongue, ningle.”

Valentine said to himself, “Now I will gull — fool — these ganders splendidly.”

Travelers often told outrageous lies. Valentine was not an exception.

He said to Onion and Juniper, “Gentlemen, having in my peregrination through Mesopotamia —”

“Speak legibly [intelligibly],” Juniper said.

Seeing some people coming, he said, “This game’s gone, without the great mercy of God. Here’s a fine tragedy, indeed.”

Valentine would not be able to tell his lies.

Seeing Finio returning with a boy (Pacue) who might become his paid page, Juniper pulled out some money and said, “There’s a Kaiser’s royal. By God’s eyelid, neither king nor Kaiser shall —”

A Caesar’s rial is a gold coin.

— 5.3 —

Finio, Pacue, Balthasar, and Martino entered the scene. Pacue was Chamont’s French page. Balthasar and Martino were two of Count Ferneze’s serving-men.

“Where? Where? Finio, where are they?” Balthasar asked.

He was looking for Juniper and Onion.

Juniper said to Valentine, “Wait a while. I’ll be with you soon.”

“Oh, here’s the page, Signor Juniper,” Onion said.

Pacue was supposed to become Juniper’s new page.

“What did Monsieur Onion say, boy?” Juniper asked.

Finio asked Juniper, “What did you say, sir?”

“Tread out, boy,” Juniper said to Pacue.

“Tread out” means “walk on a path.” This path was to follow Juniper and be his page.

“Take up, you mean, sir,” Finio said.

“Take up” means “take up service,” aka “begin work.”

“Tread out, I say,” Juniper repeated.

He preferred his own way of saying “Work for me.”

Juniper then thanked Finio for his help: “So, I thank you. Is this the boy?”

The boy was Pacue, whom Juniper wanted to hire to be his page.

“*Oui, Monsieur,*” Pacue said.

“Who gave you that name?” Juniper asked.

“Give me de name? Vat name?” Pacue said.

“He thought your name is ‘We,’” Onion said. “Young gentleman, you must do more than his legs can do for him. Bear with him, sir.”

“Sirrah, give me instance of your carriage,” Juniper said.

“Carriage” is bodily deportment. Juniper wanted to see how Pacue carried himself.

“You’ll serve my turn, won’t you?” Juniper asked Pacue.

“Serve my turn” means “serve me.”

Misunderstanding Juniper, Pacue thought that “serve my turn” was a kind of pirouette or other dance move.

“Vat? Turn upon the toe?” Pacue asked.

“Oh, signor, no,” Finio said.

“Page, will you follow me?” Juniper asked. “I’ll give you good exhibition [maintenance, income].”

“Exhibition” also likely included new clothing: new livery, aka distinctive clothing that showed for whom the page worked.

“By gar, shall not alone follow you, but shall lead you, too,” Pacue said.

“Follow you” meant “be your servant,” but the servant would also lead Juniper — that is, manipulate him into acting as the servant wanted him to.

“Plaguy boy! He soothes his humor and flatters him,” Onion said. “These French villains have pocky wits.”

“Pocky” means “pockmarked.” Smallpox made skin pockmarked.

“Here, disarm me,” Juniper said. “Take my semitary [scimitar].”

Pacue took Juniper’s rapier.

“Oh, splendid!” Valentine said to himself. “This would be a splendid man, if he had a little travel.”

Valentine then said out loud, “Balthasar, Martino, take off your shoes and bid Juniper to cobble them.”

“Friends, friends, but pardon me for fellows,” Juniper said. “I am no more in occupation, no more in corporation [business].”

Juniper was no longer a cobbler, and so he was no longer a fellow to Balthasar and Martino, although they were still his friends.

Juniper continued, “It is so, pardon me. The case is altered. This is law, but I’ll stand to nothing.”

“Stand to nothing” means “submit to nothing, including legal judgments.”

“Fait, so me tink,” Pacue said.

[Indeed, so I think.]

“Well, then, God save the Duke’s Majesty!” Juniper said. “Is this any harm now? Speak, is this any harm now?”

“No, nor good neither,” Onion said. “By God’s blood!”

“Do you laugh at me?” Juniper asked Valentine. “Do you laugh at me? Do you laugh at me?”

“Aye, sir, we do,” Valentine said.

“You do, indeed?” Juniper asked.

“Aye, indeed, sir,” Valentine said.

Juniper said, “It is sufficient.”

He then ordered Pacue, “Page, carry my purse; dog me. Follow me closely like a dog at heel.”

In this society, pages would carry the purse, aka moneyholder, for the gentleman they served.

Juniper exited.

“Gentlemen, don’t leave him,” Onion said. “You see in what state he is. He is not in adversity; his purse is full of money. Don’t leave him!”

They exited.

— 5.4 —

Angelo and Rachel talked together on the road to Pont Valerio.

“Nay, gentle Rachel!” Angelo said.

“Go away! Forbear!” Rachel said. “Ungentle Angelo, don’t touch my body with those impious hands that like hot irons sear my trembling heart and make it hiss at your disloyalty.”

Chamont and Paolo Ferneze entered the scene, but Angelo and Rachel did not notice them. Chamont and Paolo watched Angelo and Rachel quietly.

Rachel continued, “Was this your scheme, to use Ferneze’s name? Was he your fittest decoy and bait? Oh, wild dishonor!”

Paolo said quietly to Chamont, “Wait, noble sir!”

He wanted to hear what Angelo and Paolo would say to each other.

Angelo said to Rachel, “By God’s blood, how like a puppet you talk now! You are being melodramatic! Dishonor? What dishonor? Come, come, fool. Nay, then, I see you’re peevish. By God’s heart, dishonor? To have you go to a priest and marry you, and put you in an honorable state?”

He was claiming to want to marry Rachel.

“To marry me?” Rachel said. “Oh, Heaven, can it be that men should live with such unfeeling souls, without either touch or conscience of religion, or that their warping appetites should spoil those honored appearances that the true seal of friendship had set upon their faces?”

“Do you hear me?” Angelo said. “What is the need of all this commotion? Tell me, will you have me or not?”

“I’ll have you gone, and I’ll have you leave me, if you would,” Rachel said.

“Leave you?” Angelo said. “I was cursed — bewitched — to bring you here and make so fair an offer to a fool. A pox upon you! Why should you be coy? What good thing have



you in you to be proud of? Are you anything other than a beggar's daughter because you have beauty? Oh, God's light, a blast!"

A blast is a withered blossom. Blossoms bloom and then wither. Beauty blooms and then fades.

"Aye, Angelo," Paolo said.

Another thing that can be blasted is a friendship.

"You scornful baggage, you worthless woman," Angelo said. "I loved thee not as much as now I hate thee!"

Rachel knelt and prayed, "Upon my knees, you heavenly powers, I thank you, which thus have tamed his wild affections."

Angelo said to himself, "This will not do. I must again make an attempt upon her."

And her honor.

He had already made a successful attempt — attack — on his own honor.

He said out loud, "Rachel, oh, I wish that thou saw my heart, or did behold the place from whence that scalding sigh found a vent! Rachel, by Jesu, I love thee as my soul. Rachel, sweet Rachel!"

"What, again returned to this violent passion?" Rachel said.

"Do but hear me!" Angelo said. "By heaven, I love you, Rachel."

"Please, forbear! Stop!" Rachel said. "Oh, I wish that my Lord Ferneze were but here!"

Angelo said, "By God's blood, if he were, what would he do?"

Paolo stepped forward, slapped Angelo, and said, “This is what he would do, base villain!”

“My dear lord!” Rachel said.

Paolo said to Angelo:

“Thou monster, thou art even the soul of treachery! Oh, what dishonored title of reproach may my tongue spit in thy deserved face? I think my very presence should invert the steeled — hardened — organs of those traitorous eyes, to take into thy heart and pierce it through.

“Do thou turn thy eyes on the ground? Wretch, dig a grave with their sharp points to hide thy abhorred head!”

Eyes were thought to emit beams that enabled them to see. Angelo’s eyes (and the rest of him) were hardened spiritually and their beams were sharp enough to pierce his own heart and dig his own grave.

Paolo said to Rachel, “Sweet love, the wrongs done to thee have been too violent since my departure from thee, I perceive, but now true comfort shall again appear and, like an armed guardian angel, guard thee and keep thee safe from all the assaults of covered — covert — villainy.”

He said to Chamont, “Come, monsieur, let’s go and leave this wretch to his despair.”

Angelo began, “My noble Ferneze —”

Paolo interrupted:

“What, can thou speak to me, and not have thy tongue, forced with the torment of thy guilty soul, break that infected circle of thy mouth, like the rude clapper of a crazed bell?

“I, who in thy bosom lodged my soul, with all her train of secrets, thinking them to be as safe and richly entertained as

in a prince's court or tower of strength, and thou to prove a traitor to my trust, and basely to expose it! Oh, this world!"

Angelo tried again to speak: "My honorable lord —"

Paolo again interrupted, "— the very owl, which other birds do stare and wonder at, shall hoot at thee, and snakes in every bush shall deafen your ears with their —"

In other words: Owls are strange creatures, but they will hoot at you, Angelo, who are stranger than they are. And snakes are deaf, but they will deafen you (by hissing at you).

"Nay, my good lord," Chamont said. "Give an end to your passionate anger."

"You shall see that I will redeem your lost opinion," Angelo said.

Rachel said to Paolo, "My lord, believe him."

"Come, be satisfied," Chamont advised Paolo. "Sweet lord, you know our haste. Let us get on horseback. The time for my promised return is past. Be friends again. Take him along with you."

"Come, Signor Angelo," Paolo said. "Hereafter prove more true and loyal."

They exited.

## — 5.5 —

Count Ferneze, Maximilian, and Francisco Colonna talked together.

Count Ferneze said, "Tut, Maximilian, as for your honored self, I am persuaded; but no words shall turn away the edge of purposed vengeance on that wretch: Gaspar."

He then ordered his men-servants, "Come, bring him forth to execution."

His man-servants brought in Gaspar, who was tied with ropes.

Count Ferneze said, "I'll hang him for my son; he shall not escape, even if he had a hundred lives."

He then said to Gaspar, "Tell me, vile slave, do thou think that I love my son? Is he my flesh? Is he my blood, my life? And shall all these — my flesh, my blood, my life — be tortured for thy sake, and not be revenged?"

He ordered his man-servants, "Truss up and hang the villain."

"My lord, there is no law to confirm this action," Maximilian said. "It is dishonorable."

"Dishonorable, Maximilian?" Count Ferneze said. "It is dishonorable in Chamont. The day of his prefixed return is past, and he — Gaspar — shall pay for it."

"My lord, my lord, use your most extreme vengeance," Gaspar said. "I'll be glad to suffer ten times more for such a friend."

"Oh, resolute and peremptory — utter — wretch!" Count Ferneze said.

"My honored lord, let us entreat a word with you," Francisco Colonna said.

"I'll hear no more," Count Ferneze said. "I say he shall not live. I myself will hang him."

Count Ferneze advanced threateningly, but seeing an apparition, he stopped.

He said:

“Wait, what appearance is this that stands between him and me and stops my hand?”

“What miracle is this? It is my own imagination that carves this impression in me, my soft nature, which always has retained such foolish pity of the most abject creature’s misery that my soft nature abhors it! What a child am I to have a child! Woe to me! My son! My son!”

Christophero entered the scene and said to himself, “Oh, my dear love, Rachel, what has become of thee? What unjust absence lay thou on my breast like weights of lead, when swords are at my back that run me through with thy unkind flight? My gentle disposition grows wild. I shall run frantic. Oh, my love, my love!”

Jaques entered the scene and said to himself, “My gold, my gold, my life, my soul, my heaven! What has become of thee? See, I’ll impart my miserable loss to my good lord.”

He then said out loud to Count Ferneze, “Let me have search, my lord! My gold is gone!”

Count Ferneze said, “My son — Christophero, do you think it is possible that I ever shall behold my son’s face again?”

Christophero said to Jaques, “Oh, father, where’s my love? Were you so careless as to let an unthrift — a dissolute person — steal away your child?”

Jaques said to Count Ferneze, “I know Your Lordship may find out where is my gold. For God’s sake, pity me. Justice, sweet lord!”

Count Ferneze said, “Now that they have young Chamont, Christophero, surely they never will restore my son.”

Christophero said to Jaques, “Who would have thought you could have been so careless as to lose your only daughter?”

Jaques said to himself, “Who would think that, looking after my gold with such hare’s eyes, which are always open — aye, even when they sleep — I thus should lose my gold?”

This society believed that rabbits kept their eyes open even when asleep.

He said to Count Ferneze, “My noble lord, what says Your Lordship?”

“Oh, my son! My son!” Count Ferneze said.

“My dearest Rachel!” Christophero said.

“My most honey — sweet — gold!” Jaques said.

“Hear me, Christophero!” Count Ferneze said.

“Nay, hear me, Jaques!” Christophero said.

“Hear me, most honored lord!” Jaques said to Count Ferneze.

“What rule is here?” Maximilian said. “What can bring order here?”

“Oh, God, that we should let Chamont escape!” Count Ferneze said.

Aurelia and Phoenixella entered the scene.

“Aye, and that Rachel, such a virtuous maiden, should be thus stolen away!” Christophero said.

“And that my gold, being so hid in earth, should be found out!” Jaques said.

“Oh, confusion of languages, and yet no tower of Babel!” Maximilian said.

According to the Bible, people had attempted but failed to build a tower — the tower of Babel — that would reach

heaven. To stop the building of the tower, God made the people speak different languages so that they could not work together.

Francisco Colonna said to Aurelia and Phoenixella, “Ladies, beshrew and curse me if you come not fit and ready to make a jangling consort. Will you laugh to see three constant passions?”

In this society, a consort is a company of musicians. In this society, a noise is also a company of musicians. The three constant passions were making a lot of noise.

The three constant passions were 1) the Count’s for his son, 2) Christophero’s for Rachel, and 3) Jaques’ for his gold.

“Stand by,” Maximilian said. “I will interrogate them.”

He said to Count Ferneze, “Sweet count, will you be comforted?”

Count Ferneze said, “It cannot be but he — Paolo — is handled the most cruelly that ever any noble prisoner was.”

He was still worried that his son was being cruelly mistreated as a prisoner of war.

Maximilian said to Christophero, “Steward, go cheer my lord: Count Ferneze.”

Still preoccupied with his passion, Christophero said, “Well, if Rachel took her flight willingly —”

Maximilian said to Jaques, “Sirrah, do you speak touching your daughter’s flight?”

Jaques had been speaking about his literal gold, but Maximilian and the others did not know that because Jaques was a beggar. Therefore, Maximilian thought that Rachel was his figurative gold.

Jaques said, “Oh, that I could so soon forget to know the thief again who had my gold, my gold!”

“Isn’t this purely a matter for wonder?” Maximilian said.

Count Ferneze said to Gaspar, “Oh, thou base wretch, I’ll drag thee through the streets, and, as a monster, make thee wondered at.”

Balthasar entered the room and walked over to Count Ferneze, who asked, “What is it now?”

Balthasar whispered to him that Paolo, his son, was coming.

Phoenixella said to Gaspar, “Sweet gentleman, how too unworthily are thou thus tortured!”

She then said, “Brave Maximilian, pity the poor youth and appease my father.”

Count Ferneze said, “What! My son Paolo has returned? Oh, Maximilian, Francisco, daughters! Tell Paolo to come here!”

— 5.6 —

Chamont, Paolo Ferneze, Rachel, Angelo, and some servants entered the scene.

Still disbelieving, Count Ferneze said to Balthasar, “Aren’t thou mocking me?”

Seeing his son, he said, “Oh, my dear Paolo, welcome!”

“My Lord Chamont!” Maximilian said.

“My Gaspar!” Chamont said.

“Rachel!” Christophero said.

“My gold, Rachel, my gold!” Jaques said.

“Somebody tell the beggar to cease his noise,” Count Ferneze said about Jaques.



Christophero said:

“Oh, Signor Angelo, would you deceive your honest friend — me — who simply trusted you?”

“Well, Rachel, I am glad thou are here again.”

Angelo said to Christophero, “Indeed, she is not for you, steward.”

Jaques said to Phoenixella, “I beseech you, madam, urge your father to find my gold.”

“I will soon,” Phoenixella said. “Good Jaques, be content and calm.”

Aurelia said, “Now, God-a-mercy — thank you! — Lady Fortune and sweet Venus! Let Cupid do his part, and all is well.”

She wanted Cupid to bring Chamont and her together.

“I think my heart’s in heaven with this comfort,” Phoenixella said.

She was happy because Gaspar would be spared.

Seeing that Gaspar had been about to be hanged, Chamont said, “Is this the true Italian courtesy?”

He then said to Count Ferneze, “Ferneze, were you tortured thus in France? By my soul’s safety!”

Count Ferneze had not been tortured in France when Chamont’s father had taken Vicenza. Why then was he torturing — even executing — Gaspar?

Count Ferneze knelt before Chamont, a much younger man, and said, “My most noble lord, I do beseech Your Lordship.”

He was begging for forgiveness.

Paolo's ropes were untied.

Chamont said, "Honored Count, don't wrong your age with the flexure of a knee. I do impute it to those cares and griefs that did torment you in the absence of your son."

Rising, Count Ferneze said, "Oh, worthy gentlemen, I am ashamed that my extreme affection to my son should give my honor so uncured a maim. But my first son, being in Vicenza lost —"

"What! In Vicenza? Did you lose a son there? About what time, my lord?" Chamont asked.

"Oh, the same night wherein your noble father took the town," Count Ferneze said.

"How long ago is that since, my lord? Can you remember?" Chamont asked.

"It is now well-nigh upon the twentieth year," Count Ferneze answered.

"And how old was he then?" Chamont asked.

"I cannot tell," Count Ferneze said. "Between the years of three and four, I take it."

"Had he no special note in his attire or otherwise that you can call to mind?" Chamont asked.

Count Ferneze answered, "I cannot well remember his attire, but I have often heard his mother say he had about his neck a tablet given to him by the Emperor Sigismund, his godfather, with this inscription under the figure of a silver globe: *In minimo mundus.*"

A tablet is an inscribed medal or inscribed piece of wood.

The Latin motto means: "In the smallest thing, the whole world."

“What did you call your son, my lord?” Chamont asked.

“Camillo, Lord Chamont,” Count Ferneze answered.

Chamont said to Gaspar, “Then, you are no more my Gaspar, but Camillo! Take notice of and pay respect to your father, for Count Ferneze is, in fact, your father.”

Chamont then said to all present:

“Gentlemen, don’t stand amazed.”

He produced a medal and said:

“Here is a tablet with that inscription found about his neck that night and in Vicenza by my father, who, being ignorant what name he had, christened him Gaspar. Nor did I reveal this secret until this hour to any man.”

Crying, Count Ferneze said, “Oh, happy revelation! Oh, blessed hour! Oh, my Camillo!”

“Oh, strange!” Phoenixella said. “My brother!”

Francisco Colonna said, “Maximilian, see how the abundance of his joy drowns him — Count Ferneze — in tears of gladness.”

“Oh, my boy!” Count Ferneze said to Camillo/Gaspar. “Forgive thy father’s late austerity and harshness.”

Maximilian said, “My lord, I delivered as much before, but Your Honor would not be persuaded. I will hereafter give more credit to my visions. I dreamt of this.”

“I can be still no longer, my good lord,” Jaques said. “Do a poor man some grace among all your joys.”

“Why, what’s the matter, Jaques?” Count Ferneze asked.

Jaques said, “I am robbed, I am ruined, my lord, robbed and ruined! A heap of thirty thousand golden crowns was stolen

from me in one minute and, I fear, by the help of her who calls me father! But she's none of mine. Therefore, sweet lord, let her be tortured to confess the truth."

"More wonders yet!" Maximilian said.

"What! Jaques! Isn't Rachel, then, thy daughter?" Count Ferneze asked.

"No, I legally disclaim her. I spit at her," Jaques said. "She is a harlot, and her customers — your son, this gallant named Angelo, and your steward here — have all been partners with her in my despoil. They have taken my riches, no less than thirty thousand golden crowns."

"Jaques, Jaques, this is impossible!" Count Ferneze said. "How should thou come to the possession of so huge a heap of coins, you being always a known beggar?"

Jacques said to himself, "Oh! Alas! I have betrayed myself with my own tongue. The case is altered."

He began to leave.

"Someone stop him there!" Count Ferneze ordered.

Maximilian said:

"What! Does he intend to depart?"

"Count Ferneze, upon my soul, this beggar is a counterfeit. Interrogate him."

He then asked Jaques, "Did thou lose gold?"

"Oh, no, I lost no gold," Jaques lied.

"Is what I said not true?" Maximilian asked.

Count Ferneze asked Jaques, "How did thou first lose thirty thousand crowns, and now thou lost no gold? Was Rachel first thy child, and is she now not thy daughter? Sirrah

Jaques, you know how far our Milan laws extend for the punishment of liars.”

“Aye, my lord,” Jaques answered.

He said to himself, “What shall I do? I have no starting-holes.”

Starting-holes are literally holes in which hunted prey takes refuge. For human beings, they are figuratively places of refuge.

Jaques begged, “Monsieur Chamont, stand and take a place as my honored lord. Be my protector.”

“For what, old man?” Chamont asked.

“Ill-gotten goods never thrive,” Jaques said. “I played the thief and now I am robbed myself. I am not as I seem, Jaques de Prie, nor was I born a beggar, as I am, but formerly I served as steward to your noble father.”

“What! Are you Melun, who robbed my father’s treasure and stole my sister?”

Melun/Jaques replied, “Aye, aye, that treasure is lost, but Isabel, your beautiful sister, here survives in Rachel. And, therefore, on my knees —”

He knelt.

Maximilian said, “Wait, Jaques [Melun], wait. The case still alters.”

Count Ferneze said, “Fair Rachel is sister to the Lord Chamont!”

Angelo said to Christophero, “Steward, your cake is dough, as well as mine.”

“Your cake is dough” means “your hopes are disappointed.”

Paolo said, "I see that honor's flames cannot be hid, no more than lightning in the blackest cloud."

Angelo was now doing the right thing: acknowledging that Isabel/Rachel was lost to him and letting Christophero know that she was lost to him as well. Isabel/Rachel and Paolo belonged together.

"So then, sirrah, it is true that you have lost this gold?" Maximilian asked.

"Aye, worthy signor, thirty thousand crowns," Melun/Jaques said.

"By the Mass, who was it who told me that a couple of my serving-men were become gallants recently?" Count Ferneze asked.

"By the Virgin Mary, it was I, my lord," Francisco Colonnia said. "My serving-man told me."

Onion and Juniper, both wearing fine clothing well above their station in life, entered the scene.

"What is this now? What pageant is this?" Maximilian asked.

"Come, Signor Onion, let's not be ashamed to appear," Juniper said. "Keep your state. Keep your dignity. Don't look ambiguous now."

"Don't look ambiguous" meant "look like one thing only: a gentleman."

"I won't look ambiguous, while I am in this suit of clothing," Onion said.

"Lordings, equivalence to you all," Juniper said.

He meant that Onion and he were equal to them now.

“We thought good to be so good as to see you, gentlemen,” Onion said.

“What? Monsieur Onion?” Maximilian said.

“How are thou doing, good captain?” Onion asked.

“What, are my hinds turned gentlemen?” Count Ferneze asked.

Hinds are servants.

“Hinds, sir?” Onion said. “By God’s blood, if that word — hinds — will bear legal action, it shall cost us a thousand pounds apiece but we’ll be revenged.”

“Will thou sell thy lordship, count?” Juniper asked Count Ferneze.

“What! Peasants purchase lordships?” Count Ferneze said.

“Is that any novels, sir?” Juniper asked.

By “novels,” he meant “news.”

“Oh, transmutation of elements!” Maximilian said. “It is certified you had pages.”

Alchemists believed in the transmutation of elements; they believed that they could transmute base metals such as iron and bronze into precious metals such as gold and silver. Onion and Juniper had been transmuted from members of the working class to (pseudo-)members of the upper class. They even had pages: boys who served them.

“Aye, sir, but it is known they proved ridiculous,” Juniper said. “They did pilfer, they did purloin, they did procrastinate our purses, for the which wasting of our stock we have put them to the stocks.”

Procrastinate? They seem to have wasted no time in helping themselves to their new masters' wealth.

The stocks were devices of punishments that would immobilize an offender's head, and/or hands, and/or feet.

"And thither shall you two go immediately," Count Ferneze said. "These are the villains who stole Jaques' gold. Take them away and set them in the stocks with their serving-men!"

"Onion, you will now be peeled," Maximilian said.

"The case is altered now," Francisco Colonna said.

"My good lord! My good lord!" Onion said.

Juniper said to Onion, "Away, scoundrel! Do thou fear a little elocution? Shall we be confiscate [have our property confiscated] now? Shall we droop now? Shall we be now in helogabalus?"

Heliogabalus was a corrupt Roman emperor.

Possibly, Juniper thought that "Helogabalus" was a location: Helot-opolis, the city of Helots. In ancient Sparta, helots were in an intermediate social class between ordinary slaves and free citizens.

Juniper and Onion had tried to be noblemen but had failed. Now they were going in the stocks as if they were beggars. After their punishment, they would return to the intermediate social class between nobles and beggars.

"Peace, peace, stop thy gabbling and chattering," Onion said.

"Take them away, away with them," Count Ferneze said. "What's this they prate?"

Some serving-men exited with Juniper and Onion.



Count Ferneze continued, "Keep the knaves securely restrained in the stocks. Strict inquisition shall presently be made for Jaques' gold, to be disposed at the pleasure of Chamont."

"She is your own, Lord Paolo, if your father will give his consent," Chamont said.

"She" was Chamont's sister: Isabel/Rachel.

"How are things now, Christophero?" Angelo said. "The case is altered."

"With you as well as me," Christophero said. "I am content, sir."

Since Rachel was now Isabel, the sister of a noble, she was no longer wife-material for Christophero.

Count Ferneze said to Chamont, "With all my heart. And in exchange of her, if with your fair acceptance it may stand, I tender my Aurelia to your love."

Aurelia's prayer had come true: She and Chamont would be wed.

Chamont said to Count Ferneze:

"I take her from Your Lordship with all thanks, and I bless the hour wherein I was made a prisoner, for the fruition of this present fortune, so full of happy and unlooked-for joys."

He then said to Melun/Jaques, "Melun, I pardon thee, and, as for the treasure, recover it, and hold it as thine own. It is enough for me to see my sister live in the circle of young Ferneze's arms, my friend Gaspar/Camillo, the son of such a noble father, and my unworthy self, enraptured above all, by being the lord to so divine a dame."

Maximilian said, "Well, I will now swear the case is altered."

Maximilian said to Aurelia:

“Lady, fare you well; I will subdue my affections for you.”

Maximilian said to Phoenixella:

“Madam, as for you, you are a professed virgin, and I will be silent.”

Phoenixella had shown no outward signs of romantic love. Indeed, the one person she loved that way had turned out to be her long-lost brother.

Maximilian said to Count Ferneze:

“My honorable Lord Ferneze, it shall become you at this time not to be frugal, but bounteous and open-handed; your fortune has been so to you.”

Maximilian said to Chamont:

“Lord Chamont, you are now no stranger. You must be made welcome. You have a fair, amiable, and splendid lady.

Maximilian said to Paolo and Camillo/Gaspar:

“But Signor Paolo, Signor Camillo, I know you are valiant; be loving.”

Maximilian said to Isabel/Rachel:

“Lady, I must be better known to you.”

Maximilian said to Christophero and Angelo:

“Signors, as for you, I pass you not, though I let you pass, for in truth I pass not for you.”

One meaning of “pass” is “care about.”

Maximilian was going to let Christophero and Angelo’s error pass, although he did not care for them. Their error, and

the reason Maximilian did not care for them, was that they had pursued Isabel (Rachel), who was above them.

Also, of course, although Maximilian did not know this, they had pursued Isabel (Rachel) in a devious way, stealing her from her presumed father, not getting her love first, and in Angelo's case, lying to her.

Maximilian then concluded:

“Lovers, go to your nuptials.

“Lordings, go to your dances.

“March fair and walk briskly, all, for a fair March is worth a king's ransom.”

A dry March meant a good harvest. A proverb stated, “A bushel of March dust is worth a king's ransom.”

## **CHAPTER 5: Ben Jonson's *Catiline's Conspiracy***

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)**

**SULLA'S GHOST.** Late dictator of Rome.

#### **CONSPIRATORS AND SUPPORTERS**

**LUCIUS SERGIUS CATILINE.** Senator and Arch-conspirator. Sometimes he is called "Lucius." Sometimes he is called "Sergius." Usually he is called "Catiline."

**PUBLIUS CORNELIUS LENTULUS.** Disgraced Senator and Conspirator. In 70 B.C.E., the Censors threw LENTULUS and CURIUS out of the Senate because of LENTULUS' and CURIUS' immorality. Lentulus believes that a prophecy by the Sibyl states that he will be King of Rome. He was elected Praetor for 63 B.C.E. and was readmitted into the Senate.

**CAIUS CORNELIUS CETHEGUS.** Young Senator and Conspirator.

**CURIUS.** Disgraced Senator and Conspirator. In 70 B.C.E., the Censors threw LENTULUS and CURIUS out of the Senate because of LENTULUS' and CURIUS' immorality.

**AUTRONIUS.** Senator and Conspirator. AUTRONIUS and CORNELIUS were elected Consul-Designates for 65 B.C.E., but the election results were thrown out due to bribing of voters.

**CORNELIUS.** Conspirator of Equestrian Rank. Nephew to the late dictator Sulla. AUTRONIUS and CORNELIUS were elected Consul-Designates for 65 B.C.E., but the election results were thrown out due to bribing of voters.

**VARGUNTEIUS.** Senator and Conspirator.

**LONGINUS.** Senator and Conspirator. He is fat.

**PORCIUS LAECA.** Senator and Conspirator.

**FULVIUS.** Conspirator of Equestrian Rank.

**LUCIUS BESTIA.** Senator and Conspirator.

**GABINIUS.** Conspirator of Equestrian Rank. He has the epithet “Cimber,” which the Gauls used for a cruel person.

**STATILIUS.** Conspirator of Equestrian Rank.

**CEPARIUS.** Supporter of Catiline.

**VOLTURTIUS.** Supporter of Catiline.

Note: Equestrian rank is upper class, but they are not Senators, who have the highest class.

### **FEMALE CHARACTERS**

**AURELIA ORESTILLA.** Wife to Catiline. Helps recruit women to support Catiline. In this book, she is sometimes referred to as Orestilla.

**FULVIA.** Woman of Rank and Mistress to Curius. Informs on Catiline.

**SEMPRONIA.** Learned Noblewoman and Conspirator.

**GALLA.** Waiting-woman to Fulvia.

### **ROMAN MALE CHARACTERS, MAINLY NON-SUPPORTERS OF CATILINE**

**MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO.** Consul-Elect and Later Consul for 63 B.C.E.

**ANTONIUS.** Consul with Cicero for 63 B.C.E.

**MARCUS PORCIUS CATO.** Righteous Senator. Grandson of Cato the Censor. Has a reputation for fairness. Also known as Cato the Younger and Cato of Utica, where he

famously committed suicide following a military victory by Julius Caesar after the events of this book.

**QUINTUS CATULUS.** Elderly Senator. Enemy to Julius Caesar.

**MARCUS CRASSUS.** Wealthy Senator and Associate of Julius Caesar. After the events of the play, he became a member of the First Triumvirate with Julius Caesar and Pompey.

**CAIUS JULIUS CAESAR.** Praetor-Elect for 62 B.C.E. Pontifex Maximus for 63 B.C.E. In the play, he covertly supports Catiline, but due to political considerations, Cicero ignores this in public.

**QUINTUS CICERO.** Brother to Cicero.

**PETREIUS.** Officer. Commander of army that fights the army of Catiline.

**SILANUS.** Consul-Elect for 62 B.C.E.

**FLACCUS.** Praetor.

**POMTINIUS.** Praetor.

**FABIUS SANGA.** Senator and Patron of the Allobroges.

## **OTHER CHARACTERS**

**SENATORS.**

**ALLOBROGES.** Tribesmen from Gaul who are Ambassadors who have come to Rome.

**SOLDIERS.**

**GUARDS.**

**PORTER.**

**LICTORS.**

SERVANTS.

PAGES.

CHORUS.

**The SCENE: ROME.**

**The TIME: 63-62 B.C.E.**

Before the events of the play:

In 65 B.C.E., the first Catilinarian conspiracy took place. In it, Catiline and others plotted to kill the Roman Consuls. The plot failed.

After the events of the play:

In 48 B.C.E., Julius Caesar defeats Pompey in the civil war.

In 44 B.C.E., Julius Caesar becomes *dictator perpetuo*, but he is assassinated on the Ides of March (March 15).

**NOTES:**

Spoiler Alert: Catiline loses. Ben Jonson's play includes a scene in which the Roman Senators decide how some of Catiline's co-conspirators will be punished.

Cicero defeated Catiline in an election to be one of the two Consuls who would rule Rome in 63 B.C.E. Catiline formed a conspiracy, and Cicero, an excellent politician as well as an excellent orator and an excellent author, thwarted it, something he boasted about in many later speeches.

At the time, and later, the Roman Republic was under attack. Later, people would accuse Julius Caesar of wanting to be crowned King of Rome. Two triumvirates — a triumvirate is a group of three powerful men — would exercise power in Rome at different times. Eventually, Octavius Caesar, the

adopted son of Julius Caesar, would defeat Mark Antony and become Rome's first Emperor, ending Rome's republic.

In this play, Catiline is a villain and Cicero is a hero.

*Pietas* means proper, dutiful behavior. It means respect for things for which respect is due, including gods, family, and destiny. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Aeneas is noted for his *pietas*, as when he carries his father on his back out of Troy when the city fell to the Greeks. When this book refers to piety, it is referring to this kind of dutiful behavior.

We don't read drama to learn history. In Ben Jonson's play, Catiline is thoroughly evil. In real life, he may have been thoroughly evil or may simply have had rumors spread about him. For some of his reputed evil deeds, such as committing adultery with a Vestal nun, he was found innocent in a court of law. Winston Churchill is thought to be the originator of the quotation "History is always written by the victors."

Sulla: 138–78 B.C.E.

Lucius Sergius Catiline: 108–62 B.C.E.

In this society, a person of higher rank would use "thou," "thee," and "thy" when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use "you" when referring to a person of higher rank. This book uses Jonson's "thou," "thee," and "thy" only in a scene with Fulvia and Sempronia.

### **Roman Offices**

Consuls: The office of Consul was the highest political office of the Roman Republic. Two Consuls were elected each year and served for one year. Cicero is one of the two Consuls elected early in this play.



**Praetors:** A Praetor can be 1) the commander of an army, or 2) a magistrate. The office of Praetor (magistrate) is the second highest political office of the Roman Republic. They were subject only to the veto of the Consuls. Praetors could take the auspices, the performance of which was a religious rite. In 63 B.C.E. Lentulus, Flaccus, and Pomptinus were Praetors. After the events of this play, Julius Caesar served as Praetor in 62 B.C.E.

**Lictors:** Lictors served the Consuls and carried rods and axes as symbols of the Senators' authority. Rods were symbols of the Consuls' power to inflict corporal punishment, and axes were symbols of their power to inflict capital punishment. Lictors executed punishments on those convicted.

**Tribunes:** Tribunes were administrative officers in Rome. Some were judicial Tribunes, and some were military Tribunes.

**Aediles:** An Aedile was a Roman magistrate who was in charge of maintaining public buildings. They also organized public festivals and were in charge of weights and measures.

**Censors:** They supervised public morality and maintained the census.

**Prefects:** They had civil or military power, but that power was delegated to them from others.

## ACT 1 (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)

### — 1.1 —

The ghost of Sulla, a deceased dictator of Rome, appeared. The year was 63 B.C.E., and he had been dead for 15 years. The first Roman civil war pitted Sulla versus Marius. Sulla won. As dictator, in 81 B.C.E. Sulla condemned many people to death by putting their names on proscription lists. The young Catiline had fought under him.

Sulla's Ghost now prophesied the destruction of Rome and urged Catiline to be cruel and commit the vilest deeds:

“Don't you feel me, Rome? Not yet? Is night so heavy on you, and my weight so light?”

“Can Sulla's Ghost arise within your walls and be regarded as less than an earthquake threatening the imminent destruction of you and yours?”

Sulla's Ghost continued:

“Don't the frightened heads of your lofty towers shake? Don't they shrink to their very foundations?”

“Won't the collapse of your lofty towers fill the large Tiber River and make the river swell up and drown the seven proud hills that you are built on?”

“What sleep is this that seizes you, a sleep so like death and yet is not death? Wake, and feel her — feel death — in my breath.”

“Behold, I come, sent from the Stygian sound — the River Styx — like a poisonous dire vapor that had cleft the ground to mix with the night and blight the day, or like a pestilence that would display and spread infection through the world — which, thus, I do.”

He pointed to the infection: Catiline, who was in his study.

Sulla's Ghost continued:

“May Pluto, god of the Land of the Dead, be present at your — Catiline's — deliberations; and let Sulla's spirit enter into your darker bosom. All that was mine, and bad, let your breast inherit.

“Alas, how weak is that, for Catiline!

“Did I but say — vain voice! — all that was mine?

“All that the Gracchi, Cinna, Marius — revolutionaries all — would; and what now, if I — coming from hell — had a body again, I could; what fiends would wish would be; and worse than Hannibal the Carthaginian general who brought elephants across the Alps to attack Rome could have wished to see, I wish you, Catiline, to think and carry out.”

The Gracchi were two brothers who instituted land and social reforms; they were opposed by the conservative Senators and were murdered separately, in 133 and 121 B.C.E. Some people may think that the reforms of the Gracchi were justified; Sulla does not.

During Sulla's absence from Rome, Cinna and Marius wreaked vengeance on Roman aristocrats.

Hannibal terrified Roman citizens in the Second Punic War.

Sulla's Ghost was wishing for Catiline to be as revolutionary as the Gracchi, as vengeful as Cinna and Marius, as fiendish as fiends, and to terrify Roman citizens worse than Hannibal could have wished to do.

Sulla's Ghost continued:

“Let the long-hid seeds of treason in you now shoot forth in evil deeds ranker than horror, and your former evil crimes not be mentioned except to urge the doing of new evil acts.

“Let your consciousness of your former crimes provoke you on to commit more crimes.

“Let your incests, murders, and rapes be always in your mind.

“Let your raping first a Vestal nun be always in your mind.”

The Vestal nun was Fabia, the half-sister of Cicero’s wife: Terentia.

Vestal nuns were virgins who attended on Vesta, goddess of the hearth.

Sulla’s Ghost continued:

“Let your parricide, recently, on your own only son, be always in your mind after his mother, to make empty way for your most recent wicked nuptials, be always in your mind.”

In this culture, “parricide” referred to the murder of a close relative, who was not necessarily a father. Catiline murdered his first wife and his son in order to be able to marry his second wife, who was wealthy and beautiful and did not wish to have an adult stepson.

Sulla’s Ghost continued:

“Worse than those crimes is that blazing, flagrant crime, that act of your incestuous life, which got you at once a daughter and a wife.”

Catiline had committed incest with his own daughter.

Sulla’s Ghost continued:

“I pass over and don’t mention the slaughters that you did for me, of Senators, for which I hid for you your murder of your brother, being so bribed, and wrote him in the list of my proscribed after your evil deed, to save your little shame.”

Catiline was accused of murdering people for Sulla after Sulla made up his lists of proscriptions. These were lists of people whom Sulla regarded as enemies of the state. They were murdered, and their property was confiscated. Catiline murdered his own brother-in-law. After the murder, the brother-in-law's name was added to a list of proscriptions, making the murder legal.

Sulla's Ghost continued:

“Your incest with your sister I do not name.

“All of these crimes I have mentioned are too slight and trivial.

“Fate will have you pursue new evil deeds after which no evil can be new: The new evil deeds will result in the ruin of your country.

“You were built for such a work, and you were born for no less guilt.

“So what if you were defeated once before, and your plot was discovered? Attempt now to overthrow your country once again.”

Catiline had been involved in a conspiracy to murder Roman Consuls and Senators two years earlier in 65 B.C.E.

Sulla's Ghost continued:

“The ruin of Rome is your act, or none.

“What all the several evils that visit earth, brought forth by night with a sinister birth — what plagues, famine, fire — and what the sword and sicknesses of excess, could not achieve, let your fury do.”

In this society, night air was regarded as dangerous.

Sulla's Ghost continued:

“Make all past, present, future evil your own, and conquer all example — outdo all previous similar crimes and evils — in your own singular example.

“Nor let your thought find any vacant time to hate an old crime, but always let a fresher crime drown the remembrance of the old crime.

“Don’t let evil cease, but while it is in the act of punishing, let it increase.

“Let conscience and care — worry and caution — die in you and let not even heaven itself be free from your impiety — your neglect of your duty to gods and men.

“Let night grow blacker with your plots, and let day, at the showing of just your head forth, start away from this half-sphere (the half of the world illuminated by the sun), and leave Rome’s blinded — deprived of light — walls to embrace lusts, hatreds, slaughters, funerals, and not recover sight until their own flames light them to their ruins.

“Let all the names of your confederates, too, be no less great in Hell than here, so that when we would repeat our strengths in a roll-call of names, we may name you all.”

In Dante’s *Inferno*, the sinners in the lower circles of Hell do not wish to give Dante the Pilgrim their names because they do not want to be remembered in the Land of the Living.

Sulla’s Ghost continued:

“And let Furies call upon you for Furies, while what you do may strike them into fears, or make them grieve and wish your evil deeds theirs.”

Sulla was saying that he wanted Catiline and his co-conspirators to become more dreadful than the Furies: avenging goddesses of Hell. He wanted Catiline and his co-conspirators to strike fear into the Furies or to make the

Furies grieve because Catiline and his co-conspirators did more fearsome deeds than they — the Furies — did.

Sulla's Ghost exited.

Catiline had been unable to hear the words that Sulla's Ghost had spoken, although those words had echoed some of his own thoughts.

Alone in his study, Catiline spoke:

“It is decided; I know what I shall do. Nor shall your fate, Rome, resist my vow. Though hills were set on hills and seas met seas to guard you, I would win through.”

The giants Otus and Ephialtes wanted to pile mountain on mountain to attack — not protect — the gods. These two giants made war against the gods and attempted to carry away goddesses to make them their wives. Otus wanted to marry Diana, and Ephialtes wanted to marry Juno. Part of their plan was to pile the mountains Ossa and Pelion on top of Mount Olympus. The Olympian gods defeated the two giants.

The steep Alps help protect northern Italy from invasions.

The Tyrrhenian Sea, the Ionian Sea, and the Adriatic Sea help guard Italy.

Catiline continued:

“Aye, plow up rocks, steep as the Alps, in dust and dip up the Tyrrhenian Sea waters into clouds, but I would reach your head, proud city.

“The evils that I have done cannot be made safe and secure from reprisal except by greater attempts to do greater evils; and I feel a spirit within me that chides my sluggish hands and says they have been innocent and have not been doing harm for too long.”

An attempt is a dangerous undertaking, such as an assault or attack.

Catiline continued:

“Was I a man bred great as Rome herself? One formed for all her honors, all her glories, equal to all her titles? A man who could stand close up with Atlas, and sustain Rome’s name as strongly as Atlas holds up heaven on his shoulders?”

Atlas was a Titan — a pre-Olympian god — who was condemned to hold up the sky for eternity after the Titans lost a war against the Olympian gods.

Catiline continued:

“And was I, of all Rome’s brood, marked out for the repulse — defeat in the election — by Rome’s no-voice, no-vote, and rejection, when I stood as a candidate to be commander in the Pontic War?”

The Roman general Pompey defeated King Mithridates VI, King of Pontus, in the Third Mithridatic War. Catiline resented not being given command of the Roman forces.

Catiline continued:

“I will hereafter call Rome my stepdame and no true mother, forever. If she can lose her nature, I can lose my piety, and in her stony entrails I will dig me a seat where I will live again as the labor of her womb, and I will be a burden weightier than all the prodigies and monsters that she has been pregnant with and given birth to since she first knew Mars.”

According to Catiline, Rome has treated him badly and so he will make her give birth to him as a monster worse than all the other monsters she has given birth to.



Mars, the Roman god of war, was the father of Romulus and Remus, twin brothers who founded Rome. Their mother was Rhea Silva.

Aurelia, Catiline's wife, entered the study.

"Who's there?" Catiline asked.

"It is I," Aurelia answered.

"Aurelia?"

"Yes."

"Appear," Catiline said, "and break like day, my beauty, to this circle — this orb, this world. Upbraid your sun-god Phoebus Apollo because he is so long in mounting to that summit that should give you your proper splendor."

The name "Aurelia" is derived from the Latin word *aureus*, which means "golden."

"Why does my sweetheart frown?" Catiline asked. "Have I too long been absent from these lips, this cheek, these eyes?"

He kissed them.

"What is my trespass?" Catiline said. "Speak."

"It seems you know what your trespass is, you who can accuse yourself," Aurelia answered.

In fact, he had too long been absent from her lips, her cheek, her eyes.

"I will redeem it," Catiline promised.

"Always you say you will," Aurelia Orestilla responded. "But when?"

Catiline answered, "When Orestilla, by bearing well these my retirements and stolen times for thought, shall give their

effects permission to call her Queen of all the world, in place of humbled Rome.”

Catiline was plotting to become King of Rome. That was the reason for his retirements and stolen times for thought. When he and Aurelia became King and Queen of Rome, there would be no need for these retirements and stolen times for thought, he believed.

“You court me now,” Aurelia said.

He wanted to put her in a royal court, and he was courting — persuading — her to act the way he wanted her to act.

“As I would always, love, by this ambrosiac kiss” — he kissed her — “and” — he kissed her a second time — “this kiss of nectar.”

Ambrosia is the food of the gods, and nectar is the drink of the gods.

Catiline continued:

“If you would only hear as gladly as I speak. Could my Aurelia think I meant her less when, wooing her, I first removed a wife and then a son in order to make my bed and house spacious and fit to embrace her?”

He was referring to his murdering his first wife and then his son so that he could marry Aurelia, his second wife.

Catiline continued:

“These were deeds not to have begun with but to end with more and greater. He who, building, stops at one floor, or the second, has erected nothing.

“I was meditating on how to raise you and make you Queen of Rome. I was meditating on how to make some act of mine answer your love, that love which, when my state was now quite sunk, came with your wealth and raised it up again.”

Aurelia's wealth had allowed Catiline to pay off his debts.

Catiline continued:

“Your love that also made my arising fortune once more look above the main, above the high sea, which now shall hit the stars and stick my Orestilla there, among them, if any tempest can but make the billow, and any billow can but lift her greatness.”

Heroes and great personages are found among the stars in constellations such as those named after Orion the Hunter, Hercules, and Perseus.

Catiline continued:

“But I must pray to my love that she will put on like habits with myself and act as I do. I have to do with many men and many natures.”

Catiline was skilled at manipulating people. He wanted her to also manipulate people.

The word “habits” meant 1) clothes, and 2) habitual practice. Catiline wanted his wife, like him, to dress and act a part in order to manipulate people.

Catiline continued:

“Some men must be blown — puffed up — and soothed, such as Lentulus, whom I have exalted with exaggerating his noble blood and family and with a vain dream out of the Sibyl's books of prophecy.”

Sibyls are female prophets.

Before Rome became a republic, an old woman — the Cumaean Sibyl in disguise — arrived in Rome and offered to sell to King Tarquin — Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, the last Roman king — nine books of prophecy at a high price. When he declined to buy them, the Sibyl burned three books

and then offered to sell to him the remaining six books at the same high price. When he declined to buy them, the Sibyl burned three more books and then offered to sell to him the remaining three books at the same high price. He bought them.

Catiline continued:

“The vain dream is that a third man of that great family whereof he is descended, the Corneli, should be a king in Rome — which I have hired the flattering augurs to interpret the third man as being him, Cinna and Sulla being dead.”

According to these fortune-tellers, the three Corneli were Cinna, Sulla, and Lentulus. One of these men was supposed to become King of Rome, and Cinna and Sulla were dead. In fact, Catiline had bribed the augurs to interpret the Sibylline prophecies in this way.

Catiline continued:

“Then, there is bold Cethegus, whose valor I have turned into his poison and praised him so into daring that when I would bid him move, he would make an attack upon the gods, kiss lightning, wrest the thunderbolt away from the Cyclops, and fire the thunderbolt directly at the face of a full, swelling cloud, and resist his — Jove’s — anger.”

The one-eyed Cyclops made thunderbolts for Jupiter, king of gods and men, to use.

Catiline continued:

“Others there are whom malice to the state attracts and incites for contumelies — contemptuous treatment — received; and such are sure ones, such as Curius and the forenamed Lentulus, both of whom have been degraded in the Senate.”

In 70 B.C.E., the Censors threw Lentulus and Curius out of the Senate because of Lentulus' and Curius' immorality.

Catiline continued:

“And both must have their disgraces always newly rubbed — the disgraces are like a sore — to make them smart, and labor for revenge.

“Others are there whom mere ambition fires. They have vainly convinced themselves that they have a chance to achieve the governorship of provinces abroad, and I have promised the provinces to them.

“These men include Laeca, Vargunteius, Bestia, and Autronius.

“Some there are whom their needs oppress, such as the idle, unemployed captains of Sulla's troops; and diverse Roman knights, the profuse wasters of their patrimonies, who are so threatened by their debts that they will now take any desperate risk for a change.

“These for a time we must relieve and assist, Aurelia, and make our house their safeguard and protection; we must do that for those who fear the law, or stand within her control, for any act past or to come.

“Such men will be seditious because of their own crimes, as they will be from our crimes.

“Some more men there are, who are slight airlings — rash youngsters — and who will be won with the gifts of dogs, and horses, or perhaps a whore — which must be had.

“And if they risk their lives for us, Aurelia, we must risk our honors a little.

“Get a quantity and a variety of women, as I have gotten of boys; and give them time and place and every encouragement to sin.”

Some of the conspirators would be bribed with prostitutes, both female and male.

Catiline continued:

“You yourself, too, shall be courtly and be courtly flattering, and entertain, and feast, stay up late, and revel. Call all the great, the fair, and the spirited dames of Rome about you, and begin a fashion of freedom and social intercourse and licentiousness.

“Some will thank you, although the sour Senators frown, whose heads must ache in fear and feeling — and presentiment, too.”

The heads could ache because of the growing of the invisible horns that cuckolds — men with unfaithful wives — wore. Or the heads could ache because they were beaten.

Catiline continued:

“We must not spare either expense or modesty. It can but show like one of Juno’s or one of Jove’s disguises in either you or me; and will as soon, when things succeed, be thrown aside or let fall as is a veil put off, a mask changed, or the scene — a place of dramatic action — shifted in our theaters —”

The gods, such as Jupiter — Jove — and his wife, Juno, could assume disguises, pretending to be mortal humans, for example. When the need for the disguise was over, they would appear as their true immortal selves.

Catiline was interrupted by a noise outside the room.

“Who’s that?” he said. “It is the voice of Lentulus.”

“Or of Cethegus,” Aurelia said.

“Go into another room, my fair Aurelia, and think upon these stratagems,” Catiline said. “They must not see how far you are trusted with these secret matters, although you rise on their shoulders, necks, and heads.”

The rebellion of these men could make Aurelia the Queen of Rome.

Aurelia exited the room from one door.

Lentulus and Cethegus entered from another door.

Lentulus was a disgraced Senator who hoped to become King of Rome because of a supposed prophecy by the Cumaean Sibyl, and Cethegus was a young Senator.

“It is, I think, a morning full of fate!” Lentulus said. “Dawn rises slowly, as if her sullen car — her gloomy, sluggish chariot — had all the weights of sleep and death hung at it.”

In Roman mythology, the goddess Dawn arrives in a chariot pulled by two horses.

Lentulus continued, “Dawn is not rosy fingered but swollen black. Her face is like a water turned to blood, and her sick head is bound about with clouds, as if she threatened night before the noon of day. This dawn does not look as if it would have a ‘hail’ or ‘health’ wished in it, as on other morns.”

“Hail” is a Roman greeting.

Cethegus said, “Why, all the fitter, Lentulus: Our coming is not for salutation; we have business to conduct.”

“Nobly said, brave Cethegus,” Catiline said.

Then he asked, “Where’s Autronius?”

“Hasn’t he come?” Cethegus asked.

“He is not here,” Catiline said.

“Hasn’t Vargunteius come?” Cethegus asked.

“No,” Catiline answered.

Cethegus said, “Let a fire be in their beds and bosoms, who so will serve their sloth rather than virtue and courage! They are no Romans, not when they act so lethargically at such a time of high need as now.”

Lentulus said, “Both Autronius and Vargunteius, as well as Longinus, Laeca, Curius, Fulvius, and Gabinius, gave me the word last night, by Lucius Bestia, that they would all be here, and early.”

“They did?” Cethegus said. “As you would have overslept, had I not called you. Come, we all sleep and are mere sleepy dormice, flies little less than dead; more dullness hangs on us than on the morn. We’re spirit-bound in ribs — bars — of ice; our whole bloods are one stone; and honor cannot thaw us, nor our wants, although they burn hot as fevers to our states of being.”

“I wonder why they would be tardy at an hour of so great purpose and importance,” Catiline said.

Cethegus said:

“If the gods had called them to a purpose, they would just have come with the same tortoise speed, they who are thus slow to have come to such an action, which the gods will envy, as asking no less means than all their powers conjoined to effect.

“I would have seen Rome burnt by this time, and her ashes in an urn, the kingdom of the Senate rent asunder, and the



degenerate talking gown run frightened out of the air of Italy.”

The degenerate talking gown is Cicero, the orator who, like other Roman citizens, wore a toga during formal occasions.

“Spirit of men!” Catiline said, praising Cethegus. “You heart of our great enterprise! How much I love these voices — these opinions and expressions of emotion — in you!”

Cethegus said, “Oh, for the days of Sulla’s sway, when the free sword took leave to act all that it would!”

Catiline added, “And the sword was as familiar with entrails as our augurs!”

Augurs sacrificed animals and examined their entrails as a way of divining the future. Sulla’s supporters were as familiar with the entrails of humans as augurs were with the entrails of animals.

Cethegus said, “Sons killed fathers. Brothers killed their brothers.”

Catiline added, “And they received price — high esteem — and praise for acting in such a way. All hate had license given to it, and all rage was given the reins so it could run unchecked.”

Cethegus said, “Slaughter straddled the streets and stretched himself to seem huger, while to his stained thighs the gore he drew flowed up and carried down whole heaps of limbs and bodies through the arch made by Slaughter’s legs. No age was spared, and neither sex was spared.”

“None, and no rank in society,” Catiline said.

“Infants in the entrance of life were not free from slaughter,” Cethegus said. “The sick, the old, who could hope for only a day longer to live by the natural order of things, were not

allowed to stay that extra day in the Land of the Living. Virgins and widows, matrons, pregnant wives — all died.”

“It was crime enough that they had lives,” Catiline said.

To Catiline, the fact that these people were alive was reason enough to kill them.

He continued, “To strike but only those who could do hurt was dull, and poor. Some fell to make the number, as some fell to make the prey, aka the booty.”

Some died simply to increase the number of the dead; others died because they had possessions that could be looted.

Cethegus said, “The rugged Charon fainted, and asked for a navy, rather than a boat, to ferry the newly dead over the river Styx to the sad, sorry, heavy world that is the Land of the Dead.”

Charon was a ferryman who transported the souls of the dead across a river to Hades, the Land of the Dead. So many people died in Sulla’s civil war that Charon needed an entire navy rather than a single ferry to transport the souls of the dead.

Cethegus continued, “The maws — stomachs — and dens of beasts could not receive the bodies that those souls were frightened from; and even the graves were filled with men yet living, whose flight and fear had mixed them with the dead.”

“And this shall be again, and more, and more,” Catiline said, “now that Lentulus, the third Cornelius, is to stand up and be eminent in Rome.”

“Nay, don’t urge that which is so uncertain,” Lentulus said.

“What do you mean?” Catiline said.

“I mean, not cleared and proven to be trustworthy, and therefore not to be reflected on,” Lentulus said.

“The Sibyl’s leaves uncertain?” Catiline said. “Or the comments of our grave, deep, divining men not clear?”

The Cumaean Sibyl wrote her prophecies on leaves.

The augurs interpreted those prophecies.

“All prophecies, you know, suffer the torture,” Lentulus said.

Roman slaves and foreigners were tortured to extract confessions or testimony.

Prophecies tend to be uncertain and unclear. Many meanings can be tortured — interpreted — out of them.

“But this prophecy already has confessed without torture,” Catiline said, “and it has been so weighed, examined, and set forth that it would be malicious ignorance in that man who would be faint in the belief.”

According to Catiline, the prophecy that Lentulus would be King of Rome was completely clear.

“Do you believe it?” Lentulus asked.

“Do I love Lentulus?” Catiline asked. “Or pray to see him become King of Rome?”

“The augurs all are in agreement in saying that I am the member of the Cornelius family meant to be King of Rome,” Lentulus said.

The augurs — whom Catiline had bribed — all said that the prophecy stated that Lentulus would be king.

“They would have shown that they had lost their science of augury if they were not in agreement,” Catiline said.

“They count from Cinna,” Lentulus said.

Lucius Cornelius Cinna had been a four-time Consul of Rome.

“And Sulla next, and so that makes you the third, and the third shall be king,” Catiline said. “All who can say the sun has risen must think it.”

Lentulus’ becoming king soon was as obvious as the newly risen sun. So said Catiline.

“Men notice me more recently, as I come forth,” Lentulus said.

Catiline said:

“Why, what can they do less? Cinna and Sulla are set like the sun, and they are gone; and we must turn our eyes on him who is, and shines.

“Noble Cethegus, just view him with me, here! He looks already as if he shook a scepter over the Senate and the awed purple dropped their rods and axes!”

Roman Senators wore a tunic or a toga with a purple stripe, and their Lictors carried rods and axes as symbols of the Senators’ authority. Rods were symbols of their power to inflict corporal punishment, and axes were symbols of their power to inflict capital punishment.

Catiline continued, “The statues melt again.”

In 65 B.C.E., lightning struck the Capitol and melted statues — a foreboding omen.

Catiline continued, “And household gods in groans confess the travail of the city.”

When Troy fell, the greatest Trojan warrior, Hector, who was carrying the image of Vesta, goddess of the hearth, appeared before Aeneas in a dream and told him to leave the burning city and to rescue the city’s household gods. Later,

the household gods appeared to Aeneas in a dream and told him to go to Italy, where Aeneas became an important ancestor of the Romans.

Catiline continued, “The very walls sweat blood before the change; and stones start out to ruin, before the change comes.”

“But he, and we, and all are idle still,” Cethegus said.

“I am your obedient follower, Sergius,” Lentulus said.

Catiline’s full name was Lucius Sergius Catiline.

Lentulus continued, “And whatever the great Cornelian name shall succeed in becoming, it is not augury, nor the Sibyl’s books, but Catiline who makes it.”

“I am the shadow to honored Lentulus and Cethegus here, who are the heirs of Mars,” Catiline said.

Cethegus praised Catiline by saying, “By Mars himself, I say that Catiline is more my parent, for whose virtue Earth cannot make a shadow great enough, although envy should come, too.”

Others were heard approaching.

“Oh, there they are,” Cethegus said. “Now we shall talk more, although we yet do nothing.”

Autronius, Vargunteius, Longinus, Curius, Laeca, Bestia, Fulvius, Gabinius, and some servants entered Lucius Sergius Catiline’s study.

“Hail, Lucius Catiline,” Autronius said.

“Hail, noble Sergius,” Vargunteius said to Catiline.

“Hail, Publius Lentulus,” Longinus said.

“Hail, the third Cornelius,” Longinus said to Lentulus.

“Caius Cethegus, hail,” Laeca said.

“Hail, sloth and words, instead of men and spirits,” Cethegus said to everyone.

Trying to keep the peace, Catiline said, “Nay, dear Caius —”

“Are your eyes unsealed yet?” Caius Cethegus said. “Are your eyes still blinded?”

A young falcon’s eyes were stitched closed — sealed — during its early training. After its training, the falcon’s stitches were removed.

Cethegus continued, “Dare they look at even a dull day?”

Catiline said, “He’s zealous for the affair concerning which you have come, and he blames you for your tardy coming, gentlemen.”

Cethegus began, “Unless we had sold ourselves to sleep and ease, and would be our slaves’ slaves —”

Trying to keep the peace, Catiline interrupted, “— please don’t criticize them.”

Cethegus began, “The north is not so stark and cold —”

Catiline interrupted, “— Cethegus —”

“We shall redeem all, if your fire will let us,” Bestia said.

“You are too full of lightning, noble Caius,” Catiline said to Cethegus.

He then said to a servant, “Boy, see that all the doors are shut so that no one approaches us in this part of the house.”

He then ordered another servant, “Go and tell the priest to kill the slave I designated last night and tell him to bring me some of the slave’s blood when I shall call for him.

“Until then, all you servants wait outside.”

The servants exited.

Darkness appeared and covered the scene. It was an omen.

“What is it, Autronius?” Vargunteius asked.

“Longinus?” Autronius asked.

“Curius?” Longinus asked.

“Laeca?” Curius asked.

“Do you feel nothing?” Vargunteius asked.

“A strange unwonted horror invades me,” Longinus said. “I don’t know what it is. A darkness comes over the place.”

“The day goes back,” Laeca said. “Or else my senses do.”

“As at Atreus’ feast!” Curius said.

Atreus and Thyestes were brothers, but Thyestes committed adultery with Atreus’ wife and through trickery took Atreus’ crown as King of Mycenae. To get revenge, Atreus killed Thyestes’ three sons and cooked them, except for their hands and feet. After Thyestes had eaten the flesh of his sons, Atreus showed him their hands and feet, which Thyestes recognized. In horror at the deed, the gods caused darkness.

“Darkness grows more and more!” Fulvius said.

“The vestal flame on the altar in Vesta’s shrine in the Roman Forum, I think, has gone out,” Lentulus said.

This was indeed an ominous sign.

A groan of many people sounded from underground.

Hades, the Land of the Dead, is located underground.

“What groan was that?” Gabinius asked.

“It comes from our imaginations,” Cethegus said. “Let us strike fire out of ourselves and force a day. We can provide light through our own fieriness.”

One way to create fire is by striking flint against metal.

Another groan sounded from underground.

“Again it sounds!” Autronius said.

“As if all the city gave it!” Bestia said.

“We fear what we ourselves imagine,” Cethegus said.

A fiery light appeared.

“What light is this?” Vargunteius asked.

“Look out the window!” Curius said.

“It still grows greater,” Lentulus said.

“From where does it come?” Laeca asked.

“It is a bloody arm that holds a pine torch lighted above the Capitol,” Longinus said, looking out the window. “And now it waves to us!”

“Splendid and full of omen!” Catiline said. “Our enterprise is sealed and confirmed.”

He interpreted the omen as propitious to their rebellion.

“In spite of darkness that would look with disfavor on it,” Cethegus said. “Look no more. We lose time and ourselves to what we came for. Speak, Lucius! We will pay attention to you.”

They were losing time by looking at the omens; although Cethegus did not know it, they were losing themselves by rebelling against the Roman Republic.

Lucius Sergius Catiline said:



“Noblest Romans, if you were less, or if your faith and virtue did not justify that title of Roman as does your blood and birth, I should not now unprofitably spend myself in words or snatch at empty hopes, by airy ways, for solid certainties.”

In other words, if those present had not shown themselves to be good Romans, Catiline would not now be speaking and forming plans, which would be uncertain (because not backed by good Romans) to achieve solid certainties: victory in their rebellion.

In his speech, Catiline was assuming both that the co-conspirators were good Romans and that the rebellion would succeed.

Catiline continued:

“But because in many, and the greatest, dangers, I always have known you to be no less true than valiant, and because I perceive in you the same inclinations to want or not want, to think things good or bad, alike with me — which testifies to and gives evidence of your firm friendship — I dare the more boldly to set out on foot with you or to lead to this great and goodliest — most splendid — action.

“What I have thought of it before, you all have heard individually. I then expressed my zeal to the glory. Now the need inflames me, when I consider beforehand the hard conditions that our states of condition must undergo, unless in due course we redeem ourselves to liberty and break the iron yoke forged for our necks.

“For, what less can we call it, when we see the commonwealth so monopolized by a few, the giants of the state, who by turns enjoy her and defile her? All the earth, her kings and petty rulers, are their tributaries — rulers who pay tribute. People and nations pay them hourly taxes and tribute money. The riches of the world flow to their coffers, and not to Rome’s.

“While, except for those few, the rest, however great we are, however honest and valiant, are herded with the common people, and so kept as if we were bred only to consume grain, or wear out wool, to drink the city’s water, to be without honors, without authority or distinction, trembling beneath their rods, to whom, if all were well in Rome, we should come forth like bright axes and be feared.”

According to Catiline, only a very few people in Rome enjoyed wealth and high rank. In contrast, Catiline and his co-conspirators, although deserving of wealth and high rank, were treated like mere consumers and common people. The great Romans wanted Catiline and his co-conspirators to fear their rod, but Catiline wanted himself and his co-conspirators to attack the great men of Rome with axes.

Catiline continued:

“All places, honors and magistracies, and high offices are theirs, or they are where they will confer them! They leave us the dangers and liability, the repulses, the judgments and decreed obligations, the lacks and wants, which how long will you bear, most valiant spirits?

“Wouldn’t we be better off to fall, once, with virtue than draw a wretched and dishonored breath, to lose with shame, when these men’s pride will laugh?

“I call the faith of gods and men as witness: The power is in our hands, our bodies are able, and our minds are as strong as our bodies. In contrast, in them all things have grown aged and decayed with their wealth and years.

“There lacks but only to begin the business. The outcome of our rebellion is certain.”

“On, let us go on,” Cethegus and Longinus said.

“Go on, brave Sergius,” Curius and Bestia said.

Lucius Sergius Catiline continued:

“It strikes my soul — and who can escape that stroke, whoever has a soul or just the smallest breath of man within him? — to see them swell with treasure, which they pour out in their riots, eating, drinking, building. Yes, building, in the sea, planing and making level of hills with valleys, and raising valleys above hills, while we lack the necessities to give to our bodies.

“They have their multiple houses, manors, lordships. We scarcely have a fire or a poor household god — a Lar!”

Actually, Catiline and the co-conspirators were members of the Roman upper class.

Catiline continued:

“They buy rare Attic statues, Tyrian hangings, Ephesian pictures, and Corinthian plate, Attalic garments, and now newly found gems since Pompey went for Asia. These things they purchase at the price of provinces.

“The river Phasis cannot afford them fowl nor can Lucrine Lake afford them oysters enough; Mount Circeo, too, is searched to please the ingenious gluttony of a meal!”

The wealthy of Rome were feasting so much that Italy could not supply them with sufficient quantities of delicacies.

Catiline continued:

“Their ancient habitations they neglect and set up new habitations; then, if the echo is not pleasing in such a room, they pluck down those and build newer, alter them, too; and by all frantic ways they vex and keep in constant use their wild wealth, as they molest the people from whom they forcibly grab it.

“Yet, they cannot tame or overcome or exhaust their riches: not by making baths, orchards, fish-pools, letting in of seas here, and then there forcing them out again with mountainous heaps, for which the earth has lost most of her ribs — strata of rock — as entrails, being now wounded no less for marble than for gold.

“We all this while, like calm, benumbed spectators, sit until our residences do crack, and we do not hear the thundering ruins, while at home our needs, abroad our debts, subject us to pressure, our states of condition daily tending to bad, our hopes to worse; and what is left but for us to be crushed?

“Wake, wake, brave friends, and meet the liberty you often have wished for! Behold: Renown, riches, and glory court you. Fortune holds out these to you as rewards.

“I think, even if I were silent and unable to speak, the affair itself, the opportunity, your needs and dangers, with the splendid spoil the war brings, should invite you.

“Treat me as your general or your soldier. Neither my mind nor my body shall be lacking to you. And, once being newly elected Consul, I do not fear to do and effect all that you wish, as long as your trust in me does not flatter and blind me, and as long as you’d not rather still be slaves than be free.”

“Free! Free!” Cethegus said.

“It is freedom we choose!” Longinus said.

“It is freedom we all stand for!” Curius said.

“Why, these are noble voices!” Catiline said. “Nothing is lacking, then, but that we take a solemn oath to strengthen our commitment to our plot.”

“And so to act it,” Cethegus said. “Deferring and delaying hurts, where powers are so prepared.”

The word “powers” can mean 1) strengths, and 2) troops.

Autronius said, “Yet, before we enter into open act of rebellion — with your permission — it would be no loss, if it might be enquired what the condition of these arms would be?”

Autronius, who had been involved two years earlier in the first Catilinarian conspiracy, which failed, was rightly concerned about things that might stop this new conspiracy from succeeding.

“Aye, and the means to carry us through?” Vargunteius said.

Catiline said, “What, friends! Do you think that I would ask you to grasp the wind? Or call you to the embracing of a cloud?”

Ixion tried to rape the goddess Juno, but her husband, Jupiter, king of the gods, foiled the attempt by making a cloud take on the appearance of Juno. Punished in Hades, Ixion is bound on a flaming wheel that constantly spins.

Catiline continued:

“Do you think I would risk your recognized valors — your worth and valor — in so dear a business and have no other second — support and assistance — than the danger, nor any other garland than the loss? Become your own assurances and guarantees.

“And, for the means, consider, first, the stark safety — the absolute feeling of security from danger — the commonwealth is in now. The whole Senate is sleepy and is dreaming about no such violent blow.

“Their forces — armies — are all abroad, of which the greatest, which might annoy us most, is farthest off, in Asia under the command of Pompey. Those forces that are near at hand are commanded by our friends. One army in Spain

is commanded by Gnaeus Piso; the other army in Mauritania is commanded by Nucerinus. Both of these generals I have firm and fast — they are committed to helping us in our plot.

“I myself, then, am standing as a candidate now to be Consul, with my hoped-for colleague Caius Antonius, one who is no less engaged and committed to our cause by his wants and needs than we are, and whom I have the power to melt and cast in any mold.”

Catiline was saying that he could manipulate Caius Antonius, who was also campaigning to be one of the two Consuls for the next year.

Catiline continued:

“Besides these men, there are some others who will not yet be named, both sure and great ones, who, when the time comes, shall declare themselves strong for our party; so that no resistance in nature — that is, anywhere — can be thought.

“As for our reward after our victory, then:

“First, all our debts are paid.

“The dangers of law, actions, decrees, judgments against us are acquitted.

“The rich men, as in Sulla’s times, are proscribed, and confiscation made of all their goods.”

Catiline pointed to various co-conspirators as he said, continuing to use the present tense:

“That house is yours; that land is his; those waters, orchards, and walks are a third’s. He has that honor, and he has that office. Such a province falls to Vargunteius, this province falls to Autronius, that province falls to bold Cethegus, Rome falls to Lentulus.

“You share the world, her magistracies, priesthoods, wealth, and felicity among yourselves, friends, and Catiline is your servant.

“Would you, Curius, revenge the contumely and disgrace stuck upon you in being removed from the Senate? Now, now is your time to do so.

“Would Publius Lentulus strike blows for the like disgrace? Now is his time.

“Would stout and bold Longinus walk the streets of Rome, openly opposing and defying the important person who holds the powerful office of Praetor? Now has he a time to spurn and tread the fasces — bundles of rods and a single-headed ax — into dirt made of the usurers’ and the Lictors’ brains.”

Dirt can be excrement. If the co-conspirators wanted to, they could cannibalize the brains of their enemies and turn them into excrement.

Catiline continued:

“Is there a beauty here in Rome you love? An enemy you would kill? What head’s not at your mercy? Whose wife, which boy, whose daughter, of what family or class, that the husband or glad parents shall not bring you and boast of the service?”

The co-conspirators would be so powerful that they could have sex whenever they wanted with other people’s wives, daughters, and sons. They could also kill whomever they wanted.

Catiline continued:

“Only spare yourselves, and you have all the earth beside, a field to exercise your longings in.

“I see you aroused and confident and read your forward — ardent — minds eager in your faces.”

Catiline then called to the servants, “Bring the wine and blood you have prepared there.”

Adult servants and pages arrived, carrying wine mixed with blood, and drinking bowls. Pages are boys who are servants.

“What is this?” Longinus asked.

Catiline said:

“I’ve killed a slave and have caused his blood to be mixed with wine. Fill every man his drinking bowl. There cannot be a fitter drink to make this oath in.

“Here I begin the sacrament to all. Oh, for a clap of thunder now, so loud as to be heard throughout the universe, to tell the world the fact and to applaud it.

“Be firm, my hand, shed not a drop, but pour fierceness into me with it, and cruel thirst of more and more, until Rome be left as bloodless as ever her fears made her, or the sword, and when I cease to wish this to you, stepdame — Rome — or stop working to effect it, with my powers fainting, so may my blood be drawn, and so drunk up as is this slave’s.”

“And so be my blood,” Longinus said.

“And mine,” Lentulus said.

“And mine,” Autronius said.

“And mine,” Vargunteius said.

They drank.

“Fill my bowl yet fuller — to overflowing,” Cethegus said. “Here I drink this blood as I would drink Cato’s, or the new fellow Cicero’s, with that vow which Catiline has given.”



Cicero was a *novus homo*, a new man, the first in his family to become so prominent — a Senator and a Consul — in Rome.

“So do I,” Curius said.

“And I,” Laeca said.

“And I,” Bestia said.

“And I,” Fulvius said.

“And all of us,” Gabinius said.

They drank again.

“Why, now’s the business safe and each man strengthened and made sure of,” Catiline said.

Seeing one of his serving-boys respond with aversion to Bestia’s sexual advances to him, Catiline said to the page, “Sirrah, what ails you?”

“Nothing,” the page answered.

“He is somewhat modest,” Bestia said.

The page knelt before Catiline.

Catiline said to the page, “Slave, I will strike your soul out with my foot, if I find you again with such a face of aversion, you whelp —”

“Nay, Lucius,” Bestia said.

Lucius Sergius Catiline said to the page, “Are you acting coyly, when I command you to be free and open and affable to all?”

In order to achieve his ends, Catiline was willing to allow his co-conspirators to commit sodomy with his boy-servants.

Bestia whispered to Catiline, “You’ll be observed.”

Catiline said to the page, “Arise, and if you show any least aversion in your look to a man who attempts to jest or to tilt with — board — you next, then your throat opens with a slit.”

Catiline could and would do this: The page was a slave, and Catiline was ambitious.

Catiline then said to the co-conspirators:

“Noble confederates and allies, thus far is perfect. Only I will expect your votes at the assembly for the choosing of Consuls, and all the votes you can get from friends to elect me as Consul. Then let me work out your fortunes and my own fortune.

“In the meanwhile, let all of us rest sealed up and silent, as when hard frosts have bound up brooks and rivers, forced wild beasts into their caves, and birds into the woods, countrymen into their houses, and the country sleeps, so that, when the sudden thaw comes, we may break upon them like a deluge, bearing down half of Rome before us, and invade the rest with cries and noise able to wake the urns of those who are dead, and make their ashes fear.

“The horrors that strike the world should come loud and unlooked for. Until they strike, be dumb and do not speak about this plot.”

“Oracular Sergius!” Cethegus said.

“God-like Catiline!” Lentulus said.

They all exited.

**CHORUS (End of ACT 1) (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)**

The Chorus appeared and spoke in rhyming couplets, lamenting that Rome, although so great and powerful, should be threatened as a result of an excess of plenty, wealth, and ease:

*Can nothing great and at the height  
Remain so long, but its own weight  
Will ruin it? Or is't [is it] blind Chance  
That still [always] desires new states t'advance [to advance  
new states]  
And quit the old? Else, why must Rome  
Be by itself now overcome?  
Has she not foes enough of those  
Whom she hath [has] made such, and enclose  
Her round about [surround her]? Or are they none,  
Except [Unless] she first become her own [her own foe]?  
O wretchedness of greatest states,  
To be obnoxious to [subjected to] these fates,  
That cannot keep what they do gain,  
And what they raise so ill sustain.  
Rome now is mistress of the whole  
World, sea, and land, to either pole;  
And even that fortune will destroy  
The power that made it. She doth joy [does enjoy]*

*So much in plenty, wealth, and ease,*

*As [That] now th' [the] excess is her disease.*

The Chorus then described some of Rome's luxuries, including luxuries that made men effeminate:

*She builds in gold, and to the stars,*

*As if she threatened heav'n [heaven] with wars,*

*And seeks for hell in quarries deep,*

*Giving the fiends that there do keep [dwell],*

*A hope of day. Her women wear*

*The spoils of nations, in an ear,*

*Changed [Exchanged] for the treasure of a shell [a pearl],*

*And in their loose attires [loosely fitting dresses] do swell  
[puff up]*

*More light [Lighter] than sails, when all winds play.*

*Yet are the men more loose [effeminate, loosely dressed,  
wanton, unchaste] than they,*

*More kempt [combed], and bathed, and rubbed, and  
trimmed,*

*More sleeked [smoothed], more soft, and slacker limbed,*

*As [As a] prostitute: so much that kind [nature]*

*May seek itself there and not find.*

*They eat on beds of silk and gold,*

*At ivory tables or wood sold*

*Dearer than it [North African cedar was very expensive],  
and, leaving plate [setting aside gold and silver bowls],*

*Do drink in stone of higher rate [from bowls set with expensive jewels].*

*They hunt all grounds and draw [fish in] all seas,*

*Fowl [Hunt fowl in] every brook and bush, to please*

*Their wanton tastes, and in request*

*Have [seek after] new and rare things, not the best.*

The Chorus next credited the virtue of Rome's past to "simple poverty." Now that Rome was rich, it had lost much virtue:

*Hence comes that wild and vast expense*

*That hath [has] enforced [compelled] Rome's virtue thence [to leave],*

*Which simple poverty first made.*

*And now ambition doth [does] invade*

*Her state with eating avarice [avarice that devours everything],*

*Riot [Debauchery], and every other vice.*

*Decrees are bought, and laws are sold,*

*Honors, and offices for gold;*

*The people's voices [votes], and the free*

*Tongues in the Senate, bribed be [are bribed].*

*Such ruin of her manners [conduct and customs] Rome*

*Doth [Does] suffer now as [now that] she's become,*

*Without [Unless] the gods it soon gainsay [soon prevent it],*

*Both her own spoiler [despoiler] and own prey.*

The Chorus next blamed the luxuries of Asia, which had been imported to Rome, for corrupting Rome, thus giving Asia revenge for being conquered:

*So, Asia, are you cru'ly [cruelly] even*

*With us for all the blows you given [that you were given],*

*When we, whose virtue conquered you,*

*Thus by your vices ruined be [are ruined].*

Catiline and his co-conspirators looked at the excesses of the powerful people of Rome and envied them.

The Chorus looked at the same excesses of the powerful people of Rome and deplored them.

## ACT 2 (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)

### — 2.1 —

Fulvia, Galla, and a servant spoke together in a room in Fulvia's house. Galla was a waiting-woman who served Fulvia, who was a woman of rank and who had many affairs.

Fulvia complained, "Those rooms stink extremely."

She then said, "Bring my mirror and table here, Galla."

"Madam," Galla said.

She went into another room — Fulvia's bedchamber — and brought out a mirror and a table.

"Look within, in my blue cabinet, for the pearl sent to me most recently, and bring it to me," Fulvia ordered.

"The pearl from Clodius?" Galla asked.

"From Caius Caesar," Fulvia said. "You're in favor of Clodius still. Or Curius."

Galla exited.

Fulvia said to the servant, "Sirrah, if Quintus Curius comes here, I am not in a fit mood to see him; I keep to my chamber. Give warning so, outside."

"Sirrah" was a title given to a person of lower social class than the speaker.

The servant exited, and Galla returned with the pearl.

"Is this it, madam?" Galla asked.

"Yes, help to hang it in my ear," Fulvia said.

Pearl earrings were one of the luxuries that the Chorus had criticized.

“Believe me,” Galla said. “It is a rich one, madam.”

“I hope so,” Fulvia said. “It would not be worn there otherwise. Finish what you are doing and bind my hair up.”

“In the same style as it was yesterday?” Galla asked.

“No, nor the other day,” Fulvia said. “When have you ever known me to appear two days in a row with the same hair-dressing?”

“Will you have your hair in the globe or spire?” Galla asked.

The globe and the spire were two different styles of hair dressing.

“Whichever you wish,” Fulvia said. “Any style, however you will do it, good impertinence. Your company, if I slept not very well during nights, would make me an errant fool on account of your questions.”

Galla began, “Alas, madam —”

Fulvia interrupted, “Nay, gentle half of the dialogue, cease talking.”

So far, she had called Galla by the terms “good impertinence” and “gentle half of the dialogue.”

“I do it, indeed, just for your exercise,” Galla said, “as your physician tells me.”

“What?” Fulvia said. “Does he tell you to anger me for exercise?”

“Not to anger you, but to stir your blood a little,” Galla said. “There’s a difference between lukewarm and boiling, madam.”

“By Jove!” Fulvia said. “She means to cook me, I think! Please, stop.”



“I mean to dress you, madam,” Galla said.

“To dress” means 1) to fix someone’s hair, and 2) to prepare food for cooking.

Galla proceeded to do Fulvia’s hair.

“Oh, my Juno, be a friend to me!” Fulvia said.

Juno was a goddess who watched over the women of Rome.

Fulvia continued, “Attempting to be a wit, too? Why, Galla, where have you been?”

Fulvia was pretending that Galla had deliberately made a pun on the phrase “to dress.”

“What, madam?” Galla asked.

“What have you done with your poor innocent self?” Fulvia asked.

“What do you mean, sweet madam?” Galla asked.

Fulvia answered, “Thus to come forth, so suddenly, a wit-worm?”

A wit-worm is a beginning wit, one who has just emerged like a caterpillar newly emerged from an egg.

“It pleases you to flout — mock — one,” Galla said.

She then attempted to change the subject: “I did dream of lady Sempronia —”

“Oh, the wonder is out,” Fulvia said. “Did that infect you? Well, and how?”

Dreaming of lady Sempronia must have caused Galla to attempt to be witty. So said Fulvia.

Galla said, “I thought she did discourse the best —”

Fulvia interrupted, “— that ever you heard?”

“Yes,” Galla said.

“In your sleep?” Fulvia said. “What did she talk about?”

“About the Republic, madam, and the state,” Galla said, “and how she was in debt, and where she meant to raise fresh sums of money. Sempronia is a great stateswoman — she has the ability of a statesman.”

“You dreamed all this?” Fulvia asked.

“No, but you know she is as able as a statesman, madam,” Galla said, “and she is a mistress of both the Latin language and the Greek.”

“Yes, but I never dreamt it, Galla, as you have done, and therefore you must pardon me,” Fulvia said.

“Indeed, you mock me, madam,” Galla said.

“Indeed, no,” Fulvia said. “Tell me more about your learned lady. Does she have a wit, too?”

“A very masculine — vigorous — one,” Galla replied.

“She is a she-critic of literature, Galla?” Fulvia asked. “And can she compose in verse, and make quick jests, modest or otherwise?”

“Yes, madam,” Galla said.

“Can she sing, too?” Fulvia asked. “And play on instruments?”

“Of all kinds, they say,” Galla answered.

“And does she dance splendidly?” Fulvia asked.

“Excellently,” Galla said. “So well that a bald Senator made a jest and said it was better than an honest — chaste — woman needed to dance.”

“Tut, she may bear that jest,” Fulvia said. “Few wise women’s ‘honesties’ will do their courtship hurt.”

In other words, the lack of chastity of wise women will seldom interfere with their being courted, aka desired, by men.

“She’s liberal, too, madam,” Galla said.

The word “liberal” meant 1) generous, and 2) free.

“What!” Fulvia said. “With her money or her honor, I ask you?”

“With both,” Gallia said. “You don’t know which she spares least.”

She may have been less sparing of her money, or she may have been less sparing of her honor. The implication was that both her money and her honor were in short supply because she had given away both.

“A comely commendation,” Fulvia said.

“Indeed, it is a pity that she is getting old,” Galla said.

“Why, Galla?” Fulvia asked.

“Because it is a fact that she is,” Galla said.

“Oh, is that all?” Fulvia said. “I thought you had a reason for saying that.”

“Why, so I have,” Galla said. “She has been a fine lady, and she still dresses herself — but not as well as you, madam — like one of the best in Rome, and she uses cosmetics and hides her signs of aging very well.”

Fulvia said, "They say it is rather a mask than a face she wears."

"They wrong her, truly, madam," Galla said. "She does sleek her face with crumbs of bread and milk, and she lies at nights in very neat gloves."

The word "sleek" means "make smooth." She used milk and bread to clean her face and make it sleek and smooth. She also wore gloves at night. The gloves were possibly dampened inside with something to keep her hands sleek and smooth. Today, a woman might put lotion on dry hands and wear gloves to bed.

Galla continued, "But she is obliged recently to seek men for sex more than she is sought for sex — the rumor is — and so she spends money for that purpose."

"You know everything," Fulvia said.

Galla had gotten her inside knowledge of Sempronia no doubt by gossiping with Sempronia's women-servants, and no doubt Galla had gossiped about Fulvia to those women-servants.

Fulvia continued, "But, Galla, what do you have to say about Catiline's lady, Orestilla? There is the gallant, fashionable woman!"

She meant, of course, Catiline's second wife, Aurelia Orestilla.

Galla said:

"She does well. She has very good and very rich suits of clothing, but then she cannot put them on. She doesn't know how to wear a garment. She shall wear all her jewels and gold sometimes, so that her own self appears to be the least part of herself.

“No, truly, as I live, madam, you excel them all with your excellent strength of judgment, and you draw, too, the world of Rome to follow you. You attire yourself so diversely, and with the spirit of always attracting the men with the noblest characters!

“They could make love to your dress, although your face were away, they say.”

Galla’s praise had gotten away from her. In praising Fulvia’s sense of fashion, Galla was making it sound as if the men were more interested in Fulvia’s dress than in her face.

Fulvia said, “And if my body were away, too, would they have the better match of it? Say they are not so, too, Galla?”

In other words, say that they are not effeminate men, Galla.

A servant entered.

Fulvia asked, “Now, what news troubles your face?”

The servant answered, “If it pleases you, madam, the lady Sempronia has alighted from her carriage at the gate —”

Galla interrupted, “By Castor, my dream, my dream!”

“By Castor!” was a woman’s oath in Rome. Both Castor and his twin brother, Pollux, were gods who were associated with miraculous interventions. Here, Galla had dreamed about Sempronia, and now Sempronia appeared.

The servant continued, “— and comes to see you.”

The servant exited.

“For Venus’ sake, good madam, see her —” Galla said.

“Peace! Be quiet!” Fulvia interrupted. “The fool is wild and out of her wits, I think.”

Galla continued, “— and hear her talk, sweet madam, about state matters and the Senate.”

The servant allowed Sempronia, who was of a higher social class than Fulvia, to enter.

Sempronia entered the room and asked, “Fulvia, good wench, how are thou?”

The word “wench” meant “young woman” and was not perjorative.

In this society, a person of higher rank would use “thou,” “thee,” and “thy” when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also sometimes used affectionately and between equals.)

A person of lower rank would use “you” when referring to a person of higher rank.

“I am doing well, Sempronia,” Fulvia answered. “Where are you going so early?”

“To see Aurelia Orestilla,” Sempronia said. “She sent for me. I came to invite thee to go with me. Will thou go?”

“I cannot now, truly,” Fulvia said. “I have some letters to write and send away.”

“Alas, I pity thee,” Sempronia said. “I am so very weary because I have been writing all this night to all the tribes and centuries to ask for their voices — their votes — to help Catiline in his election.”

Rome had 35 tribes; a century was a group of 100 men. Tribes and centuries were both involved in voting.

Sempronia continued, “We shall make him Consul, I hope, among us. Crassus, I, and Caesar will gain the Consulship for him.”

“Is he a candidate for that political office?” Fulvia asked.

“He’s the chief candidate,” Sempronia said.

Fulvia asked, “Who is standing for election for Consul besides him?”

She then ordered Galla, “Give me some wine, and give me powder for my teeth.”

“Here’s a good pearl, in truth,” Sempronia said.

“A pretty one,” Fulvia said.

“A very lustrous one,” Sempronia said.

She then answered Fulvia’s question about the other candidates for the position of Consul: “There are other candidates for the office: Caius Antonius, Publius Galba, Lucius Cassius Longinus, Quintus Cornificius, Caius Licinius, and that talker Cicero.”

Cicero was an excellent writer and orator.

Sempronia continued, “But Catiline and Antonius will be chosen. For four of the others, Licinius, Longinus, Galba, and Cornificius, will give way, and they will not choose Cicero.”

“No?” Fulvia said. “Why?”

“It will be opposed and thwarted by the nobility,” Sempronia answered.

Galla said to herself, “How she does understand public affairs!”

Sempronia continued:

“Nor would it be fit for Cicero to be Consul. He is but a new fellow, not originally here in Rome. Catiline calls him a mere lodger here.

“And the Patricians should do very ill to let the Consulship be so defiled as it would be if Cicero obtained it. He is a perfect upstart who has no pedigree, no house, no coat of arms, no heraldic insignia of a family!”

“He has virtue,” Fulvia said.

“Hang virtue!” Sempronia said. “Where there is no blood, no good parentage, virtue is vice, and in him sauciness. Why should he presume to be more learned or more eloquent than the nobility? Or boast any quality worthy a nobleman, since he himself is not noble?”

“It was virtue only, at first, that made all men noble,” Fulvia said.

Sempronia replied, “I grant you that virtue might have made people noble at first, in Rome’s poor age, when her kings and her Consuls held the plow, or gardened well. But now we have no need to dig or lose our sweat for virtue.”

In 458 B.C.E., Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus was plowing when news of his appointment as Dictator of Rome came. As Dictator, he had much power to deal with the crisis then facing Rome. Once the crisis was resolved, he stopped being Dictator and went back to farming.

Sempronia continued, “We have wealth, fortune, and ease, and also we have our ancestors’ stock of virtue to draw on and give us a reputation for virtue by association, which will defend us against all newcomers — and can never fail us, while the succession of high members of society to high offices stays.”

Nobility has its advantages. Nobles often have ancestors with reputations for virtue. Some of the ancestors’ glory rubs off on their descendants. Also, just a few high-born families can often monopolize the highest political offices.



Sempronia continued:

“And must we glorify a mushroom, an upstart, one of yesterday and lacking a long notable family history, a fine speaker, because he has nourished himself on rhetoric by studying in Athens? And must we advance him at our own loss?”

“No, Fulvia. There are others who can speak Greek, too, if there were need. Caesar and I have sat upon and judged Cicero; so has Crassus, too, and others. We have all decided on his arrest from rising farther. Yes, we will stop him from rising further.”

“Excellent and splendid lady!” Galla said.

“Sempronia, you are beholden to my serving-woman here,” Fulvia said. “She admires you.”

“Oh, good Galla, how are thou?” Sempronia asked.

“The better for your learned ladyship,” Galla replied.

“Is this grey powder a good dentifrice?” Sempronia asked. “Does it clean teeth well?”

“You see I use it,” Fulvia answered.

“I have one that is whiter,” Sempronia said.

“It may be so,” Fulvia said.

“Yet this smells well,” Sempronia said.

“And it cleanses very well, madam, and resists the crudities of unhygienic teeth,” Galla said.

“Fulvia, I ask thee, who comes to thee now?” Sempronia asked. “Which of our great patricians?”

“Truly, I keep no catalog of them,” Fulvia said. “Sometimes I have one, sometimes another, as sexual desire excites their blood.”

“Thou have them all,” Sempronia said. “In faith, when was Quintus Curius, thy special servant, here?”

“My special servant?” Fulvia asked.

A servant can be a lover.

“Yes, your idolater, I call him,” Sempronia said.

“He may be yours,” Fulvia said, “if you do like him.”

“What!” Sempronia said.

“He does not come here,” Fulvia said. “I have forbidden him to come here.”

“Venus forbid!” Sempronia said.

“Why?” Fulvia asked.

“He is your so constant lover,” Sempronia answered.

“He is so much to the contrary,” Fulvia said. “I want to have a change of lovers. So would you, too, I am sure. And now you may have him.”

“He’s fresh yet, Fulvia,” Sempronia said. “Beware how you tempt me.”

“Fresh” can mean 1) youthful, and 2) not preserved.

“In faith, for me he is somewhat too fresh, indeed,” Fulvia said. “The salt that gave him seasoning and flavor is gone.”

“Salt” can mean 1) a seasoning, and 2) sexual desire.

Fulvia continued, “His good gifts are done. He does not yield the crop that he used to yield.”

Quintus Curius no longer gave her valuable gifts.

She continued, “And as for the sexual act, I can have secret fellows — male prostitutes — with backs worth ten of him, and these male fellows shall please me, now that the land has fled, a myriad better than him.”

A strong back is a sign of a good lover.

Quintus Curius’ land had metaphorically fled from him because he had sold his land and spent the money.

Fulvia was a woman who looked at a lover and thought, *How much money does he have left?*

Sempronia said, “And one may command those secret fellows.”

“That is true,” Flavia said. “These lordings, these petty lords, your noble fauns, they are so imperious, saucy, and rude, and as boisterous and savage as Centaurs, leaping sexually on and mounting a lady at first sight.”

Fauns were notably horny minor gods.

Centaurs sometimes became drunk and unable to control their lust. The Centaur Eurytion got drunk at a wedding while visiting the Lapiths and tried to rape the bride but was stopped and punished.

Sempronia said, “And they must be borne both with and out, they think. They think they must be both put up with and humored.”

One now obsolete meaning of “to bear out” is “to praise publicly” and “to claim that one has accomplished something.”

The lovers expected themselves and their love-making to be praised.

Fulvia said, “Tut, I’ll pay attention to none of them all, nor humor them a jot longer than they come laden in the hand and say, ‘Here’s the one for the other.’”

In other words: Here’s the money for the sex. The men, however, would probably not say this so crudely but would use less business-like language.

“Does Caesar give well?” Sempronia asked.

“They who come here shall all give and pay well, if they will have it — sex,” Fulvia said. “And they will need jewels, pearl, gold and silver vessels and utensils, or round sums — plenty of money — to buy these sexual favors. I am not taken with a male swan, or a high-mounting bull, as foolish Leda and Europa were, but with the bright gold, as Danaë was.”

Jupiter, king of the gods, disguised himself as a male swan so he could sleep with Leda, and he disguised himself as a bull so he could carry Europa on his back from Crete to Europe and sleep with her there. To seduce Danaë, Jupiter appeared before her as a rain of bright gold.

Fulvia continued, “For such a price, I would endure a rough, harsh Jupiter, or ten such thundering and vehement amorous gamesters, and refrain from laughing at them until they are gone, with my much tolerating them.”

For bright gold, Fulvia would tolerate rough sex or a gangbang. She also would not laugh in their faces at them for parting with valuables in return for a little sexual excitement — she would laugh after they left.

Sempronia said, “Thou are a most happy wench, who thus can make use of thy youth and freshness in their season and have it to make use of.”

Fulvia said to herself, “Which is the happiness.”

Sempronia said, "I am now glad to give money to them and to keep music and a continual table to invite them to."

Fulvia said to herself, "Yes, and they study your kitchen more than you."

Sempronia continued, "I metaphorically eat myself and literally ruin myself with borrowing money at usurious interest rates, and I ruin my lord and husband, too, and all my domestic servants and friends besides, in order to procure money for the needful and necessary expenses I must be at to have young lovers; and yet, I scarcely can get young lovers even so."

Fulvia said, "Why, that's because you fancy young faces only, and smooth chins, Sempronia. If you'd love beards and bristles, one with another, as others do, or wrinkles —"

She was interrupted by knocking at the door.

"Who's that?" she said. "Go and find out, Galla."

Galla investigated and said, "It is the party, madam."

"What party?" Fulvia asked. "Has he no name?"

"It is Quintus Curius," Galla said.

"Didn't I tell my servants to say that I kept to my chamber?" Fulvia said.

"Why, so they do," Galla said.

Quintus Curius was insisting on seeing Fulvia.

"I'll leave you, Fulvia," Sempronia said.

"Nay, good Sempronia, stay," Fulvia said.

"In faith, I will not," Sempronia replied.

"By Juno, I don't want to see him," Fulvia said.

“I’ll not hinder you,” Sempronia said.

“You know he will not be kept out, madam,” Galla said.

“No, he shall not be kept out, careful Galla, by my intervention,” Sempronia said.

She wanted Curius and Fulvia to meet. It amused her.

Fulvia said, “As I do live, Sempronia —”

Sempronia interrupted, “— what is the need of this?”

Fulvia ordered Galla, “Go, say I am asleep and ill at ease.”

Sempronia said:

“By Castor, no. I’ll tell him that you are awake and you are very well.

“Stay here, Galla.

“Farewell, Fulvia. I know my manners. Why do you labor like this, acting against your real wishes?”

She called, “Quintus Curius, she is, indeed, here, and in good disposition.”

She meant that Fulvia was able to see Curius and she was in a good mood.

Sempronia then exited.

“Spite with your courtesy!” Fulvia said. “How I shall be tortured!”

Curius entered the room.

He said, “Where are you, pretty one, who conceal yourself and keep your beauty within locks and bars here, like a fool’s treasure?”

“True, she was a fool, when first she showed her treasure to a thief,” Fulvia said.

“What, pretty sullenness!” Curius said. “So harsh, and short?”

“The Fool’s artillery, sir,” Fulvia replied.

In other words, words are the Fool’s weapons.

In Ben Jonson’s day, Fools, aka jesters, were highly regarded.

“Then take my gown off, for the encounter,” Curius said.

He began to take his gown — a man’s outer garment — off.

An encounter can be 1) an amorous encounter, or 2) a military encounter.

“Stop, sir,” Fulvia said. “I am not in the mood.”

“I’ll put you in the mood,” Curius said.

“Best put yourself in your case again —” Fulvia said

By “case,” she meant his gown or cover; however, the word “case” also meant vagina, so her sentence had the unintentional meaning of telling him to have sex with her.

She continued, “— and keep your furious — extravagant and foolish — appetite warm, in preparation for when you have place for it.”

“What!” Curius said. “Do you pretend to be shy?”

“No, sir. I am not proud,” Fulvia said.

This kind of pride is “sexually aroused.” It is a now-obsolete meaning of the word “proud.”

“I wish you were proud,” Curius said. “You think this state becomes you? By Hercules, it does not.”

He showed her the mirror that Galla had earlier brought and said, "Look in your mirror now, and see how scurvily that countenance shows. You would be loath to own it."

"I shall not change it," Fulvia said.

"Indeed, but you must, and relax this bended brow and stop frowning, and you must shoot from your eyes less scorn at me," Curius said. "There is a Fortune coming towards you, dainty, that will take you thus" — he attempted to embrace her — "and set you aloft, to tread upon the head of Lady Fortune's own statue here in Rome."

He was predicting great things for her. She would be so fortunate that she could stand on Lady Fortune's head.

"I wonder who let this promiser in!" Fulvia said.

She asked Galla, "Did you, good diligence? Give him his bribe again."

Lovers would often bribe household servants to gain access to the beloved — or to the sexual object.

Fulvia continued, "Or if you had none, I ask you to demand from him why he is so bold to press thus to my chamber, despite being forbidden both by myself and my servants?"

"What!" Curius said. "This is handsome! And somewhat a new strain — tone — of expression!"

When he gave her expensive gifts, she talked to him with a much different tone of voice.

"My tone of voice is not strained, sir," Fulvia said. "It is not forced, and it is not artificial. It is very natural."

"I have known it otherwise between the parties, though," Curius said.

And between the sheets.



“For your knowledge of what has happened before, thank that which made it,” Fulvia said. “It will not be so hereafter, I assure you.”

What happened before? Sex.

What made it happen? Expensive gifts.

“No, my mistress?” Curius said.

“No, though you bring the same materials — the same gifts,” Fulvia said.

She knew he had no gifts to give her.

“Listen to me,” Curius said. “You over-react now when you should show restraint. Recall a little and remember yourself again and think. If you are doing this to trick me or find at what forced distance you can hold your servant — your lover — so that it is an artificial trick, to greater inflame and fire me with desire, fearing my love may need it — as heretofore you have done — why, proceed.”

Curius thought that Fulvia might be withholding sex from him in order to inflame his lust all the more.

“As I have done heretofore?” Fulvia asked.

Curius answered, “Yes, when you’d feign your husband’s jealousy, when your servants were keeping guard and watching you, and when you’d speak softly and run often to the door or to the window and form strange fears that were not necessary — doing all these things as if the pleasure were less acceptable when it was secure and free from fear of discovery.”

The possibility of being discovered in the act can thrill some people.

“You are an impudent fellow,” Fulvia said.

“And, when you might better have done it at the gate,” Curius said, “but instead you took me in at the casement.”

They could very well have had sex outside, but Fulvia would let him in through a window.

According to Curius, Fulvia’s husband did not mind Fulvia’s affairs, and so they could very well have sex in the garden, but Fulvia preferred pretending that they had to be careful when having sex so that her husband would not find out.

“I take you in?” Fulvia said.

“Yes, you, my lady,” Curius said. “And then, when I was in bed with you, you would have your well-taught waiting-woman and look-out here” — he pointed to Galla — “come running and cry, ‘Her lord!’ and hide me without cause, crushed in a chest, or thrust up in a chimney. This happened even when he, her husband, that tame crow, was not even present and was instead napping at his farm, or, if he had been here and present, he would have kept both eyes and beak sealed up for six sesterces.”

A sesterce is a coin of little worth.

Fulvia said, “You have a slanderous, beastly, unwashed tongue in your rude mouth, and your tongue is tasting of yourself, you unmannered lord.”

“What is this now!” Curius said.

“It is your title, sir,” Fulvia said, “who, since you have lost your own good name, and know not what to lose more, don’t care whose honor you wound or whose reputation you poison with it.”

Curius had been thrown out of the Senate a few years earlier because of immoral conduct.

Fulvia continued, “You should go and vent yourself in the region where you live: among the suburb-brothels, bawds, and pimps, to which place your broken fortunes have designated and consigned you.”

To. “vent himself” meant to “discharge himself.” He could be discharging semen there.

“Nay, then I must stop your fury, I see, and pluck the tragic mask off,” Curius said.

In ancient drama, actors wore masks. Curius thought that Fulvia was putting on an act.

He now called Fulvia lady Cyprus, a reference to Venus, one of whose major cult centers was located on the island of Cyprus: “Come, lady Cyprus, know your own virtues, quickly.”

According to Curius, Fulvia’s virtues lay in having sex, not in being a drama queen.

Curius continued, “I’ll not be put to the wooing of you thus, afresh at every turn, for all the Venus in you. Yield and be pliant, or by Pollux —”

He drew his dagger and attempted to force her to have sex, but she drew a knife.

Seeing her knife, he said, “What is this now? Will Lais turn into a Lucrece?”

Lais of Corinth and Lais of Hyccara were two famous courtesans.

Lucrece was a Roman woman who was raped by Sextus Tarquinian and then committed suicide. Sextus Tarquinian was the son of the King of Rome, Lucius Tarquinius Superbus. Because of the rape and subsequent suicide, the

Romans drove the king and his family out of Rome and formed a republic.

Fulvia differed from Lucrece in that Lucrece stabbed herself with her knife, and Fulvia was prepared to stab Curius.

“No,” Fulvia said, “but by Castor, hold off your rapist’s hands! I will pierce your heart if you don’t. I’ll not be put to kill myself, as she did, for you, sweet Tarquin.”

Curius began to retreat.

Fulvia said, “What! Do you fall off? Nay, it becomes you graciously. Put not up.”

To “fall off” meant 1) to withdraw, and 2) to lose one’s erection.

“Put not up” meant 1) Don’t put your sword or dagger in its sheath, and 2) Don’t put your “sword” or “dagger” in my vagina. The Latin word *vagina* means “sheath.”

The word “weapon” can mean “penis.”

She continued, “You’ll sooner draw your weapon on me, I think, than on the Senate, who have cast you forth disgracefully, to be the common tale of the whole city, you base, infamous man!”

A common tale is the subject of much gossip.

A common tail can be a publicly available penis.

Curius had been thrown out of the Senate because of his immorality.

Fulvia continued, “For, if you were a different man, you would there employ your desperate dagger!”

The “dagger” that he would draw on Fulvia was his penis. But according to Fulvia, if Curius were a different kind of

man, the dagger that he would draw on the Senate would be a real dagger.

Putting up his dagger, Curius said, "Fulvia, you know the strengths — the superior powers — you have upon me. Do not use your power too like a tyrant; I can bear almost until you break me."

He could bear her — put up with her — almost until she broke him.

"I do know, sir," Fulvia said. "So does the Senate, too, know you can bear."

Curius had to bear the infamy of being thrown out of the Senate because of his immorality.

"By all the gods, the Senate will smart deeply for your upbraidings," Curius said. "If I were you, I should be very sorry if I — Curius — were to have the means so to be avenged on you — at least the will — as I shall shortly on them. But go on still. Continue. Fare you well, dear lady. You could not still be fair unless you were proud. You will repent these moods, and before long, too. I shall have you come about and change direction again."

Curius hoped to become a rich and powerful man after the revolution against the Senate. If that happened, Fulvia would change her opinion about him.

"Do you think so?" Fulvia asked.

"Yes, and I know so," Curius said.

"By what augury?" Fulvia asked.

"By the fair entrails of the matrons' chests — their treasure-chests — which are gold, pearls, and jewels here in Rome, which Fulvia will then, but too late, say that she might have shared, and, grieving, miss," Curius said.

She would miss out on the wealth that Curius would have after the revolution succeeded.

Fulvia began, “Tut, all your promised mountains and seas, I am so stalely and tediously acquainted with —”

Because Curius could no longer afford to give her valuable gifts, he had begun to promise her great things — figurative mountains and seas.

Curius interrupted, “— but when you see the universal flood run by your coffers; when you see that my lords, the Senators, are sold for slaves, their wives sold for slave-women, their houses and fine gardens given away, and all their goods put under the spear and auctioned in public with loud cries, and you see that you have none of this, but are still Fulvia, or perhaps less, while you are thinking of it. You will advise then, Miss Coyness, with your cushion — you will talk to your pillow — and look on your fingers and say how you were wished for, desired, and invited — and so he left you.”

She would look at her fingers and imagine the valuable rings that could be adorning them if she had continued to be Curius’ mistress.

Curius exited.

“Call him back again, Galla,” Fulvia said.

Galla exited.

Fulvia said to herself, “This is not usual; something hangs on this that I must win out of him. Yes, something is going on, and I need to get him to tell me what it is.”

Curius returned.

“How are you now?” Curius asked. “Do you melt?”

“Come, will you laugh now at my easiness?” Fulvia said. “But it is no miracle: Doves, they say, will bill — kiss — after their pecking and their murmuring.”

“Yes, and then it is kindly and natural between them,” Curius said. “I would have my love angry sometimes, to make the rest of her behavior sweeter by contrast.”

“You do see, then, that I study how I may please you,” Fulvia said. “But do you think, Curius, that it is covetousness that has made me change my mind? If you love me, change that unkind thought.”

“By my loved soul, I love you like I love my soul,” Curius said, “and it is my study, more than my own revenge, to make you happy.”

The revenge was against the Senate for exposing him.

“And it is that just revenge that makes me happy to hear you strive after it — and which, indeed, has won me to you, more than all the hope of what else can be promised,” Fulvia said. “I love valor better than any lady loves her face or clothing — than I myself do. Let me become rooted always where I do embrace. But what good means have you to effect it? Shall I know your project?”

“You shall, if you’ll be gracious and give me your favors,” Curius said.

“I will be as gracious as I can be,” Fulvia said.

“And will you kiss me then?” Curius asked.

“As closely as the shells of cockles — mollusks — meet,” Fulvia said.

“And print them deep?” Curius asked.

Would she kiss him hard?

“Quite through our subtle, delicate lips,” Fulvia answered.

“And often?” Curius asked.

“I will sow kisses, faster than you can reap them,” Fulvia said. “What is your plot?”

“Why, now my Fulvia looks like her bright name, and she is herself!” Curius said.

The Latin word *fulvus* (feminine form *fulva*) means gold-colored.

“Nay, answer me: What is your plot?” Fulvia said. “I request that you tell me, Quintus.”

“Aye, these sounds become a mistress,” Quintus Curius said.

She kissed and flattered him as he spoke.

Curius continued, “Here is harmony! When you are harsh, I see, the way to bend you is not with violence, but instead with service and compliance. Cruel, a lady is a fire; gentle, a lady is a light.”

“Won’t you tell me what I ask you?” Fulvia asked.

“All that I can think, sweet love, or that my breast holds, I’ll pour into you,” Curius said.

“What is your design — plan — then?” Fulvia asked.

“I’ll tell you,” Curius said. “Catiline shall now be Consul. But you will hear more, shortly.”

Fulvia said, “Nay, dear love —”

“I’ll tell you while I am in your arms,” Curius said. “Let us go into your bedchamber. Rome will be sacked; her wealth will be our prize. By public ruin, private spirits — men of courage — must rise.”



“Spirit” can metaphorically mean semen, and “must rise” can refer to an erection. “Public ruin” can mean the loss of a woman’s reputation.

Curius and Fulvia exited to go to bed together.

## CHORUS (End of ACT 2) (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)

Catiline and his co-conspirators wanted him to be elected Consul so that they could gain power and loot the city.

The Chorus, however, appeared now and spoke about the need for good government. He also mentioned what the qualities of a good Consul would be.

The Chorus began by praying to Mars, god of war, and to Jupiter, king of the gods:

*Great father Mars, and greater Jove,*

*By whose high auspices [divine protection] Rome hath [has] stood*

*So long, and first was built in blood*

*Of your great nephew [nephew = descendant; Remus was Mars' son and Jupiter's grandson], that [who] then strove*

*Not with his brother but your rites:*

Romulus and Remus, twin brothers, took auspices to determine after whom the city they were building should be named. The auspices said that the city should be named Rome after Romulus. Remus disagreed with the auspices, the two brothers fought, and Romulus killed Remus.

The Chorus next spoke about the election then occurring and prayed that the right kind of Romans — ones who cared about Rome — be elected Consuls:

*Be present to her now, as then,*

*And let not proud and factious men*

*Against your wills oppose their might.*

*Our Consuls now are to be made:*

*Oh, put it in the public voice  
To make a free and worthy choice,  
Excluding such [e.g. Catiline] as would invade [attack]  
The commonwealth. Let whom we name  
Have wisdom, foresight, fortitude,  
Be more with faith than face [pretense, effrontery] endowed  
[endowed],  
And study conscience above fame.*

The Chorus named other good qualities of men who should be elected Consul. Let these men be:

*Such as not seek to get the start [gain the political  
advantage]  
In state by power, parts [possessions, or factions], or bribes,  
Ambition's bawds, but move the tribes  
By virtue, modesty, desert.  
Such as to justice will adhere,  
Whatever great one it offend,  
And from th' [the] embraced truth not bend  
For envy, hatred, gifts, or fear.  
That [Who] by their deeds will make it known  
Whose dignity they do sustain,  
And life, state, glory, all they gain  
Count [They account, aka regard as] the Republic's, not  
their own.*

The Chorus mentioned some Roman families who had served Rome well:

*Such the old Bruti, Decii were,  
The Cipi, Curtii, who did give  
Themselves for Rome and would not live  
As men good only for a year [the year of their Consulship].  
Such were the great Camilli, too,  
The Fabii, Scipios, that [who] still [always] thought  
No work at price enough [too high a cost] was bought  
That for their country they could do.  
And to her honor so did knit [grow together]  
As all their acts were understood  
The sinews of the public good,  
And they themselves one soul with it.  
These men were truly magistrates;  
These [These men] neither practiced force [violence] nor  
forms [manipulation of the political rules],  
Nor did they leave the helm in storms;  
And such [men as] they are make happy states.*

The Chorus had referred to many famous Roman families in his speech. These are some of the members of those families:

L. Junius Brutus led the Romans when they deposed the last of the Roman kings and started the Roman Republic.

Publius Decius Mus and his son and grandson, each having the same name as his, saved Rome by fighting well and sacrificing themselves in battle.

Genucius Cipus. According to legend, when Cipus was leaving Rome, horns grew on his head. Soothsayers said that this meant that Cipus would become king when he returned to Rome. Rather than become king, Cipus voluntarily exiled himself. Cipus, a legendary figure, was a Praetor. He declined to become king because he did not want to end the Roman Republic, believing that Romans who served a king would be no better than slaves.

Marcus Curtius saved Rome by sacrificing himself. In 362 B.C.E., a chasm opened in the Roman Forum and could not be filled in. Soothsayers said that the only way the chasm could be closed was by the sacrifice of what was most valuable in Rome. Marcus Curtius, a young soldier, said that the most valuable possession of Rome was the courage of its citizens, and he rode his horse directly into the chasm, which closed behind him.

M. Furius Camillus went into voluntary exile after being falsely accused of embezzlement. After the Gauls sacked Rome, the Romans recalled him and he led the Romans to military victory over their enemy.

Quintus Maximus Fabius Rullianus attacked and defeated the Samnites against the orders of his superiors.

Quintus Maximus Fabius Cunctator (the above's great-grandson) minimized the damage that the great Carthaginian general Hannibal did in Italy through a tactic of delaying. He harassed Hannibal's army but did not meet it in open battle. *Cunctator* is Latin for "the Delayer."

Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus fought bravely in the Second Punic War and defeated Hannibal by taking the war

to Carthage and forcing Hannibal to leave Italy and fight the Romans in Africa.

His adoptive grandson, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus Aemilianus, conquered and destroyed Carthage in the Third Punic War.

## ACT 3 (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)

### — 3.1 —

The results of the election were in.

Catiline had failed to become Consul; instead, Cicero had just been elected Consul, along with Antonius. Catiline and the co-conspirators were shocked by the results of the election.

Cicero, Cato, Catulus, Antonius, Crassus, Julius Caesar, the Chorus, some citizens, and some Lictors stood together following the election. The Lictors served the Consuls and carried the fasces: symbols of the Consul's power.

Cicero now began his victory speech:

“Great honors are great burdens; and when they are cast with opprobrium and odium on a man, that man bears two loads. His cares must always be double to his joys in any dignity where, if he would err, he finds no pardon and, for doing well, a very small praise, and that wrung out by force.

“I speak this, Romans, knowing what the weight of the high responsibility and position you have trusted to me is.

“Not that thereby I would wish to appear to undervalue the goodness or greatness of your benefit, for I ascribe it to your singular grace and favor and vow to owe it to no other cause or entitlement, except the gods, that I, Cicero, am your Consul.

“I have no funeral-urns containing the ashes of my ancestors, no dusty ancestral monuments, no broken images of ancestors lacking an ear or nose, no forged tables of long descents from ancestors, to boast false honors from or be my sureties to your trust.

“I am only a new man — as I am styled in Rome — whom you have dignified and, more, in whom you’ve cut a way, and left it open for virtue — excellence — hereafter, to that place which our great men held shut up, with all ramparts, for themselves.”

The word “hereafter” showed that Cicero believed that he had set a precedent for more Consuls who were well qualified for high office because of their excellence, although they lacked great ancestors.

Cicero continued:

“Nor have but few of them — those well qualified for high office because of their excellence — in the past been made your Consuls; new men, before me, none.

“At my first candidacy, in my just year, preferred to all competitors, and some the noblest —”

Cicero’s just year was the year in which he first became eligible to be a candidate for Consul: the year he turned forty-three years old.

Catiline, whom Cicero had defeated in the election, came from one of Rome’s noblest families.

Crassus whispered to Julius Caesar, “Now the vein — the style of rhetoric — swells.”

Crassus was also punning on the word “vein.” He believed that Cicero was vain.

Caesar said to Crassus, “Up glory!”

Caesar expected Cicero to glory in his victory.

Cicero continued:

“— and to have your loud consents from your own uttered voices, not silent voting tablets in the secret ballot, nor votes



from the meaner tribes. Your loud consents have elected me Consul, but first and last, the universal concourse has elected me Consul: All of Rome's social classes supported me and elected me Consul.

“This is my joy, my gladness.”

The votes had actually been cast by writing a candidate's name on a tablet in a secret ballot, but Cicero was stressing the vocal acclaim that the people — including high-born people — had made when he was announced as a winner of one of the two Consul positions.

Cicero was also stressing the vocal acclaim of the Senators and the upper class, whose votes counted more than the votes from the meaner tribes. Often the winner of the election was known before the meaner tribes voted.

Of course, not everyone acclaimed Cicero's victory. Catiline and his supporters did not.

Cicero continued:

“But my care, my industry, and my vigilance now must work, so that always your opinions about me will be approved both by yourselves and by those candidates whom you have rejected and over whom you have preferred me.

“Two things I must labor for: That they who lost the election do not upbraid you and that you do not repent your vote.

“For every lapse of mine will now be called your error, if I make such lapses. But my hope is so to bear myself throughout my Consulship that spite shall never wound you, although it may wound me.

“And for myself I have prepared this strength to act so well as Consul that if evil should happen to me, it shall make the gods to blush, and it shall be their crime, not mine, that I am regarded with ill-will.”

Caesar said to himself, “Oh, confidence, newer than is the man!”

Cicero continued:

“I know well in what terms I do receive the commonwealth, how vexed, how perplexed, in which there’s not that evil or ill fate that good men fear not and wicked men expect not.”

He meant that the evil currently in the commonwealth was evil that good men fear and bad men expect.

Cicero continued:

“I know, besides, that some turbulent conspiracies are already on foot, and rumors of more dangers —”

Crassus said quietly, “Or you will make them, if there are none.”

Crassus believed that Cicero would make up a conspiracy if there were none so that he could “save” Rome from it. A Consul can’t be a hero unless there’s something to be heroic about.

Cicero finished his speech:

“Last, I know it was this which made the envy and pride of the great Roman blood abate and give way to my election.”

Cato, one of Marcus Tullius Cicero’s supporters, said, “Marcus Tullius, that is true: Our need made you our Consul, and your virtue also made you our Consul.”

Caesar whispered, “Cato, you will undo and ruin him with your praise.”

Cato whispered back, “Caesar will hurt himself with his own envy.”

The Chorus said, “The voice of Cato is the voice of Rome.”

A Latin proverb stated, “*Vox populi, vox dei.*” It means, “The voice of the people [is] the voice of God.”

“The voice of Rome is the consent of heaven!” Cato said. “And that has placed you, Cicero, at the helm, where now you must show yourself a man and master of your art. Each petty hand on deck can steer a becalmed ship —”

Cato meant that any low-ranking sailor could steer a ship in a calm sea.

He continued, “— but he who will steer and carry her to her destinations must know his tides, know his currents, know how to shift his sails, know what she will bear in foul weathers and what she will bear in fair weathers, know where breaches are caused by planks splitting, know her leaks and how to stop them. He must know what sandbanks, what ledges in the sea, what rocks do threaten her. He must know the forces and the natures of all winds, gusts, storms, and tempests. He must know when her keel plows hell and her deck knocks heaven. Knowing how to manage her — the ship — in all these situations befits the name and office of a pilot.”

Cicero said:

“All of this care of the state I’ll perform, with all the diligence and fortitude I have, not just for my year as Consul but for my life — unless my life be short, and my year as Consul concludes it.

“If my life must be short, let your will be done, beloved gods. This heart shall yet employ a day, an hour that is left me so for Rome’s benefit as it shall make a life spring out of my death to shine forever glorious in my deeds.

“The vicious count their years; the virtuous count their acts.”

Cicero wanted to count out his life not by the days he had lived, but by the good and notable deeds he had done.

“Most noble Consul!” the Chorus said. “Let us escort him home!”

Cato, Cicero, the Lictors, the citizens, and the Chorus exited.

“A very popular — demagogic — Consul he has grown, I think!” Caesar said.

“How the mob of people clings to him!” Crassus said.

“And Cato leads them!” Caesar said.

Crassus said to Antonius, “You, his colleague, Antonius, are not looked on. No one is paying any attention to you.”

Antonius had been elected the other Consul, and he would serve with Cicero.

“No attention is given to me, nor do I care,” Antonius said.

Caesar said, “He — I mean you, Antonius — enjoys rest and ease the while. Let the other Consul’s — Cicero’s — spirit toil and stay awake for it was created for turmoil.”

Catulus said, “Yet, if all the reports are true, Caius Caesar, the time has need of such a watch and spirit.”

Caesar said:

“Reports? Do you believe them, Catulus? Why, Cicero makes and breeds them for the people, to endear his service to them. Don’t you perceive a trick that is so common? Popular men must create strange monsters and then quell them, to make their arts — professional skills — seem something.

“Would you have such a Herculean actor in the scene, and not his Hydra? They must sweat no less to supply their theatrical properties than to express their parts.”

A Hydra was a monster that Hercules killed as one of his famous labors. It had nine heads, one of which was immortal. If a mortal head was cut off, two heads grew in its place. Hercules defeated the Hydra by having a nephew cauterize the places where mortal heads grew so that new heads would not grow in their place and by putting a boulder on the immortal head.

“Treasons and guilty men are made in states too often to dignify the magistrates,” Crassus said.

“Those states are wretched that are forced to buy their rulers’ reputation with their own infamy,” Catulus said.

A bad leader could get a reputation as a hero by creating an enemy and then defeating that enemy. For example, a bad leader could pit white-skinned people versus brown- and black-skinned people and then suppress the people who have brown or black skin.

Crassus and Caesar were saying that Cicero could make himself a hero by pretending that a treasonous plot had been laid; Cicero would be a hero if people believed he stopped that nonexistent plot.

“We therefore should take precautions that ours do not,” Crassus said.

“Antonius will make that his concern,” Caesar said.

“I shall,” Antonius said.

“And watch the watcher,” Caesar said.

Walking slowly, Catiline, Longinus, and Lentulus approached the group.

“Here comes Catiline,” Catulus said. “How does he take his recent loss in the election?”

“I don’t know,” Caesar said. “But painfully, to be sure.”

“Longinus, too, did stand as a candidate for Consul?” Catulus asked.

“At first,” Caesar said. “But he gave way to his friend.”

Longinus stepped aside in the election in an attempt to have his voters vote for Catiline instead.

“Who’s that coming?” Catulus asked. “Lentulus?”

“Yes,” Caesar said. “He is again taken into the Senate.”

In 70 B.C.E., the Censors threw Lentulus and Curius out of the Senate because of Lentulus’ and Curius’ immorality. Now Lentulus was again in the Senate.

“And he was made Praetor,” Antonius said.

Praetor was a high office, second only to Consul. Lentulus had been elected one of the new Praetors.

“I know it,” Catulus said. “He had my vote, immediately after the Consuls voted.”

“True, you were there, Prince of the Senate — the Senior Senator — then,” Caesar said.

Catulus was *Princeps Senatus*, a position that allowed him to vote after the Consuls. The position had no *imperium*, or power, but having the title was a great honor. In prestige, Catulus ranked just below the Consuls.

Catiline, Longinus, and Lentulus joined the others.

“Hail, noblest Romans!” Catiline said.

He said to Antonius, “The worthiest Consul, I congratulate your honor.”

Grammatically, the sentence can be construed as saying that Catiline was the worthiest Consul. “The worthiest Consul” could modify “I.” Or it could be in the vocative case and refer to Antonius.

“I could wish that it had been happier by your fellowship, most noble Sergius, had it pleased the people,” Antonius said to Catiline.

Antonius and Cicero, but not Sergius Catiline, had been elected Consul.

Lucius Sergius Catiline said, “It did not please the gods, who instruct the people, and their unquestioned pleasures must be served. They know what’s fitter for us than ourselves, and it would be impiety to think against them.”

“You bear it rightly, Lucius,” Catulus said to Catiline, “and it gladdens me to find your thoughts so even and calm.”

Catiline replied, “I shall always study to make them such — even and calm — to Rome and heaven.”

“Even” can mean 1) peaceful, or 2) equal. Catiline wanted to equal — rival — the gods. He also wanted to be equal — even — to the gods.

He also wanted to make his thoughts even in the sense of getting even with — getting revenge on — Rome and the gods.

Catiline whispered to Julius Caesar, “I would withdraw with you and speak to you a little, Julius.”

Caesar whispered back, “I’ll come to your home.”

He added, “Crassus would not have you speak to him in front of Quintus Catulus.”

Catiline whispered to Caesar, “I understand.”

Quintus Catulus had quarreled with Crassus. The two men has held the position of Censor together, but Catulus had resigned because he could not get along with Crassus.

Catiline then said to everyone present, “No, when the gods shall judge honors are suitable for me, I shall have them bountifully and with a full hand, I know it. In the meantime, men who obey are no less part of the commonwealth than those who command.”

“Oh, let me kiss your forehead, Lucius,” Catulus said. “How you are wronged!”

“By whom?” Lucius Sergius Catiline asked.

“By the public report, which gives out that you take offense at your repulse, and brook — endure — it deadly.”

The repulse was not being elected Consul.

Catiline said, “Sir, she — *fama*, public report — brooks not me. Instead, believe me, and believe yourself now that you see me. It is a kind of slander to trust rumor.”

“I know it,” Catulus said. “And I could be angry with it.”

“So may not I,” Catiline said. “Where it concerns himself, who’s angry at a slander makes it true.”

Being angry at a slander about oneself can make other people believe that the slander is true.

“Most noble Sergius!” Catulus said. “This equanimity of yours melts me.”

Crassus said to Quintus Catulus, “Will you render due respect to the Consul, Quintus?”



He was referring to Antonius, who had been elected Consul along with Cicero.

“The due respect that Cato and the rout have done to the other Consul: Cicero?” Caesar asked.

Catulus said, “I wait until he will go.”

He then said to Catiline, “Be always yourself. He who has virtue lacks no personal standing.”

Catulus, Antonius, Caesar, Crassus, and the Lictors exited.

Catiline said to himself, “Did I appear to be as tame as this man thinks me? Did I look so poor, so dead? Did I look so like that nothing that he calls virtuous? Oh, my breast, break quickly, and show my friends my inward thoughts, lest they think that I have betrayed them.”

“Where’s Gabinius?” Longinus asked.

“Gone,” Lentulus answered.

“And Vargunteius?” Longinus asked.

“Slipped away, all shrunk now that Catiline has missed the Consulship,” Lentulus answered.

Catiline said to himself, “I am the scorn of bondmen — slaves — who are next to beasts. What can I worse declare myself that’s fitter? What worse thing can I say about myself? I am the owl of Rome whom boys and girls will mock and hoot at! Or I could say that, if I were set up in the place of that wooden god — Priapus — that keeps our gardens as a scarecrow, I could not frighten the crows or the least bird enough to keep them from excreting on my head.”

Longinus and Lentulus continued to speak privately to each other, not listening to Catiline.

“It is strange that Catiline could miss being voted Consul,” Longinus said.

“Isn’t it stranger that the upstart Cicero should carry the votes so, by all consents, from men who are so much his masters?” Lentulus said.

“That’s true,” Longinus said.

Catiline said to himself, “To what a shadow am I melted!”

“Antonius won it by only a few votes,” Longinus said.

Catiline said to himself, “I have been struck through, as if I were air, and feel it not. My wounds close faster than they’re made.”

“The whole design — the whole enterprise — has been lost by Catiline’s loss in the election,” Lentulus said. “All hands quit it upon his failure.”

Catiline said to himself, “I grow mad at my patience. It is a visor — mask or helmet — that has poisoned me. I wish that it had burned me up and I died inward, with my heart turned to ashes.”

Cethegus entered the scene and walked over to Catiline to join him privately.

“Here’s Cethegus yet,” Longinus said. He began to pay attention to Catiline.

Catiline said, too loudly, “Repulse upon repulse! An inmate — a new lodger in Rome — elected Consul! I wish that I could reach the axle where the pins are that bolt this frame, so that I might pull them out and pluck all into chaos, with myself!”

The word “axle” also means axis. This society believed that the Earth had an axis passing through it. Catiline wanted to

remove the pins holding the axis steady and let the Earth plunge into chaos.

“What! Are we wishing now?” Cethegus said, hearing Catiline’s words.

“Yes, my Cethegus,” Catiline said. “Who would not fall with all the world about him?”

If Catiline was going to fall, he wanted to take the entire world with him.

“Not I,” Cethegus said. “I would stand on the world when it falls and force new nature out, to make another. These wishings are those of a woman, not of a Roman. Let us seek other arms — another form of attack.”

The plan to make Catiline a powerful Consul had failed, so now Cethegus wanted to make a new plan.

“What should we do?” Catiline asked.

“We should do, and not wish,” Cethegus said. “Something that wishes cannot perform so suddenly that the gods could not anticipate and forestall it and scarcely have time to fear it.”

“Oh, noble Caius!” Catiline said.

“It pleases me better that you are not Consul,” Cethegus said. “I would not go through open doors; instead, I would break them. I would swim to my ends and accomplish my ends through blood; or I would build a bridge of carcasses and proceed upon the heads of men struck down like piles supporting a bridge, to reach the lives of those who remain and stand. It is then a prey, when danger stops and obstructs and destruction clears the way.”

“How you give voice to my feelings, brave soul,” Catiline said. “I may not at all times show myself as I really am, for I bend and conceal according to the occasion.”

Catiline and Cethegus joined Lentulus and Longinus.

Catiline pointed to Cethegus and said, “Lentulus, this man, if all our fire were out, would fetch down new fire out of the hand of Jove, and rivet Jove to Mount Caucasus, should Jove but frown, and let his own gaunt, ravenous eagle fly at him, to tear his flesh.”

Prometheus had stolen fire and taught Humankind to master it. To punish Prometheus, Jupiter, aka Jove, chained him to Mount Caucasus and each day sent an eagle to devour his liver, which grew back each night so the eagle could devour it again the following day.

Cato entered the scene. Cato supported Cicero, not Catiline.

“Peace! Silence! Here comes Cato,” Lentulus said.

He did not want Cato to hear Catiline’s words.

“Let him come and hear,” Catiline said. “I will no more dissemble and pretend to be that which I am not. All of you, leave us. Everyone except Cethegus leave now. I and my beloved Cethegus here alone will undertake this giants’ war, and we will carry — win — it.”

The giants — the Titans — fought a war against the Olympian gods, but the giants lost the war.

Lentulus and Longinus declined to leave.

“What is the necessity of this?” Lentulus asked.

“Lucius? Sergius, be more wary,” Longinus advised Lucius Sergius Catiline.

Ignoring Lentulus and Longinus, Catiline said, “Now, Marcus Cato, our new Consul’s spy, what has your sour austerity been sent to explore?”

“Nothing in you, licentious Catiline,” Cato said. “Nooses and racks — instruments of torture — cannot wring from you more than your bad deeds have already revealed. It is only judgment that awaits you.”

In other words, Catiline’s deeds had already proven his guilt. Now all that remained to do was to punish Catiline.

“Whose judgment? Cato’s? Shall he judge me?” Catiline asked.

“No, the judgment of the gods, who forever follow — pursue — those they don’t go with as benefactors. And the judgment of the Senate, who with fire must purge sick Rome of noisome, unwholesome, harmful citizens, of whom you are one. Be gone, or else I will go. It is poison to breathe the same air with you.”

“Strike him!” Caius Cethegus said, drawing his sword.

“Stop, good Caius!” Lentulus said.

“Aren’t you afraid, Cato?” Cethegus said.

“Rash Cethegus, no,” Cato said. “Something would be wrong with Rome, when Catiline and you threaten, if Cato was afraid.”

Cato had spoken of using fire to purge Rome’s illness by getting rid of bad citizens.

“The fire you speak of — if any flame of it would approach my fortunes, I’ll quench it, not with water but with ruin,” Catiline said.

One way to stop a house fire from spreading was to demolish the houses around it.

“You hear this, Romans,” Cato said.

He exited.

“Bear it to the Consul,” Catiline yelled after Cato.

He meant: Carry my words to Cicero.

“I would have sent away his soul before him,” Cethegus said. “I would have killed him instead of letting him leave. You are too sluggish, Lentulus, and remiss. It is for you we labor, and the kingdom promised to you by the Sibyls.”

The Sibylline prophecy — as interpreted by augurs whom Catiline had bribed — had stated that Lentulus would become King of Rome.

Catiline said, “A kingdom that Lentulus’ Praetorship and some small flattery from the Senate will make him forget.”

“You wrong me, Lucius,” Lentulus said to Catiline.

“He will not need these spurs to action,” Longinus said.

“The action needs them,” Catiline said. “These things, when they proceed not forward, they go backward.”

“Let us consult then,” Lentulus said. “Let’s make a plan.”

“Let us first take arms,” Cethegus said. “They who deny us just things now, will give all that we ask, if once they see our swords.”

“Our objectives must be sought with wounds, not words,” Catiline said.

### — 3.2 —

Cicero and Fulvia talked together. Fulvia had informed Cicero about Catiline’s plot, a plot that Curius had told her about.

Cicero said:

“Is there a heaven and gods, and can it be that they should be so slow to hear and be so slow to see?”

“Has Jove no thunder, or has Jove become as torpid and stupefied as you are, nearly wretched Rome, when both your Senate and your gods sleep and neither your nor their own states do keep?”

“What will awake you, heaven? What can excite your anger, if this treasonous practice is too trivial?”

“Catiline’s former plots partake of former times, but this last plot was only Catiline’s. Oh, that it would be his last! But he before has safely done so much he’ll still dare more.”

“Ambition, like a torrent, never looks back and is an increasing swelling of pride and the last affection a high mind can put off, being both a rebel to the soul and reason; and it — ambition — overcomes by force all laws and all conscience, treads upon religion, and offers violence to nature’s self.”

“But here is that which transcends it! A black purpose to cast into confusion nature, and to ruin that which neither time nor mankind can ever repair and restore.”

“Sit down, good lady.”

Fulvia sat.

Using the third person, Cicero continued:

“Cicero is lost in this your story: for to think it is true tests my reason. It so far exceeds all the strange and immoderate fictions of the tragedies on stage.”

“The commonwealth, still panting underneath the strokes and wounds of a recent civil war, gasping for life, and scarcely restored to hope: To seek to oppress her with new

cruelty and utterly extinguish her ancient name with so prodigious and unheard-of fierceness!

“What sink — scum, pit, cesspool — of monsters, wretches of lost minds, mad after change and desperate in their states, wearied and oppressed with their poverty — for all this I acknowledge them to be — dared have thought it?

“Would the barbarous deeds of Marius and Sulla have been believed by our children, had not this greater evil deed arisen forth for them? All that Marius and Sulla did was piety compared to this because they only murdered kinsfolk, brothers, and parents and raped the virgins and perhaps some matrons. They left the city and the temples standing: The gods and the majesty of Rome were safe yet.

“Catiline and his co-conspirators purpose to set on fire Rome, to despoil the temples — beyond the other evils — and lay waste the far-triumphed world — the world over which Rome has triumphed far and wide and in which it is known for its triumphs — for what can be enough for someone to whom Rome is too little room?”

“It is true, my lord,” Fulvia said. “I had the same reasoning.”

Cicero continued:

“And then to take a horrid sacrament of wine and human blood for the execution of this their dire design, which might be called the height of wickedness, except that for which they did it was higher wickedness still!”

The plotted rebellion was more wicked than the drinking of the mixture of wine and the slave’s blood.

Fulvia said, “I assure your lordship that the extreme horror of it almost turned me to injurious air, when first I heard it. I was all vapor when it was told to me, and I longed to vent it



anywhere. It was such a secret that I thought it would have burnt me up.”

“Good Fulvia, don’t fear your act, must less repent of it,” Cicero said.

“I do not repent it, my good lord,” Fulvia said. “I know to whom I have uttered it.”

She had informed Cicero about the plot, and he was in a position of power to stop it.

“You have discharged your duty safely,” Cicero said. “Should Rome, for whom you have done the happy service, turn most ungrateful, yet would your virtue be paid in the consciousness of the deed. So much good deeds reward themselves.”

In other words: Virtue is its own reward.

“My lord, I didn’t do it for any other aim but for itself. I did not do it for any ambition of reward,” Fulvia said.

“You have learned the difference between doing office to the public welfare and private friendship, and have shown it, lady,” Cicero said. “Be still yourself. I have sent for Quintus Curius, and for your virtuous sake, if I can win him yet to the commonwealth, he shall be safe, too.”

“I’ll undertake, my lord, that he shall be won to the right side,” Fulvia said.

“Please, join with me then, and help to persuade him to do the right thing,” Cicero said.

A Lictor entered the room.

“How is it now?” Cicero said. “Has Curius come?”

“He is here, my lord,” the Lictor answered.

“Go immediately and tell my colleague Antonius I want to speak with him about some immediate business of the state.

“And, as you go, call on my brother Quintus and tell him, with the Tribunes, to come to me.

“Now tell Curius to enter.”

The Lictor exited.

Cicero asked, “Fulvia, you will aid me?”

“It is my duty,” Fulvia said.

Curius entered the room.

Cicero said:

“Oh, my noble lord! I have to chide you, truly. Give me your hand. Nay, don’t be troubled. It shall be gently, Curius. You look upon this lady? What, do you guess my business yet?”

“Come, if you frown, I will thunder. Therefore, put on your better looks and thoughts. There’s nothing but fair and good intended to you, and I would make those — your better looks and thoughts — your nature and habit of mind.”

Cicero then mentioned Lentulus, who had been restored to the Senate, although Curius had not:

“Would you, of whom the Senate had that hope, as to my knowledge it was in their purpose during the next sitting to restore you, as they have done the stupid and ungrateful Lentulus — excuse me that I name you thus together, for yet you are not such as he is —

“Would you, I say, a person both of blood and honor, coming from a long line of virtuous ancestors, embark yourself for such a hellish action with relative-killers and traitors, men turned Furies out of the waste and ruin of their fortunes — for it is despair that is the mother of madness — despair such

as that arising from want and poverty — that which all conspirators, except they, have first — a mere pretext for their evil?”

In other words, Curius’ life was good. He came from a long and distinguished line of family members, and he was on the verge of again becoming a Senator. Most conspirators become traitors out of despair, but Curius had nothing to despair about.

Cicero continued:

“Oh, I must blush with you. Come, you shall not labor to extenuate your guilt, but to quit it entirely. Bad men excuse their faults, good men will leave and abandon them. He acts the third crime who defends the first crime.”

The three crimes are 1) the evil deed, 2) failure to repent, and 3) self-justification for committing the crime.

Cicero continued:

“Here is a lady — Fulvia — who has got the start in piety of us all, and for whose virtue I could almost turn lover again, except that Terentia — my wife — would be jealous.

“What an honor has Fulvia gained for herself! What voices, titles, and loud applauses will pursue her through every street! What windows will be filled with people who will shoot eyes — gaze — at her! What envy and grief will matrons feel because they are not she! All of this when her act here shall seem worthier a chariot than if Pompey came in triumph through Rome with his captives from Asia chained behind his chariot!

“All this is while she lives. But when she is dead, her very name will be a statue, not wrought for time but rooted in the minds of all posterity, when brass and marble, aye, and the Capitol itself, is dust!”

“Your Honor thinks too highly of me,” Fulvia said.

Cicero said:

“No, I cannot think highly enough of you. And I would have Curius emulate you.

“It is no shame to follow the better precedent. She shows you, Curius, what claim your country lays to you, and what duty you owe to it.

“Don’t be afraid to break with murderers and traitors for the saving life so near and necessary to you as is your country’s life.

“Think only on Rome’s right: No child can be too naturally loving to his parent. She is our common mother, and she lays claim to the best part of us; do not stop, but instead give her the best part of you. He who is void of fear may soon be just, and no religion binds men to be traitors.”

Fulvia said to Cicero, “My lord, he understands it and will follow your saving counsel and advice. But his shame yet stays him. I know that he is coming around to what you advise.”

“Do you know it?” Curius asked Fulvia.

Curius and Fulvia spoke privately apart from Cicero.

“Yes, let me speak with you,” Fulvia said.

Curius said, “Oh, you are —”

“What am I?” Fulvia said.

“Don’t speak so loudly,” Curius said.

Fulvia said, “I am what you should be. Come, do you think I’d take part in any plot where madam Sempronia should take precedence over me, and Fulvia walk in the rear, or be

on the side in a place of secondary importance? Do you think that I would be her second in a business, although it might give me everything the sun sees?

“It was a silly fantasy — a foolish dream — of yours. Attach yourself to me and the Consul and be wise. Follow the fortune I have put you into. You may be something this way, and with safety.”

Cicero joined them and said, “Nay, I must tolerate no whisperings, lady.”

“Sir, you may hear,” Fulvia said. “I am telling him how hazardous his course was in the way wherein he was.”

Cicero said:

“How hazardous? How certain to all ruin. Did he, or do yet any of the conspirators, imagine that the gods would sleep and pay no attention to such a Stygian — Hellish — practice against the commonwealth that they have founded with so much labor, and with much care have kept now nearly seven hundred years?

According to tradition, Rome was founded in 753 B.C.E.

Cicero continued:

“It is a madness, wherewith heaven blinds them when it would confound them, that they should think it.”

A proverb stated, *Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat*. Translation: “Whom the god would destroy, he first makes insane.”

Cicero continued:

“Come, my Curius, I see your nature’s right; you shall no more be mentioned with the conspirators: I will call you mine and trouble this good shame of yours no farther.”

Either Curius was ashamed of his actions, or Cicero was pretending that Curius was ashamed of his actions.

Cicero continued:

“Stand firm for your country and become a man who is honored and loved. It would be a noble life to be found dead embracing Rome.”

Horace wrote *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. Translation: “It is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country.”

Cicero continued:

“Do you know what thanks, what titles, what rewards the Senate will certainly heap upon you for your service? Don’t allow a desperate action to more engage you than your safety should, and don’t allow wicked friendship to force you to do what honesty and virtue cannot persuade you to do.”

“He tells you right, sweet friend,” Fulvia said. “It is saving counsel that can rescue you.”

Curius replied, “Most noble Consul, I am yours and hers — I mean my country’s. You have formed me anew, inspiring me with what I should be truly. And I entreat you: Don’t let my faith seem cheaper because it springs out of penitence.”

“Good Curius, it shall be of greater price rather, and because I’d make it such, hear how I trust you more,” Cicero said.

Cicero wanted Curius to be a spy for him:

“Keep still your former face — outward appearance — and mix again with these lost spirits who are the conspirators. Run all their mazes with them, for such are treasons. Find out their windings and subtle turnings, watch their snaky ways through thickets and hedges, into woods of darkness, where they are obliged to creep upon their breasts in paths never trodden by men, but wolves and panthers.

“Learn, beside Catiline, Lentulus, and those whose names I have, what new ones they draw into their plot; who else are likely to join them and be drawn into their plot; who those great ones are they do not name; what ways they mean to take; and whither their hopes point: to war or ruin by some surprise ambush.

“Explore all their intentions and acquaint me with whatever you find that may profit the Republic, either by yourself or by this your virtuous friend, on whom I impose the responsibility of urging you to do the right thing.

“I’ll see that Rome shall prove a thankful and a bounteous mother.

“Be as secret as the night.”

“And as constant, sir,” Curius said.

The night is not constant; it turns to day. Curius is also not constant; he turns from conspirator to anti-conspirator spy.

Cicero said, “I do not doubt it, although lack of time prevents you from making a vow of loyalty to Rome. The dignity of truth is lost with too much protesting.”

He called, “Who is there?”

This was a way of calling a servant to escort Curius and Fulvia out of Cicero’s house.

A servant entered the room.

Cicero said to Fulvia and Curius, “Leave this way, lest you be seen and met. And when you come, let this be your token to say to this servant.”

Cicero gave them the password.

He then said to the servant, “Light their way with torch-fire.”

The servant, Curius, and Fulvia exited.

Alone, Cicero said to himself:

“Oh, Rome, in what a sickness have you fallen! How dangerous and deadly, when your head is drowned in sleep, and all your body is feverish!

“Rome, your lethargy is such that no noise, no pulling, no vexation wakes you; or, if by chance you heave your eyelids up, you do forget, sooner than you were told, your own danger. I didn’t act reverently when I blamed the gods who wake and watch for you, although you snore to yourself.

“Isn’t it strange that you should be so diseased and feel so secure? But, more, isn’t it strange that the first symptoms of such a malady should not rise out from any worthy member, but a base and common strumpet, worthless to be named even a hair or other part of you?”

The base and common strumpet was Fulvia, who first informed Cicero about the conspiracy.

Continuing to refer to Rome as “you,” Cicero continued:

“Think, think hereafter what your needs were, when you must use such means; and lay it to your breast — remember — how much the gods upbraid your foul neglect of them by making so vile a thing the author of your safety.

“They — the gods — could have worked by nobler ways: They could have struck your foes with forked lightning or blasted thunder; thrown hills upon them in the process; have sent death, like a noxious vapor, to all their families; or caused their consciences to burst them.

“But, when they will show you what you are and make a scornful difference between their power and you, they help you by such aids as geese and harlots.”



Enemy soldiers once tried to sneak up the Capitoline Hill, but geese sacred to Juno cackled and alerted the Romans to the approach of the enemy soldiers.

The word “goose” was also slang for “prostitute” in addition to being the name of a kind of fowl.

A Lictor entered the room.

“How is it now?” Cicero asked. “What is the answer? Has he come?”

The Lictor replied, “Your brother will immediately be here, and your colleague Antonius said, coldly, that he would follow me.”

The Lictor exited.

Alone again, Cicero said to himself:

“Aye, that troubles me somewhat and is worth my fear. Antonius is a man against whom I must make provisions so that, as he’ll do no good, he will also do no harm.

“Antonius, although he is not of the plot, will like it and wish it should proceed; for all change is always welcome to men oppressed by and pressed with their needs.

“I must with offices and patience win him. I must make him by art that which he was not born: a friend to the public and the republic. And so I will bestow on him the province of Macedonia that is by the Senate decreed to me. That benefit will bind him.”

Antonius suffered from debt. Since Macedonia was a rich province that would supply him with much money, he need not support a dangerous conspiracy in an attempt to get money to pay his debts.

Consuls normally served as the governor of a province after their Consulship. The provinces were awarded by lot, and

Cicero had won the wealthier province, but Cicero would trade Macedonia to Antonius for the less affluent province of Transalpine Gaul. This would make Antonius beholden to Cicero, and Cicero would make him do the right thing.

Cicero continued:

“It is well if some men will do well for reward. So few are virtuous when the reward’s away. Nor must I be unmindful of my own private interests, for which I have called my brother and the Tribunes, my kinsfolk, and my clients to be near me.”

Tribunes were administrative officers in Rome. Some were judicial Tribunes, and some were military Tribunes.

Cicero was the patron to some people of lower status than himself. They were his clients, and they had obligations to him as he had to them.

His private interests included self-protection. The conspirators wanted him dead.

Cicero continued:

“He who stands up against traitors and their ends shall need a double guard of law and friends, especially in such an envious state that sooner will accuse the magistrate than the delinquent and will rather grieve that the treason is not acted, than believe.”

### — 3.3 —

Julius Caesar and Catiline spoke together in the house of co-conspirator Laeca.

Caesar said:

“The night grows later, and you are about to have your meeting. I’ll therefore end with a few words.

“Be resolute and put your plan in action. The more that actions of gravity, deep significance, and danger are considered, the less assuredly they are performed. And thence it happens the bravest and most splendid plots that are not executed immediately have been discovered. Say you are constant, or another, a third, or more, there may be yet one wretched spirit with whom the fear of punishment shall work above all the thoughts of honor and revenge.

“You are not now to think what’s best to do, as in the beginnings of a plot; instead, you are to think what must be done, now that the plot has thus begun, and you are to let pass no advantage that may secure you.

“Let them call it evil now. When it is past and has prospered, it will be called virtue. Petty crimes are punished, but great crimes are rewarded.

“Nor must you think of peril, since attempts and essays begun with danger always end with glory. And when need spurs action, despair will be called wisdom.

“Less ought the anxiety about men or reputation to frighten you, for they who win seldom receive shame from their victory, however it has been achieved, and they receive vengeance least.

“For who, besieged with wants and needs, would stop at death, or anything beyond it?

“Come, there was never any great thing yet attained but by violence, or fraud. And he who balks, because of the folly of a conscience, to reach it —”

Catiline finished Caesar’s sentence: “— is a good religious — superstitious — fool.”

Caesar agreed:

“He is a superstitious slave, and he will die a beast, not a man.

“Good night. You know what Crassus thinks, and I, by this: Prepare for yourself wings, as large as sails, to cut through air and leave no impression behind you.

“A serpent, before it comes to be a dragon, eats a bat, and so must you ‘eat’ a Consul who watches and guards.”

A Greek proverb stated, “Unless a serpent eat a serpent, he will not become a dragon.” The proverb meant that to advance one must make someone else fail.

Caesar then said to Sergius Catiline, “What you do, do quickly, Sergius.”

This is John 21-27:

*21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*

*22 Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.*

*23 Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

*24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.*

*25 He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?*

*26 Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.*

*27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. (King James Version)*

Preparing to leave, Caesar said, "You shall not stir for me."

By "shall not stir," he meant that Catiline need not make a fuss.

"Excuse me," Catiline said.

He intended to stir himself to help Caesar get where he was going.

He called to servants outside the room, "Lights there!"

Catiline was calling a servant to bring a torch to light Caesar's way.

"By no means," Caesar said.

This was supposed to be a secret meeting. Having a servant light his way as he left would make him more noticeable.

Catiline called to the servants, "Stay then."

He then said to Caesar, "All good thoughts to Caesar! And the same to Crassus."

"Just bear in mind your friends' counsels and advice," Caesar said.

He exited, alone.

"Or I will lack spirit," Catiline said.

He meant that he would lack courage if he did not bear in mind his friends' counsels and advice.

His wife, Aurelia, entered the room.

"How are you now, Aurelia?" Catiline said. "Have your confederates come? The ladies?"

"Yes," Aurelia said.

"And is Sempronia there?" Catiline asked.

“She is,” Aurelia answered.

“That’s well,” Catiline said. “She has a sulfurous — fiery — spirit and will take light at a spark. Broach the subject to them, gentle love, about drawing as many of their husbands into the plot as they can. If not, to get rid of them: That’ll be the easier practice for some wives who have been long tired of them.”

One way to get rid of an unwanted husband is to have them die in the rebellion.

Catiline continued, “Solicit their aids for money, and their servants’ help in setting fire to the city at the designated time. Promise them states, and empires, and men for lovers, made of better clay than ever the old potter Titan knew.”

Prometheus, one of the Titans, made men out of clay and the goddess Athena breathed life into them.

Laeca, whose house they were in, entered the room.

“Who’s that?” Catiline said. “Oh, Porcius Laeca! Are they here?”

“They are all here,” Porcius Laeca said.

Catiline said to Aurelia, “Love, you have your instructions. I’ll trust you with the stuff — the material — you have to work on. You’ll give form to it.”

Aurelia would work at persuading the women to convince their husbands to support the rebellion.

Catiline then said to Porcius Laeca, “Porcius, fetch the silver eagle I gave into your keeping.”

The eagle was depicted on a battle standard, aka battle flag.

Catiline added, “And ask them to enter the room.”

Laeca exited.

Cethegus, Curius, Lentulus, Vargunteius, Longinus, Gabinius, Ceparius, Autronius, and Cornelius entered the room.

“Oh, friends, your faces gladden me,” Catiline said. “This will be our last meeting, I hope, of consultation.”

“So it had better be,” Cethegus said.

“Daily we lose the opportunity to act,” Curius, who was now acting as a spy for Cicero, said.

“Aye, and our means, whereof one wounds me most — that was the fairest. Piso is dead, in Spain,” Catiline said.

Piso had been murdered. One rumor was that Pompey had instigated the murder. Another rumor was that some Spaniards had murdered him because of his cruel rule.

“As we are, here,” Cethegus said.

Cethegus was a hothead who wanted violence — now.

“And, as it is thought, by the malice of Pompey’s followers,” Longinus said.

“He also is coming back now, out of Asia,” Lentulus said.

Pompey’s army, if it returned, would likely oppose Catiline.

Catiline said:

“Therefore, what we intend we must be swift in. Take your seats and listen.

“I have already sent Septimius into the Picene territories, and Julius to raise an army for us in Apulia. Manlius at Faesulae is by this time ready for war, with the old needy troops who followed Sulla; and they just wait until we will give the blow at home.”

Laeca entered with the eagle battle standard.

Catiline said:

“Behold this silver eagle. It was Marius’ standard in the Cimbrian war, and it was fatal to and influencing the fate of Rome, and, as our augurs tell me, shall still be so; for which single ominous, portentous cause I have kept it safe and done it sacred rites as if to a godhead, in a chapel built expressly for it.”

Marius won the war against the Cimbrians and so kept Rome safe; the word “fatal” meant “connected with [Rome’s] fate.” Catiline’s rebellion, however, if successful, would be fatal in another sense to the Roman Republic.

Catiline continued:

“Clasp then all your hands as a pledge to follow this battle standard, with vows of death and ruin struck silently and home.”

The conspirators made their vows, silently.

Catiline continued:

“So waters speak when they run deepest.

“Now’s the time. This year is the twentieth year from the burning of the Capitol, as fatal, too, to Rome, by all predictions. And in which honored Lentulus must rise and become a king, if he pursues it.”

“If he does not, he is unworthy of the great destiny,” Curius said.

“This destiny is too great for me,” Lentulus said, “but what the gods and their great loves decree me, I must not seem inattentive to.”



“No, nor must we be envious,” Catiline said. “We have enough beside: all Gallia, Belgia, Greece, Spain, and Africa.”

These were regions that the conspirators would split up among themselves.

“Aye, and Asia, too,” Curius said, “now that Pompey is returning.”

“Noblest Romans,” Catiline said, “I think our looks are not as quick and high — as fiery and noble — as they used to be.”

“No?” Curius said. “Whose is not?”

Catiline said, “We have no anger in our eyes, no storm, no lightning. Our hate is spent and fumed away in vapor, before our hands are at work. I can accuse not any one person, but I can accuse all of slackness.”

“Yes, and accuse yourself as such, while you do it,” Caius Cethegus said.

“What?” Catiline said. “That is sharply answered, Caius.”

“Truly, truly,” Cethegus said.

Lentulus said, “Come, let each of us know his part to do, and then let us be accused. Set aside these untimely quarrels.”

“I wish there were more Romes than one to destroy and ruin,” Curius said.

“More Romes?” Cethegus said. “More worlds.”

“Nay, then more gods, and natures, if they took part,” Curius said.

Curius was out-doing Cethegus in talking about violence, something that was difficult to do. Curius was even blaspheming.

“When shall the time be, first?” Lentulus said.

“I think the Saturnals,” Catiline said.

“It will be too long to wait,” Cethegus said. “That’s too far off in time.”

“They are not far off,” Catiline said. “It is not a month.”

“A week, a day, an hour is too far off,” Cethegus said. “Now would be the fittest time.”

“We have not laid — arranged — all things so safe and ready,” Catiline said.

Caius Cethegus said, “While we’re delaying, we shall all lie and grow to earth. I wish that I would have nothing to do with the plot, if we do not put it in action now. These things, they should be enacted before they are thought.”

One way to grow to earth is to die and be buried in a burial plot.

“Nay, now your reason forsakes you, Caius,” Catiline said. “Think but what convenience that time will furnish: The city’s custom is to be then in mirth and feast.”

During the Saturnalia, which occurred in the middle of December, slaves had freedom of speech and they ate a meal at which their masters served them. Schools and law courts were closed. Much merriment occurred, and no one would expect a rebellion.

After taking the Trojan Horse into the city of Troy, the Trojans thought that they had won the war, and so they celebrated with much drinking into the night. Their drunkenness made it easier for the Greek army to defeat

them after the Greek soldiers hidden inside the Trojan Horse came out, went to the city gates and opened them, letting in the rest of the Greek army.

Lentulus said, “They will be entirely relaxed in pleasure and security —”

Autronius said, “Each house will be relaxed in freedom —”

Curius said, “Every slave will be a master —”

Longinus said, “And they, too, will be no mean aids —”

Curius interrupted, “— made from their hope of liberty —”

Lentulus interrupted, “— or hate to their lords.”

Vargunteius said, “It is certain there cannot be a time found out more apt and natural than the Saturnalia to have our rebellion.”

Cethegus did not look happy. He looked angry.

Lentulus said, “Nay, good Cethegus. Why do your passions now disturb our hopes?”

“Why do your hopes delude your certainties?” Cethegus asked.

To Cethegus, if the rebellion started *now*, it was certain to be successful.

Catiline said to Cethegus, “You must let him have his way. Think about the arrangement and method of it.”

“Yes,” Longinus said.

“I don’t like setting Rome on fire,” Lentulus said. “It will too much lay waste my city.”

“Even if Rome were reduced to embers, there will be wealth enough raked out of them to make spring up a new Rome,” Catiline said. “It must be fire, or nothing.”

Wealth could be raked out of the ashes, but not the souls of the dead.

“What else should frighten or terrify them?” Longinus asked.

“True,” Vargunteius said. “In that confusion must be the chief slaughter.”

“Then we shall kill them most splendidly,” Curius said.

“And in heaps,” Ceparus said.

“We will strew sacrifices,” Autronius said.

“We will make the earth an altar,” Curius said.

Animals were bloodily sacrificed on altars.

“And we will make Rome the fire,” Longinus said.

“It will be a noble night,” Laeca said.

“And worth all Sulla’s days,” Vargunteius said.

“When husbands and wives, grandsires and nephews, servants and their lords, virgins and priests, the infant and the nurse, go all to hell together, in a fleet,” Curius said.

Cethegus had spoken earlier about the need for a navy to carry the souls of those who died in the Sulla-Marius civil war to the Land of the Dead. Curius used the same image when he spoke about the need of a fleet to carry to the Land of the Dead the souls of those who would soon be dead because of the rebellion.

Catiline said:

“I would have you, Longinus and Statilius, take the charge of setting Rome on fire, which must be at a sign given with a trumpet, done in twelve chief places of the city at once. The flax and sulfur are already stored at Cethegus’ house. So are the weapons.

“Gabinus, you with other force — troops — shall stop the pipes and conduits, and you shall kill those who come for water to put out the fire.”

“What shall I do?” Curius asked.

“All will have employment, fear not,” Catiline said. “Ply the execution.”

The execution could be of the plan or of a person.

“For that, trust me and Cethegus,” Curius said.

Catiline said:

“I will be at hand, with the army, to meet those who escape.

“And, Lentulus, you surround Pompey’s house, to seize his sons alive, for they are the bargaining chips that we must use to make our peace with him.

“Cut up all the other people, as Tarquin did the poppy heads or as mowers do a field of thistles.”

Sextus Tarquinius sent a messenger to ask his father, Tarquinius Superbus (the last king of Rome) how he could conquer the city of Gabii. His father, who was in his garden, used his sword or his walking stick to decapitate the tallest flowers. Sextus Tarquinius understood that to mean that he should kill the most important men in the city.

Catiline continued:

“Or else cut up, as plows do barren lands; and strike together against flints and clods — strike against the ingrateful,

ungrateful, unpleasant, and flinty Senate and strike against the clod-like common people — until no rage gone before or coming after in history may be equal in weight to yours, even though Horror herself would leap into the scale.

“Moreover, in your violent acts, let the fall of torrents and the noise of tempests, the boiling of the whirlpool Charybdis that threatened Ulysses, the sea’s wildness, the eating force of flames, and wings of winds, all be outwrought by your transcendent furies.

“It would have been done before this, had I been Consul. We would have had no stop, no hindrance.”

“Whose side is Antonius on?” Lentulus asked. “Is he loyal to us?”

Catiline said, “The other side has won him: Antonius is lost to us. Cicero was born to be my opposition and my obstacle, and he stands in all our ways.”

Cicero had given the governorship of Macedonia to Antonius and so won him over to the side of the protectors of the Roman Republic.

“Remove him first,” Curius said, referring to Cicero. “Kill him first.”

“May that yet be done sooner?” Cethegus said.

By “sooner,” he meant before the day that Rome would be set on fire.

“I wish it were done,” Catiline said.

“I’ll do it,” Cornelius and Vargunteius volunteered.

They were willing to murder Cicero.

“It is my province,” Cethegus said. “Let no one usurp it!”

“What are your means?” Lentulus asked. “How will you do it?”

“Don’t ask,” Cethegus said. “He shall die. ‘Shall’ was too slowly said. He’s dying. That is yet too slow. He’s dead.”

Catiline said to Cethegus, “Brave, peerless Roman, whose soul might be the world’s soul — *anima mundi* — if that were dying, don’t refuse yet the aids of these your friends.”

“Here’s Vargunteius, who has good relations with Cicero,” Lentulus said.

Catiline said, “And under the pretext of clientele — attendance on a patron — and visitation with the morning ‘hail,’ he will be admitted.”

Clients traditionally paid a morning visit to their patrons and greeted them with “Hail.” That would get Vargunteius close enough to kill Cicero, who was the patron of many.

“What is that to me?” Cethegus asked.

“Yes, we may kill him in his bed, and safely,” Vargunteius said.

Cethegus replied, “Safe is your way, then; take it. Mine’s my own way.”

He exited.

“Follow him, Vargunteius, and persuade him that the morning is the fittest time to kill Cicero,” Catiline said.

“The night will turn all into riot, tumult, and turmoil,” Longinus said.

“And perhaps fail to kill Cicero, too,” Lentulus said.

Catiline said, “Entreat and plead with Cethegus in all our names —”

Lentulus added, “— by all our vows and friendships.”

Vargunteius exited.

Sempronia, Aurelia, and Fulvia entered the room.

Sempronia asked, “Has our council broken up first?”

“You say that women are the greatest talkers,” Aurelia said.

Aurelia whispered with Catiline, while Fulvia took Curius aside.

“We have finished our discussion and are now fit for action,” Sempronia said.

“Which is passion. There’s your best activity, lady,” Longinus said.

Sempronia had a reputation for licentiousness.

“How does your wise Fatness know that?” Sempronia asked.

Longinus, who was fat, replied, “Your mother’s daughter taught me, madam.”

“Come, Sempronia, leave him alone,” Catiline said. “He is a joker. And our present business is of more serious consequence and importance. Aurelia tells me you’ve done most masculinely — vigorously — within, and you have played the orator.”

Sempronia said, “But we must hasten to execute our plot as well, and not remain inactive out of anxiety about the future.”

“You say well, lady,” Catiline said.

“I like our plot exceedingly well,” Sempronia said. “It is sure to succeed, and we shall leave little to luck in it.”

Catiline said to her, “Your banquet awaits you.”



He then said, "Aurelia, take her in."

Looking around, he asked, "Where's Fulvia?"

Seeing Fulvia with Curius, Sempronia said, "Oh, the two lovers are coupling."

"Indeed, she's very ill from sitting up late," Curius said.

"You'd have her laugh and lie down," Sempronia said.

She was making a bawdy joke.

"Laugh and Lie Down" was the name of a card game.

Fulvia said, "No, indeed, Sempronia, I am not well. I'll take my leave; it draws close to the morning. Curius shall stay with you."

She then said to Aurelia, "Madam, I ask you to pardon me. I must consider my health."

"Farewell, good Fulvia," Aurelia said.

Whispering to Fulvia, Curius said, "Make haste and tell Cicero to get his guards about him. For Vargunteius and Cornelius have undertaken to murder him if Cethegus should miss. Their reason is that they think Cethegus' open rashness will permit easier discovery than their attempt, which will be veiled under friendship."

He said out loud to her, "I'll take you to your coach."

Whispering, he said, "Tell him also about Caesar's coming here earlier."

"My sweet madam, are you leaving?" Catiline asked.

"In truth, my lord, I have some indisposition," Fulvia said.

"I do wish you had all your health, sweet lady," Catiline replied.

He then said, “Lentulus, you’ll do her service.”

“I’ll take her to her coach, and I’ll give her the service due to her,” Lentulus replied.

Everyone except Catiline exited.

Alone, Catiline said to himself:

“What agents men must use in their scheming!

“The rash, ambitious, needy, desperate, foolish, and wretched, even the dregs of mankind, all the way down to whores and women!

“Still, it must be so. Each has his or her own proper place, and they are the best in their jobs. Men-servants are fittest to kindle fires; slaves carry burdens, butchers are for slaughters; and apothecaries, wine-serving butlers, and cooks are for poisons.

“And so are these for me: dull, stupid Lentulus is my stale — my decoy — with whom I stalk and hunt; the rash Cethegus is my executioner; and fat Longinus, Statilius, Curius, Ceparius, and Cimber are my laborers, my pioneers who dig trenches, and they are my incendiaries.”

A stale is a decoy. Hunters would keep an animal in front of them in order to get close to their prey.

Incendiaries are weapons that start fires.

Catiline continued:

“With these, I have domestic traitors, bosom thieves whom custom has called wives, the readiest helps to betray heady — impetuous and headstrong — husbands, to rob those who are at ease and lend the money in exchange for lust.”

The wives rob the husbands and “lend” — give — the money to their lovers.

Catiline continued:

“Shall Catiline not do now, with these aids, so sought, so sorted — so recruited and given orders — something that shall be called their labor but his profit?”

“And shall Catiline not make Caesar repent his advice to be bold to a spirit so much his lord and master in evil?”

“Shall Caesar repent his advice when all these shall, like the brethren sprung of dragons’ teeth, ruin each other, and he shall fall — die — among them with Crassus, Pompey, or whoever else appears even if they only resemble or are near a great one?”

Ancient mythology has tales of the sowing of dragon’s teeth, leading to the growth of armed men who fight and kill each other.

Catiline continued:

“May my brain dissolve to water and my blood turn to phlegm, may my hands drop off, unworthy of my sword, and may that sword be inspired of itself to rip my breast for my lost entrails, when I leave a soul who will not serve me.”

This society believed that the mixture of four humors in the body determined one’s temperament. One humor could be predominant. The four humors are blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. If blood is predominant, then the person is sanguine (active, optimistic). If yellow bile is predominant, then the person is choleric (bad-tempered). If black bile is predominant, then the person is melancholic (sad). If phlegm is predominant, then the person is phlegmatic (calm, apathetic, indolent).

Catiline was optimistic that his rebellion would succeed.

Catiline continued:

“And those who will serve me are the same as with slaves:  
Such clay I am so bold as not to fear.”

Catiline had no loyalty to his co-conspirators. Once they had served his needs, they would be tossed aside.

Catiline continued:

“The cruelty I mean to act I wish should be called mine and remain in my name, while after-ages do work themselves out in thinking to do the like but do it less. People in the future will try to be as evil as I am, but they shall fail.

“And even if in the future the power of all the fiends were let loose, with Fate to boot, my cruelty should be still the outstanding example.

“Soon what the Gauls or Moors could not effect — enduring victory over Rome — nor rival Carthaginians with their long history of spite and malice against Rome, shall be the work of one, and that my, night.”

Rome and Carthage battled for supremacy in the Mediterranean. They fought three wars, each of which Rome won. The Punic Wars, also called the Carthaginian Wars, were fought between 264 and 146 B.C.E. Following the Third Carthaginian War, Rome completely destroyed Carthage.

### — 3.4 —

Cicero and Fulvia talked together. A servant was present.

Cicero said to Fulvia, “I thank your vigilance.”

He then said to the servant, “Where’s my brother, Quintus? Call all my servants up.”

The servant exited.

Cicero then said to Fulvia, “Tell noble Curius and say it to yourself: You are my saviors. But that’s too little for you: You are Rome’s saviors, too. Since you are Rome’s saviors, what could I then hope less than that you be my saviors, too?”

Quintus entered the room.

Cicero said to his brother, “Oh, brother, now the engineers of the plot I told you about are working; the machinations begin to move. Where are your weapons? Arm all my household immediately. And order the porter not to let any man in until daytime.”

“Not even your clients and your friends?” Quintus asked.

“The men who come to murder me wear those names,” Cicero said. “They will pretend to be my clients and my friends. Yet send for Cato and Quintus Catulus — those men I dare to trust — and send for Flaccus and Pomtinius, the Praetors, by the back way.”

Quintus said to Cicero, “Take care, good brother Marcus, that your fears are not formed greater than they should be. If they are, they will make your friends grieve while your enemies laugh.”

Many people at the time thought that Cicero was exaggerating any dangers facing Rome and also exaggerating his heroic response to them.

Cicero replied, “It is a brother’s counsel, and worth thanks. But do as I entreat you to do. I am exercising foresight, and I do not fear what people think about it.”

Quintus exited.

Cicero asked Fulvia, “Was Caesar there, do you say?”

“Curius says he met him coming from there,” Fulvia replied.

“Oh, so it’s true,” Cicero said. “And you had a council of ladies, too? Who was your speaker, madam?”

Fulvia answered, “She who would be the speaker, even if there had been forty more women there: Sempronia, who had both her Greek and her rhetorical figures of speech, and ever and anon — again and again — would ask us if the witty Consul could have improved on that, or if the orator Cicero could have said it better?”

The witty Consul was Cicero; in this society, “witty” meant “intelligent.”

“She’s my gentle enemy,” Cicero said. “I wish that Cethegus had no more danger in him than she has! But my guards are you, great powers, and the unabated strengths of a firm conscience, which shall arm each step taken for the state and teach me to slack no pace for fear of malice.”

The great powers could be great armies, the great gods, or both.

Quintus returned.

“How are things now, brother?” Cicero asked.

“Cato and Quintus Catulus were coming to you, and Crassus with them. I have let them in through the garden.”

“What would Crassus want?” Cicero asked himself.

He was not entirely sure whether Crassus was a friend or an enemy. Crassus had sometimes been critical of him.

Quintus said, “I hear some people whispering by the gate and wondering whether it is too early, or not. But I think they are your friends and clients, and they are afraid to disturb you.”

“You will change to another thought soon,” Cicero said. “Have you given the porter the order I told you to give to him?”

“Yes,” Quintus said.

“Withdraw and listen carefully,” Cicero said.

They were going to listen to the would-be assassins who wanted to murder Cicero. Cicero wanted witnesses.

— 3.5 —

Vargunteius, Cornelius, and some armed men stood in front of Cicero’s door.

“The door’s not yet open,” Vargunteius said.

“It would be best for you to knock,” Cornelius said.

“Let the other assassins stand hidden nearby then and, when we are in, rush after us,” Vargunteius said.

“But where’s Cethegus?” Cornelius asked.

“He has quit the assassination, since he might not do it his way,” Vargunteius said.

Vargunteius knocked.

The porter asked from inside the house, “Who’s there?”

“A friend, or more,” Vargunteius said.

He may have meant: 1) more than one friend, or 2) more than a friend — a client.

“I may not let any man in until daylight,” the porter said.

“No? Why?” Vargunteius asked.

“What is your reason?” Cornelius asked.

“I am commanded so,” the porter answered.

“By whom?” Vargunteius asked.

Cornelius said to the conspirators, “I hope that our plot has not been discovered.”

“Yes, by betrayal,” Vargunteius said to Cornelius.

He then asked the porter, “Please, good slave, who has commanded you?”

“He who may best command me — the Consul,” the porter replied.

Cicero, Cato, Catulus, Crassus, and Quintus stood on a balcony and observed the scene.

“We are his friends,” Vargunteius said.

The porter said, “All’s one. It’s all the same. It makes no difference.”

“It is best that you tell him your name,” Cornelius said to Vargunteius.

“Do you hear, fellow? I have some urgent business with the Consul. My name is Vargunteius.”

Cicero spoke to them from above, using the third person, “True, he knows it, and he knows for what ‘friendly’ job you have been sent to do.”

He then asked, “Cornelius, too, is there?”

“We are betrayed!” Vargunteius said to Cornelius.

“And desperate Cethegus, isn’t he there?” Cicero asked.

Vargunteius said to Cornelius, “You speak. Cicero knows my voice. He will recognize it.”

Cicero asked, “What do you say in answer to my question?”

“You are deceived, sir,” Cornelius said.

Cicero said:



“No, it is you who are deceived, poor, misled men. Your states are yet worth pity, if you would listen and change your savage minds. Cease to be mad: Forsake your purposes of treason, rapine, murder, fire, and horror.

“The commonwealth has eyes that keep watch as vigilantly over her life as yours do for her — the commonwealth’s — ruin.

“Be not deceived into thinking her lenity will be perpetual or, if men should be lacking, then the gods will be, to such a calling cause — the advocate of Rome against those who would hurt her.”

The calling cause is a case that is called to justice. The gods would prosecute people who were traitors to Rome.

Cicero continued:

“Consider your assaults and, while there’s time, repent them. It makes me tremble that there should yet breathe those spirits that, when they cannot live honestly, would rather perish basely.”

Cato said to Marcus Tullius Cicero, “You talk too much to them, Marcus. They are lost. Go forth and apprehend them.”

Catulus said to Cicero, “If you have proof of this piece of treachery, what should stop the commonwealth from taking due vengeance?”

Vargunteius said to the conspirators, “Let us slip away. The darkness has concealed us; we’ll say some people have abused and misused our names.”

Cornelius said, “We shall deny it all.”

Vargunteius, Cornelius, and the other would-be assassins exited.

Cato said, "Quintus, what guards do you have? Call for the Tribunes' aid and wake up the city. Consul, you are too mild: The foulness of some evil deeds takes away all mercy. Report it to the Senate."

Suddenly, thunder sounded and lightning flashed violently.

"Listen," Cato said. "The gods grow angry with your patience. It is their concern, and it must be yours, that guilty men do not escape. As crimes grow, justice should rouse itself."

### CHORUS (End of ACT 3) (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)

Blaming ambition for Rome's crisis, the Chorus said:

“What is it, Heavens, you prepare with so much swiftness and so sudden uprising? There are no Sons of Earth — no Giants and Titans — that dare again to rebellion, or to ambush the gods?”

“The world shakes and nature fears, yet the tumult and the horror are greater within our minds than in our ears, so much do Rome's faults, now grown to be her fate, threaten her.

“The priests and people run about; each social class, age, and sex is terror-stricken at the others; and at the city-gates all are thronging out, as if their safety were to quit and leave their mother — Rome.

“Yet they find the same dangers there from which they make such haste to be preserved. For guilty states do ever bear the afflictions and calamities about them that they have deserved.

“And until those plagues rise above the mountain of our faults and there sit, we see them not. Thus still we love the evil we do until we suffer for or from it.

“But ambition, that vice which is close to virtue, has the fate of Rome most provoked and occasioned, and has now caused Rome herself to be not enough ransom to free her from the death with which she's yoked, that restless ill that always builds upon success and does not end, but begins, in aspiring.

“And ambition never is satiated while anything remains that seems even worth desiring, wherein the thought, unlike the eye, to which far things seem smaller than they are, deems all contentment placed on high, and thinks there's nothing great but what is far.

“Oh, Rome did not calculate her errors in time to forestall this fortune! If only Rome could have seen her crimes before they were past and had felt her faults before her punishment.”

## ACT 4 (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)

### — 4.1 —

The ambassadors of the Allobroges, who were tribesmen from Gaul, spoke together.

Thunder sounded and lightning flashed violently as several Senators, quaking and trembling, ran by them. To the Senators, the thunderstorm was an ominous warning of bad things to come.

An Allobrox said:

“Can these men be afraid, who are not only our masters but the world's masters? Then I see the gods reproach Rome for our sufferings, or the gods would humble these Senators, by sending them these frights while we are here, so that we might laugh at their ridiculous fear — the ridiculous fear of those whose names we trembled at beyond the Alps.

“Of all who pass, I do not see a face worthy a man who dares to look up and endure the sight of even one thunderbolt to the end with bravery; but they all look downward, like beasts, running away from every flash that is made. Even the end of the world could not deserve such timidity.”

Men look up to the heavens; beasts look down to the ground.

The Allobrox continued:

“Are we employed here by our miseries, like superstitious fools, or rather slaves, to complain about our griefs, wrongs, and oppressions to a mere clothed Senate — their authority lies only in their clothing — whom our folly has made, and still intends to keep, our tyrants?

“It is our base petitionary breath that inflates them to this greatness, which this prick” — he drew his sword — “would

soon let out, if we were at the same time both boldly brave and miserably wretched.

“When they have taken all we have — our goods, crops, lands, and houses — they will leave us this: a weapon and an arm that will still be found, although left naked, and whose status is lower than the ground.”

It is wise not to outrage a subjugated people who have been robbed of gold and silver but who still have weapons.

Cato, Catulus, and Cicero entered the scene. All of them were Roman Senators.

Cato said, “Do, still present your anger, good and just heaven! Tell guilty men what powers are above them! In such a self-confidence and boldness arising from wickedness, it was time they should know something fit to fear.”

He wanted the thunderstorm to continue. It was ominous, but only for traitors.

“I never saw a morning fuller of horror,” Catulus said.

“To Catiline and his men,” Cato said. “But to just men, although heaven should speak with all his wrath at once, with the result that with his breath the hinges of the world cracked, we should stand upright and unafraid.”

“Why, so we do, good Cato,” Cicero said.

Seeing the ambassadors, he asked, “Who are these men?”

“I take them to be ambassadors from the Allobroges, judging by their clothing,” Catulus said.

An Allobrox said to his fellow ambassadors, “Aye, these men seem to be of a different race than the frightened Romans we just saw. Let’s seek justice from these men. There’s hope of justice, with their fortitude and bravery.”

The Allobroges approached the Senators.

Cicero said to the Allobrogian ambassadors, “Friends of the Senate and of Rome, today we ask you to leave us alone. Tomorrow what suit you have, given to us by Fabius Sanga, whose patronage your state has and uses, just know by the Consul’s — that is, my own — word, you shall receive either a quick reply or else an answer worth your patience.”

Fabius Sanga was the patron of the Allobroges; he was in effect their Roman-citizen ambassador who represented their interests in Rome. Fabius Sanga was a descendant of Fabius Allobrogicus, who had conquered the tribe. Traditionally, the conqueror of a tribe would become their patron. That patronage would be passed down in the family.

The Allobrox said, “We could not hope for more, most worthy Consul.”

Cato, Catulus, and Cicero exited.

The Allobrox said to his fellow ambassadors:

“This magistrate has struck an awe into me and by his sweetness has won a greater regard for his official position than all the boisterous dispositions that ignorant greatness employs to fill the large, ill-fitting authority it wears.

“How easy is a noble spirit recognized as being different from the harsh and sulfurous matter that flies out in harsh, contumelious language, makes a noise, and stinks!

“May we find good and great men who know how to condescend to consider wants and fitting necessities, and who will not turn away from any fair suits.

“Such men don’t help the cause they undertake with favor and success more than, by doing so, they raise their own good reputations by turning just men’s needs into praise of themselves because of their just actions.”

By doing the right thing, good and great people get praise heaped on them. It's a win-win situation for the people whom they help and for the good and great themselves.

— 4.2 —

Some Lictors, a Praetor, Marcus Tullius Cicero, Antonius, Cato, Catulus, Caesar, Crassus, and the other Senators entered the temple of Jupiter *Stator* for a meeting that Cicero had called after the assassination attempt against him had failed.

“Make room for the Consuls!” the Praetor called. “Fathers, take your places.”

The “Fathers” were Senators. Sometimes, they were called conscript Fathers. The word “conscript” means enrolled or elected. Conscript Fathers are those men who are enrolled or elected into the Roman Senate.

The Praetor continued, “Here, in the house of Jupiter the Stayer, by edict from the Consul Marcus Tullius, you are met, a full, well-attended Senate. Hear him speak.”

Jupiter was known as Jupiter *Stator*, the stayer, maintainer, and supporter of Rome.

Marcus Tullius Cicero began:

“I wish what may be happy and auspicious always to Rome and hers. Honored and conscript — elected — Fathers, if I were silent, and if all the dangers threatening the state and you were yet so hidden in the night or darkness that is thicker in the breasts of those who are the black contrivers, so that no beam of light could pierce them and reveal them, yet the voice of heaven — the thunder — this morning spoke loudly enough to give you a feeling of the horror and awaken you from a sleep as stark and rigid as death.



“I have recently spoken often in this Senate concerning this topic, but I always have lacked either your ears or your faith because their plots have seemed so incredible, or I have seemed so vain as to make up these things for my own glory and false greatness, as rumor has it. But so be it.

“When the dangers break forth and shall declare themselves by their too foul results, then the unpopularity of my just cares will find another name.

“As for me, I am just one person; and this poor life, so recently aimed at in an assassination attempt not an hour yet since, they cannot with more eagerness pursue my life than I with gladness would lay down and lose it to buy Rome’s peace, if that would purchase it.

“But when I see they’d make the loss of my life only the step to more and greater losses, all the way to the loss of your lives, Rome’s lives, all lives, I would with those lives preserve it, or then fall and die as part of Rome’s destruction.”

Julius Caesar and Crassus talked apart from the others present.

Caesar said:

“Aye, aye, leave it to you alone, cunning artificer — trickster!

“See how his gorget — his throat-armor — appears and peers out above his gown, to tell the people in what danger he was.

“Vargunteius acted absurdly when he named himself before he got into Cicero’s home.”

Crassus said, “It doesn’t matter, as long as they deny it all and can just maintain the same lie constantly and steadfastly.”

He then asked, “Will Catiline be here?”

“I’ve sent for him,” Caesar said.

“And have you told him to be confident?” Crassus asked.

“To that his own necessity will prompt him,” Caesar said.

“Seem to believe nothing at all that Cicero relates to us,” Crassus said.

“It will madden him,” Caesar said.

“Oh, and help the other faction,” Crassus said.

Cicero’s brother, Quintus, entered and conferred with him.

Crassus asked, “Who is that? His brother? What new intelligence has he brought him now?”

The intelligence — news — included the information that Quintus had brought some guards to protect Cicero.

Caesar said, “He has brought him some cautions from his wife about how to behave himself.”

Cicero said to Quintus, “Place some of the guards outside, and bring some inside. Thank their kind loves.”

Quintus exited.

Cicero then said to the Senate, “It is a comfort yet that all do not abandon their country’s cause.”

Quintus returned, bringing in the Tribunes and some guards.

Caesar whispered to Antonius, who had been elected Consul with Cicero, “What is this now? What is the meaning of this muster, Consul Antonius?”

“I do not know,” Antonius said. “Ask my colleague Cicero. He’ll tell you. There is some reason in state that I must yield

to, and I have promised him — indeed, he has bought it, by giving me the province of Macedonia.”

Now that the guards were present, Cicero spoke about Catiline without naming him:

“I acknowledge that it grieves me, Fathers, that I am compelled to draw these arms and aids for your defense, and, more, I must draw them against a citizen of Rome, born here among you, a patrician, a man, I must confess, of no low family nor no small virtue, if he had employed those excellent gifts of fortune and of nature to the good, not ruin, of the state.

“But being bred in his father’s needy fortunes, he advanced his position politically by prostituting his sister, and he confirmed his position with civil slaughter, entering first into the politics of the commonwealth with murders of some of the gentry while he was a follower of Sulla.

“He has done these things by study, inclination, custom, and habit, and he is familiar with all licentiousness. What could be hoped for in such a field of riot and an expanse of debauchery, but a course of action that is extremely pernicious?

“Although, I must avow, I found his evils sooner with my eyes than with my thought, and I found his evils with these hands of mine before they touched at my suspicion.”

Catiline’s evils were so great that Cicero could not believe them although he saw them — and felt them.

Julius Caesar, who knew that Cicero was speaking about Catiline, said, “What are his evil deeds, Consul? You declaim against his behavior and corrupt your own.”

Caesar then stated a maxim: “No wise man should out of hatred of guilty men lose his own innocence.”

Cicero responded:

“The noble Caesar speaks godlike truth.

“But when he [Caesar] hears I can convict him [Catiline] by his [Catiline’s] behavior in his [Catiline’s] evil deeds, he [Caesar] might be silent, and not cast away his [Caesar’s] sentences — his [Caesar’s] maxims — in vain where they scarcely apply to his [Caesar’s] subject.”

Catiline entered the scene.

Cato said, “Here he himself comes.”

Catiline sat down by Cato, who stood up and moved away because he was unwilling to sit by him.

Cato said, “If Catiline is worthy of any good man’s voice and vote, then that good man can sit down by him; Cato will not.”

Catulus, who was sitting by Catiline, stood up and said, “If Cato leaves him, I’ll not keep by his side.”

Other Senators also moved away from Catiline.

“What face and appearance is this that the Senate here assumes against me, Fathers?” Catiline asked. “Allow my modesty and sense of honor and propriety to ask the cause of so much coldness.”

Julius Caesar said to Lucius Sergius Catiline, “It is reported here that you are the head of a hostile faction, Lucius.”

“Aye,” Cicero said, “and that accusation will be proved against him.”

Catiline rose from his seat and said:

“So let it be.

“Why, Consul, if in the commonwealth, there should be two bodies, one lean, weak, rotten, and has a head, while the other is strong and healthful, but has no head, if I give it a head, do I offend?”

The Senators made known their displeasure at hearing this.

Catiline continued:

“Restore yourselves to your good temper, Fathers, and without perturbation hear me speak. Remember who I am, and of what place and position, and remember what petty fellow this is who opposes me. He is one who has exercised his eloquence always to the bane of the nobility, a boasting, insolent tongue-man.”

Cicero was a member of the equestrian class, just below the level of the Senatorial class, which was dominated by nobles. The basis for the equestrian class was economic. Cicero’s name came from the Latin word for chickpea: *cicer*. Most likely, his ancestors sold chickpeas.

“Be silent, evil traitor, or wash your mouth,” Cato said. “Cicero is an honest man and loves his country. I wish that you did, too.”

“Cato, you are too zealous for him,” Catiline said.

“No, you are too impudent,” Cato said.

“Catiline, be silent,” Catulus said.

“Nay,” Catiline said, “for then I easily fear that my just defense will come too late, with so much prejudice against me.”

Julius Caesar asked himself, “Will he sit down?”

He was wondering what Catiline would do: stand up for himself, or the opposite.

“Let the world forsake me,” Catiline said, “yet my innocence must not.”

“You innocent?” Cato said. “Then so are the furies.”

In this context, the furies are violently angry mortals whose anger approaches madness.

Cicero said, “Yes, and Atë, too.”

Atë is a goddess who causes human beings to act rashly — in such a way that it causes their destruction.

Cicero continued:

“Don’t you blush, pernicious Catiline? Or has the paleness caused by your guilt drunk up your blood and drawn your veins as dry of blood as your heart is dry of truth and your breast is dry of virtue?

“How long, then, will you abuse our patience?

“Shall your fury always mock us? To what licentiousness and disregard of law does your unbridled boldness dare run itself?

“Do all the nightly guards kept on the palace — the Palatine Hill — the city’s watches, with the people’s fears, the rallying of all good citizens, this so strong and fortified seat, here, of the Senate, that presently looks upon you, impress you not at all?

“Don’t you feel your plans all laid open, and see your wild conspiracy restrained by each man’s knowledge of it? Which of all this order can you think ignorant — if they’ll but utter their conscience and inward conviction rightly — of what you did last night, what on the former, where you were, whom you called together, what your plots were?

“Oh, the times and manners!

“This the Consul sees, the Senate understands, yet this man lives! Lives, aye, and comes here into council with us, participates in our discussion about public cares and concerns, and with his eye marks and designates each man of us to slaughter.

“And we good men think we satisfy the state and do our duty, if we can shun just this man’s sword and madness.”

The word “shun” can mean 1) loathe, 2) flee from, 3) evade, and 4) avoid.

Cicero’s point was that action — more action than mere shunning — was needed. The Senators thought that they were good men, but they were actually doing very little to help Rome.

Cicero continued:

“There was that virtue once in Rome when good men would with more sharp coercion and application of force have restrained a wicked citizen than the deadliest foe.

“We have that law still, Catiline, for you. The Senate has passed an act that is as grave and authoritative as it is sharp. The Republic does not lack the law, nor does this Senate lack the authority to enforce it.

“We, we who are Consuls, only we ourselves fail — we are the ones who are lacking.

“For twenty days now we have let grow dull and rust the edge of that decree giving Consuls absolute authority to act. We have kept it shut up, as in a sheath, which when drawn should take your head.

“Yet you still live, and you live not to lay aside your audacity arising from wickedness, but to confirm it.

“I could desire, Fathers, to be found still merciful, to seem, in these great perils grasping the state, a man remiss and slack. But then I should condemn myself as being guilty of sloth and treachery.

“Their military camp is in Italy, pitched and set up in the jaws — the narrow passes — of Etruria, their numbers daily increasing and their general within our walls, nay in our council, plotting hourly some fatal evil to the public.

Etruria is in central Italy. Catiline’s army was close to Florence, which was in Etruria. Rome is south of Etruria.

Cicero continued:

“If, Catiline, I should command you now here to be taken and killed, I justifiably wonder whether all good men would not think it done rather too late than any man too cruel.”

“Except he were of the same type of flour and batch of loaves,” Cato said.

He meant: Unless he were the same sort of man as Catiline.

Cicero continued:

“But that which ought to have been done long since, I will, and for good reason, yet forbear from doing.

“Then I will take you, when no man is found so lost, so wicked, indeed, so like yourself, but shall profess that it is done out of need, and out of right.

“While there is one who dares to defend you, Catiline, live on.

“You shall have leave, but you will live as you now live. You are and will be watched closely, besieged, and suppressed from working the smallest disturbance and civil unrest to the state.



“I have those eyes and ears that shall always keep guard and spy on you, as they have always done, and you will not feel it nor be aware of it.

“What then can you hope for? Neither night can with her darkness hide your wicked meetings, nor a private house can in her walls contain the guilty whispers of your conspiracy. If all breaks out, all will be revealed, so change your mind at last, and lose your thoughts of ruin, flame, and slaughter.

“Remember how I told to the Senate here that on such a day your Lictor, Caius Manlius, would be in arms. Was I deceived, Catiline, either in the fact, or in the time, the hour?”

Manlius had raised an army for Catiline.

Cicero continued:

“I said, too, in this Senate that your purpose was on the fifth of the Kalends of November [October 28; the fifth day before the first of November, counting November first as one day], to have slaughtered this whole order of leading citizens. This warning of mine made many leave the city.

“Can you here deny that your black design was hindered that very day by me, with yourself closed in within my protecting forces, so that you could not move against a public decree and against a republic?

“When you were heard to say, upon the parting of the rest, that you would content yourself with the murder of us who remained?

“Hadn’t you hope, besides, by an ambush by night to take Praeneste?”

Praeneste was a stronghold approximately twenty miles south-east of Rome.

Cicero continued:

“Where, when you came, didn’t you find the place secured and fortified against you with my aids, my watches? My garrisons fortified it.

“You do nothing, Sergius. You can endeavor to do nothing, nay, you cannot think, but I both see and hear your thought, and I am with you, by, and before, about, and in you, too.

“Just remember your last night’s business. Come, I’ll use no circumlocution: I will speak plainly.

“Remember Laeca’s house, the workshop and foundry of your conspiracy, among your sword-men, where so many associates both of your evil and your madness met.

“Dare you deny this? Why are you silent?

“Speak and deny it, and this shall convict you and find you guilty: Here they are, I see them, in this Senate, those who were with you.

“Oh, you immortal gods, in what region of the earth are we? What region do we live in? In what air? What commonwealth or state is this we have?

“Here, here, among us, among our own number, Fathers, in this most holy council of the world, are men who seek the destruction of me, of you, of ours, of all.

“What I can name and specify is too narrow and too limited: Follow the sun around the world, and nowhere will you find ambition to rival theirs.

“As Consul, I behold these men. Indeed, I ask for their advice concerning the state, as I would as though I were asking advice from good patriots.

“Those whom it would be fitting for the axe to hew in pieces, I not so much as wound yet with my voice.

“You were last night with Laeca, Catiline. Your shares of Italy you and your co-conspirators there divided, and you appointed who and to where each should go.

“What men should stay behind in Rome were chosen, your tasks were set down, the parts and places of the city were marked out to be set on fire.

“You yourself, you affirmed, were ready to depart. Only a little hindrance held you back: The hindrance was that I yet lived.

“Upon the word stepped forth three of your crew to rid you of that care. Two undertook this morning, before day, to kill me in my bed.

“All this I knew when your meeting was scarcely broken up. I armed all my servants, called both my brother and friends, shut out your followers you sent to visit me, whose names I told to some witnesses with me there, of high rank, before your followers came to my house.”

“Yes, both Quintus Catulus and I can affirm it,” Cato said.

Caesar said to himself about Catiline, “He’s lost and gone. His spirits have forsaken him.”

The spirits could be Catiline’s guardian spirits or his psychological spirits, or both.

Cicero continued:

“If this is so, why, Catiline, why do you stay? Go where you mean to go. The ports are open. Go forth!

“The military camp abroad has lacked you, their chief, too long. Lead all your troops out with you. Purge the city. Draw dry that noisome and pernicious cesspool — your followers — who, left behind in Rome, would infect the world.”

Cicero wanted all of Catiline's co-conspirators to leave Rome. That would not happen.

Cicero continued:

“You will free me of all my fears at once, once I see a city-wall between us. Do you give up the idea of doing that thing now, commanded by me, which before of your own choice you were prone to do? Go! The Consul tells you, an enemy, to depart from the city.

“‘Whither?’ you will ask. ‘To exile?’ I do not tell you that. But if you ask me for my counsel, I will advise you to go into exile.

“What is there here in Rome that can delight you? In Rome, where there is not a soul outside your own foul cluster of associates but fears and hates you?

“What domestic brand of private filthiness exists but that which is burnt into your life?

“What hidden and secret shame exists but that which has become part of your known infamy?

“What lust was ever absent from your eyes?

“What evil deed was ever absent from your hands?

“What wickedness was ever absent from your whole body?

“Where's that youth, drawn in within your nets or caught with your baits before whose rage you have not borne a sword, and to whose lusts you have not held a torch?

“Your latter nuptials — your marriage to Aurelia — I let pass in silence. In your latter nuptials, sins incredible on sins were heaped, which I will not name, lest in a civil state so monstrous facts should either be seen to have taken place or be seen to have not been punished.

“Your ruined finances, too, I glance not at. Your finances hang on and survive only until the next Ides.”

The Ides was a day of payment of interest or debts. People without the money to pay their interest or debts would be ruined.

Cicero continued:

“I come to that which is more known, more public: the life and safety of us all, by you threatened and sought.

“Didn’t you stand in the field of Campus Martius when Lepidus and Tullus were our old Consuls, upon the day of choice, armed and with forces to take the lives of the newly elected Consuls, and our chief citizens’, when neither your fear nor your conscience changed your mind, and nothing but the fortunate luck of the commonwealth withstood your active malice?”

Cicero was referring to the first Catilinarian conspiracy.

Cicero continued:

“Speak the truth.

“How often have you attempted to take my life? How many of your assaults have I avoided only by moving my body out of the path of the dagger, as we’d say, and wresting your dagger from your hand? How often? How often has the dagger fallen or slipped by chance?”

Cicero had figuratively, not literally, moved his body out of the path of the dagger and wrested it from Catiline’s hand.

Cicero continued:

“Yet doesn’t the sheath at your side want your dagger back again? I don’t know which vows you have made to the dagger or with what rites you have consecrated it to yourself,

with the result that you still make it a necessity to stab it in the body of a Consul.”

In other words, Catiline kept wanting to stab and kill Cicero.

Cicero continued:

“But let me stop this way of speaking and speak to you not as one moved by hatred, which is how I ought to speak to you, but as one who is moved by pity, of which none is owing to you.”

“No more than is owing to Tantalus or Tityus,” Cato said.

Tantalus was so proud that he tried to fool the gods. He killed and cooked his own son, Pelops, and he put the meat into a stew that he served the gods. The gods knew the trick, however, so they did not eat the stew — with the exception of the goddess Demeter, who ate part of Pelops’ shoulder. Outraged, the gods brought Pelops to life again and gave him a shoulder made out of ivory, and they sentenced Tantalus to eternal torment in the Land of the Dead. He stands in a stream of water, and branches heavily laden with ripe fruit are overhead, yet Tantalus is eternally thirsty and hungry. Whenever Tantalus bends over to drink from the stream, the water dries up. Whenever Tantalus reaches overhead to seize a piece of fruit, a breeze blows the fruit just out of his reach.

Tityus had once kidnapped and tried to rape Leto, the consort of Jupiter and mother of Apollo and Diana. For this infamous deed, Tityus, whose giant body lies across nine acres, is in Tartarus. Two vultures feed on his liver, which, once eaten, grow back so the vultures can eat it again and eternally torment Tityus.

Cicero continued:

“You came a short while ago into this Senate. Who in such a crowd of people, with so many friends and kindred you have here, saluted you?”

“Weren’t the seats made bare upon your entrance? Didn’t the Consular men — Senators who are ex-Consuls — rise and leave their places, as soon as you sat down, and fled your side as if you were a plague or a ruin, knowing how often they had been by you marked out for the slaughterhouse?”

“How do you bear this? Surely, if my slaves at home feared me with half the fright and horror that here your fellow citizens fear you, I would soon quit my house and think it necessary, too.

“Yet you dare to tarry here? Go forth at last, condemn yourself to flight and solitude. Discharge the commonwealth of her deep fear. Go. Go into banishment, if this is the word you have been waiting for.

“Why do you look around you? They all consent to it. Do you await the authority of their voices, whose silent wills condemn you? While they sit, they approve it; while they allow it, they decree it; and while they are silent to it, they proclaim it.

“If you prove yourself there honest and free from reproach, I’ll endure the envy.

“But there’s no thought you should ever be he whom either shame should call from filthiness, terror should call from danger, or reason should call from fury.

“Go, I entreat you — yet why do I so, when I already know they have been sent ahead and tarry for you in arms and expect you on the Aurelian Way?”

The Aurelian Way went from Rome north along the western coast and into Etruria, where Catiline’s troops were located.

Marcus Tullius Cicero continued:

“I know the day agreed between you and Manlius, to whom the silver eagle, too, is sent before, which I hope shall prove to you as baneful as you imagine it to the commonwealth.

“But this wise and sacred Senate may say: ‘What do you mean, Marcus Tullius? If you know that Catiline is awaited to be chief of a civil war and you know that he’s the author of such a wickedness, the summoner of well-known evil men to an action of so much horror, the leader of such a treason, then why do you send him forth? Why let him escape? This is to give him liberty and power. Instead, you should lay hold upon him and send him to a deserved death and a just punishment.’

“To these so holy voices, thus I answer: If I did think it timely, conscript Fathers, to punish him with death, I would not give the fencer the use of one short hour to breathe.”

The fencer is a swordsman, a gladiator. Gladiators were prisoners of war, or they were slaves. To call someone a fencer was an insult.

Cicero continued:

“But when there are in this grave order — the Senate — some who with weak judgments still nurse his hopes, some who, with not believing, have confirmed his designs more, and whose authority the weaker men, as well as the worst men, have followed, I would now send him where they all should see, clear as the light, his heart shine, his intentions made clear; where no man could be so wickedly or foolishly stupid, but should cry out he saw, touched, felt, and grasped it.

“Then, when he has run out himself, led forth his desperate party with him, collected aids of all kinds, both shipwrecked minds and fortunes, not only the grown evil that now has



sprung and sprouted forth would be plucked up and weeded, but also the stock, root, and seed of all the evils choking the commonwealth.

“Whereas, should we take only him out of such a swarm of traitors, our cares and fears might seem a while relieved, but the main peril would bide still enclosed deep in the veins and bowels of the state. As human bodies laboring with fevers, while they are caused to toss and turn with heat, if they do take cold water, seem for that short space much eased, but afterward are ten times more afflicted.

“Wherefore, I say, let all this wicked crew depart, divide themselves from good men, and gather their forces to one head. As I said often, let them be severed from us with a wall. Let them leave off assassination attempts upon the Consul in his own house, to surround the Praetor, to surround the court with weapons, to prepare fire and missiles, swords, torches, sulfur, firebrands. In short, let it be written on each man’s forehead what thoughts he bears the public.

“I here promise, conscript Fathers, to you and to myself that diligence in us Consuls, for my honored colleague abroad and for myself at home.”

Cicero’s fellow Consul, Antonius, would lead the Roman army against Catiline’s army.

Cicero continued:

“I here promise you so great authority in you, so much virtue in these, the gentlemen — *equites* — of Rome, whom I could scarcely restrain today in zeal from seeking out the parricide to slaughter.”

Some of the *equites*, members of the upper class just below the Senatorial class, wanted to lynch Catiline.

Cicero continued:

“And I here promise you so much unanimity in all good men and minds as, only on Catiline’s going out of Rome, all treachery shall be clear, made plain, oppressed, revenged.”

Catiline was a parricide in the sense that he wanted to kill the leading citizens of Rome, including and especially Cicero, the leader of the opposition to him.

Cicero continued:

“And with this omen, this portent of the future, go, pernicious plague, out of the city, to the wished-for destruction of you and those who, to the ruin of her, have taken that bloody and black sacrament.”

Cicero wanted Catiline — the pernicious plague — and his co-conspirators to leave Rome. The omen — the portent of the future — was Cicero’s speech and promises. The bloody and black sacrament was the drinking of the slave’s blood mixed with wine.

Cicero continued:

“You, Jupiter, whom we call the Stayer — the Maintainer — both of this city and this empire, will, with the same auspice you did raise it first, drive from your altars and all other temples and buildings of this city, from our walls, lives, states, and fortunes of our citizens this fiend, this fury, with his accomplices.

“And all of this offence to good men — these known traitors to their country, thieves of Italy, joined in so damned a league of evil — you will with perpetual plagues, alive and dead, punish for Rome and save her innocent head.”

Catiline responded:

“If an oration or highly wrought language, Fathers, could make me guilty, here is one — Cicero — who has done it.

He has striven to emulate this morning's thunder with his prodigious rhetoric.

“But I hope that this Senate is more serious and dignified than to give credit rashly to all he vomits against a man of your own order, a patrician, and one whose ancestors have deserved more from Rome than this man's eloquence could utter, turned the best way, as always it is the worst.”

Catiline was complaining that he deserved the best that could be spoken about him, yet Cicero always spoke the worst that could be said about him.

Cato said, “His eloquence has deserved more today, in speaking your ill, than all your ancestors did in their good. And the state that he has saved will find that fact to be true.”

Catiline said, “Who, he? If I were that enemy that he would make me, I'd not wish the state more wretched than to need him to preserve it. What do you make him out to be, Cato? You make such a man as he out to be a Hercules? An Atlas? He is a poor petty inmate!”

Hercules is the great panhellenic hero.

Atlas is the Titan who holds up the sky.

Catiline was proud. He was against Cicero in part because Cicero was a member of the *equites* class, while Catiline was a member of the higher Senatorial class. In addition, Cicero was a mere inmate — lodger — in Rome, according to Catiline. He was not born in Rome, but instead was born in Arpinum and then came to Rome.

“Traitor!” Cato shouted.

“*He* save the state?” Catiline said. “A burgess' son of Arpinum? The gods would rather twenty Romes should perish than have that contumely — insult and disgrace —

stuck upon them that he should share with them in the preserving a shed, or a sign-post.”

“Shut up, you monster!” Cato shouted.

Catiline said, “The gods would be attacked themselves again, and lost in the first rude and indigested heap — the primal chaos — before such a wretched name as Cicero should sound with theirs.”

“Away, you impudent person!” Catulus shouted.

“Do you all back him?” Catiline said. “Are you silent, too? Well, I will leave you, Fathers; I will go. But —”

He turned suddenly on Cicero.

He continued, “— my fine dainty speaker—”

Cicero interrupted, “What now, fury? Will you assault me here?”

“Help, aid the Consul!” the Chorus shouted.

Catiline said, “See, Fathers, don’t you laugh? Who threatened him? In vain you conceive, ambitious orator, hope of so splendid a death as by this hand.”

“Out of the court with the pernicious traitor!” Cato shouted. “Make him leave!”

Catiline said to Cicero, “There is no title that this flattering Senate, nor honor that the base multitude can give you, that shall make you worthy of Catiline’s anger.”

“Stop,” Cato shouted. “Stop Catiline’s monstrous mouth!”

Catiline said, “Or when it shall stop, I’ll look at you, and my look shall kill you.”

“Will no one restrain the monster?” Cato shouted.

“Parricide!” Catulus shouted.

Catiline was a parricide in that he wanted to kill Cicero. As Consul, Cicero was the head of his country, as a father is the head of a family in a paternalistic culture

“Butcher, traitor, leave the Senate!” Quintus shouted.

Catiline said, “I am going into banishment, to please you, Fathers. I am thrust headlong forth.”

“Do you still murmur, monster?” Cato said.

Catiline said, “Since I am thus put out, and made a —”

“What?” Cicero interrupted.

“Not guiltier than you are,” Catulus said.

Catiline said, “I will not burn without my funeral pyre.”

“What does the fiend say?” Cato asked.

Catiline said, “I will have fuel, timber, to build my funeral pyre.”

“Sing out, screech-owl,” Cato said. “Sing out, bird of ill omen.”

Catiline said, “It shall be in —”

“Speak your incomplete thoughts,” Catullus interrupted.

Catiline continued, “— the common fire, rather than my own. For fall I will with all, before I fall alone.”

Catiline exited.

Crassus said quietly to Caesar, “He’s lost: There’s no hope for him.”

Caesar replied quietly, “Unless he immediately takes arms and gives a blow before the Consul’s forces can be levied.”

“What is your pleasure, Fathers?” Cicero asked. “What shall be done?”

“See that the commonwealth receives no loss,” Catulus said.

“Commit the care thereof to the Consuls,” Cato said.

Crassus said, “It is the time.”

Caesar said, “And there is need.”

Crassus and Caesar now at least publicly seemed to support Cicero.

Cicero said, “I give thanks to this frequent — full, well-attended — Senate. But what do they decree to Curius and Fulvia?”

Curius and Fulvia had informed on the conspiracy.

“What the Consul shall think suitable and fitting,” Catulus said.

“They must receive reward, although it is not publicly known,” Cicero said, “lest when a state needs ministers, the ministers will have no informers.”

If informers are not rewarded, there will be few or no informers. The ministers of a state need informers to give them information on which they can act.

The Senators left, but Cato and Marcus Tullius Cicero stayed behind and talked privately.

Cato said, “Yet, Marcus Tullius, I believe that Crassus and this Caesar here ring hollow and are false to Rome.”

Cicero replied, “And they would be proved to be so, if we dared to test them.”

“Why don’t we dare to test them?” Cato asked. “What honest act exists that the Roman Senate should not dare, and do?”

Cicero replied, “Not an unprofitable, dangerous act that would stir too many serpents up at once. Caesar and Crassus, if they are ill men, are mighty and powerful ones; and we must so provide that, while we take one head from this foul Hydra, twenty more heads do not grow.”

“I approve your counsel,” Cato said.

“They shall be watched, examined, and remembered,” Cicero said. “Until they declare themselves, I will not put them out by any question. There they stand. I’ll make myself no enemies, nor the state no traitors.”

— 4.3 —

Catiline was still in Rome.

He, Lentulus, Cethegus, Curius, Gabinius, Longinus, and Statilius talked together.

Catiline said, “False to ourselves? All our designs revealed to this state-cat?”

A state-cat is a person carefully watching the state the way a cat carefully watches a mouse. In this case, the state-cat was Cicero.

“Aye, if I had had my way, he would have mewed in flames at home, not in the Senate,” Cethegus said. “I had singed his furs by this time.”

Catiline said:

“Well, there’s now no time of retracting our former actions, or our standing still. We can’t change what has passed.

“Friends, be yourselves; keep the same Roman hearts and ready minds that you had yesternight at Laeca’s house. Prepare to execute what we resolved. And do not let labor or danger or discovery frighten you.

“I’ll go to the army; you, in the meantime, make ready things here at home in Rome. Draw to you any aids that you think fit, of men of all conditions or any fortunes that may help in a war.

“I’ll either bleed out my life-blood or win an empire for you.

“Within the next few days, look to see my battle flags here at the walls; be you but firm within.

“In the meantime, to cause dislike of the Consul and give less suspicion of our course of action, let it be given out here in the city that I, an innocent man, have gone into exile into Massilia, willing to bow to fate and the times, being unable to withstand so great a faction without troubling the commonwealth, whose peace I rather seek than all the glory of struggle or any action to vindicate my own innocence.

“Farewell, the noble Lentulus, Longinus, Curius, the rest — and you, my better genius — my attendant spirit — the brave Cethegus.

“When we meet again, we’ll sacrifice to liberty.”

“And revenge,” Cethegus said, “so that we may praise our hands once.”

Lentulus said, “Oh, you Fates, give Fortune now her eyes, to see with whom she visits, so that she may never forsake him!”

Lady Fortune is proverbially blind.

Curius said, “He does not need Lady Fortune, nor her eyes. Proceed, Sergius. A valiant man is his own fate and fortune.”

“May the fate and fortune of us all go with him!” Longinus said.

“And always guard him!” Gabinius Statilius said.



“I am the obedient servant of all of you,” Lucius Sergius Catiline said.

He exited.

Lentulus said:

“Now, friends, it is left with us. I have already dealt, by Umbrenus, with the Allobroges who are here resident in Rome, whose state I hear is discontent with the avarice and extortion of the governing magistrates they are oppressed with and by, and they have made diverse complaints to the Senate, but all in vain.

“These men I have thought — both for their own oppressions and also because, by nature, they are a people who are warlike and fierce, still seeking change and now hating our state — the fittest and the easiest to be drawn into our society of conspirators, and to aid the war. This is true all the more because of their geographical location — they border Italy — and because they abound with horses and cavalry, which is the one thing our military camp lacks.

“Also, I have found them forthcoming and inclined to help us. They will meet soon at Sempronia’s house, where I would ask you all to be present, to greater confirm and strengthen their support for our cause. The sight of such high spirits as we have will be no harm, nor will our great number.”

“I will not fail,” Gabinius said.

“Nor I,” Statilius said.

“Nor I,” Curius said.

Cethegus said, “I wish that I had something by myself, apart from the others, to do. I have no spirit or inclination for these many councils. Let me kill all the Senate for my share. I’ll do it at their next sitting.”

“Worthy Caius, your presence at the meeting will add much,” Lentulus said.

“I shall spoil more,” Cethegus said.

— 4.4 —

Cicero and Fabius Sanga talked together. Sanga was a Roman Senator and the patron of the Allobroges.

Cicero said, “The state’s beholden to you, Fabius Sanga, for this great care. And those Allobroges are more than wretched, if they lend a listening to such persuasion by the conspirators.”

Sanga replied, “They, most worthy Consul, as men employed here from a grieved state, groaning beneath a multitude of wrongs, and being told there was small hope of ease to be expected to their evils from here, were willing at first to give an ear and listen to anything that spoke of liberty. But since then, because of better thoughts and my urged reasons, they have come about and won to the true side. The Fortune of the commonwealth has conquered.”

“Who is that same Umbrenus, who was the intermediary between the conspirators and the Allobroges?” Cicero asked.

“One who has had business transactions in Gallia often and is known to their state,” Sanga answered.

“Have the ambassadors come with you?” Cicero asked.

“Yes,” Sanga answered.

“Well, bring them in,” Cicero said. “If they are steadfast and honest, never have men had the opportunity so to justly deserve rewards from Rome as they have.”

Sanga exited.

Alone, Cicero said to himself, “A happy, wished-for occasion, and thrust into my hands, for the discovery and manifestly proven conviction of these traitors. Be thanked, O Jupiter!”

Sanga returned with the ambassadors of the Allobroges.

Cicero said, “My worthy lords, allies by treaty of the Senate, you are welcome. I understand by Quintus Fabius Sanga, your painstaking patron here, you have been lately solicited against the commonwealth by a man named Umbrenus — take a seat, please —”

They sat.

Cicero continued:

“— who came to you from Publius Lentulus, who wants you to be associates in Catiline’s and the other conspirators’ intended war. I could caution you that men whose fortunes are yet flourishing, and are Rome’s friends, would not without a good reason become her enemies and mix themselves and their estates with the lost hopes of Catiline or Lentulus, whose mere despair arms them.

“That would be to risk certain-to-happen good things for airy promises and to undergo all danger for a voice and a promise.

“Believe me, friends: Loud tumults are not laid down with half the easiness that they are raised up. All may begin a war, but few can end it.

“The Senate has decreed that my colleague — the other Consul, Antonius — shall lead the Senators’ army against Catiline, and has declared both Catiline and Manlius traitors.

“Our Metellus Celer has already given part of their troops defeat. Honors are promised to all who will quit them, and

rewards proposed even to slaves who can detect their courses of action and inform us about them.

“Here in the city of Rome I have, by the Praetors and Tribunes, placed my guards and watches so that not a foot can tread, not a breath can whisper, but I have knowledge of it.

“And be sure that the Senate and the people of Rome, out of their accustomed greatness, will sharply and severely punish not only any evil deed but any conspiracy or purpose against the state.

“Therefore, my lords, consult of your own ways, and think which direction is best for you to take. You, now, are present suitors for some redress of wrongs: I’ll undertake not only that that redress shall be assured you, but also whatever grace or privilege else the Senate or Roman people can cast upon you that is worthy such a service as you have now the way and means to do them, as long as your wishes are in agreement with my plans.”

The first Allobrox said, “We covet nothing more, most worthy Consul, and howsoever we have been tempted lately to a defection and abandonment of allegiance, that does not make us guilty. We are not yet so wretched in our fortunes, nor in our wills so lost, as to abandon a friendship, prodigally, so precious as is the Senate and the people of Rome’s, for hopes that do destroy themselves by impetuosity.”

“You then are wise, and honest,” Cicero said. “Do just this then.”

But before telling them what to do, he asked, “When shall you speak with Lentulus and the rest?”

“We are to meet soon, at Brutus’ house,” the first Allobrox answered.

“Who? Decius Brutus?” Cicero said. “He is not in Rome.”

Sanga said, “Oh, but his wife Sempronia —”

Cicero said:

“You, Sanga, inform and remind me: She is a chief figure.

“Well, Allobroges, don’t fail to meet them, and to express the best partiality you can pretend to all that they intend. Like it, applaud it, allege that the commonwealth and Senate will be lost to them. Promise them any aids by arms or counsel. What they can desire I would have you anticipate and promise.

“Only, say this: You’ve had dispatch, in private, by the Consul of your affairs; and, because of the many dangers the state’s now in, you are willed by him this evening to depart from Rome, which you by all sought means will do, in order to avoid suspicion.”

The words “You’ve had dispatch” don’t say whether the Allobroges’ affairs were satisfactorily resolved. The words leave open the possibility that the outcome of the ambassadors’ visit to Rome was unsatisfactory.

Cicero continued:

“Now, for the greater authority of the business they’ve entrusted to you, and to give it credit with your own state at home, say that you desire their letters to your Senate and your people, which once shown you dare pledge both life and honor, and what follows should in every way answer their hopes.

“Those letters being had, offer as an excuse that you have a sudden departure to make. Give me notice at what gate you will go out. I’ll have you intercepted and all the letters taken with you, so that you shall be redeemed in all opinions, and they shall be convicted of their manifest treason.

“Evil deeds are well turned back upon their authors; and against an injurer, the revenge is just.

“This must be done now.”

“Cheerfully and firmly,” the first Allobrox said. “We are men who would rather make haste to undertake it than stay to say so.”

“With that assurance and resoluteness, go,” Cicero said. “Make yourselves happy while you make Rome so. By means of Sanga, let me have notice and information from you.”

“Yes,” the first Allobrox said.

— 4.5 —

Sempronia and Lentulus talked together.

“When will these creatures, the ambassadors, come?” Sempronia asked. “I would like to see them. Are any of them scholars?”

“I think not, madam,” Lentulus said.

“Have they no Greek?” Sempronia asked.

“No, surely,” Lentulus answered.

“Bah, what am I doing here, waiting in attendance on them then, if they are nothing but only statesmen?” Sempronia said.

“Yes, your Ladyship shall observe their gravity, their dignity, and their reservedness, their attention to the correctness of their behavior, befitting their positions as ambassadors,” Lentulus said.

“I wonder much why states and commonwealths don’t employ women to be ambassadors sometimes!” Sempronia

said. “We would do as good public service and could make as honorable spies — for so Thucydides calls all ambassadors.”

Thucydides wrote *The History of the Peloponnesian War* about a war between Athens and Sparta.

Cethegus entered the scene.

“Have they come, Cethegus?” Sempronia asked.

“Do you ask me?” Cethegus said. “Am I your scout or bawd?”

A scout is a spy; a bawd is a pander. Cethegus did not regard himself as either to Sempronia. One kind of scout is someone who searches for — spies — customers for prostitutes.

“Oh, Caius, it is no such business,” Lentulus said.

The business was revolution, not whoring.

Caius Cethegus replied, “No? What does a woman at it, then?”

“Good sir,” Sempronia said, “There are those of us women who can be as accomplished traitors as ever a male-conspirator of you all.”

“Aye, at smock-treason, matron, I believe you,” Cethegus said, “and especially if I were your husband.”

Smock-treasure is treason by women. It includes marital infidelity.

Cethegus added, “But when I trust to your cobweb-bosoms any other kind of treason, let me there die a fly and feast you, spider.”

Cobwebs snare prey; bosoms can also snare prey.

“You are too sour and harsh, Cethegus,” Lentulus said.

“You are kind and courtly,” Cethegus replied. “I’d be torn in pieces with wild Hippolytus, nay, I’d undergo the death of every limb, before I’d trust a woman with wind, if I could retain it.”

Hippolytus, a son of Theseus, fell from a chariot and was dragged by his horses and torn to pieces.

Cethegus would not entrust a fart to a woman.

“Sir, they’ll be trusted with as good secrets yet as you have any, and carry them, too, as close and as concealed as you shall, despite all your courage and resoluteness,” Sempronia said.

Cethegus replied, “I’ll not contend with you either in speech or behavior, good Calypso.”

Calypso was the nymph who held Ulysses as prisoner, preventing him from returning to his wife, Penelope, on his home island of Ithaca.

Longinus entered the scene and said, “The ambassadors have come.”

“I give thanks to you, Mercury, who so has rescued me,” Cethegus said.

Mercury was the messenger of the gods. He came to Calypso’s island with a message from Jupiter ordering her to let Ulysses leave her island.

Gabinus, Statilius, Volturcius, and the Allobroges entered the scene.

“What is the news now, Volturcius?” Lentulus asked.

“They desire some speech with you, in private,” Volturcius answered.



“Oh, it is about the prophecy, probably, and the promise of the Sibyl’s,” Lentulus said.

“It may be,” Gabinius said.

Lentulus talked with the Allobroges apart from the others.

“Do they shun me and will not negotiate with me, too?” Sempronia asked.

“No, good lady, you may participate,” Gabinius said. “I have told them who you are.”

“I should be loath to be left out, and here in my own house, too,” Sempronia said.

Cethegus said:

“Can these or such as these be any aids to us? Do they look as if they were built to shake the world, or be of importance to our enterprise? A thousand such as they are could not make one atom — one tiny particle — of our souls.

“They should be men worth heaven’s fear, who just by looking up would make Jove stand upon his guard and draw himself inside his thunder which, amazed, he should discharge in vain, and they remain unhurt.

“Or, if they were hurt, then like Capaneus at Thebes they should hang dead upon the highest spires and ask the second bolt to be thrown down.”

At Thebes, Capaneus had boasted that not even Jupiter could prevent him from conquering the city. Jupiter was insulted by Capaneus’ impiety, and so as Capaneus climbed a ladder to scale the Theban wall, Jupiter killed him with a thunderbolt. Capaneus’ corpse, burning, hung from the wall. His limbs burned quickly. According to Statius, author of the epic poem *Thebaid*, if his limbs had burned more slowly, Jupiter would have thrown a second thunderbolt.

Cethegus then said, “Why, Lentulus, do you talk so long? This amount of time would have been enough to have scattered all the stars, to have quenched the sun and moon and made the world despair of day or any light but ours.”

Lentulus said to the Allobroges, “How do you like this spirit? In such men Mankind lives. Such souls as these move the world.”

“Aye,” Sempronia said, “although he finds me hard to bear, I still must do him justice and give him credit. He is a spirit of the right Martian breed.”

The Martian spirit is the spirit of Mars, god of war.

The first Allobrox said, “He is a Mars! I wish that we had time to live here and marvel at him.”

Lentulus said:

“Well, I see that you would prevent the Consul from coming to an agreement with you. And I commend your care and painstaking attention: It was only reasonable to ask for our letters, and we have prepared them.

“Go in, and we will take an oath and seal them.

“You shall have letters, too, to Catiline. You can visit him on the way back to your country and confirm the alliance.

“This our friend, Volturcius, shall go along with you. Tell our great general that we are ready here; tell him that Lucius Bestia, the Tribune, has been provided with a speech to lay the blame of the war on Cicero; tell him that all long just for his approach and his person. And then you are made freemen like ourselves.”

— 4.6 —

Cicero, Flaccus, and Pomptinus talked together.

Cicero said:

“I cannot doubt the war will succeed well, both because of the honor of the cause and the worth of the man who commands our army. For my colleague and fellow Consul, Antonius, being so ill afflicted with the gout, will not be able to be there in person.

“Therefore, Petreius, his lieutenant, must necessarily take charge of the army. Petreius is much the better soldier, having been a Tribune, Prefect, Lieutenant, and Praetor in the war for thirty years. He is so accustomed to being in the army that he knows all the soldiers by their names.”

“They’ll fight, then, bravely and splendidly with him,” Flaccus said.

“Aye, and he will lead them on as bravely,” Pomtinius said.

Cicero said:

“They have a foe who will require them to be brave, whose necessities will arm the foe like a fury.

“But, however, I’ll entrust it to the management and the fortune of good Petreius, who’s a worthy patriot. Metellus Celer with three legions, too, will stop their course for Gallia.”

Two armies were closing in on Catiline’s army, ensuring that it could not get reinforcements or escape. Catiline’s soldiers could be expected to fight hard simply out of desperation.

Fabius Sanga entered the room.

Cicero asked, “How is the situation now, Fabius?”

“The trick with the Allobrogian ambassadors has worked,” Sanga said. “You must immediately place your guards upon the Mulvian Bridge; for by that way they mean to come.”

“Then go there, Flaccus and Pomtinius,” Cicero said. “I must have you lead that force you have and seize them all. Let not a person escape. The Allobrogian ambassadors will yield and surrender themselves. If there should be any violence, I’ll send you aid.”

Flaccus and Pomtinius exited.

Cicero then said, “In the meantime, I will call Lentulus to me, as well as Gabinius, and Cethegus, Statilius, Ceparius, and all these by separate messengers. These men no doubt will come without apprehension or suspicion. Prodigal men don’t feel their own supplies diminishing. When I have them, I’ll place guards upon them so that they will not be able to escape.”

“But what’ll you do with Sempronia?” Sanga asked.

Cicero replied:

“A state’s anger should not take notice either of fools or of women.

“I do not know whether my joy or my sorrow and concern ought to be greater: I have discovered so foul a treason, but also I must undergo the ill-will caused by the doom of so many important men.

“But whatever happens, I will be just. My fortune may forsake me, but not my virtue: That shall go with me, and before me, always, and gladden me, as I do well, although I hear ill things spoken about me.”

— 4.7 —

Flaccus, Pomtinius, and some guards met the loyal Allobroges and the conspirator Volturcius.

“Stand!” Flaccus said. “Who goes there?”

The first Allobrox answered, “We are the Allobroges, and we are friends of Rome.”

Pomtinus said, “If you are friends of Rome, then yield yourselves into the custody of the Praetors who, in the name of the whole Senate and the people of Rome, until you clear yourselves, charge you with treachery against the state.”

“Die, friends, and don’t be taken!” the conspirator Volturcius said.

He fought with the guards.

“What voice is that?” Flaccus said. “Down with them all!”

“We surrender,” the Allobroges said.

“Who’s he who resists arrest?” Pomtinus said. “Kill him there!”

“Stop! Stop! Stop!” Volturcius said. “I surrender upon conditions.”

“We give no conditions to traitors,” Flaccus said. “Strike him down! Kill him!”

Volturcius said, “My name is Volturcius; I know Pomtinus.”

Pomtinus said, “But he doesn’t know you — not while you stand out upon these traitorous terms.”

“I’ll surrender upon the guarantee of the safety of my life,” Volturcius said. “Promise to save my life.”

“If it should be forfeited, we cannot save it,” Pomtinus said.

“Promise to do your best!” Volturcius said. “I’m not as guilty as many others I can name — and will, if you will grant me leniency.”

Pomtinus replied, “All we can do is to deliver you to the Consul.”

He meant Cicero.

He then said to the guards, “Take him, and thank the gods who thus have saved Rome.”

**CHORUS (End of ACT 4) (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)**

The Chorus appeared and criticized the people of Rome:

*Now do our ears, before our eyes,*

*Like men in mists [who hear before they see],*

*Discover who'd [who did] the state surprise [with a sudden attack],*

*And who resists [opposes such an attack]?*

*And, as these clouds do yield [give way] to light,*

*Now do we see*

*Our thoughts of things, how they did fight*

*Which seemed t'agree [to agree]?*

*Of what strange pieces [incompatible components] are we made*

*Who nothing know*

*But, as new airs [whispers] our ears invade,*

*Still censure [judge] so?*

*That now do hope and now do fear*

*And now envy,*

*And then do hate and then love dear,*

*But know not why;*

*Or if we do, it is so late*

*As our best mood [most correct opinion],*

*Though true, is then thought out of date*

*And empty of good.*

*How have we changed and come about*

*In every doom [person's judgment],*

*Since wicked Catiline went out*

*And quitted Rome?*

Having recognized the citizens' changeability and their confusion about events, the Chorus then stated the citizens' changing opinion of Cicero: At first they thought he acted too strongly, and then they thought he had not acted strongly enough:

*One while [At one time] we thought him [Catiline] innocent,*

*And then w'accused [we accused]*

*The Consul for his malice spent [exercised]*

*And [his] power abused.*

*Since that [Because] we [now] hear he [Catiline] is in arms*

*We think not so,*

*Yet charge [blame] the Consul with [for] our harms*

*That [Who] let him go.*

*[Yet we blame our injuries on the Consul, Cicero, who let Catiline go.]*

*So in our censure of the state*

*We still [always] do wander [and fall into error],*

*And make the careful magistrate*

*The mark [target] of slander.*

The Chorus next recommended that the citizens recognize noble deeds as noble deeds.



*What age is this, where honest men  
Placed at the helm  
A sea of some foul mouth or pen  
Shall overwhelm,  
And call their diligence deceit,  
Their virtue, vice,  
Their watchfulness, but lying in wait,  
And blood the price [reward they seek]?  
Oh, let us pluck this evil seed  
Out of our spirits,  
And give to every noble deed  
The name it merits,  
Lest we seem fall'n [fallen], if this endures,  
Into those times  
To [Where we] love disease and brook [bear] the cures  
Worse than the crimes.*

## ACT 5 (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)

### — 5.1 —

Petreius and some soldiers stood together at Faesulae, where Catiline and his forces were located. Because of the illness of Antonius, Petreius was now the general of the Senatorial army against Catiline's army. Another army, which was led by Metellus Celer, was keeping Catiline's army from escaping into Transalpine Gaul.

Petreius said:

“It is my fortune and my glory, soldiers, this day to lead you on, the worthy Consul Antonius being kept from the honor of it by disease.”

He was referring to the Consul Antonius' being afflicted with the gout.

Petreius continued:

“And I am proud to have so splendid a cause to exercise your arms in. We don't now fight for how long, how broad, how great and large the extent and boundaries of the people of Rome shall be, but to retain what our great ancestors, with all their labors, counsels, arts, and actions, were gaining for us during so many years.

“The quarrel is not now of fame and reputation, of tribute, or of wrongs done to allies, for which and whom the army of the people of Rome was accustomed to move, but for your own republic, for the lofty temples of the immortal gods, for all your fortunes, altars, and your fires and hearths, for the dear souls of your loved wives and children, your parents' tombs, your rites, laws, liberty, and, briefly, for the safety of the world against such men as only by their crimes are known, thrust out by riot, want, or rashness.”

The army against the Romans was composed of men who had been thrust out of Rome because of their evil deeds. These men had lived riotously and/or had fallen into poverty and/or were rash and violent.

Petreius then began to describe the enemy forces, which he divided into three sorts:

“One sort, Sulla’s old troops, left here in Faesulae, who, suddenly made rich by Sulla’s proscriptions in those dire times have since, by their unbounded vast expense, grown needy and poor and have nothing to wait for except new bills and new proscriptions from Catiline.”

In history, Catiline had promised his followers new bills, meaning cancellation of debts. The earlier proscriptions of Sulla in history included the murders of many individuals.

However, Petreius’ words had another meaning: The new bills would be long-handled weapons of war wielded against the conspirators, and the proscriptions would be of conspirators and would include seizure of their property and lives. The new bills and proscriptions had come into existence because of Catiline.

Petreius continued:

“These men, they say, are valiant; yet I think them not worth your hesitation, if you should hesitate out of fear of them. For either their old virtue has been lost because of their sloth and pleasures, or if their virtue still tarries with them, it is as ill matched to yours as is their small number compared to your number or their unworthy cause compared to your noble cause.

“The second sort are of those who are city-beasts rather than citizens — who, while they reach after our fortunes, have cast away their own. These, whelmed in wine, swelled up with food, and weakened with hourly whoredoms, never left

the side of Catiline in Rome, nor are here loosed from his embraces. These men are such as, trust me, never employed their youth in riding or in using well their arms, watching during guard-duty, or doing other military labor. Instead, they just learned to love, drink, dance, and sing, make feasts, and be fine gamesters. And these will wish more hurt to you than they actually bring you.”

Petreius then described the final cluster of men he and his soldiers would face:

“The rest are a mixed kind, all sorts of furies, adulterers, dicers, fencers, outlaws, thieves, the murderers of their parents, all the cesspool and plague of Italy met in one torrent to take today from us the punishment due to their evil deeds for so many years.”

Petreius then encouraged his soldiers to fight well:

“And who of you, in such a cause and against such fiends, would not now wish himself all arm and weapon to cut such poisons from the earth and let their blood out, to be drawn away in clouds and poured on some uninhabitable place, where the hot sun and slime breeds nothing but monsters?”

The mythical Perseus killed Medusa by decapitating her and then flew on his winged horse over the deserts of Libya. Drops of blood from Medusa’s head, which he was carrying, fell onto the desert sands and turned into snakes.

Many people at this time believed that the sun shining on slime resulted in the creation of harmful creatures such as serpents and crocodiles.

Petreius then spoke about the joy in Elysium that awaited any Roman soldiers who died for Rome, and he spoke about the hell that awaited all the enemy soldiers who fought to destroy the Roman Republic:

“Chiefly, when this inevitable joy of our victory shall crown our side, we will know that the least man who falls on our side this day — as some must give their happy names to fate and that eternal memory of the best death recorded with it for their country — shall walk at pleasure in the tents of rest and see far off, beneath him, all the dead enemy soldiers tormented after life, and Catiline there walking, a wretched and less ghost than he, the viewer.”

The souls of dead soldiers loyal to Rome would end up in Elysium, where the souls of good men were rewarded. Catiline and his dead soldiers would end up in the part of hell where the souls of bad men were punished.

Petreius continued:

“I’ll speak to and urge you on no more; move forward with your eagles and entrust the Senate’s and Rome’s cause to heaven.”

The soldiers said, “To you, to great father Mars, and to greater Jove!”

## — 5.2 —

Both Julius Caesar and Crassus kept a close eye on the politics of Rome. Both would have been happy to take advantage of a successful rebellion against Rome. Both would have been happy after the revolution to push Catiline aside and rule Rome in his place.

“I always expected this from Lentulus, when Catiline was gone,” Caesar said.

“I gave them up as lost many days ago,” Crassus said.

Caesar asked, “But why did you bear their letter to the Consul that they sent you to give you warning to leave the city so that you would be safe?”

Crassus replied, “Did I know whether he made it? It might come from him for anything I could ascertain for me.”

The letter had come from the conspirators and had warned Crassus to leave Rome before a massacre happened. Crassus thought, however, that the letter might have been a forgery commissioned by Cicero to test whether Crassus was loyal to Rome.

Crassus said, “If they meant that I should be safe, among so many to be killed, they might have come, as well as written.”

Caesar said, “There is no loss in being secure. I have recently, too, plied him thick with intelligences, but they’ve been of things he knew before.”

By “him,” he meant Cicero. The two men were not using names in case they were overheard.

Crassus replied, “A little serves to keep a man upright on these state-bridges, even if the passage were more dangerous.”

The state-bridge was like a narrow bridge with Cicero and his allies on one side and with Catiline and his allies on the other side. Until now, Caesar and Crassus had stayed in the middle, not fully committing to either side, but Caesar and Crassus now had to decide which way to cross the bridge. Whose side — Cicero’s or Catiline’s — would they end up on?

Crassus said, “Let us now take the standing part; let us join the side that will win.”

The winning side would stand; the losing side would fall.

Caesar agreed, “We must, and we must be as zealous for it as Cato is. Yet I would like to help these wretched men.”

The wretched men were the conspirators in Rome whom Cicero would soon order to be arrested.

“You cannot,” Crassus said. “Who would save them who have betrayed themselves?”

— 5.3 —

Cicero, his brother Quintus, and Cato stood together. Cicero was holding some letters.

“I will not be coerced to do it, brother Quintus,” Cicero said. “No man’s private enmity and hatred shall make me violate the dignity of another man. If there were proof against Caesar, or whoever, to declare that he is guilty, I would so declare him. But Quintus Catulus and Caius Piso both shall know that the Consul will not for their grudge have any man accused or named falsely.”

Quintus Catulus and Caius Piso were two of Julius Caesar’s enemies.

Julius Caesar had recently defeated Quintus Catulus in the election for Pontifex Maximus, and he had accused Caius Piso in court of having abused his provincial powers and illegally executing a Gaul.

Cicero’s brother, Quintus, replied, “Not falsely, but if any evidence by the Allobroges, or from Volturcius, would sustain the accusation.”

“That shall not be sought by me,” Cicero said. “If it should reveal itself, I would not spare you, brother, if it pointed at you, trust me.”

Cato said, “Good Marcus Tullius — who is more than great — you had your education with the gods.”

Marcus Tullius Cicero ordered, “Bring Lentulus here, and arrest the rest of the conspirators in Rome.”

He then said to Cato, "This task I am sorry, sir, to give to you."

Caesar, Crassus, Silanus, and other members of the Senate entered the scene.

Cicero said, "I wish what may be always happy and fortunate to Rome and to this Senate."

He showed them the letters he was holding and said, "May it please you, Fathers, to break open the seals of these letters and to view them."

He gave the letters to the Senators, who read them and passed them around.

Cicero then said, "If that which I fear should not be found in them, I yet request of you, at such a time as this, that my diligence and conscientiousness will not be scorned and condemned."

Flaccus and Pomtinius entered the scene.

Cicero asked them, "Have you brought the weapons here from Cethegus' house?"

"They are outside," Flaccus replied.

Cicero ordered, "Be ready with Volturcius, to bring him when the Senate calls, and see that none of the rest confer and talk together."

Flaccus and Pomtinius exited.

Cicero then asked the Senators, "Fathers, what do you read? Is it yet worth your care and concern, if not your fear, what you find written there?"

The letters had been sealed, so Cicero had taken a risk in giving them to the Senators to read. Cicero had believed that



the letters were about Catiline's planned rebellion, but he had not been certain that they were.

"It has a face — an appearance — of horror!" Julius Caesar said.

"I am amazed!" Crassus said.

Cato pointed to a letter and said, "Look there."

"Gods!" Silanus said. "Can such men breathe common air?"

Cicero said:

"Although the greatness of the evil, fathers, has often made belief in me small in this Senate, yet since my casting Catiline out of Rome — for now I do not fear the hostility of the words 'cast out' unless the deed be rather to be feared that he went from here alive, when those I meant should follow him did not leave Rome — I have spent both days and nights in watching what the fury and rage of those who stayed in Rome were bent on against my wishes."

He had been carefully watching after the safety of Rome and protecting it against the fury and rage of the conspirators who had stayed in Rome when Catiline left.

Cicero said:

"And I have watched for an opportunity so that I might just take them in that light where, when you perceived their treason with your own eyes, your minds at length would consider your own safety.

"And now it is done. These letters are in their handwriting and sealed with their seals. Their persons, too, are kept in custody, thanks to the gods."

He then ordered, "Bring in Volturcius and the Allobroges."

Flaccus and Pomtinius brought in Volturcius and the Allobroges.

Pointing to the Allobroges, Cicero said, “These are the men who were entrusted with their letters.”

“Fathers, believe me, I knew nothing,” Volturcius said. “I was travelling to Gallia, and I am sorry —”

Cicero said, “Stop shaking out of fear, Volturcius. Speak the truth and hope — expect — well of this Senate, on the Consul’s word.”

Cicero was giving his word as Consul that Volturcius could expect mercy from the Senate if he told the truth.

“Since that is the case, I knew everything,” Volturcius said. “But truly I was drawn in just the other day.”

Julius Caesar said, “Say what you know, and don’t be afraid. You have the Senate’s faith and the Consul’s word to fortify you. The Senate and the Consul will keep their promises.”

Volturcius answered, but he was afraid and spoke disjointedly:

“I was sent with letters — and had a message, too — from Lentulus — to Catiline — that he should use all aids — slaves or others — and come with his army as soon to the city as he could — for they were ready and just waited for him — to intercept those who should flee the fire — these men, the Allobroges, did hear it, too.”

The first Allobrox said, “Yes, fathers, and they took an oath to us, besides their letters, that we should be free, and they asked us for some immediate aid of horses.”

Cicero said, “Here are other testimonies, Fathers: Cethegus’ armory.”

Cethegus’ weapons and armor were brought forth.

“What, not all these?” Crassus said.

Cicero replied, “Here’s not the hundredth part of his weapons.”

He then ordered, “Call in the fencer, so that we may know the arms that would wield all these weapons.”

Calling Cethegus a fencer was an insult. Gladiators were slaves or prisoners of war.

Under guard, Cethegus entered the scene.

Cicero said, “Come, my brave sword-player, to what active use was all this steel provided?”

Cethegus replied, “Had you asked in the days of Sulla, their use would have been to cut throats. But now their use is to look on only. I love to see good blades and feel their edge and points, to put a helmet upon a block and cleave it, and now and then to stab an armor through.”

Handing him a letter, Cicero asked, “Do you recognize that letter? That will stab you through. Is it your handwriting?”

Cethegus tore up the letter.

“Stop, save the pieces!” Cicero said.

He then said to Cethegus, “Traitor, has your guilt awakened your fury?”

“I wrote I know not what, nor care not,” Cethegus said. “That fool Lentulus dictated the letter and I, the other fool, signed it.”

Cicero ordered a guard, “Bring in Statilius: Does he know his handwriting, too? And bring in Lentulus.”

Under guard, Statilius and Lentulus entered the scene.

Cicero ordered, “Hand Statilius that letter.”

“I confess it all,” Statilius said.

Cicero asked Publius Lentulus, “Do you know that seal yet, Publius?”

“Yes, it is mine,” Lentulus said.

“Whose image is that on it?” Cicero asked.

“My grandfather’s,” Lentulus answered.

His grandfather was a patriotic Roman named Publius Cornelius Lentulus; he had been Consul.

“What, that renowned good man, who only embraced his country and loved his fellow citizens!” Cicero said. “Wasn’t his picture, although mute, powerful enough to call you away from doing from a deed as foul —”

Lentulus interrupted, “— as what, impetuous Cicero?”

Cicero finished, “— as you are, for I do not know what’s fouler.”

He pointed to the Allobroges and asked, “Look upon these men. Don’t these faces prove your guilt and impudence?”

“What are these men to me?” Lentulus asked. “I don’t know them.”

“No, Publius?” the first Allobrox said. “We were with you at Brutus’ house.”

They had met at the house of Decius Brutus, whose wife was Sempronia.

“Last night,” Volturcius said.

“What were you doing there?” Lentulus said to the Allobroges. “Who sent for you?”

“You yourself did,” the first Allobrox said. “We had letters from you, Cethegus, this Statilius here, Gabinius Cimber, all but from Longinus, who would not write because he was to come shortly in person after us, he said, to take charge of the horses that we should levy.”

“And he has fled to Catiline, I hear,” Cicero said.

“Spies? Spies?” Lentulus said.

He was referring to the Allobroges.

The Allobroges said to Lentulus, “You told us, too, about the Sibyl’s books, and how you were to be a king this year, the twentieth from the burning of the Capitol. You told us that three Cornelii were to reign in Rome, of which you were the last; and you praised Cethegus and the great spirits who were with you in the action.”

Cethegus said to Lentulus, sarcastically, “These are your honorable ambassadors, my sovereign lord.”

Cato said, “Shut up, too bold Cethegus!”

The first Allobrox said, “Besides Gabinius and your agent — Umbrenus — you named Autronius, Servius Sulla, Vargunteius, and some others.”

Volturcius said to Lentulus:

“I had letters from you to Catiline, and a message that I’ve told to the Senate, truly, word for word; for which I hope they will be gracious to me.

“I was drawn in by that same wicked Cimber, and I thought there would be no hurt at all.”

Cimber was Gabinius. “Cimber” was an epithet meaning “cruel.” He was Gabinius Cimber: Gabinius the Cruel.

Cicero said:

“Volturcius, peace. Be silent.

“Where is your visor — your mask, your pretense of innocence — or your voice now, Lentulus? Are you confounded? Why don’t you answer that question? Is all so clear, so plain, so manifest that both your eloquence and your impudence, and your ill nature, too, have left you at once?”

Cicero then ordered the guards, “Take him aside. There’s yet one more: Gabinius, the engineer — the plotter — of all.”

Under guard, Gabinius entered the scene.

Cicero ordered, “Show him that letter. Let’s see if he recognizes it.”

“I know nothing,” Gabinius said.

“No?” Cicero asked.

“No,” Gabinius answered. “Neither will I know.”

Cato said, “Impudent head! Impudent disposition! Stick his words back into his throat. If I were the Consul, I’d make you eat the evil you have vented.”

“Is there a law for it, Cato?” Gabinius asked.

“Do you ask about a law, you who would have broken all the laws of nature, manhood, conscience, and religion?” Cato replied.

“Yes, I may ask for it,” Gabinius Cimber said.

“No, pernicious Cimber,” Cato said. “The inquiring after good does not belong to a wicked person.”

“Aye, but Cato does nothing except by law,” Gabinius said.

Cato had a reputation for righteousness.

Crassus said to the guards, “Take Gabinius aside. There’s proof enough, although he doesn’t confess.”

“Wait, I will confess,” Gabinius said. “All’s true your spies have told you. Make much of them. Praise them well.”

Cethegus said, “Yes, and reward them well, for fear you get no more such. See that they do not die in a ditch and stink, now you have finished with them, or beg on the bridges here in Rome, whose arches their active industry and toil have saved.”

Many beggars begged on the bridges of Rome. It’s harder to avoid beggars on a bridge than beggars in a street.

Cicero said:

“See, fathers, what minds and spirits these are who, being convicted of such a treason and by such a multitude of witnesses, dare still retain their boldness. What would their rage have done if they had conquered?”

“I thought, when I had thrust out Catiline, neither the state nor I should need to have feared Lentulus’ lethargic sleep here, nor Longinus’ fat, nor this Cethegus’ rashness. It was only Catiline I watched while he was within our walls, as the one who had the brain, the hand, the heart.

“But now we find the contrary! Where was there a people grieved, or a state discontent, able to make or help a war against Rome, but these, the Allobroges? And the conspirators found those men: the Allobroges.

“If the just gods had not been pleased to make the Allobroges friends to our safety more than to their own, as it then seemed, neglecting and despising these traitorous men’s offers, where would we have been, or where would the commonwealth have been, when their great chief — Catiline — had been called home to Rome?”

Lentulus' letter, which the Allobroges had turned over to Cicero, called for Catiline to return to Rome.

Cicero pointed to Lentulus and said:

“This man, their absolute king — whose noble grandfather, armed in pursuit of the seditious Caius Gracchus, took a brave wound for dear defense of that which Lentulus would spoil — had gathered all his aids of ruffians, slaves, and other slaughtermen, and he had given us — the Senators — up for murder to Cethegus.

“The other rank of citizens — the non-Senators — he gave up to Gabinius, the city was to be set on fire by Cassius, and Italy, nay, the world, was to be laid waste by cursed Catiline and his accomplices.

“Imagine it, Fathers, just think that with me you saw this glorious city, the light of all the earth, the tower of all nations, suddenly falling in one flame.

“Imagine you viewed your country buried under the heaps of slaughtered citizens who had no grave.

“Imagine this Lentulus here reigning, as he dreamt he would do, and imagine those conspirators his purple Senate.”

This society called the color of blood purple, and Roman Senators wore a tunic or a toga with a purple stripe.

Cicero continued:

“Imagine Catiline come with his fierce army; and imagine the cries of matrons, the flight of children, and the rape of virgins.

“Imagine the shrieks of the living, with the dying groans on every side to assault your sense of hearing.

“Imagine these things happening until the blood of Rome becomes mixed with her ashes!



“This was the spectacle these fiends intended to please their malice.”

Cethegus said, “Aye, and it would have been a brave one, Consul. But your part would then not have been as long as now it is. I would have quite spoiled and defeated your oration and slit that fine rhetorical pipe of yours in the first scene.”

“Insolent monster!” Cato said.

Cicero asked, “Fathers, is it your pleasures they shall be committed to some safe but free custody, until the Senate makes some other decision?”

A safe but free custody would be in a private home rather than in a prison. A leading citizen would be responsible for the detained person.

“It pleases us well,” the Senators said.

Cicero said:

“Then, Marcus Crassus, you take charge of Gabinius; send him home to your house.

“You, Caesar, take charge of Statilius.

“Cethegus shall be sent to Cornificius, and Lentulus shall be sent to Publius Lentulus Spinther, who now is an Aedile.”

Cato said, “It would be best for the Praetors to convey them under guard to their respective houses and hand them over.”

“Let it be so,” Cicero said.

He then ordered the Praetors, “Take them away from here.”

Julius Caesar said, “But first let Lentulus divest himself of his Praetorship.”

“I resign my Praetorship here to the Senate,” Lentulus said.

He removed his robe that indicated his rank.

Officials such as Praetors could not be imprisoned while in office.

“So, now there’s no offence done to religion,” Julius Caesar said.

Praetors could take the auspices, the performance of which was a religious rite. Julius Caesar had been elected Pontifex Maximus — the chief priest of the official state religion — and so he was concerned about offence done to religion. Now that Lentulus was no longer a Praetor, he could be imprisoned without offense done to religion.

“Caesar, it was piously and timely urged,” Cato said.

Flaccus, Pomptinus, and some guards exited with Lentulus, Cethegus, Statilius, and Gabinius.

Cicero asked the Senators, “What do you decree to the Allobroges who threw light on and revealed this rebellion by providing information?”

“A free grant from the state of all their suits,” Crassus said.

“And a reward out of the public treasury,” Julius Caesar said.

“Aye, and the title of honest men to crown them,” Cato said.

“What about Volturcius?” Cicero asked.

Once captured, Volturcius had informed on the other conspirators in return for mercy.

“Life and mercy are a good reward enough for him,” Julius Caesar said.

“I ask no more,” Volturcius said.

“Yes, yes, some money,” Cato said. “You need it. It will keep you honest: Poverty made you a knave.”

Silanus said, “Let Flaccus and Pomtinus, the Praetors, have public thanks, and Quintus Fabius Sanga, too, for their good service.”

“They all deserve it,” Crassus said.

Cato asked, “But what do we decree to the Consul — Cicero — whose virtue, counsel, watchfulness, and wisdom have freed the commonwealth and, without tumult, slaughter, or blood, or scarcely raising an army, rescued us all out of the jaws of fate?”

“We owe our lives to him, and our fortunes,” Crassus said.

“Our wives, our children, our parents, and our gods,” Julius Caesar said.

“We all are saved by his fortitude and moral courage,” Silvanus said.

“The commonwealth owes him a civic garland,” Cato said. “He is the only father of his country.”

A *corona civica*, or civic garland, which was made of oak leaves, was a reward for saving the lives of citizens. Another great honor was being given the title *pater patriae*: father of his country.

“Let there be public prayer to all the gods made in that name for him,” Julius Caesar said.

Crassus said:

“And in these words:

*“Because he has by his vigilance preserved Rome from the flame, the Senate from the sword, and all her citizens from massacre.”*

Cicero said, “How my labors are more than paid, grave Fathers, in these great titles and decreed honors!”

Cicero was the first Roman to be given these honors because of his devotion to his civic duty rather than for military victories. He had deserved these titles and honors not because he had acted as a general on a battlefield, but because he had acted as a statesman in Rome.

Cicero said:

“Ever since Rome became Rome, I am the first of the civil robe to receive these titles and honors, and I have received them from this frequent — full, well-attended — Senate, which more gladdens me because I now see you have the sense of your own safety.

“If those good days come no less pleasing to us wherein we are preserved from some great danger than those wherein we’re born and brought to light — because the gladness of our safety is certain, but the condition of our birth not so, and because we are saved with pleasure, but are born without the sense of joy —”

We take pleasure in being saved as adults because we are aware that we are being saved, but an infant who is being born does not have the knowledge needed to feel pleasure at being born. An infant does not know the condition of his or her birth — is the infant born into the Senatorial class or is the infant born into a family that cannot feed it?

If we are saved, we know that we have been saved and we feel pleased that we have been saved. Being born is most likely a scary process for the infant. Most infants cry immediately after birth.

When Rome was born — founded — no one could know (outside of mythology) how great it would become.

Cicero’s listeners knew how great a city (and empire) had been saved through Cicero’s efforts.

Cicero continued, “— why shouldn’t then this day, to us and all descendants of ours, be had in equal fame and honor with that when Romulus first reared these walls, when so much more is saved than he built?”

The founding of Rome was an important event, and the saving of Rome — and all that Rome had acquired and accomplished since its founding — was an important event.

“It ought to be,” Julius Caesar said.

“Let it be added to our *fasti* — calendar — as an important historical event,” Crassus said.

Loud voices sounded outside.

“What tumult’s that?” Cicero asked.

Flaccus entered the scene and said, “Here’s one Tarquinius captured, going to Catiline, and he says he was sent by Marcus Crassus, whom he names as one guilty of the conspiracy.”

“He is some lying varlet,” Cicero said. “Take him away to prison.”

“Bring him in and let me see him,” Marcus Crassus requested.

“He is not worth it, Crassus,” Cicero said.

He then ordered, “Keep Tarquinius shut up in prison, and hungry, until he tells by whose pernicious counsel he dares to slander so great and good a citizen as Crassus.”

Crassus said to himself, “By yours, I fear it will turn out.”

Crassus suspected that Cicero himself was the source of the pernicious counsel that had led to the slander or “slander” against him.

Silanus said to Crassus, “Some of the traitors, to be sure, in order to give their action the more credibility, told him to name you, or any man.”

Cicero said, “I myself know, by all the course of events of this business, that Crassus is noble and just, and he loves his country.”

Flaccus said, “Here is a document, too, accusing Caesar, from Lucius Vectius and confirmed by Curius.”

“Away with all of that,” Cicero said. “Throw it out of the court.”

“A trick on me, too?” Julius Caesar said.

“It is some men’s malice,” Cicero said. “I said to Curius that I did not believe him.”

“Wasn’t that Curius your spy who had a reward decreed to him in the last meeting of the Senate along with Fulvia, upon your private motion?” Caesar asked.

Cicero had specifically requested a reward for Curius and for Fulvia.

“Yes,” Cicero said.

“But he has not received that reward yet?” Julius Caesar asked.

“No,” Cicero said. “Don’t let this trouble you, Caesar; no one believes his accusation.”

“It shall not, as long as he receives no reward,” Julius Caesar said. “But if he does receive a reward, surely I shall think my reputation for loyalty to be very uncertain and unsafe, where such as he is may receive pay to accuse me.”

“You shall have no wrong done to you, noble Caesar,” Cicero said. “Instead, you shall have all satisfaction and contentment.”

“Consul, I am silent,” Julius Caesar said.

He was satisfied and content with Cicero’s statement.

— 5.4 —

Catiline addressed his soldiers in his military camp:

“I never yet knew, soldiers, that words added virtue to valiant men in a battle, or that a general’s oration made an army fall or stand; but how much military prowess and valor, formed by habit or inherent in his nature, each man’s breast was owner of, so much in action it showed.

“It is in vain to seek to influence with speech a man whom neither glory nor danger can excite; for the mind’s fear keeps all brave sounds from entering at that ear.

“Yet I would remind you of some few things, my friends, and give you reasons for my present plans and course of action.

“You know no less than I what state, what point and conditions, our affairs stand in. And you all have heard what a calamitous misery the sloth and sluggishness of Lentulus has plucked both on himself and on us.

“And you all have heard how, while our aids there in the city looked for are defeated, our entrance into Gallia, too, is stopped. Two armies lie in wait for us: one from Rome, the other from the provinces in Gaul. And where we are, although I most desire it, our great need of grain and other foods forbids us to stay longer. So necessarily we must move away from here, but the sword must both point to and cut the passage to where we move.

“I therefore wish you, when you strike, only to have your courage and your souls about you, and think you carry in your laboring hands the things you seek, glory and liberty, your country that you want now, with the fates that are to be instructed by our swords.”

Usually, ancient people believed that fate is fixed and actions are what is fated. Catiline, however, was saying that his soldiers’ swords would determine their fate.

Catiline continued:

“If we can give the conquering blow, all will be safe and secure for us. We shall not lack provisions, nor supplies. The colonies and free towns will lie open to us.

“Whereas, if we yield to fear, expect no place nor friend to shelter those whom their own fortune and ill-used arms have left without protection.

“You might have lived in servitude, or exile, or safe at Rome, depending on the politically powerful great ones except that you thought those things unfit for men.

“And in that thought you then were valiant. For no man ever yet exchanged peace for war except he who meant to conquer. Hold that purpose. Keep that intention. There’s more necessity you should be conquerors who are fighting for yourselves than those men who are fighting for others.

“That man is base who trusts his feet although his hands are armed — a noble man will not flee while he holds a weapon in his arms.

“I think I see Death and the Furies waiting to see what we will do, and all the gods in heaven at leisure to watch the great spectacle. Draw then your swords, and if our destiny envies our courage and begrudges it the honor of the day, let us still take care to sell ourselves at such a price as may



destroy the world to buy us, and to make Fate, while she attacks ours, fear her own estate.”

— 5.5 —

Pomtinus, Cicero, Silanus, Cato, Caesar, Crassus, and other members of the Senate stood together, along with some Lictors. They were going to decide the punishment of the conspirators who had been captured in Rome — without a trial.

“What is the meaning of this hasty calling of the Senate?” the first Senator said.

“We shall know immediately,” the second Senator said. “Wait until the Consul speaks.”

Pomtinus said:

“Fathers conscript, think about your safeties and what to do with these conspirators. Some of their clients, their freedmen — slaves they had freed — and their slaves begin to raise troops and start an insurrection.”

There had been attempts to rescue the conspirators.

Pomtinus continued:

“One of Lentulus’ bawds runs up and down the shops, through every street, with money to corrupt the poor artisans and needy tradesmen to their aid.

“Cethegus has sent, too, to his servants, who are many, picked out especially, and trained in bold assaults, to tell them that forthwith they should arm themselves and attempt to rescue him.

“All will be in instant uproar, if you don’t prevent it with immediate plans. We have done what we can to meet the fury, and we will do more.”

Guards had been stationed throughout Rome.

Pomtinus concluded:

“Be good to yourselves.”

Cicero addressed the Senators:

“What is your pleasure, Fathers, that shall be done?”

“Silanus, you are the Consul-elect; you will be the next Consul. What is your recommendation of the sentence to give these men?”

The Roman custom was for the Consul-elect to give his judicial opinion first. Once he took office, the Consul-elect would likely deal with much of the aftermath of the carrying out of the Senate’s sentence.

It was also the Roman custom, however, not to execute Roman citizens without giving them a trial. Lentulus and the other captured conspirators had not been given trials.

Silanus said:

“My recommendation is short, and it is this:

“Since the conspirators have sought to blot the name of Rome out of the world and raze this glorious empire with her own hands and arms turned on herself, I think it fitting that they die.

“And if my breath could now execute them, they should not enjoy a moment of time or tinge of light longer, to poison this our common air.”

“I think so, too,” the first Senator said.

“And I,” the second Senator said.

“And I,” the third Senator said.

“And I,” the fourth Senator said.

Cicero asked, “What is the sentence you recommend, Caius Caesar?”

Caius Julius Caesar said:

“Conscript Fathers, in great affairs, and in uncertain and controversial affairs, it behooves men who are asked their sentence to be free from either hate or love, anger or pity. For where the least of these hinders, there the mind does not easily discern the truth.

“I speak this to you in the name of Rome, for whom you stand, and to the case before us now:

“I say that this foul crime of Lentulus and the rest should not more prevail with you than your dignity, and you should not be more indulgent to your feelings than to your honor.

“If there could be found a pain or punishment equal to their crimes, I would help devise a plan for it and help execute it.

“But if the greatness of what they have done exceeds all man’s invention, I think it fitting to stop where our laws do.

“Poor petty states may alter their policies at their whim. And if they offend with anger, few know it because they are obscure; their fame and fortune are equal and the same — they are small.

“But the states that are the head of the world and live in that seen height, all mankind knows their actions.

“So we see the greater fortune has the lesser license and freedom of action. They must neither favor nor hate, nor be the least angry, for what with others is called anger, there is cruelty and pride.

“I know Silanus, who spoke before me, is a just, valiant man, a lover of the state, and one who would not in such a business use either judicial grace or judicial hatred.

“I also know well his manners and his modesty. Nor do I think his sentence cruel — for against such delinquents, what can be too bloody?

“But it is true that sentence is unacceptable to our state, since to an offending citizen of Rome our laws prescribe exile, and not death.

“Why then decrees he that? It would be wrong to think he decrees that out of fear, when, by the diligence of so worthy a Consul, all is made safe and secure.

“Is it for punishment? Why, death’s the end of evils, and a rest rather than a torment. It dissolves all griefs, and beyond death is neither worry nor joy.

“You hear that my recommended sentence would not have them die.

“What is my recommended sentence then?

“Set them free and increase Catiline’s army? So will they, if they are just banished.

“No, grave fathers, I would sentence them, first, to have their estates confiscated, and then, to have their persons remain prisoners in the free towns, far off from Rome and severed from it and from each other, where they might have relation hereafter neither to the Senate nor to the people.

“Or if they should have, those towns that were guarding them then would be fined as enemies to the state.”

The first Senator said, “What Caesar has uttered is good and honorable.”

Cicero said:

“Fathers, I see your faces and your eyes are all turned toward me, to see which of these two censures I prefer. Both censures are grave and corresponding to the dignity of the speakers and the greatness of the affair, and both censures are severe.

“One — Silanus — urges death; and he may well remember that this state has punished wicked citizens so.

“The other — Caesar — urges restraints, and those perpetual, which he thinks are devised as more appropriate punishments.

“Decree which you shall please. You have a Consul who is not readier to obey than to defend whatever you shall enact for the republic, and meet with willing shoulders any burden, or any fortune with equanimity, though it were death, which to a valiant man can never happen foul, nor to a Consul be premature, or to a wise man be wretched.”

Valiant men, Consuls, and wise men are always ready for death.

Consul-elect Silanus said, “Fathers, I spoke only as I thought the needs of the commonwealth required.”

Cato said, “Don’t excuse your recommendation.”

Cicero said, “Cato, speak your recommended sentence.”

Cato said:

“This it is.

“You here dispute about kinds of punishment and stand consulting about what you should decree against those whom you rather should beware.

“This evil deed is not like those common crimes that, when they are done, the laws may prosecute.

“But this evil deed, if you don’t prevent it before it happens, will not wait for your judgment once it has happened.”

The evil deed was revolution. Although these conspirators had been arrested, Catiline had an army and remained a danger to Rome.

If they could, most or all of the conspirators would join Catiline.

Cato continued:

“Good Caius Caesar here has very well and subtly discoursed of life and death, as if he thought those things a pretty fable that are related to us of Hell and Furies, or of the diverse way that evil men go from good to filthy, dark, and ugly places.

“And therefore he would have these live, and live long, too, but far from Rome and in the small free towns, lest here they might have rescue — as if men fit for such acts were only in the city, and not throughout all Italy! Or that boldness could not do more where it found least resistance!

“It is foolish advice, if he thinks the conspirators we have in custody are dangerous.

“And if he does not consider the conspirators dangerous, and he alone amid the so great fear of all men stands not frightened, he gives me cause, and you, more to fear him.”

If Julius Caesar alone was not frightened, then it could be because he himself was a secret conspirator.

Cato continued:

“I speak plainly, Fathers.

“Here you look about, one at another, doubting what to do, with faces as if you trusted to the gods who always have saved you — and they can do it.

“But neither wishings nor base womanish prayers can draw their aids, but only vigilance, counsel, action, which they will be ashamed to forsake.

“It is sloth the gods hate, and cowardice.

“Here you have the traitors in your houses, yet you stand doubting what to do with them. Let them loose, and send them away from here with arms, too, with the result that your mercy may become your misery as soon as it can.

“Some may say, ‘Oh, but they are great men, and they have offended only through ambition. We would spare their honor.’

“Aye, if they themselves had spared it, or their reputation, or their modesty, or either god or man, then I would spare them.

“But, as things now stand, Fathers, to spare these men would be to commit a greater wickedness than that which you would revenge.

“If there would be time and place for you to correct this error of sparing these conspirators’ lives, you should make it. It would be your punishment to feel your error of being dilatory and slow to do what needs to be done.

“But there is not time and place. Instead, necessity now bids me say to you: Let them not live an hour, if you intend that Rome should live a day.

“I have finished.”

“Cato has spoken like an oracle,” the first Senator said.

“Let it be so decreed,” Crassus said.

“We are all fearful,” the second Senator said.

“And we would have been base, had not Cato’s virtue raised us,” Silanus said.

“Proceed, most worthy Consul,” the third Senator said.  
“We’ll assist you.”

“I’m not yet changed in my opinion about the sentence, Fathers,” Julius Caesar said.

“That doesn’t matter,” Cato said.

A servant carrying letters entered the scene.

Cato asked the servant, “What are those?”

The servant replied, “Letters for Caesar.”

He handed the letters to Caesar and then exited.

“From whom?” Cato asked. “Let them be read in the open Senate. Fathers, they come from the conspirators. I crave to have them read, for the benefit of the republic.”

Julius Caesar said, “Cato, you read it.”

He handed a letter to Cato and said quietly to him, “It is a love letter from your dear sister to me. Although you hate me, do not make the letter public.”

Cato’s half-sister was Servilia. She was the mother of Brutus, a future assassin of Julius Caesar, with whom she was having an affair. She was also the wife of Consul-elect Silanus.

Believing Caesar and unwilling to make the contents of the letter public, Cato returned the letter and said, “Keep the letter, drunkard.”

He could have called Caesar an adulterer, but that would have meant calling his half-sister an adulterer, too.

Cato said to Cicero, “Consul, go forth, confidently.”

Julius Caesar said, “You’ll repent this rashness, Cicero.”



In fact, Cicero would suffer consequences for the executions of Roman citizens without first giving them a trial. Cicero would be prosecuted four years later for the execution of Lentulus, although Lentulus' sentence of death was awarded by the Senate. As a result, Cicero went into voluntary exile.

Drawing his sword, Pomptinus said, "Caesar shall repent it."

"Stop, friends!" Cicero ordered.

"Caesar is scarcely a friend to the people of Rome," Pomptinus said.

"No violence!" Cicero said. "Caesar, you are safe."

Cicero then ordered the Lictors, "Lead on."

The Lictors carried out the sentences the Senate gave to offenders. They would escort Cicero to the places where the conspirators were being held.

Cicero asked, "Where are the public executioners?"

He then said to Pomptinus, "Tell them to come to us."

Pomptinus exited.

Cicero then said to the Lictors, "Let's go to Spinther's house."

Publius Lentulus Spinther was responsible for guarding the conspirator Publius Cornelius Lentulus.

They went there, and Cicero said, "Bring Lentulus forth."

Pomptinus returned with the public executioners.

Lentulus arrived, under guard.

Cicero said to the executioners, "Here, you, the grave revengers of capital crimes against the public, take this man to your justice. Strangle him."

Lentulus said to Cicero, “You do well, Consul. It was a cast at dice — a matter of chance — in Fortune’s hand, not long since, that you yourself would have heard these or other words as fatal.”

In other words, if things had turned out differently, it would be you, Cicero, who would die.

The executioners exited with Lentulus in their custody.

Cicero said to the Lictors, “Lead us on to Quintus Cornificius’ house.”

They went there, and Cicero said, “Bring forth Cethegus.”

Cethegus, under guard, entered the scene.

The public executioners returned.

Cicero said to the public executioners, “Take him to the appropriate death that he has deserved, and let it be said: ‘He was once.’”

“He was once” meant “he once existed and now he does not,” but Cethegus treated it as an incomplete sentence that he now completed.

He said, “— a beast or, what is worse, a slave, Cethegus. Let that be the name for all that’s base hereafter: that Cethegus would let this worm Cicero pronounce on him, Cethegus, and not have trampled Cicero’s body into — Ha! Aren’t you angered?”

Cicero replied, “Justice is never angry.”

He then said to the executioners, “Take him away.”

Cethegus said, “Oh, the whore Fortune and her bawds, the Fates, who put these tricks on men who knew the way to death by a sword! Strangle me, so I may sleep; I shall grow angry with the gods else.”

Death by strangulation was regarded as a base death; death by a sword was much to be preferred.

Cethegus wanted to sleep after death. If the gods were to put his ghost in the Land of the Dead, he would be angry at them.

The executioners exited with Cethegus under guard.

Cicero said to the Lictors, "Lead us to Caius Caesar's, for Statilius."

They went there, and Cicero said, "Bring him and savage Gabinius out."

Gabinius and Statilius, under guard, entered the scene.

The public executioners returned.

Cicero said to the executioners, "Here, take them into your cold hands and let them feel death from you."

"I thank you," Gabinius said. "You do me a pleasure."

"And me, too," Statilius said.

The executioners exited with Gabinius and Statilius under guard.

Cato said to Marcus Tullius Cicero:

"So, Marcus Tullius, you may now stand up and call Rome happy because you are its Consul.

"Great parent of your country, go and let the old men of the city, before they die, kiss you. Let the matrons hang about your neck. Let the youths and maidens store up in their memory in preparation for when they are old what kind of man you were, so they can tell their nephews about you when, some year in the future, they read within our *fasti* about your Consulship."

Petreius entered the scene.

“Who’s this?” Cato asked. “Petreius?”

“Welcome,” Cicero said. “Welcome, renowned soldier. What’s the news? This face can bring no ill with it to Rome. How is the worthy Consul, my colleague Antonius?”

“As well as victory can make him, sir,” Petreius said. “He greets the fathers, and to me he has entrusted the sad relation of the civil strife, for in such civil war, even victory is still black.”

“Shall we withdraw into the Temple of Concord?” Cicero asked.

“No, happy, fortunate Consul,” Cato said. “Let’s stay here; let all ears take the benefit of this tale. If he — Petreius — had a loud enough voice to extend to the poles and strike it through the center to the antipodes on the other side of the world, the tale would ask for it.”

Petreius said:

“The straits and needs of Catiline being such that he must fight with one of the two armies that then had nearly enclosed and surrounded him, it pleased Fate to make us the object of his desperate choice, wherein the danger almost peised — counterbalanced — the honor.

“As Catiline rose and took up arms, the day grew black because of him, and Fate descended nearer to the earth, as if she meant to hide the name of things under her wings and make the world her quarry.

“At this we roused, lest one small minute’s delay would have left it to be inquired what Rome was. And, as we ought, armed in confidence of our great cause, we in battle formation stood.

“Catiline advanced, not with the face of any man, but with the face of a public ruin. His countenance was a civil war

itself. And all his soldiers had showing in their faces the paleness of the death that was to come.

“Yet they cried out like vultures and urged each other on, as if they would precipitate our fates, nor did we stay longer for them. We immediately advanced toward them.

“But Catiline himself struck the first stroke; and with it fled a life, which being cut, it seemed as if a narrow neck of land had broken between two mighty seas, and each flowed into the other, for so did the slaughter, and whirled about, as when two violent tides meet and do not yield.

“The Furies stood on hills circling the place and trembled to see men do more than they. Meanwhile, Piety left the field, grieved for that side that in so bad a cause they didn’t know what a crime their valor was.

“The Sun-chariot stood still and was, behind the cloud the battle made, seen sweating and laboring to drive up its frightened horses whom still the noise drove backward.

“And now fierce Enyo, like a flame, would have consumed all it could reach, and then itself, had not the fortune of the commonwealth come Pallas-like to every Roman thought.”

Enyo is the goddess of war. In this passage, she is metaphorically war.

Pallas is Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom. The loyal Roman army wisely remembered Rome and so fought fiercely. What was consumed was not both armies but only Catiline’s army.

Another Pallas is the son of King Evander, who lived in Italy. This young Pallas fought on the side of Aeneas, a survivor of the Trojan War who became an important ancestor of the Roman people, in Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Pallas died in the fighting, but Aeneas won the war.

Petreius continued:

“Catiline seeing that, and also seeing that now his troops covered that earth they’d fought on with their dead trunks, he, ambitious for great fame, to crown his evil, collected all his fury and ran, armed with a glory high as his despair, into our army, like a Libyan lion running upon his hunters, scornful of our weapons, not caring about wounds, plucking down lives about him, until he had circled in himself with death, surrounded by our soldiers.

“Then fell he, too, to embrace it — death — where it lay. And as in that rebellion against the gods, Minerva extending in her hands Medusa’s head (seeing which turns men into stone), one of the giant brethren — Enceladus — felt himself turn into marble at the fatal sight and, now almost made stone, began to inquire what flint, what rock it was that crept through all his limbs, and, before he could think more, he had become that which he feared he would become, so Catiline, at the sight of Rome in us, became his tomb; yet did his look retain some of his fierceness, and his hands still moved, as if he labored yet to grasp the state with those rebellious parts of his body.”

Cato said, “His was a brave, bad death. Had this death been loyal, now, and as for his country as it was against it, who previously had fallen greater than he?”

Cicero said, “Honored Petreius, Rome, not I, must thank you.”

He then said about Petreius, “How modestly has he spoken of himself!”

“He did the more,” Cato agreed.

Petreius had been the general of the Roman army. He was largely responsible for its success in battle.

Cicero said:

“Thanks to the immortal gods, Romans, I now am paid for all my labors, my watchings, and my dangers. Here conclude your praises, triumphs, honors, and rewards decreed to me.

“Only the memory of this glad day, if I may know it shall live within your thoughts, shall much affect and influence my conscience, which I must always prefer before fame.

“Though both be good, the latter yet is worst,

“And always is ill gotten without the first.”

## NOTES (*Catiline's Conspiracy*)

— 4.2 —

*Remember who I am, and of what place,  
What petty fellow this is that opposes:  
One that hath exercised his eloquence 100  
Still to the bane of the nobility,  
A boasting, insolent tongue-man.*

(4.2.98-102)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 4.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 127.

The below information comes from an article titled “SOCIAL CLASS AND PUBLIC DISPLAY”:

### Upper Classes

**Senatorial class (*senatores*):** The basis for this class was **political**. It included all men who served in the Senate, and by extension their families. This class was dominated by the **nobles** (*nobiles*), families whose ancestors included at least one Consul (earlier the qualification had been a curule magistracy, i.e. curule aedile and up). The first man in his family to be elected Consul, thus qualifying his family for noble status, was called a “new man” (*novus homo*), although this term was used in varying senses—it



could refer to an equestrian [sic] who was the first in his family to be elected to political office and thus join the senatorial class, or to a man from the senatorial class who was the first in his family to be elected Consul and thus join the nobles, or most dramatically to an equestrian like Cicero who was elected Consul. Senators had to prove that they had property worth at least 1,000,000 sesterces; there was no salary attached to service in the Senate, and senators were prohibited from engaging personally in nonagricultural business, trade or public contracts. Men of the senatorial class wore the tunic with broad stripes (*laticlavi*).

**Equestrian class (*equites*):** The basis for this class was **economic**. A man could be formally enrolled in the equestrian order if he could prove that he possessed a stable minimum amount of wealth (property worth at least 400,000 sesterces); by extension his family members were also considered equestrians. However, if an equestrian was elected to a magistracy and entered the Senate, he moved up to the senatorial class; this was not particularly easy or frequent. Equestrians were primarily involved in the types of business prohibited to senators. Equestrians wore the tunic with narrow stripes (*angusti clavi*).

Source of Above:

“SOCIAL CLASS AND PUBLIC DISPLAY

Barbara F. McManus

The College of New Rochelle

[bmcmanus@cnr.edu](mailto:bmcmanus@cnr.edu)

*January, 2009*

\*\*\*

The below information comes from the Wikipedia article titled “Cicero”:

*Cicero’s cognomen, or personal surname, comes from the Latin for chickpea, cicer. Plutarch explains that the name was originally given to one of Cicero’s ancestors who had a cleft in the tip of his nose resembling a chickpea. However, it is more likely that Cicero’s ancestors prospered through the cultivation and sale of chickpeas. Romans often chose down-to-earth personal surnames. The famous family names of Fabius, Lentulus, and Piso come from the Latin names of beans, lentils, and peas, respectively. Plutarch writes that Cicero was urged to change this deprecatory name when he entered politics, but refused, saying that he would make Cicero more glorious than Scaurus (“Swollen-ankled”) and Catulus (“Puppy”).*

Source: “Cicero.” Wikipedia. Accessed 13 July 2021

< <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cicero> >.

— 4.2 —

*Was on the fifth, the Kalends of November,*

(4.2.187)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 4.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 127.

According to *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, this is October 28.

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The Kalends is the first of the month, and days were counted before the Kalends. The Kalends itself is one of the days counted; in other words, the counting is inclusive.

*Ante diem quintum Kalendas Novembres*

October 28: fifth day before Kalends

October 29: fourth day before Kalends

October 30: third day before Kalends

October 31: day before Kalends

November 1: Kalends of November

Source of Above:

<http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/cal/novsas.htm>

The three-month calendar depicted on the web page below agrees with October 28 as the correct date:

<http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/cal/novsas.htm>

For More Information: “A Medieval English Calendar”

<http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/cal/medcal.shtml>

The below is a note from Lynn Harold Harris’ edition of *Catiline*:

**Was, on the fifth (the Kalends of Nouember).**

*W.’s emendation is undoubtedly right, and the line should read: on the fifth o’ the Kalends of November. Q2 omits the parenthesis, but lacks the o.’ The Kalends, being the first of the month, cannot*

*possibly be reconciled with the fifth, except by reading as above.*

Source of Above:

*Catiline his conspiracy*, by Ben Jonson, edited with introd., notes and glossary

by Lynn Harold Harris

New Haven, Yale University Press, 1916

P. 184.

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The Regents edition of the play states this in a note:

*[fifth ... November]* October 27, expressed in Roman style, *ante diem quintum Kalendas Novembres*.

Source: of Above:

*Catiline*. Ben Jonson. W.F. Bolton and Jane F. Gardner, ed. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1973.

P. 103.

Apparently, the Regents edition is incorrect because the counting should be inclusive:

*Days*

*While we count the days of the month forwards starting, for example, with the first of April and ending with the 30th, the Romans counted the days backwards. And not just from the end of the month, but from the first quarter and the middle of the month and then from the first day of the next month. So the day we would call the 20th day of January Romans would call the 13th day before the first of February. That arithmetic only works with inclusive counting*

— *count every day from 20 January to 1 February inclusive.*

Source of Above:

“The Roman Calendar”

Paul Lewis

Accessed 13 July 2021.

<http://www.web40571.clarahost.co.uk/roman/calhis.htm>

— 5.5 —

For Your Information:

CMHypno (Cynthia), “How and Why the Romans Executed People.” Owlcation. 8 June 2016

< <https://owlcation.com/humanities/roman-executions-why-the-romans-executed-people> >.

This short article does not mention strangling.

For Your Information:

infamost, “Top 10 Horrible Roman Execution Methods.” infamost. 28 May 2020

< <https://infamost.com/roman-execution-methods/> >.

Note: The readings above are not academic.

The below is from infamost, “Top 10 Horrible Roman Execution Methods”:

### **3. Strangulation**

Believe it or not but **spilling blood** inside the Ancient city of Rome (and outside of the arenas) was actually a **big taboo**. Therefore, one of the most common

methods of execution was **strangulation**, which conveniently didn't cause a bloody mess.

The condemned would first be **paraded all around the city** before being brought to the **Roman Forum**. There, the executioner would simply strangle the convicted felon to death with a rope.

Sometimes, the prisoner would just be paraded and **taken back to his cell** where he was then **strangled**. This was the case with for example **Vercingetorix**, a captured Gallic tribe leader who was brought to Rome and paraded during **one of 4 of Julius Caesar's triumphs in 46 B.C.**

Source of Above:

infamost, "Top 10 Horrible Roman Execution Methods."  
infamost. 28 May 2020

< <https://infamost.com/roman-execution-methods/> >.

## CHAPTER 6: Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*

### CAST OF CHARACTERS (*The Devil is an Ass*)

SATAN *the great devil*

PUG *the less devil (an imp)*

INIQUITY *the Vice*. The Vice was a stock character, often comic, in medieval morality plays. The Vice's job was supposed to be to tempt people to do evil. The Vice accompanied Satan. At the time of Ben Jonson's play, the Vice is an old-fashioned, out-of-date character.

FABIAN FITZDOTTREL *a squire of Norfolk (a dotterel is a foolish bird)*

MISTRESS FRANCES FITZDOTTREL *his wife. "Mistress" means "female head of the house." She was the mistress or lady-boss of the servants — or servant — in the household. Her husband sometimes calls her "wedlock," which is appropriate because her marriage is a form of imprisonment.*

MERECRAFT *the projector ("mere" means "solely," "completely," or "only"; "crafty" means "tricky" in an unethical sense). A projector comes up with moneymaking schemes; projectors need money to put into effect their moneymaking schemes. Merecraft is a con man.*

EVERILL *his champion and defender. Everill gets Merecraft access to wealthy men to defraud. Everill is a con man.*

WITTIPOL *a young gallant. "Wit" means intelligence, and "pol" means "head" or "parrot." The name is ambiguous, so readers will have to study his character to see whether he is an intelligent man or merely an intelligent parrot. Even an intelligent parrot is not very intelligent.*

EUSTACE MANLY *his friend. Manly is a good and ethical man.*

ENGINE *a broker (a middleman; an engine is a piece of trickery). Engine is a con man.*

TRAINS *the projector's (Merecraft's) manservant (a train is a lure or a bait)*

GILTHEAD *a goldsmith (a gilthead is a fish with gold markings on its head)*

PLUTARCHUS *his son*

SIR PAUL EITHERSIDE *a lawyer and Justice (lawyers can argue for either side: prosecution or defense)*

LADY EITHERSIDE *his wife*

LADY TAILBUSH *the lady projectress*

PITFALL *her female attendant (a pitfall is a trap)*

AMBLER *her gentleman usher*

SLEDGE *a blacksmith, the constable*

SHACKLES *jail keeper of Newgate prison*

SERGEANTS

Four JAIL KEEPERS

Three WAITERS

### **The Scene**

London

### **Notes**

In this culture, a man of higher rank would use words such as “thee,” “thy,” “thine,” and “thou” to refer to a servant. However, two close friends or a husband and wife could



properly use “thee,” “thy,” “thine,” and “thou” to refer to each other.

The word “sirrah” is a term usually used to address a man of lower social rank than the speaker. This was socially acceptable, but sometimes the speaker would use the word as an insult when speaking to a man whom he did not usually call “sirrah.” Close friends, whether male or female, could also call each other “sirrah.”

A purse is used to carry money. Men carried what they called a purse.

The word “wench” in Ben Jonson’s time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

The events of *The Devil is an Ass* take place in one day.

ACT 1 (*The Devil is an Ass*)

— 1.1 —

Satan and Pug, a minor devil, talked together in London. Pug had made a request to Satan that Satan was now laughing at. They were visiting earth, and Pug wanted to take possession of a body and stay there for a while.

“Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho,” Satan laughed. “To earth? And why do thou want to go to earth, thou foolish spirit? What would thou do on earth?”

“I want to go to earth to do, great chief, that which time shall show you,” Pug said. “I am asking only for my month on earth, which every petty, puny devil has. Within that length of time, the Court of Hell will hear something that may gain me a longer grant of time, perhaps, to spend on earth.”

Satan said, “For doing what?”

“Laming a poor cow or two?”

“Entering a sow to make her bear prematurely her farrow?”

“Or somewhere between this place and the village of Tottenham crossing the path of a market-woman’s mare and diverting it from its destination?”

The village of Tottenham was only a few miles from London.

Satan continued, “These are your usual main achievements, Pug.

“You must have some plot now concerning the storing of ale in casks: You want to make the yeast stale.

“Or you want to manage the churn so that the butter doesn’t form, despite the housewife’s cord, or her hot spit. You want

to keep the housewife's cord or her hot spit from making butter."

In this society, housewives believed that wrapping a cord around a churn or thrusting a hot spit into the cream would encourage the formation of butter.

Satan continued, "Or some good ribibe — old hag — about Kentish Town or Hoxton, in the area of north London, you would hang now for a witch because she will not let you play round Robin?"

Puck, in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is also known as Robin Goodfellow. He goes around and plays tricks such as some of the ones Satan says that Pug likes to perform. Puck's tricks are annoying, but they are not life threatening.

Satan continued, "And you'll go sour a citizen's cream in preparation for Sunday, so that she may be accused of it, and condemned by a Middlesex jury, to the satisfaction of their offended friends, the Londoners' wives, whose teeth were set on edge with it?"

Middlesex juries had a well-deserved reputation for severity.

Satan continued, "Foolish fiend, stay in your place, know your own strengths, and don't go beyond the sphere of your activity. You are too dull, stupid, and foolish a devil to be trusted out in those parts, Pug, upon any affair that may concern our name on earth. It is not everyone's work. The state of Hell must care whom it employs in point of reputation, here about London.

"You would make, I think, an agent to be sent to Lancashire properly enough, or some parts of Northumberland, as long as you would have good instructions, Pug."

In other words, Pug could do good work in Lancashire or in Northumberland, but not in and around London, which is just too evil for an imp like Pug to deal with.

“Oh, chief!” Pug said. “You do not know, dear chief, what is in me.

“Test me for just a fortnight, or for a week, and lend me only a Vice to carry with me and help me corrupt any playfellow, and you will see that there will come more out of it than you’ll imagine, precious chief.”

A Vice was a companion of devils such as Satan. They had various names, which were the names of specific moral vices.

“What Vice?” Satan asked. “What kind of Vice would thou have?”

“Why, any,” Pug said. “Let the Vice be Fraud, or Covetousness, or Lady Vanity.

“Or old Iniquity — I’ll call him here.”

He called, “Iniquity!”

Iniquity the Vice appeared and said, “Who is he who calls upon me, and would seem to lack a Vice? Before his words are half spoken, I am with him in a trice, and here, there, and everywhere, as the cat is with the mice. I am true *vetus Iniquitas*.”

Iniquity the Vice knew Latin: *Vetus Iniquitas* is Latin for “old Inequity.”

The word “iniquity” means “gross injustice” or “wickedness.”

Iniquity the Vice said, “Do thou lack cards, friend, or dice? I will teach thee to cheat, child, to swindle and cheat, lie, and

swagger, and forever and at once to be drawing forth thy dagger.

“I will teach thee to swear by Gog’s nouns — by God’s wounds — like a Lusty Juventus — like a Pleasure-Seeking Young Man.

“You will wear a cloak down to thy heel, and a hat like a penthouse, aka awning, Thy breeches will have three fingers of padding, and thy jacket will be all belly because it is stuffed with bombast — stuffing.

“And you will be with a wench who shall feed thee with aphrodisiacal cock-stones that are found in the gizzards of roosters — this wench will also feed thee with jelly.”

Iniquity the Vice skipped with delight.

Pug said to Satan, “Isn’t it excellent, chief? How nimble he is!”

Iniquity the Vice said, “Child of Hell, this is nothing! I will perform a leap from the top of the steeple of St. Paul’s Cathedral” — Iniquity the Vice was out of touch because lightning-caused fire had destroyed the steeple in 1561, and the current year was 1616 — “to the Standard, an ornamental pillar in Cheapside, and lead thee a dance through the streets without fail, as if I were a high-quality needle made in Spain, with a thread at my tail.”

Spanish lovers had a red-hot reputation, and readers can guess the meaning of a Spanish “needle.” (Non-metaphorical Spanish needles also had a reputation for good quality.)

The tail was the Vice’s bottom, and the non-metaphorical thread was his devil’s tail.

Iniquity the Vice now described a journey through disreputable areas of London, such as those filled with prostitutes, thieves, pubs, and lawyers:

“We will survey the suburbs, and make forth our sallies —

“We will go down Petticoat Lane and up the Smock Alleys  
— those haunts of prostitutes —

“We will go to Shoreditch, which is known for prostitutes;  
Whitechapel, which is known for thieves; and so continue on  
to St. Katherine’s precinct, which is known for pubs — we  
will drink with the alcohol-loving Dutch there, and take  
away from there their patterns for weaving.

“From thence we will put in at Custom House Quay and see  
how the mercantile agents and apprentices play false with  
their masters; and geld — lighten — many a full pack, to  
spend it on pies at the Dagger and the Woolsack taverns.”

The mercantile agents and apprentices would steal items to  
sell to make money to spend on pies.

“Brave, brave Iniquity!” Pug said.

He then asked Satan, “Won’t this do, chief?”

Iniquity the Vice said:

“Boy, I will bring thee to the bawds and the roisterers  
feasting with claret wine and oysters at Billingsgate.

“From thence we will use oars to shoot boats upstream  
through the narrow arch-supports of the London Bridge,  
child, to go to the Cranes in the Vintry — three cranes used  
to upload wine from boats — and see there the gimlets that  
are used for piercing casks of wine, and see how they make  
their entry!

“Or if thou had rather go down to the Strand, in time to watch  
as the lawyers come dabbled — they dabble in law — from  
Westminster Hall, and observe closely how they cling with  
their clients together. As ivy is to oak, so velvet is to leather.”

The lawyers wore velvet, and the clients wore leather.

Iniquity the Vice concluded, “Ha, boy, the things I would show thee!”

“Splendid!” Pug said. “Splendid!”

Satan said to Iniquity the Vice, “Be quiet, dotard!”

He then said to Pug, “And thou more ignorant thing, who so admires Iniquity the Vice, are thou the spirit thou seem to be? Are thou so poor and misguided that thou choose this for a Vice to advance the cause of Hell now, as vice stands this present year?”

“Remember what number this year is: six hundred and sixteen.”

The year was 1616, but Satan did not want to number years using “A.D.,” which is an abbreviation of the Latin “*Anno Domini*,” which means “In the year of Our Lord.”

Satan was missing a thousand years in his reckoning.

Revelation 20:1-3 states this (King James Version):

*1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.*

*2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,*

*3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*

Most Christian authorities would say that these thousand years of imprisonment have not yet occurred, for they occur after the Second Coming of Christ.

Satan continued, “Had the number but been five hundred, though some sixty above — that’s fifty years gone, and six —”

He meant the year 560, although that year was actually 1560 A.D. From 616 take away 56, and you have 560. In the year 1560, the theatrical characters known as Vices were popular on the stage in England. By 1616, these characters were old fashioned.

Satan continued, “Back then, when every great man had his Vice stand by him — the Vice wearing a long coat and shaking his wooden dagger — I could consent that then this your grave choice might have done, with his lord chief, that which most of his chamber can do now. Back then, a Vice could be an effective diabolical companion.

“But Pug, as the times now are, who is it who will receive thee? What company will you go to, or whom will thou mix with?

“Where can thou carry the Vice, except to taverns? In a tavern, the Vice will stand on a joint-stool with a Jew’s harp, in order to put down and defeat the improvisatory jester Cokeley, and such performances must be before ordinary citizens. He never will be admitted there where Vennar comes.”

Richard Vennar announced that a new play would be performed on 6 November 1602 at the Swan Theater; he collected the admission money to see the play and then disappeared without having the play performed. According to Satan, Iniquity the Vice may be able to compete against the jester Cokeley in modest venues, but never could he compete against a con man such as Vennar, who operated in better venues.

Satan continued:



“Iniquity the Vice may perhaps, at the end of a sheriff’s dinner, skip with a rhyme on the table from new nothing — sing a doggerel song about nothing new — and take his almain — dancing — leap into a giant custard. This shall make my Lady Mayoress and her sisters laugh with all their French hoods over their shoulders.”

The Fool of the Lord Mayor of London would traditionally leap into a large bowl of custard as part of the entertainment at some feasts.

Satan continued:

“But this kind of thing is not what will do to accomplish the purposes of Hell.

“There are other things that are received now upon earth for Vices. There are stranger, and newer, Vices — and they are changed every hour.

“The newer Vices ride the older Vices like they ride their horses off their legs, and the older Vices come here to Hell, whole legions of them, every week, tired and exhausted.”

According to Satan, Vices such as old Iniquity could no longer compete with the new Vices that were appearing in London. The competition to commit vice had grown so fierce that Hell struggled to keep up.

Satan continued:

“We still strive to breed and rear up new Hell-Vices for Londoners, but the new Hell-Vices do not stand tall when they come to London. The Londoners turn our new Hell-Vices upside down and on our hands, and it is feared that the Londoners have a stud of their own that will put down ours.”

Satan was punning bawdily. The noun “a stand” means “an erection” and the verb “to stand” means “to have an

erection.” The new Hell-Vices were impotent against the Londoners and their London-Vices.

Satan continued:

“Both our breed and trade will suddenly decay and dwindle unless we prevent it. Unless our Hell-Vice is a Vice of Quality or of Fashion now, the Londoners will not take it from us.

“Cart-men have gotten into the use of yellow starch, and chimney-sweepers have gotten into the use of their tobacco and strong waters: the strong ale known as hum, and mead, and obarni, which is scalded mead.”

A woman named Anne Turner introduced the use of yellow starch to England. In 1615, she was tried for complicity in the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury. Found guilty, she was forced to wear yellow ruffs at her execution, at which she confessed that the devil had possessed her.

Satan continued:

“We must therefore aim at sending extraordinarily subtle Hell-Vices now, when we send a Vice to London, to keep us up in credit. We must not send old Iniquities!”

Satan said to Iniquity the Vice, “Get you back all the way to Hell, sir. Return to the making of your rope of sand again.”

No one can make a rope out of sand; attempting to do so is meaningless work.

The punishments in Hell often consist of meaningless work, as these two punishments show:

1) The fifty sons of Aegyptus wanted to marry the fifty daughters of Danaus. Danaus was suspicious of Aegyptus and his fifty sons, so he fled with his fifty daughters, but Aegyptus and his fifty sons pursued them. To avoid a battle,

Danaus told his fifty daughters to marry the fifty sons of Aegyptus, but although he allowed the marriages to be performed he also ordered his fifty daughters to kill the fifty sons of Aegyptus. All of his daughters except Hypermnestra, who had married Lynceus, obeyed. Hypermnestra spared Lynceus because he treated her with respect and did not force her to have sex with him their first night together. The gods did not like what the forty-nine women who had killed their husbands had done, and so those forty-nine daughters are punished in the Land of the Dead with meaningless work. They are condemned to spend all their time trying to fill up with water a container that has a big leak and so can never be filled. Only one daughter avoided this eternal punishment.

2) When Sisyphus was on his deathbed, he ordered his wife not to give his corpse a funeral. After his death, his spirit went to the Land of the Dead and complained to Pluto, King of the Dead, that he had not yet had a funeral. Pluto allowed him to return to the Land of the Living so that he could tell his wife to give him a funeral, but once he was back in the Land of the Living, he refused to return to the Land of the Dead. He lived to an advanced old age and then died again. Now he is forced to forever roll a boulder up a hill. Just as he reaches the top of the hill, he loses control of the boulder and it rolls back to the bottom of the hill again. Sisyphus can never accomplish this task, which has no value, and so his punishment is endless meaningless work.

Satan continued speaking to Iniquity the Vice:

“You are not for the Londoners’ manners, nor the Londoners’ times.

“They have their Vices there in London that are very similar to Virtues. You cannot tell them apart by any difference. They wear the same clothes, eat the same food, sleep in the same beds, ride in those coaches — or, very likely, four horses in a coach — as the best men and women.

“Tissue gowns, garters, and the shoe decorations known as roses, which are worth fourscore pound a pair, embroidered stockings, cut-work smocks and shirts — all of these are more certainly marks of lechery and pride now, than ever they were of true nobility!”

Religious people preached sermons against lechery and pride, both of which are deadly sins.

They also preached sermons against extravagant clothing and starch, including yellow starch. Tissue gowns were expensive — tissue cloth looked like cloth of gold. Roses were ornaments on the tops of shoes. Cut-work was elaborate embroidery with pieces of cloth cut out.

At one time in London, only the nobles wore such expensive clothing — laws of the time forbade wearing clothing designated for those above one’s station in life. But now, in 1616, because of the sinful nature of the Londoners, even the drivers of carts had been using yellow starch. Previously, you could separate the nobles and the common people in London, but now that was difficult. Previously, you could separate the vices and the virtues in London, but now that was difficult — often, what seemed to be a virtue turned out to be a vice.

Iniquity the Vice bowed his head in shame and exited.

Satan then said, “But Pug, since you burn with such desire to do the commonwealth of Hell some service, I am content that you assume a body, go to earth, and visit men for one day.

“But you must take a ready-made body, Pug. I can create you none. Creation is not reserved for devils such as me.

“Nor shall you form yourself an airy body, for instead you must become subject to all impressions of the flesh you take so far as human frailty. You will be able to feel pain.

“So, there is a handsome cutpurse to be hanged at Tyburn this morning. Once his spirit has departed, you may enter his body.

“As for clothes, employ your credit with the hangman, or let our tribe of brokers furnish you with clothing.”

Pug would go to earth and take possession of a naked dead body. He could get clothing from the hangman, part of whose compensation was the clothing of the people he hanged, or he could go to a pawnbroker, a member of a profession closely associated with Hell. Or he could find a third way to get clothing.

Satan continued:

“And see how far your subtlety can work through those organs; with that body, spy among mankind — you cannot there lack vices to spy upon, and therefore the less need you have to carry Vices with you. But as you make your soon-to-come early-at-night’s relation of your day to us, we will listen and if we shall find it merits reward from the state of Hell, you shall have both trust and employment from us.”

Satan was using the majestic plural.

“Most gracious chief!” Pug said.

“Only this much more do I bind you,” Satan said. “You must serve the first man whom you meet — and that man I’ll show you now.”

A mortal man named Fitzdottrel walked near them.

Satan continued:

“Observe him. Yonder is the man whom you shall see first, after you find some clothing to wear.

“Follow him. But once you are engaged to serve him, there you must stay and be fixed in that job, and not shift to any other employment until the midnight’s cock crows.”

“I agree to any conditions so long as I can be gone!” Pug said.

“Leave, then,” Satan said.

Satan and Pug exited.

— 1.2 —

Fitzdottrel, who was holding a picture of a devil, really wanted to see a devil. He had been trying to get help from occultists to do just that.

He said to himself, “Aye, they do now name Bretnor, as before they talked of Gresham, and of Doctor Forman, Franklin, and Fiske, and Savory — he was in on the murder, too — but there’s not one of these who ever could yet show a man the Devil in his true form.”

These people were con men, astrologers, and quacks. Some of them were connected with the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, who was poisoned in 1613. Anne Turner, who introduced the use of yellow starch in England, was executed in connection with that murder. Franklin was the apothecary who supplied the poison that killed Sir Thomas Overbury.

Fitzdottrel continued, “They have their crystals, I know, and rings, and virgin parchment, and their dead men’s skulls, their ravens’ wings, their candles, and pentacles with characters — I have seen all these.”

Charms were written on parchment; the skins of newborn lambs and kids (baby goats) are used to make virgin parchment. A pentacle is a pentagram; mystical characters were inscribed on pentagrams.

Fitzdottrel continued, “But — I wish that I might see the Devil! I would give a hundred of these pictures to see him once out in person and not in a picture.”

He looked at the picture of a devil and then said, “May I prove to be a cuckold, a man with an unfaithful wife — and that’s the one main mortal thing I fear — if I don’t begin now to think that the painters have only made up the Devil and that devils don’t really exist.

“By God’s light, the Devil would have been seen at one time or another if he really existed.

“The Devil would not let an antique gentleman of as good a family as most are now in England — because King James I sells titles for money — run wild and call upon him thus in vain, as I have done this past year.”

Fitzdottrel was an “antique” gentleman in the sense that the Fitzdottrels were a long-standing family of the gentle class.

He continued, “If the Devil does not at all exist, then why are there conjurers who say that they can summon devils? If they are not truly conjurers, then why are there laws against them? The best artists — learned men — of Cambridge, Oxford, Middlesex, and of London, Essex, and Kent, I have had in pay to raise the Devil these fifty weeks, and yet the Devil has not appeared. By God’s death, I shall suspect the conjurers can make circles only shortly — small circles made for only a short time — and know only his hard names.”

The conjurers had failed to summon the Devil. Why? Perhaps the circles they made around themselves for protection against the Devil they tried to summon were too small, or perhaps the conjurers gave up too quickly. Also, perhaps they lacked knowledge. Perhaps they knew only the names of the Devil — lists of these names were available —

and lacked the other, specialized knowledge that a real conjuror possessed.

Fitzdottrel continued, “They say that the Devil will meet a man in person who has a mind to him. If he would do so, I have a mind and a half for him. By God’s light, he should not be long absent.

“I pray to thee, the Devil, come — I long for thee!

“If I were with child by him, and my wife, too, I could not long for thee more.

“Come, yet, good Beelzebub!”

Beelzebub was one of the Devil’s many names. “Good” is an adjective not normally applied to Satan.

Fitzdottrel continued, “If he were a kind Devil, and had humanity in him, he would come just to satisfy one’s longing.

“I would treat him well, I swear, and I would treat him with respect, if he were to test me.

“I would not treat him as the conjurers do when they have raised him. They put him in bonds, and send him posthaste on errands a thousand miles in distance. That is preposterous, and, I believe, that is the true reason he does not come. And he has good reason. Who would be bound, who might live freely, as he may do?

“I swear all the conjurers are wrong. The burnt child dreads the fire. They do not know to treat the Devil and keep him in service. I would so welcome him, observe his diet, get him his own chamber that is decorated with wall hangings — two of them — in my own house, lend him my wife’s embroidered pillows, and as I am an honest man, I think, if he had a mind to my wife, too, I would grant her to him, to



make our friendship perfect. I would not do that for every man.

“I wish that the Devil would just hear me now, and would come to me in a brave young shape, and would take me at my word!

“Ha! Who is this?”

— 1.3 —

Pug walked over to Fitzdottrel. Pug had possessed the body of the recently hanged handsome young cutpurse, and he was now dressed in a fine new suit.

Pug said, “Sir, I beg your good pardon for my thus presuming upon your privacy. I was born a gentleman, I am a younger brother, and I am in some disgrace now with my friends and need some little means to keep me upright, until things can be reconciled. May it please you to let my service be of use to you, sir.”

The bulk of an inheritance passed to the oldest son, and so a younger son, who was the oldest son’s brother, was often left with little wealth.

Pug was asking Fitzdottrel to employ him — to put him in service.

“Service?” Fitzdottrel said to himself. “Before Hell, my heart was at my mouth until I had viewed his shoes well, for those roses on his shoes were big enough to hide a cloven foot.”

Fitzdottrel had just asked the Devil to appear, and Pug had appeared, and so Fitzdottrel at first thought that Pug was the Devil, especially because the Devil was thought to have cloven feet that could be covered by the large roses that Pug was wearing on his feet.

Fitzdottrel carefully looked again at Pug's feet to see if he could tell whether they were cloven. They weren't, but Pug will explain that the Devil's — and the devils' — cloven feet are just a myth.

“No, friend, my number of servants is full,” Fitzdottrel said to Pug. “I have one servant, who is my all, indeed, and does everything from the broom to the brush, for just so far I trust him. He is my wardrobe man, buyer of provisions, cook, butler, and steward; he looks after my horse, and helps to watch my wife. He has all the places that I can think of, from the garret downward even to the manger and the curry-comb for currying horses. My one servant does all of that.”

“Sir, I shall put Your Worship to no charge other than my food, and as for my food I eat only a very little,” Pug said. “I'll serve you for your friendship.”

Pug was offering to work for no wages, but only food. He did not ask for shelter because he was authorized to be on earth and out of Hell for only one day.

“Ha?” Fitzdottrel said. “You will work without wages? I'd hearken in my ear, if I were at leisure. But now I'm busy. Please, friend, forgive me. If thou had been a devil, I would say somewhat more to thee. Thou are hindering now my meditations.”

“Sir, I am a devil,” Pug said.

“What!” Fitzdottrel said.

“I am a true devil, sir.”

“Nay, now you lie — under your favor, friend, for I'll not quarrel,” Fitzdottrel said.

This society had rules regarding duels. Normally, being called a liar meant challenging the person who called you a liar to duel. But using the phrase “under your favor” and

using the word “friend” qualified the assertion enough that a challenge to duel need not be issued.

Fitzdottrel said, “I looked at your feet earlier; you cannot trick me. Your shoe’s not cloven, sir, you are whole hoofed. Devils have cloven hooves.”

Fitzdottrel looked at Pug’s feet again.

“Sir, that’s a popular error that deceives many,” Pug said. “But I am what I tell you I am: I am a devil.”

“What’s your name?”

“My name is Devil, sir.”

“Is what you are saying true?”

“Indeed, it is, sir.”

“By God’s eyelid!” Fitzdottrel said. “There’s some omen in this! What part of the country are you from?”

“I am from Derbyshire, sir, about the Peak Cavern,” Pug said.

“That hole belonged to your ancestors?”

“Yes, it is called the Devil’s Arse, sir.”

Fitzdottrel said to himself, “I’ll employ him for the namesake, and I will turn away my other manservant, and save four pounds a year by doing that! There’s luck, and thrift, too! The Devil himself may come hereafter as well.”

He said to Pug, “Friend, I receive you into my service. But first I must inform you of this beforehand: If you offend me, I must beat you. It is a kind of exercise I am accustomed to use, and I cannot be without it.”

“Yes, if I do not offend, then you can follow your rule, certainly,” Pug said.

If he never offended, he would never be beaten, and so Pug was OK with Fitzdottrel following that rule.

“Indeed, Devil, I will follow my rule very heartily!” Fitzdottrel said. “I’ll call you by your surname, because I love it.”

— 1.4 —

Wittipol, Manly, and Engine talked together. Wittipol was a young gallant, Manly was his friend, and Engine was a middleman or broker. Engine was carrying a cloak.

Engine said to Wittipol, “Yonder Fitzdottrel walks, sir. I’ll go lift him for you.”

The phrase “lift him” meant 1) “make him excited in emotion” and 2) “excite his pride.” In addition, “lift” is a pun because some engines do the work of lifting.

“To him, good Engine, raise him up by degrees, gently, and hold him there, too,” Wittipol said. “You can do it. Show yourself now a mathematical — exact and calculating — broker.”

“I’ll warrant you that I will for half a piece,” Engine said.

A piece is a gold coin worth 22 shillings.

“It is done, sir,” Wittipol said. “Half a piece, it is.”

Engine took Fitzdottrel aside and spoke to him.

Manly asked, “Is it possible that there should be such a man?”

Engine and Wittipol were trying to persuade Fitzdottrel to do something that most husbands would never consider doing.

“You shall be your own witness,” Wittipol said. “I’ll not labor to tempt you past your faith.”

In other words, Manly would see the evidence for himself that yes, such a man exists; there was no need for Wittipol to persuade him that such a man exists. That kind of persuasion could result in a trial of faith, including faith that men are basically good.

“And is his wife so very beautiful, do you say?” Manly asked.

“I have not seen her since I came home from travel, and they say she is not altered,” Wittipol said. “According to other people, she still looks the same as when I left. Back then, before I went, I saw her only once; but even so, she has stayed always in my mind’s eye — no object has removed her.”

“Beauty is a fair guest, friend,” Manly said, “and once lodged deep in the eyes, she hardly leaves the inn. How does her husband, Fitzdottrel, keep her?”

“He keeps her very finely dressed,” Wittipol said. “However sordid he himself is, he is sensual that way. In every dressing he studies her.”

Fitzdottrel carefully looked at his wife in each outfit she wore, and he may have carefully studied her each time she dressed.

The word “sordid” means “dirty” or “mean.” Certainly, Fitzdottrel overvalued money in some areas of his life. As we have seen, he paid his one servant only four pounds a year. In other areas of his life, however, such as his wife’s clothing, he was willing to spend money.

“And he furnishes himself from the brokers?” Manly asked.

A broker was a middleman in bargains; for example, some people would go to a broker and pawn fine clothing. For special occasions, Fitzdottrel rented fine clothes for himself. He was willing to spend much money to dress himself well.

“Yes,” Wittipol said, “that’s a hired suit he now has on in order to see the play *The Devil is an Ass* today. This man named Engine gets three or four pounds a week by him. Fitzdottrel dares not miss a new play or a feast, whatever the rate he has to pay for hired clothes, and he thinks that he himself is still new in other men’s old.”

The clothing he wore may have been other men’s old clothing, but the clothing was new to Fitzdottrel.

“But wait,” Manly said, thinking about the feasts Fitzdottrel attended. “Does he love food so much?”

“Truly, he does not hate it,” Wittipol said. “But that’s not it. His belly and his palate would be compounded with for reason — he puts other priorities before his appetite. Indeed, he has an intelligence of that strange credit with him as opposed to all other men, as it makes him do just what it wishes. This strange obsession ravishes him forth wherever it pleases, to any assembly or place, and would make him conclude that he is ruined should he miss one public meeting because of the belief he has of his own great and catholic — universal and all-encompassing — strengths in arguing and discourse.”

Fitzdottrel attended feasts but not because of the food. He had convinced himself that he was a very intelligent man and a fine persuasive speaker, and that was why he attended so many public meetings and assemblies.

Engine had persuaded Fitzdottrel to try on the cloak.

“My plot is working, I see,” Wittipol said. “Fitzdottrel has got the cloak on him.”

Fitzdottrel said to Engine, “This is a fair garment, I swear by my faith, Engine!”

“It was never made, sir, for under threescore pounds, I assure you,” Engine said.

Any assurance made by Engine ought not to be reassuring: He was a con man.

Engine continued, “It will yield thirty pounds if sold.”

Threescore pounds is sixty pounds. Engine meant that the cloak could be worn for a while and then sold used for thirty pounds. Or perhaps the cloak was worth thirty pounds, not sixty.

Engine continued, “The plush, sir, cost three pounds, ten shillings a yard! And then there is the cost of the lace and velvet.”

This was a very fancy and very expensive cloak.

“I shall, Engine, be looked at prettily when I wear it!” Fitzdottrel said. “Are thou sure the play is played today?”

Engine handed Fitzdottrel a paper and said, “Oh, here’s the playbill, sir. I forgot to give it to you.”

“Ha? *The Devil is an Ass!*” Fitzdottrel said. “I will not lose you, sirrah — I will not miss this play! But, Engine, do you think that the gallant is so furious in his folly? So mad upon the matter that he’ll part with his cloak upon these terms you have told me?”

Engine said, “Trust not your Engine —”

Good advice, that.

He continued, “— if the gallant will not part with the cloak upon those terms, then break me to pieces, as you would a

rotten crane or an old rusty jack-tool that does not have one true wheel. Do just talk with him.”

“I shall do that to satisfy you, Engine,” Fitzdottrel said, “and myself, too.”

Fitzdottrel went to Wittipol and Manly and said, “With your leave, gentlemen, which of you is he who is so complete an idolater to my wife’s beauty, and so very prodigal to my patience, that for the short parley of one swift quarter-hour’s conversation with my wife he will part with — let me see — this cloak here, the price of folly?”

Fitzdottrel thought that Wittipol was a fool to part with the cloak in return for fifteen minutes’ conversation with Fitzdottrel’s wife. Readers may think that Fitzdottrel was a fool for accepting the cloak in return for allowing Wittipol to have fifteen minutes’ conversation with Fitzdottrel’s wife.

He turned to Wittipol and asked, “Sir, are you the man?”

“I am that venturer, sir,” Wittipol said.

“Very good!” Fitzdottrel said. “Your name is Wittipol?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And it is told to me that you’ve travelled lately?”

“That I have, sir.”

“Truly, your travels may have altered your complexion,” Fitzdottrel said. “But surely, your intelligence stood still.”

“It may well be, sir,” Wittipol said. “All heads have not the same growth.”

Travel can alter people. It can make a complexion darker, and it can broaden one’s intelligence. Fitzdottrel was saying that Wittipol’s complexion may have changed, but his



intelligence had remained the same — he had not grown more intelligent.

“The good man’s gravity that left you land, your father, never taught you these pleasant matches?” Fitzdottrel asked.

The word “match” has several meanings: 1) a husband or wife or lover, 2) an opponent, 3) a contest, and 4) a bargain.

Fitzdottrel was asking if Wittipol’s late father had taught him to make such bargains as the one Wittipol was now proposing. Perhaps the reason for Wittipol’s making such bargains was his father.

“No, nor can his mirth — the mirth of those with whom I make these pleasant matches — put me off,” Wittipol said.

Fitzdottrel was smiling at what he thought was the foolishness of Wittipol’s making such a bargain.

“You are resolved then to make this bargain?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“Yes, sir.”

“Beauty is the saint you’ll sacrifice yourself to the very shirt?”

Would Wittipol give up his cloak and strip himself to the shirt in order to talk to a beautiful woman — another man’s wife — for fifteen minutes?

“So long as I may still clothe, and keep warm your wisdom!” Wittipol said.

The cloak would clothe Fitzdottrel and keep him warm; in addition, Wittipol would still have clothing to wear.

Wittipol was using the word “wisdom” ironically when using it to refer to Fitzdottrel. Each man thought that the other man was a fool. Currently, both men were right.

Wittipol was pursuing Fitzdottrel's wife, and Fitzdottrel was allowing Wittipol access to his wife.

"You lade me, sir!" Fitzdottrel said.

Fitzdottrel meant that Wittipol was lading him with a cloak — Wittipol was putting a cloak on Fitzdottrel's back. One meaning of the verb "to lade" is "to load with gifts." Readers may be forgiven for thinking of an ass being laden with a load.

Yet another meaning of "to lade" was "to burden with guilt." Certainly, Fitzdottrel ought to feel guilty about the way he was acquiring this cloak, expensive as it may be.

"I know what you will bear, sir," Wittipol replied.

An ass can bear a heavy load. Fitzdottrel could bear a heavy load of insults.

"Well, let's get to the point," Fitzdottrel said. "The point of this bargain is only, sir, you say, to speak to my wife?"

"Yes, it is only to speak to her."

"And in my presence?"

"In your very presence."

"And in my hearing?"

"Yes, in your hearing — as long as you do not interrupt us," Wittipol said.

"For the short space you demand, the fourth part of an hour, I think I shall, with some convenient study, and this good help to boot" — Fitzdottrel lifted the cloak — "bring myself to agree to it."

He shrugged himself into the cloak.

"I ask for no more," Wittipol said.

“If you please, walk toward my house,” Fitzdottrel said. “Speak what you wish; that time is yours. My right I have departed with. But look for not a minute, or a second, beyond the fifteen minutes I have agreed to. Drawing out the length of time may much advance these matches, and so I will not allow it. And I forbid all kissing. Kisses are silent petitions always with willing lovers.”

Fitzdottrel knew that Wittipol wished to seduce his wife.

“Lovers?” Wittipol said. “How does your delusive imagination arrive at that fantasy?”

Wittipol wanted to be her lover — her only lover. Singular.

“Sir, I do know something,” Fitzdottrel said. “I forbid all lip-work.”

“I am not eager to go at forbidden dainties,” Wittipol said. “He who covets unfit things denies himself.”

He who covets unfit things denies himself the opportunity to be the best that he can be.

According to most people, Wittipol’s pursuing Fitzdottrel’s wife was unfit, but Wittipol regarded that wife as very fit, indeed. Wittipol may have convinced himself that pursuing Fitzdottrel’s wife was fitting for such a man as himself; he certainly regarded himself with more respect than he regarded Fitzdottrel.

“You say well, sir,” Fitzdottrel said. “That was prettily said, that same. He does indeed deny himself.

“I’ll have no touches, therefore, nor takings by the arms, nor tender circles cast about the waist — no hugs. Instead, all must be done at a distance.

“Love is brought up with those soft, dainty, delicate handlings. His pulse lies in his palm; and I forbid all melting

joints and fingers. That's my bargain I make with you — I forbid anything like physical action and touching.

“But talk, sir, and say whatever you will. Use all the tropes, figures of speech, and rhetorical devices that the classical rhetorician Prince Quintilian can give to you, and much good may it do your rhetoric's heart. You are welcome, sir.”

He then said, “Engine, may God be with you.”

Wittipol said, “Sir, I must add the condition that I am allowed to have this gentleman — my friend Manly — present as a witness.”

“Well, I agree, as long as he is silent,” Fitzdottrel said.

“Yes, sir,” Manly agreed.

Wittipol, Manly, and Engine exited.

Pug had told Fitzdottrel that his name was “Devil,” and so Fitzdottrel called him that.

Fitzdottrel said to Pug, “Come, Devil, I'll make you room in my house very soon. But I'll show you first to your mistress, who's no common one, you must conceive, that brings this gain to see her.”

His wife was so beautiful that she had brought an expensive cloak into his possession.

Fitzdottrel said to Pug, “I hope that thou have brought me good luck.”

“I shall do that, sir,” Pug said.

— 1.5 —

Wittipol, Manly, and Engine talked together in a room in Fitzdottrel's house.

Wittipol said, “Engine, you hope to get your half piece? There it is, sir.”

He gave Engine eleven shillings and said, “Leave now.”

Engine took the money and exited.

Wittipol tapped Manly, who was staring into space, on his chest and said, “Friend Manly, who’s within here? Are you transfixed?”

“I am entirely in a fit of wonder,” Manly said. “What’ll be the outcome of this conversation you will have with Fitzdottrel’s wife?”

“As for that, don’t vex yourself until the outcome reveals itself,” Wittipol said. “How do you like Fitzdottrel?”

“I would gladly see more of him,” Manly said.

“What do you think about this?” Wittipol asked.

“I am past all degrees and all possible stages of logical thinking,” Manly said. “Old Africa and the new America with all their progeny of monsters cannot show so complete a freak as is Fitzdottrel!”

“Could you have believed, without seeing it yourself, that a mind so sordid inward should be so outwardly handsome and laid forth abroad to all the show that ever shop or ware was?” Wittipol asked. “He dresses as if he were a model advertising fine clothing.”

Fitzdottrel’s mind was sordid: dirty and ignoble. Despite this, however, he presented a handsome outward appearance — thus his appreciation of fine clothing and the expensive cloak that Wittipol had offered to him as a bribe to be allowed to talk to his wife.

“I believe anything now, although I confess that his vices are the most extreme I ever knew in nature,” Manly said. “But why does he loves the Devil so much?”

“Oh, sir!” Wittipol said. “He loves the Devil because of the hidden treasure he hopes to find, and he has proposed to himself that there is so infinite a mass of treasure to be recovered that he doesn’t care how much he transfers of his present wealth to his men of art — his conjurors — who are the race of men who may coin him: They are the kind of men who can take him and use him to make money for themselves. Make promises of mountains of gold, and the covetous are always the most prodigal.”

Conjurors were supposed to be able to get devils to tell them where treasure was hidden. Fitzdottrel believed that he would get mountains of gold, and so he was paying conjurors lots of money in anticipation of his great future wealth.

“But do you have faith that Fitzdottrel will hold to his part of the bargain?” Manly asked.

“Oh, dear sir!” Wittipol said. “He will not fail to live up to his part of the bargain. Fear him not. I know him. One baseness always accompanies another.”

Fitzdottrel’s accepting the cloak was one baseness; allowing Wittipol to speak to his wife was another.

Wittipol looked up and said, “See! He is here already, and his wife, too.”

Manly said about Fitzdottrel’s wife, “She is a wondrously beautiful creature — that statement is as true as the statement that I live is true!”

— 1.6 —

Fitzdottrel said, “Come, wife, this is the gentleman. No, don’t blush.”

“Why, what do you mean, sir?” Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said. “Do you still have your reason? Or have you lost your mind?”

“Wife, I don’t know that I have lent it forth to anyone, at least, without a pawn, wife, or that I’ve eaten or drunk the thing lately that should corrupt it,” Fitzdottrel said. “Therefore, gentle wife, obey me. It is thy virtue. Don’t argue with me.”

In this society, a good wife was an obedient wife.

“Aren’t you already enough the talk of feasts and meetings?” Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel asked. “Must you make a new topic for fresh gossip?”

Fitzdottrel said, “Why, careful wedlock — that is, you, my worried wife — if I have a longing to have one more tale told about me, what is that to thee, dear heart? Why should thou resent my delight, or cross it, by being solicitous when it doesn’t concern thee?”

“This does concern me,” Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said. “Yes, I have a share in this. The scorn will fall as bitterly on me, where both you and me are laughed at.”

“Laughed at, sweet bird?” Fitzdottrel said. “Is that what you have scruples about? Come, come, thou are a nyas.”

A nyas is an unfledged bird. An eyas is an unfledged hawk taken out of the nest for training. These words, however, were sometimes used interchangeably. Young birds are innocent, and when they are taken out of the nest, they cry. Fitzdottrel was saying that his wife was naïve.

Fitzdottrel continued, “Which of your great houses — I will not mean at home, here, but abroad — your families in France, wife, do not send forth something within a seven-years’-time that may be laughed at? I do not say seven

months, nor seven weeks, nor seven days, nor seven hours, but seven years, wife. I give them time. Once, within seven years, I think they may do something that may be laughed at, in France — I keep my opinion about this, still.”

His point was that people in great houses — higher-class people — were laughed at; therefore, he was in good company. He was patriotic, however, and so talked about families in France.

He continued, “Therefore, wife, let them who wish to always laugh at me rather than weep for me.

“Here is a cloak that cost fifty pounds, wife, which I can sell for thirty, after I have seen all London in it, and London has seen me in it.”

Engine had said that the cloak was never made for under sixty pounds, but Fitzdottrel was a good judge of clothing and knew its worth.

He continued, “Today, I go to the Blackfriars Playhouse to see *The Devil is an Ass*. I will sit where people can see me, salute all my acquaintance, rise up between the acts, let fall my cloak, show everyone that I am a handsome man and that I have an expensive suit of clothing — that’s the special reason why we go to the theater: to be seen. That is true of all of us who pretend to stand to show displeasure for what is on the stage.”

If a man disliked a certain playwright, that man could attend one of the playwright’s shows, and in between acts stand up with an expression of disgust and ostentatiously leave — it did not matter whether the play was good or bad. Of course, a person could also do that as a way of being the center of attention and displaying his fine clothing.



Fitzdottrel continued, “The ladies ask, who’s that? For they come to see us, love, as we come to see them. Shall I lose all this because of the false fear of being laughed at?”

He said sarcastically, “Yes, certainly!”

He then continued without sarcasm, “Let them laugh, wife. Let me have such another cloak tomorrow, and let them laugh again, wife, and again, and then grow fat with laughing, and then fatter, all my young gallants — and let them bring their friends, too, to laugh at me.

“Shall I forbid them? No, let heaven forbid them. Or let their intelligence forbid them, if intelligence has any kind of control of them.”

Fitzdottrel took her to the side and spoke privately to her: “Come, give me thy ear, wife. That is all I’ll borrow of thee.”

He said to Wittipol, “Set your watch, sir.”

He said privately to his wife, “Thou art to only listen, and not speak a word, dove, to anything he says. I tell you that in precept, and as an order. This is no less than counsel, on your wifeness, wife. Do not speak to him even if he flatters you, or courts you, or flirts with you, as you must expect him to do, or let’s say, if he rails at you — whatever his skills are, wife, I will have thee delude them with a trick, which is thy obstinate silence.

“I know advantages, and I love to hit these meddling young men at their own weapons. He will use eloquence, and your response of silence will neutralize him.”

Fitzdottrel led his wife to a place for her to stand, and he set his watch.

He then said to Wittipol, “Is your watch ready? Here my sail bears, for you.”

He said to his wife, “Tack toward him, sweet pinnacle.”

Women were often figuratively called pinnaces, which were small sailing boats; however, other meanings of “pinnacle” included “prostitute” and the sexual meaning of “mistress.”

In a way, Fitzdottrel was prostituting his wife for a cloak.

Fitzdottrel asked Wittipol, “Where’s your watch?”

Wittipol answered, “I’ll set it, sir, with yours.”

They were synchronizing their watches so they could agree when fifteen minutes had ended.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said to herself, “I must obey my husband.”

Noticing how sad she looked, Manly thought, *Her modesty seems to suffer with her beauty, and so, as if his folly were away, it were worth pity.*

He meant this: Because her modesty seemed to suffer with her beauty, she was worthy of pity. And if Fitzdottrel were not capable of such folly, he would be worthy of pity.

Or, possibly, he meant this: Because her modesty seemed to suffer with her beauty, then if Fitzdottrel were not capable of such folly, her modesty and her beauty — that is, she herself — would be worthy of pity. If this is what he meant, he was blaming her for marrying a fool.

Or, possibly, he meant this: Because her modesty seemed to suffer with her beauty, then if Fitzdottrel were not capable of such folly and therefore was not deserving of punishment by being made an ass of, it would be good to pity her and not continue with this situation.

Fitzdottrel compared his watch with Wittipol’s watch and said, “Now thou are right; begin, sir. But first, let me repeat the contract briefly.

“I am, sir, to freely enjoy this cloak I am wearing, as your gift, upon the condition that you may as freely speak here to my spouse your quarter of an hour, always keeping the measured distance of your yard, or more, away from my said spouse, and in my sight and hearing.”

In this society, one meaning of “yard” was “penis.”

He then asked Wittipol, “This is your covenant — your agreement — with me?”

“Yes, but you’ll allow for this time we spent just now?” Wittipol asked.

Fitzdottrel had spent a few seconds going over their covenant.

“Let’s set our watches back that much time,” Fitzdottrel said.

Changing his mind, Wittipol said, “I think I shall not need the extra time.”

“Well, begin, sir,” Fitzdottrel said. “There is your boundary, sir. Do not go beyond that rush-mat.”

“If you interrupt me, sir, I shall discloak you,” Wittipol said.

He then began speaking to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel:

“The time I have purchased, lady, is but short, and therefore, if I employ it thriftily, I hope I stand the nearer to my pardon. I am not here to tell you that you are fair, or lovely, or how well you dress yourself, lady; I’ll save myself that eloquence of your mirror, which can speak these things better to you than I. And it is a knowledge wherein fools may be as wise as a court parliament.”

During medieval times, a court of ladies would rule on questions of courtly love.

Wittipol continued, “Nor do I come with any prejudice — preconceived idea — or doubt that you should, to the realization of your own worth, need least revelation. She’s a simple woman who does not know her good — whoever knows her ill — and in every respect.”

A proverb stated, “Any woman is simple-minded who fails to know what’s best for her.”

Wittipol continued, “That you are the wife to so much blighted flesh as scarcely has soul, instead of salt, to keep it sweet, I think will need no witnesses to prove.”

The soul keeps the body alive and preserves it from rotting, just as salt preserves the flesh of animals for eating. Fitzdottrel’s covetousness showed that he had little soul.

Wittipol continued, “The cold sheets that you lie in, with the watching candle that sees how, dull to any thaw of beauty, bits and pieces of time, and quarter nights, half nights, and whole nights, sometimes, the devil-given elfin — malignant — squire your husband leaves you, quitting here his proper circle for a much worse one in the walks of Lincoln’s Inn, under the elms, to expect the fiend in vain there, will confess for you. All of these things are evidence of how your husband regards you.”

Wittipol was pointing out that Fitzdottrel neglected her: his wife. He left her circle — her vagina — in order to go to the walks of Lincoln’s Inn to see a conjuror’s circle in the vain hope of seeing the Devil.

“I looked for this nonsense,” Fitzdottrel said. “I expected you to say such things.”

Wittipol continued, “And what a daughter of darkness he makes you, locked up away from all society you wish to visit or object you wish to see.

“Your eye is not allowed to look upon a face under a conjurer’s — or under some mold, aka top of a head, hollow and lean like his — except but by such great means as I now make to allow you to see my face.”

Wittipol meant that Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel was allowed to look at no male faces except those under a conjurer’s mold or crown (both words mean “top of head”) or the face that was under her husband’s mold or crown, which was hollow (due to lacking a brain) and lean (the human brain is mostly made of fat: almost 60 percent).

He continued, “Your own too acutely felt sufferings, without the extraordinary aids of spells or spirits, may assure you, lady.”

Assure her of what? Wittipol was hoping that her acutely felt sufferings would assure her that she ought to spend time with him.

“As for my part, I protest against all such practice. I work by no false arts, medicines, or charms to be said forward and backward.”

Fitzdottrel said, “No, I object —”

“Sir, I shall ease you of the burden of that cloak,” Wittipol said.

He made a motion as if he were going to take the cloak from him.

Fitzdottrel said, “I am mum.”

Wittipol said to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel, “Nor have I designs, lady, upon you more than this: to tell you how Love, Beauty’s good angel, he who waits upon her at all occasions, and no less than Fortune helps the adventurous, in me makes that proffer which never fair one was so fond to lose who could but reach a hand forth to her freedom.

“On the first sight I loved you; since which time, though I have travelled, I have been in travail more for this second blessing of your eyes that now I’ve purchased than for all aims else.

“Think about it, lady. Let your mind be as active as is your beauty; view your object well. Examine both my fashion and my years.

“Things that are like are soon familiar; and Nature joys still in equality.”

Wittipol was referring to two proverbs: “Like will to like” and “Marry your equal.” He did not think that Fitzdottrel was Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel’s equal, and he did think that he himself and Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel were alike.

He continued, “Let not the sign of the husband frighten you, lady, but before your spring is gone, enjoy it. Flowers, though fair, are often but of one morning. Think, all beauty does not last until the autumn.”

He was referring to this proverb: “Beauty does fade like a flower.” And, of course, he was advising her to seize the day: *Carpe diem*.

Wittipol continued, “You grow old while I tell you this. And such as cannot use the present are not wise. If Love and Fortune will take care of us, why should our will be wanting? This is all. What do you answer, lady?”

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel stood mute.

Her husband thought, *Now the entertainment comes. Let him continue to wait, wait, wait, while the watch goes, and the time runs.*

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel made a motion as if she would speak, and her husband thought, *Wife!* He shook his head at her.

“What!” Wittipol said. “You don’t speak any word? No, and so then I taste a trick in it. Worthy lady, I cannot be so false to my own thoughts of your presumed goodness to conceive this as your rudeness, which I see is imposed. Yet since your cautelous — crafty, wily — jailer here stands by you, and you’re denied the liberty of the house, let me take warrant, lady, from your silence — which always is interpreted as consent — to make your answer for you, which shall be to as good purpose as I can imagine, and what I think you’d speak.”

Since Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel would not speak, he would speak in her behalf.

He moved Manly, his friend, in front of him.

Fitzdottrel objected, “No, no, no, no!”

Manly was beyond the rush-mat and close to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel.

“I shall resume, sir,” Wittipol said to Fitzdottrel.

He moved Manly back behind the rush-mat.

“Sir, what do you mean?” Manly asked Wittipol. “What are you doing?”

Wittipol said to Fitzdottrel, “One interruption more, sir, and you go into your hose and doublet, and nothing saves you. You will get no cloak.”

Because Manley was now behind the rush-mat and at least a yard’s distance from Fitzdottrel’s wife, Fitzdottrel ought not to object.

Wittipol then said to Fitzdottrel, “And therefore listen. This is for your wife.”

Manly would represent Wittipol, and Wittipol would represent Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel and speak for her: He was

going to speak the words that he wished she would say to him.

Not quite sure what was going on, Manly said to Wittipol, “You must play fair, sir.”

Wittipol said to Manly, “Stand for me, good friend. Represent me as I represent Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel and speak for her.”

Wittipol then pretended to be Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel and spoke the words that he wished that she would say to him:

“Truly, sir, what you have uttered about my unequal and so sordid match here, with all the circumstances of my bondage, is more than true.

“I have a husband, and a two-legged one, but he is such a moonling — a lunatic and an idiot — as no wit of man or roses can redeem from being an ass.”

In the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, a work that is sometimes called *The Golden Ass*, a man named Lucius is transformed into an ass. He recovers his human form by eating roses.

Wittipol continued speaking the words that he wished Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel would say to him:

“He’s grown too much the story told by men’s mouths to escape his lading, aka burden. Should I make it my study, and plan all ways, and indeed even call mankind to help to take his burden off — why, this one act of his, to let his wife out to be courted, and at a price, proclaims his asinine nature so loudly as I am weary of my title — my legal right as his wife — to him.

“But sir, you seem a gentleman of virtue no less than of good birth, and one who in every way looks as he were of too good quality to entrap a credulous woman, or betray her.



“Since you have paid thus dearly, sir, for a visit, and made such venture on your wit and charge — the cloak — merely to see me, or at most to speak to me, I would be too stupid, or — what’s worse — too much of an ingrate if I were not to return your venture.

“Think but how I may with safety do it; I shall trust my love and honor to you, and I shall presume you’ll always husband and protect both my love and honor against this husband — who, if we chance to change his liberal ears to other ensigns, and with labor make a new beast of him, as he shall deserve, cannot complain he is unkindly dealt with.”

By committing adultery with Wittipol, she would change her husband’s ass’ ears to the horns of a cuckold. (Men with unfaithful wives were said to have invisible horns growing out of their forehead.)

Wittipol continued speaking the words he wished Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel would say to him:

“This day he is to go to a new play, sir, from whence no fear, no, nor authority, scarcely the King’s command, sir, will restrain him, now that you have fitted him with a garment he can wear while sitting on the stage, for the mere name’s sake, were there nothing else.”

The name of the play was *The Devil is an Ass*. Fitzdottrel would certainly want to see a play about devils; in addition, Wittipol had made an ass of the “devil” named Fitzdottrel by successfully tempting him with a cloak.

Wittipol continued speaking the words he wished Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel would say to him:

“And many more such journeys he will make, which, if they now or any time hereafter offer us opportunity, you hear, sir, me who’ll be as glad and eager to embrace, meet, and enjoy it as cheerfully as you.”

Wittipol now resumed his own voice and moved beside Manly and said to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel, "I humbly thank you, lady."

"Keep your ground, sir," Fitzdottrel said.

He did not need to say that. Wittipol was still a yard away from Fitzdottrel's wife.

"Will you be lightened by the removal of a cloak?" Wittipol said to Fitzdottrel.

Fitzdottrel said, "I am mum."

Wittipol said to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel, "And except that I am, by the solemn contract, thus to take my leave of you at this so envious distance, I would have taugth our lips before this to seal the happy mixture made of our souls. But we must both now yield to the necessity of our parting.

"Yet do not doubt, lady, that I can kiss, and touch, and laugh, and whisper, and do those crowning courtships, too, for which day and the public have allowed no name — but now my bargain binds me and I must leave.

"It would be a rude injury to importune you any more, or urge a noble nature to what of its own bounty it already is prone to; otherwise, I would speak. But, lady, I love so well as I will hope you'll do so, too."

Wittipol then said to Fitzdottrel, "I have finished, sir."

"Well, then, have I won?" Fitzdottrel asked.

Had he won the cloak? And had he won the contest for his wife?

"Sir," Wittipol said, "and I may win, too."

Fitzdottrel had won the cloak, but Wittipol hoped to win the wife.

Fitzdottrel said, sarcastically, “Oh, yes! No doubt of it. I’ll take care to order that my wife shall hang forth signs at the window to tell you when I am absent. Or I’ll keep three or four footmen ready always whose job shall be to run and fetch you when my wife longs to see you, sir. I’ll go and order a gilt luxurious coach for her and you to take the air in — yes, you two shall ride into Hyde Park and thence into Blackfriars so you can visit the painters, where you may see pictures, and note the most good-looking limbs, and how to make them.”

The paintings would be of lovers. Wittipol and Fitzdottrel’s wife could study the paintings so that they could imitate the positions of the lovers.

Fitzdottrel continued, “Or what do you say to a middling gossip — a female go-between or panderer — to bring you together at her lodging under pretext of teaching my wife some rare recipe for making almond milk? Ha? It shall be a part of my care for my wife.

“Good sir, may God be with you. I have kept the contract, and the cloak is mine.”

“Why, much good may it do you, sir,” Wittipol said. “It may turn out that you have bought it at a high price, although I have not sold it.”

“A pretty riddle!” Fitzdottrel said. “Fare you well, good sir.”

Fitzdottrel turned his wife around so that she was not facing Wittipol as he said to her, “Wife, turn your face this way.”

He then said, “Look at me, and think you’ve had a wicked dream, wife, and forget it.”

Manly said, “This is the strangest puppet show I ever saw.”

He had witnessed a strange performance.

Wittipol and Manly exited.

Fitzdottrel said, “Now, wife, does this fair cloak sit the worse upon me for my great sufferings, or your little patience? Does it? Do they laugh, do you think?”

His wife replied, “Why, sir, and you might see them laughing. What they think about you may be soon known by paying attention to the words of the young gentleman’s speech.”

“Young gentleman?” Fitzdottrel said. “By God’s death! You are in love with him, are you? Couldn’t he be called ‘the gentleman,’ without the ‘young’? Go up to your room again.”

“My cage, you were best to call it!” she replied.

“Yes, sing there,” Fitzdottrel said. “You’d prefer to be making blanc-manger with him at your mother’s! I know you.”

Blanc-manger is a dish made mainly of white ingredients, including fowl. Semen is white or whitish-gray, and Fitzdottrel was saying that his wife would prefer to be creating semen with Wittipol. In this society, the word “fowl” often meant “whore.”

He ordered his wife, “Go get you up to your room.”

His wife exited.

— 1.7 —

Pug the devil entered the room.

Fitzdottrel said, “How are you now! What do you say, Devil?”

“Here is a man named Engine, sir, who desires to speak with you,” Pug said.

“I thought he would bring some news about a broker!” Fitzdottrel said. “Well, let him come in, good Devil — or fetch him.”

Pug exited, and Engine entered the room.

Fitzdottrel said, “Oh, my fine Engine! What’s the affair? More cheaters?”

“No sir,” Engine said. “The wit, the brain, the great projector I told you of, has newly come to town.”

“Where is he, Engine?”

“I have brought him with me — he’s outside,” Engine said. “I brought him here even before he had time to pull off his boots, sir, but even so he was followed by people interested in conducting business with him.”

“You say that he is a projector, but what is a projector?” Fitzdottrel said. “I would like to understand that.”

Engine answered, “Why, a projector is a man, sir, who projects ways to enrich men, or to make them great, by petitions, by marriages, by undertakings, according as he sees they fancy it.”

People could petition the King for a monopoly to make a product or perform a service.

“Can’t he at all conjure?” Fitzdottrel said.

“I think he can, sir — to tell you the truth — but you know that recently the government has taken such note of conjurers, and compelled them to enter such great bonds, that the conjurers dare not practice their art,” Engine said.

“That is true,” Fitzdottrel said, “and I lie fallow for it all the while!”

In 1615, King James I had ordered the Lord Mayor of London to enforce more rigorously the laws restraining conjurors.

“Oh, sir!” Engine said. “You’ll grow the richer for the rest — the lying fallow — you are taking now.”

“I hope I shall,” Fitzdottrel said. “But Engine, you talk somewhat too much about my courses of action. My cloak-customer could tell me strange particulars.”

The cloak-customer — Wittipol — knew about Fitzdottrel’s dealings with conjurors, and Fitzdottrel believed that Engine must have told him about those dealings.

“By my means?” Engine asked.

“How else could he know about my courses of action?” Fitzdottrel said.

“You do not know, sir, what he has, and by what arts,” Engine said. “He is a moneyed man, sir, and he is as greatly involved with your almanac-men as you are!”

“Almanac-men” were men who created almanacs that contained weather predictions and medical lore. They were often astrologers.

“That gallant?” Fitzdottrel asked.

Uncomfortable, Engine changed the subject.

“You make the other man wait too long here,” Engine said, “and he is extremely punctual.”

“Is he a gallant?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“Sir, you shall see,” Engine said. “He’s in his riding suit, as he comes now from Court. But hear him speak. Minister matter to him, and then tell me whether he is a gallant.”



## ACT 2 (*The Devil is an Ass*)

### — 2.1 —

Merecraft the projector, Trains (Merecraft's manservant), and three waiters entered the room, joining Fitzdottrel and Engine. The waiters were possibly the attendants of Merecraft's clients and were waiting to get instructions from Merecraft. Or possibly they were helping Merecraft to con Fitzdottrel.

Merecraft was accurately named. His name meant "only tricks": He was a con man who preyed on the greed of his clients. By promising to make them rich, he was able to get their money for himself.

He said to Fitzdottrel, "Sir, money's a whore, a bawd, a drudge, fit to run out on errands; let her go. *Via, pecunia!*"

This was Latin for "The way or path, the money!" The Italian *via*, however, meant "away" or "leave" or "onward."

Merecraft wanted Fitzdottrel to let his money go so he — Merecraft — could possess it.

He continued, "When she's run and gone, and fled and dead, then I will fetch her again with aqua-vitae — distilled spirits — out of an old barrel. While there are lees of wine, or dregs of beer, I'll never lack money."

He would use the lees of wine or dregs of beer to distill aqua-vitae.

He continued, "Coin her out of cobwebs and dust, but I'll have her! Raise wool upon eggshells, sir, and make grass grow out of marrow-bones to make her come."

Merecraft said to the first waiter, "Commend me to your mistress. Tell her, let the thousand pounds just be had ready, and it is done."



The first waiter exited.

Merecraft said, “I would just like to see the creature of flesh and blood, the man, the prince, indeed, who could employ so many millions as I would help him to.”

Fitzdottrel said to Engine, “How he talks! Millions?”

Merecraft said to the second waiter, “I’ll give you an account of this tomorrow.”

The second waiter exited.

Merecraft said, “Yes, I will talk no less, and do it, too, if they were myriads — and without the devil, by direct means; it shall be good in law.”

He was talking about making millions without the help of conjuring. He was claiming to be able to do so legally.

King James I of England opposed conjuring.

“Sir,” Engine said.

Merecraft said to the third waiter, “Tell Master Woodcock I’ll not fail to meet him upon the Exchange at night. Tell him to have the documents there, and we’ll dispatch the business.”

A woodcock is a proverbially stupid bird.

The third waiter exited.

Merecraft turned to Fitzdottrel and said, “Sir, you are a gentleman of a good presence, a handsome man. I have considered you as a fit stock to graft honors upon. I have a project to make you a duke now.

“That you must be one, within so many months as I set down out of true reason of state, you shall not avoid it. But you must listen, then.”

“Listen?” Engine said. “Why, sir, do you doubt his ears? Alas! You do not know Master Fitzdottrel.”

“Do you doubt his ears?” meant 1) “Do you think he is deaf?” and 2) “Do you doubt that he has the ears of an ass?”

“He does not know me indeed,” Fitzdottrel said. “I thank you, Engine, for rectifying and correcting him.”

“Good!” Merecraft said.

He turned to Engine and said, “Why, Engine, then I’ll tell it to you — I see you have credit here, and I’ll not question that you can keep counsel. He shall be only an undertaker — a business partner — with me in a most feasible business. It shall cost him nothing —”

“Good, sir,” Engine said.

“— unless he wants to invest money,” Merecraft said. “But he shall lend his countenance — that I will have — to appear in it to great men, for which I’ll make him one.”

Fitzdottrel would join with him in business, and that support would help impress great men — according to Merecraft. In return for Fitzdottrel’s support, Merecraft would make Fitzdottrel a great man — or so Merecraft said he would do.

Men can be greedy for social status just as they can be greedy for money.

Merecraft continued, “He shall not open his wallet. I’ll drive his patent — execute his commission, his royal license — for him.”

King James I of England gave monopolies to people to perform certain tasks that would result in profit for them and for the Crown.

Merecraft continued, “We’ll take in — include — citizens, commoners, and aldermen to bear the expenses, and blow

them off again like so many dead flies when the business is carried.”

He was saying that he and Fitzdottrel would work with other people. The other people would pay the expenses. Sharing the profits was another matter. (“Take in” also means “deceive.”)

Red flag, that.

Merecraft continued, “The thing is for recovery of drowned land, whereof the Crown will have its moiety if it be owner; else, the Crown and landowners will share that moiety, and the recoverers of the drowned land will enjoy the other moiety for their return on their investment.”

Draining a swamp recovered land that could be used for profitable purposes.

A moiety is a share or part.

“The recovery of drowned land will take place throughout England?” Engine asked.

“Yes, which will arise to eighteen millions, seven the first year,” Merecraft said. “I have computed all, and made my survey down to the last acre. I’ll begin at the hollow, the lowest ground, not at the outskirts, the edges — as some have done, and lost all that they wrought, their timber-work, their trench, their banks all borne away, or else filled up with water again by the next winter. Tut, they never went the right and best way; I’ll have it all.”

“A gallant tract of land it is!” Engine said.

“It will yield a pound an acre,” Merecraft said. “We must rent cheap, always, at first.”

He then said to Fitzdottrel, “But sir, this project looks too large for you, I see. Come hither, we’ll have a lesser project.”

He motioned to Trains, his manservant, and said, "Here's a plain fellow, you see him. He has his papers there, in a black buckram bag, and it will not be sold for the Earldom of Pancridge."

No Earldom of Pancridge exists.

Merecraft then said to Trains, "Draw one out at random, and give it to me."

Trains drew a paper out of the bag and gave it to him.

Merecraft said, "Project four. Dog skins? Twelve thousand pounds! The very worst, drawn out at first."

Twelve thousand pounds is a lot of money, but according to Merecraft, this was the worst and least profitable of his moneymaking ideas.

"Please, let's see it, sir," Fitzdottrel said.

"It is a toy, a trifle!" Merecraft said.

"A trifle!" Fitzdottrel said. "Twelve thousand pounds for dogs' skins?"

"Yes," Merecraft said, "but you must know, sir, by my way of preparing and treating the leather to a height of better-quality goods, like your borachio of Spain, sir —"

A Spanish borachio is a wine bottle made from pigskin or goatskin.

Merecraft continued, "— I can fetch nine thousand for it —"

"From the King's glover?" Engine asked.

Engine, another con man, was making it sound as if King James I of England was interested in purchasing great numbers of dog-skin gloves.

“Yes,” Merecraft said, “how did you hear that?”

“Sir, I know you can,” Engine said.

“Within this hour I can, and reserve half my secret,” Merecraft said.

He said to Engine, “Pluck another paper. See if thou have a more fortunate hand than Trains.”

Engine plucked out a second paper: one marked “Bottle-ale.”

Merecraft said, “I thought so. The very next worse to it! Bottle-ale. Yet, this is two-and-twenty thousand! Please pull out another two or three papers.”

“Good man,” Fitzdottrel said. “Wait, friend, by bottle-ale, you can make twenty-two thousand pounds?”

“Yes, sir,” Merecraft said. “It’s calculated to a penny-halfpenny-farthing. On the back of the paper, you may see it there. Read it.

“I will not reduce a harrington of the sum.”

A harrington is a farthing; it was named for Lord Harrington, who had a patent from the King that allowed him to coin farthings.

Merecraft continued, “I’ll win the sum in my water for making ale, and my malt, my furnaces, and the hanging of my copper vessels, the barreling, and the subtlety of my yeast, and then the earth — the clay — of my bottles, which I dig, turn up, and steep, and work, and fire in a kiln myself to a degree of porcelain.

“You will wonder at my calculations of what I will put up in seven years! For so long a time I ask for my invention.”

It would take seven years to produce and age the ale.

Merecraft continued, “I will save in cork, in my mere stoppering of the bottles, above three thousand pounds within that period of time, by gouging out the stoppers just to the size of my bottles, and not slicing the cork. There’s infinite loss in slicing the cork.”

Engine drew out another paper, which was marked “Raisins.”

“What have thou there?” Merecraft asked. “Oh, making wine out of raisins; this is in hand, now.”

Engine asked, “Isn’t it strange, sir, to make wine out of raisins?”

“Yes,” Merecraft said, “and as true a wine as the wines of France, or Spain, or Italy. Look at what kind of grape my raisin is, that wine I’ll render perfectly. From the muscatel grape, I’ll render muscatel wine. From the canary grape, I’ll render canary wine. From the claret grape, I’ll render claret wine. This is true of all kinds of grape, and I’ll lessen the prices of wine throughout the kingdom by fifty percent.”

“But, sir, what if you raze — wipe out — the other commodity: raisins?” Engine asked.

He was making a joke: punning on “raze” and “raisin.”

“Why, then I’ll make it out of blackberries, and it shall do the same,” Merecraft said. “It will just take more skill, and the expense will be less.

“Take out another paper.”

Fitzdottrel said, “No, good sir. Save yourself the trouble. I’ll neither look nor hear about any project but your first, there — the drowned land — if it will do as you say.”

Merecraft said, “Sir, there’s no place to give you demonstration of these things. They are a little too subtle.”

Red flag, that.

He continued, “But I could show you that the recovery of drowned land is so necessary that you must end up being what you want to be: a duke.

“You will become a duke despite the popular misconception that England bears no dukes.”

For many years in England there were no dukes, but with the accession of King James I, dukes had again appeared in England.

Merecraft said to Fitzdottrel, “If you will keep the land, sir; the greatness of the estate shall throw a dukedom upon you.

“But if you prefer to turn the estate to money instead of keeping the land, what may not you, sir, purchase with that wealth? Say you should part with two of your millions, to be the thing you would be — a duke — who would not do it?

“I say that I myself will, out of my dividend, bid for some pretty principality in Italy, outside the jurisdiction of the church.

“Now you, perhaps, fancy the mists of England rather? But — do you have a private room, sir, for us to withdraw to, to talk in more detail about this project?”

“Oh, yes,” Fitzdottrel said.

He called, “Devil!”

Merecraft said, “These, sir, are businesses that need to be carried out with caution, and in a cloud of secrecy.”

Red flag, that.

“I apprehend that they need to be done so, sir,” Fitzdottrel replied.

Pug entered the room, and Fitzdottrel asked, "Devil, where is your mistress?"

"She is above, sir, in her chamber," Pug replied.

"Oh, that's well," Fitzdottrel said.

He then said to Merecraft, "Then go this way, good sir."

"I shall follow you," Merecraft said.

He then said, "Trains, give me the bag, and go immediately to commend my service to my Lady Tailbush. Tell her I have come from court this morning; say that I've got our business moved, and well. Entreat her to give you the fourscore angels — eighty coins — and see that they are disposed of to my counsel, the lawyer Sir Paul Eitherside. Sometime today I'll wait upon her Ladyship and give her my report."

Trains exited quickly.

Engine said, "Sir, how quickly Trains acts. Do you see?"

Merecraft asked, "Engine, when did you see my cousin Everill? Does he still stay at your quarter in the Bermudas?"

The Bermudas were a bad part of London.

"Yes, sir," Engine said. "He was writing this morning very intensely."

"Don't let him know that I have come to town," Merecraft said. "I have arranged some business for him, but I would take the business to him before he has time to think about it."

Red flag, that.

"Is it past?" Engine asked.

"Not yet," Merecraft said. "It is well on the way."

"Oh, sir!" Engine said. "Your Worship takes infinite pains."



“I love friends to be active,” Merecraft said. “A sluggish nature puts off man and woman.”

“And such a blessing follows it,” Engine said.

“I thank my fate,” Merecraft said.

He then said to Fitzdottrel, “Please, let’s go somewhere private, sir —”

“In here,” Fitzdottrel said.

“— where none may interrupt us,” Merecraft said.

He and Engine went into the private room.

Fitzdottrel said to Pug, “Listen, Devil. Lock the street doors fast, and let no one in — unless they are this gentleman’s followers — to trouble me.

“Have you been paying attention? You’ve heard and seen something today, and by it you may gather that my wife is a fruit that’s worth the stealing, and therefore she is worth the watching.

“Be sure, now, that you’ve all your eyes about you; and let in no lace-woman, nor bawd who brings French masks and cut-work embroidery.

“Do you understand? Let in no old crones who sell wafers and convey letters. Let in no youths disguised like country wives with cream and marrow-puddings. Much knavery may be conveyed in a pudding, much bawdy intelligence; they’re shrewd ciphers.

“Do not turn the key to any neighbor’s need, whether it be only to kindle fire, or beg a little fire — put the fire out, instead. Put it all out, to ashes, so that they may see no smoke.

“Or if neighbors need water, spill it; knock on the empty tubs, so that by the sound the neighbors may be forbidden entry.

“Say that we have been robbed if anyone comes to borrow a spoon, or something else.

“I will not have ‘good fortune’ or ‘God’s blessing’ let in while I am busy.”

Beggars would say, “Good fortune” or “God’s blessing,” while begging.

Pug said, “I’ll take care of it, sir. They shall not trouble you, even if they want to.”

“Well, do what I tell you to do,” Fitzdottrel said.

He joined Merecraft and Engine in the private room.

## — 2.2 —

Pug said, “I have no singular service of this now, nor no superlative master!”

Pug had come to London to do villainy, but there was nothing singular about that because Londoners were already doing lots of villainy. Also, his master was not superlative. Pug’s chief, Satan, wished to do evil, but Pug’s earthly master, Fitzdottrel, was doing lots of evil. But Fitzdottrel was not a superlative master because so many people were willing and certainly seemed capable of doing evil to him.

Pug continued, “I shall wish to be in Hell again, and at my leisure!”

And why should he not be at leisure in Hell? People such as Fitzdottrel and Merecraft were already doing lots of evil. Even such a man as Wittipol was devoting himself to tempting a married woman to commit adultery.

Pug continued, "Should I bring a Vice from Hell? That would be as crafty a scheme as to bring broadcloth here to England, or to transport fresh oranges into Spain."

There was no need to transport fresh oranges into Spain because Spain had lots of fresh oranges. There was no need to bring broadcloth here to England because England had lots of broadcloth. There was no need to bring a Vice from Hell to London because London had lots of vice.

He continued, "I find out the truth now. My chief was in the right. Can any fiend boast of a better Vice than by nature and practice they're already owners of here?"

"May Hell never own me if I am not impressed by such villainy as is here in London! The fine appeal of it pulls me along! To hear men grown such experts in our subtlest sciences!"

Certainly Merecraft was an expert in the art of conning greedy men.

Pug then said, "My first act now shall be to make this master of mine a cuckold. I will practice the earliest work of darkness!

"I will deserve so well of my fair mistress, by my revelations and useful information first, my advisory counsels afterward, and keeping secret counsel after that, as whosoever is one who sleeps with her, I'll be another; to be sure, I'll have my share. Most delicate damned flesh she will be!"

Pug intended to be one of those who slept with Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel and cuckolded her husband.

He continued, "Oh, that I could delay time now! Midnight will come too fast upon me, I fear, to cut my pleasure —"

At midnight he would return to Hell, thus cutting the amount of time he would have to sleep with Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel. Indeed, if midnight came fast enough, he would have no time to sleep with Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel entered the room and said, "Go to the back door. Someone is knocking; see who it is."

Pug said to himself as he exited, "Dainty she-devil!"

Alone, Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said to herself, "I cannot get this venture of the cloak out of my fancy, nor the gentlemanly way Wittipol took, which, though it was strange, yet it was handsome, and had a grace that was beyond the originality.

"Surely he will think me that dull stupid creature he talked about, and may end his attempt to seduce me, if I don't find a way to thank him. He did presume, knowing that I was thinking about it, that I would give him an answer; and he will swear that my brain is very barren if it can yield him no return."

Pug returned.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel asked him, "Who is it at the back door?"

Pug said, "Mistress, it is — but first, let me assure the very best of mistresses that I am, although my master's manservant, my mistress' slave, the servant of her secrets and sweet actions, and I know what fitly will conduce to either."

"What's this? I tell you to come to yourself and think what your job is: to make an answer to my question. Tell me this: Who is it at the door?"

"The gentleman, mistress, who paid the price of a cloak to speak with you this morning, and who expects only to take

some small commandments from you — whatever commandments you please that are worthy your form, he says, and your gentlest manners.”

“Oh!” she said. “You’ll soon prove to be his hired man, I fear. What has he given you for this message?”

“Sir, tell him to put off his hopes of straw and stop spreading his nets in full view like this.”

“Hopes of straw” are “no hopes.” The purpose of the net was to capture her the way that a woodsman would capture a bird.

She continued, “Although the nets may capture Master Fitzdottrel, I am no such fowl — nor a fair one, tell him — who will be had with stalking.

“And tell him to not appear to me at the gentleman’s chamber-window in Lincoln’s Inn there, that opens to my gallery.”

The Fitzdottrels lived next to Lincoln’s Inn. Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel’s gallery — a large reception room — was close to a window at Lincoln’s Inn.

She continued, “If he does not, I swear that I will acquaint my husband with his folly and leave him to the just rage of his offended jealousy. Or if your master’s sense will be not so quick to right me, tell him I shall find a friend who will repair — mend — me. Say I will be quiet in my own house! I tell you, in those words give my message to him.”

Her words could be interpreted as a coded message to Wittipol, telling him to 1) communicate with her by making use of the window at Lincoln’s Inn, 2) be her “friend” — a word that can mean “lover” — who would mend her, perhaps in bed, and 3) know that she will be quiet in her own house — for example, when her husband was gone.

But her words were deliberately misleading and ambiguous in order to fool Pug: She wanted Pug to think that she was telling Wittipol that he should *not* appear at the window in Lincoln's Inn. The word "friend" did not have to mean "lover." The word "quiet" could mean "unmolested."

Pug said to himself, "This is some fool turned!"

"Turned" meant "out of his — or was it her — wits."

Perhaps he meant, "Wittipol is a fool whom my mistress is turning away."

He exited to give Wittipol her message to him.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said to herself, "If Wittipol is the master now of that state and intelligence which I think that he is, surely he will understand me.

"I dare not be more direct because I find already that this officious fellow, my husband's new servant, is a spy my husband has set upon me.

"Yet, if Pug just tells Wittipol my message using my words, Wittipol cannot but know that he is both understood and requited.

"I would not have him think he met a statue, or spoke to someone who was not there, although I remained silent when he spoke to me in my husband's presence."

Pug returned, and she asked him, "What is your news? Have you told him my message?"

"Yes," Pug replied.

"And what does he say?" she asked.

"What does he say?" Pug said, "He says that which I myself would say to you, if I dared.

“He says that you are proud, sweet mistress, and also that you are a little ignorant — that you don’t know enough to entertain the good that’s proffered to you by him.

“And, pardon me for saying this to one as beautiful as you, he says that you are not all as wise as some true politic — crafty — wife would be, who, having married such a nupson, such a simpleton — my apology to my master — whose face has left to accuse him now, for it confesses him what you can make him, but will yet, out of scruple and a spiced — dainty — conscience, defraud the poor gentleman, or at least delay him in the thing he longs for and makes it his whole study how to compass only a title. If he would just write cuckold as his title, he would have what he deserved.”

According to Wittipol — and Pug — Fitzdottrel had a face that accused him of being a fool who deserved to be a cuckold, although he was not yet one, due to the dainty conscience of his wife. If Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel were like other wives, the ones who were crafty, she would help him get what he wanted: a title. True, the title that he wanted was the title of duke, but she could give him the title that he deserved: the title of cuckold.

Pug continued, “For, look you —”

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel thought, *This can be nothing but my husband’s plan.*

Pug was not talking to her the way a servant should. A servant would relay Wittipol’s message, but Pug was adding that Wittipol’s message is what he himself would say to her. Wittipol wanted her to commit adultery with him, and Pug was saying the same thing but about himself. Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel believed that this was a trap that her husband had set for her.

Pug continued, “— my precious mistress —”

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel thought, *It creaks his engine — his trickery creaks. This servant would never dare otherwise to be so saucy if my husband had not put him up to this.*

Pug continued, “— if it were not clearly his worshipful ambition, and the top of it, the very forked top, too” — readers should be thinking of the horned top of a cuckold — “why should he keep you thus walled up in a back room, mistress, never allow you a window opening to the street due to his fear of your becoming pregnant by the eyes with gallants? Why should he forbid you paper, pen, and ink, as if they were rat poison? Why should he search your half pint of muscatel lest a letter be sunk in the pot? And why would he hold your newly laid egg against the fire, lest any charm be written in invisible ink there?”

Lemon juice makes a good invisible ink. When heated, the dried juice turns brown and what is written becomes visible.

Pug continued, “Will you make yourself a benefit from knowing the truth, dear mistress, if I tell the truth to you? I don’t do it often!

“I am set over you, employed, indeed, to watch your steps, your looks, even your breaths, and report them to him.

“Now, if you will be a true, right, delicate, sweet mistress, why, we will make a cokes — a fool — of this ‘wise’ master. We will, my mistress, make of him an absolute fine cokes — and we will openly mock all the deep diligences of such a solemn and effectual ass, an ass to so good purpose as we’ll use him.

“I will contrive it so that you shall go to plays, to masques, to meetings, and to feasts.

“For why have all this rigging and fine tackle, mistress — all this fine clothing — if you neat handsome vessels of good



sail do not ever and often put forth with your nets abroad into the world? It is your fishing.

“There you shall choose your friends, your servants, lady, your squires of honor.”

These friends, servants, and squires of honor would be her lovers.

Pug continued, “I’ll convey your letters, fetch answers, do you all the offices that can belong to your blood and beauty.

“And for the variety, when I am inclined, although I am not in due symmetry the man of that proportion, or in rule of medical science of the just complexion, or of that truth of fine fashion in clothes to boast a sovereignty over ladies, yet I know how to do my turns as a lover, sweet mistress.”

Pug was offering himself as a lover — for variety — to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel. In doing so, he was engaging in false modesty, calling himself a man without a fine body, a fine face, or fine clothes. Actually, the hanged cutpurse whose body Pug had possessed had a fine body and a fine face, and Pug had gotten fine clothes elsewhere.

Pug continued, “Come, kiss —”

“What is this!” Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said.

Pug said, “Dear delicate mistress, I am your slave, your little worm that loves you, your fine monkey, your dog, your servant, your pug, that longs to be styled one of your pleasures!”

Thinking that this was a trap and that her husband was watching, Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said loudly, “Did you hear all this? Sir, please come out from your hiding place so you can applaud your servant who so well follows your instructions!”

Fitzdottrel entered the room and asked, “What is it, sweetheart? What’s the matter?”

“Good man!” his wife said, sarcastically. “You are a stranger to the plot! You did not set your saucy Devil here to tempt your wife with all the insolent uncivil language or action he could vent and express?”

She still believed that he had used Pug to set a trap for her.

Fitzdottrel asked Pug, “Did you do that, Devil?”

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said, “Not you? Weren’t you planted in your hole upon the stairs so you could hear him? Or weren’t you here, behind the wall hangings? Don’t I know your personal character? Did he dare to do it without you giving him directions? That is not possible!”

“You shall see, wife,” Fitzdottrel said, “whether he dared to do it on his own, or not, and what it was I directed him to do.”

He left, but immediately returned, carrying a cudgel.

“Sweet mistress, are you mad?” Pug asked.

He could guess who the cudgel was for, and he would like to get out of a beating by lying and blaming his mistress for giving false information to her husband.

“You most absolute rogue!” Fitzdottrel said to Pug. “You open and clearly revealed villain! You fiend apparent, you! You declared Hell-hound!”

He began to beat Pug with the cudgel.

“Good sir!” Pug said.

“Good knave, good rascal, and good traitor!” Fitzdottrel said. “Now I find you to be part-devil indeed. Upon the point of trust? In your first charge? The very day of your probation? To tempt your mistress?”

Pug’s job had been to keep Fitzdottrel’s wife from committing adultery, yet he was attempting to persuade her to commit adultery.

Fitzdottrel said to his wife, “You see, good wedlock — good wife — how I directed him.”

“Why, where, sir, were you?” Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel asked.

If he hadn’t been spying on her, then where had he been?

Fitzdottrel paused and then hit Pug again with the cudgel.

He said to Pug, “There is one more blow, for exercise; I told you I would do it.”

He had said that he would beat Pug if Pug displeased him. He also had said that he beat his servant for exercise.

Pug replied, “I wish that you were done beating me!”

Fitzdottrel said, “Oh, wife, the rarest, most splendid man!”

He struck Pug again and said, “Yet there’s another blow to help you remember the last one.”

He said to his wife, “Such a splendid man, wife, is inside! He has his projects, and he vents them. They are the gallantest projects!”

He said to Pug, “Were you tentiginous — horny? Ha? Would you be acting like an incubus, an evil spirit that sleeps with women at night? Did her silks’ rustling excite you?”

“Gentle sir!” Pug said.

“Get out of my sight!” Fitzdottrel shouted. “If thy name were not Devil, thou would not stay a minute with me. Go in! Yet stay. Yet go, too. I have decided what I will do; and you shall know it beforehand — as soon as the gentleman has gone, do you hear? I’ll help your lispings.”

Pug, who had been sputtering, exited.

“Wife, such a man, wife!” Fitzdottrel said. “He has such plots! He will make me a duke! No less, by heaven. You will have six mares to your coach, wife! That’s your share. And your coachman will be bald because he shall be bare enough!”

It was the fashion for the coachmen of rich ladies to be bareheaded.

“Don’t you laugh,” Fitzdottrel added. “We are looking for a place all over the map for me to be duke of. Have faith, and don’t be an infidel when it comes to me. You know I am not easily gulled and made a fool of.

“I swear, when I have my millions, I’ll make another woman a duchess, if you don’t have faith in me.”

“You’ll have too much, I fear, in these false spirits,” Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said.

She believed that he would invest too much money in conjurors: Her husband had not yet identified the man he had been talking to.

“Spirits? Oh, no such thing, wife!” Fitzdottrel said. “Wit, mere wit! I’m talking about intelligence and skill. This man defies the devil and all his works! He does his work by the use of ingenuity and devices, he does! He has his winged plows that go with sails and plow forty acres at once! And he has mills that will spout out water from ten miles away!

“All Crowland is ours, wife; and the fens, from us in Norfolk to the utmost bound of Lincolnshire!”

Crowland was a town in marshy territory in the north of England. Fitzdottrel was hoping to drain the marshes, aka fens, and make a huge profit from the recovered land.

Fitzdottrel continued, “We have viewed it, and measured it within all, by the scale! It is the richest tract of land, love, in the kingdom! There will be made seventeen or eighteen millions, or more, depending on how well it is handled! Therefore think, sweetheart: If thou have a fancy to one place more than another to be duchess of, name it now. I will have it, whatever it costs, if it will be had for money, either here, or in France, or in Italy.”

“You have strange fantasies!” his wife replied.

— 2.4 —

“Where are you, sir?” Merecraft called.

Merecraft and Engine entered the room.

Fitzdottrel said to his wife, “I see thou have no talent in this area of expertise, wife. Go up to thy gallery; go, chuck. Leave us who understand it alone to talk about it.”

“Chuck” was a term of endearment, but it need not necessarily be said endearingly.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel exited.

“I think we have found a place to fit you now, sir: Gloucester,” Merecraft said.

“Oh no, I’ll have nothing to do with Gloucester!” Fitzdottrel said.

“Why not, sir?” Merecraft said.

“It is fatal,” Fitzdottrel said.

Many dignitaries of Gloucester had died violently or under suspicious circumstances.

“You are right,” Merecraft said. “Spenser, I think, the younger, had his last honor from Gloucester. But he was only an earl.”

Hugh le Despenser’s father-in-law had been the Earl of Gloucester. When his father-in-law died, Hugh le Despenser was sometimes called the Earl of Gloucester.

“I did not know that, sir,” Fitzdottrel said. “But Thomas of Woodstock, I’m sure, was Duke of Gloucester, and he was made away with at Calais, as Duke Humphrey was at Bury. And King Richard III — you know what end he came to.”

Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, was murdered in 1397.

Duke Humphrey of Gloucester was the Lord Protector of King Henry VI; he died under suspicious circumstances in 1447.

King Richard III, who was another Duke of Gloucester, died in 1485 in the Battle of Bosworth.

“By my faith, you are knowledgeable in the contents of the historical chronicle, sir,” Merecraft said.

“No, I confess I have my history from the playbooks, and I think they’re more authentic than the historical chronicle,” Fitzdottrel said.

Plays such as William Shakespeare’s histories were popular on the stage, but Shakespeare and other playwrights of the time did such things as compress time: Events that took years in real life could seem to take only a few days when

presented on the stage. Playwrights also invented characters and ignored facts when convenient for their purposes.

“That’s surely true, sir,” Engine said.

“What do you say to being duke of this, then?” Fitzdottrel asked.

He said quietly the name of a place.

“No, a noble house lays claim to that,” Fitzdottrel said. “I will do no man wrong.”

“Then listen to one more proposition,” Merecraft said, “and hear it as past exception.”

“What’s that?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“To be duke of those lands you shall recover. Take your title from there, sir: Duke of the Drowned-lands, or Duke of the Drowned-land.”

“Ha! That last has a good sound! I like it well,” Fitzdottrel said. “The Duke of Drowned-land!”

“Yes,” Engine said. “It’s a name like Green-land, sir, if you notice.”

“Aye, and drawing thus your honor from the work, you make the reputation of that work greater, and that reputation will stay the longer in your name,” Merecraft said.

Every time people heard “the Duke of Drowned-land,” they would remember the great task of draining the swampland. Since Fitzdottrel would be the Duke of Drowned-land, the glory of draining the swampland would for a long time be attached to his name.

“That’s true,” Fitzdottrel said. “Drowned-lands will live in Drowned-land! The memory of Drowned-lands will live in the title of Duke of Drowned-land!”

Merecraft said, “Yes, it will live on in the title when you have no foot of land left, as that must be, sir, one day.”

If Fitzdottrel invested Merecraft’s schemes, he very well could have no foot of land left one day.

Merecraft continued, “And, even though it tarry in your heirs some forty, fifty descents, yet the longer liver must at last thrust them out of it, if no quirk or quibble in law or odd vice of their own doesn’t do it first.”

He was saying that eventually the recovered land would pass out of the possession of Fitzdottrel’s descendants: Someone else would own it. Perhaps the land would be left to the longer-lived of two people: one of Fitzdottrel’s descendants and perhaps the descendant’s creditor. If the creditor lived longer, the creditor would possess the recovered land. If the creditor happened to be a lawyer, the lawyer would possess the land.

Merecraft continued, “We see those changes daily. The fair lands that were the client’s are the lawyer’s now, and those rich manors there of goodman tailor’s had once more wood upon them than the yard by which they were measured out for the last purchase.”

One of Fitzdottrel’s descendants could overspend so much on extravagant clothing that the tailor would end up possessing the land.

“Nature has these vicissitudes. She makes no man a state of perpetuity, sir.”

“You’re in the right,” Fitzdottrel said. “Let’s go in, then, and conclude our business.”

Pug entered the room.

Seeing Pug, Fitzdottrel said, “Are you in my sight again? I’ll talk with you soon.”



Fitzdottrel, Merecraft, and Engine exited.

— 2.5 —

Alone, Pug said to himself, “Surely, he will geld — castrate — me if I stay. Or worse, he will pluck out my tongue. He will do one of the two.

“This fool, there is no trusting him. And to quit him would be a show of contempt against my chief past pardon.

“It was a shrewd disheartening this, at first! Who would have thought a woman so well harnessed, or rather well-caparisoned, indeed, who wears such petticoats and lace to her smocks, broad laces to cover the seams in her stockings (as I see them hang there), and garters that are lost, if she can show them, could have done this? Hell!”

Pug was wondering how Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel could dress so well and yet be so resistant to committing adultery. Why would a woman dress so well if not to attract someone who would beg a garter as a gift to treasure?

He continued, “Why is she dressed so splendidly? It cannot be to please Duke Dottrel, surely, nor the dull pictures of ancestors that hang in her gallery, nor to please her own dear reflection in her mirror.”

A dottrel is a stupid bird.

Pug continued, “Yet that last one may be true: I have known many women to begin their pleasure, but none to end it, there — that last one I consider to be right, as I think about it. Women may, for lack of better company, or lack of company that they think the better, spend an hour, or two, or three, or four, discoursing with their shadow, aka reflection. But surely they have a farther speculation. No woman dressed with so much care and study dresses herself in vain.”

According to Pug, any woman who dressed so well and had such a husband must be looking for a lover.

“I’ll consider this problem a little more before I leave it, surely.”

He exited.

— 2.6 —

Wittipol and Manly appeared together at the window of Manly’s chamber, which was opposite the Fitzdottrels’ house. The two buildings were next to each other. Indeed, these two houses were so close together that two people — each leaning out a window in each house — could touch. The window of the Fitzdottrels’ house was for a long gallery of pictures where Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel could walk.

Wittipol intended to talk to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel.

“This is better luck than I could imagine,” Wittipol said. “This turns out to be thy chamber — I thought that finding a window I could access to get close to the Fitzdottrels’ house would be my greatest trouble!”

Remembering the instructions Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel had given to him through Pug, he said, “This must be the very window and that must be the very room she talked about.”

The room was the gallery in the Fitzdottrels’ house. Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel could look out a window of the room and see Manly’s window.

“You are right — it is,” Manly said. “I now remember that I have often seen there in the gallery a woman, but I never noticed her much. I certainly never looked at her closely.”

“Where was your soul, friend?” Wittipol asked.

He could not imagine someone’s seeing Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel and not wanting to look at her closely.

Manly replied, "In faith, but now and then awake to those objects."

Truly, at times he could notice and be greatly affected by the beauty of a woman.

"You claim to," Wittipol said. "Let me not live if I am not in love more with her intelligence that she showed in giving me her instructions for me to go to this window now than with her bodily form, though I have praised that prettily since I saw her and you today."

Wittipol then gave Manly a paper, on which was the copy of the lyrics of a song.

He then said, "Read those lyrics. They'll go with the air — the tune — you love so well. Try them to the note; maybe the music will call her here sooner."

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel appeared at her window.

Wittipol said to Manly, "By God's light, she's here! Sing quickly."

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel was worried that her instructions to Wittipol to come to the window had not been understood or properly communicated.

She said to herself, "Either Wittipol did not understand Pug, or else Pug was not faithful in the delivery of what I told him to speak. And I am justly paid, I who might have made my profit from his service, but by mistakenly trying to give him secret instructions I have drawn his ill-will upon and done the worse injury to myself."

Manly sang the lyrics Wittipol had given to him:

*"See the chariot at hand here of Love,*

*"Wherein my lady rides!*

*“Each that draws is a swan or a dove,  
“And well the car Love guides.  
“As she goes, all hearts do duty  
“Unto her beauty;  
“And enamoured, do wish, so they might  
“But enjoy such a sight,  
“That they still were to run by her side,  
“Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.”*

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said, “What! Music? Then Wittipol may be there — and there he is, to be sure.”

Hearing the song, Pug entered the scene.

Seeing Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel and Wittipol, he said, “Oh, is that the way it is? Is this here the interview between these two? Have I drawn close to you at last, my cunning lady? The devil is an ass! Fooled off, and beaten! The devil made an instrument, and could not scent it!

“Well, since you’ve shown the malice of a woman to be no less than her true wit and learning, mistress, I’ll try if little Pug has the malignity to pay you back, and so get out of the danger he is in. It is not the pain, but the discredit of it. The devil would not keep a body unbeaten!”

Pug now occupied a human body, but he feared most — more than the actual beating — being mocked in Hell for not being successful at keeping that body from being beaten.

Pug exited to find Fitzdottrel.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel stepped to the window, which was open.

The window she was at and the window Wittipol was at were very close together. Many buildings in medieval timber-frame building were jettied. The upper floor of a building projected beyond the floor under it. In the days before air conditioning, windows were often open in good weather.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel and Wittipol could easily touch each other.

Wittipol said to Manly, "Away, fall back. She is coming."

"I'll leave you, sir," Manly said. "You will be the master of my chamber. I have business elsewhere."

He exited.

"Mistress!" Wittipol called.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel came over to him and said, "You make me paint my cheeks, sir."

She meant that she was blushing.

"They're fair colors, lady, and they are natural colors, not artificial cosmetics," Wittipol said.

They were very close together — within touching distance.

He added, "I did receive some commands from you lately, gentle lady, but they were so coded and wrapped in the delivery that I am afraid I may have misinterpreted them, but still I must make suit to be near your grace."

"Who is there with you, sir?" Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel asked.

"There is no one but myself," he said. "It turned out, lady, that this is a dear friend's lodging, and so good fortune is conspiring with your poor servant's blessed affections to make his wishes come true."

"Who was singing?" Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel asked.

“My friend was singing, lady, but he’s gone because I asked him to leave when I saw you approach the window. You need not fear or doubt him if he were here. He is too much a gentleman to reveal your secrets.”

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said, “Sir, if you judge me by this simple action, and by the outward habit — the way it looks — and appearance of easy conformity with your plan, you may with justice say I am a woman, and a strange woman.”

A strange woman is an immodest woman. Some strange women are prostitutes.

“But when you shall please to bring but that concurrence of my fortune to memory, which today yourself did urge, it may beget some favor like an excuse, though none like reason.”

She meant that if he would remember the words he had spoken to her earlier, he would likely excuse her actions now, even if they seemed out of line with reason.

These are among the words Wittipol had spoken when he was speaking as if he were her:

*“But sir, you seem a gentleman of virtue no less than of good birth, and one who in every way looks as he were of too good quality to entrap a credulous woman, or betray her.”*

Certainly Wittipol’s actions seemed out of line with the description of his looks: He had been trying to convince her to commit adultery.

Responding to the notion that her actions were out of line with reason, Wittipol said, “Reason has no part in your actions, my tuneful, sweet-voiced mistress? Then surely Love has no reason, and Beauty has no reason, and Nature is not violated in both Love and Beauty. You speak at once with all the gentle tongues of Reason, Love, Beauty, and Nature.”

According to Wittipol, it was completely in accordance with Reason that she commit adultery with him — and also completely in accordance with Love, Beauty, and Nature.

He continued, “I thought I had enough removed already that scruple from your breast, and left you all reason, when, through my morning’s perspective, I showed you a man so beyond excuse that he is the cause for why anything is to be done upon him, and nothing that injures him is to be called a misplaced injury.”

In other words, he had used a perspective — a metaphorical microscope — to help her closely examine her husband and realize that he was such a man that any kind of evil could be done to him and no one could say that it was undeserved.

Wittipol continued, “I rather had hope now to show you how Love by his intimate accesses grows more natural, and what was done this morning with such force was but then devised to serve the present.”

He grew more familiar in his courtship and intimate accesses, playing with her breasts, kissing her hands, etc.

These are liberties indeed, and Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel’s husband had definitely let her know earlier that she was not to allow Wittipol to touch her. What’s going on here? Possibly 1) she was sexually attracted to Wittipol, 2) she was rebelling against her husband, 3) she was manipulating Wittipol because she wanted him to do something for her, or 4) some combination of the above.

Wittipol continued, “Since Love has the honor to approach these sister-swelling breasts, and touch this soft and rosy hand, he has the skill to draw their nectar forth with kissing, and could make more wanton leaps from this brave promontory down to this valley” — he moved a hand from a nipple toward her vulva — “than the nimble deer could play the hopping sparrow about these nets, and could play the

sporting squirrel in these crisped, tightly curled groves” — he was referring to her pubic hair.

Deer can leap, sparrows can hop, squirrels can enjoy entertainment, but Love has its own action that outperforms each of these others.

He continued, “Love can bury himself in every silkworm’s cocoon that is here unraveled.”

In a non-aroused state, the walls of the vagina touch each other. In a sexually aroused state, the clitoris, labia minora, labia majora, and vagina swell as blood rushes to these areas. It is as if the vulva is opening like a flower.

“Love can run into the snare that every hair is.

“Love can cast into a curl to catch a Cupid flying.

“Love can bathe himself in milk and roses here, and dry himself there.

“Love can warm his cold hands to play with this smooth, round, and well-turned chin, as with the billiard ball.

“Love can roll on these lips, the banks of love, and there at once both plant and gather kisses.

“Lady, shall I, with what I have made today here, call all sense to wonder, and all faith to sign the mysteries revealed in your bodily form? And will Love pardon me the blasphemy I uttered when I said a looking-glass could speak this beauty, or that fools had power to judge it?”

He then sang:

*“Do but look on her eyes! They do light —*

*“All that Love’s world comprises!*

*“Do but look on her hair! It is bright*



*“As Love’s star [Venus] when it rises!  
“Do but mark [look closely], her forehead’s smoother  
“Than words that soothe her!  
“And from her arched brows, such a grace  
“Sheds itself through the face,  
“As alone, there triumphs to the life,  
“All the gain, all the good, of the elements’ strife!  
“Have you seen but a bright lily grow  
“Before rude hands have touched it?  
“Have you marked but the fall of the snow  
“Before the soil has smutched [smudged] it?  
“Have you felt the wool of the beaver?  
“Or swan’s down, ever?  
“Or have smelt of the bud of the briar?  
“Or the nard [aromatic ointment] in the fire?  
“Or have tasted the honeybag of the bee?  
“Oh, so white! Oh, so soft! Oh, so sweet is she!”*

— 2.7 —

Fitzdottrel appeared behind his wife.

Pug appeared on the street below the two buildings.

Fitzdottrel said to himself, “Is she so, sir?”

He meant: Is my wife attempting to be unfaithful to me?

He added to himself, “And I will keep her so, if I know how, or can.”

He meant that he would keep making her attempts to be unfaithful to him unsuccessful.

He added to himself, “I’ll go no farther than what the wit — intelligence and skill — of man will do.”

He may have meant that the wit — intelligence and skill — of man would be enough to keep his wife from committing adultery.

Or he may have meant that he would attempt to keep her faithful to him, but he would do only what it was possible for him to do. If so, he believed that another woman could replace his wife.

He added to himself, “At this window she shall no more be buzzed at. You can bet on it.”

He then said out loud to his wife, “If you are sweetmeats, wedlock, or sweet flesh, all’s one and the same to me. I do not love this hum about you. A fly-blown wife is not so proper.”

He was comparing his wife — whom he called “wedlock” — to sweets or meat that flies were swarming around.

He ordered her, “Go inside!”

She moved inside the room, away from the window, but Wittipol could still see her and she could still see him.

Fitzdottrel said from his window, “As for you, sir, look to hear from me.”

These words were the way a traditional challenge to a duel began.

“So I do, sir,” Wittipol replied.

Wittipol was ready to fight a duel with Fitzdottrel.

“No, but in other terms,” Fitzdottrel said.

Fitzdottrel was not ready to fight a duel with Wittipol.

Fitzdottrel continued, “There’s no man offers this to my wife unless he pays for it.”

“I have done that, sir,” Wittipol said.

He meant that he had paid with a cloak.

“Nay, then, I tell you, you are —” Fitzdottrel began.

Wittipol asked, “What am I, sir?”

“Why, that I’ll think about, when I have cut your throat!”

“Bah, you are an ass,” Wittipol said.

“I am resolved on it, sir —” Fitzdottrel began.

Fitzdottrel meant that he was resolved on cutting Wittipol’s throat.

“I think you are!” Wittipol interrupted.

Wittipol meant that Fitzdottrel was resolved on being an ass.

Fitzdottrel continued, “— to call you to a reckoning.”

“Go away, you broker’s block, you property!” Wittipol said, hitting him.

A broker’s block or property was a mannequin on which clothing was displayed. Wittipol was referring to Fitzdottrel’s custom of renting fine but used clothing.

Fitzdottrel said, “By God’s light, if you strike me, I’ll strike your mistress.”

He hit his wife, and then he and his wife exited.

Furious, Wittipol said, "Oh! I could shoot my eyes at him for that, now, or leave my teeth in him, if they were cuckold's poison enough to kill him!

"What prodigious, blind, and most wicked change of fortune's this? I have no breath of patience — all my veins swell, and my muscles start at the unfairness of it. I shall break, break!"

He exited.

Alone, Pug said to himself, "This I did for the malice of it, and so that my revenge may pass!"

He had caused Wittipol to become very angry at Fitzdottrel; if Wittipol were to beat Fitzdottrel, then Pug would have revenge for Fitzdottrel's beating him. In addition, Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel had been responsible for Pug being beaten in the first place, and he had gotten revenge on her by stopping her meeting with Wittipol.

"But now my conscience tells me I have profited the cause of Hell but little in breaking off their loves, which, if some other act of mine doesn't repair this damage, I shall hear ill of in my account."

Pug could get in trouble in Hell for interfering with the love of Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel and Wittipol. He had interfered in a love that could have led to adultery.

Fitzdottrel and his wife came outside and stood near Pug.

"Oh, bird!" Fitzdottrel said. "Could you do this? Against me? And at this time, now? When I was so employed, wholly for you, drowned in my care — more than the land I swear I have hope that I will win — to make you peerless? I have been working to get footmen for you, fine-paced ushers, and pages to serve you and bend their knees respectfully to you.

“I have been working to decide what knight’s wife will bear your train, and I have been working so that you can sit with your four women in council, and receive news from foreign parts, and I have been working so you can dress yourself perfectly in every detail!

“You’ve almost turned my good affection away from you, soured my sweet thoughts, all my pure purposes. I could now find it in my very heart to make another lady duchess and depose you.

“Well, go inside.”

His wife went inside.

Fitzdottrel said to Pug, “Devil, you have redeemed everything. I forgive you. And I’ll do you good.”

The redemption of a devil from Hell is unusual.

Pug exited.

— 2.8 —

Merecraft and Engine came outside and talked to Fitzdottrel.

Merecraft asked, “Why do you have these excursions away from business? Where have you been, sir?”

“I have been where I have been vexed a little, with a trifle!” Fitzdottrel said.

“Oh, sir!” Merecraft said. “No trifles must trouble your grave head, now that it is growing to be great.”

Fitzdottrel’s head could grow great. He could become big-headed because of pride in his imagined future success. Also, he was in danger of acquiring the horns of a cuckold.

Merecraft continued, “You must be above all those things.”

“So I will,” Fitzdottrel said.

“Now you are moving toward becoming a lord, you must put off the man, sir,” Merecraft said.

“He says the truth,” Engine said.

They were telling Fitzdottrel that he need not act like an ordinary man any more, by which they meant he did not have to observe such things as humility and courtesy.

“You must do nothing as you have done it heretofore,” Merecraft said. “You must not know or greet any man —”

Engine interrupted, “— who was your bedfellow the other month.”

“Bedfellow” here meant “intimate friend,” although unmarried people of the same sex could share a bed without causing gossip in this society.

“The other month?” Merecraft said. “The other week.”

People experiencing a sudden rise in social status often shake off their old friends.

Merecraft continued, “Thou don’t know the privileges, Engine, that follow that title, nor how swiftly they come with the title. Today, when he has put on his lord’s face once, then —”

“Sir, concerning these things I shall do well enough,” Fitzdottrel said. “I can act like a lord — don’t fear that I cannot.

“But then, my wife is such an unpredictable, uncooperative thing! She’ll never learn how to conduct herself like a duchess! I don’t understand her at all.”

“Best have her taught, sir,” Merecraft said.

“Where?” Fitzdottrel said. “Are there any schools for ladies? Is there an academy for women? I do know for men there

was; I learned in one myself how to perform courtly bows and military drills.”

Engine whispered to Merecraft, “Sir, do you remember the idea you had — concerning the Spanish gown, at home?”

Merecraft whispered back, “Ha! I thank thee with all my heart, dear Engine.”

Merecraft turned to Fitzdottrel and said, “Sir, there is a certain lady here about the town, an English widow, who has recently travelled, but she’s called the Spaniard, because she came most recently from Spain, and wears Spanish clothing.

“She is such a splendid woman! All our women here who are of spirit and fashion flock to her, as to their president, their law, their canon, more than they ever did to oracle Forman.”

Doctor Forman was a necromancer who claimed, among other things, to be able to find lost treasure. Women especially flocked to him.

Merecraft continued, “Such rare recipes she has, sir, for the face, such oils, such tinctures, such pomades, such perfumes, medicines, essential oils, etc.

“And she is such a mistress of behavior! She knows, from the duke’s daughter to the doxy, what is their just due, and no more than what is their just due.”

A doxy is a slut.

“Oh, sir!” Fitzdottrel said. “You please me in this more than my own greatness. Where is she? Let us have her.”

“Be patient,” Merecraft said. “We must find a means for you to meet her and think about how you two can become acquainted —”

“Good sir, set about it,” Fitzdottrel said.

“We must think about how first,” Merecraft said.

“Oh, I do not love to wait for a thing, when I have a mind to have it,” Fitzdottrel said. “You do not know me if you want me to wait.”

“Your wife must send some pretty token to her, with a compliment, and ask to be received in her good graces,” Merecraft said. “All the great ladies do it —”

“She shall! She shall!” Fitzdottrel said. “What pretty token would be best?”

“Some little trifle,” Merecraft said. “I would not have it be any great matter, sir — a diamond ring of forty or fifty pounds would do it handsomely; and be a gift fit for your wife to send, and fit for the Spanish lady to take.”

“I’ll go and tell my wife about it right now,” Fitzdottrel said.

He exited.

“Why, this is going well!” Merecraft said to Engine. “The Spanish clothes we’ve already got, but where’s this lady? If we could get a witty boy now, Engine, that would be an excellent joke. I could instruct him to the true height. Anything takes this dottrel.”

There was no Spanish lady; this was just another con that seemed to be about to pay off immediately with a diamond ring worth forty or fifty pounds. Fitzdottrel was a dottrel — a foolish bird — whom it was easy to take advantage of.

Engine said, “Why, sir, one of the players will be your best female impersonator.”

The players were theatrical actors. In this society, women did not act in the theater. Boys played the roles of women.

“No, there’s no trusting them to keep it secret,” Merecraft said. “They’ll talk about it, and tell their playwrights.”



“So what if they do?” Engine said. “The jest will suit the stage. But there are some of them who are very honest lads. There’s Dick Robinson, who is a very pretty fellow, and who comes often to the chamber of a gentleman who is a friend of mine.”

Dick Robinson was a boy actor who played women’s roles on stage.

Engine continued, “We had the merriest supper of it there, one night! The gentleman’s landlady invited my friend to a feast for friends. Now my friend, sir, brought Dick Robinson, dressed like a lawyer’s wife, among them all — I lent him the clothes — but to see him act out the role, and lay the law, and act refined, and drink to them, and then talk bawdy, and send frolics! Oh, your laughter would have burst your buttons, or would not have left you with an unsplit seam in your clothing.”

Frolics were humorous or amatory verses written on paper and wrapped around sweetmeats and placed in bowls. During a feast, guests would send frolics to each other.

Sweetmeats are sweet delicacies such as bonbons, candied fruit, sugarplums, sugar-covered nuts, or balls or sticks of candy.

“They say he’s an ingenious youth,” Merecraft said.

“Oh, sir!” Engine said. “And he dresses himself the best! Beyond forty of your real ladies! Have you ever seen him?”

“No, I seldom see those trifles,” Merecraft said. “But do you think that we may have him pretend to be the Spanish lady?”

“Sir, the young gentleman friend I tell you of can get him to perform the role,” Engine said. “Shall I ask my young gentleman friend?”

“Yes, do it,” Merecraft said.

Engine exited.

Fitzdottrel returned and said, “By God’s light, I cannot get my wife to part with a ring on any terms, and yet the sullen monkey has two.”

“It is against reason that you should urge her to give up one of her rings, sir,” Merecraft said. “Send to a goldsmith. Don’t let her lose by giving up a ring.”

“How does she lose by it?” Fitzdottrel asked. “Isn’t it for her?”

By giving up the ring, his wife would gain the friendship of the Spanish lady. This was a gain — so Fitzdottrel thought.

“Make it your own bounty,” Merecraft said. “It will have the better success. What is a matter of fifty pounds to you, sir?”

“I’ve only a hundred pieces to show here, and that I would not break —”

Merecraft interrupted, “You shall have credit, sir. I’ll send a note to my goldsmith.”

Trains, Merecraft’s manservant, entered the room.

Merecraft said, “Here my manservant comes. He can carry my note to my goldsmith.”

He then said, “How are things now, Trains? What birds?”

“What birds?” meant “What’s up?”

Knowing Merecraft, the slang comes from hunting — the birds were prey to be shot just like Fitzdottrel was prey to be cheated.

“Your cousin Everill met me, and he has beaten me because I would not tell him where you were,” Trains answered. “I think he has dogged me and followed to the house, too.”

“Well, you shall go out at the back door, then, Trains,” Merecraft said. “You must get Gilthead the goldsmith here by some means.”

“That is impossible!” Trains said.

“Tell him we have venison,” Fitzdottrel said. “I’ll give him a piece, and send his wife a pheasant.”

Fitzdottrel exited.

“A forest of deer will not persuade him to come until those forty pounds you most recently got from him are paid back,” Trains said. “He makes more noise about that petty sum than he does about your bond of six and statute of eight hundred.”

A statute was a loan whose collateral was land. If the loan were not paid back, the creditor could legally seize the bound land of the debtor.

“Tell him we’ll hedge in that,” Merecraft said.

That meant that he would include the forty pounds he owed in a larger debt that had better security.

He added, “Talk up Fitzdottrel to him. Say that Fitzdottrel’s net worth is twice what it really is; make him a man of metal.”

The metal he had in mind was gold.

“That will not be necessary,” Trains said. “Fitzdottrel’s bond is current enough. He has good credit.”

### ACT 3 (*The Devil is an Ass*)

#### — 3.1 —

Gilthead the goldsmith and Plutarchus talked together. Plutarchus was Gilthead's son.

“All this is to make you a gentleman,” Gilthead said. “I’ll have you learn, son. Why have I placed you with Sir Paul Eitherside except for the purpose of having you learn enough law that you can keep what is your own? Besides, he is a justice here in the town; and by dwelling, son, with him you shall learn in a single year what shall be worth twenty years of supporting you at Oxford or at Cambridge, or sending you to the Inns of Court or to France.

“I am called for now in haste by Master Merecraft to give credit to Master Fitzdottrel, a (financially) good man — I’ve inquired about him: He has eighteen hundred pounds a year, and his reputation is (financially) good for a diamond ring that costs forty pounds but will not be worth thirty pounds — that’s ten pounds we’ve gained. And this is to make you a gentleman!”

“Oh, but good father, you trust too much!” Plutarchus said. “You give too much credit!”

“Boy, boy, we live by finding fools to be trusted with credit,” Gilthead said. “Our shop-books are our pastures, our corn-grounds. We lay them open for fools to come into, and when we have them there we drive them up into one of our two pounds, the Counters, straightaway. And this is to make you a gentleman!”

The Counters were pounds — prisons — for people who could not pay their debts. Gilthead would get fools to run up debt, bleed them dry with high interest, and send them to prison still owing him money. But the money Gilthead got

went for a good cause, he thought: It would make his son a gentleman.

He continued, “We citizens never trust someone with credit but we cheat, for if our debtors pay, we cheat them with our high interest, and if they do not pay, then we cheat ourselves. But that’s a hazard everyone must run who hopes to make his son a gentleman.”

“I do not wish to be a gentleman, truly, father,” Plutarchus said. “In a generation or two, we come to be just in their — the fools’ — state, fit to be cheated like them.

“And I would rather have tarried in your trade, for since the gentry scorn the city so much, I think we should in time, holding together, and marrying in our own tribes, as they say, have gotten an Act of Common Council authorizing us legally to cheat them out of *rerum natura*.”

“*Rerum natura*” is Latin for “the nature of things”; Plutarchus was using it to mean “everything.”

The Roman philosopher Lucretius wrote a work he titled *De Rerum Natura*, or *Concerning the Nature of Things*.

Gilthead said, “Aye, if we had a legislative act first to forbid the marrying of our wealthy heirs to them, and to forbid daughters from having such lavish portions — that ruins everything.”

Gentry who lacked money could become wealthy again by marrying someone who had much money — for example, rich Jewish daughters.

“And such practices make us a mongrel breed, father,” Plutarchus said. “And when they have your money, then they laugh at you, or kick you down the stairs. I cannot abide them. I would prefer to have them cheated, but not trusted with credit.”

Merecraft and Fitzdottrel entered the room in which Gilthead and Plutarchus, his son, were talking.

“Oh, has he come?” Merecraft said. “I knew he would not fail me.”

He said quietly, “Welcome, good Gilthead. I must have you do a noble gentleman a courtesy here, in a mere trifle, some pretty ring or jewel, of fifty or threescore pounds — make it a hundred, and hedge in the last forty that I owe you, and your own price for the ring.”

Merecraft wanted the most recent forty pounds he owed Gilthead to be made a part of the loan that Fitzdottrel would get from Gilthead. That way, Fitzdottrel would be the guarantor of the loan. If Merecraft were to default on the loan — have no doubt he would — Fitzdottrel would be legally responsible for paying back the loan.

More loudly, Merecraft continued talking to Gilthead, “He’s a good man, sir, and you may perhaps see him become a great man. He is likely to bestow hundreds and thousands of pounds on you, if you can humor him by giving him credit now. A great prince he will be shortly. What do you say?”

“In truth, sir, I cannot,” Gilthead said. “It has been a long vacation with us —”

The Inns of Court took a long vacation from August 13 to October 23. The vacation cut down on profits for many shopkeepers such as Gilthead.

Fitzdottrel interrupted, “A long vacation from what, I ask thee? From wit and intelligence? Or honesty? Those are your citizens’ long vacations.”

Angry at not immediately being granted credit, he walked away and looked out a window, ignoring the others.

Plutarchus whispered to Gilthead, his father, "Good father, do not trust them. "

"Nay, Tom Gilthead," Merecraft said. "Fitzdottrel will not buy a courtesy and beg it; he'll rather pay than beg."

Fitzdottrel had money; he did not need to beg for it.

Merecraft continued, "If you do for him, you must do cheerfully. His credit, sir, is not yet prostitute."

If Fitzdottrel spent enough time with Merecraft and his fellow con artists, Fitzdottrel's credit would become prostitute.

Merecraft then asked Gilthead, "Who's this? Thy son? A handsome youth. What's his name?"

"Plutarchus, sir," Plutarchus answered for his father.

"Plutarchus!" Merecraft said. "How did you get that name?"

Gilthead answered for his son, "The year, sir, that I begot him, I bought Plutarch's *Lives*, and fell so in love with the book that I called my son by his name, in the hope he would be like Plutarch and write the lives of our great men."

"In the city?" Merecraft asked. "And are you raising him there?"

"His mind, sir, lies much to that way," Gilthead replied.

"Why then, he is in the right way," Merecraft said.

"But now I had rather get him a good wife, and plant him in the country, there to use the blessing I shall leave him," Gilthead said.

"Not a good idea!" Merecraft said. "If thou do that, thou shall lose the laudable means thou have at home, here, to advance him and make him a young alderman!"

Merecraft guessed that he would get in Plutarchus' good graces by advocating that Plutarchus be allowed to stay in the city. Also, if Plutarchus were to live in the country after receiving his father's financial blessing, Merecraft would not be able to borrow money from him.

He continued, "Buy him a military captain's position in the Artillery Company, for shame; and let him go into the world early, and with his military scarlet ostrich-plume and military scarfs worn across his chest march through Cheapside, or along Cornhill, and by the virtue of those military decorations draw down a wife there from a window worth ten thousand pounds! Get him the book for learning military drills and get him some soldier men made of lead to set upon a table, in case his mistress should chance to come by, so that he may draw her in and show her Finsbury battles."

Military training exercises, including mock battles, took place at Finsbury, a London district.

Gilthead said, "I have placed him with Justice Eitherside, to learn as much law —"

"As thou has conscience," Merecraft said. "Come, come, thou are wronging pretty Plutarchus, who has not received his name for nothing, but was born to train the youth of London in the military truth. That way his genius lies."

Hearing a noise, he looked up and said, "My cousin Everill!"

— 3.3 —

Everill entered the room and said, "Oh, are you here, sir? Please, let us whisper together."

He took Merecraft aside so they could talk quietly and privately together.



Plutarchus said to Gilthead, “Father, dear father, trust him, if you love me.”

He had changed his mind about Merecraft. Perhaps the military life appealed to him. Certainly staying in the city did. Merecraft’s description of military life involved staying in the city.

Trusting Merecraft involved trusting Fitzdottrel; Merecraft would do everything possible to make Fitzdottrel responsible for paying back any loans.

“Why, I intend to trust him, boy,” Gilthead said, “but what I do must not come easily from me. We must deal with courtiers, boy, as courtiers deal with us. If I have a business there with any of them, why, I must wait, I’m sure of it, son; and although my lord dispatch me, yet his ‘worshipful’ manservant will keep me for his entertainment a month or two, to show me with my fellow citizens. I must make his train long and full, for one quarter, and help the spectacle of his greatness.”

The “courtier” was Merecraft, and the “lord” was Fitzdottrel. Merecraft did not treat Gilthead well, as could be seen by the way he talked to him. Therefore, although Gilthead was willing to do business with Fitzdottrel, he would hold off a while because Merecraft was the middleman.

Gilthead treated courtiers, including the ones he lent money, the way they treated him. He made them wait to get a loan, and they made him wait to be repaid for the loan. True, he made interest as long as the loan was made, but the courtiers made him jump through metaphorical hoops as he waited to be repaid.

Or, if the lord were the one getting the loan, then the lord’s manservant — the courtier — would make him wait. Gilthead would be joining others in the lord’s retinue as he

waited, and the lord — and the courtier — would seem to be a great man because of the retinue.

Gilthead continued, “There nothing is done at once but injuries, boy — and they come headlong! All great men’s good turns don’t move, or they move very slowly.”

“Yet, sweet father, trust him,” Plutarchus said.

“Well, I will think about it,” Gilthead said.

He and his son then talked together quietly.

Meanwhile, Everill said to Mercraft, “Come, you must do it, sir. I’m ruined, otherwise, and your Lady Tailbush has sent for me to come to dinner, and all my clothes are pawned. I had sent out this morning, before I heard you had come to town, some twenty of my epistles, and no one return —”

The epistles were letters begging for money.

Mercraft interrupted and told Everill about his faults:

“Why, I have told you about this. This comes from wearing fancy clothes of scarlet, gold lace, and cut-works. Your fine gartering! With your blown roses on your shoes, cousin! And your eating pheasant and godwit — another fowl that is a delicacy — here in London. And your haunting the Globes and Mermaids — theaters and taverns — and squeezing in with lords always at the table! And affecting lechery in velvet — you consort with expensive whores who wear velvet!

“Instead, you could have contented yourself with cheese, salt-butter, and a pickled herring in the Low Countries — there you could have worn inexpensive cloth such as fustian! You could have been satisfied with a sexual leap on your host’s daughter in the garrison — a wench you could have bought with the small coin that is called a stoler! Or you could have been satisfied with a sexual leap on your sutler’s

wife, in the leaguer, whom you could pay with two small coins that are called blanks!”

A sutler sells provisions to the soldiers in a military camp, aka leaguer.

Merecraft continued, “You never then would have run upon this low point that forced you to write your begging letters and send out your privy seals that thus have frightened off all your acquaintances so that they shun you at a distance, worse than you shun the debt collectors!”

Everill grumbled, “A pox upon you! I didn’t come to you for advice. I lack money.”

“You do not think about what you owe me already?” Merecraft asked.

“I?” Everill said. “They owe you who intend to pay you. I’ll be sworn I never meant it.”

This sounds as if he never meant to repay Merecraft the debt he owed him, but perhaps he meant: I never meant to reach this low point. Most likely, he meant the first one.

Everill continued, “Come, you will make money with a project.”

He then said threateningly, “I shall ruin your practice for this month if you don’t help me. You know me.”

Everill could inform people such as Fitzdottrel that Merecraft was a con man.

“Yes, you have a very ‘sweet’ nature!” Merecraft said.

“Well, that’s all one,” Everill said. “Who cares?”

“You’ll leave this empire one day,” Merecraft said. “You will not ever have this tribute paid, despite your scepter of the sword!”

He was saying that he would not be intimidated. Everill was ordering him around as if Everill were an emperor, but he was gaining his power with a sword — threats — instead of with a scepter — rightful rule.

“Tie up your wit,” Everill said, “and don’t provoke me —”

“Will you, sir, help me in doing what I shall provoke another to do for you?” Merecraft asked.

Merecraft did not want to give Everill money, but he was willing to con someone into giving Everill money. To do so, he needed Everill’s help.

“I cannot tell; try me,” Everill said. “I think I am not so utterly of an ore un-to-be-melted, but I can do myself good on occasions.”

“Strike in then, and do your part,” Merecraft said.

Merecraft and Everill then went over to Fitzdottrel.

Merecraft said to him, “Master Fitzdottrel, if I transgress in point of manners, give me your best interpretation of my conduct. I must beg for my freedom from your affairs this day.”

Merecraft began to gather his coat and hat and papers.

“What is it, sir?” Fitzdottrel said.

“I need to leave to help in this gentleman’s affairs. He is my kinsman —”

“You’ll not do me that affront, sir,” Fitzdottrel said.

He was eager to quickly rise in society and to quickly become very wealthy.

“I am sorry you should so interpret my action as an affront,” Merecraft said. “But, sir, it has to do with his being invested

in a new office he has stood for a long time: Master of the Dependences!”

A dependence was a quarrel that needed to be settled. Many quarrels were settled through duels, which King James I of England opposed.

As he would now say, Merecraft wanted to set up an Office of Dependency, in which Everill would be the chief official. According to Merecraft, as he would soon say, this was one of his projects: Like other of his projects, it sounded somewhat plausible but had little chance of actually being set up and little chance of actually working.

Merecraft said, “The Office of Dependency is a place of my own design, too, sir, and it has met with much opposition; but the state, now, sees the great necessity of it, as after all their writing and their speaking against duels, they have erected it.”

Merecraft continued, “Everill’s official charter has been drawn up — for since there will be differences daily, between gentlemen, and since the roaring manner has grown offensive, with the result that those few we call the civil men of the sword abhor the vain and foolish bragging, they shall refer now hither for their process. And such as trespass against the rule of court are to be fined —”

Roaring boys were young men — bullies — who engaged in much arguing and dueling. Many roaring boys were in London.

Presumably, rather than settling quarrels through illegal dueling, which King James I had outlawed, gentlemen who had disagreements would go to the Office of Dependency and have their quarrels legally settled there. Fitzdottrel would learn that he must settle his affairs before settling his quarrel, so likely the way to settle quarrels was through legal duels approved by the Office of Dependency.

“Truly, a pretty place!” Fitzdottrel said.

“A kind of arbitrary court it will be, sir,” Merecraft said.

“I shall have a case for it, I believe, before long,” Fitzdottrel said. “I had a distaste.”

His distaste was his quarrel with Wittipol.

“But now, sir,” Merecraft said, “my learned counsel, they must have a feeling — a bribe. They’ll part, sir, with no books — written grants of privileges — unless the hand-gout be oiled, and I must furnish the oil.”

The hand-gout is a tight fist.

Merecraft continued, “If it concerns money, they come to me straightaway: I am a precious-metal mine, mint, and treasury, and I supply all.”

He asked Everill, “How much is it? A hundred pounds?”

It was time for Everill to play his part in conning Fitzdottrel.

He replied, “No, the greedy harpy now insists on a hundred pieces.”

A hundred pieces was ten percent more than a hundred pounds. A pound is twenty shillings; a piece is twenty-two shillings.

“Why, he must have them, if he insists,” Merecraft said.

He then said to Fitzdottrel, “Tomorrow, sir, will equally serve your needs, and therefore let me obtain your consent that you will yield me time to help a poor gentleman in his distresses because of his affairs’ urgency—”

“By no means!” Fitzdottrel said.

“I must get him this money, and will —” Merecraft said.

“Sir, I protest, I’d rather stand as the guarantor for the money myself than you should leave me,” Fitzdottrel said.

“Oh, good sir,” Merecraft said, “do you think so coarsely of our manners that we would, for any need of ours, be pressed to take it, although you would be pleased to offer it?”

He was pretending not to want Fitzdottrel to be the guarantor for the loan.

“Why, by heaven, I mean it!” Fitzdottrel said.

“I can never believe less,” Merecraft said. “But we, sir, must preserve our dignity, as you do publish — make public — yours. By your fair leave, sir.”

He pretended to start to leave.

“As I am a gentleman,” Fitzdottrel said, “if you intend to leave me now, or if you refuse me, I will not think you love and respect me.”

“Sir, I honor you,” Merecraft said. “And with just reason, for these noble notes of the nobility you pretend to.”

The “noble notes” included the offer to be the guarantor of the money that Merecraft said that Everill needed.

The word “pretend” means “has a claim to,” in addition to its regular meaning. Merecraft knew that Fitzdottrel had no real chance of becoming a duke; all he had was a real chance of losing his wealth.

Merecraft continued, “But sir, I would like to know why you would do this — he is a stranger. What is your reason for helping him?”

Everill whispered to Merecraft, “You’ll mar all with your fineness.”

Everill wanted to take the money and run, but Merecraft was prolonging the time that he would accept Fitzdottrel's offer to be the guarantor of the loan.

"Why, sir, that's all one — it wouldn't matter if it were only my fancy," Fitzdottrel said. "But I have a business that perhaps I'd have brought to his office."

"Oh, sir!" Merecraft said. "I have no objections to your being guarantor, then, if he can be made profitable to you."

"Yes, and it shall be one of my ambitions to have it the first business," Fitzdottrel said. "Can I do that?"

"As long as you intend to make it a perfect business," Everill said.

The word "business" meant "a private quarrel."

"I'll do that, I assure you," Fitzdottrel said. "Show me immediately what to do."

"Sir, it is important that the first be a perfect business, for Everill's own honor," Merecraft said.

Everill said, "Yes, and for the reputation, too, of my office."

The legal term "perfect" meant "enforceable by law." The private business, aka enforceable-by-law quarrel, would have to be one that was clearly suitable to be resolved — and would be resolved — by the Office of Dependency. That way, people would see that the Office of Dependency worked, and King James I and other VIPs would support it.

"Why, why do I take this course otherwise?" Fitzdottrel said. "I am not altogether an ass, good gentlemen. Wherefore should I consult you? Do you think to make a song and dance of it? Get to the point. What's your procedure for resolving quarrels? Tell us."



“Do, satisfy him,” Merecraft said to Everill. “Tell him the whole course of action.”

“First,” Everill said, “by request, or otherwise, you offer your business to the court, wherein you crave the judgment of the Master and the Assistants.”

“Well, that’s done,” Fitzdottrel said. “Now what do you do next?”

“We straightaway, sir, have recourse to the source of the business,” Everill said. “We visit the ground — that is, we examine the root causes of the quarrel, and so we see whether or not it is suitable for resolution by the Office of Dependency. If we find by our estimate that it is likely to prove to be a sullen and black business, that it is incorrigible and the parties are unable to negotiate a resolution, then we file it as a dependence.”

Fitzdottrel said, “So, it is filed. What follows? I love the order of these things.”

Everill said, “We then advise the party, if he is a man of means and possessions, that forthwith he settle his estate and put his affairs in order — or if he does not, at least that he says that he intends to do it. For by that the world takes notice that it now is a dependence. And this we call, sir, publication.”

“Publication” means “public notification.” In this society, however, “publication” also meant “confiscation.” Merecraft and Everill would love to confiscate Fitzdottrel’s wealth for their own use.

“Very sufficient!” Fitzdottrel said. “After publication, what’s next?”

Everill said, “Then we begin our legal process, which can be done in different ways: either by chartel, sir, or by ore-tenus

— that is, either by written challenge or by word of mouth. Then the challenger and challengee, or — using Spaniard words — your *provocador* and *provocado*, have their different courses of action —”

“I have enough information about it,” Fitzdottrel said. “For a hundred pieces? Yes, for two hundred underwrite me, do. Your man will take my bond?”

“That he will, to be sure,” Merecraft said.

Merecraft said quietly to Fitzdottrel, “But these same citizens, they are such sharks! There’s an old debt of forty pounds I gave my word as guarantor — I did it for one who has run away to the Bermudas, and he will hook in that or he will not take your bond.”

The citizen was Gilthead. Merecraft was trying to con Fitzdottrel into being the guarantor of the debt of forty pounds by saying that Gilthead would not lend Fitzdottrel any money unless Fitzdottrel also assumed the debt of forty pounds. This was Merecraft’s way of hedging the debt — Fitzdottrel’s credit was much better than his.

Fitzdottrel said quietly, “Why, let him. That and the ring, and a hundred pieces, will all just make two hundred pounds?”

Merecraft said quietly, “No more, sir.”

In his mind, Merecraft may have thought, *No. More, sir*. He wanted to take Fitzdottrel for more than two hundred pounds.

He added, “What ready arithmetic you have!”

He then said to Gilthead, “Do you hear? A pretty morning’s work for you, this! Do it. You shall have twenty pounds out of it.”

Twenty pounds would be ten percent interest on a loan of two hundred pounds.

“Twenty pieces?” Gilthead asked.

He wanted more interest.

“Good father, do it,” Plutarchus urged.

“You will hook still?” Merecraft said. “You will fish for more money? Well, show us your ring. You could not have done this now with gentleness at first? If you had, we might have thanked you. But instead of dealing with gentleness, you groan as if you were having a painful defecation, and your courtesies come from you as if you were passing a hard stool, and they stink!

“A man may draw your teeth out easier than your money.

“Come, if little Gilthead here did not have a better nature than you” — he squeezed Plutarchus’ lips, which in this society was a friendly gesture — “I would never love him, I who could squeeze his lips off, now.”

He then asked Plutarchus, “Wasn’t thy mother a gentlewoman?”

“Yes, sir,” Plutarchus replied.

“And she went to the court at Christmas and St. George’s tide? And she lent the lords’ men necklaces?” Merecraft asked.

“Of gold, and pearl, sir,” Plutarchus replied.

“I knew thou must take after somebody other than your father,” Merecraft said. “That could not be otherwise. You don’t look like a shopkeeper. I’ll have thee made Captain Gilthead, and have thee march up and take in Pimlico, and have thee kill the bush at every tavern.”

Pimlico was a resort town. “Take in” meant 1) capture as a soldier, and 2) tour as a tourist.

Tavern signs originally showed ivy plants, and so a tavern sign came to be known as a “bush.” “To kill the bush” meant “to drink heavily.”

Merecraft continued, “Thou shall have a wife if smocks will mount, boy.”

Smocks can mount — that is, be lifted. The word “smock” also meant “woman,” and women can mount men.

Merecraft turned to old Gilthead, the father, and asked, “What do you have? You have there now some Bristol-stone or Cornish counterfeit you’d put upon us?”

Fitzdottrel was in the market for a diamond ring, but Merecraft was asking Gilthead if he had brought a diamond substitute rather than a real diamond.

Gilthead showed him a jewel and said, “No, sir, I assure you that this is a real diamond. Look at its luster! The luster will speak for itself! I’ll give you permission to put it in the mill for grinding.”

Diamond substitutes were softer than real diamonds. Gilthead was saying that this was a real diamond that would survive grinding in a mill.

Gilthead continued, “It is not a great, large stone, but it is a true paragon of a diamond. This has all its corners — it has been perfectly cut. View it well.”

“It’s yellow,” Merecraft said.

The color yellow indicated impurities in the diamond.

“Upon my faith, sir, it is of the right black luster, and very deep,” Gilthead said. “It’s set without a foil, too.”

A foil is a thin sheet of metal placed under the diamond to show off its luster.

Gilthead displayed another jewel and said, "Here's one of the yellow luster that I'll sell cheap."

Merecraft said, "And what do you value this at? Thirty pounds?"

"No, sir," Gilthead said. "It cost me forty before it was set."

Forty what? Pounds? Something else?

"Turnings, you mean?" Merecraft said.

Turnings are actions that chip off the bad parts of the diamond.

Merecraft continued, "I know your equivocations. You're grown the better fathers of them lately."

He meant that Gilthead and other Jews had learned how to equivocate better than the Jesuit fathers.

He continued, "Well, where it must go, it will be judged, and therefore look that it is right. You shall have fifty pounds for it. Not a denier more!"

Earlier, Gilthead had talked to his son about Merecraft's summons: Gilthead would sell a ring for forty pounds that was not worth thirty pounds.

Merecraft then said to Fitzdottrel, "And because you would have things dispatched quickly, sir, I'll go immediately and find and talk to this Spanish lady. If you think it is good, sir, since you have a hundred pieces ready, you may part with those now, to serve my kinsman's turns, so that he may wait upon you at once the freer. And you will then take the hundred pieces when you have signed and sealed the agreement with Gilthead."

“I don’t care if I do,” Fitzdottrel said. “I agree.”

“And dispatch all together,” Merecraft said.

Fitzdottrel handed over the hundred pieces, saying, “There, they’re exactly the right number: a hundred pieces! I have counted them twice a day for the past two months.”

“Well, go and sign your agreement, sir, and then make your return here as speedily as you can.”

He showed Fitzdottrel, Gilthead, and Plutarchus to the door, through which they exited.

Merecraft then began to split the money.

“Come, give it to me,” Everill said.

“Quiet, sir —” Merecraft began.

“Indeed, and fair, too, then!” Everill said. “I’ll permit no delaying in getting my share, sir.”

“But you will listen to me?” Merecraft asked.

“Yes, when I have received my dividend,” Everill said.

“There’s forty pieces for you,” Merecraft said.

“What is this for?” Everill said.

He expected more.

“It’s your half,” Merecraft said. “You know that Gilthead must have twenty pieces.”

“And what about your ring there?” Everill said. “Shall I have none of that?”

“Oh, that’s to be given to a lady,” Merecraft said.

“Is that so?” Everill asked.

“By that good light, it is,” Merecraft said.

“Come, give me ten pieces more, then,” Everill said.

“Why?” Merecraft asked.

“Twenty pieces for Gilthead?” Everill said. “Sir, do you think I’ll allow him to have any such share?”

“You must.”

“Must I?” Everill said. “You do your musts, sir, and I’ll do mine. You will not part with the whole, sir? Will you? Bull! Give me ten more pieces!”

“By what law do you do this?” Merecraft asked.

“Even lion-law, sir, or else I must roar.”

Everill meant that unless he received more money he would tell people about Merecraft’s cons.

“Good!” Merecraft said, meaning that Everill could yell and complain if he wanted to.

“You’ve heard how the ass made his divisions ‘wisely’?” Everill asked.

An ass, a fox, and a lion made a partnership and went hunting. After they had killed prey, the ass divided the prey into three equal shares: one each for the ass, the fox, and the lion. The lion, however, was not happy with an equal share and so it killed the ass and added it to the slaughtered prey and asked the fox to divide the prey. The fox divided the prey into three equal shares and gave the lion two of the shares, making the lion happy so it would not kill the fox.

“And I am he, I thank you,” Merecraft said.

He had equally and fairly divided the money.

“Much good may it do you, sir,” Everill said, meaning that it would not do Merecraft any good.

He took ten extra pieces.

“I shall be rid of this tyranny one day!” Merecraft said.

“Not while you eat and lie about the town here, and cheat in your bullion-hose — your padded trousers,” Everill said, “and not while I stand beside you and give you the benefit of my reputable name, and conduct your business, adjourn your beatings every term by postponing your trials in which you would face your creditors, and find new parties whom you can con with your projects.”

Everill helped Merecraft in his cons by seeming to be a reputable man about town whom people could trust and then introducing them to Merecraft.

He continued, “I have now a pretty task of it, to hold you in with your Lady Tailbush. But the trick will be how we shall both come off without paying for what we will commit?”

“Leave off your doubting,” Merecraft said, “and do your part — do what’s assigned to you. I have never failed yet.”

Everill said, “Give some credit to your aides, such as myself. You’re always unthankful.

“Where shall I soon meet you? You have some feat to do alone now, I see. You wish me to leave. Well, I will find you out, and bring you afterward to the audit — the reckoning.”

He exited.

“By God’s light!” Merecraft said. “There’s Engine’s share, too. I had forgot!”

Engine should have received a share of the hundred pieces. So Merecraft, in fact, had *not* equally and fairly divided the money.

Merecraft continued, “This reign is too-too-unsupportable! I must relieve myself of this vassalage to Everill.”



He heard a noise, looked up, and said, "Engine! Welcome."

— 3.4 —

Engine and Wittipol entered the room.

Merecraft took Engine aside and asked, "How goes the cry?"

The cry was a hunting cry. Merecraft was asking how the hunt for Dick Robinson was going.

Engine replied, "Excellently well!"

"Will it do?" Merecraft asked. "Where's Robinson?"

"Here is the gentleman, sir, who will undertake the role of the Spanish lady himself," Engine said. "I have acquainted him with the facts of the matter."

"Why did you do that?" Merecraft asked.

The fewer people who know about a con, the better.

"Why, Robinson would have told him — he's his friend — anyway, you know," Engine said. "And he's a pleasant wit; he will not hurt anything you purpose. Also, he's of the opinion that Robinson might lack the audacity to perform the part, the Spanish lady being such a gallant — such a fashionable lady. Now he has been in Spain, and knows the fashions there, and can discourse; and being but mirth, he says, leave it to his care — he can handle the part well."

"But he is too tall to play the Spanish lady!" Merecraft objected.

"As for that, he has the most splendid solution — you'll love him for it! He will say that he — that is, the Spanish lady — is wearing *cioppinos*, that is, soles worn under shoes to give extra height. And he will say that they do so in Spain. And Robinson is as tall as he is."

“Is that true?” Merecraft asked.

“Completely,” Engine said.

“I had rather trust a gentleman with the part, of the two,” Merecraft said.

Wittipol was a gentleman.

“I ask you to go to him then, sir, and greet him,” Engine said.

They went over to Wittipol, and Merecraft said to him, “Sir, my friend Engine has acquainted you with a strange business here.”

“A merry one, sir,” Wittipol said. “The Duke of Drowned-land and his Duchess?”

“Yes, sir,” Merecraft said. “Now that the conjurers have laid him by, I have made bold to borrow him a while —”

The conjurers were lying low because King James I had ordered that the laws against conjuring be enforced more rigorously. This gave con men such as Merecraft a chance to con Fitzdottrel.

“With the purpose still to put him out, I hope, to his best use?” Wittipol asked.

The conjurers and Merecraft believed that the best use of Fitzdottrel was to get as much money as possible from him. As of now, Wittipol had no objections.

“Yes, sir,” Merecraft said.

“Don’t worry about that small part that I am entrusted with,” Wittipol said. “I would not miss out on doing it because of the mirth that will follow from it; and well, I have a fancy to do it.”

His fancy was to get close to Fitzdottrel’s wife.

“Sir, that will make it well,” Merecraft said.

“You will say that it is so,” Wittipol said.

He knew very well that Merecraft was a con man.

Wittipol then asked, “Where must I put on my costume so I can play the Spanish lady?”

“At my house, sir,” Engine said.

“You shall have a guaranteed share, sir, in what Fitzdottrel yields to the sixpence,” Merecraft said.

Wittipol did not want the money.

“You shall pardon me,” he said. “I will share, sir, in your sports only; I am here for entertainment. I want nothing of your profits. But you must furnish me with the trappings of the Spanish lady: my coach, my *guarda-duennas* —”

*Guarda-duennas* are the Spanish lady’s attendants.

“Engine’s your *provedor*,” Merecraft said.

Engine would provide those trappings.

Merecraft then said, “But sir, I must — now that I’ve entered trust with you thus far, and now that I have confidence in your quality — acquaint you with some additional information.

“The place designed to be the scene for this our merry matter, because it must have the support of women to draw conversation, and offer it, is nearby here, at the Lady Tailbush’s.”

Fitzdottrel and the Spanish lady would meet in a group of other people where conversation between the two could take place. A respectable woman would not meet privately a man to whom she was not married or related or who was not her

trusted — and preferably elderly — servant. Of course, not all women are respectable, but even the women lacking respectability usually want to keep up appearances.

“I know her, sir,” Wittipol said, “and her gentleman usher.”

“You know Master Ambler?” Merecraft asked.

“Yes, sir,” Wittipol answered.

“Sir, it shall be no shame to me to confess to you that we poor gentlemen who lack acres must for our needs turn fools up and plow ladies sometimes to try what glebe — quality of soil — they are; and this woman is no unfruitful piece. She and I now are on a project for the manufacture and selling of a new kind of fucus — makeup, for ladies — to benefit the kingdom, wherein she herself has travailed especially, by way of service to her sex, and hopes to get a monopoly for this product from King James I as the reward for her invention.”

“What is her end in this?” Wittipol asked. “What is it she wants?”

“Merely ambition, sir, to grow great, and court it — act as a court lady — with those who have secrets, although she pretends to have some other more altruistic end.

“She’s dealing already upon security for the shares, and Master Ambler has been named examiner for the ingredients and the register of what is sold, and he shall keep the office.

“Now, if she speaks confidentially with you about this — as I must make the leading thread to your becoming acquainted with her that your experience gotten through your being abroad will help our business — think of some pretty additions just to keep her floating, by which I mean just to keep her interested. It may be she will offer you a part. Any strange names of —”

“Sir, I have my instructions,” Wittipol said. “Isn’t it high time to be getting ready?”

Wittipol did not want to help Merecraft in his cons, although he was willing to play the Spanish lady in order to get close to Fitzdottrel’s wife.

“Yes, sir,” Merecraft said.

“The fool’s in sight — Dottrel,” Engine said, seeing Fitzdottrel coming.

“Leave, then,” Merecraft said.

Wittipol and Engine exited.

— 3.5 —

Fitzdottrel entered the room.

“Returned so soon?” Merecraft said.

“Yes, here’s the ring” — Fitzdottrel held it up — “I have signed for it and for the loan. But there’s not so much gold in all the Goldsmith’s Row in Cheapside, Gilthead says, until it comes from the Mint.”

Fitzdottrel had given Merecraft a hundred pieces, and he was supposed to get a hundred pieces from Gilthead after signing for the ring and for the loan, but Gilthead had said that the hundred pieces were not available.

Fitzdottrel said, “The gold has been taken up for the gamblers.”

“There’s a shopkeeper’s-trick!” Merecraft said. “A plague on them.”

“He swears that it is true,” Fitzdottrel said.

“He’ll swear, and forswear, too,” Merecraft said. “It is his trade. You should not have left him.”

“By God’s eyelid, I can go back and beat him, yet,” Fitzdottrel said.

“No, now let him alone,” Merecraft said.

“I was so earnest after the main business,” Fitzdottrel said. “I wanted to get this ring and go.”

“True, and it is time for the ring,” Merecraft said. “I’ve learned, sir, since you went to see Gilthead, that Her Ladyship the Spanish lady will eat soon with the Lady Tailbush, who is close by here.”

“In the lane here?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“Yes,” Merecraft said. “If you have a servant now of good appearance, well dressed, and with a lively and voluble tongue, neither too big nor too little for his mouth, who could deliver your wife’s compliment, to send along with —”

Fitzdottrel interrupted, “I have such a servant, sir, a very handsome, gentleman-like fellow, whom I intend to make my duchess’ usher — I employed him just this morning, too. I’ll call him to you. The worst thing about him is his name.”

“She’ll take no note of his name, just of his message,” Merecraft said.

Fitzdottrel called, “Devil!”

Pug entered the room.

Fitzdottrel pointed to Pug and asked Merecraft, “How do you like him, sir?”

He said to Pug, “Walk around a little. Let’s see you move.”

Pug walked around a little.

“He’ll serve, sir,” Merecraft said. “Give the ring to him, and let him go along with me. I’ll help to present him, and it.”

Fitzdottrel gave Pug the ring and said, “Sirrah, look that you discharge this task well, if you expect to keep your job here. Do you hear, go on, acquit yourself with all honors.”

He said to Merecraft, “I would like to see him do it.”

He would like to see Pug meet the Spanish lady and give the ring to her.

“Trust him with it,” Merecraft said.

Fitzdottrel gave Pug some instructions: “Remember kissing of your hand, and answering with the French-time, in flexure of your body.”

Kissing one’s own hand was part of the courtly etiquette of the time. The French-time was a fancy low bow.

He continued, “I could now so instruct him! And for his words —”

Merecraft interrupted, “I’ll put them in his mouth.”

“Oh, but I have learned the words from the very academies,” Fitzdottrel said.

“Sir, you’ll have use for them yourself soon, I promise you, after dinner, when you are called,” Merecraft said.

“By God’s light, that’ll be just play-time,” Fitzdottrel said. “It cannot be! I must not miss the play!”

Many people customarily ate dinner at midday, which was sometimes followed by seeing a play that began at 3 p.m.

“Sir, but you must go to the Spanish lady, if she wants to sit and talk after dinner,” Merecraft said. “She’s the president.”

“By God’s eyelid, the play is *The Devil!*” Fitzdottrel said.

He really wanted to see the play — or at least part of it — because it had a devil in it.

“Even if it were *The Devil and His Dam*, too, you must now apply yourself, sir, to this wholly, or lose all,” Merecraft said.

Fitzdottrel began, “If I could but see a part of the play —”

“Sir, don’t even think about doing it,” Merecraft said.

“If I could see only one act, I would not care — I want only to be seen to rise, and to go away, in order to vex the actors, and to punish their playwright — and keep him in awe!” Fitzdottrel said.

“But what if he is one who will not be awed, but will instead laugh at you?” Merecraft asked. “What then?”

“Then he shall pay for his dinner himself,” Fitzdottrel said.

Audience members often treated playwrights to a late dinner.

“Perhaps he would do that twice rather than thank you,” Merecraft said. “Come, get *The Devil* out of your head, my lord — I’ll call you so in private still — and remember this: You were, sweet lord, talking about bringing a business to the Office of Dependency.”

“Yes,” Fitzdottrel said.

“Why shouldn’t you, sir, carry it on yourself, before the Office of Dependency be up and running? You would show the world that you had no need of any man’s direction, in point, sir, of sufficiency? I speak against a kinsman, but I speak as one who tenders Your Grace’s good.”

He was speaking against a kinsman because, supposedly, he was taking business away from Everill.

“I thank you,” Fitzdottrel said. “To proceed —”



Merecraft interrupted, "To publications. Have your deed drawn up immediately, and leave a blank to put in your beneficiaries: one, two, or more, as you see cause —"

Merecraft was hoping to have his name put in the deed as a beneficiary: He wanted to take control of Fitzdottrel's estate.

"I thank you heartily, I do thank you," Fitzdottrel said. "Not a word more, I ask you, as you love and respect me. Let me alone."

He was angry with himself and thought, *That I could not think of this as well as he! Oh, I could beat my infinite blockhead! I should have thought of doing that!*

He exited.

Merecraft said to Pug, "Come, we must go this way."

They began walking to the building where Lady Tailbush lived.

"How far is it?" Pug asked.

"Close by here over the way," Merecraft said.

He thought, *Now, I need to gain possession of this ring from this same fellow, Fitzdottrel's servant. I need to secure the ring before he gives it to the Spanish lady. Although my Spanish lady is a young gentleman of means, and scorns to share in the profits, as he has said, I do not know but that such a toy as this ring may tempt his "Ladyship," and therefore, I think best that the ring be safe and secure and in my possession.*

Pug asked, "Sir, are the ladies we are going to see pretty and splendidly dressed?"

"Oh, yes," Merecraft said.

"And shall I see them, and speak to them?" Pug asked.

“What else?” Merecraft answered.

Trains arrived, carrying a cloak and bag.

Merecraft privately asked him, “Do you have your false beard with you, Trains?”

“Yes,” Trains replied.

“And is this one of your double cloaks?” Merecraft asked.

A double cloak was a reversible cloak that had two sides in different colors and styles, making a quick change in appearance easy when it was needed.

“It is the best of them,” Trains said.

“Be ready then,” Merecraft said.

Trains exited.

Seeing Pitfall coming, Merecraft greeted her: “Sweet Pitfall!”

— 3.6 —

Pitfall, who was Lady Tailbush’s female attendant, entered the scene.

Merecraft said to her, “Come, I must kiss —”

He attempted to kiss her, but she said, “Get away from me!”

“I’ll set thee up again,” Merecraft said. “Never fear that. Can thou never get a bird? No thrushes hungry? Stay until cold weather comes, and I’ll help thee to an ouzel or a fieldfare.”

Merecraft would set Pitfall up again after she had trapped a bird. In this society, one meaning of “bird” was “young woman,” but a few years earlier, another meaning was “young man.” Quite possibly, Pitfall made extra money by

having sex with young men. Merecraft would set her up again after a session in bed.

A pitfall is a trap; in this society, it is especially a trap for birds. Ouzels and fieldfares are kinds of birds that arrive in England in the autumn, when the weather gets colder.

Merecraft asked her, “Who’s within, with Madam Tailbush?”

“I’ll tell you straightaway,” she said.

She quickly went inside the building where Lady Tailbush lived.

Merecraft said to Pug, “Please stay here a while, sir. I’ll go in.”

He went inside.

Pug, who had heard enough to guess that Pitfall was a prostitute, at least part-time, said to himself, “I do so long to have a little lechery, while I am in this body! I would taste of every sin a little, if it might be after the manner of man!”

Pitfall returned, and Pug said to her, “Sweetheart!”

“What do you want, sir?” Pitfall said.

“Nothing but to fall into you,” Pug said.

He, or a certain part of his body, would like to fall into her “pit.”

He continued, “I want to be your blackbird, my pretty pit. As the gentleman said, I want to be your song thrush. I want to lie tame and taken with you.”

One meaning of the word “taken” is “captured.” One meaning of “taken with” is “attracted by or charmed by.”

He continued, “Here is gold! Use it to buy yourself so much new dress material from the shop — as long as I may take the old dress up —”

He wanted to pay her to allow him to lift her old dress up for sex.

Trains, wearing a false beard and the other side of his reversible cloak, arrived and using a disguised voice said to Pug, “Sir, you must send the gentleman the ring.”

Intent on having sex with Pitfall and so not paying enough attention to the disguised Trains, Pug handed over the ring and said, “There it is.”

The disguised Trains exited with the ring.

Pug said to Pitfall, “Look, will you be foolish, Pit?”

He meant: Would you like to fool around?

“This is strange rudeness,” Pitfall said.

Pug began, “Dear Pit —”

Pitfall interrupted, “I’ll call for help, I swear!”

She quickly exited.

Merecraft returned and said to Pug, “Where are you, sir? Is your ring ready? Go with me.”

“I sent the ring to you,” Pug said.

Acting surprised, Merecraft said, “To me? When? By whom?”

“A fellow was here, just now,” Pug said. “He came for it in your name.”

“I sent no one for the ring, to be sure,” Merecraft said. “My intention was always that you should deliver it to the Spanish

lady yourself. That was your master's order to you, you know. What fellow was it? Do you know him?"

"Here, just now, he got it!" Pug said.

Trains returned, wearing the other side of the reversible cloak and no longer wearing a false beard as a disguise.

"Have you seen anyone, Trains?" Merecraft asked.

"No, not I," Trains replied.

"The gentlewoman saw him," Pug said, referring to Pitfall.

"Ask her about it," Merecraft ordered Trains.

Trains exited.

Pug said to himself, "I was so focused upon Pitfall that I paid no attention to the man! My devilish chief has put me here in flesh to shame me! I perceive nothing with this dull body I am in! I attempt nothing that will succeed!"

Trains returned and said, "Sir, she saw no one, she says."

Pug said to himself, "Satan himself has taken a shape and disguise to abuse me. It could not be otherwise!"

"This is more than strange, that you should be so reckless!" Merecraft said to Pug. "What'll you do, sir? How will you answer when you are questioned about this?"

Pug said to himself, "I would run away from my flesh if I could; I would take off this body of mankind. This is such a scorn! And it will be a new exercise for my archduke — Satan! He will get exercise by punishing me! Woe to the several cudgels that must suffer on this back of mine!"

He asked Merecraft, "Do you know of anything that might help me, sir?"

"Alas!" Merecraft said. "The need for help is so immediate."

“I ask, sir, credit for another ring, only until tomorrow!” Pug said.

Pug would be back in Hell tomorrow.

“There is not enough time to get another ring, sir,” Merecraft said. “But, however, the lady is a noble lady, and will, to save a gentleman from rebuke, be entreated to say that she has received the ring.”

“Do you think so?” Pug asked. “Will she agree to say that she has received the ring?”

“No doubt, for such a reason,” Merecraft said. “It will be a lady’s bravery and her pride. She will take pride in doing a good deed.”

“And not let the good deed be known later in case Fitzdottrel learns about it?” Pug asked.

“That would be treacherous!” Merecraft said. “Upon my word, be confident.

“Tell this to your master: My lady president — the Spanish lady — sits this afternoon and will receive guests. She has accepted the gift of the ring, and she commends her services to your lady duchess: Mrs. Frances Dotterel.

“You may say that she’s a civil lady, and she gives to your lady duchess all her respects already. She also wants you to tell her that she lives but to receive her wished commandments and have the honor here to kiss her hands, for which reason she’ll stay here for yet another hour.

“Hasten to your prince. Leave!”

Doubtful, Pug asked, “And, sir, you will take care that the excuse is perfect?”

“You confess your fears too much,” Merecraft said.

“I am more worried about the shame,” Pug said.

He would be shamed in Hell for having fallen victim to a con.

“I’ll rid you of either,” Mercraft said.

But not rid Pug of both fear of Fitzdottrel and shame by Satan?

## ACT 4 (*The Devil is an Ass*)

### — 4.1 —

In her home, Lady Tailbush and Merecraft talked about the project they were working on together.

“A pox upon referring the project to commissioners!” Lady Tailbush said. “I’d rather hear that it were past the seals.”

To get the monopoly, projects were submitted to commissioners who would recommend that some projects be granted a monopoly. If the recommendation were accepted, the monopoly would be granted with a document bearing the privy seal.

To get a project submitted to the commissioners, various courtiers were used. Some courtiers were more effective than others.

“Your courtiers move so snail-like in your business,” Lady Tailbush complained. “I wish I had not begun to do business with you.”

“We must move, madam, in order, by degrees,” Merecraft replied. “We must not jump.”

“Why, there was Sir John Moneyman — he could jump a business quickly,” she replied.

“True, he had great friends,” Merecraft said. “But although some, sweet madam, can leap ditches, we must not all shun going over bridges. The harder parts, I reckon, are done. Now the project has been referred to the commissioners.”

He then flattered her: “You are infinitely bound to the ladies — they have so sung the praises of your new brand of makeup.”

“Do they like it, then?” Lady Tailbush asked.



“They have sent the Spanish lady to congratulate you.”

“I must send them thanks, and some remembrances,” Lady Tailbush said.

“That you must, and you must visit them,” Merecraft said. “Where’s Ambler?”

“Lost,” Lady Tailbush said. “Today we cannot hear of him.”

“We cannot, madam?” Merecraft asked.

“No, in good faith,” Lady Tailbush said. “They say he did not sleep at home last night. And here has fallen a business between your cousin and Master Manly that has disquieted us all.”

“So I hear, madam,” Merecraft said. “Please tell me, what happened?”

“Truly, it appears completely ill on your kinsman Everill’s part,” Lady Tailbush said. “You may have heard that Manly is a suitor to me, I am sure —”

“I guessed it, madam,” Merecraft said.

“And it seems he entrusted your cousin Everill to let fall some fair reports of him to me,” Lady Tailbush said. “Manly wanted Everill to talk him up to me.”

“Which he did,” Merecraft said.

“Which he did not,” Lady Tailbush said. “So far from it, as Manly learned when he came in and heard Everill saying bad things about him.”

“What!” Merecraft said. “And what did Manly say to him?”

“Enough, I assure you,” Lady Tailbush said, “and with such scorn of him and the injury he did that I wonder how Everill bore it — but that guilt undoes many men’s valors.”

Many behind-the-back slanderers lack courage.

Manly entered the room.

Merecraft said, "Here comes Manly."

Preparing to leave, Manly said to Lady Tailbush, "Madam, I'll take my leave —"

"You shall not go, truly," Lady Tailbush said. "I'll have you stay and see this Spanish miracle of our English lady."

The Spanish lady, of course, was supposed to be an English lady who dressed in Spanish clothing.

"Let me ask Your Ladyship to lay your commands on me some other time," Manly said.

"Now, I protest," Lady Tailbush said, "and I will have all pieced together, and all made friends again."

"It will be but ill soldered," Manly said.

He and Everill could not be friends although possibly they might be civil to each other.

"You are too much affected by it," Lady Tailbush said.

"I cannot, Madam, but think about it because of the injustice," Manly said.

"Sir, his kinsman — Merecraft — here is sorry," Lady Tailbush said.

Merecraft said, "Not I, madam, I am no kin to him — we just call each other cousins."

He then said to Manly, "And even if we really were cousins, sir, I have no relation to his crimes."

The word "crime" also meant "sin."

“You are not charged with his crimes,” Manly said. “I can accuse, sir, none but my own judgment, for although it were his crime so to betray me, I’m sure it was more my own at all to trust him. But he therein used his old manners, and his savor was strongly what he was before.”

“His old tricks” consisted of unethical behaviors, and his savor was that of a stink.

“Come, he will change!” Lady Tailbush said.

“Indeed, I must never think that he will change,” Manly said. “Nor would it be reasonable of me to expect that for my sake he should put off a nature he sucked in with his milk.”

Everill had been bad since he was a baby, according to Manly. It was his nature. He had sucked evil into him while sucking his mother’s milk.

Of course, Manly was also criticizing Everill’s mother.

Manly continued, “It may be, madam, deceiving trust is all he has to trust to. If so, I shall be loath that any hope of mine should take away his means of making a living.”

Yes, Everill’s sole means of making a living was by deceiving those who trusted him: He was a con man.

“You’re sharp, sir,” Lady Tailbush said.

Manly was sharp in his criticism of Everill. Although Lady Tailbush did not mean to say it, he was also intelligent in his criticism of Everill.

Yet Manly was tolerant of bad behavior in others. He did not attempt to get his friend Wittipol to not try to seduce another man’s wife, and he said openly now that he did not want to take away Everill’s way of making a living, even if that way were unethical. He was a forgiving — perhaps, or definitely, too forgiving — man.

Lady Tailbush added, “This act may make him honest.”

The act was being reconciled with Manly.

Manly replied, “If he were to be made honest by an act of Parliament, I would not alter in my lack of faith in him.”

Seeing Lady Eitherside enter the room, Lady Tailbush said, “Eitherside! Welcome, dear Eitherside! How are you, good wench? Thou have been a stranger! I have not seen thee all this week.”

Manly and Merecraft began to talk together quietly.

— 4.2 —

“I am always your servant, madam,” Lady Eitherside said.

“Where have thou been?” Lady Tailbush said. “I did so long to see thee.”

“Visiting, and I am so tired!” Lady Eitherside said. “I protest, madam, visiting is a monstrous trouble.”

Engaging in social activities such as visiting others can be exhausting, but many people who actually enjoy visiting complain about visiting.

“And so it is,” Lady Tailbush said. “I swear I must begin my visits tomorrow — I wish that they were over — at court. It tortures me to think about them.”

“I hear you have a reason for your visits, madam,” Lady Eitherside said. “Your suit goes on.”

The suit was to get a monopoly for the production of the new makeup.

“Who told thee?” Lady Tailbush asked.

“One who can tell: Master Eitherside.”

“Oh, thy husband,” Lady Tailbush said, “Yes, indeed, there’s life in it now; the suit has been referred to the commissioners. If we once see it receive the Privy Seal and the monopoly, wench, then we can compete with the rich set. We’ll have the great coach, six horses, and the two coachmen, with my Ambler bareheaded, and my three women-servants; we will live, truly, as the examples of the town, and govern it. I’ll lead the fashion always.”

“You do that now, sweet madam,” Lady Eitherside said.

“Oh, but then I’ll every day bring up some new project,” Lady Tailbush said. “Thou and I, Eitherside, will first be in it; I will give it thee, and they shall follow us. Thou shall, I swear, wear every month a new gown out of it.”

“Thank you, good madam.”

“I ask thee to call me Tailbush, as I call thee Eitherside,” Lady Tailbush said. “I don’t love this ‘madam.’”

Lady Tailbush had greater social status than Lady Eitherside, who used the respectful “you” when talking to her. Lady Tailbush used “thou” and “thee” when talking to Lady Eitherside.

“Then I protest to you, Tailbush, that I am glad your business so succeeds,” Lady Eitherside said.

“I thank thee, good Eitherside,” Lady Tailbush said.

“But Master Eitherside tells me that he likes your other business better.”

“Which business is that?” Lady Tailbush asked.

“The business of the toothpicks,” Lady Eitherside said.

“I have never heard about it,” Lady Tailbush said.

“Ask Master Mercraft about it,” Lady Eitherside said.

Merecraft, who was still talking quietly with Manly, overheard and said, “Madam?”

He then said to Manly about Everill, “He’s one — in a word, I’ll trust his malice with any man’s credit I would have abused.”

Merecraft was saying that he could count on Everill to undermine another man’s reputation — Everill could be counted on to slander another man.

“Sir, if you think you please me in this, you are deceived,” Manly said.

“No,” Merecraft said, “but because my lady named him as my kinsman, I want to let you know what I think about him, and I ask you to judge me by my opinion of him!”

“So I do,” Manly said. “Ill men’s friends are as unfaithful as themselves.”

Ill men speak ill about others, and Manly was saying that judging by Merecraft’s words, the friends of ill men also spoke ill about others.

“Do you hear me?” Lady Tailbush asked Merecraft. “Do you have a business about toothpicks?”

“Yes, madam,” Merecraft said. “Didn’t I ever tell you about it? I meant to have offered it to Your Ladyship once the patent was perfected.”

“What is it?” Lady Tailbush asked.

“The business is for serving the whole state with toothpicks,” Merecraft said. “It’s somewhat an intricate business to discourse, but I show how much the subject is abused, first, in that one commodity: The toothpicks are badly made. Then I show what diseases and putrefactions in the gums those

toothpicks that are made of adulterated and false wood breed!

“My plot for reformation of these abuses is as follows:

“To have all toothpicks brought to an office, there to receive a seal of approval.

“Such people who counterfeit the toothpicks and make bad ones, however, shall be fined.

“And last, for selling them, to have a book printed to teach their proper use, which every child who can read shall have throughout the kingdom. By reading the book, they will learn how to properly pick their teeth.

“Beginning early to practice the proper procedure of picking, and practicing some other rules, such as never sleeping with the mouth open, and chewing some gum, will preserve the breath and make it pure, and so free from taint —”

Seeing Trains arrive, Merecraft stopped and asked him, “What do you have to tell me?”

Trains whispered to him.

“In good faith, it sounds like a very pretty business!” Lady Tailbush said.

“So Master Eitherside says, madam,” Lady Eitherside said.

Merecraft said, “The Spanish lady has come.”

“Has she?” Lady Tailbush said. “Good, show her in.”

Merecraft exited.

“My Ambler was never so unfortunately absent,” Lady Tailbush said. “Eitherside, how do I look today? Am I not dressed smartly?”

She looked in her mirror.

“Yes, you are, truly, madam,” Lady Eitherside said.

“A pox on the word ‘madam’!” Lady Tailbush said. “Won’t you stop saying that?”

“Yes, good Tailbush,” Lady Eitherside said.

“So? Doesn’t that sound better?” Lady Tailbush asked.

She then asked, “What vile fucus — makeup — is this thou have got on?”

“It is pearl,” Lady Eitherside said.

“Pearl?” Lady Tailbush said. “Oyster shells! As I breathe, Eitherside, I know it.

“Here comes, they say, a wonder, sirrah, who has been in Spain, and who will teach us all. She’s been sent to me from court to congratulate me. Please, let’s observe her and see what faults she has, so that we may laugh at them when she has gone.”

“That we will heartily, Tailbush,” Lady Eitherside said.

“Oh, me!” Lady Tailbush said, seeing Wittipol dressed as the Spanish lady. “She is the very infanta of the giants!”

An “infanta” is a daughter of a Spanish noble family, but the word was also used to describe a woman, particularly one of pompous display.

Wittipol was tall to begin with, but he was also wearing *cioppinos*.

— 4.3 —

Merecraft and Wittipol, who was dressed as the Spanish lady, walked over to Lady Tailbush.



Merecraft said to Lady Tailbush, "Here is a noble lady, madam, come from your great friends at court to see Your Ladyship and have the honor of your acquaintance.

"Sir, she does us honor," Lady Tailbush said.

To help preserve his disguise, Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said to Merecraft, "Please, say to Her Ladyship that it is the manner of Spain to embrace only, and never to kiss. She will excuse the custom!"

"Your use of it is law," Lady Tailbush said. "If it pleases you, sweet madam, take a seat."

"Yes, madam," Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. "I have had the favor, through a world of fair reporting about you, to know your virtues, madam, and in that name have desired the happiness of presenting my service to Your Ladyship."

"Your love, madam — not your service!" Lady Tailbush said. "Otherwise, I cannot accept it."

"Both my service and my love for you are due, madam, to your great undertakings," Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

"Great?" Lady Tailbush said. "Truly, madam, they are my friends who think my undertakings to be anything. If I can do my sex any service by my undertakings, I've achieved my aims, madam."

"And they are noble ones, which make a multitude beholden to you, madam," Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. "The commonwealth of ladies must acknowledge you."

"Except some who are envious and malicious, madam," Lady Tailbush said.

"You're right in that, madam," Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. "Some of that race I encountered just recently, who, it

seems, have worked to find reasons to discredit your business.”

“Who, sweet madam?” Lady Tailbush asked.

“Nay, the parties will not be worth your pause — they are most ruinous things, madam, that have put off all hope of being recovered to a degree of attractiveness and decency,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“But what are their reasons, madam?” Lady Tailbush said. “I would like to hear what they are.”

“Some, madam, I remember,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “They say that painting — using makeup — quite destroys the face —”

“Oh, that’s an old criticism, madam,” Lady Tailbush said.

“There are new ones, too,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “They say that makeup corrupts the breath. They say that makeup has left so little sweetness in kissing that kissing is now used only for fashion, and shortly will be taken for a punishment. They say that makeup decays the front teeth that should guard the tongue and keep it from saying bad things — because of the use of makeup, the front teeth decay and from the mouth come words that run everlasting riot. And — which is worse — they say that because of makeup some ladies when they meet cannot be merry and laugh but instead they spit in one another’s faces!”

Manly looked closely at the Spanish lady and began to recognize Wittipol.

Manley thought, *I should know this voice, and I should know this face, too.*

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, “Then they say that makeup is dangerous to all the fallen yet well-disposed mad-dames who are industrious and desire to earn their living with their

sweat. For any distemper of heat and motion may displace the colors, and if the paint once runs about their faces, twenty to one, they will appear so ill-favored and ugly that their servants will run away, too, and leave the pleasure imperfect, and the reckoning also unpaid.”

These “mad-dames” were madams and/or prostitutes. When their makeup ran, they looked ugly and lost all their “servants” — their lovers, aka customers, who left and did not pay.

“Pox, these are poets’ reasons!” Lady Eitherside said.

“Some old lady who keeps a poet has devised these scandals,” Lady Tailbush said.

“Truly, we must have the poets banished, madam, as Master Eitherside says,” Lady Eitherside said.

One person who wanted the poets banished was Plato, or so one of his books advocated. In Plato’s *Republic*, poets were banished for lying about the gods. Poets such as Homer showed the gods to be far from benevolent to human beings. According to Homer’s *Iliad*, the gods were often petty.

Trains entered and whispered to Merecraft.

“Master Fitzdottrel!” Merecraft said. “And his wife! Where?”

He said to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “Madam, the Duke of Drowned-land, who will be shortly, has arrived.”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked, “Is this my lord?”

“The same,” Merecraft said.

— 4.4 —

Fitzdottrel, Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel, and Pug walked over to them.

“I am your servant, madam,” Fitzdottrel said.

Wittipol whispered to Manly, “How are you now, friend? Offended that I have found your haunt here?”

Manly whispered back, “No, but I am wondering at your strangely dressed venture here.”

“My purpose is to show you what they are whom you so pursue,” Wittipol whispered.

He intended to say things that would encourage Lady Tailbush, whom Manly was pursuing, and her friends to expose themselves as bad people.

Manly, who disliked Everill and Merecraft — two friends or associates of Lady Tailbush — whispered back, “I think it will prove a medicine against marriage to know their manners.”

“Stay and profit, then,” Wittipol whispered.

Merecraft said to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “This is the lady, madam, whose prince has brought her here to be instructed.”

Supposedly, she would be instructed in the manners of a higher social class than her and her husband’s.

Merecraft presented Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel to Wittipol (the Spanish lady).

“Will it please you to sit with us, lady?” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked.

Referring to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), Merecraft said to Fitzdottrel, “That’s the lady-president.”

“She is a goodly woman!” Fitzdottrel said.

“Goodly” meant both 1) good-looking and 2) large.

“I cannot see the ring, though,” Fitzdottrel added.

“Sir, she has it,” Merecraft said.

Continuing her earlier conversation with Wittipol (the Spanish lady), Lady Tailbush said, “But, madam, these are very feeble reasons for being against the use of makeup.”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) replied, “Therefore, I urged, madam, that the new complexion now to come forth in the name of Your Ladyship’s fucus had no ingredient —”

“— but those I dare to eat, I assure you,” Lady Tailbush interrupted.

“So do they in Spain,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“Sweet madam, be so liberal to give us the ingredients of some of your Spanish fucuses,” Lady Tailbush said.

“They are infinite, madam,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

Many ingredients were used in Spanish makeup.

“So I hear,” Lady Tailbush said.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) began to list the many ingredients. Lady Tailbush knew what some of them were and pretended to know what the others were. Readers are advised to do the same.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, “They have water of gourds, water of radish, the white beans, flowers of glass [powdered glass], powdered thistles, rosmarine [rosemary], raw honey, mustard-seed, and improperly baked doughy bread, the crumbs of bread, goat’s milk, and whites of eggs, camphor, and lily roots, the fat of swans, marrow of veal, white pigeons, and pine-kernels, the seeds of nettles, purslane [a kind of herb], and hare’s gall, lemons, thin-skinned —”

Lady Eitherside interrupted, “How Her Ladyship has studied all excellent things!”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, “These are only ordinary ingredients, madam. No, the true rarities are the *alvagada* [white lead] and *argentata* [white ceruse] of Queen Isabella!”

“Yes, what are their ingredients, gentle madam?” Lady Tailbush asked.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, “Your *allum scagliola* [flaked gypsum], or *pol di pedra* [rock alum], and *zuccharino* [sugar paste]; turpentine of Abezzo [pitch-pine sap], washed in nine waters; *soda di levanter* [sodium carbonate], or your fern ashes; *benjamin di gotta* [a tree resin], *grasso di serpe* [snake’s fat], *porcelletto marino* [sturgeon]; oils of *lentisco* [mastic gum], *zucche* [turnip], *mugia* [a kind of fish] make the admirable varnish for the face and give the right luster; but two drops rubbed on with a piece of scarlet make a lady of sixty look at sixteen. But, above all, the water of the white hen, of the Lady Estifania’s!”

“Oh, yes, that same, good madam, I have heard of,” Lady Tailbush said. “How is it done?”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) replied, “Madam, you take your hen, pluck it, and skin it, and cleanse it of the innards. Then chop it, bones and all; add to four ounces of *carravicins*, *pipitas*, soap of Cyprus, make the decoction, and strain it. Then distill it, and keep it in your galley-pot [apothecary’s jar] well sealed. Three drops will preserve skin from wrinkles, warts, spots, moles, blemish, or sun-burnings, and keep the skin *in decimo sexto*, forever bright and smooth as any mirror; and indeed, it is called the virgin’s milk for the face, *oglio reale*. A ceruse that neither cold nor heat will hurt, when mixed with oil of myrrh, the red gillyflower

called *cataputia*, and flowers of *rovistico* makes the best *muta*, or dye, of the whole world.”

Wittipol, of course, was satirizing the making of beauty products. Keeping “the skin *in decimo sexton*” sounds as if the beauty product would keep the skin looking like that of a 16-year-old girl, but *in decimo sexton* actually refers to a small book whose leaves are each one-sixteenth of a full sheet of paper.

“Dear madam, will you let us be familiar?” Lady Tailbush asked. “Shall we be friends?”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) replied, “I am Your Ladyship’s servant.”

Merecraft asked Fitzdottrel, “How do you like her?”

“She is admirable!” Fitzdottrel said. “But still I cannot see the ring.”

He was mistrustful about his ring.

Ready to confess that he had been conned out of the ring, Pug said, “Sir!”

Hearing Pug, Merecraft said to himself, “I must deliver the ring, or everything will be ruined. This fool Fitzdottrel is so mistrustful.”

He said to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “Madam —”

He surreptitiously handed over the ring and whispered, “Sir, wear this ring, and please know that it was sent to you by Fitzdottrel’s wife. And be sure to give her thanks.”

He then whispered to Pug, “Don’t dwindle, sir. Bear up.”

“I thank you, sir,” Pug, who had witnessed the handing over of the ring, said.

“But for the manner of Spain!” Lady Tailbush said. “Sweet madam, let us be bold, now we are friends. Are all the ladies there in the fashion?”

“None but grandees, madam, of the clasped train, which may be worn at length, too, or like this, upon my arm,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“And do they all wear *cioppinos*?” Lady Tailbush asked.

*Cioppinos* were soles that were worn under shoes to add height.

“Yes, if they are dressed in *punto*, madam,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“In *punto*” meant “in their best.”

“Gilt as those are, madam?” Lady Tailbush asked.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady), who was wearing golden soles, replied, “Of goldsmith’s work, madam, and set with diamonds; and their Spanish pumps of perfumed leather.”

“Pumps” are shoes.

“I should think it hard to walk in them, madam,” Lady Tailbush said.

“At first it is, madam,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“Do you ever fall in them?” Lady Tailbush asked.

“Never,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) replied.

“I swear, I should fall six times an hour!” Lady Eitherside said.

“But you have men at hand always to help you if you fall?” Lady Tailbush said.



“Only one, madam — the *guarda-duennas*, who is such a little old man as this man is,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, pointing to Trains.

“Alas!” Lady Eitherside said. “He can do nothing! This man!”

“Let me tell you, madam,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “I saw in the court of Spain once a lady fall in the King’s sight. She was stretched out on the ground, and there she lay, flat spread as an umbrella, with the hoop of her petticoat cracked here.” — He pointed to a place on the hoop of the petticoat he was wearing. — “No man dared reach out a hand to help her, till the *guarda-duennas* came. A *guarda-duenna* is the only person allowed to touch a lady there; and he only by this finger.”

“Haven’t they any servants, madam, there?” Lady Eitherside asked. “Haven’t they any friends?”

“An *escudero* or so, madam, who waits upon them in another coach, at a distance, and when they walk, or dance, nearby holds a handkerchief, and never presumes to touch them,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

An *escudero* is a Spanish squire.

“This is scurvy!” Lady Eitherside said. “And a forced gravity — an unnatural formality! I do not like it. I like our own much better.”

“It is more French and courtly, ours,” Lady Tailbush said.

“And tastes more of liberty,” Lady Eitherside said. “We may have our dozen of visitors at once make love to us.”

This kind of making love was flirting — mostly. Perhaps.

“And in front of our husbands!” Lady Tailbush said.

“Husband?” Lady Eitherside said. “As I am honest, Tailbush, I think that if nobody should love me but my poor husband, I would just hang myself.”

“Fortune forbid, wench, that so fair a neck should have so foul a necklace as a noose!” Lady Tailbush said.

“What I said is true, as I am handsome!” Lady Eitherside said.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel, “I received, lady, a token from you, which I would not be so rude as to refuse, it being your first remembrance — gift to remember you by — to me.”

Seeing the ring, Fitzdottrel whispered to Merecraft, “Oh, I am satisfied now!”

Merecraft whispered back, “Do you see the ring, sir?”

“But since you come to know me nearer and better, lady, I’ll beg the honor that you will wear it for me,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “It must be so.”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) gave the ring to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said to herself, “Surely I have heard this voice before.”

Merecraft whispered to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “What are you doing, sir?”

“Would you have me be mercenary?” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “We’ll recompense it soon, in something else.”

He meant that Merecraft would soon be able to get money from Fitzdottrel in some other way.

Merecraft and Trains exited.

“I do not love to be gulled, even in a trifling matter,” Fitzdottrel said, satisfied now that he saw the ring. “Wife, do you hear? You’re come into the school, wife, where you may learn — I know — anything! How to be fine, or fair, or great, or proud, or whatever you want, indeed, wife; here it is taught. And I am glad that you may not say, another day, when honors come upon you, you lacked means.”

He then let his wife know about his costs: “I have done my parts. Today I have been at fifty pounds charge, first, for a ring to get you entered here where you can learn the manners of this social class. Then I left my new play to wait upon you here, to see your entry into this society confirmed, so that I may say, both to my own eyes and ears — senses, you are my witness — she has enjoyed all helps that could be had, for love, or money —”

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel finished the sentence for him: “— to make a fool of her.”

“Wife, that’s your malice, the wickedness of your nature to interpret your husband’s kindness thus,” Fitzdottrel said. “But I’ll not stop trying always to do good despite your depraved disposition. Take note of it. Bend this stubborn will of yours; be great in society.”

Lady Tailbush asked Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “Good madam, whom do the Spanish grandees use in carrying messages?”

“They commonly use their slaves, madam,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“And does Your Ladyship think that so good, madam?” Lady Tailbush asked.

“No, indeed, madam,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “In such matters I prefer the fashion of England by far. I prefer

the use of your young delicate page, or discreet usher, to carry messages.”

“And I go with Your Ladyship in opinion directly for your gentleman-usher,” Fitzdottrel said. “There’s not a finer officer who goes on ground.”

“If he is made and broken in to his place, once,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“I presuppose him to be so,” Fitzdottrel said.

“And they are fitter managers, too, sir, but I would have them called our *escuderos*,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“Good,” Fitzdottrel said.

“Let’s say that I would send to Your Ladyship who, I presume, has gathered all the dear secrets to know how to make *pastillos* of the Duchess of Braganza, *coquettas*, *almojavanas*, *mantecadas*, *alcorças*, *mustaccioli*,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

All of the foreign words were for various kinds of sweets.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) continued, “Or say it were the *peladore* [depilatory] of Isabella, or balls [pills] against the itch, or *aqua nanfa* [orange water], or oil of jessamine [jasmine] for gloves of the Marquess Muja. Or for the head, and hair; why, these are offices —”

Fitzdottrel interrupted, “— fit for a gentleman, not a slave.”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, “They only might ask for your *piveti*, aka Spanish coal, an aromatic substance, to burn, and sweeten a room; but the arcane secrets of ladies’ cabinets —”

Fitzdottrel interrupted, “— should be elsewhere trusted.”

He then said to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “You’re much about the truth — you’re absolutely right.”

He then said, “Sweet honored ladies, let me fall in with you.”

He walked into the midst of the ladies and said, “I have my female wit, as well as my male wit. And I know what suits a lady of spirit, or a woman of fashion!”

By saying that he had “my female wit, as well as my male wit,” Fitzdottrel was identifying himself as a womanish man, something that many people in this society disliked.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, “And you would have your wife be a lady of spirit, or a woman of fashion!”

“Yes, madam,” Fitzdottrel replied. “I would have her be airy, somewhat light — not to plain dishonesty, I mean, but somewhat on this side.”

A “light” woman was a promiscuous woman. Fitzdottrel wanted his wife to be flirtatious enough to fit in with this society, but he did not want her to cuckold him.

“I understand you, sir,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

He then said, “He has reason, ladies.”

Just that morning, Wittipol had spoken to Fitzdottrel’s wife and attempted to persuade her to commit adultery with him.

He kicked at a rush lying on the floor and said, “I’ll not give this rush for any lady who cannot be honest within a thread.”

A rush is a stalk or a leaf from plants called, yes, rushes. Rush mats were often placed on the floor. Wittipol was saying that he would not give a rush, which is something worthless, for a woman who did not know what she could get away with — that is, for a woman who could flirt and flirt and perhaps do more than flirt yet keep her reputation.

He was also referencing the rush mat that lay between him and Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel that morning.

Lady Tailbush said, “Yes, madam, and yet venture as far for the other, in her reputation —”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) interrupted, “— as can be.”

Sneaky women could keep their reputations, yet still do many, many things that respectable women ought not to do.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) listed some of those things:

“Coach it to the resort town of Pimlico.

“Dance the scandalous dance called the saraband.

“Hear bawdy language and talk bawdy language.

“Laugh as loudly as an alarm clock.

“Squeak, spring, do anything —”

Squeaking could be done in bed.

The verb “spring” has some meanings that could refer to the act of sex or what can follow the act of sex: 1) moving energetically and changing position, 2) undergoing flushing of the skin, 3) causing water to rise (sweating), 4) being covered with water (semen), and 5) suffering the spreading of a rumor.

Or perhaps “squeak, spring” simply meant “sing, dance.”

Lady Eitherside interrupted, “— in young company, madam.”

Lady Tailbush added, “Or before gallants. If they are splendid, or lords, a woman is bound to do so.”

“I say so, ladies,” Fitzdottrel said. “It is civility to deny us nothing.”

Pug, the devil from Hell, admired Fitzdottrel. He said to himself, “You talk of a university! Why, Hell is a grammar school compared to this!”

Lady Eitherside said, “But then she must not lose a look on stuffs, or cloth, madam.”

“Stuffs” refers to materials for dresses, but readers may be forgiven for at first thinking that it refers to male parts that can be stuffed into lady parts.

“Nor no coarse fellow,” Lady Tailbush said.

“She must be guided, madam, by the clothes he wears, and the company he is in,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “Whom to salute, how far —”

Fitzdottrel interrupted, “I have told her — my wife — this. And I have told her that bawdy language, too, upon the point, is in itself as civil a discourse —”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) interrupted, “— as any other affair of flesh, whatever.”

To be a member of this particular crowd of people, you needed to speak bawdily and flirt outrageously, and perhaps do worse things. Fitzdottrel wanted his wife to be a member of this particular crowd of people.

Fitzdottrel continued, “But she will never be capable; she is not so much as coming, madam.”

This can be interpreted in two ways:

- 1) “But she will never be capable of understanding that; she is not so much as coming around to understand that, madam.”
- 2) “But she will never be capable of having such evil and effrontery; she is not so much as cumming, madam.”

Fitzdottrel continued, “I don’t know how she loses all her opportunities with hoping to be forced.”

The word “forced” means “raped,” but lesser kinds of force may include “seduced” or “persuaded.”

Fitzdottrel was a jealous husband who was afraid that Wittipol would seduce his wife — and afraid that his wife wouldn’t mind being seduced — and so he probably meant that he couldn’t understand why his wife did not want to fit in with this particular crowd of people when she, herself, would not mind being seduced.

Fitzdottrel continued, “I’ve entertained a gentleman, a younger brother, here” — he pointed to Pug — “whom I would like to breed up as her *escudero*, in anticipation of some expectations that I have, and she’ll not countenance him.”

“What’s his name?” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked.

“His name is Devil, and he’s from Derbyshire,” Fitzdottrel said.

Because of Pug’s name, Lady Eitherside said, “Bless us from him!”

This meant: May God protect us from him.

“Devil?” Lady Tailbush said. “Call him De-vile, sweet madam.”

“Call him whatever you please, ladies,” Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said.

“De-vile’s a prettier name!” Lady Tailbush said.

“And the name sounds, I think, as if it came in with William the Conqueror in the Norman Conquest,” Lady Eitherside said.



Referring to Lady Tailbush and Lady Eitherside, a disgusted Manly said, “They are worse than smocks — prostitutes! What things they are! That nature should be at leisure ever to make people like them! My wooing is at an end. I will no longer woo Lady Tailbush.”

Indignant, he exited.

Referring to Pug, Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked, “What can he do?”

“Let’s hear him,” Lady Eitherside said.

“Can he manage?” Lady Tailbush asked.

One meaning of “manage” is “perform,” perhaps meaning sexually. Another meaning of “manage” could be “manage an affair” — that is, be a good go-between for a lady and her lover.

“If it would please you to test him and ask him questions, ladies, do so,” Fitzdottrel said.

He ordered, “Stand forth, Devil.”

Pug said to himself, “Was all this but the preface to my torment?”

“Come, let Their Ladyships see your honors,” Fitzdottrel said. “Let them see you bow.”

Pug bowed.

“Oh, he makes a wicked leg,” Lady Eitherside said.

A “wicked leg” is a badly performed bow.

“As wicked as ever I saw!” Lady Tailbush said.

“Fit for a Devil,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“Good madam, call him De-vile,” Lady Tailbush requested.

They began a catechism — a question-and-answer test — of Pug.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked Pug, “De-vile, what property is there most required in your opinion, now, while in service as a Spanish squire — an *escudero*?”

Pug hesitated.

Fitzdottrel asked him, “Why don’t you speak?”

Pug then answered Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “Most required is a settled discreet pace, madam.”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) replied, “Most required, I think, is a barren head, sir, mountain-like, to be exposed to the cruelty of weathers —”

Many servants in the position of squire were required to be bareheaded. High mountains are bareheaded in the sense that trees will not grow above a certain elevation.

“Aye, for his valley is beneath the waste, madam, and to be fruitful there, it is sufficient,” Fitzdottrel said.

According to Fitzdottrel, Pug’s head was barren — a waste. Below Pug’s waist was a valley, but it was a valley in back. What came out there would be fruitful if used to fertilize fruit trees.

Fitzdottrel then said to Pug, “Dullness upon you! Couldn’t you hit this?”

“Hit this” meant “hit on the right answer.”

Fitzdottrel hit Pug, who began, “Good sir —”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, “If he had hit on the right answer, then he would have had no barren head! You torment him too much, indeed, sir.”

Fitzdottrel said to Pug, "I must walk with a French stick, like an old verger, on account of you."

A French stick is a walking stick, and a verger is a public official who carried a rod as a symbol of his authority.

Fitzdottrel believed that because of Pug's ignorance, he had to carry a walking stick so he could use it to beat Pug.

Pug quietly prayed to Satan, "Oh, chief, call me back to Hell again, and free me!"

"Do you murmur now?" Fitzdottrel asked Pug.

"Not I, sir," Pug replied.

"What do you take to be, Master De-vile, the height of your employment in the true perfect service of the *escudero*?" Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked Pug.

Again, Pug hesitated.

"When will you answer?" Fitzdottrel asked. "What do you answer?"

Pug answered Wittipol (the Spanish lady), "To be able, madam, first to inquire about and then to report the efficacy of any lady's medicine, using sweet phrases."

Some kinds of medicines are laxatives. Pug would be asking ladies whether their laxatives had worked.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, "Yes, that's an act of elegance and importance. But what is above that? What is truer and more perfect service than that?"

"Oh, I wish that I had a goad to use on Pug!" Fitzdottrel said.

"To find a good cutter of ladies' corns," Pug said.

Insulted, Lady Tailbush said, "He can get out right now!"

“Most barbarous!” Lady Eitherside said.

“Why did you give this answer, now?” Fitzdottrel said to Pug. “On purpose to discredit me? You damned Devil!”

Pug said to himself, “Sure, if I am not yet a damned devil, I shall be. All my days in Hell were holy-days compared to this!”

“This is labor lost, madam,” Lady Tailbush said.

“He’s a dull fellow of no intellectual capacity,” Lady Eitherside said.

“And of no discourse,” Lady Tailbush added. “Oh, if my Ambler would have been here!”

“Yes, madam,” Lady Eitherside said. “When you talk about Ambler, you talk about a man. Where is there such another?”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, “Master De-vile, suppose that one of my ladies here had a fine bitch, and she wanted to employ you to go forth to entreat about a convenient match for her.”

In other words, suppose that one of the ladies here had a female dog and was seeking a mate for it.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) continued, “What would you observe that would help you to find a fine mate for it?”

“The color, and the size, madam,” Pug said.

“And nothing else?” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked.

“The moon, you calf, the moon!” Fitzdottrel said.

He was calling Pug a mooncalf, aka a monster.

“Yes, the moon, and the astrological sign of the bitch,” Pug said.

“Yes,” Lady Tailbush said, “and recipes for aphrodisiacs.”

“Then when the puppies came, what would you do?” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked.

“Get their nativities — horoscopes — cast,” Pug answered.

“This is well,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “What else?”

“Consult the almanac-man about which would be the smallest? And which would be the cleanliest?” Pug answered.

“And which the silentest?” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked.

Lady Tailbush said, “This is well, madam!”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked Pug, “And what would you do while she were pregnant with puppies?”

Pug answered, “Walk her outside, and air her every morning.”

“Very good!” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “And be industrious to kill her fleas?”

“Yes,” Pug said.

“He will make a pretty student,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

Pug said to himself, “Who, coming from Hell, could look for such catechizing? The devil is an ass. I do acknowledge it.”

Which devil? Possibly, Pug himself. He had acted foolishly in wishing to leave Hell in order to visit earth.

Fitzdottrel, impressed by Wittipol (the Spanish lady), said to himself, “The top of woman! All her sex in abstract! I love each syllable that falls from her!”

Referring to Pug, Lady Tailbush requested, “Good madam, give me permission to go aside with him and test him a little.”

“Do, and I’ll withdraw, madam, with this fair lady — and teach her the while,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

Lady Tailbush said to Pug, “Come with me, sir.”

Pug prayed quietly, “Dear chief, relieve me, or I perish!”

“Lady, we’ll follow you two,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

Lady Tailbush and Lady Eitherside exited with Pug.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked Fitzdottrel, “You are not jealous of me being with your wife, sir?”

Because Fitzdottrel thought that Wittipol (the Spanish lady) was a woman, he replied, “Oh, madam! You shall see.”

He said to his wife, “Stay, wife.”

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel had disliked the company and she had disliked Pug’s being teased and beaten, and she wanted to leave and go to her home. She had no desire to be taught to behave like Lady Tailbush and Lady Eitherside.

Fitzdottrel said to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “Behold, I give her up here absolutely to you. She is your own. Do with her what you will.”

He put his wife’s arm in the arm of Wittipol (the Spanish lady).

Using a metaphor from metalworking, Fitzdottrel added, “Melt, cast, and form her as you shall think good. Set any stamp on her. I’ll receive her from you as a new thing, by your own standard!”

He exited.

“Well, sir!” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) and Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel exited.

— 4.5 —

Merecraft and Fitzdottrel talked together.

“But what have you done in your dependence, since we last talked about it?” Merecraft asked.

The dependence was Fitzdottrel’s quarrel with Wittipol.

“Oh, it goes on,” Fitzdottrel said. “I met your cousin, the Master —”

“You did not acquaint him, sir, with what you are now doing?” Merecraft asked.

He had advised Fitzdottrel to put his financial affairs in order and decide on a beneficiary, without consulting Everill.

Fitzdottrel replied, “Indeed, I did acquaint him with the facts, sir.

“And upon better thought, not without reason! He being chief officer might have taken it ill, if I had not. He might have taken it as an act of contempt against his office, and that in time, sir, might have drawn on another dependence — he and I might have had a quarrel.”

Merecraft had told Fitzdottrel that Everill was going to be Master of the Dependences, and so Fitzdottrel had thought it best to keep Everill informed about his dependence.

Fitzdottrel continued, “I did find him in good terms, and ready to do me any service.”

“So he said to you!” Merecraft said. “But sir, you do not know him.”

Fitzdottrel said, “Why, I presumed because this business of my wife’s required me to act, I could not have done better than consult Everill; and he told me that he would go immediately to your counsel, a knight, here, in the lane —”

“Yes, Justice Eitherside,” Merecraft said.

Fitzdottrel continued, “And get the deed of feoffment drawn, with a letter of attorney for livery and seisin.”

A deed of feoffment is a deed of freehold. “Livery and seisin” is a legal term for the delivery of property.

With these documents, an unscrupulous person could gain possession of Fitzdottrel’s entire estate. More than one con man wanted to gain possession of Fitzdottrel’s entire estate.

“That I know is the course of action.” Merecraft said. “But sir, you don’t mean to make him feoffee, do you?”

In other words: Do you intend to give Everill control of your entire estate?

Fitzdottrel said, “Nay, that I’ll pause on.”

Pitfall, Lady Tailbush’s female attendant, entered the room.

“What is it now, little Pitfall!” Merecraft asked.

“Your cousin Master Everill wants to come in — but he wants to know first whether Master Manly is here,” Pitfall said.

“No, tell Everill that Manly is not here,” Merecraft said. “Tell Everill that if Manly were here, I have made his peace.”

Actually, Manly still greatly disliked Everill — and Merecraft.



Pitfall exited.

Merecraft said quietly to Fitzdottrel about Everill, “He’s one, sir, who has no estate, and a man doesn’t know how such a trust may tempt him.”

“I understand what you are saying,” Fitzdottrel said.

Everill might be — make that definitely would be — tempted to misuse Fitzdottrel’s estate to benefit himself if he were to get control of it.

Everill and Plutarchus entered the room.

Everill said, “Sir, this same deed is done here.”

The deed was the deed of feoffment — the deed of freehold.

“Pretty Plutarchus!” Merecraft said. “Have thou come with it? And has Sir Paul Eitherside viewed it?”

“His signature is on the draft,” Plutarchus said.

Merecraft asked Fitzdottrel, “Will you step in, sir, and read it?”

“Yes,” Fitzdottrel said.

“Please, let me have a word with you,” Everill said to Fitzdottrel.

He took him aside and whispered, “Sir Paul Eitherside wanted me to tell you to be cautious about whom you will make feoffee, for this is the trust of your whole estate; and although my cousin here is a worthy gentleman, yet his valor — his ability to pay his debts — has at the gambling board been questioned, and we believe any man so impeached to be of doubtful honesty. I will not confirm the truth of this information, but I give it to you to make your profit of it. If you utter it, I can forswear it and deny that I ever told this to you.”

Fitzdottrel replied, "I believe you, and I thank you, sir."

Everyone exited.

— 4.6 —

Wittipol and Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel talked together.

Although Wittipol was still dressed as the Spanish lady, he had revealed his true identity to her.

He said, "Don't be afraid, sweet lady. You're entrusted to love, not violence here: I am no ravisher, just one whom you, by your fair trust again, may of a servant make a most true friend."

A ravisher is a rapist.

In this context, a servant is an admirer, and a friend is a lover.

"And such a one I need, but not in this way," Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel said.

She meant that she needed a most true friend but not a most true lover.

Manly snuck into the room, unnoticed, and hid.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel continued, "Sir, let me confess to you that the splendid manner of your attempting this morning to persuade me to commit adultery with you intrigued me, and I acknowledge that my ability to devise plans and my manners were both engaged to give it a response — but not the response that you wanted. I never considered committing adultery.

"My hope was then — although it was interrupted before it could be uttered — that you whom I found to be the master of such language, that you who had the brain and the spirit for such an enterprise, could not but, if those good things were demanded to be used in a morally right cause, employ

them virtuously, and make that profit of your noble qualities that they would yield.”

In other words, although Wittipol had been using his great gifts to attempt to do evil, she believed that he was capable of using his great gifts to do good.

She continued, “Sir, you have now the ground and cause to exercise them in — you can use your great gifts to do good.

“I am a woman who cannot speak more wretchedness of myself than you can read in my features and my life. I am matched — married — to a mass of folly — my husband — who every day hastens to his own ruin.

“The wealthy portion — my dowry — that I brought to him, he has spent, and, through my friends’ neglect, no jointure has been made for me.”

The jointure she meant was shared control of their estate, with the proviso that if she became a widow, she would have wealth enough to support herself. She wanted to be able to restrain her husband’s foolish losses of money. His wasteful spending and loss of money to astrologers and con men were threatening to impoverish them.

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel continued, “My fortunes standing in this precipice, it is counsel that I want, and honest aides. And in this way, I need you for a friend, never in any other meaning of the word — I don’t need a lover. My husband’s ill — his evil — must not make me, sir, worse.”

Manly, who had been eavesdropping while hidden, now revealed himself to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel and his friend Wittipol.

“Oh, friend, don’t forsake the splendid occasion virtue offers you to keep you innocent!” Manly said. “I have feared for both of you, and I have been watching you so I could prevent

the ill I feared. But since the weaker side — the woman — has so assured me, let not the stronger fall by his own vice, or be the less a friend because virtue needs him.”

Manly was a good man, and he had been worried because his friend Wittipol wanted to commit adultery, which meant corrupting another man’s wife. Now Wittipol had a chance to do good for the woman he had been trying to persuade to do evil, and Manly wanted Wittipol to take advantage of the opportunity to do good.

Wittipol, although he had been tempted to do evil, was basically a good man. He said, “Virtue shall never ask for my help twice. Most friend, most man, your counsels are commands.”

Wittipol had been looking out for Manly by showing him that the woman he was wooing — Lady Tailbush — was not a morally good woman. Manly was looking out for Wittipol by advising him to act virtuously and help Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel.

Both men appreciated the true friendship of the other.

Wittipol said to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel, “Lady, I can love the goodness in you more than I loved your beauty, and I here entitle your virtue to the power upon a life you shall engage in any fruitful service, even if it means forfeiting my life.”

He would help her, even if it meant losing his life.

Merecraft entered the room and said, “Madam.”

Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel curtsied and then exited.

Merecraft took aside Wittipol, who was still dressed as the Spanish lady, and whispered to him, “Listen, sir. We have another leg strained — another plot activated — for this Dottrel. He has a quarrel to carry, and he has caused a deed

of feoffment of his whole estate to be drawn yonder. He has the deed of feoffment within; and he intends to make feoffee only you: the Spanish lady. He's fallen so desperately in love with you, and talks almost like a madman — you have never heard a frantic lunatic so in love with his own fancy! Now, as you know, the deed of feoffment will have no validity if it is in the Spanish lady's name; therefore, I want you to advise Fitzdottrel to put the deed of feoffment in my name and give me control of his estate — here he comes — you shall have a share of his estate, sir.”

— 4.7 —

Fitzdottrel, Everill, and Plutarchus entered the room. Plutarchus was holding the deed of feoffment. No one had yet been named the feoffee: A blank space had been left in the document for the name or names to be entered later.

One might think that Fitzdottrel would name his wife as feoffee and let her have control of their estate rather than signing legal control of the estate over to a guardian, but Fitzdottrel did not consider this. Apparently, he did not love or respect — or trust — his wife enough for him to do this.

Fitzdottrel said to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “Madam, I have a request to make to you, and before I make the request I say this to you: You must not deny me; I will be granted what I request.”

In other words: I won't take no for an answer.

“Sir, I must know what you are asking me to do, though,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“No, lady, you must not know it,” Fitzdottrel said, “Yet you must know it, too, for the trust of it, and the fame indeed, which otherwise would be lost to me. I want to use your name in a deed of feoffment — I want to make my whole

estate over to you: My whole estate is a trifle, a thing of nothing, some eighteen hundred pounds a year in income.”

“Alas!” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “I don’t understand those things, sir. I am a woman, and I am most loathe to embark myself —”

“You will not slight me, madam?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“Nor will you quarrel with me?” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked.

“No, sweet madam, I have already a dependence — a quarrel — which is the reason I am doing this. Let me put you in the deed of feoffment, dear madam. As a result of my quarrel, I may be fairly killed.”

The quarrel could result in a duel and yes, Fitzdottrel might die in the duel, and so he needed to settle his estate and find a guardian for it before fighting the duel.

“You have your friends, sir, around you here,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “You may choose one of them as the feoffee.”

Hoping to be named the feoffee, Everill said to Fitzdottrel, “She tells you right, sir.”

Fitzdottrel replied, “By God’s death, so what if she does — what do I care for that? Tell her that I want her to tell me wrong.”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, “Why, sir, if you want a recommendation for the trust, you may let me have the honor to name you whom I recommend.”

“It is you who do me the honor, madam,” Fitzdottrel said. “Who is it whom you recommend?”

“This gentleman,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said, pointing to Manly.

“Oh, no, sweet madam,” Fitzdottrel said. “He’s a friend to the man with whom I have the dependence — the quarrel.”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) asked, “Who might he be?”

“He is named Wittipol,” Fitzdottrel replied, “Do you know him?”

“Alas, sir, he is just a toy, a trifle — you think that this gentleman is a friend to him?” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said. “He is no more a friend to Wittipol than I am, sir!”

“But will Your Ladyship vouch for that, madam?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“Yes, and whatever else for him you will engage me,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“What is his name?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“His name is Eustace Manly,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“From where does he write himself?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“He is Eustace Manly of Middlesex, Esquire,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) said.

“Say no more, madam,” Fitzdottrel said.

He then said to Plutarchus, “Clerk, come here. Write ‘Eustace Manly, squire of Middlesex’ as the feoffee on the deed of feoffment.”

Plutarchus wrote the name on the document and then gave it to Manly.

Merecraft whispered to Wittipol, “What have you done, sir?”

Wittipol whispered back, “I have named a gentleman for whom I’ll be answerable to you, sir. Had I named you, it might have raised suspicions. This way, all is safe.”

Fitzdottrel said, "Come, gentlemen, write your signatures as witnesses."

"What is this?" Manly asked. He disliked both Merecraft and Everill, who would sign the deed of feoffment as witnesses.

Everill said to Fitzdottrel, "You have made election of a most worthy gentleman."

He was pretending to approve of Manly's being selected as the feoffee on the deed of feoffment.

"I wish that a worthy man had said that!" Manly said to Everill. "Considering the man from whom it comes, it is rather a shame to me than a praise."

"Sir, I will give you any satisfaction," Everill said.

The satisfaction could be a duel, but Manly preferred silence.

"Be silent then," Manly said. "Falsehood does not commend the truth."

Plutarchus said to Fitzdottrel, "Do you deliver this, sir, as your deed to the use of Master Manly? Do you want him to be the feoffee on the deed of feoffment?"

"Yes," Fitzdottrel said.

He then said to Manly, "And sir, when did you see young Wittipol? I am ready for process now; sir, this is publication of my quarrel. He shall hear from me; he would necessarily be courting my wife, sir."

Manly said, "Yes, his cloak, which you are wearing, witnesses that what you say is true."

This remark made Fitzdottrel suspicious of Manly, and he said to him, "Nay, good sir."



Fitzdottrel then said to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “Madam, you did assert —”

Wittipol (the Spanish lady) interrupted, “What?”

Fitzdottrel finished, “— that he was not Wittipol’s friend.”

“I have heard, sir, no confession of it,” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) replied.

He had not heard Manley confess that he was not Wittipol’s friend.

Fitzdottrel said to himself, “Oh, she doesn’t know the facts of the matter!”

He then said to Wittipol (the Spanish lady), “Now I remember, madam! This young Wittipol would have debauched my wife and made me a cuckold through a window; he did pursue her to her home to my own window; but I think I swooped on him, and violently moved her away from out of his claws. I have sworn to have him by the ears; I fear the toy will not do right by me.”

He was saying that he wanted to meet Wittipol in a duel, but he was afraid that Wittipol would not fight him.

“He won’t do right by you?” Wittipol (the Spanish lady) replied. “That would be a pity! What right do you ask, sir? Here is the man who will do right by you.”

Wittipol revealed his real identity; he no longer pretended to be the Spanish lady.

“Ha?” Fitzdottrel said. “Wittipol?”

“Aye, sir,” Wittipol said. “I am a lady no more now, nor am I a Spaniard.”

“No, indeed,” Manly said. “This is Wittipol.”

“Am I the thing I feared you would make me?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“A cuckold?” Wittipol said. “No, sir, but you were recently in possibility, I’ll tell you so much.”

He meant that he had recently had a possible opportunity to make Fitzdottrel a cuckold.

Good man that he was, Manly clarified, “But your wife’s too virtuous to make you a cuckold.”

“We’ll see her, sir, safely to her home, and leave you here to be made the Duke of Shoreditch with a project,” Wittipol said.

“Duke of Shoreditch” was a joke title; no real such Duke existed.

“Thieves! Ravishers!” Fitzdottrel said.

“Cry just one more note, sir, and I’ll mar the tune of your pipe,” Wittipol said.

Fitzdottrel said, “Give me my deed of feoffment, then.”

Wittipol told him, “No. That shall be kept for the good of your wife, who will know better than you how to use it.”

Manly would not use the deed of feoffment to benefit himself; it would be used to benefit Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel. Doing so would also benefit Fitzdottrel, although he did not believe that.

Fitzdottrel thought about how he believed his wife would better know how to use it: “To feast you with my land?”

“Sir, be quiet, or I shall gag you before I go,” Wittipol said. “Consult your Master of Dependences about how to make this a second quarrel. You have time, sir.”

Wittipol shoved Fitzdottrel out of the way, and he and Manly exited.

“Oh!” Fitzdottrel said. “What will the ghost of my wise grandfather, my learned father, and my worshipful mother think about me now, they who left me in this world in state to be their heir? They will think that I have become a cuckold, and an ass, and my wife’s ward, and they will think that I am likely to lose my land and have my throat cut, all by her scheming!”

“Sir, we are all abused,” Merecraft said.

“And continue to be so!” Fitzdottrel said. “Who hinders you? Please, let me alone. I would ‘enjoy’ myself and be the Duke of Drowned-land you have made me.”

“Sir, we must play an after-game concerning this,” Merecraft said.

An after-game was a second game played to make up the losses suffered in the first game.

“But I am in no condition to be a gambler,” Fitzdottrel said. Because of the deed of feoffment, he had no money, no possessions, and no land.

He continued, “I tell you once again —”

Merecraft interrupted, “You must be ruled by me and take some counsel.”

He would advise Fitzdottrel about how to recover his estate.

Fitzdottrel replied, “Sir, I hate counsel, as I hate my wife, my wicked wife!”

“But we may think of a way for you to recover all your estate, if you will act,” Merecraft said.

“I will not think, nor act, nor yet recover,” Fitzdottrel said.  
“Do not talk to me! I’ll run out of my wits rather than listen to you. I will be what I am, Fabian Fitzdottrel, although all the world say nay to it.”

He exited.

Merecraft said to Everill, “Let’s follow him.”

ACT 5 (*The Devil is an Ass*)

— 5.1 —

Outside Lady Tailbush's house, Ambler and Pitfall talked together. Ambler, Lady Tailbush's manservant, had been missing all day, and he was worried about losing his job.

"But has my lady missed me?" Ambler asked.

"Beyond telling!" Pitfall said. "Here has been that infinity of strangers! And then she would have had you to have used you as a good model compared with one inside whom they are now teaching, and who is ambitious to be of your rank."

"Good fellow-servant Pitfall, tell Master Merecraft that I entreat a word with him."

Pitfall exited.

Alone, Ambler said to himself, "This most unlucky accident will go near to be the loss of my job, I fear!"

Merecraft entered the scene.

"A word with me?" Merecraft said. "What do you want to say to me, Master Ambler?"

"Sir, I would beseech Your Worship to protect me from my Lady Tailbush's displeasure at my absence," Ambler said.

"Oh, is that all?" Merecraft said. "I promise you that I will."

"I want to tell you, sir, just how it happened," Ambler said.

"Be brief, good Master Ambler, put yourself to your rack and exert yourself to be brief, for I have work of more importance to attend to."

"Sir, you'll laugh at me," Ambler said. "But — it is the truth — a true friend of mine, finding by conversation with me that I lived too chastely for my health, and indeed too honest

for my place, sir, advised me that if I loved myself — as I do, I must confess —”

“Spare me your parenthetical remarks,” Merecraft said. “Get to the point.”

“That I should give my body a little evacuation —”

Occasionally, testicles ought to be emptied of semen.

“Well, and you went to a whore?” Merecraft asked.

“No, sir,” Ambler said. “I dared not, for fear gossip might arrive at somebody’s ear. I would not entrust myself to a common whorehouse.”

He then spoke this rapidly:

“But I got the gentlewoman to go with me and carry her bedding to a conduit-head close by the place toward Tyburn that they call my Lord Mayor’s Banqueting House.

“Now, sir, this morning there was a public execution at Tyburn, and I never dreamt of it until I heard the noise of the people and the horses, and neither I nor the poor gentlewoman dared to stir until all was done and past, so that in the interim we fell asleep again.”

The conduit brought drinking water to London. The conduit-head had places where a couple could hide and have sex.

Out of breath, he stopped speaking.

“Nay, if you fall from your gallop, I am gone, sir,” Merecraft said.

Ambler rapidly continued, “But when I waked to put on my clothes — a suit I had had made for the occasion — it was gone, and so was all my money, with my purse, my seals, my notebooks, my studies, and a fine new device I had to carry my pen and ink, my civet perfume, and my toothpicks,

all in one case. But that which grieved me most was the thefts of the gentlewoman's shoes, with a pair of roses and garters I had given her for the business."

Ambler continued, "So that made us stay until it was dark, for I was obliged to lend her my shoes, and walk in a rug by her, barefoot to Saint Giles' church."

"A kind of Irish penance!" Merecraft said.

Some impoverished Irish wore clothing made out of rug cloth.

Merecraft then asked, "Is this all, sir?"

"I want you to satisfy Lady Tailbush that I deserve to keep my job," Ambler replied.

"I promise you that I will, sir," Merecraft said.

"I have told you my true disaster," Ambler said.

"I cannot stay with you, sir, to console you, but I rejoice in your return," Merecraft said.

He went inside.

"He is an honest gentleman!" Ambler said. "But he's never at leisure to relax and be himself because he has such tides of business."

He went inside.

## — 5.2 —

Alone, Pug said to himself, "Oh, call me home again, dear chief, and put me to work yoking foxes, milking he-goats, pounding water in a mortar, emptying the sea dry with a nutshell, gathering all the leaves that have fallen this autumn, drawing farts out of dead bodies, making ropes out of sand, catching the winds together in a net, mustering ants, and

numbering atoms — all that Hell and you thought exquisite torments, rather than keep me here for the length of time it takes to think a thought! I would sooner keep fleas within a circle and keep track for a thousand years which of them out-leaped the other and by how far, than endure a minute more of such torment as I have suffered within this house. There is no Hell compared to a lady of fashion — all your tortures in Hell are enjoyable pastimes compared to spending time with a lady of fashion! It would be refreshing for me to be in hellfire again and away from here!”

Ambler entered the scene, looked at him, and said to himself, “This man is wearing my suit, and those are the gentlewoman’s shoes and roses!”

Apparently, Pug had small feet, and so he had stolen the gentlewoman’s shoes rather than Ambler’s shoes. Small feet may be a cause of the myth saying the devils have cloven hooves rather than feet.

“They have such impertinent vexations that a general council of devils could not hit on,” Pug continued.

He noticed Ambler and said to himself, “Ha! This is the man I took asleep with his wench and borrowed his clothes. What might I do to frustrate him?”

“Do you hear me, sir?” Ambler asked.

Pug said to himself, “Answer him, but not to the purpose.”

“What is your name, I ask you, sir?” Ambler asked.

“Is it so late, sir?” Pug said, deliberately not answering the question.

“I ask you not for the time, but for your name, sir,” Ambler said.



“I thank you, sir,” Pug said. “Yes, it does hold, sir, certainly.”

“Hold, sir?” Ambler said. “What holds? I must both hold and talk to you about these clothes you are wearing.”

“A very pretty lace!” Pug said. “But the tailor cheated me.”

“No, I am cheated by you!” Ambler said. “Robbed!”

“Why, when you please, sir, I am ready for the game of threepenny gleek,” Pug said. “I am your man for that.”

“A pox on your gleek and threepence!” Ambler said. “Give me an answer.”

“Sir, my master is the best at it,” Pug said.

“Your master!” Ambler said. “Who is your master?”

“Let it be Friday night,” Pug said.

“What should be then?” Ambler asked.

“Your best song’s ‘Tom o’ Bedlam,’” Pug said.

A Tom o’ Bedlam was a lunatic who had been released from Bethlem Royal Hospital and licensed so he could beg.

“I think you are he,” Ambler said to Pug.

He then asked himself, “Does he mock me on purpose, I wonder? Or am I not speaking to him what I mean?”

He then said to Pug, “Good sir, what is your name?”

“Only a couple of cocks, sir,” Pug said. “If we can get a widgeon, it is in season.”

Widgeons were a species of bird that was in season in England during autumn.

Ambler said to himself, “He hopes to make one of these Sciptics of me — I think I got their name right — and he does not flee from me. I wonder at that! It is a strange confidence!”

By “Sciptics” he meant Skeptics — philosophers who did not think that knowledge was objective.

Ambler continued saying to himself, “I’ll try another way to draw a real answer from him.”

Ambler exited.

— 5.3 —

Merecraft, Fitzdottrel, and Everill entered the scene. Pug withdrew to a space where he could hear but was unlikely to be seen. He listened to everything the newcomers said.

Merecraft was trying to convince Fitzdottrel to say that his wife was a witch who had caused him to become possessed by a demon. If his wife was brought to trial and convicted as a witch, she would be unable to control her husband’s property.

Who would then control Fitzdottrel’s property? If Fitzdottrel were thought to be bewitched, he would not be able to. Both Merecraft and Everill, of course, were eager to control Fitzdottrel’s property. At this time, Fitzdottrel still did not know that Merecraft and Everill were con men.

“It is the easiest thing, sir, to be done,” Merecraft said to Fitzdottrel. “It is as simple as farting silently.”

This is not always easy to do. So the author of the book you are reading has heard.

Merecraft continued, “Roll your eyes, and foam at the mouth. A little Castile soap will do for foam — rub it on your

lips. And then get a nutshell with inflammable fibers and tinder in it so you can spit fire.”

Presumably, the “possessed” person would be able to secretly get the finely ground fibers and tinder from the nutshell to his lips, and then spray them into a fireplace or over the flame of a candle, creating a fireball and conveying the impression to bystanders that he had spit fire.

Merecraft continued, “Did you never read, sir, about little Darrel’s tricks, the boy of Burton, the seven in Lancashire, and Sommers at Nottingham? All these people’s histories teach these tricks. And we’ll say, sir, that your wife has bewitched you —”

These people had faked or convinced others to fake being bewitched.

John Darrel had performed exorcisms on people and had caused a man to be executed. In 1599 he was accused of being an imposter and was imprisoned.

The boy of Burton was Thomas Darling, who had pretended to be bewitched and had claimed that a mouse had come out of his mouth.

Seven children in Lancashire were supposedly bewitched when a man named Edward (or perhaps Edmund) Hartley kissed them and breathed evil spirits in them.

William Sommers of Nottingham was also supposed to have been bewitched. John Darrel exorcized him.

Everill said, “And we’ll say that your wife conspired with those two, as sorcerers.”

“Those two” were Wittipol and Manly.

Merecraft said, “And we’ll say that they gave you potions, by which means you were not *compos mentis* — of sound

mind — when you made your feoffment. There's no recovery of your estate unless you do this. This, sir, will sting; it will be fatal."

The punishment for being found guilty of witchcraft was death.

Everill added, "And it will move in a court of equity."

Such a court could overrule both common law and statute law — as well as common sense.

"For it is more than manifest that this was a plot of your wife's to get your land," Merecraft said.

"I think that is true," Fitzdottrel said.

"Sir, so it appears," Everill said.

Merecraft said, "Indeed, and my cousin has known these gallants in these shapes —"

Everill finished the sentence: "— to have done strange things, sir. One as the lady, the other as the squire."

They were referring to Wittipol and Manly. They were saying that Wittipol had dressed as a lady, and Manly had been her squire.

The squire could be a personal servant or a lover.

"How a man's honesty may be fooled!" Merecraft said. "I thought that he was a real lady."

"So did I — renounce me and cast me aside if I did not," Fitzdottrel said.

"But this way, sir, you'll be revenged in full," Merecraft said.

"Upon them all," Everill added.

“Yes, indeed,” Merecraft said, “and since your wife has run the way of woman thus, even give her —”

Fitzdottrel interrupted, “— she is lost, I swear by this hand of mine, to me. She is dead to all the joys of her dear Dottrel! I shall never pity her who could pity herself. I cannot pity a woman who puts her own interests first because she pities herself.”

“That is princely resolved, sir,” Merecraft said, “and like yourself still, *in potentia*.”

Fitzdottrel was still not a duke; he was only potentially a duke. According to Merecraft, Fitzdottrel was acting like the duke he would soon be.

Pug, standing hidden, had overheard the plot.

#### — 5.4 —

Gilthead, Plutarchus (Gilthead’s son), the constable Sledge, and some sergeants of the law arrived on the scene.

Merecraft asked, “Gilthead, what is the news?”

Fitzdottrel, who was in need of money, asked for the hundred pieces Gilthead was supposed to have given him earlier: “Oh, sir, my hundred pieces. Let me have them yet.”

“Yes, sir,” Gilthead replied.

He then said, “Officers of the law, arrest him.”

“Me?” Fitzdottrel asked.

“I arrest you,” a sergeant said.

“Keep the peace, I order you, gentlemen,” the constable Sledge said.

“Arrest me?” Fitzdottrel said. “Why?”

“For better security, sir,” Gilthead said. “My son Plutarchus assures me you’re not worth a groat. Your net worth is not even a small coin of little value.”

“Pardon me, father,” Plutarchus said. “I said His Worship had no foot of land left, and that I’ll justify, for I wrote the deed of feoffment.”

Gilthead had placed Plutarchus, his son, with Sir Paul Eitherside so that he could learn law.

“Do you have these tricks in the city?” Fitzdottrel asked. He was a squire of Norfolk and so was not a citizen of London.

“Yes, and more,” Gilthead said.

Pointing at Merecraft, he then said to the officers of the law, “Arrest this gallant, too, here, at my suit.”

“Aye, and at mine,” Sledge said. “He owes me for his lodging rent two years and a quarter.”

Apparently, being a con man doesn’t pay well, or if it does, it does so only occasionally.

Merecraft said, “Why, Master Gilthead, and landlord . . . thou are not mad, though thou are constable. Thou are not puffed up with the pride of the place. Isn’t that right? Do you hear me, sirs? Have I deserved this from you two for all my pains at court to get you each a patent — a monopoly?”

Gilthead asked, “A patent for what?”

“A patent concerning my project of the forks,” Merecraft replied.

Forks were not yet widely in use in London and England.

“Forks?” Sledge asked. “What are forks?”

Instead of saying what forks were, Merecraft mentioned some of the advantages of forks: Less food would be spilled, and so less linen and less washing would be needed.

Merecraft said, “The laudable use of forks, brought into custom here, as they are in Italy, to the sparing of napkins. Sledge, this project would have made your bellows go at the forge, as it would have made Gilthead’s go at the furnace. I had procured it, had the signet for it, dealt with the linen-draper in private because I feared they were the likeliest to ever stir against it and to cross it, for it will be a mighty saver of linen through the kingdom — as that is one of my reasons for promoting the project, and to spare washing — now, on you two I had laid all the profits. Gilthead would have the making of all those forks made of gold and silver for the better personages, and you would have the making of those forks made of steel for the common sort. And both of you would have monopolies by patent. I would have brought you your seals in. But now you have prevented me from doing that, and I ‘thank’ you.”

Sledge was persuaded by Merecraft’s words that Merecraft was trying to help Sledge — and Gilthead — make money.

“Sir, I will provide bail for you at my own risk,” Sledge said.

Merecraft said to Gilthead, “Choose what you will do.”

Plutarchus said to Gilthead, “You do the same thing as Sledge, too, good father.”

“I like the fashion of the project well,” Gilthead said. “The forks! It may be a lucky project! And it is not complicated and intricate, as one would say, but fit for plain heads as ours to deal in.”

He then said, “Listen to me, officers — we discharge you.”

The officers of the law exited. Sledge stayed.

Merecraft said, "Why, this shows a little good nature in you, I confess, but do not tempt your friends thus."

He then said to Plutarchus, "Little Gilthead, advise your sire, great Gilthead, to avoid such courses of action as this action he almost did, and such courses of action as troubling a great man in reversion — a great man who is about to reclaim all his wealth — over a matter of fifty pounds on a false alarm. Away with such courses of action! They do not show him in a good light. Let him get the hundred pieces and bring them here. You'll hear more else."

Plutarchus said, "Father!"

Gilthead and Plutarchus exited.

— 5.5 —

Ambler entered the scene. Seeing Pug, he dragged him out of hiding, and then he said, "Oh, Master Sledge, are you here? I have been to seek you. You are the constable, they say. Here's one whom I charge with felony, on account of the suit he is wearing, sir."

"Who?" Merecraft said. "Master Fitzdottrel's manservant? Beware what you are doing, Master Ambler."

"Sir, these clothes that he is wearing, I'll swear, are mine," Ambler said, "and he has on the shoes of the gentlewoman I told you of, and I will have him before a justice of the law."

"My master, sir, will pass his word for me," Pug said. "He will vouch for me."

"Oh, can you speak to the purpose now?" Ambler said sarcastically. "*Now* you can talk sense."

Fitzdottrel did not vouch for Pug; instead, he said to him, "Not I. If you are such a thief, sir, I will leave you to your godfathers-in-law. Let twelve men work."



The twelve godfathers-in-law were jurists. Fitzdottrel was willing for Pug to be brought to trial. If he were found guilty, he would be sentenced to death.

“Listen to me, sir,” Pug said. “Please, let’s talk in private.”

They moved away from the others and talked quietly.

“Well, what do you say?” Fitzdottrel said. “Be brief, for I have no time to lose.”

Pug replied, “The truth is, sir, I am truly a devil, and I had permission to take this body I am in to serve you, which belonged to a cutpurse who was hanged this morning. And it is likewise true that I stole this suit in order to clothe myself. But, sir, don’t let me go to prison for it. I have hitherto lost time and done nothing; I have shown, indeed, no part of my devil’s nature. Now I will so help your malice against these parties. Now I will so advance the business that you have at hand of witchcraft and your possession, as if I myself were in you. Now I will teach you such tricks as how to make your belly swell and how to make your eyes turn, and how to foam, to stare, to gnash your teeth together, and to beat yourself, to laugh loud, and to feign six voices —”

“Get out, you rogue!” Fitzdottrel said. “You most infernal counterfeit wretch! Get out! Do you think to gull me with your Aesop’s fables?”

He did not believe that Pug was a real devil.

He said to the constable Sledge, “Here, take him into your custody; I want no part of him.”

Pug began, “Sir —”

“Go away!” Fitzdottrel said. “I disclaim you. I will not listen to you.”

Sledge led Pug away to take him to prison.

“What did he say to you, sir?” Merecraft asked.

“Like a lying rascal, he told me he was the devil,” Fitzdottrel said.

“What!” Merecraft said. “A good jest!”

“And he said that he would teach me very fine devils’ tricks for our new resolution,” Fitzdottrel said.

“Oh, pox on him!” Everill said. “It was excellently wisely done, sir, not to trust him.”

“Why, even if he were the devil, we shall not need him, if you’ll be advised,” Merecraft said.

Merecraft and Everill would teach Fitzdottrel very fine devils’ tricks for their new resolution.

Merecraft then laid out the plot:

“Fitzdottrel, go throw yourself on a bed, sir, and feign that you are ill. We’ll not be seen with you until after you have a fit, and that is confirmed within.

“Everill, stay with the two ladies — Lady Tailbush and Lady Eitherside — and persuade them to assist us.

“I’ll go to Justice Eitherside and tell him all about the ‘bewitchment.’ I mean that I will tell him that Fitzdottrel is bewitched.

“Trains shall seek out Engine, and the two of them will fill the town with the news of Fitzdottrel’s ‘bewitchment.’”

Using a nautical metaphor, Merecraft said, “Every cable is to be paid out. We must employ all our emissaries to spread the news now.”

He meant that they must use every means to spread the news of the “bewitchment.”

Merecraft then said to Fitzdottrel, “Sir, I will send you bladders and bellows.”

The bellows would blow up the bladders, which Fitzdottrel would use to make it seem as if his belly were distended by a demon or demons within him.

“Sir, be confident,” Merecraft added. “This is no hard thing to outdo the devil in. A thirteen-year-old boy made him an ass just the other day.”

A boy named John Smith claimed to have been bewitched; this resulted in the executions of nine women in July 1616. King James I then exposed the boy as a faker.

“Making the devil an ass” means “doing more evil than the devil.” Today, we might call such a person “the devil’s asshole.”

Fitzdottrel said, “Well, I’ll begin to practice, and escape the imputation of being made a cuckold by my own act.”

“You’re right,” Merecraft said. “You will.”

Fitzdottrel exited.

Now that Everill and Merecraft were alone, they could talk openly.

“Come,” Everill said, “admit that you have put yourself and your friends into a complete mess here, by dealing with new agents in new plots. Your complications have muddled everything up.”

“Speak no more about that, sweet cousin,” Merecraft said. He was embarrassed.

“What had you to do with this Wittipol and his pretending to be a lady?” Everill asked.

“Don’t ask about that,” Merecraft said. “It is over and done.”

“You had some strain above E-la?” Everill asked.

“E-la” is a high note in music.

Merecraft admitted, “I had indeed.”

“And now you crack because of it,” Everill said.

To crack on a note means to attempt — but fail — to sing it. Merecraft had attempted to get all rather than part of Fitzdottrel’s wealth, and now he was in danger of getting none of it unless this new plot worked.

“Don’t upbraid me,” Merecraft said. “Don’t criticize me.”

“Come, you must be criticized about it,” Everill said. “You are so greedy always to grab more than you are able to get that you lose everything.”

“That is right,” Merecraft admitted. “What more do you want me to do than to admit that I am guilty? Now, give me your aid.”

They exited.

## — 5.6 —

Shackles, the jail keeper of Newgate Prison, brought Pug into a cell.

He said, “Here you are lodged, sir; you must send your garnish, if you’ll be private.”

The garnish was a bribe to the jail keeper for private accommodations.

Pug gave him some money and said, “There it is, sir. Leave me.”

Shackles exited.

“To Newgate brought?” Pug said. “How the name of ‘devil’ is discredited in me! What a lost fiend shall I be on my return to Hell! My chief will roar in triumph, now that I have been on earth for a day and have done no notable deed except bring back here the body that was hanged this morning.

“Well! I wish that it were midnight so that I knew my fate.”

At midnight, Pug was supposed to return to Hell and make his report to Satan, who would sentence him for accomplishing no notable evil while he was in the Land of the Living.

Pug continued, “I think that Time is drunk and sleeps. He is so still, and he doesn’t move! I glory now in my torment. Neither can I expect it; I have it with my fact.”

He was already being tormented even before returning to Hell. He was tormented by his lack of success among the living, and he was tormented by the fact that he had ended up in Newgate Prison although he was a devil. He also was tormented by the knowledge that Satan would punish him when he returned to Hell. What’s worse, Time was moving so slowly that it dragged out his torment.

Iniquity the Vice entered the scene and said to Pug, “Child of Hell, be merry! Put a look on as round, boy, and as red as a cherry. Cast care behind thee and dance in thy fetters; They are ornaments, baby, that have graced thy betters.

“Look at me, and listen,” Iniquity the Vice said. “Our chief salutes thee, and, lest the cold iron of your fetters should chance to confute thee, he has sent thee grant-parole by me to stay a month longer here on earth, so you can learn to welcome cold and hunger, child —”

“What?” Pug said. “Shall I stay here a month longer?”

“Yes, boy, until the legal Session, so that thou may be found guilty and have a triumphal egression,” Iniquity the Vice said.

“A triumphal egression in a cart, to be hanged!” Pug said.

Theft was a capital crime, and those found guilty were taken in a cart to the place of execution, where they were hanged.

Iniquity the Vice said, “No, child, in a car — the chariot of triumph, which most of them are.”

“Car” and “chariot” were fancy words for “cart.”

Iniquity the Vice continued, “And in the meantime, you will be greasy and boozy and drunken, and nasty and filthy, and ragged and louse-y, with ‘damn me,’ ‘renounce me,’ and all the fine phrases that bring to Tyburn the plentiful gazes.”

Thieves were taken in a cart from Newgate Prison to Tyburn to be hung. Often, many people lined the route to see the condemned prisoner.

“He is a devil!” Pug said. “And he may well be our chief devil! The great superior devil! On account of his malice, he may well be Arch-devil! I acknowledge him. He knew what I would suffer when he tied me up thus in a rogue’s body, and he has — I thank him — his tyrannous pleasure on me, to confine me to the unlucky carcass of a cutpurse, wherein I could do nothing.”

Satan entered the scene and upbraided Pug with his day’s work:

“Impudent fiend, stop thy lewd mouth.

“Don’t thou shame and tremble to lay thine own dull damned defects upon an innocent carcass there? Why, thou miserable slave, the spirit that possessed that flesh before you took it

over put more true life in a finger and a thumb than thou have in the whole mass! Yet thou rebel and complain?

“What one attempt have thou made that is wicked enough, this day, that might be called worthy of thine own name, much less worthy the name of Satan, who sent thee?

“First, thou did help thyself get a beating from Fitzdottrel promptly, and with it thou also endangered thy tongue. You were afraid that you would have your tongue cut out. You are a devil, and yet you could not keep a body unbeaten for even one day! So much for that being for our credit.

“And to get revenge for it, you stopped, for anything thou know, a deed of darkness, which was an act of that egregious folly as no one sympathetic toward the devil could have thought of.”

Pug had informed Fitzdottrel about the meeting at the windows of his wife and Wittipol. By doing that, he had possibly stopped an act of adultery.

Satan continued, “So much for your acting! But now for your suffering! Why, a man wearing a false beard and a reversible cloak cheated thee. Indeed, would your predecessor the cutpurse, do you think, have been taken advantage of like that? Damn thee! Thou have done much harm: Thou have let men know their strength and that they’re able to out-do a devil that has been put in a body — this will forever be a scar upon our name!

“Whom have thou dealt with, woman or man, this day, but they have outdone thee in some way, and most have proved to be the better fiends?

“Yet you would be employed? Yes, Hell shall make you the spiritual leader of the cheaters with false dice!

“Or Hell shall make you the bawd-ledger — the resident ambassador for the pimps and whores — for this side of the town!

“No doubt you’ll render a splendid account of things. Bane of your itch, and scratching for employment! I’ll have brimstone — sulphur — to relieve it, to be sure, and I’ll have fire to singe your fingernails off.”

Devils prefer to keep their fingernails long.

Satan continued, “Except that I would not have such a damned dishonor stick on our state — the dishonor that a devil were hanged and could not save a body that he took from Tyburn, but that body must go there again — you would ride the cart to the gallows.”

Satan then said to The Vice named Iniquity, “But up, away with him —”

Iniquity the Vice put Pug upon his back so he could carry him away, saying to him, “Mount, darling of darkness. My shoulders are broad; he that carries the fiend is sure of his load. The Devil was accustomed to carry away the Evil, but now the Evil carries away the Devil.”

In the morality plays of the Middle Ages, the Devil carried away on his back the Vice or Evil.

They exited.

## — 5.7 —

A great noise was heard in Newgate Prison. Frightened, Shackles the jail keeper and some other jail keepers came into Pug’s jail cell. The body that Pug had occupied was lying on the floor.

“Oh, me!” Shackles said.

“What’s this?” the first jail keeper asked.



“A piece of Justice Hall has broken down,” the second jail keeper said.

“Phew!” the third jail keeper said. “What a steam of brimstone is here!”

“The prisoner who came in just now is dead!” the fourth jail keeper said.

“Ha?” Shackles said. “Where?”

“Look here,” the fourth jail keeper said, pointing.

“By God’s eyelid, I should know his face!” the first jail keeper said. “It is Gill Cutpurse, the thief who was hanged this morning!”

“It is him!” Shackles said.

“The devil surely has a hand in this!” the second jail keeper said.

“What shall we do?” the third jail keeper said.

“Carry the news of it to the sheriffs,” Shackles said.

“And to the Justices,” the first jail keeper said.

“This is strange!” the fourth jail keeper said.

“And smells strongly of the devil!” the third jail keeper said.

“I have the sulphur of Hell-coal in my nose,” the second jail keeper said.

“Phew!” the first jail keeper said.

“Carry him in,” Shackles said.

“Let’s go,” the first jail keeper said.

“How rank it is!” the second jail keeper said.

They exited, carrying the body.

Sir Paul Eitherside, Merecraft, Everill, Trains, Fitzdottrel, Lady Eitherside, Lady Tailbush, Pitfall, Ambler, and some attendants had assembled in the courtroom. Fitzdottrel was lying in a bed.

Sir Paul Eitherside, who was the Justice, was wondering about and marveling at the case as the others told him about it.

“This is the most notable conspiracy that I ever heard of,” Sir Paul Eitherside said.

Merecraft said, “Sir, they had given Fitzdottrel potions that made him fall in love with the counterfeit lady —”

Everill interrupted, “— right up to the time of the delivery of the deed —”

Merecraft interrupted, “— and then the witchcraft began to appear, for immediately he fell into his fit —”

Everill interrupted, “— of rage at first, sir, which since has much increased.”

“Good Sir Paul,” Lady Tailbush requested, “see Fitzdottrel, and punish the impostors.”

“That is the reason for why I came here, madam,” Sir Paul Eitherside said.

“Let Master Eitherside alone, madam,” Lady Eitherside said. “He knows what to do.”

“Do you hear?” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “Call in the constable; I will have him by us. He’s the King’s officer! And let’s have some citizens of credible reputation by us! I’ll discharge my conscience clearly. I’ll perform my duty as according to my conscience.”

“Yes, sir,” Merecraft said.

An attendant exited to carry out Sir Paul Eitherside’s orders.

Merecraft added, “And send for Fitzdottrel’s wife.”

“And for the two sorcerers, by any means necessary!” Everill said.

Another attendant exited.

“I thought one a true lady,” Lady Tailbush said. “I would have sworn he was a lady.”

She said to Lady Eitherside, “So did you, Lady Eitherside! You thought that he was a lady!”

“Yes, I did. I swear by that light, and I wish that I might never stir if I am lying, Lady Tailbush.”

“And I thought that the other one was a civil gentleman,” Lady Tailbush said.

“But, madam, you know what I told Your Ladyship,” Everill said.

Manly had asked Everill to say nice things about him to Lady Tailbush when he was courting her, but instead Everill had said bad things about him.

“I now see the truth of it,” Lady Tailbush said. “I was providing a banquet for them, after I had finished instructing the fellow De-vile, who was the gentleman’s manservant.”

“The fellow De-vile has been found to be a thief, madam,” Merecraft said. “He robbed your usher Master Ambler this morning.”

“What!” Lady Tailbush said.

“I’ll tell you more soon,” Merecraft said.

Fitzdottrel began to act as if he were having a fit.

He shouted, "Give me some garlic! Garlic! Garlic! Garlic!"

Garlic is supposed to be good at protecting oneself from demons.

"Listen to the poor gentleman," Merecraft said. "How he is tormented!"

"My wife is a whore," Fitzdottrel shouted at Sir Paul Eitherside. "I'll kiss her no more, and why? Mayn't thou be a cuckold, as well as I? Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Devils and cuckolds have horns.

Was Sir Paul Eitherside a cuckold? Perhaps. Earlier, when Wittipol was pretending to be the Spanish lady, Lady Eitherside had said, "As I am honest, Tailbush, I think that if nobody should love me but my poor husband, I would just hang myself."

Trying to understand the words and sounds, Sir Paul Eitherside said, "That is the devil who speaks and laughs in him."

"Do you think so, sir?" Merecraft asked.

"I discharge my conscience," Sir Paul Eitherside said. "On my conscience, I believe that."

"And isn't the devil good company?" Fitzdottrel shouted. "Yes, certainly."

As part of his "possession," Fitzdottrel was speaking at various times with different voices: that of a man, that of a woman, that of a child. More than one demon can possess a human being.

"How he changes, sir, his voice!" Everill said.

Of course, both Merecraft and Everill were trying to convince Sir Paul Eitherside — the Justice — that Fitzdottrel was bewitched.

Fitzdottrel shouted, “And a cuckold is wherever he puts his head with a vengeance if his horns are forth — the devil’s companion! Look, look, look, else.”

“How he foams at the mouth!” Merecraft said.

“And how his belly swells!” Everill said.

“Oh, me!” Lady Tailbush said. “What’s that there, rising in his belly?”

The swelling resembled that of an erection.

“A strange thing!” Lady Eitherside said. “Hold it down.”

Trains and Pitfall both said, “We cannot, madam.”

“It is too apparent, this!” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “What I am seeing cannot be doubted.”

Wittipol and Manly and Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel entered the room.

“Wittipol!” Fitzdottrel cried. “Wittipol!”

“What is this?” Wittipol asked. “What play have we here?”

He knew immediately that Fitzdottrel was acting.

“What fine new matters?” Manly asked.

“*The Coxcomb and the Coverlet*,” Wittipol said, making up a title for the “play.”

A coxcomb is a fool. People who pretended to be bewitched covered themselves with a coverlet in order to hide their paraphernalia, such as bladders and bellows to make it appear that their belly was swelling.

“Oh, strange impudence!” Merecraft said. “That these should come to face their sin!”

He had been one of the people calling for them to be forced to come.

“And to outface — defy — justice and the Justice,” Everill said. “They are the parties, sir. They are responsible for the witchcraft.”

“Say nothing,” Sir Paul Eitherside said.

“Did you notice, sir, upon their coming in, how Fitzdottrel called out ‘Wittipol’?” Merecraft asked.

“And he never saw them come in,” Everill said.

“I promise you that I did notice that,” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “Let them play a while.”

He wanted to see what would happen.

Fitzdottrel hummed, “Buzz! Buzz! Buzz! Buzz.”

“It’s a pity — the poor gentleman!” Lady Tailbush said. “How he is tortured!”

“For shame, Master Fitzdottrel!” his wife said, going over to him. “What do you mean by counterfeiting being bewitched like this?”

“Oh!” Fitzdottrel said. “Oh! She comes with a needle, and thrusts it in, she pulls out that, and she puts in a pin, and now, and now! I don’t know how and I don’t know where, but she pricks me here, and she pricks me there. Oh! Oh!”

Sir Paul Eitherside said to Mrs. Frances Fitzdottrel, “Woman, stop doing that!”

“What, sir?” Wittipol asked.

“A practice that is foul for one so fair,” Sir Paul Eitherside said.

Wittipol asked Sir Paul Eitherside, “Do you really believe this playacting?”

Manly also asked Sir Paul Eitherside, “Do you believe in it?”

“Gentlemen, I’ll discharge my conscience,” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “This is clearly a conspiracy! A dark and devilish practice! I detest it!”

“The justice surely will prove to be the merrier man!” Wittipol said.

According to Wittipol, Sir Paul Eitherside was funnier and more to be laughed at than Fitzdottrel — Sir Paul was the bigger fool.

“This is very strange, sir,” Wittipol said.

“Don’t confront authority with impudence,” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “I tell you, I detest it.”

Gilthead and Sledge entered the room.

Sir Paul Eitherside said, “Here comes Sledge — the King’s constable — and with him is a very honorable commoner and my good friend, Master Gilthead. I am glad that before such witnesses I can profess my conscience and my detestation of it. Horrible! Most unnatural! Abominable!”

He had misspoken: “I am glad that before such witnesses I can profess my conscience and my detestation of it” sounded as if he detested his conscience.

No doubt Wittipol and Manly did.

While the others were paying attention to the new arrivals, Merecraft and Everill advised Fitzdottrel.

Everill whispered to Fitzdottrel, “You do not contort your body enough.”

Merecraft whispered to him, “Wallow! Gnash your teeth!”

Fitzdottrel redoubled his efforts.

“Oh, how he is vexed!” Lady Tailbush said.

“It is very manifest,” Sir Paul Eitherside said.

Everill whispered to Merecraft, “Give him more soap to foam with.”

He whispered to Fitzdottrel, “Now lie still.”

Once Fitzdottrel stopped thrashing around in bed, Merecraft was able to secretly slip some soap to him.

Merecraft whispered, “And act a little.”

Fitzdottrel began to mime smoking tobacco.

Lady Tailbush asked Sir Paul Eitherside, who had been interpreting Fitzdottrel’s actions and words, “What is he doing now, sir?”

Sir Paul Eitherside said, “He is showing the taking of tobacco, with which the Devil is so delighted.”

“Hum!” Fitzdottrel shouted.

“And he is calling for hum — strong ale,” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “You takers of strong waters and tobacco, look closely at this.”

Fitzdottrel shouted as he clapped his hands, “Yellow! Yellow! Yellow! Yellow!”

“That’s yellow starch,” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “The devil’s the idol of that color. He ratifies it with clapping of his hands. The proofs are pregnant — they are convincing.”



“How the devil can act!” Gilthead said.

“He is the master of actors, Master Gilthead, and of playwrights, too!” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “You heard him talk in rhyme! I forgot to mention it to you, a while ago.”

Earlier, the play-acting Fitzdottrel had said, “My wife is a whore. I’ll kiss her no more!”

He had also said, “She comes with a needle, and thrusts it in, she pulls out that, and she puts in a pin, and now, and now! I don’t know how and I don’t know where, but she pricks me here, and she pricks me there.”

Fitzdottrel used the finely ground fibers he had put in a walnut shell to create a fireball.

“See, he spits fire,” Lady Tailbush said.

“Oh, no! He plays at figgum,” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “The devil is the author of wicked figgum.”

A figgum is a juggler’s trick.

Earlier, Fitzdottrel or Merecraft or Everill had prepared a walnut to enable him to spit fire. The walnut shell had been filled with a flammable substance that would enable him to appear to spit fire. For example, fire-breathers today may use cornstarch or alcohol. They put some in their mouth and then spray it over a small flame, producing a burst of fire.

Apparently, Sir Paul Eitherside had seen Fitzdottrel fill his mouth with the flammable substance in the walnut shell — finely ground sawdust or flour, perhaps? — and then seen him spray it over a lit candle, producing a burst of fire.

Rather than recognizing it as an impostor’s trick, he interpreted it as a juggler’s trick. Since “the devil is the author of wicked figgum,” according to Sir Paul Eitherside, this was more evidence that Fitzdottrel was truly bewitched.

Manly asked Wittipol, “Why don’t you speak to Sir Paul Eitherside?”

Manly thought that perhaps Wittipol could talk sense into him.

Wittipol replied, “If I had all innocence of man to be endangered, and he could save, or ruin it, I’d not breathe a syllable in request to such a fool as he makes himself.”

Suppose Humankind was put on trial, and Sir Paul Eitherside was the judge who could save Humankind or have Humankind executed. Further suppose that Sir Paul Eitherside asked Wittipol to speak. Wittipol would say nothing to such a fool as Sir Paul Eitherside was making himself out to be.

Presumably, Wittipol would be OK with whatever decision Sir Paul Eitherside would make. If Humankind were judged innocent and so would survive, that would be OK with Wittipol; after all, good people such as Manly exist. If Humankind were judged guilty and so would be executed, that would be OK with Wittipol; after all, foolish people such as Fitzdottrel and Sir Paul Eitherside exist.

Or, perhaps, Wittipol would not be OK with whatever decision Sir Paul Eitherside would make. If Humankind were judged innocent and so would survive, that would not be OK with Wittipol; after all, foolish people such as Fitzdottrel and Sir Paul Eitherside exist. If Humankind were judged guilty and so would be executed, that would not be OK with Wittipol; after all, good people such as Manly exist.

“Oh, they whisper, whisper, whisper,” Fitzdottrel said about Wittipol and Manly. “We shall have a score more of devils to come to dinner in me the sinner.”

“Alas, poor gentleman!” Lady Eitherside said.

Sir Paul Eitherside said about Wittipol and Manly, “Separate them. Keep them each away from the other.”

Wittipol would not talk to Sir Paul Eitherside, but Manly was willing.

“Are you insane, sir, or what grave foolishness moves you to take the side of so much villainy?” Manly asked Sir Paul Eitherside. “We are not afraid either of law or trial; let us be examined what our objectives were, what the means we had to work by, and the feasibility of those means. Do not make a decision against us before you hear us.”

“I will not hear you,” Sir Paul Eitherside said, “yet I will make a decision based on the circumstances.”

The circumstances included circumstantial evidence.

“Will you do so, sir?” Manly asked.

“Yes, the circumstances are obvious,” Sir Paul Eitherside said.

“Not as obvious as your folly!” Manly said.

“I will discharge my conscience, and do all things necessary to the meridian — the highest point — of justice,” Sir Paul Eitherside said.

“You do well, sir,” Gilthead said.

“Provide for me three or four dishes of good meat to eat,” Fitzdottrel said. “I’ll feast on them and their tricks; a Justice’s head and brains shall be the first dish I will eat.”

“The devil loves not justice,” Sir Paul Eitherside said. “You may see that from the way the possessed man talks.”

Fitzdottrel added, “Give me a spare rib of my wife, and a whore’s innards! Give me a whole Gilthead.”

Sir Paul Eitherside whispered to Gilthead, “Don’t be troubled, sir; the devil speaks it.”

The devil’s speaking such a thing might very well trouble the person the devil was talking about.

Fitzdottrel shouted, “Yes, wis; knight, shite; Paul, jowl; owl, foul; troll, bowl.”

He pronounced the words in such a way that each pair of words rhymed.

Sir Paul Eitherside said, “This is crambe, another of the devil’s games!”

In the game of crambe, players had to come up with rhymes for a certain word.

Merecraft whispered to Fitzdottrel, “Speak, sir, some Greek, if you can.”

The devil knows many languages; sinners speak many languages.

Merecraft then whispered to Everill, “Isn’t the justice Sir Paul Eitherside a solemn gamester?”

For someone who regarded games as evil, the serious Sir Paul Eitherside certainly knew a lot about them.

“Quiet!” Everill whispered back.

Fitzdottrel said, “*Οἴμοι κακοδαίμων, Και τρισκακοδαίμων, και τετράκις, και πεντά κίς, και δωδεκαικίς, και μυριακίς.*”

Translated: “Alas! alas! I am a lost man. Ah! thrice, four, five, twelve times, or rather ten thousand times unhappy fate!”

Sir Paul Eitherside said, “He curses in Greek, I think.”

Everill whispered to Fitzdottrel, "Use your Spanish that I taught you."

Fitzdottrel said, "*Quebrémos el ojo de burlas.*"

Fitzdottrel, who had learned the Spanish poorly, had said, "Let's break his eye in jest."

Everill tried to cover up the mistaken Spanish: "What? Your rest? Let's break his neck in jest, the devil says."

Fitzdottrel then said in Spanish, "*Di grátia, Signòr mio, se havete denári fataméne parte.*"

Translated: "If you please, sir, if you have money, give me some of it."<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

Merecraft said, "What! Would the devil borrow money?"

Fitzdottrel said in French, "*Oui, Oui, monsieur, un pauvre diable! Diabletin!*"

Translated: "Yes, yes, sir, a poor devil! A poor little devil!"<sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

"It is the devil speaking, judging by his several languages," Sir Paul Eitherside said.

Carrying Ambler's possessions, Shackles, the jail keeper of Newgate Prison, entered the room, and asked, "Where's Sir Paul Eitherside?"

"Here I am," he said. "What's the matter?"

"Oh!" Shackles said. "Such an accident has happened at Newgate, sir. A great piece of the prison is torn down! The devil has been there, sir, in the body of the young cutpurse who was hanged this morning, but he was wearing new clothes, sir. Every one of us recognized him. These things were found in his pocket."

“Those are mine, sir,” Ambler said.

“I think he was committed on your charge, sir, for a new felony,” Shackles said.

“Yes,” Ambler confirmed.

“He’s gone, sir, now,” Shackles said, “and left us the dead body. But he also left, sir, such an infernal stink and steam behind that you cannot see St. Pulchre’s steeple yet. They smell the stink as far as the market town of Ware, as the wind lies by this time, I am sure.”

St. Pulchre’s steeple was the church of St. Sepulchre, which was close to Newgate Prison.

“Is this the truth, friend?” Fitzdottrel asked. “Do you give your word that it is true?”

“Sir, you may see it for yourself, and satisfy yourself that it is true,” Shackles said.

Realizing that Pug — whom he called Devil, and who had told him that he had possessed the body of a cutpurse who was hanged this morning — really was a devil, Fitzdottrel immediately said, “Then it is time to stop counterfeiting that I am possessed.”

He said to Sir Paul Eitherside, “Sir, I am not bewitched, nor do I have a devil inside me — no more than you do. I defy the devil by telling the truth, I do, and I admit I did abuse you with my counterfeiting.

“These two gentlemen — Merecraft and Everill — put me up to it. I have faith against the devil. These two gentlemen taught me all my tricks. I will tell the truth and shame the fiend. See here, sir, are my bellows, and my false belly, and my mouse that I would have pretended to come out of my mouth, and everything else that I would have pretended to have come out of my mouth!”

Manly said to Sir Paul Eitherside, “Sir, aren’t you ashamed now of your solemn, serious vanity?”

“I will make honorable amends to truth,” Sir Paul Eitherside said.

“And so will I,” Fitzdottrel said. “But these two men — Wittipol and Manly — are still cheaters, and they have my land, as plotters with my wife, who, although she is not a witch, is worse — she is a whore!”

“Sir, you misrepresent her,” Manly said. “She is chaste and virtuous, and we are honest men. I know of no glory a man would hope to acquire by proclaiming his own follies, but you’ll still be an ass, in spite of providence and God’s gifts.”

He then said to Sir Paul Eitherside, “Please go in, sir, and hear the truth, and then judge these men, and make amends for your late rashness, when you shall hear about the pains and care that were taken to save from ruin this fool: his Grace of Drowned-land!”

“My land is drowned indeed,” Fitzdottrel said.

“Be quiet!” Sir Paul Eitherside ordered Fitzdottrel.

Manly added, “And you shall hear how much his modest and too worthy wife has suffered being misunderstood by him; you will blush, first for your own belief in what you thought were her faults, but you will blush more for his actions.

“His land is his, and never, by my friend or by myself, was it meant to be put to any other use except to benefit her — his wife — who has equal right to the land. If any other had worse counsels regarding Fitzdottrel’s land —”

Manly looked at Merecraft and Everill and said, “I know I speak to those who can understand me.”

He then continued, “— let them repent their sins, and be not detected. It is not manly to take joy or pride in human errors; we all do ill things. They do them worst who love them, and dwell there until the plague comes. The few who have the seeds of goodness left will sooner make their way to a true life by shame, than by punishment.”



**THE PROLOGUE AND THE EPILOGUE (*The Devil is  
an Ass*)**

**The Prologue (Original Language, Modern Spelling)**

*The Devil Is an Ass.* That is today

The name of what you are met for, a new play.

Yet, grandees, would you were not come to grace

Our matter with allowing us no place.

Though you presume Satan a subtle thing,

And may have heard he's worn in a thumb-ring,

Do not on these presumptions force us act

In compass of a cheese-trencher. This tract

Will ne'er admit our vice because of yours —

Anon, who, worse than you, the fault endures

That yourselves make, when you will thrust and spurn,

And knock us o' the elbows, and bid, turn;

As if, when we had spoke, we must be gone,

Or, till we speak, must all run in to one,

Like the young adders at the old one's mouth?

Would we could stand due north; or had no south,

If that offend; or were Muscovy glass,

That you might look our scenes through as they pass.

We know not how to affect you. If you'll come

To see new plays, pray you afford us room,

And show this but the same face you have done  
Your dear delight, *The Devil of Edmonton*.  
Or if, for want of room, it must miscarry,  
'Twill be but justice that your censure tarry  
Till you give some. And when six times you ha' seen 't.  
If this play do not, the devil is in 't.

### **The Prologue (Modern English)**

*The Devil Is an Ass*. That is today  
The name of what you are met for, a new play.  
Yet, grandees, I wish you had not come to grace  
Our play by sitting on stools placed on the stage and  
cramping the acting space and allowing us no space to do  
our work.  
Though you presume Satan a subtle thing,  
And may have heard he's worn in a thumb-ring,  
[Note: Some members of this society thought that familiar  
spirits — supernatural entities that assist witches, warlocks,  
etc. — were sometimes kept in a thumb-ring.]  
Do not on these presumptions force us to act  
In a space the size of a cheese-platter. This space  
Will never admit our Vice because of yours —  
Our Vice who, worse than you, soon endures the fault — the  
vice —  
That you yourselves make, when you will thrust and kick,

And knock us on the elbows, and tell us to turn and when  
someone calls to you, you turn and face them;

As if, once we had spoken, we must be gone,

Or, until we speak, must all run in to one,

Like the young adders at the old one's mouth?

[The Prologue is complaining that the gallants on stage take up so much room that the actors have to leave unless they are delivering their lines — sometimes the gallants even push the actors away!

[The Prologue also is complaining that the vice of the audience — their bad behavior — will soon cause the Vice, a character in the play, to suffer.

[Note: This society believed that the mother adder would protect her young adders by letting them run in her mouth and down to her belly: a safe place. The actors who are pushed away have to gather together for protection.]

I wish we actors could stand due north and always face the audience; or had no south — no backs,

If that offend; or I wish that we actors were transparent like mica,

So that you might look through us at our scenes as we actors pass by in front of you people on stage.

We don't know how to influence you. If you'll come

To see new plays, please give us room to act,

And show this play just the same face you have shown to

Your dear delight, *The Devil of Edmonton*.

[Note: *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* was a popular play whose author is not known.]

Or if, for lack of room for us actors to act in, this play must miscarry and fail,

It will be but justice that you delay making a critical judgment

Until you give us some room. And when six times you have seen it,

If this play does not please you, the devil is in it.

### **The Epilogue**

Thus the projector here is overthrown.

But I have now a project of mine [my] own,

If it may pass: that no man would invite

The poet from us to sup forth tonight,

If the play please. If it displeasent [unpleasant] be,

We do presume that no man will; nor we.

\*\*\*

**Note:** The actor who played Wittipol may speak the Epilogue. In it, he is saying that if the play is a success, he wishes that the audience members will not invite the playwright, Ben Jonson, to dine with them because the actors will want to treat him. But if the play is a failure, he presumes that the audience members will not invite the playwright, Ben Jonson, to dine with them — and neither will the actors.

## NOTES (*The Devil is an Ass*)

### — 1.1 —

Satan says:

*He ne'er will be admitted there where Vennor comes.*

(1.1.94)

Source of Above: Jonson, Ben. *The Devil is an Ass*. Ed. Peter Happé. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994. Page 63.

Below is the entry on “Richard Vennar” by Edward Irving Carlyle in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 88:

*VENNAR or VENNARD, RICHARD (d. 1615?), author, was the younger son of John Vennar of Salisbury, a commissioner of the peace. He was educated by Adam Hill [q. v.], prebendary and succentor of Salisbury Cathedral, proceeding about 1572 to Balliol College, Oxford, where he studied for two years as a fellow commoner. He crossed to France towards the close of 1574, visited the court of Henri III, and procured letters of commendation to the emperor, Maximilian II. After some stay in Germany he returned home, and became a member of Barnard's Inn. He was admitted to Lincoln's Inn on 10 June 1581, receiving the privileges of a special admission on 25 July 1587 (Records of Lincoln's Inn, 1896, i. 93). On the death of his father he found himself involved in a lawsuit with the husband of his elder brother's widow for the possession of his patrimonial estates, and was ultimately compelled to take a younger brother's portion. In 1600 he proceeded to Scotland, and injudiciously solicited the intervention of James VI with the lords of the council. He had a favourable reception, and composed a thanksgiving for the delivery of James from the Gowrie conspiracy, which was presented to the king. His*

good reception aroused Elizabeth's anger, and on his return to England he was promptly arrested and imprisoned for a short time 'as a dangerous member to the state.' In 1601 appeared *'The Right Way to Heaven: and the true testimonie of a faithfull and loyall subject. Compiled by Richard Vennard of Lincolnes Inne. Printed by Thomas Este,'* London, 4to, a work of a religious character, but abounding in adulation of Queen Elizabeth. The first part was reprinted in the following year with several alterations and additions, with the title, *'The Right Way to Heauen, and a good presedent for Lawyers and all other good Christians.'* It was reprinted in Nichols's *'Progresses of Queen Elizabeth'* (iii. 532–43). An undated reprint of the second part, *'The True Testimonie,'* is preserved in the Bridgwater Library. It is prefaced by a dedication to James I, and contains a thanksgiving for the deliverance of the kingdom from the gunpowder plot (Collier, *Cat. of Bridgwater Libr.* p. 321). Not realising much by the sale, Vennar, who had in contemplation a second journey to Scotland, proclaimed his intention of representing England's triumphs over Spain in a masque entitled *'Englands Ioy.'* The broadside of the plot is in possession of the Society of Antiquaries, and has been reprinted in their *'Miscellanies'* (x. 196). He announced that it would be represented at the Swan on 6 Nov. 1602, and a large company, including many noblemen, assembled to witness it. After taking the entrance money, however, Vennar disappeared, and the audience revenged themselves by breaking up the furniture. Vennar himself states that he was arrested by bailiffs when the masque was about to begin, but Chamberlain relates that he fled on horseback, was pursued, captured, and brought before Sir John Popham, who treated the affair as a jest, and bound him over in five pounds to appear at the sessions (Chamberlain, *Letters*, Camden Soc. p. 163; Hazlitt, *Shakespeare Jest Books*, 1864, i. 145). The episode caused much amusement. Vennar was universally regarded as an impostor and dubbed *'England's Joy,'* a

*name which gave him peculiar annoyance. In 1614 he wrote a vehement protest, entitled 'An Apology: written by Richard Vennar of Lincolnes Inne, abusively called Englands Joy. To repress the contagious ruptures of the infected multitude. ... London. Printed by Nicholas Okes.'* The work is divided into two parts, of which the first is autobiographical, and the second relates Vennar's exertions to obtain the abolition of imprisonment for debt in England. The only perfect copy extant is in the British Museum Library, but it has been reprinted in Collier's 'Illustrations of Old English Literature' (vol. iii.). Collier inaccurately claims that it is the 'oldest piece of prose autobiography' in English. Several allusions to 'England's Joy' occur in contemporary literature, particularly in Ben Jonson's 'Love Restored' (1610–11), in his 'Masque of Augures' (1622), and in Sir John Suckling's comedy, 'The Goblins' (1646). A poem entitled 'Englands Joy,' commemorating the defeat of the Irish in 1600 under Hugh O'Neill, second earl of Tyrone [q. v.], by R. V., published without date, place, or printer's name, is sometimes attributed to Vennar, but may quite as well be the work of Richard Rowlands alias Verstegen [q. v.]

*In 1606 Vennar was arrested on suspicion of an intention to defraud Sir John Spencer of 500l. on pretence of preparing a masque under the patronage of Sir John Watts [q. v.], the lord mayor. After that he avoided London, and lived chiefly in Essex and Kent. In spite of the exertions on behalf of debtors of which he speaks in his 'Apology,' Vennar himself perished before 1617 in 'the black hole' of Wood Street counter, in the most abject misery, the victim of his keeper's resentment (Fennor, Compters Commonwealth, 1617, p. 64). Taylor in his 'Cast over the Water. ... Given gratis to William Fennor, the Rimer,' 1615, accused one Fennor of passing off as his own some manuscripts in reality written by*

*Poor old Vennor, that plaine dealing man,*

*Who acted Englands Ioy first at the Swan.*

*Fennor's theft was probably committed while Vennar was confined in Wood Street counter. [Vennar's Works; Corser's Collectanea (Chetham Soc.), v. 323–32; Fleay's English Drama, ii. 265; Ritson's Bibliogr. Poetica, p. 380; Collier's Hist. of Dram. Poetry, iii. 321, 405; Collier's Bibliogr. Catalogue, ii. 466–9; Nichols's Progr. of James I, ii. 398, iii. 139; Dodsley's Collection of Old Plays, 1780, x. 72; Hazlitt's Handbook; Hazlitt's Collections and Notes, 1st ser.; Manningham's Diary (Camden Soc.), pp. 82, 93.]*

Source of Above:

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary\\_of\\_National\\_Biography,\\_1885-1900/Vennar,\\_Richard](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Vennar,_Richard)

— 1.6 —

Fitzdottrel says:

*Well, begin, sir,*

*There is your bound, sir. Not beyond that rush.*

(1.6.72-73)

Source of Above: Jonson, Ben. *The Devil is an Ass*. Ed. Peter Happé. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994. Page 83.

Many people think that loose rushes were strewn on the floor, but C. M Stone states that that makes no sense; instead, rush mats were placed on the floor:

*What are rushes? They're herbaceous plants that bare a superficial resemblance to grasses or sedges. Their leaves are typically rounded or flat. They grow in a wide variety of moisture conditions and have evergreen leaves, which would make them very useful for a fiber plant to gather year round*



*for domestic purposes. The soft rush, called igusa in Japanese, is woven as a covering for tatami mats. [...]*

*The cloth Medieval Europeans were wearing was woven. The tapestries they hung on their walls were woven. The braids in long hair were woven. And yet many writers would have us believe that these people were so gross that they just threw rush leaves on the ground and walked on them instead of weaving mats? And while being this disgusting, they also had the sense to never display this unhygienic practice in any works of art? [...]*

*Fresh mats would be woven and laid down. Fragrant herbs were strewn on top so that when they were pressed between the foot and mat beneath they'd release their scent. (This same effect wouldn't work with a pile of loose rushes.) As the mats dried out (and can you imagine what a ridiculous fire hazard piles of loose rushes would be?), they'd absorb unpleasant odors from foot traffic and whatever was dropped on them. At the end of the season they'd be hauled out and replaced with new mats, bringing fresh scents and a clean floor once again. For special occasions, mats might be stacked up somewhere with storage, leaving clean and unworn floors for receiving company, which could then have decorative rugs instead. Removing loose material every time you received company, on the other hand, would be a lengthy, labor-intensive project with a lot of bits always left behind. [...]*

*The thing that I find so baffling about the loose rushes myth authors keep repeating is the fact that medieval/apple matting is not some obscure secret. It currently covers the floors in Elizabethan Hardwick Hall and many other National Trust properties in the UK. You can go see it in the environment it would have been used in historically right now.*

Source of Above: C.M. Stone, "Historical Inaccuracy: Rushes strewn on the floor." Ceemstone.com. 20 May 2016. Accessed on 5 July 2019.

<https://tinyurl.com/y2xxng97>.

However, rushes were also strewn on the floor as well as made into mats. *The Cottage Gardener* (1849) quotes Dr. Bulleyn, who was born early in the reign of King Henry VIII:

*In speaking of Rushes, he [Dr. Bulleyn] gives us this incidental notice of the customs of his time : — "Of rushes growing in running streams there be great plenty round about the Isle of Ely, my native country, whereof the plain people make mats and horse-coliars of the greater rushes, and of the smaller they make lights or candles for the winter. Rushes that grow upon dry ground be good to strew in halls, chambers, and galleries, to walk upon, defending apparel, as trains of gowns and kirtles, from dust. Rushes be old courtiers, and when they be nothing worth then they be cast out of doors — so be many that do tread upon them."*

Source of above: *The Cottage Gardener* (1849)

<https://tinyurl.com/y319a9qb>.

Thomas Dekkar's *Belman of London* has this passage:

*The windows were spread with hearbs, the chimney drest up with greene boughs, and the floors strewed with bulrushes, as if some lasse were that morning to be married.*

Source of Above:

Quoted in Henry Tyrell, Esq., *The Doubtful Plays of Shakspeare: The doubtful plays of Shakspeare: being all the dramas attributed to the muse of the world's great poet.* Revised from the Original Editions. London: London Print. and Pub. Co., [18--?] P. 321.

— 2.6 —

Manly sings an unidentified song in Act 2, Scene 6. Chances are, he sings the first stanza of Ben Jonson's "A Celebration of Charis: IV. Her Triumph" since Wittipol sings the last two stanzas later in the scene.

— 2.6 —

*He grows more familiar in his courtship, plays with her paps, kisses her hands, & c.*

(Stage Direction Between 2.6.70 and 2.6.71)

Source of Above: Jonson, Ben. *The Devil is an Ass*. Ed. Peter Happé. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994. Page 119.

*He grew more familiar in his courtship and intimate accesses, playing with her breasts, kissing her hands, etc.*

Source of Above: My retelling.

These are liberties indeed, but a critic named William Gifford commented, "Liberties very similar to these were, in the poet's [Jonson's] time, permitted by ladies, who would have started at being told that they had foregone all pretensions to delicacy."

Source of Gifford's Quotation: William Gifford, *The Works of Ben Jonson: With Notes Critical and Explanatory, and a Biographical Memoir Volume 5*.

<<https://tinyurl.com/yxqcpxfb>>.

Recommended Reading (mostly about later centuries):

Tracey E. Robey, "There Was Never a Time When Western Society Wasn't Weird About Cleavage: Classical paintings and Hulu's Harlots have been lying to you." 21 December 2017

<https://tinyurl.com/y4197xzu>.

Check Out:

“Category:Female nipples in art.” Wiki Commons.

<https://tinyurl.com/y3c4vm5c>

— 3.4 —

Act 3, Scene 4 contains an in-joke. Dick Robinson was a famous boy actor who played the role of a woman in plays. After he grew up, he continued to act and played the role of a man in plays. Scholars think that he originated the role of Wittipol, so when Engine says that Dick Robinson and Wittipol are exactly the same height, he is telling the literal truth.

— 5.8 —

“Οἴμοι κακοδαίμων, Καὶ τρισκακοδαίμων, καὶ τετράκις, καὶ πεντά κίς, καὶ δωδεκαίκις, καὶ μυριακίς.”

(5.8.112-114)

Source of Above: Jonson, Ben. *The Devil is an Ass*. Ed. Peter Happé. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994. Page 219.

This is a quotation from Aristophanes, *Plutus*, lines 850-852 in the original Greek.

Below are the full four lines of dialogue and the speaker:

Συκοφάντης

οἴμοι κακοδαίμων, ὡς ἀπόλωλα δειλίας,  
καὶ κακοδαίμων καὶ τετράκις καὶ πεντάκις  
καὶ δωδεκάκις καὶ μυριάκις: ἰὸν ἰού.  
οὔτω πολυφύρῳ συγκέκραμαι δαίμονι.

Aristophanes, *Plutus*, lines 850-854 in the original Greek.

Aristophanes. *Aristophanes Comoediae*, ed. F.W. Hall and W.M. Geldart, vol. 2. F.W. Hall and W.M. Geldart. Oxford. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1907.

<<https://tinyurl.com/y45exnpz>>

Below is an English translation of the Greek:

Informer

(before he sees Cario)

“Alas! alas! I am a lost man. Ah! thrice, four, five, twelve times, or rather ten thousand times unhappy fate! Why, why must fortune deal me such rough blows?”

Aristophanes. “Wealth.” *The Complete Greek Drama*, vol. 2. Ed. Eugene O'Neill, Jr. New York. Random House. 1938.

<<https://tinyurl.com/y5jrfsyq>>

## **CHAPTER 7: George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's *Eastward Ho!***

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS (*Eastward Ho!*)**

**TOUCHSTONE:** a goldsmith of Cheapside. Touchstones — dark quartz — were used to test the quality and purity of gold and silver alloys. His catchphrase is “Work upon that now!” It means, “You had better think about that!”

**MISTRESS TOUCHSTONE:** his wife, a gentlewoman.

**GERTRUDE:** his elder daughter. Touchstone says that she has a “proud ambition and nice — lascivious — wantonness.” She wants to become a lady. She can do that by marrying a knight.

**MILDRED:** his younger daughter. The name includes the word “mild.” The name also includes the word “red,” which people in this society sometimes used for the color of gold. Touchstone says that she has a “modest humility and comely soberness.”

**FRANCIS “FRANK” QUICKSILVER:** Touchstone's prodigal apprentice. Quicksilver is mercury. In this society, quicksilver was used to treat venereal disease. The Roman god Mercury was the god of thieves. Touchstone says that this apprentice has a “boundless prodigality.”

**GOLDING:** Touchstone's dutiful apprentice. Touchstone says that this apprentice has a “most hopeful industry.” Golding is as good as gold.

**SINDEFY:** Quicksilver's lover, later employed as Gertrude's gentlewoman-attendant. Her name is ambiguous: 1) one who defies sin, or 2) one who defiantly sins.

**SIR PETRONEL FLASH:** a “thirty-pound knight,” engaged to Gertrude. In this society, a “petronel” is a large pistol, aka

carbine. He is a newly made knight, and he has purchased his knighthood at a low cost.

CAPTAIN SEAGULL: a ship's captain employed by Sir Petronel to sail to Virginia. "Virginia" was the word then used for the North American coast north of Florida.

SPENDALL, SCAPETHRIFT: adventurers with Captain Seagull. The names suggest "spendthrift."

DRAWER: of the Blue Anchor Tavern in Billingsgate. A drawer is a bartender.

SECURITY: an elderly usurer; bawd to Quicksilver. "Security" is property used to get a loan.

WINIFRED: Security's young wife.

BRAMBLE: a lawyer. "Bramble" is a thorny shrub. Lawyers can get people into or out of thorny entanglements.

SCRIVENER: a writer of contracts.

POLDAVY: a tailor. "Poldavy" is canvas that can be used to make sails.

BETTRICE: a lady's maid.

MISTRESS FOND, MISTRESS GAZER: city women. The word "fond" can mean "foolish." "Gazer" can mean "snoop."

COACHMAN: to Gertrude.

HAMLET: a footman to Gertrude.

POTKIN: a tankard bearer.

FIRST GENTLEMAN, SECOND GENTLEMAN: at the Isle of Dogs.

WOLF: the keeper, aka jailer, of the Counter, a prison for debtors.

HOLDFAST: a prison guard.

FIRST PRISONER.

SECOND PRISONER: His name is Toby.

FRIEND: of the first and second prisoners.

SLITGUT: a butcher's apprentice.

PAGE.

MESSENGER.

CONSTABLE.

OFFICERS.

## **THE SCENE: LONDON AND VICINITY**

### **NOTES:**

Customers wanting to be ferried on the Thames River called "eastward ho!" or "westward ho!" to indicate the direction they wanted to travel.

In the play, eastward is towards Cuckold's Haven, and westward is towards the gallows at Tyburn and Virginia in North America.

East of Goldsmiths' Row was the Wood Street Counter.

Also eastward were Sir Petronel's "land" and "castle."

The play contains allusions to William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The names "Gertrude" and "Hamlet" are from Shakespeare's play. This book identifies only some of those references.



This society believed that the mixture of four humors in the body determined one's temperament. One humor could be predominant. The four humors are blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. If blood is predominant, then the person is sanguine (active, optimistic). If yellow bile is predominant, then the person is choleric (angry, bad-tempered). If black bile is predominant, then the person is melancholic (sad). If phlegm is predominant, then the person is phlegmatic (calm, apathetic, indolent).

Humors are dominant personality characteristics. For example, a person could be optimistic, or angry, or melancholic, or calm, or something else.

A humor can also be a fancy or a whim.

The word "humor" was an in-vogue word in Ben Jonson's day.

In Ben Jonson's society, a person of higher rank would use "thou," "thee," "thine," and "thy" when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use "you" and "your" when referring to a person of higher rank.

"Sirrah" was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

The word "wench" in Ben Jonson's time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

A "gossip" is a friend or companion or neighbor.

The word "cousin" can mean 1) relative (not necessarily what we call a cousin today), or 2) friend.

A page is a boy-servant.

“Ay me!” is an expression of regret: Alas! Woe is me! Oh!  
Ah!

## PROLOGUE (*Eastward Ho!*)

“Not out of envy, for there’s no effect

“Where there’s no cause [nothing to envy]; nor out of imitation,

“For we have ever [always] more been imitated;

“Nor out of our contention to do better

“Than that which is opposed to ours in title,

[*Westward Ho!* — a play by Thomas Decker and John Webster — was performed in 1604.]

“For that was good, and better cannot be.

“And [as] for the title, if it seems affected

“We might as well have called it, ‘God you good even’

[May God give you a good evening],

“Only that eastward westwards still exceeds —

“Honor the sun’s fair rising, not his setting.

“Nor is our title utterly enforced,

[That is, the action of this play does not always move toward the east.]

“As by the points we touch at you shall see.

“Bear with our willing pains, if dull or witty;

“We only dedicate it to the city.”

\*\*\*

### Notes on Prologue:

The line about being always imitated is a reference to other “city comedies.” These are citizen comedies: comedies about the citizens of London.

The line about titling this play *God You Good Even* is a reference to plays that have commonplace sayings as titles: *As You Like It*, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, etc.

The young general Pompey achieved notable victories in Africa, but the aging dictator Sulla did not allow him to have a triumph in Rome. Pompey said in response, “Honor the sun’s fair rising, not his setting.”

## ACT 1 (*Eastward Ho!*)

### — 1.1 —

Master Touchstone and Francis “Frank” Quicksilver entered the scene from different directions and met each other.

Quicksilver was carrying pumps (dancing shoes), a short sword, a dagger, and a tennis racket under his cloak. These were items that a gallant — a fashionable young gentleman — would wear or carry.

Golding entered the scene and paced back and forth before a goldsmith’s shop.

Touchstone was a goldsmith, and Frank Quicksilver and Golding were his apprentices.

Touchstone asked Quicksilver, “And where are you going now? What loose action are you bound for? Come, what comrades are you to meet with? Where’s the supper? Where’s the rendezvous?”

“Indeed, and in very good sober truth, sir —” Quicksilver began.

Touchstone interrupted:

“‘Indeed, and in very good sober truth, sir!’”

These were words that a Puritan might use.

Touchstone continued:

“Behind my back thou will swear faster than a French footboy and talk more bawdily than a common midwife, and now ‘indeed, and in very good sober truth, sir!’”

French footboys — pages — were known for their excessive swearing.

Touchstone continued:

“But if a privy search should be made, with what furniture — what equipment and clothing — are you rigged now? Sirrah, I tell thee that I am thy master, William Touchstone, goldsmith, and thou are my apprentice, Francis Quicksilver, and I will see to where you are running. Work upon that now!”

“Why, sir, I hope a man may use his recreation consistent with his master’s profit,” Quicksilver said.

Touchstone said:

“Apprentices’ recreations are seldom in keeping with their masters’ profit. Work upon that now — you had better think about that!

“You shall give up your cloak, though — you are no alderman.”

Aldermen were allowed to wear red cloaks. Craftsmen and apprentices wore flat caps. Apprentices wore a cap and gown. Touchstone was dressing like a man of higher social class than his own.

Touchstone removed Quicksilver’s cloak, revealing the items that Quicksilver was carrying underneath.

Touchstone then said:

“Heyday, Ruffians’ Hall! Sword, pumps, here’s a racket indeed.”

Ruffians’ Hall was a field where much fighting occurred.

“Racket” can, of course, mean “noise” as well as a tennis racket.

Quicksilver said:

“Work upon that now!”

“Thou shameless varlet, do thou jest at thy lawful master contrary to thy indentures?” Touchstone said.

“Indentures” are “articles of apprenticeship.”

Quicksilver replied:

“Why, by God’s blood, sir, my mother’s a gentlewoman and my father a Justice of Peace and of Quorum.”

A Justice of Peace heard complaints, and a Justice of Quorum was necessary to have a sitting court and to make determinations about guilt or innocence.

Quicksilver continued:

“And though I am a younger brother and an apprentice, yet I hope I am my father’s son; and by God’s eyelid, it is for your worship and for your commodity — your profit — that I keep company.

“I am entertained among gallants, true. They call me cousin Frank, right. I lend them moneys, good. They spend it, well. But when they are spent, must not they strive to get more? Must not their land fly? Must not they have to sell their land for cash money? And to whom? Shall not Your Worship have the refusal — the right of first option to buy or not buy?

“Well, I am a good member of the city, if I were well considered. How would merchants thrive, if gentlemen would not be unthrifths? How could gentlemen be unthrifths if their humors — their whims and fancies — were not fed? How should their humors be fed but by white meat and cunning secondings?”

“White meat” is food made from milk, such as cheese.

“White” can mean “having a weak or cowardly character,” and “meat” can mean 1) a prostitute or 2) a penis, or 3) a light-skinned person.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “meat for a person’s master” means “someone or something intended for a person’s betters, esp. as a source of sexual gratification; someone or something too good to be wasted on a person.”

“White” is the lightest color possible, and “light” can mean promiscuous, and so “light meat” may mean the most promiscuous sex partners.

Many gallants visited brothels and contracted syphilis.

“Cunning secondings” are 1) well-prepared second courses, or 2) flattering comments made by yes-men.

Quicksilver continued:

“Well, the city might consider us.

“Suppose that I am going to an ordinary now: The gallants begin to gamble; I carry light gold with me.”

An ordinary is an eating place.

“Light gold” is debased coinage. Gold coins had a circle inscribed on them. If the edges of the coin were clipped so much that the circle was broken, the coin was no longer legal tender.

“Light gold” is also counterfeit money.

Quicksilver continued:

“The gallants call, ‘Cousin Frank, some gold for silver!’ I change, gain by it; the gallants lose the gold and then call, ‘Cousin Frank, lend me some silver.’

“Why —”

Quicksilver had been lending money to gallants.

Touchstone interrupted:



“ — why? I cannot tell.

“Seven score pounds are thou out in the cash, but look to it, I will not be gallanted out of my moneys.”

Quicksilver had been lending Touchstone’s money to the gallants, and the gallants had not been paying Quicksilver back.

Touchstone continued:

“And as for my rising by other men’s fall, God shield and protect me!

“Did I gain my wealth by ordinaries — eating houses? No.

“By exchanging of gold? No. [That is: By lending money at interest, aka usury? No.] By keeping the company of gallants? No. I hired a little shop, fought low, took small gains, kept no debt book [that is, Touchstone gave no credit], garnished and decorated my shop, for want of plate, with good wholesome thrifty sentences, such as these:

“‘Touchstone, keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee.’

“‘Light gains make heavy purses.’

“‘It is good to be merry and wise.’”

To “fight low” is a wrestling term, meaning to attack the legs to overthrow opponents and avoid being overthrown oneself.

Touchstone continued:

“And when I was wived, having something to stick to, I had the horn of suretyship ever before my eyes.”

Hmm. The word “thing” can mean “pudendum.” The word “stick” has another meaning. So does the word “horn.”

Also, however, the “something” could be a dowry.

Touchstone continued:

“You all know the device — the illustration — of the horn, where the young fellow slips in at the butt end and comes squeezed out at the buccal.”

The buccal is the narrow end: the mouthpiece of the horn.

Hmm. “Slips in at the butt end.” Say no more.

The device illustrated the danger of signing or co-signing documents: the danger of guaranteeing that another person’s debt would be paid (by you, if need be), or the danger of not paying one’s own debt.

Because Touchstone was married, he wanted to support his wife financially, and so he worked at his trade of goldsmithing and he avoided co-signing documents that could make him pay others’ debts.

Touchstone continued:

“And I grew up, and, I praise Providence, I bear my brows now as high — I am as important — as the best of my neighbors. But thou — well, look to the accounts; your father’s bond lies for you; seven score pounds are yet in the rear — in arrears.”

Yeah, unpaid debts can be a pain in the butt.

Quicksilver’s father had given his word to pay for Quicksilver’s apprenticeship. The bond — written contract — was deposited where it would be kept safe.

Quicksilver said:

“Why, by God’s eyelid, sir, I have as good and as proper gallants’ words for it [their debt] as any are in London, gentlemen of good phrase, perfect language, surpassingly well-behaved, gallants who wear socks — that is, light shoes

or slippers — and clean linen and call me ‘kind cousin Frank’ and ‘good cousin Frank,’ for they know my father.

“And by God’s eyelid, shall not I trust them? Not trust?”

A page entered. He was looking for Touchstone’s shop.

A page is a boy-servant.

“What do you lack, sir?” Golding said. “What is it you’ll buy, sir?”

Golding, the good apprentice, was on the lookout for possible customers.

Watching Golding, Touchstone said:

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, sir, there’s a youth of another piece. There’s thy fellow apprentice, as good a gentleman born as thou are, nay, and better meant — from a family that is financially better off.

“But does he pump it or racket it? Does he wear expensive pumps or play tennis? Well, if he thrive not, if he outlast not a hundred such crackling bavins — showy lightweights — as thou are, then may God and men neglect industry.”

“Bavins” are “bundles of kindling.”

In 3.2, we read that “rash bavin wits, [are] soon kindled and soon burnt.”

The page had asked Golding about the location of Touchstone’s shop.

Golding now replied, “Here is his shop, and here my master walks.”

“Do you have business with me, boy?” Touchstone asked the page.

“My master, Sir Petronel Flash, recommends his love to you and he will quickly visit you,” the page said.

Touchstone said:

“He comes here to make up the match with my eldest daughter, my wife’s dilling — her darling — whom she longs to call madam. He shall find me unwillingly ready, boy.”

Touchstone was ready to meet Sir Petronel Flash, but he did not approve of a marriage between him and one of his daughters.

The page exited.

Touchstone continued:

“There’s another affliction, too. Just as I have two apprentices, the one of a boundless prodigality, the other of a most hopeful industry, so I have only two daughters, the eldest of a proud ambition and nice — lascivious — wantonness, the other of a modest humility and comely soberness. The one must be ladified, indeed, and she must be attired just to the court cut and long tail.”

The “court cut” is the “court fashion.”

“Cut and long tail” also refers to the tails of dogs and horses: docked and undocked.

The words can also refer to dresses with short or long trains.

“... she must be attired just to the court cut and long tail” may mean that Gertrude thinks that she must be attired like a court lady wearing a gown with a long train.

“Cut” also means “vulva,” and “long tail” means what you think it means.

If “cut” refers to circumcision, then “cut and long tail” may mean that Gertrude will be attracted to *any* man at court and she will dress accordingly to get one or more of them.

Touchstone continued:

“So far is she ill-natured and antipathetic to the place and means of my preferment and fortune — my occupation as a tradesman — that she throws all the contempt and spite that hatred itself can cast upon it.

“Well, a piece of land she has, it was her grandmother’s gift: Let her, and her Sir Petronel, flash out that. But as for my substance, she who scorns me as I am a citizen and tradesman shall never pamper her pride with my industry, shall never use me as men do foxes: Keep themselves warm in the skin and throw the body that bare it to the dunghill.”

Readers will find out later that the land was worth two thousand pounds and produced one hundred pounds of income each year.

“I must go and entertain this Sir Petronel.”

Touchstone then said to his good apprentice:

“Golding, my utmost care’s for thee, and my only trust is in thee. Look to the shop.”

Touchstone then said to his bad apprentice:

“As for you, Master Quicksilver, think of husks, for thy course is running directly to the prodigal son’s hogs’ trough. Husks, sirrah! Work upon that now.”

The prodigal son received his inheritance early, spent it, and was so impoverished that he envied hogs their swill. See Luke 15:11–32.

Touchstone exited.

Quicksilver said:

“By the Virgin Mary, faugh — yuck! — goodman flat cap!”

Merchants wore flat caps.

Quicksilver continued:

“By God’s foot, although I am an apprentice I can give arms — show a coat of arms, aka armorial bearings — and my father’s a justice of the peace by descent, and by God’s blood —”

“Bah, how you swear!” Golding complained.

Quicksilver said:

“By God’s foot, man, I am a gentleman, and I may swear by my pedigree, God’s my life. Sirrah Golding, will thou be ruled by a fool? Turn good fellow [a thief, or a jolly fellow], turn swaggering gallant, and ‘let the welkin roar, and Erebus also.’”

Quicksilver saw a lot of plays and sometimes quoted or misquoted them.

Another literary character who does this is Pistol in Shakespeare’s *2 Henry IV*, who says, “damn them with King Cerberus, / And let the welkin roar” (Act 2, Scene 4).

Cerberus is the three-headed guard dog of the Land of the Dead.

Quicksilver continued:

“Look not westward to the fall of Don Phoebus [the sun], but to the east — eastward ho!

“‘Where radiant beams of lusty Sol appear, and bright Eoüs [Eös, goddess of the dawn] makes the welkin — the sky — clear.’”

“We are both gentlemen, and therefore should be no coxcombs. Let’s be no longer fools to this flat cap Touchstone.

“Eastward, bully [good fellow]! This satin-belly and canvas-backed Touchstone — by God’s life, man, his father was a maltman — a seller of brewers’ malt — and his mother sold gingerbread in Christ Church.”

Merchants wore clothing that had velvet in the front and inexpensive canvas in the back. They also wore flat caps.

“What do you want me to do?” Golding asked.

Quicksilver said:

“Why, do nothing; be like a gentleman, be idle. The curse of man is labor. Wipe thy bum with testons — sixpences — and make ducks and drakes with shillings.”

“Make ducks and drakes with shillings” means to throw shillings and skip them over the water like flat stones: It metaphorically means to waste money.

Quicksilver continued:

“What, eastward ho! Will thou cry, ‘What is it you lack?,’ stand with a bare pate — head — and a dropping — dripping — nose under a wooden penthouse, and yet thou are a gentleman?”

A penthouse is a projecting roof that provides some protection from rain for people in front of a shop.

Golding could still occasionally get wet, or have a cold, and drops of water would fall from his nose.

Quicksilver continued:

“Will thou bear tankards of water to thy master’s house and may thou bear arms? Be ruled by my advice, turn gallant, eastward ho!”

He sang:

“*Ta lirra, lirra, ro.*”

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “talio” as “A requiting of like for like, retaliation.”

It also defines “talion law” as “the principle of exacting compensation, ‘eye for eye, tooth for tooth’; also, the infliction of the same penalty on the accuser who failed to prove his case as would have fallen upon the accused if found guilty.”

Chances are, both Touchstone and Quicksilver believed in talion law: Each believed that the other will get what’s coming to him, and each believed that he himself would be rewarded.

The Latin *rarus*, *-a*, *-um* means “rare, uncommon.”

In Elizabethan English, “rare” can also mean “splendid.”

Prodigals can end up like the Prodigal Son, envying hogs their swill, but their stories can still, but perhaps rarely, have happy endings: The Prodigal Son’s father welcomes him when the son returns. This is a rejection of talion law. This parable celebrates splendid forgiveness.

Quicksilver declaimed:

““Who calls Jeronimo? Speak, here I am.””

The quotation is from Thomas Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* (2.5.4).

Quicksilver then said:



“God’s so, how like a sheep thou look!”

“God’s so” can mean 1) By God’s soul, or 2) catso, aka Italian slang for “penis.”

Quicksilver concluded:

“On my conscience, some cowherd begot thee. Thou Golding of Golding Hall, huh, boy?”

He was mocking Golding and calling him a yokel rather than a gallant.

Golding replied, “Go, you are a prodigal coxcomb — a prodigal fool. Am I a cowherd’s son because I will not turn into a drunken whore-hunting rakehell — rascal — like thyself?”

“Rakehell?” Quicksilver said. “Rakehell?”

Quicksilver attempted to draw his sword, but Golding tripped up his heels and held him.

“Pish! Bah!” Golding said. “In soft terms — the softest words I can use to describe you — you are a cowardly bragging boy. I’ll have you whipped.”

“Whipped?” Quicksilver said. “That’s good, in faith. Untruss me?”

“Untruss” means 1) release, or 2) undo the fastenings that keep one’s breeches up (once his breeches were down, he could be whipped).

Golding said:

“No, thou will undo thyself.”

“Undo” can mean “ruin.”

Golding continued:

“Alas, I behold thee with pity, not with anger. Thou common shot-clog, gull of all companies.”

A “slot-clog” is a fool who is tolerated because he picks up and pays the bill for all.

Golding continued:

“I think I see thee already walking in Moorfields without a cloak, with half a hat, without a band [collar], a doublet [jacket] with three buttons [at least one button is missing], without a girdle, a hose with one point [points were laces that geld up the hose] and no garter, with a cudgel — because you cannot afford a sword — under thine arm, borrowing and begging threepence.”

Quicksilver said:

“Nay, by God’s life, take this and take all.

“If you take my sword, you may as well take everything I have.

“As I am a gentleman born, I’ll be drunk, grow valiant, and beat thee.”

He exited.

Alone, Golding said:

“Go, thou most madly vain, whom nothing can recover — can cure — but that which reclaims atheists and makes great persons sometimes religious: calamity.

“As for my place and life, thus I have read:

“*Whatever some vainer youth may term disgrace,*

“*The gain of honest pains is never base.*

“*From trades, from arts, from valor honor springs;*

*“These three are founts of gentry, yea, of kings.”*

He closed the shop and exited.

— 1.2 —

Gertrude, Mildred, Bettrice, and Poldavy the tailor talked together inside Touchstone’s house. Gertrude was Touchstone’s elder daughter, and Mildred was his younger daughter. Bettrice was a lady’s maid.

Poldavy was holding a pretty gown, a Scotch farthingale [hooped petticoat], and a French fall [flat collar] in his arms. These were items of clothing.

Gertrude was wearing a French head attire [a French hood] and a citizen’s gown. Mildred was sewing; and Bettrice was leading a monkey after her.

In this scene, Gertrude will change her middle-class city attire for courtly dress.

Like Quicksilver, she curses a lot. Quicksilver often quotes short passages from plays, and Gertrude often sings short snatches of bawdy songs.

Gertrude said:

“For the passion of patience, look and see if Sir Petronel approaches, that sweet, that fine, that delicate, that — for love’s sake tell me if he comes.

“Oh, sister Mil, although my father is a low-capped tradesman, yet I must be a lady, and, I praise God, my mother must call me ‘Medam.’”

“Medam” is an affected pronunciation of “madam.”

“Medam” is also “Me damn.”

In other words: “[...] and, I praise God, my mother must call me ‘me damned.’”

Or: “[...] and, I praise God, my mother must tell me that I am damned.”

Or: “[...] and, I praise God, my mother must call me the one who was damned.”

Gertrude continued:

“Is he coming?”

“Off with this gown, for shame’s sake, off with this gown! Don’t let my knight see me in the city fashion by any means.

“Tear it! A pax on it!”

She wanted the gown taken off her quickly, even if it had to be torn off.

The Latin word *pax* means “peace,” and it can mean a depiction of the Crucifixion on a gold or a silver tablet that the priest kisses, and it can mean a kiss of peace, but Gertrude was willing to burn her bridges behind her.

“Pax” is an affected pronunciation of “pox.”

“A pox on it” is an oath.

Gertrude continued:

“Does he come? Tear it off.”

She removed her gown and sang:

“*Thus whilst she sleeps I sorrow for her sake,*” etc.

The title of the song is “Sleep, Wayward Thoughts,” and it is about lustful thoughts.

Mildred, Gertrude’s sister, said, “Lord, sister, with what an immodest impatience and disgraceful scorn do you put off

your city attire! I am sorry to think you imagine to right yourself in wronging that which has made both you and us.”

Gertrude was ashamed that her father made his money as a shopkeeper. It was much more classy to get one’s money income from owning land.

Gertrude said:

“I tell you I cannot endure it. I must be a lady.

“You can wear your city attire: coif [hoodlike cap] with a London licket [latchet, aka string that fastens the coif under the chin], your stammel [red wool] petticoat with two guards [ornamental borders], the buffin [a type of fabric] gown with the tuftaffety [taffeta] cape and the velvet lace.

“I must be a lady, and I will be a lady.

“I like some humors [whims] of the city dames well: to eat cherries [a luxury] only at an angel a pound, good; to dye rich scarlet black, pretty; to line a grogram [a type of fabric] gown clean through with velvet, tolerable. Their pure [clean white] linen, their smocks of three pounds a smock [chemise, undergarment] are to be borne with.

“But your mincing niceries — affected niceties — your taffeta pipkins [small hats], durance [a type of fabric worn by city ladies] petticoats, and silver bodkins [long hair pins] — as God is my life, as I shall be a lady I cannot endure it.

“Has he come yet? Lord, what a long knight it is!”

She sang:

“*And ever she cried, ‘Shoot home!’*”

She then said:

“— and yet I knew one longer —”

She then sang:

*“and ever she cried, ‘Shoot home!’*

*“Fa, la, ly, re, lo, la.”*

“Fa ly” and “Fa lo ly” are both “folly.” “La re” is “lare,” aka a bird, possibly a seagull. “Fa-la” is a kind of madrigal (a song for more than one voice). “Fallow” is a piece of plowed but unseeded land.

Sir Petronel was, according to Gertrude, long overdue.

A “long knight” may be a sexually well-endowed knight.

“Shoot home” means what you think it means.

As will become known, Gertrude is not a virgin, and she is not pregnant.

“Well, sister,” Mildred said, “those who scorn their nest often fly with a sick wing.”

A proverb states, “It is a foul bird that defiles its own nest.”

“Bow-bell!” Gertrude said. “Cockney!”

Cockneys were born within hearing of the bell at St Mary-le-bow. They tended to be lower-class.

Mildred said:

“Where titles presume to thrust before fit means to second them, wealth and respect often grow sullen and will not follow.”

In other words: People who buy titles should first have the means to live in the manner expected of those who have such titles. If they don’t first have those means, they lose wealth, grow poor, and lose respect.

Mildred continued:

“For sure, in this I wish for your sake that I was not speaking the truth.

“*Where ambition of place goes before fitness of birth, contempt and disgrace follow.*”

A proverb stated, “Pride goeth before and shame cometh after.”

Mildred continued:

“I heard a scholar once say that Ulysses, when he counterfeited himself mad, yoked cats and foxes and dogs together to draw his plow, while he followed and sowed salt.”

Ulysses, aka Odysseus, did not want to fight at Troy, so he thought up a trick that he hoped would keep him out of the fighting. He pretended to be insane, and he yoked an ox and an ass to his plow and sowed his fields with salt. A Greek man named Palamedes knew that Ulysses was faking insanity, and he placed Ulysses’ infant son, Telemachus, in front of the plow. If Ulysses were insane, he would kill his son. But, of course, he was faking insanity and he turned the plow aside and did not kill his son. Ulysses then had to go to Troy and fight. He fought well, and he thought up the idea of the Trojan Horse: the trick that led to the sack of Troy.

The team that pulls a plow ought to consist of evenly matched animals. An ox is stronger than an ass.

Mildred continued:

“But to be sure, I judge truly mad those who yoke citizens and courtiers, tradesmen and soldiers, a goldsmith’s daughter and a knight. Well, sister, pray to God that my father does not sow salt, too.”

Mildred believed that people ought to marry within their social class.

Gertrude said:

“Alas, poor Mil! When I am a lady, I’ll pray for thee yet, in faith, and I’ll vouchsafe to call thee sister Mil still, for although thou are not likely to be a lady as I am, yet to be sure thou are a creature of God’s making, and may perhaps be saved as soon as I.”

As a prefix, “mil” can be a thousandth, or a thousand. A milliliter is one-thousandth of a liter, but a millennium is a thousand years. A “mil” can be small or big, low or high.

Currently, Gertrude regarded Mil — Mildred — as a lowly person.

She then asked about Sir Petronel:

“Does he come?”

She then sang:

*“And ever and anon she doubled in her song.”*

“Double” means to repeat a note but in a different octave.

Another kind of doubling is coupling.

Gertrude then said:

“Now lady’s my comfort, what a profane ape’s here! What a profane fool!”

“Now lady’s my comfort” means “The Virgin Mary’s my comfort.”

Gertrude then said:

“Tailor, Poldavy, please fit it! Fit it! Is this a right Scot? Does the farthingale clip close and bear up round?”

The farthingale was an item of clothing that fit tightly around a woman’s waist. It extended outward from the waist, and



the skirt hung from it. Because the farthingale extended outward from the waist, women could not let their arms and hands freely hang down.

“Bear up round” is something that erect penises do.

Poldavy the tailor said, “Fine and stiffly, in faith. It will keep your thighs so cool and make your waist so small!”

A woman would find it difficult to have sex while wearing a farthingale. This would help keep her waist small.

Poldavy the tailor continued:

“Here was a fault in your body, but I have supplied the defect with the effect of my steel instrument, which, although it has just one eye, can see to rectify the imperfection of the proportion.”

A “fault” is 1) a defect, or 2) a vagina.

A “steel instrument” with one eye is 1) a needle, or 2) an erect penis.

He put the farthingale and new gown on her.

Gertrude said:

“Most edifying tailor! I declare, you tailors are most sanctified members and make many crooked things go upright. How must I bear my hands?”

The Puritans used the word “sanctified” for saintly and the word “crooked” for sinful.

Hmm. “Members.” “Things go upright.” Say no more.

She continued:

“Light? Light?”

Poldavy replied:

“Oh, aye, now you are in the lady fashion you must do all things light.

“Tread light, light. Aye, and fall so; that’s the court amble.”

The word “light” means 1) gracefully, or 2) wantonly.

A lady with light heels is a promiscuous lady: one whose heels are easily spread and raised into the air. The lady would fall backward into the missionary position.

Gertrude skipped about the stage and asked, “Has the court never a trot?”

“No, but it has a false gallop, lady,” Poldavy said.

The courtiers, because of their bad characters and many seductions, are galloping toward eternal damnation.

Gertrude sang, “*And if she will not go to bed —*”

Bettrice looked up and said, “The knight’s come, indeed.”

Sir Petronel, Master Touchstone, Mistress Touchstone, and Golding entered the scene.

Gertrude said:

“Has my knight come?”

“Oh, the lord, my band! My collar!

“Sister, do my cheeks look well? Give me a little box on the ear — a little slap on the cheek — so that I may seem to blush.

“Now, now! So, there, there, there! Here he is.

“Oh, my dearest delight! Lord, lord, and how does my knight?”

She kissed him.

Shocking, that, in this society.

Her father, Touchstone, said, “Bah, act with more modesty!”

“Modesty!” Gertrude said. “Why, I am no citizen now. Modesty! Am I not to be married? You would do best to keep me modest now I am to be a lady.”

Her last sentence was sarcastic, but events will reveal its truth.

“Boldness is good fashion, and court-like,” Sir Petronel said.

Gertrude said:

“Aye, in a country lady — a lady of the county aristocracy — I hope it is, as I shall be.”

Knowing Gertrude, she wanted to be a member of the county aristocracy.

Gertrude then asked:

“And how does it happen that you came no sooner, knight?”

Sir Petronel said:

“Indeed, I was so entertained in the progress with one Count Epernoum, a Welsh knight.”

A “progress” is a visit of the royal court to places in the countryside.

Sir Petronel continued:

“We had a match at the game of balloon, too, with my Lord Whachum, for four crowns.”

Sir Epernaum was not likely to exist, and Sir Petronel was unlikely to have played the game of balloon he mentioned.

Epernaum, however, resembles the words “Keep her now” — ’eep ’er nau — and “Capernaum,” and it has the same number of syllables as “Petronel.”

Sir Petronel has come to marry Gertrude and therefore be able to keep her now — that is, after the wedding.

Or “’eep ’er nau” could mean “Keep her nah.” Touchstone would very much prefer that Gertrude not marry Sir Petronel.

Capernaum is an ancient fishing village that was located on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Capernaum was humble, but knights are often proud. Knights can be big balls of wind.

Sir Petronel and Epernaum supposedly played a game with a big ball of wind.

The game of balloon was played with a large, inflated leather ball that players hit with their arms, which were protected with a wooden armguard.

Lord Whachum is What-You-Call-Him.

“At baboon?” Gertrude said, mishearing the word “balloon.”  
“Jesu! You and I will play at baboon in the country, knight.”

In this society, baboons had a reputation for lechery.

The game of baboon can lead to a baby-boon and a baby-boom.

“Oh, sweet lady, it is a strong play with the arm,” Sir Petronel said.

Gertrude said:

“With arm, or leg, or any other member, if it be a court sport.”

Hmm. “Any other member.” Say no more.

She then asked:

“And when shall we be married, my knight?”

“I come now to consummate it, if your father may call a poor knight his son-in-law,” Sir Petronel said.

Touchstone said:

“Sir, you have come.”

He did NOT say, “Sir, you are welcome.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, as well as in our own, the verb “come” can mean “ejaculate.”

He continued:

“What is not mine to keep, I must not be sorry to forego. Land worth a hundred pounds in annual rent her grandmother left her; it is yours. She herself (as her mother’s gift) is yours.

“But if you expect anything from me, know, my hand and my eyes open together; I do not give blindly.

“Work upon that now.”

“Sir, you don’t mistrust my means, do you?” Sir Petronel said. “I am a knight.”

Knights tended to have means. They needed at least to own a horse, weapons, and armor.

“Sir, sir, what I don’t know, you will give me permission to say I am ignorant of,” Touchstone said.

Mrs. Touchstone said:

“Yes, you act ignorant that he is a knight!”

She was happy that a knight wanted to marry Gertrude, and she wanted her husband to also be happy about that.

She continued:

“I know where he had money to pay the gentlemen ushers and the heralds their fees.

“Aye, that he is a knight, and so might you have been, too, if you had been anything else than an ass, as well as some of your neighbors.

“If I thought you would not have been knighted, as I am an honest woman I would have dubbed you myself. I praise God I have wherewithal.”

King James I often made grants of knighthood in return for money. This was a scandal. Sir Petronel had bought his knighthood.

To “dub” someone is to give that person a new title. Touchstone’s wife, if she thought that he would decline to become a knight, could dub him with the title of cuckold. As a woman, she has the wherewithal to do it.

But she could buy for him the title of knight, perhaps, if it is true that she has the wherewithal — the independent income to do it. Later, however, she complains about not being able to get money for Gertrude.

Mrs. Touchstone then said:

“But as for you, daughter —”

“Aye, mother,” Gertrude said. “I must be a lady tomorrow, and by your leave, mother — I speak it not without my duty to you, but only in the right of my husband — I must take place of you, mother.”

By marrying a knight, Gertrude would rank socially higher than her mother. She would take precedence of her mother:

She would do such things as enter a room first. Society people entered rooms in order of social standing.

“That you shall, lady-daughter, and have a coach as well as I, too,” Mrs. Touchstone said.

“Yes, mother,” Gertrude said. “But by your leave, mother — I speak it not without my duty that I owe to you, but only in my husband’s right — my coach horses must take the wall of your coach horses.”

To “take the wall” means to “take the best position.” A person walking at the side of a street would walk close to the wall to avoid being splashed with mud or dirty water from the street and to avoid the muck in the gutter. When two people going in opposite directions passed each other, the higher-ranking person would take the wall.

Horses tend to be unaware of such societal niceties, but these are court horses.

Touchstone said:

“Come, come, the day — the sun — grows low, it is supper time. Use my house; the wedding solemnity is at my wife’s cost. Thank me for nothing but my willing blessing, for — I cannot feign and lie — my hopes are faint.

“And sir, respect my daughter; she has refused for you wealthy and honest — honorable — matches, known good men, well monied, better traded [better established in trade, and with better skills], and best reputed.”

Gertrude said:

“Body of truth, chitizens, chitizens!”

She was mocking citizens.

“Chitizens” rhymes with “shitizens.”

She continued:

“Sweet knight, as soon as ever we are married, take me to thy mercy out of this miserable chitty; immediately carry me out of the scent of Newcastle coal and the hearing of Bow-bell. I beseech thee, down with me, for God’s sake!”

She wanted him to take her down into the country to a better-smelling home and to lay her down in a bed and sleep with her — and to stay awake for a while before sleeping.

Touchstone said:

“Well, daughter, I have read that old wit who sings:

*“The greatest rivers flow from little springs.*

*“Though thou art full, scorn not thy means at first;*

*“He that’s most drunk may soonest be athirst.”*

“Work upon that now!”

Everyone except Touchstone, Mildred, and Golding exited.

Touchstone said:

“No, no; yonder stand my hopes.”

He was referring to his other daughter, Mildred, and to Golding.

He then said:

“Mildred, come hither, daughter. And how do you approve of your sister’s fashion? How do you fancy her choice? What do thou think?”

“I hope, as a sister, that all is and will be well,” Mildred said.

“Nay, but, nay, but, how do thou like her behavior and her humor?” Touchstone said. “Speak freely.”



“I am loath to speak ill, and yet — I am sorry about this — I cannot speak well,” Mildred replied.

Touchstone said:

“Well, very good. As I would wish, a modest answer.”

He then said:

“Golding, come hither; hither, Golding.”

Golding stepped forward.

Touchstone then said:

“How do thou like the knight, Sir Flash? Doesn’t he look big and self-important? How do thou like the elephant? He says he has a castle in the country.”

“Pray to heaven that the elephant carry not his castle on his back,” Golding said.

In other words, the elephant’s wealth may be solely in his clothes. The elephant — a symbol of pretensions to greatness — is the knight: Sir Petronel.

In India, war elephants sometimes carried a fortification on their back.

“Before heaven, very well said!” Touchstone said. “But seriously, how do thou repute him?”

“The best thing I can say about him is, I don’t know him,” Golding said.

Some people are well worth not knowing.

Touchstone said:

“Ha, Golding! I commend thee, I approve thee, and I will make it appear and make it apparent that my affection is strong to thee.

“My wife has her humor, and I will have mine.

“Do thou see my daughter here? She is not fair, well-favored and pretty, or so — her beauty is only indifferent — which modest measure of beauty shall not make it thy only work to watch her, nor sufficient mischance to suspect her.”

In other words: Mildred was not so pretty that men were constantly trying to seduce her, nor was she so ugly that she was forced to constantly look to find a lover.

Touchstone continued:

“Thou are towardly and outgoing, and she is modest and bashful; thou are provident, and she is careful.”

“Provident” means “providing for the future,” and “careful” means “being frugal now.”

Touchstone continued:

“She’s now mine. Give me thy hand; she’s now thine.

“Work upon that now!”

A man and a woman could join hands and become engaged in a ceremony called hand-fasting.

Holding hands fastened the couple together. Holding hands confirmed the agreement to marry.

“Sir, as your son-in-law I honor you, and as your servant I obey you,” Golding said.

Touchstone said:

“Do thou say so?”

He then said:

“Come here, Mildred.”

She came.

Her father then said:

“Do you see yonder fellow? He is a gentleman, although he is my apprentice, and he has somewhat to take to — he has some financial resources and some personal qualities worth having.

“He is a youth of good hope and good promise, well friended and related to people with good connections, and he is well parted — he is a man of skill and good qualities. Are you mine? You are his.

“Work you upon that now!”

“Sir, I am all yours,” Mildred said. “Your body gave me life, and your care and love gave me happiness of life. Let your virtue still direct it, for to your wisdom I wholly dispose myself.”

Touchstone said:

“Do thou say so? Be you two better acquainted.”

He then said to Golding:

“Lip her, lip her, knave! Kiss her!”

Golding kissed Mildred.

Touchstone then said:

“So, shut up shop; let’s go in. We must make holiday.”

Golding and Mildred exited.

Alone, Touchstone said to himself:

“This match shall go on, for I intend to find out and test and prove which thrives the best, the mean and lowly love, or the lofty love. I will find out and test and prove whether fit wedlock vowed between like and like, or prouder hopes,

which daringly overstrike their place and means, thrives the best.”

A proverb stated, “Like blood, like good, like age make the happiest marriage.”

A marriage between Golding and Mildred was a marriage of social equals and a marriage of people with similar good personal qualities and similar ages.

A marriage between Sir Petronel and Gertrude was a marriage based on social climbing.

Touchstone said:

“It is honest time’s expense when seeming lightness bears a moral sense.”

Gertrude’s apparent lightness is likely to give readers a moral lesson. This is a good use of time.

Touchstone concluded:

“Work upon that now!”

## ACT 2 (*Eastward Ho!*)

### — 2.1 —

The time was morning. The previous day, Sir Petronel and Gertrude had been married.

Outside his shop, Touchstone called, “Quicksilver! Master Francis Quicksilver! Master Quicksilver!”

Quicksilver, who was drunk and hiccupping, walked over to him and said, “Here, sir. (Hic!)”

Touchstone said:

“So, sir, nothing but flat Master Quicksilver, without any familiar addition, will fetch you.”

“Master Quicksilver” was formal address.

“Francis” in “Master Francis Quicksilver” was a familiar addition.

Touchstone then asked:

“Will you truss my points, sir?”

He wanted Quicksilver to help him tie his hose to his doublet.

A doublet is a jacket.

Quicksilver said, “Aye, indeed. (Hic!)”

Quicksilver tied Touchstone’s points, aka laces.

“How are you now, sir?” Touchstone asked. “The drunken hiccup so soon this morning?”

“It is only the coldness of my stomach, indeed,” Quicksilver said.

In this society, doctors believed that a cold stomach caused hiccups, one cure for which was drinking wine.

Touchstone said:

“What! Have you the cause natural for it? You’re a very learned drunkard. I believe I shall miss some of my silver spoons with your learning.”

Quicksilver could steal and then sell Touchstone’s silver spoons to get money to spend in taverns.

Touchstone continued:

“The nuptial night will not moisten your throat sufficiently, but the morning likewise must rain her dews into your gluttonous weasand.”

A weasand is a throat.

“If it shall please you, sir, we did but drink (hic!) to the coming off of the knightly bridegroom,” Quicksilver said.

“To the coming off of him?” Touchstone said.

“Aye, indeed,” Quicksilver said. “We drunk to his coming on (hic!) when we went to bed, and now that we are up, we must drink to his coming off. For that’s the chief honor of a soldier, sir, and therefore we must drink so much the more to it, indeed. (Hic!)”

In this society, family and friends would escort the bride and groom to their bedroom and often would cause music to be played the next morning to awaken them.

The chief honor of a soldier is to come off victoriously from the battlefield.

The phrases “coming on” and “coming off” have sexual overtones and undertones.

“A very capital reason,” Touchstone said. “So that you go to bed late and rise early to commit drunkenness? You fulfill the scripture very sufficient wickedly, indeed.”

Isaiah 5:11 states, “*Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!*” (King James Version).

“The knight’s men, indeed, are still on their knees at it (hic!), and because it is for your credit, sir, I would be loath to flinch,” Quicksilver said.

The knight’s men were kneeling as they proposed toasts.

Quicksilver, to honor Touchstone, would not flinch while drinking a toast but would instead drain the cup.

“I pray, sir, even to them again then,” Touchstone said. “You’re one of the separated crew, one of my wife’s faction, and my young lady’s, with whom and with their great match I will have nothing to do.”

Touchstone’s house was divided into two factions. In one faction were Mrs. Touchstone and Gertrude and Sir Petronel, and in the other faction were Touchstone and Mildred and Golding.

“So, sir,” Quicksilver said. “Now I will go keep my (hic!) credit with them, if it shall please you, sir.”

“In any case, sir, lay one cup of sack more on your cold stomach, I implore you,” Touchstone said.

“Yes, indeed,” Quicksilver said.

He exited.

Touchstone said:

“This is for my credit! Servants always maintain drunkenness in their master’s house ‘for their master’s credit.’ It is a good idle serving-man’s reason.”

The wedding of a daughter was an occasion to celebrate, and so servants celebrated it for the master’s honor.

Touchstone continued:

“I thank Time the night is past; I never stayed awake to such cost. I think we have stowed more sorts of flesh in our bellies than ever Noah’s ark received.”

During the Great Flood, Noah and his family survived in their ark, which they had filled with two — male and female — of every kind of animal.

“And as for wine, why, my house turns giddy with it, and there is more noise in it than at a water conduit, aka public fountain.”

Servants got water from conduits and carried the water to their employers and their employers’ families. Water conduits were a place of much gossip.

Touchstone sighed and said:

“Even beasts condemn our gluttony. Well, it is our city’s fault, which, because we commit seldom, we commit the more sinfully. We lose no time in our sensuality, but we make amends for it.”

He was using “commit” in the sense of “commit one of the Seven Deadly Sins.” Think of Exodus 20:14: “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (King James Version).

The Seven Deadly Sins are lust, gluttony, avarice, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride. These sins are deadly because they can “kill” the soul — the divine spirit — that is present in each human being.



Touchstone continued:

“Oh, that we would do the same in virtue negligence and religious negligence!”

In other words: We don't get drunk and overeat often, but when we do, we really get drunk and we really overeat. By “we” is meant “Londoners.”

Also in other words: It's a pity that we don't greatly indulge in being virtuous and religious after a period during which we neglect virtue and religion.

Golding and Mildred opened the shop and sat on either side of the stall, which was a table on which were wares for sale.

Touchstone said about them:

“But see, here are all the sober parcels — sober individuals — my house can show.

“I'll eavesdrop and hear what thoughts they utter this morning.”

He walked to the side, where he could not be easily seen.

Golding said to Mildred, “But is it possible that you, seeing your sister preferred to the bed of a knight — that is, advanced in social class by being married to a knight — should contain and confine your affections in the arms of an apprentice?”

Mildred replied, “I had rather make up the garment of my affections in some of the same piece than like a fool wear gowns of two colors or mix sackcloth with satin.”

Mildred preferred to marry someone of her own social status. She felt that marrying above her social class was like wearing a coat made of a lower-class material such as sackcloth and a higher-class material such as satin. Jesters

— Fools — wore clothing made of different colors and of different pieces of cloth.

Leviticus 19:19 states, “*Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee*” (King James Version).

Golding said, “And do the costly garments — the title and fame of a lady, the fashion, and the observation and reverence [deference and respect] proper to such preferment — no more inflame you than such convenience [small comforts] as my poor means and industry can offer to your virtues?”

In other words: Don’t you prefer the luxuries of the higher social classes to the small comforts that I can give you?

Mildred answered:

“I have observed that the bridle given to those violent flatteries of fortune is seldom recovered. They bear one headlong in desire from one novelty to another, and where those ranging appetites reign, there is always more passion than reason; no support and no restraint, and so no happiness.

“These hasty advancements are not natural. Nature has given us legs to walk to our objects, not wings to fly to them.”

In other words: People who desire rapid social advancement are driven more by strongly felt desires than by reason, which is needed to control desires.

In Plato’s *Phaedrus*, 253ff. appears the allegory of the chariot, which represents Humankind’s tripartite soul. A charioteer drives a chariot drawn by two horses, which represent passions, aka desires. The white horse represents positive desires, such as the desire to achieve honor. The

dark horse represents negative desires, such as the desire for drunkenness. The charioteer represents reason, which is needed to control the desires.

A man may desire to become King, but if his desires are not restrained by reason, he could attempt to become the new King by assassinating the old King. This would be a mistake. Ask Macbeth.

Golding said:

“How dear an object you are to my desires I cannot express, with whose fruition, if my master’s absolute consent and yours would grant me, I should be absolutely happy.

“And although it would be a grace so far beyond my merit that I should blush with unworthiness to receive it, yet thus far both my love and my means shall assure your requital: You shall want nothing fit for your birth and education — what increase of wealth and advancement the honest and orderly industry and skill of our trade will afford to any person, I don’t doubt will be aspired by me; I will forever make your contentment the end of my endeavors; I will love you above all; and only your grief shall be my misery, and your delight, my felicity.”

Touchstone said to himself:

“Work upon that now!

“By my hopes, he woos honestly and orderly; he shall be the anchor of my hopes. Look, see the ill-yoked monster, his fellow.”

Quicksilver entered the scene. He was drunk, his laces were untied, he was wearing the flat cap of a tradesman, and he had a towel around his neck.

Touchstone called Quicksilver unyoked because the laces of his clothing were not fastened, and because he was not using reason to control his desires.

Quicksilver said:

“Eastward ho!

*“Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia!”*

He was quoting Christopher Marlowe’s *2 Tamburlaine*, 4.3.1.

“Drunk now downright, on my fidelity!” Touchstone said to himself.

Quicksilver said, “(Hic!) Pulldo, pulldo! ‘Showse,’ quoth the caliver.”

“Pull dough” means “knead dough so that it will rise.”

Pulling on a soft, doughy penis can also make it rise.

“Showse” is a portmanteau word joining “shoot” and “owse,” aka “ooze.”

A penis can shoot a kind of ooze.

A caliver is a light gun and shooting a gun can be compared to ejaculation.

There’s a reason why a British punk rock band named themselves The Sex Pistols.

“Bah, fellow Quicksilver, what a pickle you are in!” Golding said.

Quicksilver said:

“Pickle? Pickle in thy throat!

“Zounds, pickle? Wa ha ho!”

Quicksilver was drunk because he was celebrating the marriage of Gertrude and Sir Petronel.

“Pickle in thy throat!” may be a reference to fellatio.

“Zounds” means “By God’s wounds.”

“Wa ha ho!” is the cry of a falconer.

Quicksilver said:

“Good morning, Knight Petronel.

“G’morning, lady goldsmith.”

Quicksilver was so drunk that he thought he was talking to Sir Petronel and to Gertrude.

“Come off, knight, with a counterbuff, for the honor of knighthood.”

A counterbuff is a counter-blow. When a knight was struck by another person, the knight would lose honor if he did not return the blow.

To a soldier, to “come off” meant to leave the field of battle.

To a lover, to “come off” meant to get off (from on top of) the loved one.

If oral sex by Gertrude can be considered a strike, aka blow, in a battle, the counter-blow would be for Sir Petronel to perform oral sex on her.

Wedding nights can be a comic battle in which the participants compete in giving each other sirrahsexual pleasure.

“Why, how are you now, sir?” Golding asked. “Do you know where you are?”

“Where I am?” Quicksilver said. “Why, by God’s blood, you jolthead, where I am?”

A “jolthead” is a blockhead.

Golding said, “Go to! Go to! Come! Come! For shame, go to bed and sleep out this immodesty — this lack of moderation; thou shame both my master and his house.”

Quicksilver said:

“Shame? What shame? I thought thou would show thy bringing up. If thou were a gentleman as I am, thou would think it no shame to be drunk. Lend me some money; save my credit.”

“Credit” can mean reputation.

Quicksilver continued:

“I must dine with the serving-men and their wives — and their wives, sirrah!”

Quicksilver was the clod-pate: the fool who was tolerated because he picked up the check and paid for all.

“Dine with who you will,” Golding said. “I’ll not lend thee threepence.”

Quicksilver said:

“By God’s foot, lend me some money.

*“Hast thou not Hiren here?”*

“Hiren” is a character in George Peele’s lost play *The Turkish Mahomet and Hiren the Fair Greek*.

The word also means “hirin’,” aka “hiring or employment.” Yes, Golding had a job, and therefore he must have money that he could lend Quicksilver.

Touchstone came forward and asked, “Why, how now, sirrah? What vein’s this, huh? What style of speech is this? What mood is this?”

Quicksilver quoted a line from another play:

“*Who cries on murder? Lady, was it you?*”

This is a line from George Chapman’s *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, 9.49.

Quicksilver continued:

“How does our master?”

“I request thee, cry, ‘Eastward ho!’”

“Sirrah, sirrah, you’re past your hiccup now,” Touchstone said. “I see you’re drunk.”

“It is for your credit, master,” Quicksilver said.

“And I hear you keep a whore in town,” Touchstone said.

“It is for your credit, master,” Quicksilver said.

This kind of credit was money Quicksilver took from Touchstone to support her.

“And what you are out in cash — what you lack in cash — I know,” Touchstone said.

“So do I,” Quicksilver said. “My father’s a gentleman; work upon that now! Eastward ho!”

Touchstone replied:

“Sir, ‘Eastward, ho!’ will make you go ‘Westward, ho!’”

East of Goldsmiths’ Row was the Wood Street Counter.

West of the city of London was Tyburn, famous for its gallows.

Touchstone continued:

“I will no longer dishonest” — he meant ‘dishonor’ — “my house nor endanger my stock — my property — with your license. There, sir, there’s your indenture.”

He handed Quicksilver a document.

By giving Quicksilver his contract of indenture, Touchstone was formally firing him.

Touchstone continued:

“All your apparel — that I must know — is on your back, and from this time my door is shut to you. From me be free, but for other freedom and the moneys you have wasted, ‘Eastward ho!’ shall not serve you.”

Touchstone knew about some of Quicksilver’s clothing: the clothing that Touchstone was obligated to give his apprentice. But Quicksilver had other clothing, as shown by his pumps in 1.1.

Apprentices who completed their apprenticeships were given certain freedoms that Quicksilver would not now get because he was fired.

Quicksilver said:

“Am I free of my fetters? Rent [Wages], fly with a duck in thy mouth!”

The phrase “to come home with a duck in the mouth” meant “to make a profit.”

Quicksilver had lost his employment, and therefore he had lost his rent (wages) and his board (food, such as duck), which Touchstone paid for. His wages and room and board were flying away from him.

Quicksilver continued:



“And now I tell thee, Touchstone —”

Normally, he would call Touchstone “Master Touchstone.”

“Good sir,” Touchstone began.

Quicksilver recited a line from a play: “*When this eternal substance of my soul —*”

“Well said and well done,” Touchstone said. “Change your gold ends for your play ends.”

In other words: Instead of working as a goldsmith, go ahead and quote fragments of lines from the plays you love so much.

Also in other words: Exchange bits of gold for bits of plays.

“Gold ends” are fragments of gold.

Quicksilver continued: “*Did live imprisoned in my wanton flesh —*”

“What then, sir?” Touchstone asked.

The next line was this:

“*Each in their function serving other’s need,*”

Quicksilver skipped that line and recited:

“*I was a courtier in the Spanish court,*

“*And Don Andrea was my name.*”

The lines Quicksilver had recited were adapted from Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, 1.1.1-2, 4-5. He had skipped line 3. He did not want to serve the need of Touchstone, and Touchstone did not want to serve the need of Quicksilver.

“Good master Don Andrea, will you march?” Touchstone asked.

“Sweet Touchstone, will you lend me two shillings?” Quicksilver asked.

“Not a penny,” Touchstone said.

Quicksilver said:

“Not a penny?”

“I have friends, and I have acquaintance. I will piss at thy shop posts and throw rotten eggs at thy sign.

“Work upon that now!”

Staggering, he exited.

Touchstone then said to Golding:

“Now, sirrah, you! Listen, you! You shall serve me no more neither, not an hour longer.”

“What do you mean, sir?” Golding asked.

Touchstone said:

“I mean to give thee thy freedom, and with thy freedom my daughter, and with my daughter a father’s love. And with all these, I will give thee such a marriage portion — a dowry — as shall make Knight Petronel himself envy thee.

“You’re both agreed, are you not?”

Golding would no longer be an apprentice.

Golding was now a journeyman — a skilled worker — in his profession of goldsmithing. In time, he might become a master.

With the dowry, Golding and Mildred could begin their life together.

Golding and Mildred knelt and said, “With all submission, both of thanks and duty.”

Touchstone took their hands and helped them rise to their feet, and then he said:

“Well, then, may the great power of heaven bless and confirm you!

“And, Golding, so that my love to thee may not show less than my wife’s love to my eldest daughter, thy marriage feast shall equal the knight’s and hers.”

Golding said:

“Let me beseech you, no, sir. The superfluity and cold meat left at their nuptials will with bounty furnish ours.”

In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* 1.2.180-1, appear these words:

*“Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats*

*“Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.”*

Golding continued:

“The grossest prodigality is superfluous cost of the belly.”

Gluttony is one of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Golding continued:

“Nor would I wish any invitement of statesmen and dignitaries or friends; only your reverend presence and witness shall sufficiently grace and confirm us.”

Touchstone replied:

“Son to my own bosom, take her and my blessing!”

He then said about Gertrude:

“The nice fondling, my lady sir-reverence, that I must not now presume to call daughter, is so ravished with desire to hansel — to begin using — her new coach and see her

knight's eastward castle that the next morning will sweat with her busy setting forth."

A "fondling" is a little fool.

"Sir-reverence" means "saving your reverence." It is an apology for vulgar language (which Gertrude used frequently). "Sir-reverence" also meant "excrement."

Touchstone continued:

"Away she and her mother will go, and while their preparation is making, we ourselves, with some two or three other friends, will consummate the humble match we have in God's name concluded."

Golding and Mildred exited.

Alone, Touchstone said to himself:

"It is to my wish, for I have often read

*"Fit birth, fit age, keeps long a quiet bed.*

*"It is to my wish, for tradesmen, well it is known,*

*"Get with more ease than gentry keeps his own."*

The gentry — at least the gallants Quicksilver spent time with — tended to be spendthrifts; the tradesmen tended to be frugal. Lack of money problems often leads to better sleep.

He exited.

## — 2.2 —

Alone, Security, an elderly usurer and bawd to Frank Quicksilver, talked to himself outside his house:

"My privy — intimate and familiar — guest, lusty and vigorous Quicksilver, has drunk too deep of the bride-bowl, but with a little sleep he has much recovered and I think is

making himself ready to be drunk in a gallanter likeness. He is ready to get drunk like a gallant.”

A bride-bowl was a large cup of alcoholic drink passed around to wedding guests.

Security continued:

“My house is, as it were, the cave where the young outlaw hoards the stolen vails — the stolen profits — of his occupation; and here, when he will revel and party in his prodigal similitude and similarity, he retires to his trunks and — I may say softly — his punks.”

Punks are prostitutes.

Security continued:

“He dares trust me with the keeping of both, for I am security itself; my name is Security, the famous usurer.”

Quicksilver entered the scene, wearing his apprentice’s coat and cap and his gallant’s breeches and stockings, and pulling on his garters.

Quicksilver’s top half was appareled like an apprentice, and his bottom half was appareled like a gallant.

Quicksilver said:

“Come, old Security, thou father of destruction.”

The Devil is the father of lies. As a usurer, Security causes destruction for those who cannot pay their debts.

Quicksilver continued:

“The indented sheepskin is burned wherein I was wrapped and confined, and I am now loose to get more children of perdition into thy usurious bonds.”

Documents such as contracts of indenture were written on sheepskin.

The sheepskin was a kind of disguise for Quicksilver. As an apprentice, he encouraged gallants to gamble and lose money, thus making them prey for Security. Quicksilver had been a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Although Quicksilver was no longer an apprentice, he still intended to profit from other people's vices.

Quicksilver continued:

“Thou feed my lechery, and I feed thy covetousness; thou are pandar to me for my wench, and I am pandar to thee for thy cozenages and cheats.

“‘Ka me, ka thee’ runs through court and country.”

“‘Ka me, ka thee’ means ‘Help me, and I’ll help you,’ or ‘You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch your back,’ or ‘One good turn deserves another.’”

Considering the moral characters of these two characters, readers may want to add, “One bad deed deserves another.”

Security replied:

“Well said, my subtle Quicksilver. These K’s open the doors to all this world’s felicity; the dullest forehead — brain — sees it.”

The word “keys” was pronounced “kays.”

Security continued:

“Let not master courtier think he carries all the knavery on his shoulders. I have known poor Hob in the country, who has worn hobnails on his shoes, have as much villainy in his head as he who wears gold buttons in his cap.”

“Hob” was a stereotypical name for a rustic.

“Why, man, it is the London highway to thrift — the quickest way to profit,” Quicksilver said. “If virtue would be used, it is used just as a scrap — just as bait — to the net of villainy. They who use virtue simply and sincerely, thrive simply and poorly, I promise. Weight and fashion make goldsmiths cuckolds.”

Goldsmiths became cuckolds — men with unfaithful wives — because so much of their time was spent making money: weighing gold and fashioning it into jewelry or other objects.

According to Quicksilver, honest goldsmiths get rich slowly through hard work. If they were to get rich fast through villainy, their wives would be faithful.

Sindefy, Frank Quicksilver’s punk and lover, entered the scene, carrying Quicksilver’s doublet (jacket), cloak, rapier, and dagger. These were fine items of clothing that were worn by a gallant, not by an apprentice.

“Here, sir, put off the other half of your apprenticeship,” Sindefy said. “Take off your apprentice’s hat and cloak.”

Quicksilver said:

“Well said, sweet Sin! Bring forth my bravery: my finery. Now let my trunks shoot forth their silks concealed. I now am free and now will justify my trunks and punks.”

Trunks can be 1) chests for storing such things as clothing, or 2) trunk-hose.

He would now acknowledge his lover and his fine clothing.

These were things that an apprentice was not supposed to have or be able to afford.

Quicksilver continued:

“Avaunt — go! — dull flat cap, then! *Via* — go! — the curtain that shadowed Borgia!”

He threw his apprentice’s hat and cloak on the ground.

Cesare Borgia (1475-1507) was known for his ability to disguise himself.

Quicksilver continued:

“There lie, thou husk of my envassaed state.

“I, Samson now, have burst the Philistines’ bands and in thy lap, my lovely Delilah, I’ll lie and snore out my enfranchised state.”

“Bands” are 1) bonds (contracts), or 2) shackles and fetters.

Judges 16 tells the story of Samson and Delilah. She betrayed him by cutting his long hair, which (the hair) was the source of his strength.

Quicksilver dressed himself as a gallant, complete with rapier and dagger.

Gallants followed the then-current style of fighting duels with just a rapier and dagger — no shield.

He then sang:

*“When Samson was a tall [brave] young man*

*“His power and strength increasèd then.”*

Quicksilver then said:

“He sold no more, neither cup, nor can, but did them all despise.

“Old Touchstone, now write to thy friends for one to sell thy base gold ends.

“Quicksilver now no more thee attends, Touchstone.”



He then asked Security, “But Dad, have thou seen my running — racing — gelding dressed today?”

Quicksilver was also not supposed to have enough money to own a racing horse.

Security was not Frank Quicksilver’s biological father. “Dad” was simply an informal way to address an older man.

The word “dressed” can mean 1) groomed, or 2) prepared for cooking.

“That I have, Frank,” Security said. “The ostler of the Cock dressed him for a breakfast.”

An ostler, aka hostler, was a person who took care of horses.

The Cock was an inn.

“What, did he eat him?” Quicksilver asked.

“No, but he ate his breakfast for dressing him, and so dressed him for breakfast,” Security said.

The ostler had earned his breakfast by dressing, aka grooming, Quicksilver’s horse. That is how the ostler made his living.

Quicksilver said:

“Oh, witty age, where age is young in wit,

“And all youth’s words have greybeards full of it!”

“But, alas, Frank, how will all this lifestyle be maintained now?” Sindefy asked Quicksilver. “Your position as an apprentice maintained it before.”

Quicksilver replied:

“Why, and I maintained my place. I’ll go to the court — another manner of place for maintenance, I hope, than the silly city.

“I heard my father say, I heard my mother sing, an old song and a true:

“*Thou art a she-fool, and know’st*

“*Not what belongs to our male wisdom.*”

“I shall be a merchant, indeed! Trust my estate in a wooden trough as he does? What are these ships but tennis balls for the winds to play with? Tossed from one wave to another, now under line and low down, now over the house and high up; sometimes hit brick-walled against a rock, so that the guts fly out again; sometimes struck under the wide hazard, and farewell Master Merchant.”

In the game of court tennis, which was played indoors, a line on the wall indicated the lower boundary of play. The “house” was a sloping roof that indicated the upper boundary of play. “Bricked-walled” is a corruption of *bricole*, a stroke in which the ball was hit on a side wall and advanced toward the opponent. The hazard was an opening in the wall. Balls hit into them won points.

Tennis balls were made of hair, and when they wore out, they spilled their guts.

Sindefy said:

“Well, Frank, well, the seas, you say, are uncertain.

“But he who sails in your court-seas shall find them ten times fuller of hazard and danger, wherein to see what is to be seen is torment more than a free spirit can endure.

“But when you come to suffer, how many injuries swallow you? What care and devotion must you use to humor an

imperious lord? Proportion your looks to his looks, smile to his smiles? Fit your sails to the wind of his breath?"

"Tush, he who cannot do that is no journeyman — no skilled worker — in his craft," Quicksilver said.

Sindefy replied:

"But he's worse than an apprentice who does it, not only humoring the lord, but every trencher-bearer and waiter, every groom and servant, who by indulgence and intelligence crept into his favor and by pandarism into his bedchamber."

Gallants can advance at court by being on friendly terms with lords and with the servants who encourage the vices of their lords and who spy on and gossip about them and who provide them with whores.

Sindefy continued:

"The servant rules the roost, and when my honorable lord says, 'It shall be thus,' my worshipful rascal, the groom of his close-stool, says, 'It shall not be thus,' claps the door after him, and who dares enter?"

A close-stool is a toilet: an enclosed chamber pot.

Some servants gained and exercised power by controlling access to their lords. If you never see a lord, you can't ask him for favors.

Sindefy continued:

"An apprentice, quoth you? It is but to learn to live, and does that disgrace a man?"

Being an apprentice is nothing to be ashamed of: The apprentice is simply learning to make a living.

Sindefy continued:

“He who rises hardly — by facing and overcoming difficulties — stands firmly; but he who rises with ease, alas, falls as easily.”

“A pox on you,” Quicksilver said, “Who taught you this morality?”

Security said:

“It is owing to this witty age, Master Francis.

“But indeed, Mistress Sindefy, all trades complain of inconvenience, and therefore it is best to have none.

“The merchant, he complains and says, ‘Overseas trading is subject to much uncertainty and loss.’

“Let them keep their goods on dry land, with a vengeance — with a curse — and not expose other men’s substances to the mercy of the winds, under protection of a wooden wall — the ship’s hull — as Master Francis says, and all for greedy desire to enrich themselves with unconscionable gain, two for one, or so.

“In contrast, I, and such other honest men who live by lending money, are content with moderate profit — thirty or forty in the hundred, so we may have it with quietness and out of peril of wind and weather, rather than run those dangerous courses of trading, as they do.”

The maximum legal rate of interest that could be charged was ten percent — not thirty or forty percent.

“Aye, Dad, thou may well be called Security, for thou take the safest course,” Quicksilver said.

Security said:

“Indeed, I take the safest course — and the quieter, and the more contented, and, no doubt, the more godly.

“For merchants in their courses are never pleased, but instead they are always repining and complaining against heaven. One prays for a westerly wind to carry his ship forth; another for an easterly to bring his ship home; and at every shaking of a leaf, he falls into an agony to think what danger his ship is in on such and such a coast, and so forth.

“The farmer, he is always at odds with the weather. Sometimes the clouds have been too barren; sometimes the heavens forget themselves [and rain at the wrong time, when water is not needed], their harvests answer not their hopes; sometimes the season turns out to be too fruitful, corn will bear no price, and so forth.

“The artificer — the trickster and con-man — he’s all for a stirring world; if his trade is too dull and falls short of his expectation, then he falls out of joint.”

Quicksilver wanted his trade to be that of a conman.

Security continued:

“Whereas we who trade nothing but money are free from all this. We are pleased with all weathers: Let it rain or hold up, be calm or windy, let the season be whatsoever, let trade go how it will, we take all in good part, even whatever pleases the heavens to send us, provided that the sun does not stand still and the moon keeps her usual returns from new moon and the sun and moon together make days, months, and years.”

“And you have good security?” Quicksilver asked.

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, Frank,” Security said. “That’s the special point.”

Quicksilver said:

“And yet, indeed, we must have trades and tradesmen in order to live, for we cannot stand without legs nor fly without

wings, and a number of such scurvy, contemptible phrases and worthless sayings.

“No, I say still and always, he who has wit, let him live by his wit; he who has none, let him be a tradesman.”

Security said:

“Witty Master Francis! It would be a pity if any trade should dull that quick brain of yours.

“Do but bring Knight Petronel into my parchment toils — traps of contracts — once, and you shall never need to toil in any trade, on my credit.

“You know his wife’s land?”

“Even to a foot, sir, I have been often there,” Quicksilver said. “A pretty fine seat and country estate, good land, all entire within itself — that is, it has all that is needed.”

“Is it well wooded?” Security asked.

“It has two hundred pounds’ worth of wood ready to fell, and a fine sweet house that stands just in the midst of it, like a prick in the middle of a circle,” Quicksilver said.

“A prick in the midst of a circle” is 1) an arrow or pin in the center of a target, or 2) a penis in a vagina, and, possibly, 3) an erect clitoris (if the vulva is regarded as a circle).

Hmm. Sir Petronel’s wife’s “land” is a pretty fine seat, well-wooded [with pubic hair], with a sweet house in the midst of a circle? Say no more.

Sir Petronel’s wife, of course, is Gertrude.

Quicksilver continued:

“I wish I were its farmer, for a hundred pounds a year!”

He would rent the land for a hundred pounds, and he could immediately sell the wood for two hundred pounds. He would, no doubt, also plow the “land,” and possibly charge others to plow it.

Security said:

“Excellent Master Francis, how I do long to do thee good! How I do hunger and thirst to have the honor to enrich thee!”

Matthew 5:6 states, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*” (King James Version).

Security continued:

“Aye, even to die, so that thou might inherit my living. Even hunger and thirst! For on my religion, Master Francis — and so tell Knight Petronel — I do it to do him a pleasure.”

“By the Virgin Mary, Dad, his horses are now coming up to bear down his lady,” Quicksilver said. “Will thou lend him thy stable to set them in?”

“Indeed, Master Francis, I would be loath to lend my stable out of doors — to a stranger,” Security said. “In a greater matter I will pleasure him, but not in this.”

Frank Quicksilver said to himself:

“A pox on your ‘hunger and thirst’!”

He then said out loud:

“Well, Dad, let him have money.

“All he could in any way get is bestowed on a ship now bound for Virginia, the frame of which voyage is so closely conveyed and secretly carried out that neither his new lady nor any of her friends know it.

“Notwithstanding, as soon as his lady’s hand is gotten to the sale of her inheritance, and you have furnished him with money, he will immediately hoist sail and go away.”

Impoverished gallants sometimes traveled to Virginia to make a new life for themselves.

Security said:

“Now, may a frank — steady — gale of wind go with him, Master Frank! We have too few such knight adventurers. Who would not sell away competent and moderate certainties to purchase, with any danger, excellent uncertainties?”

In other words: Who wouldn’t trade away safe and certain money to gamble and risk it all on a dangerous chance of getting an uncertain but excellent profit?

Security wouldn’t.

He continued:

“Your true knight venturer always does it. Let his wife seal today; he shall have his money today.”

When Sir Petronel’s wife put her seal on the contract for the sale of the land, he would get the money.

Quicksilver began:

“Tomorrow she shall, Dad, before she goes into the country; to work her to which action with the more tricky contrivances, I purpose immediately to advance my sweet Sin here to the place of her gentlewoman-attendant; whom you, for the more credibility, shall present as your friend’s daughter, a gentlewoman of the country, newly come up to London with a will for a while to learn fashions, indeed, and be in attendance to some lady; and she shall buzz pretty and devious chat into her lady’s ear, feeding her humors so



serviceably — as you know is the manner of such as she is —”

“Sweet Sin” refers to 1) Sindefy, and 2) the sin of lechery.

Security interrupted, “True, good Master Francis.”

Quicksilver finished:

“— so that she shall keep her port — her mind — open to anything she recommends to her.”

Sindefy could help convince Gertrude to sell her inheritance.

Security said:

“On my religion, I swear that this is a most fashionable project. As good she spoil the lady as the lady spoil her, for it is three to one of one side.”

The word “spoil” can mean 1) plunder, and 2) corrupt her character.

The odds are three to one in favor of Sindefy plundering Gertrude rather than Gertrude corrupting Sindefy’s character.

Security continued:

“Sweet Mistress Sin, how you are bound to Master Francis! I do not doubt to see you shortly wed one of the head men of our city.”

“Head men” are 1) movers and shakers, and 2) cuckolds, who were supposed to have invisible horns growing on their head.

“But sweet Frank, when shall my father Security present me to Gertrude?” Sindefy asked.

Frank Quicksilver answered, “With all festination and speed. I have broken the ice to it and suggested it to Gertrude

already, and I will immediately go to the knight's house, whither, my good old Dad, let me ask thee with all formality to man — to escort — her.”

The knight's house was the dwelling where he and Gertrude were staying independently in London.

Security replied:

“Command me, Master Francis; I do hunger and thirst to do thee service.”

He then said to Sindefy:

“Come, sweet Mistress Sin, take leave of my Winifred, and we will instantly meet frank Master Francis at your lady's.”

Winifred was Security's young wife.

“At your lady's” means the place where Gertrude and Sir Petronel were staying. Once Sindefy gets the place as Gertrude's gentlewoman-attendant, Gertrude will be her lady.

Winifred appeared at a window above them.

She called, “Where is my Cu there? Cu?”

“Cu” was Winifred pet name for Se-CU-rity.

“Cu” is the beginning of the word “Cuckold.”

“Aye, Winnie,” Security said.

“Will thou come in, sweet Cu?” Winifred asked.

“Aye, Winnie, right now,” Security said.

Everyone except Quicksilver exited.

Alone, he said to himself:

“‘Aye, Winnie,’ said he?”

“That’s all he can do, poor man; he may well cut off her name at Winnie.”

In other words: Winifred can whinny like a mare, but Security cannot perform the services of a stallion to a mare. He is unable to free her from her desire for an orgasm by giving her one.

In this society, “freed” was sometimes spelled “fred.”

An old, jealous husband can keep a young wife from having freedom.

An old, jealous, impotent husband can also keep a young wife free of sexual satisfaction. Winni-freed has been freed of whinnying “Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!” in bed.

If Security was impotent, he would be forced to say “nay” to any requests for sex.

A synonym of “whinny” is “neigh.”

Quicksilver continued:

“Oh, it is an egregious pandar! What won’t a usurious knave be, as long as he may be rich? Oh, it is a notable Jew’s trump!”

A Jew’s trump is a Jew’s harp: a term for a usurer.

According to Quicksilver, Security was or would be willing to use his young wife, Winifred, to get wealth from other people.

Quicksilver continued:

“I hope to live to see dog’s meat made from the old usurer’s flesh, dice made from his bones, and indentures made from his skin; and yet his skin is too thick to make parchment, but it would make good boots for a peterman to catch salmon in.”

A peterman is a fisherman. St. Peter was a fisherman. Peter boats were trawlers.

A peterman is also a pandar. The salmon are the peterman's prey. "Boots" can mean "booty" and "plunder." Boots could be the bait for the salmon that the peterman wants to catch.

Quicksilver continued:

"The only smooth skin to make fine vellum — fine, smooth parchment — is a Puritan's skin; they are the smoothest and slickest knaves in a country."

He exited and went to Sir Petronel's lodging.

— 2.3 —

Sir Petronel, who was wearing riding boots and carrying a riding wand, aka riding crop, talked with Quicksilver. They were at Sir Petronel's lodging.

Sir Petronel said:

"I'll be out of this wicked town as fast as my horse can trot.

"Here's now no good action for a man to spend his time in. Taverns grow dead; ordinaries are blown up and ruined financially and closed down; plays are at a standstill; houses of whore-hospitality are at a fall and in a low state; not a hat-feather is waving nor a spur is jingling anywhere.

"I'll go away immediately."

Frank Quicksilver said, "You'd best take some crowns in your purse, knight, or else your eastward castle will smoke but miserably."

Sir Petronel did not have money to buy firewood.

"Oh, Frank!" Sir Petronel said. "My castle? Alas, all the castles I have are built with air, as thou know."

“I know it, knight, and therefore I wonder to where your lady is going,” Quicksilver said.

Sir Petronel replied:

“Indeed, to seek her fortune, I think.

“I said I had a castle and land eastward, and eastward she will go without contradiction; her coach and the coach of the sun must meet full butt.”

There was no castle, and so Gertrude would continue to journey eastward until she meets the Sun head-on.

Phoebus Apollo drove the Sun-chariot, aka Sun-coach.

Sir Petronel continued:

“And the sun being outshined with Her Ladyship’s glory, she fears he goes westward to hang himself.”

The sun, outshone by Gertrude’s splendor, will, she imagines, go westward to the gallows at Tyburn and hang itself. Yes, Gertrude is that egotistical.

“And I fear, when her enchanted castle becomes invisible, Her Ladyship will return and follow his example,” Quicksilver said.

“Oh, I wish that she would have the grace to hang herself, for I shall never be able to pacify her when she sees herself deceived so,” Sir Petronel said.

Quicksilver said:

“Pacifying her can be made to happen as easily as can be.

“Tell her she mistook your directions, and that shortly you yourself will go down with her to show her that your castle exists. And then, just clothe her crupper in a new gown and you may drive her any way you wish.”

A “crupper” is a horse’s hindquarters, but here it is Gertrude’s butt.

Quicksilver continued:

“For these women, sir, are like Essex calves: You must wriggle them on by the tail continually, or they will never drive orderly.”

Calves could be made to move in the desired direction by twisting their tails.

Metaphorically, a man who wriggles his wife’s tail can make her move in the desired direction. The man must continually satisfy her in bed.

Sir Petronel said, “But alas, sweet Frank, thou know my financial ability and resources will not furnish her blood — her passion and desire — with those costly humors and indulgences.”

In other words, he can’t afford to buy her expensive items such as new gowns.

“Cast that cost on me, sir,” Quicksilver said. “I have spoken to my old pandar, Security, for money or commodity, and commodity, if you are willing, I know he will procure you.”

Quicksilver was trying to swindle Sir Petronel by getting him to buy a commodity. Someone who needed money would get a loan, but if that person were desperate or foolish, he could be induced to accept part or all of the loan in the form of shoddy goods of various kinds, such as dolls and hobbyhorses. These would be sold at a loss.

For example, someone would borrow one hundred pounds and would get what was supposed to be one hundred pounds’ worth of a commodity. The victim would sell the commodity for fifty pounds but would owe the lender one hundred pounds. The swindle was a way to get around laws limiting

the amount of interest that could be demanded for a loan. Often, the man being swindled was a young gallant who consorted with prostitutes.

“Commodity!” Sir Petronel asked. “Alas, what commodity?”

“Why, sir, what do you say to figs and raisins?” Quicksilver asked.

“A plague on figs and raisins and all such frail, easily spoiled commodities!” Sir Petronel said. “We shall make nothing from them.”

A “frail” is also a kind of basket in which figs and other fruit can be kept.

“Why, then, sir, what do you say to forty pounds in roasted beef?” Quicksilver said.

“Out upon it, I have less stomach to that than to the figs and raisins,” Sir Petronel said. “I’ll go out of town, although I sojourn with a friend of mine, for I must not stay here; my creditors have set a watch to arrest me, and I have no friend under heaven but my sword to bail me out.”

“Out upon” means 1) “curses upon,” or 2) “damnation to,” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

He could fight with his sword, or he could hock it to get money for bail.

For a knight to be without a sword was a disgrace.

Frank Quicksilver said, “God save me, knight, put them in sufficient sureties — securities — rather than let your sword bail you. Let them take their choice, either the King’s Bench or the Fleet, or which of the two Counters they like best, for, by the Lord, I like none of them.”

Counters are prisons, as are the King's Bench and the Fleet. One sufficient surety was to allow them to know that the debtor, Sir Petronel, was securely imprisoned.

Another kind of sufficient surety was to give them secure guarantees that they would be paid. Since Sir Petronel had no money, the guarantees would have to be made by someone else.

"Well, Frank, there is no jesting with my earnest necessity," Sir Petronel said. "Thou know if I don't get ready money immediately to further my voyage begun, all's lost, and all is lost that I have already paid out about it."

"Earnest" is money paid in advance to secure a contract.

"Ready money" is cash.

"Why, then, sir, in earnest: If you can get your wise lady to set her hand to the sale of her inheritance, the bloodhound Security will smell out ready money for you instantly," Quicksilver said.

Sir Petronel said:

"There spoke an angel!"

One kind of angel is the coin called an angel.

Sir Petronel continued:

"To bring her to which conformity, I must feign myself extremely amorous, and, alleging urgent excuses for my stay behind, part with her as passionately as she would from her foisting — farting, stinking — hound."

Quicksilver said:

"You have the sow by the right ear, sir. That's the right way to proceed.



“I warrant there was never a child who longed more to ride a cockhorse or wear his new coat than she longs to ride in her new coach. She would long for everything when she was a maiden, and now she will run mad for them. I lay my life she will have four children every year; and what charge and change — expense and inconstancy — of humor you must endure while she is pregnant with child, and how she will tie you to your tackling until she is with child, a dog would not endure.”

The word “tackle” can mean “genitals.” Gertrude will keep her husband, Sir Petronel, very busy in bed until she becomes pregnant.

Quicksilver continued:

“Nay, there is no turnspit dog bound to his wheel more servilely than you shall be to her wheel.”

Wheels are circles, and women have sexual circles.

Quicksilver continued:

“For as that dog can never climb the top of his turnspit except when the top comes under him, so shall you never climb the top of her contentment but when she is under you.”

Dogs walked in exercise wheels to turn the spit on which food was roasted. The dog will never reach the top of the wheel, except when the wheel revolves and the top goes under its paws.

Because of his lack of money, Sir Petronel will never be able to satisfy Gertrude’s desires, except when she is under him during sex.

“By God’s light, how thou terrify me!” Sir Petronel said.

Quicksilver said:

“Nay, pay attention, sir.

“What nurses, what midwives, what fools, what physicians, what cunning women [fortune tellers and diviners] must be sought for — fearing sometimes she is bewitched, sometimes in a consumption — to tell her tales, to talk bawdy to her, to make her laugh, to give her glisters [enemas], to let her blood under the tongue and between the toes —”

Bloodletting took place in various parts of the body, including under the tongue and in the foot.

Quicksilver continued:

“— how she will revile and kiss you, spit in your face and lick it off again; how she will boast that you are her creature, that she made you out of nothing; how she could have had thousand-mark jointures [thousand-coin marriage settlements]; she could have been made a lady by a Scotch knight and never have married him —”

She could have been a Scotch knight’s common-law wife.

A jointure is joint wealth owned both by a husband and a wife. If the husband dies first, the wife will own the wealth and be provided for.

King James I of England was also King James VI of Scotland. He sold knighthoods to raise money.

Quicksilver continued:

“— she could have had poignados in her bed every morning \_\_\_”

An alternate form of “poignado” is “poinado.”

Perhaps “poignado” is a portmanteau word combining “poinado” and “panada” and “poignant.”

Panadas are bread puddings, and poinados are small daggers.

In this context, a small dagger is metaphorically a penis.

In this society, “poignant” refers to sharpness of mental and physical feelings. It also refers to sharp, pungent tastes. Gertrude has a sharp desire for bread puddings and for sex.

A proverb stated, “Puddings and paramours would be hotly handled.”

Quicksilver continued:

“— how she set you up, and how she will pull you down — you’ll never be able to stand upon your legs to endure it.”

“How she set you up” means 1) how she set you up financially, or 2) how she gave you an erection.

“Pull you down” means 1) ruin you financially, or 2) make you no longer have an erection.

The word “stand” is slang for “erection.” Because of sexual exhaustion, Sir Petronel will not be able to maintain an erection.

Sir Petronel said:

“Out of my fortune, what a death is my life bound face-to-face to!

“The best thing about it is that a large, time-fitted, opportunistic conscience is bound to nothing. Marriage is just a form in the school of policy and cunning deception, to which scholars sit fastened only with painted — imaginary — chains.

“Old Security’s young wife is never the further off with me. She is still accessible to me.”

Books were valuable and were sometimes chained to desks or tables, but scholars, who were supposed to be “tied” to their desks, could move around as desired.

Sir Petronel was saying that an unscrupulous man could get out of marriage ties, and he was saying that although old Security's young wife was married, he could still try to seduce her.

Quicksilver said, "Thereby lies a tale, sir. The old usurer will be here immediately with my punk Sindefy, whom you know your lady has promised me to employ for her gentlewoman-attendant, and he — with a purpose to feed on you — invites you most solemnly by me to supper."

Sir Petronel said:

"It falls out excellently fitly.

"I see desire of gain makes jealousy venturous and willing to take risks."

Seeing Gertrude coming toward them, Sir Petronel said, "See, Frank, here comes my lady. Lord, how she views thee! She does not know thee, I think. She doesn't recognize you in this bravery — this splendid clothing you are wearing."

Gertrude asked:

"How are things now?"

She then asked Quicksilver:

"Who are you, I ask?"

He answered, "One Master Francis Quicksilver, if it shall please Your Ladyship."

Of course, she recognized the name.

Gertrude said to herself:

"God's my dignity! As I am a lady, if he did not make me blush so that my eyes stood a-watering! I wish that I were unmarried again."

She was impressed by his fine clothing.

She then asked out loud:

“Where’s the woman I am going to employ as my gentlewoman-attendant, I ask?”

Security and Sindefy entered the scene.

“See, madam, she now comes to attend you,” Quicksilver said.

Security said, “God save my honorable knight and his worshipful lady!”

He removed his hat and bowed.

“You’re very welcome,” Gertrude said. “You must not put on your hat yet.”

Normally, after bowing, a man would be invited to put on his hat again.

“Madam, until I know Your Ladyship’s further pleasure, I will not presume to put on my hat again,” Security said.

“And is this a gentleman’s daughter newly come out of the country?” Gertrude asked about Sindefy.

“She is, madam,” Security said, “and she is one whom her father has a special care to bestow in some honorable lady’s service, to put her out of her honest humors and chaste whims, indeed, for she had a great desire to be a nun, if it shall please you.”

The word “nun” was sometimes used to mean “whore.”

“A nun?” Gertrude asked. “What nun? A nun substantive or a nun adjective?”

She had misunderstood. She was talking about kinds of nouns, not nuns.

William Lily wrote in his *An Introduction of the Eight Parts of Speech* (London, 1544), “A noun substantive is that standeth by himself and requireth not another word to be joined with him [...]. A noun adjective [i.e. an adjective] is that [...] requireth to be joined with another word.”

“A nun substantive, madam, I hope, if a nun be a noun,” Security said. “But I mean, lady, a vowed maid of that order.”

Of course, “vowed” sounds much like “vowel.”

A “maid” is a maiden.

The word “substantive” means “noun” in the sense of “person, place, or thing.”

A substantive nun is a real (religious) nun.

An adjectival nun is a whore who needs to be joined with another “word”: a man.

Gertrude said, “I’ll teach her to be a maid of the order, I promise you.”

Gertrude being Gertrude, a “maid of the order” is a sexual initiate.

She then asked Sindefy, “And can you do any work that belongs to a lady’s chamber?”

“What I cannot do, madam, I would be glad to learn,” Sindefy replied.

Gertrude said:

“Well said. Hold up, then; hold up your head, I say.”

Sindefy had been keeping her head bowed as she talked to Gertrude.

Gertrude then said to her:

“Come here a little closer.”

“I thank Your Ladyship,” Sindefy said.

Gertrude added:

“And listen —”

She said to Security:

“Good man, you may put on your hat now. I am not looking at you.”

She then said to Sindefy:

“I must have you one of my faction now, not of my knight’s, maid.”

Gertrude wanted to be the boss in her home, not Sir Petronel. She therefore wanted all the servants to be on her side and obey her orders. She wanted them to be in her bow — that is, under her control.

“No, indeed, madam, of yours,” Sindefy said.

Her words were ambiguous. They could mean 1) No, I will not be of your faction: I will be of your husband’s faction, or 2) No, I will not be of your husband’s faction: I will be of your faction.

Gertrude continued:

“And you must draw all my servants in my bow, and keep my counsel, and tell me tales, and put riddles to me, and read on a book sometimes when I am busy [ahem, busy in bed, perhaps not with her husband], and laugh at country gentlewomen, and command anything in the house for my retainers, and care not what you spend, for it is all mine.”

When Gertrude wanted to commit adultery, she would have Sindefy read a book instead of act as her chapereone.

Gertrude was claiming that all the wealth would be hers, although in a patriarchal society, all the wealth would normally be the husband's. Since her husband, Sir Petronel, was in fact impoverished, although Gertrude did not know that yet, all the wealth would in fact be hers.

Gertrude continued:

“And in any case you must be still and always a maiden, whatsoever you do, or whatsoever any man can do to you.”

“I warrant Your Ladyship for that,” Security said.

Yes, Sindefy would call herself a maiden, aka virgin. It did not matter that she wasn't one.

Gertrude said to Sindefy:

“Very well. You shall ride in my coach with me into the country tomorrow morning.”

She then said to her husband:

“Come, knight, please let's make a short supper, and go to bed quickly.”

“Nay, good madam,” Security said. “This night I have a short supper at home that waits on His Worship's acceptance.”

He wanted Sir Petronel to be his supper guest.

“By my faith, but he shall not go, sir,” Gertrude said. “I shall swoon and faint if he eats a meal away from me.”

“Please, let me go to the supper,” her husband, Sir Petronel, said. “Shall Security lose his provision — shall he lose what he has spent on this meal?”

“Aye, by our Lady, sir, rather than I lose my longing,” Gertrude said.



Her longing was to have sex with her husband.

Gertrude continued:

“Come in, I say. As I am a lady, you shall not go!”

Quicksilver whispered to Security, “I told him what a burr he had gotten.”

Gretchen was sticking to Sir Petronel like a burr.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a burr can also be 1) “a circle,” or 2) “A broad iron ring on a tilting spear just behind the place for the hand.”

A burr can be a vagina (1 above), and it can be a vagina enveloping a penis (2 above: a ring on a spear).

“If you will not sup away from your knight, madam, let me entreat Your Ladyship to sup at my house with him,” Security said.

“No, by my faith, sir,” Gertrude said, “because then we cannot be in bed soon enough after supper.”

Sir Petronel said:

“What a medicine is this!”

He meant: What a bitter pill is this!

He continued:

“Well, Master Security, you are newly married as well as I; I hope you are bound as well. We must honor our young wives, you know.”

Quicksilver whispered to Security, “Honor her wish in policy, Dad, until tomorrow she has sealed the contract and signed away her land.”

He meant that Sir Petronel ought to obey the wishes of his wife until she had signed away her property. This was “policy”: something that needed to be done in order to plunder her wealth.

“I hope in the morning your knighthood will yet breakfast with me?” Security asked.

“As early as you will, sir,” Sir Petronel said.

“I thank Your good Worship,” Security said. “I do hunger and thirst to do you good, sir.”

“Come, sweet knight, come,” Gertrude said. “I do hunger and thirst to be in bed with thee.”

They exited.

### ACT 3 (*Eastward Ho!*)

#### — 3.1 —

Sir Petronel, Quicksilver, Security, Bramble, and Winifred met together at Security's house. They had just eaten breakfast.

Bramble was a lawyer.

“Thanks for our feast-like breakfast, good Master Security,” Sir Petronel said. “I am sorry by reason of my immediate haste to go on so long a voyage to Virginia, I am without means to make any kind amends and requitals to show how affectionately I take your kindness, and to confirm by some worthy ceremony a perpetual league of friendship between us.”

He lacked money to perform some action that would repay Security for the meal.

Security replied:

“Excellent knight, let this be a token between us of inviolable friendship.

“I am newly married to this fair gentlewoman, you know, and, by my hope to make her fruitful and pregnant, although I am something in years, I vow faithfully to you to make you godfather, although in your absence, to the first child I am blessed with. And henceforth call me gossip, I ask you, if you please to accept it.”

A godfather will try to encourage the child to develop in a wholesome way, something that can be difficult when the two are separated by a great distance, especially in the early 1600s.

In this society, a gossip is a friend.

Sir Petronel said:

“In the highest degree of gratitude, my most worthy gossip.

“For confirmation of which friendly title, let me entreat my fair gossip, your wife here, to accept this diamond and keep it as my gift to her first child, wheresoever my fortune in the outcome of my voyage shall bestow me.”

He offered Winifred a diamond ring.

Godparents traditionally gave silver spoons to the godchild. A ring was an unusual present for a godchild, but rings were usual presents given by lovers.

Security said to Winifred:

“What is this now, my coy wedlock — my shy wife. Why are you reluctant to accept so noble a favor and gift?

“Take it, I tell you, with all affection, and, by way of taking your leave, present boldly your lips to our honorable gossip.”

Winifred accepted the ring.

Quicksilver said to himself, “How venturous he is to him, and how jealous to others!”

Security was usually jealous concerning his wife, but because he was greedy to get the ring and to get Sir Petronel’s wife’s land, he allowed his wife to kiss Sir Petronel.

Kissing Winifred, Sir Petronel said:

“Long may this kind touch of our lips print in our hearts all the forms of affection!”

One form of affection is sex.

Sir Petronel then said to Security:

“And now, my good gossip, if the written contract is ready to which my wife should seal her name, let them be brought

this morning before she takes her coach into the country, and my kindness shall persuade her to dispatch it.”

“The written contract is ready, sir,” Security said. “My learned counsel here, Master Bramble the lawyer, has perused it, and within this hour I will bring the scrivener — the notary — with it to your worshipful lady.”

“Good Master Bramble, I will here take my leave of you, then,” Sir Petronel said. “God send you fortunate pleas and lawsuits, sir, and contentious clients!”

“And you foreright — favorable — winds, sir, and a fortunate voyage!” Bramble said.

He exited.

A messenger entered the scene and said, “Sir Petronel, here are three or four gentlemen who desire to speak with you.”

“Who are they?” Sir Petronel asked.

“They are your followers — your partners — in this voyage, knight: Captain Seagull and his associates,” Quicksilver said. “I met them this morning and told them you would be here.”

Sir Petronel said to the messenger:

“I ask you to let them enter.”

The messenger exited.

Sir Petronel then said:

“I know they long to be gone, for their stay is dangerous.”

If they delayed setting off on their journey, their ship could be seized to pay off debt.

Captain Seagull, Scapethrift, and Spendall entered the scene.

Captain Seagull was the captain of the ship that was supposed to take Sir Petronel to Virginia, and Scapethrift and Spendall were adventurers with Captain Seagull.

“God save my honorable Colonel!” Captain Seagull said.

By “Colonel,” he meant Sir Petronel.

“Welcome, good Captain Seagull, and worthy gentlemen!” Sir Petronel replied. “If you will meet my friend Frank here, and me, at the Blue Anchor Tavern by Billingsgate this evening, we will there drink to our happy voyage, be merry, and take boat to our ship with all expedition — with all haste.”

“Defer your voyage to Virginia no longer, I ask you, sir,” Captain Seagull said, “but as your voyage is hitherto carried closely and secretly and in another knight’s name, so for your own safety and ours let the secrecy be continued, our meeting and speedy purpose of departing known to as few as is possible, lest your ship and goods be seized for debt.”

“Well advised, Captain,” Quicksilver said. “Our colonel shall have money this morning to dispatch all our departures. Bring those gentlemen at night to the place appointed, and with our skins full of vintage — our bellies full of wine — we’ll take occasion by the vantage and go away.”

They would take opportunity by the forelock — at the opportune, advantageous time — and sail away.

A proverb stated, “Take Time (Occasion, aka Opportunity) by the forelock, for she is bald behind.”

“We will not fail to be there, sir,” Captain Seagull said.

Sir Petronel replied:

“Good morning, good Captain, and my worthy associates.”

He then said to Winifred:

“Health and all sovereignty to my beautiful gossip!”

“Sovereignty” is freedom. An old, jealous husband can keep a young wife from having freedom.

He then said to Security:

“As for you, sir, we shall see you very soon with the written contract.”

“With the written contract and crowns — coins, money — for my honorable gossip,” Security said. “I do hunger and thirst to do you good, sir!”

— 3.2 —

Outside the lodging of Sir Petronel and Gertrude, a coachman appeared, in his frock, aka long coat, in haste and eating part of his breakfast.

The coachman said to himself, “Here’s a stir when citizens ride out of town, indeed, as if all the house were on fire! By God’s light, they will not give a man leave to eat his breakfast before he rises.”

Hamlet, a footman, arrived in haste and said, “What, Coachman! My lady’s coach, for shame! Her Ladyship’s ready to come down.”

In Act 4, scene 5, of *Hamlet*, Ophelia calls for her coach. In *Hamlet*, she goes mad, and Gertrude’s desire to be a lady can be regarded as a kind of madness.

The coachman exited.

Potkin, a tankard bearer, entered the scene and said:

“By God’s foot, Hamlet, are you mad? To where do you run now? You should brush up my old mistress!”

Part of Hamlet's job was to brush Mrs. Touchstone's fine clothing.

Hamlet exited.

Sindefy entered the scene and said, "What, Potkin! You must put away your tankard and put on your blue coat and wait upon Mistress Touchstone as she goes into the country."

A blue coat was part of a serving-man's livery: his distinctive clothing.

Mistress Touchstone was Mrs. Touchstone. She was going with her daughter Gertrude into the countryside.

Sindefy exited.

Potkin said to himself, "I will, indeed, right away."

He exited.

Gertrude and her mother were only two people, but they kept many servants hopping.

Mistress Fond and Mistress Gazer entered the scene. They were city wives: female citizens of London. They had urban tastes and manners. They were not lower class, nor were they the highest class. They were a middling class.

"Come, sweet Mistress Gazer, let's watch here and see my Lady Flash take coach."

Lady Flash was Mrs. Petronel Flash: Gertrude.

"On my word, here's a very fine place to stand in," Mistress Gazer said. "Did you see the new ship launched yesterday, Mistress Fond?"

"Oh, God, and we citizens should lose such a sight!" Mistress Fond said.



“I promise, here will be double as many people to see her take coach as there were to see the new ship take water,” Mistress Gazer said.

“Take water” is ambiguous. “Take to water” meant that the ship was launched. “Take on water” meant that the ship was sinking or that the ship was bringing on board supplies of fresh water.

Gertrude thought that her ship of fortune had arrived, but readers know that her husband is impoverished.

“Oh, she’s married to a very fine castle in the country, they say,” Mistress Fond said.

Gertrude thought that she had married money and property and wealth.

“But there are no giants in the castle, are there?” Mistress Gazer asked.

“Oh, no, they say her knight killed them all, and therefore he was knighted,” Mistress Fond said.

Giants are just as real as Sir Petronel’s castle.

“I wish to God Her Ladyship would come away — would make her appearance!” Mistress Gazer said.

Gertrude, Mistress Touchstone, Sindefy, Hamlet, and Potkin entered the scene.

“She comes! She comes! She comes!” Mistress Fond said.

“Pray heaven bless Your Ladyship!” Mistress Gazer and Mistress Fond said.

“Thank you, good people,” Gertrude said.

Queen Elisabeth I often said these words when addressing the public.

“My coach, for the love of heaven, my coach!” Gertrude said. “In good truth, I shall swoon and faint else.”

“Coach! Coach!” Hamlet called. “My lady’s coach!”

He exited.

Gertrude said:

“As I am a lady, I think I am with child already, I long for a coach so.”

A pregnant woman often has cravings for strange combinations of food; Gertrude had a craving to ride in a coach.

Gertrude then asked:

“May one be with child before they are married, mother?”

Her mother, Mrs. Touchstone, answered, “Aye, by our lady, madam, a little thing does that. I have seen a little prick no bigger than a pin’s head swell bigger and bigger until it has come to an ancome, and even so it is in these cases.”

A tiny pinprick in the skin can swell up and become an ulcerous boil, aka an ancome.

A little prick can swell up, enter a vagina, and cause a woman’s belly to swell up.

The word “case” can mean “vagina.”

Hamlet returned and said, “Your coach is coming, madam.”

Gertrude said:

“That’s well done and well said. Now, heaven! I think I am even up to the knees in preferment.”

“Preferment” is promotion to high rank.

She sang:

“*But a little higher, but a little higher, but a little higher,*

“*There, there, there lies Cupid’s fire.*”

Yes, Cupid’s fire lies a little higher than a woman’s knees. It’s up there by the pubic bone. It’s the vagina.

The song lines are from Thomas Campion’s bawdy song “Beauty, Since You So Much Desire” from his *Fourth Book of Airs* (1617), in which he refers to toes and heels and then to Cupid’s fire.

“But must this young man, if it shall please you, madam, run by your coach all the way on foot?” Mrs. Touchstone asked.

Footmen ran beside a coach as it traveled. They were servants to the high-class people riding inside the coach.

Gertrude’s footman was Hamlet.

“Aye, by my faith, I warrant him,” Gertrude said. “He gives no other milk, as I have another servant who does.”

“No other milk” can metaphorically mean “no other duty.”

Milk is a whitish fluid; so is semen.

A servant can be 1) an employee, or 2) a lover.

Mrs. Touchstone said:

“Alas! It is even a pity, I think. For God’s sake, madam, buy him but a hobby-horse; let the poor youth have something between his legs to ease them.”

A hobby-horse can be 1) a child’s toy horse: a stick with a horse’s head on one end, or 2) a whore.

Yes, youths do have a thing between their legs. Yes, that thing can be eased with one kind of hobby-horse.

Mrs. Touchstone continued:

“Alas, we must do as we would be done to.”

The verb “do” can mean “to have sex with.”

The Golden Rule is to treat other people as you would like to be treated.

Matthew 7:12 states, “*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you: do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets*” (King James Version).

If you would like other people to have sex with you, then you ought to have sex with other people.

“Bah, hold your peace, dame,” Gertrude said. “You talk like an old fool, I tell you.”

Sir Petronel and Quicksilver entered the scene.

“Will thou be gone, sweet honeysuckle, before I can go with thee?” Sir Petronel asked.

“I request of thee, sweet knight, let me,” Gertrude said. “I do so long to dress up thy castle before thou come. But I marvel how my modest sister occupies herself this morning, that she cannot wait on me as I go to my coach as well as her mother.”

“By the Virgin Mary, madam, she’s married by this time to apprentice Golding,” Quicksilver said. “Your father, and someone more, stole to church with them in all haste, so that the cold meat and food left at your wedding might serve to furnish their nuptial table.”

Gertrude said:

“There’s no base fellow, my father, now, but he’s even fit to father such a daughter. He must call me daughter no more now, but ‘madam,’ and ‘please you, madam,’ and ‘please Your Worship, madam,’ indeed.

“Out upon him! Marry his daughter to a base apprentice!”

Golding was no longer an apprentice, but Gretchen did not know that.

Mrs. Touchstone asked:

“What should one do? Is there no law for one who marries a woman’s daughter against her — that is, my — will?”

Mr. Touchstone had gotten their daughter Mildred married to a man whom Mrs. Touchstone did not want her married to.

Mrs. Touchstone then asked:

“How shall we punish him, madam?”

Gertrude said:

“As I am a lady, if it would snow, we’d so pebble them with snowballs as they come from church!”

She wanted to pebble with snowballs her sister, Mildred, too.

Gertrude continued:

“But sirrah, Frank Quicksilver —”

“Aye, madam,” Quicksilver said.

“Do thou remember since thou and I clapped what-d’ye-call’ts in the garret?” Gertrude asked.

They had clapped genitals — bumped uglies — together.

“I don’t know what you mean, madam,” Quicksilver replied.

It was best not to acknowledge that he had had sex with Gertrude.

Gertrude sang:

*“His head as white as milk,*

*“All flaxen was his hair;*

*“But now he is dead,  
“And laid in his bed,  
“And never will come again.  
“God be at your labor!”*

The color of flax is pale yellowish-grey.

Milk is a whitish fluid.

The word “head” can mean 1) the froth at the top of a glass of beer, and 2) the cream that rises to the top of unhomogenized milk.

“His head as white as milk” may mean “semen.”

Quicksilver would never come — ejaculate — with her again.

Touchstone, Golding, and Mildred entered the scene. Mildred was carrying rosemary, which represents constancy and loyalty.

“Was there ever such a lady as Gertrude?” Sir Petronel quietly asked himself.

“See, madam, the bride and bridegroom!” Quicksilver said.

Gertrude said:

“God’s my precious!”

This oath may mean 1) By God’s precious blood, or 2) God’s my precious one.

Gertrude continued:

“God give you joy, Mistress What-lack-you!”

“What lack you” is the cry of a business person selling wares. Gertrude’s “Mistress What-lack-you!” meant “Mrs. Tradesman’s Wife.”

Gertrude continued:

“Now out upon thee, baggage, my sister married in a taffeta hat?”

One definition of “baggage” is a worthless woman.

Gertrude preferred hats that were fancier than taffeta hats.

Gertrude continued:

“By the Virgin Mary, hang you!

“Westward with a waning — a vengeance, aka curse — to ye! Nay, I have done with ye, minion, then, truly.”

A minion can be 1) a hussy, or 2) a darling.

Mildred was her father’s favorite daughter.

Gertrude continued:

“Never look to have my countenance — my good will and favor — any more, nor never look to have anything I can do for thee.

“Thou ride in my coach? Or come down to my castle? Fie upon thee! I charge thee in My Ladyship’s name, call me sister no more.”

Touchstone said:

“If it shall please Your Worship, this is not your sister. This is my daughter, and she calls me father, and so does not Your Ladyship, if it shall please Your Worship, madam.”

He disliked his daughter Gertrude’s pride.

Mrs. Touchstone said:

“No, and Gertrude must not call thee father by the practice of heraldry because thou make thy apprentice thy son as well as she your prodigy.”

She then said to Golding:

“Ah, thou misproud — wrongfully proud — apprentice, do thou dare presume to marry a lady’s sister?”

Golding answered:

“It pleased my master, indeed, to embolden me with his favor.

“And although I confess myself far unworthy so worthy a wife (being in part her servant, as I am your apprentice) yet (since I may say it without boasting) I am born a gentleman, and by the trade I have learned from my master (which I trust taints not my blood) able with my own industry and portion to maintain your daughter, my hope is, heaven will so bless our humble beginning that in the end I shall be no disgrace to the grace with which my master has bound me his double apprentice.”

“Double apprentice” means 1) apprentice, and 2) son-in-law.

“‘Master’ me no more, son, if thou think me worthy to be thy father,” Touchstone said. “Don’t call me ‘master.’”

Gertrude said, “‘Son’! Now, good lord, how he shines, if you mark him! He’s a gentleman!”

“Aye, indeed, madam, I am a gentleman born,” Golding said.

“Never stand on your gentry, master bridegroom,” Sir Petronel said. “If your legs are no better than your arms, you’ll be able to stand upon neither shortly.”

He was punning on “coat of arms.”



“If it shall please Your good Worship, sir, there are two sorts of gentlemen,” Touchstone said.

“What do you mean, sir?” Sir Petronel asked.

Touchstone said, “I make bold to take off my hat to Your Worship —”

“Nay, please don’t take off your hat, sir,” Sir Petronel said. “Put it on again and then continue with your description of two sorts of gentlemen.”

Sir Petronel did not want to put on airs over Touchstone, his father-in-law.

Touchstone said:

“If Your Worship will have it so, I say there are two sorts of gentlemen.

“There is a gentleman artificial, and a gentleman natural.

“Now, although Your Worship is a gentleman natural — Work upon that, now!”

The word “natural” can mean 1) by birth, 2) by nature, and/or 3) foolish.

People could artificially raise themselves to a higher social class by 1) acquiring land, and/or 2) acquiring a university degree, and/or 3) acquiring a military commission, and/or 4) practicing law or medicine.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a gentleman is 1) “A man of high social status,” and/or 2) “A man having the characteristics traditionally associated with high social standing; a chivalrous, courteous, or honourable man.”

Quicksilver said:

“Well said and well done, old Touchstone. I am proud to hear thee enter a set speech, indeed.

“Continue, I request thee.”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” Touchstone said. “Your Worship’s a gentleman I do not know. If you are one of my acquaintance, you’re very much disguised, sir.”

The clause “Your Worship’s a gentleman I do not know” can mean “I do not know that Your Worship is a gentleman.”

Touchstone was pretending not to recognize Quicksilver.

“Get on with it, old quipper!” Quicksilver said. “Continue with thy speech, I say.”

Touchstone said:

“What, sir, my speeches were always in vain to Your gracious Worship, and therefore until I speak to you with true, not mock, gallantry indeed, I will save my breath to cool my broth from now on.”

His words showed that he had recognized Quicksilver.

Touchstone then said to Golding and Mildred:

“Come, my ‘poor’ son and daughter, let us hide ourselves in our poor humility and live safe. Ambition consumes itself with the very show.”

He then said to everyone:

“Work upon that now!”

Touchstone, Golding, and Mildred exited.

Gertrude said:

“Let him go, let him go, for God’s sake. Let him make his apprentice his son, for God’s sake; give away his daughter,

for God's sake; and when they come begging to us, for God's sake, let's laugh at their 'good husbandry,' for God's sake!"

"Good husbandry" is careful thrift, something that Gertrude did not value.

Gertrude continued:

"Farewell, sweet knight; please make haste to come after me."

"What shall I say?" Sir Petronel said. "I would not have thee go."

If she did not go, she would not find out that his castle did not exist.

Quicksilver sang:

*"Now, Oh, now, I must depart;*

*"Parting though it absence move."*

He then said:

"This ditty, knight, do I see in thy looks in capital letters — prominently."

He then sang:

*"What a grief 'tis to depart,*

*"And leave the flower that has my heart!*

*"My sweet lady, and alack for woe,*

*"Why should we part so?"*

He then said:

"Tell truth, knight, and shame all dissembling lovers: Does not your pain lie on that side? Aren't you in pain because you have to leave your wife?"

The pain in the side was his wife. God removed a rib from Adam in order to create Eve.

Genesis 2:22 states, “*And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man*” (King James Version).

“If it do, can thou tell me how I may cure it?” Sir Petronel asked.

Quicksilver said:

“Excellently easily: Divide yourself in two halves, just by the girdlestead — the waist; send one half with your lady, and keep the other half for yourself.”

Taking Gertrude’s sexual desires into consideration, Sir Petronel would keep the half that eats. Gretchen would keep the other half: the half that —.

Quicksilver continued:

“Or else do as all true lovers do: Part with your heart and leave your body behind.

“I have seen it done a hundred times. It is as easy a matter for a lover to part without a heart from his sweetheart, and he be never the worse, as for a mouse to get away from a trap and leave his tail behind him.

“Look, here comes the writing: the document.”

Security and a scrivener entered the scene.

“Good morning to My worshipful Lady!” Security said. “I present Your Ladyship with this writing, to which if you please to set your hand, with your knight’s, a velvet gown shall attend your journey, on my credit.”

“What writing is it, knight?” Gertrude asked.

Sir Petronel answered, “The sale, sweetheart, of the poor tenement — poor property — I told thee about, only to make a little money to send thee down furniture for my castle, to which my hand shall lead thee.”

He signed the bond first.

“Very well. Now give me your pen, please,” Gertrude said.

She signed the bond.

Her inheritance of land had been sold for ready money.

“It goes down without chewing, indeed,” Quicksilver said to himself.

She had swallowed the bait of the velvet gown.

“Do Your Worships deliver this as your deed?” the scrivener asked.

“We do,” Gertrude and Sir Petronel replied.

“So now, knight, farewell until I see thee,” Gertrude said.

“All farewell to my sweetheart!” Sir Petronel replied.

“God be with ye, son knight,” Mrs. Touchstone said.

“Farewell, my good mother,” Sir Petronel said.

“Farewell, Frank,” Gertrude said. “I would eagerly take thee down if I could.”

Yes, 1) down in the country, or 2) down in bed so she could change an erection to a non-erection.

Quicksilver said:

“I thank Your good Ladyship.”

He then said:

“Farewell, Mistress Sinfy.”

Everyone exited except for Petronel, Quicksilver, and Security.

Of course, Gertrude and her mother, Mrs. Touchstone, were going on a journey to see Sir Petronel's nonexistent castle.

"Oh, tedious voyage, whereof there is no end!" Sir Petronel complained. "What will they think of me?"

This kind of voyage is an undertaking; in this particular case, it is a marriage.

Quicksilver replied:

"Think what they wish."

This is ambiguous. It can mean 1) You should think about what they wish, and/or 2) They will think what they wish.

He continued:

"They longed for a vagary — an excursion — into the country, and now they are fitted: They have gotten what they wanted.

"If a woman will marry so she can ride in a coach, she will not care if she rides to her ruin. It is the great end of many of their marriages. This is not the first time a lady has ridden a false journey in her coach, I hope."

Women would often ride in a coach to an assignation, aka a tryst, aka a session of adulterous sex. Or they would sexually ride while in a coach. Adultery often ruined marriages.

Another kind of "false journey" is a wild-goose chase.

Sir Petronel said:

"Nay, it doesn't matter; I care little what they think. He who weighs men's thoughts has his hands full of nothing.

“A man in the course of this world should be like a surgeon’s instrument: work in the wounds of others and feel nothing himself. The sharper and subtler, the better.”

“As it falls out now, knight, you shall not need to devise excuses or endure her outcries when she returns,” Quicksilver said. “We shall before they return be gone where they cannot reach us.”

Sir Petronel said to Security, “Well, my kind compeer and associate, you have now the assurance we both can make you. Let me now entreat you that the money we agreed on may be brought to the Blue Anchor Tavern nearby Billingsgate by six o’clock, where I and my chief friends, bound for this voyage, will with feasts attend you.”

“The money, my most honorable compeer, shall without fail observe your appointed hour,” Security said.

Sir Petronel said:

“Thanks, my dear gossip.

“I must now impart to your approved — attested and proven — love a loving secret, as one on whom my life does more rely in friendly trust than any man alive.

“Nor shall you be the chosen secretary, aka confidant, of my affections for affection only. For I protest (if God bless my return) to make you partner in my action’s — my deed’s — gain as deeply as if you had ventured with me half my expenses.”

If Security had risked with Sir Petronel half of Sir Petronel’s expenses, he would lose all that money. If he becomes partner in Sir Petronel’s new action or deed, we can expect Security to lose something.

Sir Petronel continued:

“Know then, honest gossip, I have enjoyed with such divine contentment the bed and sexual favors of a gentlewoman whom you well know, with the result that I shall never enjoy this tedious voyage, nor live the least part of the time it requires, without her presence, so much do I thirst and hunger to taste the dear feast of her company.

“And if the hunger and the thirst you vow as my sworn gossip to my wished good is — as I know it is — unfeigned and firm, do me an easy favor in your power.”

Security replied:

“Be sure, brave gossip, all that I can do, to my best nerve and utmost strength, is wholly at your service.

“Who is the woman, first, who is your friend?”

A “friend” can be a lover.

Sir Petronel answered:

“The woman is your learned counsel’s wife: the wife of the lawyer, Master Bramble, whom I want you to bring out this evening, in honest neighborliness, to take his leave with you of me, your gossip.

“I, in the meantime, will send this my friend — Quicksilver — home to his house, to bring Bramble’s wife disguised before his face into our company.

“For love has made her look for such a wile — a devious stratagem — to free her from his tyrannous jealousy, and I would take this course before another, in stealing her away to make us sport and entertainment and fool his circumspection and deceive his watchfulness the more grossly.

“And I am sure that no man like yourself has credit with him to entice his jealous disposition to so long stay abroad and



away from his home as may give time to her enlargement and liberation in such safe disguise.”

Security said:

“This is a pretty, pithy and vigorous, and most pleasant project and scheme!

“Who would not strain a point of neighborliness for such a point-device — such a perfect plot and plot of vice — that, just as the ship of famous Draco — Sir Francis Drake — circumnavigated the world in 1580, will wind about the lawyer, compassing the world himself?”

Sir Francis Drake sailed around the world, and now this plot will wind around and bind the lawyer, just as the lawyer’s legal papers wind around and bind his victims.

The lawyer Bramble compasses the world: He machinates (engages in plots and schemes), and he manipulates those in his world to his benefit.

Besides “machinate” and “manipulate,” the verb “compass” also means 1) to compost, or 2) to manure.

Literally, in a garden, this can be a good thing. But figuratively, Bramble spreads manure around in his world, and it is a bad thing.

Security said:

“He has the world in his arms, and that’s enough for him without his wife.

“A lawyer is ambitious, and his head cannot be praised nor raised too high with any fork of highest knavery.

“I’ll go fetch him straightaway.”

In this society, forks could have two, three, or four prongs. A two-pronged fork can resemble horns — either the horns of the Devil, or the horns of a cuckold.

Security exited.

Sir Petronel said:

“Good, good.

“Now, Frank, go thou home to Security’s house, instead of his lawyer’s, and bring his wife here.

“She, just like the lawyer’s wife, is imprisoned by his stern, usurious jealousy, which could never be overreached thus but with overreaching — that is, be outwitted thus but with trickery.”

Security returned and said:

“And, Master Francis, watch for the instant time to enter with his exit — be on watch to enter the house as soon as Bramble exits.

“It will be rare: two fine horned beasts, a camel and a lawyer!”

According to Security, the lawyer would wear the horns of a cuckold: a man with an unfaithful wife.

According to a fable by Aesop, a camel envied the horns of a bull, and asked Jupiter to give him horns. A capricious god, Jupiter not only did not give the camel horns, but also made the camel’s ears shorter.

The camel wanted horns but did not get them. According to Security, Bramble does not want horns, but he will get them.

Security exited.

“How the old villain takes joy in practicing villainy!” Quicksilver said.

Security returned and said to Quicksilver:

“And listen, gossip, when you have her here, have your boat ready; ship her to your ship with utmost haste, lest Master Bramble delay you.

“To overreach — surpass — that head that outreaches all heads, it is a trick rampant and high-spirited, it is a very quiblin — a true trick!

“I hope this harvest to pitch cart with lawyers — their heads will be so forked.”

Security was saying that instead of using pitchforks to pitch hay into wagons, people could use the forked heads of lawyers to do that.

Security continued:

“This sly touch will get apes — imitators — to invent a number of such tricks.”

He exited.

Quicksilver said:

“Was any rascal ever so honied with poison? He delights in a trick that will end up hurting him.

“He who delights in slavish, base avarice is apt to take joy in every sort of vice.

“Well, I’ll go fetch his wife, while he fetches the lawyer.”

He started to leave, but Sir Petronel said, “But wait, Frank, let’s think about how we may disguise her upon this sudden need to do that.”

Quicksilver said:

“God’s me, there’s the mischief!”

“God’s me” means “God s’ me,” aka “God save me” — a strange oath to make when planning to help someone run away with another man’s wife.

Or perhaps it means “God is me.” Some of these people are trying to act as supreme beings.

He continued:

“But pay attention, here’s an excellent trick. Before God, it’s a rare and splendid one: I will carry to her a sailor’s gown and cap and cover her, and a player’s beard.”

“Cover her” can mean “have sex with her.” Literally, it refers to a stallion covering a mare.

A “player’s beard” is an actor’s false beard.

It is also an adulterer’s pubic hair: something that Quicksilver wished to cover — with his body.

Think of Chaucer’s “Miller’s Tale” when Absolon encounters a beard after asking for a goodnight kiss.

“And what will you put upon her head?” Sir Petronel asked.

Quicksilver replied, “I told you, a sailor’s cap. By God’s light, God forgive me, but what kind of figent — fidgety and short — memory do you have?”

“Nay, then, what kind of figent wit have thou?” Sir Petronel asked. “A sailor’s cap? How shall she take it off when thou present her to our company?”

“Tush, man, as for that, make her a saucy sailor,” Quicksilver said.

“Tush, tush, it is no fit sauce — no fit disguise — for such sweet mutton,” Sir Petronel said. “I don’t know what to advise.”

A proverb stated, “Sweet meat must have sour sauce.”

“Mutton” is a word for a prostitute.

Security returned, carrying his wife’s good gown, and said, “Knight, knight, here is a rare and splendid trick!”

Sir Petronel said to himself, “By God’s wounds, here he is yet again!”

“What stratagem have you now?” Quicksilver asked.

“The best stratagem that ever was,” Security said. “You talked of disguising?”

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, gossip, that’s our present care and concern,” Sir Petronel said.

Security said:

“Cast care away, then. Cast aside your worries.

“Here’s the best trick for plain Security — for I am no better — I think that ever lived.

“Here’s my wife’s gown, which you may put upon the lawyer’s wife, and which I brought you, sir, for two great reasons:

“One reason is, that Master Bramble may take hold of some suspicion that it is my wife and gird me — make fun of me — so, perhaps, with his law wit.

“The other reason (which is cunning policy and trickery indeed) is that my wife may now be tied at home, having no more but her old gown to go abroad outside, and she will not

show me a quirk while I firk others — she won't be able to trick me while I trick others.

“Isn't this trick splendid?”

“The best that ever was!” Sir Petronel and Quicksilver said.

“Am I not born to furnish and provide for gentlemen?” Security asked.

He was acting as a pandar to Sir Petronel.

“O my dear gossip!” Sir Petronel said.

Security said:

“Well, wait, Master Francis. Watch for when the lawyer's out, and put it in.”

Hmm. “Put it in.” Say no more.

But Security meant for Quicksilver to take the dress in to Bramble's wife.

Security continued:

“And now I will go and fetch Bramble.”

He started to exit but hesitated.

Quicksilver said:

“O my Dad!”

He then whispered to Sir Petronel:

“He goes as if he were the Devil to fetch the lawyer; and devil shall he be, if horns will make him one.”

In medieval stories, the Devil sometimes carried a lawyer to Hell.

Sir Petronel asked Security, “Why, how are things now, gossip? Why do you stay there musing?”

“A toy, a toy runs in my head, indeed,” Security said.

A toy is an odd notion or a trick.

Quicksilver said to himself, “A pox on that head! Are there more toys yet?”

“What is it, I ask thee, gossip?” Sir Petronel asked.

“Why, sir, what if you should slip away now with my wife’s best gown, with me having no security for it?” Security asked.

He had no guarantee — and no security deposit — that the gown would be returned.

“As for that, I hope, Dad, you will take our words,” Quicksilver said.

Security said sarcastically:

“Aye, by the Mass, your word! That’s a proper staff for wise Security to lean upon!”

He then said:

“But it does not matter. For once I’ll entrust my name to your cracked, unsound credits; let it take no shame.

“Fetch the wench, Frank.”

Frank Quicksilver said:

“I’ll wait upon you, sir —”

Security exited.

Quicksilver continued:

“— and fetch you over in such a way that you were never so fetched. Yes, I will deceive as you have never been deceived before.”

He then said to Sir Petronel:

“Go to the tavern, knight; your followers don’t dare be drunk, I think, before their captain.”

He exited.

Alone, Sir Petronel said to himself, “I wish I might lead them to no hotter and no more dangerous service, until our Virginian gold were in our purses!”

“Virginia” was the word then used for the North American coast north of Florida. It was not rich in gold, although people believed or hoped it was.

— 3.3 —

Captain Seagull, Spendall, and Scapethrift were in the Blue Anchor Tavern near Billingsgate, a port. A drawer was also present. Drawers are bartenders.

“Come, drawer, pierce and tap your neatest hogsheads — your best and purest barrels — of wine, and let’s have cheer not fit for your Billingsgate tavern but fit for our Virginian colonel,” Captain Seagull said. “He will be here quickly.”

Hmm. “Cheer not fit for your Billingsgate tavern but fit for our Virginian colonel”? That could be much better cheer — drink — than usual. Or much worse.

“Our Virginian colonel” is Sir Petronel.

“You shall have all things fit, sir,” the drawer said. “Would it please you to have any more wine?”

“More wine, slave?” Spendall said. “Whether we drink it or instead spill it, the answer is to draw more wine from the tap.”

“Fill all the drinking pots in your house with all sorts of liquor,” Scapethrift said, “and let them wait on us here like



soldiers in their pewter coats of armor. And although we do not employ them now, yet we will maintain them until we do.”

Although they would not drink all the pewter pots of wine now, they would keep the pots full until they did drink them.

“Said like an honorable captain,” the drawer said. “You shall have all you can command, sir.”

“Come, boys, Virginia longs until we share the rest of her maidenhead,” Captain Seagull said.

Virginia was still unspoiled country: It metaphorically still had its maidenhood, aka virginity.

Captain Seagull now talked about Virginia. He made it sound like a utopia, but much of what he said was wishful thinking. He either believed what he said, or he was exaggerating to provide entertainment for his audience.

Spendall asked, “Why, is she inhabited already with any English?”

Captain Seagull answered, “A whole country of English is there, man, bred of those who were left there in 1579. They have married with the Indians and make them bring forth as beautiful faces as any we have in England, and therefore the Indians are so in love with them that all the treasure they have, they lay at their feet.”

In reality, the first settlers arrived in Virginia in 1585, and they returned to England in 1586. The settlers of 1587 disappeared and became known as the “Lost Colony.”

And at first, the Native Americans were friendly, but they turned hostile after bad behavior by the settlers.

“But is there such treasure there, Captain, as I have heard?” Scapethrift asked.

Captain Seagull answered:

“I tell thee, gold is more plentiful there than copper is with us, and for as much red copper as I can bring, I’ll have thrice the weight in gold.

“Why, man, all their pans to catch dripping grease from cooking meat and all their chamber pots are pure gold; and all the chains with which they chain up their streets are massive gold chains; all the prisoners they take are fettered in gold.”

Some streets could be chained off for traffic control.

Captain Seagull continued:

“And as for rubies and diamonds, they go forth on holidays and gather them by the seashore to hang on their children’s coats and stick in their caps, as commonly as our children wear saffron-gilt — imitation gold — brooches and groats with holes in them.”

These groats are coins that have holes drilled in them so they can be made into necklaces.

“And is it also a pleasant country?” Scapethrift asked.

Captain Seagull answered:

“As ever the sun shined on; temperate and full of all sorts of excellent viands — all kinds of excellent food. Wild boar is as common there as our tamest bacon is here, venison is as common there as our mutton is here.

“And then you shall live freely there, without sergeants [arresting officers], or courtiers, or lawyers, or intelligencers [informers]; only a few industrious Scots, perhaps, who indeed are dispersed over the face of the whole earth. But as for them, there are no greater friends to Englishmen and

England — when they are not in England but are in the world — than they are.

“And for my part, I wish a hundred thousand of them were there in Virginia, for we are all one countrymen now and ruled by one king named James, you know, and we should find ten times more comfort of them there than we do here.”

King James I of England was also King James VI of Scotland.

Captain Seagull continued:

“Then for your means to advancement there, it is simple and not preposterously and perversely mixed: You may be an alderman there and never be a scavenger [a street cleaner]; you may be a nobleman and never be a slave. You may come to preferment enough and never be a pander; you may come to riches and fortune enough and have never the more villainy nor the less wit.”

“God’s me!” Spendall said. “And how far is it thither?”

Captain Seagull said:

“Some six weeks’ sail, no more, with any indifferent — moderately — good wind.

“And if I get to any part of the coast of Africa, I’ll sail thither with any wind. Or when I come to Cape Finisterre, the westernmost point of Spain, there’s a foreright — favorable — wind that will continually waft us until we come to Virginia.

“Look, our colonel’s come.”

Sir Petronel entered the scene. Following him was the drawer.

Sir Petronel said:

“Well met, good Captain Seagull, and my noble gentlemen!

“Now the sweet hour of our freedom from debt and arrest is at hand. Come, drawer. Fill us some carouses — some full cups of wine — and prepare us for the mirth that will be occasioned soon.”

The drawer poured wine and then exited.

Sir Petronel continued:

“Here will soon be a pretty wench, gentlemen, who will bear us company all our voyage.”

Captain Seagull said, “Whatsoever she is, here’s to her health, noble Colonel, both with cap and knee.”

He removed his cap, knelt, and drank.

When the sailors and others drank toasts and healths, they removed their caps and knelt.

Sir Petronel said:

“Thanks, kind Captain Seagull. She’s one I love dearly, and her identity must not be known until we are free from all who know us. And so, gentlemen, here’s to her health!”

Spendall and Scapethrift said together, “Let it come, worthy Colonel! We do hunger and thirst for it.”

They drank to her health and to her freedom.

“Before heaven, you have hit the phrase of one whom her presence will touch from the foot to the forehead, if ye knew it,” Sir Petronel said.

“Touch” can mean 1) affect, and 2) injure.

Security’s catchphrase was “hunger and thirst for it.”

“Why, then, we will join his forehead with her health in our toast, sir,” Spendall said. “And Captain Scapethrift, here’s to them both.”

The woman’s husband’s forehead would have horns due to his being made a cuckold. The woman, of course, is Winifred, Security’s young wife.

All knelt and drank to the mystery woman.

Security and Bramble entered the scene.

Seeing all kneeling, Security said, “Look, look, Master Bramble! Before heaven, their voyage cannot but prosper; they are on their knees for success to it.”

He thought that they were praying for a successful voyage, not toasting his prospective cuckolding.

“And they pray to God Bacchus,” Bramble said.

Bacchus is the god of wine.

“God save my brave colonel, with all his tall — brave — captains and corporals!” Security said. “See, sir, my worshipful learned counsel, Master Bramble, has come to take his leave of you.”

As he and the sailors rose, Sir Petronel said:

“Worshipful Master Bramble, how far do you draw us into the sweet briar of your kindness?”

“Sweet briars” are wild roses, and they are considered to be a type of bramble: a prickly shrub.

Sir Petronel continued:

“Come, Captain Seagull, another health to this rare Bramble, who has never a prick about him.”

“Never a prick” can mean 1) never a thorn, aka no prickliness, or 2) never an erection.

“I pledge his most smooth disposition, sir,” Captain Seagull said. “Come, Master Security, bend your supporters — your legs — and pledge this notorious — notable — health here.”

“Bend your legs likewise, Master Bramble, for it is you who shall pledge me,” Security said.

“Not so, Master Security,” Captain Seagull said. “He must not pledge his own health.”

Bramble would have to wait to pledge Security’s health; right now, everyone was pledging Bramble’s health.

Security said, “No, Master Captain?”

Quicksilver and Winifred (Security’s disguised young wife) entered the scene.

“Why, then, here’s one who is fitly come to do him that honor,” Security said.

Quicksilver could pledge Bramble’s health. He could do that fitly because Winifred was not Bramble’s wife.

Quicksilver said to Sir Petronel, “Here’s the gentlewoman — your cousin, sir — whom with much entreaty I have brought to take her leave of you in a tavern. Because she is ashamed to be in a tavern, you must pardon her if she does not take off her mask.”

Masks were worn for protection from the sun as well as for anonymity.

“Pardon me, sweet cousin,” Sir Petronel said. “My kind desire to see you before I went made me so importunate as to entreat your presence here.”

“How are you now, Master Francis?” Security asked. “Have you honored this presence with a fair gentlewoman?”

“Please, sir, take no notice of her, for she will not be known to you,” Francis “Frank” Quicksilver replied.

If Security were impotent, he could not know her Biblically.

“But my learned counsel, Master Bramble here, I hope may know her,” Security said.

“Know her” can mean 1) learn who she is, or 2) have sex with her (that is, Biblically know her).

“No more than you, sir, at this time,” Quicksilver said. “His learning must teach him to pardon her.”

Security said:

“Well, God pardon her for my part, and I do, I’ll be sworn.

“And so, Master Francis, here’s to all who are going eastward tonight towards Cuckold’s Haven; and so to the health of Master Bramble.”

Frank Quicksilver knelt and said:

“I pledge it, sir.

“Has the pledging cup gone round, captains? Has everyone partaken of the health?”

“It has, sweet Frank, and the round closes with thee,” Captain Seagull said.

“Well, sir, here’s to all eastward and toward — promising — cuckolds,” Quicksilver said, “and so to famous Cuckold’s Haven so fatally — ominously — remembered.”

He drank and then rose to his feet.

Cuckold's Haven was a place on the Surrey shore of the Thames River that was marked by a pair of horns displayed on a tall pole. Supposedly, King John I of England had made a miller a cuckold there.

Sir Petronel said to the disguised Winifred, "Nay, please, coz, don't weep."

"Coz" means 1) relative (not necessarily a cousin), or 2) friend.

He then said, "Gossip Security?"

"Aye, my brave gossip?" Security replied.

"May I have a word with you, please, sir?" Sir Petronel asked.

He then said quietly to Security:

"Our friend, Mistress Bramble here, is so dissolved in tears that she drowns the whole mirth of our meeting.

"Sweet gossip, take her aside and comfort her."

Not recognizing his own disguised wife, Security said quietly to her:

"Pity of all true love, Mistress Bramble.

"What! Do you weep at enjoying your love?"

"What's the reason, lady? Is it because your husband is so near, and your heart earns — that is, grieves — to have a little abused and deceived him? Alas, alas, the offence is too common to be respected and taken seriously."

The offense is adultery.

Security continued:



“So great a grace has seldom chanced to so unthankful a woman, to be rid of an old jealous dotard, to enjoy the arms of a loving young knight that, when your prickless Bramble is withered with grief at your loss, will make you flourish afresh in the bed of a lady.”

“Prickless” Bramble has a bawdy meaning, but it can also mean “lacks sharp thorns.”

“Withered” can mean “unerect.”

The drawer entered the scene and said:

“Sir Petronel, here’s one of your watermen — hired boatmen — come to tell you it will be flood tide for the next three hours, and that it will be dangerous going against the tide.”

It was just before high tide, and the current would be strong.

The drawer continued:

“For the sky is overcast, and there was a porpoise even now seen at London Bridge, which is always the messenger of tempests, he says.”

Sir Petronel said:

“A porpoise? What’s that to the purpose? Command him, if he love his life, to wait for us. Can’t we reach the shipping center of Blackwall, where my ship lies, against the tide and in spite of tempests?”

“Captains and gentlemen, we’ll begin a new ceremony at the beginning of our voyage, which I believe will be followed by all future adventurers.”

“What’s that, good Colonel?” Captain Seagull asked.

“This, Captain Seagull,” Sir Petronel said. “We’ll have our provided supper brought aboard Sir Francis Drake’s ship that has compassed the world, where with full cups and banquets

— light food and desserts — we will do sacrifice for a prosperous voyage. My mind suggests to me that some good spirits of the waters should haunt her deserted ribs — her unmanned hull — and be auspicious to all who honor her memory, and will with like orgies — that is, ceremonies — begin their voyages.”

Sir Francis Drake’s ship was named *Golden Hind*. The circumnavigation took place from 1577-1580.

“Rarely conceited — excellently devised!” Captain Seagull said. “One health more to this motion, aka proposal, and let’s go aboard to perform it. He who will not this night be drunk, may he never be sober!”

All encircled the disguised Winifred, danced a drunken round, and drank carouses.

A carouse is a big drink of liquor. It is full-out drinking.

Bramble said:

“Sir Petronel and his honorable captains, in these youthful activities, we old servitors may be spared. We came only to take our leaves, and with one health to you all, I’ll be bold to do so.

“Here, neighbor Security, to the health of Sir Petronel and all his captains!”

He drank.

Security said:

“You must bend the knee then, Master Bramble.”

Bramble and Security knelt.

Security then said:

“So, now I am for you. I have one corner of my brain, I hope, fit to bear one carouse more.

“Here, lady, to you who are encompassed there and are ashamed of our company.”

They drank and rose.

Security said:

“Ha, ha, ha! By my truth, my learned counsel Master Bramble, my mind runs so of Cuckold’s Haven tonight that my head runs over with admiration and wonder.”

Hearing the word “cuckold,” Bramble whispered to Security about the disguised Winifred, “But isn’t that your wife, neighbor?”

Security whispered back, “No, by my truth, Master Bramble. Ha, ha, ha! A pox on all Cuckold’s Havens, I say.”

Bramble whispered back, “On my faith, I swear that her garments are exceedingly like your wife’s.”

Yes, the masked Winifred was wearing her best gown.

Security whispered back:

“*Cucullus non facit monachum*, my learned counsel.”

Translated, the Latin proverb stated, “A cowl does not make a monk.”

In other words: Appearances can be deceiving.

He continued:

“Not all are cuckolds who seem to be so, and not all who seem not to be cuckolds are so.

“Give me your hand, my learned counsel; you and I will sup somewhere else than at Sir Francis Drake’s ship tonight.”

He then said to Sir Petronel:

“Adieu, my noble gossip.”

“Good fortune, brave captains,” Bramble said. “May God send ye fair skies!”

“Farewell, my hearts, farewell!” everyone said.

“Gossip, laugh no more at Cuckold’s Haven, gossip,” Sir Petronel said.

Security said:

“I have finished. I have finished, sir.

“Will you lead, Master Bramble? Ha, ha, ha!”

Security and Bramble exited.

“Captain Seagull, call for a boat,” Sir Petronel said.

Everyone except the drawer called, “A boat! A boat! A boat!”

Everyone except the drawer exited.

Alone, the drawer said to himself, “You’re in a proper state, indeed, to take a boat, especially at this time of night, and against tide and tempest. They say yet, ‘Drunken men never take harm’; this night will try the truth of that proverb.”

He exited.

— 3.4 —

Alone in his home, Security called:

“What, Winnie! Wife, I say! Out of doors at this time?

“Where should I seek the gadfly?

“Billingsgate! Billingsgate! Billingsgate!”

“She’s gone with the knight: Sir Petronel! She’s gone with the knight! Woe be to thee, Billingsgate! A boat! A boat! A boat! A full hundred marks for a boat!”

He exited to go and try to find his wife.

ACT 4 (*Eastward Ho!*)

— 4.1 —

Holding a pair of ox horns, Slitgut stood in front of a pole at Cuckold's Haven.

He said to himself:

“All hail, fair haven of married men only! For there are none but married men who are cuckolds.

“As for my part, I presume not to arrive here except in the behalf of my master, a poor butcher of Eastcheap, who sends me to set up, in honor of Saint Luke, these necessary ensigns — these horns — of his homage.”

The butchers of Eastcheap were in charge of providing new ox's horns as needed for the pole at Cuckold's Haven. The ox was the emblem of Saint Luke.

He continued:

“And I got up this morning, thus early, to get up to the top of this famous tree — this pole — that is all fruit and no leaves, to advance this crest — emblem — of my master's occupation.”

One fruit of adultery is bastards. This kind of fruit is stone-fruit: Stones are testicles.

He then said:

“Up, then!”

He began to climb the pole.

Slitgut then said:

“Heaven and Saint Luke bless me, so that I am not blown into the Thames as I climb, with this furious tempest! By

God's light, I think the devil is abroad in the likeness of a storm, to rob me of my horns. Listen at how he roars!

“Lord, what a coil and uproar the Thames keeps! She bears some unjust, dishonest burden, I believe, and so she kicks and curvets and rears up thus to cast it — to vomit it out. Heaven bless all honest passengers, aka travelers, who are upon her back now! For the bit is out of her mouth, I see, and she will run away with them.”

He attached the horns to the top of the pole.

Slitgut continued:

“So, so, I think I have made it look the right way; it runs against London Bridge, as it were, even full butt — it directly faces the London Bridge.”

The horns directly faced London, where many cuckolds lived.

The image was of a rampaging bull running full-tilt at the London Bridge.

Slitgut continued:

“And now, let me discover from this lofty prospect — this vantage place — what pranks the rude, turbulent Thames plays in her desperate lunacy.

“Oh, me, here's a boat that has been cast away nearby. Alas, alas, see one of her passengers laboring for his life to land at this haven here; pray heaven he may recover — reach — it! His nearest land is even just under me.

“Hold out yet a little, whosoever thou are, I pray, and take a good heart to thee. Be courageous! It is a man; take a man's heart to thee.

“Just a little further; get up on thy legs, man, now it is shallow enough. So, so, so! Alas, he’s down again! Hold thy breath, father. It is a man in a nightcap. So!

“Now he’s got up again; now he’s past the worst. Yet thanks be to heaven, he comes towards me to a considerable extent — and strongly.”

Wet, and without his hat, in a nightcap, collar, etc., Security entered the scene. He had fittingly landed at Cuckold’s Haven.

Security said to himself:

“Heaven, I ask thee, how have I offended thee? Where am I cast ashore now, so that I may go a righter way home by land?

“Let me see. Oh, I am scarcely able to look about me. Where is there any sea-mark that I am acquainted with? Where is a landmark I can recognize?”

“Look up, father,” Slitgut said. “Are you acquainted with this landmark?”

“What!” Security said. “Landed at Cuckold’s Haven? Hell and damnation! I will run back and drown myself.”

He fell down.

“Poor man, how weak he is!” Slitgut said. “The water has washed away his strength.”

Security said to himself:

“Landed at Cuckold’s Haven? If it had not been to die twenty times alive, I would never have escaped death.”

He believed that he had escaped death by drowning only so that he could die twenty times from the shame of being a cuckold.



Security continued:

“I will never arise anymore; I will grovel here and eat dirt until I am choked; I will make the gentle earth do that which the cruel water has denied me.”

“Alas, good father, be not so desperate,” Slitgut said. “Rise, man; if you will, I’ll come immediately and lead you home.”

“Home?” Security said. “Shall I make any know my home who has known me thus abroad? How low shall I crouch away, so that no eye may see me? I will creep on the earth while I live and never look heaven in the face more.”

Creeping on the ground, he exited.

Slitgut said:

“What young planet reigns now, I wonder, that old men are so foolish?”

This society believed in astrology: It believed that planets influenced human behavior. In this case, a malign planet was making old men, who should behave wisely, behave foolishly instead.

Slitgut continued:

“What desperate young swaggerer would have been abroad in such a weather as this, upon the water?”

He looked at the Thames again and said:

“Ay me, see another remnant of this unfortunate shipwreck, or some other!”

“Ay me!” is an expression of regret: Alas! Woe is me! Oh! Ah!

Slitgut continued:

“A woman, indeed, a woman! Although she is almost at Saint Katherine’s reformatory for fallen women, I discern her to be a woman, for all her body is above the water, and her clothes swim about her most handsomely. Oh, they bear her up most splendidly!”

Her clothing had trapped air, which kept her afloat like Ophelia’s clothing did for a while in *Hamlet*.

Slitgut continued:

“Hasn’t a woman reason to love the taking up of her clothes all the better while she lives, because of this?”

Her clothes could be taken up for the purpose of love-making.

Slitgut continued:

“Alas, how busy the rude, unkind Thames is about her!

“A curse on that wave. It will drown her, indeed, it will drown her. Cry God mercy — thank God! — she has escaped it! I thank Heaven she has escaped it.

“Oh, how she swims like a mermaid! May some vigilant body — some watchful person — look out and save her. That’s well done: Just where the priest fell in, there’s someone who is setting down a ladder and is going to take her up.”

This place is where the priest fell in, and the woman will turn out to be a fallen woman.

Slitgut continued:

“God’s blessing on thy heart, boy. Now take her up in thy arms and to bed with her.”

“To bed with her” can mean 1) put her in a bed so she can be warm, or 2) take her to a bed and have sex with her.

Slitgut continued:

“She’s up, she’s up! She’s a beautiful woman, I promise her to be; the billows dare not devour her.”

The drawer from the Blue Anchor Tavern, with Winifred, whom he had rescued, entered the scene. Fittingly, Winifred had been rescued near St. Katherine’s reformatory for fallen women.

“How are you now, lady?” the drawer asked.

“Much better, my good friend, than I wish,” Winifred said. “I fare as one desperate that she may have lost her fame — her reputation — now that my life is preserved.”

The drawer said, “Comfort yourself; that power that preserved you from death can likewise defend you from infamy, howsoever you deserve it. Weren’t you the one who took boat, late this night, with a knight and other gentlemen at Billingsgate?”

The knight, of course, was Sir Petronel.

“Miserable as I am, I was,” Winifred said.

The drawer said:

“I am glad it was my good luck to come down thus far after you, to a house of my friend’s here in Saint Katherine’s, since I am now happily made a means to your rescue from the ruthless and pitiless tempest. This tempest, when you took boat, was so extreme, and the gentleman who brought you forth so desperate and unsober, that I feared long before this that I should hear of your shipwreck, and therefore (with little other reason) made thus far this way.

“And this I must tell you, since perhaps you may make use of it: There was left behind you at our tavern, brought by a porter hired by the young gentleman who brought you, a

gentlewoman's gown, hat, stockings, and shoes, which if they are yours, and you please to shift — change — your clothing, taking a hard bed here in this house of my friend, I will immediately go and fetch those articles of clothing for you."

The young gentleman, of course, was Quicksilver, who realized that Winifred would need her other dress and some personal items and so had ordered them to be sent to the tavern. Later, because Quicksilver was drunk and therefore forgetful, he had left the tavern with Winifred before the items could be delivered.

Winifred replied:

"Thanks, my good friend, for your more than good news.

"The gown, with all things bound with it, are mine; which if you please to fetch as you have promised, I will boldly receive the kind favor you have offered until your return — entreating you, by all the good you have done in preserving me hitherto, to let no one know what favor you do me, or where such a one as I am has been bestowed, lest you incur me much more damage in my reputation than you have done me pleasure in preserving my life."

The drawer said, "Come in, lady, and put yourself in order. Be assured that nothing but your own pleasure shall be used in your discovery: I won't reveal anything that you wish me not to reveal."

"Thank you, good friend," Winifred said. "The time may come I shall requite you."

The drawer and Winifred exited.

Slitgut looked at the Thames River and said:

"See, see, see! I hold — I bet — my life, there's some other taking up — another person landing — at Wapping, now!

Someone is being helped to get out of the water! Look — what a crowd of people cluster around the gallows there!”

Pirates, sea-rovers, and criminals were hung at Wapping, located to the east of St. Katherine’s reformatory for fallen women.

Slitgut continued:

“In good truth, it is so. Oh, me! A fine young gentleman! What, and taken up at the gallows? Heaven grant he will not be one day taken down there after hanging. On my life, it is ominous.

“Well, he is delivered for the time. I see the people have all left him; yet I will keep my lookout for a while, to see if any more have been shipwrecked.”

Quicksilver, bareheaded and without cloak or sword, entered the scene. Fittingly, he had come ashore near a gallows.

He said to himself:

“Accursed am I that ever I was saved or born!

“How fatal — how ominous — is my sad arrival here! As if the stars and Providence spoke to me and said, ‘The drift of all unlawful courses, whatever end they dare propose themselves in frame of — in planning — their licentious policies, they are in the firm order of just destiny the ready highways to our ruins.’”

In other words: Providence says that all sinful courses of action will be punished although those who follow such sinful courses of action had something much different and more pleasant intended. Quicksilver’s behavior would lead him to the gallows.

Quicksilver continued:

“I don’t know what to do; my wicked hopes are, with this tempest, torn up by the roots.

“Oh, which way shall I bend my desperate steps in which unsufferable shame and misery will not attend them? I will walk this bank and see if I can meet the other relics — the other survivors — of our poor shipwrecked crew or hear of them.

“The knight, alas, was so far gone with wine, and the other three, that I refused their boat and took the hapless woman in another boat. The hapless woman cannot but be sunk, whatever fortune has wrought upon the others’ desperate lives.”

Sir Petronel, Captain Seagull, Spendall, and Scapethrift had gone in one boat, and Quicksilver and Winifred had gone in another.

Quicksilver exited.

Sir Petronel and Captain Seagull entered the scene. They were bareheaded and without cloaks or swords.

“By God’s wounds, Captain, I tell thee we are cast up on the coast of France,” Sir Petronel said. “By God’s foot, I am not drunk still, I hope! Do thou remember where we were last night?”

“No, by my truth, knight, I don’t remember,” Captain Seagull said. “But I think that we have been a horrible while upon the water, and in the water.”

“Ay me, we are undone forever!” Sir Petronel said. “Have thee any money about thee?”

“Not a penny, by heaven,” Captain Seagull said.

“Not a penny between us, and cast ashore in France?” Sir Petronel said.

“In faith, I cannot tell that,” Captain Seagull said. “Neither my brains nor my eyes are my own yet.”

Two gentlemen entered the scene.

Sir Petronel said:

“By God’s foot, won’t thou believe me? I know that we are in France by the elevation of the pole, and by the altitude and latitude of the climate, aka land.”

The elevation of the pole referred to how high the North Star — the Pole Star — was above the horizon, but if one believes that Frenchmen are especially lascivious, it could refer to the elevation of a different kind of “pole.”

Sir Petronel said:

“See, here comes a couple of French gentlemen; I knew we were in France. Do thou think our Englishmen are so Frenchified that a man doesn’t know whether he is in France or in England when he sees them? What shall we do? We must even go to them and entreat some relief of them. Life is sweet, and we have no other means to relieve our lives now but their charities.”

Many men followed French fashions and so were Frenchified: They looked, in some ways, like Frenchmen.

“Please, beg them for help, then,” Captain Seagull said. “You can speak French.”

Sir Petronel, who could speak rough — ungrammatical — French, said:

*“Monsieur, plaît-il d’avoir pitié de nôtre grand infortunes? Je suis un poure [pauvre? = poor; poivre? or povre? = pepper] chevalier d’Angleterre qui a souffri l’infortune de naufrage.”*

[“Sir, would you like to have pity on our great misfortunes? I am a (poor or pepper) knight of England who suffered the misfortune of shipwreck.”]

The first gentleman, who could speak French, asked:

“*Un poure chevalier d’Angleterre?*”

*Pauvre* means “poor.” *Poivre* and *povre* mean “pepper.”

[“A (poor or pepper) knight from England?”]

Possibly, the first gentleman was mocking Sir Petronel’s French. But, to be sure, Sir Petronel’s life was peppered — seasoned — with poverty.

Sir Petronel said:

“*Oui, monsieur, il est trop vrai; mais vous savez bien, nous sommes tous sujet à fortune.*”

[“Yes, sir, it is too true; but you know well, we are all subject to fortune.”]

“A poor knight of England?” the second gentleman said. “A poor knight of Windsor, aren’t you?”

Impoverished military pensioners lived at Windsor.

The second gentleman continued:

“Why do you speak this broken French, when you’re a whole Englishman?”

“On what coast do you think you are?”

Sir Petronel replied, “On the coast of France, sir.”

“On the coast of Dogs, sir,” the first gentleman said. “You’re on the Isle of Dogs, I tell you.”



The Isle of Dogs was a peninsula on the north side of the Thames, and many debtors lived there. It was fitting that Sir Petronel had landed there.

The first gentleman continued:

“I see you’ve been washed in the Thames here, and I believe you were drowned in a tavern before, or else you would never have taken boat in such a dawning as this was.

“Farewell, farewell, we will not know you and ask your names for shaming of you.”

Using a Scottish accent, the first gentleman said to the second gentleman, “I ken the man weel; he’s one of those thirty-pound knights.”

The second gentleman replied, “No, no, this is he who stole his knighthood on the grand day for four pounds, giving to a page all the money in his purse, I wot [know] well.”

The grand day was the day King James VI of Scotland became also King James I of England.

The two gentlemen exited.

“By God’s death, Colonel, I knew you were overshot,” Captain Seagull said.

Sir Petronel said:

“Sure I think now, indeed, Captain Seagull, we were something overshot.”

Sir Petronel had vastly over-estimated how far they had traveled, and they had drunk too much alcohol and were vastly intoxicated.

Quicksilver entered the scene.

Sir Petronel said:

“What! My sweet Frank Quicksilver! Do thou survive to make me rejoice? But what, nobody at thy heels, Frank? Ay me, what has become of poor Mistress Security?”

“Indeed, she has gone quite from her name, as she has from her reputation, I think,” Quicksilver said. “I left her to the mercy of the water.”

As far as Quicksilver knew, Mrs. Security was far from being secure, and far from having a good reputation.

“Let her go. Let her go,” Captain Seagull said. “Let us go to our ship at Blackwall and shift us — let’s change out of these wet clothes.”

Sir Petronel said:

“Nay, by my troth, let our clothes rot upon us, and let us rot in them.

“Twenty to one our ship has been attached — has been seized — by this time. If we set her not under sail this last tide, I never looked for any other.

“Woe, woe is me, what shall become of us? The last money we could raise, the greedy Thames River has devoured, and if our ship has been attached, there is no hope that can relieve us.”

“By God’s foot, knight, what an unknighly faintheartedness transports thee and makes thee forget thyself!” Frank Quicksilver said. “Even if our ship would sink, and even if all the world that’s beyond us — Virginia — would be taken away from us, I hope I have some tricks in this brain of mine that shall not let us perish.”

“Well said, Frank, truly,” Captain Seagull said. “Oh, my nimble-spirited Quicksilver, before God I wish that thou had been our colonel!”

The “colonel” — the leader — had been Sir Petronel.

“I like his spirit very much, but I see no means he has to support that spirit,” Sir Petronel said.

“Bah, knight, I have more means than thou are aware of,” Quicksilver said. “I have not lived among goldsmiths and goldmakers all this while but I have learned something worthy of my time with them. And, not to let thee stink where thou stand, knight, I’ll let thee know some of my skill presently.”

One way for Sir Petronel to stink where he stands is to beshit himself. One reason for doing that is out of fear, including out of fear of being in a bad and impoverished situation.

“Do, good Frank,” Captain Seagull said, “I ask thee to.”

“I will blanch and whiten copper so cunningly to make it look so look like silver that it shall pass almost all tests except *the* test,” Quicksilver said. “It shall endure malleation, it shall have the ponderosity of Luna, and it shall have the tenacity of Luna and be by no means friable.”

In other words, it shall pass almost every test. *The* test would be to melt it so it could be purified; only then would the deception be revealed. Purification means separating silver from base metals such as copper.

The whitened copper (fake silver), however, can pass other tests. It can be beaten and not break, it will weigh as much as Luna (real silver), it will have the strength of Luna (real silver), and it will not crumble and be reduced to powder.

“By God’s light, where did thou learn these terms, I wonder?” Sir Petronel said.

“Tush, knight, the terms of this art every ignorant quacksalver is perfect in,” Quicksilver said.

Quacksalvers are pretenders to knowledge. For example, some people pretend to have medical knowledge, but don't. These people are known as quacks.

Quicksilver continued:

“But I'll tell you how you yourself shall blanch copper thus cunningly.

“Take arsenic, otherwise called realga [arsenic disulphide], which indeed is plain ratsbane [rat poison]; sublime it three or four times [heat to vaporize and then cool to solidify three or four times]; then take the sublimate of this realga and put it into a glass vessel, into chymia [kemia, aka chemical analysis], and let it have a convenient decoction natural [time to mature over heat], four-and-twenty hours, and the compound will become perfectly fixed [solid]. Then take this fixed powder and project it upon [apply it to] well-purged [well-washed] copper, *et habebis magisterium.*”

“*Et habebis magisterium*” is Latin for “And you will have the philosopher's stone.”

The philosopher's stone was supposed to be able to turn base metals into precious metals, such as turning copper into silver. Of course, Quicksilver's chemical process would make copper only look like silver — if it worked.

Alchemists sought the knowledge of how to make the philosopher's stone. Such a stone does not exist, and some con men took advantage of other people's credulity. See Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*.

“Excellent, Frank, let us hug thee!” Sir Petronel and Captain Seagull said.

Quicksilver said, “Nay, this I will do besides: I'll take you off twelvecence from every angel [a gold coin], with a kind

of *aqua fortis* [nitric acid], and never deface any part of the image.”

This was called “washing” currency: taking away some of the gold without removing the image on the gold coin. Quicksilver was saying that he could extract gold worth one shilling from each ten-shilling coin. Of course, doing this reduces the coin’s weight, and doing that was illegal.

“But then it will lack weight,” Sir Petronel said.

Quicksilver said:

“You shall restore that thus: take your *sal achyme* [dry salts, aka salt without chyme, aka juice] prepared, and your distilled urine, and let your angels lie in it but four-and-twenty hours, and they shall have their perfect weight again.

“Come on, now, I hope this is enough to put some spirit into your livers and give you courage; I’ll infuse more courage into you another time.

“We have saluted and paid our respects to the proud air long enough with our bare sconces — our bare heads. Now I will take you to a wench’s house of mine at London, there make shift to shift us, and afterward we will take such fortunes as the stars shall assign us.”

The wench was Sindefy; they would change into dry clothes at her house.

“Notable Frank!” Sir Petronel and Captain Seagull said. “We will forever adore thee.”

Everyone except Slitgut exited.

The drawer and Winifred, who was wearing clean, dry clothing, entered the scene.

Winifred said:

“Now, sweet friend, you have brought me near enough your tavern, which I desired so that I might with some color — plausible excuse — be seen near, inquiring for my husband; who, I must tell you, stole thither last night with my wet gown we have left at your friend’s — which, to continue your former honest kindness, let me ask you to please keep secret from the knowledge of anyone.

“And so, with all vow of your requital, let me now entreat you to leave me to my woman’s wit and fortune.”

Winifred would use her woman’s wit to convince her husband that she had been faithful to him and had not been the woman he had seen in the tavern.

“All shall be done that you desire,” the drawer said, “and so, I hope that all the fortune you can wish for will attend you!”

The drawer exited.

Security entered the scene, and he said:

“I will once more go to this unhappy tavern before I change one more rag of mine, so that I may there know what is left behind, and what news there is of their passengers.

“I have bought myself a hat and collar with the little money I had about me and made the street passersby a little break from staring at my nightcap.”

“Oh, my dear husband!” Winifred said. “Where have you been this last night? All night abroad at taverns? Rob me of my garments? And behave as one run away from me? Alas! Is this seemly and fitting for a man of your credit? Of your age and affection to your wife?”

“What should I say?” Security said. “How miraculously does this turn out? Wasn’t I at home and called thee last night?”

“Yes, sir, the harmless, innocent sleep you broke,” Winifred said, “and my answer to you would have witnessed it, if you had had the patience to have stayed and answered me. But your so sudden retreat made me imagine you were gone to Master Bramble’s, and so I rested patient and hopeful of your coming again until this your surprising and unbelievable absence brought me abroad, with no less than wonder, to seek you where the false knight had carried you.”

Of course, the false knight was Sir Petronel.

“Villain and monster that I was, how have I abused thee!” Security said. “I was suddenly gone indeed, for my sudden jealousy transferred me: It carried me away and changed me. I will say no more but this, dear wife: I suspected thee of infidelity.”

“Did you suspect me?” Winifred asked. “Did you think that I was unfaithful?”

“Don’t talk about it, I beg thee,” Security said. “I am ashamed to imagine it. I will go home, I will go home, and every morning on my knees I will ask thee heartily for forgiveness.”

Security and Winifred exited.

Alone, Slitgut said to himself:

“Now I will descend my honorable prospect, the farthest seeing sea-mark of the world.”

On the ground, he continued:

“No marvel then if I could see two miles about me.”

From the top of the pole, he had seen a great distance.

He continued:

“I hope the red — fiery and full-of-lightning — tempest’s anger is now blown over, which surely I think that heaven sent as a punishment for profaning holy Saint Luke’s memory with so ridiculous a custom.

“Thou dishonest satire, farewell to honest married men; farewell to all sorts and degrees of thee!”

The dishonest satire was a parody of infidelity: the set of ox horns at the top of the pole.

Horns are the sign of cuckolds.

Slitgut said his farewells to various kinds of horns:

“Farewell, thou horn of hunger [dinner horn] that calls the Inns of Court to their manger [dinner table].

“Farewell, thou horn of abundance [cornucopia] that adorns — and adds horns to — the headsmen [head men, and horn-headed men, aka cuckolds] of the commonwealth.

“Farewell, thou horn of direction that is the city lantern.”

City lanterns are street lights: lanterns sided with thin, transparent slices of horn.

Slitgut continued with his farewells to various kinds of horns:

“Farewell, thou horn of pleasure, the ensign of the huntsman.”

In addition to a hunting horn, a horn of pleasure can be a penis. Huntsmen can hunt game, or they can hunt women.

Slitgut continued:

“Farewell, thou horn of destiny, the ensign of the married man.”



In this cynical satire, married men are destined to be cuckolded and so receive the horn of destiny.

Slitgut concluded:

“Farewell, thou horn tree that bears nothing but stone fruit!”

“Stone fruit,” of course, is the fruit of stones, aka testicles: bastards.

— 4.2 —

Alone, Touchstone complained to himself:

“Ha, sirrah! Does my knight adventurer think we can — we know — no point of our compass? Don’t we know north-north-east, north-east-and-by-east, east-and-by-north, nor plain eastward? Ha! Have we never heard of Virginia, nor the *Cavallaria*, nor the *Colonia*?”

*Cavallaria* means a land tenant who is required, in times of war, to provide a soldier on horseback.

The Latin *colonus* means “husbandman,” aka “farming tenant.”

Sir Petronel of course, was a knight, and someone who hoped to make his fortune in Virginia. One way to do that was to establish a plantation.

Touchstone continued:

“Can we discover no discoveries?”

“Well, my errant Sir Flash, and my runagate — my renegade — Quicksilver, you may drink drunk, crack open containers of alcohol and drink the contents, hurl away a brown dozen — a full dozen, of Monmouth sailors’ caps or so in sea-ceremony to your *bon voyage* —”

The Earl of Essex once threw his cap in the sea out of an excess of happiness when he learned that the city of Cadiz would be attacked: Raleigh had persuaded Lord Howard of Effingham to undertake the attack.

Touchstone continued:

“— but as for reaching any coast save the coast of Kent or Essex with this tide or with this fleet, I’ll be your warrant for a Gravesend toast.”

A Gravesend toast is cold toast, and so it is something not worth much.

Touchstone continued:

“There’s that gone before which will stay your admiral and vice-admiral and rear-admiral, were they all — as they are — but one pinnace and under sail, as well as a remora, don’t doubt it; and from this sconce, without either powder or shot.

“Work upon that now!”

A sconce is 1) a fort, or 2) a head.

The admiral and vice-admiral and rear-admiral are all ships that carry important officers. Sir Petronel’s ship is a pinnace: a small ship. The admiral is the flagship.

A remora was a type of fish that was thought to be able to attach itself to a ship and retard its progress.

Touchstone had given the order for Sir Petronel’s ship to be seized.

Touchstone continued:

“Nay, if you’ll show tricks, we’ll vie with you a little.”

“To show tricks” is 1) to practice deception, or 2) to show your playing cards.

“To vie” is 1) to contend, or 2) to make a bet.

Touchstone continued:

“My daughter, his lady, was sent eastward, by land, to a castle of his in the air — in what region I don’t know — and, as I hear, was glad to take up her lodging in her coach, she and her two waiting-women, her maid and her mother, like three snails in a shell, and the coachman on top on them, I think.”

Hmm. “... the coachman on top on them ...” Say no more.

Touchstone continued:

“Since then, they have all found the way back again by Weeping Cross: They have repented their actions.

“But I’ll not see them. And for two of them, madam and her malkin, they are likely to bite of the bridle for William, as the poor horses have done all this while that hurried them, or else go graze on the common.”

If they bite the bridle, they have no food, and so “to bite of the bridle for William” means “to fare badly.”

“For William” may mean “as far as I’m concerned.”

The malkin — a woman servant or a sexually immoral woman — is Sindyfy.

Touchstone continued:

“So should my Dame Touchstone, too, but she has been my cross and source of torment for these past thirty years, and I’ll now keep her to frighten away spirits, truly.

“I wonder why I hear no news of my son Golding. He was sent for to go to the Guildhall early this morning, and I marvel at the matter. If I had not laid up comfort and hope in him, I should grow desperate of all.

“Look, he is coming, just when I was thinking about him.”

Golding walked over to him.

Touchstone said:

“How are you now, son? What is the news at the Court of Aldermen?”

“Indeed, sir, an incident somewhat strange, else it has little in it worth the reporting,” Golding said.

“What?” Touchstone said. “It is not borrowing of money, then?”

“No, sir,” Golding said. “It has pleased the worshipful commoners — members of the Common Council — of the city to make me one in their number at presentation of the inquest —”

He had been elected to the Court of Common Council: a great honor. People would refer to him as “Thy Worship” or “Your Worship” or “Master Golding.”

“Presentation of the inquest” means “report to a committee of inquiry.”

“Ha!” Touchstone said.

Golding continued, “— and the alderman of the ward wherein I dwell to appoint me his deputy —”

“What!” Touchstone said.

To be an alderman’s deputy was a great honor.

Golding continued, “— in which place, I have had an oath ministered to me since I went.”

Happy at all this good news concerning Golding, Touchstone said:

“Now my dear and happy son! Let me kiss Thy new Worship, and a little boast my own happiness in thee.

“What a fortune was it, or rather my judgment, indeed, for me first to see that in his disposition, which a whole city so conspires and concurs to second and confirm! To be taken into the livery of his company the first day of his freedom!”

Golding had been made a full, respected member of the Guild — the Goldsmiths’ Company — the first day after he had been freed from his apprenticeship. And he had been promoted to some high positions.

Touchstone continued rejoicing:

“Now, not a week married, chosen Commoner and Alderman’s Deputy in a day! Note but the reward of a thrifty course. The wonder of his time!”

A Commoner is a member of the Court of Common Council.

Touchstone continued:

“Well, I will honor Master Alderman for this act as becomes me, and I shall think the better of the Court of Common Council’s wisdom and worship — worthiness — while I live, for thus meeting, or coming just after me, in the opinion of his desert.

“Go forward, my sufficient and able son, and as this is the first, so esteem it the least step to that high and prime honor that expects and awaits thee.”

Possibly, the highest honor that Golding could aspire to would be to become an alderman or even the Mayor of London.

“Sir, as I was not ambitious of this, so I covet no higher place,” Golding replied. “It has dignity enough if it will just save me from contempt. And I had rather my bearing in this

or any other office should add worth to it, than the place should give the least opinion — the least estimation — to me.”

Touchstone said:

“Excellently spoken! This modest answer of thine blushes as if it said, ‘I will wear scarlet shortly.’”

Aldermen wore scarlet robes.

Touchstone continued:

“Worshipful son! I cannot contain myself; I must tell thee I hope to see thee one of the monuments of our city.”

The monuments of the city are the great citizens of the city: those who have accomplished much in public work and in charity.

Touchstone continued:

“And I hope to see thee reckoned among her worthies to be remembered the same day with the Lady Ramsey and grave Gresham, when the famous fable of Whittington and his puss shall be forgotten, and thou and thy acts become the posies — the legends — on memorial plaques for hospitals; when thy name shall be written upon conduits, and thy deeds played in thy lifetime by the best companies of actors and be called their get-penny: their reliable source of income.”

Lady Ramsey, the wife of a Mayor of London, was a benefactress of Christ’s Hospital.

Sir Thomas Gresham founded the Royal Exchange, the London mercantile center.

According to legend, Richard “Dick” Whittington became rich when he sold his cat — the best mouser in London — at a high price to the King of Barbary so it could free his mice- and rat-infested palace from rodents. Dick eventually

became Mayor of London. He left his fortune to London for the doing of good works, including building water conduits. Some water conduits in London were named for him.

Touchstone continued:

“This I divine. This I prophesy.”

Golding said:

“Sir, don’t engage your expectation farther than my abilities will answer. I, who know my own strengths, fear them; and there is so seldom a loss in promising the least, that commonly it brings with it a welcome deceit.

Usually, people are happy to learn that their low opinion of someone has been wrong.

Golding then said:

“I have other news for you, sir.”

“None more welcome than I have already heard, I am sure,”  
Touchstone said.

Golding said:

“They have their degree of welcome, I dare affirm.

“The Colonel and all his company, this morning putting forth drunk from Billingsgate, had like to have been cast away on this side Greenwich; and (as I have intelligence, by a false brother — an informer) have come straggling into town like so many masterless men — vagrants without a source of income — in their doublets and hose, without hat, or cloak, or any other —”

They had lost their swords, too.

It was a disgrace for a knight or a gallant to be without a sword.

“A miracle!” Touchstone said. “The justice of heaven! Where are they? Let’s go quickly and lay for them. Let’s set an ambush for them!”

Golding replied, “I have done that already, sir, both by Constables and other officers, who shall arrest them at their old Blue Anchor Tavern, and with less tumult or suspicion than if yourself were seen in it, under color — the pretext — of a great press that is now taking place, and they shall here be brought before me.”

The press is impressment: involuntary draft and enrollment as a soldier or a sailor. Vagrants were often pressed into military service.

Touchstone said:

“Prudent and politic — shrewd — son! Disgrace them all that ever thou can; their ship I have already seized for debt.

“How to my wish it falls out, that thou have the place of a justicer — a judge — upon them! I am partly glad of the injury done to me, in that thou may punish it. Be severe in thy place, like a new officer of the first quarter — the first three months — of service. Do not be diverted from sharply executing justice.

“Have you heard how our lady has come back with her train of attendants from the invisible castle?”

“No,” Golding said. “Where is she?”

Touchstone said:

“She is inside, but I have not seen her yet, nor her mother, who now begins to wish her daughter undubbed a knight’s lady and unmarried, they say, and that she had walked a foot-pace — slowly and surely, as opposed to a court amble — with her sister.



“Here they come; stand back.”

Mistress Touchstone, Gertrude, Mildred, and Sindefy entered the scene.

Touchstone said to her daughter Gertrude, who had married Sir Petronel:

“God save Your Ladyship! God save Your good Ladyship! Your Ladyship is welcome in your return from your enchanted castle; so are your beauteous retinue.

“I hear that your knight errant has travelled on strange adventures. Surely in my mind, Your Ladyship has ‘fished fair and caught a frog,’ as the saying is.”

In other words: Your Ladyship has made a bad marriage.

“Speak to your father, madam, and kneel down,” Mrs. Touchstone said.

“Kneel?” Gertrude said. “I hope I am not brought so low yet. Although my knight has run away and has sold my land, I am a lady still.”

“Your Ladyship says true, madam,” her father, Touchstone, said, “and it is fitter and a greater decorum that I should curtsy to you, who are a knight’s wife and a lady, than you be brought on your knees to me, who am a poor cullion — a base fellow — and your father.”

Children customarily would kneel before their parents and ask for their parents’ blessing.

“Ah!” Gertrude said. “My father knows his duty.”

She was OK with her father kneeling to her.

“Oh, child!” Mrs. Touchstone said, shocked.

Touchstone said to Gertrude:

“And therefore I do desire Your Ladyship, my good Lady Flash, in all humility, to depart my obscure cottage and return in quest of your bright and most transparent castle, however presently concealed to mortal eyes.”

He then took her by the hand, and still speaking to Gertrude, said:

“And as for one poor woman of your train here, I will take her in order that she shall no longer be a charge to you nor help you to spend and cost your ladyship expenses.

“She shall stay at home with me, and not go abroad, nor put you to the pawning of an odd coach-horse, or three wheels, but take part and share with the Touchstone. If we lack, we will not complain — lament — about it to Your Ladyship.

“And so, good madam, with your demoiselle — your maid — here, please you to let us see your straight — erect, and proud — backs in equipage, aka marching order, and in your fancy dress.”

He wanted to see Gertrude and Sindefy depart.

Touchstone finished:

“For truly, here is no roost for such chickens as you are or birds of your feather, if it shall please Your Ladyship.”

Gertrude said to her father:

“By the Virgin Mary, fist — fart — on your kindness! I thought as much.”

She then said to Sindefy:

“Come away, Sin, we shall as soon get a fart from a dead man as a farthing of courtesy here.”

“Oh, good sister!” Mildred said.

Gertrude said to Mildred:

“Sister, sir-reverence?”

“Sir-reverence” means “saving your reverence.” It is an apology for vulgar language such as “fart.” “Sir-reverence” also meant “excrement.”

Gertrude then said to Sindefy:

“Come away, I say. Hunger drops out at his nose.”

The proverb referred to poverty. Poor people often cannot afford fuel for a fire, and so their noses drip because they catch colds.

Of course, Touchstone had money, and so Gertrude was calling him stingy.

“Oh, madam, fair words never hurt the tongue,” Golding said.

“What do you mean by that?” Gertrude said. “You come out with your gold ends — your bits of wisdom — now!”

Mrs. Touchstone said:

“Stay, lady daughter.

“Good husband —.”

Touchstone interrupted:

“Wife, no man loves his fetters, even when they are made of gold. I do not wish to have my head fastened under my child’s girdle.”

He did not want to be forced to obey her commands.

To have one’s head under another person’s girdle was proverbial for being inferior to that person.

Touchstone continued:

“As she has brewed, so let her drink, in God’s name, and suffer the consequences of her actions. She went witless to her wedding; now she may go wisely a-begging.

“It’s but honeymoon yet with Her Ladyship: she has coach-horses, apparel, jewels, yet left; she needs care for no friends nor take knowledge of father, mother, brother, sister, or anybody.

“When those are pawned, or spent, perhaps we shall return into the list of her acquaintance.”

Gertrude said:

“I scorn your acquaintance, indeed.

“Come, Sin.”

“Oh, madam, why do you provoke your father like this?” Mrs. Touchstone asked.

Gertrude and Sindefy exited.

Touchstone said:

“Nay, nay, even let pride go before. Shame will follow after, I promise you.”

He then said to his wife:

“Come, why do thou weep now? Thou are not the first good cow who has had an ill calf, I trust.”

A proverb stated, “Many a good cow has an ill calf.”

A Constable entered the scene and whispered to Golding.

Touchstone asked:

“What’s the news with that fellow?”

“Sir, the knight and your man Quicksilver are outside,” Golding said. “Will you have them brought in?”

Touchstone said:

“Oh, by all means. Certainly.”

The Constable exited.

Touchstone then said:

“And son, here’s a chair; appear terrible to them on the first interview. Let them behold the melancholy — the seriousness — of a magistrate and taste the fury of a citizen in office.”

“Why, sir, I can do nothing to them unless you charge them with something,” Golding said.

“I will charge them and recharge them, rather than authority should lack foil to set it off,” Touchstone said.

“Foil” is a thin piece of metal set under a jewel to show off its radiance.

Touchstone would highlight the crimes of Sir Petronel and Quicksilver so that Golding could show off his power to punish them.

He motioned for Golding to sit.

“No, good sir, I will not,” Golding said.

He did not want to sit while Touchstone stood.

“Son, it is your place, by all means,” Touchstone said.

“Believe it, I will not sit, sir,” Golding said.

Sir Petronel and Quicksilver entered the scene. They were guarded by a Constable and some officers.

“How misfortune pursues us still in our misery!” Sir Petronel said.

“I wish that it had been my fortune to have been trussed up and hanged at Wapping rather than ever to have come here!” Quicksilver said.

“Or my fortune, to have famished in the Island of Dogs!” Sir Petronel said. “That would be better than being here now.”

“Must Golding sit upon and judge us?” Quicksilver asked.

Recently, they had been apprentices together.

“You might carry an M under your girdle to Master Deputy’s Worship,” the Constable said.

The “M” was for “Master.”

In other words: You should call Golding “Master Golding” and show him respect because he is the Alderman’s Deputy.

“Who are those men, Master Constable?” Golding asked.

“If it shall please Your Worship, they are a couple of masterless men whom I have impressed for the Low Countries, sir,” Golding said.

English soldiers had been fighting Spanish soldiers in Holland. English garrisons were there.

“Why don’t you carry them to Bridewell, according to your order, so that they may be shipped away?” Golding asked.

Bridewell was a workhouse for the poor, and a place where conscripted soldiers stayed.

“If it shall please Your Worship, one of them says he is a knight, and we thought it good to show him to Your Worship for our discharge,” the Constable said.

The Constable did not want to impress a knight into involuntary military service. Impressment was for people of lower status. Possibly, he also wanted a fee for his service.

“Which man is he?” Golding asked.

“This man, sir,” the Constable said, indicating Sir Petronel.

“And who’s the other man?” Golding asked.

“A knight’s fellow, sir, if it shall please you,” the Constable said.

“What!” Golding said. “A knight and his fellow thus accoutered and attired? Where are their hats and feathers, their rapiers and their cloaks?”

“Oh, they mock us,” Quicksilver said to Sir Petronel.

“Nay, truly, sir, they had shed both their feathers and hats, too, before we saw them,” the Constable said. “Here’s all their possessions, if it shall please you, that we found. They say that knights are now to be known without feathers, like cockerels — game cocks — are known by their spurs, sir.”

Knights customarily wore gilt spurs.

“What are their names, do they say?” Golding asked.

Touchstone said to himself, “Very well, this is. Golding should not take knowledge of them in his position as a magistrate, indeed. It is good that he pretends not to know who they are.”

“This is Sir Petronel Flash,” the Constable said.

“What!” Touchstone said, pretending to be shocked at hearing the name.

“And this is Francis Quicksilver,” the Constable said.

Touchstone said to Sir Petronel:

“Is it possible? I thought Your Worship had been gone for Virginia, sir. You are welcome home, sir. Your Worship has

made a quick return, it seems, and no doubt a good voyage. Nay, please be covered, sir. Put on your hat.”

He was being sarcastic. Sir Petronel had lost his hat in the Thames River.

Touchstone continued:

“How did your store of sea-biscuits hold out, sir?”

He then looked at Quicksilver and said:

“I thought I had seen this gentleman before.

“Good Master Quicksilver! How a degree to the southward has changed you!”

Virginia is south (and west) of England. (“Virginia” was the word then used for the North American coast north of Florida.) Ships going there from London sailed first southeast to Spain. Also, Quicksilver’s fortunes had fallen.

Golding asked Touchstone:

“Do you know them, father?”

Sir Petronel and Quicksilver attempted to speak, but Golding said to them:

“Forbear for a little while your attempts to speak; you shall be heard soon.”

Touchstone said:

“Yes, Master Deputy. I had a small venture — a small investment — with them in the voyage, a thing called a son-in-law, or so.”

Touchstone then said to the Constable and officers:



“Officers, you may let them stand alone; they will not run away, I’ll give my word for them. They are a couple of very ‘honest’ — cough — gentlemen.

“One of them was my apprentice, Master Quicksilver, here, and when he had two years left to serve as my apprentice, he kept his whore and his hunting nag.

“He would play his hundred pounds at gresco or primero — card games that gamblers play — as familiarly (and all on my purse) as any bright piece of crimson clothing on them all.

“He had his trunks of changeable apparel standing at livery and being kept for him for a fee, with his mare [whore], his chest of perfumed linen, and his bathing-tubs, which when I told him of, why he — he was a gentleman, and I was a poor Cheapside groom, aka servant.”

Nobles and court officials wore crimson clothing.

Bathing-tubs were used for treating venereal disease.

Touchstone continued:

“The remedy was, we must part. Since that time, he has had the gift of gathering up some small parcels — sums of money — of mine, to the value of five hundred pounds, dispersed among my customers, to furnish this his Virginian venture.”

Quicksilver had collected money that was owed to Touchstone, and he had kept it to finance the planned trip to Virginia. This was a capital offense: Quicksilver could hang for it.

Quicksilver had been lending Touchstone’s money to gallants when he was an apprentice, and now he had collected those debts.

Touchstone continued:

“In this Virginia venture, this knight was the chief: Sir Flash.

“He is one who married a daughter of mine, ladyfied and lay her, turned two thousand pounds’ worth of good land of hers into cash within the first week, bought her a new gown and a coach, sent her to seek her fortune by land while he himself prepared for his fortune by sea, took in fresh flesh — a new woman — at Billingsgate for his own diet, to serve him the whole voyage — the wife of a certain usurer called Security, who has been the broker for them in all this business.

“Please, Master Deputy, work upon that now!”

Golding said, “If my worshipful father has ended —”

“I have, if it shall please Master Deputy,” Touchstone said.

Golding began, “Well then, subject to your correction —”

Touchstone whispered to Golding:

“Now, son, come over them with some fine gird — some fine cutting gibe or remark — such as this, ‘Knight, you shall be encountered,’ that is, you shall be taken to the Counter.”

The Counter was a prison; “to be encountered” meant, in the card game primero, “to draw a winning card.”

Touchstone continued whispering:

“Or ‘Quicksilver, I will put you in a crucible,’ or so.”

In some alchemical processes, mercury, aka quicksilver, was placed into crucibles and heated.

Golding said:

“Sir Petronel Flash, I am sorry to see such flashes — such outbursts of bad deeds — as these proceed from a gentleman of your quality and rank. For my own part, I could wish I

could say I could not see them; but such is the misery of magistrates and men in place — ministers of state who serve the Crown — that they must not shut our eyes when confronted with offenders and ignore them.”

He said to the Constable and officers:

“Take him aside.”

He then said to Sir Petronel:

“I will hear what you have to say soon, sir.”

“I like this well,” Touchstone said to himself. “Yet there’s some grace — some virtue — left in the knight; he cries.”

Golding said:

“Francis Quicksilver, I wish to God that thou had turned quacksalver rather than run into these dissolute and lewd courses. It is a great pity.

“Thou are a proper, handsome young man, of an honest and clean, fine-featured face, somewhat near a good one — God has done his part in thee; but thou have made too much and been too proud of that face, with the rest of thy body; for maintenance of which in neat, fine, and garish attire, only to be looked upon by some light housewives — hussies, aka harlots — and thou have prodigally consumed much of thy master’s estate, and being by him gently admonished, at several times, have shown thyself to be haughty and rebellious in thine answers, thundering out uncivil comparisons — satiric similes — requiting all his kindness with a coarse and harsh behavior, never returning thanks for any one benefit, but receiving all as if they had been debts to thee and not courtesies.

“I must tell thee, Francis, these are manifest signs of an ill nature, and God does often punish such pride and

*outracuidance* — arrogance and overweening conceit — with scorn and infamy, which is the worst of misfortune.”

Golding asked Touchstone:

“My worshipful father, what do you please to charge them with?”

He then said:

“From the impress I will free them, Master Constable.”

“Then I’ll leave Your Worship, sir,” the Constable said.

“No, you may stay,” Golding said. “There will be other matters against them.”

“Sir, I do charge this gallant, Master Quicksilver, on suspicion of felony,” Touchstone said, “and the knight as being accessory, in the receipt of my goods.”

“Oh, God, sir!” Quicksilver said.

He was afraid of being hanged.

Touchstone said:

“Hold thy peace, impudent varlet, hold thy peace!

“With what forehead or face — what impudence! — do thou offer to chop logic and argue with me, having run such a race of riot — such an extravagant course — as thou have done?

“Doesn’t the sight of this worshipful man’s fortune and temper confound thee, who was thy younger fellow in household, and now has come to have the place of a judge upon thee? Don’t thou observe this?

“Which of all thy gallants and gamesters, thy swearers and thy swaggerers, will come now to moan thy misfortune or pity thy penury? They’ll look out at a window as thou ride

in triumph to Tyburn and cry, ‘Yonder goes honest Frank, mad Quicksilver.’”

“Ride in triumph” meant to ride in the executioner’s cart to the gallows at Tyburn. Of course, Touchstone was mocking Frank Quicksilver by referring to the triumphal procession of a Roman general after a great victory.

Touchstone continued:

“‘He was a free boon — jolly — companion when he had money,’ says one.”

“Free” can mean liberal and generous and free-spending.

Touchstone continued:

“‘Hang him, fool,’ says another, ‘He could not keep it when he had it.’

“‘A pox on his master the cullion,’ says a third. ‘He has brought him to this.’

“It is true, however, that their pox of pleasure and their piles of perdition would have been better bestowed upon thee, who have ventured for them — for pleasure and perdition — with the best, and by the clew — the thread — of thy knavery brought thyself weeping to the cart of calamity.”

“Pox” is syphilis, and “piles” are hemorrhoids.

“Perdition” means damnation.

In other words: It would have been more appropriate for them to curse you.

“Their pox of pleasure” is a lascivious curse, and “their piles of perdition” is a damnable curse.

Quicksilver pleaded, “Worshipful master —”

Touchstone said:

“Don’t attempt to speak, crocodile who sheds false tears. I will not hear a sound come from thee. Thou have learned to whine at the play yonder.”

In other words: By watching actors in plays, you have learned how to shed fake tears.

Touchstone then said:

“Master Deputy, please commit them both to safe custody until I am able farther to charge them.”

“Oh, me, what an unfortunate thing am I!” Quicksilver said.

Sir Petronel asked Touchstone, “Won’t you take security, sir?”

Small-s “security” is bail.”

Interpreting “security” as “Security,” Touchstone said:

“Yes, by the Virgin Mary, I will, Sir Flash, if I can find him and charge him as deep as the best of you. He has been the plotter of all this; he is your engineer — your plotter and schemer — so I hear.”

He then said to Golding:

“Master Deputy, you’ll dispose of these?”

“In the meantime I’ll go to my Lord Mayor and get his warrant to seize that serpent Security into my hands and seal up both house and goods to the King’s use, or my satisfaction.”

“Officers, take them to the Counter,” Golding said.

Quicksilver and Sir Petronel said, “Oh, God!”

They were in serious trouble.

Touchstone said:

“Nay, go on, go on.

“You see the issue of your sloth. From sloth comes pleasure, from pleasure comes riot, from riot comes whoring, from whoring comes spending, from spending comes poverty, from poverty comes theft, from theft comes hanging; and there is my Quicksilver fixed.”

“Fixed” is an alchemical term meaning “deprived of fluidity and volatility.”

In prison, Quicksilver would lose his freedom. He was in a fix.

They exited.

## ACT 5 (*Eastward Ho!*)

### — 5.1 —

Gertrude and Sindefy talked together on a street in London. Their fine clothing had been pawned to get money for food and shelter.

“Ah, Sin!” Gertrude said. “Have thou ever read in the chronicle of any lady and her waiting-woman driven to that extremity that we are in, Sin?”

Chronicles are history books, such as John Stow’s *A Summary of the Chronicles of England* or his *The Annals of England*.

“Not I, truly, madam, and if I had, it would be only cold comfort should come out of books, now,” Sindefy answered.

Gertrude said:

“Why, in good faith, Sin, I could dine with a lamentable story now.”

She sang:

“*O hone, hone, o no nera, etc.*”

The Irish *ochoin* means “oh, alas!”

“O no nera” may mean “oh, non-era.”

An *era* can be a beginning of a new period in someone’s life and it can be a period in someone’s life, and a *non* can be a disapproving person.

Gertrude’s life had changed, and she had begun a period in her life in which many people, and especially her father, disapproved of her.

A “non-era” can be a period in someone’s life in which that person suffers disapproval.



Gertrude then asked:

“Can thou tell never a lamentable story, Sin?”

Sindefy replied:

“None but my own, madam, which is lamentable enough.

“First to be stolen from my friends and relatives, which were worshipful and of good account and esteem, by an apprentice in the habit — clothing — and disguise of a gentleman, and here brought up to London and promised marriage, and now likely to be forsaken, for he is in possibility to be hanged.”

Of course, she was talking about Quicksilver.

Sindefy cried.

Gertrude said:

“Nay, don’t weep, good Sin.

“My Petronel is in as good possibility as he.”

That possibility was of being hung.

Gertrude continued:

“Thy miseries are nothing to mine, Sin. I was more than promised marriage, Sin: I had it, Sin, and I was made a lady, and by a knight, Sin, who is now as good as no knight, Sin.

“And I was born in London, which is more than brought up, Sin; and I am already forsaken, which is past likelihood and more than mere possibility, Sin.

“And instead of land in the country, all my knight’s living — his dwelling — lies in the Counter, Sin. There’s his castle now!”

The word “living” also means “landed property.”

“Which he cannot be forced out of, madam,” Sindefy said.

Gertrude said:

“Yes, if he would live hungry a week or two. ‘Hunger,’ they say, ‘breaks stone walls.’

“But he is even well enough served, Sin, in the Counter, because as soon as ever he had got my hand to the sale of my inheritance, he ran away from me, as if I had been his punk — his prostitute — God bless us.

“Would the Knight of the Sun, or Palmerin of England, have treated their ladies so, Sin, or Sir Lancelot, or Sir Tristram?”

All the names were of knights or princes who were heroes of romances.

“I do not know, madam,” Sindefy answered.

Gertrude said:

“Then thou know nothing, Sin. Thou art a fool, Sin. The knighthood nowadays are nothing like the knighthood of old time. Our knights are nothing like the old knights.

“They rode on horseback; ours go on foot.

“They were attended by their squires; ours are attended by their lackeys.”

Lackeys are footmen.

Gertrude continued:

“They went buckled in their armor; ours are muffled in their cloaks.

“They traveled wildernesses and deserts; ours scarcely dare to walk the streets because of fear of being arrested for debt.

“They were always impelled to engage their honor; ours are always ready to pawn their clothes.

“They would gallop on at sight of a monster; ours run away at the sight of an arresting sergeant.

“They would help poor ladies; ours make poor ladies.”

“Aye, madam, they were knights of the Round Table at Winchester who sought adventures,” Sindefy said, “but these are knights of the square table in ordinaries, and they sit and play the gambling game known as hazard.”

Ordinaries are eating places.

“True, Sin, let him vanish,” Gertrude said. “And tell me, what shall we pawn next?”

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, madam,” Sindefy said, “that is a timely consideration, for our hostess — profane woman! — has sworn by bread and salt that she will not trust us for another meal.”

Gertrude said:

“Let it stink in her hand, then; I’ll not be beholden — indebted — to her.

“Let me see: My jewels are gone, and my gowns, and my red velvet petticoat that I was married in, and my wedding silk stockings, and all thy best apparel, poor Sin.

“In good faith, rather than thou should pawn a rag more, I’d lay my ladyship in lavender, if I knew where.”

Pawned clothing was stored in lavender; Gertrude would pawn her title of Lady, if she knew where she could do that.

“Alas, madam, your ladyship!” Sindefy said.

Gertrude said:

“Aye, why? You do not scorn my ladyship, although it is — as I am — in a waistcoat?”

She had pawned her gown and was wearing a short garment for the upper body. Such dress was a mark of a woman of ill-repute.

Gertrude continued:

“God’s my life, you are a peat — a pet, a spoiled girl — indeed!

“Do I offer to mortgage my ladyship for you and for your benefit, and do you turn the lip and the ‘Alas’ to my ladyship? Do you disparage my title?”

“Turn the lip” means “show contempt.”

“No, madam, but I question who — I wonder whether anyone — will lend anything upon it,” Sindefy said.

Gertrude said:

“Who will? By the Virgin Mary, enough will, I promise you, if you’ll seek them out.

“I’m sure I remember the time when I would have given a thousand pounds, if I had had it, to have been a lady, and I hope I alone was not bred and born with that appetite. Some other gentle-born people of the city have the same longing, I trust.

“And for my part, I would afford them a pennyworth — some — of it; my ladyship is little the worse for the wearing, and yet I would bate — reduce — a good deal of the sum. I would lend it — let me see — for forty pounds in hand, Sin — that would apparel us — and ten pounds a year. That would keep me and you, Sin, with additional income earned from our needles as seamstresses, and we should never need to be beholden to our scurvy parents.

“Good Lord, that there are no fairies nowadays, Sin!”

“Why, madam?” Sindefy asked.

Fairies did good deeds for good housekeepers.

Gertrude said:

“To do miracles and bring ladies money.

“Surely, if we lay in a habitually clean house, they would haunt it, Sin. I’ll try. I’ll sweep the chamber early this evening, and I’ll set a dish of water on the hearth. A fairy may come and bring a pearl or a diamond; we do not know, Sin.

“Or there may be a pot of gold hid in the backside — the back of the house — if we had tools to dig for it.

“Why may not we two rise early in the morning, Sin, before anybody is up, and find a jewel in the streets worth a hundred pounds? May not some great court lady, as she comes away from revels — dances or masques — at midnight, look out of her coach as it is running, and lose such a jewel, and we find it? Huh?”

“They are pretty waking dreams, these,” Sindefy said.

They were daydreams.

Gertrude said:

“Or may not some old usurer be drunk overnight, with a bag of money, and leave it behind him on a stall, aka a shop counter? For God’s sake, Sin, let’s rise tomorrow by break of day and see.

“I say, indeed, that if I had as much money as an alderman, I would scatter some of it in the streets for poor ladies to find when their knights were laid up and imprisoned.

“And now I remember my song of the Golden Shower. Why may not I have such a fortune? I’ll sing it, and I’ll see what luck I shall have after it.”

She sang:

*“Fond [Foolish] fables tell of old,*

*“How Jove in Danaë’s lap*

*“Fell in a shower of gold,*

*“By which she caught a clap.*

*“Oh, had it been my hap [fortune],*

*“Howe’er the blow doth threaten,*

*“So well I like the play*

*“That I could wish all day*

*“And night to be so beaten.”*

“Caught a clap” meant to suffer a stroke of bad fortune; in this case, it meant to become pregnant.

The “blow” is a sexual thrust.

The “play” is sex.

An oracle had told Danaë’s father, King Acrisius of Argos, that her son would kill him. Therefore, he kept her locked up. Jupiter, the lustful king of the gods, however, came to her in a shower of golden rain. Danaë, made pregnant by Jupiter, gave birth to the Greek hero Perseus. King Acrisius put Danaë and Perseus, her son, into a chest and threw it into the sea. Neptune, god of the sea, provided a calm sea, and the chest washed up on the western coast of Italy, where Danaë founded the city of Ardea. Perseus grew up, learned about the prophecy that he would kill his father, and resolved never to go to Argos. Unfortunately, he competed in athletic games elsewhere, his aged father watched the games, and Perseus accidentally killed him with a discus.

Mrs. Touchstone, Gertrude’s mother, entered the scene.

Seeing her, Gertrude said, "Oh, here's my mother! Good luck, I hope."

She asked, "Have you brought any money, mother? Please, mother, give me your blessing."

Gertrude knelt, and Mrs. Touchstone wept.

Gertrude said, "Nay, sweet mother, do not weep."

"God bless you!" Mrs. Touchstone said, weeping. "I wish that I were in my grave!"

Gertrude said:

"Nay, dear mother, can you steal no more money from my father?"

Gertrude rose and said:

"Dry your eyes and comfort me.

"Alas, it is my knight's fault, and not mine, that I am in a waistcoat and attired thus simply."

Mrs. Touchstone said:

"Simply? It is better than thou deserve. Never whimper for the matter.

"Thou should have looked before thou had leaped. Thou were on fire to be a lady, and now your ladyship and you may both blow at the coal and become impassioned, for anything I know.

"Self do, self have.

"'The hasty person never lacks woe,' they say."

A Scottish proverb stated, "Let them that are cold blow at the coal."

Another Scottish proverb stated, "It's a cold coal to blow at."

Gertrude said:

“Nay, then, mother, you should have looked to it. A body would think you were the older. I did but my kind, I did.”

In other words: Gertrude wished that her mother had warned her about the dangers of the world. Gertrude believed that she herself had simply acted like what she was: a daughter who wished to marry well.

Gertrude continued:

“He was a knight, and I was fit to be a lady. It is not lack of liking but lack of living — lack of income — that severs us.”

Gertrude still loved — or at least still lusted after — Sir Petronel.

Gertrude continued:

“And you talk like yourself and a citiner — a citizen and a citizen’s wife — in this, indeed. You show what husband you come on, I am sure — you know who you are married to and what kind of man he is, truly.”

“Come on” means 1) come from, and 2) have sex with.

Gertrude continued:

“You smell the Touchstone — he who will do more for his daughter who has married a scurvy gold-end man and his apprentice than he will for his other daughter who has wedded a knight and his customer.

“By this light, I think that he is not my legitimate father.”

If she was saying what she really thought, then she also thought that her mother had committed adultery or that her “mother” had just been the midwife at her birth. If the latter, then she — Gertrude — was adopted.



“Oh, good madam, do not take up — don’t reprimand — your mother so,” Sindefy said.

Mrs. Touchstone said:

“Nay, nay, let her even alone.

“Let Her Ladyship grieve me still with her bitter taunts and terms.

“I have not dole — grief — enough to see her in this miserable case, I, without her velvet gowns, without ribbons, without jewels, without French wires, or cheatbread, or quails, or a little dog, or a gentleman usher, or anything indeed, that’s fit for a lady —”

French wires were used as supports for elaborate hairstyles.

Cheatbread is bread, but not bread of the highest quality. Despite being a lady, Gertrude could not afford to buy cheatbread.

Sindefy said to herself, “— except her tongue.”

Mrs. Touchstone continued:

“And I am not able to relieve her, neither, being kept so short of money by my husband. Well, God knows my heart. I did little think that she should ever have had need of her sister Golding.”

Gertrude said:

“Why, mother, I have not yet need of my sister.

“Alas, good mother, be not intoxicate — overly distressed — for me; I am well enough. I would not change husbands with my sister, I.

“The leg of a lark is better than the body of a kite.”

Larks were more highly regarded than kites.

Kites are inferior hawks.

“I know that,” Mrs. Touchstone said. “But —”

“What, sweet mother, what?” Gertrude asked.

“It’s but ill food when nothing’s left but the claw,” Mrs. Touchstone said.

“That’s true, mother,” Gertrude said. “Ay me!”

“Nay, sweet ladybird, don’t sigh,” Mrs. Touchstone said. “Child, madam! Why do you weep thus? Be of good cheer. I shall die if you cry and mar your complexion thus.”

The word “complexion” can mean face paint, aka makeup, but Gertrude is too poor to afford it.

“Ladybird” is a term of endearment.

“Alas, mother, what should I do?” Gertrude asked.

“Go to thy sister’s, child,” Mrs. Touchstone advised. “She’ll be proud Thy Ladyship will come under her roof. She’ll persuade thy father to release thy knight and redeem thy gowns and thy coach and thy horses, and set thee up again.”

“But will she get him to set my knight up, too?” Gertrude asked.

In other words (possibly): Will Mildred get Touchstone to give Sir Petronel enough money to buy back the land he sold? In any case, Gertrude wanted enough money to set her husband up in life.

“That she will, or anything else thou shall ask her,” Mrs. Touchstone replied.

“I will begin to love her, if I thought she would do this,” Gertrude said.

Mrs. Touchstone said. “Try her, good chuck, I promise thee that she will.”

“Chuck” is a term of endearment, like “ladybird.”

Gertrude asked Sindefy, “Do thou think she’ll do it?”

“Aye, madam, and be glad you will receive it,” Sindefy said.

Mrs. Touchstone said:

“That’s a good maiden; she tells you the truth.

“Come, I’ll take order — arrange payment — for your debts in the alehouse.”

Gertrude said, “Go, Sin, and pray for thy Frank, as I will for my Pet.”

They exited.

## — 5.2 —

Touchstone, Golding, and Wolf stood together in front of Touchstone’s house. Wolf, who was the jailkeeper of the Counter, was carrying letters. The Counter is a prison.

“I will receive no letters, Master Wolf,” Touchstone said. “You shall pardon me.”

“Good father, let me entreat you to read the letters,” Golding said.

Touchstone replied:

“Son Golding, I will not be tempted. I know my own easy nature, and I don’t know what a well-penned subtle letter may work upon it. There may be packing — tricks. Do you see?”

“Packing” is fraudulent dealing.

Touchstone then said to Wolf:

“Return with your packet of letters, sir.”

“Believe it, sir, you need fear no packing here,” Wolf said. “These are but letters of submission, all.”

“Sir, I look for no submission,” Touchstone said. “I will bear myself in this like blind justice. Work upon that now. When the Sessions — the court hearings — come, they shall hear from me.”

“From whom come your letters, Master Wolf?” Golding asked.

“If it shall please you, sir, one comes from Sir Petronel, another from Francis Quicksilver, and a third from old Security, who is almost mad in prison,” Wolf replied. “There are two to Your Worship: one from Master Francis, sir, and another from the knight.”

He handed the letters to Golding.

Touchstone said:

“I wonder, Master Wolf, why you should travail thus and work so hard in a business so contrary to kind or the nature of your place.”

One kind of “kind” is natural disposition.

Wolf the jailkeeper was a kind person, although judging by his name, one would expect his natural disposition to be cruel and wolvisish. One could also expect jailkeepers to be cruel.

Touchstone continued:

“That you, being the keeper of a prison, should labor for the release of your prisoners! Whereas I think it would be far more natural and kindly in you to be ranging about for more prisoners, and not let escape these whom you have already under the tooth — in prison — and in your power. But they

say that you wolves, when you have sucked the blood once so that they are dry, you have done and finished with them.”

Wolf said:

“Sir, Your Worship may descant — discourse and improvise — as you please on my name, but I say that I was never so mortified with any men’s discourse or behavior in prison.”

To be “mortified” usually means to be “dead” to the world’s pleasures and to be moved to engage in spiritual devotion. Wolf meant, however, that he was not dead to the needs of his prisoners.

Wolf continued:

“Yet I have had all sorts of men in the kingdom under my keys — under lock and key — and men of almost all religions in the land, including Papist [Catholic], Protestant [Anglican], Puritan, Brownist, Anabaptist, Millenary, Family of Love, Jew, Turk, infidel, atheist, good fellow, etc.”

Brownists were followers of Robert Browne, who believed that congregations ought to elect their pastors.

Anabaptists believed in adult baptism, and they declined to swear oaths to either civil or ecclesiastical authorities.

Millenarists believed that Christ would reign on Earth for one thousand years.

Dutch mystic Hendrick Niclaes founded the Family of Love, which believed in an inward spiritual transformation that would result in a state of perfection.

Good fellows love alcohol and good times. “Good fellow” was also a slang term for a thief.

“And which of all these, thinks Master Wolf, was the best religion?” Golding asked.

“To tell the truth, Master Deputy, they who pay their fees best,” Wolf said. “We never examine their consciences farther.”

Prisoners would pay for food, lodging (the prison was divided into sections, some more expensive to stay in than others), and other services.

Golding said:

“I believe you, Master Wolf.”

He read the letters and then said:

“In good faith, sir, here’s a great deal of humility in these letters.”

Wolf said:

“Humility, sir? Aye, if Your Worship were an eyewitness of it, you would say so. The knight will stay in the Knights’ Ward, do what we can, sir, and Master Quicksilver would stay in the Hole if we would let him.”

The Hole is the common dungeon, and it is the cheapest accommodations in the Counter. The Knights’ Ward is the second most expensive, with the Masters’ Ward being the most expensive.

Wolf continued:

“I never knew or saw prisoners more penitent or more devout. They will sit up all night singing psalms and edifying the whole prison. Only Security sings a note too high, sometimes, because he lies in the Twopenny Ward, far off, and cannot take his tune — he cannot get the correct pitch. The neighbors cannot rest because of him, and they come every morning to ask what godly prisoners we have.”

“Which of them is it who is so devout, the knight or the other?” Touchstone asked.

Wolf said:

“Both, sir, but the young man — Quicksilver — especially. I never heard his like. He has cut his hair, too.”

Short hair was a sign of unworldliness. Courtiers and gallants wore their hair long.

Sindefy had not betrayed him to the Philistines as Delilah had treated Samson, and Quicksilver had cut his own hair. Assuming that his repentance was sincere, cutting his long hair was a sign of his newfound spiritual strength.

Wolf continued:

“He is so well given — disposed — and he has such good gifts! He can tell you almost all the stories of *The Book of Martyrs* and speak all *The Sick Man’s Salve* without book — that is, from memory.

These were religious books. *The Book of Martyrs* was about Protestant martyrs in the time of Queen Mary, a Catholic Queen of England and Ireland whom her Protestant opponents called “Bloody Mary” because of her religious persecution of their faith.

*The Sick Man’s Salve* by Thomas Becom is about having religious faith during times of illness. It is 545 pages long, and yet Quicksilver seems to have memorized most of the stories in it.

Touchstone said:

“Aye, as if he had had grace.

“He was brought up where it grew, I know. Yes, he grew up in a religious household: mine.

“Go on, Master Wolf.”

“And he has converted one Fangs, a sergeant, a fellow who could neither write nor read,” Wolf said. “Fangs was called the bandog of the Counter, and Quicksilver has brought him already to pare his nails and say his prayers, and it is hoped that he will sell his place shortly and become an intelligencer: an informer.”

A bandog is a dog that is kept chained because it is so fierce.

Sergeants were arresting officers who received fees for making arrests. They could sell their position to another person who would take their place.

Touchstone said:

“No more, I am coming — I am weakening — already. If I should give any farther ear and listen any longer, I would be taken in.”

He was beginning to become sympathetic to Quicksilver and Sir Petronel.

Touchstone said:

“Adieu, good Master Wolf.”

He then said to Golding, his son-in-law:

“Son, I do feel my own weaknesses; do not importune me. Pity is a rheum — an illness — that I am subject to, but I will resist it.”

He then said:

“Master Wolf, fish that is cast in dry pools is cast away. Tell Hypocrisy it will not do; I have touched and tried him too often.”

“Hypocrisy” is Touchstone’s nickname for Quicksilver. Touchstone is determined not to shed sympathetic tears for



him because he had tested Quicksilver's character before — often — and Quicksilver had always disappointed him.

“Touched” and “tried” were also goldsmiths' terms. To “touch” meant to test the quality of a gold alloy by rubbing it on a touchstone and examining its color. To “try” precious metal meant to purify it by melting it and removing impurities.

Touchstone continued:

“I am yet proof — tried and tested and armored against appeals for help — and I will remain so. When the Sessions come, they shall hear from me. In the meantime, to all suits, to all entreaties, to all letters, to all tricks, I will be as deaf as an adder and as blind as a beetle; lay my ear to the ground and lock my eyes in my hand, against all temptations.”

He exited.

Golding said:

“You see, Master Wolf, how inexorable he is. There is no hope to recover his good will. Please commend me to my brother knight and to my fellow Francis; present them with this small token of my love.”

His “brother knight” was Sir Petronel, his brother-in-law.

He gave Wolf money and then said:

“Tell them I wish I could do them any worthier office, but in this it is desperate — it is hopeless. Yet I will not fail to try the uttermost of my power for them.

“And, sir, as far as I have any credit with you, please let them lack for nothing — although I am not ambitious — not eager — that they should know so much.”

“Sir, both your actions and words proclaim you to be a true gentleman,” Wolf replied. “They shall know only what is fit, and no more.”

— 5.3 —

Holdfast and Bramble spoke together at the Counter. Holdfast was a prison guard.

“Who do you want to speak with, sir?” Holdfast asked.

“I want to speak with a man named Security who is prisoner here,” Bramble said.

Holdfast said:

“You’re welcome, sir. Stay there; I’ll call him to you.”

He called:

“Master Security!”

Security’s face appeared at a grating. He was being kept in a dark cell.

“Who calls for me?” Security asked.

“Here’s a gentleman who would speak with you,” Holdfast said.

“Who is he?” Security asked. “Is he one who grafts my forehead, now I am in prison, and comes to see how the horns shoot up and prosper?”

He was worried that he would be cuckolded while in prison: A cuckold’s horns could be grafted onto his forehead the way that a branch from one tree can be grafted onto another tree.

“You must pardon him, sir,” Holdfast said to Bramble. “The old man is a little crazed with his imprisonment.”

As a usurer, Security had sent many to the Counter, a prison for debtors; now he was in that prison.

Security said:

“What have you to say to me, sir? Look here.”

Bramble approached the grate.

Security continued:

“My learned counsel, Master Bramble! I beg your mercy, sir. When did you see my wife?”

Bramble replied, “She is now at my house, sir, and she desired — requested — me that I would come to visit you and inquire of you about your case, so that we might work some means to get you out of prison.”

Security said:

“My case, Master Bramble, is stone walls and iron grates.”

His “case” was 1) his condition, 2) his container, and 3) his legal case.

Security continued:

“You see it; this is the weakest part of it. And, as for getting me out of prison, there is no means but to hang myself and so to be carried out, to prevent which they have here bound me in intolerable bands and shackles.”

“Why, but what is it you are in for, sir?” Bramble asked.

Security said:

“For my sins, for my sins, sir, whereof marriage is the greatest.

“Oh, if I had never married, I would have never known this purgatory, to which hell is a kind of cool bath in respect — in comparison.

“My wife’s confederacy, sir, with old Touchstone, that she might keep her jubilee and the feast of her new moon. Do you understand me, sir?”

“Confederacy” means 1) conspiracy, and 2) (sexual) intercourse.

Of course, Touchstone had not had confederacy with Security’s wife. Have Quicksilver and Sir Petronel fooled him into believing this? If they have, they are not repentant. Or is Security imagining things in his misery?

A jubilee is a time of celebration and release, and the feast of the new moon is a pagan fertility festival.

Every fifty years the Old Testament Jews freed their slaves in a jubilee. The name comes from the ram’s horn that was blown to announce the jubilee.

Originally, the new moon was the first crescent moon of the lunar cycle. A crescent moon has horns.

Of course, horns are the sign of the cuckold.

Quicksilver entered the scene and said to Bramble:

“Good sir, go in and talk with him. The light does him harm, and his example will be hurtful to the weak prisoners.”

Security was being kept in a dark cell, and the light did hurt his eyes.

Some prisoners are literally weak, and they will be discouraged if Security talks about injured eyes.

Quicksilver then said:

“Bah, father Security, that you’ll be still so profane! Will nothing humble you?”

All exited, but as they exited, two prisoners entered the scene, accompanied by a friend.

The friend asked about Quicksilver, “Who’s he?”

“Oh, he is a rare — a splendid — young man,” the first prisoner said. “Don’t you know him?”

“No, I don’t,” the friend said. “I never saw him that I can remember.”

“Why, it is he who was the gallant apprentice of London, Master Touchstone’s man — he was his apprentice,” the second prisoner, whose name was Toby, said.

“Who, Quicksilver?” the friend asked.

“Aye, this is he,” the first prisoner said.

“Is this he?” the friend said. “They say he has been a gallant indeed.”

The second prisoner said:

“Oh, he was the royallest — most royal — fellow who ever was bred up in the city!

“He would play his thousand pounds a night at dice, keep knights and lords company, go with them to bawdy-houses; have his six men in a livery, keep a stable of hunting horses, and keep his wench in her velvet gown and her cloth of silver.”

Cloth of silver was interwoven with threads of silver, or it was gilded.

Quicksilver was prodigal, but these exploits seem to have come into existence because of rumor.

The second prisoner continued:

“Here’s one knight with him here in prison.”

“And how miserably he has changed!” the friend said.

“Oh, that’s voluntary in him,” the first prisoner said. “He gave away all his rich clothes as soon as ever he came in here, among the prisoners, and he will eat food out of the basket for humility.”

The basket was an alms basket of food scraps; these scraps were NOT good eating.

“Why will he do so?” the friend asked.

“Alas, he has no hope of life,” the second prisoner said. “He mortifies himself. He does but linger on until the Sessions.”

According to the second prisoner, Quicksilver expected to be hanged. He was preparing for the next life.

The first prisoner said:

“Oh, he has penned the best thing, which he calls his ‘Repentance’ or his ‘Last Farewell,’ that ever you heard. He is a pretty poet, and for prose — you would wonder at and be surprised by how many prisoners he has helped out, with penning petitions for them, and not take a penny.”

The petitions were requests for forgiveness of debt or for other forms of charity.

The first prisoner continued:

“Look, this is the knight, in the rug gown.”

“Rug” is a coarse fabric. Sir Petronel was wearing a rug gown as a sign of repentance. This was similar to the wearing of sackcloth.

The first prisoner then said:

“Let’s stand to the side.”

They stood aside and watched the scene.

Sir Petronel, Bramble, and Quicksilver entered the scene.

Bramble said:

“Sir, as for Security’s case, I have told him.

“Let’s say that he would be condemned to be carted and whipped for a bawd, or so —”

Security had housed Sindefy, Quicksilver’s punk.

Bramble continued:

“— why, I’ll lay an execution on him of two hundred pounds; let him acknowledge a judgment — he shall do it in half an hour — they shall not all fetch him out without paying the execution, on my word.”

This was a legal trick. If Security agreed to pay money — two hundred pounds — to Touchstone, he could not be taken out of prison and carted and whipped until the money was repaid. The authorities would be unwilling to pay that debt, and so Security would not be whipped.

Possibly.

Bramble’s legal maneuvers are so twisty and convoluted that understanding them can be difficult — which is probably the point.

“But can’t we be bailed out, Master Bramble?” Sir Petronel asked.

Bramble answered:

“Hardly. None of the judges is in town, else you should remove yourself, in spite of Touchstone, with a *habeas corpus*.”

*Habeas corpus* is the legal right to have a court hearing. People cannot be locked up legally for very long unless they have a court hearing first. The court hearing could be about reducing the amount of bail needed to be released from prison.

Bramble continued:

“But if you have a friend to deliver your tale sensibly — that is, appealingly — to some justice of the town, so that he may have feeling of it, do you see, you may be bailed.”

One way for the authorities to have the feeling that these men should be released from prison would be to put money into the justice’s hand so the justice could feel it.

Another kind of feeling is the feeling of sympathy, but sometimes a bribe is more effective.

Bramble continued:

“For as I understand the case, it is done only *in terrorem* — done only to terrify others as a deterrent to crime — and you shall have a legal action of false imprisonment against him when you come out, and perhaps a thousand pounds costs.”

Master Wolf entered the scene.

Seeing him, Quicksilver asked, “How are you now, Master Wolf? What is the news? What return — what answer — do they make?”

Wolf answered, “Indeed, all the news is bad. Yonder will be no letters received. Touchstone says the Sessions shall determine it. Master Deputy Golding, however, commends himself to you, and with this token wishes he could do you other good.”

He gave Quicksilver Golding’s money.

Quicksilver said:



“I thank him.

“Good Master Bramble, trouble our quiet no more; do not molest us in prison thus with your winding — tricky, devious, and wily — devices and plots. Please depart.”

Bramble exited.

Quicksilver continued:

“For my part, I commit my cause to Him Who can succor me; let God work His will.

“Master Wolf, please let this money be distributed among the prisoners and desire — request — them to pray for us.”

He returned the money.

“It shall be done, Master Francis,” Wolf said.

Francis Quicksilver exited.

“An excellent temperament and disposition!” the first prisoner said.

“Now God send him good luck!” the second prisoner said.

The two prisoners and their friend exited.

“But what did my father-in-law say, Master Wolf?” Sir Petronel asked.

Holdfast entered the scene.

“There is a man who would speak with you, sir,” Holdfast said to Wolf.

“I’ll tell you soon, Sir Petronel,” Wolf said.

Sir Petronel exited.

Wolf asked Holdfast, “Who is it?”

“A gentleman, sir, who will not be seen,” Holdfast said.

Golding entered the scene.

Wolf asked:

“Where is he?”

Seeing Golding, he said:

“Master Deputy! Your Worship is welcome —”

“Peace!” Golding said. “Quiet!”

He wanted secrecy.

Wolf said to Holdfast, “Away, sirrah!”

Holdfast exited.

Golding said:

“In good faith, Master Wolf, the estate — the situation and condition — of these gentlemen, for whom you were so recently and willingly a suitor, does much affect me.

“And because I am desirous to do them some fair service, and I find that there is no means to make my father relent so likely as to bring him here to be a spectator of their miseries, I have ventured on a trick, which is to make myself your prisoner, entreating you to immediately go and report it to my father, and, feigning an action at the suit of some third person, request of him by this token” — he gave Wolf a ring — “that he will immediately and with all secrecy come here to be my bail.”

As part of the trick, Wolf would say that Golding was in prison because he owed money to someone.

Golding continued:

“This train, aka stratagem, if any, I know will bring him out of his house, and then having him here, I don’t doubt but we shall be all fortunate in the eventual outcome.”

If Touchstone were to actually see the prisoners, he would feel sympathy for them and he would relieve their distress.

“Sir, I will put on my best speed to effect it,” Wolf said.  
“Please come in.”

“Yes, and let me rest and remain concealed, please,” Golding said.

He exited.

“See here a benefit truly done, when it is done timely, freely, and to no ambition and ostentation,” Wolf said.

He exited.

#### — 5.4 —

Touchstone, Mrs. Touchstone, their daughters (Mildred and Gertrude), Sindefy, and Winifred talked together at Touchstone’s house.

“I will sail by you and not hear you, like the wise Ulysses,” Touchstone said.

Touchstone had gotten the myth wrong. Actually, Ulysses wished to sail by the Sirens and hear them and survive. Other sailors on other ships who had heard the Sirens had jumped overboard and been killed. Therefore, Ulysses ordered his men to stop their ears with beeswax and tie him to the mast and sail by the Sirens. Being tied to the mast kept Ulysses from jumping overboard, and he survived hearing the song of the Sirens.

Mildred knelt and said, “Dear father!”

Mrs. Touchstone knelt and said, “Husband!”

Gertrude knelt and said, “Father!”

Winifred and Sindefy knelt and said, “Master Touchstone!”

“Away, Sirens!” Touchstone said. “I will immure myself against your cries and lock myself up to your lamentations.”

“Gentle husband, hear me,” Mrs. Touchstone said.

“Father, it is I, father, my Lady Flash,” Gertrude said. “My sister and I are friends.”

“Good father!” Mildred said.

“Be not hardened, good Master Touchstone,” Winifred said.

“Please, sir, be merciful,” Sindefy said.

Touchstone said:

“I am deaf, I do not hear you; I have stopped my ears with shoemaker’s wax and drunk Lethe and mandragora to forget you.”

The water of the Lethe River causes forgetfulness in souls.

The mandragora plant is mandrake, and it has narcotic qualities. It puts people into a deep sleep.

Touchstone continued:

“All that you speak to me I commit to the air.”

He exited, and the women rose.

Wolf entered the scene.

“How are things now, Master Wolf?” Mildred asked.

“Where’s Master Touchstone?” Wolf said. “I must speak with him immediately. I have lost my breath because of haste.”

“What’s the matter, sir?” Mildred said. “I pray that all is well!”

“Master Deputy Golding has been arrested upon a writ of execution and desires Touchstone immediately to come to him without delay,” Wolf said.

“Ay me!” Mildred said.

She called, “Do you hear me, father?”

From inside, Touchstone said, “Tricks, tricks, confederacy, tricks! I have them in my nose, I scent them.”

According to Touchstone, he scented tricks the way that an animal of prey scented hunters.

“Who’s that?” Wolf asked. “Master Touchstone?”

“Why, it is Master Wolf himself, husband,” Mrs. Touchstone called to her husband.

“Father!” Mildred called.

From an inside room, Touchstone said, “I am deaf still, I say. I will neither yield to the song of the Siren nor the voice of the hyena, the tears of the crocodile nor the howling of the wolf. Avoid my habitation, monsters! Leave!”

People in this society believed that hyenas could imitate the voices of men and lure them to their death.

Wolf called, “Why, you aren’t mad, are you, sir? I ask you to look forth and see the token I have brought you, sir.”

Touchstone entered the scene and said, “Huh! What token is it?”

Wolf showed him Golding’s ring and asked, “Do you know it, sir?”

“My son Golding’s ring!” Touchstone said. “Are you in earnest, Master Wolf?”

“Aye, by my faith, sir,” Wolf said. “He is in prison and requested me to use all speed and secrecy to you.”

Touchstone said:

“Give me my cloak there!”

He then said to the women:

“Please be patient; I am plagued for my austerity.”

He said again:

“My cloak!”

He then asked:

“At whose suit, Master Wolf?”

“I’ll tell you as we go, sir,” Wolf said.

They exited.

— 5.5 —

The two prisoners and their friend talked together in the Counter.

“Why, but is his offence — Quicksilver’s crime — such as that he cannot have hope of life — have hope to continue living?” the friend asked.

“Indeed, it would seem so,” the first prisoner said, “and it is a great pity, for he is exceedingly penitent.”

“They say he is charged only on suspicion of felony yet,” the friend said.

“Aye, but his master is a shrewish — that is, ill-natured — fellow,” the second prisoner said. “He’ll prove great matter against him.”

“More than anything else, I’d like to see his ‘Farewell,’” the friend said.

Touchstone had written a song of repentance. He believed that he would be sentenced to death, and he planned to sing his “Farewell” as he was carted to the place where he expected to be hung.

“Oh, it is rarely — splendidly — written!” the first prisoner said. “Why, Toby may get him to sing it to you. Quicksilver is not standoffish with anybody.”

Toby was the second prisoner’s name.

“Oh, he is definitely not standoffish,” the second prisoner said. “He wishes that all the world should learn about his repentance, and he thinks he acquires merit in it the more shame he suffers.”

In other words: The more shame he feels, the more sincere is his repentance; if he felt no shame, he would not have sincerely repented.

The first prisoner said to the second prisoner, “Please, try and see what thou can do.”

“I promise you that he will not deny it, if he is not hoarse with the often repeating of it,” the second prisoner said.

He exited.

The first prisoner said, “You never saw a more courteous creature than he is, and the knight, too. The poorest prisoner of the house may command them: They may request favors from them. You shall hear a thing admirably penned.”

“Is the knight any scholar, too?” the friend asked. “Is he an author?”

The first prisoner said, “No, but he will speak very well, and discourse admirably of racing horses, and Whitefriars, and

against bawds, and of cocks, and he will talk as loud as a hunter, but he is none.”

“He is none” can mean 1) he is not a hunter, and/or 2) he is not a scholar and author.

Whitefriars was a sanctuary for debtors and a haunt of prostitutes.

Wolf and Touchstone entered the scene.

“Please stay here, sir,” Wolf said to Touchstone. “I’ll call His Worship down to you.”

His Worship was Golding.

Wolf exited.

Touchstone stood aside.

Quicksilver and Sir Petronel, who were escorted by the second prisoner, entered the scene.

From another direction, Wolf and Golding entered the scene and stood apart from the others to witness the scene.

The first prisoner said, “See, he has brought him, and the knight, too. Greet him, please.”

He then said to Quicksilver, “Sir, this gentleman, upon our report, is very desirous to hear some piece of your ‘Repentance.’”

“Sir, with all my heart, and as I told Master Toby, I shall be glad to have any man be a witness of it,” Quicksilver said. “And the more openly I profess it, I hope it will appear the heartier and the more unfeigned.”

“Who is this?” Touchstone said to himself. “My former serving-man Francis? And my son-in-law?”



“Sir, it is all the testimony I shall leave behind me to the world and my master whom I have so offended,” Francis Quicksilver said.

“Good sir!” the friend said.

“I wrote it when my spirits were oppressed,” Quicksilver said.

“Aye, I’ll be sworn for you, Francis,” Sir Petronel said. “What you said is true.”

“It is in imitation of Mannington’s, he who was hanged at Cambridge, who cut off the horse’s head at a blow,” Quicksilver said.

George Mannynton [Mannington] wrote “A Woeful Ballad” (1576) an hour before he was executed. It began, “I wail in woe, I plunge in pain.”

“So, sir,” the friend said.

Quicksilver said, “It is to the tune of ‘I wail in woe, I plunge in pain.’”

“An excellent ditty it is, and worthy of a new tune,” Sir Petronel said.

Quicksilver sang:

*“In Cheapside famous for gold and plate,*

*“Quicksilver, I did dwell of late.*

*“I had a master good and kind,*

*“That would have wrought [fashioned] me to his mind.*

*“He bade me still [continually], ‘Work upon that,’*

*“But alas, I wrought I knew not what.*

*“He was a touchstone black but true*

*“And told me still [continually] what would ensue.*

*“Yet, woe is me, I would not learn;*

*“I saw, alas, but could not discern.”*

The touchstones used to test the purity of gold alloys were often black.

“Excellent!” the friend said. “Excellent well.”

Wolf started to move towards Touchstone, but Golding stopped him and said, “Oh, let Quicksilver alone! Touchstone is taken — is captivated — already.”

Quicksilver continued singing his song:

*“I cast my coat and cap away;*

*“I went in silks and satins gay.*

*“False metal of good manners I*

*“Did daily coin unlawfully.*

*“I scorned my master, being drunk;*

*“I kept my gelding and my punk.*

*“And with a knight, Sir Flash by name,*

*“Who now is sorry for the same —”*

“False metal of good manners” is fake gallantry.

“I thank you, Francis,” Sir Petronel said.

Quicksilver continued singing his song:

*“I thought by sea to run away,*

*“But Thames and tempest did me stay.”*

Touchstone said to himself, “This cannot be feigned, surely. Heaven pardon my severity! The ragged colt may prove to be a good horse.”

Golding whispered to Wolf, “How he listens and is transported: He is enraptured by it! He has forgotten me.”

Quicksilver continued singing his song:

*“Still ‘Eastward ho!’ was all my word,*

*“But westward I had no regard.*

*“Nor never thought what would come after,*

*“As did, alas, his youngest daughter.”*

Mildred was the prudent younger daughter. She could consider the results of her own actions and the results of other people’s actions.

Westward is the direction toward the Tyburn gallows, and eastward may be the direction of good fortune because it is the opposite direction. But eastward is the direction toward Cuckold’s Haven.

Quicksilver and Sir Petronel had wanted to go westward to Virginia, but now it looked as if one or both of them would go westward to Tyburn. Just as on the night of the storm, they had fallen short in their journey.

The word “daughter,” then pronounced “dafter,” rhymed with “after.”

Quicksilver continued:

*“At last the black ox trod o’my foot,*

*“And I saw then what ’longed unto’t [belonged to it].”*

A black ox is a symbol of ill fortune.

Quicksilver continued:

*“Now cry I, ‘Touchstone, touch me still,*

*“And make me current by thy skill.”*”

In other words, the last two lines say:

“Now I cry, ‘Touchstone, continue to test me,

“And make me good metal — and with good mettle — with your skill.”

Starting to come forward, Touchstone said, “And I will do it, Francis.”

Wolf said quietly to Golding, “Stay him, Master Deputy; now is the time; we shall lose the song else.”

He wanted Golding to stop Touchstone from approaching Quicksilver now; he wanted to hear the rest of Quicksilver’s song.

Golding and Wolf approached Touchstone.

The friend said to Quicksilver, “I say that it is the best song that I ever heard.”

“How do you like it, gentlemen?” Quicksilver asked.

“Oh, it is admirable, sir!” the friend and the two prisoners said.

“This stanza now following alludes to the story of Mannington, from whence I took my objective for my invention,” Quicksilver said.

He was emulating Mannington, who had written his own song of repentance.

“Please go on, sir,” the friend said.

Quicksilver continued singing his song:

*“O Mannington, thy stories show  
“Thou cutt’st a horsehead off at a blow,  
“But I confess, I have not the force  
“For to cut off the head of a horse.  
“Yet I desire this grace to win:  
“That I may cut off the horsehead of Sin  
“And leave his body in the dust  
“Of sin’s highway and bogs of lust.  
“Whereby I may take Virtue’s purse  
“And live with her, for better, for worse.”*

Mannington was said to be able to cut off a horse’s head with a single blow.

Quicksilver sang that he would like to cut off the horsehead of Sin so that he could take the purse (bag for money) of Virtue and live with her. Of course, this sounds as if he is robbing Virtue.

“Admirable, sir, and excellently conceited — excellently imagined,” the friend said.

“Alas, sir,” Quicksilver said.

Touchstone said quietly:

“Son Golding and Master Wolf, I thank you. The deceit is welcome —”

The deceit was the pretense that Golding had been arrested and put in the prison.

Touchstone turned to Golding and continued:

“— especially from thee, whose charitable soul in this has shown a high point of wisdom and honesty.

“Listen! I am ravished with his ‘Repentance,’ and I could stand here a whole apprenticeship to hear him.”

The length of a whole apprenticeship was usually seven years.

“Forth, good sir,” the friend said to Quicksilver. “Continue.”

Quicksilver said, “This is the last part, and the ‘Farewell.’”

Quicksilver finished singing his song:

*“Farewell, Cheapside, farewell, sweet trade*

*“Of goldsmiths all that never shall fade.*

*“Farewell, dear fellow prentices [apprentices] all,*

*“And be you warnèd by my fall.*

*“Shun usurers, bawds, and dice and drabs [whores];*

*“Avoid them as you would French scabs [syphilitic sores and scars].*

*“Seek not to go beyond your tether,*

*“But cut your thongs unto your leather.*

*“So shall you thrive by little and little;*

*“Scape [Escape] Tyburn, Counters, and the Spittle.”*

The expression “to cut thongs of others’ leather” means “to take what is not rightfully yours.”

The full proverb is “It is not honest to make large thongs [out] of others’ leather,” and it means, “Don’t be prodigal at other people’s expense.”

The variation “cut your thongs unto your leather” means “to live within your means.”

Thongs are narrow strips of leather.

The Spittle is the Spital, a hospital for indigent patients. Venereal and other diseases were treated there.

Touchstone came forward and said, “And escape them shall thou, my penitent and dear Francis!”

“Master!” Quicksilver said.

He knelt.

Sir Petronel said, “Father!”

He knelt.

Touchstone said:

“I can no longer forbear to do your humility right. Arise, and let me honor your ‘Repentance’ with the hearty and joyful embraces of a father and friend’s love.

“Quicksilver, thou have eaten into my breast, Quicksilver, with the drops of thy sorrow, and killed the desperate — the despairing — opinion I had of thy reclaim.”

The “drops of thy sorrow” are tears.

The inorganic salts of quicksilver, aka mercury, can be corrosive to the skin. Mercury can also dissolve gold.

By “eaten into my breast,” Touchstone meant “touched my heart.”

Quicksilver’s humility had changed Touchstone’s former opinion that Quicksilver could not be reclaimed.

Rising, Quicksilver said, “Oh, sir, I am not worthy to see your worshipful face.”

Rising, Sir Petronel said, “Forgive me, father.”

Touchstone said:

“Speak no more; all former passages — all former events — are forgotten, and here my word shall release you.

“Francis, thank this worthy brother and kind friend.”

He wanted Francis Quicksilver to thank Golding and Wolf.

Touchstone then said:

“Master Wolf, I am their bail.”

Security shouted in the prison as he ran toward the grate.

Appearing at the grate, he shouted, “Master Touchstone! Master Touchstone!”

“Who’s that?” Touchstone asked.

“Security, sir,” Wolf said.

“Please, sir, if you’ll be won with a song, hear my lamentable tune, too,” Security said.

He sang:

*“O Master Touchstone,*

*“My heart is full of woe;*

*“Alas, I am a cuckold,*

*“And why should it be so?*

*“Because I was a usurer*

*“And bawd, as all you know,*

*“For which, again I tell you,*

*“My heart is full of woe.”*



Touchstone said:

“Bring him forth, Master Wolf, and release his restraints.”

Wolf exited.

He then returned with Security.

Touchstone said:

“This day shall be sacred to mercy and the mirth of this encounter in the Counter.”

Seeing some people coming, he said:

“Look, we are encountered with more suitors.”

Suitors are suppliants: They need or want something.

Mrs. Touchstone, Gertrude, Mildred, Sindefy, and Winifred entered the scene.

Touchstone then said:

“Save your breath, save your breath! All things have happened according to your wishes, and we are heartily satisfied in their outcomes.”

Gertrude said to Sir Petronel, “Ah, runaway, runaway, have I caught you? And how has my poor knight done all this while?”

“Dear lady-wife, forgive me!” Sir Petronel said.

Gertrude replied:

“As heartily as I would be forgiven, knight.”

She knelt and said to Touchstone:

“Dear father, give me your blessing and forgive me, too.

“I have been proud and lascivious, father, and a fool, father; and being raised to the state of a wanton coy thing called a

lady, father, I have scorned you, father, and my sister, and my sister's velvet cap, too; and I would make a mouth — an expression of contempt — at the city as I rode through it, and I would stop my ears at Bow-bell.”

Bow-bell is the bell at St. Mary-le-bow.

Gertrude continued:

“I have said your beard was a base one, father; and that you looked like Twierpipe, the taborer; and that my mother was only my midwife.”

A tabor is a small drum. Often, a taborer would play the tabor with one hand and a pipe — a wind instrument — with the other.

“Now God forgive you, child madam!” Mrs. Touchstone said.

Touchstone said:

“No more repetitions and recitations of past sins.”

Gertrude rose.

Touchstone then asked:

“What else is needed to make our harmony full?”

“Only this, sir,” Golding said, “that my fellow Francis make amends to Mistress Sindefy with marriage.”

“With all my heart,” Francis Quicksilver said.

“And Security give her a dower, which shall be all the restitution he shall make of that huge mass he has so unlawfully gotten,” Golding said.

“Excellently devised!” Touchstone said. “A good suggestion. What does Master Security say?”

“I say anything, sir,” Security said. “I say what you’ll have me say. I wish I were no cuckold!”

“Cuckold, husband?” Winifred said. “Why, I think this wearing of yellow has infected you.”

“Yellow” is the color of jealousy. Security was wearing yellow.

Touchstone said:

“Why, Master Security, that should be a comfort to you rather than a corrosive to your mental health.

“If you should be a cuckold, it’s an argument you have a beautiful woman for your wife.

“Then you shall be much made of; you shall have a store of friends; you shall never lack money; you shall be eased of much of your wedlock ‘pain’ because others will take it on for you.”

In other words: Others will do for you your husbandly duty to your wife in bed.

Touchstone continued:

“Besides, you are a usurer and likely to go to hell, but the devils will never torment you; they’ll take you for one of their own race because of your cuckold’s horns.

“Again, if you should be a cuckold and don’t know it, you are an innocent, and if you know it and endure it, you are a true martyr.”

Innocents are 1) guiltless people, or 2) fools.

Martyrs undergo great suffering, and sometimes they die.

Security said:

“I am resolved, sir.”

He was resolved to make the best of the situation.

He then said:

“Come hither, Winnie.”

He put his arm around her.

Touchstone said:

“Well, then, all are pleased, or shall be soon.

“Master Wolf, you look hungry, I think. Do you have any apparel to lend Francis to change into?”

Francis Quicksilver said, “No, sir, nor do I desire any, but here I make it my suit that I may go home through the streets in these clothes, as a spectacle for people to stare at, or rather an example, to the children of Cheapside.”

His suit was 1) his petition to Touchstone, and 2) his prison uniform.

He wanted to wear the prison uniform as he walked through the streets to Touchstone’s home.

Touchstone said:

“Thou have thy wish.”

He then said to the audience, including the readers of this book:

“Now, London, look about, and in this moral see thy glass [hourglass, aka time] run out.

“Behold the careful father, thrifty son;

“The solemn deeds, which each of us have done;

“The usurer punished, and from fall so steep

“The prodigal child reclaimed, and the lost sheep.”

He started to exit, but —

## EPILOGUE (*Eastward Ho!*)

— Quicksilver said to Touchstone:

“Stay, sir, I perceive that the multitude are gathered together to view our coming out at the Counter.”

He gestured at the audience members in the theatre and said:

“See whether the streets [the pit] and the fronts of the houses [the galleries] are full of people and the windows are filled with ladies as on the solemn day of the pageant!”

The pageant was an annual entertainment to celebrate the investiture of the Lord Mayor of London.

Quicksilver then said to the audience:

“Oh, may you find in this our pageant here

“The same contentment which you came to seek;

“And as that show but draws you once a year,

“May this attract you, hither, once a week.”

\*\*\*

Notes:

“That show” was the Lord Mayor’s annual entertainment.

At its first performances, this play was performed only once a week, on Saturdays.

## NOTES (*Eastward Ho!*)

— 1.2 —

[Sings] ‘*Thus whilst she sleeps I sorrow for her sake,*’ etc.

(1.2.7)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 554.

The song is “Sleep wayward thoughts” by John Dowland and is from his *The First Booke of Songs or Ayres* (1597):

*Sleep wayward thoughts, and rest you with my love,  
Let not my Love be with my love diseas'd.  
Touch not proud hands, least you her anger move,  
But pine you with my longings displeas'd.  
Thus while she sleeps I sorrow for her sake,  
So sleeps my Love, and yet my love doth wake.*

*But on the fury of my restless fear,  
The hidden anguish of my flesh desires,  
The glories and the beauties that appear,  
Between her brows near Cupid's closed fires  
Thus while she sleeps I sorrow for her sake,  
So sleeps my Love, and yet my love doth wake.*

*My love doth rage, and yet my Love doth rest,  
Fear in my love, and yet my Love secure,  
Peace in my Love, and yet my love oppress'd,  
Impatient yet of perfect temperature,*

*Sleep dainty Love, while I sigh for thy sake,  
So sleeps my Love, and yet my love doth wake.*

Source: karaoke. Accessed 17 July 2022

<https://www.karaoke-lyrics.net/lyrics/dowland-john/sleep-wayward-thoughts-540641>

— 3.2 —

*But a little higher, but a little higher, but a little higher,  
There, there, there lies Cupid's fire.*

(3.2.35-36)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 583.

The lines are from a bawdy poem by Thomas Campion:

*XXII.*

*Beauty, since you so much desire  
To know the place of Cupids fire,  
About you somewhere doth it rest,  
Yet neuer harbour'd in your brest,  
Nor gout-like in your heele or toe ;  
What foole would seeke Loues flame so low?  
But a little higher, but a little higher,  
There, there, ô there lyes Cupids fire.*

*Thinke not, when Cupid most you scorne,  
Men iudge that you of Ice were borne ;*



*For though you cast loue at your heele,  
His fury yet sometime you feele :  
And where-about if you would know,  
I tell you still not in your toe :  
But a little higher, but a little higher,  
There, there, ô there lyes Cupids fire.*

Source of Above: Thomas Campion, *The Third and Fourth Bookes of Ayres: The Fourth Booke*. Luminarium. Accessed 21 July 2022

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/beautysince.htm>

— 3.2 —

GERTRUDE

[Sings]

“His head as white as milk,

“All flaxen was his hair; 65

“But now he is dead,

“And laid in his bed,

“And never will come again.”

(3.2-64-68)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 584.

In *Hamlet* 4.5, Ophelia sings:

*“And will he not come again?”*

*“And will he not come again?”*

*“No, no, he is dead:*

*“Go to thy death-bed:*

*“He never will come again.*

*“His beard was as white as snow,*

*“All flaxen was his poll:*

*“He is gone, he is gone,*

*“And we cast away moan:*

*“God ha’ mercy on his soul!*

*“And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be wi’ ye.”*

Source of Above: Shakespeare, Hamlet. MIT. Accessed 21 July 2022

<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/hamlet/full.html>

Here are some relevant *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions for “head”:

“A person’s hair; the whole mass or body of this.”  
(head, n.1, 5a)

“The rounded part forming the end of the penis; the glans.” (head, n.1, 18d)

“An accumulation of foam or froth on the top of certain drinks, esp. beer.” (head, n.1, 20a)

“The cream which accumulates on the top of milk.” (head, n.1, 20b, first citation: 1864)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* also begins a definition of “milk” as “A whitish fluid.”

Since the person’s hair is flaxen (pale yellowish-gray), and the person’s head is “white as milk,” the person’s head is probably semen.

— 5.1 —

[Sings] ‘*O hone, hone, o no nera, etc.*’

(5.1.6)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 619.

A song exists that is titled “Franklin” and is sung to the tune “Franklin is fled away”:

*Franklin, my loyal friend,*

*O hone, O hone!*

*In whom my joys do end*

*O hone! O hone!*

*Franklin, my heart’s delight,*

*Since last he took his flight*

*Bids now the world goodnight.*

*O hone, O hone!*

Source: “Franklin.” Accessed 17 July 2022

<https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/static/music/pdf/P.3.6.pdf>

The Irish *ochoin* means “oh, alas!”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “franklin” can mean, allusively, “A liberal host.”

If that is the case here, it could refer ironically to her father, Touchstone, who no longer takes care of Gertrude.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “franklin” can mean “A freeholder; in 14-15<sup>th</sup> centuries the designation of a class of landowners, of free but not noble birth, and ranking next below the gentry.”

But if “franklin” means “a free landholder,” then it could refer ironically to Sir Petronel, who sold Gertrude’s land and abandoned her. Of course, he is a knight, but he was not born a knight. Sir Petronel, however, is not free: He is in prison.

The phrase “o no nera” could mean “oh, no ne’ra,” aka “oh, no nearer.”

Thomas Robinson has a song titled “O Hone” (1609), the music to which these words were set:

*O hone, hone, o no nera, O hone, hone, o no nera.*

Source: Ross W. Duffin, *Some Other Note: The Lost Songs of English Renaissance Comedy*.

“Nera” is a warrior in Irish Mythology.

*Nera* (modern spelling *Neara*) is a warrior of Connacht in the Ulster Cycle of Irish mythology who appears in the 10th cen Middle Irish story the *Echtra Nerai*.

Source: “Nera (mythology).” Wikipedia. Accessed 27 July 2022

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nera\\_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nera_(mythology))

If this is the meaning that Ben Jonson meant, then yes, Sir Petronel is no warrior.

“O no nera” may mean “oh, non-era.”

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “era” as “A date, or an event, which forms the commencement of a new period in the history of a nation, an institution, individual, art or science, etc.; a memorable or important date.” The first citation, however, is 1703.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “non” as “a prohibition.” The sole citation is from 1551.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* also defines “non” as “a person who dissents or disapproves.” The first citation is 1663.

An *era* can be a beginning of a new period in someone’s life and it can be a period in someone’s life, and a *non* can be a disapproving person.

The answer that I think is correct is that “O no nera” means “oh, non-era.”

Gertrude’s life has changed, and she has begun a period in her life in which many people, and especially her father, disapprove of her.

— 5.1 —

*Thou wert*

*afire to be a lady, and now your ladyship and you may  
both blow at the coal,*

(5.1.93-94)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 623.

A Scottish proverb stated, “Let them that are cold blow at the coal.”

Another Scottish proverb stated, “It’s a cold coal to blow at.”

Source: The above Scottish proverbs are from this book:

*A Collection of Scotch Proverbs.* By Anonymous. Collected by Pappity Stampoy. 1663.

Available at Guttenberg.org:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7018/7018-h/7018-h.htm>

**CHAPTER 8: Ben Jonson's *Epicene***

**CAST OF CHARACTERS (*Epicene*)**

MOROSE, *a gentleman who loves no noise.*

SIR DAUPHINE EUGENIE, *a knight, his nephew.*

NED CLERIMONT, *a gentleman, his friend.*

TRUEWIT, *another friend.*

EPICENE, *the Silent Woman.*

SIR JOHN "JACK" DAW, *a knight, her servant.*

SIR AMOROUS LA FOOLE, *a knight also.*

MR. THOMAS OTTER, *a land- and sea-captain.*

CUTBEARD, *a barber.*

MUTE, *one of Morose's servants.*

MADAM HAUGHTY, *Member of Lady Collegiates.*

MADAM CENTAUR, *Member of Lady Collegiates.*

MISTRESS DOL MAVIS, *Member of Lady Collegiates.*

MISTRESS TRUSTY, *the Lady Haughty's serving-woman (Pretender).*

MRS. OTTER, *The Captain's Wife (Pretender).*

PARSON.

BOY *and other* PAGES.

SERVANTS.

MUSICIANS.

**THE SCENE: LONDON**

## NOTES:

The Latin word *morosus* has the meaning of “peevisish” or “stubborn.”

According to Wikipedia, “**Epicenity** is the lack of gender distinction, often reducing the emphasis on the masculine to allow the feminine. It includes androgyny — having both masculine and feminine characteristics.”

A daw is a jackdaw. Jackdaws are a bird that was thought to be loquacious and thievish. The word “daw” also meant “dolt.”

Sir John “Jack” Daw is the “servant” of Epicene. In this context, “servant” means someone who loves her and is devoted to her service. A servant is a male admirer.

An otter is an amphibious animal and is associated with both land and sea: river otters and sea otters.

Centaurs are half-man and half-horse. No female Centaurs exist, even in mythology.

“Collegiates” means “people associated with a College or a Society.”

“Dol” is a nickname for Dorothy.

A pretender is an aspirer. Both MISTRESS TRUSTY and MRS. OTTER aspire to be full-fledged members of the *Lady Collegiates*.

Ben Jonson wrote *Epicene* in the year 1609, a year when the plague was virulent in London.

A mistress can be a loved woman, not necessarily a woman one sleeps with.

A servant can be a man who is devoted to and loves and serves a woman.



“Mute” means untalkative.

“Dumb” means untalkative.

“Madam” is a title of higher rank than “Mistress.” “Mistress” means “Mrs.” “Madam” is used for a woman of rank; for example, one who has the title “Lady,” as in Lady Haughty, aka Madam Haughty.

## ACT 1 (*Epicene*)

### — 1.1 —

Clerimont was in a room in a house with his boy-servant, who was helping Clerimont dress.

Clerimont asked, “Have you got the song yet perfectly memorized I gave you, boy?”

The boy replied, “Yes, sir.”

“Let me hear it,” Clerimont ordered.

“You shall, sir,” the boy said, “but, truly, let nobody else hear it.”

“Why, I ask?” Clerimont said.

The boy replied, “It will get you the dangerous name of a poet in town, sir.”

Poets and playwrights often engaged in satire, drawing the scorn of those whom they satirized.

The boy continued, “Besides, it will get me a perfect deal of ill will at the mansion you know of, whose lady is the theme of the song, whereas now I am the welcomest thing under a man who comes there.”

The mansion was the headquarters of the Lady Collegiates, and the lady was Madam Haughty.

“Under a man” meant “less than a man,” but the phrase also has a sexual meaning.

“I think so,” Clerimont said, “and above a man, too, if the truth were racked out of you.”

“Above a man” meant taller than a man: The boy would certainly be taller if he were stretched on the torture device known as the rack. Such torture was used to secure

confessions from the tortured. Again, the phrase has a sexual meaning.

The boy said, “No, indeed, I’ll confess before being tortured, sir. The gentlewomen play with me and throw me on the bed, and carry me in to my lady, and she kisses me with her makeup-greasy face and puts a peruke — a wig — on my head and asks me if I will wear her gown, and I say, ‘No.’ And then she hits me a blow on the ear and calls me innocent, and lets go of me.”

Clerimont said, “It’s no marvel if the door is kept shut against your master, when the entrance is so easy to you.”

He was punning. A door is an entrance, and he was using the word to refer to a physical door and to the entrance of Madam Haughty’s vagina.

Clerimont continued, “Well, sir, you shall go there no more, lest I be obliged to seek your voice in my lady’s rushes a fortnight hence.”

Rush mats were used as floor coverings. If the boy were to spend time on the floor with Lady Haughty, he would be engaging in an activity whose ability to perform meant that he would lose the ability to sing high notes.

Clerimont ordered, “Sing, sir.”

The boy began to sing, but Truewit, a friend of Clerimont’s, almost immediately entered the room.

Truewit said, “Why, here’s the man who can melt away his time, and never feel it! What, between his mistress away from home and his ingle at home, high fare, soft lodging, fine clothes, and his fiddle, he thinks the hours have no wings and the day has no post-horse.”

The mistress was the woman Clerimont was devoted to, but “mistress” did not necessarily mean that she was devoted to

him. The word “ingle” can mean “friend” or “boy kept for homosexual purposes.”

A post-horse is a swift horse used to ride between posts, or stages of a journey. Post-horses were used to carry messages.

Truewit continued, “Well, sir gallant, if you were struck with the plague this minute, or condemned to any capital punishment tomorrow, you would begin then to think and value every moment of your time, esteem it at the true rate, and give all for it.”

“Why, what should a man do?” Clerimont asked.

“Why, nothing,” Truewit said, “or that which, when it is done, is as idle, vain, and useless — such as hearken after the next horse race, or hunting match; lay wagers, praise Puppy, or Peppercorn, Whitefoot, Franklin; swear upon Whitemane’s side in a race; spend aloud, so that my lords may hear you; visit my ladies at night, and be able to give them the character of — that is, gossip about — every bowler or bettor on the green.”

Puppy, Peppercorn, Whitefoot, Franklin, and Whitemane were the names of famous horses.

“Spend aloud” means to talk loudly and/or spend ostentatiously.

The game of bowls was played on a green, and fashionable men sometimes bet on the outcome.

A bettor is a person who makes bets.

To fashionable men, time is something to be wasted in trivial pursuits.

Truewit continued, “These are the things wherein your fashionable men exercise themselves, and I engage in them for company.”

Clerimont replied, “Nay, if I have your authority, I’ll not leave off these activities yet. Come, the others are considerations when we come to have grey heads and weak hams, moist eyes, and shrunk members. We’ll think on them then; then we’ll pray, and fast.”

“Shrunk members” can mean shrunken arms and legs, or shrunken penises.

Truewit said, “Aye, and destine only that time of age to goodness that our lack of ability will not let us employ in evil?”

Some people think the best time to repent sins is after one’s old age has made one incapable of sinning. Saint Augustine once prayed to God, “Give me chastity and continence [self-restraint], but not yet.”

Clerimont replied, “Why, then it is time enough.”

Truewit said, “Yes, as if a man should sleep all the term for trying legal cases and think to complete his business on the last day. Oh, Clerimont, this time, because it is an incorporeal thing and not subject to sense, we mock ourselves the fineliest — most perfect — out of it, with vanity and misery indeed, not seeking an end of wretchedness but only changing the matter constantly.”

Truewit was a thinker who recognized the value of time.

Clerimont said, “Nay, you shall not leave now —”

“See but our common disease!” Truewit said.

The common-to-all disease is discontent, aka unhappiness. For many noblemen, it is caused by lack of patronage at court.

He continued, “With what justice can we complain that great men will not look upon us, nor be at leisure to give our affairs

such dispatch as we expect, when we will never do it to ourselves, nor hear nor regard ourselves!”

If noblemen misuse time, can they blame greater men for doing the same thing?

Clerimont replied, “Bah, you have read Plutarch’s *Morals* now, or some such tedious fellow, and it shows so vilely with you; before God, I say that it will spoil your wit utterly. Talk to me of pins and feathers and ladies and rushes and such things, and leave this stoicity — stoical attitude and puritanical severity — alone until you write sermons.”

The “dull fellow” Truewit had been reading was not Plutarch, but instead was the stoic philosopher Seneca. In particular, he was paraphrasing *De Brevitate Vita* [*Concerning the Shortness of Life*], 3.5.

Clerimont preferred talk about trivial things rather than serious things. According to Clerimont, trivial things included “pins and feathers and ladies and rushes and such things.”

A saying of the time was “Not worth a rush.”

Truewit replied, “Well, sir, if my advice will not take effect and succeed, I have learned to lose as little of my kindness as I can. I’ll do good to no man against his will, certainly.”

He then asked, “When were you at the College?”

“What College?” Clerimont asked.

“As if you didn’t already know!” Truewit said.

“No, indeed,” Clerimont said. “I came from court just yesterday.”

“Why, hasn’t the news arrived there yet?” Truewit said. “There is a new foundation, sir, here in the town, of ladies who call themselves the Collegiates. It is an order between

courtiers and country madams who live apart from their husbands and give entertainment to all the wits and braveries of the time, as they call them, cry down or up — decry or praise — what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion with most masculine, or rather hermaphroditical (mannishly feminine), authority, and every day gain to their College some new probationer.”

“Wits and braveries” are gallants: witty gallants and bravely (splendidly) dressed gallants.

“Who is the president?” Clerimont asked.

Truewit answered, “The grave, serious, and youthful matron, the Lady Haughty.”

Clerimont said, “A pox on her autumnal face, her pieced-together beauty! There’s no man who can be admitted to her presence until she is ready nowadays — until she has painted and perfumed and washed and scoured — except this boy here, and him she wipes her makeup-greasy lips upon like a sponge. I have made a song — I ask you to hear it — on the subject.”

The boy sang:

*Still [Always] to be neat [finely dressed], still [always] to be dressed,*

*As [if] you were going to a feast;*

*Still [Always] to be powdered, still [always] perfumed:*

*Lady, it is to be presumed,*

*Though art’s hid [hidden] causes are not found,*

*All is not sweet, all is not sound.*

*Give me a look, give me a face*

*That makes simplicity [absence of ornamentation] a grace;*

*Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:*

*Such sweet neglect more taketh [captivates] me*

*Than all th' adulteries [adulterations] of art.*

*They strike mine [my] eyes, but not my heart.*

Clerimont's song was against fancy dress, perfume, and makeup.

Truewit said, "And I am clearly on the other side: I love a good adornment before any beauty of the world. Oh, a woman is then like a delicate garden; nor is there one kind of it. She may vary every hour, take often counsel of her mirror, and choose the best. If she has good ears, show them; good hair, lay it out; good legs, wear short clothes; a good hand, reveal it often; practice any art to mend breath, cleanse teeth, repair eyebrows, use makeup, and acknowledge it."

Clerimont said, "What! Publicly?"

"That she does it, yes, but not how she does it," Truewit said. "The how of it must be private. Many things that seem foul in the doing are pleasing once they are done. A lady should indeed study her face when we think she sleeps; nor, when the doors are shut, should men be enquiring: All is sacred within then. Is it for us to see their wigs put on, their false teeth, their complexion, their eyebrows, their fingernails? You see that gilders will not work except when enclosed in a room. They must not reveal how little serves, with the help of art, to adorn a great deal. How long did the canvas hang before Aldgate? Were the people allowed to see the city's gilded statues *Love* and *Charity* while they were rude stone, before they were painted and polished? No. No more should lovers approach their mistresses except when they are complete and finished."



Aldgate was the most important eastern gate in London's old city wall. Rebuilt in 1609, it was adorned with two statues: *Love* and *Charity*. They were kept under wraps until finished and were then revealed to the public.

"Well said, my Truewit," Clerimont said.

Truewit continued, "And a wise lady will keep a guard always upon the place, so that she may do things securely. I once followed a rude fellow into a chamber, where the poor madam, for haste, and troubled, snatched at her wig to cover her baldness and put it on the wrong way."

She put on the wig backwards.

Clerimont said, "Oh, monstrous!"

Truewit continued, "And the unconscionable knave held her in fashionable small talk for an hour, with that reversed face, when I still looked for the time when she should talk from the other side."

"Why, you should have relieved her," Clerimont said.

"No, indeed, I let her alone, as we'll let alone this topic of discussion, if you please, and pass to another," Truewit said.

He then asked, "When did you most recently see Dauphine Eugenie?"

Sir Dauphine Eugenie was a knight and a friend of theirs.

"Not for these last three days," Clerimont answered. "Shall we go to him this morning? He is very melancholic and depressed, I hear."

"Sick of the uncle, is he?" Truewit asked.

He was playing with language. "Sick of the mother" meant hysteria.

Truewit continued, "I met that stiff piece of formality, his uncle, yesterday. He was wearing a huge turban of nightcaps on his head, buckled over his ears."

Sir Dauphine Eugenie's uncle was named Morose.

Old people and sick people wore nightcaps during the day.

"Oh, that's his custom when he walks outside of his house," Clerimont said. "He can endure no noise, man."

"So I have heard," Truewit said. "But is the disease so ridiculous in him as it is made out to be? They say he has been busy entering into many treaties with the fishwives [women who sold fish] and orange-selling women, and he has propounded terms and conditions between them so that they will be silent. But by the Virgin Mary, the chimney-sweepers will not be drawn into making a contract with him to be silent."

Truewit was punning on the word "drawn." Sweeping the chimney cleans out the soot and improves the draw (upward draft) of smoke.

Clerimont said, "No, nor the broom-men [broom sellers]. They stand resolutely against such contracts. He cannot endure a fruit seller; he swoons if he hears one."

The word "stand" can mean erection. The masculine broom-men won't allow themselves to be grouped in a contract together with women.

Sellers at markets advertised their wares by loudly shouting.

Truewit said, "I think a blacksmith would be ominous to him."

Clerimont said, "Or any hammer-man [metal-worker]. A brazier [brass-worker] is not allowed to dwell in his parish, nor anyone who makes armor. He would have hanged a

pewterer's apprentice once upon a Shrove Tuesday's riot for being of that trade, when the rest were acquitted."

Blacksmiths make much noise as they hammer hot metal into a desired shape. Other metal-workers such as pewterers also make noise as they work with metal.

Apprentices customarily rioted on Shrove Tuesday (the day before Lent, and a holiday for apprentices) and did such things as wreck brothels.

Truewit said, "A trumpet would frighten him terribly, as would the oboes."

"Out of his senses," Clerimont agreed. "The city-paid street musicians receive a pension from him not to come near the ward he resides in."

He motioned toward the boy and said, "This youth played a trick on him one night. He pretended to be the night watchman and rang the bell to announce each hour, and never left until he had brought him down to the door with a long sword, and there left him waving his sword in the air."

The boy said, "Why, sir, he has chosen a street to live in so narrow at both ends that it will receive no coaches nor carts nor any of these common noises, and therefore we who love him devise, now and then, ways to make him exercise and breathe hard. He would grow sluggish else in his ease. His virtue would rust without action.

"I entreated the keeper of a bear one day to come down with the dogs of some four parishes that way, and, I thank him, he did, and loudly proclaimed and advertised his next bear-baiting under Master Morose's window until he was sent crying away with his head made a most bleeding spectacle to the multitude.

“And another time a fencer, marching to his fencing-match, had his drum most tragically run through for taking that street in his way, at my request.”

Fencers would often march with drummers to a fencing-match as a form of advertisement.

Truewit said to the boy, “You are a good wag: a good mischievous boy.”

He then asked, “What does he do about the church bells?”

Clerimont replied, “Oh, in the queen’s time he was wont to go out of town every Saturday at ten o’clock, or on holiday eves.”

Bells rang on the eves of holy days, including Sundays.

He continued, “But now, because of the plague, the perpetuity of ringing has made him devise a room with double walls and treble ceilings, the windows closed and caulked, and there he lives by candlelight.”

The year was 1609, and the plague caused many, many deaths in London — so many that church bells constantly rang. A passing-bell rings to announce a person’s death, and a knell is a bell ringing during a funeral.

Clerimont continued, “He fired a serving-man last week for having a pair of new shoes that creaked. And his current employee waits on him now in tennis-court woolen socks, or slippers soled with wool, and they talk to each other in a trunk: an ear trumpet.”

He heard a noise, looked at its source, and said, “See who is coming here.”

Sir Dauphine Eugenie entered the room. Clerimont and Truewit had been talking about his uncle, Morose, who hated noise.

Dauphine asked, “How are you now? What ail you, sirs? Dumb? Unable to speak?”

Truewit said, “We are struck into stone, almost, as surely as I am here, with tales of your uncle. There was never such a monster heard of before.”

Dauphine said, “I wish you would once and for all lose this subject, my masters, for my sake. They are such as you are who have brought me into that predicament I am with him.”

“What predicament is that?” Truewit asked.

“By the Virgin Mary, that he will disinherit me, no more than that,” Dauphine said. “He thinks that I and my company of friends are the authors of all the ridiculous acts and monuments — stories — that are told about him.”

Truewit said, “By God’s eyelid, I would be the author of more in order to vex him. His intention to disinherit you makes him deserve it: It gives you law — that is, it authorizes you — to plague him. I’ll tell you what I would do. I would make a false almanac, get it printed, and then have him drawn out on a Coronation Day to the Tower Wharf and kill him with the noise of the cannon celebrating the anniversary of the coronation of King James I.”

The anniversary day was July 25, but a false almanac could list a different date. Morose would be tricked into going to the Tower Wharf on the real anniversary day so that the noise of the celebration would kill him before he could disinherit his nephew: Dauphine.

Truewit continued, "Disinherit you? He cannot, man. Aren't you his next of blood, and his sister's son?"

"Aye," Dauphine said, "but he will thrust me out of the inheritance, he vows, and marry."

If Morose were to marry and have a son, that son would be the next of kin and get the inheritance.

"What!" Truewit said. "That's a greater and more ominous portent for you. Can he endure no noise, and yet he will venture to take a wife?"

"Yes," Clerimont said. "Why, you are a stranger, it seems, to his best trick yet. He has employed a fellow this half year, to enquire around all over England and find him a dumb — silent — woman. It doesn't matter what she is of any form or any quality or any rank, as long as she is able to bear children. Her silence is dowry enough, he says."

"But I trust to God that he has found no woman like that," Truewit said.

"No," Clerimont replied, "but he has heard of one who's lodged in the next street to him, who is exceedingly soft-spoken, thrifty of her speech, who expends only six words a day. And he's pursuing her now, and he shall have her."

"Is it possible?" Truewit said. "Who is his agent in the business?"

"By the Virgin Mary," Clerimont said, "a barber named Cutbeard, who is an honest fellow and one who tells Dauphine here everything."

"Why, you oppress and overwhelm me with wonder!" Truewit said. "A woman and a barber, and yet Morose loves no noise!"

In comedy, women and barbers have a reputation for being talkative.

“Yes, indeed,” Clerimont said. “The fellow trims him silently and has not the knack with his shears or his fingers, and that continence and self-restraint in a barber Morose thinks so eminent a virtue that it has made the barber the chief of Morose’s counsellors — his main confidant.”

A knack is 1) a skill, and 2) a knock, or other loud noise such as snapping one’s fingers.

“Is the barber to be seen, or the wench?” Truewit asked.

In this society, “wench” meant “young woman.” It need not be a negative, insulting word.

“Yes, that they are,” Clerimont answered.

“Please, Dauphine, let’s go there,” Truewit said.

“I have some business now,” Dauphine said. “I cannot, truly.”

“You shall have no business that shall make you neglect this, sir,” Truewit said. “We’ll make her talk, believe it; or, if she will not, we can say at least as much as shall interrupt the treaty and hinder the negotiation — we will break it. You are bound in conscience, when he suspects you without cause, to torment him.”

“Not I, by any means,” Dauphine said. “I’ll give no consent to do it. He shall never have that plea against me that I opposed the least fancy or fantasy of his. Let it lie upon my stars — let it be fated — for me to be guilty, yet I’ll be innocent.”

By “innocent,” he meant not guilty.

“Yes, and be poor and beg,” Truewit said. “Do, innocent, when some servant of his has begotten him an heir, or this barber, if Morose himself cannot. Innocent!”

By “innocent,” he meant fool.

Truewit then said, “Please, Ned, where does she live? Let him be innocent still.”

Clerimont’s nickname was Ned.

He answered, “Why, right opposite the barber’s, in the house where Sir John Daw lives.”

“You do not mean to confound and utterly confuse me!” Truewit said. “Do you?”

“Why?” Clerimont asked.

“Does he who would marry her — Morose — know so much?” Truewit asked.

“I cannot tell,” Clerimont said. “I don’t know.”

“It would be enough of a slur on her reputation, with Jack Daw so near her,” Truewit said.

“Why?” Clerimont asked.

“He is the pre-eminent talking sir in the town!” Truewit said. “Jack Daw! And he is to teach her not to speak — God be with you. I have some business, too.”

“Will you not go there, then?” Clerimont asked.

“Not with the risk of meeting Daw, out of concern for my ears,” Truewit said.

“Why, I thought you two had been upon very good terms,” Clerimont said.

“Yes, of keeping distance between us,” Truewit said.



“They say he is a very good scholar,” Clerimont said.

“Aye, and he says it first,” Truewit said. “A pox on him! A fellow who merely makes a claim to learning, buys titles, and has nothing else of books in him.”

In other words, Jack Daw was the kind of person who buys a book and reads nothing except the title. Also, “buys titles” implies that he bought his knighthood.

“The world reports him to be very learned,” Clerimont said.

“I am sorry the world should so conspire to tell lies about him,” Truewit said.

“In good faith, I have heard very good things come from his mouth,” Clerimont said.

“You may have, indeed,” Truewit said. “There’s none so desperately ignorant as to deny that. I wish that those good things were his own!”

In other words, Jack Daw’s wit was borrowed.

Truewit said, “God be with you, gentlemen.”

“God be with you” is a way of saying “goodbye.”

He exited.

Referring to Truewit’s exit, Clerimont said, “This is very abrupt!”

— 1.3 —

Dauphine said, “Come, you are a strange, open, and unreserved man to tell everything thus.”

He was worried about what Truewit might do or say about what he had heard.

“Why, believe it, Dauphine, Truewit’s a very honest fellow,” Clerimont said.

“I don’t think otherwise,” Dauphine said, “but this frank nature of his is not for secrets.”

“Nay, then, you are mistaken, Dauphine,” Clerimont said. “I know where he has been well trusted and discharged the trust very truly and heartily.”

Dauphine replied, “I don’t dispute it, Ned, but with the fewer a business is handled, it is always the safer. Now we are alone, if you’ll go thither to visit the silent woman, I am for you.”

He meant that he would go with him.

“When were you there?” Clerimont asked.

“Last night,” Dauphine said, “and such a *Decameron* of entertainment occurred! Boccaccio never thought of the like.”

Boccaccio wrote the *Decameron*, which consisted of 100 stories, many of them about humorous romantic exploits.

Dauphine continued, “Daw does nothing but court her, and the wrong way. He would lie with her and have sex with her, and yet he praises her modesty. He desires that she would talk and be free in talk (and in bed), and he commends her silence in verses — which he reads and swears are the best that ever man made. Then he rails against his fortunes, stamps his feet, and rebels because he has not been made a counsellor and called to affairs of state.”

No doubt, he has not been called to affairs of sex.

“Please, let’s go,” Clerimont said. “I would like to witness this.”

He then said to his boy-servant, “Some water, boy.”

The water may have been for washing up before leaving his house, or it may have been for drinking.

The boy exited.

Dauphine said, “We are invited to dinner together, Jack Daw and I, by one who came thither to him: Sir La Foole.”

Clerimont said, “Oh, that’s a precious manikin! A little man! A puppet!”

“Do you know him?” Dauphine asked.

“Aye,” Clerimont said, “and he will know you, too, if he saw you even once, even if you should meet him at church in the midst of prayers. He is one of the braveries, although he isn’t one of the wits.”

He dressed well, but he was not witty.

Clerimont continued, “He will salute a judge upon the bench and a bishop in the pulpit, a lawyer when he is pleading at the bar, and a lady when she is dancing in a masque, and he will make her forget her steps.

“He does pay for private performances of plays and for suppers for his guests, and he invites his guests to them aloud, out of his window, as they ride by in coaches. He has a lodging in a fashionable neighborhood — the Strand — for that purpose, and to watch when ladies have gone to the china-shops that sell luxurious oriental goods, or the Exchange, so that he may meet them by chance and give them presents, some two or three hundred pounds’ worth of trinkets, to be laughed at.”

Either the trinkets, or La Foole himself, or both, would be laughed at.

Two or three hundred pounds is a lot of money to spend on trinkets.

Clerimont continued, “He is never without a spare banquet of wine and fruit or sweetmeats in his chamber, for their serving-women to alight at and come up to, for a bait.”

La Foole apparently used the serving-women to help him meet the women they served. In this society, a bait is refreshment, and it is a lure.

“Excellent!” Dauphine said. “He was a fine youth last night, but now he is much finer.”

That is, he is much “finer” as a source of entertainment.

Dauphine asked, “What is his Christian name? I have forgotten it.”

The boy entered the room.

Clerimont answered, “Sir Amorous La Foole.”

The boy said, “The gentleman who owns that name is here below.”

“By God’s heart, he’s come to invite me to dinner, I bet my life,” Clerimont said.

“Likely enough,” Dauphine said. “Please, let’s have him up.”

Clerimont said, “Boy, marshal him in.”

“With a truncheon, sir?” the boy said.

He was punning. Marshalls carried a ceremonial baton. A truncheon can be either a baton or a cudgel.

“Go now, please,” Clerimont said.

The boy exited.

Clerimont said, "I'll make him tell us his pedigree, now, and what food he has to dinner, and who are his guests, and the whole course of his fortunes — all in a breath."

— 1.4 —

La Foole entered the room and said, "God save you, dear Sir Dauphine! Honored Master Clerimont!

"Sir Amorous!" Clerimont said. "You have very much honored — honored — my lodging with your presence."

"In good faith, it is a fine lodging!" La Foole said. "Almost as delicate and delightful a lodging as mine."

"That's not so, sir," Clerimont said.

"Excuse me, sir, if it were in the Strand, it would be, I assure you," La Foole said.

He added, "I have come, Master Clerimont, to entreat you to wait upon two or three ladies to dinner today."

By "wait upon" the ladies, he meant to call upon the ladies, but Clerimont deliberately misunderstood him.

"What, sir!" he said. "Wait upon them? Have you ever seen me carry dishes?"

"No, sir, dispense with me," La Foole said. "I meant, to bear them company."

"Dispense with me" was an affected way of saying, "Excuse me," but Clerimont deliberately misunderstood it to mean "Do without me."

"Oh, that I will, sir," Clerimont said.

He added, "The doubtfulness of your phrase — believe it, sir — would breed you a quarrel once an hour with the terrible boys, if you would but keep them fellowship for a day."

La Foole's phrasing was ambiguous and doubtful — capable of being misunderstood.

The terrible boys were better known as the roaring boys. They were bullies who sought excuses for quarreling. Such excuses could be found in ambiguous language.

"It would be extremely against my will, sir, if I contested and fought with any man," La Foole said.

Such a declaration can be indicative of cowardice.

"I believe it, sir," Clerimont said.

He then asked, "Where will you hold your feast?"

"At Tom Otter's, sir," La Foole said.

"Tom Otter?" Dauphine asked. "Who's he?"

"Captain Otter, sir," La Foole said. "He is a kind of gamester, a gambler, but he has had command, both by sea and by land."

Dauphine said, "Oh, then, he is *animal amphibium*?"

"Amphibious" refers to living both on land and in the sea.

"Aye, sir," La Foole said. "His wife was the rich china-woman whom the courtiers visited so often, who gave the rare entertainment."

A china-woman is a woman who owns a china-shop — a shop that sells oriental goods. However, words such as "visited" and "entertainment" were used to refer to a brothel and the activity found in it.

"Rare" can mean "splendid" or "infrequent" or both.

La Foole continued, "She commands all at home."

"Then she is Captain Otter?" Clerimont asked.

“You say very well, sir,” La Foole said. “She is my kinswoman, a La Foole by the mother’s side, and she will invite any great ladies for my sake.”

“Not of the La Fooles of Essex?” Dauphine asked.

La Foole replied, “No, sir, the La Fooles of London.”

Clerimont whispered to Dauphine, “Now he’s started.”

La Foole enjoyed talking about his ancestors and himself.

He said, “They all come out of our house, the La Fooles of the north, the La Fooles of the west, the La Fooles of the east and of the south — we are as ancient a family as any is in Europe — but I myself am descended lineally of the French La Fooles — and we do bear for our coat yellow, or *or* [gold], chequered *azure* [blue] and *gules* [red], and some three or four colors more, which is a very noted and celebrated coat and has sometimes and in former times been solemnly worn by the various members of nobility of our house — but let that go.”

La Foole was describing his coat of arms, but readers may be forgiven if they thought he was describing the motley — many-colored — coat worn by a jester, aka fool.

He continued, “Antiquity is not respected now.”

Some aristocratic families had been recently elevated, and many knights had been created in Ireland ten years ago (in 1599) by the second Earl of Essex.

La Foole continued, “I had a brace — a pair — of fat does sent to me, gentlemen, and half a dozen pheasants, a dozen or two godwits [marsh birds, a delicacy], and some other fowl, which I want to be eaten while they are good, and in good company. There will be present at dinner a great lady or two — my Lady Haughty, my Lady Centaur, Mistress Doll Mavis — and they come with the purpose of seeing the

silent gentlewoman, Mistress Epicene, whom honest Sir John Daw has promised to bring thither — and then Mistress Trusty, my lady’s serving-woman, will be there, too, and this honorable knight, Sir Dauphine, with yourself, Master Clerimont — and we’ll be very merry, and have fiddlers, and dance — I have been a mad wag in my time, and have spent some crowns since I was a page in court to my Lord Lofty, and after that, I was my lady’s gentleman-usher [a gentleman who serves someone who ranks higher], who got me knighted in Ireland, since it pleased my elder brother to die — I had as fair a gold-embroidered jacket on that day as any that was worn during the Island Voyage or at Caliz.”

The eye of the land is London.

La Foole was knighted in Ireland by the Earl of Essex. Many people of the time thought that the Earl of Essex had lowered the title of knight because he had made so many people knights. Such an honor should be rare.

The Island Voyage — the Earl of Essex’ 1597 expedition to the Azores — was a disaster. Many of the gallants who joined the expedition were criticized for dressing more like people at a masked dance than as soldiers.

Caliz is Cadiz. La Foole was combining the French Cadiz and the English Cales, which is an exonym: a name used by foreigners for a place that the natives themselves do not use it for. For example, USAmericans say Germany, not Deutschland.

La Foole continued, “No one dispraised my jacket, and I came over in it hither, showed myself to my friends in court, and afterward went down to my tenants in the country and surveyed my lands, let new leases, took their money, and spent it in the eye of the land here upon ladies — and now I can take up at my pleasure.”



By “take up,” La Foole meant “take out a loan, borrow money,” but Dauphine and Clerimont deliberately misunderstood him to mean “take (lift) up skirts.”

“Can you take up ladies, sir?” Dauphine asked.

“Oh, let him breathe and catch his breath,” Clerimont said. “He has not yet recovered.”

That is, not yet recovered from his efforts in ladies’ boudoirs.

Dauphine said, “I wish I were your partner in that commodity.”

Many loans involved commodities. To get around usury laws, lenders would require borrowers to take commodities (goods) as part of the loan. The commodities were very overpriced. The lender would buy back the commodities at a low price.

Women can be another kind of commodity.

“No, sir, excuse me,” La Foole said. “I meant money, which can take up anything.”

Money can take up, or buy, anything, including the lifting of skirts.

He continued, “I have another guest or two to invite and say as much to, gentlemen. I’ll take my leave abruptly, in hope you will not fail. I am your servant.”

He meant that he hoped they would not fail to show up for his feast.

La Foole exited.

Dauphine said, “We will not fail you, Sir precious La Foole; but the she whom your ladies come to see will fail, if I take precedence over Sir Daw.”

He did not want Epicene to attend La Foole's dinner.

"Did you ever hear such a wind-fucker as this?" Clerimont said.

A wind-fucker is a kestrel, a small bird whose wings rapidly flap while hovering. The term "wind-fucker" as applied to La Foole implies busy activity that accomplishes nothing.

Dauphine said, "Or such a rook — simpleton — as the other, who will betray his mistress to be seen!"

The other is Jack Daw.

Dauphine continued, "Come, it is time we prevented this planned marriage."

"Let's go," Clerimont said.

## ACT 2 (*Epicene*)

### — 2.1 —

Morose, who was carrying an ear-trumpet, and a man-servant were in a room in his house.

Morose said to himself, “Cannot I yet find out a more compendious and expeditious method than by this trunk to save my servants the labor of speech and my ears the discord of sounds?”

Ear trumpets are used by the hard-of-hearing to enable them to hear. Morose was so insistent that his servants be quiet that he used a device that amplified their whispers so that he could hear them.

He continued, “Let me see: All discourses but my own afflict me; they seem harsh, impertinent and irrelevant, and irksome.”

He then said to his man-servant, “Isn’t it possible that you should answer me by signs and I understand you, fellow? Do not speak, even when I question you.”

The man-servant could, for example, make a bow to mean “yes” instead of speaking.

Morose asked, “You have taken the ring — the door-knocker — off the street door as I bade you? Answer me not by speech but by silence, unless it be otherwise.”

The man-servant bowed.

“Very good,” Morose said. “And you have fastened on a thick quilt, or flock-bed [a mattress or quilt stuffed with wool and/or cotton scraps] on the outside of the door, so that, if they knock with their daggers or with brickbats — pieces of bricks — they can make no noise? Answer only with a bow, unless the answer is other than yes.”

The man-servant bowed.

“Very good,” Morose said. “This is not only fit modesty in a servant, but good stately, dignified behavior and discretion in a master.”

He then asked, “And you have been with Cutbeard the barber to have him come to me?”

The man-servant bowed.

“Good,” Morose said. “And he will come immediately? Answer only with a bow, unless the answer is other than yes. If the answer is other than yes, shake your head, or shrug.”

The man-servant bowed.

“Good,” Morose said. “Italians and Spaniards are prudent in using gestures instead of words. And it is a frugal and attractive gravity.

“How long will it be before Cutbeard the barber comes?”

The man-servant started to speak, but Morose said, “Stop! If he will come in an hour, hold up your whole hand; if half an hour, two fingers; if a quarter, one finger.”

The man-servant held up one finger, bent.

“Good,” Morose said. “Half a quarter? It is well. And have you given him a key to come in without knocking?”

The man-servant bowed.

“Good,” Morose said. “And have the lock and the hinges been oiled today to keep them from creaking?”

The man-servant bowed.

“Good,” Morose said. “And the quilting on the stairs is nowhere worn out and bare?”

He had ordered padding to be put on the stairs to stop them from creaking.

The man-servant bowed.

“Very good,” Morose said. “I see that by much teaching and coercion, noise may be eliminated.”

“Stand nearby,” Morose ordered. “The Turk in this divine discipline is admirable, exceeding all the potentates of the earth; always waited on by mutes, and all his commands so executed, yea, even in the war, as I have heard, and in his military marches, most of his charges and directions given by signs and with silence.”

The Sultan of the Ottoman Empire had many mute servants. Some of his bodyguards and troops were also mute.

“An exquisite art!” Morose continued. “And I am heartily ashamed and angry often that the princes of Christendom should suffer a barbarian to transcend them in so high a point of felicity. I will practice it hereafter.”

He was interrupted by the blowing of a horn.

“What is this now?” he said. “Oh! Oh! What villain, what prodigy of mankind is that? Go and find out.”

His man-servant exited.

The horn sounded again.

“Oh!” Morose said. “Cut his throat! Cut his throat! What murderer, hellhound, devil can this be?”

His man-servant returned and said, “It is an express-messenger from the court —”

“Damn, rogue, and must you blow your horn, too?” an angry Morose said.

“Alas,” his man-servant said. “It is a messenger from the court, sir, who says he must speak with you on pain of death —”

In other words, if the messenger failed to deliver the message, he would be killed.

Morose replied, “On pain of your life, be silent!”

— 2.2 —

Truewit, booted and spurred, entered the room. He was carrying a noose and a post-horn in his hands.

He said to Morose, “By your leave, sir — I am a stranger here — is your name Master Morose?”

Receiving no answer, he said to the man-servant, “Is your name Master Morose?”

Again, he received no answer, so he said, “Mute as fishes! Pythagoreans all! This is strange!”

Pythagoreans made vows of silence so they could apply themselves to self-examination.

Truewit said to Morose, “What do you say, sir? Nothing? Has Harpocrates been here, with his club, among you?”

Harpocrates, the god of silence, carried a club.

Truewit continued, “Well, sir, I will believe you to be the man at this time. I will venture to approach you, sir. Your friends at court commend them to you, sir —”

Morose said to himself, “Oh, men! Oh, manners! Was there ever such an impudence?”

He was adapting Cicero’s words from a speech against Cataline: *O tempora! O mores!* — “Oh, the times! Oh, the

manners!” Cataline was a man who was a threat against the Roman Republic.

Truewit continued, “— and they are extremely solicitous for you, sir.”

“Whose knave are you?” Morose said.

This was an insult.

Truewit replied, “I am my own knave, and I am your compeer — your equal — sir.”

This was an insult.

Morose said to his man-servant, “Fetch me my sword —”

Truewit said to the man-servant, “You shall taste the one half of my dagger, if you do, servant —”

He then said to Morose, “— and you shall taste the other half if you stir, sir. Be patient, I order you in the king’s name, and hear me without insurrection.

“They say you are to marry? To marry! Do you hear me, sir?”

“So what, rude fellow!” Morose said.

“By the Virgin Mary, your friends do wonder that you would marry, sir,” Truewit said, “when there are so many ways and so many places to commit suicide.

“The Thames is so near wherein you may drown so handsomely.

“Or you may jump from London Bridge at a low ebb-tide, when with a fine leap, the current will hurry you down the stream.

“Or you can jump from such a delicate steeple in the town as that of St. Mary-le-Bow in Cheapside.

“Or you can jump from a more splendid height, such as St. Paul’s.

“Or, if you want to do it nearer home and a shorter way, you can jump from an excellent garret window into the street.

“Or you can hang yourself from a beam in the said garret, with this noose” — he showed Morose the noose he was carrying — “which they have sent. Your friends desire that you would sooner commit your grave head to this knot than to the wedlock noose.

“Or you can take a little sublimate [mercuric chloride, a rat poison] and go out of the world like a rat.

“Or you can go out of the world like a fly — as one of your friends said — with a straw in your arse like the fly has to keep it from flying away as it fights a spider.

“Your friends want you to go out of the world by any way rather than to follow this goblin matrimony.”

Truewit wanted to convince Morose that suicide was much preferable to marriage.

Truewit continued, “Alas, sir, do you ever think to find a chaste wife in these times? Now? When there are so many masques, plays, Puritan preachings, mad folks, and other strange sights to be seen daily, private and public?”

Entertainments of the time included visiting mental hospitals such as Bedlam to see insane people.

Truewit continued, “If you had lived long ago in King Ethelred’s time, sir, or Edward the Confessor’s, you might perhaps have found in some cold country hamlet, then, a dull, sexually frosty wench who would have been contented with one man; nowadays they will as soon be pleased with one leg or one eye. I’ll tell you, sir, the monstrous hazards you shall run with a wife.”



Morose said, “Good sir, have I ever cheated any friends of yours of their land? Immorally bought their possessions? Foreclosed on their mortgage? Begged a right of succession to an estate or an official position from them? Rendered illegitimate their children so they could not receive an inheritance? What have I done that may deserve this?”

“Nothing, sir, that I know of, except your itch to be married,” Truewit said.

Morose said, “Why, if I had murdered your father, vitiated and corrupted your mother, ravished and raped your sisters —”

Truewit interrupted, “I would kill you, sir. I would kill you if you had.”

“Why, you do more in this, sir,” Morose said. “It would be a vengeance centuple — a hundredfold — for all wicked acts that could be named to do that which you do —”

Truewit interrupted, “Alas, sir, I am only a messenger. I simply tell you what you must hear.

“It seems your friends are worried about your soul’s health, sir, and they would have you know the danger. But you may do what pleases you despite what all your friends say. I am not trying to persuade you not to marry, sir.”

This last sentence was false.

Truewit continued, “If, after you are married, your wife should run away with a vaulter —”

A vaulter can be a gymnast, but brothels were known as vaulting-houses.

Truewit continued, “— or with the Frenchman who walks upon ropes, or with him who dances the jig, or with a fencer for his skill at his weapon, why, it is not your friends’ fault;

they have satisfied what their consciences demand by letting you know what may happen.”

A fencer can be skilled with both a weapon and a “weapon.”

“Nay, suffer valiantly, sir, for I must tell you all the perils that you are liable to and that are obnoxious to you.

“If she is pretty, young, and lively, no sweetmeats ever drew more flies; all the yellow jackets and great roses in the town will be there.”

Roses are rosettes worn as decorations on shoes. Yellow jackets and roses were fashionable and were worn by dandies.

Truewit continued, “If she is ugly and crooked-backed, she’ll be with them and buy those jackets and roses, sir.”

In other words, she will pay for sex with well-dressed gallants.

Truewit continued, “If she is rich, and you marry her for her dowry and not for herself, she’ll reign in your house as imperious as a widow.

“If she is noble, all her kindred will be your tyrants.

“If she is fruitful and pregnant, and as proud as May and as changeable as weather in April, she must have her doctors, her midwives, her nurses, her longings every hour, although her longing may be for the dearest morsel of man.

“If she is well educated and learned, there was never such a parrot as she will be; all your patrimony will be too little for the guests who must be invited to hear her speak Latin and Greek, and you must lie with her — woo her — in those languages, too, if you will please her.

“If she is a Puritan, you must feast all the silenced brethren — those who have lost their licenses to preach out of

opposition to the official church — once in every three days, salute the Puritan sisters, entertain the whole family or wood [crowd] of them, and hear longwinded religious devotions, singings, and catechisings, which you are not given to and yet must give in order to please the zealous matron your wife, who, for the holy cause, will cheat and trick you over and above.”

The Latin word *silva* means “woods.” It is a collection of trees. Truewit used “wood” to mean a collection of people. In this society, a piece of wood is a blockhead. (Blockheads were wooden heads for hats or wigs to rest on.) In this society, the word “wood” also meant insane.

Truewit continued, “You begin to sweat, sir?”

“But this is not half, indeed. You may do your pleasure notwithstanding; as I said before, I did not come here to persuade you not to marry.”

Morose’s man-servant started to steal away.

Truewit said to him, “Upon my faith, master serving-man, if you do stir, I will beat you.”

Morose said, “Oh, what is my sin? What is my sin?”

Truewit continued his diatribe against women, “Then, if you love your wife, or rather dote on her, sir, oh, how she’ll torture you! And take pleasure in your torments!”

The word “dote” is related to the word “dotage.”

He continued, “You shall lie with her only when she wishes. She will not hurt her beauty, her face make-up; or it must be for that jewel or that pearl when she does lie with you. Every half-hour’s pleasure must be bought anew, and with the same trouble and expense you wooed her at first.

“Then, you must keep what servants she wants, what company she will; that friend must not visit you without her license; and him she loves most she will seem to hate eagerliest — most fiercely — to avert your jealousy, or feign to be jealous of you first, and for that reason go live with her she-friend (a possible bawd) or cousin (a possible lover) at the College who can instruct her in all the mysteries of writing letters, corrupting servants, and taming household spies.”

The College is that of the Lady Collegiates.

Truewit continued, “She must have that rich gown for such a great day, a new one for the next, a richer for the third.

“She must be served with silver plates and utensils.

“She must have the chamber filled with a succession of servants, footmen, ushers, and other messengers, besides embroiderers, jewelers, tire-women [dress-makers], sempsters [tailors], feathermen [sellers of feathers], perfumers.”

The messengers would be used to carry letters to lovers.

Truewit continued, “All this while she will not feel how the land drops away as it is sold to pay for her extravagance, nor will she feel how the acres melt, nor will she foresee the change when the mercer [seller of expensive fabrics such as silk and velvet] has your woods for her velvets.

“She will never weigh what her pride costs, sir, so long as she may kiss a page or a smooth chin that has the despair of a beard.

“She will be a stateswoman [female politician].

“She will know all the gossip: what was done at the horse races at Salisbury, what happened at the springs in Bath,

what happened at court, what happened during the journey of the king.

“Or she will censure and judge poets and authors and styles, and compare them, Samuel Daniel with Edmund Spenser, Jonson with the other youth, and so forth.”

Truewit (that is, Truewit’s creator: Ben Jonson) was joking as well as criticizing women. Many of the points Truewit made against women came from Juvenal’s *Satire VI*. Juvenal compared Homer and Virgil. Here the comparison is between Ben Jonson and his friend William Shakespeare. That Truewit does not mention Shakespeare’s name is an affectionate joke as shown by neither Jonson nor Shakespeare being youths in 1609.

Truewit continued, “Or she will be thought cunning in controversies or the very knotty problems of divinity; and she will have, often in her mouth, the main issue of the question; and then she will skip to the mathematics and demonstration; and answer in religion to one, in politics to another, in bawdry to a third.”

Morose cried, “Oh! Oh!”

“All this is very true, sir,” Truewit said. “And then her going in disguise to that astrologer and this fortune-teller or wise woman, where the first question is: How soon shall you — Morose — die?”

“The next question is: Whether her present servant loves her?”

“The next question is: Whether she shall have a new servant? And how many?”

The word “servant” can mean lover.

He continued, “She will also ask these questions:

“Which of her family would make the best bawd, male or female?”

“What precedence she shall have by her next match?”

Precedence refers to who precedes others at formal social occasions: the higher the rank, the higher the precedence.

He continued, “And she will set down the answers, and she will believe them more than she believes the holy scriptures. Nay, perhaps she’ll study the art of fortune-telling.”

Morose said, “Gentle sir, have you finished? Have you had your pleasure of me? Have you gotten what you wanted from me? I’ll think about these things you have said.”

“Yes, sir,” Truewit said. “And then she comes steaming home, reeking of vapor and sweat from going afoot.”

To go afoot is to go on foot or to be active. Here the activity could happen in a bed.

Truewit continued, “And she will lie in bed for a month to give birth to a new face, which is all makeup with oil and birdlime used as ingredients, and she rinses in asses’ milk, and she is cleansed with a new cosmetic face-wash.”

Limestone is a sticky substance used to catch birds.

Truewit himself may not have believed all the criticisms he was making of women. Earlier, he had praised women’s use of cosmetics. Here he criticized it before Morose in an attempt to persuade Morose not to marry.

Truewit said, “God be with you, sir.”

This means: Goodbye.

But then he added, “One thing more, which I had almost forgotten. This, too — whom you are to marry may have made a conveyance of her virginity aforehand, as your wise

widows do of their estates before they marry, in trust to some friend, sir.”

Wealthy widows had control of their money and possessions, but the money and possessions became her husband’s when the wealthy widow married — unless she had conveyed the money and possessions to a trusted friend — or lover — to keep for her.

According to Truewit, any woman Morose would marry was likely to have given her virginity away.

Truewit continued, “Who can tell? Or if she has not conveyed her virginity to another man yet, she may do so on the wedding day or the night before, and make you a cuckold even before the wedding night.”

A cuckold is a man with an unfaithful wife.

He continued, “The like has been heard of in nature. It is no contrived impossible thing, sir.

“God be with you. I’ll be bold enough to leave this rope with you, sir, for a remembrance.”

He handed Morose the noose.

He said to Morose’s man-servant, “Farewell, Mute.”

He then exited.

Morose said to his man-servant, “Come, help me to my chamber, but first shut the door.”

A horn sounded.

“Oh, shut the door, shut the door!” Morose said. “Has he come again?”

Cutbeard the barber entered the room and said, “It is I, sir, your barber.”

“Oh, Cutbeard! Cutbeard! Cutbeard!” Morose said. “Here has been a cut-throat with me. Help me into my bed, and give me medicine with your counsel.”

They exited.

— 2.3 —

Sir John “Jack” Daw, Clerimont, Dauphine, and Epicene were together in a room in Sir John’s house across from Cutbeard’s barbershop.

Jack Daw said to Clerimont and Dauphine, “Nay, if she will, let her refuse to come to the feast at her own cost. It is nothing to me, gentlemen. But she will not be invited to the like feasts or guests every day.”

Clerimont said, “Oh, by no means, she may not refuse —”

Clerimont and Dauphine then spoke quietly to Epicene to persuade her not to come to the feast.

Picking up where he left off speaking to Jack Daw, Clerimont said quietly to Epicene, “— to stay at home, if you love your reputation. By God’s light, you are invited thither for the purpose of being seen and laughed at by the lady of the College and her parasitical companions. This trumpeting loudmouth” — he pointed to Jack Daw — “has been talking about you.”

Speaking softly like Clerimont so that Jack Daw could not hear him, Dauphine said to Epicene, “You shall not go. Let him be laughed at in your stead for not bringing you, and put him to his extemporal faculty of acting the fool and talking out loud to explain to the company why you are absent.”

Clerimont said softly to Dauphine, “Jack Daw will suspect us; talk out loud.”



He then said out loud, “Please, Mistress Epicene, let’s see your verses — the ones Jack Daw wrote about you; we have Sir John Daw’s permission to see them. Do not conceal your servant’s merit and your own glories.”

By “glories,” he meant splendors and triumphs.

Epicene, who knew that Jack Daw was a fool and would want to read his own verses out loud, replied, “They’ll prove my servant’s glories, if you have his permission so soon.”

By “glories,” she meant pretentious boasts.

Agreeing with her, Dauphine said, “His vainglories, lady!”

Vainglories are empty glories — pretentious boasts about things of little worth.

Eager to show off, Jack Daw said, “Show them, show them, mistress; I dare to acknowledge them to be my own.”

Holding out the verses to Clerimont and Dauphine, Epicene said, “Judge for yourselves what glories!”

Jack Daw grabbed the verses and said, “Nay, I’ll read them myself, too; an author must recite his own works.”

He then said, “It is a madrigal of modesty.”

A madrigal is a love lyric.

He read out loud:

*“Modest and fair, for fair and good are near*

*“Neighbors, howe’er’ —”*

“Very good,” Dauphine said.

“Aye, is it not?” Clerimont said.

He meant, Yes, the madrigal is not good.

Jack Daw continued reciting:

*“No noble virtue ever was alone,*

*“But two in one.”*

“Excellent!” Dauphine said.

“Recite that again, please, Sir John,” Clerimont requested.

“It has something in it like rare wit and sense,” Dauphine said.

“Rare” can mean splendid, but Dauphine used the word to mean that the wit and sense in the verses were infrequent. A better word would be “nonexistent.”

“Quiet!” Clerimont said.

Jack Daw continued reciting:

*“No noble virtue ever was alone,*

*“But two in one.*

*“Then, when I praise sweet modesty, I praise*

*“Bright beauty’s rays;*

*“And, having praised both beauty and modesty,*

*“I have praised thee.”*

“Admirable!” Dauphine said.

“How it chimes, and tinkles in the close, divinely!” Clerimont said.

Jack Daw is a petit poet. His verses chime like the tinkle of a tiny bell and they tick tick tick like seeds in a dry pod, while Homer’s verses roar in the pines.

“Aye, it is Seneca,” Dauphine said.

Seneca was a Roman tragedian.

“No, I think it is Plutarch,” Clerimont said.

Plutarch wrote a series of biographies comparing famous Greeks to famous Romans.

Both Seneca and Plutarch wrote books that still live long after their authors died.

Jack Daw did not want to be grouped with such great authors: “I scoff at Plutarch and Seneca! I hate it. My verses are my own imaginative inventions, by that light. I wonder those fellows have such credit with gentlemen!”

“They are very grave authors,” Clerimont said.

Seneca and Plutarch wrote about important themes and yes, they are both in the grave.

“Grave asses!” Jack Daw said. “Mere essayists! A few loose maxims and that’s all.”

Jack Daw’s own verses were basically a few common maxims or proverbs. He was saying that one virtue is accompanied by another; for example, beauty is accompanied by modesty.

He continued, “A man would talk so his whole age; I do utter as good things every hour, if they were collected and observed, as either of them.”

“Indeed, Sir John?” Dauphine said.

“He must necessarily, since he is living among the wits and braveries, too,” Clerimont said.

“Aye, and being president of them as he is,” Dauphine said.

Jack Daw continued his criticism of famous thinkers, “There’s Aristotle, a mere commonplace fellow.”

By “commonplace,” Jack Daw meant “trivial,” but the Latin *locus communis* [common place] means “universal truth.” Aristotle wrote many books about many topics, and especially he wrote philosophy.

Jack Daw continued, “Plato was a discourser.”

By “discourser,” Jake Daw meant “a mere talker,” but Plato truly was a writer of discourses in his *Dialogues*. In them, Socrates discoursed with other people; his discourses illustrated rational, logical thought.

Jack Daw continued, “Thucydides and Livy were tedious and dry.”

“Thucydides” and “tedious” share some letters. Either through ignorance or through a feeble attempt at humor, Jack Daw pronounced Thucydides as Thucydious.

“Livy” suggests the word “livid,” whose meanings include being furiously angry and being discolored — black and blue — through bruising.

Black is the color of melancholy, which people in this society considered to be a dry humor. This society considered humors to be four bodily fluids whose various combinations made up the human personality. Black bile was the melancholic humor. A melancholic man was gloomy.

Jack Daw continued, “Tacitus was an entire knot, sometimes worth the untying, but very seldom.”

A knotty problem in intellectual thought is one that is hard to untangle.

Thucydides, Livy, and Tacitus are famous ancient historians.

The Latin word *tacitus* means secret, and hidden. It also means speechless.

“What do you think of the poets, Sir John?” Clerimont asked.

Jack Daw replied, “They are not worthy to be named as authors. Homer, an old tedious prolix ass, talks of curriers of horses, and talks of chines of beef. Virgil talks of dunging of land, and talks of bees. Horace talks of I don’t know what.”

Homer, creator of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, did write about horses and chines — backbones — of beef. But he also wrote about the meaning of life, about the heroic ethic, about war and death, and about homecoming.

Virgil in his *Georgics* did write about beekeeping and other pastoral topics, but his masterpiece is the epic poem *Aeneid*, which is about Trojans who survived the Trojan War traveling to Italy and becoming important ancestors of the Roman people.

Ben Jonson revered the Roman poet Horace. Fittingly, the foolish Jack Daw knew nothing about Horace.

“I think so,” Clerimont said.

He was not agreeing with Jack Daw’s opinions, but he was agreeing that Jack Daw knew nothing about Horace.

Jack Daw said, “And so Pindarus, Lycophron, Anacreon, Catullus, Seneca the tragedian, Lucan, Propertius, Tibullus, Martial, Juvenal, Ausonius, Statius, Politian, Valerius Flaccus, and the rest —”

These were all Roman and Greek poets, except for the Italian humanist Politian. Possibly, Jack Daw thought that Politian was Roman or Greek.

Clerimont whispered to Dauphine, “What a sackful of their names he has got!”

Dauphine whispered to Clerimont, “And how he pours them out! Politian with Valerius Flaccus!”

Valerius Flaccus wrote the incomplete *Argonautica* about Jason and the Argonauts.

Clerimont whispered to Dauphine, “Wasn’t the character sketch right about him? Isn’t what we heard about Jack Daw true?”

Dauphine whispered to Clerimont, “As right and correct as could be made, indeed.”

Jack Daw continued, “And Persius, a crabbed coxcomb, not to be endured.”

Persius was a satirist whose style was difficult and appeared to Jack Daw to be crabbed.

“Why, whom do you regard to be authors, Sir John Daw?” Dauphine asked.

Jack Daw replied, “*Syntagma juris civilis*, *Corpus juris civilis*, *Corpus juris canonici*, the King of Spain’s Bible.”

He mentioned books rather than authors.

*Syntagma juris civilis* and *Corpus juris civilis* are actually the same book. *Corpus* is Latin for Body. Σύνταγμα or *Syntagma* is Greek for Constitution. This book is a collection of Roman law.

*Corpus juris canonici* is a collection of canon law.

The King of Spain’s Bible is a polygot Bible; King Phillip I of Spain sponsored it.

Many people worked on these books; each book does not have a single author.

Because Jack Daw had named the titles of books and not the names of authors, Dauphine and Clerimont pretended that he thought the titles were authors’ names.

Dauphine whispered to Clerimont, “Is the King of Spain’s Bible an author?”

Clerimont whispered to Dauphine, “Yes, and *Syntagma*.”

Dauphine asked Jack Daw, “What was that *Syntagma*, sir?”

Jack Daw answered, “A civil lawyer, a Spaniard.”

Jack Daw really did think the book titles were authors’ names!

Dauphine said, “Surely, *Corpus* was a Dutchman.”

Clerimont said, “Aye, both the *Corpuses*, I knew them; they were very corpulent authors.”

The Dutch had a reputation for liking butter. Butter is a food that can make one’s *corpus* very corpulent, indeed.

Jack Daw continued, “And then there’s Vatablus, Pomponatius, Symancha; the others are not to be received within the thought of a scholar.”

Vatablus, Pomponatius, and Symancha are famous scholars.

Vatablus was a scholar of Hebrew, the Bible, and Aristotle. Pomponatius was a scholar of Aristotle, and Symancha was a scholar of canon and civil law.

Dauphine said to Epicene, “Before God, you have a simple learned servant, lady, in titles.”

The word “simple” can mean “absolute,” which is what Jack Daw thought it meant, or it can mean “foolish.”

In a way, though, Jack Daw was absolutely learned in titles — he knew the titles of books, but not what is inside them.

Clerimont said, “I wonder that he is not called to the helm and made a councilor!”

By councilor, he meant a member of the Privy Council, which advised the King of England.

“He is one extraordinary,” Dauphine said.

“Extraordinary” means outside the regular staff.

Clerimont said, “Nay, but in ordinary!”

“In ordinary” means “full-time.”

As a suffix, “in” can be an intensifier, so if Jack Daw is “inordinary,” he is very ordinary indeed.

Many people with high opinions of their own sagacity are ordinary ignoramuses.

Clerimont added, “To say the truth, the state wants such.”

The word “wants” can mean either “needs” or “lacks.” We can hope that the Privy Council lacks such councilors as Jack Daw.

Dauphine said, “Why, that will follow.”

Clerimont said to Epicene, “I wonder that a mistress can be so silent to the dotes of such a servant.”

“Dotes” are natural endowments, but the word is related to “dotage.”

John Daw said, “It is her virtue, sir. I have written somewhat about her silence, too.”

“In verse, Sir John?” Dauphine asked.

“What else?” Clerimont asked.

Dauphine asked Jack Daw, “Why, how can you justify your being yourself a poet, you who so slight all the old poets?”

Jack Daw replied, “Why, every man who writes in verse is not a poet.”



He meant: Not every man who writes in verse is a poet.

He was correct. Good verse is good poetry and is written by good poets. Bad verse is doggerel and is written by mere rhymers and versifiers and dilettantes. Mere dilettantes lack knowledge and commitment.

Jack Daw continued, “You have of the wits those who write verses and yet are no poets. Poets are those who live by it, the poor fellows who live by it.”

To Jack Daw, the distinction between poets and versifiers was whether they made money from writing. This society respected those who did not have to work for a living.

Dauphine asked, “Why, wouldn’t you live by your verses, Sir John?”

One meaning of “live by” is “be remembered and so be immortal in that sense.” Homer and Virgil are immortal in that sense.

Clerimont said, “No, it would be a pity if he were to. A knight live by his verses? He did not make them to that end, I hope.”

Let us not make immortal bad verses.

Dauphine said, “And yet the noble Sidney lives by his, and the noble family is not ashamed.”

Sir Philip Sidney is one of the immortal poets. Contrary to Jack Daw’s definition, Sidney did not make money from his poetry. His sister published his works after his death (during his lifetime, they circulated in manuscript form), and as a result his name and poetry live on. Among other works, he wrote *Astrophil and Stella* and *An Apology for Poetry*. The word “Apology” means “Defense.”

Clerimont said, “Aye, he proclaimed himself publicly; but Sir John Daw has more caution. He’ll not hinder his own rising in the state so much! Do you think he will?”

In this society, snobbery existed against poets.

Clerimont continued, “Read your verses, good Sir John, and no poems.”

Jack Daw’s verses were, in fact, not poetry.

Jack Daw recited:

*“Silence in women is like speech in man,*

*“Deny it who can.”*

Jack Daw believed that men should speak and that women should not speak.

“Not I ... believe it,” Dauphine said.

He was not one to believe the content of Jack Daw’s verses.

Dauphine then asked, “Your reason, sir?”

John Daw did not give a reason, but he continued reciting:

*“Nor is’t a tale*

*“That female vice should be a virtue male,*

*“Or masculine vice a female virtue be;*

*“You shall it see*

*“Proved with increase.*

*“I know to speak and she to hold her peace.”*

He then asked, “Do you *conceive* me, gentlemen?”

Some of his words had a sexual meaning.

“Tale” equals “tail.”

“Increase” can mean “production of children.”

“Peace” equals “piece.”

“Conceive” can mean “become pregnant.” (It also can mean “understand.”)

“No, truly,” Dauphine said. “What do you mean by ‘with increase,’ Sir John?”

Jack Daw replied, “Why, ‘with increase’ is when I court her for the common cause of mankind, and she says nothing but *consentire videtur*, and in time is *gravida*.”

The common cause of mankind is procreation.

*Consentire videtur* is Latin for “seems to consent.”

*Gravita* means “pregnant.”

“Then this is a ballad of procreation?” Dauphine asked.

“A madrigal of procreation,” Clerimont said. “You make a mistake by calling it a ballad.”

Originally, Jack Daw had called it a “madrigal of modesty.”

Epicene said to Jack Daw, “Please give me my verses again, servant.”

Jack Daw, “If you’ll request them aloud, you shall.”

Jack Daw and Epicene walked aside with the poems.

Clerimont heard a noise and looked in its direction and said, “Look, here’s Truewit again.”

— 2.4 —

Truewit entered the room. He was carrying his post-horn.

“Where have you been, in the name of madness, thus equipped with your horn?” Clerimont asked.

“Where the sound of it might have pierced your senses with gladness, had you been in ear-reach of it,” Truewit said. “Dauphine, fall down and worship me. I have forbid the banns, lad. I have formally objected to the marriage. I have been with your virtuous uncle and have broken the match.”

“You have not, I hope!” Dauphine said.

“Yes, indeed,” Truewit said. “If you should hope otherwise, I would repent. This horn got me entrance; kiss it. I had no other way to get in but by feigning to be a post, but when I once got in, I proved not to be a post.”

Truewit was punning on the word “post.” He had pretended to be a post-messenger, but once he gained admittance into Morose’s house, he showed that he (Truewit) was not a fence post: a block of wood, aka blockhead.

He continued, “But on the contrary, I turned him into a post, or a stone, or what is stiffer, by thundering into him the incommodities and disadvantages of a wife and the miseries of marriage. If a Gorgon were ever seen in the shape of a woman, he has seen her in my description.”

A Gorgon is a female monster whose look can turn a man into stone.

Truewit continued, “I have put him off that scent forever. Why don’t you applaud and adore me, sirs? Why do you stand mute? Are you stupid and/or stupefied? You are not worthy of the benefit I have given to you.”

Dauphine said to Clerimont, “Didn’t I tell you? Mischief!”

Clerimont said to Truewit, “I wish that you had placed this benefit somewhere else.”

“Why so?” Truewit asked.

“By God’s light, you have done the most inconsiderate, rash, weak thing that a man ever did to his friend,” Clerimont answered.

“Friend!” Dauphine said. “If the most malicious enemy I have had studied how to inflict an injury upon me, he could not have come up with a greater injury.”

“An injury!” Truewit said. “How? In what, for God’s sake? Gentlemen, come to yourselves again.”

Dauphine said to Clerimont, “But I predicted thus much before to you. I warned you of this.”

Dauphine had worried about Clerimont’s talking so openly about Dauphine’s inheritance troubles to Truewit, who was outspoken and not one for secrets.

“I wish that my lips had been soldered together when I spoke about it!” Clerimont said.

He then said to Truewit, “By God’s light, what moved you to be thus impertinent and meddling?”

“My masters,” Truewit said, “do not put on this strange face of hostility to pay my courtesy. Take off your hostile ‘mask.’ Do you have good deeds done to you, and thank the doers in this way?”

“Before heaven, you have ruined me,” Dauphine said. “That which I have plotted for and have been putting into effect now for these past four months, you have blasted in a minute.

“Now that I am lost and ruined, I may speak.

“This gentlewoman” — he pointed to Epicene — “was lodged here by me on purpose, and to impose upon and trick my uncle, she has professed this obstinate silence for my sake, being entirely my friend, and one who, in return for the

fortune she will get if she marries him, would have made me a very ample settlement. But now all my hopes are utterly miscarried by this unlucky occurrence done by you.”

Clerimont said, “Thus it is when a man will be ignorantly officious, do services, and not ask why — or whether — he should do services. I wonder what courteous itch possessed you! You never played a more absurd part in your life, nor ever made a greater trespass to friendship, to humanity.”

“Indeed, you may forgive it best,” Dauphine said. “It was your fault principally.”

“I know it,” Clerimont said. “I wish it were not my fault!”

Clerimont had told Truewit the facts that had made Truewit take the action that neither Dauphine nor Clerimont wanted.

Cutbeard the barber entered the room.

“How are you now, Cutbeard?” Dauphine asked. “What is the news?”

“The best, the happiest that ever was, sir,” Cutbeard said. “There has been a mad gentleman visiting your uncle this morning —”

He pointed to Truewit and said, “I think this is the gentleman,” and then continued, “— who has almost talked him out of his wits with threatening him with the woes of marriage.”

“Go on, please,” Dauphine said.

“And your uncle, sir,” Cutbeard said, “thinks it was done by your arrangement; therefore, he will see the party you know of immediately” — he meant Epicene — “and if he likes her, he says, and if she is so inclining to dumbness as I have told him she is, he swears he will marry her today, instantly, and not defer it a minute longer.”

“Excellent!” Dauphine said. “Beyond our expectation!”

“Beyond your expectation?” Truewit said. “By this light, I knew it would be thus.”

Not likely.

“Nay, sweet Truewit, forgive me,” Dauphine said. “I don’t believe you.”

Truewit said, “No, I was ‘ignorantly officious’ and ‘impertinent.’ This was the ‘absurd,’ ‘weak’ part. So you believe.”

“Will you ascribe to merit, now, what was sheer fortune, mere luck?” Clerimont asked.

Truewit said, “Sheer fortune? Sheer luck? No, it was completely providence and foresight. Fortune and luck had not a finger in it. I saw it must necessarily in nature fall out so; my attendant spirit is never false to me in these things. Show me how it could be otherwise.”

Truewit’s actions had had a good outcome: Morose was going to marry Epicene immediately, it seemed. Now Truewit was taking credit for it.

“Nay, gentlemen, don’t argue,” Dauphine said. “All is well now.”

“Alas, I let him go on with ‘inconsiderate’ and ‘rash’ and what else he pleased to criticize me with,” Truewit said.

Clerimont said, “Bah, you strange justifier of yourself, who claim to be wiser than you were because of a lucky outcome!”

“Lucky outcome!” Truewit said. “By this light, you shall never persuade me to believe anything other than I foresaw it as well as the stars themselves.”

“Nay, gentlemen, all is well now,” Dauphine said. “You two entertain Sir John Daw with conversation while I send Epicene away with my instructions.”

Truewit replied, “I’ll be acquainted with her, first, with your permission.”

The gentlemen approached Jack Daw and Epicene, who had been talking together off to the side.

Presenting Truewit to Epicene, Clerimont said, “This is Master Truewit, lady. He is a friend of ours.”

“I am sorry I have not known you sooner, lady, to celebrate this rare virtue of your silence,” Truewit said.

Epicene curtsied.

Clerimont said to Truewit, “Indeed, if you had come sooner, you would have seen and heard her well celebrated in Sir John Daw’s madrigals.”

Epicene, Dauphine, and Cutbeard exited as Truewit turned to Jack Daw.

“Jack Daw, may God save you!” Truewit said. “When did you last see La Foole?”

“Not since last night, Master Truewit,” Jack Daw said.

“That’s a miracle!” Truewit said. “I thought you two were inseparable.”

“He’s gone to invite his guests,” Jack Daw said.

“Ha, that’s true,” Truewit said. “What a false memory I do have towards that man!”

“I am one of his guests. I met him just now sitting upon what he calls his exquisite, delicate fine black horse, which was



ridden into a foam with posting from place to place and person to person to give them the cue —”

“A reminder lest they should forget?” Clerimont asked.

“Yes,” Truewit said. “There never was any poor captain who took more pains at a muster to show men than he, at this meal, to show friends.”

Unscrupulous military officers recruited as many men, including men unsuitable to be soldiers, as they could in order to inflate their own profits. La Foole recruited as many friends and “friends” to attend his feast as he could to maintain his social status.

“It is his quarter-feast, sir,” Jack Daw said.

Once a quarter, La Foole collected the rents due to him because of his land holdings. He celebrated with a feast for himself and his many guests.

“What, do you say so, Sir John?” Clerimont asked.

“Nay, Jack Daw will not be silenced and out of words, among the best friends he has, to the talent of his wit,” Truewit said.

In other words, Jack Daw will not restrain himself from making a joke, even if it is at the expense of his friends. Also, Jack Daw will not be absent from a feast during which he can display his wit and intelligence.

Sadly, Jack Daw had not much wit and intelligence and not many friends who really liked him.

Truewit then asked, “Where’s his mistress, who should hear and applaud him? Has she gone?”

Jack Daw asked, “Has Mistress Epicene gone?”

He meant, Has she gone to the feast already?

Clerimont said, “She has gone before us with Sir Dauphine, I promise you, to the place.”

“Gone before!” Truewit said. “That is a manifest injury, a disgrace and a half, to refuse him at such a festival time as this, with him being a bravery and a wit, too.”

He meant that Epicene had insulted Jack Daw by going to the feast with Dauphine, not him.

“Tut, he’ll swallow it like cream,” Clerimont said. “He’s better read in *jure civili* [civil law] than to esteem anything a disgrace that is offered him from a mistress.”

He meant that Jack Daw was so well mannered (or perhaps mild mannered) that he would not take offence at any insult a woman offered him.

“Nay, let her even go,” Jack Daw said. “She shall sit alone and be dumb in her chamber a week together, as far as John Daw is concerned, I promise her. Does she refuse me?”

“No, sir, do not take it so to heart,” Clerimont said. “She does not refuse you, but she does a little neglect you.”

He then said, “In good faith, Truewit, you were too blameworthy to put it into his head that she does refuse him.”

“She does refuse him, sir, palpably, however you mince — minimize — it,” Truewit said. “If I were him, I would swear to never speak a word to her today for it.”

“By this light, I will no more speak to her,” Jack Daw said.

“Nor to anybody else, sir,” Truewit said.

“Nay, I will not say that, gentlemen,” Jack Daw said.

He would continue to speak to them.

Clerimont whispered to Truewit, "It would have been an excellent happy condition for the company if you could have drawn him to promise not to speak to us again."

"I'll be very melancholic, indeed," Jack Daw said.

"As a dog, if I were as you, Sir John," Clerimont said.

Dogs were proverbially considered to be melancholic.

"Or a snail, or a hog-louse [wood-louse]," Truewit said. "I would roll myself up like a beetle for self-protection for this day, indeed; they should not unwind me."

"By this toothpick, so I will," Jack Daw said.

In this society, toothpicks were considered fashionable.

"Well done," Clerimont whispered to Truewit. "He begins already to be angry with his teeth."

Jack Daw was jabbing at his teeth with his toothpick.

"Will you go, gentlemen?" Jack Daw asked.

"Nay, you must walk alone, if you are truly melancholic, Sir John," Clerimont said.

"Yes, sir, we'll dog you," Truewit said. "We'll follow you afar off."

Jack Daw exited.

"Was there ever such a two yards of knighthood, measured out by time, to be sold to laughter?" Clerimont said, comparing Jack Daw to a bolt of cloth from which six feet of cloth were measured, cut, and sold.

"A mere talking mole!" Truewit said.

Moles were thought to be blind.

He continued, "Hang him. No mushroom was ever so fresh."

Mushrooms grow overnight, and so upstarts in society were called mushrooms. Jack Daw was an upstart because he had bought his knighthood.

Truewit continued, “Jack Daw is a fellow who is so utterly nothing that he doesn’t know what he would be.”

“Let’s follow him,” Clerimont said. “But first let’s go to Dauphine — he’s hovering about the house — to hear what is the news.”

“I agree,” Truewit said.

They exited.

— 2.5 —

Morose, Epicene, Cutbeard the barber, and the mute servant met together. Epicene was wearing a mask.

“Welcome, Cutbeard,” Morose said. “Draw near with your fair charge, and in her ear softly entreat her to unmask.”

Epicene took off her mask.

“Good,” Morose said.

He asked his mute servant, “Is the door shut?”

The mute servant bowed, meaning yes.

“Enough,” Morose said to the mute servant.

He then said, “Now, Cutbeard, with the same discipline I use with my household servants, I will question you. As I understand, Cutbeard, this gentlewoman is she whom you have provided and brought in hope she will fit me in the place and person of a wife. Answer me not with words, but by making a bow, unless the answer is otherwise than yes.”

Cutbeard bowed.

“Very well done, Cutbeard,” Morose said. “I also understand, Cutbeard, that you have been pre-acquainted with her birth, education, and qualities, or else you would not recommend her to my acceptance in the weighty consequence of marriage.”

Cutbeard began to answer with words, but Morose said, “This I understand, Cutbeard. Answer me not with words, but by making a bow, unless your answer is otherwise than yes.”

Cutbeard bowed.

“Very well done, Cutbeard,” Morose said. “Stand aside now a little, and let me examine her shape and capacity to arouse my affection.”

He walked around Epicene and said, “She is exceedingly fair and of a specially good beauty. She has a sweet, well-tuned composition or harmony of limbs. Her temper of beauty has the true height of my blood — her beauty suits my passions.”

Blood makes a penis attain height.

Morose said to himself about Cutbeard, “The knave has exceedingly well suited me with her external appearance; I will now try her within.”

He meant that he would test her character, but readers may be forgiven for thinking that Morose was going to test Epicene’s lady parts.

Morose said to Epicene, “Come near, fair gentlewoman. Let my behavior not seem rude, although to you, who are uncommonly fine, it may perhaps appear strange.”

It appears strange to most readers, no doubt.

Epicene curtsied.

Morose said, “Nay, lady, you may speak, although Cutbeard and my mute serving-man might not, for of all sounds only the sweet voice of a fair lady has the just attunement to my ears.

“I ask you to speak out loud, lady: Out of the first fire of meeting eyes, they say, love is stricken. Do you feel any such ’motion suddenly shot into you from any part you see in me? Ha, lady?”

He was asking if Epicene felt love-emotion at first sight, but readers may be forgiven if they thought of the motion of the sexual act.

Epicene curtsied.

Morose said to her, “Alas, lady, these answers by silent curtsies from you are too uncourtly, unsophisticated, and simple. I have always displayed my breeding in court, and she who shall be my wife must be accomplished with courtly and audacious — spirited — ornaments.”

He then asked, “Can you speak, lady?”

Speaking softly, Epicene said, “You are the judge of that, truly.”

“What did you say, lady?” Morose said. “Speak up, please.”

A little louder, Epicene said, “You are the judge of that, truly.”

“On my judgment, you have a divine softness in your voice!” Morose said. “But can you naturally, lady, as I enjoin these men — my mute servant and Cutbeard the barber — by instruction and employment, refer yourself to the search of my judgment, and (not taking pleasure in your tongue, which is a woman’s chiefest pleasure) think it agreeable to answer me by silent gestures, so long as my speeches agree with what you understand?”

This was a long-winded way of asking if Epicene would answer him with gestures such as curtsies instead of answering him with words, as long as the answer was yes.

Epicene curtsied.

“Excellent! Divine!” Morose said. “I hope it is possible that she should hold out and continue in this way!

“Peace, Cutbeard, you are made forever, as you have made me, if this felicity persists. But I will test her further.”

Morose then said to Epicene, “Dear lady, I am courtly, I tell you, and I must have my ears banqueted with pleasant and witty conversations, clever gibes, scoffs, and dalliance in her whom I mean to choose for my bedfellow.

“The ladies in court think it a most desperate injury to their quickness of wit and good deportment if they cannot give occasion for a man to court them, and, when an amorous discourse is set in motion, supply as good matter to continue the amorous conversation as himself.

“And do you alone so much differ from all of them that what they with so much pomp and ceremony aim at and toil for to seem learned, to seem judicious, to seem sharp and witty, you can bury in yourself with silence, and rather trust your graces to the fair consciousness and inner conviction of virtue than to the world’s or your own proclamation?”

Morose wanted his bedfellow — wife — to be witty, but to be witty only in his presence and not engage in the flirting that women at court took pleasure in engaging with men they were not married to.

Very softly, Epicene replied, “I should be sorry else.”

This could mean: I would be sorry if I could not do as you wish me to do.

Or it could mean: I would be sorry if I had to refrain from flirting.

“What did you say, lady?” Epicene asked. “Good lady, speak up.”

“I should be sorry else,” Epicene said.

“That sorrow fills me with gladness!” Morose said to himself. “Oh, Morose, you are happy and fortunate above mankind! Pray that you may contain yourself. I will put her to it only once more, and it shall be with the utmost trial and test of their sex.”

“Put her to it” sounds sexual.

He said to Epicene, “But hear me, fair lady: I also love to see her whom I shall choose for my heifer [cow that has not yet calved] to be the first and principal in all fashions, precede all the dames at court by a fortnight, have her council of tailors, liners [drapers], lace-women, and embroiderers, and sit with them sometimes twice a day to learn news of French fashions, and then come forth varied like Nature, or oftener than she, and better by the help of Art [makeup], her emulous servant. This I do like.

“And how will you be able, lady, with this frugality of speech, to give the manifold but necessary instructions for that bodice, these sleeves, those skirts, this cut [in a sleeve to display the colors in the clothing underneath], that stitch, this embroidery, that lace, this wire [to support a headdress], those knots [bows], that ruff, those shoe-roses, this belt, that fan, the other scarf, these gloves? Ha! What do you say, lady?”

Faintly, Epicene said, “I’ll leave it to you, sir.”

“What, lady?” Morose said. “Please, rise a note in your reply.”



“I leave it to wisdom and you, sir,” Epicene said.

Morose was not to be identified with wisdom.

“Admirable creature!” Morose said. “I will trouble you no more; I will not sin against so sweet a simplicity. Let me now be bold to print, on those divine lips, the seal of being mine.”

He kissed her.

He then said, “Cutbeard, I give you the lease of your house free.”

This was Cutbeard’s reward for finding a silent woman for Morose to marry. Cutbeard would not have to pay rent.

Morose continued, “Thank me not with words but with a bow.”

Cutbeard bowed.

Morose then said, “I know what you would say. Epicene is poor, and her friends are deceased. But she has brought a wealthy dowry in her silence, Cutbeard; and in respect of her poverty, Cutbeard, I shall have her more loving and obedient, Cutbeard.

“Go and get me a minister immediately, with a soft, low voice to marry us, and tell him not to be long-winded with irrelevant words, but to be as brief as he can.

“Leave! Quietly, Cutbeard.”

Cutbeard the barber exited.

Morose said to his mute servant, “Sirrah, conduct your mistress into the dining room, your now-mistress.”

One meaning of “mistress” is a female head of household.

The mute servant and Epicene exited.

Morose now began to talk about his nephew: the knight Sir Dauphine Eugenie. Morose wanted to have a son with Epicene so that Sir Dauphine would not inherit his wealth.

“Oh, my felicity!” Morose said. “Oh, my happiness! How I shall be revenged on my insolent kinsman and his plots to frighten me away from marrying! This night I will beget an heir, and thrust him out of my blood like a stranger.

“He would be knighted, indeed, and thought by that means to reign over me: His title must intimidate it.

“No, kinsman, I will now make you bring me the tenth lord’s and the sixteenth lady’s letter of commendation, kinsman, and it shall do you no good, kinsman.”

Morose began to refer to Sir Dauphine as “it” and “kighthood itself” and “it kighthood” and “your kighthood”:

“Your kighthood itself shall come on its knees to me, and it shall be rejected.

“It shall be sued and its goods seized for nonpayment of debts and it shall not be given financial redemption.

“It shall cheat at gambling in the twelvepenny-for-a-meal inn. Yes, it kighthood shall cheat to get money for its diet all the term-time when law courts are in session, and tell entertaining tales to the hostess for its diet in the vacation season.

“Or it kighthood shall do worse and take sanctuary in the seedy area known as Coleharbor [Cold Harbor] and fast due to lack of food.”

Coleharbor was a place where vagabonds took shelter. A cold harbor has shelter but no fire and no food.

Morose continued:

“It shall frighten all its friends with begging letters, and, when one of the four score has brought it knighthood ten shillings, it knighthood shall go to the Three Cranes Tavern or the Bear Tavern at the Bridge-foot and be drunk in fear.

“It shall not have money to discharge one tavern reckoning. It shall not be able to invite the old creditors to postpone asking for repayment and to instead tolerate it knighthood, and it shall not be able to persuade the new creditors-who-should-be to trust it knighthood and give it credit.

“It shall be the tenth name in a list of potential borrowers, and to borrow money it will be forced to take up the commodity of pipkins [earthenware jugs] and stone jugs.”

These commodities would be given to Sir Dauphine instead of money. He would sell them at a low price, and would owe much money to the lender.

Morose continued:

“And the money gotten thereby shall not equip it knighthood even for the attempted seduction of a baker’s widow, a brown baker’s widow.

“It shall give it knighthood’s name for a stallion — a stud — to all frisky citizens’ wives and be refused, when the master of a dancing school or (what do you call him?) the worst reveler in the town is accepted as a lover.”

The worst reveler in town could be the playwright Ben Jonson, who had a reputation.

Morose continued:

“It shall need clothes, and, by reason of that, need wit to play the fool to lawyers.

“It shall not have hope to repair its fortunes by going to Constantinople, Ireland, or Virginia.”

These were places debtors went to in order to escape arrest or to repair their fortunes.

Morose continued:

“The best and last fortune to it knighthood shall be to make Doll Tearsheet or Kate Common — prostitutes — a lady, and so it knighthood may eat.”

The final way for Sir Dauphine Eugenie to eat would be for him to marry a prostitute (who would thereby become Lady Eugenie) and act as her pimp in order to get money to buy food.

Morose exited.

— 2.6 —

Truewit, Dauphine, and Clerimont talked together in the street by Cutbeard’s barbershop. They were looking for Cutbeard.

“Are you sure he has not already gone by?” Truewit asked.

“No, he has not. I stayed in the shop ever since and would have seen him,” Dauphine said.

“But he may take the other end of the lane,” Clerimont said.

“No,” Dauphine said. “I told him I would be here at this end; I arranged to meet him here.”

“What a barbarian he is to stay away and be late, then!” Truewit complained.

“Yonder he comes,” Dauphine said.

As Cutbeard walked over to them, Clerimont said, “And his charge — Epicene — has been left behind him, which is a very good sign, Dauphine.”

“How are things now, Cutbeard?” Dauphine asked. “Are things succeeding, or not?”

Cutbeard answered, “They are successful past imagination, sir, *omnia secunda* — you could not have prayed to have had it so well — *paltat senex*, as the proverb says.”

The Latin proverb means, “All is well. The old boy is cutting capers.” It came into existence when a religious rite was interrupted and most religious people there abandoned it, but an old man continued dancing and properly carried out the rite.

Cutbeard continued, “Morose triumphs in his felicity and happiness. He admires Epicene! He has given me the lease of my house, too! And I am now going for a silent minister to marry them, and away I go.”

Not yet. The others wanted to talk.

“By God’s light,” Truewit said, “get one of the silenced ministers. A zealous brother would torment him entirely.”

Truewit was very much in favor of tormenting Morose.

A silent minister would suit Morose just fine, but not a silenced minister. Silenced ministers were Puritan ministers who had lost their license to preach. If one were to officiate at the marriage ceremony, he would be long-winded. Puritan ministers preached long sermons, and one who had not had an opportunity to preach for a long time would be especially full of words.

“*Cum privilegio*, sir,” Cutbeard said.

The Latin means, “With authority.” The minister would have the right to say the words of the marriage ceremony without Morose interrupting him and encouraging him to finish quickly.

“Oh, by no means, let’s do nothing to hinder the marriage ceremony now,” Dauphine said. “When it is done and finished, I will join with you in finding any device of vexation to torment Morose.”

“And that marriage ceremony shall occur within this half hour, upon my dexterity, gentlemen,” Cutbeard said. “Contrive whatever torment you can, in the meantime, *bonis avibus*.”

The Latin means, “The omens being favorable.”

Cutbeard the barber exited.

“How the slave does Latin it!” Clerimont said.

Cutbeard had been showing off by putting bits of Latin in his conversation.

Truewit said, “It would be made a jest to posterity, sirs, this day’s mirth, if you will.”

He was thinking of a way to torment Morose.

“Curse his heart who will not join in, I say,” Clerimont said.

“I’m in,” Dauphine said. “I’ll play my part. What do you have in mind?”

“To transfer all La Foole’s company and his feast hither to Morose’s house, today, to celebrate this bride-ale — that is, the wedding-feast,” Truewit said.

A celebration like that would be noisy and thus would torment Morose.

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, but how will it be done?” Dauphine asked.

“I’ll undertake the directing of all the lady guests thither, and then the food must follow,” Truewit said.

“For God’s sake, let’s make it happen,” Clerimont said. “It will be an excellent comedy of affliction — there will be so many different noises.”

Dauphine asked, “But aren’t they at the Otters’ place already, don’t you think?”

“I’ll guarantee you this for the College-honors — the Lady Collegiates: One of their faces has not the priming color — the undercoat — laid on yet, and the other has not yet smoothed her smock.”

The smock was an undergarment.

In other words, the ladies were not yet dressed and made up.

“Oh, but they’ll rise earlier than usual to prepare to go to a feast,” Clerimont said.

“We best go see and assure ourselves who is right,” Truewit said.

“Who knows the location of the Otters’ house?” Clerimont asked.

“I’ll lead you there,” Truewit said. “Haven’t you been there yet?”

“Not I,” Dauphine said.

“Nor I,” Clerimont said.

“Where have you lived, then?” Truewit asked. “I can’t believe you don’t know Tom Otter!”

“I don’t know him,” Clerimont said. “For God’s sake, what kind of person is he?”

Truewit answered, “He is an excellent animal, equal to your Daw or La Foole, if not transcending them, and he does Latin it as much as your barber. He is his wife’s subject; he calls

her princess, and, at such times such as these, he follows her up and down the house like a page, with his hat off, partly to fan himself because of heat, partly to show reverence to her. At this instant, he is marshalling his bull, bear, and horse.”

Dauphine asked, “What are those, in the name of Sphinx?”

The Sphinx is a monster — a lion with the head of a woman and the wings of an eagle — who asked this riddle in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*: What goes on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening? If Oedipus cannot answer this riddle correctly, the Sphinx will kill him. Oedipus answered the riddle correctly: Man, who goes on hands and knees as a crawling baby, two legs as a healthy adult, and two legs and a cane as an old person.

Truewit answered, “Why, sir, he has been a great man at the bear-baitings and bull-baitings at the Bear Garden in his time, and from that subtle sport has taken the witty denomination of his chief carousing cups.”

Mr. Otter enjoyed watching dogs bait — torment — animals. Because of that, he valued his drinking cups’ lids, which were shaped like animals’ heads.

Truewit continued, “He calls one carousing cup his bull, another his bear, another his horse. And then he has his lesser glasses that he calls his deer and his ape, and several sizes of them, too, and he is never content, nor thinks any entertainment perfect, until these carousing cups are brought out and set on the cupboard.”

Mr. Otter used the carousing cups in drinking competitions.

“For God’s love!” Clerimont said. “We would miss this if we did not go.”

He wanted to see such a man.



“Oh, he has a thousand things as good that will describe his character all day. He will rail about his wife, with certain commonplaces, behind her back; and to her face —”

“Say no more about him,” Dauphine interrupted. “Let’s go see him, I petition you.”

## ACT 3 (*Epicene*)

### — 3.1 —

Mr. Otter and Mrs. Otter were talking together in their home.

Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine entered the room, unobserved by Mr. Otter and Mrs. Otter. They stood silently and listened to the Otters.

Mr. Otter wanted to speak: “Nay, good princess, hear me *pauca verba*.”

The Latin means “few words,” and it is a drinking cry that means, “More drink and less talk.”

“By that light,” Mrs. Otter said, “I’ll have you chained up with your bull-dogs and bear-dogs if you are not soon civil. I’ll send you to the kennel, indeed. You had best bait me along with your bull, bear, and horse! Just go ahead and try!”

To bait an animal means to torment an animal. In bear-baitings, dogs tormented and sometimes killed a bear. And sometimes the bear killed one or more dogs.

“Never is there a time when the courtiers or Lady Collegiates come to the house but you make it a Shrove Tuesday — a day of rioting! I would have you get your Whitsuntide velvet cap and your staff in your hand to entertain them; yes, indeed, do that.”

Velvet caps were worn during holidays.

Mrs. Otter wanted her husband to be dressed up and be on his best behavior for the Lady Collegiates.

Mr. Otter said, “Not so, princess, neither, but subject to your correction, sweet princess, give me permission — these are things by which I am known to the courtiers. My eccentricity is reported to them, and they receive it so and expect it.

“Tom Otter’s bull, bear, and horse are known all over England, *in rerum natura*.”

The Latin means, “in the natural order of things.”

Mr. Otter wanted to show off his drinking cups, and Mrs. Otter did not want him to. She wanted him to be a respectable host in front of the Lady Collegiates.

Mr. Otter enjoyed bear-baitings at other places. Here, though, it was if he were a bear and his wife were a dog viciously attacking him.

“Before me, I will *na-ture* them over to Paris Garden and *na-ture* you thither, too, if you mention them again. Is a bear a fit beast, or a bull, to mix in society with great ladies? Do you think, in your judgment, that they are fit to mix in any well-ordered society?”

She meant that she would say ‘*nay*’ to him and *turn* his drinking cups — and him — over to the Paris Gardens. Then she would not be bothered by them or by him.

“The horse, then, good princess,” Mr. Otter said.

“Well, I am contented for the horse,” Mrs. Otter said. “They love to be well horsed, I know. I love it myself.”

“To be well horsed” contains connotations of being well ridden and well mounted.

Mr. Otter said, “And it is a delicate fine horse, this. *Poetarum Pegasus*.”

The Latin means, “The poets’ Pegasus.”

Pegasus was a flying horse. Its hoof once struck the earth and opened a spring whose water inspired poets.

Mr. Otter continued, “Correct me if I’m wrong, princess, but Jupiter turned himself into a *taurus* or bull. Correct me if I’m wrong, good princess.”

Jupiter, king of the gods, turned himself into a white bull. In Crete, the mortal woman Europa climbed on its back, and Jupiter took her from Crete to Europe, which is named after her.

Mrs. Otter said, “By my integrity, I’ll send you over to the Bankside and I’ll commit you to the Master of the Garden, if I hear just a syllable more. Must my house or my roof be polluted with the scent of bears and bulls when it is perfumed for great ladies? Is this according to the agreement we made when I married you? Our agreement is that I would be princess and reign in my own house, and you would be my subject and obey me. What did you financially bring me that should make you thus peremptory and self-willed?”

In this case, “the scent of bears and bulls” was the scent of alcoholic beverages because Mr. Otter used his animal-headed drinking cups for drinking contests.

Mrs. Otter continued, “Do I allow you your half-crown a day to spend where you will among your gamesters so that you can vex and torment me at such times as these? Who gives you your maintenance — your domestic upkeep — I ask you? Who allows you your horse fodder and man’s food? Your three suits of apparel a year? Your four pairs of stockings: one silk, three worsted?”

Servants were given three suits of clothing a year and wore worsted stockings.

She continued, “Who gives you your clean linen, your collars, and your cuffs when I can get you to wear them? It is a marvel you have them on now. Who confers honor upon you with courtiers or great personages to speak to you out of their coaches and come home to your house? Were you ever

so much as looked upon by a lord or a lady before I married you, except on the Easter or Whitsun holidays and out at the Banqueting House window, when Ned Whiting or George Stone were at the stake?”

Ned Whiting and George Stone were the names of famous bears used in bear-baiting.

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont and Dauphine, “For God’s sake, let’s go stave her off him.”

Literally, “to stave off” means to beat something — such as dogs in a bear-baiting — away with a stave.

Mrs. Otter continued, “Give me an answer to that. And didn’t I take you up from thence, in an old greasy buff doublet — leather jacket — with tagged laces, and green velvet sleeves worn out at the elbows? You forget this.”

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont and Dauphine, “She’ll worry him if we don’t help him in time.”

To “worry” a bear or bull in baiting is to injure it by biting it.

Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine came forward.

Seeing the gentlemen, Mrs. Otter said, “Oh, here are some gallants!”

She said to her husband, “Come on, behave yourself with distinction and with good morality, or, I say, I’ll take away your allowance.”

### — 3.2 —

Truewit came forward and said, “With your permission, fair Mistress Otter, I’ll be bold to enter these gentlemen in your acquaintance.”

Mrs. Otter, whose diction was often affected, said, "It shall not be obnoxious or difficil, sir."

In simpler language, she meant it would not be offensive or troublesome.

Truewit said to Mr. Otter about his drinking cups, "How is my noble captain? Is the bull, bear, and horse *in rerum natura* still?"

He was asking if they were still in existence.

Mr. Otter had a habit of talking about his drinking cups as if they were real animals, and real animals sometimes died during baitings. And cups were sometimes dropped and broken.

Mr. Otter replied, "Sir, *sic visum superis*.

*Sic visum superis* is Latin for "As those above decree."

Mrs. Otter said to her husband, "I wish you would but intimate them."

She meant that she wished he would keep the drinking cups out of sight. The Latin *intimus* means "inmost," and she wanted them inmost a closed cupboard.

Apparently, she also wanted her husband to imitate them in being out of sight because she ordered, "Go your ways inside, and get toasts and butter made for the woodcocks. That's a fit province for you."

A woodcock is a bird, or a fool. Buttered toast was served with woodcock, and it was a milksop. Mr. Otter was a henpecked husband and a milque-toast.

Her husband exited.

The gentlemen talked privately among themselves. They were a distance away from Mrs. Otter, and she could not hear them.

“Alas, what a tyranny is this poor fellow married to!” Clerimont said.

“Oh, but the entertainment will be soon, when we get him drunk and he loosens his tongue,” Truewit said.

“Does he ever dare to speak?” Dauphine asked.

“No Anabaptist — Puritan — ever railed with the like license,” Truewit said.

“License” meant “license to preach” and “lack of restraint.”

He continued, “But pay close attention to her language in the meantime, I ask you.”

Paying close attention to Mrs. Otter’s affected language could be quite entertaining.

Mrs. Otter said to them, “Gentlemen, you are very aptly come. My cousin, Sir Amorous La Foole, will be here shortly.”

“In good time, lady,” Truewit said. “Wasn’t Sir John Daw here, to ask for him and the company?”

“I cannot assure you, Master Truewit,” Mrs. Otter said. “There was a very melancholy knight wearing a ruff, who asked my subject — Mr. Otter — about somebody — a gentleman, I think.”

A ruff is a projecting frilled collar worn around the neck.

“Aye, that was he, lady,” Clerimont said.

“But he departed immediately, I can resolve you,” Mrs. Otter said.

“Resolve” is an affected way of saying “assure.”

“What an excellent choice phrase this lady uses to express herself!” Dauphine said.

Truewit said, “Oh, sir, she is the only authentical — genuine — courtier, who is not naturally bred one, in the city.”

By saying “authentical,” he was mocking her affected way of speaking.

Mrs. Otter said, “You have taken that report upon trust, gentlemen.”

She meant that they believed the report without evidence to back it up. Chances are, she was hoping to hear a compliment reassuring her that the report was true.

Truewit replied, “No, I assure you, the court determines it to be so, lady, in your behalf. The court says it is true.”

“I am the servant of the court and courtiers, sir,” Mrs. Otter said.

“They are rather your idolaters,” Truewit said.

“That is not so, sir,” Mrs. Otter said, modestly.

Cutbeard the barber entered the room, and the gentlemen talked to him quietly so that Mrs. Otter could not overhear them.

“How are you now, Cutbeard?” Dauphine asked. “Any hindrances? Have you run into any problems?”

“Oh, no, sir,” Cutbeard said. “*Omnia bene*. All is well. It was never better hung on the hinges and running smoothly — all’s sure and going well. I have so pleased him with a curate that he’s gone to it almost with the delight he hopes for soon.”



The delight he hoped for soon was supposed to occur on his wedding night.

“What is he like as a vicar?” Dauphine asked.

Cutbeard replied, “He is like one who has caught a cold, sir, and can scarcely be heard six inches off, as if he spoke out of a bulrush that was not picked, or his throat were full of pith — he is a fine, quick fellow and an excellent barber of prayers.”

Picked bullrushes can be dried and hollowed out. They then make a noise when blown into. This minister’s throat was so constricted that he could hardly make a sound.

A barber of prayers is one who cuts prayers short.

Cutbeard continued, “I came to tell you, sir, that you might *omnem movere lapidem* (as they say). Be ready with your vexation.”

*Omnem movere lapidem* is Latin for “Turn over every stone” or “Leave no stone unturned.”

“Many thanks, honest Cutbeard,” Dauphine said. “Be thereabouts with your key to let us in.”

Cutbeard had a key to Morose’s house.

“I will not fail you, sir,” Cutbeard said. “*Ad manum*. In other words, I will be at hand.”

Cutbeard exited.

Truewit said, “Well, I’ll go watch for the ladies’ coaches and direct them to go to Morose’s house for the feast.”

“Do, and we’ll send Jack Daw to you, if you don’t meet him,” Clerimont said.

Truewit exited.

Mrs. Otter joined the gentlemen's company and asked, "Has Master Truewit gone?"

"Yes, lady," Dauphine said. "There is some unfortunate business fallen out."

Mrs. Otter said, "So I judged by the physiognomy of the fellow who came in; and I had a dream last night, too, of the new pageant and my Lady Mayoress, which is always very ominous to me."

The pageant is the installation festivities of installing a new Mayor of London. The Lady Mayoress is the Mayor's wife.

Mrs. Otter continued, "I told it to my Lady Haughty, a member of the Lady Collegiates, the other day, when Her Honor came hither to see some Chinese fabrics; and she expounded it out of Artemidorus, and I have found it since very true. It has done me many affronts."

Artemidorus was a Greek who wrote about the meaning of dreams.

"What was your dream, lady?" Clerimont asked.

Mrs. Otter said, "Yes, sir, anything I do is but dream city. All my dreams are about the city."

"The city" is London.

She continued, "In a dream, I stained a damask tablecloth that cost me eighteen pounds at one time.

"And in a second dream, I burnt a black satin gown as I stood by the fire at my Lady Centaur's chamber in the College another time.

"In a third dream, at the Lord's masque, a wax candle dripped all over my wired headdress and my ruff, so that I could not go up to the banquet.

“In a fourth dream, I was taking a coach to go to Ware to meet a friend.”

The town of Ware was notorious as a meeting place for assignations. In this society, the word “friend” could mean “lover.”

She continued, “A brewer’s horse kicked up dirt all over my new suit (a crimson satin doublet and black velvet skirts), so that I was obliged to go in and change my clothes, and kept my chamber a leash of days because of the anguish of it.”

A lease is a hunting term meaning “three,” as in a lease of (three) dogs.

In each dream, a social event was ruined for her because of something happening to the clothing she was wearing.

“These were dire mischances, lady,” Dauphine said.

“I would not dwell in the city if it were so ominous to me,” Clerimont said.

“Yes, sir, but I do take the advice of my doctor, which is to dream of it as little as I can,” Mrs. Otter said.

“You do well to do so, Mistress Otter,” Dauphine said.

Jack Daw entered the room, and Clerimont took him aside to speak quietly to him.

“Will it please you to enter into the house farther, gentlemen?” Mrs. Otter asked.

“And into your favor, lady,” Dauphine said.

He was willing to go farther into the house — and farther into her favor.

He continued, “But we stay to speak with a knight, Sir John Daw, who has just come here. We shall follow you, lady.”

“At your own time, sir. When you are ready,” Mrs. Otter said. “It is my cousin Sir Amorous’ feast —”

Sir Amorous is Sir Amorous La Foole.

“I know it, lady,” Dauphine interrupted.

“— and mine together,” Mrs. Otter continued. “But it is for his honor, and therefore I take no credit for it other than of supplying the place for the feast.”

“You are a bounteous kinswoman,” Dauphine said.

“I am your servant, sir,” Mrs. Otter said.

She went further inside her house.

### — 3.3 —

Clerimont and Jack Daw came forward and joined Dauphine.

Clerimont and Dauphine wanted to fool Jack Daw into thinking that Epicene loved him. Clerimont, Dauphine, and Truewit wanted to arrange events so that Jack Daw and La Foole would clash with each other.

“Why, don’t you know about it, Sir John Daw?” Clerimont asked.

“No, I am a rook — a fool — if I do,” Jack Daw said.

“I’ll tell you, then,” Clerimont said. “Epicene is married by this time! And whereas it was put in your head — that is, you were made to think — that she had gone with Sir Dauphine, I assure you that Sir Dauphine has been the noblest, honestest friend to you that ever a gentleman of your quality could boast of.”

The last few words can mean that a gentleman of your (low) quality is lucky to have a friend like Dauphine. Unfortunately for Jack Daw, Dauphine is a “friend.”

Clerimont continued, “He has revealed the whole plot and made your mistress so acknowledging and indeed so ashamed of her injury to you that she desires you to forgive her and to grace her wedding with your presence today. She is to be married to a man with a very good fortune, she says — his uncle, old Morose — and she willed me in private to tell you that she shall be able to do you more favors, and with more security now, than before.”

The favors could be sexual favors, and the security could be that if Epicene got pregnant, Morose would be acknowledged as the child’s father.

“Did she say so, indeed?” Jack Daw asked.

“Why, what do you think of me, Sir John!” Clerimont asked. “Ask Sir Dauphine.”

“No, I believe you,” Jack Daw replied.

He then asked Dauphine, “Good Sir Dauphine, did she desire me to forgive her?”

“I assure you, Sir John, she did,” Dauphine answered.

“Nay, then, I do with all my heart,” Jack Daw said, “and I’ll be jovial and cheerful.”

“Yes, because look, sir, this was the injury to you,” Clerimont said. “La Foole intended this feast to honor her bridal day, and made you the property — the tool, the means — to invite the Lady Collegiates and promise to bring her; and then at the time she should have appeared (as his friend) she would have given you the dor — she would have insulted you.

“Whereas now Sir Dauphine has brought her to a feeling of and sensitivity to it, with this kind of satisfaction, that you shall bring all the ladies to the place where she is and be very jovial; and there she will have a dinner, which shall be in your name, and so disappoint La Foole, to make you good again and (as it were) a saver in the main point and of your manhood.”

A saver is a gambler who does not make a profit but also does not suffer a loss.

The main point was for Jack Daw to get revenge on La Foole.

Of course, La Foole had done nothing wrong; all he had done was invite his friends and “friends” to a banquet that he was paying for. Clerimont and Dauphine — and Truewit — were arranging things to make Jack Daw and La Foole angry at each other.

The banquet’s purpose was to honor La Foole and his guests (his guests would honor him as host, and La Foole would honor his guests by inviting them and feeding them), not to honor Epicene’s bridal day. At this time, La Foole did not even know that Epicene was married. Clerimont, Dauphine, and Truewit were arranging things so that the banquet would take place at Morose’s house (and annoy him) and so that Jack Daw and La Foole would be angry at each other.

“As I am a knight, I honor her and forgive her heartily,” Jack Daw said.

“Set about it, then, immediately,” Clerimont said. “Truewit has gone before to meet the coaches and redirect them to Morose’s house and to acquaint you with so much if he should meet you. Join with him, and all is well.”

La Foole entered the room.

Clerimont said quietly to Jack Daw, “See, here comes your antagonist. Take no notice of him, but be very jovial.”

“Have the ladies come, Sir John Daw, and your mistress?”  
La Foole asked.

Jack Daw’s mistress was Epicene.

Jack Daw exited.

La Foole then said, “Sir Dauphine! You are exceedingly welcome, and honest Master Clerimont.”

He then asked, “Where’s my cousin?”

His cousin was Mrs. Otter.

La Foole then asked, “Did you see any Lady Collegiates, gentlemen?”

Dauphine replied, “Lady Collegiates! Haven’t you heard, Sir Amorous, how you are abused and deceived?”

“How, sir!” La Foole asked.

“Will you speak so kindly to Sir John Daw, who has done you such an affront?” Clerimont asked.

“An affront in what, gentlemen?” La Foole asked. “Let me be a petitioner to you to know, I beg you.”

“Why, sir, Jack Daw’s mistress — Epicene — was married today to Sir Dauphine’s uncle, your cousin’s neighbor, and he has diverted all the ladies and all your company thither to frustrate your preparations and stick a disgrace upon you. He was here, just now, attempting to entice us away from you, too, but we told him his own character. We have told him the plain truth about himself, I think.”

“Has Sir John Daw wronged me so inhumanely?” Sir Amorous La Foole asked.

“He has done it, Sir Amorous, most maliciously and treacherously,” Dauphine answered, “but if you’ll be ruled by us and take our advice, you shall repay him, truly.”

“Good gentlemen!” La Foole said. “I’ll join in, believe it. How shall I repay him, I ask?”

Dauphine said, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, get your pheasants and your godwits and your best food, and serve it in silver dishes of your cousin’s immediately, and say nothing, but clap a clean towel about you, like a sewer” — the chief attendant of a feast, who supervised the seating of guests and the serving of the dishes — “and, bare-headed” — like a servant — “march before it with a good confidence (it is but over the way, nearby) and we’ll follow you, where you shall set the food on the table, and bid them welcome to it, which shall show it is yours and disgrace Jack Daw’s preparation utterly; and as for your cousin, whereas she should be troubled here at home with the care of making and giving welcome, she shall transfer all that labor thither and be a principal guest herself, sit ranked with the Lady College-honors, and be honored, and have her health drunk as often, with the male guests bare-headed with the doffing of hats to show respect to a lady being toasted, and as loud as the best of them.”

Both La Foole and Jack Daw would attempt to act as the host of the same feast. La Foole, of course, had the best claim to be host, as he was the one who was paying for the feast and had invited the guests. Clerimont, however, had told Jack Daw that the dinner Epicene would provide at Morose’s house would be in Jack Daw’s name.

“I’ll go tell her immediately,” La Foole said. “It shall be done, that’s resolved.”

He would tell his cousin, Mrs. Otter, that the place for the feast had been changed.



La Foole exited.

Clerimont said, "I thought he would not hear our plot out to the end before it would take his fancy."

Dauphine said, "Well, there are guests and food now; what shall we do for music?"

"The smell of the venison going through the street will invite one band of fiddlers or other," Clerimont said.

"I wish it would call the trumpeters thither," Dauphine said.

Trumpets would be louder than fiddles and would annoy Morose more.

"Indeed, there is hope of that; they have information about all feasts," Clerimont said. "There's good social harmony and conversation between them and the London cooks. It is twenty to one, but we have them."

Dauphine said, "It will be a most solemn day for my uncle, and an excellent fit of mirth for us."

"Solemn" means both "ceremonious" and "gloomy." Morose would have gone through the marriage ceremony, and he would be upset by the noise of the wedding banquet.

"Aye," Clerimont said, "if we can hold up the rivalry between La Foole and Jack Daw, and never bring them to declare their grievances and demand explanations."

A few minutes' conversation between La Foole and Jack Daw would clear up their disagreement and reveal the machinations of Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine.

"Tut," Dauphine said. "Flatter them both (as Truewit says) and you may take their understandings in a purse-net."

Purse-nets were net-bags used to catch rabbits.

Dauphine continued, “They’ll believe themselves to be just such men as we make them, neither more nor less. They have nothing, not even the use of their senses, but by tradition.”

In other words, they cannot think for themselves, but know only what has been handed down to them and what they have been told.

La Foole returned, outfitted like a sewer with a towel over his arm.

“Look!” Clerimont said quietly to Dauphine. “Sir Amorous has his towel on already.”

He then asked La Foole, “Have you persuaded your cousin?”

“Yes,” La Foole answered. “It is very feasible; she’ll do anything, she says, rather than allow the La Fooles to be disgraced.”

Dauphine said, “She — Mrs. Otter — is a noble kinswoman. It will be such a crushing device — like a pestle — Sir Amorous! It will pound all your enemy’s plots to powder and blow him up with his own explosives and his own line of gunpowder.”

“We’ll give fire, I promise you,” La Foole said.

Clerimont advised, “But you must manage it privately, without any noise, and take no notice by any means —”

Mr. Otter entered the room and said, “Gentlemen, my princess says you shall have all her silver dishes, *festinate*” — quickly — “and she’s gone to alter her attire a little and go with you —”

“And you yourself, too, Captain Otter,” Clerimont said.

“By all means, sir,” Dauphine said.

“Yes, sir, I do intend it,” Mr. Otter said. “But I would entreat my cousin Sir Amorous, and you, gentlemen, to be petitioners to my princess to allow me to carry my bull and my bear, as well as my horse, to the feast.”

“That you shall do, Captain Otter,” Clerimont said.

“My cousin will never consent, gentlemen,” La Foole said.

“She must consent, Sir Amorous, to reason,” Dauphine said.

“Why, she says they are not *decorum* — they are unseemly — among ladies,” La Foole said.

Mr. Otter said, “But they are *decora* — beautiful — and that’s better, sir.”

“Aye, she must hear our argument,” Clerimont said. “Didn’t Pasiphaë, who was a queen, love a bull? And wasn’t Callisto, the mother of Arcas, turned into a bear and made a star, Mistress Ursula, in the heavens?”

Pasiphaë’s husband, King Minos of Crete, refused to sacrifice a bull to the gods, so they made Pasiphaë fall in love with a bull. Their offspring was the Minotaur, which had the head of a bull and the body of a man.

Jupiter had a son named Arcas with the mortal woman Callisto. Juno, Jupiter’s jealous wife, changed Callisto into a bear. After Callisto died, Jupiter made her a constellation: the Big Bear, or Ursa Major. Ursula is a diminutive of “Ursa.”

Mr. Otter said, “Oh, God, that I could have said as much! I will have these stories painted in the Bear Garden, *ex Ovidii Metamorphosi*.”

*Ex Ovidii Metamorphosi* means “out of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.”

The Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* contains many stories of mythic transformations, including that of Callisto (II.401-507).

The story of Pasiphaë, who was not transformed, appears in Ovid's *Ars Amatoris* (I.295-326).

“Where is your princess, Captain?” Dauphine asked. “Please be our leader.”

“That I shall, sir,” Mr. Otter said.

“Make haste, good Sir Amorous,” Clerimont said to La Foole.

They exited.

#### — 3.4 —

In Morose's house, the wedding had just been performed. Present were Morose, Epicene, the parson, and Cutbeard the barber.

Morose gave the parson a gratuity and said, “Sir, there's an angel for yourself, and a pair of angels for your cold.”

An angel is a gold coin.

Morose added, “Don't wonder at my management of my bounty. It is fit we should thank Fortune, and thank double — twice as much — to Nature, for any benefit she confers upon us. Besides, your cold is your imperfection, but my solace.”

The parson's cold made him unable to speak loudly.

The parson hoarsely and quietly said, “I thank Your Worship. Because of your gratuity, my cold is now my solace, too.”

“What did he say, Cutbeard?” Morose asked.

Cutbeard answered, “He says, *praesto*, sir — at your service, sir. Whensoever Your Worship needs him, he can be ready with the like. He got this cold from sitting up late and singing rounds — songs — with cloth-workers who customarily sing part-songs as they work.”

“Say no more,” Morose said. “I thank him.”

“May God keep Your Worship, and give you much joy with your fair spouse,” the parson said.

He coughed.

“Oh, oh!” Morose said. “Wait, Cutbeard! Let him give me five shillings of my money back. As it is bounty to reward benefits, so is it equity to give fines for injuries. I will have it.”

Because of the parson’s coughing, Morose wanted part of the gratuity back.

Cutbeard and the Parson talked quietly.

Morose asked, “What does he say?”

“He cannot get change for an angel, sir,” Cutbeard said.

“It must be changed,” Morose said.

Cutbeard whispered to the parson, “Cough again.”

Morose asked, “What does he say?”

“He will cough out the rest, sir,” Cutbeard said.

The parson coughed.

“Away, away with him,” Morose said, upset by the noise. “Stop his mouth! Away; I forgive it. Let him keep the five shillings.”

Cutbeard and the parson exited.

Epicene said, not in a whisper, “Bah, Master Morose, that you will treat a man of the church with this violence!”

“What?” Morose said, astonished that Epicene was not whispering.

Epicene said, “It does not become your gravity or dignity or breeding (as you claim to have in court) to have offered this outrage on a waterman, or any more boisterous creature, much less on a man of his civil coat and sober profession.”

Watermen were notorious for loudly shouting their availability for work.

The parson’s civil coat was the black coat worn by ministers.

“You can speak, then!” Morose said.

“Yes, sir,” Epicene said.

“Speak out, I mean,” Morose said.

Speaking out meant speaking in a regular or loud voice and expressing her opinions.

“Aye, sir,” Epicene said. “Why, did you think you had married a statue, or a puppet only? One of the French puppets — marionettes — with the eyes turned with a wire? Or some innocent half-wit out of the Bedlam hospital or some innocent child from Christ’s Hospital, who would stand with her hands thus” — she demurely crossed her hands in front of her and let them hang down — “and a plaice-mouth, and look upon you?”

A plaice is a fish with a small, puckered mouth.

“Oh, immodesty!” Morose said. “A manifest woman!”

“A manifest woman” means “You are manifestly a woman!” Morose, however, was using the word structure of “A manifest villain!”

Morose called, “What, Cutbeard!”

“Nay, never quarrel with Cutbeard, sir,” Epicene said. “It is too late now. I confess that my speaking somewhat lessens the modesty I had when I styled myself as simply a maiden; but I hope I shall make my speaking a stock — an asset — always suitable to the status and dignity of your wife.”

“She can talk!” Morose said.

“Yes, indeed, sir,” Epicene said.

Morose called for help: “What, sirrah!”

He then called, more softly, “None of my knaves — servants — are there?”

His mute servant entered the room.

Morose asked him, “Where is this impostor Cutbeard?”

The mute servant shrugged or made motions that Cutbeard had gone out.

Epicene said to him, “Speak to him, fellow, speak to him. I’ll have none of this compulsory, unnatural dumbness in my house, in a household where I govern.”

The mute servant exited.

“She is my regent — my ruler — already!” Morose complained. “I have married a Penthesilea, a Semiramis. I have sold my liberty to a distaff!”

Penthesilea was a Queen of the Amazons; she died fighting for Troy in the Trojan War. Achilles killed her.

Semiramis was an Assyrian warrior-queen. After her husband died, she governed while dressed in men’s clothing and pretending to be her son.

A distaff is used in making thread. This was regarded as women's work, and so Morose's "distaff" is a woman. A distaff also makes noise during use.

In this society, a sword is the insignia for a man, and a distaff is the insignia for a woman.

— 3.5 —

Truewit entered the room and asked, "Where's Master Morose?"

Recognizing Truewit as the obnoxious man who had advised him against marriage, Morose said, "Has he come again? May the Lord have mercy upon me!"

"I wish you all joy, Mistress Epicene, with your grave and honorable marriage match," Truewit said.

Epicene said, "I return you the thanks, Master Truewit, so friendly a wish deserves."

"She has acquaintances, too!" Morose said.

Acquaintances and friends meant possible visitors, and visitors meant noise.

"May God save you, sir, and give you all contentment in your fair choice here," Truewit said. "Before, I was the bird of night to you, the owl, but now I am the messenger of peace, a dove, and I bring you the glad wishes of many friends, to the celebration of this good hour."

An owl is a bearer of bad omens. Previously, Truewit had warned Morose of the dangers of marriage.

"What hour, sir?" Morose asked.

"Your marriage hour, sir," Truewit answered. "I commend your resolution that — notwithstanding all the dangers I laid before you and warned you about, in the voice of a night-



crow — would yet go on and be yourself. It shows you are a man constant to your own ends, and upright to your purposes — you who would not be put off with left-handed cries.”

The Latin word for “left” is “sinister.” A left-handed man could hold up his right hand in a show of peace and stab you with his left hand. In the ancient world, Greek and Roman soothsayers regarded a bird cry on the left as an ominous sign.

Morose had ignored Truewit’s warnings and had gotten married anyway, showing that he was his own man.

“How did you arrive at the knowledge of so much?” Morose asked. “How do you know my business?”

Truewit answered, “Why, did you ever hope, sir, committing the secrecy of your marriage to a barber, that less than the whole town should know it?”

Barbers are notorious talkers. When King Midas of Phrygia judged a music contest between the gods Pan and Apollo, he gave first place to Pan. Angry, Apollo turned Midas’s ears into the ears of an ass. Midas kept his ears covered, and no one knew his secret except his barber. Unable to tell any human about Midas’ secret, the barber whispered the secret into a hole in the ground. Rushes grew there, and when the wind blew through the rushes, the rushes made sounds that revealed Midas’ secret. Soon, everyone knew the secret.

Truewit continued, “You might as well have told it to the conduit or the bake-house, or the infantry who follow the court, and with more security.”

People got water from a public conduit, aka water-pipe. It was a meeting place for people to talk together. So was a bakehouse. The “infantry” consisted of the blackguards or most menial servants who followed all the other people as

the king traveled. They were bearers of gossip about those whom they served.

Truewit continued, “Could your gravity forget so old and noted a scrap of quotation as *lippis et tonsoribus notum*?”

The scrap of quotation came from Horace’s *Satires* I.vii.3 and meant “known to the bleary-eyed and the barbers.” Barbers are talkers and full of gossip, but bleary-eyed people are not, so if the bleary-eyed people know a piece of gossip, everyone knows it. Bleary-eyed people tend to stay quietly at home. (In Horace, the bleary-eyed people frequent apothecary shops and hear gossip there.)

Truewit continued, “Well, sir, forgive the fault yourself now, and be communicable and affable with your friends.”

The fault was Morose’s confiding his business to a barber.

Truewit continued, “Here will be three or four fashionable Lady Collegiates to visit you presently, and their train of minions and followers.”

Wishing to keep such unwelcome guests out of his house, Morose shouted, “Bar my doors! Bar my doors! Where are all my eaters, my mouths now?”

Servants had a reputation for always being hungry.

Some servants entered the room.

Morose shouted, “Bar up my doors, you varlets!”

Epicene said, “Anyone who bars the doors is a varlet. Let them stand open. I dare any of you to move his eyes toward the doors. Shall I have a *barricado* — a barricade — made against my friends, to be barred of any pleasure they can bring in to me with honorable visitation?”

The servants exited. They did not bar the doors.

“Oh, Amazonian impudence and shamelessness!” Morose said.

“Nay, indeed, in this, sir, she speaks only reason, and I think she is more continent and self-restrained than you,” Truewit said.

He knew that Morose did not want to hear the noise of his soon-to-arrive visitors, but he pretended that Morose wanted to go to bed with Epicene immediately and so was ordering his doors to be barred.

Truewit continued, “Would you go to bed so quickly, sir, before noon? A man of your head and hair — your judgment and character — should owe more to that reverend ceremony, and not mount the marriage bed like a lecherous town bull or a lecherous mountain goat, but wait for the due season and ascend it then with religion and piety and with awe of and reverence for marriage.”

Villagers collectively owned a bull that bred all their cows.

Truewit continued, “Those delights are to be steeped in the humor and silence of the night, and give the day to other open pleasures and jollities of feast, of music, of revels, and of discourse. We’ll have all, sir, that may make your wedding day dignified and happy.”

“Oh, my torment! My torment!” Morose said.

Truewit responded, “Nay, if you endure the first half hour of marriage, sir, so irritatively, and with this irksomeness, what comfort or hope can this fair gentlewoman — Epicene — imagine to be hers hereafter, in the consideration of so many years as are to come —”

Morose interrupted, “— of my affliction. Good sir, depart, and let her do it — afflict me — alone.”

“I have finished speaking, sir,” Truewit said.

“That cursed barber!” Morose said.

“Yes, in faith, he is a cursed wretch, indeed, sir,” Truewit said.

“I have married his cittern that’s common to all men,” Morose said.

A cittern is a musical instrument often found in barbershops of the time. Customers could play the cittern to amuse themselves.

Morose was calling his new wife a common-to-all slut.

He continued, “Some plague above the plague —”

Truewit interrupted, “— all Egypt’s ten plagues —”

In Exodus 7-12 God sent ten plagues against Pharaoh for not allowing the Jews to leave Egypt: (water turning to) blood, frogs, lice, flies, pestilence of livestock, boils, hail and fire, locusts, darkness for three days, and the death of firstborn children.

Morose interrupted, “— revenge me on him!”

“It is very well, sir,” Truewit said. “If you laid on a curse or two more, I’ll assure you he’ll bear them. For example, that he may get the pox while seeking to cure it, sir?”

Barbers treated the pox: syphilis.

Truewit continued, “Or, that while he is curling another man’s hair, his own hair may drop off?”

Hair loss was a symptom of syphilis.

Truewit continued, “Or, for burning some male bawd’s love-lock, he may have his brain beat out with the curling iron?”

“No, let the wretch live wretched,” Morose said. “May he get the itch — scabies — and let his barbershop become so

filled with lice that no man will dare to come to him, nor he dare to come to no man!”

“Aye,” Truewit said, “and if he would swallow all his balls of soap for pills, let not them purge him.”

“Let his warming pan be forever cold!” Morose said.

“May a perpetual frost be underneath it, sir,” Truewit said.

In the Great Frost of 1608, the Thames River was frozen for six weeks.

“Let him never hope to see fire again!” Morose said.

“Except in hell, sir,” Truewit said.

“Let his barber chairs be always empty, his scissors rust, and his combs mold in their cases!” Morose said.

“Very dreadful, that!” Truewit said. “And may he lose the skill, sir, of carving lanterns in paper.”

Barbers made lanterns out of oiled paper to sell.

“Let there be no bawd carted that year to employ a basin of his, but let him be glad to eat his barber’s sponge for bread!” Morose said.

When bawds or prostitutes were publicly carted through the streets, barbers hired out basins for onlookers to beat as they followed the cart and jeered at the bawd or prostitute.

“And let him drink lotium — stale urine — to go with it, and much good may it do him,” Truewit said.

Lotium was used by barbers as a hair dressing.

“Or, for lack of bread —” Morose began.

Truewit interrupted, “— let him eat ear-wax, sir. I’ll help you to curse. Or, let him pull his own teeth and add them to the lute-string.”

Barbers cleaned out ear-wax, and they pulled teeth. Pulled teeth were hung on a string and displayed in the shop.

Morose said, “No, let him beat the old ones to powder and make bread of them.”

Truewit said, “Yes, let him make meal out of millstones.”

Millstones are grinders. So are molars.

“May all the boils and burns that he has cured on others break out upon him!” Morose said.

“And may he now forget the cure of them in himself, sir, or, if he does remember the cure, let him have scraped all his linen into lint for the cure, and not have a rag left to him to use to set up business with,” Truewit said.

Lint was used to dress wounds.

“Let him never set up hair again, but have the gout in his hands forever!” Morose said.

He had finished cursing Cutbeard the barber, so he said, “Now, no more, sir.”

Truewit was not ready to finish cursing Cutbeard.

He said, “Oh, that last insult was too highly set! You went too far. You might go less with him, indeed, and be revenged enough; as, for example, that he be never able to new-paint his pole —”

The pole could be his red and white barber pole, but a second meaning is that the barber never again get his pole — his penis — wet.

“Good sir, no more,” Morose said. “I forgot myself.”

Truewit continued cursing the barber: “Or, that he lack the credit to get goods from a comb-maker —”

“No more, sir,” Morose said.

Truewit continued cursing the barber: “Or, that, having broken his mirror in a former despair, he fall now into a much greater despair of ever getting another —”

“I beseech you, no more,” Morose said.

Truewit continued cursing the barber: “Or, that he never be trusted with the trimming of any but chimney sweepers —”

Chimney-sweepers (and colliers, aka coal sellers) were the least desirable customers because they were the dirtiest.

Morose began, “Sir —”

Truewit continued cursing the barber: “Or, that he may cut a collier’s throat with his razor, without evil intent, and yet hang for it!”

Morose said, “I will forgive him rather than hear any more. I ask you to stop, sir.”

In this matter, Morose was kinder than Truewit.

### — 3.6 —

Jack Daw entered the room, leading Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, and Mistress Dol Mavis, all of whom were Lady Collegiates). He also led Mistress Trusty, the Lady Haughty’s serving-woman. “Madam” is a title of higher rank than “Mistress.”

“This way, madam,” Jack Daw said to Madam Haughty.

Following the order of precedence, the madams would enter the room before the mistresses.

“Oh, the sea breaks in upon me!” Morose said. “Another flood!”

The first flood occurred in Genesis and featured Noah and the ark.

Morose continued, “An inundation! I shall be overwhelmed with noise. It beats already at my shores. I feel an earthquake in myself for it.”

Jack Daw kissed Epicene and said, “May God give you joy, mistress.”

“Has she servants, too?” Morose asked.

Yes, Epicene had male devotees.

Jack Daw said to Epicene, “I have brought some ladies here to see and know you.”

Epicene kissed the ladies one by one as he presented them to her in order of precedence:

“This is Lady Haughty.

“This is my Lady Centaur.

“This is Mistress Doll Mavis.

“This is Mistress Trusty, my Lady Haughty’s serving-woman.”

Jack Daw next asked, “Where’s your husband? Let’s see him. Can he endure no noise? Let me come to him.”

“What *nomenclator* is this?” Morose said.

*Nomenclator* means the announcing of names; Morose pronounced the last two syllables as “clatter.”

Truewit said, “This is Sir John Daw, sir, your wife’s servant.”



This kind of servant is a male admirer.

“A Daw, and her servant!” Morose said. “Oh, it is decreed, it is decreed of me — judgment has been passed on me — if she has such servants.”

A jackdaw is a foolish bird, and so the word “daw” was used for “fool.”

Morose attempted to leave, but Truewit stopped him and said, “Nay, sir, you must kiss the ladies; you must not go away now. They come toward you to seek you out.”

Madam Haughty said, “Indeed, Master Morose, would you steal a marriage and be married secretly thus, in the midst of so many friends, and not tell us? Well, I’ll kiss you, notwithstanding the justice of my quarrel.”

She then said to Epicene, “You shall give me leave, mistress, to use a becoming familiarity with your husband.”

She kissed Morose.

Normally, a male guest would ask the husband for permission to kiss the bride. Here, Madam Haughty was inverting the traditional roles of male and female in this society.

Epicene said, “Your Ladyship does me an honor in it, to let me know he is so worthy of your favor, as you have done both him and me grace to visit a pair of people so unprepared to entertain you.”

“Compliment! Compliment!” Morose said.

Epicene was using courtly language and compliments.

She continued, “But I must lay the burden of that upon my servant here.”

Jack Daw would help entertain the guests.

“Burden” has a sexual meaning in Epicene’s sentence. “Burden” can mean the weight of the top partner in sex. The sentence’s sexual meaning can be interpreted as Epicene was going to sexually get on top of her servant: Jack Daw.

“It shall not be necessary, Mistress Morose,” Madam Haughty said. “We will all bear, rather than one shall be oppressed.”

“I know it,” Morose said, “and you will teach her the faculty if she needs to learn it.”

Morose was taking her words in a sexual sense. One meaning of “to bear” is to bear a man’s weight in the missionary position. One meaning of “oppressed” is to be ravished. He was saying that Madam Haughty would teach Epicene how to bear a man’s weight in bed, unless Epicene had already learned it.

“We will all bear” can also mean “We will all bare our bodies.”

Morose stood to the side, and the ladies talked together out of his hearing.

“Is this the silent woman?” Madam Haughty asked.

Madam Centaur replied, “Nay, she has found her tongue since she was married, Master Truewit says.”

Truewit joined the ladies.

“Oh, Master Truewit!” Lady Haughty said. “May God save you. What kind of creature is your bride here? She speaks, I think.”

Truewit replied, “Yes, madam, believe it. She is a gentlewoman of very perfect behavior and of a good family.”

“And Jack Daw told us she could not speak,” Madam Haughty said.

“So it was pretended in a plot, Madam, in order to put her upon this old fellow, by Sir Dauphine, his nephew, and one or two more of us,” Truewit said, “but she is a woman of an excellent self-confidence and an extraordinarily felicitous wit and tongue. You shall see her make rare sport at the expense of Jack Daw before night.”

“And he brought us here to laugh at her!” Madam Haughty said.

“It often falls out, madam, that he who thinks himself the master wit is the master fool,” Truewit said.

Certainly Truewit, Clerimont, and Dauphine behaved sometimes unethically, if not foolishly. Is it foolish to behave unethically?

He continued, “I assure Your Ladyship, you cannot laugh at her.”

But they could laugh with her.

Lady Haughty said, “No, we won’t laugh at her. We’ll have her to the College. If she has wit, she shall be one of us.”

She then said to Madam Centaur, “Won’t she, Centaur? We’ll make her a Collegiate.”

“Yes, indeed, madam, and Mavis and she will set up a partnership,” Madam Centaur said.

“Believe it, madam,” Truewit said.

He added, “And Mistress Mavis, Epicene will sustain her part. She will be a good partner.”

Madam Mavis replied, “I’ll tell you that after I have talked with her and tested her.”

“Treat her very civilly, Mavis,” Madam Haughty said.

“So I will, madam,” Madam Mavis said.

She then walked aside with Epicene.

Morose said to himself, still not hearing their conversation, “This is a blessed minute. I wish that they would whisper like this forever!”

Truewit said to Madam Haughty, “In the meantime, madam, I wish that Your Ladyship would help to vex Morose a little. You know his disease.”

Morose’s disease was an excessive sensitivity to noise.

Truewit continued, “Talk to him about the wedding ceremonies, or call for your gloves, or —”

“Leave it to me,” Madam Haughty said. “Centaur, help me.”

Madam Haughty called to Morose, “Master bridegroom, where are you?”

“Oh, their silence was too miraculously good to last!” Morose said to himself.

Madam Haughty said, “We see no signs of a wedding here, no mark of a bride-ale. Where are our scarves and our gloves?”

Scarves and gloves were traditional gifts given to wedding guests.

She continued, “Please, give them to us. Let’s know your bride’s color and your color, at least.”

The bride and groom chose separate colors, which their respective friends wore at the wedding and bride-ale.

“Alas, madam, he has provided none,” Madam Centaur said.

“Had I known Your Ladyship’s cosmetician, I would have,” Morose said.

That kind of color was makeup.

Madam Haughty said, “He has scored a point against you, Centaur, indeed. But do you hear, Master Morose, a jest will not absolve you in this manner. You have sucked the milk of the court and from thence have been brought up to the true solid foods and wine of it — you have been a courtier from the baby’s bonnet to the nightcap, as we may say. It’s shocking for you to offend in such a high point of ceremony as this, and let your nuptials lack all the marks of ceremoniousness! How much plate have you lost today (if you had but regarded your profit), what gifts, what friends, through your complete rusticity and boorishness!”

Plate is gold and silver utensils for the table: They are traditional wedding gifts.

Morose began, “Madam —”

Madam Haughty interrupted, “Pardon me, sir. I must insinuate your errors to you.”

“To insinuate” is “to suggest or hint,” but Madam Haughty did not suggest or hint but instead spoke straightforwardly.

“No gloves? No garters? No scarves? No epithalamium? No masque?” she said.

The bride’s garters were given away to the guests. Gloves and scarves were also given to the wedding guests.

A masque was an entertaining performance with dancing and acting by masked participants.

An epithalamium is a wedding song.

Jack Daw said, “Yes, madam, I’ll make — write — an epithalamium. I promised my mistress; I have begun it already. Will Your Ladyship hear it?”

“Aye, good Jack Daw,” Madam Haughty answered.

Unwilling to hear the epithalamium, Morose said to Madam Haughty, “Will it please Your Ladyship to command a chamber and be private with your friend? You shall have your choice of rooms to retire to with the hope of obtaining what you want: My whole house is yours. I know it” — that is, having an assignation — “has been Your Ladyship’s purpose in going into the city at other times; however, now you have been unhappily diverted upon me, but I shall be loath to break any honorable custom of Your Ladyship’s. And therefore, good madam —”

Epicene said, “Come, you are a rude bridegroom to entertain ladies of honor in this fashion.”

Madam Centaur agreed: “He is a rude groom, indeed.”

A groom can be a bridegroom or a servant.

Truewit also agreed: “By that light, you deserve to have a cuckold’s horns grafted onto your forehead and have your horns reach from one side of the island to the other.”

He then pretended to be joking: “Do not mistake me, sir. I speak this only to give the ladies some heart again, not for any malice to you.”

Morose gestured toward Truewit and said, “Ladies, is this your bravo — your hired bully?”

Truewit said, “So God help me, if you utter such another word, I’ll take your Mistress Bride further inside the house and drink your health in a way unpleasant to you. Do you see? Bah. Know your friends and such as love you.”

Truewit may have been threatening to cuckold Morose.

— 3.7 —

Clerimont entered the room, leading in a number of musicians.

“Excuse me, ladies,” Clerimont said. “Do you want any music? I have brought you a variety of noises.”

A noise is a band of musicians.

He then said to the musicians, “Play, sirs, all of you.”

Because the musicians were from different bands that played different kinds of music, the result was indeed a noise.

“Oh, a plot, a plot, a plot, a plot upon me!” Morose said. “This day I shall be their anvil to work on; they will grate — grind — me asunder. It is worse than the noise of a saw!”

Clerimont, pretending that Morose did not know that the noise was produced by the bows, aka bow-saws, used to play fiddles, said, “No, they are hair, resin, and guts. I can give you the formula for making them.”

Gut was used for strings, and horsehair was used for the bow-saw. Resin was rubbed on the bow-saw.

Truewit said to the musicians, “Peace, boys.”

The musicians stopped playing.

Clerimont said to the musicians, “Play, I say.”

The musicians began playing.

“Peace, rascals!” Truewit said.

The musicians stopped playing.

Truewit said to Morose, “You see who’s your friend now, sir? Take courage; put on a martyr’s resolution. Mock down all their attacks by means of patience. It is only for a day, and I would suffer heroically if I were in your place. Should an ass exceed me in fortitude? No. You betray your infirmity — your inordinate sensitivity to sound — with your hanging

dull ears, and make them exult disdainfully. Bear up bravely and constantly and steadfastly.”

Morose may have been wearing a couple of nightcaps, as old men sometimes did in this society. The ends of the nightcaps could be hanging down like droopy ears.

La Foole walked into the room, followed by servants carrying food to the banqueting room. Dauphine and Mrs. Otter also arrived.

Truewit said to Morose, “Look here, sir, at what honor is unexpectedly done to you by your nephew, Dauphine. A wedding dinner has come, and a knight sewer — La Foole — before it, for the greater honor, and fine Mistress Otter, your neighbor, in the rump or tail of it.”

“Has that Gorgon, that Medusa, come?” Morose said. “Hide me! Hide me!”

Medusa is the most famous of the mythological Gorgons, the sight of whom could turn men into stone.

“I promise you, sir, that she will not transform you into stone,” Truewit said. “Look upon her with a good courage. Please receive her and conduct your guests in. No? You won’t?”

He then said to Epicene, “Mistress Bride, will you invite in the ladies? Your bridegroom is so bashful and shamefaced here —”

Epicene said to Madam Haughty, “Will it please Your Ladyship, madam?”

“With the benefit of your company, Mistress,” Madam Haughty replied.

Epicene said to Jack Daw, “Servant, please perform your duties.”



“I am glad to be commanded, Mistress,” Jack Daw replied.

Madam Centaur asked, “How do you like Epicene’s wit, Mavis?”

Mistress Mavis replied, “Very prettily, absolutely well.”

They were going to the banqueting hall, and Mistress Mavis was ahead of Mrs. Otter.

Mrs. Otter objected, “It is my place.”

The higher-ranking person would go first, and Mrs. Otter believed that she should precede Mistress Mavis.

Disagreeing about the order of precedence, Mistress Mavis said, “You shall pardon me, Mistress Otter.”

“Why, I am a Collegiate,” Mrs. Otter said.

“But not in ordinary,” Madam Mavis replied.

“In ordinary” means “full-time.”

“But I am,” Mrs. Otter said.

“We’ll dispute that within the banqueting hall,” Mistress Mavis said.

Jack Daw escorted the ladies into the banqueting hall.

“I wish that this had lasted a little longer!” Clerimont said.

“And that they had sent for the heralds!” Truewit said.

Heralds of the College of Heralds decided who had precedence over another person. Heralds-at-arms blew trumpets.

Mr. Otter entered the room, carrying his drinking cups.

Truewit asked, “Captain Otter, what is the news?”

“I have brought my bull, bear, and horse in private, and yonder are the trumpeters outside, and the drummer, gentlemen,” Mr. Otter said.

The drum and trumpets sounded.

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” Morose cried.

Mr. Otter continued, “And we will have a rouse — a deep drink — in each of them soon, for bold Britons, indeed.”

The drum and trumpets sounded again.

“Oh! Oh! Oh! “ Morose cried.

He exited.

The others cried, “Follow! Follow! Follow!”

This was a hunting cry.

## ACT 4 (*Epicene*)

### — 4.1 —

Truewit and Clerimont talked together, privately.

“Was there ever any poor bridegroom so tormented as Morose?” Truewit said. “Or any man so tormented, indeed?”

“I have not read of the like in the chronicles of the land,” Clerimont replied.

“Surely, he cannot but go to a place of rest after all this purgatory,” Truewit said.

In Purgatory, repentant sinners suffer to purge their sins, after which they go to Paradise. Truewit was joking that Morose was suffering so much on this day that after death he could skip Purgatory and go straight to Paradise.

“He may presume it, I think,” Clerimont said.

“The spitting, the coughing, the laughter, the sneezing, the farting, the dancing, the noise of the music, and Epicene’s masculine and loud commanding and directing the whole family of household servants make him think that by marrying Epicene he has married an avenging deity — a Fury,” Truewit said.

“And she carries it off splendidly,” Clerimont said.

“Aye, she takes any occasion to speak,” Truewit said. “That’s the best part of it.”

“And how soberly Dauphine labors to satisfy Morose that it was none of his plot, that he had nothing to do with it!” Clerimont said.

“And Dauphine has almost brought Morose to the faith in the article,” Clerimont said. “He has almost convinced him that it is true.”

Church of England ministers subscribed to 39 Articles of Faith.

“Here he comes,” Clerimont said.

Dauphine entered the room.

Clerimont then asked, “Where is Morose now? What’s become of him, Dauphine?”

Dauphine answered, “Oh, hold me up a little, or I shall die laughing. He has got on his whole nest of nightcaps and locked himself up in the top of the house, as high as ever he can climb to escape from the noise.”

The nightcaps fitted inside each other from smallest to largest, forming a “nest.”

Proverbs 21:9 states, “*It is better to dwell in a corner of the house top, than with a contentious woman in a wide house*” (1599 Geneva Bible).

Dauphine continued, “I peeped in at a cranny and saw him sitting over a crossbeam roof, like him of the saddler’s horse in Fleet Street, upright; and he will sleep there.”

Outside the saddler’s shop in Fleet Street was a sign or a model displaying a horse and rider.

“But where are your Collegiates?” Clerimont asked.

“Withdrawn with the bride in private,” Dauphine said.

“Oh, they are instructing her in the College grammar — its rules and practices,” Truewit said. “If Epicene has favor with them, she knows all their secrets instantly.”

Clerimont said, “I think the Lady Haughty looks well today, despite all my dispraise of her in the morning. I think I shall come around to your opinion and agree with you again,

Truewit. I think I will believe that makeup and good clothing improve a woman's appearance."

"Believe it," Truewit said. "I told you right. Women ought to repair the losses that time and years have made in their features with personal decorations. And an intelligent woman, if she knows in herself the least defect, will be most careful to hide it, and it becomes her.

"If she is short, let her sit much, lest when she stands she should be thought to sit.

"If she has an ill foot, let her wear her gown the longer and her shoe the thinner.

"If she has a fat hand and scaly fingernails, let her less often carve the meat at the table and gesture only while wearing gloves.

"If she has a sour breath, let her never discourse fasting, and always talk while at a distance."

Truewit believed that talking on an empty stomach made bad breath more noticeable. Possibly, the smell of food on one's breath was more pleasing. Or possibly, the act of eating and chewing brushed one's teeth.

Truewit continued, "If she has black and rugged and uneven teeth, let her laugh less, especially if she laughs with her mouth wide and open."

Clerimont said, "Oh, some women, when they laugh, you would think they brayed like a donkey, it is so rude, and —"

Truewit interrupted, "— aye, and there are others who will stalk in their gait like an ostrich, and take huge strides. I cannot endure such a sight. I love the gracefulness of dance measures in the feet and I love musical rhythm in the voice;

they are gentlenesses and elegances that often attract no less than the face.”

“How did you come to study these creatures so exactly?” Dauphine asked. “I wish you would make me proficient in that knowledge.”

Truewit replied, “Yes, but then you must cease to live in your chamber for an entire month reading the chivalric romances *Amadis de Gaul* or *Don Quixote*, as you are accustomed to do, and come abroad where the material for study is plentiful. You must go to court, to tiltings and jousts, to public shows and feasts, to plays, and to church sometimes; thither they come to show off their new attire, too, and thither they come to see and to be seen. In these places a man shall find whom to love, whom to play with, whom to touch once, whom to hold forever. The variety arrests his judgment.

“A wench to please a man does not come dropping down from the ceiling, as he lies on his back making a droning sound as he sucks a tobacco pipe. He must go to the places where she is.”

Musicians suck in air to play droning bagpipes.

Dauphine said, “Yes, and be never the nearer — no further ahead.”

“Bah, heretic!” Truewit said. “That lack of confidence makes you deserving of failure.”

“He says the truth to you, Dauphine,” Clerimont said.

“Why?” Dauphine asked.

“A man should not doubt that he will overcome any woman,” Truewit said. “If he thinks he can vanquish them, then he shall; for, although they refuse him, their desire is to be tempted. Penelope herself cannot hold out long.”

Despite what Truewit said, Penelope was a chaste woman who did hold out long. Her husband, Odysseus, went to fight in the Trojan War and did not return home until after twenty years had passed. Penelope remained faithful to Odysseus despite pressure to marry one of the young men who had taken over Odysseus' palace. In her famous weaving trick, she said that she would marry one of the suitors after she had finishing weaving a shroud for Odysseus' father. Each day, she wove the shroud, and each night she unwove the work she had done.

Truewit continued, "Ostend, as you know, was taken at last."

In 1604 the Spanish captured the city of Ostend in Belgium after a three-year siege.

Truewit continued, "You must persevere and hold to your purpose. They would solicit us, but that they are afraid. Howsoever, they wish in their hearts that we would solicit them."

In other words, women wait for men to make the first move.

Truewit continued, "Praise them, flatter them; you shall never lack eloquence or trust. Even the chastest women delight to feel themselves that way rubbed."

Flattery's "rubbing" can result in sexual titillation.

Truewit continued, "With praises you must mix kisses, too. If they take kisses, they'll take more. If they kiss, they'll do more than kiss. Though they resist, they want to be overcome."

"Oh, but a man must beware of force," Clerimont said.

He was against rape.

Truewit said, "It is to them an acceptable violence, and often has the place of the greatest courtesy. She who might have

been forced, if you let her go free without touching her, although she then seems to thank you, will forever after hate you, and although she is glad in the face, she is assuredly sad at the heart.”

Truewit was in favor of date rape.

“But all women are not to be taken all ways,” Clerimont said.

He knew that women are different; they are not all the same.

“That is true, no more than all birds or all fishes,” Truewit said. “If you appear learned to an ignorant wench, or jocund to a sad wench, or witty to a foolish wench, why, she immediately begins to mistrust herself. You must approach them in their own height, their own line — you have to meet them at their own level and have the right bait to snare them — for the contrary makes many who fear to commit themselves to noble and worthy fellows run into the embraces of a rascal.

“If she loves wit, give her verses, though you borrow them from a friend or buy them to have good verses.”

Some of Truewit’s wit was borrowed. Much of what he had to say about women here comes from Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*. *Ars Amatoria* is *The Art of Love*. Some readers consider it a seduction manual.

Truewit continued:

“If she loves valor, talk about your sword and be frequent in the mention of quarrels, though you are cautious in fighting.

“If she loves activity and exercise, be seen on your Barbary horse often, or leaping over stools to demonstrate the physical fitness of your back.”

A strong back was a mark of a strong lover.

Truewit continued:



“If she loves good clothes or hairdressing, have your learned council about you every morning: your French tailor, barber, linener, etc. Let your powder, your mirror, and your comb be your dearest acquaintance. Take more care for the ornament of your head than the safety of your head, and wish that the commonwealth be troubled rather than that a hair about you be troubled. That will take — capture — her.

“Then, if she is covetous and craving, promise her anything and perform it sparingly; so shall you always keep her in appetite. Seem as if you would give, but be like a barren field that yields little, or be like unlucky dice are to foolish and hoping gamesters. Let your gifts be slight and dainty rather than precious. Let your cunning and ingenuity be greater than your expense. Give cherries when they are in season, or apricots, and say they were sent to you from the country, though you bought them in a market in nearby Cheapside.

“Admire her clothing and hats; like her in all fashions; compare her in every outfit to some deity; invent excellent dreams to flatter her, and riddles.

“Or, if she is of high rank, perform always the supporting parts to her: like what she likes, praise whom she praises, and do not fail to make the household servants your supporters, yea, all the dependents in the household, and salute them by their names — it is only a light cost if you can purchase them so easily. Make her physician your pensioner — bribe him to get him on your side — and bribe her chief serving-woman, too.

“Nor will it be outside of your interests to make love to the serving-woman, too, so long as she follows, not ushers in, her lady’s pleasure. Always make love to the lady first. All blabbing is taken away when the serving-woman comes to be a part of the crime.”

Dauphine asked, "On what courtly lap have you recently slept, to come forth as so sudden and absolute a courtling?"

A courtling is a little courtier.

Dauphine may not have liked what he was hearing.

Truewit replied, "In good faith, I should rather question you who are so hearkening after these mysteries. I begin to suspect your diligence, Dauphine.

"Speak, are you in love in earnest?"

"Yes, by my faith I am," Dauphine said. "It would be wrong to lie to you."

"With which of them, I ask you?" Truewit said.

"With all the Collegiates," Dauphine answered.

"Come on!" Clerimont said. "We'll keep you at home, believe it, in the stable, if you should be such a stallion — such a stud."

"No," Truewit said. "I like him well. Men should love wisely, and men should love all women.

"Men should love a certain one for her face, and let her please the eye; love another for her skin, and let her please the touch; love a third for her voice, and let her please the ear; and where the objects mix, let the senses also mix, too."

He then said, "You would think it strange if I would make them all in love with you before night!"

Dauphine said, "I would say that you had the best philter — love potion — in the world, and could do more than Madam Medea or Doctor Forman."

Medea was a witch who helped Jason (of Argonauts fame) win the Golden Fleece. She then married Jason. He later fell out of love with her, and she killed their children.

Doctor Simon Forman was a quack who dealt in love potions.

Truewit said, “If I don’t make all the Collegiates love you, let me play the mountebank — itinerant quack and charlatan — for my meat while I live, and let me play the bawd for my drink.”

“So be it, I say,” Dauphine said.

— 4.2 —

Mr. Otter, who was still holding his drinking cups, Jack Daw, and La Foole entered the room. So did some musicians.

“Oh, Lord, gentlemen, how my knights and I have missed you here!” Mr. Otter said.

The knights were Sir Jack Daw and Sir La Foole.

“Why, Captain, what service?” Clerimont asked. “What service?”

This meant: How can I serve you?

“By seeing me bring up my bull, bear, and horse to fight,” Mr. Otter said.

Clerimont could serve him by being the audience for a drinking competition.

Jack Daw said, “Yes, indeed, the captain says we shall be his dogs to bait them.”

The three men — Mr. Otter, Jack Daw, and La Foole — would attack the bear-cup, bull-cup, and horse-cup by drinking from them.

“That is a good employment of them,” Dauphine said.

“Come on, let’s see a course, then,” Truewit said.

“A course” is 1) a drinking round, and 2) a bout between the dogs and a tormented animal.

“I am afraid my cousin will be offended by the drinking if she comes here,” La Foole said.

His cousin was Mrs. Otter.

“Be afraid of nothing,” Mr. Otter said to him.

He then said, “Gentlemen, I have placed the drum and the trumpets, and one to give them the sign when you are ready.”

The musicians prepared to play. Mr. Otter produced his cups and distributed them.

“Here’s my bull for myself, and my bear for Sir John Daw, and my horse for Sir Amorous La Foole,” he said. “Now, set your foot to mine and yours to his, and —”

Mr. Otter was telling the others — Jack Daw and La Foole — to set their feet in the proper position along with him — toe to toe to toe — for a drinking competition.

“I pray to God that my cousin doesn’t come here!” La Foole said.

“Saint George and Saint Andrew!” Mr. Otter said. “Fear no cousins.”

He was playing with words: “Fear no colors” means “Fear no foe.”

Saint George and Saint Andrew are the patron saints of England and of Scotland, respectively. Reigning over the countries was one man: King James I of England, who was also King James VI of Scotland.

Mr. Otter then said to the musicians, “Come, sound, sound. *Et rauco strepuerunt cornua cantu.*”

The Latin is a quotation from Virgil (*Aeneid* 8.2) and means “And the trumpets sounded with harsh note.”

The drum and trumpets sounded, and the three competitors drank. Mr. Otter drank from the bull drinking cup, Jack Daw from the bear drinking cup, and La Foole from the horse drinking cup.

“Well done, Captain Otter, indeed!” Truewit said. “Well fought at the bull!”

Clerimont said to Jack Daw, “Well held at the bear!”

“’loo, ’loo, Captain,” Truewit said.

“Halloo” was a cry urging the dogs to attack.

“Oh, the horse has kicked off his dog already,” Dauphine said.

The “fight” consisted of drinking. La Foole had stopped “fighting” quicker than the others. The horse-cup had kicked him off.

“I cannot drink it, as I am a knight,” La Foole said.

“Godso, off with his spurs, somebody,” Truewit said.

He was joking that La Foole ought to lose his knighthood for so poor an effort in this battle of drinkers.

“Godso” is a curse word based on the Italian *cazzo* (penis) and mimicking other oaths that used the word “God’s.”

“It goes against my conscience,” La Foole said. “My cousin Mrs. Otter will be angry with all the drinking.”

Jack Daw finished his cup and said, “I have done mine.”

“You fought high and fair, Sir John,” Truewit said.

“At the head,” Clerimont said.

“Like an excellent bear-dog,” Dauphine said.

An excellent bear-dog would attack the bear’s head.

Clerimont said quietly to Jack Daw, “You take no notice of the business, I hope.”

The business was the rivalry of Jack Daw and La Foole.

Jack Daw replied quietly, “Not a word, sir. You see we are jovial.”

“Sir Amorous, you must not equivocate,” Mr. Otter said. “You must not be ambiguous. It must be pulled down, for all ‘my cousin.’”

“It must be pulled down” meant, “All the drink must be drunk.” Also, a baited animal could be pulled down to the ground by dogs.

Clerimont said quietly to La Foole, “By God’s foot, if you don’t drink your drink, they’ll think you are discontented with something. You’ll betray all if you take the least notice.”

La Foole quietly replied, “Not I. I’ll both drink and talk, then.”

He drank.

“You must pull the horse onto his knees, Sir Amorous, by drinking deep,” Mr. Otter said. “Fear no cousins. *Jacta est alea.*”

The Latin means, “The die is cast.” Julius Caesar said this while crossing the Rubicon River against the orders of the Roman Senate. It metaphorically means, “We can’t go back now. We can only go forward.”

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont and Dauphine about Mr. Otter, “Oh, now he’s in his vein, and bold. The least hint given him of his wife now will make him rail against her recklessly.”

Clerimont whispered to Truewit, “Speak to him of her.”

Truewit whispered to Dauphine, “You speak to Mr. Otter, and I’ll fetch Mrs. Otter in to hear what he says about her.”

Truewit exited to get Mrs. Otter.

“Captain he-Otter, your she-Otter is coming, your wife,” Dauphine said, giving him fair warning.

“Wife! Bah! *Titivilitium*,” Mr. Otter said.

*Titivilitium* means, “A thing that is vile and of no value.” The word is used in Plautus’ comic play *Casina*, line 347.

Mr. Otter continued, “There’s no such thing in nature. I confess, gentlemen, I have a cook, a laundress, a house-drudge, all of whom serve my necessary turns and go under that title; but he’s an ass who will be so uxorious as to tie his affections to one circle.”

Mr. Otter’s image is of an ass driving a rotary mill by walking in a circle, but “circle” also means vagina.

“Uxorious” means being excessively fond of one’s wife.

Mr. Otter continued, “Come, the name — ‘wife’ — dulls the appetite. Here, replenish again. Let’s have another bout.”

The drinking cups were filled again.

Mr. Otter continued, “Wives are nasty, sluttish animals —”

“Oh, Captain!” Dauphine said.

Mr. Otter finished, “— as ever the earth bare, *tribus verbis* — in three words.”

He then asked, “Where’s Master Truewit?”

“He’s slipped aside, sir,” Jack Daw said.

“But you must drink and be jovial,” Clerimont said.

“Yes, give the drinking cup to me,” Jack Daw said.

“And me, too,” La Foole said.

“Let’s be jovial,” Jack Daw said.

“As jovial as you will,” La Foole said.

“Agreed,” Mr. Otter said.

Mr. Otter poured more drink, and then he gave Jack Daw and La Foole different drinking cups than he had before.

He said to La Foole, “Now you shall have the bear, cousin, and Sir John Daw shall have the horse, and I’ll have the bull still.”

He then said, “Sound, Tritons of the Thames! *Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero* —”

Tritons are mythological minor sea-gods who blew a shell-trumpet.

The Latin means, “Now is the time for drinking, now with free foot” (Horace, *Odes*, I.37.1). “Free foot” refers to dancing. This particular ode was about Cleopatra, who had a reputation as a man-destroyer.

The three men drank.



As the trumpets sounded, Morose spoke from the top of a staircase, “Villains, murderers, sons of the earth, and traitors, what are you doing there?”

“Sons of the earth” are bastards.

“Oh, now that the trumpets have awakened him, we shall have his company,” Clerimont said.

As was his custom when drunk, Mr. Otter complained about his wife: “A wife is a scurvy *clogdogdo*, an unlucky thing, a very foresaid bear whelp, without any good fashion or breeding: *mala bestia* — an evil beast.”

Chances are, a “clogdogdo” is Bear Garden slang meaning a bear cub. Newborn bears were thought to be without a defined shape; the mother-bear licked her whelp into shape.

“Clog-dog-do” could perhaps mean “shoe-dog-action,” referring to a dog that ought to either heel or be kicked.

Bear cubs need to be licked into shape, and dogs need to be trained. Mr. Otter apparently believed that wives need to be treated like bear cubs and dogs.

Truewit brought Mrs. Otter into the room. Mr. Otter did not notice her presence.

“Why did you marry one, then, Captain?” Dauphine asked.

“A pox!” Mr. Otter said. “I married six thousand pounds, I did. I was in love with that. I have not kissed my Fury these forty weeks.”

He had married for money, not love. Now his marriage had suffered bed-death.

“The more to blame you, Captain,” Clerimont said.

Truewit whispered to Mrs. Otter, who was about to interrupt her husband, “Nay, Mistress Otter, listen to him a little while first.”

Mr. Otter said, “She has a breath worse than my grandmother’s, *profecto* — truly.”

Mrs. Otter whispered to Truewit, “Oh, treacherous liar! Kiss me, sweet Master Truewit, and prove him a slandering knave.”

Mr. Truewit whispered back, “I’ll rather believe you, lady.”

He did not want to kiss her.

Mr. Otter continued, “And she has a peruke — a wig — that’s like a pound of hemp made up in shoe-laces.”

“Oh, viper, mandrake!” Mrs. Otter said to herself.

People in this society believed that vipers were born by eating their way out of their mother’s body. Vipers were symbols of treachery.

The root of the poisonous mandrake plant was thought to resemble the form of a human being.

Mr. Otter continued, “She has a very vile face, and yet she spends forty pounds a year in mercury and hog’s bones.”

These were ingredients used in making cosmetics.

Mr. Otter continued, “All her teeth were made in the Blackfriars, both her eyebrows were made in the Strand, and her hair was made in Silver Street. Every part of the town owns a piece of her.”

“Blackfriars” implied that her teeth were black, “the Strand” implied that her eyebrows consisted of strands, aka bristles, and “Silver Street” implied that her hair was grey.

“I cannot hold back!” Mrs. Otter said, but not loudly enough for her husband to hear her.

Mr. Otter continued, “She takes herself asunder always, when she goes to bed, into some twenty boxes, and about next day noon is put together again, like a great German clock; and so comes forth and rings a tedious alarum to the whole house, and then is quiet again for an hour, but for her quarters.”

Some women when they go to bed take off their wig, their false eyelashes, their teeth, and so on. An old joke is that at bedtime a husband looks around and can’t find his wife because there’s nothing left.

Jacobean playwrights regarded German clocks as needing a lot of upkeep to keep them in working condition. They were constantly breaking down.

The word “quarters” referred to Mrs. Otter’s quarter-hours and her living quarters and her farting hind-quarters.

Mr. Otter then asked the drinkers, “Have you done me right, gentlemen? Have you matched me drink for drink?”

Furious, Mrs. Otter beat him, saying, “No, sir, I’ll do you right with my quarters, with my quarters!”

Quarters are also blows in fencing.

“Oh, stop, good princess!” Mr. Otter said.

Truewit said to the musicians, “Sound! Sound!”

The drummer drummed and the trumpeters blew their trumpets.

“A battle! A battle!” Clerimont said.

Mrs. Otter said to her husband, “You notorious, stinkardly bear-ward! Does my breath smell?”

A bear-ward takes care of a bear.

“Under correction, dear princess,” Mr. Otter said.

He then said, “Look after my bear and my horse, gentlemen.”

“Do I lack teeth and eyebrows, you bull-dog?” Mrs. Otter asked.

Truewit said to the musicians, “Play! Play still!”

They played their instruments again.

Mr. Otter said, “No, I avow, under correction —”

Mrs. Otter interrupted, “Aye, now that you are under correction you avow no; but you did not avow no before correction, sir. You Judas, to offer to betray your princess! I’ll make you an example —”

Carrying a two-handed long sword, Morose descended the staircase and said, “I will have no such examples in my house, Lady Otter.”

“Ah —” Mrs. Otter began.

Morose interrupted, “Mistress Mary Ambree, your examples are dangerous.”

A ballad was sung about Mary Ambree’s dressing herself as a soldier so she could take part in the siege of Ghent in 1584 to avenge her lover after he died in the siege.

Mrs. Otter, Jack Daw, and La Foole exited rapidly. Jack Daw and La Foole dropped their drinking cups as they exited.

Morose continued, “Rogues, hellhounds, Stentors!”

Stentor was a mythological soldier whose voice was as loud as those of fifty men put together. In Book 5, lines 785-6 of Homer’s *Iliad*, Hera took his form and used his voice to

encourage the Greek warriors to fight well in a battle of the Trojan War.

Morose continued, “Out of my doors, you sons of noise and tumult, begot on an ill May Day, or when the galley-foist is afloat to Westminster!”

In 1517, an especially violent riot occurred on May Day.

A galley-foist is a ceremonial armed escort to the state barge that each year took the new Lord Mayor of London to Westminster to be sworn into office. Drummers and trumpeters were part of the escort.

Morose continued, “A trumpeter could not be conceived but then!”

A trumpeter is a son of noise and so must be begotten during noisy events such as May Days and installations of mayors.

Morose drove out the musicians.

“What ails you, sir?” Dauphine asked.

Morose said, “They have rent my roof, walls, and all my windows asunder with their brazen throats.”

Joshua 6:1-27 tells how Joshua and his warriors conquered Jericho. Among other things, Joshua ordered seven priests to blow seven trumpets. The noise brought down the walls of Jericho.

Morose exited.

“You had best follow him, Dauphine,” Truewit said.

“So I will,” Dauphine replied.

He exited.

“Where’s Jack Daw and La Foole?” Clerimont asked.

Mr. Otter said, “They have both run away, sir.”

He then said, “Good gentlemen, help me to pacify my princess, and speak to the great ladies for me. Now I must go lie with the bears this fortnight, and keep out of her way until I make my peace with her, because of this offence she has taken.”

He looked around and asked, “Do you see my bullhead, gentlemen?”

The bullhead was the cover of one of the drinking cups.

He searched for his bullhead.

“Isn’t it on the cup, Captain?” Clerimont said.

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont, “No, but he may make a new one, by copying the one that is on his shoulders.”

He was joking that a copy of Mr. Otter’s head would make a good cover for the drinking cup. Presumably, Mr. Otter’s head would have the horns of a cuckold just as the bullhead-cover would have the horns of a bull. Chances are, he had a couple of bumps resembling growing horns on his head from his wife’s beating him.

Finding the bullhead, Mr. Otter said, “Oh, here it is.”

He then said, “If you come over the Thames River, gentlemen, and ask for Tom Otter, we’ll go down to Ratcliffe and have a round of drinking, indeed, despite all these disasters.”

Radcliffe was outside the jurisdiction of London, and so rogues who wanted to be outside the jurisdiction of London went there.

Mr. Otter continued, “There’s *bona spes* — good hope — left.”

Cicero's *In Catalinum (Against Catiline)* II.25 states that "well-founded hope [fights] against universal despair."

"Away, Captain!" Truewit said. "Get away while you are well."

Mr. Otter exited.

"I am glad we are rid of him," Clerimont said.

"You would never have been, unless we had put his wife upon him," Truewit said. "His character is as tedious at last as it was ridiculous at first."

— 4.3 —

Madam Haughty, Mrs. Otter, Mistress Mavis, Jack Daw, La Foole, Madam Centaur, and Epicene entered the room.

Truewit and Clerimont stood to the side, watching and listening.

Madam Haughty said, "We wondered why you shrieked so, Mistress Otter."

"Oh, God," Mrs. Otter said. "Madam, he came down with a huge long naked weapon in both his hands, and looked so dreadfully! Surely, he's beside himself."

Morose had been holding a long two-handed sword, although readers may be forgiven if they thought after reading Mrs. Otter's description that he had been holding a "weapon" of a different sort.

"Why, what were you doing there, Mistress Otter?" Madam Mavis asked.

"Alas, Mistress Mavis, I was chastising my subject — my husband — and thought nothing of him," Mrs. Otter said.

Jack Daw said to Epicene, “Indeed, mistress, you must do so, too. Learn to chastise. Mistress Otter corrects her husband with the result that he dares not speak but under correction.”

“And with his hat off to her,” La Foole said. “It would do you good to see.”

Lady Haughty said, “Seriously, it is good and mature counsel.”

She then said to Epicene, “Practice it, Morose. I’ll call you ‘Morose’ always now, just as I call my friends ‘Centaur’ and ‘Mavis.’ We four will be all one.”

“Morose” and “Centaur” and “Mavis” were how males were called in this society. The feminine form of address was “Mistress Morose” and “Madam Centaur” and “Mistress Mavis.”

Mistress Centaur said to Epicene, “And you’ll come to the College and live with us?”

The Lady Collegiates lived apart from their husbands.

Madam Haughty said to Epicene, “Make him give milk and honey.”

Milk and honey are found in the Promised Land. Metaphorically, they mean “what you want.”

Apparently, Madam Haughty was saying that Epicene must make Morose give her milk and honey if he wants to enter the “Promised Land.” Nudge, nudge. Wink, wink.

Mistress Mavis said, “Look how you manage him at first, for you shall have him like that ever after.”

“Manage” means “train.” The word “manage” was used when talking about the handling of horses. Mistress Mavis’ advice was for Epicene to begin training her husband early.



Madam Centaur advised, “Let him allow you your coach and four horses, your serving-woman, your chambermaid, your page, your gentleman-usher, your French cook, and four grooms.”

Madam Haughty advised, “And go with us to Bedlam, to the china houses, and to the Exchange.”

“It will open the gate to your fame,” Madam Centaur said.

Her language was ambiguous. The “gate” can be the vaginal opening, and “fame” can mean “reputation.”

Madam Haughty said, “Here is Centaur, who has immortalized herself with the taming of her wild male.”

“Aye, she has done the miracle of the kingdom,” Mistress Mavis said.

Epicene asked, “But ladies, do you count it lawful to have such plurality of servants — male admirers — and do them all graces?”

“Grace” means “favor.” The “graces” in this context can be sexual favors.

“Why not?” Madam Haughty asked. “Why should women deny their favors to men? Are women the poorer, or the worse, for it?”

Jack Daw asked, “Is the Thames less for the dyer’s water, mistress?”

“Or a torch, for lighting many torches?” La Foole asked.

“Water” can mean “semen,” “torch” can mean “penis,” and “burn” can mean “infected with venereal disease.”

A torch that lights many torches and makes them burn is a homosexual penis that infects with venereal disease many other homosexuals’ penises. To “light” can mean to infect

with burning sores and/or to give urination a burning sensation.

“Well said, La Foole,” Truewit said.

He then said to himself, “What a new one — a new expression — he has got!”

La Foole did not realize the homosexual meaning of what he had said, but Truewit did.

Both La Foole and Jack Daw were making variations on a cliché. La Foole was making a variation on this cliché: “One candle can light many more.” Jack Daw was making a variation on this cliché: “To cast water into the Thames.”

“They are empty losses women fear in this kind,” Madam Centaur said.

In other words: When giving love, women lose nothing, and so they ought not to fear giving love.

“Besides, ladies should be mindful of the approach of age, and let no time lack its due use,” Madam Haughty said. “The best of our days pass first.”

“We are rivers that cannot be called back, Madam,” Mistress Mavis said. “She who now excludes her lovers may live to lie a forsaken beldame — an old hag — in a frozen bed.”

“That is true, Mavis,” Madam Centaur said. “And who will escort us to a coach, then, or write, or tell us the gossip then? Who will make anagrams of our names, and invite us to the Cockpit and kiss our hands all during the time a play is performed, and draw their weapons for our honors?”

Some of her words such as “Cockpit” and “weapons” can have sexual meanings.

These anagrams were acrostic poems in which each line begins with a letter of the name of a loved one.

“Not one,” Madam Haughty said.

Jack Daw said, “Nay, my mistress is not altogether unintelligent of these things. Here are present those who have tasted of her favors.”

He was hinting that Epicene had slept with some of the men now present.

Clerimont whispered to Truewit, “What a neighing hobby-horse — chattering buffoon — Jack Daw is!”

Epicene said to Jack Daw, “But not with the intention to boast them again, servant.”

Women tend not to want clandestine affairs to be made known.

Epicene then said to Madam Haughty, “And have you those excellent receipts — prescriptions — madam, to keep yourselves away from the bearing of children?”

“Oh, yes, Morose,” Madam Haughty said. “How else should we maintain our youth and beauty? Many births make a woman old, as many crops make the earth barren.”

— 4.4 —

Truewit joined Morose and Dauphine, who were talking privately together.

“Oh, my cursed angel, who directed me to this fate!” Morose said.

“Why, sir?” Dauphine asked.

“So that I should be seduced by so foolish a devil as a barber will make!” Morose said.

“I wish that I had been worthy, sir, to have taken part in your counsel,” Dauphine said. “You should never have trusted it to such a minister.”

“I wish that I could redeem it with the loss of an eye, nephew, a hand, or any other member!” Morose said.

He was addressing his nephew, but chances are he wished he could redeem his marriage with the loss of his nephew, a member of his family.

Dauphine pretended that when Morose mentioned the loss of any other member, that included the loss of his male member.

“By the Virgin Mary,” Dauphine said, “God forbid, sir, that you should geld yourself to anger your wife.”

Actually, Dauphine did not need to pretend.

“As long as it would rid me of her!” Morose said. “And that I did supererogatory — beyond the call of duty — penance in a belfry at Westminster Hall, in the Cockpit, at the fall of a stag, at the Tower Wharf.”

He asked himself, “What other noisy place is there?”

He then continued with his list: “London Bridge, Paris Garden, Billingsgate, when the noises are at their height and loudest.”

All of the activities and places he named were noisy. Bells ring in a belfry. Cockfights were held in the Cockpit. Dogs bark while hunting a deer. At the Tower Wharf, ordnance was fired on special occasions. London Bridge was noisy and crowded, and the water rushing through the bridge’s arches created a roar. Bear-baitings were held at the Bear Garden. Fishwives raucously shouted in the fish market at Billingsgate.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the theological meaning of “supererogation” as “In the Roman Catholic Church: the performance of good works beyond what God commands or requires, held to contribute to a store of merit which the Church may dispense to others to make up for their deficiencies; an instance of this.”

Morose continued, “Nay, I would sit out a play that consisted of nothing but fights at sea, drums, trumpets, and shields!”

“I hope there shall be no such need, sir,” Dauphine said. “Have patience, good uncle. This is only a day, and it is well-worn, too, now. Much of the day is already over.”

“Oh, all my days will be like this day forever, nephew, I foresee it, forever,” Morose said. “Strife and tumult are the dowry that comes with a wife.”

“I told you so, sir, and you would not believe me,” Truewit said.

“Alas, do not rub those wounds, Master Truewit, and make them bleed again,” Morose said. “The fault was my negligence. Add not affliction to affliction. I have perceived the effect — the fulfillment — of it too late in Madam Otter.”

Mrs. Otter was much like Epicene. The Otters and the Moroses had bad marriages.

Epicene approached the group and asked her husband, Morose, “How are you, sir?”

“Did you ever hear a more unnecessary question?” Morose said. “As if she did not see!”

He then answered Epicene, “Why, I do as you see, empress, empress.”

Morose's marriage was unhappy like Mr. Otter's, and so he imitated Mr. Otter's use of an honorary title. Mr. Otter used "princess," and Morose now used "empress."

Epicene said, "You are not well, sir. You look very ill. Something has upset you."

Morose said, "Oh, horrible, monstrous impertinencies and irrelevances! Wouldn't just one of these sentences have served?"

Epicene's three previous sentences all stated the same thing. Two of them were redundant and therefore unnecessary sound.

Morose said to Truewit, "What do you think, sir? Wouldn't just one of these sentences have served?"

Truewit replied, "Yes, sir, but these are only signs of female kindness, sir — they are certain tokens that she has a voice, sir."

One meaning of the word "voice" is conscience.

"Oh, is it so?" Morose said. "Come, if it is no otherwise —"

He then asked Epicene, "What do you say?"

"How do you feel, sir?" Epicene asked.

"Again that!" Morose complained.

"Nay, look, sir," Truewit said. "You would be friends with your wife upon unconscionable, unjust, and unreasonable terms — you would be friends with her only if she is silent —"

Epicene said to Morose, "They say you are mad, sir."

"Not for the love of you, I assure you," Morose said. "Do you see?"

He made a motion as if he were going to hit her.

“Oh, lord, gentlemen!” Epicene said. “Lay hold on him, for God’s sake!”

Truewit and Clerimont restrained Morose.

“What shall I do?” Epicene said. “Who’s his physician? Can you tell me who he is? Tell me which physician knows the state of his body best, so that I might send for him!”

She said to Morose, “Good sir, speak. I’ll send for one of my doctors, otherwise.”

“Why, to poison me, so that I might die intestate — without a will — and leave you possessed of all I have?” Morose asked.

Since Morose did not love Epicene, when he made his will, he would deprive her of some things that she would otherwise have gotten.

“Lord, how idly he talks, and how his eyes sparkle!” Epicene said. “He looks green about the temples! Do you see what blue spots he has?”

“Aye, it’s melancholy,” Clerimont said.

“Melancholy” tends to mean depression, but much earlier the Roman statesman Cicero wrote that some ancients used the word “melancholia” to mean frenzy (*Tusculan Disputations* 3.5.11).

“Gentlemen, for heaven’s sake, advise me,” Epicene said.

She called, “Ladies!”

She then said to Jack Daw, “Servant, you have read Pliny and Paracelsus.”

Pliny was the Roman author of *Historia Naturalis* (*The Natural History*). Part of it discusses medicine, including plants from which to derive useful drugs.

Paracelsus was a Swiss authority in chemistry and medicine.

Epicene continued, “No word now to comfort a poor gentlewoman? Woe to me! What luck had I, to marry a distracted man?”

“Distracted” can mean insane or frenzied.

Jack Daw began, “I’ll tell you, mistress —”

Truewit said quietly to Clerimont and Dauphine, “How splendidly Epicene acts her role!”

Struggling to break free, Morose said, “What do you mean by this, gentlemen?”

Epicene said to Jack Daw, “What will you tell me, servant?”

Jack Daw replied, “The disease in Greek is called *μανία* [mania], in Latin *insania*, *furor*, *velexstasis melancholica*, that is, *egressio*, when a man *ex melancholico evadit fanaticus*.”

Jack Daw had listed a number of synonyms for madness and ended with some words meaning “when a man goes from melancholy to madness.”

Morose said, “Shall I have a lecture read upon me alive?”

He was complaining that he was being treated as if he were a cadaver used in a medical lecture although he was still alive.

Jack Daw continued, “But he may be but *phreneticus* yet, mistress, and *phrenetis* is only *delirium* or so —”

*Phreneticus* means suffering from *phrenetis*.



*Phrenetis* means inflammation of the brain.

*Delirium* means temporary mental disturbance.

He was only offering names for Morose's disease; he was not advising about treatments.

Epicene said, "Aye, that is for the disease, servant. But what does this have to do with the cure? We are sure enough of the disease — we know the disease Morose has."

Struggling, Morose shouted, "Let me go!"

"Why, we'll entreat her to hold her peace, sir," Truewit said.

"Oh, no," Morose said. "Don't labor to stop her. She is like a water-pipe that will gush out with more force when she opens again."

Madam Haughty said to Epicene, addressing her the way males were addressed, "I'll tell you, Morose, you must talk divinity to him uninterruptedly, or you must talk moral philosophy to him."

La Foole said, "Aye, and there's an excellent book of moral philosophy, madam, of Reynard the Fox and all the beasts, called *Doni's Philosophy*."

*The Moral Philosophy of Doni* was a collection of animal fables, but none were about Reynard the Fox.

"There is, indeed, Sir Amorous La Foole," Madam Centaur said.

"Oh, misery!" Morose moaned.

"I have read it, my Lady Centaur, from cover to cover to my cousin here," La Foole said.

"Aye, and it is a very good book as any is of the moderns," Mrs. Otter said.

“Tut, he must have Seneca read to him, and Plutarch, and the ancients,” Jack Daw said. “The moderns are not for this disease.”

Seneca was a playwright and moral philosopher, and Plutarch was a biographer who compared and contrasted ancient Greeks and ancient Romans.

“Why, you discommended them, too, today, Sir John,” Clerimont said. “You spoke against them.”

“Aye, in some cases,” Jack Daw said, “but in these they are best, and Aristotle’s *Ethics*.”

“Do you say so, Sir John?” Mistress Mavis said. “I think you are deceived; you took it upon trust without reading it.”

“Where’s Trusty, my serving-woman?” Madam Haughty said. “I’ll end this dispute. Please, Otter, call her.”

By “Otter,” Madam Haughty meant Mrs. Otter. Madam Haughty used the masculine form when she addressed women.

Madam Haughty continued, “Trusty’s father and mother were both mad when they put her in my employment.”

“I think so,” Morose said.

He meant that he thought they had to be mad to put Mistress Trusty in Madam Haughty’s employment.

Mrs. Otter exited to get Mistress Trusty.

Morose said to Truewit and Clerimont, who were restraining him, “Nay, gentlemen, I am tame. This is but an exercise, I know, a marriage ceremony, which I must endure.”

Besides meaning a performance of a ceremony, the word “exercise” can mean “test” or “trial” (saints and martyrs

have been exercised in this way) or the training exercise of an animal.

Madam Haughty said, “And one of them — I know not which — was cured with *The Sick Man’s Salve*, and the other with *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit*.”

*The Sick Man’s Salve* by Thomas Becon was a religious tract that urged ill people to be patient and humble.

*Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit* by Robert Greene gave admonitory advice to his readers to reject the low life in London.

Madam Haughty believed that Mistress Trusty’s parents had been cured by hearing these books read out loud: one book for each parent.

“A very cheap cure, Madam,” Truewit said.

A goat was four-pence, which was the cost of the pamphlet *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit*.

“Aye, the cure’s very feasible and practical,” Madam Haughty said.

Mrs. Otter returned with Mistress Trusty.

“My lady called for you, Mistress Trusty,” Mrs. Otter said. “You must resolve a controversy.”

“Oh, Trusty, which was it you said, your father or your mother, who was cured with *The Sick Man’s Salve*?” Madam Haughty asked.

“My mother, madam, was cured with the *Salve*,” Mistress Trusty answered.

“Then it was *The Sick Woman’s Salve*,” Truewit said.

“And my father was cured with the *Groatsworth of Wit*,” Mistress Trusty added. “But there were other means of treatment used. We had a preacher who would preach folks asleep always; and so they were prescribed to go to church by an old woman who was their physician, thrice a week —”

“To sleep?” Epicene asked.

“Yes, indeed,” Mistress Trusty said, “and every night they read themselves asleep on those books.”

Sleep can be a healer.

“In good faith, these cures make sense,” Epicene said. “I wish I knew where to procure those books.”

“Oh!” Morose said.

“I can help you with one of them, Mistress Morose,” La Foole said. “I can furnish the *Groatsworth of Wit*.”

“But I shall disfurnish you, Sir Amorous,” Epicene said. “Can you spare it?”

She worried about depriving him of his groat’s worth of wit; that is, she worried about depriving him of the little wit he had.

“Oh, yes, for a week or so,” La Foole said. “I myself will read it to him.”

“No, I must do that, sir,” Epicene said. “That must be my job.”

“Oh! Oh!” Morose moaned.

“Surely, he would do well enough if he could sleep,” Epicene said.

“No, I should do well enough if you could sleep,” Morose said.

Asleep, she might be quiet.

He then asked, “Have I no friend who will make her drunk, or give her a little laudanum or opium.”

Laudanum is an alcoholic drink containing morphine.

“Why, sir, she talks ten times worse in her sleep,” Truewit said.

Hmm. How would he know that?

“What!” Morose said.

“Don’t you know, sir?” Clerimont said. “She never ceases all night.”

Hmm. How would he know that?

“And she snores like a porpoise,” Truewit said.

“Oh, redeem me, fate! Redeem me, fate!” Morose prayed.

He then asked Dauphine, “For how many reasons may a man be divorced, nephew?”

“I truly don’t know, sir,” Dauphine answered.

“Some divine must resolve you in that, sir, or some canon lawyer,” Truewit said.

A divine is a priest or a minister. A canon lawyer specializes in ecclesiastical law.

“I will not rest,” Morose said. “I will not think of any other hope or comfort, until I know.”

Morose and Dauphine exited.

“Alas, poor man!” Clerimont said.

“You’ll make him mad indeed, ladies, if you pursue this,” Truewit said.

“No, we’ll let him rest and catch his breath now a quarter of an hour or so,” Madam Haughty said.

“By my faith, a large truce,” Clerimont said.

“Is that his keeper who has gone with him?” Madam Haughty asked.

Lunatics need keepers to take care of them and make sure they don’t hurt themselves.

“It is his nephew, Madam,” Jack Daw said.

“Sir Dauphine Eugenie,” La Foole said.

Mistress Centaur said, “He looks a very pitiful knight —”

In this society, “pitiful” can mean “full of pity for others.” That is what Mistress Centaur meant, but in his next comment Jack Daw did not. He meant “deserving pity.”

“As pitiful as can be,” Jack Daw said. “This marriage has put him out of all. It has ruined his hope of inheritance.”

La Foole said, “He has not a penny in his purse, madam —”

“He is ready to cry all this day,” Jack Daw said.

Jack Daw meant that Dauphine was ready to cry because Morose had married Epicene, and so Dauphine would inherit little or nothing when Morose died, especially if Epicene gave birth to a boy.

“Dauphine is a very shark,” La Foole said. “He set me in the nick the other night at primero.”

La Foole was saying that Dauphine had bet against him — the meaning of “set me” — at the crucial moment. La

Foole did not say who won, but if it is true that Dauphine has an empty purse, then La Foole won.

La Foole is a fool, and Dauphine is not a fool (although he does have ethical lapses), but when it comes to games of chance, fortune can sometimes favor fools.

The word “shark” can mean “cheater,” but it can also mean “an impecunious fellow.”

Truewit and Clerimont were Dauphine’s friends.

Truewit whispered to Clerimont, “How these swabbers talk!”

Swabbers are low fellows.

“Aye, Otter’s wine has swelled their humors above a spring tide,” Clerimont whispered back.

Wine often makes people say things they would not ordinarily say.

Lady Haughty said to Mrs. Epicene Morose, “Good Morose, let’s go in again. I like your couches exceeding well; we’ll go recline and talk there.”

“I wait on you, madam,” Epicene said.

Jack Daw, La Foole, and the ladies exited, but Truewit detained Epicene as she was leaving.

“By God’s light,” Truewit said. “I will have them as silent as signs, and as silent as the posts on which the signs are hung, too, before I have done. Do you hear, lady bride? I ask you now, as you are a noble wench, to continue this discourse about Dauphine within, but praise him exceedingly. Magnify him with all the height of affection you can — I have some purpose for your doing it — and just beat off these two rooks, Jack Daw and his fellow fool, La

Foole, with any discontentment and annoyance away from here, and I'll honor you forever."

Rooks are fools.

"I was about to do it, here," Epicene said. "It made me angry to the soul to hear them begin to talk so malapertly and impudently about Dauphine."

"To be malapert" is "to be boldly disrespectful to or about a person of higher social standing."

"Please, perform it," Truewit said, "and you will win me and make me an idolater who worships you everlastingly."

"Will you go in and hear me do it?" Epicene asked.

"No, I'll stay here," Truewit said. "Drive them out of your company. It is all I ask, which cannot be any way better done than by extolling Dauphine, whom they have so slighted."

"I promise you that I will do it," Epicene said. "You shall expect one of them very soon."

She exited.

Clerimont said, "What a pair of kestrels are these, to hawk after ladies thus!"

To be called a kestrel was an insult. The word can mean "busy fool."

"Aye," Truewit said, "and to strike at and attack such an eagle as Dauphine."

"He will be mad when we tell him," Clerimont said. "Here he comes."

— 4.5 —

Dauphine entered the room.



“Oh, sir, you are welcome,” Clerimont said.

“Where’s your uncle?” Truewit asked.

“He’s run outdoors in his nightcaps to talk with a casuist about his divorce,” Dauphine said. “The plan is working admirably.”

A casuist is a theologian who resolves difficult questions of conduct, duty, and conscience.

“It works admirably” meant that his plan to inherit his uncle Morose’s wealth was going well.

“You would have said so if you had been here,” Truewit said. “The ladies have laughed at you most derisively and comically since you went out of the room, Dauphine.”

“And they asked if you were your uncle’s keeper,” Clerimont said.

Truewit added, “And the pair of baboons — Jack Daw and La Foole — answered, ‘Yes,’ and said you were a pitiful poor fellow and lived by running errands, and had nothing but the three suits of apparel given to servants and some few benevolences — charitable donations — that lords gave you to play the fool for them and swagger.”

“Let me not live!” Dauphine said.

He came up with a better plan: “I’ll beat ’em. I’ll bind them both to grand Madam’s — Lady Haughty’s — bedposts and have them tormented by monkeys.”

“You shall not need to do that; they shall be beaten for and to you, Dauphine,” Truewit said. “I have an execution — a metaphorical legal writ enforcing a judgment — to serve upon them, I promise you, and it shall serve. Trust my plot.”

“Aye, you have many plots,” Dauphine said. “You had one to make all the wenches fall in love with me.”

Truewit replied, “Why, if I do not do that yet before night, as near as it is, and if they do not everyone invite you and be ready to scratch and fight for you, then take the mortgage of my wit.”

“Before God, I’ll be his witness!” Clerimont said. “You shall have what you promised, Dauphine.”

He then looked back and forth at both men and said, “You shall be his fool forever if you don’t.”

In other words:

1) Dauphine shall be Truewit’s fool — the butt of his jokes — forever if he doesn’t take the wager.

2) Truewit shall be Dauphine’s fool — the butt of his jokes — forever if Truewit loses the wager and doesn’t do what he says he will do.

“Agreed,” Truewit said. “Perhaps it will be the better estate.”

Perhaps having Truewit as Dauphine’s fool would be better than having the ladies as Dauphine’s lovers.

Or perhaps having the ladies in love with Dauphine and offering him valuable gifts of jewels and other things will give Dauphine a better estate than relying on his uncle Morose’s generosity.

Truewit then said, “Do you observe this gallery? Or rather lobby, indeed? Here are a couple of studies, one at each end. Here I will act such a tragicomedy between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines: Daw and La Foole.”

The Guelphs and the Ghibellines were rival factions in medieval Italy. Dante, author of *The Divine Comedy*, was a Guelph.

“Whoever comes out first — Jack Daw or La Foole — I will seize upon. You two shall be the chorus behind the arras, and whip out between the acts and speak.”

A chorus in Greek tragedy would observe the action and then comment on it.

An arras is a wall hanging: a thick tapestry. Often an alcove was behind an arras; it made a good hiding place.

Truewit continued, “If I do not make them keep the peace for this remnant of the day, if not of the year, I will have failed once in my life.”

La Foole and Jack Daw had been at peace before Truewit and his friends had started interfering with their lives. Even now, there was no major disagreement between them.

He listened and then said, “I hear Daw coming. Hide and do not laugh, for God’s sake.”

Clerimont and Dauphine hid behind the arras.

Jack Daw entered the room and asked Truewit, “Which is the way into the garden, do you think?”

Probably he needed to urinate.

“Oh, Jack Daw!” Truewit said. “I am glad I have met with you. In good faith, I must have this matter go no further between you. I must have this dispute between you two made up.”

“What matter, sir?” Jack Daw asked. “Between whom?”

“Come, you disguise it,” Truewit said. “You pretend not to know about the dispute between Sir Amorous and you. If you love me, Jack, you shall make use of your philosophy now for this once and deliver to me your sword. This is not the wedding the Centaurs were at, though there is a she-one here.”

Centaurs are mythological beings with the body of a horse and the torso, arms, and head of a man. Many of the Centaurs were violent. In Thessaly, the Centaurs were invited to a wedding, but they grew drunk and tried to rape the women guests. The Centaur named Eurytion tried to rape the bride. A battle broke out between the humans and the Centaurs. No female Centaurs exist, even in mythology.

By “she-one,” Truewit mean Madam Centaur.

Truewit continued, “The bride Epicene has entreated me to make sure I will see no blood shed at her bridal. You saw her whisper to me just now.”

Jack Daw handed his sword to Truewit and said, “As I hope to finish Tacitus, I intend no murder.”

The Roman historian Tacitus wrote much and Jack Daw would need much time to read all of Tacitus’ many works.

“Aren’t you waiting for Sir Amorous?” Truewit asked.

“Not I, by my knighthood,” Jack Daw answered.

“And by your learning and scholarship, too?” Truewit asked.

“And by my learning and scholarship, too,” Jack Daw answered.

Truewit returned Jack Daw’s sword to him and said, “Bah. In that case, I return to you your sword and beg your pardon; but do not sheathe your sword, for you will be assaulted. Stay on your guard. I understood that you had apprehended La Foole’s challenge and walked here to defy him, and that you had regarded your life as being of contemptible value in comparison to the value of your honor.”

“No, no, no such thing, I assure you,” Jack Daw said.

He had just said that he did not regard his life as being of contemptible value in comparison to the value of his honor.

Jack Daw continued, “La Foole and I parted now as good friends as we could be.”

“Don’t trust that visor,” Truewit said. “I saw La Foole after dinner with another face.”

A visor is the part of a helmet that protects the eyes. It hides part of the face and so can be compared to a mask.

Truewit continued, “I have known many men in my time vexed with losses, with deaths, and with abuses, but so offended a wight as Sir Amorous I have never seen or read of.”

“Wight” is a medieval word meaning “man.” Truewit was like a playwright directing Jack Daw and La Foole in a parody of a medieval romance about chivalry and honor.

Truewit continued, “For taking away his guests and bringing them here, sir, today, that’s the cause of his argument with you, and he declares it behind your back, with such threats and insults! He said to Dauphine that you were the arrantest ass —”

“Aye, he may say whatever he pleases,” Jack Daw said.

Truewit continued, “And he swears that you are so proclaimed a coward that he knows you will never do him any manly or single right — that is, you will not meet him in man-to-man combat — and therefore he will take his course.”

“I’ll give him any satisfaction, sir — except fighting,” Jack Daw said.

“Aye, sir,” Truewit said, “but who knows what satisfaction he’ll take? Blood he thirsts for, and blood he will have; and whereabouts on you he will have it, who knows but himself?”

“Please, Master Truewit, be a mediator in the dispute,” Jack Daw pleaded.

Truewit opened a door to one of the studies and said, “Well, sir, conceal yourself then in this study until I return. Nay, you must be content to be locked in this study because for my own reputation I would not have you seen to receive a public disgrace, while I have the matter in managing.”

He then exclaimed, “Godso, here he comes!”

Truewit shut Jack Daw in the study, closing and locking the door and talking to him through it, “Keep your breath quiet, so that he doesn’t hear you sigh.”

Speaking loudly, as though conversing with La Foole, who was not present, Truewit said, “In good faith, Sir Amorous, Daw is not this way. Please be merciful; do not murder him; he is a Christian as good as you. You are armed as if you sought a revenge on all his family!”

He said loudly, as though conversing with Dauphine, who was still hidden behind the arras, “Good Dauphine, get him away from this place. I never knew a man’s anger so high but he would speak to his friends, he would hear reason.”

Speaking through the door, Truewit said, “Jack Daw!”

No answer.

Truewit then said, louder, “Jack Daw! Asleep?”

From behind the door, Jack Daw asked, “Has he gone, Master Truewit?”

“Aye,” Truewit said. “Did you hear him?”

“Oh, God!” Jack Daw said. “Yes.”

Truewit said to himself, “What a quick ear fear has!”

Jack Daw's fear had caused him to think he had heard La Foole's voice, although La Foole was not present.

Truewit unlocked the door, and Jack Daw came out and said, "But is he so armed as you say?"

"Armed?" Truewit said. "Did you ever see a fellow set out to take possession of property from another man?"

Even when the property had been awarded by a court of law, such an action often required force or the threat of force.

"Aye, sir," Jack Daw said.

"That may give you some light to conceive of him," Truewit said, "but it is nothing to the principal."

The principal is La Foole. "Principal" is a legal term for someone who has directly committed a crime. According to Truewit, La Foole was ready to commit murder.

Truewit said, "Some treacherous associate in the house has furnished him with weapons strangely. Or if it were out of the house, it was Tom Otter."

"Indeed, Tom Otter is a captain and his wife is La Foole's kinswoman," Jack Daw said.

"He has got somebody's old two-handed longsword, to mow you off at the knees," Truewit said. "And that sword has spawned such a dagger! But then he is so hung with pikes, halberds, petronels, calivers, and muskets that he looks like a justice of peace's hall that is hung with ancient and modern weapons."

A halberd is a weapon that is a combination spear and battle-axe. A petronel is a large pistol. Calivers are light muskets.

Truewit continued, "A man with an income of two thousand pounds a year is not assessed at so many weapons as he has on."

High-ranking citizens were required to possess a certain number of weapons in case the king needed them.

Truewit continued, "There was never a fencer challenged at so many several foils."

In other words, La Foole was carrying several different kinds of swords.

Truewit continued, "You would think he meant to murder all the many inhabitants of Saint Sepulchre's parish. If he could but victual himself for half a year in his breeches, he is sufficiently armed to overrun a country."

Breeches were voluminous pants. Truewit was saying that if only La Foole could stuff his pants with six months' worth of food, he would have sufficient food (he already had sufficient weapons) to conquer a country.

"Good lord, what does he mean, sir?" Jack Daw said. "Please, Master Truewit, be a mediator."

"Well, I'll see if he will be appeased with a leg or an arm," Truewit said. "If not, you must die this once."

"I would be loath to lose my right arm," Jack Daw said. "I use it for writing madrigals."

"Why, if he will be satisfied with a thumb or a little finger, all's one to me," Truewit said. "You must think I'll do my best."

"Good sir, do," Jack Daw said.

Truewit locked Jack Daw up again in the study, and then Clerimont and Dauphine came forth from behind the arras.

"What have you done?" Clerimont asked.

"He will let me do nothing, man," Truewit said. "He does all before me. He offers his left arm."



Truewit did not need to frighten Jack Daw. Jack Daw was frightening himself.

“Left arm?” Clerimont said. “His left wing, because he’s a Jack Daw.”

A jackdaw is a foolish, easily caught bird.

“Take it, by all means,” Dauphine said.

He meant for Truewit to take Jack Daw’s left arm.

We can hope that he was joking.

“What!” Truewit said. “Maim a man forever for a jest? What kind of conscience do you have?”

“It is no loss to him,” Dauphine said. “He has no use for his arms but to eat spoon meat — baby food or food for invalids. Besides, as good maim his body as his reputation.”

Truewit replied, “He is a scholar and a wit, and yet he does not think so — he does not think ‘as good maim his body as his reputation.’ But he loses no reputation with us, for we all have decided that he is an ass before now.”

He then said to Clerimont and Dauphine, “Take your places behind the arras again.”

“Please,” Clerimont said, “let me be in at the fooling of the other — La Foole — a little.”

“Look, you’ll spoil all,” Truewit said. “These are always your tricks.”

“No, I won’t spoil things,” Clerimont said, “but instead I could hit on some things that you will miss, and you will say that they are good ones.”

“I warrant you that what I say is true,” Truewit said. “Please, stop pleading; I’ll leave it off if you don’t. I’ll stop the whole jest.”

“Come away with me, Clerimont,” Dauphine said.

Clerimont and Dauphine concealed themselves behind the arras again.

La Foole entered the room.

“Sir Amorous!” Truewit said.

“Master Truewit!” La Foole said.

“Where are you going?” Truewit asked.

“Down into the court to make water,” La Foole answered.

He needed to urinate.

“By no means, sir,” Truewit said. “You shall rather put your breeches to the test and see how much water they hold.”

Breeches were voluminous and padded. The padding could soak up and hold water — or urine.

“Why, sir?” La Foole asked.

Truewit opened the door to the second study and said, “Enter here, if you love your life.”

“Why?” La Foole asked. “Why?”

“Do question why until your throat is cut,” Truewit said. “Dally until the enraged soul finds you.”

“Who’s the enraged soul?” La Foole asked.

“It is Jack Daw,” Truewit answered. “Will you go into the study and hide?”

“Aye, aye, I’ll go in,” La Foole said. “What’s the matter?”

Truewit said, “Nay, if he had been cool enough to tell us that, there had been some hope to reconcile you, but he seems so implacably enraged.”

“By God’s light, let him rage,” La Foole said. “I’ll hide myself.”

“Do, good sir,” Truewit said. “But what have you done to him within that should provoke him thus? You have made some jest at his expense before the ladies —”

“Not I, never in my life have I made a jest at the expense of any man,” La Foole said. “The bride was praising Sir Dauphine, and he went away in snuff — in a huff, indignantly — and I followed him. Maybe he is intoxicated and taking offence at me because earlier I would not drink all the full horse-cup.”

“By my faith, that may be the truth,” Truewit said. “You remember well. But he walks the round up and down, through every room of the house.”

“Walk the round” is a military metaphor meaning to go round a camp and ensure that all the sentries are vigilant against enemies.

Truewit continued, “Jack Daw does this with a towel in his hand, crying, ‘Where’s La Foole? Who saw La Foole?’ And when Dauphine and I asked the reason he was doing this, we could force no answer from him but ‘Oh, revenge, how sweet you are! I will strangle him in this towel’ — which leads us to conjecture that the main cause of his fury is because you brought your food here today, with a towel about you, to his discredit.”

“Likely enough,” La Foole said. “Why, if he is angry because of that, I’ll stay here until his anger has blown over.”

Truewit replied, “That is a good, becoming resolution, sir, if you can adopt it immediately.”

“Yes, I can adopt it,” La Foole said. “Or, I’ll go away into the country immediately.”

“How will you get out of the house, sir?” Truewit said. “He knows you are in the house, and he’ll watch out for you this seven night — this week — but he’ll have you. He’ll outwait a sergeant for you.”

Sergeants had the power to arrest people, and they had the reputation of lying in wait a long time in order to arrest people.

“Why, then, I’ll stay here,” La Foole said.

“You must think how to feed yourself for the time, then,” Truewit said.

“Why, sweet Master Truewit, will you entreat my cousin Otter to send me a cold venison pasty, a bottle or two of wine, and a chamber pot?” La Foole asked.

His cousin Otter was Mrs. Otter. He was using the masculine form of address to refer to her.

A pasty is a meat-pie.

“A stool of Sir A-jax’s invention would be better than a chamber pot, sir,” Truewit said.

In 1596, Sir John Harington invented a flushable toilet. He wrote about it in his treatise *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*. The title contained a pun: A jakes is a privy.

“Aye, that will be better, indeed, and a pallet — a straw mattress — to lie on,” La Foole said.

“Oh, I would not advise you to sleep by any means,” Truewit said.

“Wouldn’t you, sir?” La Foole asked. “Why, then, I will not.”

Truewit said, “Yet there’s another fear —”

“Is there, sir?” La Foole asked. “What is it?”

Truewit tested the door’s strength and then said, “No, he cannot break this door with his foot, surely.”

“I’ll set my back against it, sir,” La Foole said. “I have a good back.”

Truewit said, “But then if he should batter —”

“Batter!” La Foole said. “If he dares to batter the door, I’ll have an action of battery against him.”

Battery is a crime committed against a human, not a door.

“Anticipate the worst,” Truewit said. “He has sent for gunpowder already, and what he will do with it, no man knows — perhaps he will blow up the corner of the house where he suspects you are.”

He pretended to hear Jack Daw coming, and he said, “Here he comes! In quickly!”

La Foole ran into the study.

Pretending that Jack Daw was present, Truewit said loudly enough for La Foole to hear, “I protest, Sir John Daw, he is not here. What will you do? Before God, you shall hang no petard — no bomb — here. I’ll die rather. Will you not take my word? I never knew one but would be satisfied.”

He then said through the door to La Foole, “Sir Amorous, there’s no resisting. He has made a petard out of an old brass pot, to force open your door. Think of some satisfaction or terms to offer him.”

From the other side of the door, La Foole said, “Sir, I’ll give him any satisfaction. I dare give any terms.”

“You’ll leave it to me, then?” Truewit said.

“Aye, sir,” La Foole said. “I’ll agree to any conditions.”

Truewit then quietly told Clerimont and Dauphine to come out from behind the arras.

After they had done so, Truewit said, “Now, what do you think, sirs? Wouldn’t it be a difficult thing to determine which of these two is the most scared?”

“Yes,” Clerimont said, “but this one — La Foole — fears the bravest. The other is a whiniling — whining and whimpering — dastard, Jack Daw! But La Foole is a brave, heroic coward! And he is afraid of a threatening look and a manly accent. I like him rarely.”

Truewit said, “Hasn’t it been a pity that the real characters of these two have been concealed?”

“Shall I make a suggestion?” Clerimont asked.

“Be brief,” Truewit said, “for I must strike while it is hot.”

“Strike while the iron is hot” is a proverb that derives from blacksmithing. When the iron is glowing and hot, the blacksmith strikes it with a hammer and hammers it into the desired shape. The proverb means to act when you have a good opportunity to act to achieve something desirable.

“Shall I go fetch the ladies to witness the catastrophe?” Clerimont asked.

A catastrophe is the denouement — the climax — of a play.

“Umm,” Truewit said, thinking.

He made a decision: “Aye, by my truth.”

“By no mortal means,” Dauphine said. “Let them continue in the state of ignorance and continue to err. Let the ladies continue to think that Jack Daw and La Foole are wits and fine fellows just as they have been thinking. It would be a sin to disabuse them.”

In this matter, Dauphine was perhaps the kindest of the three friends.

“Well, I will have them fetched, now I think about it, for a private purpose of mine,” Truewit replied.

He then said, “Do, Clerimont, fetch them and tell them all that’s passed so far, and bring them into the balcony of this room.”

“This is your extreme vanity, now,” Dauphine said. “You think you would be undone and ruined if every jest you make were not made widely known.”

Truewit replied, “You soon shall see how unjust you are.”

He then said, “Clerimont, tell the ladies that it was Dauphine’s plot.”

Clerimont exited to get the ladies.

Truewit said to Dauphine, “Don’t trust me if the whole drift — the jest — is not for thy good.”

He added, “There’s a carpet — a thick woolen tablecloth — in the next room. Put it on, with this scarf over your face and a cushion on your head, and be ready when I call Amorous. Go!”

In this society, carpets were not placed on floors.

Dauphine exited.

Truewit unlocked a study door and called, “John Daw!”

“What good news do you have, sir?” Jack Daw asked.

“Indeed, I have followed and argued with La Foole hard for you,” Truewit said. “I told him you were a knight and a scholar, and that you knew fortitude consists *magis patiendo quamfaciendo, magis ferendo quam feriendo.*”

The Latin means, “More in suffering than in doing, more in submitting than in striking [a blow].”

“It does so indeed, sir,” Jack Daw said.

“And I told him that you would suffer,” Truewit said. “So at first he demanded, by my truth, in my opinion, too much.”

“What was it, sir?” Jack Daw said.

“Your upper lip and six front teeth,” Truewit said.

“That was unreasonable,” Jack Daw said.

“I told him plainly that you could not spare them all,” Truewit said. “So, after long argument — *pro et con*, as you know — I brought him down to your two butter-teeth — that is, your two most prominent front teeth — and them he would have.”

“Oh, did you so?” Jack Daw said. “Why, he shall have them.”

Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, Mistress Mavis, Mrs. Otter, Epicene, Mistress Trusty, and Clerimont entered the balcony and silently observed Truewit and Jack Daw.

“But he shall not have your front teeth, sir, by your leave,” Truewit said. “The conclusion is this, sir — because you shall be very good friends hereafter, and this will never be remembered or upbraided — raised to reproach you. In addition, so he may not boast he has done any such thing to you in his own person, he is to come here in disguise, give you five kicks in private, sir, take your sword from you, and



lock you up in that study, for as long as he pleases. That will be but a little while; we'll get the sword released soon."

"Five kicks?" Jack Daw said. "He shall have six, sir, to be friends."

"Believe me," Truewit said, "you shall not overreach yourself and make an error if you send him that word by me."

"Deliver it, sir," Jack Daw said. "He shall have the sixth kick with all my heart in order for us to be friends."

"Friends?" Truewit said. "Nay, if he should not be friends with you, and heartily too, upon these terms, he shall have me as his enemy as long as I live. Come, sir, bear it bravely."

"Oh, God, sir," Jack Daw said, "six kicks is nothing."

Truewit replied, "True. What's six kicks to a man who reads Seneca?"

"I have had a hundred kicks, sir," Jack Daw said.

Truewit called to the arras behind which Dauphine was concealed, "Sir Amorous!"

He then said to Jack Daw, "No speaking to one another, or revisiting old arguments."

Dauphine, well disguised by the carpet and shawl he was wearing, came forth and kicked Jack Daw.

Counting the kicks, Jack Daw said, "One, two, three, four, five."

He then said, "I insist, Sir Amorous, that you shall have six."

Truewit said, "Nay, I told you that you should not talk."

He then said to Dauphine, whom Jack Daw thought was La Foole, "Come, give him six, if he must have them."

Dauphine kicked Jack Daw a sixth time.

Truewit then said to Jack Daw, “Your sword.”

Jack Daw surrendered his sword to Truewit, who said, “Now, return to your safe custody. You shall soon meet in front of the ladies, and be the dearest friends one to another.”

Jack Daw went into the study where he had been hidden.

Truewit said to Dauphine, “Give me the scarf now; you shall be at the other bare-faced. Stand to one side.”

Dauphine gave Truewit the scarf and stood behind the arras.

Truewit called, “Sir Amorous!”

He unlocked the door to the study where Sir Amorous La Foole was hiding.

La Foole came out of the study.

Seeing Jack Daw’s sword that Truewit was holding, La Foole asked, “What’s here? A sword?”

“I cannot help it, unless I should take the quarrel upon myself,” Truewit said. “Here, Jack Daw has sent you his sword —”

“I’ll not take it,” La Foole interrupted.

Truewit continued, “And he orders you to fasten it against a wall, and break your head in some few different places against the hilt.”

“I will not,” La Foole said. “Tell him that plainly. I cannot endure to shed my own blood.”

“Will you not do what Jack Daw orders you to do?” Truewit asked.

“No,” La Foole said. “I’ll beat my head against a fair flat wall, if that will satisfy him; if not, he shall beat my head himself, for me: Amorous.”

“Why, this is a strange shying away, when a man stands surety for you!” Truewit said. “I, however, offered him another condition. Will you stand to that?”

“Aye,” La Foole said. “What is it?”

“That you will be beaten in private,” Truewit said.

“Yes. I am content to do that, to be blunt, and if he uses the blunt part of the sword,” La Foole said.

La Foole was OK with being hit with the pommel of a sword, or perhaps with the flat of a sword.

Truewit said, “Then you must submit yourself to be hoodwinked in this scarf.”

He was punning. “Hoodwinked” means 1) blindfolded, and 2) fooled.

He continued, “And you must be led to him, where he will take your sword from you and make you bear a blow over the mouth, *gules*, and he will make you bear tweaks by the nose, *sans nombre*.”

*Gules* is a heraldic term meaning “blood-red” (the color of a bloody mouth) and *sans nombre* is a term meaning “without number.”

“I am content to do that,” La Foole said. “But why must I be blinded?”

“That’s for your own good, sir,” Truewit said, “because if he should grow insolent and arrogant upon this and publish it hereafter to your disgrace (which I hope he will not do) you will be able to swear safely and declare that he never beat you, to your knowledge.”

“Oh, I understand,” La Foole said.

Truewit said, “I do not doubt but you’ll be perfectly good friends after this, and not dare to utter an ill thought one against another in the future.”

“Not I, as God help me, against him,” La Foole said.

“Nor he against you, sir,” Truewit said. “If he should —”

Truewit blindfolded La Foole’s eyes with the scarf and led him forward, saying, “Come, sir.”

Pretending to address Jack Daw, Truewit then called, “All hid, Sir John!”

The call “All hid” is used in the children’s game “Hide and Seek.”

Dauphine came out from behind the arras and took La Foole’s sword away from him and then tweaked his nose.

La Foole moaned, “Oh, Sir John, Sir John. Oh, o—o—o—o—o—oh —”

Truewit said, “Good Sir John, stop tweaking his nose; you’ll blow his nose off.”

Dauphine exited with the two swords.

Truewit said to La Foole, “It is Sir John’s pleasure that you should retire into the study. Why, now you are friends. All bitterness between you, I hope, is buried. You shall come out of the study by and by, and you two shall act like Damon and Pythias and embrace with all the rankness of friendship that can be.”

Damon and Pythias were two close friends. Dionysius I of Syracuse, a tyrant, sentenced Damon to death. Damon requested that he be allowed to return to his home to say goodbye to his family and settle his affairs; Pythias

volunteered to stay in Syracuse as a hostage until Damon returned. He would die in Damon's place if Damon did not return. Dionysius I of Syracuse was surprised when Damon did, in fact, return to face death. Impressed by the true friendship of Damon and Pythias, he allowed both of them to live.

In this culture, "rankness" can mean 1) abundance, or 2) foulness.

La Foole went into the study where he had been hidden.

The ladies and Clerimont, all of whom had witnessed everything, retired from the balcony.

Truewit said, "I trust we shall have them tamer in their language hereafter."

Dauphine entered the room, closely followed by the ladies and Clerimont, and Truewit said, "Dauphine, I worship you. — God's will, the ladies have surprised us."

Truewit knew the ladies had witnessed the scene, but he pretended to be surprised by the ladies' presence in order to benefit Dauphine.

— 4.6 —

Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, Mistress Mavis, Mrs. Otter, Epicene, and Mistress Trusty, along with Clerimont, had witnessed everything. All knew that Jack Daw and La Foole, despite being knights, were cowards. Rather than earning their knighthoods on the battlefield, they had bought them.

The ladies talked among themselves, apart from the gentlemen.

Madam Haughty said, “Madam Centaur, how our judgments were imposed on by these adulterate — counterfeit — knights!”

“Nay, madam,” Madam Centaur said, “Mavis was more deceived than we; it was her commendation that made them known in the College.”

“I commended only their wits, madam, and their splendid clothing,” Mistress Mavis said. “I never looked toward their valor, manliness, and courage.”

“Sir Dauphine is valiant and a wit, too, it seems,” Madam Haughty said.

“And Dauphine is a fine dresser, too,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Was this his project?” Madam Haughty asked.

The project was revealing the cowardly nature of Jack Daw and La Foole.

“So Master Clerimont intimates, Madam,” Mrs. Otter said.

Mrs. Haughty said to Mrs. Epicene Morose, “Good Morose, when you come to the College, will you bring Dauphine with you? He seems a very perfect gentleman.”

“He is indeed so, Madam, believe it,” Epicene replied.

“But when will you come, Morose?” Madam Centaur asked Epicene.

“Three or four days from now, Madam, when I have gotten myself a coach and horses,” Epicene said.

“No, tomorrow, good Morose,” Mrs. Haughty said. “Centaur shall send you her coach.”

“Yes, indeed, do, and bring Sir Dauphine with you,” Mistress Mavis said.

“She has promised to do that, Mavis,” Madam Haughty said.

“He is a very worthy gentleman in his exterior appearance, madam,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Aye, he shows he is judicial in his clothes,” Madam Haughty said.

She meant “judicious,” not “judicial,” which means “like a judge.” “Judicious” means “showing good judgment.”

Madam Centaur said, “And yet he is not so exaggeratedly neat as some, madam, who have their faces set in a brake!”

A brake can be a thicket. She was referring to hair and beards. Some men take great care of their facial hair.

(Another kind of brake is a device to keep a horse’s hoof still as it is being shod. In that case, the faces would have a set expression. A woman can wear so much makeup that her face will crack if she smiles. Also, a woman can wear such an elaborate headdress that she must be careful when she moves her head.)

The ladies were beginning to talk about very elegant — and probably effeminate — men. (Dauphine was not one of them.)

“Aye, and have every hair in place!” Madam Haughty said.

Mistress Mavis said, “And who wear purer linen than ourselves, and practice more neatness than the French hermaphrodite!”

King Henri III of France was a famous transvestite. The English liked French fashions, but they did not like what they considered French effeminacy. Also, at the time a hermaphrodite could be seen in London.

“Aye, ladies,” Epicene said, “what lies they tell one of us, they have told a thousand, and they are the only thieves of

our chaste reputation, who think to take — seduce — us with that perfume, or with that lace, and laugh at us unconscionably when they have done.”

Epicene was well aware that men gossip.

Her words “have told a thousand” were ambiguous and could mean 1) have told a thousand lies, 2) have told a thousand women, and 3) have told a thousand lies to a thousand women.

“But Sir Dauphine’s carelessness — his nonchalance — becomes him,” Madam Haughty said.

“I could love a man for such a nose!” Madam Centaur said.

One meaning of the noun “nose” is a projecting part. A lady such as Madam Centaur may be thinking of Dauphine’s penis.

“Or such a leg!” Mistress Mavis said.

A leg is a lower limb. A lady such as Mistress Mavis could be thinking of Dauphine’s penis.

“He has an exceeding good eye, madam,” Madam Centaur said.

“And a very good love-lock of hair,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Good Morose, bring him to my chamber first,” Madam Centaur said to Epicene.

“Will it please Your Honors to meet at my house, Madam?” Mrs. Otter asked.

Truewit whispered to Dauphine, “See how they eye thee, man! They are taken with you, I promise you.”



Mrs. Haughty approached Truewit and Dauphine and said, “You have unbraced — exposed and disarmed — our brace — pair — of knights here, Master Truewit.”

“Not I, Madam,” Truewit replied, “it was the plot of Sir Dauphine, who, if he has disfurnished Your Ladyship of any guard or service by it, is able to make the place good again in himself.”

The service could be love-service.

Mrs. Haughty said, “There’s no doubt of that, sir.”

She kissed Dauphine.

Madam Centaur said to Mistress Mavis, “Godso, Mavis, Haughty is kissing.”

Mistress Mavis replied, “Let us go, too, and take part.”

They approached the gentlemen.

Madam Haughty said, “But I am glad of the fortune — besides the exposure of two such empty caskets — to gain the knowledge of so rich a mine of virtue as Sir Dauphine.”

“We would all be glad to style him of our friendship — make him one of our friends — and see him at the College,” Madam Centaur said.

“He cannot mix with a sweeter society, I’ll prophesy, and I hope he himself will think so,” Mistress Mavis said.

“I should be rude to imagine otherwise, lady,” Dauphine said.

Truewit whispered to Dauphine, “Didn’t I tell you, Dauphine? Why, all their actions are governed by crude opinion, without reason or cause. They don’t know why they do anything but as they are informed, believe, judge, praise, condemn, love, hate, and — in emulation one of another —

do all these things alike. Only they have a natural inclination that sways them generally to the worst when they are left to themselves. But pursue it, now you have them.”

Mrs. Haughty asked Epicene, “Shall we go in again, Morose?”

“Yes, madam,” Epicene replied.

“We’ll entreat Sir Dauphine and ask for his company,” Madam Centaur said.

Truewit said, “Wait, good madam, and witness the interview of the two friends: Pylades and Orestes. I’ll fetch them out to you straightaway.”

Pylades and Orestes were two good friends. When Agamemnon returned home to Greece after fighting the Trojan War for 10 years, his wife, Clytemnestra, killed him. She had taken a lover during the years that he was away from home. Her son, Orestes, killed her because she killed his father, and Orestes was sentenced to die. His friend Pylades was willing to die in Orestes’ place, although Orestes did not want him to, so both told the executioners, “I am Orestes!”

“Will you, Master Truewit?” Lady Haughty asked.

Dauphine said, “Aye, but, noble ladies, do not confess in your countenance or outward bearing to them any knowledge of their follies, so that we may see how they will bear up again, with what assurance, confidence, and erection.”

“Erection” means uprightness, and it is a sexual pun.

“We won’t, Sir Dauphine,” Madam Haughty said.

“Upon our honors, Sir Dauphine,” Madam Centaur and Mistress Mavis said.

Pretending to speak confidentially, Truewit said to La Foole, who was still in a study, “Sir Amorous! Sir Amorous! The ladies are here.”

From behind the door, La Foole said, “Are they?”

“Yes, but do slip out by and by when their backs are turned and meet Sir John Daw here, as if by chance, when I call you.”

Truewit went to the door of the other study and said, “Jack Daw!”

“What do you have to say, sir?” Jack Daw said from behind the door.

Truewit replied, “Whip out behind me suddenly, and have no anger in your looks toward your adversary.”

He said loudly, “Now, now!”

La Foole and Jack Daw slipped out from behind their separate doors.

“Noble Sir John Daw!” La Foole said. “Where have you been?”

“Seeking you, Sir Amorous,” Jack Daw said.

“Me?” La Foole bowed and said, “I honor you.”

Jack Daw returned the bow and said, “I anticipate you, sir.”

Clerimont said to Dauphine and Truewit, “They have forgotten their rapiers!”

“Oh, they meet in peace, man,” Truewit said.

Dauphine asked Jack Daw, “Where’s your sword, Sir John?”

Clerimont asked La Foole, “And where is yours, Sir Amorous?”

“Mine?” Jack Daw said. “My serving-boy took it away to mend the handle just now.”

“And my gold handle was broken, too, and my boy took it away,” La Foole said.

Dauphine said, “Indeed, sir?”

He said to Truewit and Clerimont, “How their excuses meet and fit together!”

Clerimont said to Dauphine and Truewit, “What a consent there is in the handles!”

In this culture, “handle” can mean excuse.

Truewit said to Clerimont and Dauphine, “Nay, there is so in the points, too, I promise you.”

“Points” means 1) sword-points, and 2) points made in their excuses.

Seeing Morose, Epicene’s husband, Mrs. Otter said, “Oh, me! Madam, he comes again, the madman. Run!”

The ladies, Jack Daw, and La Foole hastily exited.

— 4.7 —

Morose entered the room. He was carrying two swords: those of Jack Daw and La Foole.

He asked, “What are these naked — unsheathed — weapons doing here, gentlemen?”

Truewit answered, “Oh, sir, there was likely to have been murder committed here since you went. A couple of knights quarreled about the bride’s favors; we were obliged to take away their weapons, or else your house would have been begged by this time —”

A criminal's or accomplice's property would be forfeited to the Crown, and it would be begged — petitioned for — in a case of legal confiscation.

“For what?” Morose asked.

“For manslaughter, sir, as being an accessory,” Clerimont said.

“And for her favors?” Morose said.

“Aye, sir, for her heretofore — past favors — not present,” Truewit said.

He then said, “Clerimont, carry their swords to them now. They have done all the hurt they will do.”

Clerimont exited with the two swords.

“Have you spoken with a lawyer, sir?” Dauphine asked Morose.

“Oh, no!” Morose answered. “There is such a noise in the law court that they have frightened me home with more violence than I went. There was such speaking and counter-speaking, with their several voices of citations [summonings to court], appellations [appeals to a higher court], allegations [making charges in court], certificates [giving of testimony], attachments [writs to seize property], interrogatories [questions asked of witnesses or defendants], references [submissions of disputes to the Court of Chancery], convictions, and afflictions indeed among the barristers and attorneys, that the noise here is silence compared to it! Here is a kind of calm midnight.”

Seeing an opportunity, Truewit said, “Why, sir, if you would have the court judgment be resolved, indeed, I can bring you hither a very sufficient, qualified, and capable lawyer and a learned divine who shall inquire into every least uncertainty and scruple of the matter for you.”

“Can you, Master Truewit?” Morose asked.

“Yes, and they are very sober grave persons, who will dispatch the business in a chamber with a whisper or two,” Truewit answered.

“Good sir, shall I hope this benefit from you and trust myself into your hands?” Morose asked.

“Alas, sir!” Truewit said. “Since you went, your nephew and I have been ashamed and often furious when we think how you are abused. Go in, good sir, and lock yourself up until we call you. We’ll tell you more soon, sir.”

“Do your pleasure with me, gentlemen,” Morose said. “I believe in you, and that deserves no delusion. My trust in you ought not to be shown to be deluded. You ought not to trick me.”

This was a reasonable request.

Truewit said, “You shall find none, sir —”

Morose exited.

Truewit continued, “— except heaps and heaps of plenty of vexation.”

“What will you do now, wit?” Dauphine asked Truewit.

“Bring here to me Otter and the barber if you can, by any means, immediately,” Truewit said.

“Why?” Dauphine asked. “For what purpose?”

Truewit answered, “Oh, I’ll make the deepest divine and gravest lawyer out of the two of them, for him —”

“You cannot do that, man,” Dauphine said. “These are waking dreams.”

“Don’t doubt that I can do it,” Truewit said. “Just clap a civil gown with a fur border on one, and clap a canonical cloak with sleeves on the other, and give them a few terms in their mouths. If they don’t come forth as able a doctor and complete a parson for this purpose as may be wished, then don’t trust my judgment. And I hope, without wronging the dignity of either profession, since they are but impersonations, and for mirth’s sake, to torment him. The barber smatters Latin, I remember.”

“Yes, and Otter, too,” Dauphine said.

“Well, then, if I don’t make them — Cutbeard the barber and Mr. Otter — wrangle out and dispute contentiously this case to Morose’s no-comfort, let me be thought a Jack Daw or La Foole or anything worse. Go to your ladies, but first send for Jack Daw and La Foole.”

“I will,” Dauphine said.

They exited.

## ACT 5 (*Epicene*)

### — 5.1 —

La Foole, Clerimont, and Jack Daw entered the room.

“Where did you find our swords, Master Clerimont?” La Foole asked.

“Why, Dauphine took them from the madman,” Clerimont answered.

“And he took them from our serving-boys, I assure you,” La Foole said.

“Very likely, sir,” Clerimont said.

“Thank you, good Master Clerimont,” La Foole said. “Sir John Daw and I are both beholden to you.”

“I wish I knew how to make you so, gentlemen,” Clerimont said.

“Sir Amorous and I are your servants, sir,” Jack Daw said. “We are in your debt.”

Mistress Mavis entered the room and said, “Gentlemen, have any of you a pen and ink? I would like to write out a riddle in Italian for Sir Dauphine to interpret and explain.”

“Not I, truly, lady,” Clerimont said. “I am no professional scribe.”

“I can furnish you, I think, lady,” Jack Daw said.

Jack Daw and Mistress Mavis walked to the side, and Daw produced a pen and ink.

Clerimont said, “He has it in the haft of a knife, I believe.”



A haft is a handle. The handles of swords, knives, and walking sticks sometimes had a hollow space for carrying such items.

“No, he has his box of instruments,” La Foole said.

“Like a surgeon!” Clerimont said.

La Foole said, “For the mathematics: He has his square, his compasses, his brass pens, and his black lead in order to draw maps of every place and person where he comes.”

“What!” Clerimont said. “Maps of persons?”

“Yes, sir,” La Foole said. “He has made maps of Nomentack, the Native American from Virginia, when he was here, and of the Prince of Moldavia, and of his mistress, Mistress Epicene.”

By “his mistress,” La Foole meant “Jack Daw’s mistress (loved one),” but his ambiguous use of “his” made it sound as if Epicene were the mistress of the Prince of Moldavia.

“What!” Clerimont said. “He has not found out her latitude, I hope.”

He was punning. In this society, latitude meant 1) location, and 2) laxity (e.g., of conduct).

“You are a pleasant and witty gentleman, sir,” La Foole said.

Mistress Mavis exited, and Jack Daw rejoined Clerimont and La Foole.

“Indeed,” Clerimont said, “now that we are in private, let’s wanton it and be naughty a little and talk waggishly.

“Sir John, I was telling Sir Amorous here that you two govern the ladies; wherever you go, you carry the feminine gender before you.”

His last words were ambiguous and could mean 1) you seduce the ladies, or 2) you act effeminately.

“They shall rather carry us before them if they will, sir,” Jack Daw said.

In other words, the ladies will bear the weight of the men in the missionary position.

“Nay, I believe that they do, with all,” Clerimont said, “but that you are the prime men in their affections, and direct all their actions —”

“Not I,” Jack Daw said. “Sir Amorous is.”

“I declare that Sir John is,” La Foole said.

“As I hope to rise in the state,” Jack Daw said, “Sir Amorous, you have the person.”

“Sir John, you have the person, and the discourse, too,” La Foole said.

By “person,” they meant attractiveness. “Discourse” meant art of conversation.

“Not I, sir,” Jack Daw said. “I have no discourse — and then you have activity, beside.”

“Activity” means 1) gymnastic skill, or 2) sexual activity.

La Foole replied, “I protest, Sir John, you come as high from Tripoli as I do every whit, and you lift as many joint-stools and leap over them, if you would practice it —”

He was talking about vaulting, tumbling, lifting, and jumping. Chances are, both Jack Daw and La Foole did a fair amount of unintentional tripping.

Clerimont said, “Well, agree on it together, knights, for between you, you divide the kingdom or commonwealth of ladies’ affections.”

Clerimont’s meaning was that the ladies of Jack Daw and La Foole were a commonwealth — as a common wealth, they were everyone’s ladies, aka prostitutes. Of course, Jack Daw and La Foole thought that Clerimont meant that they shared all the ladies’ affections between them.

Clerimont continued, “I see it and can perceive a little how they observe you and fear you, indeed. You could tell strange stories, my masters, if you would, I know.”

“In faith, we have seen somewhat, sir,” Jack Daw said. “We have seen some things.”

La Foole said, “That we have: velvet petticoats and embroidered smocks and such.”

Such clothing was worn by high-class ladies — and by prostitutes.

Jack Daw said, “Aye, and —”

He hesitated.

Clerimont said, “Nay, out with it, Sir John. Do not envy your friend the pleasure of hearing, when you have had the delight of tasting.”

Jack Daw, who may not have had any stories to tell in the locker room, said, “Why — ah — you speak, Sir Amorous.”

La Foole, in the same position as Jack Daw, said, “No, you speak, Sir John Daw.”

“Truly, you shall do the speaking,” Jack Daw said.

“Truly, you shall do the speaking,” La Foole said.

Jack Daw said, “Why, we have been —”

La Foole interrupted, “— in the Great Bed at Ware together in our time. Speak, Sir John.”

The Great Bed of Ware could sleep twelve people.

Perhaps the two knights did have stories to tell in a locker room frequented by gay men.

“Nay, you speak, Sir Amorous,” Jack Daw said.

“And these ladies here were with you, knights?” Clerimont asked.

“No, excuse us, sir,” La Foole said.

“We must not wound reputation,” Jack Daw said.

“No matter,” La Foole said. “They were these ladies or other ladies. Our bath cost us fifteen pounds when we came home.”

Some kinds of bath treated venereal disease.

“Listen to me, Sir John,” Clerimont said, “you shall tell me but one thing truly, as you love me.”

“If I can, I will, sir,” Jack Daw said.

“You lay in the same house with the bride Epicene here?” Clerimont said.

“Lay” means reside, but the word also has a sexual meaning.

“Yes, and conversed with her hourly, sir,” Jack Daw said.

Conversation is a kind of intercourse. In this society, the word “conversation” could mean sexual intercourse or intimacy.

“And what disposition has she?” Clerimont asked. “Is she coming and open? Is she free?”

“Coming” meant compliant and eager.

“Oh, exceedingly open, sir,” Jack Daw said. “I was her servant, and Sir Amorous was to be.”

“Come, you have both had favors from her?” Clerimont said. “I know and have heard so much.”

“Oh, no, sir,” Jack Daw said.

“You shall excuse us, sir,” La Foole said. “We must not wound reputation.”

Clerimont said, “Tut, she is married now, and you cannot hurt her with any report, and therefore speak plainly. How many times, truly? Which of you led first?”

“Sir John had her maidenhead, indeed,” La Foole said.

“Oh, it pleases him to say so, sir, but Sir Amorous knows what’s what as well,” Jack Daw said.

“Do you, indeed, Amorous?” Clerimont asked.

“In a manner, sir,” La Foole said.

“Why, I commend you, lad,” Clerimont said. “Little knows Don Bridegroom of this. Nor shall he, as far as I’m concerned.”

“Don” is the Spanish title meaning “Master.”

“Hang him, mad ox,” Jack Daw said.

“Ox” means “fool.” An ox also has horns, the emblem of a cuckold.

“Speak softly,” Clerimont said. “Here comes his nephew with the Lady Haughty. He’ll take the ladies away from you, sirs, if you don’t look out for him in time.”

“Why, if he does, we’ll fetch the ladies home again, I promise you,” La Foole said.

They exited.

— 5.2 —

Lady Haughty and Dauphine entered the room.

Lady Haughty said, “I assure you, Sir Dauphine, it is the price and worth and estimation of your manly virtue only that has caused me to embark on this adventure, and I had to find a way to tell you so; nor can I repent of the act, since it is always evidence of some virtue in ourselves that we love and desire it so in others.”

“Your Ladyship sets too high a value on my weakness,” Dauphine said.

Lady Haughty replied, “Sir, I can distinguish gems from pebbles —”

Dauphine thought, *Are you so skillful in stones?*

He was punning to himself. The word “stones” can mean 1) jewels, or 2) testicles.

Lady Haughty continued, “— and howsoever I may suffer in such a judgment as yours, by admitting equality of rank or society with Centaur or Mavis —”

Dauphine interrupted, “You do not, Madam. I perceive that they are your mere foils.”

He was punning. The word “foil” can mean 1) setting to show off a jewel, or 2) contrast. In this case, the friends were supposed to contrast with Madam Haughty, to her advantage.

“Then you are a friend to truth, sir,” Lady Haughty said. “It makes me love you the more. It is not the outward but the

inward man whom I seek. They are not capable of apprehending an eminent, distinguished perfection; instead, they love flatly and dully.”

Madam Centaur called from outside the room, “Where are you, my Lady Haughty?”

Madam Haughty called back, “I come immediately, Centaur.”

She then said to Dauphine, “My chamber, sir, my page shall show you; and Trusty, my woman, shall be ever awake for you.”

Madam Haughty meant that Mistress Trusty would always be awake to let Dauphine into Madam Haughty’s chamber, but readers can be forgiven if they thought that Mistress Trusty would be always sexually available for Dauphine.

Lady Haughty continued, “You need not fear to communicate anything with her, for she is a Fidelia and lives up to her name.”

The name “Fidelia” is based on the Latin word for “faithful and trustworthy.”

Lady Haughty continued, “I ask you to wear this jewel for my sake, Sir Dauphine.”

She gave him a jewel.

Madam Centaur entered the room.

Lady Haughty asked, “Where’s Mavis, Centaur?”

“She is inside, madam, writing,” Madam Centaur answered. “I’ll follow you soon. I’ll just speak a word with Sir Dauphine.”

Lady Haughty exited.

Dauphine asked, “With me, madam?”

Madam Centaur replied, “Good Sir Dauphine, do not trust Haughty, nor put any faith in her, whatever you do besides. Sir Dauphine, I give you this warning: She is a perfect courtier and loves nobody but those whom she can manipulate and use, and for her uses she loves all.

“Besides, her physicians give her out to be none of the clearest.”

The word “clearest” meant 1) most innocent, and 2) most clear of disease. Urine is supposed to be clear; cloudy urine may mean the presence of disease.

Madam Centaur continued, “Whether she pays them or no, heaven knows.”

Madam Haughty’s physicians talked about her, perhaps because she did not pay them.

Madam Centaur continued, “And she’s above fifty, too, and plasters herself with makeup the way plasterers plaster a wall! See her before noon — before she puts on makeup.”

Carrying a piece of paper, Mistress Mavis entered the room.

Madam Centaur said quietly, “Here comes Mavis, who has a worse face than Madam Haughty! You would not like her face, even by candlelight.”

Candlelight is said to flatter all ladies.

Madam Centaur continued, “If you’ll come to my chamber one of these mornings early, or late in an evening, I’ll tell you more.”

She then asked, “Where’s Haughty, Mavis?”

“Inside, Centaur,” Mistress Mavis answered.



“What have you there?” Madam Centaur asked, referring to the piece of paper.

“An Italian riddle for Sir Dauphine,” Mistress Mavis said.

She thought, *You shall not see it, indeed, Centaur.*

She then said out loud, “Good Sir Dauphine, solve it for me. I’ll call for it soon.”

Mistress Mavis and Madam Centaur exited together as Clerimont entered the room.

“How are you now, Dauphine?” Clerimont asked. “How do you ’quit yourself of these females?”

Clerimont meant, How do you acquit yourself with these females? Dauphine, however, took the meaning as, How do you rid yourself of these females?

“By God’s light, they haunt me like fairies and give me jewels here,” Dauphine replied. “I cannot be rid of them.”

“Oh, you must not tell, though,” Clerimont said.

Telling other people about a fairy’s gift brought bad luck.

“By the Mass, I forgot that,” Dauphine said. “I was never so assaulted. One loves me for virtue, and she bribes me with this jewel.”

He showed Clerimont the jewel that Madam Haughty had given to him.

He continued, “Another loves me and gives me warnings, and by that means she would possess me. A third brings me a riddle here; and all are jealous and each rails at the others.”

“A riddle?” Clerimont said. “Please let me see it.”

He read the Mistress Mavis’ paper out loud:

*Sir Dauphine,*

*I chose this way of intimation for privacy. The ladies here, I know, have both hope and purpose to make a Collegiate and servant of you. If I might be so honored as to appear at any end of so noble a work, I would start a rumor about my undergoing medical treatment tomorrow and continue it four or five days or longer, for your visitation.*

*Mavis.*

One end of so noble a work was the end of Dauphine's penis.

Visitation was a good deed: It meant to visit the ill. Visitation for the purpose of having an adulterous assignation when one is married — as Madam Centaur was — is not a good deed.

“By my faith, she is a ‘subtle’ one!” Clerimont said. “She calls this a riddle? What would their plain dealing and plain speaking be like, I wonder?”

“We lack Truewit to tell us that,” Dauphine said.

Truewit was known for plain dealing and plain speaking.

“We lack him for something else, too,” Clerimont said. “His knights *reformados* are wound up as high and insolent as ever they were.”

*Reformados* are soldiers who have been disbanded but still keep their rank. Clerimont was also punning on “reformed.”

“You jest,” Dauphine said.

He thought that surely they would have learned better behavior after their recent humiliation.

“No drunkards, either with wine or vanity, ever confessed such stories of themselves,” Clerimont said. “I wouldn't give a fly's leg to be put in a balance scale to measure all the

women's reputations here, if Jack Daw and La Foole could be thought to speak the truth — they tell false tales about all the women, and if believed, they would ruin every woman's reputation. And as for the bride, they have made their affidavit against her directly —”

“What, have they said that they have lain with her?” Dauphine asked.

“Yes, and they tell times and circumstances, with the cause why and the place where,” Clerimont said. “I had almost brought them to affirm that they had done it today.”

“Not both of them?” Dauphine said.

“Yes, indeed,” Clerimont said. “With one or two more cries of ‘Really!’ or ‘Indeed!’ I would have effected it. They would have signed the affidavit.”

“Why, they will be our entertainment, I see, still, whether we want that kind of entertainment or not,” Dauphine said.

— 5.3 —

Truewit entered the room and said, “Oh, are you here? Come, Dauphine. Go, call your uncle immediately. I have put my divine and my canonist into costumes, dyed their beards, and done all else that is needed; the knaves do not know themselves, they are so exalted and raised in rank and altered. Promotion changes any man.

“Dauphine, you shall guard one door and I will guard another, and then Clerimont will be in the middle, so that Morose may have no means of escape from their caviling, bickering, and hairsplitting when the disguised Cutbeard and the disguised Mr. Otter once grow hot.

“And then the women (as I have given the bride her instructions) are to break in upon him in the *l'envoi* — the conclusion.

“Oh, it will be full and twanging and exceptionally fine and wonderfully exciting!

“Leave, Dauphine. Fetch Morose.”

Dauphine exited to get his uncle.

Mr. Otter, disguised as a divine, aka minister, entered the room.

Cutbeard the barber, disguised as a canon lawyer, also entered the room.

Truewit said to them, “Come, Master Doctor and Master Parson, look to your parts now and discharge them splendidly. You are well disguised and costumed; perform your parts as well.

“If you happen to forget your lines, do not confess it with standing still or humming or gaping one at another, but go on and talk loudly and eagerly, use vehement gestures, and just remember your technical Latin terms and you are safe.

“Let the matter — the content of your discussion — go where it will; many lawyers improvise.

“But at first be very solemn and grave like your garments, although you let yourselves go afterward and skip out like a pair of jugglers on a table.”

Truewit heard a noise and said, “Here he comes! Set your faces, and look superciliously while I present you.”

Dauphine and Morose entered the room.

Morose asked, “Are these the two learned men?”

“Yes, sir,” Truewit replied. “Will it please you to greet them?”

“Greet them?” Morose said, “I had rather do anything than wear out time so unfruitfully, sir. I wonder how these common forms of greeting, such as ‘May God save you’ and ‘You are welcome,’ have come to be a habit in our lives? Or ‘I am glad to see you!’ — when I cannot see what the profit can be of these words, since it is no whit better with him whose affairs are sad and grievous that he hears this salutation.”

“That is true, sir,” Truewit said. “We’ll get down to business, then.”

The business was divorce or annulment: Morose no longer wanted to be married to Epicene. The fake experts — Mr. Otter and Cutbeard the barber — would discuss the twelve impediments to marriage. These impediments appear in Saint Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica, Supplementum ad Tertiam Partem*:

*Error, conditio, votum, cognatio, crimen,  
cultus disparitas, vis, ordo, ligamen, honestas,  
si sis affinis, si forte coire nequibis,  
haec socianda vetant connubia, facta retractant.*

These are the impediments that the fake experts will mention:

- 1) *impedimentum erroris*: impediment arising from error
  - *error personae*: mistaken identity
  - *error fortunae*: error as to fortune and property and financial circumstances
  - *error qualitatis*: mistake as to disposition and character
- 2) *conditio*: condition, aka social status — for example, whether one is a free person or a slave
- 3) *votum*: if either has taken a vow of chastity

- 4) *cognatio*: if the persons are closely related
  - *cognatio spiritualis*: if the groom was the bride's godfather
- 5) *crimen adulterii*: the sin of adultery
- 6) *cultus disparitas*: difference of religion
- 7) *vis*: upon compulsion or force
- 8) *ordo*: if the bride had taken holy orders
- 9) *ligamen*: if one was bound previously to someone else
- 10) *publica honestas*: public reputation
- 11) *affinitas ex fornication*: relationship arising from fornication
- 12) *si forte coire nequibus*: if by chance you are unable to consummate the marriage

Truewit then said, "Gentlemen, Master Doctor and Master Parson, I have acquainted you sufficiently with the business for which you have come hither. And so I know you need not now inform yourselves about the state of the question. This is the gentleman who expects your resolution, and therefore, when you please, begin."

Mr. Otter, disguised as a minister, said, "May it please you to begin, Master Doctor."

Cutbeard the barber, disguised as a canon lawyer, said, "May it please you to begin, good Master Parson."

The divine-disguised Mr. Otter said, "I would hear the canon lawyer speak first."

The canon lawyer-disguised Cutbeard the barber said, "I must give place to practical divinity, sir."

Practical divinity is in contrast to theoretical or speculative divinity.

Morose said, “Nay, good gentlemen, do not throw me into circumstantialities. Let your comforts — those that exist — arrive quickly to me. Be swift in affording me my peace, if I shall hope for any. I don’t love your disputations or your court tumults.

“And so that this won’t be strange to you, I will tell you why I feel this way. My father, in my education, was accustomed to advise me that I should always collect and contain my mind, not allowing it to flow loosely. He advised me to look at what things were necessary to the conduct of my life and what things were not necessary, embracing the one and eschewing the other. In short, he advised me that I should endear myself to rest and avoid turmoil, and this now has grown to be second nature to me.

“This has the result that I come not to your public pleadings or your places of noise — it is not that I do not care about or overlook those things that make for the dignity of the commonwealth, but only that I avoid public pleadings for the mere avoiding of clamors and impertinencies and irrelevances of orators who don’t know how to be silent.

“And it is for the reason of noise that I am now a suitor to you. You do not know in what a misery I have been exercised and tested this day, what a torrent of evil! My very house turns round with the tumult! I dwell in a windmill! The perpetual motion is here, and not at Eltham.”

Cornelius Drebbel demonstrated what was supposed to be a perpetual-motion device at Eltham Palace. This device drew large crowds.

Truewit said to the disguised Cutbeard, “Well, good Master Doctor, will you break the ice? Master Parson will wade in after you.”

“Sir, although I am unworthy and the weaker person, I will presume to go first,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “It is no presumption, *Domine Doctor*.”

*Domine* means “master.”

“Yet again!” Morose said.

*Domine Doctor* was a phrase that said much the same thing twice. Both words were titles of respect used to address learned persons.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “Your question is, for how many causes a man may have *divortium legitimum*, a lawful divorce. First, you must understand the nature of the word ‘divorce,’ which is *a divertendo* — which is derived from the Latin word for ‘separating.’”

“Make no excursions to discuss words, good Doctor,” Morose said. “Get to the question and answer it briefly and quickly.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “I answer, then: The canon law affords divorce in only a few cases, and the principal is in the common case, the adulterous case. But there are *duodecim impedimenta*, twelve impediments (as we call them), all of which do not *dirimere contractum*, but *irritum reddere matrimonium* — as we say in the canon law, they do not take away the bond but cause a nullity therein.”

The twelve impediments resulted in a nullification of marriage: No valid marriage ever existed.

“I understood you before,” Morose said. “Good sir, avoid your irrelevance of translation.”



Morose understood Latin and so he did not need the “experts” to translate for him, but the “experts” continued to translate much of the Latin they used — at least for now.

“He cannot expound this too much, sir, by your favor,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“Yet more!” Morose said.

More unnecessary words. All Morose wanted was an answer to his question: Could he nullify his marriage to Epicene or divorce her?

Truewit said, “Oh, you must give the learned men permission to speak, sir.”

He then said, “To your impediments, Master Doctor.”

“The first is *impedimentum erroris*,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“Of which there are several *species* or kinds,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“Ay, such as *error personae*,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“For example: If you contract yourself to one person, thinking her to be someone else,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

This kind of contract can be a betrothal.

“Then, *error fortunae*,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“For example: If she is a beggar, and you thought her to be rich,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“Then, *error qualitatis*,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“For example: If she proves to be stubborn or headstrong, although you thought that she was obedient,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

This sounded promising to Morose, who said, “What? Is that, sir, a lawful impediment?”

They both started to talk, and Morose said, “One at a time, please, gentlemen.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, *ante copulam*, but not *post copulam*, sir. That is, before the marriage is consummated, but not after the consummation.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “Master Parson says right. *Nec post nuptiarum benedictionem* — not after the ecclesiastical blessing of marriage. It does indeed but *irrita reddere sponsal* — that is, annul the contract of marriage. But after marriage the obstacle is of no obstancy — of no judicial oppositional force.”

The marriage and the consummation of the marriage are two separate events, and so Mr. Otter and Cutbeard the barber were not saying exactly the same thing.

Truewit said, “Alas, sir, what a hope are we fallen from by this timing!”

Morose and Epicene had not consummated the marriage, but they had married.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The next is *conditio*: if you thought her freeborn and she proves to be a bondwoman or slave, there is impediment of estate and condition.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, but Master Doctor, those servitudes are *sublatae* — abolished — now among us Christians.”

By Christians, the disguised Mr. Otter meant Protestant Christians.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “By your favor, Master Parson \_\_\_”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “You shall give me leave, Master Doctor.”

“Nay, gentlemen,” Morose said. “You need not quarrel in discussing that impediment; it does not concern my case. Pass on to the third impediment.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “Well, then, the third is *votum* — vow: if either party has made a vow of chastity. But that practice, as Master Parson said of the other impediment, is taken away from among us, thanks be to Protestant church government.”

Catholic nuns and priests who have made a vow of celibacy cannot get married. Neither Morose nor Epicene was Catholic.

The disguised Cutbeard continued, “The fourth impediment is *cognatio*: if the persons be of kin, within the degrees of kinship that are incestuous.”

The disguised Mr. Otter asked Morose, “Aye, do you know what the degrees are, sir?”

“No, nor do I care, sir,” Morose said. “They offer me no comfort in the question, I am sure.”

He and Epicene were not biologically closely related.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “But there is a branch of this impediment that may apply, which is *cognatio spiritualis*. If you were her godfather, sir, then the marriage is incestuous.”

“That comment is absurd and superstitious, Master Doctor,” the disguised Mr. Otter said. “I cannot endure it.”

By “superstitious,” he meant “Catholic.”

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, “Are we not all brothers and sisters, and as much akin in that as godfathers and goddaughters?”

“Oh, me!” Morose said. “To end the controversy, let me say that I never was a godfather — I never was a godfather in my life, sir. Pass on to the next obstacle.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The fifth is *crimen adulterii*: the known case.”

The word “case” can mean vagina. “Known case” can mean sexually experienced vagina.

The disguised Cutbeard continued, “The sixth, *cultus disparitas*: difference of religion. Have you ever examined her about her religion?”

This society opposed Roman Catholicism.

“No,” Morose replied. “I would rather she were of none than be put to the trouble of it.”

“You may have it done for you, sir,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“By no means, good sir,” Morose said. “On to the rest. Shall you ever come to an end, do you think?”

“Yes, he has done half, sir,” Truewit said.

They had discussed six of the twelve impediments to marriage.

Truewit said to Mr. Otter and Cutbeard, “On to the rest.”

He then said to Morose, “Be patient and expect the end, sir.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The seventh is *vis*: if it were upon compulsion or force.”

“Oh, no, the marriage was too voluntary, on my part — too voluntary,” Morose said.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The eighth is *ordo*: if ever she has taken holy orders.”

“That’s superstitious, too,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

Again, by “superstitious,” he meant Catholic.

“It does not matter, Master Parson,” Morose said.

Epicene had never been a nun.

Morose continued, “I wish she would go into a nunnery yet!”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The ninth is *ligamen*: if you were married, sir, to any other before.”

“I thrust myself too soon into these fetters,” Morose answered.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The tenth is *publica honestas*: which is *inchoata quaedam affinitas*.”

*Publica honestas* means public decency. *Inchoata quaedam affinitas* means “(previous) unconsummated marriage.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, or *affinitas orta ex sponsalibus*, and is but *leve impedimentum* — a slight impediment.”

*Affinitas orta ex sponsalibus* means “relationship arising from a betrothal.”

“I feel no air of comfort blowing to me in all this,” Morose said.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The eleventh is *affinitas ex fornicatione*.”

*Affinitas ex fornicatione* means “relationship arising from fornication.” A person who had committed fornication could not marry a close relative of the person with whom he had committed fornication.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Which is no less *vera affinitas* — a true relationship — than the other, Master Doctor.”

The disguised Cutbeard said, “True, *quae oritur ex legitimo matrimonio.*”

*Quae oritur ex legitimo matrimonio* means “(no less a true relationship than that) which comes from legal marriage.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “You say right, venerable Doctor. And *nascitur ex eo, quod per conjugium duae personae efficiuntur una caro* —”

*Nascitur ex eo, quod per conjugium duae personae efficiuntur una caro* means “it follows from this, that through physical union two people are made one flesh.”

“Heyday, now they begin,” Morose said.

Now they were beginning to get far off the track Morose wanted them to follow.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “I conceive you, Master Parson. *Ita per fornicationem aequae est verus pater, qui sic generat* —”

*Ita per fornicationem aequae est verus pater, qui sic generat* means “thus he is equally a true father who begets through fornication.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “*Et vere filius qui sic generatur* —”

*Et vere filius qui sic generatur* means “and he is truly a son who is thus begotten.”

“What’s all this to me?” Morose asked.

Clerimont whispered to Truewit and Dauphine, “Now it grows warm.” The twelfth obstacle was of special interest to the three friends. If none of the first eleven obstacles applied to Morose’s marriage, perhaps the twelfth would.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “The twelfth and last impediment is *si forte coire nequibis*.”

*Si forte coire nequibis* means “If by chance you are unable to have sex.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, that is *impedimentum gravissimum*. It does utterly annul and annihilate, that. If you have *manifestam frigiditatem*, you are well, sir.”

*Impedimentum gravissimum* means “very serious impediment.”

*Manifestam frigiditatem* means “evident frigidity.”

The word “frigid” means “unable to be sexually aroused.” These days, we use the word to mainly refer to women, but this society used the word to also refer to impotent men.

“Why, there is comfort come at length, sir,” Truewit said. “Confess that you are a man who is unable to have sex, and she will sue to be divorced first.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, or if there be *morbis perpetuus et insanabilis*, such as paralysis, elephantiasis, or so —”

*Morbis perpetuus et insanabilis* means “a perpetual, continuous, and incurable disease.”

“Oh, but *frigidity* is the fairer way, gentlemen,” Dauphine said.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “You say the truth, sir.”

He then said, “And as it is in the canon, Master Doctor —”

“I conceive you, sir,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

Clerimont said to himself, “Before he finishes speaking.”

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, “— that a boy or child under years — underage — is not fit for marriage because he cannot *reddere debitum*. So your *omnipotentes* —”

*Reddere debitum* means “pay the debt,” or “fulfil the obligation.” In marriage, both partners are expected to engage in sex.

*Omnipotentes* means “omnipotent men.”

The disguised Mr. Otter had made a mistake in his Latin, which Truewit now pointed out.

He whispered to the disguised Mr. Otter, “Your ‘*impotentes*,’ you whoreson lobster.”

*Impotentes* means “impotent men.”

A lob is a dull-witted person.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Your *impotentes*, I should say, are *minime apti ad contrahenda matrimonium*.”

*Minime apti ad contrahenda matrimonia* means “least suited to making marriages.”

Mr. Otter had again made a mistake in his Latin, which Truewit again pointed out.

He whispered to the disguised Mr. Otter, “‘*Matrimonium?*’ We shall have most unmatrimonial Latin with you. Say ‘*matrimonia*,’ and be hanged.”

Mr. Otter’s Latin was unmatrimonial because words that should have had the same grammatical construction did not and so the words were not joined — married — together. *Contrahenda* is plural, and *matrimonium* is singular. *Contrahenda* and *matrimonia* are both plural, and so they belong together.

Dauphine whispered to Truewit, “You put them out, man.”



Dauphine was worried that Truewit's criticism would make Mr. Otter and Cutbeard forget their lines.

The disguised Mr. Cutbeard said, "But then there will arise a doubt, Master Parson, in our case, *post matrimonium*, that *frigiditate praeditus*. Do you conceive — understand — me, sir?"

*Post matrimonium* means "after marriage."

*Frigiditate praeditus* means "endowed with frigidity" or "a man who is frigid."

"Very well, sir," the disguised Mr. Otter answered.

"Who cannot *uti uxore pro uxore* may *habere eam pro sorore*," the disguised Mr. Cutbeard said.

He meant: A man who cannot keep a wife as a wife may keep her as a sister.

"Absurd, absurd, absurd, and absolutely heretical," the disguised Mr. Otter said.

"You shall pardon me, Master Parson," the disguised Mr. Cutbeard said. "I can prove it."

"You can prove a will, Master Doctor," the disguised Mr. Otter said. "You can prove nothing else."

To "prove a will" means to "show in court that a will is valid."

Mr. Otter was disguised as a minister, and he was making the point that Cutbeard, who was disguised as a lawyer, was out of his element here. This particular question required a religious ruling, not a legal ruling.

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, "Doesn't the verse of your own canon say, *Haec socianda vetant conubia, facta retractant* —"

The Latin means “These things forbid uniting in marriage, and after marriages have been made these things annul them.”

“I grant you that, but how do they *retractare*, Master Parson?” the disguised Cutbeard asked. “How do they annul them?”

“Oh, this is what I feared,” Morose said to himself.

“*In aeternum*, sir,” the disguised Mr. Otter said. “Forever.”

“That’s false in divinity, by your favor,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“It is false in humanity — secular learning — to say so,” the disguised Mr. Otter said. “Is he not *prorsus inutilis ad thorum*? Can he *praestare fidem datam*? I would like to know.”

*Prorsus inutilis ad thorum* means “utterly useless in bed.”

*Praestare fidem datam* means “fulfil the promise given.”

The Latin word *praestare* means “perform.” It can be broken into two words: *prae* and *stare*. This means “before” and “to stand.” To the Elizabethans and Jacobean, “to stand” meant “to have an erection.”

“Yes, but what if he does *convalescere*?” the disguised Cutbeard asked. “What if he recovers his potency?”

“He cannot *convalescere*,” the disguised Mr. Otter said. “It is impossible.”

Morose tried to leave, but Truewit stopped him.

Truewit said to him, “Nay, good sir, listen to the learned men, or else they’ll think you neglect them.”

The disguised Cutbeard asked, “What if he does *simulare* himself *frigidum, odio uxoris*, or so?”

He meant: What if he pretends to be frigid, out of hatred for his wife?

The disguised Mr. Otter replied, “I say he is *adulter manifestus* — a manifest adulterer — then.”

Dauphine said to Truewit and Clerimont, “They dispute it very learnedly, indeed.”

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, “And *prostitutor uxoris* — the prostituer of his wife — and this is positive.”

Morose said to Truewit, “Good sir, let me escape.”

“You will not do me that wrong, sir?” Truewit replied.

The disguised Mr. Otter continued, “And therefore if he is *manifeste frigidus* — manifestly frigid — sir —”

The disguised Cutbeard interrupted, “Aye, if he is *manifeste frigidus*, I grant you —”

“Why, that was my conclusion,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“And mine, too,” the disguised Cutbeard said.

Truewit said to Morose, “Nay, hear the conclusion, sir.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Then, *frigiditatis causa* —”

The disguised Cutbeard interrupted, “Yes, *causa frigiditatis* —”

“Oh, my ears!” Morose interrupted, moaning.

The disguised Mr. Otter said to Morose, “She may have *libellum divortii* — a petition for divorce — against you.”

“Aye, *divortii libellum* she will surely have —” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“Good echoes, forbear,” Morose said.

They did not need to say everything twice. Doing that hurt his ears twice as much.

“— if you confess that you are impotent,” the disguised Mr. Otter said, finishing for the disguised Cutbeard.

“Which I would do, sir —” the disguised Cutbeard said.

“I will do anything —” Morose said.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “And clear myself *in foro conscientiae* — in the forum of conscience —”

*In foro conscientiae* is a Latin term for “in the forum of conscience.” Some situations are a matter of conscience; they are not a matter of law.

The disguised Cutbeard interrupted, “Because you lack indeed —”

“Yet more!” Morose said.

The disguised Mr. Otter finished for the disguised Cutbeard, “— *exercendi potestate* — the power of consummation.”

#### — 5.4 —

Epicene, Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, Mistress Mavis, Mrs. Otter, Jack Daw, and La Foole entered the room.

“I will not endure it any longer,” Epicene said. “Ladies, I ask that you help me. This is such a wrong as never was offered to a poor bride before. On her marriage day, to have her husband conspire against her, and a couple of mercenary companions — contemptable fellows! — to be brought in for form’s sake to persuade a separation!”

She then said, “If you had blood or virtue — the proper lineage and manly excellence — in you, gentlemen, you would not allow such earwigs around a husband, or allow such scorpions to creep between man and wife.”

An earwig is an ear whisperer, an insinuating parasite.

“Oh, the variety and changes of my torment!” Morose said.

“Let them be cudgeled out of doors by our servants,” Madam Haughty said.

“I’ll lend you my footman,” Madam Centaur said to Epicene.

“We’ll have our men toss them in a blanket in the hall,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Just as there was tossed a man at our house, madam, for peeping in at the door,” Mrs. Otter said.

“That would give satisfaction, indeed,” Jack Daw said.

“Wait, ladies and gentlemen, you’ll hear us out before you proceed, won’t you?” Truewit asked.

“I’d have the bridegroom blanketed, too,” Mistress Mavis said.

“Begin with the bridegroom first,” Madam Centaur said.

“Yes, by my truth,” Madam Haughty said.

“Oh, mankind generation!” Morose said.

He was referring to the ladies, who had traits that are associated with men. This society looked down on masculine women. In this context, “mankind” meant “masculine.”

“Ladies, for my sake, don’t do that,” Dauphine said.

“Yes, for Sir Dauphine’s sake,” Madam Haughty said.

“He shall command us,” Madam Centaur said.

“He is as fine a gentleman of his inches, madam, as any is about the town,” La Foole said.

When La Foole referred to Dauphine’s “inches,” readers may be forgiven for thinking of the length of Dauphine’s penis rather than Dauphine’s tallness.

La Foole added about Dauphine, “And he wears as good colors when he wishes.”

La Foole had in mind heraldic colors, and so he was saying that Dauphine, a knight, wore his heraldic colors when he wished to.

Truewit said to Morose, “Be brief, sir, and confess your infirmity; she’ll be on fire to be quit of you; if she just hears that impotency named once, you shall not be able to entreat her to stay. She’ll flee from you like she would flee from one who had the marks of the plague upon him.”

Morose began, “Ladies, I must crave all your pardons —”

“Silence, ladies,” Truewit said.

Morose continued, “— for a wrong I have done to your whole sex in marrying this fair and virtuous gentlewoman —”

“Hear him out, good ladies,” Clerimont said.

Morose continued, “Being guilty of an infirmity that, before I conferred with these learned men, I thought I might have concealed —”

Truewit interrupted, “But now being better informed in his conscience by them, he is to declare it and give satisfaction by asking your public forgiveness.”

“I am no man, ladies,” Morose said.

“What!” said Madam Haughty, Madam Centaur, Mistress Mavis, Mrs. Otter, Jack Daw, and La Foole.

Morose continued, “I am utterly unable in nature, by reason of frigidity, to perform the duties or any the least office of a husband.”

Mistress Mavis said, “Now, curses upon him, prodigious — monstrous — creature!”

“Bridegroom uncarnate!” Madam Centaur said.

“Uncarnate” means “not carnate” or “not incarnate” — not of flesh and blood. Madam Centaur was saying that Morose lacked some flesh and blood that men normally had.

“And would you offer it to a young gentlewoman?” Madam Haughty said.

“Offer it” could mean “propose marriage” or “offer your impotence” or “present this insult.”

Mrs. Otter added, “A lady of her longings?”

In addition to sexual longings, Mrs. Otter meant ’longings, aka belongings or possessions. She also meant social longings, or social ambition.

Epicene said, “Tut, a device, a device, this is; it smells rankly, ladies. It is a completely fictional comment of his own.”

“Why, if you suspect that, ladies, you may have him examined,” Truewit said.

Jack Daw added, “As the custom is, by a jury of physicians.”

“Yes, indeed, it will be excellent,” La Foole said.

“Oh, me, must I undergo that?” Morose said.

“No, let women examine him, madam,” Mrs. Otter said. “We can do it ourselves.”

“Curses upon me — that is worse!” Morose said.

“No, ladies, you shall not need to,” Epicene said. “I’ll take him with all his faults.”

“This is worst of all!” Morose said.

“Why, then there is no divorce, Doctor, if she doesn’t consent to it?” Clerimont said.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “No, if the man be *frigidus* and impotent, it is *de parte uxoris* — on the behalf of the wife — that we grant *libellum divortii* — a petition of divorce — in the law.”

“Aye, it is the same in theology,” the disguised Mr. Otter said.

“Worse, worse than worst!” Morose moaned.

“Nay, sir, don’t be utterly disheartened,” Truewit said. “We have yet a small relic of hope left, as near as our comfort is blown out.”

He said, “Clerimont, produce your brace — pair — of knights.”

He said to the disguised Mr. Otter, “What was that, Master Parson, you told me *in errore qualitatis* — mistake as to disposition — just now?”

He then said quietly, “Dauphine, whisper to the bride that she must act as if she were guilty and ashamed.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, *in errore qualitatis* (which Master Doctor did forbear to urge) if she be found *corrupta*, that is, vitiated, deflowered, or



broken up, that was *pro virgine desponsa*, espoused for a maiden —”

The error in quality would possibly apply if Morose thought that Epicene was a virgin when he married her although she was actually not a virgin.

Hopeful, Morose asked, “What then, sir?”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “It does *dirimere contractum* and *irritum reddere*, too.”

*Dirimere contractum* means “cancel the contract,” and *irritum reddere* means “render it null and void.”

Truewit said to Morose, “If this is true, we are happy again, sir, once more. Here is an honorable pair of knights who shall affirm so much.”

Clerimont led forward Jack Daw and La Foole, both of whom had earlier claimed to have slept with Epicene.

“Pardon us, good Master Clerimont,” Jack Daw said.

“You shall excuse us, Master Clerimont,” La Foole said.

“Nay, you must make it good now, knights,” Clerimont replied, with his hand on the hilt of his sword. “There is no remedy; I’ll eat no words for you, nor no men. You know you spoke it to me?”

In other words, they had to speak up in public about their relationship with Epicene. Clerimont insisted.

“Is this gentlemanlike, sir?” Jack Daw said.

Truewit said quietly, “Jack Daw, Clerimont is worse than Sir Amorous. He is fiercer by a great deal.”

He then said quietly to La Foole, “Sir Amorous, beware! There are ten Jack Daws in this Clerimont.”

He meant that as a fighter Clerimont was as good as ten Jack Daws.

La Foole said out loud, "I'll confess it, sir."

"Will you, Sir Amorous?" Jack Daw asked. "Will you wound reputation?"

"I am resolved to do so," La Foole said.

"So should you be, too, Jack Daw," Truewit said.

He then whispered to him, "What should keep you off? She is only a woman, and in disgrace. Morose will be glad to hear what you have to say about her corruption."

Jack Daw whispered back, "Will he? I thought he would have been angry."

"You will dispatch the business, knights," Clerimont said. "It must be done, truly."

"Why, if it must, it shall, sir, they say," Truewit said. "They'll never go back."

He then said to Jack Daw and La Foole, "Do not tempt his patience."

Jack Daw said to Morose, "It is true, indeed, sir."

La Foole said to Morose, "Yes, I assure you that it is true, sir."

"What is true, gentlemen?" Morose said. "About what do you assure me?"

Jack Daw said, "That we have known your bride, sir —"

La Foole interrupted, "In good fashion. She was our mistress, or so —"

“Nay, you must be plain, knights, as you were to me,” Clerimont said.

A mistress is a loved one, but not necessarily one with whom the lover has slept.

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Aye, the question is, if you have *carnaliter* or no. Have you known her carnally?”

“*Carnaliter*?” La Foole said. “What else, sir?”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “It is enough: a plain nullity — a plain annulment.”

“I am ruined!” Epicene said. “I am ruined!”

“Oh, let me worship and adore you, gentlemen!” Morose said.

“I am ruined!” Epicene said again.

Morose said to her, “Yes, you have fallen into my hands, for which I thank these knights.”

He then said, “Master Parson, let me thank you otherwise.”

He gave the disguised Mr. Otter money.

“And have they confessed?” Madam Centaur asked.

“Now, curses upon them, the informers!” Mistress Mavis said.

Referring to Jack Daw and La Foole, Truewit said, “You see what creatures you may bestow your favors on, madams.”

Madam Haughty said to Epicene, “I would object to them as beaten knights, wench, and not good witnesses in law.”

In this society, the word “wench” could be used affectionately.

Jack Daw and La Foole were cowardly knights and so they were not good witnesses in a court of law. As knights, they were supposed to be brave; by being cowardly, they were not keeping their knightly vows.

“Poor gentlewoman, how she takes it!” Mrs. Otter said.

Madam Haughty said to Epicene, “Be comforted, Morose. I love you the better for it.”

“So do I, I assure you,” Madam Centaur said.

The disguised Cutbeard asked, “But gentlemen, you have not known her since *matrimonium*?”

“Not today, Master Doctor,” Jack Daw answered.

“No, sir, not today,” La Foole answered.

The disguised Cutbeard said, “Why, then, I say, for any sexual act before, the *matrimonium* — the marriage — is good and perfect, unless the worshipful bridegroom did before witnesses precisely demand if she were *virgo ante nuptias* — a virgin before marriage.”

“No, that he did not, I assure you, Master Doctor,” Epicene said.

“If he cannot prove that, it is *ratum conjugium* — a valid marriage — notwithstanding the previous events,” the disguised Cutbeard said. “And they do in no way *impedire* — impede — the marriage. And this is my sentence; this I pronounce.”

The disguised Mr. Otter said to Morose, “I am of Master Doctor’s resolution, too, sir, if you did not make that demand *ante nuptias* — before marriage.”

“Oh, my heart!” Morose moaned. “Will you break? Will you break? This is the worst of all worst worsts that hell could have devised! Marry a whore! And so much noise!”

“Come,” Dauphine said. “I see now plain confederacy and conspiracy in this doctor and this parson to hoodwink a gentleman. You seek his affliction. Please leave, companions.”

The disguised Mr. Otter and the disguised Cutbeard did not leave.

Dauphine then said to Clerimont and Truewit, “And, gentlemen, I begin to suspect that you are on their side.”

He then said to his uncle, Morose, “Sir, will it please you to hear what I have to say?”

“Oh, do not talk to me!” Morose said. “Don’t take from me the pleasure of dying in silence, nephew.”

“Sir, I must speak to you,” Dauphine said. “I have long been your poor despised kinsman, and many a hard thought has strengthened you against me; but now it shall appear whether I love you or your peace of mind, and whether I prefer them to all the world beside. I will not be long or complaining of grievous injuries to you, sir. If I free you of this unhappy match absolutely and instantly after all this trouble, and free you who are almost in your despair now —”

“It cannot be,” Morose interrupted. “It is impossible for you to do that.”

Dauphine continued, “— sir, if I arrange things so that you will never be troubled with a murmur of it more, what shall I hope for or deserve from you?”

“Oh, whatever you want, nephew!” Morose said. “You shall deserve me and have me.”

“Shall I have your favor entirely for myself, and shall I have your love hereafter?” Dauphine asked.

“You shall have that and anything else besides,” Morose said. “Make your own conditions. My whole estate is yours. Manage it; I will become your ward.”

“Nay, sir, I will not be so unreasonable,” Dauphine said.

“Will Sir Dauphine be my enemy, too?” Epicene asked.

Dauphine said to Morose, “You know I have been long a petitioner to you, uncle, that out of your estate, which is fifteen hundred pounds a year, you would allow me just five hundred during your life and assure that I will inherit the rest after your life ends, concerning which I have often by myself and my friends tendered you a document to sign, which you would never consent or incline to sign. If you please but to effect it now —”

Dauphine wanted a third of Morose’s income simply because he was related to Morose. Such people come out of the woodwork when someone wins a sweepstakes or a lottery.

“You shall have it, nephew,” Morose said. “I will do it, and more.”

Dauphine said, “If I don’t quit you immediately and forever of this encumbrance, you shall have power instantly, I declare before all these people, to revoke your act, and I will become the slave of whomever you will give me to forever.”

“Where is the writing?” Morose said. “I will sign it — that, or I will sign a blank paper, and you can write your own conditions on it.”

“Oh, me!” Epicene said. “I am a most unfortunate, wretched gentlewoman!”

Dauphine would get all; Epicene would get nothing.

“Will Sir Dauphine do this?” Madam Haughty asked.

Crying, Epicene said, “Good sir, have some compassion on me.”

“Oh, my nephew knows you, most likely,” Morose said to her. “Away, crocodile that weeps false tears!”

“Knows you” can mean “knows you sexually” or “sees through you.”

“He does it not, surely, without good ground,” Madam Centaur said.

She wanted to believe the best about Dauphine, whom she had propositioned.

Giving Morose the documents, Dauphine said, “Here, sir.”

“Come, nephew, give me the pen,” Morose said. “I will subscribe my signature to anything, and I will put my seal to whatever you want for my deliverance. You are my restorer.”

Morose signed and returned the documents, saying, “Here, I deliver it to you as my deed. If there is a word in it lacking or written with false orthography [spelling], I declare in advance that I will not take advantage.”

“Then here is your release, sir,” Dauphine said.

He pulled off Epicene’s peruke — her wig — revealing that Epicene was a boy.

“You have married a boy, a gentleman’s son whom I have brought up this half year at my great expense,” Dauphine said, “and brought up for this settlement that I have now made with you.”

He then asked the disguised Cutbeard, “What do you say, Master Doctor? This is *justum impedimentum*— a just impediment, I hope. It is *error personae* — mistaken identity?”

The disguised Mr. Otter said, “Yes, sir, *in primo gradu* — in the first degree.”

The disguised Cutbeard agreed: “*In primo gradu.*”

Dauphine pulled off Mr. Otter’s and Cutbeard’s false beards and disguises.

He then said to them, “I thank you, good Doctor Cutbeard and Parson Otter.”

He then said to Morose, “You are beholden to them, sir, who have taken these pains for you; and you are beholden to my friend, Master Truewit, who prepared them for the business by providing their disguises. Now you may go in and rest and be as private as you will, sir. I’ll not trouble you until you trouble me with your funeral, which I don’t care how soon it comes.”

In this matter, Dauphine was an asshole.

Morose exited.

Dauphine then said, “Cutbeard, I’ll make your lease good.”

Earlier, Morose had promised Cutbeard that the lease of his house would be free.

Dauphine then parodied his uncle: “Don’t thank me except by bowing, Cutbeard.”

Cutbeard bowed.

Dauphine said, “And Tom Otter, your princess shall be reconciled to you.”

He then looked at Clerimont and Truewit, neither of whom had known that Epicene was a boy, and said, “How are you now, gentlemen? Do you look at me?”

“A boy?” Clerimont asked.



“Yes,” Dauphine said. “Mistress Epicene.”

Truewit said, “Well, Dauphine, you have cheated your friends of the better half of the garland — the glory — by concealing this part of the plot! But I hope it may do you much good — you deserve it, lad.”

He then said, “And, Clerimont, for your unexpectedly bringing in these two to confession, wear my part of the garland freely.”

Next he said, “Nay, Sir Daw and Sir La Foole, you see the gentlewoman who has done you sexual favors! We are all thankful to you, and so should the womenkind here, especially for lying about her, although not lying with her! You meant to do so, I am sure. Were it not that we have fastened your lie upon you today in your own imagined persons, and so recently, this Amazon — Mrs. Otter — the champion of the sex, should beat you now soundly for the common slanders that ladies receive from such cuckoos as you are.”

Cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, something these two knights talked about metaphorically doing.

Truewit continued, “You are they who, when no merit or fortune can make you hope to enjoy their bodies, will yet lie with their reputations and make their fame suffer. Leave, you common moths of these and all ladies’ honors!”

Moths make holes; Jack Daw and La Foole had attempted to make metaphorical holes in the reputations of ladies.

Truewit continued, “Go, travel and work to make legs and faces — bows and smirks — and come home with some new matter to be laughed at. You deserve to live in an air as corrupted as that wherewith you feed rumor.”

Jack Daw and La Foole exited.

Truewit then said, “Madams, you are mute upon this new metamorphosis! But here stands she — Epicene — who has vindicated your fames.”

Referring to Jack Daw and La Foole, Truewit said, “Take heed of such *insectae* — insects — hereafter.”

Truewit deliberately used the incorrect feminine form of the Latin word for insects rather than the correct neuter form to insult the knights by referring to them as effeminate.

Truewit continued, “And let it not trouble you that you have revealed any mysteries — secrets — to this young gentleman. He is almost an adult, and he will make a good visitant — visiting lover — within the next twelve months. In the meantime we’ll all undertake for his secrecy, we who can speak so well of his silence.”

Truewit now spoke to the readers of this book: “Audience, if you like this comedy, rise cheerfully, and, now that Morose has gone in, clap your hands. It may be that the noise of clapping will cure him, or at least please him.”

## PROLOGUES

### Prologue #1

Truth says, of old the art of making plays  
Was to content the people; and their praise  
Was to the poet money, wine, and bays [fame / bay laurel  
wreaths].  
But in this age, a sect of writers are,  
That, only, for particular likings [narrow tastes] care,  
And will taste [try] nothing that is popular.  
With such we mingle neither brains nor breasts [share  
neither thoughts nor feelings];  
Our wishes, like to those [who] make public feasts,  
Are not to please the cook's taste, but the guests'.  
Yet, if those cunning palates [carping critics] hither come,  
They shall find guests' entreaty [entertainment], and good  
room;  
And though all relish not, sure there will be some,  
That, when they leave their seats, shall make them [the  
carping critics] say,  
Who [He who, i.e., Jonson] wrote that piece, could so have  
wrote [written] a play,  
But that he knew this was the better way.  
For, to present all custard [romantic content], or all tart  
[satiric content],  
And have no other meats [dishes, content in a play], to bear  
a part.

Or to want [lack] bread, and salt [stinging satire], were but  
course [pun on coarse] art.

The poet prays you then, with better thought

To sit; and, when his cates [delicacies] are all in brought,

Though there be none far-fet [far-fetched], there will dear-  
bought

Be fit for ladies: some for lords, knights, esquires;

Some for your waiting-wench, and city-wires [fashionable  
women who use wires in their ruffs and headdresses];

Some for your men, and daughters of Whitefriars.

Nor is it, only, while you keep your seat

Here, that his feast will last; but you shall eat

A week at ord'naries [inns], on his broken meat [fragments  
of food/leftovers]:

If his muse be true,

Who commends her[self] to you.

## Prologue #2

This is another Prologue occasioned by some person's impertinent exception:

The ends of all who for the scene do write

Are, or should be, to profit and delight;

And still [always] 't hath [it has] been the [subject of] praise of all best times,

So [As long as] persons were not touched [accused], to tax the crimes [to criticize folly].

Then, in this play which we present tonight,

And make the object of your ear and sight,

On forfeit of yourselves, think nothing true [real]

Lest so you make the maker [poet] to judge you;

[If you criticize the satire, it must be because the satire satirizes YOU.]

For he knows poet never credit gained

By writing truths, but things like truths well feigned.

If any yet will, with particular sleight

Of application, wrest [twist] what he doth write,

And that he meant or [either] him or her will say,

They make a libel which he made a play.

## NOTES (*Epicene*)

— 1.4 —

“ ... *I had as fair a gold jerkin on that day, as any was worn in the island voyage, or at Caliz, none dispraised; ...* ”

(1.4.47)

Source of above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 3.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor),  
Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012.

According to Oxford Reference, CALES is

*the name by which the Spanish port of Cadiz was known in Britain up to the beginning of the 17th century ...*

Source of Above:

Oxford Reference. Accessed 24 January 2021

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199205684.001.0001/acref-9780199205684-e-449>

A note in the Oxford World Classics edition of

Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist and Other Plays* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008]

says this:

*Calix*: a botched conflation of Cadiz and its English exonym, *Cales*, referring to the English capture of Cadiz in 1596.

Dictionary.com defines “exonym” in this way:

*a name used by foreigners for a place, as Florence for Firenze*

and

*a name used by foreigners to refer to a people or social group that the group itself does not use, as Germans for Deutsche.*

Source of above:

Dictionary.com. Accessed 24 January 2021

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/exonym>

— 2.3 —

The description of Jack Daw as a petit poet comes, of course, from Edgar Lee Masters’ *Spoon River Anthology*:

**Petit, the Poet**

*Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,*

*Tick, tick, tick, like mites in a quarrel—*

*Faint iambics that the full breeze wakens—*

*But the pine tree makes a symphony thereof.*

*Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,*

*Ballades by the score with the same old thought:*

*The snows and the roses of yesterday are vanished;*

*And what is love but a rose that fades?*

*Life all around me here in the village:*

*Tragedy, comedy, valor and truth,*

*Courage, constancy, heroism, failure—  
All in the loom, and oh what patterns!  
Woodlands, meadows, streams and rivers—  
Blind to all of it all my life long.  
Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,  
Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,  
Tick, tick, tick, what little iambs,  
While Homer and Whitman roared in the pines?*

— 3.1 —

Does Mr. Otter own any animals?

He is not likely to have a real bear, a real horse, or a real bull.

He is fond of bear-baitings and bull-baitings, and he is fond of his drinking cups capped with the artificial animal heads.

Sometimes, Mrs. Otter may seem to be speaking about real animals, but she is speaking about his drinking cups. She does not want him to display them in front of the Lady Collegiates.

For example:

*Is a bear a fit beast, or a bull, to mix  
in society with great ladies? (3.1.13-24)*

Source of above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*  
7 Volume Set. Volume 3.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor),  
Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).



Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Truewit tells his companions about the drinking cups in the previous scene (2.6). Mr. Otter has no bear, horse, or bull, but he does have the eccentricity of referring to his drinking cups as if they were real animals. Because of that, his wife does the same thing when she talks to him.

— 4.2 —

“*bona spes*”

(4.2.119)

Source of above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*  
7 Volume Set. Volume 3.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor),  
Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Cicero’s *In Catalinum (Against Catiline)* II.25 states that  
“well-founded hope [fights] against universal despair.”

The translation comes from this book:

M. Tullius Cicero. *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*,  
literally translated by C. D. Yonge, B. A. London. Henry G.  
Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden. 1856.

— 4.4 —

*A very shark. He set me i'the nick t'other night at primero.*

(4.4.132)

Source of above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 3.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor),  
Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a shark is “A worthless and impecunious person who gains a precarious living by sponging on others, by executing disreputable commissions, cheating at play, and petty swindling; a parasite; a sharper.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “to set in the nick” means “(perhaps) to cheat (a person) out of his or her money.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “nick” means:

*9. (a) In the game of hazard: a throw which is either the same as the main (mainn.2 1b), or has a fixed correspondence to it (see quot. 1797); a winning throw. Now chiefly historical. (b) In the game of craps: a natural.*”

This is the note in *The Routledge Anthology of Renaissance Drama* (2002) on page 309:

*set ... nick: unclear; Holdsworth suggests it means 'cleared me out', with La Foole muddling terms from Primero (a card game) with hazard (a dice game); with 'set' meaning bet against, and 'nick' being the winning score in hazard*

Of course, if Dauphine had cheated La Foole out of his money, then Dauphine’s purse would not be empty.

In my opinion, the passage is ambiguous:

1) If Dauphine bet against him (“set me”) when La Foole had the winning score (La Foole was “in the nick”), then

Dauphine could very well have an empty purse. La Foole is a fool, and Dauphine is not a fool, but when it comes to games of chance, fortune can sometimes favor fools. In that case, the word “shark” could mean “an impecunious fellow.”

2) But Dauphine could have been the one “in the nick” — he could have had the winning score. In that case, Dauphine would have money in his purse. Also in that case, La Foole is lying about Dauphine’s purse being empty. Also in that case, the word “shark” could mean “a cheat.” La Foole could be lying about that, too.

La Foole may be muddled because he is (possibly) using terms from two different games: one a game of dice (hazard) and the other a game of cards (primero). His language may be muddled and ambiguous because his brain is muddled.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* also defines “nick” in this way:

*III. A precise moment, location, etc., and related senses.*

*11. Chiefly in in (also at, upon) the (very) nick. The precise or exact point of time when something takes place or requires to be done; a critical or opportune juncture, a crucial moment; (in later use) esp. the latest possible moment.*

In that case, “He set me i’the nick t’other night at primero” means “he bet against me at the crucial moment.” This is ambiguous because it does not say who won the bet.

### — Entire Play —

These characters are not likable.

La Foole and Jack Daw are fools. So are Mr. and Mrs. Otter.

The Lady Collegiates are despicable.

Truewit has a great name [True-wit-and-intelligence], but he advocates date rape, and some of his opinions about women are despicable.

Dauphine basically is telling his uncle this:

You are my uncle. I am your nephew. You have money. I want money. Your income is 1,500 pounds per year. I want one-third of your income. Although you are capable of having a wife and fathering an heir, I want you to sign a document that will make me the heir of all your wealth.

Dauphine also is willing for Jack Daw to lose his left arm.

Clerimont, perhaps the most likeable character, says he is in love with all the Lady Collegiates. The actor playing Clerimont, however, may make it clear that he does not love all the Lady Collegiates; after all, Clerimont criticizes Lady Haughty in the first scene of the play. Clerimont also remains silent when Clerimont talks about maiming Jack Daw, but Truewit quickly makes it known that Jack Daw will not be physically maimed, perhaps so quickly that Clerimont did not have a chance to say anything.

Truewit, Dauphine, and Clerimont regard themselves as superior to the fools in the play and so they are willing to manipulate the fools into acting much more foolishly than they would on their own.

Truewit, Dauphine, and Clerimont may not be fools, but they are assholes.

Modern audiences are likely to wonder whether Morose's sensitivity to noise is the result of a medicine condition.

William Shakespeare's comedies tend to end in love and reconciliation. Ben Jonson's comedies tend to end in hate and discontent.

Ben Jonson could have titled this play *Fools and Assholes*.

**CHAPTER 9: Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor***

**CAST OF CHARACTERS (*Every Man in His Humor*)**

KNOWELL *an old gentleman*

EDWARD KNOWELL *his son*

BRAINWORM *the father's (Old Knowell's) serving-man*

MASTER STEPHEN *a country gull, Old Knowell's nephew and Edward's cousin. A gull is a simpleton.*

GEORGE DOWNRIGHT *a plain squire. A squire is a gentleman. Half-brother to Wellbred. Squire Downright is the older half-brother.*

WELLBRED *Squire Downright's half-brother and Dame Kitely's brother*

JUSTICE CLEMENT *an old merry magistrate*

ROGER FORMAL *his clerk, a young man*

THOMAS KITELY *a merchant*

DAME KITELY *Kitely's wife and Wellbred's sister and Squire Downright's sister. She must be half-sister to either Wellbred or Squire Downright, but the play doesn't identify which one.*

MISTRESS BRIDGET *Kitely's sister*

MASTER MATTHEW *the town gull*

THOMAS CASH *Kitely's serving-man*

OLIVER COB *a water-bearer. Water-bearers carried water from conduits to individual houses.*

TIB *his wife.*

CAPTAIN BOBADILL *a St. Paul's man. St. Paul's was a place to loiter and to meet people.*

SERVANTS *and* ATTENDANTS

**THE SCENE:** LONDON

**NOTES:**

This society believed that the mixture of four humors in the body determined one's temperament. One humor could be predominant. The four humors are blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. If blood is predominant, then the person is sanguine (active, optimistic). If yellow bile is predominant, then the person is choleric (bad-tempered). If black bile is predominant, then the person is melancholic (sad). If phlegm is predominant, then the person is phlegmatic (calm, apathetic, indolent).

A humor can be a personal characteristic. For example, Edward, Old Knowell's son, has the humor of being devoted to the acquisition of impractical knowledge such as poetry.

A humor can also be a fancy or a whim.

The word "humor" was an in-vogue word in Ben Jonson's day. He may have used it in his title for that reason.

According to Wikipedia, "Humorism began to fall out of favor in the 1850s with the advent of germ theory, which was able to show that many diseases previously thought to be humoral were in fact caused by pathogens."

Humorism has no part in modern medicine.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humorism#>

In this society, a person of higher rank would use "thou," "thee," "thine," and "thy" when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and

between equals.) A person of lower rank would use “you” and “your” when referring to a person of higher rank.

“Sirrah” was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

The year the play *Every Man in His Humor* was first performed was 1598, and that is likely the year that the play is set.

The reference to Tilley in 4.8 is to this book:

Tilley, M.P. *A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Centuries*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1950.



## ACT 1 (*Every Man in His Humor*)

### — 1.1 —

Old Knowell and Brainworm talked together outside his house in Hoxton. Knowell was an old gentleman, and Brainworm was his serving-man.

“A goodly — fair — day is coming, and a fresh morning!” Old Knowell said. “Brainworm, call up your young master. Bid him rise, sir. Tell him I have some business to employ him.”

The young master was Edward, Old Knowell’s son.

“I will, sir, at once,” Brainworm said.

“But listen, sirrah,” Old Knowell said. “If he is studying, don’t disturb him.”

“Very well, sir,” Brainworm said.

He exited to carry out his errand.

Alone, Old Knowell said to himself:

“How happy now I should esteem myself if I could by any means wean the boy from one vain course of study he is devoted to! He is a scholar, if a man may trust the liberal, generous voice of reputation in her report. He is of good reputation in both our universities, Oxford and Cambridge, both of which have favored him with degrees. But their indulgence must not produce in me a foolish, doting opinion that he cannot err.

“I myself was once a student and, indeed, I was fed with the self-same humor he is now, dreaming on nothing but idle poetry, that fruitless and unprofitable art, good to none, but least of all to its professors and practitioners, which then I thought the mistress and reigning authority of all knowledge.

“But since then, time and the truth have awakened my judgment, and reason has taught me better to distinguish the vain from the useful learnings.”

Like many people, Old Knowell wanted knowledge to be practical. He did not believe in *ars gratia artis*: art for the sake of art. His son, Edward, however, reveled in art.

Master Stephen, who was Old Knowell’s nephew and Edward’s first cousin, entered the scene. This society, however, used the word “cousin” to mean a close relative. For example, Old Knowell now used the word to refer to Master Stephen, who was his nephew.

“Cousin Stephen!” Old Knowell said. “What is the news with you that brings you here so early?”

“Nothing but only to come to see how you are, uncle,” Master Stephen said.

“That’s kindly done,” Old Knowell said. “You are welcome, coz.”

The word “coz” meant “cousin” and “relative” and sometimes “close friend.”

“Aye, I know that, sir,” Master Stephen said. “I would not have come otherwise. How is my cousin Edward, uncle?”

“Oh, he is well, coz,” Old Knowell said. “Go in and see him. I suspect he is barely stirring yet.”

“Uncle, before I go in, can you tell me whether he has any book of the sciences of hawking and hunting?” Master Stephen said. “I would like to borrow it.”

“Why, I hope you will not be a-hawking now, will you?” Old Knowell said.

The hunting season was almost over.

“No, wusse — of course — but I’ll practice in preparation for next year, uncle,” Master Stephen said. “I have bought myself a hawk and a hood and bells and all. I lack nothing but a book to teach me how to train and care for it.”

Hawks were blindfolded with a hood that was taken off so they could hunt. Bells attached to their legs made sounds to help hunters keep track of the hawk’s location.

“Oh, that is most ridiculous!” Old Knowell said.

“Nay, look now, you are angry, uncle,” Master Stephen said. “Why, you know, if a man does not have knowledge of the hawking and hunting terminology nowadays, I’ll not give a rush for him.”

A rush is a reed; it is of little worth.

Master Stephen continued, “The hawking and hunting terminology is more studied than the Greek or the Latin. He is qualified for no gallant’s company without that knowledge; and, by gad’s lid, I scorn, aye, so I do, to be a consort for every humdrum, commonplace fellow.”

“Gad’s lid” means “By God’s eyelid.” It is an oath.

Soon Master Stephen would say, “Slid,” which means “By God’s eyelid.” It is another oath.

This society was against blasphemy and therefore invented these oaths.

Master Stephen continued:

“Hang them, the scoundrels! There’s nothing worthwhile in them in the world.

“Why do you talk about it? Because I dwell at Hoxton, shall I keep company with none but the archers of Finsbury, or the citizens who come hunting ducks with water-spaniels to Islington Ponds?

“A fine jest, in faith! ’Slid, a gentleman must show himself like a gentleman. Uncle, I hope that you are not angry. I know what I have to do, I trust. I am no novice.”

He wanted to be a fashionable young fellow.

Old Knowell replied:

“You are a prodigal, absurd coxcomb — a fool. Bah! Nay, never look at me with that expression; it’s I who am speaking.

“Take it as you will, sir. I’ll not flatter you. Haven’t you yet found means enough to waste that which your friends have left you, but you must go and cast away your money on a kite and don’t know how to keep it when you have purchased it?”

A kite is a bird of prey that was regarded as having less worth than a hawk. A proverb stated, “It is impossible to make a good hawk of a kite.”

Old Knowell continued:

“Oh, it’s ‘comely’! This will make you a gentleman!

“Well, cousin, well, I see you are completely past hope of all reclaim.

“Aye, so, now you are told of it, you look another way.”

“What would you have me do?” Master Stephen asked.

Old Knowell replied:

“What would I have you do? I’ll tell you, kinsman:

“Learn to be wise and practice how to thrive, I would have you do that, and not to spend your money on every bauble — trifle — that you fancy, or every foolish brain-notion that humors you.

“I would not have you invade each place, nor thrust yourself on all societies, until men’s affections or your own desert and merit would worthily invite you to your social rank.

“He who is so heedless in his behavior often sells his reputation at a cheap market.

“Nor would I have you melt away yourself in flashy, showy finery, lest, while you affect to make a blaze of gentlemanly behavior to the world, a little puff of scorn would extinguish it and leave you like an ill-smelling wick, whose property — its essential quality — is only to offend.”

Master Stephen was melting away his wealth by spending it on flashy, showy clothing like a candle melting away by spending its wick and wax on a blaze of light.

Knowell continued:

“I’d have you sober and contain yourself, so that your sail isn’t bigger than your boat.

“I would have you instead moderate your expenses now at first, so that you may keep the same proportion always.

“Nor would I have you stand so much on and assert your gentility, which is an airy and mere borrowed thing from dead men’s dust and bones, and none of yours unless you make or hold it.”

Old Knowell did not want his nephew, Master Stephen, to spend all his money now on acting like a wealthy gentleman. Rather, it would be best to moderate his expenses now so that he would have money to live on throughout his life.

Hearing a noise, Old Knowell asked, “Who is coming here?”

— 1.2 —

A servant entered the scene and said, “God save you, gentlemen.”

Master Stephen said:

“Nay, we do not stand much on our gentility, friend.”

“Yet you are welcome, and I assure you that my uncle here is a man with an income of a thousand pounds a year, his income from Middlesex land. He has but one son in all the world; I am his next heir after his son, according to the common law, Master Stephen, as simple as I stand here, if my cousin should die, as there’s hope he will.”

By “simple,” Master Stephen meant “a direct inheritor,” but readers may be forgiven if they think that Master Stephen is simple-minded.

Most people would not talk about the hope of a cousin dying, and certainly not in the presence of the cousin’s father.

Master Stephen continued, “I have a pretty considerable living of my own, too, besides, close by here.”

A living is property from which the owner receives income.

The servant replied, “In good time, sir.”

“In good time” means “certainly,” but the phrase can be used ironically, as if saying, “Yeah, whatever.”

Master Stephen thought that the servant was saying the phrase ironically and therefore mocking him.

““In good time, sir?”” Master Stephen said. “Why, and in very good time, sir. You do not flout and mock me, friend, do you?”

“Not I, sir,” the servant said.

“Not you, sir?” Master Stephen said. “You had best not be, sir. If you should, here are those who can perceive it, and that quickly, too. Bah. And they can give it again soundly, too, if need be.”

“Why, sir, let this satisfy you,” the servant said. “In good faith, I had no such intent to mock you.”

“Sir, if I thought you had, I would talk with you, and that immediately,” Master Stephen said.

The “talking” would consist of insults.

“Good Master Stephen, so you may, sir, at your pleasure,” the servant said.

“And so I would, sir, my ‘good,’ saucy fellow, if you were outside of my uncle’s grounds, I can tell you — though I do not stand upon my gentility, neither, in it,” Master Stephen said.

If Master Stephen were to challenge the servant to a fight while the servant was a visitor on Old Knowell’s property, that would be an insult to Old Knowell.

“Cousin, cousin, will this never be left off?” Old Knowell said. “Will it never end?”

Master Stephen said, “Whoreson, base fellow! A menial serving-man! By this cudgel, if it were not for shame, I would —”

It would be a disgrace for a young gentleman such as Master Stephen to fight a servant. Higher-born people did not fight lower-born people — they were too proud to do so.

Old Knowell said:

“What would you do, you peremptory gull — you utter fool? If you cannot be quiet, get away from here! You see that the honest man conducts himself modestly towards you, giving no reply to your unseasonable, immature quarrelling and rude name-calling. And still you are in a huff, with a kind of bearing as void of intelligence as of humanity.

“Go, get yourself inside! Before heaven, I am ashamed that thou have a kinsman’s claim on me — I am ashamed that thou have a share of my family’s identity.”

His nephew was disgracing the family.

Master Stephen exited.

The servant said, “I ask you, sir, is this Master Knowell’s house?”

“Yes, by the Virgin Mary, it is, sir,” Old Knowell replied.

“I should inquire for a gentleman here, one Master Edward Knowell,” the servant said. “Do you know any such person, sir, I ask you?”

“I should forget myself else, sir,” Knowell replied.

“Are you the gentleman?” the servant asked, removing his hat. “I ask your pardon, sir. I was required by a gentleman in the City, as I rode out at this end of the town, to deliver to you this letter, sir.”

He gave Old Knowell a letter.

“To me, sir?” Old Knowell said. “What do you mean? Please, remember your courtesy.”

The servant’s courtesy was delivering the letter. By “Please, remember your courtesy,” Old Knowell was saying “Please, remember who asked you to deliver the letter.”

Old Knowell read out loud:

*“To his most selected friend, Master Edward Knowell.”*

He then asked, “What might the gentleman’s name be, sir, who sent it?”

Looking up and seeing that the servant had taken off his hat, he said, “Nay, please, be covered — put your hat on.”



In this society, people customarily wore hats indoors.

“One Master Wellbred, sir,” the servant said, putting on his hat.

“Master Wellbred!” Old Knowell said. “He is a young gentleman, isn’t he?”

The servant replied, “The same, sir. Master Kately married his sister — Kately is a rich merchant in the Old Jewry.”

The Old Jewry was a street in the City — central London — where many well-off Jews had lived before the 1290 expulsion of Jews from England.

“You say very true,” Old Knowell said.

He then called for his own servant, “Brainworm!”

Brainworm entered the scene and said, “Sir?”

“Make this honest friend a drink here,” Old Knowell said.

Giving a visitor a drink before he left was good etiquette.

He said to the servant who had brought him the letter, “Please, go inside.”

The servant and Brainworm went inside Old Knowell’s house.

Alone, Old Knowell said to himself:

“This letter is directed to my son. Yet I am Edward Knowell, too, and may with the safe conscience of good manners use the fellow’s error to my satisfaction.

“Well, I will break open the seal of the letter and read it — old men are curious — if only for the sake of the style and the phrase, to see if both live up to the praises of my son, who has almost become the idolater of this young Wellbred.”

He opened the letter and said, “What have we here? What’s this?”

The letter was written with much slang of the time. It also referred to Edward Knowell by the nickname “Ned.”

Old Knowell read the letter out loud:

*“Why, Ned, I ask thee, have thou forsworn all thy friends in the Old Jewry, or do thou think us all still Jews who inhabit there?”*

This society was anti-Semitic.

Old Knowell continued reading the letter out loud:

*“If thou do, come over and just see our frippery; exchange an old shirt for a whole smock with us.”*

A frippery is a secondhand clothes shop.

Literally, the letter invited Edward Knowell to change his clothes.

Figuratively, the “old shirt” was Old Knowell, and the “whole smock” was a healthy woman with no venereal disease.

Old Knowell continued reading the letter out loud:

*“Do not conceive that antipathy between us and Hoxton as was between Jews and hogs’ flesh.”*

An earlier version of the name “Hoxton” was “Hogs-den.”

Old Knowell continued reading the letter out loud:

*“Leave thy vigilant father alone, to number and count over his green apricots of the north-west wall evening and morning. If I had been his son, I would have saved him the labor long since, if taking in all the young wenches who pass*

*by at the back door, and coddling every kernel of the fruit for them, would have served.”*

The writer of the letter, Wellbred, would have used the apricots to entice young wenches passing by to let him know or “know” (Biblically) them better. The word “coddling” meant stewing, but he was punning on “cuddling” and on “codling,” which means a scrotum. “Cod” means “bag” or scrotum.

Old Knowell continued reading the letter out loud:

*“But prithe come over to me quickly, this morning; I have such a present for thee (our Turkey Company never sent the like to the Grand Signor)!”*

The Turkey Company traded with the Turkish Empire and sent lavish gifts to the Sultan.

Old Knowell continued reading the letter out loud, which described the present, which was a couple of fools:

*“One is a rhymers, sir, of your own batch of loaves, your own yeast, but who does think himself poet-major of the town, willing to be shown and worthy to be seen. The other — I will not venture his description with you until you come because I would have you make your way hither with an appetite.”*

Events would show that he was talking about Master Matthew (a wanna-be poet) and Captain Bobadill (a boastful soldier who spent much time loitering at St. Paul’s).

Old Knowell continued reading the letter out loud:

*“If the worst of them be not worth your journey, draw your bill of charges as unconscionable as any Guildhall verdict will give it to you, and you shall be allowed your viaticum.”*

A *viaticum* is money for traveling expenses. Guildhall legal verdicts were often unjust, and so the *viaticum* would be a greater sum than was reasonable.

Old Knowell read the close of the letter out loud:

*“From the Windmill.”*

The Windmill is a tavern in Old Jewry.

Old Knowell then said to himself:

“From the bordello, the Spital, or Pict-hatch, this letter might have come as well as from a tavern!”

A bordello is a brothel.

“Spital” meant a hospital that treated venereal disease.

Pict-hatch was a place of low repute with many prostitutes in London.

The letter’s content was about leaving the old man Knowell and instead chasing skirts and laughing at fools.

Old Knowell continued:

“Is this Wellbred the man my son has so sung his praises as having the happiest and most felicitous intelligence and the choicest brain the times have sent forth to us?

“I don’t know what he may be in the arts, nor what in schools and studies, but surely for his manners I judge him to be a profane and dissolute wretch, worse by possession of such great good gifts, yet being the master of so loose a spirit.

“Why, what unhallowed ruffian would have written in such a scurrilous manner to a friend?

“Why should he think I count my apricots, or play the Hesperian dragon with my fruit, to watch over it so that it is not stolen?”

Golden apples grew in the garden of the Hesperides, mythological immortal nymphs who lived in the west and took care of the garden. A dragon guarded the apples.

Old Knowell continued:

“Well, my son, I would have thought you would have had better judgment in making your selection of your companions than to have taken on trust such petulant, jeering gamesters who can spare no argument or subject from their jest. Such gamesters mock everyone and everything. But I perceive affection makes a fool of any man too much the father.”

Fathers love their sons and for that reason often think too highly of the sons — they often think that their sons are better than their sons really are.

Old Knowell called, “Brainworm!”

Brainworm entered the scene and said, “Sir?”

“Has the fellow who brought this letter gone?” Old Knowell asked.

“Yes, sir, a pretty while ago,” Brainworm replied.

“And where’s your young master?”

“In his bedchamber, sir.”

“Did he speak with the fellow?”

“No, sir, he didn’t see him.”

Old Knowell gave Brainworm the letter and said, “Take this letter and deliver it to my son, but don’t tell him that I have opened it, on your life.”

“Oh, Lord, sir, if I were to tell him, that would be a jest indeed!” Brainworm said.

Indeed, it could lead to comedy.

He exited, carrying the letter.

Alone again, Old Knowell said to himself:

“I am resolved I will not stop my son’s journey into the City, nor practice any violent way to hinder the unbridled course of youth in him, because, when restrained, the course of youth grows more impatient, and in its nature, similar to the eager greyhound of good breed and high spirits, which, even just a little while kept from its game, turns its head and leaps up at its holder’s throat.”

Keeping youths from doing what youths do makes them rebel, sometimes violently.

Old Knowell continued:

“There is a way of winning more by love, and urging of the modesty, than fear. Force works on servile natures, not the free. Those who are compelled to goodness may be good, but they are good only because they are compelled, whereas others, drawn by softness and example, form a habit of acting correctly.

“Then, if they stray, simply warn them, and the same thing they should have done for virtue, they’ll do for shame.”

— 1.3 —

Edward Knowell, holding the letter, which he had not yet read, talked with Brainworm.

“Did he open it, do thou say?” Edward Knowell asked.

“Yes, I give you my word, sir, and he read the contents,” Brainworm answered.

“That scarcely contents me — it hardly makes me happy,” Edward Knowell said. “What expression, I ask thee, did he make while reading it? Was he angry or pleased?”

“Nay, sir,” Brainworm said. “I didn’t see him read it, nor open it, I assure Your Worship.”

“No?” Edward Knowell said. “How do thou know then that he did either?”

Brainworm answered, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, because he charged me on my life to tell nobody that he opened it. If he had not told me that, I would not have known that to tell you.”

“That’s true,” Edward Knowell said. “Well, I thank thee, Brainworm.”

Edward Knowell began to read the letter.

Master Stephen entered the room, unnoticed by Edward Knowell.

Master Stephen said, “Oh, Brainworm, didn’t thou see a fellow here in a what-sha’-call-him jacket? He brought my uncle a letter just now.”

“Yes, I did, Master Stephen,” Brainworm said. “What about him?”

“Oh, I have such a mind — a desire — to beat him! Where is he? Can thou tell me?”

Brainworm said to himself, “In faith, he is not of that mind — opinion.”

Master Stephen wanted to beat the servant, but Brainworm knew, of course, that the servant would not want to be beaten. Or, perhaps, he knew that Master Stephen liked to talk about fighting but not actually fight.

Brainworm said out loud, “He has gone, Master Stephen.”

“Gone?” Master Stephen said. “Which way? When did he go? How long ago?”

“He has ridden away from here,” Brainworm said. “He got on a horse at the street door.”

“And I stayed in the fields!” Master Stephen said. “Whoreson scanderbag — swaggering — rogue! Oh, I wish that I just had a horse to fetch him back again!”

“Scanderbag” was a reference to Albanian nobleman George Castriot’s Turkish name: Iscander Beg, aka Alexander the Governor, a complimentary reference to Alexander the Great. Master Stephen regarded him as swaggering, but the Albanians regarded him as a heroic patriot who successfully led a rebellion against the Turks.

“Why, you may have my mistress’ gelding to serve your longing, sir,” Brainworm said.

“But I have no boots,” Master Stephen said. “That’s the spite of it.”

Riding boots are long to protect the legs from chafing. Lack of riding boots was also an excuse for Master Stephen to avoid riding after the servant and fighting him.

Brainworm began, “Why, a fine wisp of hay rolled hard, Master Stephen —”

Bundled hay could be tied to the inside of a leg to protect it while riding without riding boots. Farmers sometimes did this.

“No, in faith, it’s no boot — no avail — to follow him now. Let him just go, and let him hang,” Master Stephen said. “I ask thee, help to truss me a little. He does so vex me —”



Master Stephen had loosened the laces connecting his tights to his jacket. Now he needed to be trussed — laced — up again.

“You’ll be worse vexed when you are trussed, Master Stephen,” Brainworm said.

A fowl’s legs and wings are trussed — tied — so it can be cooked without drying out those parts of the meat.

Brainworm continued, “You had best stay unlaced, and walk around until you have cooled off. Your choler may founder you else.”

“Choler” is “anger.”

The word “choler” sounded much like “collar,” aka yoke. An improperly yoked animal could founder, aka stumble.

“By my faith, and so I will, now thou tell me that,” Master Stephen said.

Thinking about boots made him think of legs, and so he asked, “How do thou like my leg, Brainworm?”

Were his legs attractive?

“A very good leg, Master Stephen,” Brainworm said, “but the woolen stocking does not commend it so well.”

“Foh!” Master Stephen said, out of patience. “The stockings are good enough, now summer is coming on, for the dust. I’ll have a pair of silk stockings in preparation for winter, for when I go to dwell in the town. I think my leg would show well in a silk hose.”

“Believe me, Master Stephen, they would, rarely well,” Brainworm said.

“Rarely” can mean 1) splendidly, or 2) seldomly.

“Seriously, I think it would,” Master Stephen said. “I have a reasonably good leg.”

“You have an excellent good leg, Master Stephen, but I cannot stay to praise it longer now, and I am very sorry for it,” Brainworm said.

He could be very sorry for the lack of time to praise the leg, or he could be very sorry for the leg, despite having politely praised it.

“Another time will serve, Brainworm,” Master Stephen said. “Gramercy for this.”

*Grand merci* is French for “many thanks.”

Brainworm exited.

Having read the letter, Edward Knowell laughed.

Master Stephen said to himself, “By God’s eyelid, I hope he isn’t laughing at me. If he is —”

Still unaware of Master Stephen’s presence, Edward Knowell said to himself, “Here was a letter indeed, to be intercepted by a man’s father, and do him good with him! He cannot but think most ‘virtuously’ both of me and the sender, surely, who makes the painstaking costermonger — fruit seller — of him in our ‘Familiar Epistles.’”

Some collections of published letters by such ancient writers as Cicero and Pliny the Younger were titled *Epistolae ad Familiares*, or *Letters to Friends*, aka *Familiar Epistles*.

Edward Knowell knew that after reading the letter, his father must have a poor opinion of the letter-writer.

Edward Knowell continued talking to himself:

“Well, if my father read this with patience, I’ll be gelt, and troll ballads for the music seller Master John Trundle, yonder, the rest of my mortality.”

Italian boys were sometimes gelt — castrated — before puberty to preserve their high singing voices.

The rest of Edward Knowell’s mortality was the rest of his life.

Edward Knowell continued talking to himself:

“It is true and likely my father may have as much patience as another man, for he takes much medicine, and often taking medicine makes a man very patient — and a patient.

“But I wish that your packet, Master Wellbred, had arrived at him in such a minute of his patience; then we would have known the end of it, which now is doubtful, and threatens —”

He noticed the presence of Master Stephen and said to himself:

“My ‘wise’ cousin! So then, I’ll furnish our feast with one gull more toward the mess — a group of four. He writes to me of a brace, aka pair, of fools, and here’s another fool in my room — that’s three fools. Oh, for a fourth!

“Lady Fortune, if ever thou shall use thine eyes, I entreat thee —”

Lady Fortune is often depicted as being blindfolded. Edward Knowell wanted her help in finding a fourth fool. If Edward Knowell were to find a fourth fool, that would be worth her seeing.

Master Stephen said to himself, “Oh, now I see who he laughed at: He laughed at somebody in that letter. By this good light, if he had laughed at me —”

Edward Knowell said out loud, “How are you now, cousin Stephen, melancholy?”

“Yes, a little,” Master Stephen said. “I thought you had laughed at me, cousin.”

“Why, what if I had, coz?” Edward Knowell said. “What would you have done?”

“I swear by this light, I would have told my uncle,” Master Stephen said.

“If you would have told your uncle, then I say that I did laugh at you, coz,” Edward Knowell said.

“Did you, indeed?” Master Stephen asked.

“Yes, indeed,” Edward Knowell said.

“Why, then —” Master Stephen began.

“What, then?” Edward Knowell asked.

“I am satisfied,” Master Stephen said. “It is sufficient.”

“Why, be so, gentle coz,” Edward Knowell said. “And, I ask you, let me entreat a courtesy of you. I am sent for this morning by a friend in the Old Jewry to come to him; to get there is just crossing over the fields to Moorgate.”

Moorgate was a gate in the City wall. Hoxton was close to Moorgate, just across some fields.

Edward Knowell asked, “Will you keep me company? I protest, it is not to draw you into bond, or any plot against the state, coz.”

“I protest” meant “I assure you.”

Being drawn into bond meant assuming someone’s debt. In this instance, it could mean paying Edward Knowell’s and

his friend's bar tab, something that Edward was saying would not happen.

Master Stephen answered, "Sir, that doesn't matter, as it were; you shall command me to go twice as far as Moorgate to do you good in such a matter. Do you think I would leave you? I protest —"

Moorgate was perhaps a mile away. Master Stephen was saying that he would walk to Moorgate and back even if it were two miles away.

"No, no, you shall not protest, coz," Edward Knowell said.

"By my fackins, but I will, by your leave," Master Stephen said. "I'll protest more to my friend than I'll speak of at this time."

"Fackins" was a rustic word for "faith." Master Stephen was a rural fellow who had come to London.

"You speak very well, coz," Edward Knowell said.

"Nay, not so, neither, you shall pardon me," Master Stephen said, "but I speak to serve my turn."

By "my turn," he meant "my purpose," but Edward Knowell now punned on the word "turn."

A trip to and from a water conduit was a turn. Water-bearers filled their tankards with water and carried them to houses. They were paid by the turn. Gentlemen such as Edward Knowell and Master Stephen did not work as water-bearers.

"Your turn, coz?" Edward Knowell said. "Do you know what you say? A gentleman of your social rank, talents, bearing, and consequence, to talk of your 'turn' in this company, and to me alone, like a tankard-bearer at a conduit?"

"This company" refers to you, the readers of this book.

Edward Knowell continued:

“Fie! You are a wight — a person — who hitherto his every step has left the stamp of a great foot behind him, as every word has left the savor of a strong spirit behind him!”

“A strong spirit” could mean 1) “much courage,” or 2) “strong breath or mouth odor,” such as alcoholic bad breath.

Edward Knowell continued:

“And he, this man, by whom I mean you, Master Stephen, is so graced, gilded, or, to use a more fitting metaphor, so tin-foiled by nature, as not ten housewives’ pewter made ready for a good time — a celebration — shows more bright to the world than he! And is he — as I said last, so I say again, and still shall say it — is this man to conceal such real ornaments as these, and shadow their glory and obscure their brilliance as a milliner’s wife does her wrought stomacher with a smoky lawn or a black cyprus?”

“Foil” is a piece of metal placed under a diamond to increase its brilliance. Some people deserve to have precious-metal foil to set off their brilliance; for Master Stephen, tin foil would do.

A milliner sold fancy fabrics such as lawn and cypress as well as such items as wrought stomachers — embroidered coverings for the chest.

Edward Knowell was saying that Master Stephen ought not to hide his talents the way that a milliner’s wife could hide her embroidered stomacher with fabric such as smoky lawn or black cyprus.

Edward Knowell continued:

“Oh, coz, it cannot be justified; don’t try to do it! Drake’s old ship at Deptford may sooner circle the world again. “

Sir Francis Drake's ship *The Golden Hind* was anchored at Deptford. In 1580, it had returned to England after circumnavigating the world.

Edward Knowell continued:

“Come, don't wrong the quality of your desert and merit with looking downward, coz, but hold up your head, so; and let the Idea — the perfect pattern — of what you are be portrayed in your face, so that men may read in your physiognomy, aka face: ‘Here within this place is to be seen the true, rare, and accomplished monster, or miracle, of nature’ — which is all one. What do you think of this, coz?”

Actually, to be the true, rare, and accomplished *monster* of nature is not a good thing.

“Why, I do think of it, and I will be more proud and melancholy and gentleman-like than I have been, I'll guarantee you,” Master Stephen said.

“Why, that's resolute, Master Stephen,” Edward Knowell replied.

Having “praised” Master Stephen and puffed up his pride, Edward Knowell said to himself, “Now, if I can but hold him up to his height of pride, as it is happily begun, it will do well for an example of suburb humor.”

Pride goes before a fall. People with undeserved pride fall easily.

Edward Knowell continued talking to himself:

“We may perhaps have a match with the city and play Master Stephen against a city gull for forty pounds.”

Edward Knowell wanted to compare a country fool with a city fool (who would turn out to be Master Matthew). He could even make a wager and bet forty pounds that Master

Stephen, the country fool, would prove to be a bigger fool than the city fool.

Edward Knowell said out loud, “Come, coz.”

“I’ll follow you,” Master Stephen said.

“Follow me?” Edward Knowell said. “You must go before me.”

The person with the higher social standing had precedence — that is, he would go first.

Edward Knowell and Master Stephen were both young gentlemen, but Edward Knowell was continuing to puff up Master Stephen’s pride.

“If I must, I will,” Master Stephen said.

He then said, “I ask you to show me the way, good cousin.”

The person who knew the way to Moorgate should be the one to go first and lead the way. Young Stephen should have insisted that Edward Knowell go first.

— 1.4 —

Standing in front of a building and holding a book, Master Matthew said to himself, “I think this is the house.”

He knocked and called, “What ho!”

Cob, the water-carrier whose house it was, opened the door and said, “Who’s there? Oh, Master Matthew! I give Your Worship good morning.”

“What, Cob?” Master Matthew said, surprised to see him. “How are thou, good Cob? Do thou live here, Cob?”

“Aye, sir, I and my lineage have kept a poor house here in our days.”



“To keep a good house” means “to have lots of food and drink.” It also means to rent rooms.

“Thy lineage, Monsieur Cob?” Master Matthew said. “What lineage, what lineage?”

“Why, sir, an ancient lineage and a princely one,” Cob said. “My ancestry came from a king’s belly, no worse man; and yet no man neither — by Your Worship’s leave, I did lie in that — but Herring, the king of fish (I proceed from his belly), one of the monarchs of the world, I assure you. I fetch my pedigree from the first red herring that was broiled in Adam and Eve’s kitchen, by the harrots’ books.”

Red herring is smoked herring.

By “harrots’ books,” Cob meant “heralds’ books.”

Cob continued, “The herring’s cob was my great-great-mighty-great grandfather.”

A “cob” is a head.

Cob was saying that according to the heraldry books, the head of Cob’s family was the head of the first herring Adam and Eve broiled and ate. In fact, it was his “great-great-mighty-great grandfather.”

“Why mighty?” Master Matthew asked. “Why mighty, I ask thee?”

“Oh, it was a mighty while ago, sir, and a mighty great cob,” Cob said.

“How do thou know that?” Matthew asked.

“How do I know that?” Cob said. “Why, I smell his ghost every once in a while.”

“Smell a ghost?” Matthew said. “Oh, unsavory jest! And the ghost of a herring cob!”

“Aye, sir,” Cob said. “With favor of Your Worship’s nose, Master Matthew, why not the ghost of a herring cob as well as the ghost of rasher bacon?”

Rasher bacon is bacon that is thinly sliced for broiling.

“Roger Bacon, would thou say?” Mathew said, thinking of the ghost of Roger Bacon.

“I say rasher bacon,” Cob said. “They were both broiled on the coals; and a man may smell broiled meat, I hope?”

Cob probably meant “they” to mean red herring and rasher bacon, but readers may be forgiven for thinking that “they” meant Roger Bacon and rasher bacon.

Roger Bacon was suspected of practicing black magic, and he was imprisoned because of it. He was not burned at a stake, although that was a punishment for practicing the black arts.

Cob said, “You are a scholar; upsolve me that, now.”

One upsolution would presumably be this:

P1: Rasher Bacon was broiled, and Roger Bacon was burned at the stake.

P2: A man can smell broiled meat.

C: A man can smell rasher bacon and Roger Bacon.

According to Cob, people can smell the ghosts of rasher bacon and of Roger Bacon.

Cob’s “upsolve” was a word of his own invention, one that Master Matthew took exception to.

“Oh, raw ignorance!” Matthew said.

“Raw ignorance” is “unschooled ignorance,” and it is ignorance that has not been broiled.

Matthew then asked, “Cob, can thou tell me about a gentleman, one Captain Bobadill, where his lodging is?”

“Oh, my guest, sir, you mean?” Cob asked.

“Thy guest?” Matthew said. “Alas!”

He laughed. He did not expect a gentleman to take residence in the home of a water-carrier.

“Why do you laugh, sir?” Cob asked. “Don’t you mean Captain Bobadill?”

“Cob, please, advise thyself well; do not wrong the gentleman and thyself, too. I dare be sworn he scorns thy house. He! He lodge in such a base, obscure place as thy house? Tut, I know his disposition so well: He would not lie in thy bed if thou should give it to him.”

“I will not give it to him, though, sir,” Cob said. “By the Mass, I thought something was in it; we could not get him to bed all night. Well, sir, although he does not lie on my bed, he lies on my bench. If it will please you to go up, sir, you shall find him with two cushions under his head and his cloak wrapped about him as though he had neither won nor lost.”

A person who fights hard but neither wins nor loses a fight is likely to be thoroughly tired at the end of the fight.

Cob continued, “And yet I guarantee he never cast better in his life than he has done last night.”

One can cast dice or cast — vomit — excessive alcohol.

“Why, was he drunk?” Matthew asked.

“Drunk, sir?” Cob said. “You do not hear me say so. Perhaps he swallowed a tavern token or some such device, sir.”

Tavern keepers gave tokens rather than coins as change.

Possibly, Captain Bobadill had been drinking so eagerly that he had swallowed a token along with the alcohol.

Cob continued, "I have nothing to do with alcohol; I deal with water and not with wine."

He called to his wife inside his house, "Give me my tankard there, ho!"

He used the tankard to carry water.

In this context, "ho" is an exclamation. He was not calling his wife a 'ho' or whore.

He was going to go to work.

Cob then said to Master Matthew, "God be with you, sir. It's six o'clock in the morning; I should have carried two turns by this time."

He again called to his wife, "What! Ho! My stopple, come!"

A stopple is a stopper for the tankard in which he carried water.

Master Matthew said to himself about Captain Bobadill, "Lie in a water-bearer's house, a gentleman of his havings? Well, I'll tell him my mind."

Captain Bobadill's "havings" are 1) his deportment, and/or 2) his possessions.

Tib, Cob's wife, appeared at the door with a tankard and stopple for Cob.

"What, Tib, show this gentleman up to the Captain," Cob said, taking the tankard and stopple from her.

Master Matthew exited with Tib.

Alone now, Cob said to himself:

“Oh, if my house were the Brazen Head now! In faith, it would even speak, ‘More fools yet!’”

Roger Bacon was supposed to have created a speaking head out of brass or bronze. The Brazen Head makes an appearance in Robert Greene’s play *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*.

Cob continued:

“You should have some people now who would take this Master Matthew to be a gentleman at the least. His father’s an honest man, a worshipful fishmonger, and so forth. He was a member of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers.”

Mongers are sellers.

Cob continued:

“And now Master Matthew creeps and wriggles into acquaintance with all the fine gallants about the town, such as my guest is — oh, my guest is a fine man! — and they flout him invincibly — without mercy.”

“To flout someone” means “to jeer at him.”

Cob continued:

“Master Matthew goes every day to a merchant’s house where I serve water, one Master Kitely’s, in the Old Jewry; and here’s the jest, he is in love with my master’s sister, Mistress Bridget, and calls her ‘mistress.’”

In this society, a mistress is a woman to whom a man is devoted. The man who loves her is known as her servant.

Cob continued:

“And there he will sit a whole afternoon sometimes, reading of these same abominable, vile — a pox on them, I cannot

abide them! — rascally verses, poyetry, poyetry, and speaking of interludes; it will make a man burst to hear him.”

He had an odd way of pronouncing “poetry.”

Interludes are performances.

Interludes are also comic plays. Master Matthew’s reading out loud of his love poems caused people to burst into laughter.

Cob continued:

“And the wenches, they do so jeer and tee-hee at him! Well, if they should do so much to me, I’d forswear them all, by the foot of Pharaoh.

“There’s an oath! How many water bearers shall you hear swear such an oath?”

It was an educated oath. Many water-carriers would not be so learned in their swearing. So said Cob.

Learned swearing can be regarded as legible swearing, as much learning requires reading.

“Oh, I have a guest, he teaches me, he does swear the legiblest of any man christened: ‘by Saint George,’ ‘by the foot of Pharaoh,’ ‘by the body of me,’ ‘as I am a gentleman and a soldier’ — such dainty oaths!

“In addition, he does take this same filthy, roguish — rascally — tobacco, the finest and cleanliest tobacco. It would do a man good to see the fumes of smoke come forth at his tunnels.”

His tunnels are his nostrils.

Cob continued:

“Well, he owes me forty shillings my wife lent him out of her purse by sixpence a time, besides his lodging. I wish I had it.”

“Sixpence at a time”? Eighty loans of sixpence each make a total of forty shillings.

Cob continued:

“I shall have it, he says, the next action.”

The action could be a military action, aka campaign, or a legal action, aka lawsuit — actually, the lawsuit could be instituted by Cob against his guest.

Or it could be Captain Bobadill getting out of bed and working rather than being a parasite.

Cob continued:

“Helter skelter, hang sorrow, care’ll kill a cat, uptails all, and a louse for the hangman!”

“Up tails all” means “topsy turvy,” often in a risqué way.

A hangman was entitled to the clothing of those whom he executed. Much of that clothing would be infested with lice.

Some of these then-common sayings made as much sense as thinking that Captain Bobadill would ever repay his debt.

— 1.5 —

Captain Bobadill was in his room, lying on a bench.

He called, “Hostess! Hostess!”

Tib entered his room and asked, “What do you say, sir?”

“A cup of thy small beer, sweet hostess,” Captain Bobadill answered.

Small beer is weak beer. People of the time drank much small beer, which was regarded as healthful. In fact, the alcohol killed bad germs, the existence of which had not yet been discovered.

In this case, Captain Bobadill was ordering some hair of the dog that bit him. A little alcohol might take the edge off his hangover.

“Sir, there’s a gentleman below who wants to speak with you,” Tib said.

“A gentleman!” Captain Bobadill said. “Ods so, I am not in.”

“Ods so” was a euphemism for “Godso,” which is an oath or an exclamation.

He was not eager to talk to gentlemen. He had too many debts, and he was probably ashamed of where he was living.

“My husband told him you were in, sir,” Tib said.

“What the plague!” Captain Bobadill said. “What did he mean by doing that?”

Master Matthew called from outside the room, “Captain Bobadill!”

Captain Bobadill called back, “Who’s there?”

He then said to Tib, “Take away the basin, good hostess.”

The basin’s purpose was to be vomited in.

He then called, “Come up, sir!”

Tib went to the door and called down to Master Matthew, “He wants you to come up, sir.”

Master Matthew entered the room, carrying his book. Tib exited.



Captain Bobadill said, "You come into a clean house here."

"God save you, sir," Master Matthew said. "God save you, Captain."

"Gentle Master Matthew, is it you, sir?" Captain Bobadill said. "Please, sit down."

"Thank you, good Captain," Master Mathew said.

He looked around but saw no stool, and then he said, "You may see I am somewhat audacious in seeking you out."

"Not so, sir," Captain Bobadill said. "I was invited to supper last night by a company of gallants, where you were wished for and drunk to, I assure you."

"Do me the favor of telling me by whom, good Captain," Master Matthew requested.

"By the Virgin Mary, by young Wellbred and others," Captain Bobadill said.

Noticing that there was no seat, he then called to Tib, "Why, hostess, bring a stool here for this gentleman."

Matthew said, "No haste, sir. All is very well."

"Body of me!" Captain Bobadill said. "It was so late when we parted last night that I can scarcely open my eyes yet; I was but newly risen when you came in. How passes the day abroad, sir? You can tell."

"In faith, it is about a half hour to seven," Master Matthew said. "Now trust me, you have an exceedingly fine lodging here, very neat and private."

Tib brought in a bench.

"Aye, sir, sit down, I bid you," Captain Bobadill said.

Tib exited.

Captain Bobadill continued, “Master Matthew, in any case possess no gentlemen of our acquaintance with notice of my lodging. Do not give them that information.”

“Who, I, sir?” Master Matthew said. “No.”

“Not that I need to care who knows it, for the cabin is convenient, but because I would not be too popular and generally visited, as some are.”

A cabin is a temporary lodging for a soldier; literally, it is a tent.

Captain Bobadill did not want to be too popular and generally visited, no doubt because he wished to avoid creditors.

“True, Captain, I conceive — understand — you,” Master Matthew said.

“For do you see, sir, by the heart of valor in me, except it be to some peculiar — special — and choice spirits to whom I am extraordinarily engaged, such as yourself or so, I could not extend my hospitality thus far,” Captain Bobadill said.

“Oh, Lord, sir! I am convinced of that,” Master Matthew said.

“I confess I love a cleanly and quiet privacy above all the tumult and roar of fortune,” Captain Bobadill said.

Seeing the book Master Matthew was holding, he asked, “What new book have you there? What! ‘Go by, Hieronimo!’”

“Go by, Hieronimo!” was a famous line from Thomas Kyd’s play *The Spanish Tragedy*. The play was popular, but old-fashioned. Playwrights such as Ben Jonson mocked it in their own plays.

“Aye, did you ever see it acted?” Master Matthew asked.  
“Isn’t it well penned?”

“Well penned?” Captain Bobadill said. “I would like to see all the poets of these times pen another such play as that was!”

One of the poets of “these times” was Ben Jonson.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“They’ll prate and swagger and keep a stir of art and devices, but when I, as I am a gentleman, read them, I find that they are the most shallow, pitiful, barren fellows who live upon the face of the earth once more as before.”

Master Matthew said:

“Indeed, here are a number of fine speeches in this book:

“*O eyes, no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears!*”

“There’s a poetic conceit! There’s a poetic metaphor!

“*Fountains fraught with tears!*”

“*O life, no life, but lively form of death!*” Another!

“*O world, no world, but mass of public wrongs!*” A third!

“*Confused and filled with murder and misdeeds.*” A fourth!

“O the muses!

“Isn’t it excellent? Isn’t it simply the best that you ever heard, Captain? Huh? How do you like it?”

“It is good,” Captain Bobadill said.

Matthew recited a poem while Captain Bobadill got dressed:

“*To thee, the purest object to my sense,*

“*The most refined essence heaven covers,*

*“Send I these lines, wherein I do commence*

*“The happy state of turtle-billing lovers.*

*“If they prove rough, unpolished, harsh, and rude,*

*“Haste made the waste — thus mildly I conclude.”*

“Turtle-billing lovers” are lovers who kiss like turtle-doves.

Master Matthew stopped reciting.

Captain Bobadill said, “Nay, proceed, proceed. Where’s this poem from?”

Master Matthew said:

“This, sir? It’s a trifle of my own in my nonage, aka minority and immaturity, the infancy of my muses.

“But when will you come and see my study? In good faith, I can show you some very good things I have done recently.”

He then said as Captain Bobadill put on his boots:

“That boot becomes your leg surpassingly well, Captain, I think.”

“So, so,” Captain Bobadill replied. “It’s the fashion gentlemen now use.”

Master Matthew said:

“In truth, Captain, now you speak of the fashion, Master Wellbred’s elder brother and I have fallen out and have quarreled exceedingly.

“This other day I happened to enter into some discourse about a hanger, which, I assure you, both for fashion and workmanship was most preemptory-beautiful and gentleman-like; yet he condemned and called it the most pied and ridiculous hanger that he ever saw.”

A hanger is a loop from which a sword hangs from a sword-belt. Hangers were often decorated.

“Peremptory-beautiful” was a pretentious phrase that meant “utterly beautiful.”

“Pied” meant “parti-colored.” Fools wore motley — parti-colored clothing.

Captain Bobadill said, “Squire Downright is the half-brother to Wellbred, isn’t he?”

“Aye, sir, he is,” Master Matthew said.

“Hang him, the rook,” Captain Bobadill said.

A rook is a simpleton.

“He!” Captain Bobadill said. “Why, he has no more judgment than a malt-horse.”

A malt-horse is a cart-horse that pulled wagons loaded with alcoholic beverages. Proverbially, it was regarded as stupid. (Alcoholics may have regarded it as stupid because it pulled wagons loaded with alcohol but drank none of it.)

Captain Bobadill continued:

“By Saint George, I marvel that you’d lose a thought upon such an animal; he is held to be the most peremptory, absurd clown of Christendom this day. I protest to you, as I am a gentleman and a soldier, I never exchanged words with his like. Judging from his discourse, he should eat nothing but hay. He was born for the manger, pannier, or pack-saddle. He has not so much as a good phrase in his belly, but all old iron and rusty proverbs — a good commodity for some blacksmith to make hobnails of.”

Hobnails were used in the making of heavy boots, and so they were associated with rusticity.

Master Matthew said, “Aye, and he thinks to carry it away and sweep all away before him with his manhood and manly valor always wherever he comes. He brags he will give me the *bastinado*, as I hear.”

A *bastinado* is a beating with a cudgel.

“What!” Captain Bobadill said. “He the *bastinado*? How came he by that word, do you think?”

“Nay, indeed, he said he would ‘cudgel’ me,” Master Matthew said. “I termed it *bastinado* for my greater credit.”

“That may be, for I was sure *bastinado* was not in his vocabulary,” Captain Bobadill said. “But when? When did he say this?”

“In faith, yesterday, they say,” Master Matthew said. “A young gallant, a friend of mine, told me so.”

Captain Bobadill said, “By the foot of Pharaoh, if it were my case now and I were in your position, I would send him a *chartel* immediately.”

A *chartel* is a challenge to a duel. Two men would fight with swords, often to the death.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“The *bastinado*? A most proper and sufficient *dépendence*, warranted by the great Carranza.”

A *dépendence* is the pretext for a duel.

Jerónimo Sánchez de Carranza wrote a famous treatise on dueling.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“Come hither. You shall *chartel* him. I’ll show you a trick or two you shall use to kill him with at your pleasure: the first *stoccata*, if you will, by this air.”

A *stoccata* is a thrust with a dueling sword.

Master Matthew said, “Indeed, you have absolute knowledge in the mystery, I have heard, sir.”

A mystery is an art. It is a mystery to those who have not learned it. Captain Bobadill had studied the art of dueling. Possibly.

“Heard it from whom?” Captain Bobadill asked. “From whom have you heard it, I ask you?”

“In truth, I have heard it spoken from various people that you have very rare and un-in-one-breath-utterable skill, sir,” Master Matthew said.

“By heaven, no, not I, no skill in the earth,” Captain Bobadill said. “I have some small rudiments in the science of dueling, such as to know my time, distance, or so. I have made myself expert in it more for noblemen’s and gentlemen’s use than for my own practice, I assure you.”

“No skill” but “expert”? Hmm.

Dueling had a bad reputation because it often resulted in the death of a promising young man.

Captain Bobadill said, “Hostess, accommodate us with another bed-staff here quickly.”

A bed-staff was a staff used in making up the bed.

Tib, who had been eavesdropping outside the door, entered the room and Captain Bobadill said, “Lend us another bed-staff!”

Tib exited.

Captain Bobadill said, “The woman does not understand the words of action.”

The words of action included the names of various kinds of swords and dueling terms, such as poniards (daggers). It also included the word “accommodate,” which meant “equip” and which was a fancy term for the times. Ben Jonson considered it a “perfumed” term.

Captain Bobadill, however, may simply have meant that Tib was slow in executing orders. After all, she had been slow in getting a stool for Master Matthew.

Captain Bobadill flourished a bed-staff as if it were a sword and said, “Look you, sir, exalt not your point above this state — position — at any hand (whatever you do), and let your poniard maintain your defense thus.”

Duelists fought with a sword and a dagger; they used the sword to attack and the dagger to deflect thrusts. A poniard is a slim dagger.

Tib returned with another bed-staff.

Captain Bobadill said, “Give it to the gentleman, and leave us.”

She handed the bed-staff to Master Matthew and then exited.

Captain Bobadill said, “So, sir, come on.”

They engaged in fencing practice.

Captain Bobadill said, “Oh, twine your body more about, so that you may fall to a more sweet, comely, gentleman-like guard.”

They made another pass.

Captain Bobadill said, “So, indifferent. Hollow your body more, sir, thus.”



He demonstrated and then said, “Now stand fast on your left leg. Note your distance; keep your due proportion of time.”

Matthew tried it.

Captain Bobadill said, “Oh, you disorder your point most irregularly!”

Master Matthew was holding his “sword” incorrectly.

He tried again and asked, “How is the bearing of it now, sir?”

Captain Bobadill answered, “Oh, out of measure ill! Extremely bad! A well-experienced hand would pass upon you at pleasure.”

By “pass upon you,” he meant “make a successful pass at you,” but Master Matthew wondered whether “pass upon you” meant “pass judgment upon you.”

“What do you mean, sir, by ‘pass upon me’?” Master Matthew asked.

Captain Bobadill answered, “Why, thus, sir, make a thrust at me. Come in upon the answer, control your point, and make a full career at the body. The best-practiced gallants of the time name it the *passada*: a most desperate thrust, believe it.”

He was using dueling terms. “Answer” means “answering thrust,” and “career” means “lunge.”

“Well, come, sir,” Master Matthew said.

They fenced again.

Captain Bobadill said, “Why, you do not manage your weapon with any facility or grace to invite me. I have no spirit to play with you; your dearth of judgment renders you tedious.”

Fencing using a bed-staff rather than a sword will do that. For some people, however, using a sword rather than a bed-staff won't much help.

"But one *venue*, sir," Master Matthew said.

A *venue* is a bout of fencing. It was an out-of-fashion French term.

Captain Bobadill said:

"*Venue*?' Fie! Most gross denomination as ever I heard. Oh, the *stoccata*, while you live, sir. Note that.

"Come, put on your cloak, and we'll go to some private place where you are acquainted, some tavern or so, and have a bite.

"I'll send for one of these fencers, and he shall breathe — exercise — you by my direction, and then I will teach you your trick. You shall kill him — Squire Downright — with it at the first pass, if you please.

"Why, I will teach you, by the true judgment of the eye, hand, and foot, to control any enemy's sword-point in the world.

"Should your adversary confront you with a pistol, it would be nothing, by this hand; you should, by the same rule, control his bullet in a line, unless it were buck-shot and spread."

Captain Bobadill claimed he would teach Master Matthew to deflect a bullet with his sword.

He then asked, "How much money do you have about you, Master Matthew?"

"In faith, I have not more than two shillings or so," Master Matthew said.

“It is somewhat with the least — it’s not much money,” Captain Bobadill said. “But come. We will have a bunch of radish and salt to add relish to our wine, and a pipe of tobacco to close the orifice of the stomach, and then we’ll call upon young Wellbred. Perhaps we shall meet the Corydon his half-brother there and put him to the question — we will call him to account.”

Corydon was a shepherd in Virgil’s *Eclogues*, and so the word meant a rustic fellow here: a yokel.

## ACT 2 (*Every Man in His Humor*)

### — 2.1 —

Thomas Kitely, Thomas Cash, and Squire Downright stood together in front of Kitely's place of business in Old Jewry. Kitely was a merchant, and Cash was his serving-man. Kitely was married to Squire Downright's sister, and so they were brothers-in-law.

"Thomas, come here," Kitely said. "There lies a note inside upon my desk. Here, take my key."

He held out the key to Thomas Cash, who took it.

Squire Downright looked at him, questioning this display of trust in a servant: Kitely had much money in the building.

Kitely said, "It doesn't matter, either."

He then asked Thomas Cash, "Where is the boy?"

"Inside, sir, in the warehouse," Cash said.

"Let him count immediately that Spanish gold and weigh it with the pieces of eight," Kitely said.

Pieces of eight are a kind of money.

Kitely added, "Make sure to see to the delivery of those silver fabrics to Master Lucre."

These fabrics had threads of silver woven into them.

Kitely continued, "Tell him, if he will, he shall have the grogran fabrics at the rate I told him, and I will meet him on the Royal Exchange soon."

Grogran fabric was made of mohair, wool, and silk.

"Very well, sir," Cash said as he exited.

“Do you see that fellow, brother-in-law Downright?” Kately asked.

That fellow was Thomas Cash.

“Aye, what about him?” Squire Downright said.

“He is a jewel, brother-in-law,” Kately said. “I took him as a child up at my door and I christened him — I gave him my own name: Thomas. Since then I brought him up and had him educated at Christ’s Hospital, the orphanage, from where when he proved to be a promising imp, I called him home and taught him so much that I have made him my treasurer, and I have given him, who had none, a surname: Cash. And I find him in his place so full of faith and loyalty that I dare to entrust my life into his hands.”

“So would I not put that kind of trust in any bastards, brother-in-law,” Squire Downright said, “as it is likely he is, even if I knew that I myself was his father. But you said you had something to tell me, gentle brother-in-law. What is it? What is it?”

“In faith, I am very loath to utter it,” Kately said, “as fearing it may hurt your patience, except that I know your judgment is of strength against the nearness of affection —”

“The nearness of affection” means “the bias of personal feelings.”

Kately was going to criticize someone close to Squire Downright.

“What is the need for this round-about approach to what you have to say?” Squire Downright complained. “Please, be direct. Say plainly what you have to say.”

Kately, who was married to Squire Downright’s sister, said, “I will not say how much I ascribe and consider due unto your friendship, nor in what regard I hold your love; but let

my past behavior and treatment of your sister simply confirm how well I've been affected and disposed to your —”

“You are too tedious,” Squire Downright interrupted. “Come to the matter. Get to the point.”

Kitely was married to the sister of Squire Downright and Wellbred, who were half-brothers and who were his brothers-in-law.

Kitely said:

“Then, without further ceremony, thus:

“My brother-in-law Wellbred, sir, I know not how, recently has much declined in what he was and has greatly altered in his disposition.

“When he came first to lodge here in my house, never trust me if I were not proud of him.

“It seemed to me that he bore himself in such a fashion, so full of manliness and sweetness in his bearing, and — what was chief — it seemed not borrowed, assumed, or acted in him, but all that he did became him as his own, and seemed as perfect, proper, and possessed as breath is by life or color is by the blood.

“But now his course of life is so irregular, so licentious, pretentious, and deprived of grace, and he himself in addition so far fallen off from that first place, as scarcely any sign remains to tell men's judgments where he lately stood.

“He's grown a stranger to all due respect, forgetful of his friends, and now he is not content just to cheapen himself and make himself over-familiar in all societies, and so he makes my house here as common as a marketplace, a theater, a public receptacle for giddy humor and diseased riot.

“And here in my house, as in a tavern or a brothel, he and his wild associates spend their hours in repetition of lascivious jests, swear, leap, drink, dance, and revel night by night, control my servants, and indeed what don’t they do?”

Leaping consisted of acrobatic leaps, but it also referred to the sexual act.

Realizing that Kately wanted him to speak to Wellbred, Squire Downright said:

“Sdeynes, I don’t know what I should say to him in the whole world!”

“Sdeynes” means “By God’s dignesse,” aka “By God’s dignity.”

Squire Downright continued:

“He values me at a cracked three-farthings, for anything I see.”

A three-farthings coin was thin and easily cracked.

Squire Downright continued:

“What is bred in the bone will never get out of the flesh.

“I have told him enough, one would think, if that would serve. But counsel to him is as good as a shoulder of mutton to a sick horse.”

A shoulder of mutton is of no use to a sick horse.

Squire Downright continued:

“Well, he knows what to trust to, I swear before St. George. Let him spend, and spend, and domineer and lord it until his heart aches. If he thinks to be relieved by me when he is put into one of your city prisons for debtors — the Counters —

he has the wrong sow by the ear, in faith, and he claps his dish at the wrong man's door.”

Beggars had begging bowls with lids that they clapped against the bowl to make noise and attract attention. Squire Downright was saying that Wellbred would be begging the wrong man for favors if he came to him for money.

Squire Downright continued:

“I'll lay my hand on my halfpenny before I part with it to fetch him out, I'll assure him.”

Squire Downright meant that he would keep a tight hold on his money. He certainly would give none of it to his half-brother — Wellbred — to fetch him out of trouble.

Kitely said, “Nay, good brother-in-law, let it not trouble you thus.”

Squire Downright said:

“By God's death, he maddens me! I could eat my very spur-leathers out of anger.”

Spurs-leathers are leather straps for tying spurs to one's feet.

Squire Downright continued:

“But why are you so tame? Why don't you speak to him and tell him how he disquiets your house?”

Kitely said:

“Oh, many reasons dissuade me from doing that, brother-in-law.

“But if you yourself would consent to undertake it, though just with plain and temperate manner of speech, it would both come much better to his sense and savor less of resentment or of passion.



“You are his elder brother, and that title both gives and warrants you authority, which, backed up by your presence and personal qualities, must breed a kind of duty in him and regard, whereas if I should hint at the least complaint, it would but add contempt to his neglect, heap worse on ill, make up an edifice of hatred, that in the rearing would come tottering down and in the ruin bury all our love.

“Nay, more than this, brother-in-law:

“If I should speak, he would be ready from his heat of cholic humor and overflowing of the vapor in him to whisper into the ears of his close friends the false breath of telling what disgraces and low disparagements I had put upon him, while they, sir, to back him up in creating the false fable, would make their loose comments upon every word, gesture, or look I use. And they would mock me all over, from my flat cap to my shining, blackened shoes.”

Shopkeepers and traders dressed in flat caps and shining, blackened shoes.

Kitely continued:

“And out of all their impetuous riotous fantasies his close friends would beget some slander that shall stick to me.

“And what would that be, do you think?”

“By the Virgin Mary, it would be this:

“They would give out, because my wife is pretty, I myself just lately married, and my sister here sojourning a virgin in my house, that I am jealous!”

Kitely’s sister was Mistress Bridget.

Kitely continued:

“Nay, as sure as death, that is what they would say; and they would say that I had found fault with and quarreled with my

brother-in-law Wellbred on purpose, in order to find an apt pretext to banish them — his close friends — from my house.”

“By the Mass, perhaps so,” Squire Downright said. “They’re likely enough to do it.”

Kitely said:

“Brother-in-law, they would, believe it.

“So would I, like one of these penurious quack doctors who sell cure-all medicines, just set the advertisements up to my own disgrace and try experiments upon myself, lend scorn and envy the opportunity to stab my reputation and good name —”

He was interrupted by the entry of guests.

We can wonder whether the characterization of Wellborn by Kitely and Squire Downright is correct.

## — 2.2 —

Master Matthew and Captain Bobadill entered the scene.

Master Matthew said to Captain Bobadill about Squire Downright, “I will speak to him —”

Squire Downright was the person with whom Master Matthew had fallen out.

Captain Bobadill interrupted, “— speak to him? Away, by the foot of Pharaoh! You shall not, you shall not do him that grace.”

He then said to Kitely, “The time of day to you, gentleman of the house. Is Master Wellbred up and stirring?”

“What about it then?” Squire Downright said. “What else should he be doing?”

Captain Bobadill said to Kately, “Gentleman of the house, it is to you whom I address myself. Is he within, sir?”

“He came not to his lodging last night, sir, I assure you,” Kately said.

Angry at being ignored, Squire Downright said to Captain Bobadill, “Why, do you hear me? You!”

Captain Bobadill said, “The gentleman-citizen has satisfied me with his answer. I’ll talk to no scavenger.”

He started to leave.

A scavenger is a street-cleaner. In this society, horses were a major means of transportation and so scavengers cleaned up horse dung.

Squire Downright said, “What, ‘scavenger’? Stay, sir, stay!”

Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew exited.

Restraining Squire Downright, Kately said, “Nay, brother-in-law Downright.”

“By God’s heart!” Squire Downright said. “Stand away from me, if you love me.”

“You shall not follow him now, please, brother-in-law,” Kately said. “In good faith, you shall not. I will overrule you.”

“Ha!” Squire Downright said.

He called after Captain Bobadill, “‘Scavenger’? Well, go to . . . I say little, but by this good day — God forgive me that I should swear — if I put up with it so and sheathe my sword, then say I am the rankest cow that ever pissed! By God’s dignity, if I swallow this, I’ll never draw my sword in the sight of Fleet Street, that place of brawls, again while I live. I’ll sit in a barn with Madge Owlet and catch mice first.

‘Scavenger’? By God’s heart, I’ll go near to fill that huge tumbrel slop of yours with something, if I have good luck; your Gargantua breech cannot carry it away so.”

Slops are baggy trousers, and a tumbrel is a cart for hauling away dung. Gargantua was a giant whom Rabelais wrote about in comic novels.

Squire Downright wanted to frighten Captain Bobadill so much that he filled his trousers with a stinky substance so voluminous that even the giant Gargantua’s trousers could not hold it all.

“Oh, do not fret yourself like this!” Kately said. “Never think about it.”

“These are my half-brother’s consorts, these are!” Squire Downright said. “These are Wellbred’s *cam’rades*, his walking mates! He’s a gallant, a *cavaliero*, too, and dressed in a style just right for the hangman!”

A cam-rade is a crooked ray. Wellbred was like the sun, and his comrades were like crooked rays emanating from him.

Hangmen were permitted to keep the clothing of the people they hanged, but perhaps Squire Downright meant that Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew wore clothing that exposed the throat, making it easy for a noose to do its work.

Squire Downright said, “Let me not live if I could not find it in my heart to swinge — thrash — the whole gang of them, one after another, and begin with him — Wellbred — first. I am aggrieved it should be said that he is my half-brother and takes these courses of action. Well, as he brews so he shall drink — he’ll get his just deserts, by Saint George, again. Yet he shall hear about it, and that roundly, too, if I live, in faith.”

Kitely said, “But brother-in-law, let your rebuke then run in an easy current, not over-high carried with rashness or devouring choler and anger, but rather use the soft, persuading way, whose powers will work more gently, and compose the imperfect thoughts you labor to reclaim, thereby more winning than enforcing the consent.”

Squire Downright said, “Aye, aye, let me alone for that, I assure you. I’ll take care of it.”

A bell rang, and Kitely said, “What is that now? Oh, the bell rings to call us to breakfast. Brother-in-law, please go in and keep my wife company until I come. I’ll just give orders for some dispatch of business to my servants.”

Squire Downright exited.

— 2.3 —

Cob entered the scene. He was carrying his tankard, and he was late in delivering the water.

“What! Cob?” Kitely said. “Our maids will have you by the back, in faith, for coming so late this morning.”

“Have you by the back” can mean “by the scruff of the neck,” but a strong back is a sign of sexual prowess.

“Perhaps so, sir,” Cob said. “Take heed somebody have not them by the belly for walking so late in the evening.”

A current proverb stated, “The back of a herring, the belly of a wench are best.”

Both are bodily pleasures.

Cob exited.

Alone, Kitely said to himself:

“Well, yet my troubled spirit’s somewhat eased, though not so reposed in that security as I could wish. But I must be content.

“Howsoever I set a face on it and try to look good and comfortable to the world, I would prefer that I had lost this finger by chance, than Wellbred had ever lodged within my house!

“Why, it cannot be, where there is such visitation of wanton gallants and young revelers, that any woman should long be virtuous and chaste.

“Is it likely that factious, rebellious Beauty will preserve the public weal — the commonwealth and common good — of Chastity unshaken when such strong motives muster and make head” — a double entendre — “against Beauty’s and Chastity’s single peace?”

“Make head” means 1) make way, 2) make war, 3) raise an army, and/or 4) raise an erection.

“Single” means 1) lone, 2) weak, and/or 3) unmarried.

“Peace” means 1) opposite of war, 2) tranquility of mind, and/or 3) piece (of ass).

Kitely continued:

“No, no. Beware when two mutual appetites meet to negotiate, and spirits of one kind and quality come once to parley in the pride of blood.”

A proverb of the time stated, “A castle that parleys and a woman who hears will both yield.”

“Pride of blood” means 1) high point of emotion, and/or 2) high point of sexual passion.

Kitely continued:

“It is no slow conspiracy that follows.”

In other words, a sexual conspiracy quickly follows.

Kitely continued:

“Well, to be plain, if I but thought the time had corresponded to their affections and inclinations, and opportunity had matched their sexual desires, all the world would not persuade me but I were a cuckold.

“By the Virgin Mary, I hope they have not got that start. For good fortune has balked and blocked them yet, and shall do still, while I have eyes and ears to attend the accusations of my heart.”

“Attend” means 1) pay attention to, 2) minister to, and/or 3) be present at the scene of.

“Impositions” means 1) commands, 2) accusations, and/or 3) falsehoods.

Kitely continued:

“My presence shall be as an iron bar between the conspiring impulses of desire. Yes, every look or glance my eye ejects shall check their opportunity, as one checks his slave when he forgets his prescribed duties.”

This society believed that the eye ejected beams that allowed it to see. Kitely would keep an eye on things to stop any adultery from occurring.

Dame Kitely (Kitely’s wife) and Bridget (Kitely’s sister) entered the scene.

Dame Kitely said, “Sister Bridget, please, fetch down the rose-water above in the closet.”

Rose-water was often served with fruit and sugar.

Bridget exited to carry out the errand.

Dame Kitely said to her husband, Kitely, "Sweetheart, will you come in to breakfast?"

Kitely said to himself, "I wonder if she overheard me just now!"

"Please, good muss, we are waiting for you," his wife said.

"Muss" was a term of endearment: baby talk for "mouse."

Kitely said to himself, "By heaven, I would not have her overhear what I said for a thousand angels."

Angels are gold coins.

Dame Kitely said, "What ails you, sweetheart? Aren't you well? Speak, good muss."

"In truth, my head aches extremely all of a sudden," Kitely replied.

He was jealous and suspected his wife of cheating on him with one or more of Wellbred's friends.

In this society, men with unfaithful wives were said to have invisible horns growing on their heads. If horns were growing on Kitely's head, that would cause him pain.

Dame Kitely felt his head and said, "Oh, the Lord!"

Did she feel horns?

"What now?" Kitely said. "What?"

"Alas, how your forehead burns!" Dame Kitely said.

He had a fever.

She continued, "Muss, keep yourself warm. In good truth, it is this new disease; there's a number of people who are troubled with it."



The “new disease” was characterized by fever and headache.

She continued, “For love’s sake, sweetheart, come in out of the air.”

Being outside in the air was believed to be harmful for invalids.

Kitely said to himself, “How simple and how subtle are her answers! A new disease, and many troubled with it! Why, truly, she heard me, I bet all the world to nothing.”

“All the world to nothing” means “It’s a sure bet.”

Dame Kitely said, “Please, good sweetheart, come in. The outside air will do you harm, in truth.”

Kitely said to himself, “‘The air’! She has me in the wind. She knows what’s up.”

If a hunter is in the wind, the animal being hunted can smell him.

The “air” could also be gossip in the air that would harm him.

He said out loud, “Sweetheart, I’ll come to you soon. My illness will go away, I hope.”

“Pray to heaven it does,” Dame Kitely said.

She and Bridget exited.

Alone, Kitely said to himself:

“A new disease? I don’t know whether it is new or old, but it may well be called poor mortals’ plague, for like a pestilence it infects the houses of the brain.”

His disease was jealousy. It is an old disease.

In this society, people thought of the brain as having three “houses,” or parts: front, middle, and back. Fancy and imagination were located in the front of the brain. Reason was located in the middle of the brain. Memory was located in the back of the brain.

Kitely continued:

“First it begins solely to work upon the fantasy, filling her seat with such pestiferous, plague-causing air that it soon corrupts the judgment; and from thence sends the same kind of contagion to the memory, still each to other giving the infection, which, as a subtle vapor, spreads itself confusedly through every part capable of sensation until not a thought or motion in the mind is free from the black poison of suspicion.

“Ah, but what misery is it to know this, or, knowing it, to want the mind’s erection — its strength and firmness — in such extremes!

“Well, I will once more strive, in spite of this black cloud, myself to be ...

“And shake the fever off that thus shakes me.”

He exited.

Kitely suspected his wife of being unfaithful to him by having an affair with Wellbred’s friend or friends. He was suffering from melancholic jealousy.

#### — 2.4 —

Alone, Brainworm, disguised as a wounded veteran, stood on the Moorfields between Hoxton and London, and said to himself:

“By God’s eyelid, I cannot choose but laugh to see myself transformed thus, from a poor creature to a creator; for now

must I create an intolerable set of lies, or my present profession loses the grace — excellence and credit — of being a soldier. And yet the lie to a man of my coat is as ominous a fruit as the *fico*.

Calling a soldier a liar was fighting words: The soldier would fight, or he would lose his honor.

Giving a soldier a *fico*, aka fig (an obscene gesture) was a fighting gesture: The soldier would fight or lose his honor.

The fruit — outcome — of these words and this action was ominous.

Brainworm then addressed you, the reader of this book:

“Oh, sir, it holds for good polity — stratagem — ever, to have that outwardly in vilest estimation that inwardly is most dear to us. So much for my borrowed disguise.”

Brainworm valued valiant military service, but he was going to play the role of a fake out-of-work soldier: a con man who pretended to be an out-of-work soldier who had been much wounded in battle.

He continued:

“Well, the truth is my old master intends to follow my young master, dryfoot, over Moorfields to London this morning.”

“Dryfoot” was a hunting term that meant to track prey without any pawprints to guide the hunter. The hunter would use only the scent of the prey to track it.

Because Moorfields was often wet, it was difficult to cross with dry feet.

Brainworm continued:

“Now I, knowing of this hunting match, or rather this conspiracy of one, and to insinuate myself with my young

master — for so must we who are blue-waiters and men of hope and service do, or perhaps we may wear motley at the year’s end, and you know who wears motley —”

Servants, who waited on their masters, wore blue livery, but unemployed servants wore motley (a coarse fabric) and Fools wore motley (parti-colored clothing). Unless a servant insinuated himself with the young master before the old master died, the servant would be a fool.

Brainworm continued:

“— I have got myself ahead of my young master in this disguise, determining here to lie in *ambuscade* — ambush — and intercept him in the midway of his journey.

“If I can but get his cloak, his purse, his hat — nay, anything — to cut him off, that is, to stay his journey, ‘*Veni, vidi, vici,*’ I may say with Captain Caesar; I am made forever, in faith.”

After a military victory, Julius Caesar said, “*Veni, vidi, vici*”: “I came, I saw, I conquered.”

Brainworm continued:

“Well, now I must practice in order to get the true manner of one of these lance-knights.”

Lance-knights were mercenaries who fought with lances.

Brainworm adopted a military posture, and he said:

“My arm, aka weapon, here, and my — young master!”

He had seen Edward Knowell coming toward him across Moorfields.

Brainworm continued:

“My young master and his cousin, Master Stephen, as I am true counterfeit man of war and no soldier!”

He stood aside, hidden by some bushes.

Edward Knowell and Master Stephen stopped to talk by the bushes where Brainworm was hiding.

Edward Knowell said to Master Stephen, “So, sir, and what then, coz?”

“By God’s foot, I have lost my purse, I think,” Master Stephen said.

In this society, men kept their money in bags that they called purses.

“Lost your purse?” Edward Knowell said. “Where? When did you have it?”

“I cannot tell,” Master Stephen said. “Wait!”

Brainstorm said to himself, “By God’s eyelid, I am afraid they will recognize me, despite my disguise. I wish I could get by them without being seen!”

“Do you have it?” Edward Knowell said.

Master Stephen replied, “No, I think I was bewitched, I —”

“Don’t weep about the loss,” Edward Knowell said. “Hang it, let it go.”

Finding his purse, Master Stephen said, “Oh, it’s here. No, if it had been lost, I would not have cared, except for a jet ring Mistress Mary sent me.”

Jet rings are made of an inexpensive material.

“A jet ring?” Edward Knowell said. “Oh, what is the posy, the posy?”

A posy is a motto engraved inside a ring.

Master Stephen said, “It was fine, in faith:

*“Though fancy sleep,*

*“My love is deep.*

“Its meaning is that although I did not fancy her, yet she loved me dearly.”

“It is most excellent!” Edward Knowell said.

Master Stephen said:

“And then I sent her another, and my posy was this:

*“The deeper, the sweeter,*

*“I’ll be judged, by Saint Peter.”*

Readers may be forgiven for giggling while reading “The deeper, the sweeter,” which can refer to love, to drinking, and to sex.

“What?” Edward Knowell said. ““By Saint Peter”? I do not conceive that.”

By “conceive,” he meant “understand.”

“By the Virgin Mary,” Master Stephen said, ““Saint Peter’ to make up the meter.”

When it comes to peters, a “meter” is unrealistic. Inches are realistic and can conceive.

Edward Knowell replied, “Well, there the saint was your good patron; he helped you at your need. Thank him, thank him.”

Brainworm had started to sneak away, but he came back, saying to himself, “I cannot take my leave of them like this. I will take a risk, come what will.”

Still disguised as a wounded soldier, Brainworm said out loud:

“Gentlemen, would it please you to exchange a few crowns — a few coins — for a very excellent good blade here?”

“I am a poor gentleman, a soldier, one who in the better state of my fortunes scorned so mean a recourse, but now it is the humor — the whim — of necessity to have it so.

“You seem to be gentlemen well-disposed toward martial men, else I should rather die with silence than live with shame. However, do me the courtesy to remember that it is my need that speaks, not myself. This condition agrees not with my spirit.”

“Where have thou served?” Edward Knowell asked.

Under King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I, England had fought wars with Scotland, France, and Spain. But wars with the countries that the disguised Brainworm will now mention? Not so much.

The disguised Brainworm said:

“May it please you, sir, I have served in all the late wars of Bohemia, Hungaria, Dalmatia, Poland — where have I not served, sir?”

“I have been a poor servitor — serving soldier — by sea and land any time these past fourteen years, and I have followed the fortunes of the best commanders in Christendom.

“I was twice shot at the taking of Aleppo, once at the relief of Vienna. I have been at Marseilles, Naples, and the Adriatic Gulf, a gentleman slave in the galleys thrice, where I was most dangerously shot in the head, through both the thighs; and yet, being thus maimed, I am void of maintenance, nothing left me but my scars, the noted marks of my resolution and courage.”

Sometimes, a wound to the thigh is a way to say a wound to the genitals. If he was wounded through both thighs, he may

have been wounded through both testicles. Therefore, in addition to being void of financial maintenance, he was unable to maintain the family line.

Elizabeth I, whose reign began in 1558, was currently Queen of England, and the actions the disguised Brainworm mentioned had not taken place anytime during the past fourteen years. The year the play *Every Man in His Humor* was first performed was 1598, and that is the date of this conversation. Many of the campaigns the disguised Brainworm mentioned had occurred in the 1530s, and the siege of Marseilles had occurred in 1524.

The disguised Brainworm was pretending to have served “the best commanders in Christendom,” but the Ottoman Turks took Aleppo in 1516 in a battle of Muslim Turks versus Muslim Egyptians.

Many rufflers, aka con men who posed as ex-soldiers, could be found in London and its surrounding areas such as Moorfields.

The disguised Brainworm was acting as both a ruffler and a courtesy-man, a con man who very politely asked for money while praising the marks (people targeted to be conned), for example, as “gentlemen well-disposed toward martial men.”

Master Stephen examined the disguised Brainworm’s sword and asked, “For how much will you sell this rapier, friend?”

The disguised Brainworm replied, “Generous sir, I refer it to your own judgment. You are a gentleman; give me whatever you please.”

“True, I am a gentleman,” Master Stephen said. “I know that, friend. But so what, though? I ask you to tell me for how much would you sell this sword?”



“I assure you, the blade may become the side or thigh of the best prince in Europe,” the disguised Brainworm said.

“Aye, with a velvet scabbard, I think,” Edward Knowell said.

A velvet scabbard would be impractical; it would be decorative. A sword in a velvet scabbard would be unlikely to be used in war.

Master Stephen said, “If it should be mine, it shall have a velvet scabbard, coz, that’s flat — that’s for certain. I’d not wear it as it is if you would give me an angel.”

An angel is a coin.

“At Your Worship’s pleasure, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said. “Nay, it is a most pure Toledo.”

“I had rather it were a Spaniard,” Master Stephen said.

Actually, Toledo swords had a very good reputation and were made in Toledo, Spain.

Master Stephen then said, “But tell me, what shall I give you for it? If it had a silver hilt —”

“Come, come, you shall not buy it,” Edward Knowell said to Master Stephen.

Edward Knowell then gave a coin to the disguised Brainworm and said, “Hold on, there’s a shilling, fellow. Take thy rapier.”

“Why, but I will buy it now because you say so ... because you say such things,” Master Stephen said to Edward Knowell.

He then said to the disguised Brainworm, “And there’s another shilling, fellow. I scorn to be outbid. What, shall I

walk with a cudgel, like Higginbottom, when I may have a rapier for money?”

The Old English “*hig*” was a word for hay. “Higginbottom” is “hay in bottom,” and so “Higginbottom” refers to a man who needs padding for his bottom and so has hay in the bottom part of his pants. The man may have been beaten on his bottom and therefore carries the cudgel for protection.

“You may buy one in the City,” Edward Knowell said.

“Tut, I’ll buy this in the field, so I will,” Master Stephen said. “I have a mind to it because it is a field rapier.”

It was a field rapier because it was being sold on Moorfields, but the disguised Brainworm would, of course, claim that it was a battlefield rapier.

Master Stephen then asked the disguised Brainworm, “Tell me your lowest price.”

“You shall not buy it, I say,” Edward Knowell said.

“By this money, but I will, though I give more for it than it is worth,” Master Stephen said.

“Come away,” Edward Knowell said. “You are a fool.”

“Friend, I am a fool, that’s granted,” Master Stephen said, “but I’ll have it for that word’s sake.”

He then said to the disguised Brainworm, “Follow me for your money.”

“I am at your service, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said.

They exited.

Alone, Old Knowell, Edward’s father, said to himself:

“I cannot lose the thought yet of this letter that was sent to my son, nor cease to wonder at the change of manners and the breeding of our youth within the kingdom since I myself was one.

“When I was young, even a man who lived in a brothel would not have dared to conceive an insult and utter it against a grey head.

“Old age was authority against a buffoon, and an old man had then a certain reverence paid to his years who had none due to his life — so much the sanctity of some prevailed for others.”

Not every old man had lived his life in such a way that demanded respect, but they received respect anyway because other old men had lived their lives in such a way as to demand respect.

Old Knowell continued:

“But now we all are fallen. Youths have fallen away from their reverence, and the aged have fallen away from that which bred reverence: good example.

“Nay, I wish that we — even those of us who are parents — were not the first who did destroy the hopes in our own children, and I wish that children would not have learned our vices in their cradles and sucked in our ill customs with their milk.

“Even before all their teeth are born, or they can speak, we make their palates sophisticated.

“The first words we form their tongues with are licentious jests.

“Can it say ‘whore’? Can it say ‘bastard’?

“Oh, then, kiss it: It is a witty child.

“Can it swear? Then it is the father’s darling! Give it two sugarplums.

“Nay, rather than it shall learn no bawdy song, the mother herself will teach it.”

Old Knowell said sarcastically:

“But this is in the infancy, the days of the long petticoat worn by young children. When it puts on the breeches, it will put off all this.”

He then said:

“Aye, it is likely, when its corruption has gone into the bone already.”

Old Knowell continued:

“No, no, this dye does deeper than the coat, or shirt, or skin. It stains all the way to the liver, the seat of violent — and sexual — passion and all the way to the heart, the seat of knowledge and understanding, in some.

“And, rather than it — the child — should not grow up and be corrupt, note what we fathers do. Look how we live, what mistresses we keep, at what expense in our sons’ eyes, where they may handle our gifts to our mistresses, hear our lascivious courtships, see our dalliance, taste of the same sexually stimulating, aphrodisiacal foods with us, to the ruin of our states!

By “states,” he meant 1) bodily health, and 2) estates.

Old Knowell continued:

“Nay, when our own portion of wealth has fled, to prey on our children’s remainder — property held in trust for heirs — we call them into fellowship of vice, bait them with the young chambermaid, to seal, and teach them all bad ways, to buy their affliction and their affection.”

To “seal” means to sign a contract; in this case, the person would sign a contract giving away his property in return for having sex with a young chambermaid.

Old Knowell continued:

“This is one path; but there are millions more in which we spoil our own with leading them.

“Well, I thank heaven I never yet was a man who travelled with his son, before he was sixteen, to show him the Venetian courtesans, nor read the grammar of cheating he had made to his sharp boy at twelve, repeating continually this rule: ‘Get money, continually get money, boy, no matter by what means; money will do more, boy, than my lord’s letter — a letter of recommendation from an aristocrat.’

“Neither have I dressed snails or mushrooms in exotic ways before him, perfumed my sauces, and taught him to make them, proceeding continually with my grey gluttony at all the eating-houses, and only feared that his palate would degenerate, not his manners.

“These are the trade of fathers now. However, my son, I hope, has met within my threshold none of these household precedents, which are strong and swift to carry away youth to their — the household precedents’ — precipice. Indeed, the precipice threatens youth.

“But, let the house at home be never so clean-swept, or kept sweet from filth — nay, dust and cobwebs — if he will live away from home with his companions in dung and dung-heaps, then it is worth a fear.

“Nor is the danger of associating familiarly with them — his companions — less than all that I have mentioned by way of example.”

Brainworm, still disguised as a soldier, appeared on the scene.

Seeing Old Knowell, the disguised Brainworm said to himself, “My master! Nay, indeed, have at you. I am fleshed now, I have fared so well.”

By “fleshed,” he meant that he had done well so far: His efforts had been rewarded. Hunting hounds and hawks were given a piece of the flesh of the game that they had helped hunters to kill.

Brainworm had already “attacked” Edward Knowell and Master Stephen and had done well. Now he was going to “attack” Old Knowell. “Have at you” was a cry that meant “I am going to attack you now.”

The disguised Brainworm said to Old Knowell, “Worshipful sir, I beg you, heed and have regard for the estate and condition of a poor soldier. I am ashamed of this base course of life, God’s my comfort, but extremity provokes me to it. What is the remedy?”

Old Knowell replied, “I have nothing for you now.”

“By the faith I bear to truth, gentleman, begging is no ordinary customary behavior in me, but only to preserve my manhood,” the disguised Brainworm said. “I avow to you that a man I have been, and a man I may be, by your sweet bounty.”

“Please, good friend, be satisfied,” Old Knowell said.

“Be satisfied” meant, basically, “leave me alone.”

“Good sir, by that hand, you may do the part of a kind gentleman in lending a poor soldier the price of two mugs of beer, a matter of small value. The King of Heaven shall pay you, and I shall be thankful. Sweet Worship —”

Old Knowell said, “Nay, if you be so importunate —”

Blocking his way, the disguised Brainworm said, “Oh, tender sir, need will have its course. I was not made to this vile use. Well, the sword-edge of the enemy could not have cast me down so much. It’s hard when a man has served in his prince’s cause and be thus —”

He wept, and then continued, “Honorable Worship, let me derive — obtain — a small piece of silver from you; it shall not be given in the course of time — someday, I will return it. By this good ground, I was obliged to pawn my rapier last night for a poor supper; I had sucked the hilts long before pawning my rapier. I am a pagan else, sweet Honor.”

Sucking the hilts was a way of dealing with hunger, such as sucking a pacifier or chewing gum or smoking.

Old Knowell said:

“Believe me, I am taken with some wonder to think that a fellow of thy outward presence would, in the frame and fashion of his mind, be so degenerate and sordid-base.

“Are thou a man? And thou aren’t ashamed to beg? To practice such a servile kind of life?

“Why, no matter how poor your education, having thy limbs, a thousand more attractive courses of action offer themselves to thy election.

“Either the wars might still supply thy wants, or the service of some virtuous gentleman, or honest labor. Nay, what can I name but would become thee better than to beg? But men of thy condition feed on sloth, as does the beetle on the dung she breeds in, not caring how the mettle of your minds is eaten with the rust of idleness.

“Now, before me, whoever he be who would relieve a person of thy quality, while thou persists in this loose, desperate course, I would esteem the sin not thine, but his.”

Giving alms to a beggar with a healthy body would be a sin, according to Old Knowell.

The disguised Brainworm said, “In faith, sir, I would gladly find some other course, if so —”

“Aye, you’d gladly find it, but you will not seek it,” Old Knowell interrupted.

“Alas, sir, where should a man seek?” the disguised Brainworm said. “In the wars there’s no ascent by desert — merit — in these days, but — and for employment as a servant, I wish it were as soon obtained as wished for, the air’s my comfort; I know what I would say —”

“What’s thy name?” Old Knowell interrupted.

“If it pleases you, Fitzsword, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said.

“Fitzsword” means “Son of the Sword.”

“Fitzsword?” Old Knowell said. “Say that a man should give thee employment now. Would thou be honest, humble, just, and true?”

The disguised Brainworm began, “Sir, by the place and honor of a soldier —”

“Nay, nay, I don’t like those affected oaths,” Old Knowell interrupted. “Speak plainly, man: What do thou think about my words?”

“Nothing, sir, but I wish that my fortunes would be as happy as my service should be honest,” the disguised Brainworm said.



“Well, follow me and be my servant,” Old Knowell said. “I’ll test thee and see if thy deeds will bear a proportion to thy words.”

“Yes, sir, immediately,” the disguised Brainworm said. “I’ll just garter my hose for a moment.”

Old Knowell exited as the disguised Brainworm bent over to adjust the garters of his hose.

Alone, the disguised Brainworm said to himself:

“Oh, I wish that my belly were hooped like a barrel to keep it from bursting now! For I am ready to burst with laughing. Never was a bottle or a bagpipe fuller.

“By God’s eyelid, was there ever seen a fox in years — such a cunning old man — who betrayed himself like this?”

Old Knowell had been fooled very much.

The disguised Brainworm said:

“Now I shall be possessed of all his plans, and, by that conduit, aka channel, my young master will also be possessed with knowledge of all his plans because I will tell him.

“Well, he is resolved to test my honesty; in faith, I say that I am resolved to test his patience.

“Oh, I shall deceive him intolerably! This small piece of service will bring him wholly out of love with soldiers forever.

“He will never come within the sign of soldiers — the sight of a soldier’s cassock, aka cloak, or a portable musket-stand — again. He will hate the musters at Mile End for it to his dying day.”

Militias composed of apprentices practiced maneuvers at Mile End.

The disguised Brainworm continued:

“It doesn’t matter. Let the world think me a bad counterfeit if I cannot trick him and give him the slip at an instant.”

Another meaning of the word “slip” is a counterfeit coin.

The disguised Brainworm continued:

“Why, this is better than to have stopped or delayed his journey. Well, I’ll follow him. Oh, how I long to be employed!”

He exited and followed Old Knowell.

### ACT 3 (*Every Man in His Humor*)

#### — 3.1 —

Master Matthew and Captain Bobadill met Wellbred in the street outside the Windmill Tavern.

Master Matthew said to Wellbred, “Yes, indeed, sir, we were at your lodging to seek you, too.”

“Oh, I did not go there last night,” Wellbred said.

“Your half-brother told us as much,” Captain Bobadill said.

“Who? My half-brother Downright?” Wellbred asked.

“Yes, he,” Captain Bobadill said. “Master Wellbred, I don’t know in what kind of esteem you hold me, but let me say to you this: As sure as honor, I esteem it so much out of the sunshine of reputation to throw the least beam of regard upon such a —”

“Out of the sunshine of reputation” means 1) shade of reputation, and 2) dishonorable.

Knowing that Captain Bobadill was going to talk ill about Squire Downright, Wellbred said, “Sir, I must hear no ill words about my half-brother.”

Captain Bobadill replied, “I protest to you, as I have a thing — a soul — to be saved about me, I never saw any gentleman-like quality —”

“Good Captain, about-face to some other topic of discourse,” Wellbred said.

Captain Bobadill replied, “With your leave, sir, if there were no more men living upon the face of the earth, I should not like him, by Saint George.”

“In truth, neither would I,” Master Matthew said. “He is of a rustical cut — I don’t know how. He does not carry himself like a gentleman of fashion.”

Wellbred replied, “Oh, Master Matthew, that’s a grace peculiar but to a few: *quos aequus amavit Jupiter*.”

The Latin, which comes from Virgil’s *Aeneid* VI.129, means this: “Those whom kind Jupiter has loved.”

“I understand you, sir,” Master Matthew said.

“No question you do or you do not, sir,” Wellbred said.

Yes, there was no question whether Master Matthew understood him or — as was more likely — did not understand him.

Edward Knowell and Master Stephen entered the scene.

Seeing Edward, Wellbred said, “Ned Knowell! By my soul, welcome! How do thou, sweet spirit, my genius?”

A genius is a familiar spirit.

Wellbred continued, “By God’s eyelid, I shall love Apollo and the mad Thespian girls the better while I live, for this.”

Apollo is the god of music.

The mad Thespian girls are the Muses, who provide inspiration (and so are mad) to creative people and who frequented the Thespian springs at the foot of Mount Helicon.

Wellbred continued, “My dear Fury, now I see there’s some love in thee.”

Calling Edward Knowell a Fury was a joke, as the Furies were avenging spirits who came from the Land of the Dead, but in Aeschylus’ tragedy *Eumenides*, the Furies acquired

the name of the Eumenides, aka the Kindly Ones. In the play, crimes began to be tried in courts of law instead of crimes being avenged by the Furies.

The love in Edward Knowell was shown by Edward's coming to the Windmill Tavern as invited.

Wellbred and Edward Knowell then talked privately between themselves; the others could not hear them.

Wellbred said to Edward Knowell:

“Sirrah, these are the two” — he pointed to Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew — “I wrote to thee about.

“Nay, what a drowsy humor is this now? Why don't thou speak?”

“Oh, you are a fine gallant!” Edward Knowell said. “You sent me a ‘splendid’ letter.”

“Why, wasn't it splendid?” Wellbred asked.

“Yes, I'll be sworn I was never guilty of reading the like,” Edward Knowell said. “Match it in all Pliny the Younger's or Symmachus' epistles, and I'll have my judgment burned in the ear for a rogue.”

Epistles are letters.

Pliny the Younger's letters and Symmachus' letters were published. Both were Roman scholars.

In Elizabethan times, before 1593, a rogue's ear could be branded with a red-hot poker as punishment.

Edward Knowell continued, “Make much of thy vein, aka literary style, for it is inimitable. But I marvel what camel it was who had the task of carrying and delivering it?”

In this society, camels were thought to be dull creatures. They were pack animals: beasts of burden.

Edward Knowell continued, "For doubtless he was no ordinary beast who brought it."

"Why do you say these things?" Wellbred asked.

"Why?" sayest thou?" Edward Knowell said. "Why, do thou think that any reasonable creature, especially in the morning — the sober time of the day, too — could have mistaken my father for me?"

Realizing that Edward's father had gotten the letter, Wellbred said, "By God's eyelid, you are joking, I hope."

Edward Knowell replied, "Indeed, the best use we can turn it to is to make a jest of it now. But I'll assure you, my father had the full view of your flourishing and florid style an hour or so before I saw your letter."

"What a dull slave was this messenger!" Wellbred said. "But sirrah, what did your father say about it, truly?"

"I don't know what he said," Edward Knowell replied, "but I have a shrewd guess what he thought."

"What?" Wellbred asked. "What?"

Edward Knowell replied, "By the Virgin Mary, he must have thought that thou are some strange, dissolute young fellow, and I a grain or two better for keeping thee company."

"A grain or two better" means "hardly better."

"Tut, that thought is like the moon in her last quarter; it will change shortly," Wellbred said. "But, sirrah, I ask thee to become acquainted with my two hangers-on here. Thou will take exceeding pleasure in them if thou hear them once go: my wind-instruments. I'll wind them up."

His wind-instruments were blowhards.

He would wind them up in such a way that they would speak and reveal themselves to be fools.

Wellbred continued, “But” — he pointed toward Master Stephen — “what strange piece of silence is this? The sign of the Dumb Man?”

Tavern signs often consisted of a picture representing the name of the tavern.

Master Stephen had not yet spoken; he was dumb in more ways than one.

He also was adopting the signs of a melancholic man: He was standing with crossed arms.

Edward Knowell answered, “Oh, sir, he is a kinsman of mine, one who may make your music the fuller, if he pleases. He has his humor, sir.”

A humor is a distinctive personal characteristic.

“Oh, what is it?” Wellbred asked. “What is it?”

“Nay, I’ll neither do your judgment nor his folly that wrong of anticipating your impressions of him,” Edward Knowell said. “I’ll leave him to the mercy of your search. If you can discover him, so be it, well and good.”

“Discover him” meant to have Master Stephen act in such a way that revealed what kind of a fool he was.

Wellbred and Edward Knowell joined the others.

Wellbred said, “Well, Captain Bobadill, Master Matthew, I ask you to know this gentleman here: Edward Knowell. He is a friend of mine and one who will deserve your affection.”

He then said to Master Stephen, “I don’t know your name, sir, but I shall be glad of any occasion to render me more familiar to you.”

“My name is Master Stephen, sir. I am this gentleman’s own cousin, sir; his father is my uncle, sir. I am somewhat melancholy, but you shall command me, sir, in whatsoever is incident to a gentleman,” Master Stephen replied.

Captain Bobadill said to Edward Knowell, “Sir, I must tell you this: I am no general man.”

He was no general man because he was a captain and not a general. In addition, in this society a general man is a man who is widely accomplished and knows much.

A general man can also be a man who is friendly to everyone: This is the sense in which Captain Bobadill was using it.

Captain Bobadill continued: “But for Master Wellbred’s sake — you may embrace and accept it at what height of favor you please — I do communicate with you and conceive you to be a gentleman of some parts. I love few words.”

“And I fewer, sir,” Edward Knowell replied. “I have scarcely enough to thank you.”

Edward Knowell’s words could be construed as saying that Captain Bobadill deserved many more words of thanks or as saying that Captain Bobadill scarcely deserved the few words of thanks that he was receiving.

Master Matthew said to Master Stephen, “But are you indeed, sir, so given to it?”

“Aye, truly, sir, I am mightily given to melancholy,” Master Stephen replied.



“Oh, melancholy is your only fine humor, sir,” Master Matthew said. “Your true melancholy breeds your perfect fine wit, sir. I am melancholy myself at different times, sir, and then I do no more but take pen and paper immediately, and overflow you half a score or a dozen of sonnets at a sitting.”

Edward Knowell whispered to Wellbred, “Surely, he utters them, then, by the gross.”

“Utters” in the commercial sense meant “puts into circulation” and “puts out for sale.”

“Gross” is a unit of measure: twelve dozen. “Gross” also means ignorant, stupid, and rude.

Master Stephen said to Master Matthew, “Truly, sir, and I love such things out of measure.”

“Out of measure” means 1) boundlessly, and 2) metrically inaccurate.

Edward Knowell whispered to Wellbred, “Truly, better than in measure, I’ll undertake.”

In other words, Master Stephen loved bad, out-of-measure poetry more than he loved good, metrically accurate poetry.

Master Matthew said to Master Stephen, “Why, I invite you, sir, to make use of my study. It’s at your service.”

Master Stephen replied, “I thank you, sir; I shall be bold to do so, I promise you. Have you a stool there, to be melancholy upon?”

“That I have, sir,” Master Matthew said, “and I have some papers there of my own doing at idle hours, about which you’ll say there’s some sparks of wit in the poems when you see them.”

Given the quality of Master Matthew's "poetry," the stool could very well be a kind of toilet: a close-stool.

Wellbred whispered to Edward Knowell, "I wish the sparks would kindle for once and become a fire among them so that I might see self-love burned for her heresy!"

Master Matthew's love of his poems was large enough to be idolatrous.

Master Stephen said to Edward Knowell, "Cousin, is it well? Am I melancholy enough?"

"Oh, aye, excellent," Edward Knowell answered.

"Captain Bobadill, why do you muse so?" Wellbred asked.

Edward Knowell whispered to Wellbred, "He is melancholy, too."

Captain Bobadill replied to Wellbred, "Truly, sir, I was thinking of a most honorable piece of service that was performed on Saint Mark's Day, which is tomorrow, some ten years ago now."

Saint Mark's Day is April 25.

"In what place, Captain?" Edward Knowell asked.

Captain Bobadill answered:

"Why, at the beleaguering of Strigonium in Hungary, where, in less than two hours, seven hundred resolute gentlemen as any were in Europe lost their lives upon the breach the assault made in the fortifications.

"I'll tell you, gentlemen, it was the first but the best leaguer, aka siege, that I ever beheld with these eyes, except the taking in, aka capture, of — what do you call it? — last year by the Genoese; but that of all others was the most fatal and dangerous exploit that ever I was ranged in since I first bore

arms before the face of the enemy, as I am a gentleman and a soldier.”

Master Stephen said, “By God, I had as gladly as an angel I could swear as well as that gentleman!”

In other words: By God, I wish as much for an angel (a gold coin) as I wish to swear like that gentleman!

In yet other words: By God, I, just as much as an angel in heaven does, wish to swear like that gentleman!

Edward Knowell said to Captain Bobadill, “Then you were a servitor — a soldier — at both, it seems: at Strigonium and What-do-you-call-it?”

“Oh, Lord, sir!” Captain Bobadill said. “By Saint George, I was the first man who entered the breach, and, had I not effected it with resolution, I would have been slain if I had had a million of lives.”

Edward Knowell said to himself, “It was a pity that you had not ten lives: a cat’s nine lives and your own, indeed.”

He said out loud, “But was it possible?”

Master Matthew said to Master Stephen, “Please, pay close attention to this discourse, sir.”

“So I do,” Master Stephen said.

“I assure you, upon my reputation, it is true, and you yourself shall confess it,” Captain Bobadill said to Edward Knowell.

“You must bring me to the rack first,” Edward Knowell said.

The rack was an instrument of torture in which arms and legs were dislocated. Edward Knowell would have to be tortured before he confessed the truth of — that is, acknowledged to be true — Captain Bobadill’s claims.

The word “rack,” however, also meant destruction, as in “rack and ruin.” Captain Bobadill interpreted Edward Knowell’s words as saying that he needed to hear more of Captain Bobadill’s description of the destruction that Captain Bobadill had witnessed.

Captain Bobadill said:

“Observe me judicially, aka judiciously, sweet sir. They had planted three demi-culverins, aka cannons, just in the mouth of the breach. Now, sir, as we were to charge, their master gunner — a man of no mean skill and marksmanship, you must think — confronted me with his linstock ready to give fire.”

A linstock is used to hold the lighted match that fires the cannon.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“I, spying his intention, discharged my petronel, aka pistol, in his bosom, and with these single — these sole and petty — arms” — he drew his weapon — “my poor rapier, I ran violently upon the Moors who guarded the ordnance and put them pell-mell to the sword.”

“To the sword?” Wellbred said. “To the rapier, Captain.”

Edward Knowell said to Wellbred, “Oh, it was a good figure of speech observed, sir.”

Edward Knowell was sarcastic. Captain Bobadill had said that he had put the enemy pell-mell to the sword. The word “pell-mell” means “confusedly” and as used by Captain Bobadill could refer to Captain Bobadill, not to the enemy. The word “pell-mell” also often refers to fleeing in a confused fashion.

He then said to Captain Bobadill, “But did you do all this, Captain, without hurting your blade?”

Captain Bobadill had been flourishing his sword, which was undamaged — evidence that it was unused.

Captain Bobadill said, “Without any impeach, aka damage, on the earth. You shall perceive, sir. Look at my sword. It is the most fortunate — blessed with luck — weapon that ever rode on a poor gentleman’s thigh. Shall I tell you, sir? You talk of Morglay, Excalibur, Durindana, or so; tut, I lend no credit to that which is fabled of them. I know the virtue of my own sword, and therefore I dare the boldlier maintain it.”

The sword named Morglay belonged to Sir Bevis of Hampton, the sword named Excalibur belonged to King Arthur, and the sword named Durindana belonged to Roland.

Master Stephen said, “I wonder whether it is a Toledo sword or not?”

“A most perfect Toledo, I assure you, sir,” Captain Bobadill said.

“I have a countryman of his here,” Master Stephen said, referring to the sword that he had bought from the disguised Brainworm.

“Please, let me see it, sir,” Master Matthew said.

He examined Master Stephen’s sword and said, “Yes, indeed, it is!”

Captain Bobadill examined the sword and said, “This a Toledo? Pish and pshaw!”

“Why do you ‘pish,’ Captain?” Master Stephen asked.

Captain Bobadill said, “This is a Fleming sword, by heaven. I’ll buy them for a guilder apiece, even if I want to have a thousand of them.”

Inexpensive swords were made in Flanders, a region in Belgium. A guilder is a Dutch coin.

Edward Knowell said to Master Stephen, “What do you say, cousin? I told you thus much.”

“Where did you buy it, Master Stephen?” Wellbred asked.

“I bought it from a scurvy rogue soldier,” Master Stephen said. “May a hundred lice go with him! He swore it was a Toledo sword.”

“It is a poor provant, aka government-issue, rapier, no better,” Captain Bobadill said.

“By the Mass, I think it is, indeed, now I look on it better,” Master Matthew said.

“The longer you look on it, the worse,” Edward Knowell said.

He then said to Master Stephen, “Put it up. Put it up.”

This meant: Sheathe your sword. Accept that you have been conned and move on.

Master Stephen said, “Well, I will put it up, but by — I have forgotten the Captain’s oath; I wanted to have sworn by it — if I ever meet him —”

He meant: “If I ever meet the man who sold me this sword —”

“Oh, it is past help now, sir,” Wellbred said. “You must have patience.”

“Whoreson, coney-catching rascal!” Master Stephen said. “I could eat the very hilts for anger!”

A coney-catcher is a swindler, a con man. Coneys are rabbits that can be lured from their rabbit-holes and caught.

“A sign of good digestion!” Edward Knowell said. “You have an ostrich stomach, cousin.”

Ostriches were reputed to be able to eat anything, including metals such as iron. Master Stephen was swallowing — bearing — the insult of being sold a poor sword, and an ostrich was capable of swallowing a sword.

“A stomach?” Master Stephen said. “I wish that I had him here! You should see if I had a stomach.”

He was saying that he had a stomach — a longing — for a fight.

“It’s better as it is,” Wellbred said to Master Stephen.

He then said, “Come, gentlemen, shall we go?”

— 3.2 —

Brainworm, still disguised as a soldier, entered the scene.

Edward Knowell said to Master Stephen, “A miracle, cousin. Look here! Look here!”

Master Stephen said to Brainworm, “Oh, by God’s lid, by your leave, do you know me, sir?”

“By your leave” meant “if you don’t mind.” It was a phrase of etiquette that could lead to avoiding a duel.

“Aye, sir. I know you by sight,” the disguised Brainworm replied.

“You sold me a rapier, didn’t you?” Master Stephen asked.

“Yes, by the Virgin Mary, I did, sir,” the disguised Brainworm replied.

“You said it was a Toledo sword, didn’t you?” Master Stephen asked.

“True, I did so,” the disguised Brainworm replied.

“But it is not a Toledo sword?” Master Stephen asked.

“No, sir, I confess it, it is not,” the disguised Brainworm replied.

“Do you confess it?” Master Stephen said to the disguised Brainworm.

He then said, “Gentlemen, bear witness he has confessed it.”

He then said to the disguised Brainworm, “By God’s will, if you had not confessed it —”

Edward Knowell interrupted, “— oh, cousin, stop, stop.”

Master Stephen replied, “I have finished, cousin.”

“Why, you have acted like a gentleman,” Wellbred said to Master Stephen. “He has confessed it; what more do you want?”

Master Stephen said, “Yet, by his leave, he is a rascal — under his favor, do you see?”

“Under his favor” means “if he is agreeable to it.” It was a phrase of etiquette that could lead to avoiding a duel.

Edward Knowell said quietly to Wellbred, “Aye, ‘by his leave, he is,’ and ‘under favor’ — a pretty piece of civility! Sirrah, how do thou like him?”

Wellbred replied quietly, “Oh, he’s a most precious fool! Make much of him and build up his pride. I can compare him to nothing more aptly than a drum, for everyone may play upon him.”

“No, no,” Edward Knowell whispered. “A child’s whistle is by far the fitter to use as a comparison.”

A child’s whistle makes a shrill noise. So does Master Stephen.



The disguised Brainworm said to Edward Knowell, “Sir, shall I entreat a word with you?”

“With me, sir?” Edward Knowell replied. “You haven’t another Toledo sword to sell, have you?”

“You are full of conceits — jests — sir,” the disguised Brainworm said.

He and Edward Knowell talked quietly and privately together.

He said to Edward, “Your name is Master Knowell, as I take it?”

“You are in the right,” Edward Knowell said. “You don’t mean to proceed in the catechism, do you?”

The Child’s Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer had questions such as “What is your name?” and “Who gave you this name?”

“No, sir, I am none of that coat,” the disguised Brainworm said.

By “coat,” he meant a parson’s coat; in other words, he was saying that he was not a parson.

“But you are of as bare a coat, though,” Edward Knowell said.

By “bare,” he meant “threadbare.” Parsons were proverbially impoverished.

Edward Knowell then said, “Well, speak, sir.”

The disguised Brainworm said, “Indeed, sir, I am but servant to the drum extraordinary — I am a soldier on a special mission — and indeed — this smoky varnish of makeup being washed off and three or four patches removed — I

appear Your Worship's in reversion, after the decease of your good father — Brainworm!"

He would be Edward Knowell's servant after the death of Edward's father; "reversion" referred to a legal right of succession.

He gave Edward Knowell a glimpse of his identity.

"Brainworm!" Edward Knowell said. "By God's light, what breath of a conjurer has blown thee here in this disguise?"

"The breath of your letter, sir, this morning — the same that blew you to the Windmill and that blew your father after you," the disguised Brainworm said.

"My father?" Edward Knowell asked, surprised.

"Don't be startled," the disguised Brainworm said. "It is true. He has followed you over the fields, by the footprints, as you would follow a hare in the snow."

Edward Knowell motioned for Wellbred to join them, and then he said, "Sirrah Wellbred, what shall we do, sirrah? My father has come over after me."

"Thy father?" Wellbred said. "Where is he?"

The disguised Brainworm answered, "At Justice Clement's house over here, in Coleman Street, where he just waits for my return, and then —"

"Who's this?" Wellbred asked. "Brainworm?"

"The same, sir," the disguised Brainworm said.

"Why, how in the name of wit did thou come to be transmuted like this?" Wellbred asked.

"In faith, it's a stratagem, a stratagem," the disguised Brainworm said. "For the love of reason, gentlemen, and for

avoiding the danger, don't stand here! Withdraw somewhere private, and I'll tell you everything."

"But are thou sure he will wait for thy return?" Edward Knowell asked.

"Do I live, sir?" the disguised Brainworm asked. "What kind of question is that?"

"We'll prolong his waiting, then, a little," Wellbred said. "Brainworm, thou shall go with us."

Wellbred called to the others, "Come on, gentlemen."

He then said to Edward Knowell, "Nay, I ask thee, sweet Ned, don't droop; by God's heart, if our wits are so wretchedly dull that one old, plodding brain can outstrip us all, I would wish that we were impressed — conscripted — into service to make porters of, and serve out the remnant of our days in Thames Street or at Custom House quay, in a civil war against the carmen."

Porters transported goods by foot, and carmen transported goods by cart, and so they were engaged in a civil war for business carrying goods from the river.

The disguised Brainworm said, "Amen, amen, amen, I say!"

They exited.

### — 3.3 —

Kitely and Cash talked together at Kitely's business in Old Jewry about one of Kitely's business associates.

"What does he say, Thomas?" Kitely asked. "Did you speak with him?"

"He will expect you, sir, within this half hour," Thomas Cash answered.

“Has he the money ready, can you tell?” Kitely asked.

“Yes, sir,” Cash said. “The money was brought in last night.”

“Oh, that’s well,” Kitely said. “Fetch me my cloak, my cloak.”

Cash exited.

Alone, Kitely said to himself:

“Wait, let me see. An hour to go and come, aye, that will be the least amount of time, and then it will be an hour before I can settle my affairs with him, or very near to it. Well, I will say two hours.

“Two hours? Ha! Things never dreamt of yet may be contrived, aye, and effected, too, in my two hours’ absence.

“Well, I will not go. Two hours. No, sneering Opportunity, I will not give your subtle trickery that scope. Who will not judge him worthy to be robbed who sets his doors wide open to a thief and shows the felon where his treasure lies?

“Again, what earthly spirit but will attempt to taste the fruit of beauty’s golden tree when leaden sleep seels and seals up the dragon’s eyes?”

A dragon guarded the golden apples in the garden of the immortal nymphs known as the Hesperides. Hercules took some of the golden apples.

The word “seel” comes from falconry. A young hawk’s eyes were stitched shut during its training.

Kitely was jealous of his wife, and he did not want to leave her for two hours lest he be cuckolded.

Kitely continued:

“I will not go. Business, go by for once.

“No, Beauty, no. You are of too good caract — carat and character — to be left so, without a guard, or open. Your luster, too, will inflame at any distance, and it will draw courtship to you as a jet does straws, it will put the power of motion in a stone, and it will strike fire from ice. Nay, it will make a porter leap you with his burden!”

Jet is a semi-precious variety of lignite (a kind of coal) that is black and hard, takes a polish, and is used in jewelry. When rubbed, it generates an electrical charge that will draw a straw to it.

Leaping consisted of acrobatic leaps, but it also referred to the sexual act. This particular burden, in Kitley’s jealous mind, could be a load of semen. The word “burden” also refers to pregnancy.

Kitley continued:

“You, Beauty, must then be kept shut tight, secret, and well-watched, for, if given the opportunity, no quicksand devours or swallows swifter. He who lends his wife, if she is beautiful, either time or place, compels her to be false.

“I will not go. The dangers are too many.

“And then fashionable dressing is a most main — important and potent — attraction! Our great heads within the city never were in safety ever since our wives began to wear these little round velvet caps.”

Ever since the wives started wearing fashionable caps, the husbands’ heads were in danger of growing horns because the wives of the men might cuckold them. So said Kitley.

Kitley continued:

“I’ll change them. I’ll change them right away in my household. My wife shall no more wear three-piled acorns, to make my horns ache.”

“Three-piled” meant thick velvet of the best quality. The three-piled caps resembled the cap of an acorn.

Young bucks grew antler-like “velvet” skin covering their horns while growing their antlers.

Kitely was worried that the a-corn caps might give him ache-horns.

Kitely continued:

“Nor will I go. I am resolved for that. I have firmly decided that.”

Cash returned, carrying Kitely’s cloak.

Kitely said to Cash, “Carry in my cloak again. Yet stay! Yet do carry it in again, too! I will defer going on any and all occasions, whatever I do.”

“Sir, Snare, your scrivener, will be there with the bonds,” Cash said.

A scrivener draws up documents, including legal documents.

“That’s true,” Kitely said. “Fool on me! I had entirely forgotten it; I must go. What time is it?”

“Time for the Exchange to open, sir,” Cash said.

The Exchange opened at 10 a.m.

Kitely said to himself:

“By God’s heart, then Wellbred will soon be here, too, with one or other of his loose consorts. I am a knave if I know what to say, what course of action to take, or which way to make a decision.

“My brain, I think, is like an hourglass, wherein my imaginations run like sands, filling up time, but then are turned and turned, so that I don’t know what to stop at and

who to have trust in, and know even less what choices to put in action.

“It shall be so. I dare to have faith in his secrecy; he doesn’t know how to deceive me.”

He called, “Thomas!”

“Sir,” Thomas Cash said.

Kitely said to himself:

“Yet, now I have thought about it, too, I will not have faith in Thomas’ secrecy.”

He then asked Thomas Cash, “Thomas, is Cob within?”

“I think he is, sir,” Cash said.

Kitely said to himself:

“But Cob will prate and blab, too; there’s no talking to him if I want privacy.

“No, there is no man on the earth compared to Thomas, if I dare to trust him: There is all the fear.

“But if Thomas were to have a chink, aka crack, and be leaky and blab my secrets, I would be a goner, having lost my reputation forever and being a subject of gossip for the Exchange.

“The manner Thomas consistently maintained until this present time promises no such change. What should I fear, then?

“Well, come what will, I’ll tempt my fortune for once.”

He said to Thomas Cash, “Thomas — you may deceive me, but I hope that your love to me is more —”

Cash interrupted, “— sir, if a servant’s duty with faith may be called love, you are more than in hope of having it; you are already possessed of it.”

Kitely said:

“I thank you heartily, Thomas. Give me your hand. I thank you with all my heart, good Thomas.

“I have, Thomas, a secret to impart to you — but when once you have it, I must seal up your lips.

“So far I tell you, Thomas.”

“Sir, as for that —” Thomas Cash began.

Kitely interrupted, “— nay, hear me out. Think that I esteem you, Thomas, when I will let you in thus to my private life. It is a thing that sits nearer to my crest than thou are aware of, Thomas. If thou should reveal it, but —”

A crest appears in a coat of arms, and Kitely meant the word to refer to his family. A crest also appears at the top of a head (for example, a rooster’s crest), and Kitely was worried about a cuckold’s horns appearing on his head.

Thomas Cash interrupted, “— what! I reveal it?”

“Nay,” Kitely said. “I do not think thou would, but if thou should, it would be a great weakness.”

“It would be a great treachery!” Thomas Cash said. “Give it no other name.”

“Thou will not reveal it, then?” Kitely asked.

“Sir, if I do, let mankind disclaim — disown — me forever,” Thomas Cash said.

Cash had said most of the right words, but he had not said, “I swear.”



Kitely said to himself:

“He will not swear. He has some reservation, some concealed purpose and close meaning, surely. Else, being urged so much, how should he choose but lend an oath to all this protestation?”

“He’s no precisian — no Puritan — I am certain of that, nor is he rigid Roman Catholic. He’ll play at fayles and tick-tack; I have heard him swear.”

“Fayles and tick-tack” are forms of backgammon.

Puritans and Catholics did not play games of chance, and they did not swear.

Kitely said to himself:

“What should I think of it? Urge him again, and by some other way? I will do so.”

Kitely said to Thomas Cash, “Well, Thomas, thou have sworn not to disclose my secret. Yes, you did swear?”

“Not yet, sir, but I will, if it pleases you,” Thomas Cash said.

“No, Thomas, I dare to take thy word without an oath,” Kitely said. “But if thou will swear, do as thou think good. I am resolved to take your word without your swearing an oath; you may swear at thy pleasure.”

“By my soul’s safety, then, sir, I solemnly declare and swear that my tongue shall never take knowledge of a word delivered to me in nature of your trust,” Thomas Cash said.

Kitely said:

“It’s too much; these ceremonies are not necessary. I know thy faith to be as firm as rock.

“Thomas, come hither, nearer; we cannot be too private in this business. So it is —”

Kitely said to himself, “Now he has sworn, I dare the safelier venture —”

He said out loud to Cash, “I have recently by diverse observations —”

Kitely said to himself, “But I don’t know whether his oath can bind him, yea or nay, being not taken lawfully, before a magistrate. Ha!”

He then asked you, the reader of this book, “What do you say?”

Kitely said to himself, “I will ask counsel and advice before I proceed.”

He said out loud to Thomas Cash, “Thomas, it will be now too long to stay. I’ll spy some fitter time soon, or tomorrow.”

“Sir, at your pleasure,” Thomas Cash said.

“I will think,” Kitely said, “and, Thomas, I ask you, search the books in preparation for my return, for the receipts between me and Traps.”

“I will, sir,” Cash said.

“And listen: If your mistress’ brother Wellbred happens to bring here any gentlemen before I come back, let someone immediately bring me word,” Kitely said.

“Very well, sir,” Cash replied.

“Bring me word to the Exchange, do you hear?” Kitely said. “Or here in Coleman Street, to Justice Clement’s. Don’t forget it, and don’t be out of the way. Don’t leave them alone.”

“I will not, sir,” Cash said.

“I ask you to attend carefully to it,” Kately said. “Whether he should come or not, if any other, stranger or otherwise, don’t fail to send me word.”

“I shall not, sir,” Cash said.

“Make it your special business, now, to remember it,” Kately said.

“Sir, I promise you I will,” Cash said.

“But Thomas, this is not the secret, Thomas, I told you of,” Kately said.

“No, sir, I do believe it,” Cash said.

The words “I do believe it” are ambiguous and can mean: “I do believe it is the secret, or 2) I do believe it is not the secret.

“Believe me, it is not,” Kately said.

“Sir, I do believe you,” Cash said.

What did he believe: Kately’s words, or his actions and mannerisms, which showed that he was agitated and hinted that this was the secret he had told Thomas Cash about?

Kately said:

“By heaven, it is not; that’s enough.

“But Thomas, I don’t want you to utter it, do you see, to any creature living; yet I don’t care if you do.

“Well, I must go away from here.

“Thomas, understand thus much: It was a trial of you when I intimated so deep a secret to you. I don’t mean this, but that which I have yet to tell you; this is nothing, this.

“But, Thomas, keep this from my wife, I charge you, locked up in silence, midnight, buried here.”

He tapped his chest.

He said to himself, “There is no greater hell than to be a slave to fear.”

He exited.

Cash said:

“‘Locked up in silence, midnight, buried here’?”

“Whence should this flood of passion, I wonder, spring from? Huh?”

“Best dream no longer of this running humor, for fear I sink! The violence of the stream already has transported me so far that I can feel no ground at all. But be silent —”

He had heard something and was now listening intently.

He then said, “Oh, it is our water-bearer. Something has vexed him now.”

### — 3.4 —

Cob entered the scene. He did not notice Cash at first.

Thinking himself to be alone, he said, “Fasting days? What tell you me of fasting days? By God’s eyelid, I wish they were all on a light fire — all ablaze — as far as I’m concerned! They say the whole world shall be consumed with fire one day, but I wish I had these Ember weeks and villainous Fridays burnt in the meantime, and then —”

One week, called an Ember Week, occurred each season. During Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday of each Ember Week, as well as on all Fridays and Saturdays, eves of holy days, and during Lent, no meat could be sold or consumed.

One reason for this was to increase jobs for fishermen and fishmongers.

The current day was the Eve of Saint Mark's Day, and so it was the eve of a holy day.

"Fasting days" did not mean abstinence from all food, but meat was forbidden.

Cash said, "Why, how are you now, Cob? What moves thee to this choler, huh?"

The word "choler" means anger.

"Collar, Master Thomas?" Cob said. "I scorn your collar. I, sir, I am none of your cart-horse. I am not a cart-horse, although I carry and draw water."

The word "draw" means 1) get from the tap, or 2) pull.

Cob continued, "If you offer to ride me with your collar, or halter either, I may perhaps show you a jade's trick, sir."

The word "ride" can mean "irritate."

Jades are bad horses, and jades sometimes have tricks that can irritate their owners.

Cash replied, "Oh, you'll slip your head out of the collar?"

He was making a joke about the collar being a hangman's noose.

Cash continued, "Why, goodman Cob, you mistake me."

"Nay, I have my rheum," Cob said, "and I can be angry as well as another, sir."

"Thy rheum, Cob? Thy humor? Thy humor? Thou are mistaken," Cash said.

The word “rheum” was an old-fashioned word for “humor.” It also meant “mucous discharge” or “watery discharge.”

Cob replied, “‘Humor’? Mack, I think it be so, indeed. What is that ‘humor’? Some rare thing, I warrant.”

“Mack” meant “by the Mass.”

“By the Virgin Mary, I’ll tell thee, Cob,” Cash said. “It is a gentleman-like monster bred in the special gallantry of our time by affectation, and it is fed by folly.”

“What!” Cob said. “Must it be fed?”

“Oh, aye, humor is nothing if it is not fed,” Cash said. “Didn’t thou ever hear that? It’s a common phrase, ‘Feed my humor.’”

“Feed my humor” meant “indulge my disposition” or “indulge my mood” or “indulge my whim.”

“I’ll have nothing to do with it,” Cob said. “Humor, avaunt! Be off! I don’t know you; be gone. Let who will, make hungry meals for your monstership; it shall not be I.”

In other words, let someone else go hungry in order to feed your humor.

Cob continued, “Feed you, quoth — said — he? By God’s eyelid, I have much ado to feed myself, especially on these lean rascally days, too.”

“Lean rascals” are lean inferior deer, and so they are not plentiful eating.

Cob continued, “If it had been any other day but a fasting day — a plague on them all, for me! I swear by this light, one might have done the commonwealth good service and have drowned them all in the flood two or three hundred thousand years ago. Oh, I do stomach — resent — them

hugely! I have a maw, now, if it were for Sir Bevis his horse, against them.”

He could eat Sir Bevis’ horse to prepare himself for fasting days.

“I ask thee, good Cob, what makes thee so out of love with fasting days?” Cash said.

Cob replied, “By the Virgin Mary, that which will make any man out of love with them, I think: their bad conditions, if you need to know that. First, fasting days are of a Flemish breed, I am sure of that, for they raven up and devour more butter than all the days of the week beside. Next, fasting days stink of fish and leek porridge miserably. Thirdly, fasting days will keep a man devoutly hungry all day, and at night send him supperless to bed.”

According to Cash, the Flemish are Phlegm-ish. If phlegm is predominant in a person’s makeup, then the person is phlegmatic (calm, apathetic, indolent). Eating fish supposedly made a person phlegmatic.

The Flemish also had a reputation for liking butter.

Many fast days made a man devoutly — fervently and piously — hungry. Many fast days, such as those of Lent and the eves of holy days, had a religious origin.

Cash said, “Indeed, these are faults, Cob.”

“Nay, if this were all, it would be something,” Cob said. “But they are the only known enemies to my generation, aka breed. A fasting day no sooner comes but my lineage goes to rack.”

Remember that Cob traces his ancestry from Herring.

“Rack” can mean 1) ruin, 2) broiling rack or grill, and 3) torture rack.

“Poor cobs, they smoke for it,” Cob said.

True. Cobs are heads, and the heads of herring are often smoked.

The words “smoke for it” also meant “suffer for it.”

Cob continued, “They are made martyrs of the gridiron.”

Saint Lawrence was a Roman martyr who was cooked alive on a griddle. The legend is that he told his tormenters, “This side is cooked. Turn me over and eat.”

Cob continued, “They melt in passion, and your maidens also know this, and yet would have me turn Hannibal and eat my own fish and blood!”

Hannibal was a Carthaginian who crossed the Alps with war elephants and rampaged up and down Italy for years, terrifying the Romans, enemies of Carthage.

Cob was mixing up the words “cannibal” and “Hannibal.”

He pulled out a red herring and addressed it: “My princely coz, fear nothing. I have not the heart to devour you, even if I might be made as rich as King Cophetua.”

King Cophetua married a beggar maiden. He was rich, and he did not marry for money.

Cob continued, “Oh, that I had room for my tears!”

“Room” is a pun on “rheum,” aka a watery discharge.

Cob continued, “I could weep salt water enough now to preserve the lives of ten thousand of my kin; but I may curse none but these filthy almanacs, for, if it weren’t for them, these days of persecution would never be known.”

Almanacs listed fasting days.



Cob continued, “I’ll be hanged if some fishmonger’s son does not make much of them, and puts in more fasting days than he should do because he would utter — put up for sale — his father’s dried stockfish and stinking conger eels.”

A politician named William Cecil, the son of a fishmonger, was responsible for making some Wednesdays fish-days. Such days were called Cecil’s Fasts. They were unpopular.

Cash said, “By God’s light, peace! Thou shall be beaten like a stockfish else.”

Dried cod, aka stockfish, was beaten before being boiled.

Seeing an approaching group, Cash said, “Here is Master Matthew. Now I must look out for a messenger to my master.”

He was going to send a message to Kitely that men had arrived at his house.

Master Matthew was the son of a fishmonger.

Cob and Cash exited.

### — 3.5 —

Wellbred, Edward Knowell, Brainworm, Captain Bobadill, Master Matthew, and Master Stephen were outside Kitely’s house. Wellbred, Edward Knowell, and Brainworm talked privately among themselves. The rest had pipes and tobacco but were not yet smoking.

Wellbred said, “Beshrew me — curse me — but it was an absolute good jest, and exceedingly well carried.”

“Aye, and our ignorance maintained it as well, didn’t it?” Edward Knowell said.

“Yes, indeed,” Wellbred said, “but was it possible thou didn’t know him? I forgive Master Stephen, for he is stupidity itself.”

Edward Knowell replied, “Before God, I swear that I did not recognize Brainworm, even if I might have joined the seven wise masters and become the eighth for recognizing him.”

The Seven Wise Masters of Rome were seven philosophers who were tutors to the son of Emperor Diocletian.

Edward Knowell continued:

“He had so contorted himself into the attire and guise of one of your poor infantry, your decayed, ruinous, worm-eaten gentlemen of the round — a military patrol going on its rounds — such as have vowed to sit on the outskirts of the city (let your provost and his half-dozen of halberdiers do what they can) and have translated begging out of the old hackney — plodding — pace to a fine, easy amble, and made it run as smooth off the tongue as a shove-groat shilling.”

Impoverished soldiers (and conmen) were living in the outskirts of the city, and they were accomplished beggars.

A provost was in charge of maintaining public order.

Halberdiers were civic guards who carried halberds — weapons that were half-spear and half-battleax.

A shove-groat shilling was a smooth coin of little value used in a game of shuffleboard called shove-groat.

Edward Knowell continued:

“He had molded himself so perfectly into the likeness of one of these *reformados*, observing every trick of their action — as varying the accent, swearing with an *emphasis*, indeed all with so special and exquisite a grace — that, had thou seen

him, thou would have sworn he might have been sergeant-major, if not lieutenant-colonel, to the regiment.”

The *reformados* were members of a disbanded military company and so they were no longer employed as soldiers. The term originally referred to members of a military company that was disbanded so its soldiers could be reformed into other companies.

Wellbred, who had seen and quickly recognized Brainworm, said, “Why, Brainworm, who would have thought thou had been such an artificer?”

“An artificer? An architect!” Edward Knowell said.

An artificer is a trickster, one who has designs on another person and wants to trick that person.

Artificers can also mean craftsmen and artisans. An architect, however, is a designer — an artist — on a grand scale. When it came to disguises, Brainworm was an artist.

Edward Knowell continued, “Except a man had studied begging all his lifetime and had been a weaver of language — a spinner of tales — from his infancy for the clothing — the disguise — of begging, I never saw his rival.”

“Where did thou get this military coat, I wonder?” Wellbred said.

Brainworm answered, “I got it from a Houndsditch man, sir, one of the devil’s near kinsmen: a broker.”

Houndsditch was a street where many pawnbrokers worked.

Wellbred said, “That cannot be, if the proverb holds true, for ‘A crafty knave needs no broker.’”

Pawnbrokers were known for being dishonest and crafty.

“True, sir,” Brainworm said, “but I did need a broker, *ergo* \_\_\_”

*Ergo* is Latin for “therefore.”

The syllogism is this:

P1: *A crafty knave needs no broker.*

P2: *I needed a broker.*

C: *Therefore, I am not a crafty knave.*

“P” means “Premise,” and “C” means “Conclusion.”

“Well parried,” Wellbred said. “Not a crafty knave, you’ll say.”

“Tut, Brainworm has more of these shifts,” Edward Knowell said.

Shifts can mean 1) dodges and tricks, and 2) items of clothing (e.g., shirts).

Punning on “shift” as “item of clothing,” Brainworm said, “And yet, where I have one, the broker has ten, sir.”

“One” means one shift (item of clothing), or it means one shift (trick).

Thomas Cash entered the scene and called, “Francis! Martin!”

He then said to himself, “Not a one to be found now. What a spite is this? Isn’t this maddening?”

He wanted Francis and/or Martin to carry a message to Kately, who was at Justice Clement’s house.

“How are you now, Thomas?” Wellbred asked. “Is my brother-in-law Kately inside?”

“No, sir, my master went out just now, but Master Downright is inside,” Thomas Cash said.

He called, “Cob! What, Cob!”

He then asked, “Is he gone, too?”

“Whither went your master, Thomas,” Wellbred asked. “Can thou tell me?”

“I don’t know for sure,” Thomas Cash said. “To Justice Clement’s, I think, sir.”

He called again, “Cob!”

He exited.

“Justice Clement — who’s he?” Edward Knowell asked.

“Why, don’t thou know him?” Wellbred said. “He is a city magistrate, a justice here, an excellent good lawyer and a great scholar, but the only — peerless — mad, merry old fellow in Europe. I showed him to you the other day.”

“Oh, is that he?” Edward Knowell said. “I remember him now. Good faith, and he has a very strange presence, I think. It shows as if he stood out of the rank from other men. I have heard many of his jests in the university. They say he will commit a man for taking the wall of his horse.”

A man who believed that he had social precedence over other men also believed that he and his horse should ride in the part of the street that was closest to the wall because it was cleaner and safer.

Edward Knowell had said, “They say he will commit a man for taking the wall of his horse.”

His horse? Whose horse? Justice Clement’s horse?

If another man would ride closer to the wall than Justice Clement's horse, then he, as a justice of the peace, and therefore of high social status, could punish that man.

But maybe it was another man's horse, and one man was unrightfully trying to take precedence over another man. In that case, Justice Clement could punish the man who was acting unrightfully.

Wellbred said, "Aye, or wearing his cloak on one shoulder, or serving of God — anything, indeed, if it should come in the way of his humor."

If a man wearing his — Justice Clement's cloak — on one shoulder without a good reason for having Justice Clement's cloak, then Justice Clement could punish that man.

A man who served God would be unlikely to be punished, but a hypocrite who claimed to serve God might be punished.

But perhaps Justice Clement's humor was sometimes to threaten to punish people but not punish them.

Cash went in and out of the scene, calling for potential messengers.

He re-entered the scene and called, "Gasper! Martin! Cob! By God's heart, where should they be, I wonder?"

"Master Kately's serving-man, please, vouchsafe — grant — us the lighting of this match," Captain Bobadill requested.

He handed a match to Cash.

In this society, a spark from a tinderbox was used to light a match.

"Fire on your match!" Cash said.

No doubt he wanted to say, “Fie on — to hell with — your match!”

He complained, “No time but now to ‘vouchsafe’?”

He was busy.

He called, “Francis! Cob!”

He then exited.

Captain Bobadill said, “I swear by the body of me, here’s the remainder of seven pounds of tobacco I got a week ago yesterday. It is your right, your true Trinidad.”

Seven pounds! If pipe-smokers can be chain smokers, Captain Bobadill must be a chain smoker.

High-quality tobacco came from Trinidad.

He then asked, “Have you ever taken — used — any tobacco, Master Stephen?”

“No, truly, sir, but I’ll learn to take it now, since you commend it so,” Master Stephen replied.

In Ben Jonson’s day, tobacco was controversial. Many people praised it and believed that it cured many diseases. Others disparaged it as causing many diseases. Captain Bobadill praised tobacco, but Cob disparaged it.

Captain Bobadill said:

“Sir, believe me, upon my relation, for what I tell you the world shall not refute. I have been in the Indies, where this herb grows, where neither myself nor a dozen gentlemen more of my knowledge have received the taste of any other nutriment in the world for the space of one-and-twenty weeks except for the fume of this simple — this medicinal herb — only.”

There were stories of Native Americans using tobacco to stop hunger pangs for four or five days.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“Therefore, it cannot be but it is most divine.

“Further, taken in the nature, in the true natural form so, it makes an antidote that, if you had taken the most deadly poisonous plant in all Italy, where the strongest poisons come from, the tobacco would expel it and purge you of it with as much ease as I speak.

“And for your green — fresh — wound, your balsamum and your Saint John’s wort are all mere cheats and trash compared to tobacco, especially your Trinidado. Your Nicotian is good, too.”

The word “Nicotian” comes from Jacques Nicot, who is credited for introducing tobacco into France. It is actually a term for tobacco in general, not a term for a particular kind of tobacco.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“I could say what I know of the virtue of it for the expulsion of rheums and colds, raw humors, crudities, obstructions and constipation, with a thousand of this kind, but I profess myself no quacksalver.”

“Quacksalvers” are medical quacks.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“Only thus much, by Hercules: I do hold it and will affirm it before any prince in Europe to be the most sovereign — efficacious — and precious weed that ever the earth tendered to the use of man.”



Edward Knowell whispered to Wellbred, “This speech would have done decently and fittingly in a tobacco-trader’s mouth!”

Captain Bobadill sounded as if he were making a commercial.

Cash and Cob entered the scene.

Cash said to Cob, “At Justice Clement’s, in the middle of Coleman Street, he — Kitely — is.”

Coleman Street was close to Old Jewry.

Cash had Cob by the ear to make sure he was listening, and Cob said, “Oh, oh!”

Captain Bobadill asked Cash, “Where’s the match I gave thee, Master Kitely’s serving-man?”

Cash said, “I wish that his match, and he, and his pipe, and all were at the city of Sancto Domingo on the island of Hispaniola! I had forgotten about it.”

He exited.

Cob said:

“By God’s me, I wonder what pleasure or felicity they have in taking this roguish and rascally tobacco.”

“By God’s me”? If we are God’s, then perhaps this oath means “By the body of me.” Or maybe Cob meant to say “God’s ’nee,” aka “God’s knee.”

Cob continued:

“It’s good for nothing but to choke a man and fill him full of smoke and embers. There were four died out of one house last week with the taking of it, and two more the bell went for yesternight.”

Bells were usually rung to announce a death, but for these two people, bells were rung in anticipation of their deaths.

Cob continued:

“One of them, they say, will never escape his death; he voided a bushel of soot yesterday, upward and downward — he vomited and defecated a bushel of tobacco ash.

“By the stocks, if there were no wiser men than I, I’d have it present — instant — whipping, man or woman, who should but deal with a tobacco pipe. Why, it will stifle them all in the end, as many as use it; it’s little better than ratsbane or rosaker.”

The stocks were two pieces of wood with half-circles carved out of one edge; when the two pieces of wood were put together, the half-circles would form circles. A person would be restrained by having his or her feet, and/or hands, and/or head put in the circles.

Ratsbane is rat poison, and rosaker is red arsenic, which was also used to kill rats.

Captain Bobadill beat Cob with a cudgel as Cash re-entered the scene while carrying a lighted match.

Everyone said, “Oh, good Captain, stop! Stop!”

“You base cullion, you!” Captain Bobadill said to Cob.

A cullion is literally a testicle.

The others restrained Captain Bobadill.

Cash handed the lighted match to Captain Bobadill and said, “Sir, here’s your match.”

He then said to Cob, “Come, thou must necessarily be talking, too. Thou are well enough served — you got what you deserved.”

Cob said, “Nay, he will not meddle with his match — fight with his equal — I assure you. Well, it shall be a dear beating, if I live.”

He meant that he would get revenge on Captain Bobadill.

Still angry, Captain Bobadill said to Cob, “Do you prate? Do you murmur?”

Edward Knowell said to Captain Bobadill, “Nay, good Captain, will you regard the humor of a fool?”

He then said to Cob, “Go away, knave!”

Wellbred said to Thomas Cash, “Thomas, get him away.”

Cash and Cob exited.

“A whoreson, filthy slave, a dung-worm, an excrement!” Captain Bobadill said about Cob. “I swear by the body of Caesar, that except that I scorn to let forth so mean a spirit, I would have stabbed him to the earth.”

“Let forth so mean a spirit” means “let free from the body so mean a soul.”

“By the Virgin Mary, the law forbids murder, sir,” Wellbred said.

“By Pharaoh’s foot, I swear I would have done it,” Captain Bobadill said.

Master Stephen said to himself, “Oh, he swears admirably! ‘By Pharaoh’s foot,’ ‘by the body of Caesar’ — I shall never do it, to be sure. ‘Upon my honor,’ and ‘by Saint George’ — no, I have not the right grace.”

The right grace is the right tone of voice. Master Stephen knew the right words, but he did not know the right way to say them. Yes, he knew the words, but he did not know the tune.

The men lighted their pipes and smoked.

Master Matthew said, "Master Stephen, will you have any tobacco? By this air, this is the most divine tobacco that I ever drunk!"

"None, I thank you, sir," Master Stephen said.

Master Stephen then said to himself, "Oh, this gentleman — Master Matthew — does it rarely, too, but nothing like the other."

Master Matthew swore — "by this air" — but not as well as Captain Bobadill.

Master Stephen faced a post and began to practice swearing: "By this air! 'As I am a gentleman!' 'By —'"

Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew exited.

Brainworm said to Edward Knowell, "Master, glance, glance! Look at Master Stephen!"

He then said, "Master Wellbred!"

Master Stephen said to the post, "As I have something to be saved, I protest —"

He had a soul to be saved.

The phrase "I protest" is used in a solemn declaration.

Wellbred said to himself, "You are a fool; it needs no affidavit."

Edward Knowell said to Master Stephen, "Cousin, will you have any tobacco?"

Taking some tobacco, Master Stephen said, "Aye, sir! Upon my reputation —"

"How are you now, cousin?" Edward Knowell asked.

Master Stephen said, “I protest, as I am a gentleman, but no soldier, indeed —”

“No, Master Stephen?” Wellbred said. “As I remember, your name is entered in the Artillery Garden?”

The Artillery Garden is the Artillery Yard, where citizens who were members of the Honorable Artillery Company practiced military drills.

“Aye, sir, that’s true,” Master Stephen said.

He then asked Edward Knowell, “Cousin, may I swear ‘as I am a soldier’ by that?”

“Oh, yes, that you may,” Edward Knowell said. “It’s all you have for your money.”

Citizens paid to become members of the Honorable Artillery Company, and they paid quarterly fees. By becoming members, they became citizen-soldiers.

“Then, as I am a gentleman and a soldier, I swear that it is divine tobacco!” Master Stephen said.

“But wait,” Wellbred said. “Where’s Master Matthew? Gone?”

“No, sir, they went in here,” Brainworm answered.

Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew had gone inside Kitley’s house.

“Oh, let’s follow them,” Wellbred said. “Master Matthew has gone to salute — greet formally — his mistress in verse.”

His mistress — that is, the woman he loved and served — was Bridget, Kitley’s sister.

Wellbred asked Edward Knowell, “We shall have the happiness to hear some of his poetry now. He never comes unsupplied.”

He then said, “Brainworm!”

Master Stephen said, “Brainworm? Where? Is this Brainworm?”

Brainworm was still disguised as a military man, and Master Stephen had not recognized him.

“Aye, cousin,” Edward Knowell said. “Say no words about it, upon your gentility.”

“I won’t, I swear by the body of me, by this air, Saint George, and the foot of Pharaoh!” Master Stephen said.

Wellbred said quietly to Edward Knowell, “Splendid! Your cousin’s discourse is simply drawn out with oaths.”

The oaths added unnecessary words to his conversation.

Edward Knowell said quietly to Wellbred, “His discourse is larded with them. It’s a kind of French dressing, if you love it.”

French cooks would add fat to lean fowl before cooking it to make it juicy.

French people were renowned for oaths and cookery. French swearing could give someone a good dressing-down.

— 3.6 —

Kitely and Cob talked together.

“Ha!” Kitely said. “How many are there, do thou say?”

Cob began, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, your brother, Master Wellbred —”

Kitely interrupted, "Tut, beside him. What strangers are there, man?"

"Strangers?" Cob said. "Let me see: one, two — by the Mass, I don't well know, there are so many."

"What!" Kitely said. "So many?"

"Aye," Cob said, "there's some five or six of them at the most."

Kitely said to himself, "A swarm! A swarm! Spite of the devil, how they sting my head with forkèd stings, thus wide and large!"

The stings would cause his head to swell up in two spots and make horns.

He then asked, "But Cob, how long have thou been in coming hither, Cob?"

"A little while, sir," Cob answered.

"Did thou come running?" Kitely asked.

"No, sir," Cob answered.

"Nay, then, I am familiar with thy haste," Kitely said.

He then said to himself:

"Bane to my fortunes! What meant I to marry? Why did I marry? I who before was established in such content, my mind at rest, too, in so soft a peace, being free master of my own free thoughts, and now become a slave?"

"What, never sigh; be of good cheer, man, for thou are a cuckold. It is done, it is done. Nay, when such flowing store, plenty itself, falls in my wife's lap, the *cornucopiae* will be mine, I know."

When Zeus seduced Danae, he transformed himself into a stream of gold that poured into her lap.

Kitely's *cornucopiae* was a plentitude of horns.

Kitely then said, "But Cob, what manner of reception had the strangers? I am sure my sister and my wife would bid them welcome. Ha!"

"Likely enough, sir," Cob said, "yet I heard not a word of it."

Kitely said to himself, "No, their lips were sealed with kisses, and the voice, drowned in a flood of joy at their arrival, had lost her motion, state, and faculty."

He then asked, "Cob, which of them was it who first kissed my wife? My sister, I should say. My wife! Alas, I don't fear her. Ha? Who was it, do thou say?"

"By my truth, sir," Cob said, "will you have the truth of it?"

"Oh, aye, good Cob, I ask thee heartily for the truth," Kitely said.

"Then, I am a vagabond, and fitter for Bridewell than Your Worship's company, if I saw anybody to be kissed, unless they would have kissed the post in the middle of the warehouse," Cob said.

Bridewell was a workhouse for impoverished people.

To "kiss the (door)post" meant to "be shut out after arriving too late."

Cob continued, "For there I left them all at their tobacco — with a pox! A plague on them!"

"What!" Kitely said. "Hadn't they gone in, then, before thou came to me?"



“Oh, no, sir,” Cob said.

“Spite of the devil!” Kately said. “Why do I stay here, then?”

He wanted to get home before he was cuckolded.

“Cob, follow me,” Kately ordered.

Alone, Cob said to himself:

“Nay, soft and fair! I have eggs on the spit.”

“Having eggs on the spit” meant “having important business at hand.” Roasting eggs on a spit required careful attention.

Cob continued:

“I cannot go yet, sir. Now I am for some five-and-fifty reasons hammering, hammering revenge. Oh, for three or four gallons of vinegar to sharpen my wits! Revenge, vinegar revenge, vinegar-and-mustard revenge!”

Cob was angry at Captain Bobadill, who had beaten him although he was staying at his house. Cob was Captain Bobadill’s host, and guests ought not to beat their hosts. It’s a violation of hospitality. Cob was also jealous; he was afraid that Captain Bobadill was sleeping with his — Cob’s — wife. This is another violation of hospitality.

The kind of revenge Cob wanted was vinegar-and-mustard revenge. The two, when combined, made a sharp salad dressing, and Cob wanted revenge with a sting to it.

Cob continued:

“Nay, if he had not lain in my house, it would never have grieved me. But being my guest — one whom, I’ll be sworn, my wife has lent him her smock off her back while his one shirt has been in the wash, pawned her neckerchers for clean bands for him, sold almost all my platters to buy him tobacco

— and he to turn into a monster of ingratitude and strike his lawful host!”

“Neckerchers” are neckerchiefs; “bands” are ornamental collars or ruffs.

Cob continued:

“Well, I hope to raise up a host — an army — of fury for it.”

Looking up, he said, “Here comes Justice Clement.”

— 3.7 —

Justice Clement, Old Knowell, and Roger Formal (Justice Clement’s clerk) entered the scene.

“What, has Master Kately gone?” Justice Clement asked.

He then called, “Roger!”

Roger Formal, his clerk, said, “Aye, sir.”

“By the heart of me, what made him leave us so abruptly?” Justice Clement asked.

Seeing Cob, he asked him, “How are you now, sirrah? What are you doing here? What do you want?”

Cob answered, “If it pleases Your Worship, I am a poor neighbor of Your Worship’s —”

Justice Clement interrupted, “A poor neighbor of mine? Why, speak, poor neighbor.”

“I dwell, sir, at the sign of the water-tankard, nearby the Green Lattice,” Cob said. “I have paid scot and lot there any time this eighteen years.”

“To the Green Lattice?” Justice Clement asked.

Many alehouses had painted lattices.

“No, sir, to the parish,” Cob said. “By the Virgin Mary, I have seldom escaped scot-free at the Lattice.”

“Scot and lot” were parish taxes.

“Oh, well,” Justice Clement said. “What business has my poor neighbor with me?”

Cob replied, “If Your Worship likes, I have come to crave the peace of Your Worship.”

Cob wanted Justice Clement to issue a warrant of peace-keeping to keep Captain Bobadill from inflicting violence upon him.

Justice Clement, however, thought — or pretended to think — that Cob was saying that Cob wanted a warrant of peace-keeping to keep Justice Clement from inflicting violence upon him.

Justice Clement said, “Of me, knave? Peace of me, knave? Did I ever hurt thee? Or threaten thee? Or wrong thee? Huh?”

“No, sir,” Cob said, “but I want Your Worship’s warrant for one who has wronged me, sir. His arms are at too much liberty. I would like to have them bound to a treaty of peace, if my credit could compass it and bring it about with Your Worship.”

“Thou go far enough about for it, I am sure,” Justice Clement said.

“To encompass” means “to encircle.” Justice Clement was punning: Cob was taking the long route in telling Justice Clement information; he was not getting straight to the point but was instead circling around it.

Old Knowell said to Cob, “Why, do thou go in danger of thy life for him, friend?”

“No, sir,” Cob said, “but I go in danger of my death every hour by his means; if I die within a twelvemonth and a day, I may swear by the law of the land that he killed me.”

Prosecution for murder could be instituted within a year and a day.

“What! What, knave?” Justice Clement said. “Swear he killed thee?”

Once a person is dead, it is unlikely that he will swear anything.

Justice Clement continued, “And by the law? What pretense, what color — what justification — have thou for that?”

Cob said, “By the Virgin Mary, if it pleases Your Worship, both black and blue — color enough, I assure you. I have it here to show Your Worship.”

He showed the bruises from the beating that Captain Bobadill had given him.

“Who is he who gave you these bruises, sirrah?” Justice Clement asked.

“A gentleman and a soldier he says he is, of the city here,” Cob said.

“A soldier of the city?” Justice Clement said. “What do you call him?”

“Captain Bobadill,” Cob answered.

“Bobadill?” Justice Clement said. “And why did he bob and beat you, sirrah? How did the quarrel between you begin?”

To “bob” means to “hit with a fist.”

He continued, “Speak truly, knave, I advise you.”

“By the Virgin Mary, indeed, if it pleases Your Worship, only because I spoke against their vagrant — low and vile — tobacco as I came by them when they were taking it. That is the cause of the beating — it was for nothing else.”

“Ha? You speak against tobacco?” Justice Clement said.

He then ordered, “Formal, his name.”

Roger Formal asked Cob, “What’s your name, sirrah?”

“Oliver, sir,” Cob answered. “Oliver Cob, sir.”

Justice Clement said, “Tell Oliver Cob he shall go to the jail, Formal.”

Roger Formal said, “Oliver Cob, my master, Justice Clement, says you shall go to the jail.”

“Oh, I beseech Your Worship, for God’s sake, dear Master Justice!” Cob said.

He was asking for mercy.

“Nay, by God’s precious body,” Justice Clement said. “If such drunkards and tankards as you are come to dispute about tobacco once, I have done.”

He ordered, “Away with him! Take him away!”

“Oh, good Master Justice!” Cob said.

He said to Old Knowell, “Sweet old gentleman!”

Old Knowell replied, “Sweet Oliver, I wish that I could do thee any good.”

A popular ballad of the time began, “Oh, sweet Oliver.”

He then said, “Justice Clement, let me entreat you, sir.”

“What?” Justice Clement said. “A threadbare rascal, a beggar, a slave who never drunk out of better than piss-pot metal in his life?”

Piss-pot metal was pewter, the metal that tavern mugs — and chamber pots — were made of.

Justice Clement continued:

“And he to deprave and abuse the virtue of an herb so generally received in the courts of princes, the chambers of nobles, the bowers of sweet ladies, the tents of soldiers?”

“Roger, away with him, by God’s precious.”

He then said to Cob, “I say, go to.”

“Go to” was an expression of annoyance. Sometimes, it meant “Go to hell.”

Cob said, “Dear Master Justice, let me be beaten again — I have deserved it — but don’t send me to the prison, I beg you!”

“Alas, poor Oliver!” Old Knowell said.

Justice Clement said, “Roger, make a warrant of peacekeeping for him.”

He was going to give Cob what Cob wanted.

Justice Clement then said about Cob, “He shall not go to prison; I was only frightening the knave.”

Roger Formal said, “Do not stink, sweet Oliver. You shall not go to prison; my master will give you the warrant of peacekeeping you wanted.”

“Do not stink” may mean “Don’t crap your pants.”

Cob, who had been very scared, said, “Oh, may the Lord maintain His Worship, His worthy Worship!”

“Leave, and take care of him,” Justice Clement ordered Roger Formal, his clerk.

Roger Formal and Cob exited.

Justice Clement then said to Old Knowell, “How are you now, Master Knowell! In the dumps? In the dumps? Are you melancholic? Come, this is not fitting.”

“Sir, I wish I could not feel my cares,” Old Knowell said.

He was worried about his son and the company his son was keeping.

“Your cares are nothing,” Justice Clement said. “They are like my cap, soon put on and as soon put off.”

While performing their official duties, justices wore a special cap.

Justice Clement continued:

“Your son is old enough to govern himself; let him run his course. It’s the only way to make him a staid, settled, dignified man, one who will stay at home.

“If he were a spendthrift, a ruffian, a drunkard, or a licentious liver, then you had reason, you had reason to take care and to be worried, but with him being none of these, mirth’s my witness, if I had twice as many cares as you have, I’d drown them all in a cup of sack.”

Sack is a kind of white wine.

Justice Clement continued:

“Come, come, let’s try it.

“I marvel that your parcel — piece — of a soldier has not returned all this while.”

The parcel of soldier was the disguised Brainworm.

They exited to drink a cup of wine.



## ACT 4 (*Every Man in His Humor*)

### — 4.1 —

Squire Downright and Dame Kately talked together. They were brother and sister. Her brother and his half-brother was Wellbred, who often brought visitors to the Kately house, in which he lived.

“Well, sister, I tell you true, and you’ll find it so in the end,” Squire Downright said.

He had been complaining about the visitors whom Wellbred often brought to the Kately house.

“Alas, brother, what would you have me do?” Dame Kately said. “I cannot help it; you see, my brother brings them in here; they are his friends.”

“His friends? His fiends!” Squire Downright said. “By God’s blood, they do nothing but haunt him up and down like a sort of unlucky sprites — malignant elves or fairies — and tempt him to all manner of villainy that can be thought of. Well, by this light, a little thing — something trivial — would make me play the devil with some of them. If it weren’t more for your husband’s sake than anything else, I’d make the house too hot for the best of them. They should say and swear hell were broken loose before they went away from here. But, by God’s will, it is nobody’s fault but yours. For, if you had done as you might have done, they should have been parboiled — thoroughly boiled — and baked, too, every mother’s son, before they should have come in, ever a one of them!”

“God’s my life, did you ever hear the like?” Dame Kately said. “What a strange man is this! Could I keep out all of them, do you think? I should put myself against half-a-dozen men, should I? Good faith, you’d madden the most patient

body in the world to hear you talk so, without any sense or reason.”

Hmm. “Put myself against half-a-dozen men.” Ha.

— 4.2 —

Mistress Bridget, Master Matthew (who was holding some papers), and Captain Bobadill entered the scene, followed at a distance by Wellbred, Master Stephen, Edward Knowell, and Brainworm.

Master Matthew was Mistress Bridget’s servant: He was her professed admirer, who served her. She was his mistress: the woman he loved. “Mistress” in this sense does not imply that they were sleeping together.

Bridget said to Master Matthew, “Servant, truly, you are too prodigal of your wit’s treasure, thus to pour it forth upon so mean a subject as my worth.”

“You say well, mistress; and I mean as well,” Master Matthew said.

He was agreeing with her!

“Bah, here is stuff — here is nonsense!” Squire Downright said.

Edward Knowell said quietly to Wellbred, “Oh, now stand close — quiet and nearby and unnoticed. Pray heaven she can get him to read his poetry. He should do it of his own natural impudency.”

Bridget pointed to the papers Master Matthew was carrying and asked, “Servant, what are these papers, I ask you?”

“By the Virgin Mary, an elegy, an elegy, an odd toy,” Master Matthew said.

The word “elegy” meant a short lyrical poem, not necessarily mournful. “An odd toy” is a whimsical trifle.

Squire Downright said, “It is a toy to mock an ape with — that is, a trick to make a fool out of a fool. Oh, I could sew up his mouth now!”

“Sister-in-law, I request of you, let’s hear it,” Dame Kately said.

“Are you rhyme-given, too?” Squire Downright said.

Master Matthew said to Bridget, “Mistress, I’ll read it, if you please.”

“I pray you do, servant,” Bridget replied.

Squire Downright said sarcastically, “Oh, here’s no foppery! By God’s death, I swear I can endure the stocks better.”

Squire Downright exited.

Edward Knowell said quietly to Wellbred, “What ails thy brother? Can’t he hold his water at the reading of a ballad?”

A then-current story was about a man who so hated the bagpipes that he peed himself whenever he heard them.

Wellbred quietly replied, “Oh, no, a rhyme to him is worse than cheese or a bagpipe.”

Cheese and other curdled foods nauseate some people. Some cheeses are cheesy.

Wellbred quietly continued, “But pay attention. You lose the protestation — you are missing Master Matthew’s comments.”

Master Matthew said, “In faith, I did it in a humor — an inspiration. I don’t know how good it is, but if it would please you, come near, sir. This gentleman” — he pointed to

Master Stephen — “has judgment; he knows how to censure a —”

He then said to Master Stephen, “Please, sir, you can judge.”

“Not I, sir — upon my reputation, and by the foot of Pharaoh,” Master Stephen said, practicing his swearing.

Wellbred said quietly to Edward Knowell, “Oh, chide your cousin for swearing.”

Edward Knowell said quietly to Wellbred, “Not I, as long as he does not forswear himself.”

To “forswear himself” means to “swear falsely.” If Master Stephen swears “upon my reputation, and by the foot of Pharaoh” and has neither a reputation nor the foot of Pharaoh, he has not forsworn himself.

Captain Bobadill said, “Master Matthew, you abuse the expectation of your dear mistress and her fair sister. Bah, while you live, avoid this prolixity.”

“I shall, sir,” Master Matthew replied.

He then addressed his audience, “Well, *incipere dulce* — ‘to begin is sweet.’”

Edward Knowell said quietly to Wellbred, “What? *Insipere dulce*? ‘A sweet thing to be a fool,’ indeed.”

Wellbred said quietly to Edward Knowell, “What! Do you take *incipere* in that sense?”

Edward Knowell whispered, “You do not? You? This was your villainy, to gull him with a *mot*.”

A *mot* is a saying. A *bon mot* is a witty saying.

Edward Knowell was accusing Wellbred of teaching Master Matthew the *mot* “*incipere dulce*” so that Wellbred could

pun on it with “*insipere dulce*” and call Master Matthew a fool in a *bon mot*. Edward Knowell, however, had beaten him to the jest and made it first.

Wellbred whispered to Edward Knowell, “Oh, the benchers’ phrase: *pauca verba, pauca verba.*”

“*Pauca verba*” is Latin for “few words.” Some proverbs beginning with that phrase included “Few words are best” and “Few words suffice for the wise.” When it came to Master Matthew’s own poetry, the fewer words the better. When it came to drinkers, it was best to talk less and drink more.

Benchers sit on a bench. The bench could be a tavern bench or a judge’s bench; in this case, it is the bench a judge of poetry sat on.

Master Matthew read out loud:

*“Rare creature, let me speak without offence.*

*“Would God my rude words had the influence*

*“To rule thy thoughts, as thy fair looks do mine;*

*“Then shouldst thou be his prisoner, who is thine.”*

Edward Knowell whispered to Wellbred, “This is Christopher Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander!*”

Master Matthew was a plagiarist, but at least right now he was plagiarizing very good poetry. He was merely changing a few words and claiming it as his own poetry.

Marlowe had written this:

*“Fair creature, let me speak without offence,*

*“I would my rude words had the influence,*

*“To lead thy thoughts, as thy fair looks do mine,*

*“Then shouldst thou be his prisoner who is thine.”*

(The spelling and punctuation of Marlowe’s poem here and later has been partially modernized.)

Wellbred whispered back, “Oh, aye, peace. Be quiet. We shall have more of this.”

Master Matthew read out loud:

*“Be not unkind and fair. Misshapen stuff*

*“Is of behaviour boisterous and rough —”*

Marlowe had written this:

*“Be not unkind and fair; misshapen stuff*

*“Are of behaviour boisterous and rough.”*

Wellbred said to Master Stephen, “How do you like that, sir?”

Master Stephen answered by shaking his head.

People nod their heads yes, and people shake their heads no. Master Stephen did not like the lines of poetry.

Edward Knowell whispered to Wellbred, “By God’s light, he shakes his head like a bottle, to feel if there is any brain in it!”

Master Matthew said:

“But observe the catastrophe — the denouement — now:

*“And I in duty will exceed all other*

*“As you in beauty do excel Love’s mother.”*

Marlowe had written this:

*“And I in duty will excel all other,*

“*As thou in beauty dost exceed Love’s mother.*”

Love’s mother is Venus; Love is Cupid.

Master Matthew then presented the verses to Bridget.

Edward Knowell whispered to Wellbred, “Well, I’ll have him given the freedom of the wit-brokers, for he utters nothing but stolen remnants.”

Edward Knowell would have Master Matthew enrolled among the dealers in second-hand remnants — in this case, the dealers in second-hand wit since Master Matthew had gotten his wit from Christopher Marlowe.

Wellbred whispered to Edward Knowell, “Oh, forgive him for it.”

Edward Knowell whispered back, “A filching rogue, hang him! And from the dead? It’s worse than sacrilege.”

Christopher Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* had been published posthumously in 1598.

Wellbred said to Bridget, “Sister-in-law, what have you here? Verses? Please, let’s see them.”

Bridget gave the verses to Wellbred, who examined them and said, “Who made these verses? They are excellent good.”

“Oh, Master Wellbred, it is your disposition to say so, sir,” Master Matthew said. “They were good in the morning; I made them extempore — extemporaneously — this morning.”

“What! Extempore!” Wellbred said.

“Aye, I wish that I might be hanged else,” Master Matthew said. “Ask Captain Bobadill. He saw me write them at the — a pox on it! — the Star, yonder.”

The Star was a tavern. It had taken Master Matthew a moment to remember the name.

Brainworm said quietly to Wellborn and Edward Knowell, “Can he find in his heart to curse the stars so?”

Edward Knowell whispered, “Indeed, his stars are even with him: They have cursed him enough already.”

According to astrology, the stars have an influence on our life. At his birth, Master Matthew’s stars had cursed him with foolishness.

“Cousin, how do you like this gentleman’s verses?” Master Stephen asked Edward Knowell.

“Oh, admirable!” Edward Knowell said. “The best that ever I heard, coz.”

Master Stephen said, “By the body of Caesar, they are admirable! The best that ever I heard, I swear as I am a soldier.”

If Edward Knowell liked the poetry, then so did Master Stephen. Many people make up their minds about the quality of a work of art after learning the opinion of good critics.

Justice Downright entered the scene.

He said to himself, not caring if anyone heard him, “I am vexed. I can hold never a bone of me still! By God’s heart, I think they mean to build and breed — reside permanently — here!”

Wellbred said to Bridget, “Sister, you have a simple servant here, who crowns your beauty with such *encomions* and *encomiums* and devices.”

*Encomion* is the Greek form of *encomium*. Each is a fancy expression of praise.



Devices can be tricks, or they can be poetic devices such as metaphors.

Wellbred continued, “You may see what it is to be the mistress of a wit who can make your perfections so transparent that every bleary eye may look through them and see him drowned over his head and his ears in the deep well of desire.”

Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection. Unable to move away from his reflection, he stared at it until he died. In some versions of the myth, he fell into the pool and drowned.

Wellbred then said, “Sister Kitely, I marvel that you haven’t gotten you a servant who can rhyme and do tricks, too.”

Master Matthew’s “trick” was plagiarism.

“Tricks” also has a sexual meaning that the others were well aware of.

Justice Downright said to himself, “Oh, monster! Impudence itself! Tricks?”

“Tricks, brother?” Dame Kitely asked. “What tricks?”

“Nay, speak,” Bridget said. “I ask you, what tricks?”

“Aye, never spare anybody here, but say, what tricks?” Dame Kitely said.

Both women were worried about their reputations.

“Passion of my heart!” Bridget said. “Do tricks?”

“Tricks” can be sexual acts performed for pay. “Merry tricks” is a pun on *meretrix*, which is Latin for “prostitute.”

Wellbred said, “By God’s light, here’s a trick, vied and revied.”

This kind of “trick” was one performed in a card game. The phrase “vied and revied” means “bid and rebid.”

Wellbred continued, “Why, you monkeys, you, what a caterwauling do you keep up! Hasn’t he given you rhymes and verses and tricks?”

Squire Downright said to himself, “Oh, the fiend!”

Wellbred said to Bridget, “Nay, you lamp of virginity — you paragon of virtue — who so take it in snuff — take offense at it, come and cherish this tame poetical fury — inspiration — in your servant; you’ll be begged else shortly for a concealment.”

King Henry VIII had dissolved the monasteries and taken their land, but some land that should have gone to the crown was concealed — the land that was taken from the monasteries and should have gone to the crown was instead held by private owners. Queen Elizabeth I gave commissions to people to find and report concealed land; these people received part or sometimes all of the land. Some greedy people tried to claim that land legally owned by others was actually concealed land. These greedy people begged the land — they claimed they were entitled to part or all of the land as a reward.

Like those greedy people, Master Matthew was claiming a part of Marlowe’s poetry as his own. Master Matthew had “found” the “concealed” *Hero and Leander* — foolishly, he thought that no one would recognize Marlowe’s poem and so discover his plagiarism. Bridget, who was Master Matthew’s mistress, had given him a “commission” for poetry and now she needed to reward him lest he lay a claim to — beg — the entire poem.

Also, unless Bridget cherished Master Matthew’s “tame poetical fury,” she could be accused of concealing his poetic “genius.”

Wellbred continued, “Go on, reward his muse. You cannot give him less than a shilling in conscience because the book he had it out of cost him a teston at least.”

A teston is sixpence; a shilling is tweldepence. Master Matthew would receive sixpence for the cost of Marlowe’s book (expenses) and sixpence for the labor of copying Marlowe’s verses.

Wellbred then said to the others, “How are you now, gallants? Master Matthew? Captain? What! All sons of silence? No spirit?”

Squire Downright said, out loud, to Wellborn, “Come, you might practice your ruffian tricks somewhere else and not here, indeed. This is no tavern, nor drinking school, to vent your exploits in.”

“What is this now!” Wellborn said. “Whose cow has calved?”

Sometimes, people could argue over whose cow had calved when a cow gave birth in a common pasture with no witnesses. Sometimes, cows gave birth at roughly the same time, and if a cow gave birth to twins, people could argue over the ownership of the second twin. Sometimes, a calf was stillborn, and if another cow gave live birth at roughly the same time, people could argue over the ownership of the living calf.

By saying “Whose cow has calved?” Wellbred was acknowledging that Squire Downright was in a mood for a fight.

The proverb can also mean, “What’s the matter?”

“By the Virgin Mary,” Squire Downright said, “That was my cow that calved. Nay, boy, don’t look at me like that about

this matter. I'll tell you about it; aye, sir, you and your companions, mend yourselves when I have finished talking."

"My companions?" Wellbred said to his half-brother: Squire Downright.

The word "companions" could be used as a derogatory term. Squire Downright was using it in that way to insult Wellbred's friends and guests.

For Wellbred to allow his guests to be insulted would be a major breach of hospitality.

"Yes, sir, your companions, so I say," Squire Downright said. "I am not afraid of you, nor am I afraid of them, either, your hang-bys — your hangers-on — here. You must have your poets and your potlings and drinking buddies, your *soldados* [Spanish for "soldiers"] and *foolados* [mock-Spanish for "fools"], to follow you up and down the city, and here they insist on coming to domineer and swagger."

He then said to Master Matthew, "Sirrah, you ballad-singer, and Slops, your fellow there, get out!"

Slops were baggy trousers; Captain Bobadill was wearing slops.

Squire Downright continued, "Get yourself home or, by this steel" — he put his hand on his sword — "I'll cut off your ears, and that immediately."

Wellbred said to Master Matthew and Captain Bobadill, as they shied away, "By God's light, stay. Let's see what he dares to do."

He then said to Squire Downright, "Cut off his ears? Cut a whetstone. You are an ass, do you see? Touch any man here and, by this hand, I'll run my rapier to the hilts in you."

Wellbred was no fan of Master Matthew and Captain Bobadill, but Squire Downright was going beyond the bounds of proper behavior.

Livy in his *History of Rome* (Book 1.36) recounted a story of a Roman augur named Attus [sometimes called Accius] Naevius who cut a whetstone with a razor. Such a task would be impossible, and Wellbred was mocking Squire Downright here.

Squire Downright said, “Yea, I would like to see that, boy.”

They both drew their swords. So did a few others.

Dame Kately shouted, “Oh, Jesu! Murder! Thomas! Gaspar!”

“Help, help, Thomas!” Bridget shouted.

Thomas Cash and the other serving-men came running and parted the opposing swordsmen.

“Gentlemen!” Edward Knowell said. “Don’t fight, I ask you.”

Captain Bobadill said to Squire Downright, “Well, sirrah, you Holofernes. By my hand, I will pink your flesh full of holes with my rapier for this; I will, by this good heaven!”

Holofernes was the general of Nebuchadnezzar; Judith killed him. “Full of holes” is a play on his name.

They attempted to fight again, but they were parted.

Captain Bobadill said, “Nay, let him come, let him come, gentlemen; by the body of Saint George, I’ll not kill him.”

“Stop, stop, good gentlemen!” Cash said.

Squire Downright said to Captain Bobadill, “You whoreson bragging coistrel! You scoundrel!”

Kitely entered the scene and asked, “Why, what is this now? What’s the matter? What’s the trouble here? Whence springs the quarrel?”

He called for Thomas Cash, “Thomas! Where is he?”

He said, “Put up your weapons and put off this rage!”

He then said to himself, “My wife and my sister — they are the cause of this.”

He called again for Thomas Cash, “What! Thomas! Where is this knave?”

Thomas Cash said, “Here I am, sir.”

Wellbred said to Edward Knowell and the rest, “Come, let’s go. This is one of my half-brother’s ancient — long-established — humors, this.”

“I am glad nobody was hurt by his ancient humor,” Master Stephen said.

Because he was frightened, he forgot to swear.

Wellbred, Edward Knowell, Brainworm, Master Stephen, Captain Bobadill, Master Matthew, and the servants exited.

Staying behind were Kitely, Squire Downright, Dame Kitely, Bridget, and Thomas Cash.

Kitely said, “Why, what is this now, brother-in-law? Who forced this brawl? Whose rude behavior started it?”

Squire Downright replied, “A sort of lewd rakehells, who care neither for God nor the devil. And they insist on coming here to read ballads, and roguery, and trash. I’ll mar and mangle the group of them before I sleep, perhaps, especially

Bob there, he who's all manner of shapes, and Songs and Sonnets, his fellow."

Captain Bobadill's shape changed according to the kind of trousers he was wearing. Currently, he was wearing wide baggy trousers.

*Songs and Sonnets* was a popular title for books of — you guessed it — songs and sonnets.

Bridget said to Squire Downright, "Brother-in-law, indeed, you are too violent, too sudden in your humor; and you know that my brother-in-law Wellbred's temper will not bear any reproof, especially in such presence where every slight disgrace he should receive might wound him in opinion and respect."

"Respect?" Squire Downright said. "Why do you talk about respect among such as have neither spark of manhood nor good manners? By God's dignity, I am ashamed to hear you. Respect?"

He exited.

Bridget said, "Yes, there was one, a civil gentleman, and he very worthily demeaned — conducted — himself."

"Oh, that was some love of yours, sister," Kately said.

"A love of mine?" Bridget said. "I wish it would be no worse, brother. You'd pay my dowry sooner than you think."

Her dowry was in the keeping of her brother until she married.

"Indeed, he seemed to be a gentleman of an exceedingly fair disposition, and of very excellent good parts," Dame Kately said.

Bridget and Dame Kately exited.

Alone except for Thomas Cash, Kately said to himself, “Her love, by heaven! My wife’s minion! Her sweetheart! ‘Fair disposition’? ‘Excellent good parts’? By God’s death, these phrases are intolerable. ‘Good parts’? How should she know his parts? His parts! Well, well, well, well, well, well! It is too plain, too clear. “

“Parts” can mean 1) qualities, or 2) sexual parts.

He then said more loudly, “Thomas, come here. What! Have they gone?”

“Aye, sir, they went inside,” Thomas Cash said. “My mistress and your sister —”

This kind of mistress was a lady boss.

“Are any of the gallants inside?” Kately asked.

“No, sir, they are all gone,” Cash replied.

“Are thou sure of it?” Kately asked.

“I can assure you that it is so, sir,” Cash said.

“What gentleman was that they praised so, Thomas?” Kately asked.

“One whom they call Master Knowell, a handsome young gentleman, sir,” Thomas Cash replied.

Kately said to himself, “Aye, I thought so; my mind gave me as much. I’ll die if they haven’t hidden him in the house somewhere; I’ll go and search.”

He then said more loudly, “Go with me, Thomas. Be true to me, and thou shall find me a master worthy of the name.”

They exited.



Cob knocked on the door of his house. His wife, Tib, was inside. He was jealous of his wife. He worried that she was cheating on him with Captain Bobadill.

As he knocked, Cob called, “What, Tib! Tib, I say!”

From inside the house, Tib said, “What is it now? What cuckold is it who knocks so hard?”

Tib opened the door suddenly, and in so doing, hit Cob’s head with the door.

She said, “Oh, husband, is it you? What’s the news?”

“Nay, you have stunned me, indeed!” Cob said. “You have given me a knock on the forehead that will stick by me. Cuckold? By God’s eyelid, cuckold?”

“Bah, you fool!” Tib said. “Did I know it was you who knocked? Come, come, you may call me as bad a name when you like.”

“May I?” Cob said. “Tib, you are a whore.”

“You lie in your throat, husband,” Tib replied.

“What! The lie? And in my throat, too?” Cob said. “Do you long to be stabbed, huh?”

Telling a soldier that he lied in his throat was grounds for a duel to the death.

“Why, you are no soldier, I hope,” Tib said.

“Oh, must you be stabbed by a soldier?” Cob said.

He was referring to a sexual “stabbing.”

Cob continued, “By the Mass, that’s true. When was Bobadill here, your captain? That rogue, that foist, that fencing Burgullian! I’ll tickle — beat — him, indeed.”

A “foist” is a pickpocket, and “Burgullian” is Cob’s word for a Burgundian.

In England in 1598, a Burgundian named John Barrose was hanged for killing a man. Previously, he had challenged all the fencers in England to fence against him.

“Why, what’s the matter, I wonder?” Tib said.

Cob said:

“Oh, he has lambasted me rarely, sumptuously! But I have it here in black and white, for his black and blue, that shall pay him back.”

The “black and white” was the warrant that Cob had asked for, and the “black and blue” were the bruises that Captain Bobadill had given him.

Cob continued:

“Oh, the Justice! The honestest old brave Trojan in London!”

Being called a Trojan was a compliment.

Cob continued:

“I honor the very flea of his dog. A plague on him, though; he put me once in a villainous, filthy fear. By the Virgin Mary, it vanished away like the smoke of tobacco, but I was smoked — given a hot time — soundly first, I thank the devil and his ‘good’ angel, my guest.

“Well, wife, or Tib, whichever you prefer, get you in and lock the door, I order you.”

In this society, “Tib” was a slang name for a strumpet.

Cob continued:

“Let no body into you, wife, nobody in to you. Nobody in to and no body into you. Those are my words. Not Captain Bob himself, nor the fiend in his likeness. You are a woman; you have flesh and blood enough in you to be tempted; therefore, keep the door shut upon all comers.”

The word “comers” had a sexual meaning.

“I warrant you, there shall no body enter here without my consent,” Tib said.

“Nor with your consent, sweet Tib,” Cob said, “and so I leave you.”

“It’s more than you know, whether you leave me so,” Tib said.

“What?” Cob asked.

“Why, whether I am sweet,” Tib said.

Tib was teasing her husband: Was he leaving her in a state of sweetness? Maybe not.

“Sweet” can metaphorically mean “chaste.”

“Tut, sweet or sour, thou are a flower,” Cob said. “Keep closed thy door; I ask no more.”

This particular “door” could be between her legs.

#### — 4.5 —

Edward Knowell, Wellbred, and Brainworm, who was still disguised as a soldier, talked together on a street. Master Stephen was present, but he was not close enough to hear the others’ conversation.

Edward Knowell said, “Well, Brainworm, perform this business successfully and thou will make a purchase of my love forever. You shall gain my love forever.”

Wellbred said to the disguised Brainworm, “Indeed, now let thy spirits use their best faculties. But, at any hand, remember the message to my half-brother, for there’s no other means to start him.”

To start an animal is to drive it out of its lair by startling it.

They were planning to trick Wellbred’s half-brother: Squire Downright.

“I warrant you, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said. “Fear nothing. I have a nimble soul that has awakened all the forces of my fantasy — imagination — by this time and put them in true motion. What you have instructed me to do, I’ll discharge it amply, sir. Don’t doubt it.”

“Go forth and prosper, Brainworm,” Wellbred said.

The disguised Brainworm exited.

Wellbred then said to Edward, “Indeed, Ned, how do thou approve of my abilities in this device?”

“In truth, well, in any case,” Edward Knowell said, “but our plot will come to an excellent end if it succeeds.”

Wellbred said:

“Succeeds, man? Why, it cannot choose but succeed, as long as the details of our plot don’t miscarry.

“But tell me ingenuously and frankly: Do thou feel affection for my sister-in-law Bridget, as thou claim?”

“Friend, am I worth believing?” Edward Knowell asked.

“Come, do not protest,” Wellbred said. “In faith, she is a maiden of good qualities and much modesty; and, unless I conceived very worthily of her, thou should not have her.”

“Nay, that, I am afraid, will be a question yet, whether I shall have her or not,” Edward Knowell said.

“By God’s eyelid, I swear thou shall have her; I swear by this light, thou shall,” Wellbred said.

“Nay, do not swear,” Edward Knowell said.

“By this hand, thou shall have her,” Wellbred said. “I’ll go fetch her right away. Just appoint a place where you two shall meet, and, as I am an honest man, I’ll bring her there.”

In fact, Edward Knowell wanted to marry Bridget.

“Wait, wait,” Edward Knowell said. “Be temperate.”

“Why, by — what shall I swear by?” Wellbred said. “Thou shall have her, as I am —”

“Please, be at peace,” Edward Knowell said. “Be silent. I am satisfied, and I do believe thou will omit no offered occasion — opportunity — to make my desires complete.”

“Thou shall see and know that I will not,” Wellborn said.

They exited.

— 4.6 —

Roger Formal and Old Knowell talked together on a street near Justice Clement’s house. Roger Formal was Justice Clement’s clerk.

“Was your man a soldier, sir?” Roger Formal asked.

The man was an employee, a serving-man: the disguised Brainworm, whom Old Knowell had recently hired.

“Aye, a knave,” Old Knowell said. “I overtook him begging on the way, this morning, as I came over Moorfields.”

He was upset because his new employee had been absent for so long.

Brainstorm, who was still disguised as a soldier, entered the scene.

Seeing the disguised Brainworm, Old Knowell said, “Oh, here he is!”

He then said to the disguised Brainworm, “You’ve made fair speed, believe me. Where, in the name of sloth, could you be thus —”

The disguised Brainworm interrupted, “— by the Virgin Mary, peace be my comfort, I was where I thought I should have had little comfort of — little support from — Your Worship’s service.”

In other words, he had been where he thought he would be treated badly because of his being employed by Old Knowell.

“How so?” Old Knowell asked.

“Oh, sir!” the disguised Brainworm said. “Your coming to the city, your reception of me, and your sending me to watch — indeed, all the circumstances, either of your charge or my employment, are as open, evident, and plain to your son as to yourself.”

In other words, Edward Knowell knew his father’s every move.

“How could that be?” Old Knowell asked. “Unless that villain Brainworm has told him about the letter and revealed all that I strictly charged him to conceal? It is so.”

“I am partly of the faith that it is so indeed,” the disguised Brainworm said.

“But how could he know thee to be my serving-man?” Old Knowell asked.

“Nay, sir, I cannot tell, unless it be by the black art,” Brainworm said. “Isn’t your son a scholar, sir?”

Some scholars, including Doctor Faustus, studied the black arts.

“Yes, but I hope his soul is not allied unto such hellish practice,” Old Knowell said. “If it were, I would have just cause to weep my part in him and curse the time of his creation.”

He then asked, “But where did thou find them, Fitzsword?”

Fitzsword was the disguised Brainworm’s alias.

The disguised Brainworm said:

“You should rather ask where they found me, sir, for I’ll be sworn that I was going along in the street, thinking nothing, when all of a sudden a voice calls, ‘Master Knowell’s man!’ Another cries, ‘Soldier!’ And thus half a dozen of them, until they had called me within a house, where I no sooner came but they were seen to be manly men, and out flew all their rapiers at my bosom, with some three- or four-score oaths to accompany them, and all to tell me I was but a dead man if I did not confess where you were, and how I was employed, and about what. Which, when they could not get that information out of me — as, I affirm, they must have dissected and made a skeleton out of me first, and so I told them — they locked me up into a room in the top of a high house, whence by great miracle, having a light heart, I slid down by the use of a ball of packthread — strong cord for typing up packs — into the street and so escaped.

“But, sir, thus much I can assure you, for I heard it while I was locked up: there were a great many rich merchants and fine citizens’ wives with them at a feast, and your son, Master Edward, withdrew with one of them, and has appointed to meet her soon at the house of a man named Cob. He is a water-bearer who dwells by the old City wall.

“Now there Your Worship shall be sure to take him, for there he preys, and he will not fail to be there.”

“Nor will I fail to break his match, I don’t doubt,” Old Knowell said.

“Match” can mean 1) appointment, or 2) romantic match.

Old Knowell then ordered, “Go thou along with Justice Clement’s man, Roger Formal, and wait there — at Justice Clement’s house — for me. At Cob’s house, say thou?”

“Aye, sir, there you shall have him,” the disguised Brainworm said.

Old Knowell exited.

The disguised Brainworm said to himself, “Yes? Invisible? Much wench or much son!”

He was being sarcastic. Old Knowell would find neither Bridget nor Edward, his son, there.

The disguised Brainworm continued, “By God’s light, when he has stayed there three or four hours, travailing with the expectation of wonders, and at length be delivered of air — oh, the entertainment that I should then take to look on him if I dared!”

“To be delivered of air” means “to give birth to nothing.”

The disguised Brainworm continued, “But now I mean to appear no more before him in this disguise; I have another



trick to act yet. Oh, that I would be so happy as to light on a nupson — a fool — now in this Justice’s novice!”

He was hoping that Roger Formal, the young man who was Justice Clement’s clerk, was a fool.

The disguised Brainworm said to Roger Formal, “Sir, I make you stay somewhat long.”

“Not a whit, sir,” Roger Formal said. “I ask you, what do you mean, sir?”

“I was putting up some papers,” the disguised Brainworm said.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one definition of “paper” is this: “A notice fastened on the back of a criminal undergoing punishment, specifying his or her offence.” The notice makes known the offender’s offense.

Brainworm, disguised as a soldier, had not been literally putting up papers, but he had been punishing Master Stephen for his foolishness, and he had been making Master Stephen’s foolishness known by conning him into buying a sword of low quality for the price of a sword of high quality.

Brainworm had also been fooling or would be fooling other people with his disguise, including Old Knowell and Roger Formal himself. His fooling of these people would also become known, just as if people were reading papers pinned to their back.

His fooling of Old Knowell had made Roger Formal stay somewhat long.

“You have been lately in the wars, sir, it seems,” Roger Formal said.

The disguised Brainworm said, “By the Virgin Mary, I have, sir, to my loss and expense of everything, almost.”

“Truly, sir, I would be glad to bestow a pottle of wine on you, if it would please you to accept it,” Roger Formal said.

A pottle is a two-quart tankard.

“Oh, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said.

“I would like to hear the manner of your services and your devices — your stratagems — in the wars,” Roger Formal said. “They say they are very strange, and not like those a man reads in the Roman histories or sees at Mile End.”

Militias composed of apprentices practiced maneuvers at Mile End.

“No, I assure you, sir, my services were not like those,” the disguised Brainworm said. “Why, at any time when it would please you, I shall be ready to discourse to you all I know.”

He said to himself, “And somewhat more than I know, too.”

He would make up military adventures.

“No better time than now, sir,” Roger Formal said. “We’ll go to the Windmill. There we shall have a cup of neat — undiluted — grist, we call it. Please, sir, let me request that you go with me to the Windmill.”

“Grist” is malt that has been ground — perhaps by a windmill — for brewing strong beer. Roger Formal and his friends used the word “grist” to refer to strong beer.

“I’ll follow you, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said.

He then said to himself, “And make grist out of you, if I have good luck.”

“Make grist” in this context means “take advantage of you.”

They exited.

Master Matthew, Edward Knowell, Captain Bobadill, and Master Stephen talked together.

Master Matthew said to Edward Knowell about Squire Downright, “Sir, did your eyes ever taste the like clown — country bumpkin — of him where we were today? I mean Master Wellbred’s half-brother? I think the whole earth cannot show his parallel, I swear by this daylight.”

“We were just now speaking about him,” Edward Knowell said. “Captain Bobadill tells me that Squire Downright has fallen foul of you, too.”

“Oh, aye, sir, he threatened me with the *bastinado*,” Master Matthew said.

The *bastinado* was a cudgel. Squire Downright had threatened to beat Master Matthew with a cudgel.

“Aye, but I think I taught you prevention — defense — this morning for that,” Captain Bobadill said. “You shall kill him, beyond question, if you be so generously — nobly — minded.”

“Indeed, it is a most excellent trick!” Master Matthew said.

He practiced fencing.

“Oh, you do not give spirit enough to your fencing move,” Captain Bobadill said. “You are too tardy, too heavy. Oh, it must be done like lightning. *Hay!*”

*Hai* is an Italian fencing term meaning “A hit!”

Captain Bobadill demonstrated at a post.

“Splendid, Captain!” Master Matthew said.

“Tut, it is nothing, if it be not done in a — *punto!*” Captain Bobadill said, demonstrating.

*Punto* is an Italian word meaning 1) a point of time, aka moment, or 2) a thrust with the point of a sword.

“Captain, did you ever test yourself against any of our masters and teachers of defense here?” Edward Knowell asked.

“Oh, good sir!” Master Matthew said. “Yes! I should think so!”

Captain Bobadill said:

“I will tell you, sir.

“Upon my first coming to the city, after my long travail — travel and trouble — for knowledge in that mystery, aka art, of fencing, only there came three or four of them to me at a gentleman’s house, where it was my chance to be resident at that time, to entreat my presence at their schools, and in addition so much importuned me that — I protest to you, as I am a gentleman — I was ashamed of their rude demeanor out of all measure.

“Well, I told them that I would not come to a public school, and they should pardon me, as it was opposite in diameter — diametrically opposed — to my humor; but if instead they would give their attendance at — come to — my lodging, I promised to do them what right or favor I could, as I was a gentleman, and so forth.”

“So, sir, then you tried their skill?” Edward Knowell asked.

Captain Bobadill answered:

“Alas, soon tried! You shall hear, sir.

“Within two or three days afterward, they came; and, by honesty, fair sir, believe me, I graced them exceedingly,

showed them some two or three tricks of defense that have purchased for them since a very creditable reputation! They cannot deny this. And yet now they hate me; and why? Because I am excellent, and for no other vile reason on the earth.”

“This is the strangest and most barbarous thing I ever heard!” Edward Knowell said.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“Nay, for a greater instance of their preposterous — perverse and ungrateful — natures, just note this, sir.

“They have assaulted me, some three, four, five, six of them together, as I have walked alone in diverse outskirts in the town, such as Turnbull, Whitechapel, and Shoreditch, which were then my quarters.”

Turnbull, Whitechapel, and Shoreditch were areas known for their prostitutes and criminals.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“And they have assaulted me since upon the Royal Exchange, at my lodging, and at my ordinary, aka my usual eating-house, where I have driven them before me the whole length of a street in the open view of all our gallants, pitying to hurt them, believe me.

“Yet all this lenity will not overcome their spleen, aka envy; they will be doing with the pismire — will be as busy as ants — raising a hill a man may spurn abroad — kick aside — with his foot at pleasure.

“By myself, I could have slain them all, but I don’t delight in murder. I am loath to bear any other weapon than this *bastinado* — this cudgel — against them, yet I hold it good policy not to go disarmed, for, although I am skillful, I may be oppressed with multitudes.”

Edward Knowell said, “Aye, believe me, you may indeed be so, sir, and in my conceit — opinion — our whole nation should sustain the loss by it, if it were so.”

Of course, he did not believe this. He was saying these things to Captain Bobadill in the hope that Captain Bobadill would reveal his — Captain Bobadill’s — foolishness.

“Alas, no,” Captain Bobadill said. “What’s a peculiar — individual — man to a nation? Not seen.”

He was unacknowledged: Important people did not know who he was.

“Oh, but your skill, sir!” Edward Knowell said.

Captain Bobadill said, “Indeed, that might be some loss, but who respects or pays attention to it? I will tell you, sir, privately and figuratively sealed: I am a gentleman and live here obscure and to myself. But if I were known to Her Majesty and the lords, observe me, I would undertake, upon this poor head and life, for the public benefit of the state, not only to spare the entire lives of her subjects in general, but to save the one half — nay, three quarters — of her yearly expense in holding war and against whatsoever enemy. And how would I do it, do you think?”

“Nay, I don’t know how, nor can I conceive it,” Edward Knowell said.

Captain Bobadill said:

“Why, I would do it thus, sir.

“I would select nineteen more men throughout the land to join with myself; they should be gentlemen of good spirit, and of a strong and able constitution.

“I would choose them by an instinct, a characteristic that I have.”

Captain Bobadill then used a number of specialized Italian fencing words:

“And I would teach these nineteen men the special rules — as your *punto*, your *reverso*, your *stoccata*, your *imbroccata*, your *passada*, your *montanto* — until they could all play very near or altogether as well as myself.”

He continued:

“This done, say the enemy were forty thousand strong. We twenty would come into the field the tenth of March or thereabouts, and we would challenge twenty of the enemy. They could not in their honor refuse us.

“Well, we would kill them; challenge twenty more, kill them; twenty more, kill them; twenty more, kill them, too. And thus would we kill every man his twenty a day, that’s twenty score; twenty score, that’s two hundred; two hundred a day, five days a thousand. Forty thousand — forty times five, five times forty — two hundred days kills them all up, by computation.”

Hmm — “twenty score, that’s two hundred.” No, twenty score is four hundred.

Using the correct arithmetic, in one hundred days, Captain Bobadill and his nineteen chosen men would kill an army of forty thousand strong. So Captain Bobadill said.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“And this will I venture my poor gentleman-like carcass to perform — provided there be no treason practiced upon us — by fair and discreet manhood; that is, civilly and in a gentlemanly fashion, by the sword.”

He was using “carcass” to refer to his body, and if he really had the chance to challenge twenty enemy soldiers a day, and did so, his body would soon be a carcass indeed.

“Why, are you so sure of your hand, Captain, at all times?” Edward Knowell asked.

Isn't it possible that in fighting so many men, even one at a time, he might make a mistake and be killed?

“Tut, never miss thrust upon, or mistrust, my reputation with you,” Captain Bobadill said.

“I would not stand in Downright's shoes, then, if you meet him, for the wealth of any one street in London,” Edward Knowell said.

He was still encouraging Captain Bobadill to say things that would reveal that he was a fool. So far, he had been very successful in doing that.

“Why, sir, you mistake me,” Captain Bobadill said. “If he were here now, by this welkin, aka sky, I would not draw my weapon upon him. Let this gentleman — Master Matthew — do as he wishes, but I will *bastinado* him, by the bright sun, wherever I meet him.”

He would not fight Squire Downright with his sword; instead, he would beat him with a cudgel.

Master Matthew said, “Indeed, and I'll have a fling at him, at my distance.”

A safe distance, no doubt.

Squire Downright appeared some distance away.

“Godso, look where he is!” Edward Knowell said. “Yonder he goes.”

In this society, “Godso” was an exclamation of surprise.

Squire Downright, who was looking for Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew, said to himself, “What peevish luck I have. I cannot find these bragging rascals!”



He exited.

“It’s not he, is it?” Captain Bobadill said.

“Yes, indeed, it is he,” Edward Knowell said.

“I’ll be hanged, then, if that were he,” Master Matthew said.

“Sir, keep your hanging good for some greater matter, for I assure you that was he,” Edward Knowell said.

“Upon my reputation, it was he,” Master Stephen said.

“Had I thought it had been he, he must not have gone away like that, not without a fight,” Captain Bobadill said. “But I can hardly be induced to believe it was he, yet.”

“I think so, sir,” Edward Knowell said.

If Captain Bobadill were to be induced to believe that it was Squire Downright, then according to his words, he would go after him and fight him. But Edward Knowell knew that Captain Bobadill was a coward who would not fight Squire Downright, and so he would not be induced to believe that it was Squire Downright.

Squire Downright reentered the scene.

Edward Knowell said, “But look, he has come again!”

Seeing them, Squire Downright took off his cloak and let it drop to the ground, and then he said to Captain Bobadill, “Oh, Pharaoh’s foot, have I found you? Come, draw; to your tools — your dagger and rapier. Draw, gypsy, or I’ll thrash you.”

People in this society fought duels using dagger and rapier — no shields. The dagger was used to help defend against the opponent’s rapier.

As used in this society, the word “gypsies” means 1) shiftless rascals, and 2) Egyptians. Squire Downright was calling Captain Bobadill an Egyptian because he often swore “by Pharaoh’s foot.”

“Gentleman of valor, I do believe what thou are saying,” Captain Bobadill said. “Hear me —”

Not in a listening mood, Downright said, “Draw your weapon, then.”

Traying to talk his way out of a fight, Captain Bobadill said, “Tall — valiant — man, I never thought about it until now: By the body of me, I had a warrant of the peace served on me just now as I came along, by a water-bearer. This gentleman saw it — Master Matthew.”

Cob had been given a warrant of peace upon him.

Squire Downright said, “By God’s death, you will not draw, then?”

He beat Captain Bobadill and disarmed him.

Master Matthew ran away.

“Stop! Stop!” Captain Bobadill said. “Under thy favor, stop beating me!”

“Prate again if you like this, you whoreson foist, you!” Squire Downright said. “You’ll control the point, you? You’ll control my sword with your own? Your consort — Master Matthew — is gone? Had he stayed, he would have shared this beating with you, sir.”

Squire Downright exited, accidentally leaving his cloak behind him.

“Well, gentlemen, bear witness I was bound to keep the peace, by this good day,” Captain Bobadill said.

He wanted to excuse his not fighting, but he did not want his excuse to be cowardice.

“No, indeed, it’s an ill day, Captain,” Edward Knowell said. “Never reckon it to be other than an ill day. But let’s say you were bound to keep the peace; even if that were so, the law allows you to defend yourself. That’ll prove but a poor excuse for not fighting.”

“I cannot explain what happened, sir,” Captain Bobadill said. “I desire a good and fair interpretation of what happened. I have never sustained the like disgrace, by heaven. Surely I was struck by a planet from heaven, for I had no power to touch my weapon.”

In other words, he was saying that he had been paralyzed by malign astrological influences. Others may instead say that he had been paralyzed by fear.

“Aye, likely enough,” Edward Knowell said. “I have heard of many who have been beaten under a planet.”

Catholic priests wore a chasuble, a sleeveless outer vestment that was called a planet. In anti-Catholic England, Catholic priests were sometimes beaten.

Edward Knowell continued, “Go, get yourself to a doctor. By God’s eyelid, if these are your tricks, your *passadas* and your *montantos*, I’ll have none of them.”

Captain Bobadill exited.

“Oh, manners!” Edward Knowell said. “That this age should bring forth such creatures! That Nature should be at leisure to make them!”

In other words, what a pitiable time we live in if such people as Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew exist in it.

He then said to Master Stephen, “Come, coz.”

Picking up Squire Downright's cloak, Master Stephen said, "By the Mass, I'll have this cloak."

"By God's will, it is Downright's," Edward Knowell said.

"Nay, it's mine now," Master Stephen said. "Another man might have picked it up as well as I. I'll wear it, so I will."

He put it on.

"What if he should see it?" Edward Knowell said. "He'll demand that it be returned to him, you can assure yourself."

"Aye, but he shall not have it," Master Stephen said. "I'll say I bought it."

"Take heed you don't buy it at too dear a cost, coz," Edward Knowell said.

They exited.

#### — 4.8 —

Kitely, Wellbred, Dame Kitely, and Bridget talked together.

Kitely said to Wellborn about Squire Downright, "Now trust me, brother-in-law, you were much to blame to incense his anger and disturb the peace of my poor house, where there are sentinels who every minute watch to give alarms of civil war, without the adjection — the addition — of your assistance or taking the occasion to act."

"No harm done, brother-in-law, I assure you, since there is no harm done," Wellbred said. "Anger costs a man nothing; and a brave man is never his own man — truly himself — until he becomes angry. To keep his valor in obscurity is to keep himself, as it were, in a cloak-bag, aka suitcase. What's a musician unless he plays music? What's a brave man unless he fights? For, indeed, all this my wise half-brother stands upon absolutely, and that made me fall in with him so resolutely."

Squire Downright wanted to fight, and Wellbred joined in with him in wanting to fight.

“Aye, but what harm might have come of it, brother!” Dame Kately said.

“Might, sister?” Wellbred said. “So might the good warm clothes your husband wears be poisoned, for anything he knows, or the wholesome wine he drunk just now at the table —”

Wellbred was saying that there wasn’t much chance that serious harm could come from him and Squire Downright quarreling.

Kately said, “Now, God forbid! Oh, me, now I remember: My wife drunk to me last and changed the cup, and she told me to wear this cursèd suit today. Let’s see if heaven will permit murder to be undiscovered!”

Hercules died from wearing poisoned clothing that his wife gave him. In Hercules’ case, his death was unintended by his wife. According to the myth, a Centaur named Nessus offered to give Deianira, Hercules’ wife, a ride across a fast, deep river. He did take her across the river, but when Hercules was still in the river, Nessus tried to run away with Deianira. Hercules killed Nessus with some arrows that had been dipped in the poisonous blood of the Hydra. Dying, Nessus told Deianira that if Hercules became attracted to another woman, then she should give him Nessus’ shirt, which was charmed and would make Hercules love her again. Hercules did fall in love with another woman, and Deianira did give him Nessus’ shirt. But the shirt was stained with the poisoned blood of the Hydra from Hercules’ arrows and with Nessus’ own Hydra-poisoned blood, and as Nessus knew would happen, the poison burned Hercules and caused him so much pain that he immolated himself. The fire burned

away his mortal part, leaving his immortal part, and he became a god.

Kitely then said, “I feel ill. Give me some mithridate.”

Mithridate was a poison antidote. Mithridates was a King of Pontus who made himself immune to poison by taking a small amount of poison at first and then slowly taking larger amounts of poison each succeeding day.

Kitely continued, “Some mithridate and olive oil, good sister, fetch me.”

In this society, people sometimes used olive oil as an emetic to make them vomit.

Kitely continued, “Oh, I am sick at heart!”

He had heart palpitations — or thought he did. He was also sick from jealousy, which gave him a burning sensation.

Kitely continued, “I burn, I burn. If you will save my life, go fetch it for me.”

“Oh, what a strange humor!” Wellbred said. “My very breath has poisoned him.”

Just hearing Wellbred’s words had made Kitely ill.

Bridget said to Kitely, “Good brother, be patient and calm. What do you mean? The strength of these extreme conceits — powerful delusions — will kill you.”

Dame Kitely said, “Curse your heart-blood, brother Wellbred, now, for putting such a foolish idea into his head!”

“Is a fit simile a foolish idea?” Wellbred replied, referring to the argument he had just made. “Will he be poisoned with a simile?”

He then said, “Brother-in-law Kately, what a strange and idle imagination is this! For shame, be wiser. On my soul, there’s no such matter. You aren’t poisoned.”

“Am I not sick?” Kately asked. “How am I then not poisoned? Am I not poisoned? How am I then so sick?”

“If you are sick,” Dame Kately said, “your own thoughts make you sick.”

“His jealousy is the poison he has taken,” Wellbred said.

Brainworm entered the scene. He was no longer disguised as a soldier; instead, he was disguised as Roger Formal, Justice Clement’s clerk.

Brainworm said, “Master Kately, my master, Justice Clement, salutes you and desires to speak with you with all possible speed.”

“No time but now?” Kately said. “When, I think, I am sick? Very sick! Well, I will wait upon His Worship.”

He then called, “Thomas! Cob!”

He said to himself, “I must seek them out and set them to be sentinels — watchful guards — until I return.”

He again called, “Thomas! Cob! Thomas!”

He exited to look for Thomas Cash and Cob.

Wellbred and the disguised Brainworm talked together apart from the others.

Wellbred quietly said, “This is perfectly splendid, Brainworm. But how did thou get this apparel of the Justice’s clerk?”

Brainworm quietly replied, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, my proper fine penman — the clerk Roger Formal — would

necessarily bestow the grist on me at the Windmill Tavern, to hear some martial discourse, where I so marshalled and manipulated him that I made him drunk, with admiration.”

The disguised Brainworm had made Roger Formal admirably drunk with alcohol and drunk with admiration for Brainworm’s supposed martial exploits.

The disguised Brainworm continued, “And because too much heat — caused by the beer — was the cause of his distemper, I stripped him stark naked, as he lay at full length asleep, and borrowed his suit of clothing to deliver this counterfeit message in, leaving a rusty suit of armor and an old brown bill — a kind of halberd — to watch over him until my return — which shall be when I have pawned his apparel and spent the better part of the money, perhaps.”

A brown bill is a kind of long-handled weapon.

Wellbred said quietly, “Well, thou are a successful merry knave, Brainworm. His absence will be a good subject for more mirth. I say to thee, return to thy young master — Edward Knowell — and tell him to meet me and my sister-in-sister, Bridget, at the Tower of London immediately.”

Marriages could be performed at the Tower immediately because the premises were extra-parochial. Such a place was called a liberty.

Wellbred added quietly, “For here, tell Edward, the house is so stored up with jealousy that there is no room for love to stand upright in.”

Hmm. “... love to stand upright in.” Those words have a double meaning.

Wellbred continued quietly, “We must get our fortunes committed to some larger prison, say; and I know no better



air, nor where the liberty of the house may do us more present service, than the Tower.”

One kind of commitment is to another person in a marriage; another kind of commitment is to a prison.

“Liberty of the house” is a certain amount of permitted freedom while in custody.

Wellbred said, “Go now!”

The disguised Brainworm exited.

Kitely and Thomas Cash entered the scene, but they were oblivious to the presence of Dame Kitely and Wellbred, who were far enough away not to hear their conversation.

Kitely said:

“Come here, Thomas.

“Now my secret’s ripe, and thou shall learn it. Listen carefully to what I say to thee with both of thine ears. I must go forth, Thomas.

“Be careful of thy promise.”

Thomas Cash had promised not to reveal Kitely’s secret.

Kitely continued:

“Keep a good watch. Note every gallant, and observe him well, any man who enters in my absence to thy mistress.

“If she would show him rooms, the jest is stale.”

The hostess of an inn — or whorehouse — can show rooms.

“Show him rooms” can have the implication of “lies backwards and lets out her forerooms” (Tilley F594).

A stale is a prostitute. A stale jest is an old trick.

Kitely continued:

“Follow them, Thomas, or else hang on him, and don’t let him go behind you. Closely observe their looks. Note if she attempts even just to see his hat-band or any other amorous toy about him, but praises his leg or foot, or if she says the day is hot, and asks him to feel her hand, how hot it is — oh, that’s a monstrous thing!”

The amorous toy could be a decorative piece of clothing — or a penis.

This society regarded a hot, moist palm as a sign of a lecherous nature.

Kitely continued:

“Closely observe all this for me, good Thomas; closely observe their sighs, and if they even just whisper, then break them off — interrupt them. I’ll back thee up in it.”

They might object to Thomas Cash’s interference, but Kitely would back him up.

Kitely then asked:

“Will thou do this?”

“Will thou be true, my Thomas?”

“As true as truth’s self, sir,” Thomas Cash replied.

“Why, I believe thee,” Kitely said.

He then asked, “Where is Cob, now?”

He called, “Cob!”

Kitely exited.

Dame Kitely said, “He’s always calling for Cob. I wonder what he employs Cob to do.”

Wellbred said, “Indeed, sister, to ask how he employs Cob is a necessary question for you who are his — Kately’s — wife, and a thing not very easy for you to be satisfied in. But this I’ll assure you, sister: Cob’s wife is an excellent bawd — pander — and often your husband haunts her house — by the Virgin Mary, for what purpose I cannot altogether accuse him. Imagine what you think convenient. But I have known fair hides to have foul hearts before now, sister.”

“You never said truer than that, brother,” Dame Kately said. “So much I can tell you in return for your information.”

She then ordered Thomas Cash, “Thomas, fetch your cloak and go with me; I’ll go after my husband immediately. I wish to Lady Fortune I could catch him in the act there, indeed! I’d return him his own, I assure him. Yes, I’d pay him back.”

Thomas Cash and Dame Kately exited.

Wellbred said:

“So, let them go; this may make entertainment soon.

“Now, my fair sister-in-law: I wish that you only knew how happy a thing it were to be fair and beautiful!”

He was not saying that she was not fair and beautiful, only that she was not enjoying the effects of being fair and beautiful.

“That touches not me, brother-in-law,” Bridget said. “That does not concern me.”

Wellbred said:

“That’s true; that’s even the fault of it. For, indeed, beauty stands a woman in no stead unless it procures her touching.”

This kind of touching is sexual in nature.

Wellbred continued:

“But sister-in-law, whether it touches you or not, it touches your beauties, and I am sure they will abide the touch.”

A touchstone was used to determine the genuineness and quality of gold alloys.

Wellbred continued:

“If they do not, a plague on all ceruse, say I!”

Ceruse was a cosmetic that was used for touching up a woman’s beauty.

Wellbred continued:

“And it touches me, too, in part, though not in the —”

He omitted the word “whole,” perhaps because he realized that it might be mistaken as the word “hole.”

Wellbred continued:

“Well, there’s a dear and respected friend of mine, sister-in-law, who stands very strongly and worthily affected toward you, and has vowed to inflame whole bonfires of zeal at his heart in honor of your perfections.”

“Bonfires” can be a pun on “bone-fires,” aka venereal disease.

Wellbred continued:

“I have already made my promise to bring you where you shall hear him confirm much more. Ned Knowell is the man, sister-in-law. There’s nothing to take exception to against the man. You are ripe for a husband, and a minute’s loss to such an occasion is a great trespass in a wise beauty.

“What do you say, sister-in-law? On my soul, I swear he loves you. Will you give him the meeting?”

Bridget replied, "In faith, I would have very little confidence in my own constancy and chastity, brother-in-law, if I did not dare to meet a man. But this proposition of yours savors of an old knight-adventurer's servant a little too much, I think."

"What's that, sister-in-law?" Wellbred asked.

Bridget replied, "By the Virgin Mary, of the squire."

A squire of ladies can be a pander. An apple-squire is also a pander.

"It doesn't matter even if it did," Wellbred said. "I would be such a one for my friend."

The friend could be either Edward Knowell, or Bridget, or both. Wellbred was willing to be a "pander" to bring them together.

He was not really a pander, of course; he wanted them to be married.

Wellbred looked up and said, "But see who has returned to hinder us!"

Kitely entered the scene.

"What villainy is this?" he said. "Called out on a false message? This was some plot! I was not sent for by Justice Clement."

He then said, "Bridget, where's your sister-in-law — my wife?"

"I think she has gone out, sir," Bridget said.

"What!" Kately said. "Has my wife gone out? To where, for God's sake?"

"She's gone outside with Thomas," Bridget said.

“Outside with Thomas?” Kitely said. “Oh, that villain dors — dupes — me! He has revealed all to my wife. Beast that I was, to trust him! To where, I ask you, did she go?”

“I don’t know, sir,” Bridget answered.

“I’ll tell you, brother-in-law, where I suspect she’s gone,” Wellbred said.

“Where, good brother-in-law?” Kitely asked.

“To Cob’s house, I believe,” Wellbred said, “but keep my secret.”

“I will, I will,” Kitely said. “To Cob’s house? Does she haunt Cob’s? She’s gone on purpose now to cuckold me with that lewd rascal, who, to win her favor, has told her all.”

He thought that his wife would have sex with Thomas Cash.

Kitely exited.

Wellbred said to Bridget, “Come, he’s once more gone. Sister-in-law, let’s lose no time; the affair is worth it.”

They exited.

#### — 4.9 —

Master Matthew and Sir Bobadill talked together in a street.

“I wonder, Captain, what they will say about my going away?” Master Matthew said.

His going away was running away.

“Why, what should they say, but as of a discreet gentleman, quick, wary, respectful of nature’s fair lineaments, and that’s all?” Captain Bobadill answered.

“Respectful of nature’s fair lineaments” refers to running away to keep one’s body from being beaten; in other words, Master Matthew had hauled ass to save his ass.

“Why, so, but what can they say about your beating?” Master Matthew said.

“A rude part, aka rude piece of combat, a touch with soft wood, a kind of gross battery used, laid on strongly, borne most patiently, and that’s all,” Captain Bobadill said.

A rude part is also 1) an unmannerly act, or 2) an unmannerly role, as in a play.

A wooden cudgel is hardly soft wood.

“Aye, but would any man have offered it in Venice, as you say?” Master Matthew said.

Would anyone have offered — attempted — to fight Captain Bobadill in Venice?

Captain Bobadill said:

“Tut, I assure you, no. You shall have there your *nobilis* [gentlemen], your *gentilezza* [nobility], come in bravely upon your reverse, stand you close, stand you firm, stand you fair, save your *retricato* with his left leg, come to the *assalto* [attack] with the right, thrust with brave steel, defy your base wood.”

Captain Bobadill’s Italian was imperfect. By *retricato* he probably meant *rintricato*, which means “entangled.”

The base wood is a wooden cudgel.

Captain Bobadill continued:

“But wherefore do I awaken this remembrance? I was fascinated — bewitched. By Jupiter, fascinated! I was

bewitched! But I will be unbewitched, and I will be revenged by law.”

“Do you hear me?” Master Matthew said. “Isn’t it best to get a warrant, and have him arrested and brought before Justice Clement?”

“It would not be amiss,” Captain Bobadill said. “I wish we had a warrant!”

Brainworm, still disguised as Roger Formal, Justice Clement’s clerk, entered the scene.

“Why, here comes his clerk,” Master Matthew said. “Let’s speak to him.”

“Agreed,” Captain Bobadill said. “You do the speaking.”

“Save you, sir,” Master Matthew said to the disguised Brainworm.

“With all my heart, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said.

Master Matthew meant, “God save you,” but Brainworm was willing to use his wit and intelligence and all his heart to save himself from any bad consequences of his actions.

Master Matthew then said, “Sir, there is a man named Downright who has abused this gentleman and myself, and we intend to make our amends by law. Now, if you would do us the favor to procure a warrant to bring him before your master, Justice Clement, you shall be well considered, I assure you, sir.”

The disguised Brainworm replied, “Sir, you know my service is my living. Such favors as these gotten from my master is his only preferment, and therefore you must consider me as I may make benefit of my job.”



The disguised Brainworm was saying that he made his living from serving Justice Clement, who did him the favor of allowing him to write warrants and make money from them.

“How is that, sir?” Master Matthew asked.

“Indeed, sir, the thing is extraordinary, and the gentleman may be of great account,” the disguised Brainworm said. “Yet, be who and what he will, if you will lay me down a brace of angels in my hand, you shall have it; otherwise, not.”

A brace of angels is two gold coins. The disguised Brainworm was selling the warrant at a high price.

Master Matthew and Captain Bobadill talked privately.

“What shall we do, Captain?” Master Matthew said. “He asks for a brace of angels. You have no money?”

“Not a cross, by Lady Fortune,” Captain Bobadill said.

A cross was imprinted on pennies and half-pennies.

“Nor I, as I am a gentleman, but two pence, left of my two shillings in the morning for wine and radish,” Master Matthew said. “Let’s find him something he can pawn.”

“Pawn?” Captain Bobadill said. “We have nothing to the value of his demand.”

“Oh, yes, I’ll pawn this jewel in my ear, and you may pawn your silk stockings, and pull up your boots,” Master Matthew said. “Your silk stockings will never be missed. It must be done now.”

Master Matthew was wearing one jeweled earring, as was fashionable at the time.

“Well, if there be no remedy, I’ll step aside and pull them off,” Captain Bobadill said.

He took off his stockings as Master Matthew removed his earring.

Master Matthew said to the disguised Brainworm, “Do you hear me, sir? We have no store of money at this time, but you shall have good things to pawn — look, sir, you shall have this jewel and that gentleman’s silk stockings — because we would have this business dispatched before we go to our chambers.”

“I am content, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said. “I will get you the warrant right away. What’s his name, do you say? Downright?”

“Aye, aye, George Downright,” Master Matthew said.

“What manner of man is he?” the disguised Brainworm asked.

“He is a tall, big man, sir,” Master Matthew said. “He goes in a cloak most commonly of silk russet laid about with russet lace.”

“That is very good, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said.

“Here, sir, here’s my jewel,” Master Matthew said.

“And here are my silk stockings,” Captain Bobadill said.

They gave the disguised Brainworm these items to pawn.

“Well, gentlemen, I’ll procure for you this warrant right away,” the disguised Brainworm said. “But who will you have to serve it?”

“That’s true, Captain,” Master Matthew said. “That must be considered.”

“By the body of me, I don’t know who will serve the warrant,” Captain Bobadill said. “It is a dangerous service!”

“Why, you would best get one of the varlets of the city, a sergeant,” the disguised Brainworm said. “I’ll appoint one for you, if you please.”

Varlets were city sergeants who served warrants and made arrests. They were arresting sergeants.

“Will you, sir?” Master Matthew said. “Why, we can wish nothing better.”

“We’ll leave it to you, sir,” Captain Bobadill said.

Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew exited.

“This is splendid!” the disguised Brainworm said. “Now I will go pawn this cloak of Justice Clement’s clerk at the broker’s for a varlet’s suit, and be the varlet myself, and get either more pawns or more money from Downright for the arrest.”

Another meaning of the word “varlet” is “scoundrel.”

— 4.10 —

Old Knowell stood in front of Cob’s house and said, “Oh, here it is. I am glad I have found it now.”

He knocked and said, “Ho! Who is within here?”

Tib opened the door a crack and said, “I am within, sir. What’s your pleasure? What do you want?”

“To know who is inside besides yourself,” Old Knowell replied.

He was looking for his son Edward and whatever woman his son was supposed to be with.

“Why, sir, you are no constable, I hope,” Tib said.

“Oh, do you fear the constable?” Old Knowell said. “Then I don’t doubt that you have some guests inside who deserve that fear. I’ll fetch the constable straightaway.”

“On God’s name, sir!” Tib said.

“Bah,” Old Knowell said. “Come, tell me, isn’t young Knowell here?”

“Young Knowell?” Tib said. “I know no such person, sir, I swear on my honesty.”

“Your honesty?” Old Knowell said. “Dame, it flies too lightly from you. There is nothing for me to do but fetch the constable.”

“The constable?” Tib said. “The man is mad, I think.”

She slammed the door shut, and Old Knowell started to leave.

Thomas Cash and Dame Kately entered the scene. Old Knowell saw them and stood to the side to observe them. They did not notice him.

Dame Kately was here because she thought that her husband was having an affair here.

Thomas Cash said loudly, “Ho! Who keeps house here?”

Old Knowell said to himself, “Oh, this is the female copesmate of my son. Now I shall meet my son immediately.”

A copesmate is a companion, but “to cope” means “to encounter,” and the encounter could be sexual in nature.

“Knock, Thomas, hard,” Dame Kately ordered.

Knocking, Thomas Cash said loudly, “Ho, good wife!”

From inside her house, Tib said, “Why, what’s the matter with you?”

“Why, woman, does it grieve you to open your door?” Dame Kately said. “Perhaps you get something to keep it shut.”

In other words: Perhaps you get paid to keep the door shut while people inside are having immoral sex.

Tib opened the door and said, “What do you mean by these questions, I ask you?”

“So strange you make it?” Dame Kately said. “You pretend not to understand me? Isn’t my husband here?”

“Her husband?” Old Knowell said to himself.

“My tried husband, Master Kately,” Dame Kately continued.

She did not add “and true” to the word “tried.” “Tried” can mean 1) excellent, and 2) tested.

“I hope he need not to be tried here,” Tib said.

“To be tried” in this context meant 1) to be put on trial, 2) to have something (e.g., semen) extracted, and/or 3) to be sexually solicited.

“No, dame, he does it not for need, but for pleasure,” Dame Kately said.

“Neither for need nor for pleasure is he here,” Tib said.

Old Knowell said to himself, “This is only a trick to balk me with.”

Seeing a figure approaching, he said to himself, “Wait, who is this? Isn’t it my son, disguised?”

Kately, wearing his cloak, entered the scene. His wife, Dame Kately, saw him coming, and she ran to him.

“Oh, sir, have I forestalled your honest market — your honest business?” Dame Kately said. “Have I found your close — secret — walks? You stand amazed now, do you? Indeed, I am glad I have smoked you out yet at last. Who is your jewel, may I ask? In, come, let’s see her.”

She said to Tib, “Fetch forth your huswife — hussy — dame!”

She then said to her husband, Kately, “If she is more beautiful, in any honest judgment, than myself, I’ll be content with it. But she is a change, she feeds you fat, she soothes your appetite — and you are well? Your wife, an honest woman, is figuratively meat twice sod — twice boiled, and rendered stale by familiarity — to you, sir? Oh, you treacher — you deceiver!”

Old Knowell said to himself, “She cannot counterfeit thus palpably. She cannot be faking her emotions and actions. This is real.”

Kately replied to his wife, “Out on thy more than strumpet’s impudence! Do thou steal away thus to thy haunts? And have I taken thy bawd” — he pointed to Thomas Cash — “and thee and thy companion” — he pointed to Old Knowell — “this hoary-headed lecher, this old goat, close — secretly and close together — at your villainy? And would thou excuse it with this stale harlot’s trick of accusing me of doing what thou thyself are doing?”

In this society, goats were thought to be lecherous.

Kately said to Old Knowell, “Oh, old incontinent, don’t thou feel ashamed, when all thy powers’ in chastity is spent, to have a mind so hot, and to entice and feed the enticements of a lustful woman?”

Kately was saying that Old Knowell was impotent because of old age, but his mind still sinned in his thoughts.

“Bah!” Dame Kitely said. “I defy thee, I do, dissembling wretch!”

“Defy me, strumpet?” Kitely said.

Standing by Thomas Cash, he said, “Ask thy pander here. Can he deny it?”

He pointed to Old Knowell and added, “Or can that wicked elder deny it?”

Kitely now thought that his wife, Dame Kitely, was having an affair with Old Knowell, whose name he did not know.

Dame Kitely still thought that her husband, Kitely, was having an affair with a woman inside Tib’s house.

Old Knowell said out loud, “Why, listen, sir —”

“Tut, tut, tut, never speak,” Kitely said. “Thy guilty conscience will reveal thee.”

“What lunacy is this that haunts this man?” Old Knowell said.

Kitely said to Tib, “Well, goodwife B, A, D” — this meant “bad,” and it sounded somewhat like a goat and (once the vowel sound was changed) “bawd” — “Cob’s wife ...”

And then he said to his wife, “... and you, who make your husband such a hoddy-doddy ...” — a hoddy-doddy is literally a small shell-snail; snails have horns, like cuckolds.

And then he said to Thomas Cash and Old Knowell, “... and you, young apple-squire [pander], and old cuckold-maker ...”

And then he said to all of them, “I’ll have every one of you before a justice of the peace. All of you shall answer it. I order all of you, go to the justice.”

Old Knowell replied, “By the Virgin Mary, I go willingly, although I taste — perceive — that this is a trick put on me to punish my impertinent search, and justly. And I half-forgive my son for playing this trick.”

Kitely said to his wife, “Come, will you go?”

“Go?” Dame Kitely said. “To thy shame, believe it.”

Cob entered the scene, and seeing the commotion, he asked, “Why, what’s the matter here? What’s here to do?”

“Oh, Cob, are thou come?” Kitely said. “I have been abused, and in thy house. Never was a man so wronged!”

“By God’s eyelid, in my house, my master Kitely?” Cob said. “Who wrongs you in my house?”

Referring to his wife and Old Knowell, Kitely said, “By the Virgin Mary, young-lust-in-old and old-in-young, here.”

He then said, “Thy wife’s their bawd; here have I taken them.”

“What?” Cob said. “Bawd? Has my house come to that? Am I preferred — promoted — to be a keeper of a brothel thither?”

He attacked his wife and beat her, saying, “Did I order you to keep your doors shut, Isabel?”

He had, indeed.

When he said “Isabel,” he may have meant “Jezebel,” aka an immoral, sexually promiscuous woman.

Cob continued, “And do you let them lie open for all comers?”

These comers could be cum-ers.



Old Knowell said, “Friend, know some cause before thou beat thy wife. This is madness in thee.”

“Why, isn’t there cause?” Cob asked.

“Yes, I’ll show cause before the Justice, Cob,” Kitley said.  
“Come, let her go with me.”

“She shall go,” Cob said.

“I will go,” Tib said. “I’ll see if you may be allowed to make a bundle of hemp out of your right and lawful wife thus, at every cuckoldly knave’s pleasure.”

Hemp stalks were beaten to separate the fibers, which were used to make rope.

Tib then said to Kitley, “Why don’t you go now?”

Kitley said, “You are a bitter quean — a bitter harlot. Come, we’ll have you tamed.”

They exited.

— 4.11 —

Disguised as a city sergeant, Brainworm was holding a staff of office. This staff of office was a mace that was decorated with the image of an artichoke. Mace is also a spice, as are salt and pepper, which can be used to spice an artichoke. Satirists can use words as if they were weapons, dealing blows the way a mace does. Satirists also rub salt into a wound.

Brainworm said to himself:

“Well, of all my disguises yet, now I am most like myself, being in this sergeant’s gown.”

Brainworm’s being “most like myself” was his being disguised as a varlet.

The disguised Brainworm continued:

“A man of my present profession never counterfeits until he lays hold upon a debtor and says he arrests him, for then he brings him to all manner of unrest. A kind of little kings we are, bearing the diminutive of a mace made like a young artichoke that always carries pepper and salt in itself. Well, I don’t know what danger I undergo by this exploit. Pray heaven I come well off.”

Master Matthew and Captain Bobadill entered the scene.

“Look, I think yonder is the varlet, judging by his gown,” Master Matthew said.

“Let’s go in quest of him,” Captain Bobadill said.

Master Matthew said to the disguised Brainstorm, “God save you, friend. Aren’t you here at the appointment of Justice Clement’s clerk?”

“Yes, if it please you, sir,” the disguised Brainworm replied. “He told me two gentlemen had willed him to procure a warrant from his master, which I have about me, to be served on a man named Downright.”

“It is honestly done of you both,” Master Matthew said.

Looking up, he said, “And see where the party comes whom you must arrest. Serve it upon him quickly, before he is aware of what you are doing.”

Master Matthew had seen a man whom he thought was Squire Downright, but the man was actually Master Stephen, who was wearing Squire Downright’s cloak.

“Bear back, Master Matthew!” Captain Bobadill said. “Retreat!”

He was afraid of Squire Downright.

The disguised Brainworm said to Master Stephen, “Master Downright, I arrest you in the Queen’s name, and I must carry you before a justice of the law by virtue of this warrant.”

“Me, friend?” Master Stephen said. “I am no Downright, I. I am Master Stephen. You don’t do well to arrest me, I tell you truly. I am in nobody’s bonds nor books — I want you to know that.”

He thought he was being arrested for debt, and he was saying that he had no actionable debt registered in either bonds or books.

Master Stephen continued, “A plague on you heartily for making me thus afraid before my time!”

“Why, how are you deceived, gentlemen?” the disguised Brainworm asked.

“He wears such a cloak, and that deceived us,” Captain Bobadill said.

The real Squire Downright entered the scene.

Seeing him, Captain Bobadill said, “But see, here he comes, indeed! This is he, officer.”

Seeing that Master Stephen was wearing his cloak, Squire Downright said to him, “Why, what is this now, Signor Gull, have you turned filcher — thief — recently? Come, give my cloak to me.”

“Your cloak, sir?” Master Stephen said. “I bought it even now, in open market.”

“Master Downright, I have a warrant I must serve upon you, procured by these two gentlemen,” the disguised Brainworm said.

“These gentlemen?” Squire Downright said. “These rascals!”

“Keep the peace, I order you, in Her Majesty’s name,” the disguised Brainworm said.

“I obey thee,” Squire Downright said. “What must I do, officer?”

“Go before Master Justice Clement, to answer for what they can object against you, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said. “I will treat you kindly, sir.”

Master Matthew said to Captain Bobadill, “Come, let’s go ahead of the others and make our case to the Justice, Captain.”

Captain Bobadill said about the disguised Brainworm, “The varlet’s a tall — brave —man, before heaven!”

The disguised Brainworm had said that he must serve a warrant on Squire Downright.

Actually, he had not written out or served a warrant, but had merely told Squire Downright that he must serve a warrant on him.

Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew exited.

Squire Downright said to Master Stephen, “Gull, you’ll give me my cloak?”

“Sir, I bought it, and I’ll keep it,” Master Stephen replied.

“You will?” Squire Downright said.

“Aye, that I will,” Master Stephen replied.

Squire Downright gave the disguised Brainworm some money and said, “Officer, there’s thy fee. Arrest him.”

“Master Stephen, I must arrest you,” the disguised Brainworm said.

“Arrest me?” Master Stephen said. “I scorn it.”

He then said to Squire Downright, “There, take your cloak; I’ll not have it.”

“Nay, that shall not serve your turn now, sir,” Squire Downright said.

He wanted Master Stephen to be arrested.

He then said to the disguised Brainworm, “Officer, I’ll go with thee to the Justice’s. Bring him — Master Stephen — along.”

“Why, isn’t your cloak here?” Master Stephen said. “What else do you want?”

“I’ll have you answer— give satisfaction — for it, sir,” Squire Downright said.

Master Stephen could have avoided this trouble by quickly giving Squire Downright the cloak — which Squire Downright owned.

“Sir, I’ll take your word, and this gentleman’s, too, for his appearance in court,” the disguised Brainworm said.

Brainworm was not really an arresting sergeant. He was not authorized to arrest anyone or to write warrants. If he were to actually deliver these men to Justice Clement, his disguise would be revealed.

“I’ll have no words taken,” Squire Downright said. “Bring him along.”

“Sir, I may choose to do that,” the disguised Brainworm said. “I may take bail.”

If he took bail, he could enrich himself.

“It is true, you may take bail and choose, at another time,” Squire Downright said, “but you shall not now, varlet. Bring him along, or I’ll beat you.”

“Sir, I pity the gentleman’s case,” the disguised Brainworm said. “Here’s your money back.”

“By God’s dignity, don’t tell me about my money,” Squire Downright said. “Bring him away, I say.”

“I assure you, he will go with you of himself — on his own accord — sir,” the disguised Brainworm said.

He did not want to go with them to see Justice Clement.

“Yet more ado?” Squire Downright said. “Yet more arguing?”

The disguised Brainworm said to himself, “I have made a fair mash — a fine mess — of it.”

A mash is a mixture of malt and water and is used for brewing beer.

“Must I go?” Master Stephen asked.

“I know no remedy to avoid it, Master Stephen,” the disguised Brainworm said.

Squire Downright said to Master Stephen, “Come along before me here. I do not love your hanging look behind.”

He was saying that he didn’t want Master Stephen with his hangdog — dejected — look behind him. He wanted to keep an eye on him lest he escape.

“Why, sir, I hope you cannot hang me for it,” Master Stephen replied.

He then asked the disguised Brainworm, “Can he, fellow?”

“I think not, sir,” the disguised Brainworm said. “It is but a whipping matter, surely.”

“Why, then, let him do his worst,” Master Stephen said. “I am resolute.”

They exited to go and see Justice Clement.

**ACT 5 (*Every Man in His Humor*)**

**— 5.1 —**

Justice Clement, Old Knowell, Kitley, Dame Kitley, Tib, Thomas Cash, Cob, and some of Justice Clement's servants were together in a room in Justice Clement's house.

Justice Clement said, "Nay, but stay, stay. Give me leave."

He then said to a servant, "My chair, sirrah."

The servant brought him his chair, and he sat down.

Justice Clement then said to Old Knowell, "Master Knowell, you say that you went there to meet your son, Edward?"

"Aye, sir," Old Knowell said.

"But who directed you to go there?" Justice Clement asked.

"That did my own serving-man, sir," Old Knowell said.

He was referring to Brainworm, who at the time was disguised as a soldier. Old Knowell still did not know that the soldier was Brainworm.

"Where is he?" Justice Clement asked.

"I don't know, now," Old Knowell said. "I left him with your clerk and ordered him to stay here for me."

"My clerk?" Justice Clement said. "About what time was this?"

"By the Virgin Mary, between one and two, as I take it," Old Knowell said.

"And at what time did my clerk come with the false message to you, Master Kitley?" Justice Clement asked.



The person who had delivered the false message to Kitely was Brainworm, who at the time was disguised as Justice Clement's clerk.

"After two, sir," Kitely said.

"Very good," Justice Clement said.

He then asked, "But Mistress Kitely, how was it that you were at Cob's?"

"If it pleases you, sir, I'll tell you," Dame Kitely said. "My brother Wellbred told me that Cob's house was a suspected place."

A suspected place is a house of ill repute — a whorehouse.

"So it appears, I think," Justice Clement said. "But go on."

"And that my husband used thither daily," Dame Kitely said.

"Used" meant "was accustomed to go" or "used women sexually."

"That doesn't matter, as long as he used himself well, mistress," Justice Clement said.

"Used" meant "treated."

"True, sir, but you know what grows by such haunts often," Dame Kitely said.

Penises grow in such haunts. In the case of such activities resulting in cuckolds, horns grow.

"I see — rank fruits of a jealous brain, Mistress Kitely," Justice Clement said. "But did you find your husband there in that case, as you suspected?"

"I found her there, sir," Kitely said.

“Did you so?” Justice Clement said. “That alters the case. Who gave you knowledge of your wife’s being there?”

“By the Virgin Mary, my brother-in-law Wellbred did,” Kately said.

“What?” Justice Clement said. “Wellbred first told her, and then afterward he told you? Where is Wellbred?”

“Gone with my sister, Bridget, sir, I don’t know to where,” Kately said.

“Why, this is a mere trick, a device,” Justice Clement said. “You are gulled in this most grossly, all of you.”

He then asked Tib, “Alas, poor wench, were thou beaten for this?”

“Yes, most pitifully, if it pleases you,” Tib said.

“And worthily, I hope, if it shall turn out to be so,” Cob said.

“Aye, that’s likely, and a piece of a sentence — a bit of wisdom,” Justice Clement said.

One of Justice Clement’s servants entered the room.

Justice Clement asked, “What is it now, sir? What’s the matter?”

“Sir, there’s a gentleman in the court outside who desires to speak with Your Worship,” the servant replied.

“A gentleman?” Justice Clement said. “Who is he?”

“A soldier, sir, he says,” the servant replied.

“A soldier?” Justice Clement said. “Take down my armor and my sword quickly! A soldier speak with me? Why, when will you get me my armor and sword, knaves?”

The servant brought Justice Clement his armor and sword and helped him arm himself.

Justice Clement said, “Come on, come on, hold my cap there, so; give me my gorget. Give me my sword.”

A gorget is a piece of armor worn to protect the throat.

He then said to Old Knowell, Kately, and Dame Kately, “Stand nearby. I will end your matters soon.”

He then said to the servant, “Let the soldier enter.”

The servant went to the door.

Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew entered the room.

Justice Clement said to Captain Bobadill, “Now, sir, what have you to say to me?”

— 5.2 —

Captain Bobadill began, “By Your Worship’s favor —”

Justice Clement said to Master Matthew, “Keep out, sir, I don’t know your claim to my attention.”

If he was going to be forced to fight, he wanted to fight only one person, not two.

He then said to Captain Bobadill, “You send me word, sir, that you are a soldier; why, sir, you shall be answered here. Here are men who have been among soldiers. Sir, what is your pleasure?”

“Indeed, sir, this is it: This gentleman and I myself have been most uncivilly wronged and beaten by one Downright, a coarse fellow about the town here,” Captain Bobadill said. “And for my own part, I protest, being a man in no sort given to this filthy humor of quarrelling, he has assaulted me in the way of my peace, despoiled me of my honor, disarmed me

of my weapons, and rudely laid me flat in the open streets, when I not so much as once offered to resist him.”

Justice Clement was disgusted. Captain Bobadill was supposed to be a soldier, and yet he had not defended himself.

“Oh, by God’s precious!” Justice Clement said. “Is this the soldier?”

He then said to a servant, “Here, take my armor off quickly; it will make him swoon, I fear. He is not fit to look on it — he who will put up with and endure a blow.”

Master Matthew said, “If it pleases Your Worship, he was bound to the peace.”

“Why, if he were, sir, his hands were not bound, were they?” Justice Clement said.

A man can legally and morally defend himself.

A servant entered the room and said, “There’s one of the varlets of the city, sir, who has brought two gentlemen here, one of them upon Your Worship’s warrant.”

“My warrant?” Justice Clement said, surprised.

He had signed no warrants.

“Yes, sir,” the servant said. “The officer says that the warrant was procured by these two.”

The “officer” was the disguised Brainworm, and the false warrant had been paid for by Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew.

“Tell him to come in,” Justice Clement said.

He then pointed to Captain Bobadill and said, “Let’s put aside this picture.”

Captain Bobadill was not a true soldier; he was at best a picture of a soldier.

Captain Bobadill was led aside, and a servant went to the door and let into the room Squire Downright, Master Stephen, and Brainworm, who was still disguised as an arresting sergeant.

Justice Clement said, "What, Master Downright! Are you brought here at Master Freshwater's suit?"

Captain Bobadill was a freshwater soldier; a freshwater sailor is one who has not been to sea.

— 5.3 —

Squire Downright answered, "Indeed, I am, sir. And here's another brought at my suit."

Justice Clement asked Master Stephen, "Who are you, sir?"

"A gentleman, sir," Master Stephen replied.

Seeing Old Knowell, he said, "Oh, uncle!"

"Uncle?" Justice Clement said. "Who? Master Knowell?"

"Aye, sir," Old Knowell said. "This is a 'wise' kinsman of mine."

"God's my witness, uncle, I am wronged here monstrously!" Master Stephen said. "He charges me with the stealing of his cloak, and I wish I might never stir if I did not find it in the street by chance."

"Oh, did you find it, now?" Squire Downright said. "You said you bought it, previously."

"And you said I stole it," Master Stephen said. "Now that my uncle is here, I'll do well enough with you."

"Well, let this rest a while," Justice Clement said.

He then said to Captain Bobadill, “You who have cause to complain there, stand forth. Did you have my warrant for this gentleman’s apprehension?”

Captain Bobadill replied, “Aye, if it pleases Your Worship.”

“Nay, do not speak in passion — so strongly,” Justice Clement said.

He was mocking Captain Bobadill, who spoke deferentially.

He then asked, “Where did you get it?”

“From your clerk, sir,” Captain Bobadill answered.

“That’s well,” Justice Clement said sarcastically. “As if my clerk can make warrants and my hand not sign them!”

He had not made or signed the warrant.

He then asked, “Where is the warrant? Officer, do you have it?”

The disguised Brainworm said, “No, sir. Your Worship’s man, Master Formal, bid me do it for these gentlemen, and he would be my discharge and take the responsibility.”

“Why, Master Downright, are you such a novice to be served and never see the warrant?” Justice Clement asked.

“Sir, he did not serve it on me,” Squire Downright said.

“No?” Justice Clement said. “What happened, then?”

Squire Downright said, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, he came to me and said he must serve it, and he would treat me kindly, and so —”

“Oh, God’s pity, was it so, sir?” Justice Clement said, “He must serve it?”

He then said to a servant, "Give me my long-sword there, and help me off the chair, so."

He then said to the disguised Brainworm, "Come on, sir varlet."

Brainworm knelt.

Justice Clement waved his long-sword over him as he said, "I must cut off your legs, sirrah. Stand up; I'll treat you kindly. I must cut off your legs, I say."

"Oh, good sir, I beg you," the disguised Brainworm said. "Don't do that, good Master Justice!"

"I must do it," Justice Clement said. "There is no remedy. I must cut off your legs, sirrah; I must cut off your ears, you rascal, I must do it. I must cut off your nose; I must cut off your head."

"Oh, Your good Worship!" the disguised Brainworm said.

"Well, rise," Justice Clement said.

The disguised Brainworm stood up.

Justice Clement said to him, "How do thou do now? Do thou feel thyself well? Have thou no harm?"

"No, I thank Your good Worship, sir," the disguised Brainworm said.

"Why, so it is!" Justice Clement said. "I said I must cut off thy legs, and I must cut off thy arms, and I must cut off thy head, but I did not do it. So you said you must serve this gentleman with my warrant, but you did not serve him. You knave, you slave, you rogue, do you say you must?"

He then said to a servant, "Sirrah, go away with him and take him to the jail!"

He then said to the disguised Brainworm, "I'll teach you a trick for your 'must,' sir."

"Good sir, I beg you to be good to me," the disguised Brainworm said.

Justice Clement said to the servant, "Tell him he shall go to the jail. Take him away, I say!"

"Nay, sir, if you will commit me, it shall be for committing more than this," the disguised Brainworm said. "I will not lose, by my travail, any grain of my fame, certainly."

Brainworm had performed mighty deeds in his various disguises this day, and he wanted credit for doing them. Therefore, he threw off his current disguise.

"Who is this?" Justice Clement asked.

"My serving-man Brainworm!" Old Knowell said.

"Oh, yes, uncle," Master Stephen said. "Brainworm has been with my cousin Edward and me all this day."

"I told you all there was some plot," Justice Clement said.

Brainstorm, no longer disguised, said, "Excellent Justice, since I have laid myself thus open to you, now stand strong for me, both with your sword and your balance."

Lady Justice carries both a sword and a set of scales. These represent punishment and fairness.

"By the body of me, I swear this is a merry knave!" Justice Clement said. "Give me a bowl of sack."

A bowl is a shallow cup.

A servant brought him wine.

Justice Clement said, "If he belongs to you, Master Knowell, I can vouch for your patience."



Brainworm said, “My master’s patience is what I have most need of.”

He then said to his master, Old Knowell, “Sir, if you’ll only pardon me, I’ll glory in all the rest of my exploits.”

He was proud of most of the actions he had performed this day.

Old Knowell replied, “Sir, you know I don’t love to have my favors come hard from me. You have your pardon — although I suspect you shrewdly of being in secret agreement with my son against me.”

“Yes, indeed, I have been, sir, although you retained me doubly this morning for yourself: first, as Brainworm, afterward, as Fitzsword,” Brainworm said. “I was your reformed — discharged — soldier, sir. It was I who sent you to Cob’s, upon the errand without an end — a pointless errand.”

“Is it possible?” Old Knowell said. “Is it possible that thou could disguise thy language so as I should not know thee?”

“Oh, sir, this has been the day of my metamorphosis!” Brainworm said. “It is not that disguise alone that I have run through today. I brought this gentleman, Master Kately, a message, too, in the form of Master Justice’s clerk here, to draw him out of the way, as well as Your Worship, while Master Wellbred might make a conveyance of Mistress Bridget to my young master.”

A conveyance is a legal transfer of property. Bridget — now Edward Knowell’s wife — was now figuratively his property.

“What!” Kately said. “My sister has been stolen away?”

“My son is not married, I hope!” Old Knowell said.

“Indeed, sir, they are both as surely — securely — joined in wedlock as love, a priest, and three thousand pounds (which is her dowry) can make them,” Brainworm said, “and by this time they are ready to order their wedding supper at the Windmill Tavern, unless some friend or family member here forestall them and invite them home.”

Edward Knowell and Bridget were married.

“By the Virgin Mary, that will I do,” Justice Clement said. “I thank thee for putting me in mind of it.”

He ordered a servant, “Sirrah, go and fetch them here, upon my warrant.”

The servant exited.

Justice Clement then said, “Neither’s friends and family have cause to be sorry, if I know the young couple rightly.”

This was a good marriage match for both bride and groom.

Justice Clement said to Brainworm, “Here, I drink to thee for thy good news. But, I ask thee, what have thou done with my clerk, Formal?”

Brainworm replied, “Indeed, sir, after some ceremony passed, as making him drunk, first with story, and then with wine, but all in kindness, and stripping off his outer clothing and leaving him in his shirt, I left him in that cool fashion, departed, sold Your Worship’s warrant to these two” — he pointed to Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew — “pawned his livery for that varlet’s gown to serve it in, and thus have brought myself, by my activity, to Your Worship’s consideration.”

A servant’s livery is distinctive clothing that shows whose servant he is.

Justice Clement said, “And I will consider thee, in another cup of sack. Here’s to thee, which, having drunk off, this is my sentence.”

Justice Clement’s sentencing of Brainworm consisted of Brainworm’s having a drink with him.

He drank and then added, “Pledge me — drink with me: Thou have done or assisted to nothing, in my judgment, but what deserves to be pardoned for the wit of the offence. If thy master, or any man here, is angry with thee, I shall suspect his ingenuity and intelligence as long as I know him to be angry.”

A noise sounded.

Justice Clement said, “What now? What noise is that?”

A servant entered and said, “Sir, Roger has come home.”

Roger Formal was the justice’s clerk.

Justice Clement ordered, “Bring him in, bring him in.”

Roger Formal entered the room. He was still drunk, and he was wearing an old suit of armor.

Justice Clement asked him, “What, drunk in arms, against me? What is your reason for this?”

— 5.4 —

“I beg Your Worship to pardon me,” Roger Formal said. “I happened into ill company by chance who cast me into a sleep and stripped me of all my clothes —”

The ill company was Brainworm, who was then disguised as a soldier.

“Well, tell him that I am Justice Clement, and I pardon him,” Justice Clement said. “But what does this have to do with your armor? What may that signify?”

“If it pleases you, sir, it was hung up in the room where I was stripped, and I borrowed it from one of the liquor-drawers, aka bartenders, to come home in, because I was loath to do penance through the street in my shirt.”

People were sometimes shamed for moral offences by being forced to walk through the streets while wearing a white sheet.

“Well, stand by awhile,” Justice Clement said, seeing some people coming.

Edward Knowell, Wellbred, and Bridget entered the room.

“Who are these people?” Justice Clement asked.

Recognizing them, he said, “Oh, the young company.”

He greeted them: “Welcome, welcome! God give you joy.”

This was a traditional greeting to a newly wedded couple.

He then said:

“Mistress Bridget, don’t blush. You are not so fresh a bride but the news of it has come here before you.

“Master Bridegroom, I have made your peace with and reconciled you to your father and your brother-in-law; give me your hand. I will also make your peace with and reconcile you to all the rest, before you forsake my roof.”

— 5.5 —

“We are the more indebted to your humanity, sir,” the newly married Edward Knowell said.

Justice Clement pointed to Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew and said, “Only these two have so little of man in them that they are no part of my care.”

Wellbred said, “Yes, sir, let me plead to you for this gentleman.”

He pointed to Master Matthew and then said, “He belongs to my sister-in-law, the bride.”

He had been Bridget’s servant and had served her.

Justice Clement asked, “In what place, sir?”

By “place,” he meant “position or capacity,” but Wellbred punned on another meaning: “location.”

“In the place of her delight, sir, below the stairs and in public,” he said. “He was her poet, sir.”

“Below the stairs” meant in the servants’ hall. Wellborn was bawdily punning on the “place of her delight” and “below the stairs.”

Justice Clement said:

“A poet? I will challenge him myself right now, at extempore:

*“Mount up thy Phlegon muse, and testify*

*“How Saturn, sitting in an ebon [black] cloud,*

*“Disrobed his podex, white as ivory,*

*“And through the welkin thundered all aloud.”*

Justice Clement was parodying poetry. In Greek mythology, Phlegon is one of the horses that pull the chariot of the sun-god Helios. A “podex” is a butt, and his poem was about the god Saturn dropping his pants, farting, and filling the welkin — the sky — with thunderous sound.

As one of the horses that pull the chariot of the sun-god Helios across the sky, Phlegon is connected with time. The word “extempore” means “without time for preparation.” The Latin *ex tempore* means “out of time.”

“He is not for extempore, sir,” Wellborn said. “He is all for the pocket muse; may it please you to command a sight of his pocketed poems.”

Master Matthew could not compose poems extempore and release the words into the air; his way of composing poems was to copy them out of a book with a few words changed and keep them in his pocket.

Of course, small books can also fit in pockets.

“Yes, yes, search him for a taste of his vein,” Justice Clement said.

“To taste his vein” meant “to take his pulse” — Justice Clement meant for the servants to grab him by the wrist. He also meant for them to search the man for samples of his poetic style.

Wellborn said to Master Matthew, who was resisting, “You must not deny the Queen’s justice, sir, under penalty of a writ of rebellion.”

A man who failed to show up in court after a summons was served was treated as a rebel against the law.

Some people searched Matthew’s pockets and found his poems.

Justice Clement said:

“What, all this verse? By the body of me, he carries a whole ream, a realm and commonwealth of paper, in his hose! Let’s see some of his subjects.”

He read out loud:

*“Unto the boundless ocean of thy face*

*“Runs this poor river, charged with streams of eyes.”*

He then said, “What! This is stolen!”

Yes, this was another of Master Matthew’s plagiarized poems.

Samuel Daniel had written:

*“Unto the boundless ocean of thy beauty*

*“Runs this poor river, charged with streams of zeal.”*

Edward Knowell said, “A parody! A parody! With a kind of miraculous gift to make it absurder than it was.”

“Is all the rest the same as this batch?” Justice Clement said. “Is all the rest of this plagiarized? Bring me a torch; lay the poems all together and set them on fire. Cleanse the air. Here was enough to have infected the whole city, if it had not been taken in time!”

They burned the poems.

A defense against the plague was to burn stinky rubbish. After it was burned, it would no longer stink and so the air would be cleansed.

Justice Clement continued, “See, see, how our poet’s glory shines! Brighter and brighter! Still it increases! Oh, now it’s at the highest; and now it declines as fast. You may see: *Sic transit gloria mundi.*”

The Latin means, “Thus passes the glory of the world.”

“There’s an emblem for you, son, and your studies!” Old Knowell said to Edward.

Justice Clement said:

“May no speech or act of mine be drawn forward against such as profess it — poetry — worthily. They are not born every year, as is an alderman.”

It has been said that a poet is born once in an age; however, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Ford, John Donne, and John Milton (and others) were all alive at the same time. Some ages are more productive of poets than others.

Justice Clement continued:

“There goes more to the making of a good poet than a sheriff, Master Kitley. You look upon me! Though I live in the city here among you, I will do more reverence to him, when I meet him, than I will to the mayor, out of his year.”

The Mayor of London served for one year.

Justice Clement continued:

“But these paper-peddlers! These ink-dabblers! They cannot expect reprehension or reproach. They have it with the fact.”

Bad poets are punished simply by the fact that their poetry is bad. They need not expect reprehension or reproach because bad poets and bad poetry tend to be ignored. Master Matthew has no reputation as a poet today. Plagiarism is not poetry.

“Sir, you have saved me the labor of a defense,” Edward Knowell said.

He would have made a defense of good poets and good poetry.

Justice Clement said:

“It shall be conversation for supper between your father and me, if he dare undertake me.

“But to dispatch away these.”



He said to Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew, “You sign of the soldier, and you picture of the poet — but both so false I will not have you hanged out at my door until midnight.”

Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew were mere signs or pictures to hang out in front of a tavern — they were not the real things. Hanging them out at Justice Clement’s house after midnight would be acceptable because it would be too dark for them to be seen.

Justice Clement continued:

“While we are at supper, you two shall penitently fast it out in my court outside; and, if you will, you may pray there that we may be so merry within as to forgive or forget you when we come out.”

Justice Clement then pointed to Roger Formal and said, “Here’s a third, because we value your safety, who shall watch you; he is provided for the purpose.”

Roger Formal was wearing old armor, and so he was provided with what was needed to guard Captain Bobadill and Master Matthew.

Justice Clement said to Roger Formal, “Look to your charge, sir. Do your job.”

Master Stephen asked, “And what shall I do?”

Justice Clement said, “Oh, I would have lost a sheep if he had not bleated!”

He had forgotten about Master Stephen.

He then said to Master Stephen, “Why, sir, you shall give Master Downright his cloak; and I will entreat him to take it. A trencher — a wooden plate — and a napkin you shall have in the buttery, and you shall keep Cob and his wife here” — he pointed to them — “company.”

The buttery is a large pantry, full of provisions, where servants ate and drank.

Justice Clement continued:

“I will first entreat Cob and his wife to be reconciled, and I will entreat you to endeavor with your ‘intelligence’ to keep them so.”

“I’ll do my best,” Master Stephen said, unaware of the justice’s sarcasm.

Cob said to his wife, “Why, now I see thou are honest and chaste, Tib, I receive thee as my dear and mortal wife again.”

He said “mortal,” but he meant “moral.”

Tib replied, “And I receive you as my loving and obedient husband.”

In the marriage service of this society, it was the wife who was supposed to be obedient.

Justice Clement said:

“Good complement and compliment! It will be their bridal night, too. They are married anew.

“Come, I conjure the rest to put off all discontent.

“You, Master Downright, put off your anger.

“You, Master Knowell, put off your cares and worries.

“Master Kately and his wife, both put off your jealousy. For, I must tell you both, while that — jealousy — is fed, horns in the mind are worse than on the head.”

“Sir, thus they go away from me,” Master Kately replied.

He then said to his wife, “Kiss me, sweetheart.”

He kissed his wife and then recited out loud:

*“See, what a drove of horns fly in the air,*

*“Winged with my cleansèd and my credulous breath!*

*“Watch ’em, suspicious eyes, watch where they fall:*

*“See, see, on heads that think they’ve none at all!*

*“Oh, what a plenteous world of this will come!*

*“When air rains horns, all may be sure of some.”*

He then said, “I have learned so much verse out of a jealous man’s part in a play.”

The play was *Every Man in His Humor*, and he was the jealous man.

Justice Clement said:

“It is well! It is well! This night we’ll dedicate to friendship, love, and laughter.

“Master Bridegroom, take your bride and lead; everyone shall take a fellow.

“Here is my mistress: Brainworm! To whom all my addresses of courtship shall have their reference.

“Brainworm’s adventures this day, when our grandchildren shall hear to be made a fable, I don’t doubt that it shall find both spectators and applause.”

Now is a good time for the readers of this book to applaud.

Thank you.

NOTES (*Every Man in His Humor*)

— 2.3 —

*These are my brother's consorts, these! These are  
his cam'rades,*

(2.2.23)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 4.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin  
Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Page 657.

According to Oxford English Dictionary:

A “rade” is a ray.

A “ray” is:

A single line or narrow beam of light; each of the  
lines in which light (and accompanying radiant heat)  
may seem to emanate from the sun or other source.

The adjective “cam” means:

Crooked, twisted, bent from the straight.

Away from the straight line, awry, askew.

— 2.4 —

*I have been at Marseilles, Naples, and the Adriatic Gulf, a  
gentleman*

*slave in the galleys thrice, where I was most dangerously  
shot in the head, 55*

*through both the thighs; and yet, being thus maimed, I am void of maintenance,*

*nothing left me but my scars, the noted marks of my resolution.*

(2.4.54-57)

This information comes from the Wikipedia article on “Fisher King”:

(A “thigh” wound has been interpreted by many scholars in Arthurian literature as a wound to the genitals.)

[...]

The location of the wound is of great importance to the legend. In most medieval stories, the mention of a wound in the groin or more commonly the “thigh” (such as the wounding of the ineffective suitor in *Lanval* from the *Lais of Marie de France*) is a euphemism for the physical loss of or grave injury to one’s penis. In medieval times, acknowledging the actual type of wound was considered to rob a man of his dignity, thus the use of the substitute terms “groin” or “thigh”, although any informed medieval listener or reader would have known exactly the real nature of the wound. Such a wound was considered worse than actual death because it signaled the end of a man's ability to function in his primary purpose: to propagate his line. In the instance of the Fisher King, the wound negates his ability to honor his sacred charge.

Source of Above: “Fisher King.” Wikipedia. Accessed 18 September 2021

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fisher\\_King](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fisher_King)

This information comes from an article titled “The Motif of the ‘Mutilated Hero’ in Herodotus”:

Classical scholars are generally aware of the trope that in literature from around the world thigh wounds are often euphemistic for castration, or at least for impotence.

Source of Above: D. Felton, “The Motif of the ‘Mutilated Hero’ in Herodotus.” *Phoenix*, Vol. 68 (2014) 1-2. Pages 47-48.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7834/phoenix.68.1-2.0047>

D. Felton. “THE MOTIF OF THE ‘MUTILATED HERO’ IN HERODOTUS.” *Phoenix*, vol. 68, no. 1/2, Classical Association of Canada, 2014, pp. 47–61, <<https://doi.org/10.7834/phoenix.68.1-2.0047>>.

— 2.4 —

*What, shall I walk*

*with a cudgel, like Higginbottom, and may have a rapier for money?*

(2.4.74-75)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 4.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Page 663.

According to the *Oxford England Dictionary*, “hay” comes from the Old English “*hīg*.”

This paragraph by David Bruce is pure speculation:

“Higginbottom” is “hay in bottom,” aka a man who needs padding for his bottom. The man may have been beaten on his bottom and therefore carries the cudgel.

In 1.3, Brainworm talks about bundled hay being used in place of riding boots to prevent chafing. Captain Bobadill wears voluminous pants that could hold bundled hay in the bottom that could protect him whenever he is beaten. He doesn’t do that in the play, of course, but maybe he should.

“Higginbottom” is perhaps the name of a man who carried a cudgel but is no longer remembered. Since that man, if he existed, is no longer remembered, we do what we can with what we’ve got.

— 4.2 —

Quotations from Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*.

The quotations from Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* (not Master Matthew’s plagiarized version) I took from this source:

AN OPEN COMPANION TO EARLY BRITISH  
LITERATURE

58 CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE: HERO AND  
LEANDER

<https://earlybritishlit.pressbooks.com/ACT/christopher-marlowe-hero-and-leander/>

— 4.2 —

“*Cut a whetstone.*”

(4.2.109)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 4.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Page 695.

The reference is a story about the Roman augur Attus Navius in Livy, *The History of Rome*, Book 1, 36:

**36.** He was also making preparations for surrounding the City with a stone wall when his designs were interrupted by a war with the Sabines. So sudden was the outbreak that the enemy were crossing the Anio before a Roman army could meet and stop them. There was great alarm in Rome. The first battle was indecisive, and there was great slaughter on both sides. The enemies' return to their camp allowed time for the Romans to make preparations for a fresh campaign. Tarquin thought his army was weakest in cavalry and decided to double the centuries, which Romulus had formed, of the Ramnes, Titienses, and Luceres, and to distinguish them by his own name. Now as Romulus had acted under the sanction of the auspices, Attus Navius, a celebrated augur at that time, insisted that no change could be made, nothing new introduced, unless the birds gave a favourable omen. The king's anger was roused, and in mockery of the augur's skill he is reported to have said, 'Come, you diviner, find out by your augury whether what I am now contemplating can be done.' Attus, after consulting the omens, declared that it could. 'Well,' the king replied, 'I had it in my mind that you should cut a whetstone with a razor. Take these, and perform the feat which your birds portend



can be done.’ It is said that without the slightest hesitation he cut it through. There used to be a statue of Attus, representing him with his head covered, in the Comitium, on the steps to the left of the senate-house, where the incident occurred. The whet-stone also, it is recorded, was placed there to be a memorial of the marvel for future generations. At all events, auguries and the college of augurs were held in such honour that nothing was undertaken in peace or war without their sanction; the assembly of the curies, the assembly of the centuries, matters of the highest importance, were suspended or broken up if the omen of the birds was unfavourable. Even on that occasion Tarquin was deterred from making changes in the names or numbers of the centuries of knights; he merely doubled the number of men in each, so that the three centuries contained eighteen hundred men. Those who were added to the centuries bore the same designation, only they were called the ‘Second’ knights, and the centuries being thus doubled are now called the ‘Six Centuries.’

Source of Above:

Livy. *History of Rome* [Book 1, 36]. English Translation by Rev. Canon Roberts. New York, New York. E. P. Dutton and Co. 1912.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0026%3Abook%3D1%3AACT%3D36>

— 4.2 —

“*Whose cow has calved?*”

(4.2.97)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 4.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Page 695.

This paragraph by David Bruce is pure speculation:

Sometimes, people could argue over whose cow had calved when a cow gave birth in a common pasture with no witnesses. Sometimes, cows gave birth at roughly the same time, and if a cow gave birth to twins, people could argue over the ownership of the second twin. Sometimes, a calf was stillborn, and if another cow gave live birth at roughly the same time, people could argue over the ownership of the living calf.

— 4.6 —

*“Sir, I make you stay somewhat long.”*

*FORMAL*

*Not a whit, sir. Pray you, what do you mean, sir? 50*

*BRAINWORM*

*I was putting up some papers.*

(4.6.49-51)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 4.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Page 701.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one definition of “paper” is this:

*A notice fastened on the back of a criminal undergoing punishment, specifying his or her offence.*

This is what I wrote in this book:

The notice makes known the offender’s offense.

Brainworm, disguised as a soldier, had not been literally putting up papers, but he had been punishing Master Stephen for his foolishness, and he had been making Master Stephen’s foolishness known by conning him into buying a sword of low quality for the price of a sword of high quality.

Brainworm had also been fooling or would be fooling other people with his disguise, including Old Knowell and Roger Formal himself. His fooling of these people would also become known, just as if people were reading papers pinned to their back.

His fooling of Old Knowell had made Roger Formal stay somewhat long.

Note: I suspect that “I was putting up some papers” may have additional meaning, but this is the best that I can do as of now.

**CHAPTER 10: Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His  
Humor***

**CAST OF CHARACTERS (*Every Man Out of His  
Humor*)**

**ASPER** *the presenter and supposed author of the play, who also plays the role of Macilente. He is a harsh critic.*

**GREX CHORUS** (or **AUDIENCE** consisting) *of Asper's friends:*

**CORDATUS** *Asper's spokesman*

**MITIS**

**PROLOGUE**

**CARLO BUFFONE** *a common jester*

**Carlo's BOY** *his boy-servant*

**MACILENTE** *a maliciously envious scholar*

**SOGLIARDO** *a country bumpkin and would-be gentleman, Sordido's brother*

**SORDIDO** *a rich farmer, Sogliardo's brother, father of Fungoso and Fallace, and father-in-law of Deliro*

**HIS HIND** *a farm laborer*

**FUNGOSO** *an Inns of Court student, Sordido's son, Fallace's brother*

**His TAILOR**

**His SHOEMAKER**

**His HABERDASHER** *a maker and/or seller of hats*

**FASTIDIOUS BRISK** *a courtier, would-be lover of Saviolina*

**CINEDO** *his page. In Latin, cinaedus means "homosexual."*

**PUNTARVOLO** *a knight*

**HIS LADY**

**HER WAITING-GENTLEWOMAN**

**HIS HUNTSMAN**

**HIS SERVINGMEN, TWO** *in number*

**HIS DOG** *a live greyhound*

**HIS CAT**

**DELIRO** *a merchant and moneylender, doting husband of Fallace*

**FALLACE** *Deliro's wife, Fungoso's sister, and would-be mistress of Brisk*

**FIDO** *Deliro and Fallace's boy-servant*

**SHIFT** *a cavalier and pimp*

**CLOVE** *a coxcomb. Coxcombs are fools.*

**ORANGE** *his friend, another coxcomb*

**RUSTICI** *country people*

**SAVIOLINA** *a court lady*

**MUSICIANS**

**NOTARY**

**A GROOM** *a servant, often taking care of horses*

**TWO DRAWERS** *at the Mitre Tavern, the elder named GEORGE. Servers of ale and wine*

**CONSTABLE** and **OFFICERS** *of the law*

**QUEEN ELIZABETH I** *portrayed by an actor*

**THE SCENE:** INSULA FORTUNATA, AKA THE FORTUNATE ISLAND. Aka Britain. “The city” is London because St. Paul’s Cathedral is mentioned and is the location of one scene (3.1) in the play.

**NOTES:**

Ben Jonson’s society existed before the age of modern medicine.

Doctors in Ben Jonson’s society believed that the human body had four humors, or vital fluids, that determined one’s temperament. Each humor made a contribution to the personality, and one humor could be predominant. For a human being to be sane and healthy, the four humors had to be present in the right amounts. If a man had too much of a certain humor, it would harm his personality and health.

Blood was the sanguine humor. A sanguine man was optimistic.

Phlegm was the phlegmatic humor. A phlegmatic man was calm.

Yellow bile was the choleric humor. A choleric man was angry.

Black bile was the melancholic humor. A melancholic man was gloomy.

A humor can be a personal characteristic.

A humor can also be a fancy or a whim.

A humor can also be a mood.

Asper's humor (personal characteristic) was to be severely critical and satiric.

Sordido's humor (personal characteristic) was to be severely greedy.

Sogliardo's humor (personal characteristic) was to want to be a gentleman and to have Cavalier Shift as his role model.

Cavalier Shift's humor (personal characteristic) was to want to be thought a brave man.

Fungoso's humor (personal characteristic) was to be excessively socially ambitious and dressed in the very latest fashion.

Saviolina's humor (personal characteristic) was to have an overly high opinion of herself.

Deliro's humor (personal characteristic) was to excessively dote on his wife, Fallace.

Fallace's humor (personal characteristic) was to excessively dote on Fastidious Brisk.

Fastidious Brisk's humor (personal characteristic) was to want to be thought a highly desired and desirable courtier.

Puntarvolo's humor (personal characteristic) was to travel and gamble on his travel.

Macilente's humor (personal characteristic) was to be maliciously envious.

In Ben Jonson's society, a person of higher rank would use "thou," "thee," "thine," and "thy" when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use "you" and "your" when referring to a person of higher rank.

“Sirrah” was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

The word “wench” at this time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

In Ben Jonson’s society, a “clown” is a rustic, a countryman or countrywoman.

Queen Elizabeth I ruled England at the time of the play, whose first performance was in 1599.



## NOTES ON CHARACTERS (*Every Man Out of His Humor*)

### **ASPER [Sour]**

A faultfinder. He is of an ingenious, intellectually gifted, free, and unrestrained spirit, eager, tart, and constant in reproof, without fear rebuking the world's abuses; one whom no servile hope of gain or frosty apprehension of danger can make to be a parasite and sycophant, either to time, place, or opinion.

### **MACILENTE [Lean, Thin]**

A lean malcontent. A man well-endowed with natural abilities, a capable and sufficient scholar, and travelled, who, lacking that place in the world's account which he thinks his merit is entitled to, falls into such an envious apoplexy, with which his judgment is so confounded and disgusted that he grows violently impatient of any contrasting happiness in another.

### **PUNTARVOLO [Wishes to Gamble]**

A vainglorious knight, over-Englishing — over-elaborating and over-exaggerating — his travels and wholly consecrated to affecting eccentricity; the very Jacob's staff of compliment; a sir who has lived to see the revolution of time in most of his apparel — he is old, and most of his clothing is no longer fashionable. Of dignified appearance good enough, but so palpably affected to his own praise that, for lack of flatterers, he commends himself to the floutage and mockery of his own family. He deals upon returns and strange performances, resolving, in spite of public derision, to stick to his own particular fashion, phrase, and gesture.

A Jacob's staff was an instrument for measuring altitude. Puntarvolo enjoys using high-altitude (high-flown) language.

He praises himself so much and so extravagantly that others mock him.

“Returns and strange performances” are things to gamble on. A traveler could bet that he could return from a hazardous journey within a certain time; others could bet that he would not be able to do it. An example of a strange performance is actor Will Kemp’s betting that he could dance the morris dance from London to Norwich.

### **CARLO BUFFONE [Charles the Jester]**

A public, scurrilous, and profane jester, who, more swift than Circe, with absurd similes will transform any person into deformity. A good feast-hound or banquet-beagle who will scent out a supper some three miles away, and who will swear to his patrons (“God damn me if I did not!”) that he came in oars when he was only wafted over in a sculler. A contemptible person who has an extraordinary gift in pleasing his palate, and will swill up more sack (white wine) at a sitting than would make all the guard a posset (medicinal drink). His religion is railing, and his discourse ribaldry. They stand highest in his respect whom he studies most to reproach.

Circe is the goddess who turned Odysseus’ men into swine in Homer’s *Odyssey*.

Carlo Buffone is a man who gets himself invited to dinners hosted by rich people. He will swear that he crossed the Thames River in an expensive boat with lots of oars, but he actually used less-expensive means of transportation: a rowboat with a pair of oars or a small boat with one oar. He entertains his hosts with malicious gossip and indelicate tales.

A posset is a drink containing milk curdled by wine or ale.

## **FASTIDIOUS BRISK [Well-Dressed]**

A neat, foppish, spruce, full-of-affectations courtier; one who wears clothes well and in fashion, practices by his mirror how to salute and greet people of high social class, speaks good fragments of others' wit (notwithstanding his fashionable use of the bass viol and tobacco to punctuate his conversation), swears tersely and with variety, cares not what lady's favor [letter, gift, or sexual conquest] he belies or what great man's familiarity he belies. A good property to perfume the boot of a coach. He will borrow another man's horse to appraise it and then ride the horse as if it were his own; or, if he lacks money, on foot can post — ride quickly — himself into credit with his merchant only with the jingle of his spur and the jerk of his wand (whip).

Fastidious Brisk uses perfume. Attendants sat in the boot of the coach, and Brisk's perfume improved the smell of the air there. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "boot" in this way: "An uncovered space on or by the steps on each side, where attendants sat, facing sideways."

Although Fastidious Brisk has no horse, he wears spurs and carries a whip so that other people, including merchants, think that he is wealthy enough to own a horse. This is a scheme to persuade merchants to give him credit.

## **DELIRO [Fool]**

A good doting — foolish — citizen, who, it is thought, is wealthy enough that he might be a member of the common council. A fellow sincerely besotted with his own wife, and so rapt with a belief in her perfections that he simply holds himself unworthy of her; and in that hoodwinked — as if blindfolded — humor, lives more like a suitor than a husband, standing in as true dread of her displeasure as when he first wooed her. He sacrifices twopence in juniper to her every morning before she rises, and he wakes her with

villainous out-of-tune music, which she, out of her contempt (though not out of her judgment) is sure to dislike.

Deliro treats his wife as if she were a goddess. He burns sweet-smelling juniper as a sacrifice to her, just as devotees burn incense to honor their god.

### **FALLACE [Illusion]**

Deliro's wife and idol, a proud, mincing, petted darling, and as perverse as he is officious. She dotes as perfectly upon the courtier Fastidious Brisk as her husband dotes on her, and lacks only the effrontery to be adulterous.

### **SAVIOLINA [Moderately Witty]**

A court lady whose weightiest praise is a light, shallow wit, admired by herself and one more, her admirer Brisk.

### **SORDIDO [Sordid and Corrupt]**

A wretched hobnailed rustic miser and chatterer, whose recreation is reading of almanacs, and whose felicity is foul weather; one who never prayed but for a lean dearth of wheat due to crop failure, and always wept in a fat harvest.

Almanacs forecast weather and crop yields. Sordido hoards grain and hopes for a lean harvest so he can sell grain at a high price.

### **FUNGOSO [A Mushroom, aka an Upstart]**

The son of Sordido, and a student; one who has reveled — including in the festivities of the Inns of Court after Christmas — in his time and follows the fashion afar off, like a spy. He makes it the whole bent of his endeavors to wring sufficient means from his wretched father to put him in the courtier's fashion; at which he earnestly aims, but so unluckily, that he still alights short a suit.

Fungoso metaphorically bends his bow, takes aim at a target, and shoots, but his arrow alights — lands — short of his mark. Fungoso wants to dress like a courtier, but he fails.

### **SOGLIARDO [Fool]**

An essential (in the highest sense) clown and rustic, brother to Sordido, yet so enamored of the title and status of a gentleman that he will have it although he has to pay for it. He comes up every London law-term to learn to take tobacco and see new motions. He is in his kingdom when he can get himself into company where he may be well laughed at.

Motions are 1) puppet-shows, and 2) events that take place in courts of law.

### **SHIFT [Conman and Trickster]**

A threadbare shark, rogue, and petty swindler; one who never was a soldier, yet is a con man who makes money by begging while pretending he was a soldier. His profession is skeldering (fraudulent begging) and odling (cheating), his bank is St. Paul's Cathedral, and his warehouse is Pickthatch, a place of brothels. Borrows single testons (sixpences) upon oaths until doomsday. Falls under executions of three shillings and enters into five-groat bonds. He waylays the reports of notable military exploits and cons them without book (that is, he hears the reports and memorizes them), damning himself by lying that he came freshly from the military exploit, when all the while he was taking the diet (that is, undertaking a cure for venereal disease) in a bawdy house or lay pawned in his chamber for rent and victuals. He is of that admirable and happy memory that he will salute — greet — one for an old acquaintance whom he never saw in his life before. He lays claim to cheats, quarrels, and robberies that he never did, only to get himself a reputation. His chief activities are taking the whiff of tobacco, squiring a prostitute and pimping her or using her services, and

covertly looking for imparters — people who will part with their money by lending it to him, or people who can give him information he can use, perhaps to help him pretend to be a soldier.

Pickt-hatch was a bad part of town where Shift stored — warehoused — stolen goods.

An execution is a writ of execution. Shift cannot repay three shillings, and so a writ of execution is taken out to seize his property to repay the three shillings.

Sometimes, Shift would have to stay in his room because he had pawned everything of value he owned, perhaps including his clothing.

Shift pretends to recognize people he has never seen before as a way to worm himself into their acquaintanceship and con them.

### **CLOVE and ORANGE [Effeminate Fools]**

An inseparable pair of coxcombs, aka fools, city-born; the Gemini or twins of foppery who, like a pair of wooden rapiers, are fit for nothing but to be practiced upon (cheated or fooled). Being well flattered, they'll lend money, and repent when they have done. Their glory is to feast actors and give suppers; and in company of better rank, to avoid the suspicion of intellectual insufficiency, will enforce their ignorance most desperately, to set upon the understanding of anything. Orange is the more preposterous of the two, whose small portion of juice being squeezed out, Clove serves to stick him with commendations.

Clove and Orange are both fools, but they pretend — or even believe — that they are more intelligent than they are. They force their ignorance on other, smarter people.

When Orange speaks, Clove lavishes him with praise.

### **CORDATUS [Wise and Prudent]**

The author's friend, a man intimately and closely acquainted with the scope and drift — the aim and design — of the author's plot; of a discreet, prudent, and understanding judgment, and has the place of a moderator, arbitrator, and judge.

### **MITIS [Gentle]**

Is a person of no action, and therefore we have reason to afford him no character.

### ***BENA NOTA:***

It was not near his thoughts who has published this either to traduce and defame the author or to make vulgar and cheap any of the individual and distinguished merits of the actors, but rather, whereas many censures fluttered about it, to give all leave and leisure to judge with distinction.

## INDUCTION (*Every Man Out of His Humor*)

The induction is an introduction.

The trumpet sounded for the second time. The first sounding of the trumpet was to tell audience members to take their places, and the third and final sounding would announce the beginning of the Prologue. The middle sounding was a warning that audience members really needed to take their places.

Asper and two of his friends — Cordatus and Mitis — strode onto the stage of a playhouse. Asper would be an actor in the play his friends were going to see. His two friends were running after him. Asper was angry, and they wanted to calm him. Audience members — including you, dear reader — were in attendance.

Asper was also the author of the play about to be presented on that stage.

In Ben Jonson's day, the word "asper" meant harsh, severe, and stern. As a satirist, Asper was about to severely criticize society.

Cordatus began, "Nay, my dear Asper —"

Mitis began, "Stay your mind, and calm yourself —"

Asper said:

"Go away!

"Who is so capable of enduring this impious world that he can check his spirit or rein his tongue? Who can control himself in this impious and wicked world and refrain from criticizing it?

"Or who has such a dead unfeeling sense that heaven's horrid thunders cannot awaken it?



“To see the earth, cracked with the weight of sin, hell gaping under us, and over our heads black ravenous ruin with her sail-stretched wings ready like a bird of prey to sink us down and cover us.

“Who can behold such prodigies — monstrous, unnatural events — as these and have his lips sealed up?

“Not I. My soul was never ground into such oily colors to flatter vice and daub iniquity — I can’t paint a pretty picture of this impious world.

“Instead, with an armed and resolved hand, I’ll strip the ragged, torn, faulty follies of the time as naked as people are at their birth —”

Asper was a satirist who wished to point out the faults of this world. He wanted to metaphorically strip and whip wicked offenders.

“Don’t be too bold,” Cordatus interrupted.

Asper said, “You trouble me with your interruption!”

He then continued his diatribe from where he had left off:

“— and with a whip of steel print wounding lashes in their iron ribs.

“I fear no angry mood, stamped in a private brow when I am pleased to unmask a public vice.

“I fear no strumpet’s poisons nor ruffian’s stab, should I detect their hateful lusts.

“I fear no pawnbroker’s, bawd’s, usurer’s, or lawyer’s extortionate grip, if I were disposed to say that they’re all corrupt.

“I fear no courtier’s frown, should I ‘applaud’ the easy flexure of his supple hams as he frequently bows.

“Tut, these are so innate and inborn, vulgar, and common that drunken Custom — habituated vice — would not shame to laugh in scorn at any satirist who would just dare to tax them.

“And yet, not one of these but knows Custom’s works, knows what damnation is, the devil, and hell. Yet hourly they persist, grow grossly luxuriant and foul-smelling in sin, blasting their souls away in perjurious, lying puffs of air, to cherish their extortion, pride, or lusts.”

“Stop, good Asper,” Mitis said. “Don’t be like your name.”

Asper’s name means “harsh.” He is a harsh critic.

Asper continued:

“Oh, but to such corrupt people, whose faces are all filled with religious zeal, and who, with the words of Hercules, attack such crimes as these, who will not smell of sin, but seem as if they were made of sanctity, religion in their garments, and their hair cut shorter than their eyebrows —”

Asper was criticizing hypocrisy. The Puritans were thought to be hypocrites.

Puritans talked much about religious zeal, and their hairstyle was short.

Hercules suffered fits of madness during which he ranted.

Asper continued:

“— when the conscience is vaster than the ocean, and devours and swallows up more wretches than the Counters —”

The Counters are prisons.

Asper was criticizing conscientious Puritans who condemned more people than could be held in London’s two

prisons for debtors. The Puritans' ability to morally condemn other people became as wide and deep as the ocean.

Mitis said, "Gentle Asper, contain your spirit in much stricter boundaries, and don't be thus carried away with the violence of your strongly held thoughts and beliefs."

Cordatus said, "Unless your breath has the godlike power to melt and destroy the world and mold and make it anew again, it is in vain to expend it in these moods."

Looking around, Asper said, "I did not see this thronged round until now."

The round was the area around the stage. Asper and his two friends were standing on stage.

Asper addressed the audience, including you, dear readers:

"Gracious and kind spectators, you are welcome.

"May Apollo and the Muses feast your eyes with graceful objects, and may our Minerva — Queen Elizabeth I — answer your hopes to their largest strain — to their utmost."

Apollo was the god of music and poetry. The nine Muses were goddesses of the arts. Minerva was the Roman equivalent of the Greek Athena, goddess of wisdom.

Asper continued:

"Yet here — don't mistake me, judicious friends — I do not say this to beg your patience, or servilely to fawn on your applause like some dry, unfruitful brain, despairing in his merit."

Asper then invited critics to criticize his ideas:

"Let me be criticized by the austerest brow.

“Where I lack art and skill in my conception and expression, or where I lack judgment in my handling of my conception and expression, please tax and criticize me freely.

“Let envious, carping critics with their most sweeping eyes look through and through me; I pursue no favor.

“Only grant me your attentions, and I will give you music worth your ears.

“Oh, how I hate the monstrosity of time, where every servile imitating spirit, plagued with an itching, contagious leprosy of wit, in a mere lame fury strives to fling his ulcerous body in the Thespian spring of poetic inspiration, and straightaway leaps forth a poet, but as lame as Vulcan or the founder of Cripple Gate.”

Vulcan is the Roman equivalent of the Greek Hephaestus. He was the lame blacksmith god.

Cripple Gate, one of the seven gates of Old London, was popularly supposed to have been built by a lame man who had become wealthy.

Not every playwright is competent or original.

Mitis said, “In faith, this humor will seem offensive to some. You will be thought to be too peremptory and dogmatic.”

The word “humor” was popular at the time and had many meanings. Mitis was using it to mean “mood.”

Picking up on the word “humor,” Asper said, “‘This humor’? It’s good you used that phrase just now, and can you explain why you used the phrase ‘this humor,’ Mitis?”

Mitis began to turn away, wishing to avoid a discussion of the meaning or meanings of the word “humor.”

Asper told him, “Nay, do not turn away, but answer me.”

“Answer?” Mitis said. “Answer what?”

Asper said:

“I will not stir your patience, pardon me.

“I urged my question about humor for some reasons, and the rather to give these ignorant ‘well-spoken’ days some taste of their abuse of this word ‘humor.’”

“‘Well-spoken’” with the ironic quotes means “eloquent but ignorant.”

“Humor” was an in-vogue word, used by many people with various meanings.

Asper considered some of those meanings to be incorrect.

“Oh, do not let your purpose lapse, good Asper,” Cordatus said. “It cannot but arrive at a most acceptable conclusion, chiefly to such people as have the happiness daily to see how the poor innocent word is racked, distorted, and tortured.”

Cordatus agreed with Asper that the word “humor” was frequently misused.

“Aye, please, proceed,” Mitis said.

Asper, who had been thinking and not paying attention, said, “Ha? What? What is it?”

“Tell us about the abuse of the word ‘humor,’” Cordatus said.

Ben Jonson’s society existed before the age of modern medicine.

Doctors in Ben Jonson’s society believed that the human body had four humors, or vital fluids, that determined one’s temperament. Each humor made a contribution to the personality, and one humor could be predominant. For a

human being to be sane and healthy, the four humors had to be present in the right amounts. If a man had too much of a certain humor, it would harm his personality and health.

The four humors are blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. If blood is predominant, then the person is sanguine (active, optimistic). If yellow bile is predominant, then the person is choleric (bad-tempered). If black bile is predominant, then the person is melancholic (sad). If phlegm is predominant, then the person is phlegmatic (calm, apathetic, indolent).

The above is the definition of “humor” that Asper believed was correct.

Asper said:

“Oh, I beg your pardon. I was lost in my thoughts.

Asper now defined humor:

“Why, humor (as it is, *ens*, *aka entity*) we thus define to be a quality of air or water, and in itself it holds these two properties, moisture and flexure, aka fluidity or ability to flow.

“As for demonstration: Pour water on this floor, and it will wet and run. Likewise, the air, forced through a horn or trumpet, flows instantly away and leaves behind a kind of dew or condensation.

“And hence we do conclude that whatsoever has flexure (fluidity) and humidity, as wanting power to contain itself, is humor. So in every human body the cholera, melancholy, phlegm, and blood, by reason that they flow continually in some one part and are not continent, but are incontinent and always flowing, receive the name of humors.

“Now, thus far it may by metaphor — figuratively — apply itself unto the general disposition, as when some individual,

singular, peculiar quality does so possess a man that it draws all his affections, desires, and feelings, his spirits, and his powers in their confluxions — their actions of flowing together — all to run one way.

“This may be truly said to be a humor.”

Other people believed that a humor could be a personal characteristic, a fancy or a whim, or a mood.

A personal characteristic could be an eccentricity, such as affectation in clothing.

Asper, however, did not regard affectation in clothing to be a true humor:

“But that a rook — a lout — in wearing a pied feather — the cable hatband or the three-piled ruff, a yard of shoe-tie or the Switzer’s knot on his French garters, should affect a humor, oh, it is more than most ridiculous.”

A pied feather is a parti-colored plume — a feather dyed more than one color.

A cable hatband is a twisted cord worn around a hat.

A three-piled ruff is a three-layered collar.

Shoe-ties are decorations made of ribbon and worn on a shoe.

The Switzer’s knot is a garter worn below the knee by Swiss soldiers.

French garters are made of silk or taffeta.

People were claiming that their affectation in clothing was a humor.

“He speaks pure truth,” Cordatus said. “Now, if an idiot should have but an apish — foolishly affected or imitative — or fantastic strain, it is his humor.”

In other words, if anyone exhibited any kind of eccentricity, perhaps (or probably) intentionally, that person called it his or her humor.

Speaking as a satirist and as the supposed author of the satiric play about to be performed, Asper said, “Well, I will scourge and whip those apes, and to these courteous eyes” — he meant the audience — “I will set opposite to their gaze a mirror as large as is the stage whereon we act, where they shall see the time’s deformity anatomized — dissected — in every nerve and sinew, with constant courage and contempt of fear.”

“Asper, I urge it as your friend, take heed and be careful,” Mitis said. “The days are dangerous, full of objection and faultfinding and complaint, and men are grown impatient of reproof.”

Asper laughed and then replied:

“You might as well have told me that yonder is heaven.”

He pointed to the underside of the cover over the stage; the underside was painted like the sky.

Asper continued:

“You might as well have told me that this stage is the earth, these pillars are men, and these things all move like the things they represent.

“Don’t I know the times’ condition?”

“Yes, Mitis, I know the times’ condition, and their souls, and who they are who either will or can make an objection against me. They are none but a group of fools, so sick in



taste that they scorn all medicine of the mind, and, like camels made sore because of chafing, kick at every touch — they fight the people who are trying to help them.

“Good men and virtuous spirits who loath their vices will cherish my free labors, love my lines, and with the fervor of their shining grace make my brain fruitful to bring forth more objects worthy their serious and attentive eyes.

“But why do I so urge this, as if my argument were faint and weak?

“No, if any person here should happen to see himself in the portrayal of any actor on stage, let him not dare to accuse me of doing wrong, for if he is ashamed to have his follies known, first he should be ashamed to enact them.”

More usually, people don't see themselves when actors portray the audience's vices — but they do see their neighbors. Later, Jonathan Swift would write, “Satire is a sort of glass [mirror] wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets with in the world, and that so very few are offended with it.”

Asper continued:

“My strict hand was made to seize on vice, and, with a firm grip, to crush out the humor of such spongy souls as lap up every idle vanity.”

Cordatus said about Asper, “Why, this is genuine *furor poeticus*! The poets' inspired frenzy!”

He then said to the audience, “Kind gentlemen [and gentlewomen], we hope your patience will yet conceive the best interpretation of his actions or entertain this supposition: that a madman speaks.”

Asper called to the actors, who were offstage, “Are you ready there?”

He then said, “Mitis, sit down, and my Cordatus, sit down, too.”

He called to the trumpeters, “Sound, ho, and begin!”

When the trumpets would next sound, that would be the signal for the prologue to begin. Actually, the trumpets would sound not immediately, but a little later.

Asper said to his two friends, “I will leave you two as judges to sit here, observe what I present, and liberally speak your opinions upon every scene as it shall pass the view of these spectators.”

He called to the trumpeters, “Nay, now, you’re tedious, sirs. For shame, begin!”

Asper then said, “And Mitis, note for me if in all this collection of faces of the audience you can espy a gallant of this type, who, to be thought one of the judicious, sits with his arms thus wreathed” — Asper folded his arms tightly in the position a judgmental critic would fold them — “his hat pulled here” — Asper demonstrated the way a judgmental critic would wear his hat — “cries a derisive ‘mew’ and nods, then shakes his empty head, and will show more various motions — expressions — in his face than the new *London*, *Rome*, or *Nineveh*.”

“Motions” were puppet-plays as well as expressions. *London* was probably about the giants Gog and Magog, *Nineveh* was probably about Jacob and the whale, and *Rome* was probably about Julius Caesar.

Asper continued his description of a judgmental critic: “And now and then he breaks a dry biscuit jest — a stale joke,

which, so that it may more easily be chewed, he steeps and soaks in his own laughter.”

People would float a piece of dry toast in a mug of ale and then consume both the toast and the ale.

“Why, will that make it be sooner swallowed?” Cordatus asked.

Asper replied, “Oh, assure yourself it will, or if it did not, yet as Horace sings, *Jejunus raro stomachus vulgaria temnit* — that is, ‘Mean cates are always welcome to hungry guests.’”

“Mean cates” are common food, not delicacies.

“That is true, but why should we observe them, Asper?” Cordatus asked.

Why keep an eye on the judgmental critics?

Asper answered:

“Oh, I would know them, for in such assemblies they’re more infectious than the pestilence. And therefore I would give them pills to purge — emetics or laxatives — and make them fit for fair societies. How monstrous and detested is it to see a fellow who has neither art nor brain sit like an Aristarchus, or a stark ass” — Aristarchus of Samothrace was an ancient Greek literary critic — “taking exception to men’s lines with a tobacco face in snuff, always spitting, using his twisted, contorted looks, in nature of a vice, to wrest and turn the good aspect of those who shall sit near him from what they do behold! Oh, it is most vile.”

Critics can be good or bad. A good satirist can justly criticize a bad society. A bad critic can unjustly criticize a good play.

Mitis began, “Nay, Asper —”

Asper said:

“Peace, Mitis, be quiet. I know what you are thinking: You’ll say that your — that is, my — audience will take exception at this.

“Pish, you are too timorous and full of fear. Then it is he, a patient, shall reject all medicine because the physician tells him you are sick.”

In other words, you say that the audience will take exception at my words and so I ought not to say them, although my words are meant to heal despite inflicting pain. It is as if a physician were to tell you that you are sick, and because you are timorous and full of fear, and you don’t want others to feel that way, the others have no chance of getting the same medicine although they suffer from the same illness that you do.

Asper continued:

“Or, if I say that he is vicious, you will not hear of virtue.”

In other words, if I say that someone is sinful, you will shield that person from hearing me although I then talk about virtue.

Asper continued:

“Come, you’re foolish.

“Shall I be so extravagant to think that happy judgments and composed, self-possessed spirits will challenge me for taxing such as these?

“I am ashamed —”

Cordatus interrupted, “— nay, but good sir, pardon us. We must not endure this peremptory sailing on and criticizing us but instead use our best endeavors how to please the audience. We can’t ignore the interests of the audience.”

Asper replied:

“Why, therein I commend your careful thoughts, and I will join with you in working to please the audience.

“But whom shall we please?

“Attentive auditors, such as will join their profit with their pleasure, and come to feed their understanding parts and satisfy their intellect? For these, I’ll prodigally expend my energy and speak my spirit away into air with my satiric speeches. For these, I’ll melt my brain into invention, coin new ideas, and hang my richest words as polished jewels in the audience’s bounteous ears.

“But wait, I am losing myself and wronging the actors’ patience. If I stay on stage and dwell here, the actors will not begin, I see.”

He said to Cordatus and Mitis, “Friends, sit here still, and entertain this troop of audience members with some familiar talk and chit-chat. I’ll hasten the trumpeters and make them sound.”

When the trumpet sounded, the Prologue would walk onto the stage. During the prologue, Asper would dress for his part in the play.

Asper then said to the audience:

“Now, gentlemen, I go to turn myself into an actor and a humorist.”

A humorist 1) is subject to humors, and/or 2) is comical.

Asper continued:

“Here, before I resume my present person, we hope to make the circles of your eyes flow with distilled laughter — tears of laughter. If we fail, we must impute it to this sole, single chance: ‘Art has an enemy called ignorance.’”

He exited to get dressed for his role in his play.

“How do you like his spirit, Mitis?” Cordatus asked.

“I would like it much better if he were less confident,” Mitis said.

“Why, do you suspect his merit?” Cordatus asked.

“No, but I fear this spirit of his will procure him much malice against him,” Mitis said.

“Oh, that sets the stronger seal on his merit,” Cordatus said. “If he had no enemies, I should esteem his fortunes most wretched at this instant.”

A savage satirist such as Asper should have enemies. A savage satirist without enemies is a bad savage satirist. Asper does have enemies and so he may be a good savage satirist.

“You have seen his play, Cordatus,” Mitis said. “Please tell me, how is it?”

“Indeed, sir, I must refrain from judging it,” Cordatus said. “Only this I can say of it, it is strange, and of a particular kind by itself, somewhat like *Vetus Comoedia*. A work that has bounteously pleased me; how it will answer the general expectation and be received by the audience, I don’t know.”

*Vetus Comoedia is Old Comedy, such as the comic plays of the ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes. It is also early English comic plays.*

“Does he observe all the laws of comedy in it?” Mitis asked.

“What laws do you mean?” Cordatus asked.

Mitis replied, “Why, the equal division of it into acts and scenes, according to the Terentian manner; the correct number of actors; the furnishing of the scene with *grex* or chorus; and that the whole plot fall within the compass of a single day.”

Terence was a Roman playwright who divided his plays into five acts.

Ben Jonson's *grex* or chorus consisted of Cordatus and Mitis, who would comment on and criticize his play.

"Oh, no, these are too nice — foolish or over-strict — observations," Cordatus said.

"They are such as must be received, if you don't mind my saying so, or it cannot be authentic," Mitis said. "They must be accepted as authoritative."

"To tell the truth, I can discern no such necessity," Cordatus said.

"No?" Mitis said.

Cordatus now began to talk about theatrical history as the people of Ben Jonson's day understood it. Some of what they believed was correct, and some was incorrect:

"No, I assure you, signor.

"If those laws you speak of had been delivered to us *ab initio* — from the beginning — and in their present excellence and perfection, there would be some reason for obeying their rules. But it is manifest that that which we call *comoedia* was at first nothing but a simple and continuous satire, aka satyr's dance and songs, sung by one only person, until Susario invented a second, after him Epicharmus a third; Phormus and Chionides devised to have four actors, with a prologue and chorus, to which Cratinus, long after, added a fifth and sixth, Eupolis more, Aristophanes more than they.

"Every man in the dignity of his spirit and judgment supplied something.

"And, although it is true that in Aristophanes this kind of poem" — "poem" was Ben Jonson's preferred word for

“play” — “appeared completely and fully perfected, yet how is the face of it changed since, in Menander, Philemon, Cecilius, Plautus, and the rest, who have utterly excluded the chorus, altered the social levels and conditions of the characters, their names, and natures, and augmented it with all liberty according to the elegance and disposition of those times wherein they wrote.

“I don’t see then why we shouldn’t enjoy the same *licentia*, or free power, to illustrate and heighten our invention as they did, and not be tied to those strict and regular forms that the foolishness and fussiness of a few playwrights — who value nothing but form — would thrust upon us.”

Some people follow the literary rules too strictly.

Mitis replied, “Well, we will not dispute about this now. But where does Ben Jonson set his scene in this upcoming play?”

“By the Virgin Mary, he sets it on the *Insula Fortunata*, sir,” Cordatus answered.

The Fortunate Island is 1) Britain, and 2) the birthplace of Folly, according to Renaissance humanist Erasmus’ *The Praise of Folly*.

In mythology, the Fortunate Islands are the Isles of Bliss, where good souls go to in the afterlife.

“Oh, the Fortunate Island?” Mitis said, “By the Mass, he has bound himself to a strict law there. He has severely limited what he can do.”

Some people of Ben Jonson’s day believed in the three theatrical laws of time, place, and action.

The unity of time was the rule that the events of the play had to take place within one day.



The unity of place was the rule that the events of the play had to take place in one main place.

The unity of action was the rule that the events of the play had to concern one action. That is, the play would have one plot.

These laws came from an interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, but Ben Jonson and other playwrights often violated these rules; for example, plays would often contain one major plot and one or more minor plots. Ben Jonson often did this, but he also followed the three unities in his play *Volpone*.

"Why so?" Cordatus asked.

"He cannot lightly and easily alter the scene without crossing the seas," Mitis said.

The unity of place, if observed, would prohibit the characters from leaving the island.

"He doesn't need to cross the seas, having a whole island to run through, I think," Cordatus said.

"No?" Mitis said. "How comes it, then, that in a certain play we see so many seas, countries, and kingdoms passed over with such admirable dexterity?"

The Elizabethan stage was very fluid. The locale could be England in one scene and France in the next scene. This happens in William Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

"Oh, that just shows how well the authors can travail and travel in their vocation, and outrun the apprehension of their audience," Cordatus said. "But leaving this topic of discussion, I wish the actors would begin at once. This protraction is enough to sour the best-settled patience in the theatre."

The trumpets sounded for the third time to announce the entrance of the Prologue.

“They have answered your wish, sir,” Mitis said. “The trumpets sound.”

The Prologue — the actor who spoke the prologue — strode on stage.

“Oh, here comes the Prologue,” Cordatus said.

He then said to the Prologue, “Now, sir, if you had stayed away a little longer, I would have spoken your prologue for you, indeed.”

“By the Virgin Mary, with all my heart, sir, you shall do it yet, and I thank you,” the Prologue said.

He started to leave.

“Nay, nay! Stay, stay! Do you hear me?” Cordatus said.

The Prologue replied, “You could not have prepared and aimed to have done me a greater benefit at this time, for I say to you, I am not word-perfect, and had I spoken the prologue, I must of necessity have been reduced to silence.”

“What! Do you speak this seriously?” Cordatus asked.

“Seriously?” the Prologue said. “Aye, as God’s my help, I do speak this seriously, and I esteem myself indebted to your kindness for it.”

“For what?” Cordatus asked.

“Why, for undertaking the prologue for me,” the Prologue said.

“What! Did I agree to undertake it for you?” Cordatus asked.

“Did you?” the Prologue said. “I appeal to all these gentlemen in the audience whether you did or not. Come, it

pleases you to cast a strange and surprised look on it now, but it will not serve as an excuse.”

“Before God, but it must serve, and therefore speak your prologue,” Cordatus said.

“If I do, let me die poisoned with some venomous hiss and never live to look as high as the two-penny room again,” the Prologue said.

The Prologue had metaphorically compared the hissing of a hostile audience to the hissing of a venomous snake.

Places in the theater cost various prices according to how good the places were. The two-penny rooms were frequented by prostitutes and pickpockets.

The Prologue exited.

“He has put you to it, sir,” Mitis said.

“By God’s death, what a humorous — perverse — fellow this is!” Cordatus said.

He then said to the audience, “Gentlemen [and gentlewomen], in good faith, I can speak no prologue, howsoever the Prologue’s weak wit has had the fortune to make this strong, severe, brazen use and treatment of me here before you. But I protest —”

Carlo Buffone entered the scene along with his serving-boy.

Carlo interrupted Cordatus, “— come, come, stop these fustian — bombastic and longwinded — protestations. Leave. Come, I cannot abide these grey-headed, hoary, outdated ceremonies.”

He then ordered his serving-boy, “Boy, fetch me a glass of wine, quickly, so that I may bid these gentlemen welcome and give them a health — a toast — here.”

The serving-boy exited.

Carlo Buffone then said, “I marvel whose wit it was to put a prologue in yonder sackbut’s mouth. They might well think he’d be out of tune, and yet you’d play upon him, too.”

A sackbut is a musical instrument that is a forerunner of the trombone, and a butt of sack is a cask of white wine. Carlo Buffone was calling the Prologue a sackbut. Possibly, he was implying that Cordatus had a squeaky voice and was drunk. Carlo was known for saying caustic things that were not necessarily true. He was willing to say mean things if it would get people to laugh.

“To play on a person” is 1) to trick that person, 2) to mock that person, 3) to jest with that person, and/or 4) to manipulate that person (as one would manipulate a musical instrument).

“Hang him, dull block!” Cordatus said, knowing that he had been insulted.

A “block” is 1) a block of wood on which wigs or hats were placed, 2) metaphorically, a blockhead or stupid person, 3) an obstruction, or 4) a wooden support in carpentry.

Using the definition of “block” as a wooden support, Carlo Buffone said, “Oh, speak good words, speak charitable words. A well-timbered fellow, he would have made a good column if he had been thought on when the house — the Globe Theatre — was being built.”

“Well-timbered” can mean 1) well-built, or 2) wooden-headed, aka blockheaded.

The Globe Theatre was where Ben Jonson’s play was being performed.

Carlo’s serving-boy returned with a glass and some wine.

Carol Buffone said:

“Oh, have thou come? Well assayed, and well done. Give me wine, boy. Fill my glass. Good. Here’s a cup of wine that sparkles like a diamond.”

He then said to the audience:

“Gentlewomen — I am sworn to put them in first — and gentlemen, here is a round in place of a bad prologue.”

Carlo Buffone was claiming that etiquette required him to mention the gentlewomen first, before mentioning the gentlemen.

He continued:

“I drink this good draught to your health here: Canary, the very elixir and spirit of wine.”

Canary wine was wine from the Canary Islands. The Latin name of the islands is *Canariae Insulae* and means the Islands of the Dogs. Large dogs were reputed to roam on the islands.

Carlo Buffone drank and then said:

“This is the wine that our poet — Ben Jonson — calls Castalian liquor, the liquor of the Muses, whose sacred spring was named Castalia, when he comes abroad, now and then, once in a fortnight, and hosts a good meal among players, where he has *caninum appetitum*: a dog-like, greedy appetite. By the Virgin Mary, at home he keeps a good philosophical — abstemious — diet of beans and buttermilk. An honest pure rogue, he will drink off three, four, five of these draughts, one after another, and look villainously when he has done, like a one-headed Cerberus.

“Ben Jonson does not hear me, I hope.”

The draughts were of wine, but Carlo made it sound as they might be of buttermilk. If indeed they were of buttermilk, that could explain why Ben Jonson looked so villainously. Of course, being drunk or hungover can also make one look villainously.

Cerberus was a three-headed dog that was a guard dog in the Land of the Dead. One way to get past him was to get him drunk with bread soaked in wine so that he would sleep.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“And then, when his belly is well ballasted — loaded — and his brain clothed with Canary wine and rigged a little, he sails away in spite of it, as though he would work wonders when he comes home.”

Once loaded with the inspiration of Canary wine, Ben Jonson felt as if he could write a play that would be wonderfully applauded.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“He has made a play here, and he calls it *Every Man Out of His Humor*. By God’s blood, if he gets me out of the humor he has put me in, I’ll never trust any of his tribe again, while I live.”

The humor — mood — Carlo Buffone was in was caustic and critical. Can Ben Jonson get him out of that humor? Not likely. Chances are, even if Ben Jonson doesn’t get him of that mood, Carlo Buffone will never trust any of his tribe.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Gentles, all I can say on his behalf is, you are welcome. I could wish my bottle here were passed around among you, but there’s an old rule: ‘No pledging your own health.’”

“By the Virgin Mary, if any here are thirsty for it, their best course of action that I know is to sit still, seal up their lips, and drink so much of the play in at their ear.”

Carlo Buffone and his serving-boy exited.

“Who may this fellow be, Cordatus?” Mitis asked.

Cordatus answered:

“Indeed, if the time will allow his description, I’ll give it to you.”

In fact, Carlo Buffone is a character in Ben Jonson’s play.

Cordatus continued:

“He is one whom the author — Ben Jonson — calls Carlo Buffone, an impudent common jester, a violent railer, and an immense glutton. He is one whose company is desired by all men, but beloved by none. He will sooner lose his soul than a jest, and he will profane even the most holy things to excite laughter. No honorable or reverend personage whatsoever can come within the reach of his eye but is turned into all manner of variations by his specious similes and comparisons.”

“You paint forth a monster,” Mitis said. “You make him out to be a monster.”

Cordatus continued his description:

“He will prefer all other countries before his native country, and he thinks he can never sufficiently, or with admiration enough, deliver his affected ideas about foreign atheistic policies.

“But wait, observe these actors in the play. Carlo Buffone will appear as himself in the play soon.”

Macilente, unaccompanied, walked onto the stage.

Asper, the supposed author of the play, was appearing in the role of Macilente.

“Oh, this is your envious man, Macilente, I think,” Mitis said.

“The same, sir,” Cordatus replied.

The play began.



## ACT 1 (*Every Man Out of His Humor*)

### — 1.1 —

The scene was the estate of Sogliardo, a wealthy country bumpkin who wished to be a gentleman. The estate was near London.

Macilente, an envious scholar, said to himself:

*“Viri est, fortunae caecitatem facile ferre.”*

The Latin means: “The lot of Mankind is to endure the blindness of fortune without complaining.”

Macilente continued:

“It is true, but stoic.”

The Stoic philosophers believed in patiently enduring their lot in life.

Macilente continued:

“Where in the vast world does that man breathe who can so entirely command his passions and his feelings?”

“Well, I see that I strive in vain to cure my wounded soul. For every cordial that my thoughts apply turns into a corrosive and eats it farther.

“There is no taste and no relish in this philosophy. It is like a dose of medicine that a man should drink, but his stomach turns with the sight of it.

“I am no such peeled and pilled Cynic that I would believe that beggary is the only happiness, or that with a number of these patient fools, I would sing ‘my mind to me a kingdom is’ when the lank hungry belly barks for food.”

“My mind to me a kingdom is” is the first line of a hymn by Sir Edward Dyer.

The word “peeled” means threadbare and beggarly, and the word “pilled” means covered with fur.

Hungry stomachs growl; very hungry stomachs bark.

Many Cynics were beggars and the Cynic Diogenes was sometimes called the Dog. The word “Cynic” means “Dog-like.”

The Cynics believed in rejecting wealth, fame, and power and instead living a simple life. They often publicly and caustically rejected wealth, fame, and power and the people who pursued them.

Diogenes once carried a lit lamp during the daytime and claimed to be looking for a man — any man — but all he could find were scoundrels. (Retellings of this story sometimes say that he was looking for an honest man.)

Alexander the Great heard about Diogenes, met him, and asked if he could do anything for him. In doing so, Alexander stood between the famous Cynic and the sun and cast a shadow on him. Diogenes replied, “Yes, you can stand out of my sunlight.”

Alexander told him, “If I were not Alexander, I would want to be Diogenes.” Diogenes replied, “If I were not Diogenes, I would want to be Diogenes.”

When Alexander wondered why Diogenes was looking at a pile of bones, Diogenes replied, “I am looking for the bones of your father, but I cannot distinguish them from the bones of his slaves.”

Macilente began to speak about his envy of the success of other people:

“I look into the world, and there I meet with objects that strike my bloodshot eyes into my brain; where, when I view myself — having before observed, this man is great, mighty,

and feared, and that man is loved and highly favored, a third man is thought wise and learned, a fourth man is rich and therefore honored, a fifth man is splendidly handsome, and a sixth man is admired for his nuptial fortunes won by marrying a rich woman — when I see these and view myself, I say that I wish my optic instruments — my eyes — were cracked, and that the engine of my grief could cast my eyeballs, like two globes of wildfire, forth to melt this unjustly proportioned frame of nature.”

“Engine” here refers to a war machine such as a catapult.

Wildfire was a highly inflammable substance used in war.

Macilente continued:

“Oh, they are thoughts that have transfixed — pierced and wounded — my heart, and often, in the strength and full force of apprehension, made my cold passion stand upon my face, like drops of sweat on a stiff cake of ice.”

Cordatus commented:

“This alludes well to that of the poet,

*“Invidus suspirat, gemit, incutitque dentes,*

*“Sudat frigidus, intuens quod odit.”*

Jonson scholar G.A. Wilkes translated the Latin:

*“The envious man sighs, groans, gnashes his teeth,*

*“Breaks into a cold sweat, contemplating what he hates.”*

Mitis said, “Oh, peace. Be quiet: You interrupt the scene.”

— 1.2 —

Sogliardo and Carlo Buffone entered the scene. Sogliardo was a country bumpkin who had land and money and wished to be a gentleman.

Macilente said, “Wait! Who are these men? I’ll lie down a while until they pass by.”

He lay down.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “Signor, note this gallant, I say to you.”

The “gallant” was Sogliardo.

“Who is he?” Mitis asked.

“A tame rook,” Cordatus said. “You’ll see through him very soon. Listen.”

A rook is a fool.

Sogliardo said, “Nay, look, Carlo, this is my humor now. I have land and money, my relatives left me well off, and I will be a gentleman whatsoever it costs me.”

“That is a most gentlemanlike resolution,” Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo said:

“Tut, if I take a humor of a thing once, I am like your tailor’s needle: I go through and I see it through.

“But, as for my name, signor, what do you think? Won’t it serve for a gentleman’s name, when the ‘signor’ is put to it? Huh?”

“Let me hear it,” Carlo Buffone said. “What is it?”

Sogliardo answered, “‘Signor Insulso Sogliardo.’ I think it sounds well.”

*Insulso* is Latin for “without salt.” Sogliardo is without salt: He is bland and without wit and intelligence.

“Oh, excellent,” Carlo Buffone said. “Tut, if you were all dressed to suit your name, you might very well stand for a gentleman. I know many Sogliardos who are gentlemen.”

Sogliardos are people without wit and intelligence, like Sogliardo.

“Why, and for my wealth I might be a justice of peace,” Sogliardo said.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, “Aye, and a constable for your wit.”

Calling Sogliardo “a constable for your wit” was a way of saying that Sogliardo was witless. Constables were often thought to be unintelligent.

Sogliardo motioned around him and said, “All this is my lordship you see here, and those farms you came by.”

Sogliardo was a lord of the lordship who owned much property. He was not a member of the peerage.

“These are good steps to gentility, too, by the Virgin Mary,” Carlo Buffone said. “But Sogliardo, if you affect — aspire — to be a gentleman indeed, you must observe all the splendid qualities, humors, and accomplishments of a gentleman.”

“I know it, signor,” Sogliardo said, “and if you please to instruct me, I am not too good and high-ranking to learn something from you, I’ll assure you.”

Carlo Buffone said out loud, “Enough, sir —”

He said to himself, “I’ll make admirable use in the projection of my medicine upon this lump of copper here.”

He then said out loud, “— I’ll think about how I can help you, sir.”

He wanted to turn this metaphorical lump of copper (and literal fool) into money and gold for himself, like an alchemist would use the philosopher's stone to turn base metals such as copper into gold.

In the process called projection, some of the philosopher's stone was used to turn base metal into precious metal. This was supposed to be the final step of making the philosopher's stone.

The philosopher's stone was called "medicine" here because it was also believed to cure all illnesses.

Of course, the philosopher's stone does not exist.

"Signor, I will both pay you and beg you, and thank you and think about you," Sogliardo replied.

Cordatus said, "Isn't this purely and entirely good?"

Envious at hearing about Sogliardo's wealth, Macilente said to himself, "By God's blood, why should such a prick-eared hind as this be rich?"

A hind is 1) a rustic, 2) a servant, or 3) a female deer.

Dogs with erect ears are said to be prick-eared. Possibly, Sogliardo had big ears and a short haircut.

Macilente continued, "Bah! A fool? Such a transparent gull that may be seen through? Why should he have land, houses, and lordships? Oh, I could eat my entrails and sink my soul into the earth with sorrow!"

Carlo Buffone said:

"First, to be an accomplished gentleman, that is, a gentleman of the time, you must give up housekeeping in the country and live all the time in the city among gallants, where, at your first appearance, it would be good if you turned four or five hundred acres of your best land into two or three trunks

of apparel — you may do it without going to a conjurer, magician, or witch.”

A gentleman needed expensive clothing, and he could get money to buy it by mortgaging his land.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“And be sure that you mix yourself always with such as flourish in the spring of the fashion and are least among the common people; study their deportment and behavior in everything; learn to play at the card game called primero and the dice game called passage; and, always when you lose, have two or three peculiar, eccentric oaths to swear by that no other man swears; but above all, protest in your play, and affirm ‘Upon your honor, as you are a true gentleman’ at every cast of the dice. You may do it with a safe conscience, I assure you.”

“Oh, this is admirably splendid!” Sogliardo said. “He cannot choose but be a gentleman who has these excellent gifts. More, more, I ask you to tell me.”

Carlo Buffone said:

“You must endeavor to feed neatly at your eating-house, sit and look melancholy, and pick your teeth when you cannot speak.”

Toothpicks were fashionable.

He continued:

“And when you go to plays, be humorous — unreceptive to the play — look with a good starched-with-haughtiness face, and ruffle your brow like a new boot, laugh at nothing but your own jests, or else as the noblemen laugh; that’s a special grace and eloquence you must observe.”

Wide-topped boots were fashionable. The tops were folded, aka ruffled, below the knee.

“I assure you that I do those things, sir,” Sogliardo said.

Carlo Buffone said, “Aye, and sit on the stage and flout and scoff — provided you are wearing a good suit of clothing.”

Some members of the audience could sit on the stage. In fact, Cordatus and Mitis were sitting on the stage.

“Oh, I’ll have a suit only for that, sir,” Sogliardo said.

“You must talk much about your kindred and allies,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Tell lies?” Sogliardo said. “No, signor, I shall not need to do so, I have kindred in the city to talk about. I have a niece who is a merchant’s wife, and a nephew, my brother Sordido’s son, who is a law student of the Inns of Court.”

Carlo Buffone said:

“Oh, but you must pretend alliance with courtiers and great persons, and always when you are to dine or sup in any strange and unfamiliar presence, hire a fellow with a great chain that is the steward’s badge of office — though it be copper, it doesn’t matter — to bring you letters, feigned to make it appear to be from such a nobleman or such a knight or such a lady, ‘To their worshipful, right rare, and noble qualified friend or kinsman, Signor Insulso Sogliardo’ — give yourself plenty enough titles of address.

“And there, while you direct your attention to circumstances of news, or inquiry of their health, or so, one of your friends, whom you must bring with you always, breaks the seal open, as if it were in jest, and reads it publicly at the table; at which you must seem to take his action as unpardonable an offence as if he had torn your mistress’ colors, or insulted or lustfully



panted at her picture; and pursue it with that hot grace as if you would enforce a challenge upon it immediately.”

Colors are scarves and ribbons that are gifts from women.

Sogliardo said:

“Wait, I do not like that humor of challenge. It may be accepted.”

He did not want to get into a fight.

He continued:

“But I’ll tell you what’s my humor now. I will do this: I will take the opportunity of sending one of my suits to the tailor’s to have the pocket repaired, or so, and such a letter as you talk of, with its seal and all broken open, shall be left in the pocket.

“Oh, the tailor will soon let everyone know who and what I am upon the reading of it, more effectively than twenty of your gallants.”

The stereotype of tailors was that they were effeminate and they were gossips.

“But then you must put on an extreme face of discontentment at your serving-man’s negligence,” Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo would pretend that his serving-man had left the open letter in the pocket.

“Oh, so I will, and I will beat him, too,” Sogliardo said. “I’ll have a man-servant for the purpose.”

Macilente said to himself, “You may indeed have a man-servant for the purpose. After all, you have land and crowns. Oh, partial — unfairly biased — Fate!”

Crowns are gold coins.

“By the Mass, well remembered,” Carlo Buffone said.

Wealthy men could beat their servants.

He continued, “You must keep your men gallant at the first. Give them fine pied — parti-colored — liveries embroidered with good gold lace. There’s no loss in it; they may rip it off and pawn it, when they lack victuals.”

“By our Lady, the Virgin Mary, that is expensive, signor,” Sogliardo objected. “It will bring a man into debt.”

“Debt?” Carlo Buffone said. “Why, that’s the more for your credit, sir; it’s an excellent policy for gentlemen to owe much in these days, if you note how gentlemen act in these days.”

Sogliardo would get credit — a reputation — for being a gentleman, but “more for [his] credit” also meant he would be in danger of overextending his credit, aka debt.

“How will debt be more for my credit as a gentleman, good signor?” Sogliardo said. “I would like to be a politician and play the game of being a gentleman well.”

Carlo Buffone said:

“Oh, look, wherever you are indebted any great sum, your creditor attends you with no less regard than if he were bound to you for some huge benefit, and he will tremble with fear lest he give you the least cause of offence, lest he lose his money.

“I assure you, in these times no man has his servant more obsequious and pliant than gentlemen have their creditors, to whom, if at any time, you pay but a half or a fourth part of what you owe them, it comes more acceptedly and welcome than if you gave them a New-Year’s gift.”

“I understand you, sir,” Sogliardo said. “I will raise the money by borrowing it, and bring myself in credit and run up debts, to be sure.”

Carlo Buffone said:

“By the Virgin Mary, take heed of this: Always be careful that you don’t do business with bankrupts, or poor needy Ludgathians.”

Ludgathians were bankrupts who were in the debtors’ prison at Ludgate.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“They are impudent creatures, turbulent spirits; they don’t care what violent tragedies they stir, nor how they play fast and loose with a poor gentleman’s fortunes, to get their own.

“By the Virgin Mary, these rich fellows who have the world, or the better part of it, sleeping in their countinghouses, they are ten times more peaceable, they. Either fear, hope, or modesty restrains them from offering any outrages.”

These rich fellows were the ones with lots of money in their treasuries. Because of their excessive wealth, they were peaceful. Possibly, this made them easier to take advantage of. They would not object to small (small for them, that is) losses.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“But this is nothing to your followers. You shall not run a penny more in debt for them, if you wish, yourself.”

“No?” Sogliardo said. “How should I keep them, then?”

Don’t servants need to eat and to be paid?

Carlo Buffone replied:

“Keep them? By God’s blood, let them keep themselves; they aren’t sheep, are they?”

“You shall come in houses where plate, apparel, jewels, and diverse other pretty commodities lie negligently scattered, and I would have those mercuries follow me in the houses, I think. They should remember they don’t have their fingers for nothing.”

Mercuries are thieves; Mercury was the Roman god of thieves.

Carlo Buffone would have Sogliardo’s servants pilfer items from the houses of rich people.

“That’s not so good, I think,” Sogliardo said.

“Why, after you have kept them a fortnight or so and showed them enough to the world, you may turn them away and keep no more than a boy; it’s enough,” Carlo Buffone said.

Serving-boys were paid less than serving-men.

“Nay, my humor is not for boys,” Sogliardo said. “I’ll keep men, if I keep any, and I’ll give coats, that’s my humor. But I lack a cullison.”

Servants wore blue coats. Their clothing was known as liveries, and the servants of great gentlemen had distinctive liveries that showed whom they served.

A cullison was a badge that indicated one’s family and was displayed on servants’ livery. The badge often was a coat of arms. Gentlemen had cullisons.

“Why, now that you ride to the city, you may buy one,” Carlo Buffone said. “I’ll bring you where you shall have your choice for money.”

Wealthy ambitious men could bribe heralds to grant them a coat of arms.

“Can you, sir?” Sogliardo asked.

“Oh, aye, you shall have one take the measure of you and make you a coat of arms to fit you of what fashion you will,” Carlo Buffone said.

His words were suitable to describe both a herald who made coats of arms and a tailor who made coats.

“By word of mouth, I thank you, signor,” Sogliardo said.

“By word of mouth?” He was taking Carlo Buffone’s advice and making up his own oaths: “I swear by my word of mouth.”

Sogliardo continued, “I’ll be for once a little prodigal in a humor, in faith, and have a most prodigious coat.”

Macilente said loud enough to be heard:

“Torment and death! Break head and brain at once to be delivered of your fighting issue!”

Zeus gave birth to his warrior-daughter Athena from his forehead. Parthenogenesis is a form of asexual reproduction, and the temple called the Parthenon in Athens was dedicated to her.

Sogliardo was an ordinary fool, but Lady Fortune had given him wealth and so he was going to be born again as a wealthy, foolish gentleman. Sogliardo was someone whom Macilente wanted to fight.

Macilente continued:

“Who can endure to see blind Fortune dote thus?”

“To be enamored on this dusty turf — this clod! A whoreson puckfist! Oh, God! God! God! God!”

“I could run wild with grief now to behold the rankness and gross fertility of her bounties that does breed such bulrushes, these mushroom gentlemen, these social upstarts, who shoot up in a night to a position of dignity.”

Macilente felt envious of Sogliardo’s wealth, and he felt contempt at how Sogliardo was planning to spend it.

A puckfist is a puffball fungus: It is empty, like Sogliardo’s head.

Bulrushes only appear to be strong; they are actually fragile.

Mushroom gentlemen are gentlemen who seemingly spring up overnight. They are new men, and they do not come from families who have long been known as belonging to a high social class.

Hearing Macilente complain, Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, “Let him alone. Ignore him. He is some stray, some stray.”

“Nay, I will ask him some questions before I go, to be sure,” Sogliardo said.

Carlo Buffone replied, “The lord of the soil has all wefts and strays here, hasn’t he?”

Wefts are waifs, abandoned property such as that dropped by a thief while being pursued. Strays are stray animals. If waifs and strays were not claimed within a reasonable amount of time, they became the property of the lord of the lordship.

Carlo Buffone was referring to Macilente as if he were a stray dog.

“Yes, sir,” Sogliardo answered.

“Truly, then I pity the poor fellow,” Carlo Buffone said.

He was referring to Macilente.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, “He’s fallen into a fool’s hands.”

Sogliardo said to Macilente, “Sirrah, who gave you a commission or warrant to lie — reside — in my lordship?”

“Your lordship?” Macilente said.

“What? ‘My lordship’? Do you know me, sir?” Sogliardo asked.

“I do know you, sir,” Macilente said.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, “By God’s heart, he answers him like an echo.”

“Why, who am I, sir?” Sogliardo asked.

“You are one of those whom fortune favors,” Macilente answered.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, “The periphrasis of a fool. I’ll observe this better.”

A Latin proverb stated, “*Fortuna favit fatuis.*” This means: “Fortune favors fools.”

Macilente had used a periphrasis — roundabout way — to say that Sogliardo was a fool.

“Whom fortune favors?” Sogliardo asked. “What do you mean by that, friend?”

“I mean simply ... that you are one who doesn’t live by your wits,” Macilente said.

This means “you are rich enough that you don’t have to live by your wits,” and it implies “you aren’t intelligent enough to live by your own wits.”

“By my wits?” Sogliardo said. “No, sir, I scorn to live by my wits, I. I have better means, I tell thee, than to take such base

courses of action as to live by my wits. By God's blood, do thou think I live by my wits?"

Sogliardo was happy that he had so much money that he didn't need to live by his wits. He was also stupid enough that he didn't understand Macilente's implied insult.

Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, "I think, jester, you should not relish this well."

Jesters live by their wits; Sogliardo took pride in not living by his wits.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, "Ha! Does he know me? Does he recognize me?"

Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, "Though yours be the worst use a man can put his wit to, of thousands of ways to use your wit, to prostitute it at every tavern and eating-house, yet I think that you should have turned your broadside at this, and you should have been ready with a defense of wit able to sink this hulk of ignorance into the bottom and depth of his contempt."

As a jester, Carlo Buffone should have given Sogliardo a broadside of his wit and metaphorically blown him out of the water and literally blown him out of his self-satisfied complacency.

A broadside occurs when all the cannon on one side of a warship fire at the same time.

A hulk is 1) a large ship, or 2) a large person.

Carlo Buffone said to himself, "By God's blood, this man is Macilente!"

He then said out loud to him, "Signor, you are well encountered. How is it with you? How are you?"



He then whispered to Macilente, “Oh, we must not regard what he — Sogliardo — says, man. He is a trout, a shallow fool. He has no more brain than a butterfly. He is a mere stuffed suit. He looks like a musty bottle, newly placed in a wicker basket; his head’s the cork, light, light.”

Trout were supposed to be easily caught by tickling them.

Sogliardo was like a musty — a stale — bottle in a new wicker basket. His intelligence was musty, but his clothing was new.

Carlo Buffone then said out loud, “I am glad to see you so well returned, signor.”

“You are?” Macilente said. “Gramercy, good Janus. Great thanks.”

Janus was a Roman god with two faces. One face looked toward the future; the other face looked toward the past. The image became used for a hypocrite. Carlo Buffone was praising Sogliardo to his face, but he was insulting him behind his back.

Sogliardo whispered to Carlo Buffone, “Is he one of your acquaintance? I love him the better for that.”

Carlo Buffone whispered to Sogliardo, “By God’s precious body, come away and don’t waste time on him, man, what do you mean? If you knew him as I do, you’d shun him as you’d shun the plague.”

Sogliardo whispered back, “Why, sir?”

Carlo Buffone whispered back, “Oh, he’s a black — an evil — fellow. Take heed on him. Be careful when you are around him.”

Sogliardo whispered back, “Is he a scholar or a soldier?”

Carlo Buffone whispered back, “Both, both. A lean mongrel; he looks as if he were chap-fallen — slack-jawed — because of exhaustion from barking at other men’s good fortunes. Be wary how you offend him; he carries oil and fire in his pen that will scald where it drops; his spirit’s like gunpowder, quick, violent; he’ll blow a man up with a jest. I fear him worse than a rotten wall does the cannon, when the wall is still shaking an hour after the sound of the cannon’s blast. Leave, don’t come near him.”

Sogliardo whispered back, “For God’s sake, let’s be gone. If he is a scholar, you know I cannot abide him. I had as gladly see a cockatrice, especially as cockatrices go now.”

Cockatrices are basilisks, mythological monsters that can kill with their look.

Cockatrices are also prostitutes. There is a pun on “cock,” and the “trice” is analogous to the end of *meretrix*, a word that is Latin for “prostitute” and which people of Ben Jonson’s time joked meant “merry tricks.” Therefore, cockatrices are cock-tricks.

Carlo Buffone now whispered to Macilente, “What, you’ll stay, signor? This gentleman Sogliardo and I are to visit the knight Puntarvolo, and then go from thence to the city. We — you and I — shall meet there.”

Carlo Buffone and Sogliardo exited.

Throughout this meeting, Macilente had been lying down.

Now he stood up and said to himself:

“Aye, when I cannot shun you, we will meet.

“It is strange. Of all the creatures I have seen, I don’t envy this Buffone, Carlo Buffone, for indeed neither his fortunes nor his parts — qualities — deserve it.

“But I hate him as I hate the devil, or that brass-visaged and impudent monster called Barbarism.

“Oh, it is an open-throated, black-mouthed, slanderous cur, which bites at all, but eats on those who feed him.

“A rogue who to your face will, serpent-like, creep on the ground as if he would eat the dust, and to your back will turn the tail and sting you more deadly than a scorpion.”

Seeing someone coming, he said, “Wait, who’s this? Now, for my soul, another darling of the old Lady Chance’s. I’ll observe him.”

Old Lady Chance is Lady Fortune.

He watched quietly, unobserved as the newcomer arrived and he listened as the newcomer spoke to himself.

— 1.3 —

Sordido entered the scene. He was reading a prognostication: a set of weather predictions and other information useful to farmers. Prognostications were bound with almanacs.

Sordido was Sogliardo’s brother, and like Sogliardo, he was rich. Sordido was, in particular, a rich farmer.

What Sordido was reading made him happy: “Oh, splendid, good, good, good, good, good! I thank my Christ. I thank my Christ for it.”

Macilente said to himself, “Didn’t I say the truth? Doesn’t his passion — his strong emotion — speak out of my divination?”

Macilente had guessed that this newcomer was “another darling of the Old Lady Chance’s.” The newcomer’s strong feelings of happiness seemed to show that this was true.

Macilente continued, “Oh, my senses, why don’t you lose your powers and become deadened, dull, and blunted with this spectacle? I know him: He is Sordido, the farmer, a boor, and brother to that swine who was here.”

“That swine” was Sogliardo.

“Excellent, excellent, excellent!” Sordido said. “It is as I would wish, as I would wish.”

Macilente said to himself, “See how the strumpet Fortune tickles and excites him, and makes him swoon with laughter, ‘Oh, oh, oh!’”

Many people considered Lady Fortune to be a strumpet because she was so fickle when deciding on whom to bestow or not to bestow her favors. Often, she left one man and then favored another man.

“Ha, ha, ha!” Sordido said. “I will not sow my grounds this year. Let me see, what harvest shall we have? June? July?”

He consulted his book of prognostications.

Macilente said to himself, “What is it? A prognostication that enraptures him so?”

Sordido read the prognostications out loud and commented on them:

“*‘The twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second days, rain and wind.’* Oh, good, good.

“*‘The twenty-third and twenty-fourth, rain and some wind.’* Good.

“*‘The twenty-fifth, rain’* — good still.

“*‘Twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, wind and some rain.’* I wish it had been rain and some wind. Well, it is good, when it can be no better.

“*Twenty-ninth inclining to rain.*’ Inclining to rain? That’s not so good, now.

“*Thirtieth and thirty-first, wind and no rain.*’ No rain? By God’s eyelid, wait, this is worse and worse.

“What does he say about St. Swithin’s? Turn back. Look, ‘*St. Swithin’s*’ — no rain?”

A proverb stated, “If it rain on St. Swithin’s Day [July 15], it will continue for forty days.”

Excessive rainy weather ruined crops and made the price of grain higher.

Macilente said to himself:

“Oh, here’s a precious, filthy, damned rogue, who fattens himself with the expectation of rotten weather and unseasonable hours, and he is rich for it, an elder brother.”

Because of primogeniture, the eldest son usually inherited the bulk of his parents’ estate.

Macilente continued speaking to himself:

“His barns are full, his ricks and mows are well trod, and his garners — grain storehouses — crack with store.”

Well-trod ricks and mows are well-tamped stacks of grain so that no space is wasted that could store more grain.

Macilente continued speaking to himself:

“Oh, it is well! Ha, ha, ha!

“May a plague consume thee and thy family!”

Sordido hoarded grain so that he could wait for a bad harvest and sell it at a very high price.

Still thinking he was alone, Sordido continued:

“Oh, here! ‘*St. Swithin’s, the fifteenth day, variable weather, for the most part, rain*’ — good — ‘*for the most part, rain.*’

“Why, it should rain forty days after now, more or less. It was a rule held before I was able to hold a plow, and yet here are two days, no rain. Ha! It makes me muse.”

On the thirtieth and the thirty-first, the prognostication forecast no rain.

Sordido continued:

“We’ll see how the next month begins, and see if that is better. ‘*August: August first, second, third, and fourth days, rainy and blustering.*’ This is well, now.

“‘*Fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth, rain, with some thunder.*’ Aye, by the Virgin Mary, this is excellent; the other was incorrectly printed, surely.”

“The other” was the other two days: the thirtieth and the thirty-first.

Sordido continued:

“‘*The tenth and eleventh, great store of rain*’ — oh, good, good, good, good, good!

“‘*The twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth days, rain*’ — good still.

“‘*Fifteenth and sixteenth, rain*’ — good still.

“‘*Seventeenth and eighteenth, rain*’ — good still.

“‘*Nineteenth and twentieth*’ — good still, good still, good still, good still, good still!

“‘*One-and-twentieth, some rain.*’ Some rain? Well, we must be patient and attend the heavens’ pleasure. I wish it would be more, though.

“*‘The one-and-twentieth, two-and-twentieth, three-and-twentieth, great tempest of rain, thunder, and lightning.’* Oh, good again, past expectation good!

“I thank my blessed angel. Never, never did I spend a penny better than I spent this penny to purchase this dear book.”

Almanacs containing prognostications cost one penny.

Still thinking he was alone, Sordido continued:

“It is not dear — expensive — for price, and yet by me it is as dearly prized and as valuable as life, since in it is contained the very life-essence, blood, strength, and sinews of my happiness.

“Blest be the hour wherein I bought this book.

“May the endeavors of the man who composed the book be happy and fortunate, and may the man who sold me the book be fortunate.

“Sleep with this blessing, and be as true to me as I rejoice and am confident in thee.”

A servant arrived and gave a letter to Sordido.

As Sordido read the letter, Macilente said to himself:

“Ha, ha, ha! Isn’t this good? Isn’t it pleasing, this?”

He was sarcastic.

Macilente continued:

“Ha, ha! God’s — ha! Is it possible that such a spacious — large-scale and owning-much-land — villain should live and not be plagued? Or does he lie hidden within the wrinkled bosom of the world where Heaven cannot see him?”

“By God’s blood, I think that it is rare and admirable that he should breathe and walk, feed with good digestion, sleep,

enjoy his health, and, like a boisterous whale swallowing the poor, always swim in wealth and pleasure.

“Isn’t it strange?

“Unless his house and skin were thunder-proof, I wonder at it.”

“Thunder-proof” means impervious to thunderbolts thrown by Zeus, the King of the gods — or thrown by God.

Macilente continued:

“I think now, the fever, gout, leprosy, or some such loathed disease might alight upon him, or that fire from heaven might fall upon his barns, or mice and rats eat up his grain, or else that it might rot within the hoary ricks, even as it stands.

“I think this might be a good and suitable punishment, and after all that, the devil might come and fetch him. Aye, it is true. I truly believe he deserves this punishment.

“In the meantime he surfeits — celebrates to excess — in prosperity, and thou, Macilente, in envy of him, gnaw thyself.

“Peace, fool, by which I mean myself, get away from here, and tell thy vexed spirit, ‘Wealth in this age will scarcely look on merit.’”

He exited.

Sordido asked the servant, “Who brought this paper and gave it to you to give to me, sirrah?”

The servant replied, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, one of the justice’s men brought it; he says it is a precept — a court order — and all their hands are on it. All the authorities have signed their names to it.”



Sordido responded:

“Aye, and the prints of them stick in my flesh like a brand deeper than in their letters.”

They had used wax to seal the letter and stamp the seal deeply.

Sordido continued:

“They have sent me pills wrapped in paper here, pills that, should I take them, would poison all the sweetness of my book and turn my honey into hemlock juice.”

Pills were usually wrapped in paper.

The authorities were ordering Sordido to sell his grain at a fair price in the marketplace because people were hungry. Soon, some authorities would arrive and check his storehouses to verify that he had sold his grain.

Sordido said:

“But I am wiser than to observe and obey their precepts or follow their prescriptions. Here’s a device to order me to bring my grain to the markets.

“Aye, that’s likely!

“When I have neither barn nor garner nor earth to hide my grain in, I’ll bring it, but until then, each corn I send shall be as big as Paul’s.”

He intended to hide his grain. Only the grain he could not hide would be sold, but the only grain he could not hide would have each kernel as large as St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Sordido continued:

“Oh, but some say that the poor are likely to starve.

“Why, let them starve; what’s that to me? Are bees bound to keep life in drones and idle moths by laboring to produce honey while they are idle? No.

“Why, such as these who term themselves the poor, only because they would be pitied, are indeed just a band of lazy beggars, licentious rogues and sturdy vagabonds, bred by the sloth of a fat plenteous year like snakes in heat of summer out of dung, and this is all that these cheap times are good for; whereas a wholesome and penurious dearth of grain purges the soil of such vile excrements, and kills the vipers.”

Ben Jonson’s society believed that snakes could be born from spontaneous generation.

“Penurious” means 1) extremely poor, and 2) mean.

His servant said, “Oh, but master, be careful that they — the poor people — don’t hear you.”

“Why should I?” Sordido asked.

“The poor people will loudly exclaim against and denounce you,” the servant said.

Sordido said:

“Aye, their exclamations against me move me as much as thy breath moves a mountain.

“Poor worms, they hiss at me, while I at home can be contented to applaud myself, to sit and clap my hands and laugh and leap, knocking my head against my roof with joy to see how plump my moneybags are and my barns.

“Sirrah, go, hurry to your home, and bid your fellows to get all their flails ready in preparation for when I come.”

“I will, sir,” the servant said as he exited.

Alone, Sordido said to himself:

“I’ll instantly set all my servants to thrashing a whole rick of corn, which I will hide under the ground, and with the straw thereof I’ll stuff the outsides of my other mows.”

Ricks are stacks of cut corn or hay, and mows are corn or hay stored in a barn.

Sordido wanted to disguise his mows of grain as mows of straw.

Sordido continued:

“That done, I’ll have them empty all my garners and in the friendly earth bury my store, so that, when the searchers for my grain — by then hidden — come to prevent me from cornering the market, they may suppose all’s consumed and that my fortunes were lied about or misreported.

“And to lend more opinion to my appearance of need and to stop that many-mouthed vulgar dog — poor people yelping for food — that otherwise would always be baying at my door, each market day I will be seen to buy part of the purest wheat, as if to feed my household, and when the wheat comes here, it shall increase my heaps.

“It will yield me treble gain at this dear time, promised in this dear book. I have cast and calculated and forecast all.”

He was gambling — like a cast of the dice — all the grain he had that the upcoming harvest would be poor.

Sordido continued:

“Until then, I will not sell an ear. I’ll hang first.

“Oh, I shall make my prizes — rewards — and my prices as I wish!

“My house and I can eat peas and barley.

“What though a world of wretches starve the while?

“He who will thrive must think no courses of action vile.”

He exited.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “Now, signor, how do you approve of this? Have the humorists expressed themselves truly or not?”

The humorists were 1) the characters with humors, and 2) the characters who caused the audience to smile and laugh.

Mitis replied:

“Yes, I do approve of this, if it will be well prosecuted and followed up. It is hitherto happy enough.

“But I think that Macilente went away from here too soon. He might have been made to stay and speak something in reproof of Sordido’s wretchedness — greediness — now at the last.”

“Oh, no, that would have been extremely improper,” Cordatus said. “Besides, he had continued the scene too long with him as it was, being in no more action.”

Mitis said, “You may put forward the length as a necessary reason, but for propriety and stage decorum the scene would very well have borne Macilente’s staying and speaking, in my judgment.”

“Oh, the worst of both: excessive length and lack of propriety,” Cordatus said. “Why, you mistake his — Macilente’s — humor utterly, then.”

“How do I mistake it?” Mitis asked. “Isn’t his humor envy?”

Cordatus said:

“Yes, but you must understand, signor, Macilente envies Sordido not as he is a villain, a wolf in the commonwealth,

but as he is rich and fortunate; for the true condition of envy is *dolor alienae felicitates*.”

The Latin meant: “resentment at another person’s good fortune.”

Cordatus continued:

“To have our eyes continually fixed upon another man’s prosperity — that is, his chief happiness — and to grieve at that. That is what Macilente does.

“Whereas if we make his monstrous and abhorred actions our object, the grief we take then comes nearer the nature of hate than envy, as being bred out of a kind of contempt and loathing in ourselves.”

Macilente was envious of Sordido’s wealth. Macilente’s humor was envy.

If Macilente’s main opinion of Sordido was that he was a monster for hoarding grain in hopes of making much money later while people were starving now, then Macilente’s humor would be hate: He would hate Sordido.

Mitis said, “So you’ll infer it would have been hate, not envy in him, to reprehend the humor — greediness — of Sordido?”

Cordatus said:

“Right, for what a man truly envies in another, he could always love and cherish in himself; but no man truly reprehends in another what he loves in himself, therefore reprehension — finding fault — is out of his hate.”

Macilente envied Sordido’s wealth, but Macilente would love to have that wealth for himself.

Cordatus continued:

“And this distinction he himself has made in a speech there, if you noticed it, where he says, ‘I don’t envy this Buffoon, but I hate him.’”

Mitis said, “Wait, sir: ‘I don’t envy this Buffoon, but I hate him.’ Why might he not as well have hated Sordido as him?”

Cordatus answered:

“No, sir, there was subject — a material motive — for his envy in Sordido: his wealth.

“But there was no subject — no material motive — for envy in the other: Carlo Buffone.

“He — Carlo Buffone — stood possessed of not one eminent gift or superior talent, but he did possess a most odious and fiend-like disposition that would turn charity itself into hate, rather than envy as in the present case.”

## ACT 2 (*Every Man Out of His Humor*)

### — 2.1 —

Carlo Buffone, Sogliardo, Fastidious Brisk, and Cinedo were near the house of the knight Puntarvolo. Fastidious Brisk was a courtier, and Cinedo was his page. In Latin, *cinaedus* means “homosexual.”

“You have satisfied me, sir,” Mitis said.

Seeing the new actors arriving, he added, “Oh, here come the fool and the jester again, I think.”

“It would be a pity if they should be parted, sir,” Cordatus said.

The jester was Carlo Buffone, and the fool was Sogliardo.

“What bright-shining gallant is that with them?” Mitis asked. “The knight they went to pay a visit to?”

Carlo Buffone and Sogliardo had mentioned paying a visit to the knight named Puntarvolo.

“No, sir, this man is one Monsieur Fastidious Brisk, otherwise called the fresh Frenchified courtier,” Cordatus answered.

Ben Jonson’s society regarded anyone who was “Frenchified” as effeminate and affected.

“Is he a humorist, too?” Mitis asked.

“He is as humorous as quicksilver,” Cordatus answered. “Just watch him.”

Quicksilver, also known as mercury, is liquid at room temperature and coheres in a ball. People who are mercurial are volatile, unstable, and capricious. Think of Mercutio in William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*.

“The scene is the country still, remember,” Cordatus said.

Sordido and Puntarvolo lived close to each other and close to the city.

The city was London.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Cinedo, watch when the knight comes, and give us word.”

“I will, sir,” Cinedo said as he exited.

“How do thou like my boy, Carlo?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Oh, well, well,” Carlo Buffone said. “He looks like a colonel of the pygmies’ cavalry, or one of these clockwork figures in a great antique and antic — old-fashioned and grotesque — clock. He would show well upon a haberdasher’s stall at a corner shop, splendidly.”

Haberdashers sold hats. Carlo Buffone was joking that Cinedo looked like a dummy in a haberdasher’s shop.

“By God’s heart, what a damned witty rogue is this!” Fastidious Brisk said. “How he confounds with his similes!”

“It’s better to confound with similes than smiles,” Carlo Buffone said.

“To confound” means 1) to surprise, 2) to confuse, or 3) to destroy or ruin. This third meaning is now obsolete.

Courtiers do much flattering and smiling. Sometimes, flattery and smiles can lead to ruin and destruction.

“And to where were you riding now, signor?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Who, I?” Fastidious Brisk asked. “What a silly jest is that! To where should I ride but to the court?”

He was a courtier, and so he spent much time at the court.



Carlo Buffone sprung his sex joke: “Oh, pardon me, sir, you could ride to twenty places more: your hot-house, or your —”

A hot-house is a place where a person can get a hot bath and a massage. Also, a hot-house can be a whorehouse. “Riding” can be a sexual riding.

Carlo Buffone did not finish his sentence, pretending that he was not willing to mention anything salacious.

“By the virtue of my soul, this knight dwells in Elysium here,” Fastidious Brisk said, changing the subject.

Elysium is where good souls go to in the afterlife.

Carlo Buffone said to himself:

“He’s gone now.”

The attention of Fastidious Brisk had wandered to a different topic of discussion, probably on purpose. In other words, Carlo Buffone’s conversation was not to his liking.

Carlo Buffone added, still talking to himself:

“I thought he would fly out presently. These be our nimble-spirited catsos who have their evasions — tricks and shifts — at pleasure, and who will run over a bog like your wild Irish; no sooner started, but they’ll leap from one thing to another like a squirrel — hey! — dance and do tricks in their discourse, from fire to water, from water to air, from air to earth, as if their tongues did but even lick the four elements over, and away.”

The word “catso” comes from the Italian *cazzo*, which means “penis.” “Catso” is used to mean “rogue.”

Irish soldiers were known for attacking enemy English soldiers and then escaping by running through swampland.

The four elements that Ben Jonson's society thought everything was made of in various combinations were air, water, earth, and fire.

Fastidious Brisk said, "Sirrah Carlo, thou never saw my grey hobby yet, did thou?"

His use of "sirrah" showed that he believed that he was Carlo Buffone's social superior.

Hobby horses are small horses, much in fashion in Ben Jonson's time.

"No, have you such a one?" Carlo Buffone asked.

"The best in Europe, my good villain, thou shall say when thou see him," Fastidious Brisk said.

"Good villain" means "fine fellow," but in a condescending way.

"But when shall I see him?" Carlo Buffone asked.

Not answering the question, Fastidious Brisk said, "There was a nobleman in the court offered me one hundred pounds for him, I swear by this light of the day — the sun. A fine little fiery slave, he runs like a — oh, excellent, excellent! — with the very sound of the spur."

"What? The sound of the spur?" Carlo Buffone asked.

"Oh, it's your only humor now extant, sir," Fastidious Brisk said. "A good jingle, a good jingle."

Fastidious Brisk moved his feet and jingled his spurs.

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, "By God's blood, you shall see him turn morris-dancer. He has got him bells, a good suit, and a hobby-horse."

The "bells" were his jingling spurs.

In some dances, the dancers wore a hobby-horse — a figure of a horse that was attached to their waist. It made a comic image since the dancer appeared to be on horseback. The hobby-horse's rear legs were the person's legs. "Hobby-horse" was also slang for "prostitute."

Morris-dance costumes included small bells attached to the clothing.

Morris-dances and hobby-horse capers were rural entertainments. A courtier such as Fastidious Brisk would look down on them as being unsophisticated entertainments.

Sogliardo said to Carlo Buffone, "Signor, now you talk of a hobby-horse, I know where one is, one who will not be given for a brace of angels."

A brace of angels is a pair of gold coins.

"What is that you are saying, sir?" Fastidious Brisk asked.

Sogliardo said, "By the Virgin Mary, sir, I am telling this gentleman about a hobby-horse. It was my father's, indeed, and though I say it —"

Carlo Buffone said to himself, "Who should not say it."

He then said, out loud, "Go on, go on."

Sogliardo continued, "— my father did dance in it with as good humor and as good regard and public approval as any man of his social rank whatsoever, being no gentleman. I have danced in it myself, too."

"Not since the humor of gentility was upon you, did you?" Carlo Buffone asked.

Gentlemen were unlikely to dance in a hobby-horse costume.

“Yes, once,” Sogliardo said. “By the Virgin Mary, that was but to show what a gentleman might don in a humor.”

“Oh, very good,” Carlo Buffone said.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Why, this fellow’s discourse would be nothing if not for the word ‘humor.’”

The word “humor” was an in-vogue word, and some speakers vastly overused it.

“Oh, bear with him,” Cordatus said. “If he should lack matter, substance — and lack words, too — it would be pitiful.”

Sogliardo said, “Nay, look, sir, there’s not a gentleman in the country who has the like humors for the hobby-horse as I have. I have the method for the threading of the needle, the —”

“Threading the needle” was a dance move in the morris-dance. Possibly, two dancers made one big arch with their arms and the other dancers danced through the arch.

“What? The method?” Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo responded, “Aye, the legerity” — he meant “dexterity” — “for that, and the wehee” — neigh — “and the daggers in the nose, and the travels of the egg from finger to finger — all the humors necessary for a good performance.”

These are all dance moves and tricks of dexterity suitable for good dancers and performers.

Sogliardo continued, “The hobby-horse hangs at home in my parlor. I’ll keep it for a monument, as long as I live, to be sure.”

A monument is a memorial. Sogliardo would keep the hobby-horse as a memorial for long-times-past morris-dances.

“Do so, and when you die, it will be an excellent trophy to hang over your tomb,” Carlo Buffone said.

Roman trophies were such things as the weapons of a fallen enemy.

“By the Mass, and I’ll have a tomb, now I think on it,” Sogliardo said. “It is but so much expense.”

“Best build it in your lifetime, then; your heirs may happen to forget it if you don’t,” Carlo Buffone said.

“I mean to,” Sogliardo said. “I’ll not trust it to them.”

“No, for heirs and executors are grown damnably careless, especially since the ghosts of will-and-testament makers left off walking,” Carlo Buffone said.

Out of fear of where they would end up in the afterlife, wealthy people often made wills that would leave their descendants destitute, if followed. Their descendants found ways to get around such wills and inherit the deceased person’s wealth. The ghosts of the deceased wealthy people have stopped walking, perhaps because the wealthy people ought to take care of their descendants, and since the descendants are, in fact, taken care of, the ghosts can rest peacefully.

Also possibly, the ghosts had been in Purgatory, the place where souls — ghosts — purged their sins, according to Catholic doctrine. Since the idea of Purgatory was no longer current in Protestant England, Englishmen and Englishwomen no longer believed that ghosts walked in Purgatory.

Carlo Buffone said quietly to Fastidious Brisk, “How do you like him, signor?”

Fastidious Brisk said quietly back, “Before heavens, his humor arrides me exceedingly.”

Trying to avoid vulgar words — the words of commoners — Fastidious Brisk was Englishizing a Latin prefix and a Latin word: *ad* (to) and *ridere* (laugh). He meant *arrides* to mean “amuses.”

Carlo Buffone whispered to Fastidious Brisk, “‘Arrides’ you?”

In other words, his humor is to *ride* you?

Fastidious Brisk whispered back:

“Aye, *pleases* me.

Then, realizing that he had set himself up to be mocked, he said:

“A pox on it!

“I am so haunted at the court and at my lodging with your refined choice spirits that it makes me completely of another garb, another strain, I don’t know how.”

“Garb” is fashionable expression, and “strain” is an uncommon turn of phrase.

Poet John Milton used the words “garb” and “strain” to describe extravagant language.

Fastidious Brisk added quietly, “I cannot frame myself to your harsh vulgar phrase. It is against my genius.”

“Genius” can mean 1) natural inclination, 2) spirit, or 3) guardian angel.

Upset at being ignored, Sogliardo said, “Signor Carlo.”

He and Carlo Buffone talked together quietly.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “This is just like that sentence of Horace: *Dum vitant stulti vitia in contraria currunt.*”

The Latin means: “When fools avoid vices, they run into their opposites.”

Cordatus continued, “So this gallant, laboring to avoid vulgarity in his speech, falls into a habit of affectation ten thousand times more hateful than vulgar speech.”

In this case, the fool is Fastidious Brisk. The vice is vulgar speech, and in avoiding it, he uses the speech of courtiers to excess. Cordatus regarded such speech as ten thousand times more hateful than vulgar speech.

“Vulgar” contains the meaning of “common.” Vulgar speech is the speech of commoners: common people.

Carlo Buffone said quietly to Sogliardo about Fastidious Brisk:

“Who, he?”

“He is a gull, a fool. There is no salt — no wit and intelligence — in him in the earth, in the world, man. He looks like a fresh salmon kept in a tub, he’ll be spent — exhausted by spawning — shortly. His brain’s lighter than the feather in his cap already, and his tongue more subject to lie than the feather is to wag and flutter. He sleeps with a musk-cat every night, and walks all day hanged in pomander chains for penance.”

A musk-cat can be a container of musk or a prostitute or an animal such a civet or a musk deer that secretes musk.

Pomander chains are necklaces with hanging containers of perfume, but the bodies of some executed criminals were hung in chains and exposed to the view of the public.

Carlo Buffone continued speaking quietly to Sogliardo about Fastidious Brisk:

“He has his skin tanned in civet — preserved in perfume — to make his complexion youthful and the sweetness of his youth lasting in the sense of his sweet lady. A good empty puff, he loves and respects you well, signor.”

Puffs are libertines, often homosexual, or they are vainglorious boasters.

Sogliardo replied quietly, “There shall be no love lost, sir, I’ll assure you.”

Upset at being ignored by Carlo Buffone, Fastidious Brisk said, “Nay, Carlo, I am not fortunate enough to enjoy your love and friendship, I see. I am not favored by your attention. Please allow me to enjoy thy company a little, sweet mischief-maker. By this air, I shall envy this gentleman’s — Sogliardo’s — place in thy affections, if you are thus private, indeed.”

Cinedo, Fastidious Brisk’s boy-servant, entered the scene.

Fastidious Brisk asked, “How is it now? Has the knight arrived?”

“No, sir,” Cinedo said. “But it is guessed he will arrive soon, by his forerunners.”

Forerunners are servants sent ahead to announce a person’s imminent arrival, but in this case four-runners are also four-legged dogs that run ahead of a hunter.

“His hounds!” Fastidious Brisk said. “By Minerva, an excellent figure of speech, a good boy.”

Minerva is the Roman goddess of wisdom. Her Greek name is Athena.



Carlo Buffone said, “You should give him a French crown for it; the boy would find two better figures in that, and a good figure of your bounty beside.”

A French crown is 1) a coin with the head of King Henri IV of France on one side, and 2) baldness as a symptom of the French disease: syphilis.

“Figures” are 1) figures of speech, and 2) images of kings on coins.

“Tut, the boy wants no crowns,” Fastidious Brisk replied.

That is, he wants no tips.

“He wants no crown,” Carlo Buffone said.

That is, he wants no baldness caused by syphilis.

Carlo Buffone added, “Speak in the singular number, and we’ll believe you.”

“Figure,” the singular of “figures,” is a sum of money.

“Nay, thou are so capriciously conceited now,” Fastidious Brisk replied.

“Conceited” means 1) full of conceits, aka ideas and figures of speech, 2) fanciful, and 3) full of an overvaluation of yourself.

Fastidious Brisk then began saying to Carlo Buffone:

“Sirrah —”

Realizing that Carlo Buffone had made a joke at his expense about a French crown, he said to himself:

“Damnation!”

He then continued speaking out loud:

“I have heard this knight, Puntarvolo, reported to be a gentleman of exceedingly good humor. Thou know him; please tell me, what is his disposition? I never was so favored by my stars as to see him yet.”

He asked Cinedo:

“Boy, are you looking after the hobby horse?”

“Aye, sir, the groom has set him up and put him in a stall,” Cinedo replied.

Fastidious Brisk said, “It is well.”

Sogliardo talked quietly with Cinedo.

Fastidious Brisk said to Carlo Buffone, “I rode out of my way on purpose to visit him, and take knowledge of his — nay, good wickedness! — his humor, his humor.”

He was worried that Carlo would deliberately mistake his words as meaning that he had come here to take knowledge — have carnal knowledge — of the knight’s wife.

Carlo Buffone told Fastidious Brisk about the knight Puntarvolo: “Why, he loves dogs, and hawks, and his wife well. He has a good riding face, and he can sit on a great warhorse. He will taint — break — a staff well when tilting. When he is mounted, he looks like the sign of the George, that’s all I know, save that, instead of a dragon, he will brandish his sword against a tree, and break his heavy sword as confidently upon the knotty bark as the other did upon the scales of the beast.”

Having a good riding face can mean 1) Puntarvolo always looks in control of his horse, and/or 2) his wife likes to sit on his face.

The sign of the George is the sign of the St. George Inn. St. George is the patron saint of England, and one of his notable exploits was killing a dragon.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Oh, but this is nothing to what’s said about him. They say that he has dialogues and discourses between his horse, himself, and his dog, and that he will court his own lady as if she were a stranger he had never encountered before.”

Carlo Buffone replied, “Aye, that he will, and woo her anew every morning.”

He pointed to Sogliardo, who was talking quietly to Cinedo, and said, “This gentleman has been a spectator of it.”

He then said to Sogliardo, “Signor Insulso!”

In the middle of a conversation, Sogliardo said to Cinedo, “I am resolute to keep a page —”

He then said to Carlo Buffone, “What do you have to say, sir?”

“Have you seen Signor Puntarvolo woo his lady?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Oh, aye, sir,” Sogliardo answered.

“And what is the manner of it? Please tell us, good signor,” Fastidious Brisk requested.

Sogliardo answered, “Indeed, sir, he woos her in a very high style. He has his humors for it, sir; as first, suppose he were now to come from riding or hunting or so, he has his trumpet to sound, and then the waiting-gentlewoman looks out, and then he speaks, and then she speaks. It is very pretty, indeed, gentlemen.”

“Do you remember any particulars, signor?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Oh, yes, sir,” Sogliardo said. “First, the gentlewoman looks out at the window.”

“After the trumpet has summoned a parle? Not before?” Carlo Buffone asked.

A parle is a talk by opposing parties before battle begins.

Sogliardo said, “No, sir, not before, and then he says —”

He had a fit of laughing.

“What does he say?” Carlo Buffone said. “Don’t be so amused.”

Sogliardo said, “He says —”

He continued to laugh.

“Nay, speak, speak,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Ha, ha, ha — he says, ‘God save you’ — ha, ha!” Sogliardo said.

“Was this the ridiculous motive to all this passion?” Carlo Buffone asked.

In other words: Is this what you are laughing at?

“Nay, that, I am laughing at what comes after, is — ha, ha, ha, ha!” Sogliardo said.

Carlo Buffone said, “Doubtless he apprehends more than he utters, this fellow, or else —”

Hounds sounded.

“Listen! Listen!” Sogliardo said. “They are returning from hunting. Stand by, close under this terrace, and you shall see it done better than I can show it in words.”

“So it had need,” Carlo Buffone said. “It will scarcely poise — repay — the observation else.”

Watching the knight woo his wife must necessarily convey more information — and entertainment — than Sogliardo had been able to convey.

“Indeed, I remember it all, but the manner of it is quite out of my head,” Sogliardo said.

He remembered how entertaining the sight was, but he could not convey the details that made the sight entertaining.

“Oh, withdraw, withdraw!” Fastidious Brisk said. “It cannot be other than a most pleasing sight to watch.”

They moved away to watch Puntarvolo unobserved.

## — 2.2 —

Puntarvolo and a huntsman with a horn entered the scene. They were accompanied by a greyhound. Puntarvolo was a knight who enjoyed hunting.

“Forester, give wind to thy horn,” Puntarvolo said.

The huntsman blew his horn.

“Enough!” Puntarvolo said. “By this time, the sound has touched the ears of the people enclosed in the castle.”

Puntarvolo did not have a castle as his dwelling. He was playing a role, as would soon become clear.

He then said to the huntsman, “Depart, leave the dog, and take with thee what thou have deserved, the horn, and thanks.”

Normally, the blower of the horn would deserve and get a monetary tip, but this blower had blown badly his horn. Or the blower had blown well the horn and the horn was his tip.

The huntsman exited.

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, there’s some taste in this,” Carlo Buffone said. “This is worth savoring.”

“Isn’t it good?” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Ah, peace,” Sogliardo said. “Quiet! Now look above! Now look above!”

The knight’s wife’s waiting-gentlewoman appeared at the window. The waiting-gentlewoman was a companion, not a common servant.

“Wait!” Puntarvolo said. “My eye has, on the instant, through the generous gift of the window, received the form of a nymph. I will step forward three paces, of the which I will barely retire one; and, after some little flexure — bending — of the knee, with an erected grace, I will greet her.”

“Erected grace” is a complimentary greeting after standing up from kneeling.

Readers may be forgiven for thinking of a different kind of erection.

Taking steps, he counted, “One, two, and three.”

He stepped back one step, knelt, and said, “Sweet lady, God save you.”

“No, indeed, I am only the waiting-gentlewoman,” she replied.

“He knew that before,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Pardon me,” Puntarvolo said. “*Humanum est errare.*”

The Latin means: “To err is human.”

Puntarvolo had erred in mistaking the serving-gentlewoman for the lady of the house.

Puntarvolo had taken three steps forward and one step back. His mistaking the serving-gentlewoman for the lady of the castle was his one step back.

A proverb stated: “To err (that is, to sin) is human, to repent (one’s sin) is divine, to persevere (in sinning) is diabolical.”

“He learned that from a Puritan,” Carlo Buffone said.

Puritans were thought to be hypocritical. A jest in Ben Jonson’s day was this: “A Puritan is such a one as loves God with all his soul but hates his neighbor with all his heart.”

Puntarvolo said:

“To achieve the richest perfection of compliment (which is the sundial — the measuring device — of the thought, and guided by the sun of your beauties) are required these three elements: the *gnomon*, the *puntlios*, and the *superficies*.

“The *superficies* is that which we call ‘place’; the *puntlios*, ‘circumstance’; and the *gnomon*, ‘ceremony.’

“In each of which, for a stranger to err, it is easy and easily done, and such am I.”

The *gnomon* is the rod of the sundial.

The *punctilio* are the gradations marked on the sundial’s circumference.

The *superficies* is the level surface of the sundial.

Carlo Buffone said, “True, not knowing her horizon, he must needs err, which I fear he knows too well.”

A horizon is a place in which Puntarvolo can err, aka wander. The woman’s horizon is her intelligence and knowledge. Her horizon is also the horizontal position in which Puntarvolo can have sex with her. Some religious people consider all sex, even sex between a husband and wife, to be sexual sin,

aka sexual erring. This belief is considered a heresy by many religious leaders.

“What do you call the lord of the castle, sweet face?” Puntarvolo asked.

“The lord of the castle is a knight, sir: Signor Puntarvolo,” the waiting-gentlewoman said.

“Puntarvolo? Oh,” Puntarvolo said, still playing the role of a stranger.

“Now must he ruminare,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Does the wench know him all this while, then?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Oh, as well as you know me, man,” Carlo Buffone said. “Why, therein lies the syrup — the sweetness — of the jest. It’s a fully planned project, a designment of his own, a thing studied and rehearsed as ordinarily at his coming from hawking or hunting, like a jig after a play.”

“Aye, even like a jig, sir,” Sogliardo said.

Yes, the waiting-gentlewoman was part of the role-playing. Puntarvolo had written the lines she was saying.

“It is a most sumptuous and stately edifice,” Puntarvolo said. “How old is the knight, fair damsel?”

“Indeed, much about your years, sir,” the waiting-gentlewoman said. “He is approximately your age.”

“What temperament, or what stature, bears he?” Puntarvolo asked.

“He is approximately your height, and very near upon your temperament,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

Puntarvolo said, “My temperament is melancholy —”



“So is the dog’s, exactly,” Carlo Buffone said.

Dogs were proverbially melancholy.

Puntarvolo continued;

“— and melancholy does betoken constancy, chiefly in love.

“What are his endowments? Is he courteous? Is he courtly and chivalrous?”

“Oh, he is the most courteous knight upon God’s earth, sir,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“Is he magnanimous?” Puntarvolo asked.

A magnanimous man is generous in his thoughts and actions.

“He is as magnanimous as the skin between your brows, sir,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

Having skin between the eyebrows — no unibrow — indicated magnanimity and honesty.

“Is he bountiful and charitable?” Puntarvolo asked.

Charity was a noble virtue.

“By God’s blood, Puntarvolo takes an inventory of his own good parts!” Carlo Buffone said.

Puntarvolo had written the waiting-gentlewoman’s lines, and those lines praised him.

“Bountiful? Aye, sir, I wish you should know it; the poor are served at his gate early and late, sir,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“Is he learned?” Puntarvolo asked.

“Oh, aye, sir, he can speak the French and Italian,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“Then, he is travelled?” Puntarvolo asked.

“Aye, indeed, he has been beyond-sea once or twice,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“As far as Paris, to fetch over a fashion and come back again,” Carlo Buffone said.

A much more impressive journey would have been to the Holy Land.

“Is he religious?” Puntarvolo asked.

“Religious? I don’t know what you call religious, but he goes to church, I am sure,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“By God’s eyelid, I think these answers should offend him,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Puntarvolo had traveled abroad only once or twice, and Fastidious Brisk thought that his religiousness was perhaps shown only by his going to church, although the waiting-gentlewoman had said that “the poor are served at his gate early and late.”

“Tut, no,” Carlo Buffone said. “He knows they are excellent, and to the capacity of her who speaks them.”

The serving-gentlewoman was playing a part, and these answers are either what she was ad-libbing or what Puntarvolo had written for her to say. In any case, Puntarvolo was happy with the answers.

“I wish that I could see his face,” Puntarvolo said.

“The waiting-gentlewoman should let down a mirror from the window at that word, and request him to look in it,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Doubtless, the gentleman is most exact and absolutely qualified,” Puntarvolo said. “Does the castle contain him? Is he inside the castle?”

“No, sir, he is away from home, but his lady is within,” the waiting-gentlewoman answered.

“His lady?” Puntarvolo said. “Is she beautiful? Splendidous? Brilliant and magnificent? And is she amiable?”

“Amiable” is derived from the Latin word for “love.” As used by Puntarvolo, “amiable” means “able to be loved.”

“Oh, Jesus, sir!” the waiting-gentlewoman said.

She may not have wanted to play a role in this game. Or her answer may have meant that she was unable to express his lady’s beauty.

“Please, dear nymph, entreat her beauties to shine on this side of the building,” Puntarvolo said.

The waiting-gentlewoman exited from the window.

Carlo Buffone said, “He wants his lady — his wife — to shine on this side of the building so that he may erect a new sundial of compliment, with his *gnomons* and his *puntilios*.”

Carlo was thinking of a different kind of erection than a literal sundial.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Nay, thou are such another man now; a man had necessarily walk uprightly before thee.”

“Uprightly” can mean 1) righteously, or 2) with an erection.

Carlo Buffone said, “By God’s heart, can any man walk more upright than he does? Look, look. It is as if he went about in a frame, or had a suit of wainscot on, and the dog watching him lest he should leap out of it.”

Puntarvolo had excellent posture. He was as stiffly upright as if he were being stretched on a rack or was wearing wood paneling as a suit of clothing.

“Oh, villain!” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Well, if ever I meet him in the city, I’ll have him jointed — pulled joint from joint so he can be roasted,” Carlo Buffone said. “Or else I’ll pawn him in Eastcheap among the butchers.”

Seeing some people coming, Fastidious Brisk said, “Peace! Quiet! Who are these people, Carlo?”

Sordido and his son, Fungoso, entered the scene.

Carlo Buffone, Fastidious Brisk, and Sogliardo continued to watch, unnoticed.

Sordido said to Fungoso, his son, “Yonder’s your godfather; do your duty to him, son.”

Fungoso’s godfather was Puntarvolo.

Fungoso took off his hat.

Sogliardo pointed to Sordido and said to Fastidious Brisk, “You ask who is this man, sir? He is a poor elder brother of mine, sir, a yeoman who may spend some seven or eight hundred pounds a year. That’s his son, my nephew, there.”

A yeoman was not a gentleman, but he could own much land and be wealthy.

Puntarvolo said, “You are not ill-come, neighbor Sordido, although I have not yet said well-come. What, my godson is grown a great proficient — an advanced scholar — by this time!”

“I hope he will grow to be great one day, sir,” Sordido said.

Wealthy yeomen could become gentlemen by such means as getting degrees in law.

“What does he study? The law?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Aye, sir, he is a gentleman, although his father is only a yeoman,” Sogliardo answered.

Some people, such as King James I at a later time, wanted only gentlemen to be admitted into law schools, but many yeomen got educations in law.

“What do you call your nephew, signor?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“By the Virgin Mary, his name is Fungoso,” Sogliardo answered.

The Italian *fungo* means “fungus.” A mushroom is a type of fungus.

Mushroom gentlemen are gentlemen who seemingly spring up overnight from humble origins.

“Fungoso?” Carlo Buffone said. “Oh, he looked somewhat like a sponge in that pinked doublet, I thought. Well, make much of him; I see he was never born to ride upon a mule.”

A doublet is a jacket. When a doublet is pinked, it has small holes through which a lining or a shirt with a contrasting color can be seen.

Judges and sergeants-at-law rode mules. Fungoso was so fantastically dressed that he wouldn't fit in a conservative occupation such as law.

The waiting-gentlewoman appeared again at the window and said, “My lady will come immediately, sir.”

“Oh, now, now,” Sogliardo said to his hidden companions.

Puntarvolo said to Sordido and Fungoso, “Stand by, retire yourselves a space.”

He then said to Fungoso, “Nay, please, don’t forget the use of your hat. The air is piercing.”

Because it was cold, Puntarvolo was giving Fungoso permission to put on his hat, which he had taken off to show respect to the knight, his godfather. This demonstrated magnanimity on Puntarvolo’s part.

Sordido and Fungoso withdrew to the side, and the lady — Puntarvolo’s wife — came to the window.

“What?” Fastidious Brisk said. “Won’t their presence prevail against the current of his humor?”

In other words, won’t Puntarvolo be too embarrassed to continue his role-play in the presence of Sordido and Fungoso?

“Oh, no, it’s a complete flood — a torrent — that washes away all before it,” Carlo Buffone said.

Puntarvolo said:

“What more than heavenly pulchritude is this?

“What storehouse or treasury of bliss?

“Dazzle, you organs to my optic sense,

“To view a creature of such eminence.

“Oh, I am planet-struck and in yonder sphere

“A brighter star than Venus does appear!”

“Planet-struck” meant “struck with awe due to the astrological influence of a planet.” In this case, the planet was his wife.

In Ben Jonson's society, the word "planet" could refer to the sun and to stars. Planets were believed to be embedded in spheres around the Earth.

"What! In verse?" Fastidious Brisk said.

"A poetic ecstasy, an ecstasy, man!" Carlo Buffone said.

"Is it your desire to speak with me, sir knight?" Puntarvolo's lady asked.

"He will tell you that soon," Carlo Buffone said. "Neither his brain nor his body are yet molded for an answer."

No real conversation would take place right now. Puntarvolo's brain was filled with ornate language, and his body was stiff with courtly dignity. Part of his body may soon be stiff with blood.

Puntarvolo said, "Most debonair, gracious, and luculent — brilliant — lady, I decline me as low as the basis of your altitude."

He bowed to her.

"Basis" and "altitude" were terms used in geometry.

Cordatus said, "He makes congees — ceremonious bows — to his wife in geometrical proportions."

By "geometrical proportions," he meant "angular movements."

"Is it possible there should be any such humorist?" Mitis asked.

"Very easily possible, sir," Cordatus answered. "You see there is. Just look in front of you."

Puntarvolo said:

“I have scarcely collected my spirits, which were just now scattered — dazzled and confused — in the admiration of your form; to which, if the bounties of your mind be in any way responsive, I don’t doubt that my desires shall find a smooth and secure passage.”

“Desires”? “Smooth and secure passage”? Hmm. Later, he (and his wife) will talk about “entrance” to the “castle.” These words sound sexual. Role-play can be very sexual, indeed.

Puntarvolo continued:

“I am a poor knight-errant, lady, who, hunting in the adjacent forest, was by adventure in the pursuit of a hart — a female deer — brought to this place; which hart, dear madam, escaped by enchantment.”

The hart could be the waiting-gentlewoman, whom Puntarvolo had complimented with the excuse that he thought she was the lady of the castle.

Puntarvolo continued:

“The evening approaching, I myself and my servant wearied, my suit is to enter your fair castle and refresh myself.”

Puntarvolo’s lady responded:

“Sir knight, although it is not usual with me, chiefly in the absence of a husband, to admit any entrance to strangers, yet in the true regard of those innate virtues and fair parts that so strive to express themselves in you, I am resolved to entertain you to the best of my unworthy power, which I acknowledge to be nothing when compared to the value that so worthy a person as you may deserve.

“May it please you to wait while I descend.”

“Most admired lady, you astonish me,” Puntarvolo said.



She and her waiting-gentlewoman exited from the window, and Puntarvolo joined Sordido and his son: Fungoso.

“What!” Carlo Buffone said. “She astonishes you by speaking a speech of your own penning?”

“Nay, look!” Fastidious Brisk said. “Please, peace. Please, be silent.”

“A pox on it,” Carlo Buffone said. “I am impatient of such foppery.”

“Oh, let’s hear the rest,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Carlo Buffone said:

“What! Hear a tedious ACT of courtship, after Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere?”

Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere committed adultery, and so Queen Guinevere cuckolded her husband: King Arthur. Similarly, in this role play, Puntarvolo’s wife was on the verge of committing adultery with a “stranger,” and so she was “cuckolding” her husband: Puntarvolo.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Leave! I marvel in what dull cold nook he found this lady out, that, being a woman, she was blessed with no more abundance of wit but to serve his humor thus. By God’s blood, I think he feeds her with porridge, aye; otherwise, she could never have such a thick brain.”

“Why, is porridge so hurtful, signor?” Sogliardo asked.

Carlo Buffone jested — or perhaps he believed — that thick porridge produces thick wits:

“Oh, there is nothing under heaven more prejudicial to those ascending subtle powers. There is nothing under heaven that

does sooner abate that which we call *acumen ingenii* [acuteness of mental powers], than gross fare [food].

“Why, I’ll give you an example: Your city wives, just observe them.

“You haven’t more perfect true fools in the world bred than they are generally; and yet you see, by the fineness and delicacy of their diet — diving into the fat capons, drinking rich wines, feeding on larks, sparrows, potato-pies, and such good unctuous, fatty meats — how their wits are refined and rarefied; and sometimes a very quintessence of conceit flows from them, able to drown a weak intellect.”

Larks, sparrows, and potato-pies were considered aphrodisiacs.

City wives were fools, but because of their rich diet — no porridge for them! — they were able to outwit those country folk who ate porridge.

“Silence! Here comes the lady,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Puntarvolo’s lady and her waiting-gentlewoman entered the scene.

Seeing Carlo Buffone, Fastidious Brisk, and Sogliardo, Puntarvolo’s lady said, “God save me, here’s company! Go back inside!”

She and her waiting-gentlewoman exited.

“By God’s light, our presence has cut off the action of the jest,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“All the better,” Carlo Buffone said. “I am glad about it, for the outcome was very perspicuous: It was easy to foresee. Come, let’s reveal our presence and greet the knight.”

Carlo Buffone, Fastidious Brisk, and Sogliardo stepped forward and went over to Puntarvolo.

Puntarvolo said:

“Wait, who are these men who address themselves towards us?”

“What! Carlo! Now by the sincerity of my soul, welcome!”

He then said to Fastidious Brisk and Sogliardo:

“Welcome, gentlemen.”

He then asked Carlo Buffone:

“And how do thou, thou grand scourge, or second untruss of the time?”

Satirists are known for scourging — whipping — those who need it. To “untruss” is to undress; for example, to make bare someone’s back in preparation for a whipping. As a noun, an untruss is literally someone who prepares someone’s back for a whipping. Figuratively, an untruss is a satirist.

The first British untruss may have been John Marston, author of *The Scourge of Villainy*.

Carlo Buffone said:

“Indeed, I am spending my metal and mettle in this reeling, tottering world, here and there, as the sway of my feelings carries me.”

“Metal” is metal coins, and “mettle” is natural vigor. To “spend one’s mettle” is to ejaculate.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“And perhaps I stumble upon a yeoman fewterer, as I do now.”

A “yeoman fewterer” is a dog-keeper. Puntarvolo was still holding his dog’s leash.

Puntarvolo was a knight, but by holding his dog's leash instead of having a servant do that, he was acting like a yeoman fewterer.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Or perhaps I stumble on one of fortune's mules laden with treasure, and an empty cloak-bag following him, opening his mouth wide when a bag will untie.”

Sogliardo and Sordido were fortune's mules laden with treasure, and Fastidious Brisk and Fungoso were the empty cloak-bags following them, and they, like Carlo Buffone, were hoping to acquire some of these fortune's mules' wealth.

In particular, Fungoso would soon be asking his father, Sordido, for money with which to buy expensive clothing. Fastidious Brisk was a courtier who also wished to borrow money so that he could buy expensive clothing, although he borrowed money from someone other than Sogliardo and Sordido.

Actually, Carlo Buffone was following Sogliardo in order to make fun of him.

Puntarvolo said, “Silence, you bandog, peace!”

A “bandog” is 1) a mean dog that is kept tied up, 2) a fierce dog used in bear-baiting, or 3) figuratively, a savage satirist.

Pointing to Fastidious Brisk, Puntarvolo said, “What brisk nymphodoro is that in the white virgin boot there?”

Fastidious Brisk was fashionably dressed.

A nymphodoro is an effeminate courtier.

Carlo Buffone said, “By the Virgin Mary, sir, he is one whom I must entreat you to take a very particular knowledge

of, and with more than ordinary respect: This is Monsieur Fastidious.”

Puntarvolo said to Fastidious Brisk, “Sir, I could wish that for the time of your vouchsafed abiding — your deigning to visit me — here, and for your more ample entertainment, that this my house stood on the Muses’ hill — Mount Parnassus — and that these my orchards were those of the Hesperides.”

The garden of the Hesperides contained trees that grew golden apples.

“I possess as much in your wish, sir, as if I were made lord of the Indies, and I pray that you believe it,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Carlo Buffone said to himself about these flattering words, “I have a better opinion of his faith than to think it will be so corrupted. I do not think that Puntarvolo will be taken in by Fastidious Brisk’s words.”

Sogliardo said to Sordido, “Come, brother, I’ll make you acquainted with gentlemen and good fellows, such as shall do you more grace than —”

Sordido interrupted, “— brother, I don’t hunger for such acquaintance.”

He did not want to know these people.

Carlo Buffone came toward them.

Sordido said, “Take heed, lest —”

Sogliardo interrupted, “— hush!”

He then said to Carlo Buffone, “This is my brother, sir, for lack of education, sir, somewhat nodding to the boor, the clown.”

“Nodding to” means “inclining toward.”

A “noddy” is a fool.

“But I request to speak to you in private, sir,” Sogliardo said to Carlo Buffone.

Sogliardo and Carlo Buffone talked quietly together.

Looking at Fastidious Brisk, Fungoso said to himself, “By Jesus, it’s a very fine suit of clothes.”

Cordatus said, “Do you observe that, signor? There’s another humor that has newly cracked the shell and sprung into existence.”

Fungoso’s humor was an obsession with fashionable clothing.

“What?” Mitis said. “He is enamored of the fashion, is he?”

“Oh, you anticipate the jest,” Cordatus said.

Fastidious Brisk and Puntarvolo talked together quietly.

Fungoso said to himself, “I wonder what such clothing might cost him.”

Sogliardo said to Fungoso, “Nephew?”

Still engrossed in his thoughts, Fungoso said to himself, “Before God, it’s an excellent suit, and as neatly becomes him.”

He then asked, “What did you say, uncle?”

“When did you see my niece?” Sogliardo asked.

His niece was Fungoso’s married sister, Fallace, who was living in London.

“By the Virgin Mary, yesterday I supped there,” Fungoso said.

He then said to himself about Fastidious Brisk's boots, "That kind of boot is very splendid, too."

"And what news did you hear?" Sogliardo asked.

Fungoso said to himself, "The gilt spur and all. I wish I would be hanged, if it isn't exceedingly good."

He then asked his uncle, "What did you say?"

"Your mind is carried away with something else," Sogliardo said. "I asked you what news did you hear."

"Indeed, we heard none," Fungoso said.

He then said to himself, "In good faith, I was never so pleased with a fashion, in all the days of my life. Oh, if I might have but my wish, I'd ask no more of God now but such a suit, such a hat, such a flat linen collar, such a doublet, such a hose, such a boot, and such a —"

Sogliardo said, "They say there's a new puppet-show about the city of Nineveh, with Jonah and the whale, to be seen at Fleet Bridge. You can tell me about it, nephew?"

Fungoso said to himself, "Here's such a world of questions with him now! He is asking so many questions!"

He then said to his uncle, "Yes, I think there is such a thing. I saw the advertisement."

He said to himself, "I wish he would once be satisfied! Let me see, the doublet, say, fifty shillings the doublet, and between three or four pounds the hose. Then boots, the hat, and band. Some ten or eleven pounds would do it all and suit me for the heavens!"

A band is a linen collar that is worn under a ruff.

The heavens were high: on the underside of the roof over the stage. Fashionable gentlemen were seated in the higher seats in the theater.

“I’ll see all those devices, if I come to London once,” Sogliardo said.

The devices were puppet-shows.

Fungoso said to himself, “By God’s eyelid, if I could acquire such clothing, it would be splendid.”

He then said out loud, “Listen, uncle.”

“What does my nephew say to me?” Sogliardo asked.

Fungoso said:

“Indeed, uncle, I’d have desired you to have made a motion — proposal — for me to my father in a thing, that — walk aside and I’ll tell you, sir — is no more than this:

“There’s a parcel of law books, some twenty pounds’ worth, that lie in a bookshop and sell for little more than half the money they cost, and I think for some twelve pounds or twenty marks I could go near to purchase them.

“There are books by Plowden, Dyer, Brooke, and Fitzherbert, and other eminent jurists and legal authors such as I must have before long; and you know I might as well save five or six pounds as not, uncle. Please, propose such a purchase to him for me.”

“That I will,” Sogliardo said. “When would you have me do it? Immediately?”

“Oh, aye, please, good uncle,” Fungoso said.

Sogliardo left to talk to Sordido.



“God send me good luck!” Fungoso said to himself. “Lord, if it is thy will, prosper it. Oh, Jesus, now, now, if my plan to get money for new clothes works — oh, Christ — I am made forever!”

Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo, who had asked if he had found favor with a certain lord, “Shall I tell you, sir, by this air, I am the most indebted to that lord of any gentleman living. He does treat me the most honorably, and with the greatest respect, more indeed than can be uttered with any opinion of truth.”

“... more indeed than can be uttered with any opinion of truth”? Hmm. Sounds like Fastidious Brisk knows that he is lying.

“So then, you do know the Count Gratiato?” Puntarvolo said.

Fastidious Brisk replied:

“He is as truly noble a gentleman, too, as any gentleman who breathes. I am exceedingly endeared to his love. By Jesus, I protest to you, signor, I speak it not vaingloriously nor out of affectation, but there’s he, and the Count Frugale, Signor Illustre, Signor Luculento, and a group of them, who, when I am at the court, they share me among them.

“Happy is he who can enjoy me most privately. I do wish myself sometime an ubiquitous — that is, someone who can be everywhere — for their love, in good faith.”

“Happy is he who can enjoy me most privately”? Hmm. Sounds like a homosexual subtext there.

Hearing him speak, Carlo Buffone said to himself, “There’s never a one of these gentlemen but might lie a week on the rack, before they could bring forth his name, and yet he pours them out as familiarly as if he had seen them stand by the

fire in the royal presence chamber, aka reception room, or taken tobacco with them over the stage in the lords' room."

The rack is an instrument of torture: one that stretches one's limbs painfully. Carlo Buffone guessed that influential people could be tortured for a week on the rack without remembering Fastidious Brisk's name, although Fastidious tried to make it sound as if he knew well these people of influence.

A place by the fire is a privileged place because it is warm.

The lords' room in the theater is where Fungoso has said that he would like to sit and smoke once he has new clothing.

Puntarvolo said, "Then you must of necessity know our court-star there, that planet of wit, Madonna Saviolina?"

"Oh, Lord, sir, she is my mistress!" Fastidious Brisk said.

A mistress is a woman whom a man admires and who returns that admiration. In this context, the word "mistress" does not necessarily imply sexual intercourse.

"Is she really your mistress?" Puntarvolo asked.

Good question.

Fastidious Brisk answered:

"Indeed, here are some slight favors — tokens of friendship or love — of hers, sir, that announce that she is: such as this scarf, sir, or this ribbon in my ear, or so."

Audiologists sometimes remove long "ribbons" of dead skin and ear wax from ear canals.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“This feather grew in her sweet fan sometimes, though now it is my poor fortunes to wear it as you see, sir — slight, slight, a foolish toy.”

“Well, she is the lady of a most exalted and ingenious spirit,” Puntarvolo said.

“Did you ever hear any woman speak like her?” Fastidious Brisk asked. “Or any woman so enriched with a more plentiful discourse?”

A woman with a plentiful discourse is a talkative woman.

Carlo Buffone said, “Oh, villainous! Nothing but sound, sound, a mere echo. She speaks as if she goes attired in cobweb lawn, light, thin — good enough to catch flies with.”

Cobweb lawn is flimsy, transparent linen.

According to Fastidious Brisk, Madonna Saviolina spoke at length.

According to Carlo Buffone, Madonna Saviolina had nothing to say.

Also according to Carlo Buffone, Madonna Saviolina’s conversation was good enough to attract flatterers such as Fastidious Brisk.

“Oh, manage your affections!” Puntarvolo said to Carlo Buffone. “Restrain your outbursts of feelings!”

He did not want to hear insults directed toward Madonna Saviolina.

He was chivalrous that way.

Fastidious Brisk said to Carlo Buffone, “Well, if thou are not plagued for this blasphemy one day —”

“Come, don’t pay attention to a jester,” Puntarvolo said. “It is in the power of my purse to make him speak well or ill of me.”

Fastidious Brisk said, “Sir, I affirm it to you, upon my credit and judgment, that Madonna Saviolina has the most harmonious and musical strain of wit that ever tested a true ear; and yet we see here that a rude tongue will profane heaven.”

It was Carl Buffone’s tongue that would profane heaven.

“I am not ignorant of it, sir,” Puntarvolo said.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Oh, wit flows from her like nectar, and she does give it that sweet, quick grace and exornation — rhetorical embellishment — in the composition that, by this good heaven, she observes as pure a phrase and use as choice figures of speech in her ordinary conversations as any that appear in the *Arcadia*.”

*Arcadia* is a pastoral romance by Sir Philip Sidney.

Carlo Buffone said, “Or rather in Greene’s works, from which she may steal with more security.”

Robert Greene was less admired and less read in intellectual circles than Sir Philip Sidney. Therefore, Madonna Saviolina could plagiarize Greene’s witticisms with less chance of being caught out than if she were to plagiarize Sir Philip Sidney’s witticisms.

Sordido said to Fungoso, “Well, if ten pounds will fetch the law books, you shall have the money, but I’ll part with no more.”

“I’ll try what that will do, if you please,” Fungoso said.

“Do so, and when you have the books, study hard,” Sordido said.

“Yes, sir,” Fungoso said.

He then said to himself, “If I could find a way to get forty shillings more now! Well, I will put myself into the fashion, as far as this money will go, immediately.”

“I wonder that it doesn’t rain!” Sordido said. “The almanac says we should have a store of rain today.”

Puntarvolo said to Fastidious Brisk, “Why, sir, tomorrow I will associate” — he meant “accompany” — “you to the court myself, and from thence to the city about a business, a project I have. I will expose” — he meant “explain” — “it to you, sir. I am sure that Carlo has heard of it.”

“What’s that, sir?” Carlo Buffone said.

Puntarvolo answered:

“I do intend, this year of jubilee, to travel; and because I will not altogether go at my own expense, I am determined to put forth some five thousand pounds to be paid me five for one, upon the return of myself, my wife, and my dog from the Turk’s court in Constantinople.”

Many people in a year of jubilee would travel to the Holy Land.

The Turk was the Ottoman Sultan.

Puntarvolo continued:

“If all or either of us miscarry in the journey, it is gone; if we should be successful, why, there will be twenty-five thousand pounds to entertain time with.”

Sordido started to leave.

Puntarvolo said:

“Nay, don’t go, neighbor Sordido.

“Stay tonight and help to make our society the fuller. Gentlemen, frolic and have fun.”

A traveler could bet that he could return from a hazardous journey within a certain time; others could bet that he would not be able to do it. The traveler would have to provide evidence that he had successfully reached his destination.

Puntarvolo’s bet was unusual in that it included the safe return of his dog.

“Carlo?” Puntarvolo said. “What? Dull now? Nothing to say?”

“I was thinking on your project, sir, if you call it so,” Carlo Buffone replied. “Is this the dog that will go with you?”

“This is the dog, sir,” Puntarvolo said.

“He doesn’t go barefoot, does he?” Carlo Buffone asked.

Silly question.

“Go away, you traitor — you rascal — go away,” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone said:

“Nay, before God, I speak sincerely. He may prick his foot with a thorn and be as much as the whole venture is worth.”

If the dog does not return safely, then Puntarvolo loses his wager. The dog could die of natural causes. But also, rather than lose their bets, the people who bet against him may try to kill his dog.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Besides, for a dog that never travelled before, it’s a huge journey to Constantinople. I’ll tell you now, if he were mine, I’d have some immediate conversation with a physician,

what antidotes would be good to give him, and preservatives against poison, for I assure you, if once your money is put down for the wager, there'll be diverse attempts made against the life of the poor animal."

"Thou are always negative," Puntarvolo said.

Fastidious Brisk said to Sogliardo, "Is Signor Deliro's wife your kinswoman?"

"Aye, sir, she is my niece, my brother's daughter here, and my nephew's sister," Sogliardo replied.

"Do you know her, sir?" Sordido asked Fastidious Brisk.

"Oh, God, sir, Signor Deliro, her husband, is my merchant," Fastidious Brisk replied.

Merchants were often also money-lenders — that is, usurers.

Fungoso pointed to Fastidious Brisk and said to Sordido, "Aye, I have seen this gentleman there often."

"I beg your mercy, sir," Fastidious Brisk said. "Let me ask you what is your name, please."

"I am Fungoso, sir," he answered.

"Good Signor Fungoso, I shall request to know you better, sir," Fastidious Brisk said.

"I am her brother, sir," Fungoso said.

"In fair time, sir," Fastidious Brisk said.

This greeting meant something like "We are well met" or "It is good to meet you."

"Come, gentlemen, I will be your guide," Puntarvolo said. "I will lead you there."

They started to exit.

Fastidious Brisk said to Fungoso, “Nay, please, you go first, sir.”

People would exit in order of social prominence. Fungoso, who admired Fastidious Brisk’s clothing, wanted to allow him to exit first, but Fastidious, flattering Fungoso, insisted on Fungoso exiting first.

Fastidious Brisk said to Fungoso, “We shall meet at Signor Deliro’s often.”

Sogliardo said, “You shall find me at the heralds’ office, sir, for a week or so, at my first coming up to London.”

He then said, “Come, Carlo.”

They exited.

Mitis said, “I think, Cordatus, he — Asper the playwright — dwelt somewhat too long on this scene; it hung in the hand.”

Like a hand dragging a weight hung on a string, this scene dragged on.

Cordatus said, “I don’t see where he could have settled for less, and still have made the humors perspicuous — easily understood — enough.”

In other words, the scene needed to be long in order to competently develop the characters and their humors.

Mitis replied, “True, as his satire of humors lies; but he might have altered the shape of the plot and explicated the characters and their humors better in single scenes rather than in one long scene.”

“That had been single — singular — indeed,” Cordatus said. “Why, aren’t they the same persons in this one long scene as they would have been in those shorter scenes? And isn’t it an object of more flowering, flourishing state to behold the scene full of characters, and furnished with a variety of



speakers to the end, than to see a vast empty stage and the actors come in one by one, as if they were dropped down with a feather into the eye of the audience?"

In Ben Jonson's society, feathers were used as eyedroppers to drop small amounts of liquid onto an eye.

Mitis said, "You are better acquainted with these things than I, and therefore I'll submit to your judgment."

He added that he still wanted to make criticisms of the play: "By the Virgin Mary, you shall give me permission to make objections."

"Oh, what else?" Cordatus said. "It's the special intention of the author that you should do so, for thereby others who are present — that is, the members of the audience — may as well be satisfied who perhaps would happily object the same as you do."

Mitis asked, "That is so, sir, but when does Macilente appear again?"

Macilente, Deliro, and Fido entered. Fido was carrying flowers, herbs, and incense. Fido was Deliro and Fallace's boy-servant. Deliro was married to Fallace.

Cordatus said:

"By the Virgin Mary, he waited just until our silence gave him an opportunity to appear again. Here he comes, and with him Signor Deliro, a merchant, at whose house he has come to sojourn.

"Make your own observation now, only transfer your thoughts to the city with the scene change, where you may suppose they speak."

This scene was set in the backyard of Deliro's house in London.

Deliro said to a client just off-stage, "I'll tell you by and by, sir."

He then said, "Welcome, good Macilente, to my house to sojourn even forever, if my best in delicate, choice foods and every sort of good entreaty may persuade you to stay with me."

Deliro turned to his serving-boy, Fido, and signaled, and Fido began strewing the flowers on the ground to act as air fresheners to please Deliro's wife.

"I thank you, sir," Macilente replied.

He then said to himself:

"And yet the muffled — inscrutable — Fates, had it pleased them, might have supplied me from their own full store without this utterance, 'I thank you,' to a fool.

"I see no reason why that dog called Chance should fawn upon this fellow more than me. I am a man, and I have limbs, flesh, blood, bones, sinews, and a soul as well as he."

Chance is Old Lady Chance, aka Lady Fortune.

He continued:

"My parts are in every way as good as his. If I would have said that my parts are better, why, I would not have lied.

"Nonetheless, his wealth, simply nodding with casual generosity on my wants, must make me bow and cry, 'I thank you, sir.'"

Deliro said to Fido, “Hurry. Take heed your mistress doesn’t see you.”

This kind of mistress is a female boss.

“I promise you, she won’t see me, sir,” Fido said as he exited.

All that they had done to perfume the air was done to prepare for the arrival of Deliro’s wife.

Deliro said, “Nay, gentle, distinguished friend, be merry, raise your looks out of your bosom. I protest, by heaven, that you are the man most welcome in the world.”

“I thank you, sir,” Macilente replied.

He said to himself, “I know my cue, I think!”

Fido returned with two censers. Censers are incense-burners. Burning incense and herbs sweetened the air.

“Where will you have them burn, sir?” Fido asked.

“Here, good Fido,” Deliro said. “What? She did not see thee?”

“No, sir,” Fido said.

“That’s well,” Deliro said. “Strew, strew, good Fido, the freshest flowers. Good.”

“What does this mean, Signor Deliro?” Macilente asked.

Deliro said to Fido, “Cast in more frankincense. Yet more. Well done.”

He then answered Macilente, “Oh, Macilente, I have such a wife, so surpassingly beautiful, so passing-fair — superbly — unkind, and of such worth and right to be unkind, since no man can be worthy of her kindness.”

He adored his wife.

In Ben Jonson's society, wives were supposed to be kind — affectionate and submissive — to their husbands. Deliro's wife was not kind to him.

“What, no man is worthy of her?” Macilente said.

Deliro said:

“No, that is sure as death; no man alive is worthy of her. I do not say ‘is not’ but instead I say ‘cannot possibly be worth’ her kindness.

“Nay, that is certain; let me do her right.

“What did I say? ‘Do her right’?”

“As though I could! As though this dull gross tongue of mine could utter the rare, the true, the pure, the infinite rights that sit, as high as I can look, within her.”

“This is such dotage as was never heard,” Macilente said.

Dotage can mean 1) infatuation, and 2) foolishness.

“Well, what I have said about my wife must necessarily be granted to be true,” Deliro said.

“Must be granted, did you say?” Macilente asked.

Deliro replied:

“Nay, Macilente, do not so discredit the goodness of your judgment to deny it, for I speak the very least of her.”

“I speak the very least of her” is ambiguous. It can mean, “The praise I give her does not come close to what she deserves.” Or it can mean, “Although I praise her, you can tell that she does not deserve any of that praise.”

Deliro continued:

“And I would crave and beg no more of heaven, for all my fortunes here, but to be able to utter first, in fit terms, what she is, and then the true joys I conceive in her.”

Chances are, Deliro wanted to have children with her. He certainly wanted the sexual rights of a husband.

“Is it possible she should deserve as well as you pretend?” Macilente asked.

“Pretend” can mean 1) profess, and/or 2) assert without evidence or belief.

Deliro replied:

“Aye, and she knows so well her own value that, when I strive to enjoy it” — as a husband, he could, or was supposed to, enjoy his wife, including sexually — “she weighs the things I do with what she merits and deserves, and, seeing my worth outweighed so in her graces, she is so formal, so scrupulous, so hard to please and headstrong that no courteous attention I can give to her can make her kind to me. If she finds fault, I mend that fault, and then she says I faulted in that I did mend it.

“Now, good friend, advise me how I may temper — lessen and control — this strange spleen in her.”

Macilente answered:

“You are too amorous and fond of her, too obsequious, and you make her too assured she may command you.

“When women doubt most of their husband’s loves, they are the most loving. Husbands must take heed that they give no gluts of kindness to their wives, but treat them like their horses, whom they feed not with a manger-full of meat — food — together, but half a peck at a time, and keep them so always with an appetite to that which they give them.”

Macilente believed that husbands can be too subservient to their wives.

He also believed that wives ought to be like horses: legal possessions.

He was also talking about sex. The word “meat” can refer to a penis, and the word “appetite” can refer to sexual appetite. But it seems unlikely that Deliro’s wife ever had sex with him, at least not recently.

Macilente continued:

“He who desires to have a loving wife must bridle and check all the show of that desire. Be kind, not amorous. Do not reveal kindness as if love wrought it, but act out of considerate and deliberate legal and moral duty and obligation.

Macilente advised that Deliro act out of reason, not love-passion.

Macilente quoted a maxim:

“*Offer no love-rites, but let wives still [always] seek them,*

“*For when they come unsought, they seldom like them.*”

Deliro said:

“Believe me, Macilente, this is gospel.

“Oh, that a man were his own man so much to rule himself thus! I will strive, in faith, to be more strange and careless — distant and emotionally uninvolved; yet I hope that I have now taken such a perfect course to make her kind to me and live contented that I shall find my kindness well returned and have no need to fight with my affections.

“She lately has found much fault with every room within my house. One was too big, she said. Another was not furnished

to her liking, and so through all the rooms in my house. All of which rooms I have altered.

“Then here she has a place, on my back side, wherein she loves to walk, and that, she said, had some ill smells about it.”

Deliro’s back side is 1) Deliro’s backyard or back garden, or 2) Deliro’s backside, aka butt. Backsides can at times have ill smells.

Deliro continued:

“Now this walk have I, before she knows it, thus perfumed with herbs and flowers, and laid in diverse places, as it were on altars consecrated — dedicated — to her, perfumed gloves and delicate necklaces of amber to keep the air in awe of her sweet nostrils.”

Perfumed gloves and delicate amber necklaces were popular lovers’ gifts.

Deliro was mistaken about amber (fossilized resin), which does not have a scent unless it is heated.

Deliro continued:

“This I have done, and this I think will please her.

“Look, she is coming.”

Fallace, Deliro’s wife, entered the scene.

She complained:

“Here’s a sweet stink indeed!

“What, shall I always be thus crossed by and plagued by and sick of my husband? Oh, my head aches, as if it would be split in two with these savors and smells!

“All my rooms are altered, and just one poor walk that I delighted in, and that is made so fulsome and cloying with perfumes that I am afraid — my brain does sweat so! — that I have caught the plague.”

“Why, gentle wife, is now thy walk too sweet-sweeting?” Deliro said. “Thou said recently it had sour airs about it, and thou found much fault that I did not correct it.”

“What if I did find fault, sir?” Fallace said.

“Nay, dear wife,” Deliro said. “I know thou have said thou have loved perfumes, and no woman better loves them than thee.”

Fallace said:

“Aye, long ago, perhaps, but now that sense has changed.”

“You want me, like a puddle or a standing, stagnant pool, to have no motion nor no spirit within me.

“No, I am like a pure and sprightly quickly flowing river that moves forever, and yet is always the same, or fire that burns much wood, yet is always one flame.”

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that you can’t step into the same river twice because it is constantly changing.

“Only yesterday, I saw thee at our garden smelling roses and purple flowers,” Deliro said. “And since then, I hope, the humor of thy sense has not at all changed.”

“Why, those were growing flowers, and these within my walk are cut and strewed,” Fallace said.

“But yet they have one and the same scent,” Deliro said.

Fallace asked:

“Is that really true?”



She answered her own question:

“In your gross judgment.

“If you make no difference between the scent of growing flowers and cut ones, you have a sense to taste lamp-oil, truly.”

She was accusing him of being insensitive: The only thing he could smell was something strong such as lamp-oil. Also, she was saying that if that was what his sense of smell was like, he must think that lamp-oil smells good and he would like to taste it.

Fallace continued:

“And with such judgment you have changed the chambers, leaving no room that I can feel joy to be in, in all your house; and now my walk and all you smoke me from, as if I were a fox, and you long, it is likely, to drive me quite away.”

Hunters used smoke to drive a fox from its lair.

Fallace continued:

“Well, you walk there, and I’ll walk where I wish.”

“What shall I do?” Deliro said. “Oh, I shall never please her.”

Macilente said to himself:

“Get out of here, you dotard!

“What star — astrological influence — ruled his birth that brought him such a star — such a beautiful woman? Blind Fortune always bestows her gifts on such as cannot use them.

“How long shall I live before I am so happy to have a wife of this surpassing body shape?”

Deliro said to Fido:

“Take these things away! I wish I had broken a joint when I thought up this that should so displease her.

“Away, carry everything away!”

Fido carried the gloves, censers, and other love-tokens away as he exited.

Fallace said:

“Aye, do, for fear anything that is there should please her — by whom I mean me.

“Oh, this man, how cunningly he can conceal himself and make it seem as though he loved! Loved? Nay, honored and adored!”

“Why do you say that, my sweetheart?” Deliro asked.

Fallace said:

“Sweetheart? Oh, better still!

“And asking, ‘Why? Wherefore?’ And looking strangely, as if he were as white as innocence.

“Alas, you’re simple and unsophisticated, you. You cannot change, look pale at your pleasure — when you please — and then look red with wonder.

“No, no, not you.

“I did but cast an admiring eye even now upon a pair of gloves that I somewhat liked, and immediately he noted it, and gave the command that all should be taken away.”

“May those gloves be my bane, my poison, then, if they are taken away,” Deliro said.

He called, “What! Sirrah! Fido!”

Fido returned.

Deliro ordered, “Bring in those gloves again you took away from here.”

Fallace said to Fido, “By God’s body, sirrah, do not do that. Bring in no gloves to spite me. If you do —”

Fido exited.

“My lot in life is sorrow!” Deliro said. “I am very wretched. How my wife misinterprets me!”

Macilente said to himself:

“Oh, how she tempts my heartstrings with her eye, to knit them to her beauties, or to break!

“What moved the heavens that they could not make me such a woman, but made me a man, a beast, who has no bliss like to others?

“I wish to God, in revenge for my misfortunes, that I would be turned into some fair water-nymph, so that, set upon the deepest whirlpool of the ravenous seas, my adamant — magnetic — eyes might headlong hale this iron world to me, and drown it all.”

Macilente knew that Fallace was a beautiful woman, but he envied more her power: She bossed her husband.

In mythology, the iron age is the last and most evil age. The first and best age is the golden age.

To a savage satirist, the present age is always the iron age.

Fungoso entered the scene. He was wearing a replica of the suit of clothing that Fastidious Brisk had been wearing earlier.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “Look, see the translated gallant!”

“Oh, he is welcome,” Mitis said.

Fungoso said to Deliro and Fallace, “God save you, brother-in-law and sister.”

He said to Macilente, “God save you, sir.”

He said to Fallace, his sister, “I have commendations for you from out in the country.”

He then said to himself, “I marvel that they haven’t noticed my new suit of clothing.”

He then continued talking to Fallace:

“My uncle Sogliardo is in town.

“Sister, I think you are melancholy. Why are you so sad? I think you mistook me for Master Fastidious Brisk, sister, didn’t you?”

He was trying to draw attention to his new clothes.

“Why should I mistake you for him?” Fallace asked.

“Nay, no reason,” Fungoso said.

Then he added, “I was lately in Master Fastidious’ company, and I think we are very similar.”

“You have a fair suit of clothing, brother-in-law,” Deliro said. “May God give you joy of it.”

“Indeed, it is good enough to ride in, brother,” Fungoso said. “I had it made to ride in.”

This implies that he had other fancy suits of clothing to wear when he was not riding on horseback.

“Oh, now I see the cause of his frivolous question was his new suit of clothing,” Fallace said.

Deliro said quietly to Fungoso, “Please, good brother-in-law, see if you can change her mood.”

Fallace seemed to always be in a peevish mood.

Fungoso replied quietly, “I assure you I will. Leave it to me. I’ll put her out of her dumps.”

He then said to Fallace, “Sister, how do you like my suit of clothing?”

“Oh, you are a gallant in print — a perfect gallant — now, brother,” Fallace said, referring to his clothing.

Since Fungoso had gotten the money by claiming he needed it to buy books but had instead spent it on clothing, he was indeed a gallant in print.

Fungoso replied, “Indeed, how do you like the fashion? It’s the last edition — the latest edition — I assure you.”

“I cannot but like it as it deserves,” Fallace replied.

Considering how Fungoso had gotten the money to get the new clothes, did they deserve to be praised?

“To tell the truth, sister, I was obliged to borrow these spurs,” Fungoso said. “I have left my gown as security for them. Please, lend me an angel.”

A gown is a kind of men’s upper garment that can be worn in public.

An angel is a gold coin.

“Now, beshrew — curse — my heart, then,” Fallace said.

She was reluctant to lend him money.

Fungoso said, “In good truth, I’ll pay you again at my next exhibition.”

His exhibition was his allowance. His father gave him money periodically to enable him to be a law student.

He continued, "I had just barely ten pounds from my father, and it would not reach to put me wholly into the fashion."

He had bought everything except the spurs.

"I don't care," Fallace said.

"I had spurs of my own before, but they were not jinglers," Fungoso said.

Fastidious Brisk had worn spurs that jingled, and so Fungoso had wanted some of his own.

Fungoso added, "Monsieur Fastidious will be here soon, sister."

"You jest!" Fallace said.

"Never lend me one penny more, while you live, then, if I am jesting," Fungoso said, "and that is something I'd be loath and reluctant to say, in truth."

He was loath and reluctant to tell her to never lend him any more money.

"When did you see him?" Fallace asked.

"Yesterday," Fungoso said. "I became acquainted with him at Sir Puntarvolo's. Nay, sweet sister —"

Macilente said to himself:

"I would like to know of heaven, now, why yonder fool should wear a suit of satin. He? That rook — that fraud! That painted jay — flashily dressed fool — with such a deal of outside? He is all show and no substance. What is his inside, do you think? Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Good heaven, give me patience!

"A number of these popinjays — chatterers — there are whom, if a man bring to mind and just compare their inward

merit with the inward merit of such men as lack the popinjay's financial resources, Lord, Lord, what things they are!"

Popinjays are literally chattering birds with fine feathers.

Macilente considered himself to be a man of inward merit who lacked the money to buy fine clothing.

Scholars and gallants are different. Scholars are supposed to seek a well-furnished mind; gallants are thought to seek a well-furnished — that is, well-clothed — body.

Fungoso was a law student, but he wanted to be dressed like a gallant. He valued clothing more than books.

Macilente thought of himself as a scholar, but he wanted to be dressed like a gallant.

Fallace said, "Come, when will you pay me again? Tell me now."

She may or may not have given him money.

"Oh, God, sister!" Fungoso said.

He may have caught sight of Fastidious Brisk, who entered the scene while wearing a new suit of clothing in the newest fashion.

Seeing Fastidious Brisk, Macilente said to himself, "Here comes another."

He meant another popinjay.

Fastidious Brisk greeted Deliro and Fallace:

"May God save you, Signor Deliro.

"How are thou, sweet lady? Let me kiss thee."

Fungoso said, "What! A new suit of clothing? My lot is sorrow!"

He had thought he was wearing the latest fashion, but now he learned that he was not.

"And how does Master Fastidious Brisk?" Deliro asked.

Fastidious Brisk, who sometimes left words out of his sentences, said, "Indeed, [I] live in court, Signor Deliro, in favor and grace, I thank God, both of the noble masculine and feminine."

He meant upperclass lords and ladies.

He added, "I must speak with you in private by and by."

He wanted to borrow money.

"When you please, sir," Deliro said.

"Why do you look so pale, brother?" Fallace asked.

"By God's eyelid, all this money is cast away now," Fungoso said.

He had spent much money on his clothing, and now his clothes were not the latest fashion.

Macilente said to himself, "Aye, there's a newer edition come forth."

The new edition was a new fashion.

"It is just my hard fortune," Fungoso said. "Well, I'll have my suit of clothing changed. I'll go and fetch my tailor soon, but first I'll devise a letter to my father. Have you any pen and ink, sister?"

"What would you do with it?" Fallace asked.



“I would use it,” Fungoso said. “By God’s light, if it had come but four days sooner, I would have had the fashion!”

If he had had the money four days earlier, he would have been fashionable for four days. Or, if Fastidious Brisk had worn his new suit of clothing four days earlier, Fungoso would have been able to copy it and would have been fashionable now.

He exited.

Fastidious Brisk said:

“There was a countess [who] gave me her hand to kiss today, in the presence chamber” — the royal reception room — “did [which did] me more good, by Jesus, then — and yesternight sent her coach twice to my lodging to entreat me [to] accompany her, and my sweet mistress, with some two or three nameless ladies more.”

The ladies must be nameless out of discretion — or because they didn’t exist.

Fastidious Brisk again left out some words: *’did* above means “Which did,” and *This* below means “This is.”

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“Oh, I have been graced by them beyond all aim of affection! This’ [This is] her garter my dagger hangs in. And they so commend and approve my apparel, with my judicious wearing of it, it’s above wonder.”

Fallace said, “Indeed, sir, it is a most excellent suit, and you do wear it as extraordinary — uncommonly well.”

Fastidious Brisk replied, “Why, I’ll tell you now, in good faith, and I swear by this chair — which, by the grace of God, I intend soon to sit in — I had three suits in one year [that] made three great ladies [fall] in love with me. I had three

other [suits that] undid [ruined] three gentlemen in imitation, and three other [suits that] got three other gentlemen widows of three thousand pound a year.”

In other words: He claimed that he had three suits of clothing made in one year that made three great ladies fall in love with him. He also claimed that he had three other suits of clothing that financially ruined three gentlemen who imitated him. He also claimed that that he had three other suits of clothing that got three other gentlemen who imitated him widows who each had an income of three thousand pounds a year. Apparently, these three gentlemen married the three widows and got their money, as was the norm in Ben Jonson’s society.

“Is it possible?” Deliro asked.

“Oh, believe it, sir, a good face is the witch and good apparel is the spells that bring all the pleasures of the world into their circle,” Fastidious Brisk said.

The bawdy meaning of “circle” is vagina.

“Ah, the sweet grace of a courtier!” Fallace said.

Macilente said to himself, “Well, I wish my father had left me just a good face for my inheritance yet; even if I had shared the unfortunate wit that goes with it, I wouldn’t have cared. I might have passed for someplace in the world then.”

Macilente had inherited nothing except his intelligence, which he wishes he could exchange for a good face. With a good face, he would have a better chance of rising in the world.

Fastidious Brisk said to Deliro:

“Why, [I] assure you, signor, rich apparel has strange virtues:

“It makes him who has rich apparel without means, esteemed for an excellent wit.

“It makes him who enjoys rich apparel with means able to put the world in remembrance of his means.

“Rich apparel helps the deformities of nature and gives luster to nature’s beauties.

“Rich apparel makes continual holiday where it shines.

“Rich apparel sets the wits of ladies at work who otherwise would be idle.

“Rich apparel furnishes your two-shilling ordinary.

“Rich apparel takes possession of your stage at your new play.

“And rich apparel enriches your oars, as scorning to go with your scull.”

A two-shilling ordinary is an eating-place that sells two-shilling meals.

Fashionably dressed people in the audience may upstage the actors because people will look at their fashionable clothing.

A scull is a boat with only one oar. Water-taxis were more fashionable and had more oars. Fashionably dressed people would scorn to take a scull.

Macilente said, “Please, sir, add this: Rich apparel gives respect to your fools, and it makes many thieves, as many strumpets, and no fewer bankrupts.”

“Bah! Bah! You are unworthy to speak where he breathes!” Fallace said.

Fastidious Brisk asked Deliro about Macilente, “Who is he, signor?”

“A friend of mine, sir,” Deliro answered.

“By heaven, I wonder at you citizens. I wonder what kind of creatures you are,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Why, sir?” Deliro asked.

“[I wonder] that you can consort yourselves with such poor seam-rent fellows,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Seam-rents are garments with ripped seams. Macilente lacked money and good clothing.

“He says the truth,” Fallace said.

“Sir, I will assure you, however you esteem of him, he’s a man worthy of respect,” Deliro said, defending Macilente.

“Why?” Fastidious Brisk asked. “What virtue has he in him that he should be respected? Huh?”

“By the Virgin Mary, he is a scholar, sir,” Deliro said.

“Nothing else?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“And he is well travelled,” Deliro said.

“He should get himself good clothes,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“I would cherish those good qualities learned from the experience of travel in him, and I would recommend him to some nobleman of high position.”

“Sir, such a benefit should bind me to you forever for my friend’s sake,” Deliro said, “and I don’t doubt that his merit shall more than justify my praise.”

“Why, if he had fine clothes, I’d carry him to the court with me tomorrow,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Deliro said, “He shall not lack fine clothes, sir, if gold and any place in the whole city will furnish him with credit.”

Gold would definitely furnish him with credit. With gold, he could pay the bill for clothing.

“You say well, sir,” Fastidious Brisk said. “Indeed, Signor Deliro, I have come to have you play the alchemist with me and change the species of my land into that metal you talk of.”

Fastidious Brisk wanted to borrow money, using his land as security. In alchemical terms, he would turn earth into gold.

In Ben Jonson’s society, one meaning of “species” is coined money. Certainly, land can be converted into money.

“With all my heart, sir,” Deliro said. “What sum will serve you?”

“Indeed, some three- or fourscore pounds,” Fastidious Brisk answered.

“To tell the truth, sir, I have promised to meet a gentleman this morning in St. Paul’s Cathedral, but upon my return I’ll quickly dispatch your business.”

“I’ll accompany you there,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“As you please, sir, but I’m not going there directly,” Deliro said.

“It doesn’t matter. I have no other designment — appointment — in hand, and therefore I might as well go along with you,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Deliro said to himself, “I might as well have a quartan fever follow me now, for I shall never be rid of him.”

A quartan fever is hard to get rid of. It is a fever that keeps recurring every few days.

Deliro called to his servants, “Bring me a cloak there, someone!”

He said to himself, “Still, with the aid of Fastidious Brisk’s help at the court, I am sure to be visited by notables. I was a beast to give him any hope. Well, I wish that I were in, that I am out with him once, and —”

The notables whom he would meet would raise his social status. Possibly, they would become his customers.

Deliro had already lent Fastidious Brisk money and he would like to have that repaid: He had lent money out and he would like to have it repaid with an introduction at court (or repaid into his moneybag). Also, he would like to be in a certain part of his wife’s body that he was currently out of, partly because his wife was infatuated with Fastidious Brisk.

Deliro then said, “Come, Signor Macilente, I must confer with you as we go.”

He said to Fallace, “Nay, dear wife, I ask thee to forsake these moods; look not like winter thus. Here, take my keys, open my money-counting houses, spread all my wealth before thee, choose any object that delights thee. If thou will eat of the spirit of gold, and drink dissolved pearl in wine, it is for thee.”

Small amounts of gold in food was thought to promote health.

Cleopatra once dissolved a very valuable pearl in wine and drank it in order to win a bet with Marc Antony that she would host the most expensive banquet in history.

Such waste of a valuable pearl is the epitome of the vice known as *Luxuria*.

So is poop glitter: gold flakes that people eat in order to make their poop glitter.

“So, sir,” Fallace said.

“Nay, my sweet wife,” Deliro said.

“Good Lord!” Fallace said. “How you are perfumed in your terms and all! Please leave us.”

“Come, gentlemen,” Deliro said.

“Adieu, sweet lady,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Everyone exited except Fallace.

Alone, Fallace said to herself about Fastidious Brisk:

“Aye, aye, let thy words forever sound in my ears, and thy graces — elegance and charms — disperse contentment through all my senses. Oh, how happy is that lady above other ladies who enjoys so absolute a gentleman to be her servant!”

In this context, a servant is a man who admires a woman.

Fallace continued:

“A countess give him her hand to kiss! Ah, foolish countess, he’s a man worthy — if a woman may speak of a man’s worth — to kiss the lips of an empress.”

Fungoso and his tailor entered the scene.

“What! Has Master Fastidious gone, sister?” Fungoso asked.

“Aye, brother,” Fallace said.

Still thinking about Fastidious Brisk, Fallace said to herself, “He has a face like a cherub.”

“God’s me, what luck’s this!” Fungoso said. “I have fetched my tailor and all. Which way did he go, sister? Can you tell me?”

“Not I, in good faith,” Fallace said.

Still thinking about Fastidious Brisk, Fallace said to herself, "And he has a body like an angel."

"How long is it since he went?" Fungoso asked.

"Why, but just now," Fallace said. "Didn't you meet him?"

Still thinking about Fastidious Brisk, Fallace said to herself, "And a tongue able to ravish any woman in the earth."

He could ravish a woman with flattery, with kisses, and/or with cunnilingus.

"Oh, for God's sake!" Fungoso said.

He said to the tailor, "I'll pay you for your pains."

He said to Fallace, "But just now, did you say?"

He said to the tailor, "Come, good sir."

He said to himself, "By God's eyelid, I had forgotten it, too."

He said to Fallace, "Sister, if anybody asks for my uncle Sogliardo, they shall find him at the heralds' office yonder by St. Paul's."

Fungoso exited with his tailor.

Alone again, Fallace said to herself:

"Well, I will not altogether despair. I have heard of a citizen's wife who has been beloved by a courtier, and so why shouldn't I be beloved by one, too? Well, I will go into my private chamber, lock the door, and think over all his good parts one after another."

"Heigh ho" expresses sadness: a sigh.

Fallace's speech was filled with double entendres:

Her private chamber can be 1) her bedroom, and/or 2) her vagina.



A lock and key can be symbols of a vagina and a penis.

The door can be the entrance to her vagina.

Fastidious Brisk's good parts can be his private parts.

Chances are excellent that she was going to masturbate while thinking about Fastidious Brisk.

Fallace exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, "Well, I fear that this last scene will endure some grievous torture."

"What?" Cordatus said. "You fear it will be racked by some hard construction?"

Ben Jonson wanted to avoid being accused of slander, and so Cordatus and Mitis talked here about Jonson's words being tortured and misconstrued as attacking a particular person instead of attacking a vice shared by many people.

"Don't you fear that, too?" Mitis asked.

Cordatus said:

"No, in good faith.

"Unless my eyes could enable me to see beyond what I can physically see, I see no reason why this should be more liable to the rack than the rest.

"You'll say perhaps the city will not take it well that the merchant Deliro is made here to dote so entirely upon his wife, Fallace, and also that she is so fastidiously affected as she is."

"You have uttered my thought, sir, indeed," Mitis said.

Cordatus said:

“Why, by that analogy, the court might as well take offence at him we call the courtier, and with much more reason, by how much the real place — the royal court — transcends and is superior in dignity and virtue.

“But can you imagine that any noble or true spirit in the royal court — whose sinewy and tough-minded and altogether unaffected graces very worthily express that he, the true spirit, is a courtier — will make any complaint at the opening of such an empty trunk as this Brisk is? Or think that his own worth is impeached by beholding his motley inside?”

No real, worthy courtier will take offense at the portrayal of Fastidious Brisk, who cannot possibly be thought to represent any real, worthy courtier. Only a courtier who actually is like Fastidious Brisk would take offense.

“No, sir, I do not,” Mitis said.

Cordatus said:

“No more, I assure you, will any grave wise citizen or modest matron object to this folly in Deliro and his wife, but rather apply it as the foil to their own virtues.”

A foil is a thin piece of metal placed under a gemstone to better display its glitter. Here, the follies of Ben Jonson’s characters are the foils that show off his audience’s virtues better by the contrast of folly and virtue.

Cordatus continued:

“For to take personal affront at a satiric character would be to affirm that a man writing of Nero should mean all emperors, or speaking of Machiavelli, comprehend all statesmen, or in our character Sordido, all farmers, and so of the rest; than which, nothing can be uttered that is more malicious and absurd.

“Indeed, there is a kind of these narrow-eyed decipherers, I confess, who will extort strange and abstruse meanings out of any subject, although it is ever so obvious and innocently delivered.

“But to such — wherever they sit concealed — let them know that the author defies them and the writing-tablets that they use to write down what they perceive as slanders, and the author hopes no sound or trustworthy judgment will infect itself with their contagious comments, who indeed come here only to pervert and poison the sense of what they hear, and for nothing else.”

Seeing another actor walking onto the stage, Mitis asked, “Wait! What new mute is this who walks so suspiciously?”

## ACT 3 (*Every Man Out of His Humor*)

### — 3.1 —

Cavalier Shift, holding two *si quises* — notices to be posted in St. Paul’s Cathedral — in his hand walked onto the stage. Shift was a swaggerer and a pimp. *Si quis* is Latin for “if anyone.” The notices could request employment and information, or they could be about lost items. Cavalier Shift’s notices were about employment.

Cordatus said, “Oh, by the Virgin Mary, this is one for whose better illustration we must desire you to imagine that the stage is the middle aisle in St. Paul’s Cathedral, and that, the west end of it.”

The middle aisle was a place for people to meet and gossip; the west end is where the notices were posted.

“So, sir, and what follows?” Mitis asked.

“Indeed, a whole volume of humor, and it is worthy the unclasping.”

Many books of the time had clasps to keep them shut when not in use.

“As how?” Mitis asked. “What name do you give him first?”

“He has shift of names, sir,” Cordatus answered. “Some call him Apple-John, some Signor Whiff. By the Virgin Mary, his main standing — most used — name is Cavalier Shift; the rest are but as clean shirts to his natures.”

An apple-john may be an apple-squire, aka pimp. An apple-john is an apple that will not rot quickly, and an apple-squire is a pimp with a steady supply of prostitutes. Since a “john” is a man, and “apple” can refer to the fruit of the tree of knowledge, aka the forbidden fruit, an apple-john may also be a prostitute’s client.

Signor Whiff refers to Shift's habit of smoking tobacco.

Cavalier Shift shifted — changed — his alias frequently — as frequently as some men change their shirts. He did this in order to suit whatever character he was adopting.

“And what is he doing in St. Paul's now?” Mitis asked.

“Truly, as you see, for the promotion of a *si quis* or two, wherein he has so varied himself and presented himself in various roles that if any one of them take, he may hull up and down in the humorous world a little longer.”

In his notices, he varied his character, and he probably used various names. If one advertisement got a taker, he would keep using that character and name. He would be like a ship and follow that current and wind for a while. As you might guess, the word “shift” meant “stratagem.”

“It seems, then, he bears a very changing sail?” Mitis said.

In other words, Cavalier Shift can change direction very often. If one stratagem doesn't work, he moves in another direction and tries another.

“Oh, as the wind, sir,” Cordatus said. “Here comes more actors.”

Orange, a coxcomb, entered the scene. Coxcombs are fools.

“This is splendid,” Cavalier Shift said. “I have set up my bills without being noticed.”

Being noticed might result in his being arrested.

“What? Signor Whiff?” Orange said. “What fortune has brought you into these west parts?”

Cavalier Shift (aka Signor Whiff) answered, “Indeed, signor, nothing but phlegm. I have been taking an ounce of tobacco

nearby here with a gentleman, and I have come to spit privately in St. Paul's. God save you, sir."

Spitting phlegm in a cathedral? Yuck.

"Privately" means alone and not in front of others.

"Adieu, good Signor Whiff," Orange said.

He walked aside.

Clove, Orange's friend, entered the scene. Like Orange, Clove was a coxcomb, aka a fool.

"Master Apple-John!" Clove said. "You are well met. When shall we sup together, and laugh and be fat with those good wenches? Huh?"

"Indeed, sir, I must now leave you upon a few humors and occasions. But when you please, sir," Cavalier Shift (aka Master Apple-John) said.

He exited.

"Farewell, sweet Apple-John," Clove said. "I wonder that there is no greater number of gallants here?"

"Who are these two, signor?" Mitis asked Cordatus about Orange and Clove.

"By the Virgin Mary, they are a couple, sir, who are mere strangers to the whole scope of our play, by chance come only to walk a turn or two in this scene set in St. Paul's."

Orange and Clove would have very small parts in the play.

Orange and Clove walked together.

"May God save you, good Master Clove," Orange said.

"Sweet Master Orange," Clove replied.

"What?" Mitis said. "Clove and Orange?"

Sometimes, cloves were stuck in oranges.

Cordatus said:

“Aye, and they are well met, for it is as dry an orange as ever grew.”

Dry fruit is withered. This man Orange lacked juice and taste. He lacked wit and intelligence.

Cordatus continued:

“Their conversation is nothing but salutation, and ‘Oh, God, sir!’ and ‘It pleases you to say so, sir.’”

These were fashionable expressions.

Cordatus continued:

“Orange is one who can laugh at a jest for fellowship’s sake with a most plausible and extemporal grace, and some hour afterward will in private ask you what the jest was.”

Orange pretends to understand a joke but asks someone later, in private, to explain it.

Cordatus continued:

“The other, Monsieur Clove, is a more spiced — seasoned with ‘wit’ — youth. He will sit a whole afternoon sometimes in a bookseller’s shop reading the Greek, Italian, and Spanish, when he understands not a word of any of those languages. If he had the tongues to his suits, he would be an excellent linguist.”

If Clove actually knew the languages he pretended to know, and if he knew as many languages as he had suits of clothing, he would be an excellent linguist.

Continuing their private conversation, Clove asked, “Do you hear this reported for certainty?”

Orange replied, "Oh, good sir!"

Puntarvolo and Carlo Buffone entered the scene, accompanied by two serving-men following them. One serving-man was leading Puntarvolo's dog and one was holding a cat in a bag.

Puntarvolo said to the serving-men, "Sirrah, take my cloak, and you, sir knave, follow me closer. If thou lose my dog, thou shall die a dog's death; I will hang thee."

Unwanted dogs were often killed either by hanging or by drowning.

Carlo Buffone said, "Tut, don't worry about the serving-man's vigilance, he's a good lean rascal, he loves a dog well, I assure you. I see by his looks, aye, by the Mass, he's somewhat like him."

The dog and the serving-man resembled each other, or perhaps both were melancholy since dogs were proverbially melancholy.

He then whispered to the serving-man, "By God's blood, poison him, make away with him with a crooked pin or something, man; thou may have more security of thy life."

If the dog were to eat a crooked pin placed in its food, that could kill the dog.

If the dog were to die before Puntarvolo's journey, he would almost certainly stay at home and not undertake the dangerous journey and take the servant with him.

Carlo Buffone then said to Puntarvolo, "And so, sir, what? You have not gotten financial backers for your whole venture yet, have you?"



“No, I still lack backers for some fifteen or sixteen hundred pounds,” Puntarvolo answered. “But my lady, my wife, is out of her humor; she does not now intend to go.”

Earlier, Puntarvolo, his wife, and his dog were to travel to Constantinople. Now his wife had decided to stay home.

“No?” Carlo Buffone said. “What then will happen?”

“By the Virgin Mary, I am now forced to change the terms of the wager, and make them upon the return of myself, my dog, and my cat,” Puntarvolo said.

“Your cat?” Carlo Buffone said. “Where is she?”

“My squire has her there in the bag,” Puntarvolo said.

He then said to the serving-man, “Sir, look after her.”

Puntarvolo wanted his dog and cat well taken care of so he could undertake and return successfully from his journey.

He then asked, “How do thou like my substituting of my cat for my wife, Carlo?”

In the slang of the time, “cat” could mean “prostitute.”

“Oh, for the better, sir,” Carlo Buffone said. “Your cat has nine lives, and your wife has but one.”

“Besides, she will never be seasick, which will save me so much money in medicines and herbal remedies,” Puntarvolo said.

Cats were supposed to be able to influence storms and ward them off.

Perhaps Puntarvolo’s wife had decided not to travel because of the danger of seasickness.

Puntarvolo then asked, “When did you see Signor Sogliardo?”

“I came away from him just now,” Carlo Buffone answered. “He is at the heralds’ office yonder. He requested me to go ahead of him and hire a serving-man or two for him in St. Paul’s, in preparation for when his cullison was ready.”

Servants wore liveries: distinctive clothing bearing the cullison, aka badge, that indicated whose servants they were. A serving-man or two wearing his cullison would give Sogliardo social prominence.

“What?” Puntarvolo said. “Has he purchased arms, then?”

Sogliardo had bought a coat of arms.

“Aye, and splendid ones too, of as many colors as ever you saw any fool’s coat in your life,” Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo’s coat of arms was parti-colored — of many colors — like the motley clothing that a Fool, aka jester, wore.

Most coats of arms were restrained in their use of color.

“I’ll go look among yonder bills to see if I can fit him with legs to his arms,” Carlo Buffone said.

The legs were those of the serving-men.

He was going to look at the bills to see if anyone was requesting employment as a servant.

“With legs to his arms!” Puntarvolo said. “Good.”

It was a good witticism.

He added, “I will go with you, sir.”

They went to look at the bills.

Fastidious Brisk, Deliro, and Macilente entered the scene.

Fastidious Brisk said:

“Come, let’s walk in the *Mediterraneum*.”

The Mediterranean was the middle aisle of St. Paul's.

The Mediterranean is the sea in the middle of land.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“I assure you, sir, I am not the least respected among ladies, but let that pass.”

In other words: Ladies love Fastidious Brisk. So says Fastidious Brisk.

But his words were ambiguous: They could mean that ladies respect one or more other men than they respect Fastidious Brisk.

Or they could mean that ladies do not at all respect Fastidious Brisk.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“Do you know how to go into the presence room, sir?”

The royal presence room was the royal reception room at court.

“Why, on my feet, sir,” Macilente said.

Fastidious Brisk answered:

“No, on your head, sir, for it is that which must bear you out — aid you and carry the day for you, I assure you.”

Of course, another meaning of “bear you out” is “carry you out of the royal presence room.”

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“I mean thus, sir: You must first have a special care so to wear your hat, [so] that it will not make a mess of this your predominant or foretop, because when you come at the presence door, you may, with once or twice stroking up your

forehead thus, enter with your predominant perfect, that is, standing up stiff.”

The predominant or foretop was a hair style in which the forelock was grown long and brushed back.

Fastidious Brisk’s words contained sexual innuendo: “stroking up” and “standing up stiff.”

“Hair standing up as if one were frightened?” Macilente asked.

“Aye, sir,” Fastidious Brisk answered.

“Which indeed, a true fear of your mistress should do, rather than gum water, or whites of eggs, isn’t that so, sir?” Macilente said.

Men who love women sometimes tremble in the presence of those women.

Gum water and whites of eggs were used in hair-dressing. They made hair stand up straight.

“An ingenious observation,” Fastidious Brisk said. “Give me permission to ask your name, sir.”

“His name is Macilente, sir,” Deliro said.

Fastidious Brisk said:

“Good Signor Macilente, if this gentleman, Signor Deliro, furnish you as he says he will with clothes, I will bring you tomorrow by this time into the presence of the most divine and acute — sharp-witted — lady of the court. You shall see sweet silent rhetoric and dumb — mute — eloquence speaking in her eye; but when she herself speaks, it is such an anatomy of wit, so sinewized and arterized, that it is the goodliest model of pleasure that ever was to behold.

“Oh, she strikes the world into admiration of her — oh, oh, oh! — I cannot express them, believe me.”

An anatomy of wit is a model of understanding.

“So sinewized and arterized” means “so thoroughly examined, as if every sinew and artery were examined.”

Fastidious Brisk’s “oh, oh, oh!” may be orgasmic.

Fastidious Brisk’s “cannot express them” means he cannot describe all of her good points.

“Oh, your only admiration is your silence, sir,” Macilente said.

Proverbially, the greatest admiration is silence: One is so awed that one cannot speak.

Reading a notice, Puntarvolo said:

“Before God, Carlo, this is good. Let’s read them again.

He read a notice out loud:

*“If there be any lady or gentlewoman of good carriage who is desirous to entertain, to her private uses, a young, straight, and upright gentleman of the age of five- or six- and-twenty, at the most, who can serve in the nature of a gentleman usher and has little legs of purpose, and a black satin suit of his own to go before her in (which suit, for the more sweetening, now lies in lavender), and can hide his face with her fan to give her privacy, if need require, or sit in the cold at the stair foot for her as well as another gentleman, let her write her name and place at the bottom of this notice, and diligent attention shall be given.”*

The phrase “lady or gentlewoman of good carriage” is ambiguous. It can mean 1) lady or gentlewoman of good character or 2) prostitute or other woman who carries — or bears — the weight of the man in the missionary position.

Other words and phrases can be interpreted as referring to or necessitating a man with an erection: “desirous to entertain,” “private uses,” “straight,” “upright.”

A “gentleman usher” can provide “private uses” — that is, sexual services.

“Little legs” can be a series of erections, or the legs of a servant.

“Little legs of purpose” can be used in running errands, making bows, being a go-between between a lady and her lover, or providing sexual services.

The black satin suit that lies in lavender may be stored with lavender to make it smell good, but “lies in lavender” was then-current slang for “has been pawned.”

The notice has two meanings: 1) I am a gentleman looking for a job as an usher to a gentlewoman, and 2) I am a man looking for a job as a pimp to a prostitute or as a gigolo to a gentlewoman.

“This is exceedingly excellent, huh?” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone pointed to another notice and said, “No, this, this, here’s a fine servant.”

Puntarvolo read out loud:

*“If this city or the suburbs of the same do afford any young gentleman of the first, second, or third generation, more or less, whose friends [relatives or guardians] are but recently deceased and whose lands are but newly come to his hands, who (to be as exactly qualified as the best of our ordinary gallants are) desires to learn to entertain the most gentlemanlike use of tobacco — as, first, to give it the most exquisite perfume, then to know all the delicate sweet forms for the use of it (as also the splendid supplement and practice of the Cuban ebullition, Euripus, and whiff) which he shall*

*receive or take in — that is, inhale — here at London and evaporate — that is, exhale — at Uxbridge [sixteen miles from London], or farther, if it please him — if there be any such generous spirit who is truly enamored of these good arts, may it please him, but (by a note of his hand) to specify the place or ordinary where he is accustomed to eat and lodge, and most sweet attendance with tobacco and pipes of the best sort shall be ministered. Stet quaeso candide lector.”*

The Latin sentence meant: “Please let this stand, honest reader.”

A gentleman of the first, second, or third generation is a new gentleman: an upstart.

The Cuban ebullition was a way of smoking that involved rapidly inhaling and exhaling a large amount of pipe-smoke.

Euripus was a way of smoking that involved alternating quick inhalations and exhalations and slow inhalations and exhalations.

Whiff was a way of smoking that involved inhaling smoke through the mouth and exhaling it through the nose.

Shift was advertising his availability to teach a new gentleman how to smoke tobacco.

“Why, this is without parallel, this is!” Puntarvolo said.

“Well, I’ll mark this fellow for Sogliardo’s use presently,” Carlo Buffone said.

He wanted the man in the notice — Cavalier Shift — to be employed by Sogliardo.

Puntarvolo said, “Or rather, Sogliardo for his use.”

Puntarvolo was able to guess that Sogliardo would be taken advantage of by the man in the notice.

The word “use” can be a sexual reference.

“Indeed, either of them will serve,” Carlo Buffone said. “They are both good properties. I’ll designate the other a place, too, where we can meet so that we may see him.”

“Properties” meant “tools.”

Carlo Buffone wanted Sogliardo to hire both men who had posted the notices. “Both men” were Cavalier Shift, but he had not put his name on the notices.

“No better place than the Mitre Tavern, so that we may be spectators with you, Carlo,” Puntarvolo said.

Sogliardo entered the scene.

Puntarvolo added:

“Wait, look who enters here.

“Signor Sogliardo! God save you.”

Sogliardo said:

“God save you, good Sir Puntarvolo. Your dog’s in health, sir, I see.

“How are things now, Carlo?”

“We have taken some small pains to choose for you followers here,” Carlo Buffone answered.

The followers were servants.

“Come hither, signor,” Puntarvolo said to Sogliardo.

They showed Sogliardo the notices.

Clove and Orange had been strolling around, not hearing the others’ conversation, except perhaps in snatches.



Clove said quietly, “Monsieur Orange, yonder gallants are observing us. Please, let’s talk fustian a little and gull them and make them believe we are great scholars.”

Fustian is pompous, pretentious language. Jargon can be fustian.

“Oh, Lord, sir!” Orange said.

“Nay, please let’s, by Jesus,” Clove said. “You have an excellent habit in discourse.”

“It pleases you to say so, sir,” Orange said.

Clove said:

“By this church, you have it, indeed! Nay, come, begin.”

Clove began to use fustian:

“Aristotle in his *Daemonologia* approves Scaliger for the best navigator in his time, and in his *Hypercritiques* he reports him to be *Heautontimorumenos*. You understand the Greek, sir?”

Aristotle never wrote on demonology, although King James VI of Scotland (later King James I of England) did, and Julius Caesar Scaliger never contributed to travel literature.

A “navigator” is a traveler.

*Hypercritiques* means “hyper-critical.”

*Heautontimorumenos* means “self-tormentor.”

“Oh, God, sir!” Orange said.

Macilente said to himself, “For society’s sake he does ‘understand’ the Greek, as well as Italian and Spanish. Oh, here are a couple of fine tame parrots.”

Did Clove understand the Greek? On occasion, he pretended to.

Ladies kept tame parrots as pets and spent much money on them.

Note to Readers: If you don't understand the fustian above and the fustian that follows, don't worry. No one else understands it, either. In fact, it is nonsense and there is nothing to understand.

Clove said loudly to Orange:

“Now, sir, whereas the ingenuity of the time and the soul's *synderesis* [the innate understanding of good and evil] are but *embryons* [embryos] in nature, added to the paunch of *esquiline* [a latrine] and the *intervallum* [intervening space or time] of the zodiac, besides, the ecliptic line being optic [able to be seen by the naked eye] and not mental, but by the contemplative and theoretic part thereof, does demonstrate to us the vegetable circumference and the ventosity [flatulence, and bombast] of the tropics, and whereas our intellectual or mincing capriole [leap in a dance], according to the *Metaphysics*, as you may read in Plato's *Histriomastix*.

“Do you understand me, sir?”

Plato did not write *Histriomastix*, which is an Elizabethan play.

“Oh, Lord, sir!” Orange said.

Clove continued using fustian loudly:

“Then coming to the ingenious animal, as reason long since is fled to animals, you know, or indeed for the more modelizing [shaping or framing] or enamelling [embellishing] or rather diamondizing [making brilliant] of your subject, you shall perceive the hypothesis or *galaxia* [the Milky Way], whereof the meteors long since had their

initial inceptions and notions, to be merely Pythagorical, mathematical, and aristocratical; for you see, sir, there is always a kind of concinnity [stylistic elegance] and *species* [appearance of beauty] —”

He then said quietly to Orange, “— let us return to our former discourse, for they are not paying us any attention.”

They walked aside.

Fastidious Brisk said, “By the Mass, yonder’s the knight Puntarvolo.”

“And my cousin Sogliardo, I think,” Deliro said.

Sogliardo was the brother of Deliro’s father-in-law.

Macilente said to himself, “Aye, and his familiar that haunts him, the devil with a shining face.”

A familiar is a supernatural assistant to a witch or a devil.

The devil with the shining face is literally Lucifer, the shining one, and figuratively Carlo Buffone.

“Let them alone,” Deliro said. “Don’t notice them.”

Sogliardo, Puntarvolo, and Carlo Buffone began to walk.

The middle aisle of St. Paul’s Cathedral was a place for walking and for meeting people.

Sogliardo said, “Nay, I will have him, I am resolute for that. By this parchment, gentlemen, I have been so toiled among the harrots [heralds] yonder at the College of Heraldry, you will not believe. They do speak in the strangest language, and they give a man the hardest terms for his money that ever you knew.”

The parchment was a sketch of his new coat of arms.

Heralds have their own vocabulary, which the uninitiated find hard to understand.

The “hardest terms” are those terms that are very hard to understand or they are exorbitant financial terms. In this case, they are both.

“But have you arms?” Carlo Buffone asked. “Have you arms?”

He was referring to a coat of arms.

“Indeed, I thank God I can sign myself as a gentleman now,” Sogliardo said.

He showed them the parchment and said, “Here’s my patent. It cost me thirty pounds, by this breath.”

A patent is a document that authorizes the creation of a new coat of arms.

The patent included a sketch of his new coat of arms.

Puntarvolo said, “A very fair coat, well charged — full of heraldic devices — and full of armory.”

“Well charged” can also mean overly expensive, and it can mean overly full of heraldic devices.

“It has as much variety of colors in it as you have seen a coat have,” Sogliardo said. “How do you like the crest, sir?”

Two or three colors were best; too many colors were disgraceful.

The crest was the heraldic figure at the top of the shield bearing a coat of arms. Often the heraldic figure was a lion.

“I don’t well understand it,” Puntarvolo said. “What is it?”

“By the Virgin Mary, sir, it is a boar without a head, rampant.”

A boar without a head is a stupid bore and/or a stupid boor.

A bore is a boring person, and a boor is an ill-mannered person or a peasant or both.

Of course, one person can be both a bore and a boor.

A boar rampant is a boar standing on two legs with its front legs raised; a bore/boor rampant is a bore/boor standing on two legs with his front arms raised.

The raised front legs suggest climbing. Sogliardo was a social climber.

Boars standing with front legs raised is an unnatural position.

Sogliardo's being a gentleman is also unnatural. He was not born a gentleman, and he did not have gentlemanly qualities.

"A boar without a head," Puntarvolo said. "That's very rare."

Carlo Buffone whispered to Puntarvolo, "Aye, and rampant, too. Indeed, I commend the herald's wit, he has deciphered — understood and depicted — him well: a swine without a head, without brain, wit, anything indeed, ramping to gentility."

A ramping woman is an immodest woman.

A farmer/peasant who ramps after gentility is a social climber.

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, "You can blazon the rest, signor, can't you?"

"Blazon" means 1) describe using heraldic terms, and 2) boast.

"Oh, aye, I have it in writing here for that purpose. It cost me two shillings for the drawing."

The drawing was black and white; the colors were indicated with abbreviations.

“Let’s hear,” Carlo Buffone said. “Let’s hear.”

Puntarvolo said quietly to Carlo Buffone, “It is the most vile, foolish, absurd, palpable, and ridiculous escutcheon — shield — that this eye ever survived — surveyed.”

They greeted Fastidious Brisk, Deliro, and Macilente as they met in the walk.

Puntarvolo said, “God save you, good Monsieur Fastidious.”

“Silence, good knight,” Carlo Buffone said.

He then said to Sogliardo, “Go on, go on.”

Sogliardo read out loud:

*“Gyrony of eight pieces, azure and gules, between three plates a chevron engrailed checky, or, vert, and ermins, on a chief argent between two ann’lets sables, a boar’s head proper.”*

The gyrony is the lower two-thirds of the shield.

The plates are small O’s, aka silver roundels.

The chevron is an inverted V.

“Checky” means “checked.”

Ann’lets sables are black rings.

Some more colors will be mentioned later.

These are the colors of Sogliardo’s coat of arms:

Argent: silver

Azure: blue

Ermine: white with black spots

Gules: red

Or: gold

Proper: a proper color for a boar

Sable: black

“What’s that?” Carlo Buffone said. “On a chief *argent*?”

The chief argent is the upper third of the shield, colored argent, aka silver.

Sogliardo read out loud:

*“On a chief argent, a boar’s head proper between two ann’lets sables.”*

“By God’s blood, it’s a hog’s cheek and puddings in a pewter field, this,” Carlo Buffone said.

Puddings are entrails. Anlets are rings, and intestines are long circular tubes. Plates were made of pewter.

“How do you like them, signor?” Sogliardo asked Puntarvolo.

“Let the word be: *Not without mustard*,” Puntarvolo advised. “Your crest is very rare, sir.”

The crest was the heraldic figure at the top of a shield bearing a coat of arms.

The word is a motto.

Thomas Nashe wrote a play about Pierce Penniless, who went to sea and suffered hardships, including seasickness and eating salt fish without mustard. He made a vow never again to eat salt fish if God helped him get home safely, but once he got home safely, he qualified his vow: He would never again eat salt fish without mustard.

Some mottos in history include:

*Ad summa virtus*: Courage to the last

*Omnia vincit amor*: Love conquers all

*Semper fidelis*: Always faithful

*Spes mea superne*: My hope is from above

Carlo Buffone said to himself, “A frying pan to the crest would have no fellow.”

Yes, frying pans have never yet been seen in coats of arms.

Fastidious Brisk, Deliro, and Macilente approached again.

The strollers changed strolling companions:

Fastidious Brisk paired with Puntarvolo; Carlo Buffone paired with Sogliardo; Deliro paired with Macilente. Clove and Orange were the fourth couple.

A fifth couple was the two servants with the dog and the cat.

Fastidious Brisk said to Carlo Buffone, “Entreat your poor friend — Sogliardo — to walk off a little distance, signor, I will salute the knight.”

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, “Come, lap’t up, lap’t up.”

This can mean, “Come closer.” A dog laps up water to bring it closer to its throat so it can swallow it.

Sogliardo had been lapping up insults because he was too stupid to know that they were insults.

Sogliardo walked over to Carlo Buffone, and Fastidious Brisk walked over to Puntarvolo.

Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo, “You are right well encountered, sir. How does your fair dog?”



“My dog is in a reasonable state, sir,” Puntarvolo said.  
“What citizen is that you were coupled with? A merchant of any worth?”

“He is Signor Deliro, sir,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Is it he?” Puntarvolo said.

As Puntarvolo and Deliro walked past each other, Puntarvolo said, “God save you, sir.”

Deliro returned the greeting: “Good Sir Puntarvolo.”

Macilente said to himself, “Oh, what an abundance of fools would this place supply to one endowed with patience to observe it!”

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo:

“Nay, look, sir, now you are a gentleman, you must carry a more exalted presence, change your mood and habit to a more austere form, be exceedingly proud, stand upon your gentility and be a snob, and scorn every man.

“Speak nothing humbly, never discourse with anyone lower than the status of a nobleman; even if you never saw him except when he rode to the Star Chamber, it doesn’t matter.”

The Star Chamber was an English Court that tried cases of great importance.

Carlo Buffone was not a nobleman, and so he was advising Sogliardo not to talk to him. That’s good advice.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Love no man, trust no man, speak ill of no man to his face, and speak well of no man behind his back.

“Salute them fairly to their front, and wish them hanged when they turn their backs.

“Spread yourself upon his bosom and publicly hug him whose heart you would eat in private.

“These are principles; think on them.

“I’ll come to you again soon.”

Carlo Buffone exited.

Sogliardo mingled with Puntarvolo and Fastidious Brisk.

Puntarvolo said to a serving-man, “Sirrah, keep close, yet not so close; thy breath will thaw — collapse — my ruff.”

The lower classes were noted for having bad breath.

Fungoso arrived, accompanied by his tailor.

Sogliardo said to Fungoso, “Oh, good cousin, I am a little busy. How does my niece? I am to walk with a knight here.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, “cousin” meant “relative”; Fungoso was Sogliardo’s nephew.

Fungoso pointed to Fastidious Brisk and said to his tailor, “Oh, he is here. Look, sir, that’s the gentleman.”

“Who, he in the blush-colored satin?” the tailor replied.

Fastidious Brisk was wearing a blush-colored suit of clothing.

“Blush-colored” meant “maiden’s blush”: The color was damask-rose.

“Aye, he, sir, although his suit blushes, he does not — he wears the clothing with pride,” Fungoso said. “Look, that’s the suit, sir. I would have for me such a suit exactly the same as his: such fabric, such a wing, such a sleeve, such a skirt, belly, and all.”

A wing is a shoulder flap. It hides the seam between the torso of the coat and a detachable sleeve.

The skirt is the lower part of a man's coat.

"Therefore, please, observe it," Fungoso said. "Have you a writing tablet?"

The tailor used his writing tablet to write notes.

Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo:

"Why, do you see, sir? They say I am fantastical."

He thought Fungoso and the man with him were criticizing his suit of clothing.

The word "fantastical" can mean 1) excessively foppish in attire, and/or 2) excessively grotesque in attire.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

"Why, true, I know it, and I pursue my humor still in contempt of this censorious age. By God's light, if a man should do nothing but what a bunch of stale judgments about this town will approve in him, he would be a sweet ass. I'd beg him, indeed. I never knew any persons more likely to find fault with a fashion than they who didn't know how to put themselves into it. For my own part, as long as I please my own appetite for fashion, I don't care what the fusty, musty, old-fashioned world speaks of me. Puh!"

Fastidious Brisk ignored conventional public opinion when it came to fashion: He wore what he wanted to wear.

If someone were financially well-to-do but mentally impaired, another person could go to court and beg — a legal term — him for a fool. That way, they would get custody of the person and the use of the person's financial assets.

Of course, Fastidious Brisk was wrong in this case. He knew that Fungoso was closely looking at his clothing, but Fungoso wanted to copy it, not criticize it.

Fungoso said to the tailor, “Do you see how it hangs from the knee there?”

“I assure you that I do, sir,” the tailor replied.

“For God’s sake, do — note everything,” Fungoso said. “Do you see the collar, sir?”

“Fear nothing,” the tailor said. “The suit of clothing I shall make for you shall not differ in a stitch from his suit of clothing, sir.”

“Pray God it doesn’t,” Fungoso said. “You’ll make these linings serve, and help me to a merchant for the outside, won’t you?”

The linings of the suit of clothing he was wearing now would serve as the linings of the new suit of clothing.

He would borrow money from a merchant, aka money-lender, so he could buy fabric for the outside of the suit of clothing.

“I’ll do my best, sir,” the tailor said. “You’ll soon take off the suit of clothing you are wearing now?”

“Aye,” Fungoso said. “Go with me to my chamber, and you shall have it. But make haste of it, for the love of Christ, for I’ll sit in my old suit or else lie in bed and read the *Arcadia* until you have done.”

Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* was a pastoral romance.

Fungoso and the tailor exited.

Carlo Buffone entered the scene and said to Fastidious Brisk, Puntarvolo, and Sogliardo, “Oh, if ever you were struck with

a jest, gallants, now one is coming, now! I can usher you to the strangest piece of military profession that ever was discovered in *Insula Paulina*.”

*Insula Paulina* is a pun: 1) Paul’s isle, and 2) St. Paul’s aisle.

“Where?” Fastidious Brisk asked. “Where?”

“What kind of creature is he?” Puntarvolo asked.

“A pimp, a pimp, whom I have observed yonder, the rarest *superficies* — face or surface — of a humor. He comes every morning to empty his lungs — cough up phlegm and spit — in St. Paul’s here, and offers up some five or six hecatombs of faces and sighs, and then goes away again.”

A hecatomb is literally a hundred animal sacrifices.

Cavalier Shift habitually sighed many times while making the appropriate face before he left St. Paul’s.

Carlo Buffone said, “Here he comes — nay, walk, walk, don’t be seen to look at him, and we shall have excellent entertainment.”

Shadow-fencing with his rapier, Cavalier Shift walked by them.

“By God’s eyelid, he heaved such a sigh just now that I thought he would have blown up the church,” Puntarvolo said.

“Oh, you shall have him give a number of those false fires — deep sighs — before he departs,” Carlo Buffone said.

“See! Now he is conversing with his rapier,” Fastidious Brisk said. “Look! Look!”

“Did you ever in your days observe better passion — strong emotion — about a hilt and sword?” Carlo Buffone said.

“Unless it were in the person of a cutler’s boy, or that the fellow were nothing but vapor, I should think it impossible,” Puntarvolo, a knight, said.

A cutler’s boy is an apprentice to a man who makes, repairs, and sells knives.

Cavalier Shift was acting so strangely with his rapier that he must be in the business of repairing swords or else he must be mentally ill.

“See, again, he claps his sword on the head, like one who should say, ‘Well, come on!’” Carlo Buffone said.

Cavalier Shift had slapped his rapier on the hilt.

“Oh, violence!” Fastidious Brisk said. “I wonder the blade can contain itself, being so provoked.”

Possibly, Cavalier Shift now hit himself in the head while doing a maneuver with his rapier.

Carlo Buffone recited:

*“With that, the moody squire thumped his breast,*

*“And reared his eyes to heaven for revenge.”*

“Indeed, if you are gentlemen, let’s make them friends, and mend the quarrel between his rapier and him,” Sogliardo said.

“Nay, if you intend that, you must dispose of the problem,” Carlo Buffone said, “for this rapier, it seems, is in the nature of a hanger-on, and the good gentleman would happily be rid of him.”

A hanger-on is 1) something (such as a rapier) that hangs from a loop on a belt, or 2) a human parasite.

“By my faith, if it is to be suspected that he would like to sell his rapier, I’ll ask him,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Macilente said to Deliro:

“Oh, here’s rich stuff for people to laugh at.

“For Christ’s sake, let us go. A man would wish himself a senseless pillar rather than view these monstrous prodigies, aka freaks of nature:

*“Nil habet in foelix paupertas durius in se,*

*“Quam quod ridiculos homines facit.”*

The Latin quotation, which is from the satirist Juvenal (*Satires* 3.152-153), means:

“Harsh in itself, poverty has no effect more unfortunate than to expose paupers to ridicule.”

Macilente and Deliro exited.

Fastidious Brisk approached Cavalier Shift, while the others watched from a distance.

“Signor,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“At your service,” Cavalier Shift responded.

“Will you sell your rapier?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

Observing Shift’s reaction, Carlo Buffone said, “By God’s blood, he has turned wild upon the question! He looks as if he had seen a sergeant.”

Sergeants had the power to arrest people.

“Sell my rapier?” Cavalier Shift said. “Now God bless me!”

Being without a sword was a grave indignity for a military man.

“Amen,” Puntarvolo said.

They were in St. Paul’s Cathedral, after all.

“You asked me if I would sell my rapier, sir?” Cavalier Shift asked.

“I did indeed,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Now Lord have mercy upon me!” Cavalier Shift said.

“Amen, I say still,” Puntarvolo said.

“By God’s blood, sir, what should you behold in my face, sir, that should move you, as they say, sir, to ask me, sir, if I would sell my rapier?” Cavalier Shift asked.

“Nay, let me ask that you, sir, not be moved — angered,” Fastidious Brisk said. “I protest I would rather have been silent than in any way offensive, had I known your nature.”

Cavalier Shift said loudly:

“Sell my rapier? By God’s eyelid! Nay, sir, for my own part as I am a man who has served in military actions, and such, so I am not apt to injure any gentleman in the degree of behaving without honor.”

This is ambiguous: Who would be behaving without honor? Cavalier Shift? Any gentleman? Would Cavalier Shift injure any gentleman if that would mean that Cavalier Shift would be behaving without honor? Or would Cavalier Shift not injure any gentleman who was behaving without honor?

Cavalier Shift continued:

“But sell my rapier?”

“I will tell you, sir, I have served with this ‘foolish’ rapier where some of us dare not appear in haste. I name no man, but let that pass.



“Sell my rapier? Death to my lungs!”

His habit of using tobacco may have led him to make this curse.

Cavalier Shift continued saying loudly:

“This rapier, sir, has travelled by my side, sir, the best part of France and the Low Country. I have seen Flushing, Brill, and the Hague with this rapier, sir, in My Lord of Leicester’s time, and by God’s will, he who should try to dis-rapier me now, I would —”

He claimed to have participated in many military campaigns, including one or more in the Low Country — the Netherlands.

In 1586, My Lord of Leicester — Robert Dudley — led a military expedition that ended in disaster, being defeated by the Spanish. Sir Philip Sidney was one of those who died.

The current year was 1599, and according to one of Cavalier Shift’s two *si quises*, he was twenty-six years old at the most, so in 1586, he would have been thirteen years old at the most.

Cavalier Shift then said quietly, “Look, sir, you presume to be a gentleman of good breeding, and so likewise your friends here.”

Normally, one would say, “I presume you to be a gentleman of good breeding,” but Cavalier Shift’s word choice may be accurate.

He continued:

“If you have any disposition to travel, for the sight of service or so, one, two, or all of you, I can lend you letters to diverse officers and commanders in the Low Countries who shall for my sake do you all the good offices that shall pertain or belong to gentlemen of your —”

The Low Countries are the Netherlands, but a person with a bawdy mind who is aware that Cavalier Shift is a pimp might think that the Low Countries are between women's legs.

Gentlemen of good breeding, indeed.

Cavalier Shift then pleaded directly:

“Please show the bounty of your mind, sir, and impart some ten groats or half a crown to our use, until our ability to earn is of growth enough to return it, and we shall think ourself \_\_\_”

Fastidious Brisk turned away and joined his group.

Cavalier Shift said loudly:

“By God's blood, sell my rapier!”

Sogliardo asked Fastidious Brisk, “Please, what did he say, signor? He's a proper man — a good-looking man.”

“By the Virgin Mary, he tells me that if I please to show the bounty of my mind, I can impart some ten groats or so to his use,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Puntarvolo advised, “Break his head, and give it to him.”

“Break his head” meant to hit his head hard enough to draw blood.

“Give it to him” probably meant “Give him the money.”

“I thought he had been playing on the Jew's trump, I did,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Playing on the Jew's trump” meant “scheming to get money.”

A Jew's harp is a simple musical instrument.

A trump can be a trick.

Cavalier Shift approached Fastidious Brisk and remonstrated:

“My rapier? No, sir, my rapier is my guard, my defense, my revenue, my honor!”

He then said quietly to Fastidious Brisk:

“If you cannot impart money to me, then be secret and quiet about it, I beseech you.”

Remonstrating, he said loudly:

“And I will maintain it, where there is a grain of dust or a drop of water!”

He then said quietly to Fastidious Brisk:

“Hard is the choice when the valiant must eat their arms or else clem — starve.”

“Eat their arms” means to sell their weapons and use the money to buy food.

Remonstrating, Cavalier Shift said loudly:

“Sell my rapier?”

He addressed his rapier loudly:

“No, my dear, I will not be divorced from thee yet, I have always found thee true as steel, and —”

Cavalier Shift then quietly asked Fastidious Brisk:

“You cannot impart money to me, sir?”

He said loudly to the others:

“God save you, gentlemen.”

Cavalier Shift quietly said to Fastidious Brisk:

“Nevertheless, if you have a fancy to buy my rapier, sir ....”

Fastidious Brisk said to his companions, “Please, let’s leave now.”

Not seeing Deliro, he asked, “Has Signor Deliro departed?”

Ignoring the question, Carlo Buffone said, “Have you seen a pimp outface his own wants better?”

“Outface” can mean 1) brazen out, or 2) vehemently deny.

Cavalier Shift needed money, but he did not want the disgrace of selling his sword.

Fastidious Brisk wanted money, and he did not want to lose sight of Deliro.

“I commend that man who can dissemble them so well,” Sogliardo said.

“True, and having no better a cloak for it than he has, neither,” Puntarvolo said.

A cloak can be a cover. Cavalier Shift’s cloak for his needs is the notices he had put up in order to attempt to get money.

Also, he was trying to cover up the fact that he was actually willing to sell his rapier to Fastidious Brisk.

Fastidious Brisk’s cloak, or suit of clothing, was costly, but it was also something to draw the negative notice of other people (not including Fungoso).

“By God’s precious body, what mischievous — evil — luck is this!” Fastidious Brisk said. “Adieu, gentlemen.”

“To where are you going in such haste, Monsieur Fastidious?” Puntarvolo asked.

“After my merchant, Signor Deliro, sir,” Fastidious Brisk answered.

Carlo Buffone said to the others, “Oh, don’t hinder him; he may perhaps lose his tide.”

Fastidious Brisk might lose his opportunity to get money since Deliro had left.

Carlo Buffone added, “A good flounder, indeed.”

Fastidious Brisk could be floundering because of debts, and he could have opened his mouth wide like a wide-mouthed flounder — bottom feeder — when he learned that Deliro had left earlier.

Fastidious Brisk exited.

Orange and Clove called Cavalier Shift over to them.

“Listen, Signor Whiff, may we have a word with you?” Orange asked.

“What?” Carlo Buffone said. “Signor Whiff?”

He did not know that Cavalier Shift used that alias.

“What was the quarrel between that young gallant who’s gone and you, sir?” Orange asked.

The gallant was Fastidious Brisk.

“No quarrel,” Cavalier Shift said. “He would have given me five pounds for my rapier, and I refused it, that’s all.”

“Oh, was it no otherwise?” Clove said. “We thought you had been having words with each other.”

“No other than you saw, sir,” Cavalier Shift said.

“Adieu, good Master Apple-John,” Clove said.

Orange and Clove exited.

Carlo Buffone, who had been eavesdropping, said, “What! Whiff, and Apple-John, too? By God’s heart, what’ll you say

if this be the appendix, accessory, or label to both yonder indentures?”

The appendix, accessory, or label was the name that should be attached to the notices. Cavalier Shift had many names.

The indentures were contracts for services. Carlo Buffone now guessed that Cavalier Shift had put up both notices.

“It may be,” Puntarvolo said.

“Solve the riddle for us, Janus, thou who look every way, or thou, Hercules, who have travelled all countries,” Carlo Buffone said.

Janus is a two-faced Roman god who can look forwards and backwards.

Hercules was a panhellenic hero who travelled to all countries and knew many notables.

“Nay, Carlo, don’t spend time in invocations now — it is late,” Puntarvolo said.

Invocations are appeals to gods such as Janus.

Carlo Buffone said to Cavalier Shift, “Signor, here’s a gentleman wanting to know your name, sir.”

The gentleman was Sogliardo.

“Sir, my name is Cavalier Shift. I am known sufficiently in this walk, sir.”

“Shift?” Carlo Buffone said. “I heard your name varied and altered just now, as I take it.”

Yes, he had heard Cavalier Shift called Whiff and Apple-John.

“True, sir, it pleases the world (as I am her excellent tobacconist) to give me the style of Signor Whiff; as I am a

poor esquire about the town here, they call me Master Apple-John. A variety of good names does well, sir.”

An esquire is 1) a gentleman, and/or 2) a squire of ladies. This kind of squire can be a pimp.

“Aye, and good qualities to make those good names, out of which I imagine yonder bills to be yours,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Sir, if I should deny the scriptures — the notices — I would be worthy to be banished from the middle aisle of St. Paul’s forever,” Cavalier Shift said.

“I take you at your word, sir,” Carlo Buffone said. “This gentleman has subscribed to your notices, and he is most desirous to become your pupil.”

Sogliardo’s name was subscribed — written — on the notices to show his interest in interviewing and perhaps hiring the notice’s writer.

Carlo Buffone added, “By the Virgin Mary, you must use expedition and make haste.”

He then said, “Signor Insulso Sogliardo, this is the professor.”

Cavalier Shift professed to have certain skills, such as in the smoking of tobacco.

“In good time, sir,” Sogliardo said.

This was a polite greeting.

Cavalier Shift took off his hat.

Sogliardo said, “Nay, good sir, house your head.”

Cavalier Shift put on his hat.

“Do you profess these sleights in tobacco?” Sogliardo asked.

“Sleights” are “tricks” or “skills”: different ways of smoking.

Cavalier Shift replied, “I do more than profess, sir, and if you please to be a practitioner, I will undertake in one fortnight to teach you so well that you shall take it plausibly and with public admiration in any ordinary, theatre, or the Tilt Yard if need be, the most popular assembly that is.”

An ordinary is an eating-house.

The Tilt Yard was a place for tilting, aka jousting.

“But you cannot bring him to the whiff so soon?” Puntarvolo said.

“Yes, as soon as that, sir,” Cavalier Shift said. “He shall inhale the one, two, and three whiff, if it pleases him, and upon the inhalation take his horse, drink his three cups of canary wine, and expose — exhale and vomit — one (whiff of smoke and cup of wine) time at Hounslow, a second time at Staines, and a third time at Bagshot.”

Each of these three towns was over ten miles from London.

Apparently, Cavalier Shift was saying that he would teach new smokers how to inhale smoke and then exhale that smoke in three widely separate locations. Because they were new smokers, they would get sick and vomit their wine in these three locations.

“Bow-wow!” Carlo Buffone said.

The proverb “Bow-wows are no wedding” means that noisy protestations are not necessarily to be trusted.

To inhale smoke and then hold one’s breath in order to exhale the smoke at these three widely separated locations is impossible.



“You will not serve me, sir, will you?” Sogliardo said. “I’ll give you more than countenance.”

He was offering Cavalier Shift a job.

“Countenance” is “maintenance,” aka “what is necessary to maintain oneself,” including monetary recompense.

It can also mean 1) patronage, and 2) goodwill.

By “serve,” Sogliardo meant “work as a servant.”

“Pardon me, sir, I scorn to serve any man,” Cavalier Shift responded.

One meaning of “serve” is “have sex with.”

Today, farmers still talk of a bull servicing a cow.

“Who? He serve?” Carlo Buffone said. “By God’s blood, he keeps high men and low men, he; he has a fair living at Fulham.”

“High men and low men” are servants, but another meaning of the phrase is loaded dice.

Cavalier Shift did not have servants, but he could very well gamble with loaded dice.

Loaded dice were also called high fulhams and low fulhams and were named after the town of Fulham, where many people gambled.

“But in the nature of a fellow, I’ll be your follower if you please,” Cavalier Shift said.

A fellow is a companion rather than a servant.

“Sir, you shall stay and dine with me, and if we can agree, we’ll not part in haste,” Sogliardo said. “I am very bountiful to men of quality. Where shall we go, signor?”

Men of quality are 1) men of skill, and/or 2) men of good birth.

“Mitre is the best house,” Puntarvolo said.

“I can make this dog take as many whiffs as I please, and he shall retain or effume them at my pleasure,” Cavalier Shift said about Puntarvolo’s dog.

“Effume” meant “puff out smoke.”

“By your patience,” Puntarvolo said.

“By your patience” meant “excuse me.”

He did not want his dog to be taught how to smoke. Smoking could make his dog ill, and he loved his dog.

He then said to his serving-men, who were taking care of his dog and cat, “Follow me, fellows.”

“Sir Puntarvolo!” Sogliardo said.

“Pardon me, my dog shall not eat in his company for a million pounds,” Puntarvolo said.

He, his serving-men, and his dog and cat exited.

Carlo Buffone said, “Nay, don’t you be amazed, Signor Whiff, whatever that stiff-necked gentleman says.”

Puntarvolo’s usual posture was stiffly upright. He was also stubborn, and he was determined to take care of his dog.

“No, for you do not know the humor of the dog as we do,” Sogliardo said.

Puntarvolo was very devoted to his dog. That was one of his humors.

“Where shall we dine, Carlo?” Sogliardo said. “I would like to go to one of these ordinaries, now that I am a gentleman.”

“So you may,” Carlo Buffone said. “Weren’t you ever at one yet?”

“No, indeed,” Sogliardo said, “but they say your most choice gallants resort there.”

Carlo Buffone replied:

“True, and the fashion is, when any stranger comes in among them, they all stand up and stare at him, as if he were some unknown beast brought out of Africa. But that’ll be helped with a good adventurous face: A bold manner can overcome their hostility.

“You must be impudent enough, sit down, and don’t be deferential. When anything’s propounded above your capacity to understand it, smile at it, make two or three faces, and it is excellent; they’ll think you have travelled — though you argue a whole day in silence thus, and discourse in nothing but laughter, it will pass.

“Only now and then give fire, discharge a good full oath, and offer a great wager — it will be admirable.”

“I assure you, I am resolute to do so,” Sogliardo said.

He then gave Cavalier Shift a coin and said, “Come, good signor, there’s a poor French crown for your ordinary — for your meal.”

“It comes well, for I had not so much as the least portcullis of coin before,” Cavalier Shift said.

A portcullis is a small coin: a silver half-penny.

They exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “I travail — am in labor with — with another objection, signor, which I fear will be charged against the author, before I can be delivered of it.”

“What’s that, sir?” Cordatus asked.

Mitis replied, “That the subject-matter of his comedy might have been of some other nature, as of a Duke to be in love with a Countess, and that Countess to be in love with the Duke’s son, and the son to love the lady’s waiting maid; some such cross-wooing, with a clown as their serving-man, and that would be better than to be thus nearly, closely, particularly, and familiarly linked to the current time and way of life.”

This description of comedic subject-matter applied to some of William Shakespeare’s comedies.

Cordatus said, “You say well, but I would like to hear one of these autumn-judgments define once the question ‘*Quid sit comoedia?*’”

“Autumn-judgments” are old critics, including those who are going senile.

*Quid sit comoedia* means: What should be comedy?

Cordatus continued:

“If he cannot, let him content himself with Cicero’s definition (until he have strength to propose to himself a better), who would have a comedy to be *imitatio vitae* [an imitation of life], *speculum consuetudinis* [a mirror of customs], *imago veritatis* [an image of truth]; a thing throughout pleasant, jocular, laughable, and ridiculous, and accommodated to the correction and improvement of social manners and behavior.

“If the poet-playwright should have failed in any particle of this, they may worthily and justifiably tax him, but if not, why, you (who are for them) should be silent, as I will be for the poet-playwright, and give way to the actors.”

Alone on his farm, Sordido, who had a noose around his neck because he was thinking about committing suicide, said to himself:

“By God’s precious blood, if the weather and the season are so indifferent to social conditions that beggars shall live as well as their betters, and that my hunger and thirst for riches shall not make them hunger and thirst with poverty, and that my sleeps shall be broken and their hearts not broken, and that my coffers shall be full and yet I still worry, and that their coffers shall be empty and yet they are merry, then it is time that a cross — a gibbet — should bear flesh and blood, since flesh and blood cannot bear this cross.”

His cross was that the weather had been good. He had expected excessive rain that would ruin the harvest and make his already stored grain much more valuable.

Mitis asked, “What! Will he hang himself?”

“Indeed, aye,” Cordatus said. “It seems his prognostication — predictive weather report — has not kept faith with him, and that makes him despair.”

“Curse me, he will be out of his humor then indeed,” Mitis said.

Sordido will no longer display his personal idiosyncrasy — his greed — because he will be dead.

Sordido continued:

“Tut, these star-monger knaves, these astrological weather predictors, who would trust them? One says ‘dark and rainy’ when it is as clear as crystal, another says ‘tempestuous blasts and storms’ and it is as calm as a milk bowl.

“Here are sweet rascals for a man to trust his whole fortunes to.

“You sky-staring coxcombs, you; you fat brains, a curse upon you! You are good for nothing but to sweat into night-caps and make scholars’ rug-gowns expensive.

“You are learned men, and yet haven’t a legion of devils *à votre service, à votre service* — *at your service, at your service?*”

Scholars such as Doctor Faustus summoned demons who would act as their servants for a predetermined number of years as long as Satan received the scholar’s soul at the end of the demons’ service.

Sordido continued:

“By heaven, I think I shall die a better scholar than they.”

Seeing a servant enter the scene, he said, “But wait.”

Then he asked, “What is it now, sirrah?”

The servant handed him a document and said, “Here’s a letter that has come from your son, sir.”

“From my son, sir?” Sordido said. “Why would my son write, sir? Some good news, no doubt.”

Because of his mood, he was sarcastic.

He began to read the letter out loud:

*“Sweet and dear father:*

*“Desiring you first to send me your blessing, which is more worth to me than gold or silver, I desire you likewise to be informed that this Shrovetide, contrary to custom, we are accustomed always to have revels, which is indeed dancing, and makes an excellent show, in truth, especially if we*

*gentlemen are well-attired, which our seniors — barristers and benchers — of the Inns of Court note, and think the better of our fathers the better we are maintained; and that they — the barristers and benchers — shall know if they — the fathers — come up and have anything to do in the law.”*

Shrovetide is the Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of Lent. Lent is a six-week period of fasting and penitence observed by some branches of Christianity before Easter.

Christmas revels usually ended on Candlemas, February 2.

In his letter, Fungoso was hinting that the seniors of the Inns of Court would take note if he wore new clothing and they would therefore respect Sordido more if he ever had a case in the law courts.

Sordido continued to read the letter out loud:

*“Therefore, good father, these lines in my letter are, for your own sake as well as mine, to re-desire you that you let me not lack that which is fit for the setting-up of our name in the honorable volume of gentility, so that I may say to our calumniators with Tully, Ego sum ortus domus meae, tu occasus tuae.”*

The Latin lines stated this: “I am the rising star of my house; you are the falling star of your house.”

Marcus Tullius Cicero is not known to have written those lines. The lines are derived from Plutarch.

Sordido continued to read the letter out loud:

*“And thus, not doubting of your fatherly benevolence, I humbly ask for your blessing, and I pray to God to bless you.*

*“Yours, if his own.”*

Sordido said to himself:

“What’s this? ‘Yours, if his own’? Isn’t he my son, unless he is his own son?”

“Likely, this is some new kind of subscription the gallants use.”

A subscription is a complimentary close to a letter; for example, “yours” or “yours sincerely.”

The complimentary close could mean, “I am yours, if I am my own man.”

Such a close could be meant to be complimentary: If I am a man, it is because I have had you as my father and you have raised me well.

Unfortunately, in the letter, Fungoso was asking for money and so he was not his own man. He also hardly seemed to be the rising star of his house.

Sordido said to the servant, “Well, why do thou stay, knave? Away, go.”

The servant exited.

Sordido said to himself:

“Here’s a letter indeed! Revels? And benevolence? Is this a weather to send benevolence? Or is this a season to revel in? By God’s eyelid, the devil and all conspire to vex me, I think.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, “benevolence” meant 1) affection and goodwill, and 2) a gift of money.

Sordido continued:

“This letter would never have come now else, now, now, when the sun shines and the air is thus clear.



“By my soul, if this good weather continues, we shall shortly have an excellent crop of corn spring out of the highways; the streets and houses of the town will be hid with the rankness — the fertility — of the fruits that grow there in spite of good husbandry.”

To Sordido, “good husbandry” was stockpiling grain in order to sell it at high prices in a time of famine.

Sordido was despairing much too early. The time was before Ash Wednesday, and the earliest that Ash Wednesday can occur is 4 February, and the latest it can occur is 10 March. In 1599, Ash Wednesday fell on 21 February. Since the location was Britain, the time was much too early to worry about the harvesting of grain.

In this play, time moves differently for Sordido than it does for other characters.

Sordido continued:

“Bah, I’ll prevent the sight of it. Come as quickly as it can, I will prevent the sight of it. I have this remedy, heaven.

“Wait, I’ll test the pain thus a little.”

He was going to test the pain of hanging by experiencing the pull of the noose at his neck.

He climbed up a ladder, attached the noose to something that would hold his weight, grabbed the rope, and pulled at his neck.

Sordido continued:

“Oh, nothing, nothing.”

The pain was nothing he thought he couldn’t handle.

Sordido continued:

“Well, now shall my son gain a benevolence — a generous inheritance — by my death? Or shall anybody be the better for my gold or so forth?

“No.

“Alive, I kept it from them, and dead, my ghost shall walk about it and preserve it; my son and daughter shall starve before they touch it. I have hidden it as deep as hell from the sight of heaven, and to it I go now.”

He dropped from the ladder.

Five or six rustics — country folk — one after the other, entered the scene.

Seeing the hanging Sordido, the first rustic said, “Oh, what pitiful sight is this! Help! Help! Help!”

“What is it now?” the second rustic asked. “What’s the matter?”

The first rustic answered, “Oh, here’s a man who has hanged himself! Help me to get him down and revive him again!”

The first rustic cut the hanging rope.

“Hanged himself?” the second rustic said. “By God’s eyelid, carry him before a justice; it is chance-medley, on my word.”

Actually, “chance-medley” is manslaughter, not deliberate suicide.

“What is this now?” the third rustic said. “What’s going on here?”

“How did this happen?” the fourth rustic asked.

“Someone has executed himself contrary to the order of law, and by my consent he shall answer for it,” the second rustic said.

To do that, the man would have to recover from the hanging.

“I wish he were in a condition to answer for it,” the fifth rustic said.

Sordido began to revive.

“Stand aside,” the first rustic said. “Give him room. He recovers. Give him breath.”

“Oh!” Sordido said.

The fifth rustic said to the first rustic, “By the Mass, it was well you went by way of the footpath and not by way of the highway, neighbor.”

“Aye, if I had not cut the noose,” the first rustic said.

“What?” Sordido said. “Cut the noose? Aye me, I am undone! I am undone!”

“Aye me” is an expression used when upset or worried.

The meaning of this “undone” is “ruined.”

“By the Virgin Mary, if you had not been undone, you would have been hanged, I can tell you,” the second rustic said.

The meaning of this “undone” is “cut down from the noose.”

Sordido said, “You threadbare horsebread-eating rascals, if you had to meddle, couldn’t you have untied the rope, but instead you must cut it? And in the middle, too? Aye me!”

He was complaining because the rope was ruined after having been cut in the middle.

Horsebread was beans and grains that are used as horse fodder: lentils, oats, peas. Poor people ate them when wheat and barley were too expensive.

“Curse me, it is the caterpillar Sordido!” the first rustic said.  
“How cursed are the poor because the viper was blessed with this good fortune!”

A caterpillar is metaphorically a rapacious person.

Sordido was literally a rapacious person.

The other rustics turned against the first rustic.

“Nay, how accursed are thou, who are the cause of the curse of the poor!” the second rustic said to the first rustic.

The first rustic had kept Sordido alive, and Sordido had behaved badly toward the poor.

“Aye, and to save so wretched a caitiff — a villain!” the third rustic said.

“Cursed be thy fingers that loosed him!” the fourth rustic said.

“May some desperate Fury possess thee, so that thou may hang thyself, too!” the fourth rustic said.

The Furies are avenging spirits that come from hell.

“Never may thou be saved and receive salvation, who saved so damned a monster!” the fifth rustic said.

Hearing all this, Sordido said to himself:

“What curses these men utter! How have my deeds made my looks differ from another man’s, with the result that they should thus detest and loath my life?”

“Curses on my wretched humor! It is that which makes me thus monstrous in true human eyes.”

His humor was greed.

Sordido then said to the rustics:

“Pardon me, gentle friends. I’ll make fair amends for my past foul errors, and twenty-fold I will restore to all the men whom with wrong I robbed. My barns and garner shall stand open continually to all the poor who come, and my best grain shall be made alms-bread — charity-food — to feed half-famished mouths.

“Although hitherto among you I have lived like an unsavory muckhill — stinking manure-heap — to myself, yet now my gathered heaps, being spread outside my home, shall turn to better and more fruitful uses.”

A proverb stated, “Money, like dung, does no good unless it is spread.”

Sordido pointed to the first rustic and said:

“Bless then this man. Curse him no more for saving my life and soul and keeping them together.

“Oh, how deeply the bitter curses of the poor do pierce!

“I am by a wonderful miracle changed. Come in with me and witness my repentance.

“Now I prove:

“No life is blest that is not graced with love.”

He exited.

The wonderful miracle was to see himself as others saw him.

Later, the Scottish poet Robert Burns would write:

*“O wad some Power the giftie gie us, to see oursels as ithers see us!”*

[*“Oh, would some Power the gift give us, to see ourselves as others see us.”*]

Sordido was now a man out of his humor. His humor had been to make lots of money even if it meant disobeying the law and withholding grain from the market even though the result was that impoverished people would starve. Now he wanted to make amends and become a good person.

“Oh, a miracle!” the second rustic said. “See when a man has grace.”

“Wouldn’t it have been a pity that so good a man should have been cast away?” the third rustic said.

According to Sordido’s society, he would have been damned and cast into hell if he had succeeded in committing suicide.

“Well, I’ll get our parish clerk to put his conversion in the chronicle — the church records,” the second rustic said.

“Do, for I will assure the cleric that Sordido is a virtuous man,” the fourth rustic said.

“Oh, God, how he wept, if you noticed it!” the fourth rustic said. “Did you see how the tears trilled?”

“Trilled” can mean 1) flowed in a steady stream, or 2) rolled along like a ball.

“Yes, believe me, like master vicar’s bowls upon the green, for all the world,” the fifth rustic said.

The third or fourth rustic said to the first rustic, “Oh, neighbor, God’s blessing on your heart, neighbor, it was a good, pleasing deed!”

They exited.

Cordatus said, “What do you think now, Mitis? What’s that you are thinking about so seriously?”

Mitis replied:

“Indeed, I am thinking about that which does in fact please me: the warping and twisting condition of this green and soggy — waterlogged with tears — multitude.

“But in good faith, signor, your author has largely outstripped my expectation in this scene — I will liberally confess it. For when I saw Sordido so desperately intending to do a desperate act, I thought I had a grasp — an understanding — of him then.”

“What?” Cordatus said. “You supposed he should have hung himself indeed?”

Mitis replied, “I did, and I had framed and fashioned my objection to it ready, which may yet be very fitly and aptly urged, and with some necessity; for though his purposed violence lost the effect and extended not to death, yet the intent and horror of the object was more than the nature of a comedy will in any sort allow.”

“Oh?” Cordatus said. “What do you think of Plautus in his comedy called *Cistellaria* there, where he brings in Alcestimarchus with a drawn sword ready to kill himself, and as he is ready to fix his breast upon it, he is restrained from his resolved outrage and act of violence by Silenium and the Bawd? Doesn’t Plautus’ authority have the power to give our scene approbation and approval?”

*Cistellaria* is the play *The Casket*, aka *The Small Chest*.

Mitis replied, “Sir, this your single example has left me to say this: I think it is so indeed, your memory is happier than mine. But I wonder what device the playwright will use to bring the rest out of their humors?”

Cordatus said:

“That will appear soon. Don’t occupy your imagination with other thoughts.

“Let your mind keep company with the scene still, which now removes itself from the country to the court. Here comes Macilente and Signor Brisk freshly outfitted in new clothing.

“Don’t get lost in side issues, for now the *epitasis* or busy part of our subject is in action.”

Ben Jonson divided his play into three parts:

Protasis: the beginning, in which his characters demonstrate their humors.

Epitasis: the middle, in which his characters have experiences that take away their humors. This has already happened with Sordido.

Catastrophe: the conclusion. This occurs in the final scene of this play: 5.6.

### — 3.3 —

At court, Macilente, Fastidious Brisk, and Cinedo talked together. Macilente and Fastidious Brisk were wearing new suits of clothing, and Cinedo was holding tobacco. Cinedo was Fastidious Brisk’s page.

A viola da gamba was hanging up. was also known as a bass viol, and it was played between the legs like a cello, inspiring some wits to make bawdy comments about it.

“Well, now, Signor Macilente, you are not only welcome to the court, but also to my mistress’ withdrawing-chamber,” Fastidious Brisk said.

This chamber was a drawing-room, a large room in which guests could be received.

He then said to Cinedo, his page, “Boy, get me some tobacco.”



Cinedo prepared a pipe of tobacco.

Fastidious Brisk said to Macilente, "I'll just go in and show I am here, and come to you presently, sir."

He exited.

Macilente said to himself:

"What's that he said? By heaven, I wasn't paying attention to him. My thoughts and I were of another world.

"I was admiring my own outside — my new suit of clothing — here. I was thinking what privilege and palm — emblem of excellence — it bears here in the court.

"No matter how vile a man is in wit, in judgment, manners, or what else, if he can just purchase a silken cover of fine clothing, he shall not only pass, but pass well regarded.

"In contrast, let a man be poor and meanly clad, although ever so richly talented and intelligent, you shall have a fellow who knows nothing but his beef — and so is beef-witted and stupid and uncouth — or how to rinse his clammy guts in beer, who will take the poor man by the shoulders or by the throat and kick him down the stairs.

"Such is the state of virtue in bad clothes — ha, ha, ha, ha!

"That raiment should be in such high regard and so much in vogue! How long should I live and wait before I should take off my hat to my lord chancellor's tomb or the shrieve's posts? By heaven, I think, a thousand thousand years."

"My lord chancellor's tomb" was the impressive tomb of Sir Christopher Hatton in St. Paul's Choir.

The shrieve's posts were set up in front of the house of the sheriff or mayor. On it, proclamations were posted.

A shrieve is a sheriff.

If Macilente were to take off his hat to my lord chancellor's tomb or the shrieve's posts, he would be paying homage to appearances, the way that some people pay homage to fine clothing. Better to pay homage to a good person, no matter how well or badly they are dressed.

Macilente continued:

“Sir Christopher's gravity, his wisdom, and his faith and loyalty to my dread sovereign — graces that survive him — these I could well bear to venerate, but not his tomb, no more than I'll commend the chapel organ for the gilt on its outer surface, or this bass viol for the varnished face.”

He would pay respect to Sir Christopher's gravity, wisdom, and loyalty to Queen Elizabeth I, but not to his tomb, impressive though it was. The same applied to other appearances, such as the gilt on the cabinet of an organ or the varnish on a bass viol.

Fastidious Brisk returned and said to Macilente, “Indeed, I have made you wait somewhat long, sir.”

He then said to Cinedo, “But is my tobacco ready, boy?”

“Aye, sir,” Cinedo replied.

“Give it to me,” Fastidious Brisk said.

He then said to Macilente, “My mistress is at the point of coming. You shall see her soon, sir.”

He puffed tobacco and said, “You'll say you never accosted a more piercing wit.”

He then said to Cinedo, “This tobacco is not dried, boy, or else the pipe's defective.”

He gave the pipe to Cinedo, who mended it.

Fastidious Brisk then said:

“Oh, your wits of Italy are nothing compared to her; her brain’s a very quiver of jests, and she darts them abroad with that sweet release of an arrow and judicial aim that you would —

“Here she comes, sir.”

Saviolina, a court lady, entered the scene.

Macilente said to himself, “It’s about time. His invention of archery metaphors would have bogged down if she had not come.”

Saviolina called to a servant, “Give me my fan there.”

She exited.

“How are you now, Monsieur Brisk?” Macilente said.

“A kind of affectionate reverence strikes me with a cold shivering, I think,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“I like such tempers well, such tempers as stand before their mistresses with fear and trembling, and before their Maker — their Creator — like impudent mountains,” Macilente said, sarcastically.

“By Jesus, I’d spend twenty pounds for my vaulting horse to stand here now, so that she might see me do just one trick!” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Why, does she love activity?” Macilente asked.

A trick can be a sexual act; activity includes sexual activity.

A vaulting horse was a piece of gymnastics equipment; a vaulting-house is a brothel.

Cinedo said, “Or if you just had your long stockings on to be dancing a lively galliard dance, as she comes by.”

“Aye, either of those,” Fastidious Brisk said. “Oh, these stirring humors make ladies mad with desire.”

“Stirring” means “sexually exciting.”

He then said, “She comes. May my good genius embolden me! Boy, give me the pipe quickly.”

His “good genius” was his guardian angel.

Saviolina returned.

Macilente said to himself, “Will he give her music?”

“Tunes” could be played on a different kind of pipe.

“A second good morrow to my fair mistress,” Fastidious Brisk said.

By “morrow,” Fastidious Brisk was using the now-obsolete meaning “morning.”

“Fair servant,” Saviolina said, “I’ll thank you a day hence — tomorrow — when the date of your salutation comes forth.”

This kind of mistress is a woman who is admired, and this kind of servant is a man who admires a woman.

“How do you like that answer?” Fastidious Brisk asked Macilente. “Isn’t it admirable?”

“I would be a simple-minded courtier if I could not admire trifles, sir,” Macilente said.

“Trifles” are trivial jokes.

Smoking, Fastidious Brisk punctuated his discourse with puffs on his pipe:

“Indeed, sweet lady, I shall” — puff — “be prepared to give you thanks for those thanks, and” — puff — “study more

attentive and obsequious” — puff — “to your fair beauties” — puff.

He then said to Cinedo, “Mend the pipe, boy.”

He gave Cinedo the pipe.

Macilente said to himself, “I never knew tobacco taken as a parenthesis before.”

“Before God, sweet lady, believe it, I honor the meanest, lowliest rush in this chamber for your love,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Rushes were reeds that were used as floor coverings.

He prized the lowliest reed simply because Saviolina had trodden on it.

“For your love” meant “because of my love for you.”

“Aye, you need not tell me that, sir,” Saviolina said. “I think you do prize a rush before my love.”

She was pretending that Fastidious Brisk had said *’fore*, not *for*.

If he prized the lowliest reed before her love, then he prized the lowliest reed more than he prized her love.

Macilente, not impressed by her wit, said to himself, “Is this the wonder of nations?”

“Oh, by Jesus, pardon me, I said, ‘for your love,’ by this light,” Fastidious Brisk said, “but it is the accustomed sharpness of your ingenuity, sweet mistress to —”

By “ingenuity,” he meant “sharpness of wit.”

He interrupted himself, “— by the Mass, your viol’s newly strung, I think.”

Fastidious Brisk took down the bass viol from the wall and began to tune it.

Macilente said to himself, “Ingenuity? I see his ignorance will not suffer him to slander her, which he would have done most notably, if he had said ‘wit’ for ‘ingenuity,’ as he meant it.”

Macilente thought that Fastidious Brisk had said the truth about Saviolina when he mentioned “ingenuity,” which Macilente was pretending to be “ingenuous,” or well-born.

In Ben Jonson’s society, the adjective form of “ingenuity” could be either “ingenious” or “ingenuous.”

Macilente knew that Saviolina was well-born; he did not believe that she was witty.

Humming, Fastidious Brisk began to tune the bass viol, “By the soul of music, lady. Hum, hum.”

“I wish that we might hear it once,” Saviolina said.

Either Fastidious Brisk’s tuning was taking a long time, or his tuning already provided evidence that his playing would be bad and so once was enough.

Fastidious Brisk said, “I do more adore and admire your — hum, hum — predominant and powerful perfections than — hum, hum — ever I shall have power and faculty to express — hum.”

“Upon the viol da gamba, do you mean?” Saviolina said.

“It’s miserably out of tune, by this hand,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Nay, rather by the fingers,” Saviolina said.

Fastidious Brisk’s fingers were miserably tuning the bass viol.

Macilente said to himself, “It makes good harmony with her wit.”

The bass viol and her wit were both out of tune, in his opinion.

“Sweet lady, tune it,” Fastidious Brisk said, giving up.

He handed her the bass viol and then said to Cinedo, “Boy, some tobacco.”

Macilente said to himself, “Tobacco again? He does court his mistress with very exceedingly good changes.”

The changes were in his behavior, but the word “changes” is also a musical term.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Signor Macilente, you take no tobacco, sir?”

He puffed.

“No, unless I had a mistress, signor, it would be a great indecorum for me to take tobacco,” Macilente said.

“How do you like her wit?” Fastidious Brisk said.

He puffed.

“Her ingenuity is excellent, sir,” Macilente said.

Again, in Ben Jonson’s society, the adjective form of “ingenuity” could be either “ingenious” or “ingenuous.”

Indicating Saviolina tuning the bass viol, Fastidious Brisk said:

“You see the subject of her sweet fingers there?”

He puffed.

“Oh, she tickles it so that she makes it laugh most divinely.”

He puffed.

“I’ll tell you a good jest now, and you yourself shall say it’s a good one: I have wished myself to be that instrument, I think, a thousand times, and not so few as a thousand times, by heavens.”

He puffed.

Macilente said, “That’s not unlikely, sir, but how? To be cased up and hung by on the wall?”

“Cased up” means the bass viol would be put in its case.

In Ben Jonson’s society, the word “case” meant vagina, and jokes were made about male instruments being put in feminine cases.

Fastidious Brisk said, “Oh, no, sir, to be in use, I assure you, as your judicious eyes may testify.”

He puffed.

“In use” referred both to the musical instrument and to male and female sexual parts.

Offering Fastidious Brisk the bass viol, Saviolina said, “Here, servant, if you will play, come.”

Continuing to puff, Fastidious Brisk said:

“Instantly, sweet lady.

“In good faith, I say that here’s most divine tobacco.”

“Nay, I cannot stay to dance after your pipe,” Saviolina said.

The word “pipe” sometimes was used to refer to the male sexual instrument.

A bawdy ballad titled “The Shaking of the Sheets” had an alternate title: “Dance After My Pipe.”



She began to leave.

“Good — nay, dear lady, stay,” Fastidious Brisk said. “By this sweet smoke, I think your wit is all fire.”

He puffed.

Macilente said to himself, “And he’s the salamander that lives by it.”

Ben Jonson’s society believed that salamanders were able to live in fire.

“Is your tobacco perfumed, sir?” Saviolina asked. “Is that why you swear by the sweet smoke?”

Fastidious Brisk said:

“Still more excellent. Before God and these bright heavens, I think” — he puffed — “you are made of ingenuity, I do.”

He puffed.

Macilente said to himself, “True, as your discourse is. Oh, abominable!”

“Will Your Ladyship take any tobacco?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Oh, be quiet, I ask you,” Saviolina said. “I don’t love the breath of a woodcock’s head.”

Pipe-smokers had bad breath.

Woodcocks were fools.

“Meaning my head, lady?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“Not altogether so, sir,” Saviolina said. “But, as it were fatal to their follies who think to grace themselves with taking tobacco when they lack better entertainment, you see your pipe bears the true form of a woodcock’s head.”

Fastidious Brisk's pipe bowl was carved into the image of a woodcock, an easily caught bird that was therefore deemed to be stupid.

Saviolina was saying that people who smoke pipes when they have nothing better to do may think they look sophisticated but they resemble the woodcock.

"Oh, admirable simile!" Fastidious Brisk said.

"It is best leaving you in admiration, sir," Saviolina said.

Fastidious Brisk was doing little except praising Saviolina. Some praise can be good, but excessive admiration is cloying and can lead to the admired person's dislike.

Saviolina exited.

Macilente said to himself, "Are these the admired lady-wits, who, having so good a plainsong, can run no better division upon it?"

Plainsong is the theme, and division is a variation on the plainsong.

He added, "By God's heart, all her jests are of the fashion March was fifteen years ago."

*Every Man Out of His* Humor was first performed in 1599. In 1583 the Throckmorton plot against Elizabeth I and England was discovered. Part of the plot was to free Mary, Queen of Scots. Sir Francis Throckmorton was arrested in November 1583, and he was executed on 10 July 1584.

Also on 10 July 1584, William the Silent, aka William Prince of Orange was assassinated. From 1581, Balthasar Gérard plotted to assassinate him. The assassination led Parliament to pass the Bond of Association, a document intended to protect Elizabeth I.

According to Wikipedia:

*The document obliged all signatories to execute any person that:*

- *attempted to usurp the throne*
- *successfully usurped the throne*
- *made an attempt on Elizabeth's life*
- *successfully assassinated Elizabeth*

*In the last case, the document also made it obligatory for the signatories to hunt down the killer.*

March 1584 was no time to be making jokes.

Macilente was unimpressed with Saviolina, whose jokes he regarded as old.

Macilente asked out loud, "Is this the blazing comet of wit, Monsieur Fastidious, whom your gallants wonder at so?"

Fastidious Brisk replied:

"Heart of a gentleman, to neglect me in the presence of a guest like this!

"Sweet sir, I beg you to be silent and don't tell anybody about my disgrace. By Jesus, I never was in so vile a humor in my life. And her wit was at the flood, too.

"Don't gossip about it for a million pounds, good sir. Let me be so far endeared to your love."

They exited.

Mitis said, "What follows next, Signor Cordatus? This gallant's humor is almost exhausted, I think; it ebbs apace, with this contrary breath of his mistress."

Cordatus replied:

“Oh, but it will flow again, for all this, until there shall come a general drought of humor among all our actors, and then I don’t doubt that his will fall as low as any.

“See who presents himself here!”

That person was Fungoso.

“What! In the old case?” Mitis asked.

The old case could be 1) in the same condition of needing money, or 2) in the same clothing he was wearing before.

Cordatus replied:

“Indeed, that which makes it the more pitiful.

“Do you understand where the scene is?”

**ACT 4 (*Every Man Out of His Humor*)**

— 4.1 —

Fungoso and Fallace talked together in Deliro's house.

"Why are you so melancholy, brother?" Fallace asked.

"I am not melancholy, I thank you, sister," Fungoso replied.

"Why aren't you merry, then?" Fallace asked. "There are just two of us siblings in all the world, and if we should not be comforts to one another, God help us."

Fungoso said, "Indeed, I cannot tell, sister, but if a man had any true melancholy in him, it would make him melancholy to see his yeomanly father cut his neighbors' throats to make his son a gentleman; and yet when he has cut them, he will see his son's throat cut, too, before he makes him a true gentleman indeed, before death cuts his own throat. I must be the first head of our house, and yet he will not give me the head until I am made so. Is any man termed a gentleman who is not always dressed in the latest fashion? I would like to know that."

The "first head" is a first-generation gentleman.

"Give me the head" means "give me freedom."

Fallace said:

"If you are melancholy for that, brother, I think I have as much cause to be melancholy as one, for I'll be sworn I live as little in the fashion as any woman in London.

"By the bible of heaven (beast that I am to say it), I have not one friend in the world besides my husband."

The word "friend" can mean 1) lover, or 2) well-wisher or patron.

Fallace then asked, “When did you see Master Fastidious Brisk, brother?”

Fungoso said:

“Just a while ago, sister, I think. I don’t know well, in truth.

“By God’s eyelid, I could fight with all my heart, I think.”

“Nay, good brother, don’t be resolute to brawl,” Fallace said.

“I sent him a letter, and he writes me no answer neither,” Fungoso said.

By “him,” Fungoso meant their father, Sordido, but Fallace immediately thought of Fastidious Brisk.

Fallace said:

“Oh, sweet Fastidious Brisk! Oh, fine courtier! Thou are he who makes me sigh and say, ‘How blessed is that woman who has a courtier as her husband! And how miserable a dame she is who has neither husband nor friend in the court!’

“Oh, sweet Fastidious! Oh, fine courtier!

“How comely he makes a bow in his curtsy! How full he hits a woman between the lips when he kisses! How upright he sits at the table! How daintily he carves meat! How sweetly he talks and tells news of this lord and of that lady! How cleanly he wipes his spoon at every spoonful of any white-meat he eats, and what an elegant case of toothpicks he carries about him always!

“Oh, sweet Fastidious! Oh, fine courtier!”

White-meat is made of dairy foods — milk, cheese, and curds — and of eggs.

Toothpicks were fashionable.

Deliro entered the scene with a band of musicians.

“See, yonder she is, gentlemen,” Deliro said. “Now, as ever you’ll bear the name of musicians, touch your instruments sweetly. She has a delicate ear, I tell you; don’t play a false note, I beg you.”

“Don’t worry, Signor Deliro,” a musician said.

“Oh, begin, begin, play some sprightly thing,” Deliro said.

The musicians played.

“Lord, how my imagination races with thoughts of the success of it!” Deliro said. “Well done. Good, indeed! Heaven grant it will please her. I’ll not be seen, for then she’ll be sure to dislike it.”

He hid himself.

Hearing the music, Fallace said, “Heyday, this is excellent. I’ll bet my life this is my husband’s dotage.”

Her husband was foolishly in love with her.

Seeing her husband, she said, “I thought so. Nay, never play peekaboo with me. I know you do nothing but study how to anger me, sir.”

Her husband was peeking out from his hiding place.

“Anger thee, sweet wife?” Deliro asked. “Why, didn’t thou send for musicians to play during supper last night thyself?”

“To supper, sir?” Fallace said. “Now come off it! To supper, I say to you! As though there were no difference between suppertime when folks should be merry and this time when they would be melancholy! I would never take upon me to take a wife if I had no more judgment to please her.”

“Be pleased, sweet wife, and they shall have finished,” Deliro said.

He motioned to the musicians to stop playing and leave.

He then said, “And I wish to Christ that my life were done, if I can never please thee!”

The musicians exited.

Macilente entered the scene and said, “May God save you, lady. Where is Master Deliro?”

“Here, Master Macilente,” Deliro said. “You’re welcome from the court, sir. No doubt you have been graced exceedingly by Master Brisk’s mistress, and the rest of the ladies, for his sake.”

Macilente replied:

“Alas, the poor fantasist, he’s scarcely known to any lady there, and those who know him know him to be the simplest — most foolish and least sophisticated — man of all they know.

“They deride and play upon his amorous humors, although he just apishly — ridiculously — imitates the most gallant courtiers, kissing ladies’ pumps — shoes — holding to the side the cloth hanging over a doorway for them, praising their wits, and servilely observing everyone who may do them pleasure, fearful to be seen with any man, although that man is ever so worthy, who’s not in grace with some who are the greatest.

“Thus courtiers do, and these he counterfeits, but he does not set such a sightly carriage upon their vanities as they themselves, and therefore they despise him; for indeed he’s like a zany clown to a tumbler, who tries tricks after him to make men laugh.”

Fastidious Brisk tries to imitate the real courtiers, but his imitation is poor.



The ladies laugh at him.

Fallace said to herself, "Here's an unthankful spiteful wretch! The good gentleman — Fastidious Brisk — condescended to make him his companion because my husband put him into a few rags, and now see how the unrude — dreadful — rascal backbites him."

The "rags" were Macilente's new set of clothing.

"Is he no more graced among them then, say you?" Deliro asked.

"Indeed, he is like a pawn at chess," Macilente said. "He fills up a space, that's all."

The pawn is the least valuable piece in a game of chess.

Fallace said to herself, "Oh, monster of men! Can the earth bear such an envious caitiff, such an envious wretch?"

"Well, I repent that I ever believed him so much," Deliro said. "But, now that I see what he is and that his masquing visor is off, I'll forbear — endure and tolerate — him no longer."

A masquing visor is a mask that a person would wear at an entertainment called a masque.

Deliro continued, "All his lands are mortgaged to me, and they are forfeited. Besides, I have bonds of his in my hand for the receipt of now twenty pounds, now thirty, now twenty-five. Still, as he has had a fan but wagged at him, he would be in a new suit."

If a woman wagged her fan at him, it raised his hopes and made him want a new set of clothes to impress her.

Deliro continued, "Well, I'll salute him by a sergeant the next time I see him, indeed, I'll suit him."

He will sue Fastidious Brisk with a lawsuit, and a sergeant will arrest him.

“Why, you may soon see him, sir, for he is to meet Signor Puntarvolo at a notary’s by the Royal Exchange, soon, where he means to take up upon return,” Macilente said.

Puntarvolo was going to get his travel wager written up as a formal contract.

Fallace said to Macilente, “Now, out upon thee, Judas! Can’t thou be content to backbite thy friend, but thou must also betray him? Will thou seek the undoing and ruin of any man? And of such a man, too?”

She then asked Deliro, “And will you, sir, get your living by the counsel of traitors?”

A living is an income. Deliro could get Fastidious Brisk’s land and get the income from it.

“Dear wife, have patience,” Deliro said.

“The house will fall, the ground will open and swallow us!” Fallace said. “I’ll not stay here for all the gold and silver in heaven.”

Fallace exited.

“Oh, good Macilente, let’s follow and appease her, or the peace of my life is at an end,” Deliro said.

Deliro exited.

“Now peas, and not peace, feed that life whose head hangs so heavily over a woman’s manger!” Macilente said.

Peas are horse-fodder — and ass-fodder.

A manger can be 1) a sumptuous feast, or 2) an open box or trough from which animals can eat fodder.

The reader can decide for him- or herself which definition better applies to what Deliro's wife metaphorically provides him.

Macilente exited.

Fallace ran into a room, shut the door, and called, "Help me, brother!"

Deliro was outside the door.

She told him, "By God's body, if you come here, I'll do myself an evil!"

Deliro said, "Nay, hear me, sweet wife, unless thou will have me go, I will not go."

He would not leave the house to have Fastidious Brisk arrested without her permission.

"Tut, you shall never have that advantage of me, to say you are undone and ruined by me," Fallace said. "I'll not bid you stay, I won't."

She gave Fungoso money and said:

"Brother, sweet brother, here's four angels — gold coins — I'll give you toward your suit of clothing. For the love of Jesus, and as ever you were born a Christian, make haste to the water-side — you know where Master Fastidious is accustomed to land — and give him warning of my husband's intent, and tell him of that lean rascal's — Macilente's — treachery.

"Oh, Jesus, how my flesh — gorge — rises at him!

"Nay, sweet brother, make haste. You may say I would have written to him, but that the necessity of the time would not allow it — he cannot choose but take it as an extraordinary sign of favor from me — and commend me to him, good brother.

“Say that I sent you.”

Fallace exited.

Fungoso said to himself, “Let me see: These four angels, and then forty shillings more I can borrow on my gown in Fetter Lane by pawning it — well, I will go soon, try on my suit of clothing, pay as much money as I have, and swear myself into credit with my tailor for the rest.”

Fungoso exited.

— 4.2 —

Deliro and Macilente spoke together.

“Oh, on my soul, you wrong her, Macilente,” Deliro said. “Although she is froward — unruly — yet I know she is honest and chaste.”

“Well, then I have no judgment,” Macilente said. “Would any woman, but one who were wild and licentious in her affections, have broken out into that immodest and violent passion against her husband? Or is it possible —”

“If you love me, stop,” Deliro said. “All the arguments in the world shall never wrest my heart to believe it.”

Macilente and Deliro exited.

Cordatus asked Mitis, “How do you like the depiction of Deliro’s dotage concerning his wife?”

Mitis replied:

“Oh, strangely and uncommonly, and of the other’s malice, too, who labors so seriously to set debate between a man and his wife.

“Wait, here comes the knight adventurer.”

“Aye, and his scrivener comes with him,” Cordatus said.

A scrivener is a notary who can write legal contracts and other documents.

— 4.3 —

Puntarvolo and a notary talked together. Also present were a serving-man leading Puntarvolo's dog and a serving-man holding Puntarvolo's cat.

"I wonder that Monsieur Fastidious hasn't come!" Puntarvolo said. "But notary, if thou will please take notes on the indentures — the legal contract — while we wait, I will give thee the theory."

The theory was the terms and conditions: the rules that must be followed.

Fastidious Brisk was supposed to wager that Puntarvolo, his dog, and his cat would not successfully journey to Constantinople and back in the time allotted.

"With all my heart, sir, and I'll write them down immediately," the notary said.

"Well then, first, the amount of the wager is to be clearly written," Puntarvolo said.

Writing down notes, the notary said, "Good, sir."

"Next, our different names and the distinctive markings of my dog and my cat must be known," Puntarvolo said.

He said to a serving-man, "Show him the cat, sirrah."

"So, sir," the notary said.

Puntarvolo said, "Then, write that the intended destination is the Turk's court in Constantinople; the time limited for our return, a year; and that if any of us — me, my dog, or my cat — miscarry and fail to return on time, the whole venture —

the whole amount of the wager — is lost — these are general articles, do thou understand? — or if any of us turn Turk.”

“Turn Turk” can mean 1) become a Muslim, 2) go to work for the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire (and become a traitor to one’s country), and/or 3) engage in homosexual acts with boys.

If Puntarvolo, his dog, or his cat were to turn Turk and do any of the above activities, then Puntarvolo would lose his wager.

“Aye, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo said:

“Now for particulars:

“That I may make my travels by sea or land, to my best liking; and that, hiring a coach for myself, it shall be lawful for my dog and my cat to ride with me in the said coach.”

“Very good, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo continued:

“That I may choose to or choose not to give my dog or my cat fish, for fear of bones, or any other nutriment that, by the judgment of the most authentic and authoritative physicians where I travel, shall be thought dangerous.”

“That is well, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo continued:

“That, after the receipt of his money, Fastidious Brisk shall neither in his own person, nor any other, either by direct or indirect means, as magic, witchcraft, or other such exotic and foreign arts, attempt, practice, or conspire anything to the injury of me, my dog, or my cat; neither shall I use the help of any such sorceries or enchantments, such as ointments, to

make our skins impenetrable, or to travel invisible by virtue of a powder or a ring, or to hang any three-forked charm about my dog's neck, secretly conveyed into his collar — do you understand? — but that all shall be performed sincerely, without fraud or imposture.”

In the Middle Ages, before trials by combat, the participants swore that they were not using any enchantments.

“So, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo continued:

“That, for testimony of the performance — proof that I actually completed my journey — I myself am to bring from Constantinople a Turk's mustachio, my dog a hare's lip, and my cat the train or tail of a rat.”

A train can be a trap or snare.

“It is done, sir,” the notary said. “I have written it down.”

Puntarvolo said:

“It is said, sir, not done, sir.

“But let's go forward:

“That upon my return and landing on the Tower Wharf with the aforesaid testimony, I am to receive five for one, according to the proportion of the sums wagered.”

Fastidious Brisk was wagering five to one that Puntarvolo or his dog or his cat would not return by the appointed time. If they returned on time, he would pay Puntarvolo five hundred pounds.

“That is well, sir,” the notary said.

Puntarvolo said:

“Provided that, if before our departure or setting-forth, either I myself or my dog or my cat should be visited with sickness or any other unexpected accident, so that the whole course of the adventure be hindered thereby, that then the wager is off. He is to return, and I am to receive the prementioned proportion, upon fair and equal terms. In other words, all money wagered is to be returned.”

“Very good, sir,” the notary said. “Is this all?”

Puntarvolo said, “It is all, sir, and dispatch it all, good notary. Write out the legal contract.”

“As fast as is possible, sir,” the notary said.

He exited.

Seeing Carlo Buffone coming toward him, Puntarvolo said, “Oh, Carlo, welcome. Have you seen Monsieur Brisk?”

“Not I,” Carlo Buffone said. “Did he make an appointment to meet you here?”

“Aye, and I wonder that he should be so tardy,” Puntarvolo said. “He is to wager a hundred pounds on my venture, if he maintains his promise.”

“Is his hour past?” Carlo Buffone asked. “Has he missed his appointment?”

“Not yet, but the end of it comes on quickly,” Puntarvolo said.

“Tut, don’t be mistrustful of him,” Carlo Buffone said. “He will sooner break all the ten commandments than his hour. Upon my life in such a case, trust him.”

“I think, Carlo, that you look very smooth?” Puntarvolo said. “Huh?”



“Smooth” can mean 1) clean-shaven, or 2) glib and flattering.

“Why, I come but now from a hothouse, so I must necessarily look smooth,” Carlo Buffone said.

A hothouse can be 1) a bathhouse, or 2) a whorehouse.

“From a hothouse?” Puntarvolo said.

“Aye, do you make a wonder of it?” Carlo Buffone said. “Why, it’s your only medicine. Let a man sweat once a week in a hothouse and be well rubbed and frotted with a good plump juicy wench, and sweet, fresh linen, and he shall never have the pox.”

“Frotted” means massaged or rubbed, including sexual rubbing.

“What!” Puntarvolo said. “The French pox?”

“The French pox? Our pox!” Carlo Buffone said. “By God’s blood, we have the pox in as good form as they, man, what!”

The French pox is syphilis, but pox can also be the plague.

“Let me perish and go to hell, but I must say that thou are a villain,” Puntarvolo said. “Was your newly created gallant there with you? Sogliardo?”

“Oh, porpoise!” Carlo Buffone said. “Hang him, no!”

Porpoises were thought to be neither flesh nor fish. They lived in the sea, but they kept jumping out of the water.

Sogliardo was not born a gentleman, but he became one by paying money.

Carlo Buffone said, “He’s a lodger at Horn’s Ordinary, yonder. His villainous Ganymede — Cavalier Shift — and

he have been puffing a tobacco pipe there as if he were puffing a bagpipe, ever since yesterday noon.”

Ganymede was a beautiful youth who became the cup-bearer and lover of Jupiter, king of the gods.

“Who? Signor Tripartite, the man who would give my dog the whiff and teach him how to smoke?” Puntarvolo asked.

Cavalier Shift was also known as Apple-John and Signor Whiff, and so he had three names.

Carlo Buffone said:

“Aye, he.

“They have hired a chamber and tobacco paraphernalia, private, to practice in, for the making of the patun, the receipt reciprocal, and a number of other mysteries not yet seen in public.”

“Patun” was a Native American name for tobacco.

The receipt reciprocal may be a French form of smoking in which the smoker inhales simultaneously with mouth and nose.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“I brought some dozen or twenty gallants this morning to view them, as you’d do a piece of perspective, in at a keyhole.”

In perspective painting one looked at the image through a peephole that was attached to the frame at an oblique angle. Look at it straight on and the picture was distorted.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“And there we might see Sogliardo sit in a chair, holding his snout up like a sow under an apple-tree, while the other

opened his nostrils with a poking-stick to give the smoke a more free delivery. They had spit some three- or fourscore ounces of phlegm between them before we came away.”

“What!” Puntarvolo said. “Spit three- or fourscore ounces!”

“Aye, and preserved it in soup bowls, as a barber does his blood when he pricks a vein,” Carlo Buffone said.

Barbers would bleed some patients as a medical treatment to restore the correct proportion of their humors. In the Middle Ages, barbers were also surgeons.

“Get out, pagan and infidel!” Puntarvolo said. “How do thou prick the vein of thy friend!”

Carlo Buffone casually said bad things about Sogliardo behind his back. This offended Puntarvolo’s sense of honor.

“Friend?” Carlo Buffone said. “Is there any such foolish thing in the world? Ha? By God’s eyelid, I have never yet relished friendship.”

“Thy humor is the more dangerous,” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone’s humor was to be cynical. This was more dangerous than friendship.

Carlo Buffone said:

“No, not a whit, signor.

“Tut, a man must keep time in all situations: He must suit his behavior to the situation. I can oil my tongue and speak flatteringly when I meet him next and look with a good slick — sleek and smooth and pleasant — forehead; it will take away all soil of suspicion, and that’s enough.

“What Lynceus can see my heart?”

Lynceus was one of the Argonauts who sailed with Jason on the *Argo*. His eyesight was so keen that he could see objects buried underground.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Pish, the title of a friend, it’s a vain idle thing, only venerable and respectable among fools.

“No one who has any reputation for wit and intelligence will affect it.”

Deliro and Macilente entered the scene.

“God save you, good Sir Puntarvolo,” Deliro said.

“Signor Deliro!” Puntarvolo said. “Welcome.”

“I ask you, sir, did you see Master Fastidious Brisk?” Deliro said. “I heard he was to meet Your Worship here.”

“You heard no incorrect statement, sir,” Puntarvolo said. “I expect him every minute that my watch strikes.”

Some watches struck the hour — not the minute.

Travelers were advised not to carry such watches: Someone could hear the chime and know that the person wearing the watch had money. Such watches were expensive.

“In good time, sir,” Deliro said.

This was a polite way to end a conversation.

He walked aside with Macilente.

Carlo Buffone pointed to Deliro and said:

“There’s a fellow now, who looks like one of the stern patricians of Sparta. By the Virgin Mary, his wit’s after ten in the hundred.”

Ten percent interest was the legally allowed amount.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“A good bloodhound, a close-mouthed dog, he follows the scent well.”

A moment later, he said:

“By the Virgin Mary, he’s at a fault now, I think.”

Bloodhounds were silent while following a scent. They bayed when they saw the prey.

Being at a fault means: He’s lost the scent.

“I would marvel at any creature who is free from the danger and dominion of thy tongue,” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone was quick to talk about people behind their back.

“Oh,” Carlo Buffone said, “I cannot abide these limbs of satin, or rather Satan indeed, that’ll walk like the children of darkness all day in a melancholy shop, with their pockets full of blanks, ready to swallow up as many poor unthrifths as come within the Verge.”

Tradesmen wore satin jackets.

The limbs of Satan were the devils that follow Satan’s orders.

The children of darkness were dishonest shopkeepers.

A melancholy shop was poorly lit on purpose so that customers couldn’t clearly see the lack of quality of the goods offered for sale.

Blanks were contracts with blank areas to be filled in.

The Verge was an area where people could not be arrested for debt.

“So, and what have thou for him who is with him now?” Puntarvolo asked.

The person with Deliro now was Macilente, who was wearing a new suit of clothes.

“Oh, damn me, immortality!” Carlo Buffone said. “I’ll not meddle with him, the pure element of fire, all spirit, extraction.”

The four elements were fire, water, earth, and air.

Extraction is an alchemical process that was supposed to produce the essence of something.

Carlo Buffone was cynical and harsh-talking; Macilente could match Carlo’s words and even best him. Therefore, Carlo would leave him alone — may immortality damn Carlo if he did not.

“What, Carlo!” Puntarvolo said. “Ha, who is he, man?”

Carlo Buffone replied, “He is a scholar named Macilente. Don’t you know him? A lank and lean raw-boned skeleton, he walks up and down like a charged musket, no man dares encounter him. That’s his rest there.”

The “rest” was Deliro, who was Macilente’s support. A rest is a support for a musket.

“His rest?” Puntarvolo said. “Why, has he a forked head?”

A forked head has horns that can be used as a rest for a musket.

In Ben Jonson’s society, people joked that a cuckold — a man with an unfaithful wife — had invisible horns growing on his head.

“Pardon me, that’s to be suspended,” Carlo Buffone said.

He wanted to suspend the joke.

“You are too quick, too perceptive,” Carlo Buffone added.

Puntarvolo caught onto his jokes quickly and matched his puns and similes.

They walked aside.

Deliro and Macilente returned.

Deliro said to Macilente, “Indeed, now I think on it — think about arresting Fastidious Brisk for debt — I’ll defer it until some other time.”

“By God’s precious blood, not by any means, signor, you shall not lose this opportunity,” Macilente said. “He will be here soon now.”

“Yes, indeed, Macilente, it is best not to pursue the arrest now,” Deliro said. “For look, sir, I shall so exceedingly offend my wife in it that —”

Macilente said:

“Your wife?”

“Now for shame, lose these thoughts and become the master of your own spirits.”

“Spirits” can be semen.

Macilente said:

“Should I, if I had a wife, suffer myself to be thus passionately carried to and fro with the stream of her humor? And should I neglect my deepest affairs of business to serve her affections? By God’s blood, I would geld myself first.”

“Oh, but signor, if you had such a wife as mine is, you would —” Deliro said.

Many men with a wife like that would castrate themselves, at least metaphorically. Maybe more than metaphorically.

Macilente said:

“Such a wife?”

“Now God hate me, sir, if ever I discerned any wonder in your wife yet, with all the power of sight I have. I have seen some who have been thought fairer than she, in my time; and I have seen those who have not been altogether so tall, esteemed proper handsome women; and I have seen less — smaller — noses grow upon sweeter faces, who have done very well, too, in my judgment.

“But in good faith, signor, for all this, the gentlewoman is a good pretty-proud and hard-favored — very proud but unpleasant — thing, by the Virgin Mary, not so peerlessly — without equal — to be doted upon, I must confess.

“Nay, don’t be angry.”

Deliro said, “Well, sir, however you please to forget yourself and behave inexcusably, I have not deserved to be thus played upon. But henceforth, I tell you to keep away from my house, for I can scarcely endure the smell of a person’s breath at my table who shall thus treat me like a jade and insult me in return for my courtesies.”

A jade is a poor-quality horse.

“Then, signor,” Macilente said, “let me tell you that your wife is no proper woman, by Jesus, and I suspect her chastity, what’s more, which you may likewise suspect, if you please. Do you see? I’ll urge you to nothing against your inclinations, but if you please, you may suspect it.”

“Good, sir,” Deliro said.



This was a polite response, but Deliro did not believe Macilente.

Deliro exited.

Macilente said, ““Good, sir”? Now may horn upon horn pursue thee, thou blind egregious dotard! May you be cuckolded over and over.”

Carlo Buffone said quietly to Puntarvolo, “Oh, you shall hear him speak like Envy — like Malice.”

He then said out loud, “Signor Macilente, have you seen Monsieur Brisk lately? I heard you were with him at the court.”

“Aye, Buffone, I was with him,” Macilente replied.

“And how is he respected there?” Carlo Buffone asked. “I know you’ll speak plainly and truthfully to us. Is he made much of among the sweeter sort of gallants?”

The sweeter sort of gallants are the perfumed gallants.

“Indeed, aye, his civet — his perfume — and his casting glass — his bottle for sprinkling perfume — have helped him to a place among the other perfumed gallants, and there his seniors give him good slight looks in their fashion, and they smile and greet in French with some new compliment,” Macilente said.

“What, is this all?” Carlo Buffone said.

Macilente said:

“Why, suppose that they should show the frothy, frivolous fool such grace as they pretend comes from the heart. Then he would have a mighty windfall and it would benefit him, no doubt.”

The windfall would be something good he did not expect, but it would consist of wind — empty talk.

Macilente continued:

“Why, all their graces are not to do grace to virtue or desert, but to ride both with their gilt spurs quite breathless away from themselves.”

This kind of riding was deriding.

The courtiers don’t care to show favor to virtue or merit; instead, they drive — deride — them away.

Macilente continued:

“It is now esteemed precisianism in wit — pedantical and puritanical — and a disease in human nature to be kind toward earned merit, to love or seek good reputations.

“Who feeds himself with a good reputation? Who thrives with lovingly serving the commonwealth and doing acts of charity?

“Who can provide a feast for his own desires by serving others? Ha, ha, ha!

“It is folly by our wisest worldlings proved,

“If not to gain by love, to be beloved.”

In other words: It is foolish to be beloved unless you can benefit in some way from the person who loves you.

Carlo Buffone said to Puntarvolo, “How do you like him? Isn’t he a good spiteful slave? Ha?”

“Shrewd, shrewd,” Puntarvolo said.

These days, the word “shrewd” is positive. In Ben Jonson’s day, the word was negative and meant “evil-minded.”

Who is shrewd?

Carlo Buffone? Macilente?

Both.

“Damn me, I could eat his flesh now, divine sweet villain,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Nay, please stop,” Macilente said.

He did not want approval and attention from Carlo Buffone. He did not want to be called “divine sweet villain” by him.

Drawing Carlo aside, he asked him about Puntarvolo, “Who’s he there?”

Carlo Buffone quietly replied, “Who? This man in the stiffened-by-starch beard? It’s the dull stiff — pompous and straight-backed — knight Puntarvolo, man. He’s to travel now, very soon; he has a good knotty intelligence, by the Virgin Mary — he carries little intelligence out of the land with him.”

According to Carlo Buffone, Puntarvolo was knotty-pated; in other words, he was a knot-head or blockhead.

“How then?” Macilente said.

“He puts his intelligence forth in venture, as he does his money, upon the return of a dog and a cat,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Is this he?” Macilente said.

“Aye, this is he, a good tough gentleman,” Carlo Buffone said. “He looks like a chine of brawn — a sirloin roast of boar — at Shrovetide, out of date and ready to be thrown out, or a store of dried, salted cod upon Easter-Eve, cod that is left over from the cod that has furnished the table all Lent, as he has done the city this last vacation.”

During the vacation — Shrovetide and Lent — Puntarvolo was keeping some people such as the notary busy.

“Come, you’ll never leave your back-stabbing similes,” Macilente said. “I shall catch you aiming at me with them by and by, but —”

“Oh, renounce me then!” Carlo Buffone said. “Pure, honest, good devil, I love thee above my love for women: I could even melt in admiration of thee now. By God’s soul, look here, man. Here come Sir Dagonet and his squire.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, one kind of “melting” was having a sexual orgasm.

Carlo Buffone was calling Sogliardo Sir Dagonet, the Fool in stories about King Arthur and the Round Table. Sogliardo’s squire is Cavalier Shift.

Sogliardo and Cavalier Shift walked over to them.

Sogliardo said, “May God save you, my dear gallantos.”

By “gallantos,” Sogliardo meant “gallants.” The Italian *gallante* means the adjective “gallant.” The Italian *galano* means “wears gay clothing.” The Italian *galantino* means “pretty” or “darling.”

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift, “Nay, come, approach, good cavalier.”

He then said to Puntarvolo, “Please, sweet knight, become acquainted with this gentleman; he’s one whom it pleases me to treat as my good friend and companion, and therefore do him kindnesses and favors.”

He said to all the others about Cavalier Shift, “I beseech you, gentles, to become acquainted with him and know him.”

“Sir, for Signor Sogliardo’s sake, let it suffice I know you,” Puntarvolo said.

“Why, by Jesus, I thank you, knight, and it shall suffice,” Sogliardo said. “Listen, Sir Puntarvolo, you’d little think it, but he’s as brave a piece of man-flesh as any is in the world.”

“Indeed, sir?” Puntarvolo said.

“Upon my gentility, sir, on my word as a gentleman,” Sogliardo said.

He then said to Carlo Buffone, “Carlo, a word with you.”

He pointed to Cavalier Shift and said, “Do you see that same fellow there?”

“Who? Cavalier Shift?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Oh, you know him,” Sogliardo said. “I cry you mercy! I beg your pardon! Before God, I think that he is the tallest — most valiant — man living within the walls of Europe.”

“The walls of Europe!” Carlo Buffone said. “Take heed what you say, signor. Europe’s a huge thing within the walls.”

Sogliardo said, “Tut, if the walls were as huge again — twice as huge — I’d still affirm what I speak. By God’s eyelid, he swaggered even now in a place where we were. I never saw a man do it more resolutely.”

“Nay, indeed, swaggering is a good argument of resolution,” Carlo Buffone said.

In one sense, no. In another sense, yes.

Resolution can mean 1) confidence and steadfastness of mind, or 2) decay.

Resolute men ought not to swagger and especially they ought not to swagger among prostitutes who can give them venereal disease.

Carlo Buffone asked Macilente, “Do you hear this, signor?”

“Aye, to my grief,” Macilente said.

He then said to himself:

“Oh, that such muddy flags — dirty battle-standards — for every drunken flourish should achieve the name and reputation of manhood, while true perfect valor, hating to show itself out of modesty, goes by despised!”

A flourish is a wave of a sword in the air.

Macilente continued:

“By God’s blood, I do surely know now, in a fair just cause, I dare do more than he, a thousand times. Why shouldn’t they — notable people — take knowledge of this, huh? And give my worth allowance before his? Because I cannot swagger. Now may the pox alight on your Pickt-hatch prowess!”

Pickt-hatch is a London district frequented by prostitutes.

Sogliardo said:

“Why, I tell you, sir, he has been the only bid-stand — highwayman — who ever was, and kept Newmarket, Salisbury Plain, Hockley-i’the-Hole, Gad’s Hill, all the chief places that people talk about.

“He has had his mares and his geldings, he has, which have been worth forty, threescore, a hundred pounds a horse, and would have sprung you over hedge and ditch like your greyhound.

“He has done five hundred robberies in his time, more or less, I assure you.”

“What!” Puntarvolo said. “And escaped?”

“Escaped!” Sogliardo said. “Indeed, aye. He has broken the jail when he has been in irons and more irons, and been out and in again, and out and in, forty times and not so few, he.”

Macilente said to himself, “Sogliardo is a fit trumpet to proclaim such a person.”

“But can this be possible?” Carlo Buffone asked.

Cavalier Shift said, “Why it is nothing, sir, when a man gives his affections — his emotional commitment — to it.”

Sogliardo said, “Good Pylades, tell about a robbery or two, to satisfy these gentlemen of thy worth.”

Pylades and Orestes were two good friends. When Agamemnon returned home to Greece after fighting the Trojan War for ten years, his wife, Clytemnestra, killed him. She had taken a lover during the years that he was away from home. Her son, Orestes, killed her because she killed his father, and Orestes was sentenced to die. His friend Pylades was willing to die in Orestes’ place, although Orestes did not want him to, so both told the executioners, “I am Orestes!”

Cavalier Shift replied, “Pardon me, my dear Orestes, causes have their quiddities, and it is ill jesting with bell-ropes.”

“Causes” could be 1) law cases, or 2) reasons. Law cases have their abstruse legal points that common citizens don’t know, and robberies have some points that are kept secret from those who are not robbers because if word gets out about who committed a robbery, the robber can be hung.

Cavalier Shift was reluctant for good reason to talk about robberies in front of people he did not know.

A hanged criminal was called a “gallows-clapper.”

Clappers were the tongues of bells.

A proverb stated: “No jesting with the bell-ropes.”

Jests about robberies to the wrong people could get one hung.

“What?” Carlo Buffone said. “Pylades and Orestes?”

Sogliardo replied, “Aye, he is my Pylades, and I am his Orestes. How do you like the comparison?”

Carlo Buffone replied, “Oh, it’s an old-fashioned and stale interlude entertainment. No, I’ll give you names myself. Look, he shall be your Judas, and you shall be his elder tree to hang on.”

Judas, who betrayed Jesus, hanged himself from an elder tree. In the comparison, Cavalier Shift was a hanger-on to Sogliardo.

Macilente said, “Nay, rather, let him be Captain Pod, and this his motion, for he does nothing but show him.”

A motion is a puppet or a puppet-show, and Captain Pod was a puppet master. Sogliardo was showing off Cavalier Shift: his puppet.

“Excellent!” Carlo Buffone said. “Or thus: You shall be Holden, and he your camel.”

Holden was an animal-trainer.

“You do not mean to ride, gentlemen?” Cavalier Shift said.

In addition to “ride” as in riding a camel, “ride” can mean 1) harass, and 2) sexually ride.

“Indeed, let me end this nicknaming game for you, gallants,” Puntarvolo said. “You shall be his Countenance, and he shall be your Resolution.”

Sogliardo will give Cavalier Shift a countenance (income), and he will countenance (approve of) Shift’s criminal behavior.



Cavalier Shift will be Sogliardo's resolution, or swaggerer. He will swagger around Sogliardo and tell him stories about robberies.

Resolution can mean determination, as in having a resolute temper. It can also mean decay, as of one's body — and it can mean death. Cavalier Shift's kind of resolution was swaggering.

"Indeed, that's pretty," Sogliardo said. "What do you say, cavalier, shall it be so?"

"Aye, aye," Carlo Buffone said. "Most voices — the majority — approve."

"Indeed, I am easily yielding to any good impressions," Cavalier Shift said.

Something that is resolute is firm; wax is softened so that it can take an impression of a seal.

"Then give hands, good Resolution," Sogliardo said. "Let's shake hands."

"By the Mass, Cavalier Shift cannot say good Countenance now, properly, to Sogliardo again," Carlo Buffone said.

Sogliardo does not have a good countenance: He is ugly. But he can pay a good countenance: a good maintenance, or allowance.

"Yes, by an irony," Puntarvolo said.

Macilente said, "Oh, sir, the countenance of Resolution should, as he's altogether grim and unpleasant."

Resolution is Cavalier Shift. He and his stories are morally repugnant, and so his countenance should be ugly. He is the hanger-on to Sogliardo, who is his countenance and who is ugly.

The irony is that the wrong man is ugly.

Fastidious Brisk entered the scene.

He said:

“May good hours make music with your mirth, gentlemen, and keep time to your humors. May the times match your good humor.

“How are you now, Carlo?”

“Monsieur Brisk!” Puntarvolo said. “Many a long look have I extended for you, sir.”

Fastidious Brisk said:

“In good faith, I must ask your pardon. I was invited this morning, before I was out of my bed, by a bevy of ladies to a banquet of fruit and wine, whence it was almost one of Hercules’ twelve labors for me to come away, but that the respect of my promise did so prevail with me. I know they’ll take it very ill, especially one who gave me this bracelet of her hair as a love-token just last night, and this pearl another gave me that was dangling from her forehead; by the Virgin Mary, she —

“— what, are the writings ready?”

“I will send my man to find out,” Puntarvolo said.

He said to a serving-man, “Sirrah, go you to the notary’s and learn if he is ready. Leave the dog, sir.”

The serving-man exited.

Fastidious Brisk said:

“And how does my splendidly qualified and distinguished friend, Sogliardo?”

“Oh, Signor Macilente! By these eyes, I didn’t see you, I would have greeted you sooner else, I swear on my truth.”

He said quietly to Macilente, “I hope, sir, I may presume upon you that you will not divulge my recent embarrassment or disgrace, indeed, sir.”

“You may, sir,” Macilente said.

Seeing, but not hearing, this exchange, Carlo Buffone said to himself, “By God’s heart, Macilente knows some notorious deed about this fool, and so he has Fastidious behaving so obsequiously and deferentially to him.”

Indicating Cavalier Shift, Sogliardo said, “Monsieur Fastidious, do you see this fellow there? Doesn’t he look like a clown? Would you think there’s anything in him?”

In this culture, clowns were rustics and peasants.

“Anything in him?” Fastidious Brisk said. “Curse me, aye, the fellow has a good ingenious — clever — face.”

“By this element — the sky — he is as ingenious and tall — clever and brave — a man as ever swaggered about London,” Sogliardo said. “He and I call each other Countenance and Resolution, but his name is Cavalier Shift.”

Puntarvolo said to Cavalier Shift, “Cavalier, did you know Signor Clog, who was hanged for the robbery at Harrow-on-the-hill?”

“Clogs” were heavy pieces of wood attached to a prisoner’s leg or neck in order to prevent escape. As a name, the word “Clog” means “Blockhead.”

“Know him, sir!” Sogliardo said. “Why, it was he who gave all the directions for the action.”

“What?” Puntarvolo said to Cavalier Shift. “Was it your project, sir?”

Cavalier Shift said to Sogliardo, “Pardon me, Countenance, you do me some wrong to make public that which I imparted to you in private.”

“By God’s will, here are none but friends, Resolution,” Sogliardo said.

“That’s all one,” Cavalier Shift said. “That doesn’t matter. Things of consequence must have their respects, for example regarding where, how, and to whom they are imparted.”

He then said to Puntarvolo:

“Yes, sir, he showed himself a true clog in the uniting together of that affair, sir; for if he had managed matters as they were corroborated and confirmed and entrusted to him, it would have been better for him by forty score or fifty score of pounds, sir, and he himself might have lived, in spite of Fate, to have fed on woodcocks with the rest.

“But it was his heavy fortunes to sink, poor Clog, and therefore let us talk no more about him.”

Clog had impeded his own actions by not following the plan, and so he had been caught. If he had followed the plan, he would have made money and been able to feast on woodcocks at an eating-place. So said Cavalier Shift.

“Why, had he more agents, then?” Puntarvolo asked.

“Oh, God, sir, aye, there were some present there who were the Nine Worthies to him, indeed,” Sogliardo said.

The Nine Worthies were nine great men: three from the Bible, three from classical times, and three from romances.

The three from the Bible were Joshua, King David, and Judas Maccabaeus.

The three from classical times were Hector of Troy, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar.

The three from romances were King Arthur, Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon (or sometimes Sir Guy of Warwick).

Cavalier Shift said:

“Aye, sir, I can satisfy you and give you more information at a more convenient conversation.

“But, for my own part, I have now reconciled myself to other courses of action, and I now earn a living out of my other skills and qualities.”

Sogliardo said to the others:

“He has left all that criminal behavior now, I assure you, and he is able to live like a gentleman by his quality.

“By this dog, he has the most rare gift in tobacco that ever you knew.”

Carlo Buffone said to Macilente, “By God’s heart, he keeps more ado with this monster than ever Banks did with his horse, or the fellow with the elephant.”

Banks had a famous horse that he had trained. His horse would bow when Queen Elizabeth I of England or King James VI of Scotland was mentioned, and it would bite when the King of Spain was mentioned.

The elephant had been often exhibited and perhaps was trained to do tricks.

Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, “He will shortly hang out his picture painted on a cloth banner — he will advertise himself — you shall see.”

“Oh, he does manage a quarrel the best that ever you saw, for terms and circumstances,” Sogliardo said. “He knows all about dueling.”

Fastidious Brisk said:

“Good faith, signor, now you speak of a quarrel, I’ll acquaint you with a difference that happened between a gallant and myself.

“Sir Puntarvolo, you would know him if I should name him. He is Signor Luculento.”

“Luculento!” Puntarvolo said. “What inauspicious chance interposed itself between the friendship of you two?”

Fastidious Brisk answered:

“Indeed, sir, the same that sundered Agamemnon and great Thetis’ son.”

Thetis’ son is Achilles. In the first book of Homer’s *Iliad*, he and Agamemnon quarreled. One way to look at the quarrel is that it was over women. When Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek army, lost his sex-slave, he took the sex-slave of Achilles, the greatest warrior of the Trojan War. (A better way to look at the quarrel is that it was over honor; Achilles was dishonored by Agamemnon, so Achilles declined to fight in the war.)

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“But let the cause escape, sir. Never mind the cause.

“He sent me a challenge, mixed with some few threats and boasts, which I responded to, and in short we met. Now, indeed, sir, I must tell you, he did fight at first very desperately, but without judgment; for look, sir, I cast myself into this figure.”

He struck a fencing pose.

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“Now he comes violently on, and, while he was advancing his rapier to strike, I thought to have hit his arm, for he had left his whole body open to my attack, and I was sure he could not recover his guard.

“Sir, I missed my purpose in his arm, for I slashed his doublet sleeve, ran him close by the left cheek, and through his hair.

“He in return struck me here — I had a gold cable hatband then in the latest fashion, which I wore about a mulberry-colored broad-brimmed French hat that I had. He cut my hatband (and yet it was massive, goldsmith’s work). He cut my hat brims, which, by good fortune, being thick-embroidered with gold twist and spangles, disappointed the force of the blow; nevertheless, his stroke grazed on my shoulder, and cut and took away six purls — loops of frilly lace edging on my collar — of an Italian cutwork collar I wore. It cost me three pounds in the Royal Exchange just three days before.”

“This was a strange encounter,” Puntarvolo said.

They were dueling, but the only thing being injured was their clothing.

Fastidious Brisk replied, “You shall hear, sir.”

He continued his description of the duel:

“With this we both fell out and rested and caught our breath.

“Now, upon the second sign of his assault, I resumed the former manner of my defense. He, on the other side, abandoned his body to the same danger as before, and followed me still with blows. But I, being loath to take the deadly advantage that lay before me of his left side, made a kind of stramazoun — a downright blow — and I ran him up

to the hilts, through the doublet, through the shirt, and yet missed the skin.

“He, making a reverse blow — a backhand stroke — fell upon my embossed belt — I had thrown off the hangers for daggers and swords a little before — and he struck off a skirt of a thick-laced satin doublet I had, lined with some four taffetas, cut off two panes of cloth embroidered with pearl, and cut through the drawings-out of tissue, entered the linings, and skipped the flesh.”

Some jackets had slits cut in them to display the cloth underneath. The cloth could be pulled through the slits so it could be better seen. The cloth was of a different color than the jacket.

Carlo Buffone said to Macilente, “I marvel that he hasn’t mentioned his embroidered shirt.”

Fastidious Brisk continued his description of the duel:

“Here, because of the mutual damage we had done to each other, we paused.”

Well, damage to each other’s clothing, anyway.

Fastidious Brisk continued his description of the duel:

“But, before I proceed, I must tell you, signor, that in this last encounter, not having leisure to put off my silver spurs, one of the rowels caught hold of the ruffle of my boot, and, being Spanish leather and subject to tear, it overthrew and tripped me, tore two pairs of silk stockings that I put on — being somewhat a raw morning, a peach color and another — and struck some half-inch deep into the side of the calf.”

This was the first blood of the duel.

Fastidious Brisk fell because of the clothing he was wearing, which was not suitable to a duel. His opponent did not



wound him; instead, Fastidious tripped because one of the rowels on his spurs caught on the top of one of his high boots, which was turned down in accordance with fashion. As Fastidious fell, his rowel cut him.

Fastidious Brisk continued his description of the duel:

“He, seeing the blood come, immediately took to his horse and rode away.”

Because his opponent fled, Fastidious Brisk won the duel.

Fastidious Brisk continued his description of the duel:

“I, having bound up my wound with a piece of my embroidered shirt —”

Carlo Buffone said quietly to Macilente, “Oh, now he mentions his embroidered shirt.”

Fastidious Brisk continued:

“— I rode after him, and, alighting at the court-gate both together, we embraced and marched hand in hand up into the royal presence chamber.”

By riding to the court, Fastidious Brisk’s opponent could get sanctuary and avoid arrest for dueling.

By embracing his opponent, Fastidious Brisk publicly showed that he thought that his opponent had fought well. Others may disagree.

Macilente said quietly to Carlo Buffone, “Well, by this we can guess what apparel the gentlemen wore.”

“Before God, it was an undertaking begun with much resolution, maintained with as much prowess, and ended with more humanity,” Puntarvolo said.

Puntarvolo, the knight, was perhaps sarcastic.

Seeing his serving-man return, Puntarvolo asked, "How are things now? What does the notary say?"

The serving-man answered, "The notary says he is ready, sir; he waits only at Your Worship's pleasure."

Puntarvolo said to Fastidious Brisk, "Come, we will go to him, monsieur."

He then said to the others, "Gentlemen, shall we entreat you to be witnesses?"

"You shall entreat me, sir," Sogliardo said. "Come, Resolution."

"I follow you, good Countenance," Cavalier Shift said.

Carlo Buffone said to Macilente, "Come signor, come, come."

Macilente said to himself, "Oh, that there should be fortune to clothe these men, so naked and devoid of merit, and that the just and well-deserved storm and affliction of a wretched life does not beat them ragged for their wretched souls, since they are not only as fruitless as coals, but also as black as coals!"

The actors exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, "Why, but signor, how does it happen that Fungoso did not give his sister's information to Brisk?"

That information was that Deliro wanted to have him arrested for debt.

Cordatus answered, "By the Virgin Mary, because of the evil angels — money and demons — that she gave him, who have indeed tempted the good simple youth to follow the tail of the fashion and neglect the request of his friends."

The four angels were evil angels because they tempted Fungoso to neglect the message that his sister had given to him and instead to order new clothing for himself.

Cordatus then said, “Look, here Fungoso comes, very worshipfully attended, and with good variety.”

A number of people were following Fungoso and flattering him by calling him “Your Worship.”

— 4.4 —

Fungoso walked on stage. Following him were his tailor, shoemaker, and haberdasher.

“Great thanks, good shoemaker,” Fungoso said. “I’ll get my own shoe-ribbons myself.”

The ribbons were used to lace shoes.

The shoemaker exited.

Fungoso said to the haberdasher, “Now, sir, let me see, how much money must you have for this hat?”

“Here’s the bill, sir,” the haberdasher said, presenting him with it.

Putting on the hat, Fungoso asked, “How does it become me? Well?”

“Excellent, sir,” the tailor said. “It is as excellent as any hat you ever had in your life.”

“Indeed, sir, the hat’s as good as any man in this town can make for you, and will maintain fashion as long,” the haberdasher said. “Never trust me for a groat if it doesn’t.”

A groat is a very small amount of money.

“Does it go well with my suit?” Fungoso asked.

“Exceedingly well, sir,” the tailor said.

“How do thou like my suit, haberdasher?” Fungoso asked.

“I swear by my truth, sir, it is very splendidly well made,” the haberdasher replied. “I never saw a suit fit better that I can recall.”

The tailor said, ironically, “Nay, we have no art to please our friends, not we.”

In other words: “We do have the art needed to please our friends, we do.”

Fungoso handed over some money to the haberdasher and said, “Here, haberdasher, count this money.”

“In good faith, sir,” the haberdasher said, “the suit of clothing makes you have an excellent body.”

Suits can be designed to hide body flaws.

The tailor had praised the hat, and then the haberdasher had repaid the favor by praising the suit of clothing.

Fungoso said, “Believe me, I think I have as good a body in clothes as anyone else.”

“You lack points — ties — to bring your apparel together,” the tailor said.

Doublets, aka jackets, were tied to hose, a kind of stockings.

Without shoe-ribbons and points, Fungoso was only partially dressed.

“I’ll have points soon,” Fungoso said.

Indicating the money, he asked, “How do things stand now? Is it the right amount?”

“Indeed, sir, it is too little, but upon farther hopes — I will give you credit and you can pay me the rest later,” the haberdasher said. “Good morning to you, sir.”

The haberdasher exited.

“Farewell, good haberdasher,” Fungoso said.

He then said to the tailor, “Well now, Master Snip, let me see your bill.”

Mitis said to Cordatus, “I think he pays and sends away his followers too thickly — one right after the other.”

“Oh, therein he saucily imitates some great man,” Cordatus said. “I assure you that although he turns them off, he keeps this tailor in the position of a page to follow him always.”

A page is a servant.

Fungoso was behaving like a big shot.

He said, “This bill is very reasonable, indeed. Listen, Master Snip. Truly, sir, I am not altogether so well furnished with money at this present time as I could wish I were. But, if you’ll do me the favor to take part payment in cash, you shall have all the cash I have now, by Jesus.”

The tailor began, “Sir —”

Fungoso interrupted, “— and just give me credit for the rest, until the beginning of the next term when the courts are in session.”

The tailor began, “Oh, Lord, sir —”

Fungoso interrupted, “— before God and by his light, I’ll pay you to the utmost, and acknowledge myself very deeply engaged — obliged and indebted — to you, by this hand.”

“Why, how much do you have there, sir?” the tailor asked.

“By the Virgin Mary, I have here four angels and fifteen shillings of white money,” Fungoso said. “It’s all I have, as I hope to be saved.”

White money is silver money.

“You will not fail me at the next term with the rest?” the tailor asked.

Many big shots were late in paying their bills, if they paid their bills.

“No,” Fungoso said. “If I do, I pray to God that I will be hanged. Let me never breathe again upon this mortal stage, as the philosopher calls it. By this air, and as I am a gentleman, I’ll keep my word.”

Cordatus said to Mitis, “He would be an iron-hearted fellow, in my opinion, who would not believe him and give him credit upon these monstrous oaths.”

The tailor said, “Well, sir, I’ll not be unreasonable with any gentleman over a trifle. You know what amount it is that remains to be paid?”

Fungoso said:

“Aye, sir, and I give you thanks, in good faith.

“Oh, God, how happy am I made in this good fortune!

“Well, now I’ll go seek out Monsieur Brisk.

“By God’s soul! I have forgotten the ribbon for my shoes, and I have forgotten the points. By God’s eyelid, what luck’s this! What shall I do?

“Master Snip, please let me reduct — get back — some two or three shillings so I can buy points and shoe-ribbons.

“By Jesus, I have utterly disfurnished myself of money in the default because of my bad memory.

“Please, let me be beholden and indebted to you; it shall come home to you and be paid in full when I pay the bill, believe me.”

“Indeed, sir,” the tailor said, “I can hardly depart with the money, but I’ll take up and send you some points and shoe-ribbons out of my stock by my serving-boy quickly. What color of ribbon do you want?”

“Whatever color you shall think fitting, in your opinion, sir, for my suit of clothing,” Fungoso said.

“Well, I’ll send you some immediately,” the tailor said.

“And points, too, sir?” Fungoso asked.

“And points, too, sir,” the tailor replied.

“Good lord, how I shall endeavor to deserve this kindness of yours, sir!” Fungoso said. “Please let your youthful serving-boy make haste, for I should have finished a piece of business an hour ago, and now I fear that I shall come too late.”

The tailor exited.

Fungoso said, “Now, indeed, I am exceedingly proud of my suit!”

He exited.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “Do you observe the straits that this poor gallant is put to, signor, to purchase the fashion?”

“Aye, and to be still a fashion behind with the world, that’s the entertainment,” Mitis replied.

Fungoso was gifted at buying clothing just before that style of clothing went out of fashion.

“Wait,” Cordatus said, seeing some actors coming. “Oh, here they come from ‘sealed and delivered.’”

Puntarvolo and Fastidious Brisk had signed the contract and had it sealed and delivered to them. They each had part of the contract. Their two halves had irregular edges that fitted together perfectly and showed that it was a legal contract.

— 4.5 —

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, and the serving-men with the dog and the cat walked onto the stage.

Puntarvolo said, “Well, now that my whole journey is covered by wagers, I will resolve to depart shortly.”

“Indeed, Sir Puntarvolo, go to the court, and take leave of the ladies first,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“I don’t care if it should be this afternoon’s labor,” Puntarvolo said.

He then asked, “Where is Carlo?”

“Here he comes,” Fastidious Brisk said.

Carlo Buffone, Sogliardo, Cavalier Shift, and Macilente entered the scene.

Carlo Buffone said:

“Indeed, gallants, I am persuading this gentleman” — he pointed to Sogliardo — “to become a courtier. He is a man of fair revenue, and his estate will bear the expense well. Besides, for his other gifts of the mind, or so, why, they are as nature lent him them: pure, simple, without any artificial drug or mixture of these two threadbare beggarly qualities,



learning and knowledge, and therefore the more suitable and genuine.”

Sogliardo was uneducated.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Now, for the life of a courtier itself —”

Fastidious Brisk interrupted and described the life of a courtier as he understood it to be:

“Oh, the most celestial, and full of wonder and delight that can be imagined, signor, beyond all thought and understanding of pleasure! A man lives at court in such a divine rapture that he will think himself in the third heaven — God’s abode — for the time, and he will lose all sense of mortality whatsoever.”

The third heaven is Earth’s atmosphere, and the second heaven is the realm of the stars.

He continued:

“When he shall behold such glorious and almost immortal beauties, hear such angelical and harmonious voices, discourse with such flowing and ambrosian spirits — whose wit’s as sudden as lightning and honeyed as nectar — oh, it makes a man all quintessence and flame, and lifts him up in a moment to the very crystal crown of the sky, where, hovering in the strength of his imagination, he shall behold all the delights of the Hesperides, the *Insulae Fortunatae*, Adonis’ gardens, the beautiful Thessalian valley called Tempe, or whatever else is confined within the amplest verge of poesy and consider them to be mere *umbrae* — shadows — and imperfect figures, compared to the most essential felicity of your court.”

The garden of the Hesperides with its golden apples was located in the west in the *Insulae Fortunatae* or Fortunate Islands.

The Elizabethans believed that Adonis' gardens were an earthly paradise.

Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, "Well, this encomium — fancy speech of praise — was not extemporal; it came too perfectly off."

Fastidious Brisk's praise had been written and rehearsed earlier.

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, "Besides, sir, you shall never need to go to a hothouse; you shall sweat there with courting your mistress, or sweat from losing your money at the card game primero, as well as sweat from being in front of all the stoves in Flanders."

Sweating was a treatment for venereal disease.

The inns in Flanders had stoves for warmth in common rooms in the winter. Of course, the windows were kept closed. Wet clothes hung near the stoves, and people stayed near the stoves for warmth. Many people complained about the odor.

Carlo Buffone continued:

"By the Virgin Mary, this, too, sir:

"You must always be sure to carry a good strong perfume about you, so that your mistress' dog may smell you out among the rest; and, in wooing her, never fear to be out, for you may have a pipe of tobacco, or a bass viol shall hang on the wall on purpose, and either will put you in presently."

"To be out" meant 1) to be at a loss for words, or 2) to be sexually rejected.

Carlo Buffone continued saying to Sogliardo:

“The tricks your Resolution has taught you in tobacco — the whiff, and those tricks — will stand you in very good ornament — grace — there.”

Fastidious Brisk said, “Aye, to some, perhaps. But, if he should come to my mistress Saviolina with tobacco, this gentleman knows” — he pointed to Macilente — “she’d reply sharply upon him, indeed. Oh, by this bright sun, she has the most acute, ready, and polished wit, that — tut, there’s no spirit able to withstand her.”

He then said to Macilente, “You can report it, signor, for you have seen her.”

“Then he can report no less based on his judgment, I assure him,” Puntarvolo said.

“Truly, I like her well enough, but she’s too self-conceited, I think,” Macilente said.

“Aye, indeed, she’s a little too self-conceited,” Fastidious Brisk said. “If it were not for that humor, she would be the most-to-be-admired lady in the world.”

“Indeed, it is a humor that detracts from her other excellencies,” Puntarvolo said.

“Why, her self-conceit may easily be made to forsake her, in my thought,” Macilente said. “She can be taught not to be self-conceited.”

“Easily, sir?” Fastidious Brisk said. “Then are all impossibilities easy.”

“You conclude too quickly that I cannot do it, signor,” Macilente said. “What will you say if I make it so plainly and clearly appear now that you yourself shall confess that nothing is more possible?”

“By the Virgin Mary, I will say that if you can do it, I will both applaud you and admire you for it,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“And I will second him,” Puntarvolo said.

“Why, I’ll show you, gentlemen,” Macilente said. “Carlo, come here.”

Macilente, Carlo Buffone, Puntarvolo, and Fastidious Brisk whispered together, forming a plan.

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift, “Indeed, I have a great fancy to go to the court. What does my Resolution think? Shall I venture to go there?”

“Indeed, Countenance, do as you please,” Cavalier Shift said. “The court is a place of good reputation and capacity.”

“Capacity” may mean that the court is a large court, or that the people there have much mental capacity, or both.

“Oh, my tricks in tobacco, as Carlo says, will appear excellent there,” Sogliardo said.

“Why, you may go with these gentlemen now and see fashions, and afterward, do as you shall see fit,” Cavalier Shift said.

“You say the truth,” Sogliardo said. “Will you go with me, Resolution?”

“I will meet you, Countenance, about three or four o’clock,” Cavalier Shift said. “But to say that I will go with you, I cannot, for, as I am Apple John, I am to go before the cockatrice you saw this morning, and therefore please make my excuse, good Countenance.”

A cockatrice can be a prostitute.

“Farewell, good Resolution, but don’t fail to meet me there,” Sogliardo said.

“I swear as I live that I will,” Cavalier Shift said.

He exited.

Macilente, Carlo Buffone, Puntarvolo, and Fastidious Brisk broke off their whispered conversation.

“This plan is admirably excellent,” Puntarvolo said.

“If you can just persuade Sogliardo to go to the court, that’s what we need now,” Macilente said.

“Oh, leave it to me,” Carlo Buffone said. “That’s my task.”

Carlo took Sogliardo aside and talked to him.

“Now, by Jesus, Macilente, it’s above measure excellent,” Fastidious Brisk said. “It will be the only courtly exploit that ever proved a courtier ingenious.”

In other words: This will be the only courtly exploit that demonstrated that a courtier is intelligent.

“Upon my soul, it puts the lady quite out of her humor, and we shall laugh righteously,” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone returned to the others and said about Sogliardo, “Come, the gentleman was already resolved to go with you even before I urged it.”

“Why, then, gallants, you two and Carlo go ahead of us to prepare the jest,” Macilente said. “Sogliardo and I will come a little while after you.”

“Pardon me,” Carlo Buffone said. “I am not for the court.”

“That’s true. Carlo will not go to the court, indeed,” Puntarvolo said. “Well, you shall leave the plan to the ability of Monsieur Brisk and myself; upon our lives, we will

manage it successfully and enjoyably. Carlo shall order supper at the Mitre Tavern in preparation for when we come back, where we will meet and dimple our cheeks with laughter at the success.”

“Aye, but will you all promise to come?” Carlo Buffone asked.

The bill for the meal would be high.

“I myself shall mansuete — manage — it concerning them,” Puntarvolo said. “I’ll bring them along tamely. He who fails, let his reputation lie under the lash of thy tongue.”

Wearing his new suit of clothing, Fungoso entered the scene.

“God’s so, look who comes here,” Carlo Buffone said.

“God’s so” means “By God’s soul,” but it is close to “Godso,” which is Italian slang for “penis.”

“What do you want, nephew?” Sogliardo asked.

“Uncle, God save you,” Fungoso said. “Did you see a gentleman, one Monsieur Brisk, a courtier? He goes in such a suit as I do.”

Pointing to Fastidious Brisk, Sogliardo said, “Here is the gentleman, nephew, but not in such a suit as you are wearing.”

“Another suit!” Fungoso said.

He fainted.

“How are you now, nephew?” Sogliardo asked.

Fastidious Brisk said to Fungoso, “Do you want to speak to me, sir?”

“Aye, when he has recovered himself, poor poll,” Carlo Buffone said.

A poll is a parrot. Parrots copy the speech of humans; Fungoso copies the clothing of Fastidious Brisk.

“He needs some *rosa solis*,” Puntarvolo said.

Literally “rose of the sun,” this was a medicinal drink.

“How are you now, signor?” Macilente asked Fungoso.

“I am not well, sir,” Fungoso said.

“Why, this is what it is to dog — follow — the fashion,” Macilente said.

“Come, gentlemen, remember your affairs,” Carlo Buffone said. “Fungoso’s disease is nothing but the flux — the fluctuation in fashion — of apparel.”

In medicine, “flux” is a discharge, including a discharge of excrement.

The affairs at hand concerned fooling Saviolina.

Puntarvolo said to his serving-men, “Sirs, return to the lodging. Keep the cat safe; I’ll be the dog’s guardian myself.”

The serving-men exited with the cat.

“Nephew, will you go to the court with us?” Sogliardo asked. “These gentlemen and I are for the court. Nay, don’t be so melancholy.”

“By God’s eyelid, I think no man in Christendom has that rascally fortune that I have,” Fungoso said.

“Indeed, your suit is well enough, signor,” Macilente said.

He thought that Fungoso was complaining about always being a little behind the latest fashion.

“Nay, not for that I protest, but I had an errand to carry information to Monsieur Fastidious, and I have forgotten the information,” Fungoso said.

Macilente replied:

“Why, go along to the court with us and remember it. Come.”

He then said:

“Gentlemen, you three take one boat, and Sogliardo and I will take another; we shall be there very quickly.”

“I am content with that,” Fastidious Brisk said.

He then said to Fungoso, “Good sir, grant us your pleasance — your company.”

“Farewell, Carlo,” Puntarvolo said. “Remember.”

In additional words: Remember to order the meal.

“I assure you I will,” Carlo Buffone said. “I wish that I had one of Kemp’s shoes to throw after you.”

Throwing a shoe after someone is supposed to bring that someone good luck. Will Kemp was a famous actor of the time.

Puntarvolo said, “Good fortune will close the eyes of our jest: No one will know what we are up to. Fear not, and we shall frolic and have fun.”

The actors exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “This Macilente, signor, begins to be more sociable all of a sudden, I think, than he was before. There’s some portent in it, I believe.”

“Oh, he’s a fellow of a strange nature,” Cordatus said. “Now does he, in this calm of his humor, plot and store up a world



of malicious thoughts in his brain, until he is so full of them that you shall see the very torrent of his malice break forth, and against the course and charge of all their affections — emotions aroused by malice — oppose itself so violently that you will almost be amazed to think how it is possible the current of their dispositions shall receive so quick and strong an alteration.”

Mitis replied, “Aye, by the Virgin Mary, sir, this is that on which my expectation has dwelt all this while; for I must tell you, signor, although I was loath to interrupt the scene, yet I questioned in my own private thoughts how the playwright should properly call it *Every Man Out of His Humor* when I saw all his actors so strongly pursue and continue their humors.”

Cordatus said:

“Why, therein his art appears most full of luster, and approaches truest to life, especially when in the flame and height of their humors they are laid flat; it fills the eye better and with more contentment.

“How tedious a sight it would be to behold a proud lofty tree lopped and cut down by degrees, when it might be felled in a moment with one blow!

“And, to set the axe to it before it came to that pride and fulness, would be the same as not to have it grow.”

In other words: Ben Jonson was making sure that the humors of his characters were at their fullest height before he took the characters out of their humors. It would be a mistake to take the characters out of their humors too soon. But when he took them out of their humors, he would do so quickly.

“Well, I shall long until I see this fall you talk of,” Mitis said.

Cordatus said:

“To help your longing, signor, let your imagination be swifter than a pair of oars, and, by this imagination, suppose Puntarvolo, Brisk, Fungoso, and the dog arrived at the court gate and going up to the great hall.

“We’ll leave Macilente and Sogliardo them on the water until possibility and natural means may land them.

“Here come the gallants; now prepare your expectation.”

**ACT 5 (*Every Man Out of His Humor*)**

**— 5.1 —**

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, Fungoso, and the dog walked onto the stage.

“Come, lordings,” Puntarvolo said.

He then said to Fungoso, “Signor, you are sufficiently instructed in what you need to do?”

“Who, I, sir?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

Indicating Fungoso, Puntarvolo said, “No, this gentleman. But wait, I am worried about where to put my dog. He is no suitable companion for the presence chamber.”

“By the Mass, that’s true indeed, knight,” Fastidious Brisk said. “You must not carry him into the presence chamber.”

“I know it, and I, like a dull beast, forgot to bring one of my cormorants to attend me,” Puntarvolo said.

Cormorants are literally rapacious large birds and figuratively gluttons. Masters frequently complained about the large appetites of their servants.

“Why, you would do best to leave him at the porter’s lodge,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“No,” Puntarvolo said. “His worth is too well known among the porters to be returned when I wish.”

The dog was valuable to him in part because it would accompany him in his voyage to and from Constantinople. If the dog were to die before Puntarvolo set out on his journey, all bets would be off and he would not make the journey. Puntarvolo, however, genuinely loved his dog.

“By God’s light, what will you do then?” Fastidious Brisk asked.

“I must leave him with someone who is ignorant of my dog’s worth, if I will have him kept safe,” Puntarvolo said. “And look, here comes one who will carry coals, and therefore he will hold my dog.”

The servants who carried charcoal were accustomed to doing menial work. Looking after a dog should be an OK task to them.

A servant carrying a basket of coals entered the scene.

“My trustworthy friend, may I commit the safekeeping of this dog to thy prudent care?” Puntarvolo asked.

“You may if you please, sir,” the servant said.

“Please, let me find thee here at my return,” Puntarvolo said. “It shall not be long until I will ease thee of thy employment and please thee.”

What would please the servant would be a good tip.

To the others, Puntarvolo said, “Let’s go forth, gentlemen.”

Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo, “Why, but will you leave your dog with so slight command, and impart no more admonitions upon the fellow?”

Didn’t he have any instructions for the servant regarding the care of the dog?

“Admonitions?” Puntarvolo said. “No, there would be no strategy in that; that would be to let him know the value of the gem he holds, and so to tempt frail nature against her inclination to be honest.”

He said to the servant, “No, please let thy honesty and trustworthiness be sweet and short.”

By short, he meant for the short time the servant would need to look after the dog.

His words, however, could be interpreted as an insult: Didn't he think that the servant could be honest and trustworthy for a longer time?

"Yes, sir," the servant said.

Puntarvolo said to the others, "But listen, gallants, and chiefly Monsieur Brisk: When we come in eyeshot or the presence of this lady, don't let other matters carry us away from our project, but if we can, let us single her forth to some place."

"Single forth" was a hunting term meaning to separate one animal from the rest of the pack so it could be killed.

"I assure you we will," Fastidious Brisk said.

"And don't be too sudden, but let the plan induce itself with good circumstance," Puntarvolo said. "Let it seem plausible and arise out of the situation and not out of a plot. Let's go onward."

"Is this the way?" Fungoso asked.

He looked at the wall hangings and said, "Truly, here are fine tapestries."

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, and Fungoso exited.

Mulling over Puntarvolo's words, the servant said to himself:

"Honesty, sweet — and *short*?

"By the Virgin Mary, it shall, sir, don't doubt that.

“For even at this very instant if one would give me twenty pounds, I would not deliver the dog to him: There’s for the sweet.

“But now, an instant later, if any man would come and offer me just twopence, he shall have the dog: There’s the short — the short-lived honesty — now.

“By God’s blood, what a mad humorous gentleman is this to leave his dog with me. I could run away with him now if he were worth anything.

“Well, I pray God send the gentleman back quickly again.”

Puntarvolo had upset the servant, who thought he was being looked down on: He felt that Puntarvolo had insulted him.

Macilente and Sogliardo entered the scene.

“Come on, signor,” Macilente said. “Now prepare to court this all-witted lady, most naturally and like yourself.”

Sogliardo was a rustic whose “like [him]self” was unlikely to appeal to a court lady.

In Ben Jonson’s society, a “natural” was a half-wit.

Part of the meaning of “like yourself” was that Saviolina was like Sogliardo in being a half-wit. So Macilente said.

“Indeed, if you say the word, I’ll begin to court her while smoking tobacco,” Sogliardo said.

Macilente said:

“Oh, bah to tobacco.

“No, you shall begin with ‘How does my sweet lady?’ or ‘Why are you so melancholy, madam?’ Although she may be very merry, it’s all one — it doesn’t matter.

“Be sure to kiss your hand often enough.”

Kissing one's hand was an action of courtly etiquette.

Macilente continued:

“Pray for her health and tell her how ‘more than most fair’ she is.

“Screw your face to one side like this” — he demonstrated — “and profess your devotion to her. Let her scoff and look askance and hide her teeth with her fan when she laughs a fit. The reaction will draw her into more conversation; that's nothing to worry about.

“You must talk continuously, eagerly, and boldly. Although it may be without sense, as long as it is without blushing, it is most court-like and well.”

“But shall I not use tobacco at all?” Sogliardo asked.

“Oh, by no means use tobacco,” Macilente said. “It will but make your breath suspected of being bad and she may think that you use it only to cover up the rankness of your breath.”

“I will be advised, sir, by my friends,” Sogliardo said. “I will do what they advise me to do.”

He believed that his friends included Macilente.

“God's my life, see where Sir Puntar's dog is!” Macilente said, seeing the servant and the dog.

Macilente was shortening Puntarvolo's name. A “punter” is a gambler.

The servant said to himself, “I wish the gentleman would return for his follower — his dog — here. I'll leave him — the dog — to his fortunes else.”

Macilente said to himself, “By God's heart, it would be the very best jest — notable deed — in the world to poison the

dog now. Ha! By God's will, I'll do it, if I can but get him away from the fellow."

He then said, "Signor Sogliardo, walk aside, and think upon some device to entertain the lady with."

"So I do, sir," Sogliardo said.

Sogliardo walked off, meditating.

Macilente said to the servant, "How are you now, my honest friend? Whose dog-keeper are thou?"

"Dog-keeper, sir?" the servant said. "I hope I scorn that, indeed."

"Why, don't thou keep a dog?" Macilente asked.

"Sir, now I do, and now I do not," the servant said.

He released the dog and said, "I think this is sweet and short. Make me his dog-keeper, does he?"

The servant exited.

He had taken care of the dog as asked — that was the sweet. But he had taken care of the dog for only a short time — that was the short.

"This is excellent above expectation," Macilente said to himself.

He said to the dog, "Nay, stay, sir. You'd be travelling to Constantinople, but I'll give you a dose of medicine that shall shorten your voyage."

He fed poison to the dog and said, "Here. So, sir, I'll be bold to take my leave of you. Now go to the Turk's court in the devil's name, for you shall never go in God's name."

Macilente kicked the dog away.



He then called, “Sogliardo! Come.”

Sogliardo came over to him and said, “I have a device — a plan — indeed now, that will sting it.”

A sting was a tool that would repair a thatched roof.

Sogliardo had something in mind that would make him attractive to Saviolina.

The “sting” could also be his penis, which he could use to “sting” Saviolina.

“Take heed you don’t leese — accidentally lose — it, signor, before you come there,” Macilente said. “Preserve it and keep it safe.”

They exited.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “How do you like this first exploit of his?”

He was referring to poisoning the dog.

“Oh, it is a piece of true malice,” Mitis said. “But I eagerly await the conclusion of the other plot: the one involving Sogliardo and Saviolina.”

“Here the actors come,” Cordatus said. “They will make the conclusion of that plot appear.”

— 5.2 —

Puntarvolo, Saviolina, Fastidious Brisk, and Fungoso entered the scene.

“Why, I thought, Sir Puntarvolo, that you had been gone on your voyage by now?” Saviolina said.

Puntarvolo replied, “Dear and most amiable — worthy to be loved — lady, your divine beauties do bind me to those

courtly and attentive services, so that I cannot depart when I would.”

“It is most courtly spoken, sir,” Saviolina said, “but what might we do to have a sight of your dog and cat?”

“His dog’s in the courtyard, lady,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“And not your cat?” Saviolina said. “How dare you trust her to be left behind you, sir?”

“Indeed, madam, she has sore eyes and she stays in her chamber,” Puntarvolo said. “By the Virgin Mary, I have left her under sufficient guard. Two of my servants are attending to her.”

“I’ll give you some medicinal herbal water for her eyes,” Saviolina said. “When do you go, sir?”

“Certainly, sweet lady, I don’t know,” Puntarvolo said.

Fastidious Brisk said, “He does stay the rather, madam, to present your acute judgment with so courtly and well-parted — multi-talented — a gentleman, as yet Your Ladyship has never seen.”

“Who’s he, gentle Monsieur Brisk?” Saviolina asked.

She pointed to Fungoso and asked, “Not that gentleman?”

“No, lady, the man I mean is a kinsman of Justice Silence,” Fastidious Brisk said.

He was referring to Sogliardo.

Puntarvolo said, “Please, sir, give me permission to describe him:

“He’s a gentleman, lady, of such rare and splendid and admirable faculty, that I assert that I don’t know his like in Europe.

“He is exceedingly valiant, an excellent scholar, and so widely travelled that he is able in discourse to deliver you a model of any prince’s court in the world.

“He speaks the languages with that purity of phrase and facility of accent that it breeds astonishment.

“His wit is the most exuberant and (above wonder) pleasant of all that ever entered the concave of this ear!”

“It is most true, lady,” Fastidious Brisk said.

He added something negative about Sogliardo: “By the Virgin Mary, he is no very excellent proper man: He is not a handsome man.”

“His travels have changed his complexion, madam,” Puntarvolo said.

Puntarvolo was saying that Sogliardo was tanned from his travels, but actually Sogliardo was tanned from his life on a farm in rural England.

Ben Jonson’s society valued light complexions.

“Oh, Sir Puntarvolo, you must not think that every man was born to have my servant Brisk’s features,” Saviolina said.

She realized that not every man is handsome.

Puntarvolo said:

“But he has that which transcends all that, lady.

“He does so peerlessly imitate any manner of person for gesture, action, passion, or whatever —”

“Aye,” Fastidious Brisk said. “He does so imitate especially a rustic or a clown, madam, that it is not possible for the sharpest-sighted wit in the world to discern any sparks of the gentleman in him, when he does it.”

“Oh, Monsieur Brisk, don’t be so tyrannous to confine all wits within the compass of your own: Don’t judge the wit of other people by your own,” Saviolina said. “Not find the sparks of a gentleman in him, if he is a gentleman?”

She believed that if he were really a gentleman, she could find signs of it.

“No, in truth, sweet lady, I believe you cannot,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Do you believe so?” Saviolina said. “Why, I can find sparks of a gentleman in you, sir.”

In other words: If I can find sparks of a gentleman in you, then I can find sparks of a gentleman in him.

“Aye, he is a gentleman, madam, and a reveler,” Puntarvolo said.

Playwright Francis Beaumont satirically identified three types of students at the Inns of Court: Revelers were law students who engaged in many entertainments. Young students were naïve first-year law students, and plodders were those who were studying law seriously in order to make a living from it.

“Indeed, I think I have seen Your Ladyship at our revels,” Fungoso said.

“Likely enough, sir,” Saviolina said. “But I wish that I might see this wonder you talk of. May one have a sight of him for any reasonable sum?”

“Yes, madam, he will arrive soon,” Puntarvolo said.

“And shall we see him play the clown and act like a country bumpkin?” Saviolina asked.

“Indeed, sweet lady, that you shall,” Fastidious Brisk said. “See, here he comes.”

Macilente and Sogliardo entered the scene.

“This is the man,” Puntarvolo said. “Please observe him, lady.”

“Curse me, but he clowns it properly indeed,” Saviolina said.

Sogliardo really did look like a country bumpkin.

“Closely observe his courtship,” Puntarvolo said.

“How is my sweet lady?” Sogliardo asked.

He took Saviolina’s hand and said, “Hot and moist? Beautiful and lusty? Ha!”

In Ben Jonson’s society, a hot and moist palm was regarded as a sign of a lecherous nature.

“Beautiful, if it pleases you, sir, but not lusty,” Saviolina replied.

“Oh, ho, lady, it pleases you to say so, in truth,” Sogliardo said. “And how is my sweet lady? Is she in health? *Bona-roba, quaeso que nouvelles? Que nouvelles, sweet creature?*”

*Bona-roba* refers to a woman as if she were a commodity: good stuff.

*Quaeso que nouvelles* is sort of Italian, sort of French, and sort of Spanish for “I ask what is the news?” The words “*Que nouvelles*” appeared at the openings of some satiric skits at the Inns of Court.

“Oh, excellent!” Saviolina said. “Why, gallants, is this the man who cannot be deciphered? They would be very bleary-and dim-witted, indeed, who could not discern the gentleman in him.”

“But do you, in earnest, see the gentleman in him, lady?” Puntarvolo asked.

Saviolina said:

“Do I, sir?”

“Why, if you had any true court-judgment in the carriage of his eye, and that inward power that forms his countenance, you might perceive his counterfeiting as clearly as you perceive the noonday.”

“Carriage” is “bodily department” and seems to be ill matched with “eye.” “Countenance” is “facial features” and seems to be ill matched with “inward power.”

Saviolina continued:

“Alas — nay, if you wanted to have tested my wit indeed, you should never have told me he was a gentleman, but instead have presented him for a true clown indeed, and then have seen if I could have deciphered him.”

“Before God, Her Ladyship says the truth, knight,” Fastidious Brisk said to Puntarvolo.

He then asked Saviolina, “But doesn’t he imitate the clown most naturally, mistress?”

“Naturally” means 1) realistically (as if born to it), and/or 2) like a half-wit.

“Oh, she cannot but affirm that, out of the bounty and excellence of her judgment,” Puntarvolo said.

“Nay, no doubt he does well for a gentleman imitating a clown,” Saviolina said. “But I assure you, he graces his natural carriage — bodily department — of the gentleman much better than his clownery.”

“It is strange, indeed, that Her Ladyship should see so far into him,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Aye, isn’t it?” Puntarvolo said.

“Indeed, as easily as may be,” Saviolina said. “Not decipher him, did you say?”

“In all seriousness, I wonder at it,” Fungoso said.

“Why, has she deciphered him, gentlemen?” Macilente asked.

“Oh, most miraculously, and beyond admiration,” Puntarvolo answered.

“Is it possible?” Macilente said.

“She has given in front of witnesses a statement about the most infallible signs of the gentleman in him, that’s for certain,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Why, gallants, let me laugh at you a little,” Saviolina said. “Was this your plot to test my judgment in a gentleman?”

“Nay, lady, do not scorn us,” Macilente said. “Although you have this gift of perspicacy and clear-sightedness above others, what if he should be no gentleman now, but a clown indeed, lady?”

“What would you think of that?” Puntarvolo asked. “Wouldn’t Your Ladyship be out of your humor?”

“Oh, but she knows it is not so,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“What if he weren’t a man, you may as well say,” Saviolina said. “Nay, if Your Worships could fool me so indeed, you would be wiser than you are thought to be.”

“In good faith, lady, he is a very perfect clown, both by father and mother, that I’ll assure you,” Macilente said.

“Oh, sir, you are very jocular,” Saviolina replied.

Macilente said, “Just look at his hand, and that shall tell you the truth.”

He showed her one of Sogliardo's palms, which was heavily calloused, and said, "Look, lady, what a palm is here."

"Tut, that was with holding the plow," Sogliardo said.

"The plow!" Macilente said. "Did you discern any such thing in him, madam?"

"Indeed, no, she saw the gentleman as bright as at noontide, she did," Fastidious Brisk said. "She deciphered him from the first moment she saw him."

"Truly, I am sorry Your Ladyship's sight should be so suddenly struck," Macilente said.

"Oh, you're goodly beagles!" Saviolina said.

Beagles hunt in packs. So do Puntarvolo, Macilente, and Fastidious Brisk. To a much lesser extent, so does Fungoso.

Saviolina began to leave.

"What! Has she gone?" Fastidious Brisk said.

"Nay, stay, sweet lady!" Sogliardo said. "*Que nouvelles? Que nouvelles?* What news? What news?"

"Get out, you fool, you!" Saviolina said.

She exited.

"She's out of her humor, indeed," Fungoso said.

True, but she had been correct: Sogliardo was a gentleman; he had purchased a coat of arms.

"Nay, let's follow it while it's hot, gentlemen," Fastidious Brisk said.

"Come, on my honor, we'll make her blush in the presence chamber," Puntarvolo said. "My spleen is great with laughter."



In Ben Jonson's society, the spleen was regarded as the organ most associated with laughter.

"Your laughter will be a child of a feeble life — it will be short-lived, I believe, sir," Macilente said.

He then said to Fungoso, "Come, signor, your looks are too dejected, I think. Why don't you mix mirth with the rest of us?"

"By God's will, this suit of clothing frets me at the soul," Fungoso said. "I'll have it altered tomorrow, to be sure."

They exited.

Cavalier Shift entered and said to himself:

"I have come to the court to meet with my Countenance, Sogliardo. Poor men must be glad of such patronage, when they can get no better. Well, need and poverty may insult and wound a man, but it shall never make him despair of being a man of consequence.

"The world will say, 'It is base.' Tush, base! It is base to live under the earth, not base to live above it, by any means."

"Base" can mean "low," as in "under the earth in a grave," and it can mean "morally low." To Cavalier Shift, it is not base to find a means — by any means — to get what you need to stay alive.

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, Sogliardo, Fungoso, and Macilente entered the scene.

Fastidious Brisk said, "The poor lady is most miserably out of her humor, indeed."

"There was never so witty a jest played at the Tilt Yard of all the court wits who were ever born and christened!" Puntarvolo said.

The Tilt Yard was a place for tilting, aka jousting, and other sports. Wits tilt — jest — with words.

Macilente said to himself, “Oh, this applause taints it foully.”

All this self-congratulation was lessening the goodness of the practical joke, according to Macilente.

The purpose of the practical joke had been to lessen the too-great self-regard of Saviolina, but now most of the jokers were building too high their own self-regard.

“I think I did my part in courting,” Sogliardo said.

Noticing Cavalier Shift, he said, “Oh, Resolution!”

Looking for the servant who had been keeping his dog, Puntarvolo said, “Aye me, my dog!”

“Aye me” is a cry of distress.

“Where is he?” Macilente, who had poisoned Puntarvolo’s dog, asked.

“By God’s precious blood, go seek for the fellow, good signor,” Fastidious Brisk said to Fungoso.

Fungoso exited to look for the dog and the coal-carrier who had been supposed to take care of the dog.

“Here, here is where I left him,” Puntarvolo said.

“Why, no one was here when we came in now but Cavalier Shift,” Macilente said. “Ask him where the dog is.”

Fastidious Brisk asked Cavalier Shift, “Did you see Sir Puntarvolo’s dog here, cavalier, since you came?”

“His dog, sir?” Cavalier Shift replied. “He may look for his dog, sir; I see nothing of his dog, sir.”

Macilente said to Puntarvolo, "Upon my life, Shift has stolen your dog, sir, and he has been hired to do it by some who have bet money with you. You may guess this by his peremptory and obstinate answers."

"That's not unlikely, for he has been a notorious thief by his own confession," Puntarvolo replied.

He asked Cavalier Shift, "Sirrah, where's my dog?"

"Do you blame me for the loss of your dog, sir?" Cavalier Shift said. "I have nothing to do with your dog, sir."

"Villain, thou lie!" Puntarvolo said.

Being called a liar was justification enough to challenge a man to a duel.

"Lie, sir?" Cavalier Shift said. "By God's blood, you are merely a man, sir, and thus you are mortal and able to die."

"Rogue and thief, restore my dog to me!" Puntarvolo said.

"Take heed, Sir Puntarvolo, what you do," Sogliardo said. "He'll bear no coals, I can tell you, on my word."

"Bear no coals" means "bear no insult."

"This is splendid," Macilente, a troublemaker, said to himself.

Sogliardo said to Puntarvolo, "It's a wonder he doesn't stab you. By this light, he has stabbed forty men for forty times less matter, I can tell you, from my knowledge."

"I will make thee stoop and obey me, thou abject man," Puntarvolo said.

One meaning of "stoop" is a dog's lowering its head to catch a scent. Another meaning is humble submission.

Puntarvolo and Shift threatened each other.

“Make him stoop, sir?” Sogliardo said. “Gentlemen, pacify him or he’ll — Puntarvolo will — be killed!”

“Is Shift so tall — brave — a man?” Macilente asked.

“Tall a man?” Sogliardo said. “If you love Puntarvolo’s life, stand between them. Make Cavalier Shift stoop!”

Puntarvolo said to Cavalier Shift, “Give me my dog, villain, or I will hang thee! Thou have confessed robberies and other felonious acts to this gentleman, thy Countenance —”

“I’ll bear no witness,” Sogliardo interrupted.

He would not give evidence that could get his friend, Cavalier Shift, hung.

Puntarvolo continued, “— and without my dog, I will hang thee for them!”

Cavalier Shift knelt before Puntarvolo. He was afraid of being hung.

“What! Kneel to thine enemy!” Sogliardo said, astonished.

“Pardon me, good sir,” Cavalier Shift said. “As God is my judge, I swear I never did robbery in all my life.”

Fungoso returned from looking for the dog and said, “Oh, Sir Puntarvolo, your dog lies giving up the ghost in the woodyard.”

Macilente, who had poisoned the dog, said to himself, “By God’s blood, isn’t he dead yet?”

“Oh, my dog was born to endure a disastrous fortune!” Puntarvolo said. “Please lead me to him, sir.”

Puntarvolo and Fungoso exited.

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift, “What! Did you never do any robbery in your life?”

“Oh, this is good,” Macilente said to himself.

He said to Sogliardo, “So he swore, sir.”

“Aye, I heard him,” Sogliardo said.

He asked Cavalier Shift, “And did you swear truly, sir?”

“Aye, as God shall have an interest in my soul, sir, I never robbed any man, I,” Cavalier Shift said. “I never stood by the highway side as a highwayman, sir, but only said I did so because I wanted to get myself a reputation and be accounted a brave man.”

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift:

“Now get out, base *viliaco* — *rascal*! Thou, my Resolution? I, thy Countenance?”

Sogliardo said to the others:

“By this light, gentlemen, he has confessed to me the most inexorable and unforgivable multitude of robberies, and he has damned himself in swearing that he did them — you never heard the like.”

Sogliardo said to Cavalier Shift:

“Out, scoundrel, get out, follow me no more, I command thee! Get out of my sight, go away from here and don’t speak! I will not hear anything you say! Away, *camouccio*!”

*Camouccio* is supposed to be an insult in a language that resembles but is not quite Italian.

Cavalier Shift exited.

Macilente said to himself:

“Oh, how I do feed upon this now, and fatten myself!”

He was feeding his humor — malicious envy — and metaphorically growing fat.

Macilente continued saying to himself:

“Here were a couple unexpectedly dishumored: Sogliardo and Cavalier Shift.”

Saviolina was expectedly dishumored.

Macilente continued saying to himself:

“Well, by this time, I hope, Sir Puntarvolo and his dog are both out of humor to travel.”

He then said out loud:

“Gentlemen, why don’t you seek out the knight and comfort him?”

“Our supper at the Mitre must of necessity be held tonight, if you love your reputations.”

“Before God, I am so melancholy for his dog’s disaster, but I’ll go,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Indeed, and I may go, too, but I know I shall be so melancholy,” Sogliardo said.

“Tush, melancholy?” Macilente said. “You must forget that now, and remember that you lie at the mercy of a Fury: Carlo will rack your sinews asunder and scold you to a dusty death, if you don’t come.”

The three Furies were avenging goddesses out of hell.

The actors exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Oh, then their fear of Carlo, likely, makes them hold their meeting.”

Cordatus replied, “Aye, here he comes. Just imagine him to have entered the Mitre, and it is enough.”

— 5.3 —

Carlo Buffone walked on stage, which now represented the Mitre Tavern. Some others brought a table and chairs on stage.

Carlo Buffone said, “Holla! Where are these shot-sharks?”

Shot-sharks are bartenders who bring the drinkers the — sometimes inflated — bill.

A drawer — that is, a drawer of wine and ale, aka bartender — arrived, saying to an out-of-sight customer, “By and by.”

This meant: I’ll be there soon.

The drawer then said, “You’re welcome, good Master Buffone.”

“Where’s George?” Carlo Buffone said. “Call George here for me quickly.”

George was Carlo Buffone’s favorite drawer at the Mitre.

“What wine will you please to have, sir?” the drawer said. “I’ll draw you wine that’s neat, Master Buffone.”

Neat wine is undiluted.

“Go away, neophyte, and do as I tell you to do,” Carlo Buffone said. “Bring my dear George to me.”

George arrived before the drawer exited.

“By the Mass, here he comes,” Carlo Buffone said.

“Welcome, Master Carlo,” George said.

“Is supper ready, George?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Aye, sir, almost,” George replied. “Will you have the cloth laid, Master Carlo?”

“Oh, what else?” Carlo Buffone said. “Have any of the gallants come yet?”

“None yet, sir,” George answered.

He began to leave, but Carlo Buffone said, “Wait, take me with you, George.”

This meant: Wait, I have more instructions for you, George.

He then said, “Let me have a good fat loin of pork laid to the fire immediately.”

“It shall be done, sir,” George said.

“And also, listen, draw me the biggest shaft you have out of the butt you know of,” Carlo Buffone said. “Go away now — you know which cask I mean, George — quickly.”

“Shaft” means “draught,” and “butt” means “wine cask.”

He wanted George to fill up the biggest flagon with Carlo’s favorite wine from the wine cask that George knew about.

“It will be done, sir,” George said as he exited.

Carlo Buffone said to himself:

“By God’s blood, I never hungered so much for anything in my life as I do to know our gallants’ success or lack of it at the court. Now is that lean bald-rib Macilente — that witty, stinging villain — plotting some evil plan, and he lies a-soaking in their frothy humors like a dry crust, until he has drunk them all up.”

The Elizabethans often floated a piece of dry bread or toast in ale and consumed both. Macilente is like a sop that soaks up *all* the ale.



Carlo Buffone continued talking to himself:

“Could the kex — that dry, hollow stem of a man — but hold up his eyes at other men’s happiness in any reasonable proportion, by God’s eyelid, the slave would be loved next to heaven, above honor, wealth, rich fare, apparel, wenches, all the delights of the belly and the groin — gluttony and lust, appetites and passions — whatever.”

Macilente does have the virtue of being a good social critic, but unfortunately his malicious envy makes him unlovable.

George returned, bringing wine in a flagon and two cups.

“Here, Master Carlo,” George said.

“Is it right, boy?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Aye, sir, I assure you it is right,” George said.

“Well said, my dear George, depart now,” Carlo Buffone said.

George exited. The other drawer remained in the room.

Carlo Buffone said, “Come, my small gimlet, you in the false scabbard, go away!”

A gimlet is a boring-tool used to make holes in casks so that the wine or ale can be drawn out.

A scabbard is a sheath for a knife or a sword, both of which can be phallic symbols. The Latin word *vagina* means “sheath.” If the drawer were wearing a codpiece — a piece of clothing for holding male genitals — the codpiece could be a false sheath.

Carlo Buffone put the drawer out of the room and shut the door.

Alone, Carlo Buffone said to the huge flagon of wine George had brought, “Good. Now to you, Sir Burgomaster, let’s taste of your bounty.”

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Will he start drinking such quantities of wine alone?”

“You shall perceive that soon enough, sir,” Cordatus answered.

Carlo Buffone drank.

He then said to himself:

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, sir, here’s purity. Here’s undiluted wine! Oh, George, I could bite off thy nose for this now!”

In Ben Jonson’s society, “I could bite off thy nose” was an endearment, similar to “I could eat you up.”

Carlo Buffone continued saying to himself:

“Sweet rogue, he has drawn nectar, the very soul of the grape. I’ll wash my temples and get pleasantly drunk with some of it now and drink some half-a-score draughts.

“It will heat the brain and kindle my imagination; I shall talk nothing but crackers and fireworks tonight. I will dazzle my hearers with eloquence.”

“Crackers” can be 1) firecrackers, or 2) liars and boasters.

George had brought two cups for wine-drinking. Carlo Buffone set the two cups apart.

He said, “So, sir, please you to be here, sir, and I here. Good.”

He was going to pretend to be two drinkers and drink out of one cup and then out of the other.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “This is worth the observation, signor.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “Now, sir, here’s to you, and I present you with so much of my love.”

He drank from the first cup.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “I take it kindly from you, sir” — he drank from the second cup — “and will return to you the like proportion, but also, sir, remembering the merry night we had at the countess’ — you know where, sir.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “By Jesus, you do put me in mind now of a very necessary office that I will propose in your pledge, sir: the health of that honorable countess, and the sweet lady who sat by her, sir.”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “By I do vail to it with reverence.”

“Vail” means respectfully lower one’s sails. Carlo Buffone bowed.

He drank from the second cup.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) added, “And now, signor, with these ladies, I’ll be bold to mix the health of your divine mistress.”

Wine was often diluted with water.

One meaning of “mix” is “have sexual intercourse with.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) asked, “Do you know her, sir?”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Oh, lord, sir, aye, and in the respectful memory and mention of her, I could wish this wine were the most precious drug in the world.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “In good faith, sir, you do honor me in it exceedingly.”

He drank from the first cup.

Mitis asked Cordatus, “Whom would he be impersonating in this scene, signor?”

Possibly, Ben Jonson was not satirizing anyone in particular, but he did make jokes about his own wine-drinking, as in his play *The Staple of News* and in the Induction of this play.

“Indeed, I don’t know, sir,” Cordatus said, “Observe, observe him.”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “If it were the basest filth or mud that runs in the channel, I am bound to pledge it, by God, sir.”

He drank from the second cup.

The particular channel he was talking about was for sewage.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) added, “And now, sir, here is again a replenished bowl, sir, that I will reciprocally return upon you to the health of the Count Frugale.”

As he was drinking, Carlo kept refreshing the wine-bowl with more wine.

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “The Count Frugale’s health, sir? I’ll pledge it on my knees, by Jesus.”

He knelt and drank from the first cup.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Will you, sir? I’ll drink it on my knees, then, by the Lord.”

He knelt and drank from the second cup.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “Why, this is strange.”

“Have you ever heard a better drunken dialogue?” Cordatus asked.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Nay, do me right, sir.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “So I do, in good faith.”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “In good faith, you do not; my cup was fuller.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) objected, “Why, by Jesus, it was not.”

When drinking toasts, people were supposed to drink the same amount of wine.

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “By Jesus, it was, and you do lie.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “Lie, sir?”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Aye, sir.”

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “By God’s wounds, you rascal!”

Carlo Buffone (second cup) said, “Oh, come, stab if you have a mind to it.”

Being called a liar was grounds for a duel that could be fought with swords and daggers.

Carlo Buffone (first cup) said, “Stab? Do thou think I don’t dare to?”

Carlo Buffone (as himself) said, “Nay, I beseech you gentlemen, what is the meaning of this? Nay, look, for shame, respect your reputations.”

He overturned the wine, pot, cups, and all else.

Macilente entered the scene and asked, “Why, how are you now, Carlo? What humor is this you are in?”

“Oh, my good mischief, have thou come?” Carlo Buffone asked. “Where are the rest? Where are the rest?”

“Indeed, three of our ordnance have burst,” Macilente said.

He was comparing three of their number to war machines that had blown up.

“Burst?” Carlo Buffone said. “How did that come to happen?”

“Indeed, they were overcharged, overcharged,” Macilente said.

“Overcharged” meant “overloaded with explosives.”

“But didn’t the train — the fuse — hold?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Oh, yes, and the poor lady is irrecoverably blown up,” Macilente said.

He was comparing Saviolina to the target of war machines such as artillery.

“Why, but which of the weapons has miscarried, then?” Carlo Buffone asked.

Macilente replied, “*Imprimis*, Sir Puntarvolo; next, the Countenance and Resolution.”

*Imprimis* is Latin for “in the first place.”

The Countenance and the Resolution, of course, were Sogliardo and Cavalier Shift.

“What?” Carlo Buffone said. “How, for the love of God?”

“Indeed, the Resolution has been proven to be a coward, the Countenance has changed his copy, and the passionate knight is shedding funeral tears over his departed dog,” Macilente said.

“Changed his copy” means “changed his behavior and role model.”

Cavalier Shift was no longer Sogliardo’s hero.

“What about Puntarvolo’s dog?” Carlo Buffone asked. “Is he dead?”

Macilente replied:

“Poisoned, it is thought.

“By the Virgin Mary, how, or by whom, that’s left for some cunning woman — some witch — here on the Bankside to resolve.

“As for my part, I know nothing more than that we are likely to have an exceedingly melancholy supper of it.”

“By God’s life, and I had purposed to be extraordinarily merry,” Carlo Buffone said. “I had drunk off a good preparative of old sack here. But will they come, will they come?”

A “preparative” is 1) a medicinal drink, and 2) a military order to get ready.

Old sack is a kind of old wine.

“They will assuredly come,” Macilente said. “By the Virgin Mary, Carlo, as thou love me, run over them all freely tonight with your satiric attacks, and especially the knight. Spare no sulphurous jest that may come out of that sweaty forge of thine, but ply them with all manner of shot: minion, saker, culverine, or anything whatsoever thou will.”

A sweaty forge is 1) a forge on wheels used for military purposes, and 2) the creative imagination.

Minion, saker, and culverine are different sizes of cannon.

“I want thee, my dear case of petronels, so that I won’t stand in dread of thee, to second me and support me in satiric duels,” Carlo Buffone said.

A case of petronels is literally a pair of pistols and metaphorically satiric weapons. In this case, the satiric weapons were words from the mouth of Macilente.

Carlo Buffone wanted Macilente’s help as he mocked the others.

“Why, my good German tapster, I will,” Macilente said.

A tapster is a bartender, and soon Carlo Buffone will be pouring wine for the others.

The Germans and the Dutch were reputed to be big drinkers. At the moment, certainly, Carlo Buffone was a heavy drinker.

Carlo Buffone called, “What, George!”

Drunk, he danced as he sang: “*Lomtero! Lomtero!*”

George entered the scene and asked, “Did you call, Master Carlo?”

“More nectar, George.”

He sang: “*Lomtero! Lomtero!*”

A montero is a Spanish cap that has flaps to protect the ears. A lamb is an innocent person.

Innocent people need protection for their ears so they aren’t hurt by the satiric gibes of people such as Carlo Buffone and Macilente.



“Your meat and food’s ready, sir, if your company have come,” George said.

“Is the loin of pork cooked enough?” Carlo Buffone asked.

“Aye, sir, it is cooked enough,” George said.

Macilente said, “Pork? By God’s heart, what do thou with such a greasy dish? I think thou do varnish thy face with the fat on it — it looks so like a glue-pot.”

“Greasy” can mean 1) oily, and 2) filthy.

A glue-pot is used for melting glue.

Carlo Buffone replied:

“True, my raw-boned rogue, and if thou would farce — fill out — thy lean ribs with it, too, they would not, like ragged laths, rub out and fray as many doublets as they do.”

Laths are slats of wood.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“But thou don’t know a good dish, thou don’t. Oh, it’s the only nourishing meat in the world.

“It’s no wonder, though, that that saucy, insolent, and stubborn — because they rejected Christianity — generation that is the Jews were forbidden it; for what would they have done, when well pampered with fat pork, who dared to murmur at their Maker with a diet of garlic and onions?

“By God’s blood, fed with it, the whoreson strummel-patched (men made of straw), goggle-eyed grumbledories would have gigantomachized.”

“Strummel” is straw. A “patch” is 1) a simpleton, or 1) a piece of cloth used to repair a piece of clothing. Therefore, “strummel-patched” probably refers to straw men.

A “drumbledore” is a bumblebee. A “dory” is a fish. Therefore, “grumbledories” probably refers to grumbling non-human creatures.

“Gigantomachized” may mean “become like the Giants who fought against the gods.”

The suffix “-mach” means “fight with” whatever comes before the “-mach.”

“Gigantomachized” may mean “fight with the giants,” but “fight with” can mean 1) fight on the side of or 2) fight against. The word “Gigantomachized” may mean that the Jews are treacherous and can change sides.

Also, whether they fought on the side of the giants or on the side of the pagan gods, a Christian would say that they were fighting on the wrong side.

Whatever these words mean, they convey an anti-Semitic meaning.

George returned with wine and winecups.

Carlo Buffone said, “Well done, my sweet George! Fill the cups! Fill the cups!”

George served the wine, and then he exited.

“This savors too much of profanation,” Mitis said.

Carlo Buffone was being drunkenly profane. His opinions were not necessarily those of Ben Jonson.

Cordatus said, “*O, servetur ad imum, qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.*”

C. Smart translated the lines: “let it be preserved to the last such as it set out at the beginning, and be consistent with itself.”

The Latin is from Horace, *Ars Poetica* 126-127. Basically, Cordatus was saying that Carlo Buffone's character had remained consistent from the beginning until now. His humor was now the same as it had been earlier.

Cordatus added, "The necessity of his vein compels a toleration; for, bar this, and dash him out of humor before his time."

In other words: We now must tolerate his drunken blasphemy, for if we don't, we will take him out of his humor before it is the best time to do so.

Carlo Buffone said:

"It is an axiom in natural philosophy: What comes nearest the nature of that it feeds, converts quicker to nourishment, and does sooner essentiate and become bodily substance.

"Now, nothing in flesh and entrails assimilates or resembles man more than a hog or swine."

"Assimulates" is a too-fancy way of saying "simulates," aka "imitates" or "counterfeits."

In other words: Since a man and a pig resemble each other closely, a pig's flesh when eaten by a man is converted quickly into man's flesh.

Carlo Buffone drank.

Macilente said, "True, and the man, to requite the pigs' courtesy, often takes off his own nature and puts on theirs, as when he becomes as churlish as a hog, or as drunk as a sow. But continue on to your conclusion."

Carlo Buffone was well on his way to being as drunk as a sow. He was already as churlish as a hog.

Macilente drank.

Carlo Buffone said:

“By the Virgin Mary, I say, nothing resembling man more than a swine, it follows, nothing can be more nourishing; for indeed, except that it shrinks from our nice nature and makes us squeamish, if we fed one upon another, we would shoot up a great deal faster, and thrive much better. I refer to your Long Lane cannibals, or such like.”

Long Lane “cannibals” are greedy pawnbrokers and old-clothes dealers.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“But since cannibalism is so contrary to us, pork, pork, is your only feed.”

Macilente said, “I take it the devil is of the same diet; he would never have desired to have been incorporated into swine otherwise.”

Mark 5 (King James Version) tells about Jesus casting devils out of a man and, at their request, into swine:

*11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.*

*12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.*

*13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.*

Puntarvolo, Fastidious Brisk, Sogliardo, and Fungoso entered the scene.

Macilente said, “Oh, here comes the melancholy dinner-party mess. Upon them, Carlo, charge, charge!”

A mess is a party of four.

Macilente was encouraging Carlo Buffone to satirically attack the others.

Carlo Buffone, who was drunk as a sow, was happy to do so.

In a mocking voice, he said, "Before God, Sir Puntarvolo, I am sorry for your heavy grief. By the body of Christ, I swear it was a grievous mischance. Why, didn't you have any unicorn's horn or bezoar's stone about you? Huh?"

Unicorn's horn and bezoar's stone were reputed to be antidotes for poison.

"Sir, I would request you to be silent," Puntarvolo said.

Wishing to cause trouble, Macilente said to Carlo Buffone, "Nay, go to him again."

Carlo Buffone said to Puntarvolo, "Take comfort, good knight, if your cat has recovered from her sore eyes, fear nothing; your dog's mischance may be helped."

Fastidious Brisk said:

"Say how, sweet Carlo, for so God mend me, the poor knight's moans draw me into fellowship of his misfortunes.

"But be not discouraged, good Sir Puntarvolo. I am content your adventure shall be performed with only your cat: You shall go to Constantinople and back with your cat and leave the dog out of the contract."

Macilente said to himself, "I believe you, musk-cod, I believe you; for rather than thou would make immediate repayment, thou would take it upon his own bare return from Calais."

Literally, a musk-cod is a small bag for perfume. Figuratively, it is the perfumed Fastidious Brisk.

From London to Calais (across the English Channel and back) was a much shorter — and safer — journey than to Constantinople and back.

Macilente was saying that Fastidious Brisk did not want to return the 100 pounds that Puntarvolo had given to him as a deposit for their five-for-one wager, and therefore Brisk would agree to a different wager, even one that Puntarvolo could fairly easily win, such as going to Calais and back alone, as long as Brisk did not have to return the money now.

Overhearing Macilente's words, Carlo Buffone said, "Nay, by God's life, he'd be content, as long as he were well rid of his company, to pay him five for one at his next meeting him in St. Paul's."

"Well rid of his company" meant that Fastidious Brisk would not have to witness Puntarvolo's grief at the death of his dog. But especially it meant that Fastidious Brisk would not have to immediately return the 100 pounds.

Carlo Buffone said to Puntarvolo, "But as for your dog, Sir Puntar, if he is not outright dead, there is a friend of mine, a quacksalver, who shall put life in him again, that's certain."

"Sir Puntar" was a nickname that Carlo Buffone was using for Sir Puntarvolo. A "punter" is a gambler.

A quacksalver is a medical quack: a fraudulent doctor.

"Oh, no, that comes too late," Fungoso said.

Macilente pointed to Carlo Buffone and said to Puntarvolo, "By God's precious blood, knight, will you endure this?"

Macilente was trying to stir up trouble between Carlo Buffone and Puntarvolo.

Puntarvolo called, "Drawer, get me a candle and hard wax, immediately."

Hard wax was sealing wax. It was melted and dripped on a document to seal it.

Sogliardo called, "Aye, and bring up supper, for I am so melancholy."

His courting of Saviolina had not gone well.

Carlo Buffone said to Sogliardo, "Ah, signor, where's your Resolution?"

"Resolution! Hang him, the rascal!" Sogliardo said. "Oh, Carlo, if you love me, do not mention him."

"Why, why not?" Carlo Buffone said. "Why not?"

"Oh, he is the arrantest crocodile — the most arrant hypocrite — that any Christian was acquainted with," Sogliardo replied. "By Jesus, I shall think the worse of tobacco while I live, for his sake. I did think him to be as brave a man —"

Macilente whispered to Carlo, "Nay, Buffone, the knight, the knight."

Macilente still wanted to stir up trouble between Carlo Buffone and Puntarvolo.

Hoping to make Puntarvolo angry, Carlo Buffone said to the others:

"By God's blood, Puntarvolo looks like an image carved out of box, full of knots."

"Box" is a kind of wood; it is similar to knotty pine.

Carlo Buffone continued:

"His face is, for all the world, like a Dutch purse, with the mouth downward; his beard's the tassels, and he walks —"

let me see — as melancholy as one of the Master’s side in the Counter.

“Do you hear, Sir Puntar?”

Dutch purses had tassels.

Prisons had better quarters for those who could pay for them. One side of the prison contained the Knights’ ward, which was on the side of the Master: the prison Warden.

Puntarvolo’s grief showed in his face.

He said to Carlo Buffone, “Sir, I ask you no more, but instead I tell you to be silent, if you desire your peace and wish to avoid a fight with me.”

Carlo Buffone said, “Nay, but dear knight, understand (here are none but friends, and such as wish you well) that I would have you do this now: Skin your dog immediately (but in any case, keep the head), and stuff his skin well with straw, as you see these dead monsters at Bartholomew Fair —”

“I shall be sudden, I tell you,” Puntarvolo said.

When he took action, he would do so quickly.

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Or, if don’t you like that, sir, get a somewhat smaller dog and clap it into the skin.

“There’s a slave about the town here, a Jew, one Johan, or a fellow who makes wigs, who will glue it on artificially, it shall never be discerned; besides, it will be so much the warmer for the hound to travel in, you know —”

“Johan” is not a stereotypical Jewish name. In Ben Jonson’s society, Jews were stereotypically regarded as greedy, and a non-Jewish greedy person could be called a Jew.



A slave in this context is a working man whom Carlo Buffone looked down on.

Macilente said, “Sir Puntarvolo, by God’s death, how can you be so patient?”

Carlo Buffone continued:

“Or do this, sir:

“You may have, as you come through Germany, a familiar spirit that for little or nothing shall turn itself into the shape of your dog, or anything — what you will — for certain hours —”

A familiar spirit was an attendant spirit of a witch or demon. They often took the form of animals.

Puntarvolo drew his sword.

“God’s my life, knight, what do you mean?” Carlo Buffone said. “You’ll offer no violence, will you?”

Puntarvolo beat Carlo Buffone with the hilt.

“Stop! Stop!” Carlo Buffone cried.

“By God’s blood, you slave, you bandog, you!” Puntarvolo said.

A bandog is a ferocious dog.

A drawer arrived, carrying a candle and sealing wax.

“As you love God, stop the enraged knight, gentlemen!” Carlo Buffone said.

“By my knighthood, he who tries to rescue Carlo, dies,” Puntarvolo said.

He then ordered, “Drawer, leave.”

He did not want unnecessary witnesses.

The drawer exited.

“Murder! Murder! Murder!” Carlo Buffone yelled.

The drawer went to summon a constable.

“Aye, are you howling, you wolf?” Puntarvolo said to him.

He then said to the others, “Gentlemen, as you value your lives, allow no man to enter until my revenge is completely done.”

He then said, “Sirrah Buffone, lie down. Make no exclamations, but lie down.”

Carlo Buffone tried to leave, but Puntarvolo threatened him: “Down, you cur, or I will make thy blood flow on my rapier hilts!”

“Sweet knight, hold in thy fury, and, before God, I’ll honor thee more than the Turk does Mahomet,” Carlo Buffone begged.

“Down, I say!” Puntarvolo said.

Carlo Buffone lay on the table.

Knocking sounded on the door.

Puntarvolo called, “Who’s there?”

From outside the door, a constable yelled, “Here’s the constable! Open the doors!”

Carlo Buffone began, “Good Macilente —”

Puntarvolo interrupted and said:

“Open no door! If the Adelantado — Governor — of the Spanish Netherlands were here, he should not enter.

“Proceed.

“Help me with the light, gentlemen.”

He melted the wax as the knocking continued.

As he melted the wax, he said, “You knock in vain, sir officer.”

Carlo said to Macilente, “*Et tu, Brute.*”

These were Julius Caesar’s words to a man whom he thought was his friend — Brutus — but who helped assassinate him: “You, too, Brutus?”

Macilente was the man who had encouraged Carlo Buffone to irritate Puntarvolo. He had even promised to be Carlo’s second, aka assistant, in a fight. Now Macilente was helping Puntarvolo to punish Carlo.

Puntarvolo threatened, “Sirrah, close your lips, or I will drop the melted wax in thine eyes, by heaven.”

“Oh! Oh!” Carlo Buffone cried as the melted wax fell onto his mustache and beard and sealed his lips until he was unable to speak or cry, “Oh! Oh!”

The constable yelled outside the door, “Open the door, or I will break it open!”

Macilente called, “Nay, good constable, have patience a little, you shall come in very soon; we have almost done.”

Puntarvolo said to Carlo Buffone, “So, now, are you out of your humor, sir?”

He then said, “Make your escape, gentlemen.”

Puntarvolo, Macilente, and Sogliardo all drew their weapons and, leaving Carlo Buffone behind, exited. Fungoso hid under the table.

Fastidious Brisk began to exit, but he was behind the others.

The constable entered with some other police officers, and they stopped Fastidious Brisk.

“Lay hold upon this gallant, and pursue the rest,” the constable ordered.

“Lay hold on me, sir?” Fastidious Brisk said. “For what?”

“By the Virgin Mary, for your riot here, sir, with the rest of your companions,” the constable said.

“My riot!” Fastidious Brisk said. “As God’s my judge, take heed what you do.”

He then asked, “Carlo, did I offer any violence?”

Knowing that Carlo Buffone’s lips were sealed shut with wax, the constable said, “Oh, sir, you see he is not in a position to answer you, and that makes you so peremptory and obstinate.”

Fastidious Brisk was wasting time and trying to avoid arrest by asking Carlo Buffone a question.

“Peremptory and obstinate?” Fastidious Brisk said. “By God’s life! I appeal to the drawers if I did him any hard measure.”

George and the younger drawer entered the scene.

“They are all gone,” George said. “There’s none of them will be laid any hold on.”

The constable said to Fastidious Brisk, “Well, sir, you are likely to be held responsible until the rest can be found out.”

“By God’s blood, I appeal to George here,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Tut, George was not here,” the constable said.

He then said to the police officers about Fastidious Brisk, “Take him to the Counter, sirs.”

The Counter was a jail.

The constable said to Carlo Buffone, “Come, sir, it is best that you get yourself medical treatment somewhere.”

The Constable, police officers, Fastidious Brisk, and Carlo Buffone exited.

The two drawers remained behind.

George said, “Good Lord, that Master Carlo could not take heed, and knowing what a gentleman the knight is when he is angry!”

Carlo Buffone’s excuse might be that he was drunk and that Macilente encouraged him to irritate Puntarvolo.

Puntarvolo is a gentleman, but he is a not-so-gentle man when he is angry.

“A pox on them,” the drawer said. “They have left all the food on our hands! I wish that they were choked with it as far as I’m concerned!”

No one had paid the bill for the food.

Macilente returned and said, “What, are they gone, sirs?”

“Oh, here’s Master Macilente,” George said.

Noticing Fungoso under the table, Macilente said, “Sirrah George, do you see that concealment there? That napkin under the table?”

George looked under the table and said, “God’s so, it’s Signor Fungoso!”

Macilente said, “He’s a good pawn for the reckoning — to make responsible for paying the bill. Be sure you keep him

here, and don't let him go away until I come again, even if he offers to discharge and pay the entire bill. I'll return soon."

He exited.

George said to the other server, "Sirrah, we have a pawn for the reckoning."

"Who?" the drawer asked. "Macilente?"

"No, look under the table," George said.

Macilente and the two drawers had been talking quietly enough that Fungoso had not heard them.

Fungoso said to himself, "I hope that all is quiet now. If I can get away from this street, I don't care about anything else."

He looked out from under the table and asked, "Masters, please tell me, has the constable gone?"

In this usage, "masters" meant "my fine fellows."

"What!" George said, pretending to just become aware of Fungoso's presence. "Master Fungoso!"

"Wasn't it a good trick to hide under the table? Wasn't it good of me, sirs?" Fungoso asked.

"Yes, indeed," George said. "Have you been here all this while?"

"Oh, God, aye," Fungoso said. "Good sirs, look and see if the coast is clear. I'd like to be going."

"All's clear, sir, except the reckoning, and that you must clear and pay before you go, I assure you," George said.

"I pay?" Fungoso said. "By God's light, I ate not a bit since I came into the house yet."

“Why, you may eat when you please, sir,” the drawer said. “All the food that was ordered is all ready below in the kitchen.”

“Ordered?” Fungoso said. “Not by me, I hope?”

“By you, sir?” George said. “I don’t know that, but it was for you and your company, I am sure.”

“My company?” Fungoso said. “By God’s eyelid, I was an invited guest, so I was.”

“Indeed, we have nothing to do with that, sir,” the drawer said. “They’re all gone but you, and we must be paid, that’s the short and the long of it — that’s the way it is.”

Fungoso said, “Nay, if you will grow to extremities, my masters, then I wish this pot, cup, and all were in my belly, if I have a cross — a small coin — about me.”

Fungoso was in extremities: He was broke.

“What, and have such apparel?” George said.

“Apparel” means clothing, but “appareil” was a legal word for debt.

George continued, “Do not say so, signor, for that mightily discredits your clothes.”

“By Jesus, the tailor had all my money this morning, and yet I must be obliged to alter my suit, too,” Fungoso said.

He needed to update his suit of clothing once again to try to keep up with the latest fashion.

He continued, “Good sirs, let me go; it is Friday night, a fast day, and, in good truth, I have no stomach in the world to eat anything — I am not hungry.”

“That doesn’t matter, as long as you pay, sir,” the drawer said.

“Pay?” Fungoso said. “By God’s light, with what conscience can you ask me to pay what I never drank for?”

“Yes, sir, I did see you drink once,” George said.

“By this cup, which is silver, but you did not,” Fungoso said. “You do me infinite wrong. I looked in the pot once indeed, but I did not drink.”

Silver is less valuable than gold; lies are less valuable than the truth.

“Well, sir, if you can satisfy my master, it shall be all one to us,” the drawer said.

Someone called George from another room.

George replied, “By and by!”

The actors exited.

Cordatus said to Mitis, “Don’t lose yourself now, signor. Get ahold of yourself.”

In other words, pay attention. The exciting conclusion comes on apace.

#### — 5.4 —

Macilente and Deliro walked on stage. The new location was Deliro’s house.

Macilente said, “Tut, sir, you did bear too bad an opinion of me in our earlier quarrel, but I will now make my friendship to you most transparent, in spite of any dust of suspicion that may be raised to dim it; and henceforth, since I see it is so against your humor, I will never labor to persuade you that your wife is not chaste and not loyal to you.”



“Why, I thank you, signor,” Deliro said. “But what’s that you tell me may concern my peace so much?”

Macilente said:

“Indeed, sir, it is this:

“Your wife’s brother, Signor Fungoso, being at supper tonight at a tavern with a group of gallants, there happened some division and disagreement among them, and he is left in pawn for the reckoning.

‘Now, if ever you look for a time when you shall have a happy occasion to do your wife some gracious and acceptable service, take hold of this opportunity, and immediately go and redeem him by paying the tavern bill; for being her brother, and his credit so amply engaged as now it is, when she shall hear — as he cannot himself behave otherwise, but he must out of need and embarrassment report it — that you came and offered yourself so kindly, and with that respect of his reputation, by God’s blood, the benefit that you gave to her brother cannot but make her dote on you and fall madly in love with you because of your goodwill toward her brother.’”

“Now, by heaven, Macilente, I acknowledge myself exceedingly indebted to you by this kind offer of your friendship, and I am sorry to remember that I was ever so rude as to neglect a friend of your worth,” Deliro said.

He called, “Bring me shoes and a cloak there!”

He said to Macilente, “I would be going to bed if you had not come. What tavern is it?”

“The Mitre, sir,” Macilente replied.

“Oh,” Deliro said.

He called, “Why, Fido, my shoes!”

He then said, "In good faith, it cannot but please my wife exceedingly."

Fallace and Fido entered the room. Fido was carrying Deliro's shoes and cloak.

Fallace said to her husband, "Come, I marvel what piece of nightwork — what sexual adventure — you have in hand now, that you call for your cloak and your shoes."

She pointed to Macilente and asked, "Is this man your pander?"

"Oh, sweet wife, speak lower," Deliro said. "I would not he should hear thee for a world —"

"Hang him, rascal!" Fallace said. "I cannot abide him for his treachery, with his wild bristly beard there. To where are you going now with him?"

"No 'whither with him,' dear wife," Deliro said. "I go alone to a place from whence I will return instantly."

He whispered to Macilente, "Good Macilente, don't tell her where I am going and what I am doing by any means; it may come so much the more accepted the less it is expected. Invent some other answer. Don't tell her the truth."

He said out loud to his wife, Fallace, "I'll come back immediately."

Deliro and Fido exited.

Fallace called after her husband, "Nay, if I am not worthy to know where you are going, wait until I take knowledge of your coming back."

"I hear you and understand you, Mistress Deliro," Macilente said.

"So, sir, and what do you say?" Fallace asked.

“Indeed, lady, my intentions will not deserve this slight respect, when you shall know them,” Macilente said.

“Your intentions?” Fallace asked. “Why, what may your intentions be, for God’s sake?”

Macilente replied, “Truly, the time allows for no lengthy explanations, lady. Therefore know that this was merely a device of mine to remove your husband from here and bestow him securely, until, at a more convenient time, I might report to you a misfortune that has happened to Monsieur Brisk.”

Fallace looked worried.

Macilente continued:

“Nay, be comforted, sweet lady.

“This night, being at supper, a group of young gallants committed a riot, for the which only Monsieur Brisk was apprehended and carried to the Counter, where, if your husband and other creditors would just have knowledge of him, the poor gentleman would be ruined forever.”

The Counter was a city prison.

“I would feel terrible if that were to happen to him!” Fallace said.

“Now, therefore, if you can think upon any immediate means for his delivery from prison, do not forslow and delay it,” Macilente said. “A bribe to the officer who committed him will get him out of prison.”

“Oh, God, sir, he shall not lack for a bribe,” Fallace said. “Please, will you commend me to him — Fastidious Brisk — and say I’ll visit him soon?”

“No, lady, I shall do you better service in protracting your husband’s return, so that you may go with more safety,” Macilente said.

“In good truth, so you may,” Fallace said. “Farewell, good sir.”

Macilente exited.

Alone, Fallace said to herself, “Lord, how a woman may be mistaken in a man! I would have sworn upon all the testaments in the world that Macilente did not respect Master Brisk.”

She called, “Bring me my keys there, maid!”

She said to herself about Fastidious Brisk, “Alas, good gentleman! If all I have in this earthly world will pleasure him, it shall be at his service.”

Part of what she had in this earthly world was her body.

She exited.

Mitis said to Cordatus, “How Macilente sweats in this business, if you pay close attention to him!”

“Aye, you shall see the true picture of spite soon,” Cordatus said. “Here comes the pawn and his redeemer.”

— 5.5 —

Deliro and Fungoso entered the scene. George the drawer followed them.

“Come, brother-in-law, don’t be discouraged because of this, man,” Deliro said. “What is bothering you?”

“No, truly, I am not discouraged,” Fungoso said. “But I assure you, brother-in-law, I have finished imitating any

more gallants either in purse or apparel — spending and debt and clothing.

“But I shall act as shall become a gentleman for good carriage — honorable conduct and manners — and such.”

“You say well,” Deliro said.

He said to George, “This is all in the bill here, isn’t it?”

“Aye, sir,” George said.

“There’s your money,” Deliro said. “Count it.”

He then said to Fungoso, “And brother-in-law, I am glad I met with so good an occasion to show my love and respect to you.”

“I will endeavor to deserve it, in good truth, if I live,” Fungoso said.

“Is the amount of money correct?” Deliro asked George.

“Aye, sir, and I thank you,” George replied.

“Let me have a capon’s leg saved, now the reckoning is paid,” Fungoso said.

A capon is a castrated rooster.

“You shall, sir,” George said as he exited.

Macilente entered the scene and asked, “Where’s Signor Deliro?”

“Here I am, Macilente,” Deliro said.

Macilente whispered to him, “Listen, sir, have you dispatched this business?”

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, I have,” Deliro said.

“Well, then, I can tell you the news,” Macilente said. “Brisk is in the Counter.”

“In the Counter?” Deliro asked.

“It is true, sir,” Macilente said. “He has been committed for the brawl here tonight. Now I would have you send your brother-in-law home before you, with the report of this your kindness done him to his sister, which will so pleasingly possess her, and out of his mouth, too, so that in the meantime you may slap your lawsuit on Brisk, and your wife — being in so happy a mood — cannot entertain it ill by any means.”

“That is very true,” Deliro said. “She cannot indeed, I think.”

“Think? Why, it’s past thought,” Macilente said. “You shall never have again the like opportunity, I assure you.”

“I will do it,” Deliro replied.

He then said to Fungoso, “Brother-in-law, I want you to go home before me — this gentleman and I have some private business — and tell my sweet wife I’ll come soon.”

“I will, brother-in-law,” Fungoso said.

Macilente said to Fungoso, “And signor, acquaint your sister with how liberally and out of his bounty your brother-in-law has treated you — do you see? He has made you a man of good reckoning (one who pays his bills); redeemed that which you never were possessed of (credit); gave you as gentlemanlike terms of repayment as might be; found no fault with your trying to keep up with the latest fashion but failing; nor has he found fault in you for anything.”

Fungoso had no credit at the Mitre Tavern, and probably little credit (so far) as a human being.

The terms of repayment were probably this: No repayment needed.

Deliro was a wealthy and generous man.

“Nay, I am out of those humors now,” Fungoso said.

“Well, if you are out of those humors, keep your distance, and don’t be made a shot-clog anymore,” Macilente said.

A shot-clog is a fool who is tolerated because he pays the tavern bill for all.

He then said to Deliro, “Come, signor, let’s make haste.”

The actors exited.

— 5.6 —

Fastidious Brisk and Fallace talked together in the Counter prison.

“Oh, Master Fastidious, what a pity it is to see so sweet a man as you are, in so sour a place!” Fallace said.

She kissed him.

“As upon her lips, does she mean?” Cordatus asked.

What sour place? Her lips?

“Oh, this is to be imagined the Counter, perhaps?” Mitis said.

The Counter is another sour place.

“Indeed, fair lady, it is first the pleasure of the Fates, and next of the constable, to have it so,” Fastidious Brisk said, “but I am patient and indeed comforted and cheered the more in your kind visitation.”

A visitation is a social call.

“Nay, you shall be comforted in me more than this, if you please, sir,” Fallace replied.

By “comforted in me,” she meant “comforted by me,” but readers may be forgiven if they thought she was making a sexual invitation.

She continued, “I sent you word by my brother, sir, that my husband wanted to arrest you this morning. I don’t know whether you received it or not.”

“No, believe it, sweet creature, your brother gave me no such information,” Fastidious Brisk said.

“Oh, the Lord!” Fallace said.

“But has your husband any such purpose in his mind?” Fastidious Brisk asked. “Does he want to have me arrested?”

“Oh, God, Master Brisk, yes, and therefore be quickly discharged,” Fallace said, “for if he would come with his actions upon you — Lord deliver you! — you will be in prison for one half-a-score years — ten years. He kept a poor man in Ludgate, once, for twelve years for sixteen shillings.”

This seems unlikely, given what we have seen of Deliro’s character, although debtors were kept in prison until either they paid their debt or their debt was forgiven.

“Where’s your keeper?” Fallace said. “For God’s love, call him, let him take a bribe and dispatch you. Lord, how my heart trembles! Here are no spies, are there?”

“No, sweet mistress,” Fastidious Brisk said. “Why are you in this passion?”

Fallace answered:

“Oh, Christ, Master Fastidious, if you knew how I rebuked my husband today when he said he would arrest you, and how I railed at Macilente, the man who persuaded him to do



it and who is the scholar there (and who, on my conscience, loves and respects you now), and what care I took to send you intelligence by my brother, and how I gave him four sovereigns — forty shillings — for his pains, and now, how I came running out here without a serving-man or serving-boy with me, as soon as I heard about it, you'd say I were in a passion indeed — your keeper, for God's sake!"

Respectable gentlewomen would never leave their homes without a chaperone.

A "keeper" could be 1) a jailor, or 2) a person who kept someone. E.g., a woman who kept a gigolo, or a man who kept a mistress.

Fallace continued:

"Oh, Master Brisk, as it is in John Lyly's *Euphues His England*:

*"Hard is the choice, when one is compelled either by silence to die with grief, or by speaking to live with shame."*

She had chosen to speak out in defense of Fastidious Brisk.

He replied, "Fair lady, I understand you, and may this kiss assure you that, where adversity has, as it were, contracted, prosperity shall not —"

In other words: ... where bad fortune has brought us together, good fortune shall not [separate us].

Deliro and Macilente entered the scene.

Fastidious Brisk said, "By God's light, your husband!"

"Oh, me!" Fallace said.

"Aye!" Deliro said. "Is it thus?"

“Why, how now, Signor Deliro? Has the wolf seen you? Ha? Has a Gorgon’s head made marble out of you?” Macilente asked.

A superstition stated that when a wolf saw a man before the man saw the wolf, the man would be stricken dumb. (If I were to turn around and see a wolf looking at me, I would lose my power of speech — and maybe some body contents.)

In mythology, the sight of a Gorgon’s head would turn a man to stone.

“May some planet strike me dead!” Deliro said.

Macilente said:

“Why, look, sir, I told you that you might have suspected this long before, had you pleased, and you might have saved this labor of astonishment now, and strong emotion, and such extremities as this frail lump of flesh is subject to.

“Nay, why don’t you dote on Fallace now and make excuses for her behavior, signor? I think you should say it were some enchantment, *deceptio visus* — an illusion, or so, ha? If you could persuade yourself it were a dream now, it would be excellent.

“Indeed, try what you can do, signor. It may be possible that your imagination will be brought to it in time; there’s nothing impossible.”

“Sweet husband!” Fallace said.

“Sweet husband”? Fallace was out of her humor.

“Get out, lascivious strumpet!” Deliro said.

“Lascivious strumpet”? Deliro was out of his humor.

He exited.

Macilente said to Fallace:

“What! Did you see how ill that stale vein became him before, of ‘sweet wife’ and ‘dear heart’? And are you fallen just into the same now, with ‘sweet husband’?”

“Away, follow him!

“Go, and keep your state — keep your dignity!

“What! Remember that you are a woman: Turn impudent. Don’t give him the head, although you give him the horns.

“Away! Follow him!”

Giving her husband the head meant giving him his freedom.

Giving her husband the horns meant making him a cuckold.

Macilente was sarcastically advising Fallace not to admit she was wrong.

He continued:

“And yet I think you should take your leave of the *enfants-perdus* here, your forlorn hope.”

*Enfants-perdus* [lost children] and “forlorn hope” are French and English military terms for a sentinel(s) who is (are) in a position where he (they) will probably not survive a battle. Here it applies to Fastidious Brisk, whose financial position is past hope.

Fallace exited.

Macilente then asked:

“How are you now, Monsieur Brisk? What! Friday at night? And in affliction, too?”

Religious people went meatless on Friday, and Fastidious Brisk had gone supperless at the Mitre. Also, religious

people sorrowed as they repented their sins, and Fastidious Brisk was sorrowing in prison.

Macilente was sarcastically asking Fastidious Brisk if he had become religious.

He continued:

“And yet your *pulpamenta*? Your delicate morsels?”

*Pulpamenta* means finely seasoned meat. Fastidious Brisk’s delicate morsel was Fallace, Deliro’s wife. So maybe Fastidious Brisk was not becoming religious since he may still have his delicate morsel.

Macilente continued:

“I perceive that the erotic love of ladies and gentlewomen pursues you wheresoever you go, monsieur.”

Fastidious Brisk replied, “Now, in good faith, and as I am a gentleman, there could not have come a thing in this world to have distracted and distressed me more than the wrinkled — spoiled — fortunes of this poor dame.”

Macilente replied:

“Oh, yes, sir, I can tell you a thing that will distract and distress you much better, believe it.

“Signor Deliro has entered three actions against you, three actions, monsieur. By the Virgin Mary, one of them — I’ll put you in comfort — is only three thousand marks, and the other two some five thousand pounds together. Trifles, trifles.”

This was poor comfort. These debts were much more than Fastidious Brisk could pay.

“Oh, God, I am ruined!” Fastidious Brisk said.

Macilente replied:

“Nay, not altogether so, sir. The knight — Puntarvolo — must have his hundred pounds repaid; that’ll help add to your debt, too. And then six-score pounds for a diamond, you know where.”

Fastidious Brisk may have pawned the diamond. Or he may have bought a diamond on credit so he could lie and say that it was a gift from a female admirer.

Macilente continued:

“These are things that will weigh, monsieur; they will weigh.”

They will weigh him down with debt and sorrow.

“Oh, Jesus!” Fastidious Brisk said.

Macilente said:

“What! Do you sigh?

“This is what it is to kiss the hand of a countess, to have her coach sent for you, to hang poniards — small daggers — in ladies’ garters as favors, to wear bracelets of their hair, and for every one of these great favors to give some slight jewel of five hundred crowns or so.”

Fastidious Brisk paid for small feminine favors with great gifts.

Macilente continued:

“Why, it is nothing!

“Now, monsieur, you see the plague that treads upon the heels of your foppery.

“Well, go your ways in. Remove yourself to the two-penny ward quickly to save charges, and there set up your rest to spend Sir Puntar’s hundred pounds for him.”

At this point, all the money that Fastidious Brisk had was the hundred pounds he had gotten from Puntarvolo — one hundred pounds that was supposed to be returned to him because Puntarvolo’s dog had died and so Puntarvolo would not set out on his journey.

Macilente was advising Fastidious Brisk to spend the one hundred pounds on himself to make his stay in prison somewhat comfortable. Since he was likely to be there a long time, he ought to conserve money by going to the two-penny ward rather than a more expensive ward.

Macilente then said, “Away, good Pomander, go away!”

A pomander is literally a scent container. Figuratively, it is a perfumed courtier: Fastidious Brisk.

Fastidious Brisk exited.

An actor portraying Queen Elizabeth I entered the scene and walked across the stage.

Suddenly, against expectation and all the steel of Macilente’s malice, the very wonder of her presence struck Macilente to the earth, dumb and astonished. From there he rose.

Recovering his heart, Macilente expressed his passion – his strong emotion:

“Blessed, divine, unblemished, sacred, pure,

“Glorious, immortal, and indeed immense —

“Oh, that I had a world of attributes

“To lend or add to this high majesty!

“Never until now did [any] object greet mine [my] eyes

“With any light [enlightening] content, but in her graces

“All my malicious powers have lost their stings.

“Envy has fled my soul at sight of her,

“And she hath [has] chased all black thoughts from my bosom,

“Like as [Just as] the sun doth [does] darkness from the world.”

Queen Elizabeth I was sometimes compared to Astraea, the goddess of justice who exited from the Earth because of the worsening behavior of human beings who engaged in such vices as malicious envy.

The sight of Queen Elizabeth had driven Macilente’s malicious envy out of his mind.

Macilente next spoke of his former humor — his malicious envy — and compared it to a stream of sewage flowing into the Thames, which then diluted and drowned it:

“My stream of humor is run out of me;

“And as our city’s torrent, bent to infect

“The hallowed bowels of the silver Thames,

“Is checked by [the] strength and clearness of the river

“Until it has spent itself even at the shore,

“So in the ample and unmeasured flood

“Of her perfections are my [former malignant] passions drowned,

“And I have now a spirit as sweet and clear

“As the most rarefied and subtle air;  
“With which, and with a heart as pure as fire,  
“Yet humble as the earth, do I implore —”  
He knelt: This was a prelude to his prayer:  
“O heaven, that she, whose figure hath [has] effected  
“This change in me may never suffer change  
“In her admired and happy [fortunate] government!  
“May still [always] this island be called Fortunate,  
“And rugged Treason tremble at the sound  
“When Fame [Reputation] shall speak it with an emphasis!  
“Let foreign Policy [that is, the Policy of hostile countries,  
not England] be dull as lead,  
“And pale Invasion come with half a heart  
“When he but [just] looks upon her blessed soil;  
“The throat of War be stopped within her land,  
“And turtle-footed [turtledove-footed — that is, elegant and  
graceful] Peace dance fairy rings  
“About her court, where never may there come  
“Suspect [Suspicion] or danger, but all trust and safety.  
“Let Flattery be dumb, and Envy blind  
“In her dread presence; [may] Death himself admire her,  
“And may her virtues make him to forget  
“The use of his inevitable hand.  
“Fly from her, Age. Sleep, Time, before her throne!



“Our strongest wall falls down when she is gone.”

The actor playing Queen Elizabeth exited.

The trumpets sounded, and the actor playing Macilente, no longer performing a role in the play within a play that had just finished, joined his friends: Mitis and Cordatus.

The actor who had played Macilente asked Mitis and Cordatus, “How are you now, sirs?” How did you like the play? Hasn’t it been tedious?”

“Nay, we have finished censuring now,” Cordatus said. “There will be no more critical commentary from us.”

“Yes, indeed,” Mitis said.

“Why?” the actor who had played Macilente asked.

Cordatus answered:

“By the Virgin Mary, because we’ll imitate your actors, and be out of our critical humors.

“Besides, here are those” — he pointed to the audience, including you, dear readers — “round about you, of more ability in censure than we, whose judgments can give it a more satisfying allowance of approval and applause; we’ll refer you to them.”

The actor who had played Macilente replied:

“Aye? Is it even so?”

He then said to you, the audience:

“Well, gentlemen [and gentlewomen], I should have gone in and returned to you as I was, Asper the playwright, at the first.

“But because the costume-change would have been somewhat long, and we are loath to draw your patience any farther, we’ll entreat you to imagine it.

“And now, so that you may see I will be out of humor for the sake of good company, I long only for your kind approbation, and, indeed, I am not at all as peremptory and obstinate as I was in the beginning of the play.

“By the Virgin Mary, I will not do as Plautus in his *Amphitryo*, for all this: *Summi Iovis causa, plaudite*. I will not beg a plaudit for God’s sake.”

The Latin meant: For the sake of great Jove, applaud.

Jove is Jupiter, Roman king of the gods.

The actor who had played Macilente continued:

“But if you, out of the bounty of your good liking, will bestow it, why, you may in time make lean Macilente as fat as Sir John Falstaff.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, lean people were thought to be envious and fat people were thought to be jovial.

The actors exited.

\*\*\*

*Non ego ventosae plebis suffragia venor.*

The Latin, which is from Horace’s *Epistles* I.19.37, means:

“I am not hunting the votes of a fickle public.”

## NOTES

### — 1.1 —

*“Invidus suspirat, gemit, incutitque dentes,*

*“Sudat frigidus, intuens quod odit.”*

(1.1.34-35)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 278

Jonson scholar G.A. Wilkes translated the Latin:

*The envious man sighs, groans, gnashes his teeth,*

*Breaks into a cold sweat, contemplating what he hates.*

Wilkes also wrote that “*gemit* should be *fremit*” and that the epigram was by Caelius Firmianus Symposius.

Source of Above: Ben Jonson, *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*. Edited by G. A. Wilkes. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1981-1982. Volume 1. P. 297.

### — 2.2 —

*I do intend, this year of jubilee, to travel [...]*

(2.2.276)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 310.

## **JUBILEE DEFINITION**

***Francis announces new global jubilee, the Holy Year of Mercy***

*Symbolically calling on the entire global Roman Catholic church to take up his papacy's central message of compassion and pardon, Pope Francis on Friday announced that he is convoking a jubilee year to be called the Holy Year of Mercy.*

[...]

*A jubilee year is a special year called by the church to receive blessing and pardon from God and remission of sins. The Catholic church has called jubilee years every 25 or 50 years since the year 1300 and has also called special jubilee years from time to time, known as extraordinary jubilee years.*

*The last jubilee year was held in 2000 during the papacy of Pope John Paul II and was known as "the Great Jubilee." The last extraordinary jubilee year was held in 1983 to celebrate 1,950 years since the death and resurrection of Jesus.*

*[Joshua J. McElwee is NCR Vatican correspondent. His email address is [jmcelwee@ncronline.org](mailto:jmcelwee@ncronline.org). Follow him on Twitter: @joshjmac.]*

*Source of Above: Joshua J. McElwee, “Francis announces new global jubilee, the Holy Year of Mercy.” National Catholic Reporter. 13 March 2015*

*<https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-announces-new-global-jubilee-holy-year-mercy>*

## **PLENARY INDULGENCE DEFINITION**

*“What is a plenary indulgence?”*

*VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis said he will grant a plenary indulgence to the faithful who watch or listen to his extraordinary blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) at 6 p.m. Rome time March 27.*

*Special indulgences have also been granted to those suffering from COVID-19, their caregivers, friends and family and those who help them with their prayers.*

*But what is this ancient practice of offering indulgences through prayer and penance and what is needed to receive them?*

*An indulgence is not a quick ticket to heaven, as St. John Paul II once said; rather, it is an aid for the real conversion that leads to eternal happiness.*

*[...]*

*An indulgence, then, is the result of the abundance of God’s mercy, which he offers to humanity through Jesus Christ and through the church, he said.*

*But this gift cannot be received automatically or simply by fulfilling a few exterior requirements nor can it be approached with a superficial attitude, St. John Paul said.*

*The reception of an indulgence depends on “our turning away from sin and our conversion to God,” he said.*

*That is why there are several conditions for receiving an indulgence:*

— *A spirit detached from sin.*

— *Sacramental confession as soon as possible.*

— *Eucharistic communion as soon as possible.*

— *Prayer for the Holy Father’s intentions.*

— *Being united spiritually through the media to the pope’s special prayer and blessing on March 27.*

*[...]*

*The faithful can claim the indulgence for themselves or offer it on behalf of someone who has died.*

Source of Above: Carol Glatz, “What is a Plenary Indulgence?” Catholic News Service • Posted March 27, 2020

<https://catholicphilly.com/2020/03/news/world-news/what-is-a-plenary-indulgence/>

— 1.3 —

*‘St Swithin’s, the fifteenth day, variable weather, for the most*

*part, rain’ – good – ‘for the most part, rain’. Why, it should rain forty days*

*after now, more or less. It was a rule held afore I was able to hold a plough,*

*and yet here are two days, no rain.*

(1.3.30-33)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 288.

The below information comes from the article “St. Swithin’s Day” by the Editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

*Swithin’s Day, also called St. Swithun’s Day, (July 15), a day on which, according to folklore, the weather for a subsequent period is dictated. In popular belief, if it rains on St. Swithin’s Day, it will rain for 40 days, but if it is fair, 40 days of fair weather will follow.*

Source of Above: Editors of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “St. Swithin’s Day.” Britannica.com. Accessed 13December 2021

St. Swithin’s Day | weather folklore | Britannica

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Saint-Swithins-Day>

The passage seems to indicate that the date of the play is July 15, but the letter by Fungoso in 3.2 indicates that the date is before Lent. See note on 3.2 below.

Possibly, Sordido means “Why, it should rain forty days after now [now = this date in the almanac], more or less.”

Much of *Every Man in His Humor* seems to take place in a day (assuming Fungoso’s tailor works very, very quickly and travel takes place very, very quickly) or, more likely, a

few days, but the Sordido subplot seems to take place over weeks or months — long enough for a crop to grow.

— 2.2 —

*Faith, here be some slight favours of hers, sir, that do speak it,*

*she is: as this scarf, sir, or this ribbon in mine ear, or so.*

(2.2.241-242)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 309.

One definition of “ribbon” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is this:

*Anything that forms a narrow strip or that is suggestive of a ribbon; = riband n. 3a; spec. a strip of land, esp. a path or road.*

However, the first date for this usage is 1656.

Here is some information from Caroline Oraderio’s article titled “Watch an audiologist vacuum a ‘huge ribbon of skin’ from someone’s ear.”

Oraderio, Caroline. “Watch an audiologist vacuum a ‘huge ribbon of skin’ from someone’s ear.”

- *A new video from an audiologist shows a “huge ribbon of skin” getting suctioned out of someone’s ear.*



- *Later in the video, it's placed next to a ruler and measures 5 centimeters long.*
- *The audiologist who posted the video wrote that this type of skin shedding is uncommon, but not unheard of.*

Source of Above: Oraderio, Caroline. "Watch an audiologist vacuum a 'huge ribbon of skin' from someone's ear." Insider.com. 24 January 2018

<https://www.insider.com/audiologist-removes-ribbon-of-skin-earwax-2018-1>

This is the YouTube video:

**HUGE RIBBON OF SKIN AND EAR WAX REMOVED**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mpukw2Q\\_Ft4&t=11s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mpukw2Q_Ft4&t=11s)

— 2.3 —

*Perfumèd gloves and delicate chains of amber*

*To keep the air in awe of her sweet nostrils.*

(2.3.93-94)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 316.

Here is some information about amber:

*There are three things called "amber" associated with perfumery.*

*The first is ambergris. It's produced in whale stomachs, possibly to protect them from hard sharp objects (squid beaks, for instance), hence the nickname "whale vomit", although "whale pearl" might be just as accurate. Fresh ambergris is a byproduct of the whaling industry, but considered unsuitable for use in perfume; the good stuff spends years in the ocean before finally washing up on shore. I haven't smelled the real thing, but the synthetics have a distinctive fresh-woody character with some resemblance to clary sage; the real thing is said to be smoother, more complex, and somewhat animalic.*

*The second is mineral amber. This is fossilized tree sap. It's translucent and kind of an orange brown color, like honey; it is, I suspect, what the color "amber" refers to. Actually, this isn't used in perfumery at all; mineral amber has no smell unless it's heated (by burning, or working with power tools) and the smell is supposedly an unpleasant resinous or "burning plastic" smell. According to some sources on the internet, it's possible to extract an oil from the resin, but the smell is similar to when it burns.*

*The third is perfume amber, which is often confused with mineral amber. Perfume amber isn't any kind of fossilized sap; it's a solid perfume, typically composed of labdanum, benzoin, and beeswax, with any number of other ingredients as the maker desires (patchouli, frankincense, and vanilla being probably the most common). The scent is heavy, resinous, and sweet, but not particularly like ambergris. It's also possible to extract an amber oil from the solid, or to construct an amber oil by using extracts of the resin ingredients.*

*So when a scent says it has “amber” notes in it, which of these three do they mean? Unfortunately, there’s no way to tell. Ambergris has a kind of legendary status, being known as a precious material that makes any perfume better but is too rare and expensive to use in modern commercial formulation ... a kind of unattainable exotic luxury from the past. The word “amber” has an evocative, mysterious quality that makes it sound desirable even to people who don’t know what it is. No perfume marketer would hesitate an instant to claim that something has “amber” or “ambergris” notes; their real stock in trade is genuine 100% Grade A bullshit, and they’ll say anything, anything, to sell a bottle of juice. But since ambergris has its own word, I generally assume that when a perfume says it has amber in it, they mean the solid perfume kind ... and I think most perfumes with “amber” in the name have the characteristic smell of perfume amber.*

Last edited: Jun 1, 2008

Source of Above: “What Does Amber Smell Like?” Base Notes. 22 February 2008.

<https://basenotes.com/threads/what-does-amber-smell-like.206386/>

— 2.3. —

*If thou wilt eat of the spirit of gold, and drink dissolved pearl  
in wine, 'tis for thee.*

(2.3. 297-298)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 324.

Here is some information about Cleopatra drinking a pearl dissolved in wine:

*Among the most colorful tales in the pearl world is that of a legendary banquet, where Cleopatra bet Marc Antony that she could host the most expensive dinner in history. According to author and noted pearl expert Fred Ward, in his book, Pearls, the queen hoped to impress Antony and the Roman Empire he represented with the extent of Egypt's wealth. In her clever attempt to do so, she crushed one large pearl from a pair of earrings and dissolved it in a goblet of wine (or vinegar), before gulping it down.*

*"Astonished, Antony declined his dinner—the matching pearl—and admitted she had won," Ward writes.*

*The famous story of Cleopatra's pearls is told by Pliny the Elder in his Natural History. Pliny, often called the world's first gemologist, estimated the two pearls' worth at 60 million sestertii, or roughly \$28.5 million in today's dollars.*

*Cleopatra was often seen as the epitome of Luxuria, a medieval vice pictured as a bejewelled naked woman, the embodiment of extravagant lust. It was her association with pearls which was the real reason for her early notoriety as Luxuria.*

*As Pliny related,*

*“The first place and the topmost rank among all things of price is held by pearls ... Their whole value lies in their brilliance, size, roundness, smoothness and weight ... There have been two pearls that were the largest in the whole of history; both were owned by Cleopatra ... they had come down to her through the hands of the kings of the East.”*

Source of Above: “The real story about Cleopatra’s banquet and that pearl. Grants Jewelry. 9 June 2016 < <https://www.grantsjewelry.com/the-real-story-about-cleopatras-banquet-and-that-pearl/> >.

— 3.1 —

The sample Latin mottos come from the site *Welcome to Armorial Gold: The World’s Largest Provider of Heraldic Art*:

<https://www.heraldryclipart.com>

— 3.2 —

*Desiring you first to send me your blessing, which is more worth to*

*me than gold or silver, I desire you likewise to be advertised that this Shrovetide,*

(3.2.22-23)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 347.

The following information is from the Wikipedia article titled “Ash Wednesday”:

*Ash Wednesday is exactly 46 days before Easter Sunday, a moveable feast based on the cycles of the moon. The earliest date Ash Wednesday can occur is 4 February (which is only possible during a common year with Easter on 22 March), which happened in 1598, 1693, 1761 and 1818 and will next occur in 2285. The latest date Ash Wednesday can occur is 10 March (when Easter Day falls on 25 April) which occurred in 1666, 1734, 1886 and 1943 and will next occur in 2038.*

Source: “Ash Wednesday.” Wikipedia. Accessed 21 November 2021

< [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash\\_Wednesday#Dates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash_Wednesday#Dates) >.

— 3.3 —

*'Sheart, all her jests are of  
the stamp March was fifteen years ago.*

(3.3.119-120)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 357.

Possibly, Macilente is merely saying that Saviolina’s jokes are old, but *Every Man Out of His Humor* was first performed in 1599, and in March 1894 Sir Francis Throckmorton was under arrest for high treason against

Queen Elizabeth I and England, and also in March 1894 Balthasar Gérard was plotting to assassinate William of Orange. So possibly Macilente was also saying that Saviolinia's jokes came from a time when jokes ought not to be made.

The information below comes the Wikipedia article on "Throckmorton Plot":

*The 1583 **Throckmorton Plot** was one of a series of attempts by English Roman Catholics to depose Elizabeth I of England and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots, then held under house arrest in England.*

*The plot is named after the key conspirator, Sir Francis Throckmorton, cousin of Bess Throckmorton, lady in waiting to Queen Elizabeth. Francis was arrested in November 1583 and executed in July 1584.*

Source of Above: "Bond of Association." Wikipedia. Accessed 11 December 2021.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bond\\_of\\_Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bond_of_Association)

Source of Below: "Catholics and Queen Elizabeth."

*In 1584 William of Orange, the leader of the Dutch Protestants was murdered by a Catholic. Parliament responded by passing the **Bond of Association**. This stated that if Elizabeth was murdered, Parliament would make sure that the murderers were punished along with anyone who had benefitted from Elizabeth's death.*

...

1583 — The Throckmorton Plot

*A young Catholic man, Francis Throckmorton, organised a plan for a French army to invade*

*England and replace Elizabeth with Mary, Queen of Scots, paid for by the Pope and King Philip II of Spain.*

Source of Above: Catholics and Queen Elizabeth.” GCSE OCR B. Accessed 11 December 2021.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z324mnb/revision/2>

The information below comes the Wikipedia article on “Throckmorton Plot”:

*The document obliged all signatories to execute any person that:*

- *attempted to usurp the throne*
- *successfully usurped the throne*
- *made an attempt on Elizabeth’s life*
- *successfully assassinated Elizabeth*

*In the last case, the document also made it obligatory for the signatories to hunt down the killer.*

Source of Above: “Bond of Association.” Wikipedia. Accessed 11 December 2021.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throckmorton\\_Plot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throckmorton_Plot)

— 5.3 —

*“O, servetur ad imum, qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.”*

(5.3123)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.



Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 403.

This is C. Smart's translation:

*such as it set out at the beginning, and be consistent  
with itself.*

The Latin is from Horace, *Ars Poetica* 126-127.

Source of translation: Horace. *The Works of Horace*. C. Smart. Theodore Alois Buckley. New York. Harper & Brothers. 1863.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0065%3Acard%3D125>

## **CHAPTER 11: Ben Jonson's *The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels***

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)**

Note: The names of characters who are definitely female are in bold.

1. **CYNTHIA**: Goddess of the Moon and of Hunting. She is also called Diana. Her Greek name is Artemis. In Elizabethan drama, Cynthia is often allegorically Queen Elizabeth I. She does not drink from the Fountain of Self-Love.

2. MERCURY: God of Thieves. He disguises himself as a page and serves Hedon.

3. CUPID: God of Love. He disguises himself as a page and serves Philautia. Cupid can make people fall in love with each other who ought not to fall in love with each other.

4. HESPERUS: Personification of the Evening Star.

5. **ECHO**: former attendant of Juno, Queen of the Gods. Echo is a woman.

Echo fell in love with Narcissus, a beautiful mortal, but he saw his reflection in a pool of water and fell in love with it. Unable to move away from the sight of himself in the pool of water, he wasted away and died. After he died, a flower sprang up where he died. Echo also wasted away from grief until she became no more than her voice, which repeats the words that others say.

According to one myth, Juno took away Echo's voice because Echo helped Juno's husband, Jupiter, king of the gods, to hide his adulteries from her.

6. **CRITICUS**. The name means “critic.” Good critics (as in the case of good satirists) are capable of pointing the way (and following the way) to moral improvement. Criticus is a wise scholar. He does not drink from the Fountain of Self-Love.

7. **ARETE**. The name means “Excellence” or “Virtue.” Lady Arete is wise, excellent, and virtuous. She does not drink from the Fountain of Self-Love.

8. **AMORPHUS**. The name means “Shapeless” and “Misshapen” and “Deformed.” Amorphus may be adaptable, and he may have a shifting nature and character. He is a foolish male courtier.

9. **PHANTASTE**. The name means “Fantasy,” which can mean Self-Delusion. Phantaste has a Light Wittiness. Phantaste is a woman. She is a foolish female courtier. Courtiers are attendants at court. The word “light” can mean unimportant and trivial.

10. **ASOTUS**. The name means “Prodigal.” The Prodigal engages the Beggar to be his attendant and serve him. Asotus is a foolish male courtier.

11. **ARGURION**. The name means “Silver,” or “Money” since some money is silver. Argurion is a woman. She does not drink from the Fountain of Self-Love.

12. **HEDON**. The name means “Voluptuous,” as in “Hedonistic.” He is a hedonistic courtier. He is a foolish male courtier.

13. **PHILAUTIA**. The name means “Self-Love.” Philautia is a court lady. She is a foolish female courtier.

14. **ANAIDES**. The name means “Shameless.” He is an impudent courtier. He is a foolish male courtier.

15. **MORIA.** The name means “Folly.” Moria is a woman. She is like a mother to some of the young unmarried women: She is the Mother of the Maidens. She is a foolish female courtier.

16. **PROSAITES.** The name means “Beggar.” He is a boy. He is a foolish page.

17. **COS.** The name means “Whetstone.” Liars were punished by being made to wear whetstones around their neck. He is a boy. He is a foolish page.

18. **MORUS.** The name means “Simpleton.” He is a foolish page.

19. **GELAIA.** The name means “Laughter.” Laughter is the daughter of Folly. In the play, Laughter is a young woman (a wench dressed in a page’s clothing). She serves Anaiides as a page. She is a foolish female courtier.

Note: In Ben Jonson’s society, the word “wench” is not necessarily negative. It can be affectionate.

20. **PHRONESIS** *mute.* The name means “Prudence.” She does not drink from the Fountain of Self-Love.

Note: The word “mute” means “a character who does not speak.”

21. **THAUMA** *mute.* The name means “Wonder.” She does not drink from the Fountain of Self-Love.

22. **TIMÈ** *mute.* The name means “Honor.” She does not drink from the Fountain of Self-Love.

A TAILOR

FIRST CHILD

SECOND CHILD

## THIRD CHILD

### THE SCENE: GARGAPHIE

Gargaphie is a forested valley in Boeotia, Greece. It was sacred to Diana, goddess of the hunt. It is also the place where Actaeon was killed: See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.155-156. In the play, it is spelled “Gargaphia” one time.

\*\*\*

An archaic meaning of “fountain” is a spring of water that comes from the Earth and forms a pool of water. The surface of the pool can be still and form a natural mirror.

In Ben Jonson’s society, a person of higher rank would use “thou,” “thee,” “thine,” and “thy” when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use “you” and “your” when referring to a person of higher rank.

“Sirrah” was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

The word “wench” at this time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

A presence chamber is a reception room.

This play was first performed by a company of boy actors. In Ben Jonson’s society, boys always played the parts of women.

Ben Jonson mostly uses the Roman names of the gods, but he sometimes uses the Greek names. Here are the names of some of the gods (Roman name first):

Apollo: Apollo

Cupid: Cupid

Diana: Artemis

Juno: Hera

Jupiter, aka Jove: Zeus

Latona: Leto

Mercury: Hermes

Minerva: Athena

Neptune: Poseidon

Vulcan: Hephaestus

Venus: Aphrodite

Artemis (also called Diana and Cynthia and some other names) and Apollo are twins. Their father is Jupiter, and their mother is Leto. In the form of a swan, Jupiter went to Leto and impregnated her.

\*\*\*

Cynthia has many names: Diana: Artemis, Phoebe, etc.

One reason for this is that the Greeks and the Romans worshipped goddesses who were similar and so were conflated as one.

Another reason is that Cynthia was a tripartite goddess of the Moon, the Earth, and the Underworld.

- As a goddess of the Moon, she was known as Phoebe and as Luna and as Selene.
- As a goddess of the Earth, she was known as Artemis and as Diana.
- As a goddess of the Underworld, she was known as Hecate.

In slightly other words:

Cynthia is a tripartite goddess: a goddess with three forms.

- In Heaven, she is Luna, goddess of the Moon.
- On Earth, she is Diana (Roman name) and Artemis (Greek name), goddess of the hunt.
- In Hell, she is Hecate, goddess of witchcraft.

Cynthia was born on Mount Cynthus on the island of Delos.

In this play, Cynthia (derived from Mount *Cynthus*) is also sometimes called Delia (derived from the island of *Delos*).

Samuel Daniel wrote a sonnet cycle about a woman named Delia. The sonnet cycle, which is mentioned in *Cynthia's Revels*, can be found here:

<http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/delia.html>

Artemis has many epithets or bynames. Delia is an epithet or byname for the goddess Artemis (Cynthia).

\*\*\*

Myths frequently contradict other myths. They were told orally in many widely separated parts of Greece and Italy and other countries around the Mediterranean, and they changed in the retelling.

And so, according to various myths, the father of Cupid is Jupiter or Mercury or Mars. His mother, however, is always Venus.

**AD LECTOREM** (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or  
Cynthia's Revels*)

**[To the Reader]**

*Nasutum volo, nolo polyposum.*

The Latin is from Martial, *Epigrammata* 12.37.2.

An anonymous translator (Bohn's Classical Library (1897)) rendered the full epigram in this way:

*You wish to be regarded as having an extremely good nose.*

*I like a man with a good nose, but object to one with a polypus.*

<https://topostext.org/work/677>

“Polypus” is an archaic term for “polyp,” which is a small growth protruding from the surface of a mucous membrane.

A person who is *nasutum* is a person who is more than ordinarily intelligent.

Ben Jonson is saying that he wants good audience members: people who can enjoy a good play without being biased against it without good reason.



**PRELUDE** (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)

Three children entered the scene and began to argue over which of them would speak the Prologue to the play. All of them wanted to speak it because each child possessed Self-Love. The first child was wearing a cloak. The children were all boys.

“Please, you children, go away!” the first child said to the other two children. “Why, children? God’s so, what do you mean?”

“God’s so” is a variant of “catzo” or “cazzo,” Italian slang for “penis.” It may also or instead mean “By God’s soul.”

“By the Virgin Mary, we mean that you shall not speak the prologue, sir,” the second child said.

“Why?” the third child asked. “Do you hope to speak it?”

“Aye, and I think I have the most right to speak it,” the second child said. “I am sure I studied it first.”

“That doesn’t matter if the author of the play thinks I can speak it better,” the third child said.

“I plead possession of the cloak,” the first child said.

The person who spoke the Prologue at the beginning of plays customarily wore a cloak.

The first child said to the audience, “Ladies and gentlemen, give me your attention, for God’s sake.”

A voice from offstage said, “Why, children, aren’t you ashamed? Come in there! Let the Prologue be performed!”

“By God’s eyelid, I’ll play nothing in the play, unless I speak the Prologue,” the third child said.

“Why, will you stand to most voices of the gentlemen?” the first child suggested. “Let that decide it.”

The first child wanted the audience to vote with their voices for whichever child they wanted to speak the Prologue.

“Oh, no, sir gallant!” the third child said. “You presume to have the start of us there, and that makes you offer so bountifully.”

“No, I wish that I would be whipped if I had any such thought,” the first child said. “Try it by lots, either of you.”

“Indeed, I dare tempt my fortune in a greater venture than this,” the second child said.

“Well said, resolute Jack,” the third child said to the second child. “I am content, too, as long as we two draw first.”

The third child said to the first child, “Make the cuts.”

The cuts would be made in three straws to make two of equal length and the third of a different length.

The first child said, “But will you snatch my cloak while I am stooping to make the cuts?”

“No, we scorn treachery,” the third child said.

“Which cut shall determine which of us speaks the Prologue?” the second child asked. “The shortest straw? Or the longest straw?”

“The shortest,” the third child said.

The first child, holding three straws in his hand, said, “Agreed. Draw.”

The two other children drew straws, leaving the third straw in the first child’s hands.

“The shortest straw has come to the shortest child,” the first child said. “Fortune was not altogether blind in this.”

The first child was the shortest child; the first child had drawn the shortest straw and so was supposed to say the Prologue. The first child was also the child with the cloak.

Lady Fortune is usually thought to be blind.

“Now, children, I hope I shall go forward without your malicious envy,” the first child said.

The first child wanted to speak the Prologue without being interfered with by the other children.

“Curses on all evil luck!” the second child said. “I touched the winning straw. I could have picked it.”

“Wait, Jack,” the third child said. “By God’s eyelid, I’ll do something now before I go in, although it be nothing but to revenge myself on the author, since I don’t speak his Prologue. I’ll tell all the argument — the plot — of his play beforehand, and so make stale his invention to the auditory — the audience — before the play begins.”

“Oh, don’t do that,” the first child said.

“By no means,” the second child said.

The third child began to tell you, the audience, the plot of the play, while the other two children interfered with and bothered him.

The third child said:

“First, the title of his play is *Cynthia’s Revels*, as any man who has hope to be saved by his book can witness.”

The title of the play was written on a banner above the stage. People who were literate could read the banner. They could also plead benefit of clergy if they were literate and so be

tried in an ecclesiastical court rather than a civil court. Doing so could keep a person accused of a crime from being hung.

Also, a person who reads a satire and recognizes him- or herself in that satire can reform him- or herself and so be saved.

The third child continued:

“The scene is Gargaphia, which I do vehemently suspect to be some fustian country, but let that vanish.”

One meaning of “fustian” is “imaginary.”

The third child continued:

“Here is the court of Cynthia, whither Ben Jonson, our playwright, brings Cupid, travelling on foot, resolved to pretend to be a page: a boy servant.

“Along the way, Cupid meets with Mercury. (As that’s a thing to be noted, take any of our playbooks without a Cupid or a Mercury in it and burn it for a heretic in poetry.)”

One of the boys pinched him.

The third child said to that boy, “Please, let me alone!”

He then continued:

“Mercury, in the nature of a conjurer, raises up Echo, who weeps over her love, or daffodil, Narcissus. She then sings a little and curses the spring wherein the pretty, foolish gentleman melted himself away, and there’s an end of her.”

A boy pinched him.

The third child continued:

“Now, I am to inform you that Cupid and Mercury both become pages in the play.”

Pages are boy servants.

The third child continued:

“Cupid attends on and serves Philautia, or Self-Love, a court lady.

“Mercury follows and serves Hedon, the Voluptuous — Hedonistic — courtier, one who ranks himself even with Anaides, or the Impudent gallant (and that’s my part), a fellow who keeps Laughter, the daughter of Folly (a wench in boy’s attire) to wait on him.”

The three boys would play parts in the forthcoming play. The third boy would play Anaides.

A boy pinched him.

The third child continued:

“These, in the court, meet with Amorphus, or the Deformed, a traveler who has drunk from the Fountain of Self-Love and there tells the wonders about the water; they immediately dispatch away their pages with bottles to fetch water from it, and themselves go to visit the ladies. But, I should have told you —”

The other boys were continuing to pinch the third child, who said, “Look, these emmets — that is, these ants, the other children — put me out here. They interfere with my speech.”

The third child then continued with what he had been saying:

“— that with this Amorphus, there comes along a citizen’s heir, Asotus, or the Prodigal, who, in imitation of the traveler who has the Whetstone following him, engages the Beggar to be his attendant.”

The Whetstone is a page named Cos.

A boy pinched him.

The third child continued:

“Now, the nymphs who are mistresses to these gallants are Philautia (Self-Love), Phantaste (Fantasy, who has a Light Wittiness), Argurion (Money), and their guardian, Mother Moria (Mistress Folly).”

“I say to thee, say no more,” the second child said, pinching him.

The third child continued:

“There Cupid strikes Money in love with the Prodigal, makes her dote upon him, give him jewels, bracelets, carcanets [necklaces or ornamental collars], etc., all of which he most ingeniously — naïvely — gives away, to be made known to the other ladies and gallants; and in the heat of this newfound wealth increases his train of servants with the Fool to follow him, as well as the Beggar.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, the word “ingenious” was sometimes used to mean “ingenuous,” which can mean “well-born” or high-minded” or “innocent.”

A boy pinched him.

The third child continued:

“By this time the Beggar has begun to wait in close attendance, and he has returned with the rest of his fellow bottle-men — servants who are in charge of bottles.”

Bottle-men can be in charge of a wine cellar, and they can be servers of wine. These particular “bottle-men” bring back water in bottles.

A boy pinched him.

The third child continued:

“There they all drink, except for Argurion, who has fallen into a sudden apoplexy —”

“Stop his mouth!” the first child said, attempting to put his hand over the third child’s mouth. The first child was worried that the third child would reveal too much of Ben Jonson’s plot before the play even began.

The third child continued:

“And then there’s a retired — that is, not in public life — Scholar there (you would not wish a thing to be better condemned and despised by a society of gallants than it — the Scholar — is), and he applies his service, good gentleman, to the Lady Arete, or Virtue, a poor nymph of Cynthia’s train of attendants who is scarcely able to buy herself a gown; you shall see her play in a black robe soon. She is a creature who, I assure you, is no less scorned than the Scholar is.”

Criticus is a wise critic and scholar.

Ben Jonson, a satirist, believed that his society often scorned scholarship and virtue.

The third child then asked:

“Where am I now? At a standstill?”

“Come, leave off at last yet,” the second child said. “Stop talking.”

The other children covered the eyes of the third child, who said:

“Oh, the night has come (it was somewhat dark, I thought) and Cynthia intends to come forth; that helps it a little yet.”

Cynthia is goddess of the Moon; she would bring moonlight.

The third child continued:

“All of the courtiers must provide for revels; they decide upon a masque, the device of which is —”

A masque is an entertainment in which the performers wear masks. The masquers need not be professionals.

The third child said to the other two children, who were continuing to torment him, “What! Will you ravish — rape — me?”

The third child then continued with what he had been saying:

“— that each of these vices, being to appear before Cynthia, would seem other than indeed they are, and therefore assume and simulate the most neighboring virtues as their masquing costumes.”

The third child said to the other two children, who were continuing to torment him, “I’d cry a rape except that you are children.”

The second child said, “Come, we’ll have no more of this anticipation. To give them the inventory of their cates — delicacies — beforehand is the custom of a tavern, and not befitting this company.”

The first child said, “Tut, the purpose of all this exposition was but to show us the happiness of his memory. I thought at first he would have played the ignorant critic with everything along as he had gone. I expected some such trick.”

“Oh, you shall see me do that splendidly,” the third child said. “Lend me thy cloak.”

“Be calm, sir,” the first child said. “Do you intend to speak my prologue while wearing this cloak?”

“No, I wish that I might never stir from — leave — this place if I did,” the third child said.



“Lend it to him,” the second child said. “Lend it to him.”

“Well, have you sworn that you will not speak the Prologue?” the first child asked.

“I have,” the third child said.

The first child gave him the cloak.

The third child said:

“Now, sir, suppose that I am one of your gentlemanly auditors — audience members — who has come in, having paid my money at the door with much ado, and here I take my place and sit down.

“I have my three different kinds of tobacco in my pocket, my light by me, and thus I begin:

“By God’s soul, I wonder that any man is so mad to come to see these rascally tits — that is, these rascally young men — play here.”

He puffed on an imaginary pipe and continued:

“They do act like so many wrens or pismires [ants]” — he puffed — “not the fifth part of a good face among them all” — he puffed — “and then their music is abominable” — he puffed — “able to stretch and distress a man’s ears worse than ten” — he puffed — “pillories, and their ditties” — he puffed — “are most lamentable things, like the pitiful fellows who make them” — he puffed — “poets.”

Some people were punished by having their ears nailed to a pillory, which is a wooden frame with holes for restraining an offender’s head and hands. The pillory was often mounted on a post.

The third child continued:

“By God’s eyelid, if it weren’t for tobacco” — he puffed — “I think” — he puffed — “the very stench of them would poison me. I would not dare to come in at their gates — a man would better visit fifteen jails” — he puffed — “or a dozen or two of hospitals — than once risk to come near them.

“How was my speech? Well?”

“Excellent,” the first child said. “Give me my cloak.”

“Wait!” the third child said. “You shall see me do another imitation now, but this time it will be of a more sober or better-composed gallant who is (as it may be thought) some friend or well-wisher to the house. And here I enter —”

“What!” the first child interrupted. “You’ll step upon the stage, too?”

The second child said, “Yes, he will, and I step forth like one of the children and ask you, the gentleman: ‘Would you have a stool, sir?’”

Gentlemen could rent a stool for sixpence and sit on the stage.

“A stool, boy?” the third child said.

“Aye, sir, if you’ll give me sixpence, I’ll fetch you one,” the second child said.

“For what, I ask thee?” the third child said. “What shall I do with it?”

“Oh, God, sir!” the second child said. “Will you betray your ignorance so much? Why, you will enthrone yourself in state on the stage as other gentlemen are accustomed to do, sir.”

“Away, wag!” the third child said. “What, would thou make an implement — a piece of furniture — out of me? By God’s

eyelid, the boy takes me for a piece of prospective, I hold my life, or some silk curtain come to hang on the stage here.”

A perspective — not prospective — is a painted cloth that is used as a piece of stage background scenery.

The third child continued, “Sir Crack, I am none of your fresh pictures that are used to beautify the decayed dead arras — decorative cloth hangings — in a public theatre.”

A “crack” is a cheeky child.

The second child said, “It is a sign, sir, that you don’t put that confidence in your good clothes and your better face that a gentleman should do, sir. But I ask you, sir, to so let me be a suitor to you that you will quit our stage then and take a place. The play is soon to begin.”

“Most willingly, my good wag,” the third child said. “But I would speak with your author. Where is he?”

The author is Ben Jonson.

The second child said:

“He is not this way, I assure you, sir.

“We are not so officiously befriended by him as to have his presence in the tiring-house — dressing room — to prompt us aloud, stamp at the book-holder, aka prompter, swear for our properties, curse the poor tire-man, aka costumer, rail at the out-of-tune music, and sweat for every venial trespass we commit, as some authors would, if they had such fine ingles — favorite boys — as we.

“Well, it is just our hard fortune.”

“Nay, Crack, don’t be disheartened,” the third child said.

“Not I, sir,” the second child said. “But if you please to confer with our author by attorney — proxy — you may, sir; our proper self here stands for him.”

The second child was offering to stand in the place of the playwright, Ben Jonson, and engage in conversation with the third child.

The third child said:

“Indeed, I have no such serious affair to negotiate with him, but what may very safely be turned upon thy trust.

“It is in the general behalf of this fair society here that I am to speak, at least the more judicious part of it, which seems much distasted with the immodest and obscene writing of many in their plays.

“Besides, they could wish that your poets would stop being promoters of other men’s jests, and would waylay and ambush all the stale apophthegms — so-called witty sayings — or old books they can hear of, in print or otherwise, to farce — stuff — their scenes with.”

Ben Jonson’s preferred term for “playwright” was “poet.”

The third child continued:

“They wish that your poets would not so penuriously glean wit from every laundress or hackney-man who lends horses for money, or derive their best grace with servile imitation from common stages, or observation of the company they converse with, as if their invention lived wholly upon another man’s wooden dinner plate.”

Ben Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels* was performed at Blackfriars, which was NOT a common stage.

The third child said:

“Again, that feeding their friends with nothing of their own, but what they have twice or thrice cooked, they should not wantonly give out how soon they had dressed — prepared — it; nor how many coaches came to carry away the broken meat — the leftovers — besides hobby-horses and foot-cloth-wearing nags.”

Hobby-horses are small horses.

Footcloths were decorative pieces of cloth laid over the back of a horse.

In Ben Jonson’s society, the word “nag” simply meant “horse” and not necessarily a bad horse.

The second child said, “So, sir, this is all the reformation you seek?”

The reformation requested was for originality in plays.

“It is,” the third child said. “Don’t you think it necessary to be practiced, my little wag?”

“Yes,” the second child said, “where there is any such ill-habited custom received.”

“Oh, I had almost forgotten it, too,” the third child replied. “They say the *umbrae* or ghosts of some three or four plays departed a dozen years since have been seen walking on your stage here.”

The accusation was that old plays were often performed on this stage.

The third child continued, “Take heed, boy. If your house is haunted with such hobgoblins, aka imps, it will frighten away all your spectators quickly.”

The hobgoblins were old plays.

The second child said:

“Good, sir, but what will you say now if a poet, untouched with any breath of this disease, were to find God’s tokens — signs of the bubonic plague — upon you who are of the audience?”

The second child mentioned some kinds of people who had been infected with this metaphorical bubonic plague:

“For example, a perfumed wit among you who knows no other learning than the price of satin and velvets, nor other perfection than the wearing of a neat suit, and yet will censure — judge to be good or bad — as desperately as the most professed critic in the house, presuming his clothes should bear him out in it.

“Another, whom it has pleased nature to furnish with more beard than brain, prunes — preens — his mustachio, lisps, and, with some score of affected oaths, swears down all who sit near him, ‘that the old *Hieronimo*,’ as it was first acted, ‘was the only, best, and judiciously penned play of Europe.’”

*Hieronimo* is the major character in Thomas Kyd’s play *The Spanish Tragedy*. This is one of the hobgoblins that the third child had criticized. Although popular, *The Spanish Tragedy* was old-fashioned.

The second child continued mentioning some kinds of people who had been infected with this metaphorical bubonic plague:

“A third great-bellied juggler — buffoon — talks of twenty years since and when Monsieur — Francis, Duke of Alençon — was here to court Queen Elizabeth, and he would enforce all wit to be of that fashion because his doublet — jacket — is still of that fashion.

“A fourth miscalls all by the name of ‘fustian’ that his grounded capacity cannot aspire to.

“A fifth only shakes his bottle-head, and out of his corky — frivolous — brain squeezes out a pitiful-learned face, and is silent.”

People who are bottle-heads shake their heads. According to the cynical, they shake their heads in an attempt to hear whether anything is inside them.

The third child said, “By my faith, Jack, you have put me down. I wish I knew how to get off the stage with any reasonable grace. Here, take your cloak and promise some satisfaction in your prologue or, I’ll be sworn, we have marred all.”

The third child exited.

“Tut, fear not, Sall,” the second child said to the first child.

“Sall” is short for the name “Salomon.”

The second child continued:

“This will never offend the taste of a true sense. Don’t forget your lines and do be good enough; I wish thou had some sugar that has been candied — crystallized — to sweeten thy mouth.”

The second child exited.

**PROLOGUE** (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)

Wearing the cloak, the first child said the Prologue:

“If gracious silence, sweet attention,

“Quick sight, and quicker apprehension

“(The lights of judgment’s throne) shine anywhere,

“Our doubtful [uncertain whether the play will be a success] author [Ben Jonson] hopes this is their sphere [natural home].

“And therefore opens he himself to those;

“To other weaker beams his labors close,

“As loath to prostitute their virgin strain

“To every vulgar and adulterate [contaminated] brain.

“In this alone his muse her sweetness has:

“She shuns the print of any beaten path,

“And proves [tests] new ways to come to learned ears;

“Pied [Multi-colored, like the clothing of a Fool] ignorance she neither loves nor fears.

“Nor hunts she after popular applause,

“Or foamy [insubstantial] praise, that drops from common jaws;

“The garland that she wears, their hands must twine,

“Who can both censure [judge to be good or bad], understand, define

“What merit is. Then cast those piercing rays



“Round as a crown, instead of honored bays [wreath of laurel leaves],

“About his poesy; which, he knows, affords

“Words above action, matter above words.”

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The matter is the intellectual content of the play, which in this case is a satire. In this play, Ben Jonson is placing intellectual content above bombastic poetry and actions such as violent murders, both of which can be found in *The Spanish Tragedy*.

**ACT 1 (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)**

**— 1.1 —**

Cupid and Mercury met each other.

“Who goes there?” Cupid asked.

“Blind archer, it is I,” Mercury answered.

Cupid is often depicted as blindfolded. He shoots arrows that cause people to fall in love, but people often fall in love with the wrong or “wrong” person. Two boys may be very similar, but one boy may be rich and the other boy may be poor. A girl’s father may wonder why she didn’t fall in love with the rich boy instead of the poor boy.

“Who?” Cupid asked. “Mercury?”

“Aye,” Mercury answered.

“Farewell,” Cupid said.

“Stay, Cupid,” Mercury requested.

“Not in your company, Hermes, unless your hands were riveted — handcuffed — at your back,” Cupid replied.

Hermes (Mercury’s Greek name) was the god of thieves. On the day that he was born, he stole 50 cattle from the god Apollo.

“Why so, my little rover?” Mercury replied.

A rover is 1) a person who wanders, aka roves, or 2) an arrow.

“Because I know you have not a finger but is as long as my quiver, cousin Mercury, when you please to extend it,” Cupid answered.

Mercury used his long fingers to thieve. One thing that Cupid had to steal was his arrows.

In Ben Jonson's society, "cousin" and "cuz" meant "relative." The words could also mean "friend."

According to various myths, Cupid's father was either Mercury, or Mars, or Jupiter. His mother was Venus, goddess of beauty and sexual passion. Mars was the god of war, and Jupiter was the king of gods. Jupiter was the father of Mercury and Mars.

"Whence derive you this speech, boy?" Mercury asked.  
"Why do you say this?"

"Oh, it is your best policy to be ignorant," Cupid said.

He now mentioned some of Mercury's previous thefts:

"You did never steal Mars' sword out of the sheath, you? Nor Neptune's trident? Nor Apollo's bow? No, not you!

"Alas, your palms, Jupiter knows, are as tender as the foot of a foundered nag or a lady's face new mercuried; they'll touch nothing."

A foundered nag is a horse that is suffering from founder, a disease of the horse's foot.

Some women used mercury as a cosmetic. We now know that mercury is a poison. Ladies' facial skin could be irritated by the application of mercury, which can cause skin rashes and inflammation.

"Bah, infant, you'll be daring still," Mercury said.

Cupid said:

"Daring? Oh, Janus, what a word is there!"

Janus is a two-faced god.

Cupid continued:

“Why, my light feather-heeled” — Mercury wore feather-heeled sandals that made him fast — “coz, what are you any more than my uncle Jove’s pander, aka pimp?”

Actually, Jove, aka Jupiter, is Mercury’s father and Cupid’s grandfather, but Ben Jonson’s society used the words “uncle” and “cousin” loosely.

Jupiter had many, many affairs with goddesses and mortal women, and Mercury carried messages that facilitated these affairs.

Cupid continued:

“What are you any more than a lackey who runs on errands for him and can whisper a light message to a loose wench with some round — fluent — volubility, wait at a table with a trencher, and warble — play or sing while playing — upon a crowd a little?”

A crowd is a musical instrument similar to a viol.

Cupid continued:

“What are you any more than one who sweeps the gods’ drinking room every morning, and sets the cushions in order again that they threw one at another’s head overnight?”

“That’s the catalogue of all your employments now.

“Oh, no, I err.

“You have the marshalling of all the ghosts, too, that pass the Stygian ferry, and I suspect you for a share with the old sculler there, if the truth were known — but let that pass by and be ignored.”

One of Mercury’s duties as a god was to escort the souls of the dead to the Land of the Dead. He took them to the

ferryman Charon, who ferried them across the Styx River to the Underworld.

Charon received money from the souls of the dead — corpses were buried with a coin on their eyes or in their mouths so they could pay the ferryman. Cupid is accusing Mercury of splitting the profits with Charon.

Scullers are rowers of sculls, aka small boats.

Cupid continued:

“You possess one other peculiar virtue in lifting — that is, thieving — or legerdemain, which few of the house of heaven have else besides, I must confess.”

Legerdemain is sleight of hand, a good quality for a magician or a thief to have.

Cupid continued:

“But I think that should not make you set such an extreme distance between yourself and others, with the result that we should be said to over-dare in speaking to your nimble deity.

“So Hercules might challenge a priority of us both because he can throw the heavy bar farther or lift more joint-stools at the arm’s end than we.

“If this might carry it, then we who have made the whole body of divinity tremble at the twang of our bow, and enforced Saturnius — Jupiter, a son of the god Saturn — himself to hide his curly haired forehead, thunder, and three-forked fires — lightning bolts — and put on a costume for masquing too light for a reveler of eighteen to be seen in —”

Jupiter could well tremble at the twang of Cupid’s bow. Jupiter had a jealous wife, Juno, who hated his affairs.

Costumes for masques could be revealing.

Angry, Mercury interrupted, “— what is the meaning of this, my dancing braggart in decimo-sexto?”

A “decimo-sexto” is a small book; Cupid is still a boy.

The gods tend to be born and then grow to an age they will be at forever. Cupid is a boy forever, Mercury is a young man forever, and Jupiter is a mature man forever. A few gods or goddesses are already fully grown when they are born.

Mercury continued, “Charm your skipping tongue, or I’ll —”

“What?” Cupid said. “You would use the virtue of your snaky tipstaff there upon us?”

Mercury carried a caduceus, a winged staff with two snakes wrapped around it.

Court officials carried a tipstaff.

These items were symbols of authority and could be used to hit someone such as Cupid.

Mercury said:

“No, boy, but I would use the stretched vigor of my arm about your ears.”

He was threatening to box Cupid’s ears with his fist.

Mercury continued:

“You have forgotten since the time when I took your heels up into air, on the very hour I was born, in sight of all the seated deities, when the silver roof of the Olympian palace rung again with the applause of the fact.”

Cupid replied, “Oh, no, I remember it freshly and by a particular instance; for my mother Venus, at the same time, just stooped to embrace you, and — to speak by metaphor

— you ‘borrowed’ a girdle of hers just as you ‘borrowed’ Jove’s scepter, while he was laughing, and you would have ‘borrowed’ his thunder, too, except that it was too hot for your itching fingers.”

“It is well, sir,” Mercury said.

Cupid said:

“I heard you just looked in at Vulcan’s forge the other day and ‘entreated’ a pair of his new tongs to go along with you for company.”

Vulcan is the blacksmith god. According to the ancient Greek satirist Lucian, when Mercury was still a baby, he stole Vulcan’s tongs and hid them in his baby clothes.

Cupid continued:

“It is joy on you, indeed, that you will keep your hooked talons in practice with anything.

“By God’s light, now that you are on Earth, we shall have you filch spoons and candlesticks rather than fail.

“Pray Jove the perfumed courtiers keep their casting-bottles, toothpicks, and shuttlecocks away from you, or our more ordinary gallants their tobacco-boxes, for I am strangely jealous of your fingernails.”

Casting-bottles are bottles for sprinkling perfumed water.

In Ben Jonson’s society, toothpicks were fashionable items.

Mercury said:

“Never trust me again, Cupid, if you have not turned into a most acute gallant recently.

“The edge of my wit is completely taken off with the fine and subtle stroke of your thin-ground — eloquent — tongue; you fight with too poignant a phrase for me to deal with.”

Cupid said, “Oh, Hermes, your craft cannot make me confident. I know my own steel — strength — to be almost spent, and therefore entreat my peace with you in time. You are too cunning for me to encounter at length, and I think it my safest ward to close.”

Cupid was using a fencing metaphor. If he were to be very close to Mercury (Hermes) — within him, as within his arms — he would be safe from the thrusts of his sword.

“Well, for once I’ll suffer you to come within me, wag,” Mercury said, “but don’t use these strains of speech too often, for they’ll stretch my patience.”

He then asked, “To where might you be marching now?”

Cupid answered:

“Indeed, to recover thy good thoughts, I’ll reveal my whole plan and project.

“The huntress and queen of these groves, Diana, is aware of some black and envious slanders hourly breathed against her for her divine justice on Actaeon.”

Cynthia, aka Diana, aka Artemis, is a virgin goddess who is militant about protecting her virginity as shown by the story of Actaeon:

Actaeon was out hunting with his dogs, and he saw the virgin goddess bathing naked. She turned him into a stag, and his own dogs ran him down and killed him. He suffered horribly because his mind was still human although his body was that of a male deer.

Cupid continued:



“Therefore, as she asserts, she has here in the valley of Gargaphie proclaimed ceremonial revels that she will grace with the full and royal expense of one of her clearest moons — the Moon will be bright.

“In this time of revels, it shall be lawful for all sorts of ingenuous — spirited — persons to visit her palace, to court her nymphs, to exercise all variety of generous and noble pastimes, as well to intimate how far she treads such malicious imputations beneath her, as also to show how clear her beauties are from the least wrinkle of austerity they may be charged with.”

“But what is all this to you, Cupid?” Mercury asked.

Cupid answered, “Here I mean to put off the title of a god and take the clothing of a page, in which disguise, during the interim of these revels, I will get to follow some one of Diana’s maids, where, if my bow hold and my shafts fly but with half the willingness and aim they are directed, I doubt not but I shall really — and royally — redeem the minutes I have lost by their so long and over-nice — overly fastidious — proscription of my deity from their court.”

Diana/Cynthia was a virgin goddess, and her attendants were virgins, but on this night, Cupid had a chance to woo and pursue her attendants.

Normally, Cupid was banned from Diana’s court. It’s not good to have the god of love around attendants who are supposed to stay virgins.

Cupid was hoping to make one of Diana’s virgin attendants a former virgin.

“Pursue it, divine Cupid,” Mercury said. “It will be splendid!”

The gods frequently had affairs with goddesses, with mortal women and with nymphs, who were long-lived and almost immortal.

“But will Hermes second me and back me up?” Cupid asked.

Hermes/Mercury answered, “I am now to put in action and carry out a special assignment from my father Jove, but once that has been performed, I am ready for any fresh action that offers itself.”

“Well, then we part,” Cupid said.

He exited.

Alone, Mercury said to himself:

“Farewell, good wag. Now to my charge.”

He called:

“Echo, fair Echo, speak! It is Mercury who calls thee. Sorrowful nymph, salute me with thy repercussive — echoing — voice, so that I may know what cavern of the Earth contains thy airy spirit; and so that I may know how or where I may direct my speech so that thou may hear me.”

— 1.2 —

Echo, a voice underneath the stage, echoed Mercury’s last word: “Here.”

“So nigh?” Mercury said.

“Aye,” Echo echoed.

Mercury said:

“Know, gentle soul, then, I am sent from Jove, who, pitying the sad burden of thy woes still growing on thee, in thy lack of words to vent thy passion — strong emotion — for Narcissus’ death, commands that now, after three thousand

years that have been exercised in Juno's spite, thou will take on a corporal figure and ascend, enriched with vocal and articulate power.

“Make haste, sad nymph. Thrice does my winged rod — my caduceus — strike the obsequious Earth to give thee way.

“Arise, and speak thy sorrows! Echo, rise.”

Echo ascended from below the stage. Mercury, by the command of Jupiter, had given her a corporeal body and the ability to speak her own thoughts in her own words rather than merely repeating the words of others.

Three thousand years earlier, Echo had fallen in love with Narcissus, a beautiful mortal, but he saw his reflection in a pool of water and fell in love with it. Unable to move away from the sight of himself in the pool of water, he wasted away and died. After he died, a flower sprang up where he died. Echo also wasted away from grief until she became no more than her voice, which repeated the words that others said.

According to one myth, Juno took away Echo's voice because Echo helped Juno's husband, Jupiter, king of the gods, to hide his adulteries from her.

Mercury said, “We are here by this fountain where thy love did pine, whose memory lives fresh to vulgar — commonly known — fame, enshrined in this yellow flower that bears his name.”

Daffodils are yellow flowers of the genus *Narcissus*.

Echo said:

“His name revives and lifts me up from Earth. Oh, which way shall I first convert — turn — myself, or in what mood shall I assay to speak, so that in a moment I may be delivered of the prodigious grief I go with?”

“See, see, the mourning fountain whose spring weeps yet the untimely fate of that too beautiful boy, that trophy of Self-Love and spoil of nature, who, now transformed into this drooping flower, hangs the repentant head back from the stream as if it wished, ‘I wish that I had never looked in such a flattering mirror.’

“Oh, Narcissus, thou who were once, and yet are, my Narcissus, had Echo but been privy to and known thy thoughts, she would have dropped away herself in tears until she had turned into all water, so that in her, as in a truer mirror, thou might have gazed and seen thy beauties by a kinder reflection.

“But Self-Love never yet could look on truth except with bleared beams — blurred eyesight; sleek Flattery and Self-Love are twin-born sisters, and they so mix their eyes — look into each other’s eyes and unite their souls — so that if you sever one, the other dies.”

If you take away Self-Love, Flattery dies (the person will cease to flatter him- or herself); and if you take away Flattery, Self-Love dies.

Self-Love and Flattery are very close: They are as close as twins.

Echo continued:

“Why did the gods give thee a heavenly form and earthy thoughts to make thee proud of it?

“Why do I ask? It is now the known disease that beauty has, to bear too deep a sense of her own self-conceived excellence.

“Oh, had thou known the worth of heaven’s rich gift, thou would have turned it to a truer use.”

A truer use of beauty is to attract a mate with whom one can reproduce.

Echo continued:

“And not, with lean and covetous ignorance, pined in continual eyeing that bright gem, the glance whereof to others had been more than to thy famished mind the wide world’s store.”

To Narcissus, his beauty was worth the entire world.

To others such as Echo, Narcissus’ beauty was worth more than the entire world. It was worth the entire world plus the baby that would be born to Narcissus and his wife (whom Echo would have liked to be).

Echo continued:

“So wretched is it to be merely rich.”

Narcissus was rich in beauty, but he could have been rich both in beauty and in children.

Echo concluded:

“Witness thy youth’s dear sweets here spent untasted,

“Like a fair taper — candle — with his — its — own flame wasted.”

Mercury said, “Echo, be brief; Saturnia is abroad, and if she hears you, she’ll storm at Jove’s high will.”

“Saturnia” means “daughter of Saturn.” Here it means in particular Juno, the wife of Jupiter. Yes, they are brother and sister as well as husband and wife.

If Juno hears Echo, Juno will be angry at Jupiter because he has restored her voice, at least temporarily. Yes, even after three thousand years, Juno still wants to punish Echo.

Echo replied:

“I will, kind Mercury, be brief as time.”

Time can be brief or long. Here, it means the time needed, which is brief.

Echo continued:

“Allow me to do him these last rites: Just to kiss his flower and sing some mourning strain — song — over his watery hearse.”

An obsolete meaning of “hearse” is “tomb.”

Mercury said:

“Thou do obtain thy wish. I would be no son to Jove if I were to deny thee.

“Begin, and more to grace thy cunning voice, the humorous air shall mix her solemn tunes with thy sad words.

“Strike, Music, from the spheres,

“And with your golden raptures swell our ears.”

“Humorous” here means “filled with humors,” aka moods.

At one time, people thought that the planets and the Sun and the stars were encased in crystalline spheres that revolved around the Earth.

The music of the spheres was thought to be beautiful.

Music played.

Echo said:

“Slow, slow, fresh fountain, keep time with my salt tears. Yet, slower, yet, O faintly gentle springs. Listen to the heavy part the music bears.

“Woe weeps out her division — her melody — when she sings.”

Echo sang:

*“Droop herbs, and flowers,*

*“Fall grief in showers;*

*“Our beauties are not ours.*

*“Oh, I could still,*

*“Like melting snow upon some craggy hill,*

*“Drop, drop, drop, drop,*

*“Since nature’s pride is now a withered daffodil.”*

Mercury said, “Now, have you finished?”

Echo said, “I will be finished soon, good Hermes; be patient a little while. Allow my thirsty eye to gaze a little while, just even to taste the place, and I am vanished.”

Mercury replied, “Forgo thy use and liberty of tongue — thy freedom of speech — and thou may dwell on Earth and entertain thee there.”

If Echo would refrain from freely speaking and criticizing the gods, she could dwell again on Earth in bodily form and with her voice. If she would not refrain from freely speaking and criticizing the gods, her voice would become an echo again and she would live in caves without a bodily form.

Echo criticized some of Cynthia’s actions:

“Here young Actaeon fell, pursued and torn by Cynthia’s wrath, more eager than his hounds.

“And here — woe is me, the place is deadly — see the weeping Niobe transported hither from Phrygian mountains,

and by Phoebe reared as the proud trophy of her sharp revenge.”

Niobe was proud. She had given birth to six sons and six daughters, and she boasted aloud, “I am more worthy of respect than the goddess Leto, who has given birth to only two children: the twins Apollo and Artemis.” Leto’s children were angry at the disrespect shown to their mother, and with the anger of the gods, they killed all of Niobe’s children in one day by shooting them with arrows. Because of Niobe’s pride, Apollo and Diana turned her to stone. Even when she was stone, she grieved for the deaths of her children, and tears trickled down her marble cheeks. Niobe was so proud that she thought she was a better mother than the goddess mother of the god Apollo and goddess Diana.

Phoebe, Diana, and Artemis are other names for Cynthia. Cynthia was a virgin goddess; she was also a tripartite goddess, and as Phoebe (and as Luna) she was the goddess of the Moon.

Mercury said, “Nay, but listen —”

Echo interrupted, “But here, oh, here, is the Fountain of Self-Love in which Latona and her careless — without cares, and uncaring — nymphs, regardless of my sorrows, bathe themselves in hourly pleasures.”

Latona is the Roman name of Leto, the mother of Cynthia.

Possibly, “Latona” should be “Latonia,” or “daughter of Latona.” In that case, “Latonia” would be Cynthia.

Mercury said:

“Stop thy babbling tongue, fond — foolish and doting — Echo. Thou profane the grace that is done to thee. Similarly idle worldlings — worldly minded people — merely made of voice, censure and judge the powers above them.



“Come away!

“Jove calls thee from here away and his will brooks — tolerates — no stay.”

Echo said:

“Oh, stay! Wait!

“I have just one poor thought to clothe in airy garments and speak out loud, and then, indeed, I will go.”

She cursed the fountain:

“Henceforth, thou treacherous and murdering spring, be forever called the Fountain of Self-Love; and with thy water let this curse remain as a plague that cannot be separated from the water:

“My curse is that any person who tastes even a drop thereof may with the instant touch grow dotingly enamored on themselves.

“Now, Hermes, I have finished.”

Mercury (Hermes) replied:

“Then thy speech must here forsake thee, Echo, and thy voice, as it was accustomed to do, will rebound but the last words someone speaks to you.

“Farewell.”

“Well,” Echo echoed.

She meant that she understood what he had told her about losing her freedom of speech. She had used her freedom of speech to criticize the gods, and now her voice would again become an echo.

She began to descend into the Earth again.

Mercury said:

“Now, Cupid, I am for you and your mirth

“To make me light and happy before I leave the Earth.”

— 1.3 —

Amorphus entered the scene and saw Echo.

The word “amorphous” means “shapeless.”

Amorphus said to Echo, “Dear spark of beauty, don’t go so fast away!”

“Away!” Echo echoed.

Seeing this, Mercury said to himself, “Wait, let me observe this portent still.”

Amorphus said to Echo, “I am neither your minotaur, nor your centaur, nor your satyr, nor your hyena, nor your baboon, but just a traveler, believe me.”

The Minotaur is a half-human, half-bull monster.

Centaur is half-human and half-horse.

Satyrs are woodland gods, half-human and half-goat.

“Leave me,” Echo echoed.

Unimpressed with Amorphus, Mercury said to himself, “I guessed it should be some travelling motion — puppet — who pursued Echo so.”

Amorphus asked Echo, “Do you know from whom you flee, or whence?”

“Hence!” Echo echoed.

She exited.

Thinking himself alone, Amorphus said to himself, “This is somewhat above strange: a nymph of her feature and lineament to be so preposterously rude. Well, I will just cool myself at yonder spring and then follow her.”

Mercury said to himself, “Nay, then, I am familiar with the issue: I know how things will turn out. I’ll leave you, too.”

How will things turn out? Amorphus will drink the cursed water.

Mercury exited.

Now alone, Amorphus said to himself:

“I am a rhinoceros if I had thought a creature of her symmetry would have dared so improportionable — out of proportion — and abrupt a digression — an exit.

“Liberal and divine fountain, allow my profane hand to partake of thy bounties.”

He drank water from the fountain.

He then said to himself:

“By the purity of my taste, here is most ambrosiac water. I will sup of it again.

“With thy permission, sweet fountain.”

Ambrosia is the food of the gods.

He drank again.

Filled with Self-Love, Amorphus said to himself:

“See, the water, a more running, subtle, and humorous nymph than she [Echo], permits me to touch and handle her.

“What should I infer from this rejection?”

“If my behaviors had been of a cheap or customary garb, my accent or phrase vulgar, my garments trite [frayed], my countenance illiterate or unpracticed in the encounter of a beautiful and brave-attired piece [splendidly dressed woman], then I might, with some change of color, have suspected my faculties and abilities.

“But knowing myself to be an essence so sublimated and refined by travel, of so studied and well-exercised a gesture, so alone and unequalled in fashion, able to make — imitate — the face of any statesman living, and to speak the mere extraction — that is, the finest essence — of language; and one who has now made the sixth return upon venture —”

Amorphus was a traveler and a gambler. He made bets that he could travel to and from a certain place within an allotted time. He had won six such bets.

He continued:

“— and was the first who ever enriched his country with the true laws of the *duello* [duel]; whose optics — eyes — have drunk the spirit of beauty in some eight score and eighteen princes’ courts, where I have resided, and been there fortunate in the amours of three hundred forty and five ladies, all nobly descended, whose names I have in catalogue; to conclude, in all so happy as even admiration herself does seem to fasten her kisses upon me.

“Certainly I do neither see, nor feel, nor taste, nor savor the least smell, steam, or fume of a reason that should invite this foolish, fastidious nymph so peevishly to abandon me.

“Well, let the memory of her fleet — fly — into air; my thoughts and I are for this other element: water.”

Criticus and Asotus entered the scene. Criticus was a man of good judgment; Asotus was a man of prodigality.

“What?” Criticus said. “The well-dieted Amorphus has become a water-drinker? I see he does not intend to write verses then.”

Some people believe that alcohol is a source of poetic inspiration.

“No, Criticus?” Amorphus said. “Why?”

Criticus replied, “*Quia nulla placere diu, nec vivere carmina possunt, quae scribuntur aquae potoribus.*”

The Latin quotation (with *Quia* added to it), which is from Horace’s *Epistles* 1.192-3, means “Because no songs that have been written by drinkers of water can please or live on for a long time.”

“What do you say to your Helicon?” Amorphus asked.

Helicon is a mountain in Boeotia that is the source of a spring sacred to the Muses. Drinking its water was thought to cause poetic inspiration.

“Oh, the Muses’ well!” Criticus said. “That’s always excepted.”

“Sir, the Muses have no such water as the water in this fountain, I assure you,” Amorphus said. “Neither nectar nor the juice of nepenthe is anything compared to it. It is better than metheglin, believe it!”

Nectar is the drink of the gods.

Nepenthe is a drug mentioned in Homer’s *Odyssey*; the drug banishes worry.

Metheglin is a Welsh spiced drink.

“Metheglin!” Asotus said. “What’s that, sir, may I be so audacious to demand?”

“A kind of Greek wine I have met with, sir, in my travels,” Amorphus answered. “It is the same that Athenian orator Demosthenes usually drank in the composure — the composition — of all his exquisite and mellifluous orations.”

Criticus said, “That’s to be argued, Amorphus, if we may credit Lucian, who in his *Encomium Demosthenis* — *Praise of Demosthenes* — affirms that Demosthenes never drank anything but water in any of his composition sessions.”

“Lucian is absurd; he knew nothing,” Amorphus said. “I will believe my own travels before all the Lucians of Europe. He feeds you with fictions and leasings.”

Leasings are lies.

Indeed, Lucian wrote a book about travelling to the Moon.

“Indeed, I think, next to a traveler, he does prettily well,” Criticus said.

“I assure you that it was wine,” Amorphus said. “I have tasted it, and from the hand of an Italian antiquary who derives it — traces its genealogy — authentically from the Duke of Ferrara’s bottles.”

The Duke of Ferrara was a patron of the arts.

Amorphus then asked, “What is the name of the gentleman you are in rank with there, sir?”

“He is Asotus, son to the late deceased Philargyrus the citizen,” Criticus answered.

Philargyrus is derived from the Greek word for “money-lover.”

“Was his father of any eminent place or means?” Amorphus asked.

“He was to have been praetor next year,” Criticus answered.

The office of Praetor was the second highest political office of the Roman Republic. Praetors were subject only to the veto of the Consuls. Among other duties, Praetors could take the auspices, the performance of which was a religious rite.

The location, however, was Greece, and “praetor” meant a high administrative office, such as mayor or chief magistrate.

Amorphus said:

“Ha! He’s a pretty formal — shapely — young gallant, truly. It’s a pity he is not more genteelly propagated — better born.

“Listen, Criticus; you may say to him who I am, if you please. Although I do not affect — desire — popularity, yet I would be loath to stand out to — that is, spurn — anyone whom you shall grant to call your friend.”

“Sir, I fear I may do wrong to your sufficiencies — abilities — in the reporting them by forgetting or misplacing some one of them,” Criticus replied. “You can best inform him about yourself, sir, unless you have some catalogue or inventory of your faculties ready-drawn that you would request me to show him for you, and for him to take notice of.”

Realizing that Criticus did not want to praise him to Asotus, Amorphus said to himself, “This Criticus is sour.”

He then said out loud, “I will think, sir.”

He would think about the best way to get to know Asotus.

“Do so, sir,” Criticus said.

He then said to himself, “Oh, heaven, that anything in the likeness of man should endure these racked extremities for the uttering of his sophisticate — adulterated — good parts!”

Asotus then took Criticus aside and said to him quietly, “Criticus, I have a request to make to you, but you must not deny me. Please make this gentleman and me friends.”

Criticus said, “Friends! Why? Is there any difference between you? Have you quarreled?”

“No,” Asotus said. “I mean make us acquaintances: for us to know one another.”

“Oh, now I understand you,” Criticus said. “I did not understand your meaning before.”

Actually, Criticus was leery of introducing the two men for fear that Amorphus would take advantage of Asotus, the young prodigal.

Asotus said, “In good faith, he’s a most excellent rare — splendid — man, I am sure.”

Criticus said to himself, “By God’s light, they are mutually enamored by this time.”

“Will you, sweet Criticus?” Asotus pleaded.

“Yes, yes,” Criticus replied.

“Nay, but when?” Asotus said. “You’ll defer it now and forget it?”

“Why, is it a thing of such immediate necessity that it requires so violent and quick a dispatch?” Criticus asked.

“No, but — I wish I might never stir — he’s a most ravishing man,” Asotus said. “Good Criticus, you shall endear me to you indeed, I say!”



“Well, your longing shall be satisfied, sir,” Criticus said.

“And in addition you may tell him who my father was, and how well-off he left me, and that I am his heir,” Asotus said.

“Leave it to me, I’ll forget none of your dear graces, I assure you,” Criticus said.

“Nay, I know you can better marshal these affairs than I can,” Asotus replied.

He then said to himself, “O gods, I’d give all the world, if I had it, for an abundance of such acquaintances.”

Criticus said to himself, “What ridiculous circumstance might I devise now to bestow this reciprocal brace — pair — of coxcombs — fools — one upon another?”

They were reciprocal because each wished to be introduced to the other.

Thinking of a way to get to know Asotus, Amorphus said to himself:

“Since I trod on this side of the Alps, I was not so frozen in my invention.

“Let me see, to accost him with some choice remnant of Spanish, or Italian would indifferently express my languages now.”

“Indifferently” can mean 1) “casually,” or 2) “poorly.”

Amorphus continued speaking to himself:

“By the Virgin Mary, then, if Asotus would turn out to be ignorant, it would be both hard and harsh on him.

“How else can I get to know him?

“Step into some discourse of state — politics — and so make my introduction? That would be above him, too, and out of his element, I fear.

“Pretend to have seen him in Venice or Padua, or some face near his in similitude? It is too pointed and open.

“No, it must be a more quaint and collateral — indirect — device as — wait: to frame some encomiastic — praising — speech upon this our metropolis, or the wise magistrates thereof, in which politic — wise — number it is likely that his father filled up a room?

“Descend into a particular admiration of their justice, for the due measuring of coals, burning of cans, and such like?”

Weights and measures are an important part of a magistrate’s duties. “Cans” are wooden drinking vessels, and a magistrate would make a burn mark on the vessel to show what is a full measure.

Amorphus continued speaking to himself:

“Or also to praise their religion in pulling down a superstitious cross and advancing a Venus or Priapus in place of it?”

In Ben Jonson’s London, crosses were removed because people thought they were Catholic. In the city of this play, statues of Venus and Priapus are put up in place of crosses.

Venus is the goddess of sexual passion, and Priapus, statues of whom displayed a giant phallus, was the god of fertility.

Amorphus continued speaking to himself:

“Ha! It will do well!

“Or to talk of some hospital whose walls record his father as a benefactor, or of so many emergency buckets for getting water to put out fires bestowed on his parish church in his

lifetime, with his name at length, for lack of a coat of arms, tricked upon them? Any of these?

“Or to praise the cleanness of the street wherein he dwelt, or the provident painting of his posts in preparation for the time he should have been praetor.”

Officials often began their careers by being responsible for the cleaning of streets.

Mayoral proclamations were placed on posts.

Amorphus continued speaking to himself:

“Or, leaving aside his parent, come to some special ornament about himself, such as his rapier, or some other of his accoutrements?”

“I have it! Thanks, gracious Minerva.”

Minerva is the Roman goddess of wisdom. Her Greek name is Athena.

Asotus said to himself, “I wish I had just at once spoken to him [Amorphus], and then —”

Amorphus then praised the collar that Asotus was wearing as a means of becoming introduced to him:

“It is a most curious and neatly wrought neckband, this same, as I have seen, sir.”

“Oh, God, sir,” Asotus said.

“Oh, God, sir” was a fashionable expression of little meaning.

“You forgive the humor of my eye in observing it?” Amorphus asked.

“Humor” was a fashionable word of many meanings and often of little meaning.

“Oh, Lord, sir, no such apology is needed, I assure you,” Asotus said.

Criticus said to himself, “I am anticipated. They’ll make a solemn deed of gift of themselves, you shall see.”

“Your rose, too, suits you most gracefully, indeed,” Amorphus said.

The rose was an ornamental ribbon worn on shoes.

“It is the most genteel and received wear now, sir,” Asotus said.

Amorphus said, “Believe me, sir — I speak it not to humor you — I have not seen a young gentleman, generally, put on his clothes with more judgment.”

Asotus was well and fashionably dressed.

“Oh, it is your pleasure to say so, sir,” Asotus said.

“No, I swear as I am virtuous, being altogether untraveled, it strikes me into wonder,” Amorphus said.

“Being altogether untraveled” was badly expressed; the phrase referred to Asotus, not to Amorphus, who was well traveled, according to his previous statements.

“I do purpose to travel, sir, at spring,” Asotus said.

“I think I shall affect and take a liking to you, sir,” Amorphus said. “This last speech of yours has begun to make you dear to me.”

“Oh, God, sir, I wish there were anything in me, sir, that might appear worthy the least worthiness of your worth, sir,” Asotus said. “I avow, sir, that I should endeavor to show it, sir, with more than common regard, sir.”

Criticus said to himself, “Oh, here’s excellent motley, sir.”

Fools, aka jesters, wore motley: multi-colored clothing.

Amorphus said:

“Both your desert — merit — and your endeavors are plentiful. Do not suspect them.

“But your sweet disposition to travel, I assure you, has made you another myself — an alter ego — in my eye, and struck me enamored on your beauties.”

Amorphus and Asotus were forming a mutual admiration society, one that had begun at first sight.

“I wish I were the fairest lady of France for your sake, sir, and yet I would travel, too,” Asotus said.

Amorphus said, “Oh, you should digress from yourself else, for, believe it, travel is the only thing that rectifies or, as the Italian says, *vi rendi pronto all’ attioni*.”

He translated the Italian: “makes you fit for action.”

“I think it is a great expense, though, sir,” Asotus said.

Amorphus said:

“Expense? Why, it is nothing for a gentleman who goes private — alone — as yourself, or so; my intelligence shall cover my expenses at all times.”

Amorphus lived by his wits. He found ways for other people to pay his expenses.

He then said:

“By my good faith, I swear this hat has possessed my eye exceedingly: It is so pretty and fantastic.

“What! Is it a beaver hat?”

A beaver hat is an expensive hat made out of beaver fur.

“Aye, sir. I’ll assure you it is a beaver hat,” Asotus said. “It cost me six crowns just this morning.”

“A very pretty fashion, believe me, and a most novel kind of trim,” Amorphus said. “Your button is conceited — cleverly designed — too!”

The button may have been an ornament on the hat.

“Sir, it is all at your service,” Asotus said.

“Oh, pardon me,” Amorphus said.

“I beseech you, sir, if you please to wear it, you shall do me a most infinite favor,” Asotus said.

He wanted to give his expensive beaver hat to Amorphus.

Criticus said to himself, “By God’s light, will he be praised out of his clothes?”

“By heaven, sir, I do not offer it to you after the Italian manner,” Asotus said. “I wish you would believe that of me.”

The Italian manner was to offer someone something but with the expectation that the gift will be declined.

The people who defined “the Italian manner” in this way were not Italian.

Amorphus replied:

“Sir, I shall fear to appear rude in denying your courtesies, especially being invited by so proper a distinction between the Italian manner and your manner.

“May I please ask for your name, sir?”

“My name is Asotus, sir.”

Amorphus replied:

“I take your love, gentle Asotus, but let me persuade you to receive this in exchange —”

They exchanged hats, and Criticus said to himself, “By God’s heart, they’ll exchange doublets — jackets — soon.”

Amorphus continued:

“— and from this time esteem yourself in the first rank of those few whom I profess to love.

“Why are you in the company of this scholar here? I will make you known to gallants such as Anaides the courtier, Hedon the courtier, and others whose society shall render you graced and respected.

“This scholar is a trivial fellow, too mean, too coarse for you to converse with.”

Examining Amorphus’ hat, Asotus said, “By God’s eyelid, this hat is not worth a crown, and my hat cost me six crowns just this morning!”

Criticus said, “I looked for the time when Asotus would repent this exchange; he has begun to be sad for a good while.”

Amorphus said:

“Sir, shall I say to you about that hat — be not so sad, be not so sad — that it is a relic I could not so easily have departed with, except as the hieroglyphic — the sign — of my affection.

“You shall alter it to what form you please; it will take any block. I have varied it myself to the three thousandth time, and not so few.”

A block was a wooden mold for a hat. From it we derive the insult “blockhead.”

Since he had varied its shape for the three thousandth time, it was a well-worn hat.

Amorphus continued:

“It has these virtues beside: Your head shall not ache under it, nor your brain leave you without permission; it will preserve your complexion to eternity, for no beam of the Sun, should you wear it under *zona torrida* — the torrid zone, aka tropics — has the force to approach it by two ells; it is proof against thunder and enchantment.”

An ell is a unit of measurement.

Amorphus was claiming that his hat was made of a material that would repel lightning; such materials supposedly included hawthorn, laurel, and seal-skin.

Amorphus continued:

“And it was given to me by a great man in Russia as an especially prized present; and constantly affirmed to be the hat that accompanied the politic — crafty — Ulysses in his tedious and ten years’ travels.

Ulysses is also known by his Greek name: Odysseus. He is one of the heroes of Homer’s *Iliad* and the main hero of Homer’s *Odyssey*. He left his home island of Ithaca, went to Troy, and fought until the Greeks conquered Troy, and then it took him another ten years of trouble to return home.

Once back on his home island of Ithaca, he discovered that his palace had been taken over by suitors who mistreated his wife and son. In order to stay alive until he could find a way to kill the suitors, he pretended to be a beggar.

Asotus said, “By Jove, I will not depart with this hat, no matter who would give me a million crowns for it.”



Cos and Prosaites entered the scene.

The name “Prosaites” means “Beggar.”

The name “Cos” means “Whetstone.”

Looking for employment, Cos said, “May God save you, sweet bloods — young gentlemen. Do any of you want a creature or a dependent?”

Criticus said to himself, “Curse me, he’s a fine blunt slave.”

A creature is someone’s creation: Give someone a job as a servant, and he is your creature. He is also your dependent: You will feed him.

In this context, a slave is a beggar.

Amorphus said to himself, “A page of good timber: He is well built. It will now be my grace to entertain him first, though I cashier — dismiss — him again in private.”

Amorphus wanted to impress Asotus by hiring a servant.

He asked, “What are thou called?”

“Cos, sir, Cos.”

Criticus said to himself, “Cos? How happily has Fortune furnished him — Amorphus — with a whetstone!”

In Ben Jonson’s society, liars were punished by having a whetstone hung around their neck while they were in a pillory. Amorphus was a traveler, and travelers were known for telling lies about their travels.

Amorphus said:

“I do entertain you, Cos.”

This kind of “entertain” means “hire.”

Amorphus quietly added:

“Conceal your quality — your character — until we are private.”

He was worried that Cos’ character may be bad; after all, “Cos” meant “whetstone” and whetstones were hung around the necks of liars as punishment. In addition, he had hired him without an interview, simply in order to impress Asotus by hiring someone to be his page.

Amorphus continued quietly:

“If your parts are — that is, your character is — worthy of me, I will countenance — support — you; if not, I will catechize you.”

A catechism is a set of religious questions and answers about Christian principles.

He then said out loud, “Gentlemen, shall we go?”

“Wait, sir,” Asotus said, “I’ll just entertain — hire — this other fellow and then —”

He said quietly to himself, “I have a great humor — desire — to taste of this water, too, but I’ll come again alone for that.”

The word “taste” can mean “touch.” Asotus is usually generous, so he would be willing to share and drink the water with other people. He may have meant that he would come back later to bathe in the water.

Asotus continued out loud from where he had left off, “— mark the place.”

He then asked, “What’s your name, youth?”

“Prosaites, sir.”

“Prosaites?” Asotus said. “A very fine name, Criticus, isn’t it?”

“Yes, and a very ancient name, sir,” Criticus said. “It means ‘the beggar.’”

“Follow me, good Prosaites,” Asotus said. “Let’s talk.”

Asotus, Prosaites, Cos, and Amorphus exited.

Alone now, Criticus said to himself:

“He will rank even with you before long if you hold on to your course.”

The prodigal — Asotus — would soon be like the beggar — Prosaites — if he continued wasting his money.

Criticus continued:

“O Vanity, how are thy painted beauties doted on by light and empty idiots!”

People in this society called makeup “paint.” In this context, “painted” was metaphorical as well as literal.

Criticus continued:

“How pursued with open and extended appetite and eagerness!

“How they sweat and run themselves out of breath, raised on their toes, to catch thy airy forms, always turning giddy until they reel like drunkards who buy the merry madness of one hour with the long irksomeness of following time!”

Drunk people pay for the happiness of one alcoholic hour with a long hangover the next day.

“Oh, how despised and base a thing is man if he does not strive to erect his groveling — face-down — thoughts above the strain of flesh!

“But how much cheaper he is when even his best and understanding part, the crown and strength of all his faculties, floats like a dead drowned body on the stream of vulgar humor mixed with the commonest dregs!”

The word “humor” has many meanings, including “fluid.” Much more often, it means “mood” or “fashion.”

Criticus continued:

“I suffer for their guilt now, and my soul, like one who looks on ill-affected — diseased — eyes, is hurt with mere intention — simply gazing — on their follies.

“Why will I view them then, my sense might ask me?”

“Is it either a rarity, or some new object, that strains my strict observance to this point?”

“Oh, I wish it were, therein I could afford that my spirit should draw a little near to theirs to gaze on novelties, so long as Vice were a novelty.”

Criticus is disgusted because he is watching the fools. If vice were a novelty, he might forgive himself a little for watching this display of vice. But he, like most or all of us, has seen lots of vice and so vice is no novelty.

Criticus continued:

“Tut, she — Vice — is stale, rank, foul, and were it not that those who woo her greet her with locked — closed — eyes, in spite of all the impostures, paintings, drugs, which her bawd Custom, aka Habit, daubs her cheeks with, she — personified Vice — would betray and reveal her loathed and leprous face, and frighten the enamored dotards away from themselves.”

These dotards, aka imbeciles, were doting on themselves: They possessed Self-Love, although only one had so far drunk from the Fountain of Self-Love.

Criticus continued:

“But such is the perverseness of our nature, that if we once but fancy levity, how antique and ridiculous soever it may appear on us, yet will our muffled thought choose rather not to see its ridiculousness than to avoid it.

“And if we can just banish our own sense, we act our mimic — deceitful — tricks with that free license, that lust (that feeling of delight), that pleasure, that security as if we practiced in a pasteboard case, and no one saw the motion but the motion.”

A motion is a puppet. The puppeteer is concealed in a pasteboard case and no one sees his motions as he manipulates the puppets. Because no one sees him, he can freely move as he likes.

A fool who does not know that he is a fool also acts freely. Because he is a fool, he does not see that his actions are foolish, and so he performs them.

Criticus continued:

“Well, check thy passion lest it grow too loud;

“While fools are pitied, they grow fat and proud.”

**ACT 2 (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)**

**— 2.1 —**

Cupid and Mercury spoke together.

“Why, this was most unexpectedly followed, my divine delicate Mercury,” Cupid said. “By the beard of Jove, thou are a precious deity!”

Mercury said:

“Nay, Cupid, cease to speak improperly. Since we are turned cracks, let's study to be like cracks.”

Cracks are cheeky children. Cupid and Mercury were disguised as pages: boy servants.

Cupid was speaking improperly because he was not speaking like a cheeky page. He needed to be cheekier and wittier and less complimentary. He also needed to talk to Mercury as if Mercury were a cheeky page and not a god.

Mercury continued:

“We must practice their language and behaviors, and not with a dead imitation. We must act freely, carelessly, and capriciously, as if our veins ran with quicksilver, and not utter a phrase but what shall come forth steeped in the very brine of conceit and sparkle like salt in fire.”

“Quicksilver” is mercury, and mercurial people have sudden changes of mood. Think of the character Mercutio in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Cupid replied, “Being cheeky and witty is not everyone's good fortune, Hermes. Though you can presume upon the easiness and dexterity of your wit, you shall give me permission to be a little solicitous of mine and allow me to not desperately hazard it after your capering humor.”

“Nay then, Cupid, I think we must have you hoodwinked — blindfolded — again, for you are grown too provident and prudent since your eyes were at liberty,” Mercury said.

“Not so, Mercury, I am still blind Cupid to thee,” Cupid said.

“And what are you to the lady nymph you serve?” Mercury asked.

Cupid answered, “Indeed, I am ‘page,’ ‘boy,’ and ‘sirrah.’ These are all my titles.”

“Then thou have not altered thy name with thy disguise?” Mercury asked.

“Oh, no, that would have been supererogation — too much,” Cupid said. “You shall never hear your courtier called except by one of these three names.”

“Indeed, then both our fortunes are the same,” Mercury said.

“Why, what parcel — piece — of man have thou alighted on for a master?” Cupid asked.

“Such a one as, before I begin to decipher him, I dare not affirm him to be anything other than a courtier,” Mercury said. “So much he is during this open time of revels that Cynthia has proclaimed, and he would be longer except that his means — his sources of income — are to leave him shortly afterward. His name is Hedon, and he is a gallant wholly consecrated to his pleasures.”

“Hedon?” Cupid said. “He frequents my lady’s chamber, I think.”

“Tell me what she is called and then I can tell thee,” Mercury said.

“She is Madam Philautia,” Cupid said.

The name “Philautia” means “Self-Love.”

Mercury said:

“Oh, aye, he affects her very particularly indeed.

“These are his graces: He does, besides me, keep a barber and a monkey.”

Monkeys were fashionable pets.

Mercury continued:

He has a richly embroidered waistcoat to entertain his visitants in, with a cap almost suitable. His curtains and bedding are thought to be his own; his bathing tub is not suspected.”

Hedon owned his own bath. Other courtiers might have a rented bath that had previously been used for treating some other people’s venereal disease.

Mercury continued:

“He loves to have a fencer, a pedant, and a musician seen in his lodging in the mornings.”

A pedant is a teacher.

“And not a poet?” Cupid asked.

Mercury answered:

“Fie, no! He himself is a rhymmer, and that’s a thought better than a poet.”

He added:

“He is not lightly within to his mercer, no, although he comes when he takes medicine, which is commonly after his play.”



A mercer sells silk and other fine fabrics. Hedon does not always come when his mercer calls, perhaps because the mercer is there to collect money he is owed.

The medicine is perhaps a purgative or an alcoholic drink.

The play could be in the theater or at a gambling table.

Mercury continued:

“He beats a tailor very well, but a stocking-seller admirably; and so, consequently, he beats anyone he owes money to who dares not resist him.

“He never makes general invitation — invitations — except in preparation for the publishing of — making known that he has — a new suit of clothing.

“By the Virgin Mary, then you shall have more drawn to his lodging than come to the launching of some three ships, especially if he is furnished with supplies for the retrieving of his old wardrobe from pawn; if he doesn’t have the money that is needed to get his clothes out of the pawnshop, he rents a stock — suit — of apparel, and some forty or fifty pounds in gold for that afternoon to show.”

A careless display of gold in one’s home is a way to impress guests. Unfortunately for Hedon, he has to rent the gold.

Mercury continued:

“He’s thought a very necessary perfume — accessory — for the presence chamber — the royal reception chamber — and only for that reason is he welcome thither: six milliners’ shops won’t give you the same scent.”

Hedon smells good because of his perfume, and for that reason he is welcome in the royal reception room.

Mercury continued:

“He courts ladies with how many great horses he has ridden that morning, or how often he has done the whole or the half *pomado* in the seven-night — the week — before.

Hedon tries to impress ladies by telling them how many *pomados* he has performed. A *pomado* is a leap onto or over a horse’s back; it is performed with the assistance provided by grabbing the saddle’s pommel.

Mercury continued:

“And he sometimes ventures so far upon the virtue of his pomander — perfume ball — that he dares tell them how many shirts he has sweat through at tennis that week, but he wisely conceals so many dozen of balls he is on the score.”

The score can be the result of the tennis game, but it can also be the tally of a debt. The balls may be the zeros in the figure owed.

Mercury continued:

“Here he comes, he who is all this.”

## — 2.2 —

Hedon, Anaides, and Gelaia entered the scene.

Hedon is a hedonistic courtier.

The name “Anaides” means “Shameless.” He is an impudent courtier.

The name “Gelaia” means “Laughter.” Laughter is the daughter of Folly. She was dressed in boys’ clothing and served Hedon as a page.

“Boy!” Hedon called.

“Sir,” Mercury answered.

Mercury was disguised as a young mortal, and he was serving Hedon as a page.

“Are any of the ladies in the presence chamber?” Hedon asked.

“None yet, sir,” Mercury answered.

“Give me some gold,” Hedon ordered.

Mercury gave him some gold.

Some servants carried the purses — the wallets — of their masters.

“Give me more gold,” Hedon ordered.

Mercury gave him more gold, and then Mercury and Cupid stood to the side and watched the others.

“Is that thy serving-boy, Hedon?” Anaides asked.

“Aye, what do thou think of him?” Hedon answered.

“By God’s heart, I’d geld him; I swear he has the philosopher’s stone,” Anaides said.

“Geld” means “castrate.”

Alchemists sought the philosopher’s stone, which was supposed to be able to turn base metals such as iron into precious metals such as gold.

In Ben Jonson’s society, “stone” was slang for “testicle.”

Mercury, being a god, although they did not know that, was able to supply Hedon with money — more money than Hedon actually had.

“Well said, my good melancholy devil,” Hedon said to Anaides. “Sirrah, I have devised one or two of the prettiest

oaths, this morning in my bed, as ever thou have heard, to use inside the presence chamber.”

“Please, let’s hear them,” Anaides requested.

“Wait, thou shall use them before me,” Hedon said.

“No,” Anaides said. “If I do, then damn me. I have more oaths than I know how to utter, I swear by this air.”

Hedon said, “Indeed, one is ‘by the tip of your ear, sweet lady.’ Isn’t it pretty and genteel?”

“Yes, for the person it is applied to, a lady,” Anaides said. “It should be light and —”

“Nay, the other is better, and it exceeds it by much,” Hedon said. “The invention is farther fetched, too: ‘By the white valley that lies between the Alpine hills of your bosom, I avow — etc.’”

Anaides said, “Well have you traveled — and travailed — for that phrase, Hedon.”

In a translation of Ovid’s *Banquet of Sense*, George Chapman used the phrase “Cupid’s Alps” to describe the breasts of Corinna.

The travail may have been the trouble needed to steal the idea from Ovid.

Mercury said to himself, “Aye, he traveled in a map, where his eyes were but blind guides to his understanding, it seems.”

Hedon said, “And then I have a salutation that will nick — outdo — all, by this dance-caper, ho!”

He leapt into the air.

“What salutation is that?” Anaides asked.

Hedon answered:

“You know I call Madam Philautia my ‘Honor,’ and she calls me her ‘Ambition.’

“Now, when I meet her in the presence chamber, soon, I will come to her and say, ‘Sweet Honor, I have hitherto contented my sense with the lilies of your hand, but now I will taste the roses of your lip,’ and with that I will kiss her; to which she cannot but blushing answer, ‘Nay, now you are too ambitious.’

“And then I will reply, ‘I cannot be too ambitious of honor, sweet lady.’ Won’t that be good? Huh? Huh?”

“Oh, assure your soul that it will,” Anaides said.

“By heaven, I think it will be excellent, and a very politic achievement of a kiss,” Hedon said.

“I have thought upon one for Moria of a sudden, too, if it take,” Anaides said.

The name “Moria” means “Folly.”

“What is it, my dear mischief?” Hedon said.

“By the Virgin Mary, I will come to her — and she always wears a muff if you remember — and I will tell her, ‘Madam, your whole self cannot but be perfectly wise, for your hands have wit enough to keep themselves warm,’” Anaides said.

Hedon said:

“Now, before Jove, that is admirable! Look, thy page likes it, too, by Phoebus.”

Anaides’ page was Gelaia, who had laughed. Gelaia was dressed in a page’s clothing.

Phoebus is Phoebus Apollo, who drives the chariot of the Sun.

Hedon continued:

“My sweet facetious rascal, I could eat water-gruel with thee for a month for this jest — oh, my dear rogue!”

Water-gruel is thin gruel made with water rather than milk.

Gruel made with milk is better.

Anaides said, “Oh, by Hercules, it is your only dish, above all your potatoes or oyster-pies in the world.”

Hedon said:

“I have ruminated upon a most rare — splendid — wish, too, and the prophecy to it, but I’ll have some friend to be the prophet, as thus: ‘I wish that I were one of my mistress’ *ciopinos*.’”

*Ciopinos* are shoes with a thick cork sole.

Hedon continued:

“Another demands, ‘Why would he be one of his mistress’ *ciopinos*?’

“A third answers, ‘Because he would make her higher.’

“A fourth shall say, ‘That will make her proud.’

“And a fifth shall conclude, ‘Then do I prophesy, pride will have a fall, and he shall give it to her.’”

“Fall” was a double entendre with one meaning being falling backwards into the missionary position.

Hedon’s wish was that Madam Philautia would go to bed with him.

Hedon wanted to set up a wish concerning Madam Philautia, but he needed help with it. A “prophet” would say the line about a wish that would set up Hedon’s wish: “I wish that I were one of my mistress’ *ciopinos*.”

A prophet in this sense is like a straight man: The prophet prophesizes the punch line.

“I’ll be your prophet,” Anaides said. “By God’s soul, it will be most exquisite! Thou are a fine inventious — inventive — rogue, sirrah.”

“Nay, and I have posies for rings, too, and riddles that they dream not of,” Hedon said.

Posies are short sayings that are engraved inside rings. For example: “As gold is sure, love is pure.” “I love you.” “*Amor vincit omnes*” [Love conquers all].

“Tut, they’ll do that when they come to sleep on them — the riddles — for enough time,” Anaides said. “But were thy devices never in the presence chamber yet, Hedon?”

“Oh, no, I disdain that,” Hedon said.

Anaides said, “It would be good we went there ahead of time, then, and made them acquainted with the room where they shall act, lest the strangeness of it put them out of countenance when they should come forth.”

The “devices” were the people who would assist Hedon in making his wish. They had not yet been in the presence chamber: the royal reception room.

Hedon, Anaides, and Gelaia exited.

Cupid asked, “Is that man a courtier, too?”

He was referring to Anaides.

Mercury said:

“In truth, no.

“He has two essential parts of the courtier: pride and ignorance. I mean of such a courtier who is indeed only the zany, aka clown, to an exact — perfect — courtier — by the Virgin Mary. His other parts come somewhat after the ordinary gallant.”

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “zany” in this way:

*“A comic performer attending on a clown, acrobat, or mountebank, who imitates his master’s acts in a ludicrously awkward way; a clown’s or mountebank’s assistant, a merry-andrew, jack-pudding; sometimes used vaguely for a professional jester or buffoon in general.”*

Mercury continued:

“Anaides is impudence itself. He is one who speaks all that comes in his cheeks and will blush no more than a sackbut. The words that come into his cheeks tend not to pass through his brain first.”

A sackbut is 1) a wine barrel or 2) a musical instrument that is similar to a trombone.

Mercury continued:

“He lightly occupies the jester’s room at the table and keeps laughter, Gelaia, a wench in page’s attire, following him in place of a squire, whom he now and then tickles with some strange ridiculous stuff, uttered — as his land came to him — by chance.

“He will censure — judge to be good or bad — or discourse of anything, but as absurdly as you would wish.

“His fashion is not to take knowledge of a man who is beneath him in clothes. He pretends not to know him.

“He never drinks below the salt.”



A salt cellar placed on a long table marked a division in status. Those seated above the salt had a higher social class than those seated below the salt. The host and hostess and their honored guests sat above the salt.

Mercury continued:

“He does naturally admire the wit of a man who wears gold lace or the rich cloth known as tissue, and he stabs any man who speaks more contemptibly of the scholar than he.”

The play has no mention of Anaides ever stabbing any man who speaks more contemptibly of the scholar than he, and so it is likely that no man speaks more contemptibly of the scholar than he.

Mercury continued:

“He is a great proficient in all the illiberal sciences, such as cheating, drinking, swaggering, whoring, and such like.

“He never kneels except to pledge healths, nor prays except for a pipe of pudding-tobacco.”

Pudding-tobacco was tobacco that had been pressed in rolls that resembled a sausage.

Mercury continued:

“He will blaspheme in his shirt even before he is fully dressed.

“The oaths that he vomits at just one supper would maintain a town with a garrison of profane soldiers in good swearing for a twelvemonth.

“One other genuine quality he has that crowns all these, and that is this: To a friend in need, he will not depart with the weight of a soldered groat, lest the world might judge him to be a prodigal or report that he is a gull — a fool.”

A groat is a coin of little value. People would clip the edges of gold and silver coins to get some of the metal. Clipped coins could be repaired with solder.

Mercury continued:

“But by the Virgin Mary, he will give to his cockatrice or *punchetto*, half-a-dozen taffeta gowns or satin kirtles, aka skirts, in a pair or two of months — why, they are nothing.”

A cockatrice and a *punchetto* are both prostitutes.

“I commend him,” Cupid said. “He is one of my clients.”

A person who would do such things is a follower of Cupid.

— 2.3 —

Amorphus, Asotus, and Cos entered the scene.

Amorphus said to Asotus, “Come, sir. You are now within sight of the presence chamber, and you see the privacy of this room, how sweetly it offers itself to our retired intendments — our private intentions.”

He then said to Cos, “Page, cast a vigilant and inquiring eye about, so that we are not rudely surprised by the approach of some ruder stranger.”

“I promise you, sir, that I’ll tell you when the wolf enters,” Cos said. “Fear nothing.”

A Latin proverb stated, *lupus in fabula*: the wolf in the story. The wolf is a person who comes into a place suddenly while he or she is being gossiped about.

Mercury said quietly to Cupid, “Oh, what a mass of benefit shall we possess, in being the invisible spectators of this strange show now to be acted!”

They would be greatly entertained by witnessing what was about to happen.

Servants are sometimes treated as if they are invisible, but Mercury and Cupid are gods who have the power of making themselves invisible.

Amorphus said to Asotus:

“Plant yourself there, sir, and observe me.

“You shall now be the ocular-witness as well as the ear-witness [he would both see and hear] how clearly I can refute — refute — that paradox, or rather pseudodox, aka false teaching, of those who hold the face to be the index of the mind, which, I assure you, is not so in any politic — crafty — creature.”

Some people believe that the face reveals the intentions of the person whose face it is, but Amorphus was going to show Asotus that he could put on and take off faces as he wished.

Amorphus continued:

“For instance, I will now give you the particular and distinct face of all of your most noted species of persons — as for example your merchant, your scholar, your soldier, your lawyer, courtier, etc. — and each of these so truly, as you would swear — except that your eye sees the variation of the lineament, aka facial features — that the expression were my most proper and genuine aspect.

“First, as for your merchant’s, or city-face, it is thus.”

He made a face like a merchant’s face.

Amorphus continued:

“A merchant’s face is a dull, plodding face, always looking in a direct line forward; there is no great matter in this face.

“Then you have your student’s, or academic face, which is here.”

He made a face like a student’s face.

Amorphus continued:

“A student’s face is an honest, simple, and methodical face, but somewhat more spread — broader — than the former.

“The third is your soldier’s face.”

He made a face like a soldier’s face.

Amorphus continued:

“A soldier’s face is a menacing and astounding face that looks broad and big; the grace of this face consists much in a beard.

“The anti-face — the opposite face — to this is your lawyer’s face.”

He made a face like a lawyer’s face.

Amorphus continued:

“A lawyer’s face is a contracted, subtle, and intricate face, full of quirks and turnings; a labyrinthian face, now angularly, now circularly, every way aspected.

“Next is your statist’s — statesman’s — face.”

He made a face like a statesman’s face.

Amorphus continued:

“A statesman’s face is a serious, solemn, and supercilious face, full of formal and square gravity; the eye, for the most part, artificially and deeply shadowed; there is great judgment required in the making of this face.

“But now, to come to your face of faces, or courtier’s face, it is of three sorts, according to our subdivision of a courtier: elementary, practic, and theoric.

“One kind is concerned with practice, and the other is concerned with theory.

“Your courtier theoric is he who has arrived to his farthest, and now knows the court rather by speculation — that is, contemplation — than practice, and this is his face: a fastidious, aka disdainful, and oblique face that looks as if it went with a vice and were screwed up like thus.”

He made a face like a courtier theoric’s face.

Amorphus continued:

“Your courtier practic is he who is yet in his path, his course, his way, and has not touched the punctilio or point of hopes; this face is here.”

He made a face like a courtier practic’s face.

Amorphus continued:

“A courtier practic’s face is a most promising, open, smooth, and overflowing face, which seems as if it would run and pour itself into you.

“Your courtier elementary is one just newly entered or as it were in the alphabet, or ut-re-mi-fa-sol-la, of courtship; note well this face.”

He made a face like a courtier elementary’s face.

Amorphus continued:

“For it is this face — the courtier elementary’s face — that you must practice.”

“Ut-re-mi-fa-sol-la” is a musical scale; later, “doh” replaced “ut.” One who practices the musical scale is likely a beginner.

“I’ll practice them all, if you please, sir,” Asotus said.

Amorphus said:

“Aye, hereafter you may, and it will not be altogether an ungrateful — unrewarding — study. For let your soul be assured of this: In any rank or profession whatsoever, the most general or major part of opinion goes with the face, and simply respects nothing else. Therefore, if that can be made exactly, curiously, exquisitely, thoroughly, it is enough.

“But, for the present, you shall apply yourself only to this face of the elementary courtier: a light, reveling, and protesting — one that frequently says, ‘I protest,’ aka ‘I declare’ — face, now blushing, now smiling, which you may help much with a wanton wagging of your head thus.”

He wagged his head:

Amorphus continued:

“A feather will teach you how to wag your head.

“Or you may help that face much with kissing your finger that has the ruby, or playing with some string of your hatband, which is a most quaint kind of melancholy besides.

“Where is your page? Call for your casting-bottle — your perfume-bottle — and place your mirror in your hat, as I told you.”

Asotus placed a small mirror in his hat.

Amorphus continued:

“Good.

“Come, don’t look pale, observe me; set your face, and enter into the character of the elementary courtier.”

Mercury said to himself, “Oh, for some excellent painter, to have painted the copy of all these faces!”

Asotus called for his page: “Prosaites!”

Amorphus admonished him: “Bah, I premonished — forewarned — you of that; in the court, say ‘boy’ or ‘sirrah.’”

Prosaites entered the room.

Cos said to Amorphus, “Master, *lupus in* — Oh, it is Prosaites.”

He had begun to say “*lupus in fabula*” to warn Amorphus about a newcomer, but then he saw that the newcomer was only Prosaites.

Asotus said to Prosaites:

“Sirrah, prepare my casting-bottle for me.

“I think I must be forced to purchase me another page; you see how Cos waits at hand here.”

Cos was very close to Amorphus, while Prosaites had been so far from Asotus that Asotus had to call for him to come closer.

Amorphus, Asotus, Cos, and Prosaites exited.

“So will he, too, in time,” Mercury said.

As time goes on, Asotus the prodigal will waste more and more of his wealth and grow closer and closer to Prosaites the beggar.

“Who’s he, Mercury?” Cupid asked.

He was referring to Asotus.

Mercury answered:

“He is a notable finch, aka gullible fool. He is one who has newly entertained the beggar — Prosaïtes — to follow and serve him, but he cannot get him to wait near enough. He is Asotus, the heir of Philargyrus.

“But first I’ll give you the other man’s character, which may make his — Asotus’ character — the clearer.

“The man who is with him is Amorphus, a traveler.

“He is a man so made out of the mixture and shreds of forms that he himself is truly deformed.

“He walks most commonly with a clove or toothpick in his mouth.

“He’s the very mint of compliment; all his behaviors are printed, his face is another volume of essays, and his beard an Aristarchus.”

Aristarchus was an ancient Greek critic who wrote commentaries.

Amorphus’ face was a volume of essays, and his beard was the commentary on his face.

Just as clothing can reveal much information about social class, so can hair styles and beard styles. The Elizabethans sometimes starched their beards. But often beards were long and not starched. A person with a starched beard was concerned about fashion and so could be a courtier. Peasants would be unlikely to starch their beards.

A glance at Amorphus’ beard would at least sometimes show whether the beard matched the face he was making.

Mercury continued:



“He speaks all cream, skimmed, and more affected than a dozen waiting women.”

“All skimmed cream” means “all cream,” and “all skimmed of cream” means “no cream.”

Mercury continued:

“He’s his own promoter in every place; the wife of the ordinary — an eating house — gives him his diet to maintain her table in discourse, which indeed is a mere tyranny over her other guests, for he will usurp all the talk — ten constables are not so tedious.”

In Ben Jonson’s society, constables had a reputation for dullness.

Mercury continued:

“He is no great shifter — changer — of clothing. Once a year his apparel is ready to revolt.

“He does act much to arbitrate quarrels, and he himself fights exceedingly well, out at a window.”

The implication is that Amorphus does not fight so well when he is within arm’s distance of the person he is willing to shout at from a window.

Mercury continued:

“He will lie cheaper than any beggar and louder than most clocks, for which he is right properly accommodated to the whetstone, his page.”

Amorphus and his page, Cos, snore loudly.

Mercury then began to describe the character of Asotus:

“The other gallant — Asotus — is his zany, aka assistant to a clown, and does most of these tricks after him, sweats to

imitate him in everything to a hair, except a beard, which is not yet extant.”

Asotus is so young that he does not yet have a beard.

Mercury continued:

“Asotus learns to eat anchovies and caviar because Amorphus loves them.

“Asotus speaks as he — Amorphus — speaks.

“Asotus looks and walks, Asotus goes so in clothes and fashion, and Asotus is in all things, as if he — Asotus — were molded out of Amorphus.

“By the Virgin Mary, before they met, Asotus had other very pretty sufficiencies, aka competencies, which yet he retains some light impression of, as frequenting a dancing school and grievously torturing strangers with inquisition after his grace in his galliard — a French dance.

“Asotus buys a fresh acquaintance at any rate.

“His eye and his raiment confer much together as he goes in the street.

“He treads nicely, like a tightrope fellow who walks upon ropes, especially the first Sunday of his silk-stockings; and when he is most neat and new, you shall strip him of clothing with praise and commendations.”

Amorphus had already stripped Asotus of his hat by praising it.

Cupid said, “Here comes another man.”

Mercury said, “Aye, but he is a man of another strain, Cupid; this fellow weighs somewhat.”

This new man is not a fool.

The new man was Criticus, who walked past Mercury and Cupid.

“What is his name, Hermes?” Cupid asked.

Mercury (Hermes) replied:

“His name is Criticus.

“Criticus is a creature of a most perfect and divine temper; he is one in whom the humors and elements are peaceably met without emulation of precedency.

“Criticus is neither too fantastically melancholy [sad], too slowly phlegmatic [unemotional and calm], too lightly sanguine [optimistic], nor too rashly choleric [angry], but in all things he is so composed and ordered that it is clear Nature was about some full work; she did more than make a man when she made him.

“His discourse is like his behavior, uncommon but not unpleasing; he is prodigal of neither discourse nor behavior.

“Criticus strives rather to be that which men call judicious than to be thought so; and he is so truly learned that he does not desire to show it off.

“Criticus will both think and speak his thought freely, but he is as distant from depraving — disparaging — any other man’s merit as proclaiming his own.

“As for his valor, it is such that he dares as little to offer an injury as to receive one.

“In sum, he has a most ingenious — intelligent — and sweet spirit, a sharp and seasoned wit, a straight judgment, and a strong mind, constant and unshaken.

“Fortune could never break him or make him less.

“Criticus counts it his pleasure to despise pleasures, and he is more delighted with good deeds than goods. It is a competency — a sufficient reward — to him that he can be virtuous.

“Criticus neither covets nor fears; he has too much reason to do either — and that commends all things to him.”

Cupid said, “Not better than Mercury commends him.”

Mercury replied, “Oh, Cupid, it is beyond my deity to give him his due praises; I could leave my place in heaven to live among mortals, as long as I were sure to be no other than he is.”

“By God’s light, I believe he is your minion — your favorite,” Cupid said. “You seem to be so ravished with him.”

“He’s one I would not willingly have a wry thought darted against,” Mercury said.

Cupid said, “No, but a straight shaft in his bosom, I’ll promise him, if I am Cytherea’s son.”

Cytherea is Venus. She was born in the surf near the island of Cythera, which is off the southwest coast of the Peloponnese in Greece. A temple on Cythera was dedicated to her.

“Shall we go, Cupid?” Mercury asked.

“Let’s stay and see the ladies now; they’ll come soon,” Cupid said. “I’ll help to paint them.”

“Paint” can mean “makeup” as a noun and “put on makeup” as a verb, but Cupid was using the word to metaphorically mean “paint a verbal description of them.”

“What, lay color upon color?” Mercury said. “That affords only an ill blazon.”

Since one meaning of “color” is makeup, if Cupid were to literally paint the ladies’ portrait, he would be using paint to paint their paint.

“Color” can also mean a heraldic device such as one painted on a metal blazon, aka war shield.

The word “blazon” can also mean “a portrait of a woman.”

Argurion walked by them.

“Here comes metal to help it: the Lady Argurion,” Cupid said.

“Argurion” means “silver,” and since silver is used in the making of coins, it also means “money.”

“Money, money,” Mercury said.

Cupid said:

“The same.

“Argurion is a nymph of a most wandering and giddy disposition, as humorous as the air.

“She’ll run from gallant to gallant, as they sit and play the card game primero in the presence chamber, most strangely, and she seldom stays with any.

“Argurion spreads money around as she goes.

“Today you shall have her look as clear and fresh as the morning, and tomorrow as melancholy as midnight.

“Argurion takes special pleasure in a close, obscure lodging, and for that reason visits the city so often, where she has many secret and true-concealing favorites.”

Some people conceal the truth about her. Misers can pretend to be poor, and some spendthrifts can pretend to be wealthier than they are.

Cupid continued:

“When Argurion comes abroad, she’s more loose and scattering — erratic — than dust, and she will fly from place to place as if she were rapt — seized — with a whirlwind.

“A young student, for the most part, she does not favor. She only greets him, and then leaves.

“A poet or a philosopher she is hardly brought to take any notice of, no, even though he may be some part of an alchemist.”

No alchemist ever succeeded in making the philosopher’s stone.

Cupid continued:

“Argurion loves a player well, and a lawyer infinitely, but your fool above all.”

Players — gamblers — can get lucky at gambling sometimes.

Cupid continued:

“Argurion can do much in the court for the obtaining of any suit whatsoever; no door but flies open to her, her presence is above a charm.

“The worst in her is a lack of keeping state and maintaining dignity and too much descending into inferior and base offices. She’s for any coarse employment you will put upon her, such as to be your procurer or pander or pimp.”

Mercury said, “Quiet, Cupid, here comes more work for you, another character or two.”

Cupid’s work was introducing some new characters.

Phantaste, Moria, and Philautia entered the scene.

“Phantaste” means “Fantasy,” which can mean Self-Delusion.” She has a light wittiness.

“Moria” means “Folly.” She is the mother of Gelaia, whose name means “Laughter.” She is older than Phantaste and Philautia, who are of an age to be married soon.

“Philautia” means “Self-Love.”

Phantaste said, “Wait, sweet Philautia, I’ll just change my fan and go immediately.”

She exited.

Moria said, “Now, in very good seriousness, ladies, I will have this order reversed; the presence chamber must be better maintained from you. A quarter past eleven and never a nymph in prospective — in view! Curse my hand, there must be a reformed discipline.”

Moria perhaps wanted the nymphs — Phantaste and Philautia — to arrive before any other guests. They had arrived in the presence chamber only to find some men there first.

Moria then asked Philautia, “Is that your new ruff, sweet ladybird? By my truth, it is most intricately splendid.”

Mercury and Cupid talked together at the side.

“Good Jove, what reverend gentlewoman in years might this be?” Mercury asked.

Cupid was the grandson of Jupiter, aka Jove.

Cupid said:

“This gentlewoman, Madam Moria, guardian of the nymphs, is one who is not now to be persuaded of her wit and intelligence.”

Or lack of them.

In Queen Elizabeth I’s court, the Mother of the Maids was responsible for taking care of the unmarried maidens of the court.

Cupid continued:

“She will think herself wise against all the judgments that come.

“She is a lady made all of voice and air, and she talks anything of anything.

“She is like one of your ignorant poetasters — inferior poets — of the time who, when they have got acquainted with a strange word, never rest until they have wrung it in, even though it loosens the whole fabric of their sense.”

In other words, they pretensify the pretentiousness of their pretentoxicity.

Mercury said, “That was prettily and sharply noted, Cupid.”

Cupid said:

“She will tell you that Philosophy was a fine reveler when she was young and he was a gallant, and that then, even though she is the one who says it, she was thought to be the Dame Dido and Helen of the court.”

Dido, the Queen of Carthage, nearly kept the Trojan War survivor Aeneas from fulfilling his destiny of becoming an important founder of the Roman people.

Helen is Helen of Troy, whose beauty became a cause of the Trojan War when Paris ran off with her and took her to Troy.



Her character was ambiguous: Some sources say she willingly left her legitimate husband, Menelaus, the King of Sparta, while other sources say she was kidnapped by Paris.

Cupid said:

“She will also speak about what a sweet dog she had this time four years ago, and how it was called Fortune, and that, if the Fates had not cut his thread, he would have been a dog to have given entertainment to any gallant in this kingdom.”

The three Fates commanded the pulse of life; they controlled human life. Clotho spun the thread of life. Lachesis measured the thread of life, determining how long a person lived. Atropos cut the thread of life; when the thread was cut, the person died.

Ancient literature does not contain accounts of Atropos cutting the thread of life of a dog.

Moirai's name is “Folly,” and Fortune is a good name for Moira's dog. A proverb stated, “Fortune favors fools.”

Mercury said, “Oh, please tell me no more about her. I am full of her.”

Cupid said, “Yes, I must necessarily tell you that she composes a sack-posset well, and she would court a young page sweetly, except that her breath is against it.”

Sack-posset is hot milk curdled with sack, a kind of white wine.

Moria had bad breath.

Mercury said:

“Now, may her breath, or something stronger, protect me from her!

“Tell me about the other, Cupid.”

The other was Madam Philautia, Cupid's mistress, aka lady-boss. He served her as her page.

"Philautia" means "Self-Love."

Cupid said:

"Oh, that's my lady and mistress, Madam Philautia.

"She does not admire herself for any one particularity — particular thing — but for all:

"She is fair, and she knows that; she has a pretty light wit, too, and she knows that; she can dance, and she knows that, too; she can play at the game of shuttlecock, and she knows that, too.

"No quality she has but she shall take a very particular knowledge of and, most ladylike, commend it to you.

"You shall have her at any time read to you the history of herself, and she will very subtly run over another lady's sufficiencies — abilities — in order to come to her own.

"She has a good superficial judgment in painting, and she would like to appear to have such in poetry.

"She is a most complete lady in the opinion of some three people besides herself."

Philautia said to Moria, "Indeed, how did you like my quip to Hedon about the garter? Wasn't it witty?"

"Exceedingly witty and integrate," Moria replied. "You did so aggravate the jest with it — quite so."

Moria sometimes misused words. "Integrate" perhaps meant "complete." "Aggravate" perhaps meant "instigate."

"And didn't I dance movingly last night?" Philautia asked.

“Movingly!” Moria replied. “Out of measure, in truth, sweet lady.”

Mercury said, “A happy commendation, to dance out of measure.”

“Out of measure” can mean 1) outstandingly, or 2) out of time with the music. A measure is a type of stately dance.

Moria said, “Save only that you lacked the swim in the turn. Oh! When I was at fourteen —”

A “swim” is a smooth movement.

Philautia interrupted, “Nay, that’s my own from any nymph in the court, I am sure of it, therefore you mistake me in that, guardian. Both the swim and the trip are properly mine. Everybody will affirm it who has any judgment in dancing, I assure you.”

A trip is a dance movement.

Phantaste returned and said, “Come now, Philautia, I am ready. Shall we go?”

“Aye, good Phantaste,” Philautia said. “What! Have you changed your headdress?”

“Yes, indeed; the other was so like the common style, it had no extraordinary grace,” Phantaste replied. “Besides, I had worn it for almost a day, truly.”

Philautia said, “I’ll be sworn that it is most excellent for our project, and it is splendid. It is after the Italian print we looked at the other night.”

The Italian print had shown an illustration of a headdress like the one Phantaste was wearing now.

“It is so,” Phantaste said. “By this fan, I cannot abide anything that savors the poor overworn cut, anything that has

any kindred with it. I must have variety, I must. I hate this mixing in fashion worse than to burn juniper in my chamber, I declare.”

Juniper was burned as an aromatic. Juniper smoke was also thought to clean the air.

Philautia said, “And yet we cannot have a new peculiar court-attire, for if we attempt to do that, these retainers will imitate it — these suburb-Sunday-waiters, these courtiers for high days, aka festival days — I don’t know what I should call them —”

Suburb-Sunday-waiters were people who visited the court on special days, but they were not in attendance daily, as were more important people.

Phantaste interrupted and said, “Oh, aye, they do most pitifully imitate; but I have a tire coming, indeed, that shall \_\_\_”

Phantaste wore many headdresses. She changed her headdress because she had worn it almost a day, and she had a new headdress coming.

“Tire” can also mean “attire.” Phantaste may have coming a new outfit of clothing that includes a new headdress.

Moria interrupted and said to Phantaste, “In good certain, madam, it makes you look most heavenly. But, lay your hand on your heart, you never skinned a new beauty more prosperously in your life, nor more supernaturally.”

“Skinned a new beauty” perhaps meant putting on a new face of makeup.

Or “skinned a new beauty” perhaps meant putting on a new headdress or a new outfit of clothing. In that case, Phantaste would be the beauty in an outfit. Her beauty would be new because it was brought out by the new clothing.

Or Phantaste may have ordered an animal to be skinned so that its fur could be used in some clothing she was wearing.

Or Phantaste may have had a beauty rest to refresh her skin.

“Supernaturally” perhaps meant that Phantaste never looked more heavenly.

Moria said to Philautia, “Look, good lady, sweet lady, look.”

She meant: Look at Phantaste.

Philautia said:

“It is very clear and well, believe me. But if you had seen mine yesterday when it was young, you would have —

“Who’s your doctor, Phantaste?”

This kind of doctor — an expert in an area of learning — may be a cosmetician.

Or this kind of doctor — an expert in an area of learning — may be a medical doctor.

Phantaste replied:

“Nay, that’s counsel — that’s a secret. Philautia, you shall pardon me.

“Yet I’ll assure you that he’s the most dainty, sweet, absolute, splendid man of the whole college. Oh! His very looks, his discourse, his behavior, all he does is medicine, I declare.”

Philautia said, “For heaven’s sake, what’s his name? Good, dear Phantaste —”

Phantaste interrupted, “No, no, no, no, no, no! Believe me, not for a million of heavens. I will not make him cheap. Bah —”

Philautia, Phantaste, and Moria exited.

Cupid said about Phantaste, “There is a nymph, too, of a most curious and elaborate strain, light, all motion, an ubiquitary, she is everywhere, Phantaste —”

An ubiquitary is someone who is everywhere.

Mercury interrupted:

“Her very name speaks — describes — her; let her pass.

“But are these, Cupid, the stars of Cynthia’s court? Do these nymphs — Philautia and Phantaste — attend upon Diana?”

Cupid replied:

“They are in her court, Mercury, but not as stars; these nymphs never come in the presence of Cynthia.

“The nymphs who make up Cynthia’s train of attendants are the divine Arete [Excellence, Virtue], Timè [Honor], Phronesis [Prudence], Thaumà [Wonder], and others of that high sort.

“These nymphs — Philautia and Phantaste — are privately brought in by Moria in this licentious time, against Cynthia’s knowledge; and, like so many meteors, they will vanish when she appears.”

This licentious time was the time of revels that Cynthia was permitting. It was a time of freedom.

Meteors are seen for only a short time. In Ben Jonson’s society, comets were called meteors. The light of comets can be outshone and drowned out by the light of the Moon.

— 2.5 —

Prosaites, Gelaia, and Cos entered the scene. They were carrying bottles.

Prosaites sang:

*“Come follow me, my wags, and say as I say.*

*“There’s no riches but in rags, hey day, hey day.*

*“You that [who] profess this art, come away, come away,*

*“And help to bear a part, hey day, hey day.*

*“Bear-wards [Bear-keepers] and blackingmen [sellers of shoe polish],*

*“Corn-cutters [cutters of corns on feet] and car-men [cart-men],*

*“Sellers of marking stones [chalk that was used to mark cattle so their owners could be identified],*

*“Gatherers-up of marrow bones [the marrow was edible],*

*“Pedlars [Peddlers] and puppet-players,*

*“Sow-gelders [Sow-spayers] and soothsayers,*

*“Gypsies and jailers,*

*“Rat-catchers and railers [scoffers],*

*“Beadles [minor parish officials] and ballad-singers,*

*“Fiddlers and fadingers [dancers of an Irish dance],*

*“Thomalins [itinerants] and tinkers,*

*“Scavengers and skinkers [bartenders],*

*“There goes the hare away,*

*“Hey day, hey day.*

*“Bawds and blind doctors,*

*“Paritors [ecclesiastical court officials] and spital proctors  
[hospital officials],*

*“Chemists [Alchemists] and cuttlebungs,*

*“Hookers and horn-thumbs —”*

These were types of thieves: Cuttlebungs used knives to cut the strings of purses (moneybags that could be tied to a person’s belt), hookers used hooks to hook and steal items through open windows, and cuttlebungs used thimbles made of horn to protect their fingers as they cut purses.

Prosaites continued singing:

*“— with all cast [cast-off, jobless] commanders*

*“Turned post-knights [professional informers] or panders,*

*“Jugglers and jesters,*

*“Borrowers of testers [six-pences],*

*“And all the troop of trash*

*“That’re [Who’re] allied to the lash [whipping was the  
trash’s punishment],*

*“Come and join with your lags [fellows],*

*“Shake up your muscle-bags [thighs, or buttocks].*

*“For beggary bears the sway [is dominant],*

*“Then [So then] sing: cast care away,*

*“Hey day, hey day!”*

Mercury said:

“What? Those who were our fellow pages just now are so soon promoted to be yeomen of the bottles?”



The yeomen of the bottles were literally the court officials who were in charge of the wine.

Mercury continued:

“The mystery, the mystery, good wags?”

The mystery was: What are you doing?

Cupid speculated, “Some diet — medicinal — drink they have the guard of.”

Prosaites said, “No, sir, we are going in quest of a strange fountain lately found out.”

“By whom?” Cupid asked.

“My master, or the great discoverer, Amorphus,” Cos said.

“Thou have well entitled him a discoverer, Cos, for he will reveal all he knows,” Mercury said.

The word “discover” can mean “reveal.”

“Aye, and a little more, too, when the spirit is upon him,” Gelaia said.

Yes, the alcoholic spirit. The “little more” than he knows will be lies.

Prosaites said, “Oh, the good travelling gentleman yonder — Amorphus — has caused such a drought in the presence chamber with reporting the wonders of this new water, that all the ladies and gallants lie languishing upon the rushes — floor covering — like so many impounded cattle in the midst of harvest to keep them from eating the crops, sighing one to another, and gasping, as if each of them expected a cock — a spout — from the fountain to be brought into his mouth; and, unless we return quickly, they are all, as a youth would say, no better than a few trouts cast ashore, or a dish of eels in a sandbag.”

Mercury said:

“Well, then, you had best dispatch and have a care of them.

“Come, Cupid, thou and I will go peruse this dry wonder.”

**ACT 3 (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)**

**— 3.1 —**

Amorphus and Asotus entered the scene. Asotus had not made a good impression on the courtiers in or near the presence chamber. He had been tongue-tied.

Amorphus said to Asotus:

“Sir, don’t let this discountenance or disgallant you — empty you of gallantry — a whit; you must not sink under the first disaster. It is with your young grammatical — as if still in grammar school — courtier as with your neophyte actor, a thing usual to be daunted at the first presence or inter-view.”

An inter-view is also an enter-view. Asotus had entered and been inside this area that was frequently by courtiers for his first time, and the sight had daunted him.

Amorphus continued:

“There you saw Hedon and Anaides, who are far more practiced gallants than yourself, who were both out, aka at a loss of words, and that should comfort you.

“It is no disgrace to be discomfited, no more than for your adventurous reveler to fall by some inauspicious chance in his galliard, or for some subtle politician to undertake the bastinado, so that the state might think worthily of him and respect him as a man well beaten to the world.”

A galliard is a dance in triple time.

The bastinado was a Turkish punishment in which a person was beaten on the feet.

A man who is well beaten to the world may be a man who is well traveled and has beaten a path to various parts of the world. One would have to travel to undergo the bastinado.

Amorphus continued:

“What, has your tailor provided the property — the outfit — we spoke of at your chamber, or not?”

“I think he has,” Asotus said.

Amorphus said:

“Nay, I entreat you, don’t be so flat and melancholic. Erect your mind. Rouse yourself. You shall redeem this with the courtship I will teach you in preparation for this afternoon.

“Where will you eat today?”

“Wherever you please, sir, anywhere, I say,” Asotus said.

Amorphus said:

“Come, let us go and taste some light dinner, a dish of sliced caviar or so.”

Normally, caviar is eaten as a garnish or a spread. It can be eaten with sliced foods such as bread or salmon.

Amorphus continued:

“And after we eat, you shall practice an hour at your lodging some few forms that I have remembered. If you had but so far gathered your spirits to you as to have taken up a rush from the floor, when you were out, and wagged it like this —”

He demonstrated by picking up a rush — a plant whose stalks were used as floor coverings — from the floor and wagging it.

Amorphus continued:

“— or cleaned your teeth with it, or just turned aside and feigned some business to whisper with your page until you had recovered yourself, or just had found some slight stain

in your stocking or any other pretty invention, so long as it had been sudden, you might have come off with a most clear and courtly grace.”

Asotus said, “A poison of all, I think, I was forspoke — I was bewitched! I was!”

“Forspeak” means “speak evil of” as well as “bewitched.”

Amorphus said:

“No, I do partly aim at the cause, which was ominous indeed: For as you enter at the door, there was opposed to you the form of a wolf in the wall hangings, which, your eye taking suddenly, gave a false alarm to the heart, and that was what called your blood out of your face and so disordered the whole rank of your spirits.

“I urge you to labor to forget it.”

They exited.

### — 3.2 —

Hedon and Anaides talked together. Hedon had conceived a deep dislike of Criticus. Hedon was a hedonistic courtier, and Anaides was an impudent courtier.

They had been in the same place as Amorphus and Asotus, and Hedon had also been discomfited. Hedon and Anaides had planned a way for Hedon to compliment his mistress — the woman he admired — Madam Philautia. The plan, however, had not gone well.

Hedon said, “By God’s heart, was there ever so prosperous an invention — my plan — thus unluckily perverted and spoiled by a whoreson bookworm, a candle-waster?”

He was talking about Criticus, although he did not know his name.

Some people “waste” candles by using their light to study at night.

Anaides replied, “Nay, don’t be impatient, Hedon.”

“By God’s light, I would like to know his name,” Hedon said.

Anaides said:

“Hang him, the poor grogram-wearing rascal. Please don’t think about him.”

Grogram is a coarse cloth of the type that a scholar could wear.

Anaides continued:

“I’ll send for him to come to my lodging, and have him blanketed whenever thou wish, man.”

Some disliked men were put in a blanket and tossed high in the air.

“By God’s soul, I wish thou could,” Hedon said. “Look, here he comes. Laugh at him, laugh at him. Ha, ha, ha!”

Criticus passed by them and stood to the side.

Anaides said, “Bah, he smells like lamp-oil because of his studying by candlelight.”

“How confidently he went by us, and how carelessly!” Hedon said. “He was never moved, nor stirred to anger at anything! Did you observe him?”

“Aye, a pox on him,” Anaides said. “Let him go, dormouse; he is in a dream now. He has no other time to sleep but thus when he walks abroad to take the air.”

Dormice were known for sleeping much of the time.

Anaides may have meant to say, "Let him go — the dormouse." If he had, then the "dormouse" would be Criticus, not Hedon.

Hedon said, "By God's precious blood, this afflicts me more than all the rest, that we should so particularly direct our hate and contempt against him, and he to carry it thus without wound or passion! It is insufferable."

Criticus was unconcerned about what they thought of him.

Anaides said, "By God's eyelid, my dear Envy, if thou wilt just say the word now, I'll undo and ruin him eternally for thee."

"How, sweet Anaides?" Hedon asked.

"By the Virgin Mary, half a score of us will get him in one night and make him pawn his wit for a supper," Anaides answered.

They would get Criticus to speak entertainingly while being fed a meal. Apparently, Anaides thought that Criticus would make a fool of himself. Or, possibly, they thought that Criticus would flatter anyone who bought him a meal.

Hedon said:

"Get out! Go away! Thou have such unseasonable jests!

"By this heaven, I wonder at nothing more than our gentlemen ushers, who will allow a piece of serge or perpetuana to come into the presence chamber. I think that they should, out of their experience, better distinguish the silken disposition of a courtier than to let such terrible coarse rags mix with them, able to fret — fray — any smooth or genteel society to the threads with their rubbing devices — their irritating conversation."

Serge and perpetuana are rough kinds of cloth that a scholar might wear.

Anaides said, “Damn me if I should adventure — come — on his company once more without a suit of buff — thick leather — to defend my wit. He does nothing but stab, the slave. How mischievously he crossed thy device of the prophecy there! And Moria came without her muff, too, and there my invention was lost.”

“Well, I have decided what I’ll do,” Hedon said.

“What, my good spirituous spark — my spirited gallant?” Anaides asked

“By the Virgin Mary, I’ll speak all the venom I can of him, and poison his reputation in every place where I come,” Hedon said.

He would maliciously gossip about him.

“Before God, that is most courtly,” Anaides said.

Courtly behavior is supposed to be behavior that shows good etiquette, but some courtiers at this court engaged in malicious gossip.

Hedon added, “And if I chance to be present where any question is made of his sufficiencies and abilities, or of anything he has done in private or public, I’ll censure — judge — it slightly, and ridiculously —”

Anaides replied:

“At any hand, beware of that, lest you may draw your own judgment into suspicion.”

The judgment of Criticus was much better than the judgment of Hedon.

Anaides continued:



“No, I’ll instruct thee in what thou shall do, and by a safer, more secure means: Approve anything thou hear of his according to the received opinion of it. If other people think it is good, then you also say that it is good.

“But if what he says is extraordinarily good, give the credit of it not to him but to some other person whom thou more particularly like.

“That’s the way to plague him, and he shall never come to defend himself.

“By God’s blood, I’ll give out the gossip that all he says is dictated from — that is, he copied the conversation of — other men; and I’ll swear it, too, if thou shall allow me to, and I’ll swear that I know the time and place where he stole it.

“Although my soul is not guilty of believing any such thing, and although I think, from the bottom of my heart, he hates such barren shifts and imaginative tricks as plagiarism; yet to do thee a pleasure and him a disgrace, I’ll damn myself, or do anything.”

Hedon said, “Many thanks, my dear devil. We’ll put it seriously in practice, indeed.”

### — 3.3 —

Criticus had overheard their conversation.

Alone, he said to himself:

“Do, good Detraction — Anaides — do, and I the while

“Shall shake thy spite off with a careless — worry-free — smile.

“Poor piteous — contemptible — gallants, what lean idle sleights and tricks their thoughts suggest to flatter their starved hopes!

“As if I didn’t know how to entertain these straw-devices — harmless plots — but of force must yield to the weak stroke of their calumnious and abusive tongues.

“Why should I care what every dor — fool — buzzes of gossip into credulous ears?

“It is a crown — a mark of distinction — to me that the best judgments can report me wronged, them liars, and their slanders impudent.

“Perhaps, upon the rumor of their speeches, some grieved friend will whisper, ‘Criticus, men speak ill of thee.’

“As long as they are ill men, if they spoke worse of me, it would be better, for to be dispraised and criticized by such men is the most perfect praise.

“What can his censure hurt me — the censure of a man whom the world has censured vile before me?

“Censured” means “judged.”

Criticus continued:

“If good Chrestus [Honest], Euthus [Straightforward], or Phronimus [Sensible] had spoken the words, they would have moved me, and I should have called my thoughts and actions to a strict account upon the hearing.

“But when I remember it is Hedon and Anaides, alas, then, I think but who and what they are, and I am not stirred to anger:

“The one is a light voluptuous reveler.

“The other is a strange arrogating puff of nothing.

“Both are impudent and ignorant enough.

“They are courtiers who talk as they are accustomed to talk, not as I merit and deserve.

“They instead traduce by habit just as most dogs bark by custom.

“They do nothing out of judgment, but out of disease.

“They speak ill because they never could speak well.

“And who would be angry with this race of creatures? What wise physician have we ever seen moved by a frantic man? The same feelings that a wise physician bears to his sick patient a right mind should carry to such as these.

“And I count it a most rare revenge that I can thus, with such a sweet neglect, pluck from them all the pleasure of their malice.

“For that’s the mark — the target — of all their ingenious craft — their deceitful plots — to wound my patience, howsoever they seem to aim at other objects, which if missed, their envy’s like an arrow shot upright, an arrow which in the fall endangers their own heads.”

— 3.4 —

Arete entered the scene.

The name “Arete” means “Excellence” or “Virtue.” Lady Arete is wise.

“What, Criticus!” Arete said. “Where have you spent the day? You have not visited your jealous friends!”

In Ben Jonson’s society, one meaning of “jealous” is “anxious for your welfare.”

Criticus replied:

“I have been where I have seen, most honored Arete, the strangest pageant, fashioned like a court — at least I dreamt I saw it — so diffused and disordered, so painted with makeup, so outfitted in fools’ pied — multi-colored — clothing, and so full of rainbow strains and streaks of color, as never yet, either by time or place, was made the food to my distasted — disgusted — sense.

“Nor can my weak, imperfect memory now render to my tongue half the forms that were convolved — coiled together — within this thrifty — fertile — room.”

The room was fertile ground for a satirist such as Ben Jonson.

Criticus then began to list a few types of people whom he had seen by the presence chamber:

“Here stalks by me a proud and spangled-clothing sir who looks three hands-breadths higher than the top of his head. He savors himself alone, is only kind and loving to himself. He is one who will speak darker and more doubtful — ambiguous — than six oracles. He salutes a friend as if he had a stitch of sudden pain. He is his own chronicle, and he scarcely can eat because he is busy registering himself.”

This courtier who is his own chronicle and is constantly registering himself is someone who constantly writes notes, perhaps to remember things to write in a journal later.

The parish would register — keep a record of — important events, including births, weddings, and deaths.

Criticus continued:

“He is waited on by mimics [buffoons], jesters, panders, parasites and hangers-on, and other such-like prodigies — monsters — of men.

“This courtier having gone past, there comes some subtle Proteus.”

Proteus is a mythological sea-god who is a shape-shifter: He can change his shape into many other forms.

Criticus continued:

“He is one who can change and vary with all the forms he sees. He can be anything but honest, serves the time by following whatever is the current fashion, hovers between two factions, and explores the plots of both. With cross — opposite — faces, he bears news of these plots to the divided heads, and he is received with mutual grace by either head.”

This type of courtier plays both sides. When two factions are opposed, he will present one face to the head of one faction and an opposite face to the head of the other faction. In each case, he seems to favor the faction of the person to whom he is speaking and not favor the other faction.

Criticus continued:

“He is one who dares do deeds worthy the hurdle or the wheel, to be thought somebody; and is, in truth, such as the satirist points truly forth:

“*Criminibus debent hortos, praetoria, mensas.*”

The hurdle was a sled on which a convicted criminal was drawn to the place of execution.

To be broken on the wheel was to be bound to a wheel and endure the breaking of one’s bones. Or a person could be tied up and an executioner would drop a heavy wheel on the person and break that person’s bones.

The Latin quotation, which is from Juvenile, Satire 1, line 75, means “To their crimes they owe their gardens, their palaces, and their tables.”

“You tell us wonders, Criticus,” Arete said.

Criticus replied:

“Tut, this is nothing.

“There stands a neophyte, glazing of his face — that is, making his face sleek — in preparation for when his idol — the woman he loves — enters, and repeats, like an unperfect prologue at third music, his part of speeches and confederate jests in passion — passionately — to himself.”

“An unperfect prologue at third music” is a prologue speaker who is imperfect — that is, he hasn’t memorized his lines properly. “Third music” was the signal for the speaker to begin saying his prologue at the beginning of a play.

“Confederate jests” are those that need a collaborator to set up the jest or witticism. An example of a confederate jest is the one about *ciopinos* in which Hedon needed the assistance of Anaides.

Criticus continued:

“Another swears his scene of courtship over, and then seems as if he would kiss away his hand in kindness.”

Courtiers would sometimes kiss their own hand.

Criticus continued:

“A third is most in action, swims and frisks, plays with his mistress’ paps, aka breasts, salutes her pumps, aka shoes, and will spend his patrimony — inheritance — for a garter, or the least feather in her bounteous fan.

“A fourth, he comes in only to act as a mute, divides the act with a dumb show, and exits.”

The acts of some Elizabethan plays were divided by a dumb show in which the actors did not speak. A mute is a character that does not speak.

Criticus continued:

“Then must the ladies laugh, but straightaway comes their scene, a six-times-worse confusion than the rest.

“Where you shall hear one woman talk about this man’s eye, another woman talk about his lip, a third woman talk about his nose, a fourth commend his leg, a fifth his foot, a sixth his hand, and everyone commends a limb, so that you would think the poor distorted gallant must there expire.

“Then they fall in discourse about tires — headdresses — and fashions: how and in which order of social prominence they must take their places, where they may kiss [!], and whom; when to sit down, and with what grace to rise; and if they greet someone, what courtesy they must use.

“They talk such cobweb stuff as would force the commonest sense to abhor the Arachnean workers.”

Arachne was a Greek woman who out of pride challenged the goddess Athena to a weaving contest. Arachne created a weaving with no flaws, and Athena turned her into a spider that created light, airy cobwebs.

The court ladies — the Arachnean workers — described by Criticus are proud and without substance.

Arete said:

“Have patience, Criticus.

“This knot of spiders will be soon dissolved, and all their webs swept out of Cynthia’s court when once her glorious deity appears and just presents herself in her full light.

“Until then, go in, and spend your hours with us your honored friends, Timè [Honor] and Phronesis [Prudence], in contemplation of our goddess’ name.”

The goddess’ name is Cynthia, and Arete, Timè, and Phronesis honored her and her name.

Arete then asked Criticus to create an entertainment to honor Cynthia.

Arete continued:

“Think on some sweet and choice artistic invention now that is worthy her serious and lustrous and illustrious eyes, so that from the merit of it we may take the desired occasion to prefer and promote your worth, and make your service known to Cynthia.

“It is the pride of Arete to grace her studious lovers, and in scorn of time, envy, and ignorance, to lift her studious lovers’ state and condition above a vulgar height.

“True happiness consists not in the multitude of friends, but in their worth and choice; nor would I have Virtue pursue a popular regard.

“Let them be good who love me, although they may be but few.”

Criticus said, “I kiss thy hands, divinest Arete, and vow myself to thee and Cynthia.”

— 3.5 —

Amorphus and Asotus talked together. A tailor was present who had brought Asotus the clothing he had ordered.

Amorphus said to Asotus, “A little more forward, so, sir.”

He meant, Look more confident.



He then said to Asotus, ‘Now, go in, take off your cloak yourself, and come forth.’”

Asotus exited.

Amorphus then said, “Tailor, bestow thy absence upon us, and be not prodigal of this secret except to a dear customer.”

Amorphus did not want news of Asotus’ new suit of clothing to get out before Asotus had made a grand appearance in the presence chamber.

The tailor exited, and Asotus returned.

Amorphus began to teach Asotus about courtly behavior and about wooing a court lady:

“It is well entered, sir — you are making a good entrance.

“Stay, you come on too fast; your pace is too impetuous.

“Imagine this to be the palace of your pleasure, or place where your lady is pleased to be seen. First, you present yourself, thus —”

He demonstrated.

Amorphus continued:

“— and, spying her, you fall off, aka withdraw, and walk some two turns around the area; in which time it is to be supposed your passion has sufficiently whited your face.

“Then, stifling a sigh or two and closing your lips, with a trembling boldness and bold terror, you advance yourself forward.

“Try thus much, I ask you to.”

Affected by his love for his lady, whoever she may be, when Asotus saw her, he was supposed to turn pale and tremble.

Asotus said, “Yes, sir, I pray to God that I can light on it and get it right. Here I come in, you say, and present myself?”

“Good,” Amorphus said.

“And then I spy her and walk off?” Asotus asked.

“Very good,” Amorphus said.

“Now, sir, I stifle a sigh and advance forward?” Asotus asked.

“Trembling,” Amorphus said.

Asotus replied, “Yes, sir, trembling. I shall do it better when I come to it. And what must I speak now?”

Amorphus answered, “By the Virgin Mary, you shall say, ‘*Dear beauty,*’ or ‘*Sweet honor,*’ or by what other title you please to remember her, ‘I think you are melancholy.’ This is what you will say if she is alone now and discompanied — without any company.”

“Well, sir, I’ll enter again,” Asotus said. “Her title shall be ‘My dear Lindabrides.’”

“Lindabrides?” Amorphus asked.

Lindabrides was a character in a romance that Margaret Tyler translated as *The Mirrour of Knighthood*. Lindabrides was the Princess of Tartary.

Asotus explained, “Aye, sir, the Emperor Alicandro’s daughter, and the Prince Meridian’s sister, in *The Knight of the Sun*. She should have been married to him, except that the Princess Claridiana —”

Lindabrides is a kinda, but not quite a, bride. Asotus remembered that she was unlucky in love. In the romance, she spends a lot of time weeping.

“Lindabrides” is also known as a name for a mistress, in the sense of “lady-love.”

“Oh, you betray your reading,” Amorphus said.

One meaning of “betray” is “reveal.” Another is “be false to.”

Asotus said:

“Nay, sir, I have read history, I am a little humanitian.”

By “humanitian,” he meant “student of the humanities.”

Asotus continued:

“Don’t interrupt me, good sir.”

He then said what he would say to his loved one:

*“My dear Lindabrides — my dear Lindabrides — my dear Lindabrides, I think you are melancholy.”*

Amorphus said, “Aye, and take her by the rosy-fingered hand.”

Homer’s *Odyssey* refers to “rosy-fingered dawn.”

Asotus said:

“Must I do so?”

“Oh, *‘My dear Lindabrides, I think you are melancholy.’*”

Amorphus said:

“Or say this, sir:

*“May all variety of divine pleasures, choice sports, sweet music, rich fare, brave attires [outfits], soft beds, and silken thoughts attend this dear beauty.”*

Asotus said:

“Believe me, that’s pretty!

“*May all variety of divine pleasures, choice sports, sweet music, rich fare, brave attires [outfits], soft beds, and silken thoughts attend this dear beauty.*”

Amorphus continued to offer wooing advice, using some military metaphors:

“And then, offering to kiss her hand, if she shall coyly **recoil**, and signify your **repulse**, you are to **re-enforce** yourself with these words:

“*More than most fair lady, let not the rigor of your just disdain thus coarsely censure of your servant’s zeal’; and, in addition, profess her to be ‘the only and absolute unparalleled creature I — that is, you — ‘do adore, and admire, and respect, and reverence in this court, corner of the world, or kingdom.’*”

“This is hard, by my faith,” Asotus said. “I’ll begin it all again.”

“Do so, and I will act the part of your lady,” Amorphus said.

Pleased, Asotus said:

“Will you grant me the favor of playing the lady, sir?”

In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

“*May all variety of divine pleasures, choice sports, sweet music, rich fare, brave attire, soft beds, and silken thoughts attend this dear beauty.*”

In the character of the lady, Amorphus said:

“*So, sir, please go away.*”

In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

“*More than most fair lady, let not the rigor of your just disdain thus coarsely censure of your servant’s zeal. I say that you are the only and absolute unapparelled*” —

“Unapparelled” “ means “naked.”

Amorphus corrected him, “Unparalleled.”

In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

“*Unparalleled creature, I do adore, and admire, and respect, and reverence in this court, corner of the world, or kingdom.*”

Amorphus said:

“This is, if she abides — is waiting for — you.

“But now, let’s assume that she should be *passant* [passing by] when you enter, as thus” — he demonstrated — “then you are to frame your gait thereafter, and call upon her, *‘Lady, nymph, sweet refuge, star of our court.’*”

“Then if she be *guardant* [on guard]” — he demonstrated — “you are to come on and, laterally disposing yourself, swear *‘by her blushing and well-colored cheek, the bright dye of her hair, her ivory teeth,’* or some such white and innocent oath to induce you.

“If she is *reguardant* [on guard and facing you]” — he demonstrated — “then maintain your station, brisk and irpe [typo for ‘ripe,’ aka mature], show the supple motion of your pliant body, but, in chief, of your knee and hand, which cannot but arride — gratify — her proud humor exceedingly.”

The situation may be that the lady is carefully looking at Asotus to see if he would be a good sex partner. He would show off his supple body, including the parts — knees and hands — that he would use to hold himself up in the

missionary position. He would be making the case that he could gratify her by riding her and making her feel gratified and proud because she is wanted sexually.

Asotus said, “I conceive you, sir. I shall perform all these things in good time, I don’t doubt, they do so hit — impress — me.”

Amorphus said:

“Well, sir, I am your lady.

“Make use of any of these beginnings, or some other out of your own invention, and prove how you can hold up and follow it.

“Say, say.”

Asotus knelt and said, “Yes, sir.”

In the character of the wooer, Asotus began:

“*My dear Lindabrides’* —”

Amorphus interrupted:

“No, you affect that Lindabrides too much, and, let me tell you, it is not so courtly. Your pedant — scholar — should provide you some parcels of French, or some pretty commodity of Italian to commence with, if you want to be exotic and exquisite.”

Asotus said, “Yes, sir, he was at my lodging the other morning; I gave him a doublet — a jacket.”

Amorphus responded:

“Double your benevolence, and give him the hose — the leggings — too. If you clothe his body, he will help to apparel your mind.

“But now, see what your proper genius — your own guiding spirit — can perform alone, without adjection — without the addition — of any other Minerva.”

“I understand, sir,” Asotus said.

Amorphus said, “I do stand — support — you, sir; fall back to your first place.”

Asotus stood up and assumed the first posture he had been taught.

Amorphus said, “Good, surpassingly well, very properly pursued.”

In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

“*Beautiful, ambiguous, and sufficient lady. What, are you all alone?*”

“Ambiguous” and “sufficient” are poor words to use to compliment a lady.

In the character of the lady, Amorphus said:

“*We would be, sir, if you would leave us.*”

In the character of the wooer, Asotus began:

“*I am at your beauty’s appointment, bright angel; but —*”

In the character of the lady, Amorphus interrupted:

“*But what?*”

In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

“*No harm, more than most fair feature.*”

“That touch relished well,” Amorphus said.

A “touch” is a hit in fencing.

In the character of the wooer, Asotus began:

“*But, I protest*’ —”

In the character of the lady, Amorphus interrupted:

“*And why should you protest?*”

In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

“*For good will, dear esteemed madam, and I hope Your Ladyship will so conceive of it — if ever you have seen great Tamburlaine.*”

Tamburlaine was a violent man in Christopher Marlowe’s plays *Tamburlaine, Part One* and *Tamburlaine, Part Two*. If Tamburlaine wants a lady to conceive of something, or to conceive, the lady would be well advised to do it — out of fear.

Amorphus said:

“Oh, that line of blank verse was excellent! If you could pick out more of these play-particles, aka pieces of plays, and, as occasion shall greet you, embroider or damask — ornament — your discourse with them, persuade your soul, it would judiciously commend you.

“Come, this was a well-discharged and auspicious bout. Prove the second. Let have a second bout.”

In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

“*Lady, I cannot swagger it in black and yellow.*”

Malvolio wears black clothes and yellow stockings in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*. He thinks the yellow stockings are what the woman he wants to marry wants him to wear. They aren’t.

In the character of the lady, Amorphus said:

“*Why, if you can revel it in white, sir, it is sufficient.*”



In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

*“Say you so, sweet lady? Lan, tede de, de, dant, dant, dant, dante, etc. No, in good faith, madam, whosoever told your ladyship so, abused you; but I would be glad to meet your ladyship in a measure.”*

A measure is a stately dance.

The English word “lante” means “bestows.” The Italian word *tediante* means “wearisome” and “boring.” Many ladies would likely think that Asotus’ wooing bestows wearisomeness and boredom.

In the character of the lady, Amorphus said:

*“Me, sir? Perhaps you measure me by yourself, then?”*

In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

*“I wish I might, fair feature.”*

In the character of the lady, Amorphus said:

*“And what were you the better, if you might?”*

In the character of the wooer, Asotus said:

*“The better it please you to ask, fair lady.”*

Amorphus said:

“Why, this was ravishing, and most acutely continued.

“Well, don’t spend your humor too much; you have now competently exercised your conceit.

“This kind of exercise, once or twice a day, will render you an accomplished, elaborate, and well-levelled — poised — gentleman.

“Convey in your courting-stock — take me to the ladies; we will, in the heat of this, go visit the nymphs’ chamber.”



**ACT 4 (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)**

**— 4.1 —**

Phantaste, Philautia, Argurion, Moria, and Cupid, who was still disguised as a page, were in a room together. The ladies were seated on chairs and couches. They were waiting for the water from the fountain to be brought to them.

“I wish this water would at once arrive that our travelling friend so commended to us,” Phantaste said.

“So would I, for he has left all of us in travail with expectation of it,” Argurion said.

“I pray to Jove that I will never rise from this couch if ever I thirsted more for a thing in my whole time of being a courtier,” Phantaste said.

A courtier is an attendant at court. Women can be courtiers. They can be ladies of the court.

Philautia said, “Nor will I, I’ll be sworn; the very mention of the water sets my lips in a worse heat than if he had sprinkled them with mercury.”

The chemical element mercury was used as a cosmetic. It could blister and cause a rash.

She then ordered her page, “Reach me the glass, sirrah.”

Cupid handed her a glass and said, “Here, lady.”

Moria asked, “Philautia, your lips don’t peel, sweet charge, do they?”

“Yes, they peel a little, guardian,” Philautia answered.

“Oh, it is an imminent good sign,” Moria said. “Whenever my lips peel, I am sure to have some delicious good drink or other approaching.”

Argurion said, “By the Virgin Mary, this sign may be a good sign for us ladies; for, it seems, the fountain water is far-fetched and fetched from afar by their delay in returning.”

“I bet my palate against yours, dear Honor, that the water shall prove to be most elegant, I assure you,” Moria said. “Oh, I do fancy this gear — this thing, the water — that’s long in coming, with an unmeasurable strain.”

Phantaste said:

“Please sit thee down, Philautia.

“That rebato — your stiff collar — becomes thee singularly.”

“Isn’t it quaint?” Philautia said.

“Yes, indeed,” Phantaste said.

She added, “I think thy servant Hedon is not at all as obsequious to thee as he used to be. I don’t know why, but he’s grown out of his garb — his clothing — lately. He’s warped.”

A “servant” in this context is a man who loves a woman and serves her.

“Warp” and “weft” are terms used in weaving.

Moria said, “In trueness, I think so, too. He’s much converted and changed.”

Philautia replied:

“Tut, let him be what he will; he is an animal I dream not of.

“This tire — headdress — I think, makes me look very ingenuously — that is, ingeniously — quick, and spirited; as if I should be some Laura or some Delia, I think.”

The Italian poet Petrarch loved Laura. He wrote about her in *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (*Fragments of Vernacular Matters*).

The poet Samuel Daniel wrote a sonnet sequence about Delia titled “To Delia.”

Moria said, “As I am wise, the fair honors that Philautia gave Hedon to be her Ambition spoiled him. Before, he was the most propitious and observant young novice —”

Phantaste interrupted:

“— no, no; you are the whole heaven awry, guardian. It is the swaggering tilt-horse — that Anaides — who draws with him there who has been the diverter of him.”

Phantaste thought that Anaides had corrupted Hedon, who then diverted his attention away from Philautia.

In Phantaste’s image, Hedon and Anaides are yoked together.

Tilt-horses are used in jousting tournaments.

Philautia said, “For Cupid’s sake, speak no more about him. I wish I might never dare to look in a mirror again if I ever respect a marmoset — small monkey — of them all, otherwise than I would respect a feather or my shuttlecock, to make fun and entertainment of now and then.”

Phantaste said:

“Come sit down.

“Indeed, if you are good beauties, let’s run over and discuss all of them — all the men — now.

“Which man is the properest — most handsome — man among them? I say the traveler, Amorphus.”

They looked at pictures of the male courtiers.

Philautia said, "Oh, fie on him. He looks like a Dutch trumpeter in the sea battle of Lepanto in the gallery yonder, and he speaks to the tune of a country lady who comes always in the rearward or train of a fashion."

"I should have judgment in a feature, sweet beauties," Moria said.

"A body would think so, at these years of yours," Phantaste said.

Moria was older than the other women present.

"And I prefer another now, far before him, a million at least," Moria said.

"Who might that be, guardian?" Phantaste asked.

"By the Virgin Mary, fair charge, I prefer Anaides," Moria answered.

Phantaste said:

"Anaides? You talked of a tune, Philautia.

"Anaides is one who speaks in a key, like the opening of some justice's gate or a post-boy's horn, as if his voice feared an arrest for some ill words it should give and were loath to come forth."

The gate of a justice may creak when it opens or when a key turns in its lock.

A post-boy's horn is loud.

Anaides the impudent courtier may be played by a boy-actor whose voice is breaking.

"Aye, and he has a very imperfect face," Philautia said.

“Like a squeezed orange: sour, sour,” Phantaste said.

Possibly, the boy-actor playing Anaides had acne.

“His hand’s too great, too, by at least a straw’s breadth,” Philautia said.

A puppy’s paws grow big before the rest of its body.

“He has a worse fault than that, too,” Phantaste said.

“A long heel?” Philautia asked.

Phantaste said:

“That would be a fault in a lady rather than him.”

The heel of the hand is the bottom of the palm. The heel pad is the fleshy part of the palm by the little finger.

According to a superstition, a man who has small hands also has a small penis. If Anaides has a long heel on his hand, he has a long penis.

Chances are, Phantaste was also talking about the heel of a foot.

According to a superstition, a man who has big feet also has a big penis.

Phantaste continued:

“No, they say he puts off the calves of his legs with his stockings every night.”

In other words, his stockings are padded so that he will seem to have powerful calves.

“Bah to him!” Philautia said. “Turn to another of the pictures, for God’s sake. What does Argurion say? Whom does she commend before the rest?”

Cupid said to himself, "I hope I have instructed her sufficiently for an answer."

Cupid had done what Cupid does: Make someone fall in love with someone else. In this case, he had made Argurion fall in love with Asotus.

Moria said, "Truly, I made the motion to her ladyship for one today in the presence, but it appeared she was other ways furnished before; she would none."

Moria had been trying to be a match-maker. She had been unsuccessful.

"Who was that, Argurion?" Phantaste asked.

"By the Virgin Mary, the little, poor, plain gentleman in the black there," Moria said.

Moria had wanted Argurion to fall in love with Criticus.

"Who, Criticus?" Phantaste asked.

"Aye, aye, he," Argurion said. "A fellow whom nobody so much as looked upon, or regarded, and she would have had me done him particular grace."

"That was a true trick of yourself, Moria, to persuade Argurion to affect and love the scholar," Phantaste said.

It really does seem sometimes that only Folly (Moria) could make Money (Argurion) fall in love with a Scholar (Criticus). Don't believe it? Ask a scholar if the scholar is wealthy.

"Tut, but she shall be no chooser for me," Argurion said. "In good faith, I like the citizen's son there, Asotus. I think none of the others come near him."

"Not Hedon?" Phantaste asked.



Argurion said:

“Hedon, indeed, no.

“Hedon’s a pretty slight courtier, and he wears his clothes well and sometimes in fashion; by the Virgin Mary, his face is but indifferent, and he has no such excellent body.

“No, the other one — Asotus — is a most delicate youth, a sweet face, a straight body, a well-proportioned leg and foot, a white hand, a tender voice.”

A white hand shows that Asotus does no outside work.

Asotus’ late father is Philargyrus, whose name is derived from the Greek word for “money-lover.”

Argurion’s name, of course, means “Silver,” aka “Money.”

“How are things now, Argurion?” Philautia asked.

“Oh, you should have let her alone,” Phantaste said. “She was bestowing a copy — a verbal portrait — of him upon us.”

“Why, she dotes more palpably upon him than his father ever did upon her,” Philautia said.

Phantaste said:

“Believe me, the young gentleman — Asotus — deserves it; if she could dote more, it would not be amiss. He is an exceedingly proper youth, and he would have made a most neat barber-surgeon, if he had been put to it in time.”

Gentlemen were not barber-surgeons.

“Do you say so?” Philautia said. “I think he looks like a tailor already.”

Gentlemen were not tailors.

“Aye, Asotus looks like a tailor who had assayed — tried — on one of his customers’ suits,” Phantaste said.

“Well, ladies, jest on,” Argurion said. “The best of you both would be glad of such a servant — such a male admirer.”

Moria said:

“Aye, I’ll be sworn they would. Go on, beauties, make much of time, and place, and occasion, and opportunity, and favorites, and things that belong to them, for I’ll ensure — assure — you that they will all relinquish and disappear; they cannot endure above another year.

“I know it out of future experience, and therefore take exhibition and warning: I was once a reveler myself, and although I am the one who says it, as my own trumpet, I was then esteemed —”

By her “future experience,” which can be an oxymoron, Moria meant her own past experience of the then-future, which was now the past.

“Exhibition” can mean 1) display, and 2) financial support.

Philautia finished Moria’s sentence: “— the very marchpane of the court, I say!”

“Marchpane” is the sweet treat known as marzipan.

“And all the gallants came about you like flies, didn’t they?” Phantaste teased.

Moria said:

“Bah. They did somewhat, but that doesn’t matter now.

“Here comes Hedon.”

Hedon, Anaides, and Mercury entered the scene. Mercury was disguised as a page. He served Hedon.

Hedon said:

“God save you, sweet and clear beauties! By the spirit that moves in me, you are all most pleasingly bestowed, ladies. Only I can take it for no good omen to find my Honor so dejected.”

Philautia called him “Ambition”; Hedon called her “Honor.”

They were pet names.

“You need not fear, sir,” Philautia said. “I did on purpose humble myself against your coming, to decline the pride of my Ambition.”

Hedon replied, “Fair Honor, Ambition dares not stoop; but if it should be your sweet pleasure, I shall lose that title. I will, as I am Hedon, apply myself to your bounties.”

“That would be the next way to distill myself — take away the title — of Honor,” Philautia said. “Oh, no, rather still be Ambition and ambitious, I ask you.”

If Hedon ceased to be Ambition, Philautia would cease to be Honor.

Hedon replied:

“I will be anything that you please while it pleases you to be yourself, lady.”

He then greeted the others:

“Sweet Phantaste, dear Moria, most beautiful Argurion —”

“Farewell, Hedon,” Anaides said.

“Anaides, stay!” Hedon said. “Where are you going?”

“By God’s light, what should I do here?” Anaides said. “If you engross them all for your own use, it is time for me to look elsewhere.”

“Them all” means “all the ladies.”

“Engross them all” can mean 1) take all their attention, or 2) buy all of them wholesale.

“I engross them?” Hedon said. “Away, mischief, this is one of your extravagant jests now because I began to salute and greet them by their names —”

Anaides said, “By my faith, you might have spared us Madam Prudence — Moria, the guardian there — although you had more covetously aimed at the rest.”

“By God’s heart, take them all, man!” Hedon said. “Why do you speak to me about aiming or being covetous?”

Anaides said:

“Aye, do you say so?”

“Nay, then, I’ll have a go at them.

“Ladies, here’s one who has distinguished you by your names already. It shall only become me to ask, ‘How do you do?’”

“By God’s soul, was this the design you travailed with?” Hedon asked.

Was this his opening move with the ladies?

And earlier, he had shown a lack of couth when referring to Hedon’s engrossing — buying — the ladies for his own use.

One meaning of “use” is “have sex with.”

The ladies were silent until Phantaste said, “Who answers the brazen head? It spoke to somebody.”

In legend, the magician Roger Bacon created a head out of bronze that spoke. Bacon was exhausted and so he was sleeping, and his foolish servant did not wake him up when the brazen head spoke. The Brazen Head spoke three times and was ignored each time, and then a supernatural hand destroyed it. Bacon had wanted the brazen head to tell him the secrets of the universe.

You can read the story in Robert Greene’s play *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*.

Phantaste’s point was that everyone was ignoring Anaides.

Anaides asked Moria, “Lady Wisdom, do you interpret — speak — for these puppets?”

He was calling the young ladies puppets because they were silent.

Moria chastised the young ladies:

“In truth and sadness, honors, you are in great offence for this. Bah!

“The gentleman (I’ll undertake to speak up for him) is a man of fair living [a good income], and able to maintain a lady in her two coaches a day, besides pages, monkeys, and paraquitos [parakeets], with such attendants as she shall think fitting for her turn; and therefore there is more respect requirable, howsoever you seem to connive and take no notice of him.”

Moria then chastised Anaides:

“Listen, sir, let me discourse a syllable with you. I am to say to you, these ladies are not of that close and open behavior as happily you may suspend.”

Chances are, Moria was trying to say, “I am saying to you that these ladies are not of that secret [close] and open-legged behavior as perhaps you may suspect.”

In other words, she was trying to say that these young ladies were not sexually promiscuous.

Moria continued:

“Their carriage is well known to be such as it should be, both gentle and extraordinary.”

“Carriage” can mean 1) how a person moves his or her head and body, and 2) the act of carrying or bearing something.

A woman can bear the weight of a man in the missionary position.

Mercury said, “Oh, here comes the other pair.”

#### — 4.3 —

Amorphus and Asotus entered the scene.

Amorphus said quietly to Asotus, “That woman was your father’s love, the nymph Argurion. I would have you direct all your courtship toward her; if you could but endear yourself to her affection, you were eternally engallanted — made a gallant.”

“Truly, sir?” Asotus said. “I pray to Phoebus Apollo that I prove favorsome — worthy of favor — in her fair eyes.”

Amorphus said to those present, “I wish all divine mixture and increase of beauty to this bright bevy of ladies; and to the male courtiers, I wish compliment and courtesy!”

Hedon replied, “In the behalf of the males, I gratify — thank — you, Amorphus.”

“And I of the females,” Phantaste said.

Amorphus replied, "Succinctly spoken. I do vail — bow — to both your thanks and kiss them, but primarily to yours, most ingenious, acute, and polite lady."

He bowed and kissed Phantaste's hands.

Amorphus had greeted Phantaste first, and that made Philautia jealous.

Philautia said, "God's my life, how he does so much to bequalify — give qualities to — her! Ingenious, acute, and polite? As if there were not others in place as ingenious, acute, and polite as she!"

"Yes," Hedon said, "but you must know, lady, he cannot speak outside of a dictionary method."

Phantaste comes alphabetically before Philautia.

Phantaste said, "Sit down, sweet Amorphus. When will this water come, do you think?"

"It cannot now be long, fair lady," Amorphus said.

Cupid said quietly to Mercury, "Now observe, Mercury."

Asotus and Argurion had been speaking privately, and Argurion had just let him know she loved him and had given him permission to love her.

Asotus said to Argurion, "What, most ambiguous beauty, love you? That I will, I swear by this handkerchief."

Mercury said quietly to Cupid, "By God's eyelid, he draws his oaths out of his pocket."

"But will you be constant and loyal to me?" Argurion asked.

Asotus replied:

"Constant, madam? I will not say for constantness, but I swear by this purse — which I would be loath to swear by

unless it were embroidered — I state, you more than most fair lady, that you are the only absolute and unparalleled creature I do adore, and admire, and respect, and reverence in this court, corner of the world, or kingdom.

“I think you are melancholy.”

He was remembering Amorphus’ advice in 3.5 to tell the woman he loved that he thought she was melancholy, but a woman who has just acquired a boyfriend ought not to be melancholy.

Actually, Amorphus had told him to say, “I think you are melancholy,” only “if she be alone now and discompanied — without any company.”

“Does your heart speak all this?” Argurion asked.

“What did you say?” Asotus asked.

Mercury said quietly to Cupid, “Oh, he is groping for another oath.”

Asotus had not been listening to Argurion because he was trying to think of another oath.

Asotus said to Argurion:

“Now, by this watch —”

He said to himself:

“I marvel at how much forward and advanced the day is.”

Asotus said to Argurion:

“— I do unfeignedly vow myself —”

He said to himself:

“By God’s light, it is deeper and later than I took the time to be. It is past five.”



Asotus said to Argurion:

“— yours entirely addicted — devoted, madam.”

Argurion replied, “I require no more, dearest Asotus. Henceforth let me call you mine; and in remembrance of me, grant to me that you will wear this chain and this diamond.”

A chain is a necklace.

She presented him with the gifts.

“Oh, God, sweet lady,” Asotus said.

Cupid said quietly to Mercury:

“There are new oaths for him.”

Now Asotus could swear by the chain and the diamond.

Cupid continued:

“Doesn’t Hermes taste any alteration in all this?”

Mercury/Hermes said quietly to Cupid, “Yes, thou have struck Argurion enamored on Asotus, I think?”

Sarcastically, Cupid replied quietly, “Alas, no. I am nobody, I. I can do nothing in this disguise.”

He was not carrying a bow and arrows, but he had an arrow hidden on him. Readers find out later that he need not shoot someone with an arrow to make them fall in love; he can just brandish — wave — an arrow at them.

Recognizing the sarcasm, Mercury then asked quietly, “But thou have not wounded any of the rest, Cupid?”

Cupid replied quietly, “Not yet; it is enough that I have begun so prosperously.”

Argurion said to Asotus:

“Tut, these are nothing to the gems I will hourly bestow upon thee. Be but faithful and kind to me and I will lade — load — thee with my richest bounties.

“Behold, here, my bracelets from my arms.”

She offered him her bracelets.

“It shall not be so, good lady, I swear by this diamond,” Asotus said.

This was the diamond that she had just given to him.

Argurion said, “Take them; wear them; my jewels, chain of pearl, pendants, all I have.”

Asotus said, “Then, I swear by this pearl, you make me a wanton — you spoil me.”

This was one of the pearls in the chain — the necklace — she had just given to him.

Cupid whispered to Mercury, “Shall not she answer for this to maintain him thus in swearing?”

Asotus was swearing with each gift she gave him.

Mercury whispered to Cupid, “Oh, no, there is a way to wean him from this. The gentleman may be reclaimed.”

In other words, the gentleman may be made to not swear by her gifts.

Cupid whispered to Mercury, “Aye, if you had the airing of his apparel, coz, I think.”

Clothes were washed and then left in the air to dry. Thieves often stole drying clothing.

Mercury was a thief, and if he stole Asotus’ clothing, then Asotus would have no pockets to put Argurion’s gifts in and so Asotus would have no gifts to swear by.

In addition, since Mercury was a thief, if he stole the gifts that Argurion was giving to Asotus, then Asotus would have no gifts to swear by.

Argurion had just asked, quietly, whether Asotus would be loving to her.

Asotus replied, “Loving? It would be a pity I should be living if I were not loving to you, believe me.”

He said to Hedon, “God save you, sir.”

He then said:

“God save you, sweet lady.

“God save you, Monsieur Anaides.

“God save you, dear madam.”

Anaides asked, “Do thou know the man who saluted thee, Hedon?”

Hedon replied, “No, he is some idle *fungoso*, I promise you.”

A *fungoso* is a mushroom. The word was used for someone who seemed to rise high in society overnight.

“By God’s blood, I never saw him until this morning, and he greets me as familiarly as if we had known each other since the first year of the siege of Troy,” Anaides said.

The traditional date of the fall of Troy is 1184 B.C.E. Since the Trojan War lasted for 10 years, the first year of the siege was 1194 B.C.E.

Amorphus said, “A most right-handed and auspicious encounter. Confine yourself to your fortunes.”

The Latin word *sinister* means “left.” A right-handed encounter is a fortunate encounter.

Philautia proposed that they play a game while waiting for the water from the fountain to arrive: “For God’s sake, let’s have some riddles or purposes!”

In the game of purposes, each player whispers a question to the person who is next to him or her, and that person comes up with an answer. Then a question and an answer are stated out loud, but in such an order that the questions and the answers are not asked and answered in the correct order, so that the answers are at cross-purposes, often amusingly so, with the questions.

Phantaste said, “No, indeed, your prophecies are the best game; the other games are stale.”

Possibly, the game of prophecies was talked about in 2.2 when Hedon said, “I have ruminated upon a most rare — splendid — wish, too, and the prophecy to it, but I’ll have some friend to be the prophet, as thus: ‘I wish that I were one of my mistress’ *ciopinos*.’”

Philautia said:

“Prophecies? We cannot all sit in at them; we shall make a confusion.

“No, what did you call that game we played in the forenoon — the morning?”

“Substantives and adjectives,” Phantaste said. “Isn’t that right, Hedon?”

Substantives are nouns.

“I say aye to that game,” Philautia said. “Who begins?”

“I have thought of a substantive,” Phantaste said. “Speak your adjectives, sirs.”

“But don’t you change your substantive, then,” Philautia said.

“I won’t,” Phantaste said. “Who says the first adjective?”

“Odoriferous,” Moria said.

“Popular,” Philautia said.

“Humble,” Argurion said.

“White-livered,” Anaides said.

“Barbarous,” Hedon said.

“Pythagorical,” Amorphus said.

Hedon said to Asotus, “It’s your turn, signor.”

“What must I do, sir?” Asotus asked.

Amorphus answered, “Give forth your adjective with the rest; for example, prosperous, good, fair, sweet, well.”

Hedon added, “Any adjective that has not been spoken previously.”

“Yes, sir, ‘well-spoken’ shall be my adjective,” Asotus said.

“Have you all done?” Phantaste asked.

All answered, “Aye.”

Phantaste said:

“Then the substantive is ‘breeches.’

She asked Moria:

“Why *odoriferous* breeches, guardian?”

The game was for a player to silently think of a noun and for the other players to name out loud an adjective each. The first player then announces what the noun is, and the other players explain how their adjective modifies that noun.

Moria answered:

“Odoriferous, because odoriferous: That which contains most variety of savor and smell, we say is most odoriferous.

“Now, breeches I presume are incident to that variety, and therefore, odoriferous breeches.”

Breeches can smell differently before and after being washed. They can also smell differently if given to someone else who wears them. A fart can make breeches smell differently.

“Well, we must take it howsoever we can,” Phantaste said. “Who’s next? Philautia.”

Philautia said, “My adjective is ‘popular.’”

“Popular” can mean “common, or popular with commoners.” It can mean “not noble” and “vulgar.” An antonym of “popular” is “highbrow.”

Phantaste asked, “Why *popular* breeches?”

Philautia answered, “By the Virgin Mary, that is when they are not content to be generally noted in court, but will press forth on common stages and brokers’ stalls to the public view of the world.”

Common stages do not include Blackfriars, where this play by Ben Jonson was performed. Blackfriars was a private theater.

Brokers’ stalls are second-hand stalls.

“Good,” Phantaste said. “Why *humble* breeches, Argurion?”

Argurion answered, “They are humble, because they are accustomed to be sat upon. Besides, if you don’t tie them up, their property is to fall down about your heels.”

Having one’s breeches fall down in public can be a humbling experience.

Mercury said quietly to Cupid, “She has worn the breeches, it seems, which have done so.”

Mercury was joking that at some time Argurion had worn pants that had fallen down.

Some women wear the breeches in a relationship.

“But why *white-livered*?” Phantaste asked.

Anaides said:

“Why? By God’s heart, aren’t their linings white?”

Breeches can have white linings.

Anaides added:

“Besides, when they come in swaggering company, and will pocket up anything, may they not properly be said to be white-livered?”

Swaggerers were bullies, and their insults could be pocketed — cowardly endured. White-livered (or lily-livered) people were cowards.

Phantaste said:

“Oh, yes, we cannot deny it.

“And why *barbarous*, Hedon?”

Hedon answered, “Barbarous, because commonly when you have worn your breeches sufficiently, you give them to your barber.”

“That’s good,” Amorphus said. “But now *Pythagorical*.”

Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher who believed in reincarnation: the transmigration of souls from one body into another.

“Aye, Amorphus,” Phantaste said. “Why *Pythagorical* breeches?”

“Oh, most kindly of all, it is a conceit of that fortune I am bold to hug my brain for,” Amorphus said.

“What conceit — idea — is it, exquisite Amorphus?” Phantaste asked.

“Oh, I am rapt with it,” Amorphus said. “It is so fit, so proper, so happy.”

“Nay, do not rack us thus!” Philautia said.

In other words: Don’t torture us with anticipation.

Amorphus said, “I never truly relished myself before. Give me your ears: breeches are Pythagorical, by reason of their transmigration into several shapes!”

Different people could wear the breeches — the gallant first and then his barber — and so the breeches were transmigrated from one body into another. Since bodies differ, and clothes stretch and adapt to suit the wearer (clothes are more comfortable after they have been worn a few times), the trousers can transmigrate into different shapes.

“Most splendid, in sweet truth!” Moria said. “By the Virgin Mary, this young gentleman, for his well-spoken —”

Phantaste interrupted, “Aye — why *well-spoken* breeches?”

“Well-spoken?” Asotus said. “By the Virgin Mary, well-spoken because whatsoever they speak is well taken, and whatsoever is well taken, is well-spoken.”

Breeches speak when their wearer farts, and listeners tend to laugh. Laughter is good, and so the breeches are well-taken.



Breeches can also speak by proclaiming the wearer's social class. Gentlemen wear clothing different — better quality and more expensive — from the clothing farmers wear.

“This is excellent, believe me,” Moria said.

“Not so, ladies, neither,” Asotus said, modestly.

“But why breeches now?” Hedon asked.

Phantaste answered, “Breeches, quasi — as if — bear-riches; when a gallant bears all his riches in his breeches.”

Asotus had placed Argurion's gifts to him in his breeches' pockets.

Changing the subject, Philautia said, “In good faith, these unhappy pages would be — ought to be — whipped for staying away thus long.”

The pages were the people who had gone to get water from the fountain. They were taking a long time.

“Curse my hand and my heart else,” Moria said.

“I do wonder at their protracted absence,” Amorphus said.

“I pray to God that my whore has not discovered — revealed — herself to the rascally boys, and that is the reason of their stay and delay,” Anaides said.

His “whore” was Gelaia, a woman dressed in the clothing of a page. The boys were Prosaites and Cos. They were the pages bringing back the water.

“I must suit myself with another page,” Asotus said. “This idle Prosaites will never be brought to wait well.”

“Sir, I have a kinsman I could willingly wish to your service, if you would deign to accept him to your service,” Moria said.

She was talking about her relative becoming Asotus' page.

“And I shall be glad, most sweet lady, to embrace him,” Asotus said. “Where is he?”

“I can fetch him, sir, but I would be loath to make you turn away and fire your other page,” Moria said.

“You shall not, most sufficient lady. I will keep them both employed as my pages,” Asotus said. “Please, let's go and see him.”

“Whither goes my love?” Argurion asked Asotus.

“I'll return soon,” Asotus said. “I am going just to see a page with this lady.”

Asotus and Moria exited.

Anaides said about Gelaia, his page:

“As sure as fate, it is so. She has opened all — a pox on all cockatrices!”

“Cockatrices” are literally monsters that are also known as basilisks. They are figuratively prostitutes.

“Opened all” means 1) revealed all, and 2) opened both legs.

Anaides continued:

“Damn me if she has played loose with me. I'll cut her throat within a hair's breadth, so it may be healed again.”

Anaides was threatening to cut the skin of her throat, but he would not kill her.

He exited.

Mercury said quietly to Cupid, “What, is he jealous of his hermaphrodite?”

Anaides' "hermaphrodite" was Gelaia, who served Anaides as a page. She was female, but she was dressed as a male page.

Cupid whispered back, "Oh, aye, this will be excellent entertainment."

Philautia said:

"Phantaste, Argurion, what? You are sudden struck, I think."

"Struck" may be 1) wonderstruck, 2) struck silent, or 3) struck ill.

Philautia continued:

"For God's will, let's have some music until they come back with the water.

"Ambition, hand me the lyra, please."

Hedon said as he handed her a harp, "Anything to which my Honor shall direct me."

Philautia then said, "Come, Amorphus, cheer up Phantaste."

Earlier, Amorphus had greeted Phantaste before he had greeted Philautia.

Amorphus said:

"It shall be my pride, fair lady, to attempt all that is in my power.

"But here is an instrument that alone is able to infuse soul in the most melancholic and dull-disposed creature upon Earth.

"Oh, let me kiss thy fair knees!"

A knee can be an angular piece of wood, so he may be saying that he wanted to kiss the wooden musical instrument.

Amorphus asked Philautia:

Will you have ‘The Kiss,’ Honor?”

Philautia answered, “Aye, good Ambition.”

Hedon sang “The Kiss”:

*“Oh, that joy so soon should waste!*

*“Or so sweet a bliss*

*“As a kiss,*

*“Might not forever last!*

*“So sugared, so melting, so soft, so delicious,*

*“The dew that lies on roses,*

*“When the morn herself discloses [discloses herself],*

*“Is not so precious.*

*“Oh, rather than I would it smother,*

*“Were I to taste such another;*

*“It should be my wishing*

*“That I might die kissing.”*

Hedon then said:

“I made this ditty and the musical notes to it about a kiss that my Honor gave me.

“How do you like it, sir?”

Amorphus answered, “It is a pretty air! In general, I like it well. But, in particular, your long ‘die’ note did arride — gratify — me most, but it was somewhat too long. I can show one almost of the same nature but much before it, and not so long, in a composition of my own. I think I have both the note and ditty about me.”

The “die” note is the note on which the word “die” is sung.

Hedon said, “Sir, see if you have it.”

Amorphus produced a paper and said:

“Yes, there is the note and all the parts, if I am not misthinking — mistaken.

“I will read the ditty to your beauties here, but first I will make you familiar with the occasion, which presents itself thus:

“Once upon a time, going to take my leave of the Emperor and kiss his great hands, there being then present the Kings of France and Aragon, the Dukes of Savoy, Florence, Orleans, Bourbon, Brunswick, the Landgrave, Count Palatine — all of which had individually feasted me — besides an infinite number more of inferior persons, such as Earls and others — it was my chance, the Emperor being detained by some other affair, to wait for him the fifth part of an hour, or much near it.

“In which time, retiring myself into a bay-window, I encountered the Lady Annabel, niece to the Empress and sister to the King of Aragon, who, having never before eyed me but only heard the common report of my virtue, learning, and travel, fell into that extremity of passion for my love that she there immediately sounded — that is, swooned — that is, fainted.

“Physicians were sent for; she had recourse to her chamber; so to her bed, where languishing some few days, after many times calling upon me, with my name in her mouth, she expired and died.

“As that, I must necessarily say, is the only fault of my fortune, that as it has always been my hap — my luck — to be sued to by all ladies and beauties where I have come, so I

never yet sojourned or rested in that place or part of the world where some great and admirable fair creature did not die for my love — die out of love for me.”

Mercury said quietly to Cupid, “Oh, the sweet power of travel! Are you guilty of this, Cupid?”

Cupid quietly replied, “No, Mercury; and that his page, Cos, knows, if he were here present to be sworn.”

In other words, Amorphus was lying.

Philautia asked Amorphus, “But how does this draw on the ditty, sir? What does it have to do with the story?”

Mercury said quietly to Cupid, “Oh, she is too quick with him. He has not devised an answer for that yet.”

Mercury was wrong.

Amorphus said to Philautia, “By the Virgin Mary, some hour before she departed, she bequeathed to me this glove” — he displayed the glove — “which the Emperor himself took care to send after me, in six coaches, covered all with black velvet, attended by the stately principal people of his empire; all of which he freely gave me, and I reciprocally (out of the same bounty) gave it to the lords who brought it; only reserving, and respecting, this glove — the gift of the deceased lady — upon which I composed this ode, and set it to my most affected — loved — instrument, the lyra.”

Amorphus read out loud the lyrics to his song about a lady’s glove:

*“Thou more than most sweet glove,*

*“Unto my more sweet love,*

*“Suffer [Allow] me to store with kisses*

*“This empty lodging, that now misses*

*“The pure rosy hand that ware [wore] thee,  
“Whiter than the kid [baby goat] that bare [bore] thee.  
“Thou art [are] soft, but that was softer;  
“Cupid’s self hath [has] kissed it ofter [oftener],  
“Than e’er [ever] he did his mother’s doves,  
“Supposing her the Queen of Love’s,  
“That [Who] was thy mistress,  
“Best of gloves.”*

Doves were sacred to Venus: They pulled her chariot, sometimes assisted by swans.

Mercury said to Cupid, “Blasphemy, blasphemy, Cupid!”

Amorphus had said that Cupid had kissed the lady’s glove more often than he had ever kissed his mother’s doves.

Cupid replied quietly, “Aye, I’ll revenge it time — soon — enough, Hermes.”

“Good Amorphus, let’s hear it sung,” Philautia requested.

“I am not concerned negatively about doing that, since it pleases Philautia to request it,” Amorphus said.

“Here, sir,” Hedon said, offering him the harp.

“Nay, you play it, please,” Amorphus said, declining to take the harp. “You do well, you do well.”

Amorphus sang his lyrics while Hedon played.

Amorphus then asked, “How do you like it, sir?”

“Very well, indeed,” Hedon said.

Amorphus said:

“Only ‘very well’? Oh, you are a mere mammothrept in judgment then!”

“Mammothrept” can mean 1) a spoiled child, or 2) a severe critic.

Amorphus continued:

“Why, don’t you observe how excellently the ditty is affected — good — in every place?”

“Don’t you observe that I do not marry a word of short quantity [time] to a long note, nor an ascending syllable to a descending tone?”

“Besides, upon the word ‘best’ there, you see how I do enter with an odd minim and drive it through the breve, which no intelligent musician I know but will affirm to be very rare, extraordinary, and pleasing.”

Quantity [time] can be long or short.

A breve is a musical note four times the length of a minim.

One wonders how Hedon could play the tune: He must have practiced it ahead of time. Amorphus must have planned to sing the song to the ladies at some time.

Amorphus’ criticism of Hedon is unjustified because Hedon had helped him by playing the harp.

Mercury said quietly to Cupid, “And yet the song is not fit to lament the death of a lady for all this.”

As the inventor of the harp, Mercury has some knowledge of music.

Cupid replied quietly, “Tut, here are people who will swallow anything.”



“Please, let me have a copy of it, Amorphus,” Phantaste requested.

“And me, too,” Philautia requested. “Indeed, I like it exceedingly.”

“I have denied it to princes; nevertheless, to you, the true female twins of perfection, I am won over to depart with it,” Amorphus said.

Amorphus gave sheets of paper containing the lyrics to Philautia and Phantaste.

He was prepared to give away copies of the song: This was more evidence that the song’s performance was pre-planned.

“I hope I shall have my Honor’s [Philautia’s] copy,” Hedon said.

“You are ambitious in that, Hedon,” Phantaste said.

Hedon was Ambition to Philautia’s Honor.

Anaides entered the scene. He seemed upset.

“How are you now, Anaides?” Amorphus asked. “What is it that has conjured up this distemperature in the circle of your face?”

“By God’s blood, what have you to do with it?” Anaides said. “A pox of God on your filthy travelling beard! Hold your tongue.”

“Have you heard some evil?” Hedon asked Anaides.

“Go away, musk-cat!” Anaides said.

Musk-cats stank, although their musk was made into perfume. Sometimes, wearing too much perfume makes a person stink.

“I say to thee, thou are rude, impudent, coarse, impolished, aka unpolished or badly polished; a frapler, and base,” Amorphus said.

A frapler is a blusterer.

Hedon said to himself, “By the heart of my father, what a strange alteration has half a year’s haunting of ordinaries wrought in this fellow! He came with a tuftaffeta jacket to town just the other day, and now he has turned into Hercules; he lacks only a club!”

Tuftaffeta is tufted taffeta.

The great PanHellenic hero Hercules carried a club.

“Sir, I will garter my hose with your guts and that shall be all,” Anaides said.

He exited.

Mercury said quietly to Cupid, “By God’s eyelid, what splendid fireworks are here? Flash! Flash!”

“What’s the matter with Anaides, Hedon?” Phantaste asked. “Can you tell?”

Hedon replied, “I can guess nothing except that he lacks money, and he thinks we’ll lend him some to be friends.”

Asotus, Moria, and Morus entered the scene.

The name “Morus” means “Simpleton.”

He was Moria’s nephew, and Asotus had just hired him to be his second page.

Asotus, who had asked Moria for her picture and had given her a gift and had made promises to her, said to her:

“Come, sweet lady, in good truth I’ll have it, you shall not deny me.”

He then said:

“Morus, persuade your aunt to give me her picture, by any means necessary.”

Morus said:

“Yes, sir.”

He then said to Moria:

“Good aunt, now, let him have it. He will treat me the better, so if you love me, do give him your picture, good aunt.”

“Well, tell him he shall have it,” Moria said.

Morus said to Asotus, “Master, you shall have it, she says.”

“Shall I?” Asotus said. “Thank her, good page.”

Cupid whispered to Mercury, “What, has he entertained — hired — the fool?”

Mercury whispered back, “Aye, he’ll wait close by him, you shall see, although the beggar — Prosaites — hang off at a distance.”

Morus said to Moria, “Aunt, my master thanks you.”

“Call him to come here,” Moria said.

“Yes,” Morus said.

He then called, “Master!”

Moria said, “Yes, in very truth, and he gave me this purse, and he has promised me a most fine dog that he will have drawn with my picture, and he desires most vehemently to be known to Your Ladyships.”

Moria liked dogs.

Phantaste said, “Call him to come here; it is good groping — examining and exploiting — such a gull.”

A gull is a fool.

Moria called, “Master Asotus! Master Asotus!”

Asotus said to Argurion, who loved him, “For God’s sake, let me go. You see I am called to the ladies.”

“Will thou forsake me, then?” Argurion asked.

“By God’s soul, what would you have me do?” Asotus asked.

Moria called:

“Come here, Master Asotus.”

She then said to the ladies:

“I do ensure — assure — Your Ladyships that he is a gentleman of a very worthy desert and of a most bountiful nature.”

Moria said to Asotus:

“You must show and insinuate yourself responsible and equivalent now to my commendment.”

She then said to the ladies:

“Good honors, grace him.”

Asotus recited part of a speech he had practiced with Amorphus in 3.5:

“I protest, more than most fair ladies, I do wish all variety of divine pleasure, choice entertainment, sweet music, rich fare, brave attires, soft beds, and silken thoughts attend these fair beauties.”

Asotus then said to Phantaste:

“Will it please Your Ladyship to wear this chain of pearl, and this diamond for my sake?”

He presented her with the pearl necklace and diamond that Argurion had given to him earlier to remember her by.

“Oh!” Argurion said.

Asotus then said to Philautia:

“And I present to you, madam, this jewel and pendants.”

He presented her with a jewel and some pendants that Argurion had given to him earlier to remember her by.

“Oh!” Argurion said.

Phantaste said, “We don’t know how to deserve these bounties out of so slight merit, Asotus.”

Who has the slight merit? The ladies? Asotus? Both?

“No, indeed, but there’s my glove for a favor,” Philautia said.

She offered him a glove.

“And soon after the revels I will bestow a garter on you,” Phantaste said.

Asotus replied:

“Oh, Lord, ladies, it is more grace than ever I could have hoped, but that it pleases Your Ladyships to extend. I protest it is enough that you just take knowledge of my — if Your Ladyships want embroidered gowns, tires [headdresses] of any fashion, rebatoes [stiff collars], jewels, or carcanets [ornamental collars or necklaces], anything whatsoever, if you vouchsafe to accept.”

Hmm. To “just take knowledge of my —” The Bible sometimes mentions a particular kind of knowledge.

Cupid whispered to Mercury, “And for it they will help you to shoe-ties and devices.”

Asotus was giving the ladies big gifts such as pearls and diamonds, and they were giving him the small gift of a glove and the promise of a small gift of a garter.

A shoe-tie is a ribbon to be worn as a decoration on shoes.

“Devices” are tricks.

Asotus said, “I cannot express myself well, dear beauties, but you can conceive —”

Yes, they can become pregnant.

“Oh!” Argurion said.

“Sir, we will acknowledge your service, fear not,” Phantaste said. “Henceforth, you shall be no more ‘Asotus’ to us but our goldfinch, and we shall be your cages.”

The word “finch” can mean “fool.” Asotus is their goldfinch: a fool who gives his gold away.

“Oh, God, madams, how shall I deserve this?” Asotus said.

He then said to himself:

“If I were only made acquainted with Hedon now! I’ll try.”

He said to Argurion, who loved him, “Please, go away.”

Mercury whispered to Cupid, “How he prays Money to go away from him!”

Asotus said quietly, “Amorphus, let me have a word with you. Here’s a watch I would bestow upon you. Please make me known to that gallant.”

Amorphus said quietly, “That I will, sir.”

He then said out loud, “Monsieur Hedon, I must entreat you to exchange knowledge with this gentleman.”

To exchange knowledge meant to get to know each other.

“It is a thing, next to the water we expect, I thirst after, sir. Good Monsieur Asotus,” Hedon said.

Asotus said:

“Good Monsieur Hedon, I would be glad to be loved and respected by men of your rank and spirit, I declare.

“Please accept this pair of bracelets, sir; they are not worth the bestowing.”

The bracelets were those Argurion had earlier given to him.

Asotus offered Hedon the gifts.

Mercury whispered to Cupid, “Oh, Hercules, how the gentleman purchases! This must necessarily bring Argurion to a consumption.”

Cupid had much power, as did Hercules. He had made Argurion love Asotus, and now Argurion was suffering because of her love for Asotus.

Asotus was attempting to purchase friends.

Ironically, the phrase “to purchase” at this time also meant “to become rich,” Asotus was becoming poorer, but his “friends” were becoming richer.

Consumption is a wasting-away disease.

Argurion — Money — was wasting away because Asotus was giving away all the wealth that she had given to him to remember her by.

“Sir, I shall never stand in the merit of such bounty, I fear,” Hedon said.

In other words, he did not deserve such valuable gifts.

Asotus replied, “Oh, Lord, sir, your acquaintance shall be sufficient. And if at any time you need my bill or my bond —”

He was willing to make legal agreements that could result in his paying the expenses and debts of a man to whom he had just been introduced: Hedon.

“Oh! Oh!” Argurion said.

She fainted.

“Help the lady there!” Amorphus said.

“God’s dear, Argurion!” Moria said. “Madam, how are you?”

“Sick,” Argurion said.

“Take her forth and give her air,” Phantaste said.

“I will come back again straightaway, ladies,” Asotus said.

Mercury whispered to Cupid, “Well, I doubt all the physic — medicine — he has will scarcely recover her; she’s too far spent.”

Asotus and Morus helped Argurion to leave the scene.

— 4.4 —

Anaides, Gelaia, Cos, and Prosaites entered the scene. They were carrying bottles filled with water from the Fountain of Self-Love. Anaides and Gelaia had been arguing.

Philautia said:

“Oh, here’s the water come.

“Fetch some glasses, page.”



Gelaia said to Anaides, “Heart of my body, here’s a coil — a fuss — indeed with your jealous humors and moods. Nothing but ‘whore,’ and ‘bitch,’ and all the villainous swaggering names you can think of to call me! By God’s eyelid, take your bottle and put it in your guts for all I care, I’ll see you poxed — infected with syphilis — before I follow you any longer!”

One way for Anaides to put his bottle in his guts would be for him to stick it up his —

“Nay, good punk, sweet rascal,” Anaides said. “Damn me if I am jealous now.”

A “punk” is a prostitute, but Anaides may now be using the word affectionately.

“That’s true indeed,” Gelaia said.

She then said, “Please, let’s go.”

To whom was she speaking? Anaides? Or Moria?

“What’s the matter there?” asked Moria, who was Gelaia’s mother.

Gelaia replied, “By God’s light, he has me upon interrogatories — he keeps asking me questions.”

She said to Anaides, “Nay, my mother shall know how you treat me.”

She said to her mother, “He asks where I have been? And why I should stay so long? And how is it possible? And in addition he calls me at his pleasure I don’t know how many cockatrices and things.”

“Cockatrices” are prostitutes.

Moria said, “In truth and sadness, these are no good epithets, Anaides, to bestow upon any gentlewoman; and, I’ll ensure

— assure — you, if I had known you would have dealt thus with my daughter, she should never have fancied you as deeply as she has done. Go to!”

Go to where? Hell?

“Why, do you hear, Mother Moria?” Anaides said. “By God’s heart!”

“Nay, please, sir, do not swear,” Moria said.

Anaides replied, “Swear? Why, by God’s blood, I have sworn before now, I hope. Both you and your daughter mistake me. I have not honored Arete, who is held the worthiest lady in the court (next to Cynthia), with half that observance and respect as I have done her in private, howsoever outwardly I have carried myself careless — without cares and worries — and negligent.”

He then said to Gelaia, “Come, you are a foolish punk and don’t know when you are well employed. Kiss me. Come on. Do it, I say!”

Moria said, “Nay, indeed I must confess that Gelaia is apt to misprision — misapprehension and misunderstanding.”

She then said to Anaides, “But I must have you stop what you are doing, minion.”

The meaning of the word “minion” can be good or bad. The word can mean “darling” or “favorite,” or it can mean “slave” or “underling.”

Asotus entered the scene.

Seeing him, Amorphus asked, “How are you now, Asotus? How is the lady Argurion doing?”

“Indeed, she is ill,” Asotus said. “I have left my page with her at her lodging.”

His page was Morus, who had helped him assist Argurion.

Hedon drank some of the water.

“Oh, here’s the rarest and most splendid water that ever was tasted,” Hedon said.

He then said to Prosaites, Asotus’ first page, “Fill a glass with some water for him.”

The water was for Asotus.

Prosaites whispered to Mercury, “What? Has my master a new page?”

Mercury whispered back, “Yes, a kinsman of the Lady Moria’s. You must serve your master better now or you are cashiered — fired, Prosaites.”

“Come, gallants, you must pardon my foolish humor,” Anaides said. “When I am angry that anything crosses me, I grow impatient straightaway. Here, I drink to you.”

He drank.

Philautia said, “Oh, I wish that we had five or six bottles more of this liquor!”

“Now, I commend your judgment, Amorphus,” Phantaste said.

A knock sounded on the door.

Phantaste asked, “Who’s that who is knocking? Go and see, page.”

Cupid went to the door.

“Oh, this water is most delicious!” Moria said. “A little of this would make Argurion well.”

Phantaste said, “Oh, no, give her no cold drink, by any means.”

“Slud — by God’s blood, this water is the spirit of wine — I’ll be hanged if it isn’t,” Anaides said.

All the courtiers present — male and female — had drunk the water.

“Here’s the Lady Arete, madam,” Cupid said.

— 4.5 —

Arete entered the scene.

“What, at your beverages, gallants?” Arete said.

“Will it please Your Ladyship to drink?” Moria asked. “It is water from the new fountain.”

The new fountain was, of course, the Fountain of Self-Love.

Arete, whose name means “Virtue” and “Excellence,” said:

“Not I, Moria, I thank you.

“Gallants, you must provide some solemn — ceremonial — revels tonight. Cynthia is minded to come forth and grace your entertainments with her presence.

“Therefore, I could wish there were something extraordinary to entertain her.”

“What do you say to a masque?” Amorphus asked.

A masque is an informal court entertainment such as a dance with the dancers wearing masks. Or it could be an allegorical tableau in which the allegorical characters wear masks. Or both.

Hedon said, “Nothing is better, if the invention or project is new and splendid.”

“Why, I’ll send for Criticus and have his advice,” Arete said.

She said to Phantaste, “You will be ready in your endeavors?”

“Yes, but won’t Your Ladyship stay for a while?” Phantaste asked.

“Not now, Phantaste,” Arete said.

She exited.

“Let her go, please,” Philautia said. “That good Lady Sobriety, I am glad we are rid of her.”

All too often, Virtue and Excellence are not liked and respected.

“What a set face the gentlewoman has, as if she were always going to a sacrifice!” Phantaste said.

“Oh, she is the extraction of a dozen of Puritans for a look,” Philautia said.

“Of all nymphs in the court I cannot tolerate her; it is the coarsest thing —” Moria said.

Arete and Moria — Virtue/Excellence and Folly — do not go together.

Philautia said, “I wonder how Cynthia can love her so above the rest! Here are nymphs who are in every way as fair as she, and a thought fairer, I am sure.”

“Aye, and as ingenious and conceited — filled with conceits, aka ideas — as she,” Phantaste said.

“Aye, and as politic as she, for all she sets such a forehead on it,” Moria said. “She makes a show that she is opposed to it.”

Politic people scheme to get their way.

“I would wish I were dead if I would change to be Cynthia!”  
Philautia said.

One must be filled with Self-Love to not want to be more like Cynthia — or like Arete.

“Or I,” Phantaste said

“Or I,” Moria said.

Phantaste and Moria were saying that they also would wish to be dead if they would change to be Cynthia, but it sounded as if they were saying that Philautia would wish she were dead if she would change to be more like them.

Amorphus said, “And there’s her minion — her darling — Criticus; why is his advice worth more than Amorphus’ advice? Haven’t I invention before him? Learning, to better that invention, above him? And travail —”

Anaides interrupted:

“— by Death, why are you talking about his ‘learning’? He understands no more than a schoolboy.

“I have put him down myself a thousand times, I swear by this air, and yet I never talked with him but twice in my life.

“You never saw his like; I could never get him to argue with me but once, and then, because I could not construe a piece of Horace at first sight, he went away and laughed at me.

“By God’s will, I scorn him, as I do the sodden nymph who was here just now, his mistress Arete, and I love myself for nothing else.”

Apparently, Criticus declines to argue with Anaides because he does not respect Anaides.

Hedon said, “I wonder why the fellow does not hang himself, being thus scorned and contemned — regarded with

contempt — by us who are held the most accomplished society of gallants!”

Mercury whispered to Cupid, “That is, ‘held the most accomplished society of gallants’ by themselves, and by no one else.”

Hedon said, “I declare, if I had no music in me, no courtship, if I were not a reveler and could dance, or had not those excellent qualities that give a man life and perfection, but instead I were a mere poor scholar as he is, I think I should make some desperate way — and make away — with myself; whereas now, I wish that I might never breathe more if I do know that creature in this kingdom with whom I would exchange selves.”

Hedon so loved himself that he wished to be no other person than himself. The same was true of all the others who drank water from the Fountain of Self-Love. No wonder none of the ladies liked Arete or wished to be Cynthia.

One characteristic of Self-Love is looking down on other people.

Self-Love is different from Proper Pride, which is pride of oneself that is reasonable and justifiable.

Proper Pride builds oneself up by doing things to be proud of; Self-Love builds oneself up by tearing others down.

Cupid whispered to Mercury, “This is excellent entertainment! Well, I must alter this soon.”

Mercury whispered back, “Be sure that you do, Cupid.”

Asotus said:

“Oh, I shall tickle it soon. I did never appear until then. By God’s eyelid, I am the neatest-made gallant in the company

and have the best presence; and my dancing — I know what the usher said to me the last time I was at the school.

“I wish that I might lead Philautia in the measure, if it would be God’s will! I am most worthy, I am sure.”

Morus, Asotus’ new page, entered the scene and said, “Master, I can tell you news: The lady kissed me yonder, and played with me, and says she loved you once as well as she does me, but that you cast her off.”

Fortune favors fools.

The lady was Argurion.

“Peace, my most esteemed page,” Asotus said. “Be quiet.”

“Yes,” Morus said.

Amorphus said, “Gallants, think upon your time, and take it by the forehead.”

Time (and opportunity) must be seized by the forelock; she is bald except for the forelock. Once time (and opportunity) have passed by you, you cannot seize them.

Amorphus then said, “Anaides, we must mix this gentleman with you in acquaintance, Monsieur Asotus.”

Anaides said, “I am easily entreated to grace any of your friends, Amorphus.”

“Sir, and his friends shall likewise grace you, sir,” Asotus said. “Nay, I begin to know myself now.”

“To know thyself” is something good, but one can wonder whether Asotus really knows himself.

Amorphus whispered to Asotus, “Oh, you must continue your bounties.”



In other words: You must continue to give away valuable items.

Asotus whispered back, "Must I? Why, I'll give him this ruby on my finger."

"Come, ladies," Hedon said. "But wait, we shall want one to lady it — act as a lady — in our masque in place of Argurion."

"Why, my page — Gelaia — shall do it," Anaides said.

"In truth, and he'll do it well," Hedon said. "It shall be so."

Hedon apparently did not know that Gelaia was a young woman dressed in the clothing of a page.

Hedon, Phantaste, Philautia, Moria, Gelaia, and Amorphus exited.

Asotus said to Anaides, "Do you hear, sir? I heartily wish your acquaintance, and I partly know myself worthy of it. Please you, sir, to accept this poor ruby in a ring, sir. The poesy is of my own device: 'Let this blush for me,' sir."

Asotus offered him a ruby ring.

"So it must blush for me, too," Anaides said. "For I am not ashamed to take it."

He took the ruby ring and exited.

Morus said:

"Sweet man, by my truth, master, I love you; will you love me, too, for my aunt's sake? I'll serve you well, you shall see, I'll still be here.

"I wish I might never stir, but you are in gay clothes."

Morus wanted Asotus' clothes as a gift.

“As for that, Morus, thou shall see more hereafter,” Asotus said.

Perhaps Asotus was planning to strip off his clothes later so he could give them away.

He looked in his pockets, found nothing of value — he had given much or all of his wealth away — and said, “In the meantime, by this air, or by this feather, I’ll do as much for thee as any gallant shall do for his page whatsoever, ‘in this court, corner of the world, or kingdom.’”

Everyone except for the pages — Mercury, Cupid, Prosaites, Cos, and Morus — exited.

Mercury said, “I marvel that this gentleman Asotus should affect to keep a fool; I think he makes entertainment enough with himself.”

Some fools, aka Fools, are jesters. Other fools are fools.

Cupid said, “Well, Prosaites, it would be good if you waited closer at hand to your master.”

“Aye, I’ll look to it,” Prosaites said. “It is time.”

“We are likely to have sumptuous revels tonight, sirs,” Cos said.

Mercury said, “We must necessarily have sumptuous revels, when all the choicest singularities — the most notable people — of the court are up in pantofles; never a one of them but is able to make a whole show of itself.”

“Up in pantofles” can mean 1) standing on shoes with thick, built-up soles, or 2) standing on one’s dignity.

Hedon called from another room, “Sirrah, a torch! A torch!”

“Oh, what a call is there!” Mercury said. “I will have a canzonet — a short song — made with nothing in it but

‘sirrah’; and the burden — the refrain — shall be ‘I am coming.’”

Everyone exited.

— 4.6 —

Arete and Criticus talked together about the masque. They were virtuous courtiers who were not guilty of Self-Love.

Criticus, who opposed having the masque, said:

“A masque, bright Arete?

“Why, it would be a labor more for Hercules.

“Better and sooner would I dare undertake to make the different seasons of the year, the winds, or the elements to sympathize, than undertake to make their (the self-loving courtiers’) unmeasurable (that is, immeasurable, and unable to dance the measures of songs) vanity dance truly in a measure.

“They agree?

“So what if all concord is borne of contraries? So many follies will prove to be confusion and destruction, and like a group of jarring instruments, all out of tune.

“Why? Because, indeed, we see that there is not that analogy between discords as between things that are completely opposite.”

Harmony can come from dissimilar sounds, but no such harmony can come from the self-loving courtiers because they are so similar in their Self-Love.

Making these self-loving courtiers harmonize is a labor worthy of Hercules, who performed twelve nearly impossible-to-accomplish labors.

Arete, who wanted the vain courtiers to participate in Cynthia's revels, said:

“There is your error. For Hermes' wand charms the disorders of tumultuous ghosts — one of Mercury's responsibilities is to lead the ghosts of the dead to the Underworld — and the strife of Chaos then did cease when better light than Nature's did arrive.

“Just like those two examples, what could never in itself agree forgets the eccentric property and turns forthwith regular at the sight of her whose scepter guides the flowing ocean.”

In Ptolemaic astronomy, an eccentric orbit is one whose exact center is not the Earth.

Cynthia is goddess of the Moon, and she has power over the tides. Queen Elizabeth I, whom Cynthia often represents in poetry written during Elizabeth's reign, had much sea power.

Just the sight of Cynthia ought to turn the vain courtiers away from their vanity and toward Proper Pride.

Arete continued:

“And even if the sight of Cynthia does not work its transformative magic on the self-loving courtiers, yet respect of majesty, the place, and the presence of Cynthia will keep most of them, being either courtiers or not wholly rude, within ring — within limits.

“This is true especially when they are not presented as themselves, but are masked like others. For, in truth, not so to incorporate them — that is, make them into a team, or make them a new body — could be nothing else than 1) like a state ungoverned, without laws, or 2) a body made of nothing but diseases.

“The one state would be through impotency poor and wretched.

“The other state would be, because of the anarchy, absurd.”

Criticus next argued that people other than the vain courtiers ought to participate in Cynthia’s revels:

“But lady, for the revelers themselves it would be better, in my poor conceit — understanding and opinion — that others would be employed to participate in the revels; for such as are unfit to be in Cynthia’s court can seem no less unfit to be in Cynthia’s entertainments.”

Arete then argued that Cynthia had a particular purpose for holding her revels, and that purpose was to create a reformation:

“That is not done, my Criticus, without particular knowledge of the goddess’ mind.

“Cynthia, who holds true intelligence and information about what follies have crept into her palace, has resolved on holding entertainments and triumphs; under that pretext, she has resolved to have them muster in their pomp and fullness, so that she might more strictly and to the root effect the reformation she intends.”

Convinced by Arete’s words, Criticus agreed to do what Arete and Cynthia wished him to do:

“I now conceive Cynthia’s heavenly drift in all, and I will apply my spirits to serve thy will.

“Oh, thou, you are the very power by which I am, and but for which it would be in vain to be.

“You are chief and are second only to Diana.

“You are virgin, heavenly fair, admired Arete, admired by them whose souls are not enkindled — set on fire with lust — by the senses ...

“Disdain not my chaste fire, but feed the flame

“Devoted truly to thy gracious name!”

Arete replied:

“Leave — cease — to suspect us. Criticus shall find

“As we are now most dear, we’ll prove most kind.”

A voice from another room called, “Arete!”

Arete said, “Listen, I am called.”

She exited.

Alone, Criticus said to himself:

“I will follow instantly.”

He then began a prayer to Apollo and Mercury:

“Phoebus Apollo, if with ancient rites and due devotions, I have ever hung elaborate paeans on thy golden shrine or sung thy triumphs in a lofty strain, fit for a theater of gods to hear, and thou the other son of mighty Jove, Cyllenian Mercury — who was born on Mount Cellene to his mother, Maia — sweet Maia’s joy ...”

He then asked for something good:

“... if in the busy tumults of the mind thou ever have illuminated my path, for which thine altars I have often perfumed and decked thy statue with many-colored flowers:

“Now cause invention to thrive in this glorious court,

“So that not of bounty only, but of right,

“Cynthia may grace and give it life by sight!”

Just the sight of Cynthia will grace the court and give it sight.

Just seeing Cynthia will improve the vain courtiers and make them better.

**ACT 5 (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)**

**— 5.1 —**

Hesperus, Cynthia, Arete, Timè, Phronesis, and Thaumata were together.

Hesperus is the personification of the evening star.

The name “Timè” means “Honor.”

The name “Phronesis” means “Prudence.”

The name “Thaumata” means “Wonder.”

Hesperus sang a hymn to Cynthia, who was both a Moon goddess and the goddess of hunting:

*“Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,*

*“Now the Sun is laid to sleep,*

*“Seated in thy silver chair,*

*“State in wonted [accustomed] manner keep;”*

“To keep state” means “to maintain one’s dignity” and “to observe the ceremony that a person of high rank deserves.”

Hesperus continued singing:

*“Hesperus entreats thy light,*

*“Goddess excellently bright.*

*“Earth, let not thy envious [malicious] shade*

*“Dare itself to interpose!”*

In other words: Earth, don’t cause a lunar eclipse.

Hesperus continued singing:

*“Cynthia’s shining orb [the Moon] was made*



*“Heaven to clear, when day did close.*

*“Bless us then with wished [wished-for] sight,*

*“Goddess excellently bright.*

*“Lay thy bow of pearl apart,*

*“And thy crystal-shining quiver;*

*“Give unto the flying hart [fleeing deer, fleeing heart]*

*“Space to breathe, how short soever [however short];”*

In other words: Be merciful to the deer who flee from you in your character as a huntress and be merciful to the hearts of the vain courtiers who flee from correct behavior.

Hesperus continued singing:

*“Thou, that mak’st [who make] a day of night,*

*“Goddess excellently bright!”*

A bright Moon reflects light by which we can see at night.

Hesperus exited.

Cynthia/Diana began to speak.

First, she denied that she is like a malicious miser:

*“When has Diana, like an envious wretch who glitters and is splendid only to his soothed — comforted and flattered — self, denying to the world the precious use of hoarded wealth, withheld her friendly aid?”*

She is not a miser because she gives light to people on Earth:

*“Monthly we expend our constantly repaired — waning and waxing — shine, and we do not forbid our virgin-waxen torch to burn and blaze while nutriment does last.*

“Our virgin-waxen torch, once consumed, out of Jove’s treasury anew we take, and stick it in our sphere to give the mutinous race of lacking men their looked-for light.”

She then asked if the receivers of her — the Moon’s — light deserve to receive it:

“Yet what is their desert? Do they deserve the light?

“Bounty is wronged, interpreted as due.

“Mortals can challenge not a ray by right,

“Yet they do expect the whole of Cynthia’s light.

“But if deities were to withdraw their gifts because of human follies, what would men deserve but death and darkness?”

According to Cynthia, she and other high beings ought to do things worthily for their own sakes — simply because the things are worthy and because the high beings are worthy:

“It behooves the high beings for their own sakes to do things worthily.”

Arete said:

“What you said is most true, most sacred goddess, for the heavens receive no good from all the good they do.

“Neither Jove, nor you, nor other heavenly powers are fed with fumes which rise from incense, or sacrifices reeking — steaming — in their bloody gore.”

When the ancient Greeks sacrificed, they ate the meat, and the smoke from the sacrificial fires rose to Mount Olympus.

Arete continued:

“Yet because of the care and concern that you have for mortals, whose proper good it is that they be so, you well are pleased with odors redolent.”

The gods are happy with the odor of roasting meat from the sacrificial fires. This shows their concern for human beings, whom they allow to eat the meat.

Arete continued:

“But ignorant is all the race of men,

“Which always complains, not knowing why or when.”

According to Arete, human beings always complain about the gods although they ought not to.

Cynthia said:

“Else, noble Arete, they would not blame and tax, either as unjust or as proud, thy Cynthia in the things that are indeed the greatest glories in our starry crown.

“Such a great glory is our chastity, which safely scorns not love — for who more fervently loves immortal honor and divine renown?

“Instead, our chastity scorns giddy Cupid, Venus’ frantic son.

“Yet, Arete, neither night nor court would enjoy our light, if by this veiled and dimmed light, we just discerned — what we in fact do not discern — even the least of imputations standing ready to sprinkle our unspotted reputation with note of lightness — unchastity — from these imminent revels.

“If we did discern such imputations, not even for the empire and rulership of the universe would either night or court enjoy any shine or grace at all of ours.

“Let me repeat:

“If we did discern such imputations, neither night nor court would unhappily — inappropriately — enjoy any shine or grace at all of ours.”

She continued:

“Place and occasion are two privy thieves, and from poor innocent ladies often steal the best of things: an honorable name.

“To stay with follies, or where faults may be,

“Infers a crime, although the party be free.”

She meant “be free of crime.”

The word “crime” means “sin.”

Arete said:

“How Cynthia — that is, how worthily and like herself — the matchless Cynthia speaks!

“Infinite jealousies, infinite watchfulness, do watch about the true virginity, but Phoebe [Cynthia as Moon goddess] lives free from all not only fault, but as from thought, so from suspicion free.”

This kind of jealousy is devotion and eagerness to serve.

Arete continued:

“Thy presence broad-seals — gives the highest authorization to — our delights for pure.

“What’s done in Cynthia’s sight is done safely and securely.”

Cynthia said:

“That, then, so answered, dearest Arete, what the argument — subject and theme — or of what sort our entertainments are likely to be this night, I will not demand to know.

“Nothing that duty and desire to please bears written in the forehead — plainly expressed — comes amiss.

“But unto whose invention must we owe the complement — completion — of this night’s entertainment? Who is the author?”

Arete said:

“Excellent goddess, the credit for the entertainment is due to a man’s inventiveness, whose worth, without hyperbole, I thus may praise:

“He is one, at least, who is studious of deserving well, and, to speak the truth, indeed he is deserving well.

“Potential merit stands for actual where only opportunity is missing.

“Neither will nor power are missing in him: Both of them in him abound.

“He is one whom the Muses and Minerva love — for whom should they love more than Criticus, whom Phoebus the god of poetry, although not Lady Fortune, holds dear?

“And, which argues convincingly excellence in him, he is a principal admirer of yourself.

“Even through the ungentle injuries of fate, and difficulties, which choke virtue, thus much of him appears.

“What other things of farther note do lie unborn in him, them I leave for nourishing cherishing to show, and for a goddess graciously to judge.”

Cynthia said:

“We have already judged him, Arete.

“Nor are we ignorant how noble minds suffer too much through those indignities that times and vicious persons cast on them.

“Ourself have always vowed to esteem virtue as worthy in itself, and so esteem fortune as base.

“Virtue is first in worth, and so virtue is first in place.

“Nor farther notice, Arete, we crave than thine approval’s sovereign warranty.

“Let it be thy care to make us known to him.

“Cynthia shall brighten what the world made dim.”

— 5.2 —

The First Masque began.

Cupid, appearing like Anteros, held a crystal globe, aka crystal ball.

Anteros is Anti-Eros, the half-brother and enemy to Eros, who is also known as Cupid. Ben Jonson regarded Anti-Eros highly as the god of Requited Love and as Love of Virtue. Cupid, in contrast, is often a causer of chaos.

In his costume as Anteros, Cupid carried a bow and arrows.

Appearing but not speaking in the masque were these four allegorical characters:

Philautia appeared as Storge, or Natural Affection. Her motto is “Each to his own standard.”

Gelaia appeared as Aglaia, or Pleasant and Delectable Conversation. Her motto is “I dispel the clouds of worry.”

Phantaste appeared as Euphantaste, or Wittiness. Her motto is “Thus the praise of wit [increases].”

Moria appeared as Apheleia, or Simplicity. Her motto is “No makeup is present.”

The masquers carried imprese with mottoes. These imprese were pasteboard shields bearing a symbolic picture called a device. Each shield also bore a motto.

The four female allegorical characters served their queen, **Perfection**.

Cupid, in the character of Anteros, said:

“Clear pearl of heaven, and not to be farther ambitious in titles, Cynthia:

“The fame of this illustrious night, among others, has also drawn these four fair virgins from the palace of their queen, **Perfection** — a word that makes no sufficient difference between hers and thine — to visit thy imperial court; for she, their sovereign lady, not finding where to dwell among men, before her return to heaven, advised them wholly to consecrate themselves to thy celestial service, as in Cynthia’s clear spirit — the proper element and sphere of virtues — they should behold not her alone, their ever honored mistress, but themselves, more truly themselves, to live enthroned.

“**Perfection** herself would have commended them unto thy favor more particularly, except that she knows no commendation is more available with thee than that of proper virtue.

“Nevertheless, she willed them to present this crystal globe, a note of monarchy and symbol of perfection, to thy more worthy deity; which as here by me they most humbly do, so among the rarities thereof, that is the chief, to show whatsoever the world has excellent, howsoever remote and various.

“But your irradiate — illuminate — judgment will soon look into the crystal ball and discover the secrets of this little crystal world.

“The four virgins themselves, to appear the more plainly, because they know nothing more odious than false pretexts, have chosen to express their several qualities thus in several colors.

### **1. Natural Affection. Allowable Self-Love.**

“The first, in citron — pale yellow — color, is **Natural Affection**, which given to us to procure our good, is sometimes called Storge, and as everyone is nearest to himself, so this handmaid of Reason, **Allowable Self-Love**, as it is without harm, so are none without it; her place in the court of Perfection was to quicken minds in the pursuit of honor.

“Her device is a perpendicular level upon a cube or square.”

These items are used in making measurements.

Cupid, in the character of Anteros, continued:

“The motto is *se suo modulo* [each to his own standard], alluding to that true measure of one’s self, which as everyone ought to make, so is it most conspicuous in thy divine example.”

Aristotle in his *Nicomachian Ethics* made a distinction between Vicious Self-Love and Virtuous Self-Love. A person who has Virtuous Self-Love will love and respect him- or herself and will want to preserve that self. Such a person will have Proper Pride.

Horace in his *Epistles* 1.7.9 wrote “*metiri se quemque suo modulo ac pede verum est.*” Translation: “Every man should measure himself by his own standard and yardstick.”



## 2. Delectable and Pleasant Conversation.

“The second, in green, is Aglaia, **Delectable and Pleasant Conversation**, whose property it is to move a kindly delight, and sometimes not without laughter.

“Her office is to entertain assemblies and to keep societies together with fair familiarity.

“Her device is this: within a ring of clouds, a heart with shine about it.

“The motto *curarum nubila pello* [I dispel the clouds of worry] is an allegory of Cynthia’s light, which no less clears the sky than her fair mirth clears the heart.

## 3. Wittiness.

“The third, in a pale mantle spangled all over, is Euphantaste, a well-conceited **Wittiness**, and employed in honoring the court with the riches of her pure invention.

“Her device is a crescent upon a petasus, aka a mercurial (worn, with additional wings, by Mercury) hat with a low crown and broad brim.

“Her motto, *sic laus ingenii* [thus the praise of wit], infers that the praise and glory of wit does ever increase as does thy growing Moon.

## 4. Simplicity.

“The fourth, in white, is Apheleia, a nymph as pure and simple as the soul, or as an abrase table [a blank tablet], and is therefore called **Simplicity**; without folds, aka without pleats in which items can be hidden, without color, without counterfeit, and, to speak plainly, plainness itself. Her device is no device.

“The motto under her silver shield is *omnis abest fucus* [no makeup is present], alluding to thy spotless self, who are as far from impurity as from mortality.”

**Anteros. Anti-Eros.**

Cupid, in the character of Anteros, then identified whom he was portraying:

“I myself, celestial goddess, more fit for the court of Cynthia than the arbors of Cythere, am called Anteros, or **Love’s Enemy**; the more welcome therefore to thy court and the fitter to conduct this *quaternion* [set of four], who as they are thy professed votaries, and for that cause adversaries to Love, yet thee, perpetual virgin, they both love and vow to love eternally.”

Various kinds of Love exist, not all of them good.

Cynthia values Love of Virtue. She does not value the kind of Love that is Lust.

Cythere, aka Cythera, is the name of the island where Venus was born.

— 5.3 —

Cynthia looked into the crystal ball and saw a vision of Queen Elizabeth:

“Not without wonder, nor without delight, my eyes have viewed in contemplation’s depth — the depth of this crystal ball — this work of wit divine and excellent.

“What shape, what substance, or what unknown power, in virgin’s clothing crowned with the laurel leaves of victory and the olive branches of peace woven in between, on sea-girt rock shines similar to a goddess?

“O front [forehead]! O face! O all celestial sure and more than mortal!

“Arete, behold another Cynthia, and another queen, whose glory, like a lasting plenilune — full Moon — seems ignorant of what it is to wane.

“Not under heaven could an object be found more fit to please.”

Cynthia then called for Criticus:

“Let Criticus approach.

“Bounty forbids to pall and make pale our thanks with delay, or to defer our favor after view.

“The time of grace is, when the cause is new.”

Criticus entered the scene.

Arete said:

“Look, here is the man, celestial Delia, who, like a circle bounded in itself, contains as much as man in fullness may.

“Look, here is the man, who, not of usual earth, but of that nobler and more precious mold — Earth — which Phoebus’ self does temper, is composed.

“And who, even if all were not rewarding him, yet to himself he would not be lacking. He would have what he needs.

“The gain of thy favor is his greatest and best ambition,

“And the best goal of his labor; he is a man who, humble in his height,

“Stands fixed silent in thy glorious sight.”

Cynthia said:

“With no less pleasure than we have beheld this precious crystal, a work of rarest wit, our eye does read thee, now, our

Criticus, whom learning, virtue, and lastly our favor, exempts from the gloomy multitude.

“With common eye the supreme — the highest — should not see.

“Henceforth be ours, the more thyself to be.”

Criticus replied:

“Heaven’s purest light, whose orb may be eclipsed, but not thy praise, divinest Cynthia, how much too narrow for so high a grace thy, save therein, unworthy Criticus finds himself!

“May thy fame and thine honors shine forever, as thy beauties do.

“In me they must shine; they are my dark world’s chiefest lights, by whose propitious beams my powers are raised to hope some part of those most lofty points that blessed Arete has pleased to name as landmarks to which my endeavor’s steps should bend.

“Mine, as begun at thee, in thee must end.”

— 5.4 —

The Second Masque began.

Mercury appeared as a page.

Appearing but not speaking in the masque were these people, who were playing allegorical characters:

Amorphus appeared as Eucosmos. The name means “Orderly” and “Well-Mannered.”

Hedon appeared as Euphathes. The name means “Enjoying Good Things.”

Anaides appeared as Eutolmos. The name means “Brave-Spirited.”

Asotus appeared as Eucolos. The name means “Good-Natured” and “Benevolent.”

They were outfitted with suitable heraldic devices, including javelins.

They were the sons of **Eutaxia**. The name means **Orderly Behavior**: Eutaxia is **Orderly Behaved and Well-Mannered**.

Mercury, in the character of a page, greeted Cynthia:

“Sister of Phoebus Apollo, to whose bright orb we owe that which we do not complain of his absence.”

Apollo’s bright orb is the Sun, but the bright orb here is the brightly lit Moon, because of whose brightness no one needed to complain about the absence of the Sun. Of course, the Moon does not produce its own light — it instead reflects the light of the Sun.

Mercury, in the character of a page, presented the four allegorical beings:

“These four brethren — for they are brethren and sons of Eutaxia, aka **Orderly Behavior**, a lady known and highly beloved of your resplendent deity, and these brethren are not able to be absent when Cynthia holds a ceremonial event — dutifully move themselves into thy presence; for, as there are four cardinal virtues upon which the whole frame of the court does move, so are these the four cardinal properties without which the body of compliment does not move.”

The four cardinal virtues are Justice, Prudence, Temperance, and Fortitude.

Mercury, in the character of a page, continued:

“With these four silver javelins, ceremonial weapons that they bear in their hands, they support in princes’ courts the stateliness of the presence chamber, as by office they are obliged; which though here they may seem superfluous, yet for honor’s sake they thus presume to visit thee, having also been employed in the palace of Queen Perfection.

“And though to them, who would make themselves gracious to a goddess, sacrifices would be fitter than presents or impresse, yet they both hope thy favor, and, in place of either, use several symbols containing the titles of thy imperial dignity.

### **1. Eucosmos: Neat and Elegant.**

“The hithermost, in the robe with the blue and green contrasting and changeable color effects, is the commendably fashionable gallant, **Eucosmos**. His courtly outfit is the grace of the presence and delight of the surveying eye; he is the gallant whom ladies understand by the names of **Neat and Elegant**. His symbol is *divae virgini* [to the divine virgin] in which he would express thy deity’s principal glory, which has always been virginity.

### **2. Eupathes: Enjoying Good Things.**

“The second, in the rich accoutrement and robe of purple impaled — bisected — with a vertical line of gold, is **Eupathes**, who entertains his mind with a harmless but not careless variety. All the objects of his senses are sumptuous. He is a gallant who without excess can make use of superfluities, go richly in embroideries, jewels, and what not, without vanity, and dine delicately without gluttony. And therefore, not without cause, he is universally thought to be of fine humor. His symbol is *divae optimae* [to the best goddess], an attribute to express thy goodness in which thou so resemble Jove, thy father.

### **3. Eutolmos: Brave-Spirited; Good Audacity.**

“The third, in the blush-colored suit, is **Eutolmos**, as duly respecting others as never neglecting himself. He is commonly known by the title of **Good Audacity**; he is a guest most acceptable at courts and courtly assemblies. His symbol is *divae viragini* [to the divine virago, aka female warrior], to express thy hardy courage in chase of savage beasts that harbor in woods and wilderness.”

Cynthia is a huntress.

### **4. Eucolos: Good-Natured, Kind, and Benevolent; Truly Beneficent.**

“The fourth, in watchet-tinsel [sky-blue cloth with gold or silver thread], is the **kind and truly beneficent Eucolos**, who imparts not without respect, but yet without difficulty, and has the happiness to make every kindness seem double, by the timely and freely bestowing thereof.”

A proverb stated that the person who gives quickly gives twice.

“He is the chief of them who, by the common people, are said to be of good nature. His symbol is *divae maximae* [to the best goddess], an additional name to signify thy greatness, which in Heaven, Earth, and Hell is formidable.”

Cynthia is a tripartite goddess: a goddess with three forms.

In Heaven, she is Luna, goddess of the Moon.

On Earth, she is Diana, goddess of the hunt.

In Hell, she is Hecate, goddess of witchcraft.

The two masques joined: a masque of four women and a masque of four men. Because they were wearing masks, their identities were not readily apparent to Cupid.

Cupid asked Mercury, “Isn’t that Amorphus, the traveler?”

Mercury replied, “As though it could be anyone else. Don’t you see how his legs are in travail with a measure?”

“Hedon, thy master, is next,” Cupid said.

“What, will Cupid turn nomenclator — announcer — and cry out the names?” Mercury asked.

“No, indeed, but I have a comedy in mind that would not be lost for a kingdom,” Cupid said.

Cupid has the power — usually — to make the four women and the four men fall in love. Often, the result of falling in love is comedy.

“In good time, for Cupid will prove the comedy,” Mercury said.

One way to interpret this sentence is that Cupid will be the one who is laughed at.

“Mercury, I am studying how to be a matchmaker and match them,” Cupid said.

“How to mismatch them would be harder,” Mercury replied.

They were all full of Self-Love, and so they were all similar.

“It is the nymphs who must do it,” Cupid said. “I shall entertain myself with their passions above measure — exceedingly.”



“Those nymphs need to be tamed a little indeed, but I fear thou have not the arrows necessary for the purpose,” Mercury said.

“Oh, yes, I do,” Cupid said. “Here are arrows of all sorts: flights, rovers, and butt-shafts.”

Because he was impersonating Anteros, Cupid had a bow and arrows.

Flights are light arrows that can travel a long distance. Rovers are arrows for shooting at various targets selected by the archer. Butt-shafts are blunt arrows.

Cupid added, “But I can wound with a brandish — just by shaking an arrow at someone — and never draw bow for the matter.”

“I cannot but believe it, my invisible archer, and yet I think you are wearisome,” Mercury said.

As gods, Mercury and Cupid can turn themselves invisible.

Gods can definitely get on each other’s nerves.

Cupid said:

“It behooves me to be somewhat circumspect, Mercury, for if Cynthia should hear the twang of my bow, she’ll come close to whipping me with the string.

“Therefore, to prevent that, I thus discharge a brandish upon — it makes no matter which of the couples.

“Phantaste and Amorphus, I brandish my arrow at you.”

If all were to go as Cupid expected, Phantaste and Amorphus would now fall in love.

Mercury asked, “Will the shaking of a shaft strike them into such a fever of affection?”

“As well as the wink of an eye,” Cupid said. “But I pray thee hinder me not with thy prattle.”

“Jove forbid I hinder thee!” Mercury said. “By the Virgin Mary, all that I fear is Cynthia’s presence, which, with the cold of her chastity, casts such an antiperistasis — contrary circumstance — about the place that no heat of thine will tarry with the patient.”

The coldness of Cynthia’s chastity may make it impossible for Cupid’s arrows to cause sexual heat in anyone at whom he brandishes his arrow.

Cupid said, “It will tarry the rather, for the antiperistasis will keep it in.”

Cupid thought that Cynthia’s chastity would serve as an outer boundary that would keep sexual heat inside Phantaste and Amorphus. Think of an igloo with a fire inside.

“I long to see the experiment,” Mercury said.

“Why, their bone marrow boils already, or else they have all been turned into eunuchs,” Cupid said.

Phantaste and Amorphus should already be deeply in love.

“Nay, if it is so, I’ll give over speaking, and be a spectator only,” Mercury said.

All danced to the first strain of music.

Full of Self-Love, Amorphus said to himself, “Cynthia, by my bright soul, is a completely exquisite and splendidious and magnificent lady, yet Amorphus, I think, has seen more fashions, and I am sure I have seen more countries. But whether I have or not, what need have we to gaze on Cynthia when we have ourself to admire?”

Full of Self-Love, Phantaste said to herself, “Oh, excellent Cynthia! Yet if Phantaste sat where she does and had such a

tire — a headdress — on her head (for attire can do much) ... I say no more — but goddesses are goddesses, and Phantaste is as she is! I wish the revels were done at once, so I might go to my school of glass — my mirror — again and learn to do myself right after all this ruffling.”

“Ruffling” means “contending.” The Self-Lovers were contending with Cynthia for supremacy.

Amorphus loved himself, and Phantaste loved herself. They doted on themselves, not on each other. They loved themselves more than they loved Cynthia.

Phantaste wanted to work on her makeup to make it better.

Mercury said sarcastically, “How are things now, Cupid? Here’s a wonderful change as a result of your brandishing your arrows! Don’t you hear how they dote?”

“What prodigy is this?” Cupid said. “No word of love? No mention of love? No motion toward each other? No commotion?”

“Not a word, my little hell-fire, not a word,” Mercury said.

Cupid’s arrows inflame the heart, and so he can be called a little hell-fire.

“Are my darts enchanted?” Cupid said. “Is their vigor gone? Is their virtue —”

Mercury said, “What? Cupid turned jealous of himself? Cupid troubled that his power has gone? Ha, ha, ha!”

“Does Mercury laugh?” Cupid asked.

“Is Cupid angry?” Mercury asked.

“Hasn’t he reason to be angry, when his purpose is so laughed at?” Cupid asked.

His purpose was to cause comedy by having Phantaste and Amorphus fall in love. Mercury was laughing because Cupid could not accomplish his purpose.

“A splendid comedy; it shall be titled Cupid’s Comedy,” Mercury said.

“Do not scorn us, Hermes,” Cupid said.

Mercury/Hermes replied, “Choler, aka Anger, and Cupid are two fiery things; I do not scorn them. But I see that come to pass which I presaged in the beginning.”

Earlier, Mercury had said, “By the Virgin Mary, all that I fear is Cynthia’s presence, which, with the cold of her chastity, casts such an antiperistasis — contrary circumstance — about the place that no heat of thine will tarry with the patient.”

In other words, he had worried that Cupid’s arrows would have no effect so near Cynthia.

“You cannot tell,” Cupid said. “Perhaps the medicine will not work as soon upon some as upon others. It may be the rest are not so resty — so sluggish.”

Mercury said, “*Ex ungue*. You know the old adage: As these, so are the remainder.”

*Ex ungue leonum* is a proverb: “From the claw of a lion,” you may discover its size.

If Cupid’s arrows didn’t work on Phantaste and Amorphus, chances were excellent that they would not work on other couples.

Cupid said, “I’ll try again. This is the same shaft with which I wounded Argurion.”

Argurion had fallen in love with Asotus after Cupid had brandished one of his arrows at her.

“Aye, but let me save you a labor, Cupid,” Mercury said. “There were certain bottles of water fetched and drunk off, since that time, by these gallants.”

“May Jove strike me into Earth!” Cupid said. “The Fountain of Self-Love!”

A person who is excessively in love with him- or herself may find it difficult or impossible to fall in love with someone else.

“Don’t faint, Cupid,” Mercury said.

“I did not remember that,” Cupid said.

Mercury said:

“Indeed, it was ominous to take the name of Anteros upon you; you don’t know what charm or enchantment lies in the word.

“You saw I did not dare to venture upon any device or plot in our presentation, but instead I was content to be no other than a simple page.

“Your arrows’ properties, to keep decorum and appropriateness, Cupid, are suited, it would seem, to the nature of him whom you impersonate: Anteros.”

Cupid’s arrows could not now be used to create romantic drama.

“This is an indignity not to be borne!” Cupid said.

“Nay, rather it is an attempt to have been forborne,” Mercury said. “You ought not to have attempted to use your arrows to make them fall in love.”

Cupid said to himself:

“How might I revenge myself on this insulting Mercury?”

“There’s Criticus, his minion; he has not tasted of this water. It shall be so.”

All danced to the second strain of music.

Cupid asked Mercury, “Has Criticus turned dotard on himself, too? Is he in love with himself, too?”

Mercury answered, “That does not follow from the fact that the venom of your shafts cannot pierce him.”

The venom of Cupid’s arrows could not pierce Criticus, but it does not follow that Criticus was filled with Self-Love.

“As though there were one antidote for these, and another for him?” Cupid asked.

The antidote for the foolish courtiers was their Self-Love. The antidote for Criticus was his strength of character and the protection of Cynthia.

“As though there were not two antidotes!” Mercury said. “Or as if one effect might not arise from diverse causes? What do you say to Cynthia, Arete, Phronesis, Timè, and others there?”

These beings were all immune to Cupid’s arrows.

“They are divine,” Cupid answered.

“And Criticus aspires to be so,” Mercury said.

Criticus aspired to the highest values and behavior.

“But that shall not serve him,” Cupid said. “That shall not be of use to him when I use my powers on him.”

“It is likely to serve him prettily well at this time,” Mercury said. “But Cupid has grown too covetous because he will not spare one of a multitude.”

In Genesis 18:23-33, Abraham bargains with God not to destroy Sodom if 50 righteous people are found to reside there. Abraham then bargains the number down to 45, then 40, 30, 20, and finally 10. Eventually, one righteous man — Lot — is found. God destroys Sodom, but Lot and his family flee from the destruction.

“One is more than a multitude,” Cupid said.

One virtuous man is worth more than a multitude of fools.

Not sparing one virtuous man is more destructive than not sparing a multitude of fools.

Mercury said, “Arete’s favor makes anyone shot-proof against thee, Cupid.”

All danced to the third strain of music.

Mercury then said, “Please, light honey-bee, remember thou are not now in Adonis’ garden, but in Cynthia’s presence, where thorns lie in garrison about the roses.”

Adonis was a mortal lover of Venus.

Mercury then said, “Quiet, Cynthia speaks.”

Cynthia now began to speak to the ladies and gallants. In doing so, she was speaking to the Virtues whom the foolish courtiers filled with Self-Love were portraying. She was not speaking to the foolish courtiers who were portraying those virtues.

Using the third person and the regal plural, and sometimes calling herself “Diana,” Cynthia said:

“Ladies and gallants,

“To give a timely period — end — to our entertainments, let us conclude them with declining night; dawn is coming soon. Our empire is only the darker half of the 24-hour day.

“If you judge to have earned Diana’s thanks to be any recompense for your fair pains, Diana grants to you her thanks, and bestows their crown to gratify your acceptable zeal.

“For you are not those who, as some have done, censure and judge us as too severe and sour.

“Instead, you judge us, as, more rightly, gracious to the good.

“Although we do not deny that unto the proud or the profane, we are perhaps indeed austere:

“For so Actaeon, by presuming far, did, to our grief, incur a fatal doom, and so swollen-with-pride Niobe, comparing more than he (Actaeon) presumed, was trophied into stone.”

Niobe compared herself to Leto, Cynthia’s mother, and she said that she was more worthy of admiration than Leto because Leto had given birth to only one son and only one daughter, while Niobe had given birth to six sons and six daughters. As punishment for her egotistic comparison, Niobe was transformed into a stone trophy. Ancient Roman generals could make a trophy by displaying an enemy general’s armor on a tree trunk whose branches had been lopped off: This would be a monument to commemorate a victory.

Actaeon was out hunting, and he saw Cynthia, a virgin goddess, bathing naked. As punishment for his presumption and impure thoughts, Cynthia punished him by turning him into a stag. Actaeon’s own hounds killed him.

Cynthia continued:

“But are we therefore judged to be too extreme?

“Does it seem to be no crime to enter sacred bowers and to pollute hallowed places most lewdly with impure gaze?”



Actaeon did that.

Cynthia continued:

“Does it seem to be no crime to brave and defy a deity?”

Niobe did that.

Cynthia continued:

“Let mortals learn to make religion of ‘offending’ heaven, and not at all to censure powers divine.

“To men, this argument should stand for firm:

“A goddess did it; therefore, it was good.”

Even when heaven offends or seems to offend, mortals ought not to judge it.

Cynthia continued:

“We are not cruel, nor do we delight in blood.

“But what have these serious repetitions of already-known narratives about Actaeon and Niobe to do with revels and the entertainments of court?

“We do not intend to sour your late delights with harsh expostulation. Let it suffice that we take notice of and can take revenge on these calumnious and lewd blasphemies.

“For we are no less Cynthia than we were, nor is our power, other than as ourself, the same, although we have now put on no tire of shine — shiny headdress — except that which mortal eyes undazzled may endure.”

Mortal eyes can endure looking at the Moon, but they are blinded when looking at the Sun. Cynthia is careful not to overwhelm mortals with her shine. Doing so can destroy them.

Jupiter, king of the gods, promised to give Semele, a mortal woman, anything she wanted if she would sleep with him. After they had slept together, she told him that she wanted to see him in his full divine glory rather than in just the form he took when he appeared to mortals. Because he had sworn an inviolable oath, he did as she requested. Unable to endure the sight, she burst into flames.

Cynthia continued:

“Years are beneath the spheres, and time makes weak the things under heaven; time does not make weak the powers which govern heaven.”

The first Ptolemaic sphere around the Earth was that of the Moon. According to Ptolemy, crystalline spheres have embedded in them the planets and the stars.

Cynthia continued:

“And although ourself be in ourself secure, yet let mortals not claim as a right for themselves immunity from ourself.

“Lo, this is all:

“Honor has store of spleen, but lacks gall.”

In other words: Honor is quick to become angry, but Honor does not carry around bitterness after becoming angry.

Mankind cannot expect to be immune from Cynthia’s anger; she does grow angry at calumnious and lewd blasphemies.

Cynthia continued:

“Once more, we cast the slumber of our thanks on your taken toil, which here let take an end.”

She was bringing their toil (of performing the masque) to an end. The slumber of her thanks is to allow them to rest.

Cynthia continued:

“And so that we do not mistake your several worths, nor you our favor, from yourselves remove what makes you not yourselves, those clouds of mask.

“Particular pains, particular thanks do ask.”

The eight foolish courtiers — four men and four women — took off their masks, revealing their real identities.

Cynthia said:

“Are we contemned and scorned?

“Is there so little awe of our disdain that any, under trust of their disguise, would mix themselves with others of the court?

“And, without forehead — shame — boldly press so far that nowhere farther is left that they can invade?

“How apt is lenity to be abused? Severity to be loathed?

“And yet, how much more does the seeming face of neighbor virtues, and their borrowed names, add of lewd boldness to loose vanities!

“Who would have thought that Philautia did dare either to have usurped noble Storge’s name and with that theft to have dared to approach our eyes?

“Who would have thought that all of them should hope so much of our connivance — tacit approval — as to come to grace themselves with titles not their own?

“Instead of medicines, have we maladies?

“And such impostumes — moral abscesses — as Phantaste is do grow in our palace? We must lance these sores, or all will putrefy.”

Abscessed sores are pierced with a lancet so that the pus can drain out and the sore can heal.

Cynthia continued:

“Nor are these all, for we suspect a farther fraud than this.

“Take off our veil so that shadows may depart and shapes appear, beloved Arete.”

Arete took the veil from Cynthia’s face.

The entire presence chamber brightened.

Cynthia said:

“So.

“Another face of things presents itself than did recently.

“What, feathered Cupid masked, and masked to appear like Anteros?

“But even more strange! Dear Mercury, our half-brother, like a page, to countenance and support the ambush of the boy?”

Cynthia and Mercury share the same father: Jupiter.

Cupid had planned to play tricks in Cynthia’s presence chamber. Mercury had not revealed Cupid’s plot to Cynthia, and so he had tacitly approved of it.

Cynthia continued:

“Nor ends our discovery as yet.

“Gelaia is now like a nymph, who just a while ago in male attire did serve Anaides as a page?

“Cupid came here to find entertainment and game. He, heretofore, has been too conversant among our train of servants, but he has never felt revenge.

“And Mercury gave Cupid company.

“Cupid, we must confess this time of mirth, which was proclaimed by us, gave opportunity to thy attempts to play tricks, although no privilege.

“Tempt us no farther, we cannot endure thy presence longer; vanish, go away from here. Go away!”

Cupid exited.

Cynthia continued:

“You, Mercury, we must entreat to stay, and hear what we determine of the rest, for in this plot you have the deepest hand.

“But — because we do not mean a censorian — too severe — task and yet we do mean to lance these ulcers grown so ripe and so ready to be lanced — dear Arete and Criticus, to you we give the charge and responsibility of inflicting punishment.

“Impose what pains you please. The incurable cut off, the rest reform.

“Remember always what we first decreed,

“Since revels were proclaimed, let now none bleed.”

Cynthia wanted Arete and Criticus to decide what will be the punishment, but the punishment may not be death.

Arete said:

“How well Diana can distinguish times and sort her censures! Keeping to herself the doom — the judgment — of gods, leaving the rest to us!

“Come, cite them — summon them to court — Criticus, and then proceed.”

Criticus summoned the female offenders:

“First Philautia, for she was the first,

“Then light [trivial] Gelaia in Aglaia’s name,

“Thirdly Phantaste, and Moria next,

“You are all strong follies, and of the female company.”

Criticus then summoned the male offenders:

“Amorphus, or Eucosmos counterfeit,

“Voluptuous [lustful] Hedon taken for Eupathes,

“Shameless Anaides, and Asotus last,

“With his two pages, Morus and Prosaites;

“And thou, the traveler’s evil, Cos, approach,

“All of you are impostors, and male deformities.”

The travelers’ evil is lying. Many travelers made up fantastic stories about their travels.

Self-Love, aka Pride, is the foundation of the other Seven Deadly Sins.

Arete said to Criticus:

“Go forward and continue, for I delegate my power, and I decree that at thy mercy they do stand — the mercy of you whom they so often so plainly scorned before.

“It is virtue that they lack, and lacking it,

“Honor no garment to their backs can fit.”

“Now, Criticus, use your discretion.”

Criticus, who was obliged to be both severe and merciful, said:

“Adored Cynthia, and bright Arete, another might seem fitter for this task than I, Criticus, except that you do not judge that to be so.

“For I, not to appear vindictive and revengeful, or mindful of contempts and insults, which I condemned and scorned as done out of impotence, must be negligent of my duty.

“As I was the author in some sort of this masque in order to bring knowledge of them into Cynthia’s sight, I should be much severer to revenge the indignity hence issuing to her name.

“But there’s not one of these who are unpained, or by themselves unpunished; for vice is like a fury and a Fury to the vicious mind, and it turns delight itself into punishment.

“But we must go forward and continue to define their doom.”

He said to the foolish courtiers (including the foolish ladies of the court) and foolish pages:

“You are offenders, and that you must confess.

“Do you confess it?”

All the foolish courtiers and foolish pages said, “We do.”

Criticus then asked:

“And do you acknowledge that you deserve sharp correction?”

All the foolish courtiers and foolish pages said, “We do.”

Criticus then said:

“Then we (reserving unto Delia’s [Cynthia’s] grace her farther pleasure, and to Arete what Delia grants) thus do sentence you.

“Your sentence is that from this place, for penance known of all, since you have drunk so deeply of Self-Love, you, two and two, singing a palinode [a song of repentance], will march to your separate homes by Niobe’s stone, and offer up two tears, one from each eye, apiece thereon, so that it may change the name, as you must change, and of a stone be called Weeping Cross because it stands cross of Cynthia’s highway, one of whose names is sacred Trivia [three ways meeting].”

Each of the foolish courtiers and foolish pages has a “home” by the Fountain of Self-Love because they are so full of Self-Love.

Criticus continued:

“And after this penance is thus performed, you must pass in like set order, not as Midas did to wash his gold off into Tagus’ stream, but you must pass to the Well of Knowledge, Helicon, and wash off your Self-Love.”

Midas was granted his wish that everything he touched would turn to gold, but it turned out to be a curse because his food and drink and his son turned to gold. Washing in the Tagus River cured his curse. Afterward, gold was found in the river.

The Helicon was a mountain that was sacred to the Muses. On the Helicon were sacred fountains.

Criticus continued:

“At Helicon, once you are purged of your present maladies, which are neither few nor slender, you will become such as you eagerly would seem to be; and you will then return, offering your service to great Cynthia.

“This is your sentence, if the goddess please

“To ratify it with her high consent;



“The scope of wise mirth unto fruit is bent.”

Cynthia said:

“We do approve thy judgment, Criticus.

“Mercury, thy true propitious friend, a deity who is beloved by us second to Jove, will undertake to see thy judgment exactly done.

“And for this service of discovery performed by thee, in honor of our name, we vow to reward it with such due grace as shall become our bounty and thy place.

“Princes who wish their people should do well

“Must at themselves begin, as at the heads of fountains;

“For men by their example pattern out

“Their imitations and regard of laws.

“A virtuous court, a world to virtue draws.”

Cynthia, Arete, Timè, Phronesis, Thagma, and Criticus exited.

### **PALINODE**

A palinode is a song in which a previous viewpoint is retracted.

The Reformed Self-Lovers renounce their Self-Love in this song:

Amorphus sang:

*“From Spanish shrugs, French faces, smirks, irpes, and all affected humors.”*

[Spanish shrugs and French faces are affectations.]

[“Irpes” may mean “sinful sexual temptations.”]

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Phantaste sang:

*“From secret friends, sweet servants, loves, doves, and such fantastic humors.”*

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Amorphus sang:

*“From stabbing of arms, flap-dragons, healths [toasts], whiffs [smoking tobacco], and all such swaggering humors.”*

[A lover could stab his own arm and drink his own blood as a sign of devotion to the woman he loved.]

[Flap-dragons are raisins that have been soaked in burning brandy and then are eaten.]

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Phantaste sang:

*“From waving of fans, coy glances, glicks [sexy glances], cringes [bows], and all such simpering humors.”*

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Amorphus sang:

*“From making love by attorney [indirectly], courting of puppets, and paying for new acquaintance.”*

[Puppets are decoys; a lover may court a servant in order to gain access to the lady whom the servant serves.]

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Phantaste sang:

*“From perfumed dogs, monkeys, sparrows, dildos, and paraquitos [parakeets].”*

[Dildos are sometimes shaped like animals.]

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Amorphus sang:

*“From wearing bracelets of hair [a kind of love-token], shoe-ties, gloves, garters, and rings with posies.”*

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Phantaste sang:

*“From pargeting [plastering on of makeup], painting [putting on makeup], slicking [making glossy], glazing [making sleek], and renewing old rivelled [wrinkled] faces.”*

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Amorphus sang:

*“From squiring [escorting] to tilt-yards [jousting yards], playhouses, pageants, and all such public places.”*

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Phantaste sang:

*“From entertaining one gallant to gull [fool] another, and making fools of either.”*

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

Amorphus sang:

*“From belying [lying about] ladies’ [sexual] favors, noblemen’s countenance, coining counterfeit employments, vain-glorious taking to them other men’s services, and all self-loving humors.”*

The Chorus of Reformed Self-Lovers sang:

*“Good Mercury defend us!”*

**Cantus [Song] Sung By All the Reformed Self-Lovers**

*“Now each one of us [will] dry his or her weeping eyes,*

*“And to the Well of Knowledge make haste;*

*“Where purged of our maladies,*

*“We may of sweeter waters taste,*

*“And with refined voice report,*

*“The grace of Cynthia and her court.”*

**EPILOGUE (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)**

The Epilogue (person who spoke the epilogue) was Criticus, who had went in (gone backstage) before the Palinode was sung.

The Epilogue said:

*“Gentles, be't [be it] known to you, since I went in*

*“I am turned rhymer, and do thus begin:*

*“The author, jealous [doubtful] how your sense doth [does] take*

*“His travails, hath [has] enjoined me to make*

*“Some short and ceremonious epilogue,*

*“But if I yet know what, I am a rogue.*

*“He ties me to such laws, as quite distract*

*“My thoughts, and would a year of time exact [require].*

*“I neither must be faint, remiss, nor sorry,*

*“Sour, serious, confident, nor peremptory,*

*“But betwixt [between] these. Let's see; to lay the blame*

*“Upon the children's action [child-actors' performance; the play was performed by children], that were lame [would be a lame idea].*

*“To crave your favors with a begging knee,*

*“Were [Would be] to distrust the writer's faculty [Ben Jonson's ability as a playwright].*

*“To promise better at the next we bring,*

*“Prorogues [Defers] disgrace, commends not anything.*

*“Stiffly to stand on this, and proudly approve*

*“The play, might tax [accuse] the maker of Self-Love.”*

The maker — playwright — of *The Fountain of Self-Love* is Ben Jonson.

The Epilogue continued:

*“I’ll only speak what I have heard him say:*

*“By God, ’tis [it is] good, and if you like’t [like it], you may.”*

\*\*\*

*Ecce rubet quidam, pallet, stupet, oscitat, odit.*

*Hoc volo: nunc nobis carmina nostra placent.*

\*\*\*

The Latin quotes Martial’s *Epigrammatica* 60:3-4.

The entire poem is four lines:

*Laudat, amat, cantat nostros mea Roma libellos,*

*Meque sinus omnes, me manus omnis habet.*

*Ecce rubet quidam, pallet, stupet, oscitat, odit.*

*Hoc volo: nunc nobis carmina nostra placent.*

Translation:

Rome praises, loves, sings my little books

Every bosom has me, every hand has me.

Look! A man blushes, pales, is astonished, yawns, and hates.

I want this: Now our songs please us.

## NOTES (*The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels*)

### — Cast of Characters —

Whetstone. Whetstones were hung around the necks of liars as a punishment.

Here is some information about whetstones from “Whetstones for Dull Wits and Liars” by saucyindexer:

#### **Punishment of the Pillory and Whetstone**

In the Letter Books of the City of London from 1412 there is an account of the deceit of William Blakeney, a shuttlemaker. “Under the guise of sanctity” and also barefoot and with long hair he pretended to be a hermit and “under colour of such falsehood he had received many good things from divers persons.” As a skilled craftsman he was capable of supporting himself but for six years he “lived by such lies, falsities, and deceits, so invented by him, to the defrauding of the people.”

“It was adjudged that said William should be put upon the pillory for three market-days, there to remain for one hour each day, the reason for the same being there proclaimed; and he was to have, in the meantime, whetstone hung from his neck.”

Source of Above: saucyindexer, “Whetstones for Dull Wits and Liars.” Lost Art Press. 5 October 2019

< [https://blog.lostartpress.com/2019/10/05/\\_trashed/](https://blog.lostartpress.com/2019/10/05/_trashed/) >.

*He's the very mint*

*of compliment; all his behaviours are printed, his face is  
another volume*

*of essays, and his beard an Aristarchus.*

(2.3.68-70)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin  
Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 479.

The following information comes from “1500s: The  
Elizabethan Ruff, Manicured Beards and Arum Starch #2”:

*Beard Starching.*

*Beard starching. Never done it? The Elizabeth era  
was the prime time for men to display their creativity  
in beard shaping, a somewhat neglected manicure  
amongst the gentlemen of today. A man wishing to  
sculpt his beard into a suitably fashionable and  
attractive shape had to take into account a number  
of considerations. Firstly there were the Elizabethan  
class dictates, so that where he lived and what  
profession he held played an important role in how  
his beard might be manipulated. Such important  
social signals were not to be overlooked. That  
decided, he was then free to enter the constantly  
changing fashion race of sculpting his beard into  
different angles, shapes, cuts, coils and contortions.*



*'having starched their beards most curiously...'  
To ensure such facial architecture would remain in  
place, men would stiffen their beards with starch.  
Now, there is a persistent rumour that it was  
specifically Arum starch that was used for this. The  
source of this is usually Cecil Prime, who refers to a  
preface by Thomas Nashe in Robert Greene's  
Menaphon of 1589. The actual sentence is this:*

*'Sufficeth them to bodge up a blank verse with ifs and  
ands, and otherwhile, for recreation after their  
candle-stuff, having starched their beards most  
curiously, to make a peripatetical path into the inner  
parts of the City, and spend two or three hours in  
turning over French dowdy, where they attract more  
infection in one minute than they can do eloquence  
all days of their life by conversing with any authors  
of like argument'.*

Source of Above Information:

"1500s: The Elizabethan Ruff, Manicured Beards and Arum Starch #2". © 2010 Lynden Swift.

<https://wildarum.co.uk/Blog/files/c8c844e2670b8500fc0eaa0c3d303385-30.html>

Some information about starched ruffs is here:

<https://wildarum.co.uk/Blog/files/1cc90517ca09b994e1839eec150566cb-29.html>

— 3.4 —

*Do deeds worthy the hurdle or the wheel,*

(3.4.29)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 494.

The information below comes from the Wikipedia article “Breaking wheel”:

*Those convicted as murderers and/or robbers to be executed by the wheel, sometimes termed to be “wheeled” or “**broken on the wheel**”, would be taken to a public stage scaffold site and tied to the floor. The execution wheel was typically a large wooden spoked wheel, the same as was used on wooden transport carts and carriages (often with iron rim), sometimes purposely modified with a rectangular iron thrust attached and extending blade-like from part of the rim. The primary goal of the first act was the agonizing mutilation of the body, not death. Therefore, the most common form would start with breaking the leg bones. To this end, the executioner dropped the execution wheel on the shinbones of the convicted person and then worked his way up to the arms. Here, rhythm and number of beatings were prescribed in each case, sometimes also the number of spokes on the wheel. To increase its effect, often sharp-edged timbers were placed under the convict’s joints. Later, there were devices in which the convicted person could be “harnessed”. Although not commonplace, the executioner could be instructed to execute the convicted person at the end of the first act, by aiming for the neck or heart in a “coup de grace”. Even less often, this occurred immediately from the start (from the head down).*

*In the second act, the body was braided into another wooden spoked wheel, which was possible through the broken limbs, or tied to the wheel. The wheel was then erected on a mast or pole, like a crucifixion. After this, the executioner was permitted to decapitate or garrote the convicted if need be. Alternatively, fire was kindled under the wheel, or the “wheeled” convict was simply thrown into a fire. Occasionally, a small gallows was set up on the wheel, for example, if there were a guilty verdict for theft in addition to murder.*

*Since the body remained on the wheel after execution, left to scavenging animals, birds and decay, this form of punishment, like the ancient crucifixion, had a sacral function beyond death: according to the belief at that time, this would hinder transition from death to resurrection.*

*If the convict fell from the wheel still alive or the execution failed in some other way, such as the wheel itself breaking or falling from its placement, it was interpreted as God’s intervention. There exist votive images of saved victims of the wheel, and there is literature on how best to treat such sustained injuries.*

*The survival time after being “wheeled” or “broken” could be extensive. Accounts exist of a 14th-century murderer who remained conscious for three days after undergoing the punishment. In 1348, during the time of the Black Death, a Jewish man named Bona Dies underwent the punishment. The authorities stated he remained conscious for four days and nights afterwards. In 1581, the possibly fictitious German serial killer Christman Genipperteinga remained conscious for nine days on*

*the breaking wheel before expiring, having been deliberately kept alive with “strong drink”*

*Alternatively, the condemned were spreadeagled and broken on a saltire, a cross consisting of two wooden beams nailed in an “X” shape, after which the victim’s mangled body might be displayed on the wheel.*

Source of Above: “Breaking wheel.” Wikipedia. Accessed 8 January 2022.

< [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breaking\\_wheel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breaking_wheel) >

— 3.5 —

ASOTUS

*Well, sir, I’ll enter again; her title shall be ‘My dear Lindabrides’.*

AMORPHUS

*Lindabrides?*

(3.5.24-25)

The University of Michigan has put this book (*The Mirror of Knighthood*, translated by Robert Parry) online:

*The second part of the first booke of the Myrroure of knighthood in which is prosecuted the illustrious deedes of the knight of the Sunne, and his brother Rosicleer, sonnes vnto the Emperour Trebatio of Greece: with the valiant deedes of armes of sundry worthie knights, very delightfull to bee read, and nothing hurtfull to bee regarded. Now newly translated out of Spanish into our vulgar tongue by R.P.*

Ortúñez de Calahorra, Diego. aut, R. P., fl. 1583-1586., Parry, Robert, fl. 1540-1612, attributed name., Parke, Robert, fl. 1588, attributed name.

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A08545.0001.001/1:5?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>

You can find the online Table of Contents here:

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Here is some information about Lindabrides from *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*:

*A heroine in The Mirror of Knighthood, whose name at one time was a synonym for a kept mistress, in which sense it was used by [Sir Walter] Scott, [in his novels] Kenilworth and Woodstock.*

Source: *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, E. Cobham Brewer, 1894.

— 3.5 —

*If regardant [Demonstrating], then maintain your station, brisk and irpe, 65*

*show the supple motion of your pliant body, but, in chief, of your knee and*

*hand, which cannot but arride her proud humour exceedingly.*

(3.5.65-67)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 1.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 498.

In my opinion, “irpe” is a typo for “ripe,” which means, according to *The Oxford Dictionary*:

*Of grain, fruit, etc.: having developed to the point of readiness for harvesting and eating, or for the dispersal of seed for propagation; that is at the full extent of natural growth.*

*Of a person: fully developed in body or mind; mature, fully grown; (also) †marriageable (obsolete).*

The lady is “reguardant,” which means, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

*Heraldry. Of an animal: looking backwards over the shoulder. Also: (in early use) = guardant adj. 2. Chiefly used postpositively.*

*Observant, watchful, attentive; contemplative.*

What may be happening here is that the lady is considering whether Asotus would be a possible sex partner. She could be looking at him attentively to determine that. If she is looking backwards over her shoulder at him, she could be showing off her figure, offering — presenting — it to him.

Asotus, in turn, is showing off “the supple motion of [his] pliant body, but, in chief, of [his] knee and hand.”

In the missionary position, his knees and hands would be on the bed.

Asotus’ doing this would “arride her proud humour exceedingly.”

“Arride” means “gratify,” and there could be a pun on him gratifying her by riding her.

This is one meaning of “proud,” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

*Feeling greatly honoured, pleased, or satisfied by something which or someone who does one credit; acutely aware of some honour done to oneself, taking pride in something. Also more generally (chiefly in early use): gratified, pleased, glad (now regional).*

In the Palinode, “irpes” may mean “sinful sexual temptations.”

### — Whole Play —

Self-Love is Pride.

Pride is the foundation of all sins; pride makes a person think that he or she is the center of the universe. These are the seven deadly sins, and these are illustrations of how these sinners think:

- 1) Pride — A sinner who is guilty of Pride thinks, “I am the center of the universe, and I am better than other people. Quite simply, I am more important than other people.”
- 2) Envy — A sinner who is guilty of Envy thinks, “I am the center of the universe, and if you have something I want, I envy you.”
- 3) Wrath — A sinner who is guilty of Wrath thinks, “Because I am the center of the universe, everything ought to go my way, and when it does not, I get angry.”
- 4) Sloth — A sinner who is guilty of Sloth thinks, “I am the center of the universe, so I don’t have to work at something. Other people can do my work for me, and/or they can give

me credit for work I have not done because if I had done the work, I would have done it excellently.”

5) Avariciousness and Prodigality — A sinner who is guilty of Avariciousness or Prodigality thinks, “I am the center of the universe, so I deserve to have what I want. If I want money, I get money and never spend it, or if I want the things that money can buy, then I spend every penny I can make or borrow to get what I want. Either way, I deserve to have what I want.”

6) Gluttony — A sinner who is guilty of Gluttony thinks, “I am the center of the universe, so I deserve these three extra pieces of pie every night. This is my reward for myself for being so fabulous.”

7) Lust — A sinner who is guilty of Lust thinks, “I am the center of the universe, so my needs take precedence over the needs of everyone else. If I want to get laid, it’s OK if I lie to get someone in bed and never call that person afterward. My sexual pleasure is more important than the hurt of someone who realizes that he or she has been used.”

In Dante’s *Purgatory*, the repentant sinners purge these sins in the order of the sins’ evil, starting with Pride.

By the way, according to Dante’s *Inferno*:

What is at the center of the universe?

The Earth.

What is at the center of the Earth?

Lucifer.

What is at the center of Lucifer?

His rectum.

What is at the center of Lucifer’s rectum?



Former food that isn't food anymore.

\*\*\*

Perhaps, when Philautia, whose name means "Self-Love," drinks from the Fountain of Self-Love, the water has no effect on her. She already loves herself above all others.

Supposedly, when the others drink from the Fountain of Self-Love, they begin to love themselves above all others.

Actually, they all seem full of Self-Love even before drinking from the Fountain of Self-Love.

Amorphus is the first to drink from the Fountain of Self-Love, and he immediately says some egotistic things about himself, but even before he drinks the cursed water he is shocked that the nymph Echo runs away from him.

Still, after drinking from the Fountain of Self-Love, some of the drinkers say that they are better than Cynthia. Drinking from the Fountain of Self-Love seems to intensify their Self-Love.

**CHAPTER 12: Ben Jonson's *The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled* (1632)**

**CAST OF CHARACTERS (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)**

LADY LOADSTONE *the magnetic lady; a loadstone is a magnet (something that attracts)*

MISTRESS POLISH *her gossip (friend and companion) and she-parasite*

PLACENTIA STEEL *her niece; the Latin word placere means "to give pleasure"*

PLEASANCE *her waiting-woman and daughter of Polish*

MISTRESS KEEP *the niece's nurse. She is an old woman.*

MOTHER CHAIR *the midwife. She is an old woman.*

MASTER COMPASS *a scholar mathematic*

CAPTAIN IRONSIDE *a soldier*

PARSON PALATE *prelate of the parish*

DOCTOR RUT *physician to the house*

TIM ITEM *his apothecary*

SIR DIAPHANOUS SILKWORM *a courtier, a viscount*

MASTER PRACTICE *a lawyer. "Practice" can mean a trick or scheme.*

SIR MOTH INTEREST *a usurer, aka money-bawd, and brother to Lady Loadstone*

MASTER BIAS *a vi-politic [vice-politician, aka assistant to an official], or sub-secretary. He engages in political manipulation on behalf of another person. He is an assistant to a politician. According to the Oxford English Dictionary,*

*one meaning of politician is “A schemer or plotter; a shrewd, sagacious, or crafty person.”*

MASTER NEEDLE *the lady’s steward and tailor*

A FOOTBOY *a boy-servant*

A VARLET *an official with the power to make arrests*

CHORUS *by way of Induction*

MASTER PROBEE *the Latin word probare means “to approve”; the name suggests “probity” (honesty and decency)*

MASTER DAMPLAY *an audience member who can damn a play without having understood it*

Note: Master Probee is an example of a member of the intelligent audience whom Ben Jonson hopes will see and enjoy his play. Master Damplay is an example of a member of the unintelligent audience whom Ben Jonson dislikes.

JOHN TRYGUST *boy of the house; he is a book-holder or prompter who helps actors when they forget their lines. “Trygust” means “Test Taste.” Plays tend to test the taste of audience members. Will they recognize a good play when they see it?*

## **THE SCENE: LONDON**

### **NOTES:**

A compass is a device that uses magnetism to find the direction north.

A compass is also a device used to draw circles.

This society believed that the mixture of four humors in the body determined one’s temperament. One humor could be

predominant. The four humors are blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. If blood is predominant, then the person is sanguine (active, optimistic). If yellow bile is predominant, then the person is choleric (angry, bad-tempered). If black bile is predominant, then the person is melancholic (sad). If phlegm is predominant, then the person is phlegmatic (calm, apathetic, indolent).

Humors are dominant personality characteristics. For example, a person could be optimistic, or angry, or melancholic, or calm, or something else.

A humor can also be a fancy or a whim.

The word “humor” was an in-vogue word in Ben Jonson’s day.

In Ben Jonson’s society, a person of higher rank would use “thou,” “thee,” “thine,” and “thy” when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use “you” and “your” when referring to a person of higher rank.

“Sirrah” was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

The word “wench” in Ben Jonson’s time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

A “gossip” is a friend or companion or neighbor.

## **THE INDUCTION, OR CHORUS (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)**

Two gentlemen, Master Probee and Master Damplay, walked onto the stage.

A boy named John Trygust, who worked at the theater, met them.

“What do you lack, gentlemen?” he asked them. “What is it you need?”

This was the cry of shopkeepers as they tried to sell things to passersby.

John Trygust continued, “Any fine fancies, figures of speech, humors, characters, ideas, descriptions of lords and ladies?”

Humors are dominant personality characteristics. For example, a person could be optimistic, or angry, or melancholic, or calm, or something else.

John Trygust continued, “Waiting-women, parasites, knights, captains, courtiers, lawyers? What do you lack?”

Parasites are people who live on the wealth of other people.

Plays can supply all of the characters whom John Trygust was offering to the two gentlemen.

“He is a pretty prompt boy for the poetic shop,” Probee said about the boy.

The boy was the prompter for actors who forgot their lines, and he was a prompter trying to get more audience members to see the play.

Damplay said, “And he is a bold boy!”

He then asked, “Where’s one of your masters, sirrah? Where is the poet?”

Ben Jonson regarded playwrights as poets. In Elizabethan and Jacobean and Carolinian England, many plays included much poetry in the dialogue.

“Which of them?” John Trygust asked. “Sir, we have several poets who drive that trade now: poets, poetaccios, poetasters, poetitos —”

“Poetaccios, poetasters, poetitos” all are words used for poor, paltry poets.

“And all haberdashers of small wit, I presume,” Damplay said.

Haberdashers dealt with small items that were used in sewing.

Damplay was critical of poets and of plays.

He then said, “We would speak with the poet of the day, boy.”

The poet of the day was the playwright whose play would be performed that day. That playwright was Ben Jonson, author of *The Magnetic Lady*.

“Sir, he is not here,” John Trygust said. “But I have the dominion and management of the shop for this time under him, and I can show you all the variety the stage will afford for the present.

“Therein you will express your own good qualities, boy,” Probee said.

“And tie us two and make us indebted to you for the gentle office,” Damplay said.

“We are a pair of public persons, this gentleman and myself, who are sent thus coupled to you upon state business,” Probee said.

“Public persons” concern themselves with promoting the well-being of the public. The public is better off if good plays rather than bad plays are performed.

“It concerns only the state of the stage, I hope!” John Trygust said.

In this society, some playwrights were accused of putting political sedition in their plays. If found guilty, such playwrights could be severely punished.

“Oh, you shall know that by degrees, boy,” Damplay said. “No man leaps into a business of state without fording — crossing over — first the state of the business.”

“Business” can mean 1) commerce, and 2) political affairs.

In other words: No man leaps into a commerce of state without fording — crossing over — first the state of the political affairs.

Also in other words: Playwrights need to be concerned about making a profit. To do that, they need to avoid having their play suppressed because of suspected seditious political content.

“We are sent to you, indeed, from the people,” Probee said.

“The people!” John Trygust said. “Which side of the people?”

Liberals or conservatives? House of Peers or House of Commons? Government or the Loyal Opposition? Wealthy or impoverished?

When it comes to politics, much is uncertain, and a playwright may err and be accused of sedition.

“The venison side, if you know it, boy,” Damplay said.

Venison comes from a deer, aka hart. The heart beats more strongly on the left side of the body.

“That’s the left side,” John Trygust said. “I had rather they had been the right.”

The left side is the sinister side. *Sinister* is Latin for “left.”

“So they are,” Probee said. “Not the faeces [sediment] or grounds of your people, who sit in the oblique caves and wedges of your house, your sinful six-penny mechanics —”

Mechanics are manual laborers. They purchased less expensive tickets than nobles.

“Caves” comes from the Latin *caveae*, meaning “seats.” The word “wedges” comes from the definition of the Latin *cunei*, meaning “wedge-shaped seat divisions.”

“But the better and braver — more splendidly dressed — sort of your people!” Damplay said. “Plush-and-velvet outsides that stick to your house round like so many eminences —”

These expensively dressed playgoers decorated the theater like so many supporting columns as they sat in galleries around the theater. They paid more money for tickets and so supported the theater.

“Of clothes, not understandings?” John Trygust said. “They are at pawn.”

A pawn is used as collateral for debt, but in this society, a pawn is also a peacock, whose brilliant feathers are like the expensive clothing of some playgoers.

He continued, “Well, I take these as a part of your people, though.”



These expensively dressed playgoers are like Damplay: more splendid in clothing than intelligence.

John Trygust then asked, “What do you bring to me from these people?”

“You have heard, boy, the ancient poets had it in their purpose always to please this people?” Damplay asked.

Probee began, “Aye, their chief aim was —”

Damplay interrupted, “— *populo ut placerent* (if he understands so much).”

He was not certain that John Trygust understood Latin.

John Trygust did understand Latin and he finished the quotation: “— *quas fecissent fabulas*.”

*Populo ut placerent quas fecissent fabulas* is Latin for “Whatever plays they make should please the people” (Terence, *Andria*, Prologue, 3).

He continued, “I understand that since I learned Terence in the third form at Westminster. Go on, sir.”

“Third form” is a junior grade at school.

Probee said, “Now, these people have employed us to you in all their names to ask for an excellent play from you.”

“For they have had very mean — inferior — plays from this shop of late, the stage, as you call it,” Damplay said.

John Trygust said, “Truly, gentlemen, I have no wares that I dare thrust upon the people with praise. But this, such as it is, I will venture with — risk to have appear before — your people, your gay gallant people, so long as you again will undertake for them that they shall know a good play when they hear it and will have the conscience and ingenuity and nobility of mind and high-mindedness besides to confess it.”

The boy wanted Probee and Damplay to guarantee the audience's fairness. He wanted the two men to guarantee that the audience would recognize a good play when they saw it and that they would be fair-minded enough to confess that it was a good play.

Probee replied, "We'll pass our words for that. We'll vouch for it. You shall have a brace — a pair — of us to engage ourselves."

"You'll tender your names, gentlemen, to our book then?" John Trygust said.

This was metaphorically a book in a shop. A person would make a purchase on credit, and the person's name would be written in an account book. Probee and Damplay would stay and see the play: That was their purchase. They would also give their words to fairly evaluate the play.

"Yes, here's Master Probee, a man of most powerful speech and parts to persuade," Damplay said.

"And Master Damplay, who will make good all he undertakes," Probee said.

John Trygust said:

"Good Master Probee and Master Damplay! I like your securities: I trust your assurances.

"Whence do you write yourselves? Where do you come from?"

Probee said, "We are of London; we are gentlemen, but knights' brothers and knights' friends, I assure you."

They were younger brothers. In the tradition of primogeniture, the oldest son would inherit the bulk of the father's estate.

Damplay added, “And we are knights’ fellows, too. Every poet writes ‘squire’ now.”

England was and is a class-conscious society. An esquire is a gentleman, and sometimes poets’ publishers would add “esquire” to the name of the authors they published, whether or not the author actually had the right to use that title.

Historically, a squire or esquire was a knight’s attendant, one who hoped to himself become a knight.

“You are good names!” John Trygust said. “Very good men, both of you! I accept you.”

Damplay asked, “And what is the title of your play here? *The Magnetic Lady*?”

“Yes, sir, an attractive title that the author has given it,” John Trygust said.

“Attractive” means 1) pleasing, and 2) having magnetic force.

Probee said, “*A magnete*, I warrant you.”

He was confirming that the title was attractive, as a magnet is attractive. Such a title would attract an audience.

Damplay said, “Oh, no, from *magnus, magna, magnum!*”

Damplay’s Latin was faulty. *Magnus, magna, magnum* is a first and second declension adjective meaning “big” or “great.” Probee, however, was not using that adjective. *A magnete* means “from a magnet.” *Magnes* is the Latin word for “magnetic” or “magnet.” It is mixed (third) declension.

John Trygust pointed to Probee, whose Latin was correct, and said, “This gentleman has found the true magnitude —”

Damplay interrupted, “— of his portal or entry to the work, according to Vitruvius.”

Vitruvius was a Roman architect. A portal could be an elaborate entrance to a theater.

John Trygust said:

“Sir, all our work is done without a portal — or Vitruvius. “*In foro*, as a true comedy should be.”

This comedic play did not have an elaborate set. *In foro* is Latin for “in an open court or space.” Classical comedies also did not have elaborate sets and were *in foro*.

He continued:

“And what is concealed within is brought out and made present by report.”

In classical plays, important events that happened offstage would be reported by a messenger or other person. In *The Magnetic Lady*, a dinner party occurs offstage and some of the characters on stage report on the events that happen during it.

“We see that is not always observed by your authors of these times, or scarcely any other,” Damplay said.

Modern authors often did not follow the traditions observed by classical playwrights.

Such traditions included the three unities: unity of action, unity of time, and unity of place. Ben Jonson sometimes followed these unities:

The play had one main plot, with no subplots.

The play took place within one day.

The play took place in one main location.

John Trygust said, “Where it is not at all known, how should it be observed? The most of those your people call authors

never dreamed of any *decorum* or what was proper in the scene, but grope at it in the dark and feel or fumble for it. I speak it both with their leave and the leave of your people.”

“Leave” means “permission.”

Yes, many playwrights of Ben Jonson’s time didn’t know much about stage theory.

Damplay asked, “But why is the play subtitled *Humors Reconciled*, I would like to know?”

By the end of this play, after some major revelations, all the characters will be reconciled to truth. *The Magnetic Lady* is a comedy and has a happy ending.

“I can satisfy you there, too — if you will,” John Trygust said. “But perhaps you desire not to be satisfied.”

“No?” Damplay asked. “Why should you conceive that to be so, boy?”

John Trygust said:

“My conceit — my understanding — is not ripe yet; I’ll tell you that soon.”

He was not sure how much to tell Damplay about the play. Often, it is better to simply watch a play without knowing much before seeing it. It is true, however, that a little knowledge can whet the appetite for seeing a play.

John Trygust continued:

“The author, Ben Jonson, beginning his studies of this kind with *Every Man In His Humor* and afterward, *Every Man Out of His Humor*, and since, continuing in all his plays (especially those of the comic thread whereof *The New Inn* was the most recent) some recent humors still, or manners of men, which went along with the times, finding himself now

near the close or shutting up of his circle, has fancied to himself in idea and his imagination this magnetic mistress.”

Ben Jonson’s emblem (heraldic device) had the motto *Deest quod duceret orbem*: That which should complete the circle is lacking.

Ben Jonson, however, saw *The Magnetic Lady* as his last comedy of manners, one that would close the circle of his plays about humors. One more play by Jonson appeared on stage after *The Magnetic Lady — A Tale of a Tub* — but that play may be a revision of a play he wrote at or near the beginning of his career.

John Trygust continued:

“A lady, a brave, bountiful housekeeper [keeper of a house, not a housecleaner] and a virtuous widow, who, having a young niece ripe for a man and marriageable, Ben Jonson makes that his center attractive to draw thither a diversity of guests, all persons of different humors to make up his perimeter and circumference. And this he has called *Humors Reconciled*.”

The center of Ben Jonson’s comedy is the magnetic lady, who is virtuous and attractive and attracts people to her house.

The subtitle of Ben Jonson’s comedy is *Humors Reconciled*.

“A bold undertaking!” Probee said. “And far greater than the reconciliation and harmony of both churches — Protestant and Catholic — the quarrel between humors having been much the ancients and, in my poor opinion, the root of all schism and faction, both in church and commonwealth.”

John Trygust said:

“Such is the opinion of many wise men who meet at this shop still, but how Ben Jonson will succeed in this play we cannot tell, and he himself (it seems) less cares.

“For he will not be entreated by us to give it a prologue. He has lost too much time that way — writing prologues — already, he says. He will not woo the gentle, well-born ignorance so much.

“But not worrying or caring about all vulgar — common and ordinary — censure, as not depending on common approbation, he is confident it shall super-please judicious spectators, and to them he leaves it to work with the rest by example or otherwise.”

Ben Jonson was confident that his play would greatly appeal to judicious spectators, and he hoped that judicious spectators would be good examples for less judicious spectators to follow.

“He may be deceived in that, boy,” Damplay said. “Few follow examples now, especially if the examples are good.”

John Trygust said:

“The play is ready to begin, gentlemen, I tell you, lest you might defraud the expectation of the people for whom you are delegates!

“Please take a couple of seats and plant yourselves here as near my standing — where I stand — as you can.

“May everything you see fly to the mark.”

In other words: May every satiric arrow hit its target.

John Trygust continued:

“Judge it to be good or bad freely — as long as you don’t interrupt the series of dialogue or thread of the plot, to break or pucker and disrupt it with unnecessary questions.

“For I must tell you (not out of my own dictamen and command, but the author’s), a good play is like a skein of silk that, if you take it up by the right end, you may wind off at pleasure on the bottom or card of your discourse in a tale or so, how you will.”

A bottom is a core that thread is wound around.

A card is a comb with iron teeth used to comb fibers.

John Trygust continued:

“But if you light on the wrong end, you will metaphorically pull all into a knot or elf-lock (tangled hair), which nothing but the shears or a candle will undo or separate.”

The knots and tangles must be cut out or burned off.

“Wait!” Damplay said. “Who are these people, I ask you?”

He had seen some actors just offstage. The play was about to start.

John Trygust said, “Because it is your first question, and these are the prime — first and best — persons in the play, it would in civility require an answer. But I have heard the poet affirm that the most unlucky scene in a play is that which needs an interpreter, especially when the auditory are awake, and such are you, he presumes.”

Do good plays require interpreters? Ancient plays often had a chorus that commented on the action of the play.

Probee and Damplay are the interpreters of this play; they form a chorus that will comment on the action of this play.

John Trygust concluded:

“Ergo — therefore — pay attention.”



Probee and Damplay took their seats and watched the beginning of the play.

## ACT 1 (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)

### — 1.1 —

Compass and Captain Ironside met on the street in front of Lady Loadstone's house. Compass studied mathematics and its application to other sciences, and Captain Ironside was a soldier. They were friends and worthy men. The two men were "brothers," but not in a biological sense.

Lady Loadstone was hosting a dinner, and Compass wanted Captain Ironside to attend the dinner with him.

Compass greeted his friend:

"Welcome, good Captain Ironside, and brother, you shall go along with me. I'm lodged nearby here at a noble lady's house on the street, the Lady Loadstone's. She is one who will bid us welcome.

"At her house there are gentlewomen and male guests of different humors [strong personality characteristics], carriage [social behavior], constitution [disposition], and profession [belief, or occupation], too, but so diametrically opposed one to another and so much opposed that, if I can but hold them all together and draw them to a sufferance and tolerance of each other just until the dissolution — the end — of the dinner, I shall have just occasion to believe my wit is magisterial, and we ourselves shall take infinite delight in the outcome."

A magisterial intelligence is a masterful intelligence. The *magisterium* is the philosopher's stone, which was greatly desired by alchemists. It was thought to be able to turn lead into gold. A magisterial intelligence can turn pen and paper into a literary masterwork.

Compass was looking forward to the dinner. Many different personality types would attend Lady Loadstone's dinner,

and there was great potential for arguments to break out. He had a reputation for getting along with many different kinds of people, and he wanted to test his ability to keep the guests at the dinner peaceful. But if he failed and arguments broke out, then that would provide entertainment for his friend Captain Ironside and him. And if at the end all arguments were resolved, that also would be a comedy.

Captain Ironside replied, “Truly, brother Compass, you shall pardon me. I don’t love so to multiply the number of my acquaintances when doing so can ruin a meal. It will take away much from my freedom and bind me to follow the most trivial customs of etiquette.”

He preferred to eat in peace and quiet and not to engage in the customs of etiquette that required people to get along with and be polite to other people whom they disliked.

Compass said, “Why, Ironside, you know I am a scholar and am in part a soldier; I have been employed by some of the greatest statesmen of the kingdom these many years, and in my time I have conversed with people who had various kinds of humors, suiting myself so to company, with the result that honest men and knaves, goodfellows and revelers, hypocrites, all sorts of people, although never so divided and separated by differences in and among themselves, have labored to agree still in their treatment and handling of me (which has been fair, too).”

In other words: Although all of these people I have met in my life are very different from each other, they have always treated me fairly (as I have treated them).

Captain Ironside said:

“Sir, I confess you to be one well read — knowledgeable — in men and manners, and that usually the most ungoverned and uncontrolled persons, you being present, would rather subject themselves to your censure — your criticism and

judgment — than give you the least occasion of distaste and displeasure by making you the target of their jokes.”

Captain Ironside agreed that other people, even the most ungoverned, treated Compass well because they respected him. In turn, Compass treated them well.

Captain Ironside continued:

“But — to deal plainly with you, as a brother — whenever I distrust my own valor, I’ll never rely upon another’s wit and intelligence, or attempt to rescue or save myself by relying on the opinion of your judgment, gravity, discretion, or whatever else.”

The *Oxford English Dictionary* has as one meaning of “valor” this: “Worth or importance due to personal qualities or to rank.”

The dinner would include people of different social ranks, but even if Captain Ironside were to be of a lower social rank than some or all of the other dinner guests and got in an argument with someone, he would not rely on Compass to smooth things over.

Captain Ironside continued:

“But, if I am absent, you’re sure to have less wit-work — that is, less need to use your ingenuity and intelligence — gentle brother, my humor being as stubborn as the rest, and as unmanageable.”

Captain Ironside was aware that if he attended the dinner, he could very well get into one or more arguments.

Compass replied, “You mistake my characterization and valuation of your friendship all this while, or at what rate I reckon your assistance, knowing by long experience, to such animals, half-hearted creatures as these are, your fox — your sword — there, unkennelled and unsheathed with a choleric,

angry, ghastly aspect, or two or three comminatory — threatening — terms, would make them run in their fears to any hole of shelter, worth a day's laughter. I am for the sport — the entertainment — and for nothing else.”

Part of the entertainment would be to see Captain Ironside, if he had need to, frighten cowards who attack him and make them run away. He would use his fox — a type of sword — to do that.

Captain Ironside objected:

“But brother, I have seen a coward, meeting with a man as valiant as our Saint George (not knowing him to be such, or having the least opinion that he was so), set upon him roundly, aye, and swinge — beat — him soundly.

“And in the virtue and strength of that error, having once overcome, resolved forever after to err, and think no person nor no creature more valiant than himself.”

Sometimes cowards get lucky in a fight, even when they are fighting a valiant man (and especially when they don't realize the man is valiant).

Compass said:

“I think that, too.

“But, brother, if I could over-entreat you and persuade you to do more than you want to do, I have a little plot against the other dinner guests.

“If you would be contented to endure a sliding, passing reprehension and condemnation and finding of faults at my hands, to hear yourself or your profession glanced at — criticized indirectly — in a few slighting terms, it would beget me such a main — strong — authority on the by (as a result) and do yourself no disrepute at all.”

Compass' plot involves him criticizing Captain Ironside and his profession of soldier. This criticism, he says, would benefit him and would have no ill effect on Captain Ironside.

Captain Ironside replied:

“Compass, I know that universal causes in nature produce nothing except as meeting particular causes, to determine those and specify their acts.”

Aristotle did not accept Plato's theory of ideal Forms. He did think that common, universal characteristics existed, but only in relation to material examples. Instead of believing in the ideal Form of Tree, Aristotle recognized that many individual trees existed and they shared common, universal characteristics that identified them as being trees.

Captain Ironside continued:

“This is a piece of Oxford science and philosophy that has stayed with me ever since I left that place, and I have often found the truth thereof in my private passions and feelings.

“For I never feel myself perturbed with any general words against my profession of soldiery, unless by some smart stroke upon myself they awake and stir me.”

In other words: General condemnations against the military profession did not bother Captain Ironside. What would make him angry was a condemnation made directly against him: an individual soldier.

Captain Ironside continued:

“In addition, to wise and well-experienced men, words carry only superficial meaning. They have no power, except with dull grammarians, whose souls are nothing but a *syntaxis* — arrangement — of them.”

A proverb stated, “Words are but wind.”

A physical attack on Captain Ironside, however, would be strongly resisted by him.

Seeing someone coming toward them, Compass said:

“Here comes our parson, Parson Palate here, a ‘venerable youth’! I must greet him.

“And he’s a great clerk and cleric! He’s going to the lady’s, and, although you see him thus without his cope, I dare assure you, he’s our parish pope.”

A cope is an outer ecclesiastical garment. Parson Palate was not wearing one.

Parson Palate walked over to them.

Compass said, “May God save my reverend clergyman, Parson Palate!”

— 1.2 —

“The witty Master Compass!” Parson Palate replied. “How is it with you? How are you?”

Compass replied, “My lady waits for you and for your counsel touching — concerning — her niece, Mistress Placentia Steel, who strikes the fire of fully fourteen years old today, ripe for a husband.”

Flint striking steel creates a spark that can light a fire.

The fire she is experiencing is metaphorical: Placentia Steel has reached puberty and is feeling sexual fire.

In this society, fourteen was a young age for a bride.

Parson Palate said:

“Aye, she chimes, she chimes.”

The chimes, as of a bell ringing the time, announce that she's ready and ripe enough to be married. She rings out her sexual desirability.

He continued:

“Have you seen the Doctor Rut, the house physician? He's sent for, too.”

“Sent for to counsel her?” Compass said. “It's time you were there. Make haste and give it a round, brisk, quick dispatch, so that we may go to dinner in good time, parson, and drink a health or two more to the business.”

Parson Palate exited.

Captain Ironside said, “This is a strange put-off!”

He felt that Compass had been rude to Parson Palate in how he had sent him on his way.

Captain Ironside continued:

“He is a reverend youth, and you treat him very surreverently — not reverently — I think.

“What do you call him? Palate Please? Or Parson Palate?”

Compass said:

“All's one, but shorter.”

Indeed, “Palate Please” is one syllable shorter than “Parson Palate.” Both together mean that he is a parson who pleases his palate.

Compass continued:

“I can give you a description of his character.”

Compass then described the parson's character, in couplets:

“He is the prelate of the parish here



“And governs all the dames, appoints the cheer [food and entertainment],

“Writes down the bills of fare, pricks [records] all the guests,

“Makes all the matches and the marriage feasts

“Within the ward, draws up all the parish wills,

“Designs [Arranges] the legacies, and strokes the gills

“Of the chief mourners.”

Tickling the gills of trout was a way of catching them. Metaphorically, Parson Palate flatters the chief mourners as a preparation for taking money from them.

Compass continued:

“And, whoever lacks

“Of all the kindred, he has first his blacks [black hangings for funerals].”

Parson Palate probably rents out the black hangings as a source of income.

The “whoever lacks” is ambiguous. It can refer to 1) a lack of money, or 2) a lack of a family member due to death.

Compass continued:

“Thus holds he weddings up, and burials,

“As his main tithing [source of income], with the gossips’ stalls,

“Their pews.”

Parson Palate makes money by renting pews to godparents, aka gossips.

Compass continued:

“He’s top still [always] at the public mess [always sits at the head of the table],

“Comforts the widow and the fatherless

“In funeral sack [sackcloth], sits above the alderman,

“For of the wardmote quest [a town ward’s judicial inquiry] he better can [knows]

“The mystery than the Levitic law.”

“That piece of clerkship [scholarship] does his vestry awe.”

Parson Palate understood secular law better than he understood church law. Many parsons attempted to understand such mysteries as the Trinity, but Parson Palate worked to understand secular mysteries. The people in his congregation were awed by his knowledge of secular law.

Compass continued:

“He is as he conceives himself, a fine,

“Well-furnished and apparellèd divine.”

Parson Palate concerned himself much with his income, and he knew much about secular matters. He also had a high opinion of himself and was very well dressed.

Different kinds of ‘fine’ exist. A person can have a fine figure or a fine mind.

Different kinds of “well-furnished” exist. The phrase can refer to a house that has fine furniture or to a well-stocked mind.

Actor/writer/director/raconteur Peter Ustinov was once asked why he read so many books. He replied that since he was a prisoner of his mind, he wanted it to be well furnished.

The description of Parson Palate was an epigram: a short witty poem.

“Who made this epigram?” Captain Ironside asked. “You?”

“No, the one who made it is as great clerk — scholar — as any is of his bulk,” Compass said. “Ben Jonson made it.”

This is true: Ben Jonson wrote *The Magnetic Lady*.

Ben Jonson was a bulky — heavy — man. At one time, he was just short of 20 stone, or 280 pounds. According to Jonson, he had a “mountain belly.”

Jonson’s knowledge of literature, including classical literature, was impressive: It was weighty.

“But what is the character description of Doctor Rut?” Captain Ironside asked.

Compass replied:

“The same man — Ben Jonson — made both character descriptions, but the description of Doctor Rut is shorter, and not in rhymed couplets, but unrhymed blank verse.

“I’ll tell you that, too.

“Rut is a young physician to the family, who, letting God alone, ascribes to nature more than her share.”

In a religious age, he ignored God and God’s help in healing.

Compass continued:

“He is licentious in discourse.”

In other words: He says more than he should.

Compass continued:

“And in his life he is a self-confessed voluptuary and lewd sexualist.

“He is the slave of money, a low buffoon and cruel fool in manners.

“He is obscene and indecorous in language, which he vents and speaks for wit.

“He is saucy and insolent in his logics and disputing.

“He is anything but civil or a man.”

Seeing people approaching them, Compass said, “Look, here they are!”

Lady Loadstone, Parson Palate, and Doctor Rut entered the scene.

Compass said to Captain Ironside:

“And they are walking with My Lady in consultation before the door.

“We will slip in as if we didn’t see them.”

Compass and Captain Ironside exited the scene and entered Lady Loadstone’s house, where Compass resided.

### — 1.3 —

Lady Loadstone, Parson Palate, and Doctor Rut talked about Placentia Steel, Lady Loadstone’s niece. Today was her fourteenth birthday, and Lady Loadstone believed that she was ready to be married.

“Aye, it is his fault that my niece, Placentia, is not bestowed and given in marriage,” Lady Loadstone said. “It is my brother Interest’s fault.”

“Who, old Sir Moth?” Parson Palate asked.

“He keeps off all her suitors, keeps her marriage portion still in his hands, and will not part with it on any terms,” Lady Loadstone said.

The marriage portion was Placentia's dowry. Sir Interest Moth had control of the money until Placentia was married.

Mathew 6:19-20 (King James Version) states:

“19: *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:*

“20: *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.*”

Sir Interest Moth, however, was a usurer, and he was busy laying up for himself treasure on earth.

“*Hinc illae lachrimae,*” Parson Palate said. “Thus flows the cause of the main grievance.”

*Hinc illae lachrimae* is Latin for “Hence [come] these tears.”

The line is a quotation from Terence, *Andria*, line 126.

“That — the grievance — it is a main one,” Doctor Rut said. “How much is the marriage portion?”

“No petty sum,” Lady Loadstone said.

“No more or less than sixteen thousand pounds,” Parson Palate said.

“He should be forced, madam, to lay it down and release it,” Doctor Rut said. “When is it payable?”

“When she is married,” Lady Palate said.

“Marry her, marry her, madam,” Parson Palate said.

“Get her married,” Doctor Rut said. “Lose not a day, an hour —”

Parson Palate interrupted:

“— not a minute. Pursue your project real.”

“Real” can mean 1) genuine, actual, 2) real estate, real property, and/or 3) chattel real — a lease or ward.

Placentia Steel is a ward of Lady Loadstone.

Hmm. Fourteen is a young age to be married. The haste for Placentia Steel to be married may have much to do with getting sixteen thousand pounds out of the hands of Sir Moth Interest, the brother of Lady Loadstone. But there could be a different, additional reason.

Parson Palate continued:

“Master Compass advised you, too. He is the perfect instrument your Ladyship should sail by.”

Parson Palate respected Compass.

Doctor Rut said, “Now, Master Compass is a fine, witty man. I saw him go in just now.”

“Has he gone in?” Lady Loadstone asked.

“Yes, and a feather with him,” Parson Palate said. “He seems to be a soldier.”

Captain Ironside was wearing a feather in his hat. At the time, that was a mark of a military man.

“He is some new suitor, madam,” Doctor Rut said.

“I am beholden to Compass,” Lady Loadstone said. “He always brings a variety of good persons to my table, and I must thank him, although my brother Interest dislikes and disapproves of it a little.”

“Sir Moth Interest likes nothing that runs your way,” Parson Palate said. “If you like something, he doesn’t like it.”

“Truly, and the other — Compass — doesn’t care about Sir Moth Interest’s opinion,” Doctor Rut said. “Compass will go his own way, if he thinks it right.”

Lady Loadstone said:

“Compass is a true friend.

“And there’s Master Practice, the fine young man of law who comes to the house. My brother does not tolerate him because he thinks that Master Practice is by me assigned for — intended to marry — my niece.

“My brother will not hear of it.”

Doctor Rut said:

“Not of that ear.”

“To hear of both ears” means to be impartial and to hear both sides of an argument. In this case, Sir Moth Interest is metaphorically deaf in one ear and will not hear the argument that Placentia ought to marry the lawyer Master Practice.

Doctor Rut continued:

“But yet Your Ladyship does wisely in it —”

Parson Palate interrupted:

“— it will make him to lay down the marriage portion sooner, if he but dreams you’ll match her with a lawyer.”

A lawyer would know how to get the dowry money from Sir Moth Interest.

“So Master Compass says,” Lady Loadstone said. “It is between the lawyer and the courtier who shall have and marry Placentia.”

“Who, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm?” Parson Palate asked.

Yes, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm was the courtier.

“A fine gentleman,” Doctor Rut said. “He is Old Master Silkworm’s heir.”

Parson Palate said, “And he is a neat, well-dressed courtier, of a most elegant thread — appearance and clothing.”

“And so my gossip — my companion — Polish assures me,” Lady Loadstone said. “Here she comes!”

Mistress Polish entered the scene.

Lady Loadstone said, “Good Polish, you are welcome, truly! How are thou, gentle Polish?”

“Who’s this?” Doctor Rut whispered to Parson Palate.

Parson Palate quietly answered, “She is Dame Polish, the she-parasite of Lady Loadstone. She is her much-talking, soothing and flattering, sometime governing gossip.”

A she-parasite is a female dependent.

A gossip is a friend or companion.

Mistress Polish had been Placentia’s guardian.

— 1.4 —

Madame Polish said, “Your Ladyship is still the Lady Loadstone who draws and draws to you guests of all sorts: the courtiers, the soldiers, the scholars, the travelers, physicians, and divines, as Doctor Ridley wrote, and Doctor Barlow! They both have written about you and Master Compass.”

Mark Ridley wrote *The Navigators Supply* (1597), and William Barlow wrote *Magneticall Advertisements ... experiments concerning the nature and properties of the Load-stone* (1616).



“We intend that they shall write more before long,” Lady Loadstone said.

Mistress Polish said:

“Alas, they are both dead, if it please you.”

“If it please you” means “I hope you don’t mind my saying so.”

Mark Ridley had died in 1624, and William Barlow had died in 1625.

Mistress Polish continued:

“But Your Ladyship means well, and shall mean well, so long as I live.

“How does your fine niece, my charge, Mistress Placentia Steel? How is she?”

A “charge” is a responsibility.

Mistress Polish helped take care of her charge: Placentia Steel.

“She is not well,” Lady Loadstone said.

“Not well?” Mistress Polish asked.

“Her doctor says so,” Lady Loadstone said.

Doctor Rut said:

“She is not very well.

“She cannot shoot arrows at butts [targets] and practice archery, or manage and ride a great warhorse, but she can crunch a sack of small coal-cinder, eat limestone and hair, soap-ashes [wood ashes used in making soap], loam, and she has a dainty, delicate, delightful spice — perfume — of the green sickness.”

The green sickness is anemia brought about by puberty in young women and causing a faint greenish complexion. Some of the odd “snacks” listed here may replace iron lost through menstruation. An unusual appetite for odd items is a sign of anemia due to iron deficiency — and it is a sign of pregnancy.

This society believed that green sickness afflicted virgins, and one cure was to marry the young woman to a man.

Sir Moth Interest was willing for Placentia to continue to be sick and not marry because he would keep control of her money.

Now that Placentia was a young woman, she was giving up male exercises such as target shooting and riding large horses. She was no longer a tomboy.

“Od shield!” Mistress Polish said.

This means, “God shield and protect us!”

Doctor Rut then said:

“Or she has a dainty, delicate, delightful spice — perfume — of the dropsy.”

Dropsy is edema, which causes swelling, including a bloated stomach.

He continued:

“The illness is a toy, a trifle, a thing of nothing.

“But My Lady here, her noble aunt —”

Mistress Polish said, “She is a noble aunt, and a right worshipful — distinguished and worthy of respect — lady, and a virtuous one, I know it well.”

Doctor Rut said, “Well, if you know it, peace — be quiet.”

“Good sister Polish, hear your betters speak,” Parson Palate said.

Mistress Polish said:

“Sir, I will speak, with My good Lady’s leave, and speak and speak again.

“I did bring up My Lady’s niece, Mistress Placentia Steel, with my own daughter, who’s Placentia, too, and waits upon My Lady as her serving-woman.”

“Placentia” means “pleasure.” So does “Pleasance,” which is the name of Mistress Polish’s daughter. So both have the same name: Pleasure.

Mistress Polish continued:

“Her Ladyship well knows Mistress Placentia Steel, as I said, her curious — fastidious and discriminating — niece, was left a legacy to me — bequeathed to me — by father and mother, along with the nurse, Keep, who tended her.”

In other words, Mistress Polish became Placentia’s guardian.

Mistress Polish continued:

“Her mother died in childbed of complications resulting from her birth, and her father lived for not long afterward because he loved her mother.

“They were a godly couple!

“Yet both died, as must we all. No creature is immortal, I have heard our pastor say, no, not even the faithful, and they did die, as I said, both in one month —”

The first part of Psalm 89:48 states, “*What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?*” (King James Version).

Doctor Rut whispered to Parson Palate, “Surely Mistress Polish is not likely to be long-lived, if she expends and wastes her breath like this.”

Mistress Polish continued:

“And did bequeath her to my care and hand to polish and bring up.”

The polish would be acquired through education and training.

Mistress Polish continued:

“I molded her and fashioned her and formed her; she had the sweat both of my brows and brains, My Lady knows it, since she could write a quarter old.”

The words “since she could write a quarter old” mean “since she — Pleasance — was a week old.”

The word “quarter” means “a fourth of a lunar month.”

Pleasance’s mother died giving birth to her, and her father quickly died afterward in the same month, and so Pleasance became Mistress Polish’s ward when Pleasance was one fourth of a lunar month old — one week old.

One meaning of “write” is “to be age [such-and-such].”

To tease Mistress Polish, Lady Loadstone interpreted “write” in the sense of “writing letters and words”:

“I don’t know that she could write so early, my good gossip.

“But I do know that she was so long in your care until she was twelve years old. It was then that I called for her and took her home, for which I thank you, Polish, and I am beholden to you.”

Doctor Rut whispered to Parson Palate, "I for sure thought that she had a lease of talking for nine lives —"

A lease is a legal arrangement. Some leases can be for a lifetime, but some were for more than one lifetime so the lease would apply to descendants. But if Mistress Polish were like a cat and had nine lives, she would be talking throughout each of them.

Parson Palate interrupted, "— it may be she has."

Overhearing him, Mistress Polish said to Parson Palate:

"Sir, sixteen thousand pounds was then her portion, for she was indeed their only child. And this was to be paid upon her marriage, provided that she married still — consistent — with My good Lady's liking here, her aunt.

"I heard the will read: Master Steel, her father, the world condemned him to be very rich and very hard, and he did stand condemned with that vain world until, as it was proved afterward, he left almost as much more to good uses in Sir Moth Interest's hands, the hands of My Lady's brother, whose sister Master Steel had married.

"Sir Moth Interest holds all the money in his close grip."

Master Steel had married the sister of Lady Loadstone and Sir Moth Interest. Sir Moth was now the trustee of Master Steel's estate, including the money that was supposed to go to charity and the money that was supposed to be Placentia's dowry.

Master Steel had left almost sixteen thousand pounds to good uses — charity. But since Sir Moth Interest was taking care of the money, and since as a usurer he considered earning interest to be a good use of money, he was probably using the money in usury.

Mistress Polish continued:

“But Master Steel was liberal and generous, and he was a fine man, and his wife was a dainty dame, and she was a religious, and a bountiful —”

— 1.5 —

Compass and Captain Ironside now stepped forward.

They had entered somewhat earlier and had listened to the conversation, but now they walked over to the others.

“You knew her, Master Compass?” Mistress Polish asked.

“Her” was Master Steel’s wife, the mother of Placentia.

“Spare the torture,” Compass said. “I do confess without it.”

Some prisoners were tortured to exact confessions.

Compass was tortured by hearing about Master Steel’s wife because it reminded him that she was now dead. He had respected her.

“And her husband?” Mistress Polish asked. “What a fine couple they were, and how they lived?”

“Yes,” Compass said.

“And loved together like a pair of turtledoves?” Mistress Polish asked.

Turtledoves are symbols of constancy in love — they are lovebirds.

“Yes,” Compass said.

“And feasted all the neighbors?” Mistress Polish asked.

“Take her away,” Compass said. “Somebody who has mercy —”

Doctor Rut whispered to Parson Palate, “Oh, he knows Mistress Steel, it seems!”

Compass continued:

“— or any measure of compassion.

“Doctors, if you are Christians, undertake responsibility — one for the soul, the other for the body!”

The doctors were Parson Palate, Doctor of Theology, and Doctor Rut, Doctor of Medicine.

Mistress Polish said, “Mistress Steel would dispute and debate with the Doctors of Divinity at her own table! And the Spital preachers! And find out the errors of the Armenians.”

Preachers spoke Spital Sermons at the Church of St. Mary Spitalfields, which was near the hospital of St. Mary.

Doctor Rut asked, “Do you mean the Arminians?”

Doctor Rut was right. She actually meant the followers of James Arminius, aka Jacobus Arminius, who proposed that God’s sovereignty and human free will are compatible. This was a reaction to the Calvinist belief of predestination: that God chose which human beings he wanted to save; even before they were born, all human beings were predestined either for Heaven or for Hell.

The Arminians can be seen as a middle way between Calvinism and Catholicism.

“I say the Armenians,” Madam Polish said.

“I say so, too!” Compass said.

He wanted to have some fun at her expense.

“So Master Polish called them, the Armenians!’ Mistress Polish said.

“And the Medes and the Persians, didn’t he?” Compass said.

Compass was having fun with her, hoping that she would adopt these malapropisms. And so she did, using “Medes” to refer to those people who were middling — lukewarm — when it came to religious observance. She also used “Persians” to mean Precisians: strict Puritans.

Mistress Polish rose to his expectations:

“Yes, he knew them, and so did Mistress Steel! She was his pupil.

“The Armenians, he would say, were worse than Papists!

“And then the Persians were our Puritans, and they had the fine piercing wits!”

“And who were the Medes?” Compass asked.

“The middlemen, the lukewarm Protestants!” Mistress Polish said.

“Out, out! Bah, bah!” Doctor Rut said. “That’s what I say to the middle way!”

“Sir, she would find them by their branching: their branching sleeves, branched cassocks, and branched doctrine, beside their texts,” Mistress Polish said.

“Branching” and “branched” usually refer to embroidery, but when Mistress Polish refers to “branching doctrine,” she means “branching away from true religion,” aka “causing a schism or heresy.”

“Stint, carline!” Doctor Rut said. “Stop, old woman! I’ll not listen to her. Confute her, parson.”

A “carline” is an old woman.

“I respect no persons, chaplains, or doctors. I will speak,” Mistress Polish said.



By “persons,” Mistress Polish meant “parsons.”

“Yes,” Lady Loadstone said. “As long as she speaks reason, let her.”

Doctor Rut said, “Death, she cannot speak reason.”

“Death” is an oath: “By God’s death.”

“Nor can she speak sense, if we are masters of our senses,” Compass said.

Captain Ironside said, “What madwoman have they got here to bait — to torment?”

An entertainment of the time was bear-baiting, an activity in which dogs tormented a bear that was tied to a stake.

Another entertainment: Some people visited mentally ill people and laughed at them.

Mistress Polish said, “Sir, I am mad in truth and to the purpose, and I cannot but be mad, to hear My Lady’s dead sister slighted, witty Mistress Steel!”

Chances are, Her Lady’s dead sister was not slighted, just Mistress Polish’s interpretation of what Her Lady’s sister believed.

Captain Ironside said, “If she had a wit, death has gone near to spoil it, assure yourself.”

In other words: Death has destroyed her good intelligence.

Mistress Polish said:

“She was both witty [intelligent] and zealous in her faith, and she lighted all the tinder of the truth — she inspired fervor — (as one said) of religion in our parish.

“She was too learned to live long with us!

“She could — she conned and knew — the Bible in the holy tongue, Hebrew, and read it without pricks.”

To read Hebrew without pricks means to read it without torment: to read it fluently.

Also, “pricks” can refer to marks on Hebrew vowels. To read Hebrew without those linguistic marks would be difficult.

Mistress Polish continued:

“She had all her *Masoreth*; she knew Burton and his *Bull*, and scribe Prynne, gent., presto-begone, and all the Pharisees!”

*Masoreth* is a learned edition of the Talmud: a compilation of Jewish civil and ceremonial law and legend.

Henry Burton published *The Baiting of the Popes Bull* in 1627.

William Prynne was a militant Puritan who made attacks in his writings upon church policy under the Archbishop of Canterbury: William Laud. Because of his work *Histriomastix*, in which he criticized theater, he was accused of criticizing the Queen of England, who had performed in a play. The Queen was Henrietta Maria of France, who was married to King Charles I of England. As a result, Prynne spent time in the pillory, and suffered the amputation of both of his ears. Mistress Polish perhaps calls him “gent.” instead of “gentleman” because anyone who attacks and criticizes the Queen is not a gentleman. Some of his works list as the author “William Prynne, gent. Lincolnshire.”

John Presto was a Protestant divine. The word “prestidigitation” refers to entertaining magic tricks.

“Presto-begone,” however, may also or instead refer to Prester John, a legendary Christian priest-king.

Jesus criticized Pharisees for their public performances of piety.

Lady Loadstone said, “Dear gossip, leave at this time, too, and vouchsafe — condescend — to see your charge: my niece.”

“I shall obey, if Your wise Ladyship thinks fit,” Mistress Polish said. “I know enough to yield to my superiors.”

She exited.

Lady Loadstone said:

“She is a good woman!

“But when Mistress Polish is impertinent and grows earnest and strident, a little troublesome and out of season, then her love and zeal transport her.”

One meaning of “transport” is “to move from this world to the next world.” Another meaning is “to be carried away by emotions.”

Compass said:

“I am glad that anything could port — carry — her away from here. We now have hope of dinner, after her long grace.”

A long grace is a long prayer before a meal.

Compass continued:

“I have brought Your Ladyship a hungry guest here, a soldier and my brother, Captain Ironside, who being by custom and habit grown a sanguinary — someone who loves to shed the blood of others, the solemn and adopted son of slaughter — is more delighted in the chase of an enemy, an execution (in more ways than one) of three days and nights, than he is delighted by all the hope of numerous succession or

happiness of issue — many children — could bring to him  
—”

In other words, Captain Ironside preferred the act of killing to the act that might result in the production of children.

Doctor Rut whispered to Parson Palate, “He is no suitor to Placentia, then?”

Parson Palate whispered back, “So it would seem.”

Compass continued:

“And, if he can get pardon at heaven’s hand for all his murders, is in as good case as a new-christened infant, his employments continued to him without interruption, and not allowing him either time or place to commit any other sins but those.”

In other words: Captain Ironside has been so busy killing people that he has not been able to commit any other sins such as fornication. If heaven pardons his many killings, then he is as innocent as a newly christened infant.

Compass continued:

“Please make him welcome for a meal, madam.”

Lady Loadstone said, “The nobleness of his profession makes his welcome perfect, although your coarse description would seem to sully it.”

Of course, Compass had previously gotten his friend’s permission to somewhat denigrate his military profession.

Captain Ironside said, “Never, where a beam of so much favor does illustrate and illuminate it, right knowing lady.”

Lady Loadstone had looked approvingly at him as if she knew that he was a good man despite just meeting him.

Parson Palate whispered to Doctor Rut, “She has cured — healed — all well.”

Lady Loadstone was a peacemaker.

Doctor Rut whispered back, “And Captain Ironside has fitted well the compliment.”

He had made a good first impression.

— 1.6 —

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm and Master Practice entered the scene. Sir Diaphanous Silkworm was a courier, and Master Practice was a lawyer. Both were considered suitable suitors for Placentia.

Compass said:

“Here they come! The prime magnetic guests our Lady Loadstone so respects: the Arctic and the Antarctic!”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm and Master Practice were the most likely male guests to attract other guests. They were the Arctic and the Antarctic: the places where the Earth’s magnetic poles were located.

They were also the two most likely suitors to wed Placentia.

Compass continued:

“Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, a courtier extraordinary who, by diet of meats and drinks, his temperate exercise, choice music, frequent baths, his horary shifts — hourly changes — of shirts and waistcoats, means to immortalize mortality itself, and makes the essence of his whole happiness the trim — fashionable dress — of court!”

“To immortalize mortality” means “to live a very long life.”

“I thank you, Master Compass, for your short encomiastic,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

By “encomiastic,” he meant “commendation.”

“It is much in little, sir,” Doctor Rut said.

Compass had described the courtier briefly, but well.

Parson Palate said, “It is concise and quick and lively: the true style of an orator.”

Compass said:

“But Master Practice here, My Lady’s lawyer, or man of law (for that’s the true writing): He is a man so dedicated to his profession and the preferments — promotions and privileges — that go along with it, as scarcely the thundering bruit and uproar of an invasion, another fifteen eighty-eight threatening his country with ruin, would no more work upon and affect him than Syracuse’s sack on Archimedes.

“So much he loves that nightcap (lawyer’s cap), the benchgown (lawyer’s formal gown that was worn in court) with the broad guard (ornamental trimming] on the back.”

The year 1588 was the year the Spanish Armada threatened England but was defeated.

Archimedes of Syracuse, Sicily, a famous mathematician and scientist, devised defensive war machines to protect his city; he was killed in 212 B.C.E. by a Roman soldier when Syracuse was sacked. According to legend, Archimedes was engrossed in solving a mathematical problem and so did not notice the Roman soldier.

Compass continued:

“These show a man betrothed — engaged — to the study of our laws!”

Master Practice replied, “You just think that the practice of law is the crafty impositions of subtle clerks, feats of fine understanding to abuse clots (fools) and clowns (more fools) with, Master Compass, having no ground in nature to sustain it or light from those clear causes that to the inquiry and search of which your mathematical head has so devowed and devoted itself.”

Master Practice believed that Compass thought that law lacked the firm foundation and clarity of mathematics, the subject that Compass studied. Law was not mathematical and was not scientific.

Compass replied:

“Tut, all men are philosophers to their inches — to the best of their abilities.

“There inside Lady Loadstone’s house is Sir Interest, as able a philosopher in buying and selling, who has reduced his thrift to certain principles, and in that method, as he will tell you instantly, by logarithms, the utmost profit of a stock (investment) employed, be the commodity (what is traded) what it will, the place or time but causing very, very little, or, I may say, no parallax (alteration) at all, in his pecuniary observations!

“He has brought your niece’s marriage portion with him, madam; at least, he has brought the man who must receive it.”

Compass had referred to Sir Interest, which is an incorrect way to refer to a knight. Sir Moth and Sir Moth Interest are both correct, but not Sir Interest. Such a wrong use of the name indicated Compass’ lack of respect for this man.

Compass noticed Sir Moth Interest and Master Bias entering the scene and said:

“Here they come, negotiating the affair.

“You may perceive the contract in their faces and read the indenture.

“If you’d sign them, so be it.”

An indenture was a contract that was divided into two halves with serrated edges. One half was given to each of the two people who had made the contract.

Compass believed that Sir Moth Interest and Master Bias were motivated mainly by the making of money. Because of that, Lady Loadstone ought to be careful about accepting their idea about whom Placentia ought to marry.

Their idea was that Placentia ought to marry Master Bias.

— 1.7 —

Sir Moth Interest and Master Bias walked over to them.

Sir Moth Interest was a usurer, or money-bawd, and brother to Lady Loadstone.

Master Bias was a vi-politic — a vice-politician, aka assistant to an official. The official was Lord Whach’um: Lord What-You-Call-Him.

Parson Palate asked Compass quietly about Master Bias: “What and who is he, Master Compass?”

Compass answered, “He is a vi-politic, or a sub-aiding (aiding-behind-the-scenes) instrument of state: a kind of laborious, painstaking secretary, one who does all the work, to a great man — and is likely to come on and be successful! He is full of attendance and assiduous service, and of such a stride — so confident — in business, political or economic, that his lord may as well stoop to take advice from him and be told what to do and be directed by him in affairs of highest consequence, when he is dulled or wearied with the less!”



Sir Diaphanous Silkworm the courtier said, “He is Master Bias, Lord Whach’um’s politic.”

A vi-politician can engage in political manipulation. Master Bias probably did some of Lord Whach’um’s dirty work for him.

“You know the man?” Compass asked.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm answered, “I have seen him wait at court there with his maniples — bundles — of papers and petitions.”

Master Practice the lawyer said:

“He is a man who overrules others, though, by his authority of living there, and he cares for no man else.”

Much of his authority came from his living at court.

Master Practice continued:

“He neglects the sacred letter of the law, and he holds it all to be just a dead heap of civil institutions. It is the rest — the resort, the prop — only of common men and their causes, a farrago, aka hodgepodge, aka confused mass, or a made-dish — something concocted from many ingredients — in court, a thing of nothing.”

“And that’s your quarrel at him?” Compass said. “A just plea.”

Sir Moth Interest said to his sister, Lady Loadstone, “I tell you, sister Loadstone —”

Compass whispered to Captain Ironside, “Hang your ears this way and hear his praises: Now Moth opens.”

Master Practice had given a negative view of Master Bias, and now Sir Moth Interest will give a positive view of Master Bias.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“I have brought you here the very man, the jewel of all the court, close-mouthed and secret Master Bias.”

Personal secretaries know their superiors’ secrets, and so being secretive and close-mouthed can be a good quality in a secretary.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“Sister, apply him to your side, or you may wear him here on your breast, or hang him in your ear.”

Sir Moth Interest called Master Bias a metaphorical jewel:

“He’s a fit pendant for a lady’s tip — earlobe. He is chrysolite, a gem, the very agate of state and polity. He is cut from the quarry of Machiavelli, as true a cornelian as Tacitus himself, and to be made the brooch to any true state-cap in Europe!”

In other words: He would be an ornament to any politician he assisted. He would help that politician to become more powerful and influential.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one meaning of “politician” is “A schemer or plotter; a shrewd, sagacious, or crafty person.”

Machiavelli, who wrote *The Prince*, had the reputation of being a consummate political manipulator.

Cornelius Tacitus was a Roman historian.

A cornelian is a gemstone, as is a chrysolite and an agate.

Lady Loadstone said, “You praise him, brother, as if you had hope to sell him.”

Compass said, “No, madam, as if he had hope to sell — praise — your niece to him.”

“Beware your true jests, Master Compass,” Lady Loadstone said. “They will not relish or please.”

A proverb states, “There’s many a true word spoken in jest.”

Sir Moth Interest said:

“I will tell you, sister, that I cannot cry his caract — character and carat — up enough: He is unvaluable.”

He meant invaluable: very valuable. “Unvaluable” means 1) very valuable, 2) incalculable, and/or 3) worthless.

Some things, of course, that are valuable in some ways can be worthless in other ways — such as being morally bankrupt.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“All the lords have him in that esteem for his relations [accounts, narratives of events], courants [express messengers], advice, correspondences and letters with this ambassador and that agent. He will insinuate himself into a statist’s confidence and find out the secret of that statist —”

A statist is a skilled politician.

Compass said, “— as easy as some cobbler worms a dog.”

In this society, a preventative procedure against rabies was to remove a ligament from under a dog’s tongue. This was called “worming” the dog.

Sir Moth Interest continued, “— and lock it in the cabinet of his memory —”

Compass said, “— until it turns into a politic insect or a fly thus long.”

“It” refers to Master Bias’ memory and to Master Bias himself. Master Bias will keep the secret until it becomes politically expedient to reveal it.

Master Bias is a politic insect or fly: something despicable and annoying such as a buzzing fly or other insect.

Sir Moth Interest said, “You may be merry, Master Compass, but although you have the reversion of an office, you are not in it, sir.”

Having the reversion of an office meant having the right to succeed in — being next in line to have — it. Eventually, Compass would have that office.

“Remember that,” Master Bias said.

This was a threat. Someone like Master Bias knew ways to have someone else get that reversion.

Compass said, “Why, should that frighten me, Master Bi-, from telling whose -ass you are?”

Compass had separated the two syllables of Bias’ name so he could call him an ass. Actually, he called him twice-an-ass: a bi-ass.

Sir Moth Interest said, “Sir, he’s one who can do his turns there and deliver, too, his letters as punctually and in as good a fashion as ever a secretary can in court.”

In other words: Master Bias knew the tricks of the trade of political trickery.

Captain Ironside said, “Why, is it any matter in what fashion a man delivers his letters, as long as he does not open them?”

Master Bias said, “Yes, we have certain precedents in court from which we never swerve once in an age, and, whatsoever Compass thinks, I know the arts and sciences do not

directlier — more directly — make a graduate in our universities than a habitual gravity prefers a man in court.”

Projecting an aura of gravitas helped a man earn promotions at court. It does that more directly and effectively than having a good education. Sometimes, appearance is more profitable than reality.

Compass said, “Which, by the truer style, some call a formal, flat servility.”

A “truer style” is a truer title or name.

“Formal” means “outward.” It is an outward appearance of gravitas that may not match what is inside the vi-politician. Some politicians and vi-politicians are hypocritical.

Master Bias said:

“Sir, you may call it what you please. But we who tread the path of public businesses know what a tacit shrug is, or a shrink, the wearing the calotte, the politic hood, and twenty other *parerga*, besides, you secular laymen — you non-political men — don’t understand.”

In politics, people know how to shrink and show fear when needed. They know who wears the calotte: a sergeant-at-law’s hat.

They also know many other things: *Parerga* means “secondary features.”

Master Bias said to himself:

“I shall trick Compass, if his reversion should come in my lord’s way.”

He would find a way to make Compass’ reversion the reversion of the politician he served.

“What is that, Master Practice?” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm asked. “You surely know Master Compass’ reversion?”

Master Practice said:

“It is a fine place, a fine office: Surveyor of the Projects General.

“I wish I had it.”

The office granted monopolies.

“What is it worth?” Parson Palate asked.

“Oh, sir, it is worth a *nemo scit*,” Master Practice said.

*Nemo scit* is Latin for “No one knows,” but no doubt one could guess its worth.

Lady Loadstone said to Sir Moth Interest, “We’ll think about it before dinner.”

She would think about whether Master Bias would be an appropriate suitor for Placentia.

### **CHORUS 1 (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)**

John Trygust asked Probee and Damplay, “Now, gentlemen, what censure — judge — you about our *protasis*, or first act? What do you think about it?”

“Well, boy, it is a fair presentment of and performance by your actors,” Probee said. “And it is a handsome promise of something to come hereafter.”

“But there is nothing done in it, or concluded,” Damplay said. “Therefore I say, it is no act.”

John Trygust said:

“A fine piece of logic!

“Do you look, Master Damplay, for conclusions in a *protasis*? I thought the law of comedy had reserved them to the *catastrophe*, and that the *epitasis*, as we are taught, and the *catastasis* had been intervening parts, to have been expected. But you would have all come together, it seems. The clock should strike five at once with the acts.”

In other words: If all the parts of a play occurred at the same time, the play would be over quickly.

Also in other words: The introduction (*protasis*) of a play is for introducing things; the conclusion (*catastrophe*) of a play is for concluding things.

In classical drama, plays can be divided into four parts:

*Protasis*: The introductory part of a play, setting forth the characters and the subject of the play. In Jonson’s play and many other plays, this is the first act.

*Epitasis*: Trials and tribulations ensue and build toward a climax. In Jonson’s play, the *epitasis* includes negotiations about who will marry Placentia. The number of suitors increases, and the negotiations become complicated.

*Catastasis*: The action that was initiated in the *epitasis* continues, often resulting in the climax of a drama. The climax can be the turning point and/or a point of highest tension. In 4.4, Compass makes an important discovery.

*Catastrophe*: The conclusion, which in comedies is happy. In comedies, the *catastrophe* often includes one or more marriages.

Jonson’s play has an additional part:

Prologue/Induction: An opening that gives context and gives background details. In Jonson’s play, this is the Induction (Introduction) or Chorus.

“Why, if it could do so, it would be well, boy,” Damplay said.

John Trygust replied, “Yes, if the nature of a clock were to speak, not strike. So, if a child could be born in a play, and grow up to a man in the first scene, before he went off the stage, and then afterward to come forth a squire and be made a knight, and that knight to travel between the acts and do wonders in the Holy Land, or elsewhere: kill paynims [pagans], wild boars, dun [dull brown] cows, and other monsters; beget himself a reputation and marry an emperor’s daughter for his mistress; convert her father’s country; and at last come home, lame and all-to-beladen — heavily loaded — with miracles.”

Damplay said, “These miracles would please, I assure you, and take — captivate — the people. For there are those of the people who will expect miracles and more than miracles from this pen.”

“Do they think this pen — Ben Jonson — can juggle?” John Trygust asked. “I wish we had Hocus-Pocus for them, then, your people, or Travitanto Tudesko.”

Hocus-Pocus was a famous juggler of the times.

“Who’s Travitanto Tudesko, boy?” Damplay asked.

John Trygust answered:

“Another juggler with a long name.”

He then said:

“I wish either that those expecters you talk about would be gone hence now, at the first act, or that they would expect no more hereafter than they understand.”

“Why so, my peremptory jack?” Damplay said.



He felt that the theater boy was peremptory: overly confident in his opinions.

The theater boy — John Trygust — said:

“My name is John, indeed.”

The name “Jack” is a nickname for “John.”

John Trygust continued:

“My answer to your question is this: Because those who expect what is impossible or beyond nature defraud and cheat themselves.”

“There the boy said well: They do defraud and cheat themselves indeed,” Probee said.

John Trygust said:

“And therefore, Master Damplay, unless, like a solemn justice of wit — a judge without a sense of humor — you will damn our play unheard or unexamined, I shall entreat your Mistress, Madam Expectation, if she is among these ladies, to have patience but a pissing while — a short time, the time it takes to piss — in order to give our springs leave to open a little by degrees!

“A source of ridiculous, laughter-causing matter may break forth soon that shall steep their temples and bathe their brains in laughter, to the fomenting of stupidity itself and the awaking any velvet lethargy — well-dressed sleepy person — in the house.”

Probee said, “Why do you maintain your poet’s quarrel so with velvet and good clothes, boy? We have seen him in indifferent — neither especially good nor especially bad — clothes before now.”

The poet was Ben Jonson.

John Trygust said:

“And you may see him in better clothing, if it please the King, his master, to say amen and agree to it, and allow it, to whom he acknowledges all.”

If the King were to — ahem — give Ben Jonson more money, Ben Jonson would dress better.

John Trygust continued:

“But his clothes shall never be the best thing about him, though; he will have something in addition, either of humane letters and classical learning or severe honesty, that shall speak and reveal him to be a man even if he went about naked.”

For some people, their clothes — not their mind — are the best thing about them. This is not the case with Ben Jonson.

“He is beholden to you, if you can make this good, boy,” Probee said. “If you can do it, the author will owe much to you, boy.”

“He himself has done that already against envy,” John Trygust said.

Ben Jonson had criticized malicious envy in the induction of his play *The Arraignment, or Poetaster*.

In his plays, poems, and masques, Ben Jonson had shown that he was worthy of great respect no matter what clothes — if any — he was wearing.

“What’s your name, sir, or your country?” Damplay asked.

“John Trygust is my name,” the theater-boy said. “I am a Cornish youth, and I am the poet’s servant.”

The poet, of course, is Ben Jonson.

“West-country breed, I thought, you were so bold,” Damplay said.

John Trygust said, “Or rather saucy, to find out your palate, Master Damplay. Indeed, we do call a spade a spade in Cornwall. If you dare damn our play in the wrong place, we shall take heart — have the courage — to tell you so.”

“Good boy!” Probee said.

**ACT 2 (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)**

**— 2.1 —**

Nurse Keep, Placentia, and Pleasance spoke together in a room in Lady Loadstone's house.

Nurse Keep said to Placentia, "Sweet mistress, please be merry. You are sure to have a husband now."

"Aye, if the store does not hurt the choice," Placentia replied.

Placentia had a store — an abundance — of suitors: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm the courtier and Master Practice the lawyer. And now, although she did not know it yet, Master Bias.

A plentitude of suitors could make deciding among them difficult.

"Store is no sore, young mistress, my mother is wont to say," Pleasance said.

By "my mother," she meant "Mistress Polish."

The proverb "Store is no sore" means "Abundance is not a problem."

"And she'll say as wisely as any mouth in the parish," Nurse Keep said. "Fix on one, fix upon one, good mistress. Choose a suitor to marry."

"At this call, too, here's Master Practice who is called to the bench of purpose," Placentia said.

Master Practice was called to Lady Loadstone's dinner-table for the purpose of being a suitor.

Nurse Keep said, "Yes, and by My Lady's means —"

Lady Loadstone had encouraged Master Practice to court Placentia and to come to the dinner.

“He is thought to be the man who will marry you,” Pleasance said to Placentia.

One purpose of Lady Loadstone’s dinner was to decide on a husband for Placentia. Placentia’s preference among the suitors counted for something, but if she rejected Lady Loadstone’s suitors for her, she could lose her marriage portion. The decisive vote was that of her mother: Lady Loadstone.

Nurse Keep said, “A lawyer’s wife —”

Pleasance added, “— and a fine lawyer’s wife —”

Nurse Keep concluded, “— is a brave and fine calling.”

“Calling” is a form of address: what one is called. Often, one’s calling includes a title.

“Sweet Mistress Practice!” Pleasance said.

“Gentle Mistress Practice!” Nurse Keep said.

“Fair, open Mistress Practice!” Pleasance said.

“Open” means “free and frank,” among other meanings.

“Aye, and close and cunning Mistress Practice!” Nurse Keep said.

“Close” means “secretive.”

“Cunning” means “wise and crafty.”

“I don’t like that ‘Mistress Practice,’” Placentia said. “The courtier’s is the neater — more elegant — calling.”

Yes, she would be called “Lady” if she married the courtier.

“Yes, My Lady Silkworm,” Pleasance said.

“And to shine in plush,” Nurse Keep said.

“Plush” is an expensive fabric.

“Like a young night-crow, a Diaphanous Silkworm,” Pleasance said.

“Night-crows” are nocturnal birds of ill omen.

Courtiers such as Diaphanous Silkworm keep late hours and sleep late.

“The title ‘Lady Diaphanous’ sounds most delicate and delightful!” Nurse Keep said.

Actually, she would be Lady Placentia Silkworm.

“Which suitor would you choose now, mistress?” Pleasance asked.

“I cannot say,” Placentia said. “The copious abundance of suitors does confound and confuse one.”

“Here’s my mother,” Pleasance said.

## — 2.2 —

Mistress Polish entered the scene.

She said, “How are things now, my dainty charge of delicate health and my diligent nurse? What were you chanting — chattering — about?”

A “charge” is a responsibility.

Pleasance, her daughter, knelt before her to receive her blessing.

“God bless you, maiden,” Mistress Polish said to her.

Pleasance rose.

Nurse Keep said, “All of us were enchanting, wishing for a husband for my young mistress here. A man to please her.”

“She shall have a man, good nurse, and she must have a man: a man and a half, if we can choose him out,” Mistress Polish said.

“A man and a half” is better than just a man.

“A man and a half” also means a man and a better half.

She continued:

“We are all in council within and sit about it: the doctors and the scholars and My Lady, who’s wiser than all of us.

“Where’s Master Needle? Her Ladyship needs him to prick out the man.”

Master Needle was Lady Loadstone’s steward and tailor.

Needles can be used to prick, but Master Needle was needed now to prick — choose — the name of the man who would marry Placentia. They were sitting in council to make that choice, and when the choice was made, Master Needle could metaphorically prick — mark — the man’s name. Think of a list of names written on a wax tablet.

Pleasance exited to get Master Needle.

Mistress Polish said to Placentia:

“How is my sweet young mistress?

“You don’t look well, I think. How are you, dear charge?

“You must have a husband, and you shall have a husband. There’s two men put forward as choices for making a match with you. And there’s a third man your uncle promises.”

That third suitor, put forward by Sir Moth Interest, was Master Bias.

Mistress Polish continued:

“But you must still be ruled by your aunt, according to the will of your dead father and mother, who are in heaven.

“Your lady aunt has choice in the house — within the family — for you.

“We do not trust your uncle. He would keep you a bachelor — an unmarried maiden — always so he can keep control of your marriage portion — your dowry — and keep you not only without a husband, but with a sickness.

“Aye, and I mean the green sickness, the maiden’s malady, which is a sickness, a kind of a disease, I can assure you, and like the fish our mariners call remora —”

A remora was a fish that was believed to attach itself to a ship and slow its progress.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a remora is “Any of various slender marine fishes of the family Echeneidae, which have the dorsal fin modified to form a large oval suction disc for attachment to the undersides of sharks, other large fishes, cetaceans, and turtles.”

Never being married can retard a woman’s progress when she lives in a society where she is expected to marry and have children.

Nurse Keep interrupted, “— a remora, mistress!”

Annoyed, Mistress Polish, said:

“How now, goody nurse, Dame Keep of Kat’er’ne’s?”

“Goody” is short for “goodwife,” a title of address.

She was referring to Saint Katherine’s Hospital, where insane people were kept.

“Kat’er’ne’s” may also be an oblique reference to “cater’in’s,” or “caterwaulings.”



Nurse Keep was doing a fair amount of caterwauling

Mistress Polish continued:

“What! Have you an oar in the cockboat because you are a sailor’s wife and come from Shadwell? I say a remora, for it will stay and delay a ship that’s under sail.”

A cockboat is a small boat.

“Shadwell” is a dock that had a bad reputation.

“An oar in the cockboat” may have a bawdy meaning.

Master Needle entered the scene, accompanied by Pleasance.

Mistress Polish continued:

“And stays and delays are long and tedious things to maidens! And maidens are young ships that would be sailing when they are rigged. For what reason is all their trim else?”

“Stays” and “rigging” are ship ropes.

“Stays” are also 1) delays, and 2) a corset’s stiffening support.

Removing a corset can delay a maiden who is eager to cease being a maiden (a virgin).

A rig is a wanton woman. A rigged woman is a well-dressed woman.

“Trim” can refer to 1) a ship’s being trimmed: rigged and ready to sail, or 2) good clothing.

Master Needle said, “True, and for them to be stayed —”

“The stay is dangerous,” Mistress Polish said. “You know it, Master Needle.”

Master Needle said, “I know something, I can assure you, from the doctor’s mouth.

“Placentia has a dropsy, and she must have a change of air before she can recover.”

Mistress Polish asked him, “Do you say so, sir?”

“The doctor says so,” Master Needle said.

Mistress Polish said:

“Says His Worship so?

“I warrant them he says the truth then; doctors are sometimes soothsayers and are always cunning-men.

“Which doctor was it?”

“Even My Lady’s doctor,” Master Needle said, “the neat — skillful — house-doctor. But he is a true stone-doctor.”

Stone-horses still had their testicles; they were not geldings.

Mistress Polish said:

“Why, do you hear this, nurse? How comes this gear — this trouble — to happen?

“This is your fault, in truth. It shall be your fault, and it must be your fault.

“Why is your mistress sick?

“She had her health all the time she was with me.”

Nurse Keep said, “Alas, good Mistress Polish, I am no saint, much less am I My Lady, to be urged to give health or sickness at my will, but I must await the stars’ good pleasure and I must do my duty.”

In other words: She lacked the power of the Fates and of Lady Loadstone and instead had to do her duty and hope for

illness to be warded off, and when illness occurred, she had to hope for healing to occur.

Mistress Polish said, “You must do more than your duty, foolish nurse! You must do all you can — and more than you can, more than is possible — when folks are sick, especially when the sick person is a mistress, a young mistress.”

Doctor Rut and Lady Loadstone entered the room.

Nurse Keep said, “Here’s Master Doctor himself, who cannot do that.”

She exited.

Madame Polish said, “Doctor Do-all can do it. That’s why he’s called that.”

Mistress Polish had faith in Doctor Rut: He could do anything.

“Do,” however, can mean “have sex with.” The word “rut” also refers to sex.

### — 2.3 —

Doctor Rut asked about “Doctor Do-All,” “Where is he from? What’s he called?”

Mistress Polish said, “Doctor, do all you can, I pray you and beseech you, for my charge here.”

Lady Loadstone said about Mistress Polish, “She’s my tendering gossip, my affectionate friend, and she loves and attends to my niece.”

“I know you can do all things, what you please, sir, for a young damsel, My good Lady’s niece here,” Mistress Polish said. “You can do what you wish.”

“Peace, tiffany,” Doctor Rut said.

Tiffany is a flimsy fabric: Doctor Rut was insulting Mistress Polish.

“Especially in this new case of the dropsy,” Mistress Polish said. “The gentlewoman, I fear, is leavened.”

Leavened bread has yeast: It rises. Think of a loaf of bread in the oven.

“Leavened?” Doctor Rut asked. “What’s that?”

Mistress Polish answered, “Puffed, blown, if it please Your Worship.”

“What!” Doctor Rut said. “Dark by darker? What is blown? Puffed? Speak English —”

Mistress Polish’s explanation of her comment was harder to understand than her original comment.

In English: Placentia’s belly was swollen.

Mistress Polish continued not speaking English:

“Tainted, if it please you, some do call it.”

In other words: Placentia’s belly was contaminated, corrupted.

Mistress Polish finally spoke English:

“She swells and swells so with it —”

Doctor Rut said

“Give her vent — an outlet — if she do swell. A gimlet that will make a hole must be had.

“It is tympanites that she is troubled with.

“There are three kinds.

“The first kind is anasarca [dropsy of the abdomen] under the flesh, a tumor: That’s not her kind.

“The second is ascites, or *aquosus*, a watery humor: That’s not her kind either.

“But her kind is a tympanites, which we call the drum.

“A wind bomb’s in her belly; it must be unbraced and loosened, and with a faucet — a tap — or a peg let the wind bomb out, and she’ll do well. Get her a husband.”

The faucet and peg are phallic symbols. They will drill a hole in Placentia and let the “wind bomb” out.

Mistress Polish said, “Yes, I say so, Master Doctor, and betimes — quickly — too.”

Yes, get Placentia a husband quickly.

“As soon as we can,” Lady Loadstone said. “Let her bear up and keep up her spirits today, laugh, and keep company at gleek or crimp.”

Gleek and crimp are card games. The names of the games refer to tricks and traps.

“Your Ladyship says the right thing,” Mistress Polish said. “Crimp, surely, will cure her.”

Doctor Rut said:

“Yes, and gleek, too.

“Peace and silence, Gossip Tittle-Tattle — Gossip Chatterbox.

“Placentia must tomorrow go down into the country some twenty miles. She must use a coach and six brave — splendid — horses, take the fresh air a month there, or five weeks, and then return as a new bride up to the town for any husband in

the hemisphere to chuck at, when she has dropped her tympany.”

The husband could chuckle at her or gently chuck — tap — her under the chin.

The hemisphere is the part of the heavens that can be seen above the horizon.

“Drop” can mean 1) “get rid of,” or 2) “let fall.”

“Must she then drop it?” Mistress Polish asked.

Doctor Rut said:

“That is why it is called a dropsy.

“The tympanites is one spice of — a touch of — it: It is a toy, a trifle, a thing of nothing, a mere vapor.

“I’ll blow it away.”

Lady Loadstone said, “Needle, you get the coach ready for tomorrow morning.”

“Yes, madam,” Master Needle said.

Master Needle and Pleasance exited.

“I’ll go down with her into the country myself and thank the doctor,” Lady Loadstone said.

“We all shall thank him,” Mistress Polish said. “But, dear madam, think and resolve upon a man this day. Decide who the bridegroom will be.”

Lady Loadstone said:

“I have done it.

“To tell you true, sweet gossip — nobody is here except Master Doctor; he shall be of the council — the man I have designated for her, indeed, is Master Practice. He’s a neat —

skillful — young man, forward and eager, ambitious, and precocious, and growing up in a profession in which he is likely to be somebody important, if Westminster Hall continues to stand and the pleading of law cases continues.

“To be a prime young lawyer’s wife is a very happy fortune.”

Doctor Rut said:

“And since she is bringing so plentiful a marriage portion, they may live like a king and a queen at common law together.”

He meant that they would have an interest in law together as a source of livelihood, but the phrase also has the meaning that they could have a marriage that is recognized by common law.

Doctor Rut continued:

“They may sway judges; guide the courts; command the clerks and frighten the evidence; and rule at their pleasures, like petty sovereigns in all cases!”

“Sway judges?” “Guide the courts?” Hmm. Placentia’s dowry would give them enough money to sway and guide — that is, bribe — judges, jurors, and clerks.

“Frighten the evidence”? Hmm. Sounds like they would intimidate the witnesses.

Mistress Polish said:

“Oh, that will be a work of time. It will take a long while to achieve that! She may be old before her husband rises to the position of being a chief judge, and all her metaphorical flower will be gone.

“No, no, I would have her be a lady of the first head and in the royal court.”

A deer with its first set of antlers is said to have its first head. Metaphorically, new nobles would be of the first head.

Mistress Polish continued:

“I would have her be the Lady Silkworm, a diaphanous lady, and she would be a viscountess to carry all before her, as we say.

“Her gentleman-usher and cast-off pages will be bare to bid her aunt welcome to Her Honor at her lodgings.”

Given her dropsy, Placentia would be carrying her big belly in front of her and in front of everyone.

The gentleman-usher and pages would be bare-headed.

“Cast-off pages” are freely-moving pages; they are like dogs that have slipped — cast off — their leashes.

Readers with a bawdy mind may think that Placentia is a vice-cunt-woman — viscountess — and that the gentleman-usher and pages are bare-naked. They may also think that the pages are cast-off — former — lovers.

Yes, playwrights of the early 1600s were that bawdy.

Doctor Rut said, “You say well, lady’s gossip, if My Lady could admit and accept that and be willing to have her niece precede her.”

A viscountess would rank high socially — higher than Lady Loadstone.

Lady Loadstone was the widow of a knight, and so she was a gentlewoman, but a viscountess was the wife of a viscount, and so she was a noblewoman.

“For that, I must consult my own ambition, my zealous gossip,” Lady Loadstone said.



Mistress Polish said:

“Oh, you shall precede her: You shall be a countess.

“Sir Diaphanous shall get you made a countess. He will find a count for you to marry.”

Seeing Sir Diaphanous Silkworm coming, she said:

“Here he comes, he has my voice — vote — certainly — O fine courtier! O blessed man! The bravery pricked out — the splendid man chosen — to make my dainty charge a viscountess!”

A different kind of “prick” out would make Placentia a viscountess: A consummated marriage to Sir Diaphanous Silkworm would make her a viscountess.

Mistress Polish continued:

“And to make My good Lady, her aunt, countess at large!”

Readers with a bawdy mind can think that “countess at large” means sexually available cunt-ess.

The non-bawdy meaning is that Lady Loadstone will be widely recognized in society.

— 2.4 —

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm and Parson Palate entered the scene and spoke together apart from the others. Placentia had a dowry of sixteen thousand pounds, and Sir Diaphanous was willing to bribe other people so he could get it.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, “I tell thee, parson, if I get her, you can reckon thou have a friend in court and shall command a thousand pounds to go on any errand — any quest — for any church preferment thou have a mind to.”

A proverb stated, “Better is a friend in court than a penny in purse.”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm was bribing Parson Palate with money: a thousand pounds that he could use for expenses in seeking promotions.

Those expenses could include bribery. The use of bribes to secure advancement in ecclesiastical circles is called simony. If simony were to be discovered in the election of a pope, that election would be null and void.

Parson Palate said:

“I thank Your Worship. I will so work for you that you shall study and investigate all the ways to thank me. I’ll work on and persuade My Lady and My Lady’s friends: her gossip, and this doctor, and Squire Needle, and Master Compass, who is all in all — he is all-important to her, and the very fly she moves by.”

A fly is a component of a sailor’s compass. A compass points out the way for one to go.

Parson Palate continued:

“He is one who went to sea with her husband, Sir John Loadstone, and brought home the rich prizes.”

Prizes are ships captured during a war.

Parson Palate continued:

“All that wealth has been left to her, for which service she respects him, a dainty — excellent — scholar in the mathematics and one she wholly employs — relies on — to advise her.

“Now Dominus [Lord] Practice is already the man appointed by Her Ladyship, but there’s a trick to set his cap awry and interfere with him and his expectations, if I know anything.

“He has confessed to me in private that he loves another, My Lady’s serving-woman, Mistress Pleasance; therefore, that makes you safe from his rivalry. You won’t have to worry about him being your rival.”

“I thank thee, my noble parson,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said. “There’s five hundred pounds more that waits on thee for that. You’ll receive that much more money.”

Parson Palate said:

“Accost the niece. Yonder she walks alone.”

“Accost” means “board her” as if she were a prize to be captured — “woo her.”

Parson Palate continued:

“I’ll move — persuade — the aunt.

“But here’s the gossip, her friend: She expects a morsel.

“Haven’t you a ring or a toy — a trifle — to throw away?”

“Yes, here’s a diamond of some threescore pounds,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said. “Please give her that.”

He handed the parson a diamond.

“If she will take it,” Parson Palate said.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said:

“And there’s an emerald for the doctor, too.”

He handed over the emerald and then said:

“Thou, parson, thou shall coin me: I am thine. You shall make money out of me.”

Parson Palate said:

“Here Master Compass comes.”

Compass entered the scene.

Parson Palate said about him:

“Do you see My Lady and all the rest? How they do flutter about him! He is the oracle — the prophet and seer — of the house and family.

“Now is your time: Go nick it with the niece — take advantage of this opportunity.”

A nick is a winning throw in the dice game called Hazard.

Parson Palate then said:

“I will walk by and hearken how the chimes go. I will hear how things are going.”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm began to court Placentia at the side of the room.

— 2.5 —

Seeing Parson Palate, Compass said:

“Nay, parson, don’t stand far off; you may approach.

“This is no such hidden point of state we handle, but you may hear it, for we are all of counsel.”

In other words: Come join us. We are not discussing a matter of national importance that we must keep secret from you.

“We are all of counsel” means “We are all in the know.”

Parson Palate walked over to the group.

Compass then said to Lady Loadstone, “The gentle Master Practice has dealt clearly and nobly with you, madam.”

“Have you talked with him, and made the overture?” Lady Loadstone asked.

The overture concerned marriage to Placentia. It was the opening gambit in a negotiation.

Compass said:

“Yes, first I put forward the business entrusted to me by Your Ladyship in your own words, almost your very syllables, except where my memory trespassed against their elegance and I forgot the elegant words you used and was forced to use my own words, for which I hope to have your pardon.

“Then I enlarged and spoke more fully about the advantages of marriage with Placentia in my own plain and homely style: the special goodness and greatness of your bounty in your choice and the free and voluntary conferring of a benefit so without concealed ends and ulterior purposes and conditions, and without any tie except his pure virtue.

“And I spoke about the value and worth of this marriage, to call him into your kindred, into your veins and bloodline, insert him into your immediate family, and make him a nephew by the offer of a niece with such a marriage portion.

“When he had heard this and most maturely acknowledged (as his professional training in the profession of law tends to make every matter a matter of due and mature deliberation), he returned a thanks as ample as the courtesy, in my opinion.

“He said it was a grace too great to be rejected or accepted by him.

“But as the terms stood and made common cause with his fortune, he was not to prevaricate and be evasive with Your Ladyship, but rather to require ingenious — noble, honest, and frank — permission that he might, with the same love and goodwill with which it was offered, refuse it, since he could not with his honesty — because he was engaged before — receive it.”

Master Practice had rejected the offer of marriage to Placentia.

This kind of engagement is attraction to another woman whom he would like to marry: His love was engaged.

“The same he said to me,” Parson Palate said.

“And did he name the party?” Compass asked.

The “party” is the woman Master Practice wanted instead of Placentia.

“He did, and he did not,” Parson Palate said.

Possibly, he did not name the woman he loved. Also possibly, however, the name of the woman he loved could be guessed.

“Come, leave your schemes and fine amphibolies, parson,” Compass said.

“Fine amphibolies” are deliberate ambiguities.

“You’ll hear more,” Parson Palate said.

“Why, now Your Ladyship is free to choose the courtier, Sir Diaphanous: He shall do it. I’ll put it forward to him myself,” Mistress Polish said.

“What will you put forward to him?” Lady Loadstone asked.

“The making you a countess,” Mistress Polish said.

“Stint and stop, foolish woman,” Lady Loadstone said.

Mistress Polish went to the side to join Placentia and Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Lady Loadstone asked Compass, “Do you know the party Master Practice means?”

Compass replied, “No, but your parson says he knows, madam.”

Lady Loadstone replied, “I fear he fables — I fear he invents things.”

She then asked, “Parson, do you know where Master Practice is engaged?”

Parson Palate said:

“I’ll tell you, but under seal — in strict confidence. Her mother must not know.

“It is with Your Ladyship’s serving-woman, Mistress Pleasance.”

“What!” Compass said.

“He is not mad?” Lady Loadstone said.

Master Practice could be mad because he has chosen a woman who has no dowry, or he could be not mad because he has chosen to love a good woman.

Or it is Compass who could be mad for a not-yet-revealed reason.

“Oh, hide the hideous secret from her mother: Mistress Polish!” Parson Palate said. “She’ll trouble all, otherwise. You hold a cricket by the wing.”

Proverbially, to hold a cricket or a grasshopper by the wing means to endure much noise.

“Did he name Pleasance?” Compass said. “Are you sure, parson?”

Lady Loadstone said:

“Oh, it is true! He named your mistress: the woman to whom you are devoted!

“I find where your shoe wrings you, Master Compass. I have found your sensitive spot.

“But you’ll look to him there and put him right. You will take care of your rival.”

Compass was also interested in Pleasance.

Master Practice entered the scene in the company of Sir Moth Interest and Master Bias. They were talking together.

Compass said, “Yes. Here’s Sir Moth, your brother, with his Bias and the party deep in discourse. It will be about making a bargain and sale, I see by their close working of their heads and running them together so in counsel.”

He knew that they were bargaining about Placentia and whom she would marry. They had put their heads together and were quietly negotiating.

“Will Master Practice be of counsel against us?” Lady Loadstone asked. “Will he be hired in his professional position to be against us?”

Sir Moth Interest could hire him in an attempt to keep Placentia’s marriage portion — or most of it.

Compass said:

“He is a lawyer, and he must speak for his fee against his father and mother, all his kindred, his brothers or his sisters.

“No exception — or objection — lies at the common law.”

In other words: As a lawyer, Master Practice must speak as he has been paid to speak: whether for or against. He had to speak for the side that had retained him. Natural affections such as familial ties must have no effect on his profession.

Compass continued:



“He must not alter nature for form.”

In other words: He has a nature (a capacity and talent) for form (legal procedures), and he must not alter it. That is, he must not allow such things as natural affections and familial ties to have an effect on how he performs in his profession.

Compass continued:

“Instead, he must go on in his path — it may be he will be for us and on our side.

“Don’t attempt to meddle.

“Let them take their course; let them dispatch and marry her off to any husband.

“Don’t be over-scrupulous. Don’t be overly particular.

“Let who can, have her, as long as Sir Moth lays down the marriage portion, though he geld it.”

Compass was advising that Placentia be married to any man who could get her dowry — or part of it — out of the hands of Sir Moth Interest.

Compass continued:

“It will maintain the lawsuit against him later if he holds back part of the dowry. To some extent, something in the hand is better than no birds.”

A proverb stated, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”

Compass hoped to get more than one metaphorical bird for Placentia: one “bird” now in the form of part of her dowry, and the other “bird or birds” in the form of the rest of her dowry after a successful lawsuit against Sir Moth Interest.

Compass continued:

“He shall at last — eventually — account for the utmost farthing, if you can keep your hand from signing any discharge or release of obligation.”

Lady Loadstone exited.

Mistress Polish said to Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, “Sir, do but make her worshipful aunt a countess, and Placentia is yours. Her aunt has worlds to leave you! The wealth of six East Indian fleets of merchant ships at least! Her husband, Sir John Loadstone, was the governor of the East India Company for seven years.”

“And came there home six fleets of ships in seven years?” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm asked.

“I cannot tell,” Mistress Polish said. “I must attend my gossip, Her good Ladyship.”

She exited.

Placentia asked:

“And will you make me a viscountess, too?”

“For how do they make a countess? In a chair?”

Can a court official rule that a woman is a countess?

She then asked:

“Or upon a bed?”

Yes, marry a count and you will be made a countess in bed.

A chair can also be the location where a marriage to a count is consummated.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm answered, “Both ways, sweet bird: I’ll show you.”

Placentia and Sir Diaphanous exited.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“The truth is, Master Practice, now that we are sure that you are off the list and not a suitor, we dare come on the bolder:

“The portion left was sixteen thousand pounds — I do confess it as a just man should — and I call here Master Compass with these gentlemen to the relation.”

Compass and these other gentlemen were supposed to listen to the financial report, too.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“I will continue to be just.

“Now as for the profits every way arising, it was the donor’s wisdom that those profits should pay me for my watchful wakefulness and the breaking of my sleeps.

“It is no petty charge and responsibility, you know, that sum. It will keep a man wakeful for fourteen years.”

Placentia was fourteen years old, and Sir Moth Interest had controlled her money for fourteen years.

Worrying about investments can result in poor sleep.

Master Practice said, “But, as you knew to use it in that time, it would reward your waking.”

Master Practice was pointing out that as a skilled usurer, Sir Moth Interest would be well rewarded for using that money in usury.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“That’s my industry and diligence, as it might be your reading, study, and counsel, and now your pleading — your argument.

“Who denies your calling to you?”

“I have my calling, too.”

“Well, sir, the contract is with this gentleman, ten thousand pounds — an ample portion for a younger brother, with a soft, tender, delicate rib of man’s flesh that he may work like wax and print upon.”

The “rib of man’s flesh” is a wife, as Eve was to Adam.

The husband may work her like wax and shape her as he pleases and print upon her by making her pregnant.

These days, we may want to call a pregnant woman’s uterus and vagina a biological 3-D printer.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“He expects no more than that sum to be tendered if he shall receive it: Those are the conditions.”

Sir Moth Interest wanted Master Practice to be the lawyer for Master Bias and him. Sir Moth Interest wanted Master Bias to marry Placentia and receive ten thousand pounds as her dowry. Sir Moth Interest would receive the remaining six thousand pounds of the dowry. Master Practice, of course, would be paid for his representation of and advocacy of the interests of Sir Moth Interest and Master Bias. And, readers will soon see, Sir Moth Interest wanted to receive much more than six thousand pounds.

“A direct bargain and in open sale in the market,” Master Practice said.

Sir Moth Interest said, “And what I have furnished him with on the side to appear or so: a matter of four hundred pounds, to be deducted upon the payment —”

Sir Moth Interest had advanced 400 pounds to Master Bias so that he could make a good appearance.

Master Bias interrupted, “Right. You deal like a just man still.”

“Write up this contract, good Master Practice, for us to sign, and be speedy,” Sir Moth Interest said.

Master Practice said:

“But here’s a mighty gain, sir, you have made of this one stock — this one dowry. The principal first doubled in the first seven years, and that redoubled in the next seven years!

“Besides six thousand pounds, there’s threescore thousand got in fourteen years after the usual rate of ten in the hundred, and the ten thousand paid.”

Through usury, Sir Moth Interest had made Placentia’s marriage portion grow.

At ten percent interest, 16,000 pounds had become 32,000 pounds in seven years, and 32,000 pounds had become 64,000 pounds in the next seven years.

Sir Moth Interest wanted Master Bias to get 10,000 pounds. The remaining 54,000 pounds (which includes the 6,000 pounds already discussed) would be Sir Moth Interest’s.

Of course, Sir Moth Interest was to be paid for his watchfulness in investing the money, but why wouldn’t much of the increase in the amount of money go to Placentia and her husband?

“I think it is so,” Sir Moth Interest said.

“How will you escape the clamor and the envy?” Master Practice said.

There would an outcry (clamor) and ill will (envy) against Sir Moth Interest getting so much. It would be a major scandal.

Lady Loadstone, Compass, and others had been afraid that Sir Moth Interest would attempt to do something like this. They wanted the money to go to Placentia and her husband.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“Let them exclaim and envy. What do I care?

“Their murmurs and complaints raise no blisters in my flesh.”

In other words: Their words cannot raise welts on his flesh.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“My moneys are my blood, my parents, and my kindred, and whoever does not love those is unnatural.

“I am persuaded that the love of money is not a virtue only in a subject, but also that it might befit a prince.

“And, if need be, I find that I would be able to make good the assertion to any reasonable man’s understanding and make him believe and confess it.”

Sir Moth Interest was going against scripture.

1 Timothy 6:10 states, “*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*” (King James Version).

Compass said, “Gentlemen, doctors, and scholars, you’ll hear this and see as much true secular and worldly wit and deep lay sense as can be shown on such a commonplace.”

A commonplace is a topic for a debate or a sermon. It is a general truth or “truth” that the speaker defends.

Sir Moth Interest began his argument that love of money is a virtue:

“First, we all know the soul of man is infinite in what it covets. A man who desires knowledge desires it infinitely. A man who covets honor covets it infinitely.

“It will be then no hard thing for a coveting man to prove or to confess he aims at infinite wealth.”

Point One: Human beings want the infinite: some in knowledge, some in honor, some in wealth.

“His soul lying that way,” Compass said.

The word “lying” can mean 1) inclining toward, or 2) telling lies.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“Next, and secondly, every man is in the hope or possibility of a whole, complete, perfect world, this present world being nothing but the dispersed issue — result — of the first one.”

The first world is the Garden of Eden before the fall.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“And therefore I do not see but a just man may with just reason and out of duty propound to himself —”

Point Two: Every man hopes to become wealthy just as they hope to return to a world such as the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden is perfect, and infinite wealth is part of a perfect world.

“An infinite wealth!” Compass said. “I’ll bear the burden.”

Compass would the bear the burden of being wealthy, and he would bear the burden — sing the chorus — to Sir Moth Interest’s verses.

Compass then said: “Go on, Sir Moth.”

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“Thirdly, if we consider man a member but of the body politic — a citizen — we know, by just experience, that the prince has need more of one wealthy man than ten fighting men.”

“There you went out of the road a little from us,” Compass said.

Compass was not wealthy, but he was in part a soldier.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“And therefore, if the prince’s aims be infinite, it must be in that which makes all —”

Compass interrupted, “— infinite wealth.”

Point Three: Money facilitates everything, and so a ruler needs wealthy men to tax. The ruler needs them much more than he needs soldiers to fight.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“Fourthly, it is natural to all good subjects to set a price on money —”

The word “natural” can mean 1) appropriate, or 2) foolish.

People really do put a value on money. In fact, the value of a coin is literally put on coins.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“— more than fools ought on their mistress’ picture, every piece from the penny to the twelpence being the hieroglyphic and sacred sculpture — the sacred symbol and the engraving — of the sovereign.”

Point Four: The image of the sovereign is stamped on coins. Citizens love their sovereign, and so they love coins.



“A manifest and clearly revealed conclusion, and a safe one,” Compass said.

It is not safe to run afoul of royalty, and so it is best to praise royalty.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“Fifthly, wealth gives a man the leading voice at all conventions and public meetings, and it displaces worth and merit with general allowance to all parties.”

In other words: Wealth is generally believed to outweigh virtue. It can also outweigh social rank. Wealthy people are respected, and they are listened to.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“Wealth makes a trade — a business — take the wall of virtue.”

“To take the wall” means “to take the best position.” Higher-ranking people took the position closest to the wall. Those walking further from the wall were in danger of being splashed with muddy water from the street. A wealthy businessman could take the wall.

Since trade and business take the wall instead of virtue, wealth gotten from trade and business is valued more highly than virtue.

Sir Moth Interest continued his fifth argument:

“Wealth makes the mere issue of a shop right honorable.”

The wealthy child of a shopkeeper can become a right honorable lord.

Point Five: Wealth gives shopkeepers and merchants influence. People who have money can speak freely. They

are also respected and their children can rise high in social rank.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“Sixthly, it enables him who has it to do the performance of all real actions, referring him to himself always, and not binding his will to any circumstance without considering himself and his interests.”

In other words: Wealth enables a person to perform every action in such a way that it benefits himself; he need not perform actions that don't benefit himself. A wealthy man need not sell his time and labor to someone else unless he wants to and will benefit from doing so.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“It gives him precise knowledge of himself, for, if he is rich, he straightaway with evidence knows whether he has any compassion or any inclination to virtue or not.”

Point Six: Wealth allows people to know themselves. If a wealthy man is virtuous, he will do virtuous things with his wealth. If he is not virtuous, he will not do virtuous things with his wealth. What he chooses to do with his money will tell him much about himself.

Sir Moth Interest continued his sixth argument:

“Whereas the poor knave — the ordinary man — erroneously believes, if he were rich, he would build churches or do such mad things.”

According to Sir Moth Interest, it is mad to do such things as build churches.

Point Six, Part 2: Poor people always delude themselves into thinking that if they were wealthy, they would be virtuous.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“Seventhly, your wise poor men have always been contented to observe rich fools and so to serve their turns upon them, subjecting all their wit to the others’ wealth and become gentlemen parasites, squire bawds, to feed their patrons’ honorable humors.”

Point Seven: Wise but poor men will work for the wealthy but foolish man. They will use their intelligence to serve the wealthy but foolish man in return for sustenance.

Sir Moth Interest continued his argument:

“Eighthly, it is certain that a man may leave his wealth either to his children or his friends.

“His wit and intelligence he cannot so dispose by legacy as they shall be a harington — a brass farthing — the better for it.”

Point Eight: A man who has read and understood 10,000 books cannot pass on that knowledge to his children when he dies. They will have to read books on their own. Wealth, in contrast, can be passed on to children.

“A man of wit and intelligence may entail a jest upon his house, though —” Compass said.

Captain Ironside entered the scene. Among those present were Sir Moth Interest, Parson Palate, Doctor Rut, and Master Bias.

Compass continued, “—or leave a tale to his posterity to be told after him.”

Compass’ words are true:

- Harry Lehr, aka America’s Court Jester, got married, but he later grew to hate his wife. When he died, his will stated that he had left her “my houses, lands, silver plate, tapestries, pictures, carriages,

yachts and motor cars.” However, Mr. Lehr didn’t own any of that stuff.

- John Custis hated being married to his wife, Fidelity. When he died, his tombstone stated that although he was 71 years old, he had lived only seven years — the years he had been an adult bachelor.

Ironside said:

“As you have done here?

“To invite your friend and brother to a feast where all the guests are so mere heterogeneous — so completely different — and such strangers that no man knows another man, or cares if those who here are met are Christians or Mohammedans!”

Compass asked, “Is it anything to you, brother, to know religions more than those you fight for?”

Is it really necessary to know another man’s religion?

Captain Ironside replied:

“Yes, and I need to know with whom I eat.

“I may get into a discussion, and how shall I have an argument with such men whom I know neither their humors nor their heresies, and I don’t know which heresies are religions now and so received?”

Some heresies become accepted and so they become religions.

Captain Ironside continued:

“Here’s no man among these who keeps a servant whom I can ask questions about his master, yet in the house, I hear it buzzed and rumored that there are a brace of — a pair of — doctors, a fool and a physician [Parson Palate and Doctor Rut], with a courtier who feeds on mulberry leaves like a true

silkworm [Sir Diaphanous Silkworm], a lawyer [Master Practice], and a mighty money-bawd, Sir Moth, who has brought his politic Bias with him.”

One species of mulberry is food for silkworms.

Captain Ironside continued:

“Bias is a man of a most animadverting — critical and censorious — humor, who, to endear himself to his lord, will tell him that you and I, or any of us who here are met, are all pernicious and destructive spirits and men of pestilent purpose meanly affected — disposed — toward the nation we live in; and he will beget himself a thanks with the great men of the time by breeding jealousies — suspicions — in them against us.

“Bias shall cross and thwart our fortunes, frustrate our endeavors, twice seven years after.”

“These seven years day” is an idiom for a long time. “Twice seven years” is a very long time.

Bias’ tricks will harm those whom he targets for a very long time.

“And this trick is called the cutting of throats with a whispering or a penknife.”

The “trick” was figurative murder caused by spreading rumors orally or in writing. Penknives are small knives that were used to make quill pens to dip into ink and write with.

Captain Ironside drew his sword and said:

“I must cut Bias’ throat now. I’m bound in honor and by the law of arms to see it done.

“I dare to do it, and I dare to profess openly the doing of it, being a deed to be done against such a rascal and rogue, who

is the common offence — disgrace — grown of mankind and worthy to be torn up from society.”

Captain Ironside wanted to kill Master Bias, whom he regarded as the common disgrace of all mankind. The world would be better if Bias were dead.

“You shall not do it here, sir,” Compass said.

Captain Ironside asked:

“Why? Will you entreat yourself into a beating for him, my courteous brother?”

In other words: Do you intend to negotiate that I beat you instead of killing him?

Captain Ironside continued:

“If you will, get ready to fight.

“No man deserves it better, now I think about it, than you, who will keep consort — company — with such fiddlers [triflers], pragmatic [busy and interfering] flies, fools, publicans [tax gatherers], and moths [people drawn to temptations that can destroy them like a moth is drawn to a flame], and leave your honest and adopted brother!”

“Consort with such fiddlers” sounds like “concert with such fiddlers.”

Sir Moth Interest said, “It would be best to call for help and raise the house against him to secure us and make us safe — he’ll kill us all!”

“I love no blades in belts!” Parson Palate said.

Swords and daggers were placed in scabbards that hung from belts.

“Nor I!” Doctor Rut said.

Master Bias said, “I wish that I were again at my shop — my place of business — in court, safely stowed up with my politic bundles of papers!”

Sir Moth Interest, Parson Palate, Doctor Rut, and Master Bias exited in a panic.

“How they are scattered!” Compass said.

“They have run away like *cimici* into the crannies of a rotten bedstead,” Captain Ironside said.

*Cimici* is Italian for bedbugs.

*Cimici* glances at vim-and-see: Show some vim and vigor and see them scatter.

Compass said, “I told you such a passage of events — including the sight of your sword — would disperse them, even if the house were their fee-simple in law — their absolute possession — and they were possessed of all the blessings in it.”

Captain Ironside said, “Pray heaven they are not so frightened from their stomachs that My Lady’s table will be disfurnished of the provisions!”

Captain Ironside still wanted to eat a meal.

Compass said:

“No, by this time the parson’s calling all the covey again together.

A covey is literally a group of birds.

Seeing Pleasance coming, Compass said:

“Here comes good tidings!

Pleasance entered the scene and said, “Dinner’s on the table.”

Captain Ironside and Master Practice exited.

Compass and Pleasance remained behind, close together.

— 2.7 —

Compass proceeded to ask Pleasance if she were engaged to marry Master Practice, but he did so using legal terms that were taken out of their usual context. In doing so, he made a series of legal puns.

“Stay, Mistress Pleasance. I must ask you a question,” Compass said. “Have you any suits in law?”

A suit in law can be a lawsuit, or it can be a suitor who is in the law profession.

“I, Master Compass?” Pleasance asked.

“Answer me briefly,” Compass said. “It is dinner time.”

“Briefly” can refer to a period of time or a limited number of words; it puns on “law brief.”

Compass said, “They say you have retained brisk Master Practice here of your counsel.”

Lawyers get retainers — preliminary payment of fees — to secure their services. A woman engaged to be married may give her fiancé a gift.

Compass continued:

“And they say you are to be joined a patentee with him.”

“Joined with” can mean “entered into a contract with.” That contract can be a marriage contract.

A “patentee” is someone who has been officially granted something.



“Joined with in what?” Pleasance asked. “Who says so? You are disposed to jest.”

Compass said:

“No, I am in earnest.”

“In earnest” can mean “with serious intent,” but “earnest” can also mean money paid in order to secure a contract.

Compass continued:

“It is given out in the house that what I said is so, I assure you, but keep your right to yourself and do not acquaint a common lawyer with your case.”

In this society, the word “quaint” can mean “cunt.”

The word “case” can mean 1) law case, or 2) vagina.

Compass continued:

“If he once find the gap, a thousand will leap after.”

“Gap” can mean “hole,” and therefore “vagina.”

The word “leap” can mean “have sex.” In this society, brothels were called leaping-houses.

Compass concluded:

“I’ll tell you more soon.”

He exited.

Alone, Pleasance said, “This riddle shows a little like a love-trick, of one face, if I could understand it. I will study it.”

Pleasance recognized that Compass was anxious about her virginity. This could be a love-trick: a way of showing that he was interested in her, or a way of tricking her into loving him.

Maybe the one face was a deceptive face.

Like many women, she sometimes had trouble understanding a man: Was he serious or not? Did he love her or not?

She exited.

### **CHORUS 2 (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)**

Damplay asked, “But whom does your poet mean now by this Master Bias? What lord’s secretary does he purpose to impersonate and represent or to perstringe — censure and criticize?”

John Trygust replied, “You might as well ask me what alderman or alderman’s mate — companion — he meant by Sir Moth Interest; or what eminent lawyer he meant by the ridiculous Master Practice, whose name he invented for laughter — invented as a joke — rather than for any offence or injury it can stick on the reverend professors of the law. And so the wise ones will think.”

Probee said:

“It is an insidious, crafty, tricky question, brother Damplay. Iniquity itself would not have urged it.”

Many old plays included the evil-minded character known as Vice, aka Inequity, aka Wickedness.

Probee concluded:

“It is picking the lock of the scene, not opening it the fair way with a key.

“A play, though it apparel — dress — and present vices in general, flies from all particularities in persons.

“Would you ask of Plautus and Terence, if they lived now, who were Davus [in Terence’s *Andria*] or Pseudolus [title character of ‘The Liar’ in Plautus’ play] in the scene?”

“Who were Pyrgopolinices [in Plautus’ *Miles Gloriosus*, aka *The Braggart Soldier*] or Thraso [in Terence’s *Eunuchus*, aka *The Eunuch*]?”

“Who were Euclio [in Plautus’ *Aulularia*, aka *The Pot of Gold*] or Menedemus [in Terence’s *Heutontimorumenos*, aka *The Self-Tormentor*]?”

John Trygust said:

“Yes, he would.

“And he would inquire of Martial, or any other epigrammatist, whom he meant by Titius or Seius — the common John à Noke [John from the Oak] or John à Stile [John from the Stile] —”

These were fictitious names (like John Doe) used in law cases. The fictitious names Gaius Seius and Lucius Titius appear in Roman law.

John Trygust continued:

“— under whom they note all vices and errors taxable to — that can be blamed on — the times! As if there could not be a name for a folly fitted to the stage, but there must be a person found out in nature to own it.”

“Why, I can fancy — decide on — a person to myself, boy,” Damplay said. “Who shall hinder me?”

John Trygust said:

“And, in not publishing him and making his name known to others, you do no man an injury.

“But if you will utter and make public your own ill meaning on that person under the author’s words, you use his comedy to libel someone.”

Playwrights could run afoul of libel laws, and so Ben Jonson attempted to make clear that he was not satirizing real individuals, but instead he was satirizing character types.

“Oh, he told us that in a prologue long ago,” Damplay said.

Ben Jonson wrote, “They make a libel which he made a play” in the second Prologue to *Epicene, or The Silent Woman*.

“If you do the same reprehensible ill things, still the same reprehension — rebuke — will serve you, though you heard it previously,” John Trygust said. “They are his own words. I can invent no better, nor he.”

Probee said:

“It is the solemn, humorless vice of interpretation — misinterpretation — that deforms the figure of many a fair scene by drawing it awry, and it is indeed the civil, polite murder of most good plays.”

“Drawing it awry” can mean 1) “drawing it badly,” or 2) “pulling it out of shape.”

Probee continued:

“If I see a thing vively — vividly and clearly — presented on the stage, in such a way that the looking-glass of custom, which is comedy, is so held up to me by the poet that I can therein view the daily examples of men’s lives and images of truth in their manners, so drawn for my delight or profit as I may either way use them, then will I — rather than make that true use — hunt out persons to defame by my malice of misapplying?”

“And will I imperil the innocence and candor of the author by calumniating him?”

In other words: Suppose that a play vividly presents to me truthful images of men’s lives in such a way that I can be entertained or educated by them. Would I then seek to match real people with the characters seen on stage, thereby defaming the real people and putting the playwright in danger of being accused of libel?

Probee continued:

“It is an unjust way of hearing and beholding plays, this, and most unbecoming a gentleman to appear malignantly witty about another’s work.”

John Trygust said:

“They are no other but narrow and shrunk natures, shriveled up poor things that cannot think well of themselves, who dare to detract and disparage the reputations of others.

“That signature distinctive mark is upon them, and it will last. A half-witted barbarism that no barber’s art or his balls will ever expunge or take out!”

One of the barber’s arts is bloodletting.

In one of Martial’s epigrams appears a man named Cinnamus who is unable to efface the mark of Martial’s stigma: Martial’s harsh criticism of another man. In another of Martial’s epigrams, readers learn that Cinnamus is a barber.

Barber poles are signs that often consist of a red-and-white-swirled pole, capped with a ball on top and at the bottom. The ball at the top represents the basin in which leeches were kept for blood-letting (one of the barber’s arts or skills), and the ball at the bottom represented the basin in which blood was collected when a vein was cut in phlebotomy. The pole

itself represents the pole that barbers gave patients to squeeze while blood was being collected.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a ball is “any (approximately) spherical object.”

The barber’s balls are 1) his round basins, and 2) his balls of soap.

Bloodletting will not expunge the illness of bad interpretation and libel. Nor will soap remove or take out the stain of bad interpretation and libel.

“Barber” also glances at “barbarian.”

Damplay said, “Why, boy, this would be a strange empire with an absolute ruler, or rather it would be a tyranny, you would entitle and give your poet a legal right to have, over gentlemen: with the result that they should come to hear and see plays, and say nothing for their money?”

“Oh, yes, say what you will, as long as it is about the matter at hand, to the point, and in its proper place and time,” John Trygust said.

“Can anything be out of purpose at a play?” Damplay said. “I see no reason, if I come here and give my eighteen pence or two shillings for my seat, but I should take it out in censure — judgment, good or bad — on the stage.”

John Trygust said:

“Your two shillingworth is allowed you, but you will take your ten shillingworth, your twenty shillingworth, and more.

“And you will teach others around you to do the like, who follow your leading face, as if you were to cry up or down — to praise or condemn — every scene by confederacy — unlawful conspiracy — be it right or wrong.”

“Who should teach us the right or wrong at a play?”  
Damplay asked.

John Trygust said:

“If your own science — your own knowledge — cannot do it, or the love of modesty and truth, all other entreaties or attempts — are vain. You are fitter spectators for the bears than us, or for the puppets.”

Bear-baitings often occurred in the same theaters in which plays were performed.

Puppet shows were popular.

John Trygust continued:

“This is a popular — a common people’s — ignorance indeed, somewhat better appareled — dressed — in you than the people, but a hard-handed and stiff ignorance, worthy a trowel- or a hammer-man, and not only fit to be scorned, but to be triumphed over.”

“By whom, boy?” Damplay asked.

John Trygust said:

“By no particular person, but by the general neglect and silence of all.

“Good Master Damplay, be yourself still without a second — without a supporter. Few here are men of your opinion today, I hope; tomorrow, I am sure there will be none, when they have ruminated and thought about this.”

Probee said to Damplay, “Let us mind what you have come for, the play, which will draw on to the *epitasis* now.”

In the *epitasis*, trials and tribulations ensue and build toward a climax.

### ACT 3 (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)

#### — 3.1 —

Tim Item met Master Needle and Nurse Keep. Tim Item was Doctor Rut's apothecary, aka pharmacist. Apothecaries make and sell medicine.

"Where's Master Doctor?" Tim Item asked.

"Oh, Master Tim Item, the doctor's learned 'pothecary!" Master Needle said. "You are welcome. He is inside at dinner."

"Dinner? By God's death!" Tim Item said. "To think that he will eat now, having such a business that so concerns him!"

"Why, can any business concern a man like his meat and food?" Master Needle asked.

Tim Item replied, "Oh, twenty million things are more important to a physician who is in practice. I bring him news from all the points of the compass (that's all the parts of the sublunary — under the Moon — globe) of times and double times."

"Times" means "the times." Master Tim Item brings news of the times from various places. "News" includes gossip.

"Double times" may be 1) times filled with deception, or 2) times doubly filled with business, or 3) times doubly filled with news.

Master Needle said, "Go in, in, sweet Item, and furnish forth and provide the table with your news. Deserve and earn your dinner. Sow out your whole bag full. Toss out your items of news as if you were sowing seed. The guests will listen to it."

Tim Item looked toward the dining room and said, "I heard they were fallen out and quarreling."



Master Needle said:

“But they are pieced and put together again.”

“Pieced” is a tailor’s term. “Piecework” is also known as “Patchwork.” In it, small pieces of cloth are sewn together to create a design.

Master Needle continued:

“Their quarrel has been mended and they are at peace. You may go in. You’ll find them at high eating.”

In other words: They are eating high on the food chain, aka eating luxuriously.

Master Needle continued:

“The parson has an edifying stomach and a persuading palate (like his name).”

An edifying stomach is a stomach that is physically being built up like an edifice, or it is an appetite that is morally edifying.

A persuading palate is a passion for converting others or an appetite that persuades him to eat vast amounts because his taste buds have been persuaded that the food tastes good.

Master Needle continued:

“Parson Palate has begun three draughts of sack — white wine — in doctrines and four in uses.”

Doctrines are church dogma or tenets; uses are rituals.

“And they follow him?” Master Item asked.

Master Needle said:

“No, Sir Diaphanous is a recusant in sack. He takes it — alcohol — only in French wine with an allay of water.”

A recusant is someone who rejects an item of church dogma. Here Sir Diaphanous Silkworm rejects sack — Spanish white wine — in favor of French wine mixed with water.

Master Needle continued:

“Go in, go in, Item, and stop your peeping.”

Tim Item exited.

Nurse Keep said, “I have a month’s mind to peep a little, too.”

“A month’s mind” is a commemorative Catholic Mass held one month after a person’s death. Often family members and friends of the deceased shared a meal together. This was a minding day: a day during which one minded — remembered — the dead.

The word “month” also refers to the month after childbirth. The mother was expected to be confined to bed.

Placentia’s mother died as a result of giving birth. Her month’s mind would have been roughly a month after she gave birth. Nurse Keep would likely have been one of the people observing the month’s mind.

The word “peep” has meanings related to 1) looking, and 2) emerging. Revelations about childbirth will emerge in this play, and Nurse Keep will be a part of them.

Master Needle prevented her from peeping at the dinner guests.

Nurse Keep said, “Sweet Mas’ [Master] Needle, how are they seated?”

Master Needle said, “At the board’s end — head — is My Lady — ”

“And my young mistress, Placentia, is by her?” Nurse Keep asked.

Master Needle said:

“Yes. The parson is on the right hand (as he’ll not lose his place for thrusting).”

Parson Palate was positioned in such a way that he could easily stab his knife at platters of food and put the stabbed item on his plate.

He also was in the place of honor: the right side of the hostess. No one had been able to thrust him out and take over that spot.

Presumably, dishes of the best kinds of food were close to the host/hostess and the seat of honor.

Master Needle continued:

“And opposite him is Mistress Polish.

“Next, Sir Diaphanous is opposite Sir Moth: The knights were one opposite the other.

“Then the soldier, the man of war, is opposite the man of peace, the lawyer.

“Then the pert doctor is opposite the politic Bias.”

“Pert” can mean 1) “skilled,” or 2) “ready to express an opinion.”

Master Needle continued:

“And Master Compass circumscribes all.”

The politic Bias was in the least honored position: the bottom of the table on the left of the hostess.

Compass is at the end of the table, opposite Lady Loadstone and Placentia. He completes the circle, and he has a clear view of everyone.

Compass' position was an anomaly, as seats were usually arranged in a U shape.

Noise came from inside the dinner room.

Running, Pleasance entered the scene and said, "Nurse Keep! Nurse Keep!"

"What noise is that inside?" Master Needle asked.

"Come to my mistress!" Pleasance said to Nurse Keep. "All their weapons are out!"

The word "weapon" can mean "penis."

Nurse Keep said:

"Mischief of men! What evil men are! What day, what hour is this?"

She then said to Master Needle:

"Run for the cellar of strong waters — quickly!"

A cellar is a case of bottles, and strong waters are stimulants, usually containing alcohol.

Master Needle exited.

Pleasance and Nurse Keep exited in the direction of the dining-room.

### — 3.2 —

Compass and Captain Ironside appeared and talked together.

"Were you a madman to do this at the table?" Compass said. "And trouble all the guests, to frighten the ladies and gentlewomen?"

Captain Ironside said:

“A pox upon your women and your half-man there, Court-Sir Ambergris!”

A pox is an illness such as the plague or venereal disease. Smallpox is one example of a plague illness.

Ambergris comes from a whale and is used in perfume.

Of course, Captain Ironside was referring to Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, who was wearing perfume.

Captain Ironside continued:

“A perfumed braggart! He must drink his wine with three parts water, and he must have amber in that, too.”

The resin (amber) of some trees was used in medicine.

“And must you therefore break his face with a wine glass and wash his nose in wine?” Compass said.

“Can’t he drink in the orthodox, customary manner? Must he have his gums and paynim — pagan — drugs?” Captain Ironside asked.

“Gums” are medicinal resin.

Compass said:

“You should have used the wine glass rather as balance than as the sword of justice, but you have cut his face with it. He bleeds.”

Statues of Justice show her carrying a sword and a set of scales. Things that are in balance do not conflict.

Two people drinking wine together need not conflict.

Compass continued:

“Come, you shall take your sanctuary with me. The whole house will be up in arms against you else, within this half-hour. Let’s go this way to my lodging.”

A place of sanctuary is a place where a person can be safe from arrest.

Compass and Captain Ironside exited.

Doctor Rut, Lady Loadstone, Mistress Polish, and Nurse Keep entered the scene, carrying Placentia over the stage, assisted by Pleasance and Tim Item.

Captain Ironside’s violence may have made her ill.

Doctor Rut said:

“A most rude and violent action!”

“Carry Placentia to her bed and use the fricace to her with those oils — massage her with those oils.

“Keep your news, Item, for now, and attend to this business.”

Lady Loadstone said to Mistress Polish, “Good gossip, look after her.”

“How are you, sweet charge?” Mistress Polish asked Placentia.

A charge is someone to whom one has a duty. Mistress Polish’s duty was to help take care of Placentia.

“She’s in a sweat,” Nurse Keep said.

“Aye, and a faint sweat, by the Virgin Mary!” Mistress Polish said.

Doctor Rut said:

“Let her alone for Tim to treat. He has directions.”

Tim Item had the order for and the instructions for making the medicine prescribed for her.

Doctor Rut then said:

“I’ll hear your news, Tim Item, when you have done.”

Carrying Placentia, Tim Item, Mistress Polish, Nurse Keep, and Pleasance exited.

“Was ever such a guest brought to my table?” Lady Loadstone said.

Doctor Rut said:

“These boisterous soldiers have no better breeding.”

Seeing Compass approaching, Doctor Rut said:

“Here Master Compass comes.”

Compass entered the scene.

Doctor Rut asked, “Where’s your captain, Rudhudibras de Ironside?”

Rud Hudibras was a legendary figure in Britain. He was the son of King Leil, and he founded Carlisle, Canterbury, and Winchester.

His name suggests “Rude Hubris.”

Compass answered, “He has gone out of doors.”

Mistress Loadstone said:

“That he had never come in them, I may wish.

“He has discredited my house and board with his rude swaggering and blustering manners, and he has endangered my niece’s health by drawing his weapon — God knows how far — how dangerously — for Master Doctor does not know.”

A “weapon” can be a penis, and such a weapon can put a virgin maiden in danger of no longer being a virgin maiden.

Compass said, “The doctor is an ass then if he says so, and if he cannot with his conjuring names, Hippocrates, Galen, or Rasis, Avicen, Averroes, cure a poor wench’s falling in a swoon and fainting, which a poor farthing exchanged for *rosa solis* or cinnamon water would.”

“A poor farthing exchanged for *rosa solis*” is a farthing’s worth of the cure for fainting called *rosa solis*.

*Rosa solis* means “rose of the sun.” It was a medicinal drink made from the sundew plant (*drosera*).

The names to conjure by were those of famous doctors and authors.

Hippocrates (460-370 B.C.E.) and Galen (129-216 B.C.E.) were ancient Greek physicians.

Rasis (865?-935? C.E.) was a ninth-century Arabian physician.

Avicenna (980-1037 C.E.) was a Persian physician.

Averroes (1126-1198 C.E.) wrote about medicine and translated Aristotle.

Nurse Keep and Mistress Polish entered the scene.

Lady Loadstone said, “What is the news now? How is she doing?”

“She’s somewhat better,” Nurse Keep said. “Master Item has brought her a little about. She is recovering a little.”

Mistress Polish said:

“But there’s Sir Moth, your brother, who has fallen into a fit of the happyplex.



“It would be a happy place for him and us if he could steal to heaven thus.”

By “happyplex,” Mistress Polish meant “apoplexy,” aka stroke.

In other words: If Sir Moth Interest were in heaven, it would be a happy place for him. It would also make Mistress Polish and Placentia happy.

Mistress Polish continued:

“All in the house are calling ‘Master Doctor! Master Doctor!’

“The parson, he has given Sir Moth Interest gone — considered him dead — this half-hour.

“He’s pale in the mouth already for the fear of the fierce captain.”

Doctor Rut exited.

Lady Loadstone said:

“Help me to my chamber, Nurse Keep.

“I wish that I could see the day no more, and instead that night hung over me like some dark cloud so that, buried with this loss of my good name, I and my house might perish, thus forgotten.”

Lady Loadstone, Nurse Keep, and Mistress Polish exited.

“Her taking it to heart thus more afflicts me than all these accidents and incidents, for they’ll blow over and pass on,” Compass said.

— 3.3 —

Master Practice and Sir Diaphanous Silkworm entered the scene.

Master Practice said:

“It was a barbarous injury, I confess, but if you will be counseled and advised, sir, by me, the reverend, worthy-of-respect law lies open to repair your reputation. That will give you damages: I have known five thousand pounds to be given in court for a finger.

“And let me pack your jury. I will find jurors who will be partial toward you and your case.”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, “There’s nothing that vexes me except that he has stained my new white satin doublet, and bespattered my spick and span silk stockings, on the day they were first put on,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said. “And here’s a spot on my hose, too.”

Hose cover the thighs and loins.

“Shrewd maims! Grievous injuries!” Compass said. “Your clothes are wounded desperately, and that, I think, troubles a courtier more, an exact, refined courtier, than a gash in his flesh.”

“My flesh?” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said. “I swear, had he given me twice so much hurt, I never should have reckoned it — I would not have regarded it as worthy of comment. But my clothes to be defaced and stigmatized — marked with a stain — so foully! I take it as a contumely — an insult — done me above the wisdom of our laws to correct and put right.”

If the law won’t right wrongs, one can take matters into one’s own hands.

Compass said, “Why then, you’ll challenge him? You’ll formally challenge him to duel in a written letter?”

“I will take thought,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, “though Master Practice here does urge the law and the

creditable reputation for honor it will give me, besides great damages — let him pack my jury.”

Compass said to himself:

“He speaks like Master Practice, one who is the child of a profession he’s vowed and devoted to and servant to the study he has taken, a ‘pure and uncorrupted’ apprentice at law!”

He then said out loud:

“But you must have the counsel of the sword, and you must square your action to their canons and that brotherhood if you do right. You must follow the canons — the rules — of dueling.”

“The counsel of the sword” is advice from someone who has settled an argument by dueling.

Master Practice said:

“I tell you, Master Compass, that you don’t speak like a friend to the laws, nor even a subject to the laws, to persuade him thus to the breach of the peace.

“Sir, you forget that there is a court above, that of the Star Chamber, to punish routs and riots.”

Dueling was against the law.

Compass replied:

“No, young master, although your name is Practice there in term time when the courts are open, I do remember it.

“But you’ll not hear what I was bound to say, but, like a wild young haggard — untrained — justice, you will fly at and attack and breach the peace before you know whether the amorous knight dares to break the peace of conscience in a duel.”

A haggard is an untrained bird of prey that could fly at and attack something prematurely.

Amorous knights appeared in romances; Sir Diaphanous Silkworm was courting Placentia.

The “peace of conscience” could mean that Sir Diaphanous Silkworm is a conscientious objector to violence.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, “Truly, Master Compass, I take you to be my friend and ask you to be my second — my assistant — in the duel. You shall settle for me any matter that’s reasonable, as long as we may meet fairly on even terms.”

“We” meant Captain Ironside and Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Compass said:

“I shall persuade — urge — no otherwise. And you shall take your learned counsel, Master Practice, to advise you. I’ll run and go along with him.

“You say you’ll meet him — Captain Ironside — on even terms.”

The duel will not be even. The odds for each duelist would not be even.

Compass then gave reasons why the duel could not be even:

“I do not see indeed how the duel can be even, between Ironside and you, now I consider it.

“He is my brother, I do confess — we have called each other ‘brother’ for twenty years — but you are, sir, a knight in court, with allies there, and you are so befriended, that you may easily answer the worst outcome.”

The worst outcome would be death. If Captain Ironside were to die in the duel, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm would be able to pay the probable fine that would result.

Advantage: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

But if Sir Diaphanous Silkworm were to die in the duel, that would be another kind of worst outcome; still, he could answer that, too — it would be easy for him to die in the duel. That would be his answer to the duel.

Advantage: Captain Ironside.

Compass continued:

“He is a known, noted, bold boy of the sword, and he has all men’s eyes upon him. And there’s no London jury but are led in evidence as far by common fame and reputation as they are by present deposition.”

According to Compass, London juries were swayed more by the reputation of and gossip about those involved in lawsuits than they were by evidence and testimony.

Captain Ironside has a reputation as a military man, and London juries are swayed by reputations.

Advantage: Captain Ironside.

Compass continued:

“Then you have many brethren and near kinsmen. If he should kill you, it will be a lasting quarrel between them and him.”

Captain Ironside may well kill Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Advantage: Captain Ironside.

But Sir Diaphanous Silkworm has many brethren and near kinsmen who will avenge him against this one captain.

Advantage: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Compass continued:

“Whereas Rud Ironside, although he has got his head into a beaver with a huge feather, is just a currier’s son, and he has not two old Cordovan skins to leave in leather caps for others to mourn him in — to wear as a sign of mourning — if he should die.”

Rud Ironside is Rudhudibras de Ironside, the name Doctor Rut had given to Captain Ironside.

A beaver is the visor of a helmet; the feather was a decoration for the helmet.

A currier colors leather after it is cured. Curing removes water from the hide.

“Cordovan skins” is leather from Cordoba, Spain.

Captain Ironside can leave little behind for his survivors: people who will mourn him if Sir Diaphanous Silkworm should kill him. Sir Diaphanous Silkworm will leave much behind.

Advantage: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Compass continued:

“Again, you are generally beloved, he hated so much, so that all the hearts and votes — prayers — of men go with you in the wishing all prosperity to your purpose.”

Advantage: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Of course, as an experienced soldier, Captain Ironside has a huge advantage over the not-at-all experienced Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Advantage: Captain Ironside.

Compass then gave an equivocal speech. His words for each argument could be taken either to say that Captain Ironside was favored to win the duel, or to say that Sir Diaphanous was favored to win the duel.

Compass said:

“Captain Ironside is a fat, corpulent, unwieldy fellow.”

The adjectives “fat,” “corpulent,” and “unwieldy” have a negative sense in which the person they are applied to is excessively heavy, out of shape, uncoordinated, and unable to move well.

Point: Captain Ironside is fat and out of shape.

Advantage: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

In this society, however, the adjectives “fat,” “corpulent,” and “unwieldy” also have positive meanings as well as the usual negative. The adjectives can mean “big-bodied” and “muscular” and “difficult to move.” The word “fat” can mean “well fed.” (In some cultures, being plump is regarded as something good.) “Corpulent” can mean “massive.” Also, Captain Ironside is unwieldy: No one can push him around.

Point: Captain Ironside is well fed, massive, and hard to push around.

Advantage: Captain Ironside.

Compass continued:

“In contrast, you are a dieted spark, fit for the combat.”

“A dieted spark” can mean a spirited man who is not overweight or obese, someone who is ready to fight well.

Advantage: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

A “dieteted spark” can also mean a thin man with a fine figure. Sir Diaphanous Silkworm’s “fine figure” is likely to be due to his splendid clothing rather than hours spent in exercise. His fitness can mean that his clothing fits well, not that he is physically fit.

Advantage: Captain Ironside.

Compass continued:

“Captain Ironside has killed so many that it is ten to one his turn is next.”

According to this incorrect use of statistics and probability, Captain Ironside is likely to die in this fight.

Advantage: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Compass continued:

“You never fought with any, much less slew any, and therefore you have the hopes before you.”

According to this incorrect use of statistics and probability, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm is likely to defeat Captain Ironside.

Advantage: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Of course, as an experienced soldier, Captain Ironside has a huge advantage over the not-at-all experienced Sir Diaphanous Silkworm; however, Captain Ironside has said that lesser men sometimes defeat men of valor.

Advantage: Captain Ironside, but with a reservation.

Compass continued:

“I hope these things thus specified to you are fair advantages: You cannot encounter him upon equal terms.



“Besides, Sir Silkworm, he has done you wrong in a most high degree, and sense of such an injury received should so exacute — sharpen — and whet your choler that you should count yourself a host — an army — of men compared to him.

“And therefore you, brave sir, have no more reason to provoke or challenge him than the huge great porter has to try his strength upon an infant.”

King Charles I had a porter named William Evans who was reputed to be over seven feet tall.

If Sir Diaphanous Silkworm’s anger made him think that he was the equivalent of an entire army, he had no need to fight Captain Ironside. It was already certain that he would win.

Advantage: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

But in history, the huge porter — William Evans (d. 1636) — was not physically fit and healthy. If the army was metaphorically like the huge porter, the army was not powerful. Victory was not sure, after all.

Advantage: Captain Ironside.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, “Master Compass, you rather spur me on than in any way abate and reduce my courage to the enterprise.”

According to his words, he was all the more eager to fight Captain Ironside after hearing Compass’ words.

Compass said:

“All counsel’s as it’s taken: All advice is what you make of it.”

This is true: Compass’ advice could be taken as encouragement to fight the duel, or as discouragement to fight the duel.

Compass continued:

“If you stand on point of honor not to have any odds, I have rather dissuaded you than otherwise.”

In other words: If as a point of honor, you wish to duel on even terms and not have anything to give you an advantage, I have given you reasons not to duel. I have given you reasons to think you will lose.

Compass continued:

“If you wish to duel upon terms of honor and revenge, I have encouraged you.”

In other words: If you wish to duel because of your temperament and a desire for revenge, I have given you reasons to think you will win.

Compass continued:

“So that I think that I have done the part of a friend on either side: In furnishing your fear with a basis for it first, if you have any; or, if you dare to fight, to heighten and confirm your resolution and determination to persist.”

“I now do crave your pardon, Master Compass,” Master Practice said. “I did not apprehend and understand your way before, the true perimeter and scope of it: You have circles and such fine draughts about!”

Master Practice was praising the thoroughness of Compass’ logic.

The *perimeter* is the circumference.

The *scope* is what is covered.

The *circle* is the figure of the circumference.

The *draughts* outline or plot the figure. They are drawn around the figure to define it.

In other words: Anyone who understands geometry has the intellectual power to speak rationally, as you have just shown.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said:

“Sir, I do thank you, I thank you, Master Compass, heartily.

“I must confess I have never fought before, and I’ll be glad to do things orderly, in the right place.

“I ask you to instruct me.

“Is it best to fight ambitiously or maliciously?”

A person ambitious to get a good reputation for honor would fight fairly. A person whose only objective is to win would fight dirty.

“Sir, if you never fought before, be wary,” Compass said. “Don’t trust yourself too much. Don’t be overconfident.”

“Why?” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm asked. “I assure you I’m very angry.”

Compass said:

“Do not allow, though, the flatuous [flatulent], windy choler — anger — of your heart to move the clapper — tongue — of your understanding, which is the guiding faculty: your reason.

“You don’t know if you’ll fight or not, once you are brought to the place of the duel.”

In other words: Don’t allow your anger to make you burst out in an angry speech made without the use of your reason.

Don't be like a bell that clangs in a high wind rather than a bell-ringer who makes harmonious music.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, "Oh, yes, I have imagined him trebled-armed, provoked, too, and as furious as Homer makes Achilles; and I find that I am not frightened by his reputation one tiny jot."

"Treble-armed" can mean 1) with three arms, or 2) with three different kinds of weapons.

In Achilles' *Iliad*, Achilles first argues with Agamemnon, and later, after Hector kills Achilles' friend Patroclus, Achilles becomes furious at Hector.

Compass said:

"Well, yet take heed. These imaginary fights are less than skirmishes, the fight of shadows:

"For shadows have their figure, motion, and their umbratile — shadowy — action from the real physical posture and motion of the body's act. Whereas imaginarily many times those men may fight, yet in reality they scarcely dare eye one another, much less meet."

In other words: Men may imagine many times fighting each other, but when they actually meet in a duel, they scarcely dare to look at each other, much less fight.

Compass continued:

"But if there is no help for it and no stopping the duel, in faith, I would wish you to send him a fair challenge."

"I will go pen it immediately," Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

"But word it in the most high-minded, generous terms," Compass said.

“Let me alone,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said. “Leave it to me.”

“And word it with silken phrase: Make it the courtliest kind of quarrel,” Master Practice said.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm exited.

“He’ll make it a petition for his peace,” Compass said.

In other words: Instead of fighting, he’ll get a legal bond to maintain peace between Captain Ironside and him. Or, possibly, his letter would ask for a peaceful resolution to their dispute; it need not be a request that the two meet in a duel.

“Oh, yes, of right, and he may do it by law,” Master Practice said.

In other words: His doing so is right and justified, as long as he follows the law.

### — 3.4 —

Doctor Rut, Parson Palate, and Master Bias brought out Sir Moth Interest, who was in a chair. Tim Item and Mistress Polish followed them.

Doctor Rut said:

“Come, bring him out into the air a little. Set him down there. Bend him; yet bend him more.”

Parson Palate and Master Bias attempted to bend Sir Moth Interest’s head to his knees.

Doctor Rut continued:

“Dash that glass of water in his face.”

Parson Palate splashed Sir Moth Interest’s face with water.

Doctor Rut continued:

“Now tweak him by the nose.”

Master Bias pulled Sir Moth Interest’s nose.

Doctor Rut continued:

“Hard, harder still. If it just calls the blood up from the heart, I ask no more.

“See what a fear can do!”

Sir Moth Interest was afraid of Captain Ironside. That fear had caused him to fall into this condition.

Master Bias pulled Sir Moth Interest’s nose harder.

Doctor Rut continued:

“Pinch him in the nape of the neck now.”

Tim Item hesitated.

Doctor Rut continued:

“Nip him! Nip him!”

He demonstrated, pinching Sir Moth Interest, who startled.

“He feels the pinch,” Tim Item said. “There’s life in him.”

“He groans and stirs,” Parson Palate said.

“Tell him the captain’s gone,” Doctor Rut said.

Captain Ironside had left the vicinity.

Sir Moth Interest said, “Huh!”

“The captain’s gone, sir,” Master Palate said to Sir Moth Interest.

“Give him a box — hard! hard! — on his left ear,” Doctor Rut said.

No one moved.

Doctor Rut struck Sir Moth Interest on his ear.

“Ow!” Sir Moth Interest said.

“How do you feel?” Doctor Rut asked.

“Sore! Sore!” Sir Moth Interest said.

“But where?” Doctor Rut asked.

“In my neck,” Sir Moth Interest said.

“I nipped him there,” Doctor Rut said to the others.

“And in my head,” Sir Moth Interest said.

“I boxed him twice or thrice to move those sinews,” Doctor Rut said.

“Sinews” are muscles.

“I swear you did,” Master Bias said.

“What a brave — excellent — man is a doctor, to beat one into health!” Mistress Polish said. “I thought his blows would even have killed him. Sir Moth Interest did feel no more than a great horse.”

“Is the wild captain gone, that man of murder?” Sir Moth Interest asked.

“All is calm and quiet,” Master Bias said.

“Do you say so, Cousin Bias?” Sir Moth Interest said. “Then all’s well.”

The word “cousin” indicates kinship. Master Bias had not yet married Placentia, but Sir Moth Interest was firmly convinced that Master Bias would marry her.

“How quickly a man is lost!” Parson Palate said.

“And soon recovered!” Master Bias said.

Mistress Polish said, “Where there are means and doctors, learned men and their apothecaries, who are not now, as Chaucer says, their friendship to begin, well could they teach each other how to win [cure people] in their swath-bands —”

Chaucer, Gen. Prol., 428 wrote, “*Hir frendship was nought newe to biginne.*”

Ben Jonson interpreted “newe” to mean “now.”

Doctor Rut and apothecary Tim Item had long been friends. Because of their long working together, they could effect cures. By being friends and working together, they would long have been learning the art of medicine.

“Swath-bands” are swaddling bands. They are also bandages.

Doctor Rut interrupted, “— stop your poetry, good gossip, stop your Chaucer’s clouts, and wash your dishes with them. We must rub up — uproot — the roots of his disease, and so we request your silence for a while, or else your absence.”

“Clouts” are 1) swaddling-cloths, aka a baby’s garments, including cloth diapers, or 2) rags.

“Nay, I know when to hold my peace,” Mistress Polish said.

Doctor Rut said to her:

“Then do it.”



He then said:

“Give me your hand, Sir Moth. Let’s feel your pulse.”

He felt Sir Moth Interest’s pulse and said:

“It is a pursiness, a kind of stoppage or obstruction, or tumor of the purse, for want of exercise, that you are troubled with.”

“Pursiness” is “shortness of breath.” Of course, the word glances at the word “purse,” aka moneybag. One illness afflicting Sir Moth Interest is greed: an excessive love of money. The other illness is shortness of breath due to his fear of Captain Ironside.

A tumor is a swelling. A purse is a bag. A medical example of a swelling of the purse could be swollen testicles, but in Sir Moth Interest’s case, he suffers from a swollen moneybag. The obstruction was too-tight purse-strings.

Doctor Rut continued:

“You have some ligatures in the neck of your *vesica* or *marsupium* that are so close-knit that you cannot evaporate, and therefore you must use relaxatives.”

“Ligatures” can be 1) ligaments, or 2) purse-strings.

A *vesica* is a bladder, and a *marsupium* is a pouch.

“Close-knit” means close-tied or tightly tied.

Sir Moth Interest’s moneybag is too full and too tightly tied, and it never gets exercise. His moneybag needs to be opened so that some of the coins can “evaporate” into general circulation. Sir Moth Interest is tight-fisted, and relaxatives — muscle relaxants — would help open his hand.

Doctor Rut said:

“Besides, they say you have grown so restive that you cannot except with trouble put your hand into your pocket to discharge a reckoning, and this we sons of physic do call *chiragra*, a kind of cramp or hand-gout. You shall purge for it.”

“Restive” can mean 1) inactive, or 2) stubborn.

Sir Moth Interest’s hand cannot reach into his pocket and take out money to discharge — pay — a reckoning, aka bill.

To correct this problem, Sir Moth Interest needs to be purged of some of his money. If he becomes more willing to spend money, his hand will more easily go into his pocket to pull out coins. His hand will no longer have the hand-gout, aka *chiragra*.

A medical kind of purge is vomiting or defecation.

Tim Item said, “Indeed, Your Worship should do well to advise him to cleanse his body all the three high ways: that is, by sweat, purge, and phlebotomy.”

Sweat, purge, and phlebotomy were means of medical cures. Patients would be made to sweat, to vomit or defecate, and/or to bleed.

Doctor Rut said:

“You say well, learned Tim. I’ll first prescribe him to give his purse a purge once, twice a week at dice or cards.

“And when the weather is open, sweat at a bowling alley, or be let blood in the lending vein, and bleed a matter of fifty or threescore ounces at a time.”

Sir Moth Interest needs to purge some of his money. He can do that by losing at dice or cards.

Losing money while betting on the game of bowls will make him sweat or vomit.

The “lending vein” is the frame of mind that would allow Sir Moth Interest to lend money, presumably not at usurious rates.

The important point is that Sir Moth Interest needs to bleed money.

Doctor Rut continued:

“Then put your thumbs under your girdle — your belt — and have somebody else pull out your purse for you, until with more ease and a good habit — custom or habitual practice — you can do it yourself.

“And then be sure always to keep a good diet, and have your table furnished from one end to the other: It is good for the eyes, but feed yourself on one dish still.”

In other words, have guests at meals and spend money to feed them well.

Doctor Rut continued:

“Have your diet-drink — your nutritional drink — habitually ready in bottles, which must come from the King’s Head Tavern on Fish Street Hill.”

In other words: Spend money on good strong ale. It will build up your constitution (and reduce the weight of your moneybag).

Doctor Rut continued:

“I will prescribe you nothing but what I’ll take before you my own self. That is my course with all my patients.”

Food and drink are some good things for Sir Moth Interest to spend his money on.

Doctor Rut followed his own advice about diet, and he was willing to help Sir Moth eat some of the food and drink some of the ale.

Doctor Rut said that he would take it before Sir Moth Interest. This can mean 1) He would follow his own nutritional advice before prescribing it for Sir Moth, 2) He would be Sir Moth's food-taster, eating some of the food before Sir Moth ate it to make sure it was not poisoned, and/or 3) He would eat the food in front of Sir Moth, at Sir Moth's table.

“Very methodical, *secundum artem* — according to the art,” Parson Palate said.

“And very safe *pro captu recipientis* — for the pleasing of the recipient,” Master Bias said.

“All errant learnèd men, how they 'spute Latin!” Mistress Palate said.

By “errant” (wrong-headed), Mistress Polish meant “arrant” (learned).

By “'spute,” Mistress Polish meant “dispute,” but “to spew” means “to vomit.”

Doctor Rut said, “I learned this prescription from a Jew, and a great rabbi, who every morning mixed his cup of white wine with sugar and, by the residence — residue — in the bottom, would make report of any chronic, lasting malady, such as Sir Moth's is, being an oppilation — an obstruction — in that which you call the neck of the money bladder, most anatomical and by dissection.”

The rabbi's report was “most anatomical and by dissection.” These were words that Doctor Rut used to show approval.

Chances are that the rabbi looked at the wine after it had passed through his bladder. Doctors then and now look at

urine to help determine a patient's health. Urine should be clear, and cloudy urine can indicate a medical problem.

The rabbi suffered from the same disease as Sir Moth Interest.

Nurse Keep entered the scene and said, "Oh, Master Doctor, and his 'pothecary, good Master Item, and my Mistress Polish! We need you all above! She's fallen again into a worse fit than ever."

"Who?" Mistress Polish asked.

"Your charge," Nurse Keep answered.

Placentia was ill again.

"Come away, gentlemen," Mistress Polish said.

Mistress Polish, Nurse Keep, Parson Palate, Doctor Rut, and Tim Item exited.

Sir Moth Interest said, "This fit — this session — with the doctor has mended — cured — me past expectation."

He exited, leaving Master Bias behind, alone.

### — 3.5 —

Compass, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, and Master Practice entered the scene. Sir Diaphanous Silkworm was holding a letter.

"Oh, Sir Diaphanous, have you finished your letter?" Compass asked.

"I have brought it," Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

"That's well," Master Practice said.

"But who shall carry it now?" Compass asked.

“A friend,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said. “I’ll find a friend to carry it. Master Bias here will not deny me my request.”

“What request is it?” Master Bias asked.

“To carry a challenge I have written to Captain Ironside,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm answered.

Master Bias said:

“By my faith, but I will deny you your request, sir; you shall pardon me.

“For a twi-reason — a double reason — of state, I’ll bear no challenges: I will not hazard my lord’s favor so or forfeit my own judgment with His Honor by turning into a ruffian.”

He would not risk his lord’s favor, and he would not give up the reputation he had with his lord.

Dueling was against the law, and carrying a challenge to duel to another person was against the law. If Master Bias were to do that, he would be a ruffian.

Master Bias continued:

“I have to commend me nothing except His Lordship’s good opinion, and in addition to it my calligraphy, a beautiful handwriting fit for a secretary — a professional writer.”

Secretaries used different kinds of styles of handwriting for different kinds of documents. One style was called the secretary hand.

Master Bias continued:

“Now you know a man’s hand, being his executing part in fight, is more obnoxious to — that is, more liable to be affected by — the common peril —”

Duelists use their hands to control their weapons, and so their hands were liable to be injured.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm interrupted, “— you shall not fight, sir; you shall only find my antagonist and commit us fairly there upon the ground on equal terms.”

Master Bias would not fight, but he would have to find Captain Ironside, deliver the letter, and find a dueling ground that would be fair to both duelists and that both duelists would commit to.

“Oh, sir!” Master Bias said. “But if my lord should hear I stood at the end — participated in even a minor way — of any quarrel, it would be an end of me in a political career in state affairs. I have read the political writers, and I have heard the opinions of our best divines.”

In 1613, King James I made into law his *Edict and Severe Censure against Private Combats and Combatants*. Duelists and their seconds (supporters) and those who carried challenges would be banished from court for seven years. Master Bias, of course, wanted a career at court.

Divines would presumably be against dueling and the killing it causes.

Exodus 20:13 states, “*Thou shalt not kill*” (King James Version).

“The gentleman has reason,” Compass said. “Where was first the birth of your acquaintance, or the cradle of your strict friendship made?”

“We met in France, sir,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm answered.

Compass said:

“In France, that garden of humanity and mental cultivation, the very seed-plot — seeding ground — of all courtesies!

“I marvel that your friendship sucked that aliment and nourishment, the milk of France, and see this sour effect it does produce in contrast to all the sweet benefits of travel.

“There, every gentleman professing to be skilled in arms thinks that he is bound in honor to embrace and welcome the bearing of a challenge for another without either questioning the cause or asking the least color — pretext or show — of reason.

“There’s no cowardice and no poltroonery such as urging ‘why?’ and ‘wherefore?’

“Instead, there is only this: Carry a challenge, die, and do the thing.”

A poltroon is a complete and utter coward.

France was (and is) a country of intellectual cultivation, and yet many gentlemen died in duels there.

Master Bias said out loud:

“Why, listen, Master Compass, I just desire to speak in your ear in private.”

He then said quietly to him:

“I would carry his challenge, if I only hoped your Captain Ironside was angry enough to kill him.

“For, to tell you the truth, this knight — Sir Diaphanous — is an impertinent, meddlesome person in court, we think, and he troubles my lord’s lodgings and his table with frequent and unnecessary visits, which we (the better sort of followers) don’t like, being his fellow equals in all other places except our master’s table, and we disdain to do those servile, unworthy-of-a-gentleman services that often his



foolish pride and empire — that is, his tyranny — will exact against the heart or humor of a gentleman.”

Compass replied:

“In truth, Master Bias, I’d not have you think that I speak to flatter you, but you are one of the deepest politicians I ever met, and the most subtly rational. I admire you.”

In this context, a politician is a schemer. Does Compass admire him?

The word “subtle” can mean crafty and cunning.

Reason can be used for good or for evil.

The word “admire” can mean “marvel at.” Compass marvels that someone like Master Bias can exist.

Compass continued:

“But don’t you believe in such a case that you are an accessory to his death, an accessory because you carry a challenge from him with such a purpose and intention?”

That purpose, of course, was to get Sir Diaphanous Silkworm killed. Master Bias would be an accessory before the fact: He would help arrange things so that Captain Ironside could kill Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

Bias said:

“Sir, the corruption of one thing in nature is held the generation of another.”

Dead things became fertilizer to grow living things.

A proverb stated, “The corruption of one is the generation of another.”

Bias continued:

“And therefore I had rather be accessory to his death than to his life.”

“A new moral philosophy, too!” Compass said. “You’ll carry the challenge then?”

An old moral philosophy stated, “Thou shalt not kill.”

“I would if I were sure that it would not incense and inflame Captain Ironside’s choler — his anger — and make him want to beat the messenger,” Master Bias said.

“Oh, I’ll secure you and keep you safe,” Compass said. “You shall deliver the letter to Captain Ironside in my lodging safely and do your friend Sir Diaphanous a service worthy of his thanks.”

“I’ll venture it, upon so good induction — inducement — in order to rid the court of an impediment, this baggage — worthless — knight,” Bias said.

*Impedimenta* is Latin for the baggage of an army.

Captain Ironside entered the scene.

He said:

“Peace to you all, gentlemen, except to this upstart mushroom, who I hear is menacing me with a challenge, which I come to anticipate and save the law a labor.”

Upstarts are mushrooms because mushrooms spring up overnight, as upstart social climbers seem to do. Captain Ironside was calling Sir Diaphanous Silkworm a mushroom, but since Sir Diaphanous is a knight, the insult is undeserved except that Sir Diaphanous Silkworm is instigating the duel as a way to gain credit for reputation and so rise in society.

By having the duel now, they would save the law the trouble of trying to prevent it.

Captain Ironside said to Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, “Will you fight, sir?”

“Yes, in my shirt,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

He took off his doublet: a kind of jacket.

“Oh, that’s to save your doublet,” Captain Ironside said. “I know it is a court trick! You would rather have an ulcer — a running sore — in your body than an additional pink in your clothes.”

A pink is a decorative hole in clothing. The colorful cloth underneath shows through it.

A pink is also a sword’s or dagger’s stab.

“Captain, you are a coward if you do not fight in your shirt,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

He drew his sword.

Captain Ironside said:

“Sir, I do not intend to delay the fight because you say that, nor do I intend yet to take off my doublet.”

Of course he would not delay the fight: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm had just called him a coward.

He drew his sword.

Captain Ironside continued:

“You’ve now a reason to call me coward: because I won’t fight in my shirt, I who fear more the touch of the common and life-giving air than all your fury and the panoply — the full suit of armor.”

“Which is at best but a thin linen armor,” Master Practice said. “I think a cup of generous, good-quality wine would be better than fighting in your shirts.”

“Sir, sir, my valor is a valor of another nature than to be mended by a cup of wine,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

“I would be glad to hear of any different kinds of valors,” Compass said. “I am one who has known hitherto only the one virtue that they call fortitude to be worthy of the name of valor.”

Valor is fortitude: courage.

“Anyone who has not fortitude is justly thought to be a coward,” Captain Ironside said. “And he — Sir Diaphanous — is such a coward.”

“Oh, you have read the play there, *The New Inn* of Ben Jonson’s, that decries and openly condemns all other valor but what is for the public,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

In Act 4, Scene 4 of Ben Jonson’s play *The New Inn*, the character Lovell discusses and defends true valor. He says that true valor is a true science of distinguishing what’s good or evil. It springs out of reason and tends to perfect honor; the end goal of true valor is always honor and the public good. He also says that an act is not valorous if it is done for a private cause or reason.

“I think that, too,” Captain Ironside said. “But I did not learn it there. I think no valor exists for a private cause or reason.”

“Sir, I’ll redargue — confute or challenge — you by disputation and argument,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

“Oh, let’s hear this!” Compass said. “I long to hear a man dispute in his shirt about valor, and his sword drawn in his hand.”

Master Practice said, “Sir Diaphanous’ valor will catch a cold.”

Both Compass and Master Practice would mock the various kinds of valor that Sir Diaphanous Silkworm would talk about.

Master Practice then said to Sir Diaphanous, “Put on your doublet.”

Compass said quietly to Master Practice:

“His valor will remain cold — he will stay calm — you are deceived, and it will relish — please — much the sweeter in our ears.

“It may be, too, in the ordinance of nature — the way nature orders things that their valors are not yet so combative or truly antagonistic as to fight but may admit to hear about some divisions — different kinds — of fortitude that may put them off their quarrel.”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said:

“I would have no man think me so ungoverned or subject to my passion — strong feeling — but I can deliver him a lecture between my undertakings and executions.”

This can mean 1) “in the time between my undertaking to fight a duel and my execution — actually doing — my undertaking,” or 2) “between what I say I will do and what I actually do.”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm continued:

“I know all kinds of doing the business that the town calls valor.”

Compass said quietly to Master Practice, “Yes, he has read the town. Towntop’s his author!”

In other words: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm has studied the attitude of Londoners, and he has listened to gossip as people

whipped the parish-top and made it spin. That is where he has gained his ideas about valor.

Towntop, aka parish-top, is a large whipping-top that provided entertainment and exercise for people in a community.

Compass asked Sir Diaphanous Silkworm out loud, “What is your first kind of valor?”

“First is a rash headlong unexperience — valor arising from lack of experience,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

The First Kind of Valor: People can show courage by recklessly rushing into danger without knowing how dangerous the situation is.

Compass said, “Which is in children, fools, or your street gallants of the first head.”

“Of the first head” means “superior to others.” Compass was being sarcastic.

“A pretty kind of valor!” Master Practice said.

Compass said quietly to Master Practice, “Commend him; he will spin it out in his shirt as fine and flimsy as the thread in that shirt of his.”

“The next is an indiscreet presumption, grounded upon frequent escapes,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

The Second Kind of Valor: People can show valor because they are very confident of being able to escape from a dangerous situation.

Compass said:

“Or the insufficiency — the lack — of adversaries, and this is in your common fighting brothers, your old perdu —

sentinels at an outpost — who, after a time, do think, the one, that they are shot-free, the other, that they are sword-free.”

These are sentinels who have been placed at dangerous outposts, but the battle has moved away from them and they are beyond the reach of bullets and swords and therefore they are safe. Such sentinels can feel valorous.

Compass then asked Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, “What is your third kind of valor?”

He replied, “It is nothing but an excess of choler that reigns in testy, grumpy old men —”

The Third Kind of Valor: An excess of anger displayed by testy, grumpy old men. Such old men can threaten and bluster.

Compass interrupted, “Noblemen’s porters and self-conceited poets who think too highly of themselves.”

“And is rather a peevishness than any part of valor,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

Master Practice said quietly to Compass, “He but rehearses; he concludes no valor.”

In other words: Sir Diaphanous Silkworm talks about valor, but he has not described anything that is true valor.

Compass replied quietly to Master Practice, “His harangue — lecture — undertakes a history of distempers — incidents of angry people — as they are practiced, and no more.”

He then asked Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, “Your next form of valor?”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm began, “It is a dull desperate resolving —”

Compass interrupted, “— in case of some necessitous, impoverished misery, or incumbent — threatening — evil.”

Master Practice said, “Narrowness of mind, or ignorance being the root of it.”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm finished his sentence, “— which you shall find in gamesters quite blown up.”

The Fourth Kind of Valor: People who have been ruined by gambling or who are in some other desperate situation can resolve to do something desperate.

“Bankrupt merchants, undiscovered and still-hidden traitors,” Compass said.

People who are desperate can rebel against their government.

Master Practice said, “Or your exemplified malefactors — criminals who have been made an example to others and have survived their infamy and punishment.”

Compass said:

“For example, one who has lost his ears by a just sentence of the Star Chamber, a right valiant knave.

“And is a histrionical contempt of what a man fears most, it being an evil in his own apprehension unavoidable.”

If it is histrionical, then it is theatrically extravagant and hypocritical.

“Contempt of what a man fears most” is “disrespect to one’s sovereign,” whether secular or divine.

One kind of apprehension is being arrested.



Master Practice said, “This kind of valor is found in cowards wounded mortally, or thieves adjudged — sentenced — to die.”

Compass said, “This is a valor that I should desire much to see encouraged, as being a special entertainment for our rogue people who are spectators at an execution, and it does make often good sport to them from the gallows to the ground.”

The people who are being executed could die with some valor by accepting their fate and by repenting their sins. Such a display of valor and repentance would entertain and benefit the spectators from the time the criminals stepped on the gallows to the time when their bodies were taken from the rope and laid on the ground to be quartered.

This English punishment for high treason was on the books until 1870:

*That you be drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution where you shall be hanged by the neck and being alive cut down, your privy members shall be cut off and your bowels taken out and burned before you, your head severed from your body and your body divided into four quarters to be disposed of at the King's pleasure.*

In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the old Thane of Cawdor was a traitor to King Duncan, but he died well. Malcom said to King Duncan:

*[...] I have spoke  
With one that saw him die: who did report  
That very frankly he confess'd his treasons,  
Implored your highness' pardon and set forth*

*A deep repentance: nothing in his life  
Became him like the leaving it; he died  
As one that had been studied in his death  
To throw away the dearest thing he owed,  
As 'twere a careless trifle.*

*(Macbeth 1.4.2-11, Signet Edition)*

This is one kind of valor that Compass would encourage.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, “But mine is a judicial resolving or liberal undertaking of a danger —”

The Fifth Kind of Valor: A nobleman shows valor when facing a risk worthy of a gentleman — such as a duel.

Compass interrupted, “— that might be avoided.”

“Aye,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, “and with assurance that it is found in noblemen and gentlemen of the best sheaf — the best class.”

Such risks are avoidable, and they are sometimes avoided.

Compass said, “Who having lives to lose, like ordinary private men, have yet a world of honor, and public reputation to defend —”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm interrupted, “— which in the brave historified Greeks and Romans you shall read of.”

They are historified — celebrated in history.

Compass said, “And, no doubt, many in our aldermen meet it, and their deputies, the soldiers of the city, valiant blades, who, rather than their houses should be ransacked, would fight it out like so many wild beasts, not for the fury they are

commonly armed with, but the close manner of their fight and custom of joining head to head and foot to foot.”

The alderman would fight to protect their property not by physically fighting but by presenting a unified front to the enemy.

Soldiers can fight in close formation: Roman armies were famous for doing that.

“And which of these so well-pressed and well-argued resolutions am I to encounter now?” Captain Ironside said. “For commonly men who have so much choice before them have some trouble to resolve and decide on any one of them.”

Master Bias said, “There are three valors yet that Sir Diaphanous has, if he doesn’t mind my saying so, not touched.”

“Yeah?” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said. “Which are those?”

Master Practice said quietly to Compass, “He perks up at that!”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm had perked up because more discussion about valor meant putting off the duel for a while longer.

Compass said quietly to Master Practice, “Nay, he does more: He chatters.”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm’s teeth could chatter out of fear.

Of course, more chatter from Master Bias meant putting off the duel.

Master Bias said:

“A philosophical contempt of death is one kind of valor.”

Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis — often called Cato the Younger — lived according to strict ethical principles. He fought against Julius Caesar, whom he believed wanted to do away with the Roman Republic and make himself King of Rome. After Julius Caesar defeated the army of Cato the Younger at Utica in Africa, Cato committed suicide after reading the *Phaedo*, a dialogue by Plato in which appear arguments for the immortality of the soul. Believing that his soul is immortal, Cato the Younger killed himself because he loved freedom and did not want to live in what he thought would become a kingdom rather than a republic.

The Sixth Kind of Valor: Fortitude that comes from philosophy.

“Then, an infused, instilled kind of valor wrought in us by our *genii* or good spirits and guardian angels, of which the gallant ethnics — heathens — had deep sense, who generally held that no great statesman, scholar, or soldier ever did anything *sine divino aliquo afflatu*.”

The Latin quotation from Cicero’s *De natura deorum*, or *On the Nature of the Gods*, 2.167, means “Without any divine inspiration.”

The Seventh Kind of Valor: Fortitude that is a gift from non-Christian gods.

Master Practice said, “But there’s a Christian valor above these, too.”

Master Bias said, “Which is a quiet patient toleration of whatsoever the malicious world with injury does to you, and consists in passion more than action, Sir Diaphanous.”

The passion of Christ is His suffering and death.

Some Christians believe that the virtue of patience and suffering display a greater valor than physical fortitude and courage.

The Eighth Kind of Valor: Christian patience and suffering.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, “To be sure, I do take mine to be Christian valor —”

If he does, he need not fight but instead can suffer patiently.

“You may be mistaken, though,” Compass said. “Can you justify on any reason this seeking to deface in a duel the divine image in a man?”

Exodus 20.13 states, “*Thou shalt not kill*” (King James Version).

Genesis 1:26 states, “*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth*” (King James Version).

“Oh, sir!” Master Bias said. “Let them alone! Isn’t Diaphanous as much a divine image as is Ironside? Let images fight, if they will fight, in God’s name.”

Both Sir Diaphanous Silkworm and Captain Ironside are divine images: images of God.

Master Bias would be happy if Captain Ironside were to kill Sir Diaphanous Silkworm.

### — 3.6 —

Nurse Keep entered the scene and interrupted them.

“Where’s Master Needle?” she asked. “Have you seen Master Needle? We are ruined!”

“What ails the frantic, lunatic nurse?” Compass asked.

“My mistress is undone — she’s crying out!” Nurse Keep said. “Where is this man, do you think? Where is Master Needle?”

Master Needle entered the scene and said, “Here I am.”

“Run for the party whom we need: Mistress Chair, the midwife,” Nurse Keep said.

Stupified by the request, Master Needle stood still.

Nurse Keep said, “Nay, look how the man stands, as if he were gowked — stupified! She’s lost, if you do not hasten away from the party.”

As would become clear, “she” is Placentia.

“Where is the doctor?” Master Needle asked.

Nurse Keep said:

“Where a scoffing, dismissive man is, and his apothecary is little better. They laugh and jeer at everything.

“Will you hurry?

“And fetch the person in question — the midwife — quickly to our mistress. We are all ruined! The tympany will out else!”

The tympany is a swelling. “The tympany will out” means 1) The baby will be born, and 2) The tympany — pregnancy — will become gossip.

Nurse Keep and Master Needle exited.

Sir Moth Interest entered the scene and said:

“News, news, good news, better than buttered news!”

Nathaniel Butter was an early newsman.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“My niece is found with child, the doctor tells me, and has started labor.”

“What!” Compass said.

“The portion’s paid!” Sir Moth Interest said. “The portion —”

“The portion’s paid!” means “the portion is a dead issue!” or “the portion is settled!”

In this society, a man of high position would not want to marry a woman who gave birth out of wedlock to another man’s child. This meant that Sir Moth Interest would keep the dowry.

“Oh, the captain! Is he here?” Sir Moth Interest said, seeing Captain Ironside.

Sir Moth exited.

“He’s spied your swords out,” Master Practice said. “Put them away! Put them away! You’ve driven him away from here; and yet your quarrel’s ended.”

One quarrel was over who would get Placentia’s dowry.

Captain Ironside said, “It has ended in a most strange discovery and revelation.”

“Of light gold,” Master Practice said.

“Light gold” is a gold coin that is no longer legal tender because its edges have been clipped to collect bits of gold. Gold coins had rings, aka circles, and if the clipping extended inside the circle, the coin was no longer legal tender.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said:

“And cracked within the ring.”

One kind of circle or ring is a vagina. Placentia’s vagina had been metaphorically “cracked,” and in this society she was no longer regarded as wife material for an upper-class man.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said:

“I take the omen as a good omen.”

The omen was birth. One way in which it was a good omen was that Sir Diaphanous Silkworm would not first marry Placentia and then discover that she was pregnant with another man’s baby.

Master Practice said:

“Then put up — put away — your sword.”

In the confusion, Compass exited.

Master Practice continued:

“And put on your doublet. Give the captain thanks.”

The two would-be combatants sheathed their swords.

Putting on his doublet, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said:

“I would have been slurred else.”

He meant that his honor would have been stained due to being engaged to a woman who gave birth out of wedlock (assuming that he would have been chosen to be her husband).

He continued:

“Thank you, noble captain! Your quarrelling caused all this.”

The quarreling had kept all of Placentia’s suitors from being chosen to be engaged to and marry her.



“Where’s Compass?” Captain Ironside asked.

Master Practice said, “Gone, shrunk hence, contracted to his center, I fear.”

“Shrunk hence” can mean that Compass has shrunk away and left the scene.

A penis can shrink and contract, returning closer to a man’s center.

Another kind of center could be the center of a target. A metaphorical target for Compass’ “arrow” could be Placentia’s vagina.

Master Practice suspected that Compass was the father of Placentia’s child, and so Compass had gone to see her.

“The slip is his, then,” Captain Ironside said.

Compass had given them the slip. A “slip” is also a counterfeit, illegitimate coin. A “slip” is also a sexual slip, and it is the baby that can result from a sexual slip.

Captain Ironside’s words can be interpreted as saying that Compass was the father of Placentia’s illegitimate baby.

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said, “I was likely to have been abused in the business, had the slip slurred on me, a counterfeit.”

The slip is the illegitimate child. Sir Diaphanous Silkworm could have married Placentia and been the non-biological father of a counterfeit — illegitimate and not his own — child.

Master Bias said, “Sir, we are all abused, as many as were brought on to be suitors, and we will all join in thanks to the captain, and to his fortune that so brought us off and rescued us.”

Captain Ironside's coming unannounced to duel Sir Diaphanous Silkworm had helped both Sir Diaphanous and Master Bias by delaying the choice of a husband for Placentia. They could have been engaged to marry a woman who was now giving birth to another man's child.

Captain Ironside's fortune, aka luck, had also brought them good fortune.

### **CHORUS 3 (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)**

Damplay said, "This was a pitiful poor trick of your poet, boy, to make his prime woman character be with child — be pregnant — and fall into labor just to settle a quarrel."

John Trygust replied:

"With whose borrowed ears have you heard, sir, all this while, that you can mistake the current — the direction — of our scene so?"

"The stream of the plot threatened her being with child from the very beginning, for it presented her in the first part of the second act with some apparent note of infirmity or defect, from knowledge of which the members of the audience were rightly to be left hanging and kept in suspense by the author until the quarrel, which was only the accidental, by-chance cause, hastened on the discovery of it in occasioning her fright, which made her fall into her throes of childbirth quickly, and all of this happened within that compass of time allowed to the comedy wherein the poet expressed his prime artifice — his primary artistic construction. It is not an error that the detection of her being with child should bring to an end the quarrel that had produced it."

"The boy is too hard for you, Brother Damplay," Probee said. "You had best pay attention to the play and let him alone."

“I don’t care for marking — paying attention to — the play,” Damplay said. “I’ll damn it, talk, and do that which I have come for. I will not have gentlemen lose their privilege, nor I myself my prerogative, for never an overgrown or superannuated poet — fat and aged playwright — of them all! He shall not give me the law. I will censure and judge the play, and be witty, and take my tobacco, and enjoy my Magna Carta of reprehension and criticism, as my predecessors have done before me.”

Damplay believed that since he is a gentleman, he has the right and prerogative to criticize the play.

The Magna Carta recognized upper-class people’s right of free speech, including the right to criticize.

“Even to behavior and speech beyond control and absurdity,” John Trygust said.

Probee said, “Not now, because the gentlewoman is in labor and the midwife may come on stage all the sooner, to put her and us out of our pain.”

Damplay said to John Trygust, “Well, look to your business afterward, boy, that all things be clear and come properly forth, suited and set together in order; for I will search what follows severely and to the fingernail.”

Sculptors would scrape a fingernail on a marble statue to check for flaws.

“Let your fingernail run smooth then and not scratch, lest the author be bold to pare your fingernail to the quick and make it hurt,” John Trygust said. “You’ll find him as severe as yourself.”

Damplay said:

“He is a shrewd, cunning boy, and he has bested me everywhere!”

Seeing that the next scene was starting, he said:

“The midwife has come; she has made haste.”

ACT 4 (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)

— 4.1 —

Mother Chair and the midwife and Master Needle talked together.

“Stay, Master Needle, you do prick — hurry — too fast upon the business,” Mother Chair said. “I must take some breath. Give me my stool. You have drawn a stitch — a sharp pain — in my side upon me, in faith, son Needle, with your haste.

A midwife would sit on the stool to assist at a childbirth. The pregnant woman would be in a birthing-chair, some of which were three-legged stools.

The words “mother” and “son” did not mean a biological relationship. They were simply words of etiquette.

Master Needle said, “Good mother, piece up — mend — this breach; I’ll give you a new gown, a new silk grogram gown. I’ll do it, mother.”

A breach is a hole. Placentia’s pregnancy was something that needed to be patched up. It was a bad situation, and Mother Chair and the midwife and Master Needle wanted to make it less bad.

“Grogram” is a coarse silk fabric.

Nurse Keep entered the room.

She had overheard Master Needle’s last few words, and she said:

“What’ll you do? You have done too much already with your prick-seam, and through-stitch, Master Needle.”

A prick-seam is a kind of stitch used in making gloves, and a through-stitch is a stitch that is drawn through the material.

Hmm. The word “prick” has a bawdy meaning, and a needle can be likened to a male body part. Perhaps Compass is not the father of Placentia’s baby. Perhaps there is an explanation for Master Needle’s wanting to give Mother Chair a new silk program gown if she mends this breach.

Nurse Keep then said:

“I ask you to not sit fabling here old tales, good Mother Chair, the midwife. Just hurry and come up to Placentia’s bed-chamber.”

Mother Chair and Master Needle exited.

— 4.2 —

Compass and Master Practice entered the scene.

“How are things now, nurse? Where’s My Lady?” Compass asked.

“My Lady” is Lady Loadstone.

“In her bed-chamber locked up, I think,” Nurse Keep said. “She’ll speak with nobody.”

“Does she knows about this accident — this incident?” Compass asked.

“Alas, sir, no,” Nurse Keep said. “I wish that she might never know about it!”

She exited.

Master Practice said, “I think Her Ladyship is too virtuous and too nobly innocent to have a hand in and take part in so ill-formed, badly conceived, and poorly managed a business.”

The business was attempting to have Master Practice marry a woman who was pregnant with another man’s baby.

Compass said:

“Your thought, sir, is a brave, admirable thought and a safe one. The child now to be born is not more free from the aspersion — soil and defamation — of all spot — stain and moral disgrace — than she.

“Even if there were no other considerations, would Lady Loadstone have her hand in a plot against Master Practice, whom she so loves, cries up and speaks well about, and values?”

Compass then mentioned the other reasons why Lady Loadstone would not be involved in a plot against Master Practice:

“Whom she knows to be a man marked out for a chief justice in his cradle? Or a lord paramount, the head of the Hall, aka master of an Inn of Court, the top or the top-gallant of our law?”

“Top” and “top-gallant” are high sails. Master Practice will rise high in his legal career.

Compass continued:

“Assure yourself, she could not so deprave and impair the rectitude of her judgment to wish you to a wife who might prove to bring infamy and bad reputation to you, a wife whom she esteemed that part of the commonwealth and had up for honor to her blood.”

“I must confess a great beholdingness and obligation to Her Ladyship’s offer and good wishes,” Master Practice said. “But the truth is, I never had affection for or any liking of this niece of hers.”

“You foresaw something, then?” Compass asked.

“I had my notes and my prognostics,” Master Practice said.

“Notes” can mean gossip — people note what other people say and do.

“Prognostics” are foreknowledge: predictions of the future.

“You read almanacs and study them to some purpose, I believe?” Compass asked.

Almanacs were bound together with prognostics.

“I do confess it,” Master Practice said. “I do believe and pray, too, according to the planets at some times.”

According to astrology, some days are propitious for some tasks. Other days are not propitious for those tasks.

“And you do observe the sign of the zodiac in making love?” Compass asked.

In this society, “making love” meant wooing.

“As I do in phlebotomy,” Master Practice said.

Phlebotomy is the medical procedure of opening a vein to let out blood. Some days were regarded as propitious for this procedure; these days were determined by astrology.

“And you choose your mistress — the woman whom you are devoted to — by the good days, and leave her by the bad?”

“I do, and I do not,” Master Practice said.

In other words: I do choose her on the propitious days, and I do not choose her on the days that are not propitious.

Compass said to himself, “A little more would fetch all his astronomy from Allestree.”

In other words: A little conversation would show that he got all his prognostications from a man named Allestree.



Astonomy is perhaps a portmanteau word meaning “astonishing astronomy.” The phrase may be regarded as a description of astrology — which is the word that readers would expect to see there.

It would be astonishing if astrology were true.

Richard Allestree of Derby was a poor poet and an almanac writer. An enemy of Ben Jonson named Alexander Gill wrote that Allestree was a Homer in comparison to Jonson.

Master Practice said, “I tell you, Master Compass, as my friend, and under seal — in secret — I cast my eye long ago upon the other wench, My Lady’s serving-woman. She is another manner of piece — a different kind of sexual object — for handsomeness than is the niece — but that is *sub sigillo* — under seal, a secret — as I give it you in hope of your aid and counsel in the business.”

Compass said:

“You need counsel? You who are the only famous counsel of the kingdom and in all courts?”

“Counsel” can mean 1) advice, and 2) a lawyer.

Compass continued:

“That is a jeer, in faith, worthy your name and your profession, too, sharp Master Practice.”

“Sharp” can mean 1) intelligent, and 2) cunning in an unethical sense. A “sharper” is a cheat — a swindler.

“Sharp practice” is unethical practice — unethical tricks.

Master Practice replied, “No, upon my law, as I am a bencher and now double reader, I meant in pure simplicity of request.”

“Bencher” and “double reader” are positions in the Inns of Court, with “double reader” being the more senior position. The Inns of Court are buildings owned by legal associations.

Compass said:

“If you meant so.”

He may have emphasized the “If.”

He continued:

“The affairs are now perplexing and confused and full of trouble; give them time to breathe and to settle down.

“I’ll do my best.

“But in the meantime, prepare the parson.”

He said to himself:

“I am glad to know this, for I myself liked the young maiden before, and loved her, too.”

Compass was happy because he could now use this information to keep Master Practice from marrying Pleasance.

Compass then asked out loud:

“Do you have you a marriage license?”

“No, but I can fetch one quickly,” Master Practice said.

Compass said:

“Do, do, and remember the parson’s pint to engage him in the business.”

The parson’s pint is a gift — or a bribe.

Compass added:

“A knitting cup there must be.”

The knitting cup is a cup of wine that is passed around at weddings.

“I shall do it,” Master Practice said.

He exited, leaving Compass behind.

— 4.3 —

Master Bias and Sir Moth Interest entered the scene.

Master Bias complained to Sir Moth Interest, “It is an affront to me from you, sir. You brought me here to My Lady’s to woo a wife, who since has proved to be a cracked commodity. She is damaged merchandise. She has broken bulk too soon.”

“Broken bulk” means “unloaded cargo.” She gave birth too soon — she gave birth before being married.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“It is no fault of mine, if she is cracked in pieces or broke round.”

“Broke round” means broken around the edges. Her value had been lessened the way the value of a coin is lessened when its circumference has been clipped.

One kind of “round” is a vagina, and her virginity had been broken the way a hymen can be broken.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“It was the fault of my sister, who owns the house where my niece has got her clap, which makes all this uproar.”

The clap can mean 1) misfortune, 2) venereal disease, and/or 3) loud noise.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“I keep her marriage portion safe; that is not scattered.

“The moneys don’t rattle, nor are they thrown to make a muss yet among the gamesome — merry — suitors.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb “rattle” can mean “to give out a rapid succession of short, sharp, percussive sounds.”

Also according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the noun “rattle” can mean “A state of uproar, commotion, or boisterous or exuberant activity” (first entry 1688; *The Magnetic Lady* was licensed for performance on 12 October 1632).

A rapid succession of short, sharp, percussive sounds uttered during exuberant activity could be this: “Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!”

“Muss” is a scrambling and snatching game.

Compass said:

“Can you endure that flouting insult, close — secretive — Master Bias, who have been so bred in the politics?

“The injury is done to you, and by him only. He lent you impressed money, and he upbraids you with it.”

“Impressed money” is money that is paid in advance. Sir Moth Interest had given Master Bias 400 pounds so that he could buy new clothes and make a good impression on Lady Loadstone and Placentia. This money was an advance on the dowry that Master Bias would get if he married Placentia.

Compass continued:

“He has furnished you with money for the wooing, and now waives — disregards — you. He casts you aside.”

“That makes me expostulate — complain about — the wrong so with him, and that makes me resent it as I do,” Master Bias said.

“But do it home, then,” Compass said. “Carry this matter — this complaint — to a conclusion.”

“Sir, my lord shall know it,” Master Bias said.

“And all the lords of the court, too,” Compass said.

“What a moth you are, Sir Interest!” Master Bias said.

“In what way am I a moth, I ask you, Sweet Master Bias?” Sir Moth Interest asked.

Compass answered, “To draw in young statesmen and heirs of policy into the noose of an infamous matrimony.”

The verb “to moth” meant “to hunt for moths.” Sir Moth Interest hunted for moths such as Master Bias who, like Sir Moth Interest, were drawn to Placentia’s marriage portion the way that a moth is drawn to a candle.

“Heirs of policy” are those who are likely to gain political power.

Master Bias said:

“Yes, infamous and shameful, *quasi in communem famam*.”

The Latin *quasi in communem famam* means “as though in a public scandal.”

A marriage to Placentia would be a public scandal.

Master Bias continued:

“And matrimony, *quasi* [as if] matter of money.”

This means “marriage as if it were for the sake of money.”

Indeed, Placentia’s suitors were after her marriage portion.

“Learnedly urged, my cunning Master Bias,” Compass said.

Master Bias said, “Matrimony — matter of money — with his lewd, known, and prostituted niece.”

Master Bias meant that Sir Moth Interest wanted him to marry Placentia although she were known to be lewd.

A marriage to Placentia would be a public scandal.

“Lewd” can mean 1) unchaste, 2) uneducated, and 3) evil.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“My known and prostitute!”

As an adjective, the word “prostitute” means “licentious.”

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“How you mistake the situation and run upon a false ground, Master Bias!

“Your political lords will do me right.”

Sir Moth Interest meant that he did not know that Placentia was a lewd woman until now.

Also, if there were to be a trial about Placentia’s dowry, which he wanted to keep, he hoped that the lords of the Inns of Court would support him.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“Now she is prostitute and now that I know it — please understand me — I mean to keep the marriage portion in my hands and pay no moneys.”

Compass said:

“Did you mark that, Don Bias? Are you paying attention?”

“Don” is a complimentary title, but Compass meant that Master Bias had been “done”: manipulated and taken advantage of.

Compass continued:

“And you shall still remain in bonds to Sir Moth for wooing furniture and impressed charges.”

Master Bias had been furnished with money in advance to buy furniture — clothing and gifts — so he could woo Placentia in style and impress her.

“Good Master Compass, for the sums Master Bias has had from me, I do acquit him,” Sir Moth Interest said. “They are his own. Here before you I do release him.”

“Good!” Compass said.

“Oh, sir!” Master Bias said.

Compass said to Master Bias, “By God’s eyelid, take it. I do witness it. Sir Moth cannot hurl away his money better.”

Sir Moth Interest said, “Master Bias shall get so much, sir, by my acquaintance, to be my friend. And now report to his lords as I deserve no otherwise.”

Master Bias would not have to repay the 400 pounds he had gotten from Sir Moth Interest. In return, he would be Sir Moth Interest’s friend at court.

Compass said:

“You deserve no otherwise but well, and I will witness it and I will be witness to the value: Four hundred pounds is the price, if I am not mistaken, of your true friend in court.

“Shake hands. You have bought him, and you have bought him cheap.”

Sir Moth Interest and Master Bias shook hands.

“I am His Worship’s servant,” Master Bias said.

Master Bias had been bribed and would now be Sir Moth Interest’s advocate at court.

Compass said to himself, “And you are his slave, Sir Moth. Sealed and delivered. Haven’t you studied the court compliment?”

The “court compliment” is a court ceremony. In this case, it is the ceremony of buying a courtier.

Sir Moth Interest and Master Bias exited.

Compass said to himself, “Here are a pair of humors reconciled now, whom money held at a distance and kept them apart from each other; or their thoughts, which are baser than money.”

Their base thoughts are love of money.

Money is not the root of all evil — love of money is.

Both men wanted Placentia’s dowry. Both men would have gotten a portion of it if Master Bias had married her. But Master Bias had been angry at Sir Moth Interest because Placentia was pregnant. He was also angry at having to repay the 400 pounds that he had been given in advance to woo Placentia.

The argument had been resolved by Master Bias becoming Sir Moth Interest’s friend at court in return for not having to repay the 400 pounds.

Ben Jonson’s play is subtitled “humors reconciled,” and these are the first two humors to be reconciled.



Mistress Polish and Nurse Keep entered the scene. They were arguing, quietly at first and then louder. They did not see Compass.

Mistress Polish said to Nurse Keep, “Get out, thou caitiff — base — witch! Bawd, beggar, gypsy! Anything indeed but an honest woman!”

“Whatever you please, Dame Polish, My Lady’s stroker and flatterer,” Nurse Keep said.

Compass said to himself, “What is going on here? The gossips have fallen out with each other!”

Madame Polish said to Nurse Keep, “Thou are a traitor to me, an Eve, the apple, and the serpent, too. Thou are a viper that has eaten a passage through me, through my own bowels, by thy recklessness.”

Vipers were thought to be born by biting their way out of their mother’s body. They were symbols of ingratitude.

Compass said to himself, “What frantic outburst is this? I’ll step aside and listen to it.”

He hid himself.

Madame Polish said:

“Did I trust thee, wretch, with such a secret of that consequence, which did so concern me and my child, our livelihood and reputation? And have thou undone and ruined us? By thy connivance with an evil person, with you nodding and napping in a corner, and allowing her to be gotten with child so basely?”

“Sleepy, unlucky hag! Thou bird of night and all mischance to me!”

Birds of night are birds of ill omen.

“Good lady empress!” Nurse Keep said. “Had I the keeping of your daughter’s clicket — latch — in charge? Was that committed to my trust?”

A clicket is the latch of a door or a gate. “Clicket” is also a word metaphorically related to sex. Think of a key being inserted into a lock. A latch-key raises the latch of a door or a gate. Doors and gates can be open or closed.

Compass said, “Her daughter?”

Mistress Polish’s daughter was Pleasance. Was Pleasance pregnant, like Placentia?

Compass wanted to marry Pleasance.

Mistress Polish said, “Softly, devil, not so loud. You’d have the house hear and be witness, would you?”

“Let all the world be witness,” Nurse Keep said. “Before I’ll endure the tyranny of such a tongue — and of such a pride —”

“What will you do?” Mistress Polish asked.

Nurse Keep answered:

“Tell truth and shame the she-man-devil in puffed sleeves!”

A proverb stated, “Tell truth and shame the devil.”

The “she-man-devil” wearing puffed sleeves is Mistress Polish.

Nurse Keep continued:

“Run any hazard by revealing all to My Lady about how you changed the cradles and changed the children in them!”

“Not so high!” Mistress Polish said. “Not so loud!”

Nurse Keep's voice traveled.

Nurse Keep said, "Calling your daughter Pleasance there 'Placentia,' and calling my true mistress Placentia by the name of 'Pleasance.'"

Not only had the babies been exchanged, but their names had also been exchanged.

To avoid confusion, this book will continue to use the name "Placentia" for the woman who has hitherto been called Placentia, and this book will continue to use the name "Pleasance" for the woman who has hitherto been called Pleasance.

Compass said to himself, "A horrid and detestable secret, this is — and it's worth the discovery!"

Pleasance was actually Lady Loadstone's niece, while Placentia was actually Mistress Polish's daughter.

Suitors had been trying to marry Placentia for the dowry, but the dowry actually belonged to Pleasance.

In Homer's *Odyssey* the suitors were trying to marry Penelope and become the King of Ithaca, but Penelope's husband, Odysseus, was still alive. His palace still belonged to him.

"And must you be thus loud?" Mistress Polish asked.

Nurse Keep said:

"I will be louder, and I will cry it through the house, through every room, and every office — workplace — of the laundry-maids, until it is borne hot to My Lady's ears.

"Before I will live in such a slavery, I'll do away myself. I'll kill myself."

“Didn’t thou swear to keep it secret?” Mistress Polish said.  
“And upon what book? I remember now: *The Practice of Piety*.”

Lewes Bayly, Bishop of Bangor, wrote *The Practice of Piety*, which was a Puritan devotional manual.

Nurse Keep said:

“It was a practice of impiety out of your wicked forge and making. I know it now — my conscience tells me.”

Forges work with metal, and Mistress Polish had worked evil on the Steel family. Lady Loadstone was the widow of a man named Steel.

Nurse Keep continued:

“First, it was a practice of impiety against the infants, to rob them of their names and their true parents.

“Second, it was a practice of impiety to abuse the neighborhood, to keep them in error.

“Third, and most of all, it was a practice of impiety against My Lady. She has the main wrong, and I will let her know it instantly.

“Repentance, if it is true, never comes too late.”

Midwives, nurses, and guardians had the ethical duty not to switch babies. Parents wanted to raise their own children and leave the inheritance to them, not to other children.

Switching children would also abuse the neighborhood. If a midwife, nurse, or guardian switched one child, perhaps she had switched or would switch other children.

Nurse Keep exited.

Mistress Polish said:

“What have I done? Conjured a spirit up I shall not lay down again? Drawn a danger and ruin on myself thus, by provoking a peevish fool whom nothing will persuade to stop or will satisfy, I fear?”

“Her patience stirred has turned to fury.

“I have run my bark — my ship — on a ‘sweet’ rock by my own arts and trust, and I must get off again, or be dashed to pieces!”

She exited.

“This was a business worth the listening after,” Compass said to himself.

— 4.5 —

Pleasance, the true niece of Lady Loadstone, entered the scene and said:

“Oh, Master Compass, did you see my mother?”

“Mistress Placentia, My Lady’s niece, was newly brought to bed of the bravest — most splendid — boy!”

“Will you go see it?”

“First, I’ll know the father, before I approach these hazards,” Compass replied.

He did not want to cause gossip that he was the faather.

Pleasance said, “Mistress Midwife has promised to find out a father for it, if there is need.”

The father need not be the biological father.

“She may the safelier — the more safely — do it by virtue of her place as a midwife,” Compass said. “But, pretty Pleasance, I have a piece of news for you that I think will please you.”

“What is it, Master Compass?” Pleasance asked.

“Wait, you must earn it before you know it,” Compass said.

“Where’s My Lady?”

“She has retired to her chamber and shut it up,” Pleasance said.

“She has heard nothing about this yet?” Compass said.

“Well, command the coach to be made ready and prepare yourself to travel a little way with me.”

“To where, for God’s sake?” Pleasance asked.

“Where I’ll entreat you to do something not to your loss, believe it, if you dare trust yourself,” Compass said.

“I will go with you the world over!” Pleasance said.

“The news will well requite the pains, I assure you, and in this tumult you will not be missed,” Compass said.

“Command the coach to be made ready. It is an instant — an urgent — business that will not be done without you.”

Pleasance exited, and Parson Palate entered the scene.

Compass said, “Parson Palate, we are most opportunely met. Step into my chambers. I’ll come to you soon. There is a friend or two who will entertain and receive you.”

Parson Palate exited, and Master Practice, who was holding a marriage license, entered the scene.

Compass asked, “Master Practice, do you have the license?”

— 4.6 —

“Here it is,” Master Practice said.

“Let’s see it,” Compass said. “Your name’s not in it.”

“I’ll fill that in soon,” Master Practice said. “It has the seal, which is the main thing, and it is registered. The clerk knows me and trusts me.”

“Do you have the parson?” Compass asked.

“They say he’s here,” Master Practice said. “He said that he would come here.”

Compass said:

“I would not have him seen here for a world, to breed suspicion. Intercept him and prevent that. But take your license with you and fill in the blank, or leave it here with me. I’ll do it for you.”

Compass would both intercept the parson and fill in the blank. Actually, he had already intercepted the parson.

Compass continued:

“Wait for us at his church behind the Old Exchange; we’ll come in the coach and meet you there within this quarter of an hour at least.”

Master Practice gave him the marriage license and said:

“I am much bound to you, Master Compass. You have all the law and parts — abilities — of Squire Practice forever at your use.

“I’ll tell you news, too. Sir, your reversion’s fallen. Thinwit, Surveyor of the Projects General, is dead.”

This meant that Compass would become the new Surveyor of the Projects General. This was a desirable position.

“When did he die?” Compass asked.

“Just this morning,” Master Practice said. “I received the news from a right hand: an important aide.”

“Conceal it, Master Practice, and bear in mind the main affair you have in hand and are actively concerned with,” Compass said.

Master Practice exited the scene, and Pleasance entered the scene.

“The coach is ready, sir,” Pleasance said.

Compass said:

“It is well, fair Pleasance, although now we shall not use it.”

He had intended for the coach to take Pleasance and him to the church to be married. Now the coach was not needed. Parson Palate and a marriage license were here.

Compass continued:

“Tell the coachman to drive to the parish church and stay about there until Master Practice comes to him and employs him.”

Pleasance exited.

Compass said to himself, “I have a license now that must be registered before my lawyer’s license.”

“My lawyer” is Master Practice.

Master Practice was not his lawyer. Compass was using “my” the same way a person might say “my boy,” when referring to a boy who was not his son.

Parson Palate entered the scene.

Compass said to him, “Noble Parson Palate, thou shall be a mark advanced: Here’s a piece. And do a feat — an action — for me.”

Nobles, marks, and pieces are coins.



“What, Master Compass?” Parson Palate asked.

Compass answered, “Just run — speak — the words of matrimony over my head and Mistress Pleasance’s in my chamber. There’s Captain Ironside to be a witness, and here’s a license to make thee feel secure that the wedding is legitimate, Parson!”

Parson Palate did not look happy.

Compass asked, “What do you stick at? Why are you hesitating?”

Parson Palate said:

“It is afternoon, sir, directly against the canon law — the ecclesiastical law — of the church.”

According to the ecclesiastical law of the time and place, weddings had to take place between the hours of eight and twelve in the morning. Also, the wedding had to take place at a church.

Parson Palate continued:

“You know it, Master Compass, and besides, I am hired by and committed to our worshipful friend, the learned Master Practice, in that business.”

He was supposed to officiate at the marriage of Master Practice and Pleasance.

Compass said:

“Come on, engage yourself — commit yourself. Who shall be able to say you married us other than in the morning, the most canonical and legal minute of the day, if you affirm it?”

Compass wanted Parson Palate to lie about the time of the wedding and to break his previous commitment and promise made to Master Practice.

He continued:

“That’s a spiced — over-scrupulous — excuse, and it shows you have set the common law before any profession — religious vow — else of love or friendship.”

According to Compass’ rhetoric, Parson Palate was preferring the interests of Master Practice the lawyer over his religious vow to prefer the interests of love and friendship.

Pleasance had agreed to go with Compass the world over — that was evidence of love and friendship — and their marriage would also be evidence of love and friendship.

There is no evidence that Master Practice had even asked Pleasance to marry him, much less that she had accepted his proposal.

Pleasance returned.

Compass said to her, “Come, Mistress Pleasance, we cannot prevail with the rigid parson here.”

He then said to Parson Palate, “But, sir, I’ll keep you locked in my lodging until it is done elsewhere, and under fear of Ironside.”

Captain Ironside would guard him — a terrifying prospect to Parson Palate. While he was under guard, Parson Palate could not tell Master Practice what was happening.

“Do you hear me, sir?” Parson Palate said. “Listen to me.”

“No, no, it doesn’t matter,” Compass said.

Parson Palate said:

“Can you think, sir, that I would deny you anything? I would not even if it meant the loss of both my livings. I will do it for you.”

A living is a source of income; for example, a position as a vicar or other church official. Many parsons had more than one living.

Parson Palate asked:

“Do you have a wedding ring?”

Compass answered, “Aye, and a posy: *Annulus hic nobis quod scit uterque dabit.*”

A posy is a sentiment inscribed on the inside of a ring.

“Good!” Parson Palate said.

He loosely translated the posy: “This ring will give you what you both desire.”

He then said, “I’ll make the whole house chant it, and the parish.”

Literally, the Latin states: “This ring will give to us what each knows.”

Pleasance has yet to know that she is the daughter of Lady Loadstone; this is knowledge that Compass will give her. Readers will soon see that Pleasance has important knowledge to give to Compass.

“Why, well said, parson,” Compass said.

He then said, “Now I will give to you my news that comprehends my reasons for this action, Mistress Pleasance.”

— 4.7 —

Mother Chair, Master Needle, Mistress Polish, and Nurse Keep spoke together.

“Go, get a nurse, procure her at what rate you can, and out of the house with it, son Needle,” Mother Chair said. “It is a bad commodity — a bad piece of goods.”

“It” is the baby, which needed a wet nurse to breastfeed it.

“Good mother, I know it, but the best should now be made of it,” Master Needle said.

They needed to make the best of a bad situation, and they needed to do what they could for the baby.

Mother Chair replied:

“And it shall.”

Master Needle exited.

Mother Chair then said:

“You should not fret so, Mistress Polish, nor you, Dame Keep. My daughter shall do well, when she has taken my caudle — my medicinal drink. I have known twenty such breaches of trust pieced up and patched up and made whole without a bum of noise.”

Placentia was not Mother Chair’s biological daughter; “my daughter” was a term of etiquette.

Mother Chair meant “without a hum of noise,” but “bum” goes well with “breeches.” A bum of noise is a bum of farts.

A breach of trust can also be a vagina that has been breached out of wedlock. Mother Chair has known twenty out-of-wedlock births that ended well.

Of course, another breach of trust was the switching of babies.

Yet another breach of trust was the falling out between Mistress Polish and Nurse Keep.

“You two fall out?” Mother Chair said. “And you tear up one another?”

“Blessèd woman!” Mistress Polish said. “Blest be the peacemaker.”

Nurse Keep said:

“The pease-dresser!”

A “pease-dresser” is someone who prepares peas for cooking.

The word “pease” means “appease.”

Nurse Keep continued:

“I’ll hear no peace from Mistress Polish. I have been wronged. So has My Lady, My good Lady’s Worship, and I will right her, hoping she’ll right me.”

Mistress Polish said, “Good gentle Keep, I ask thee, Mistress Nurse, to pardon my passion, to pardon my strong emotion. I was misadvised — I acted unadvisedly. Be thou yet better by this grave sage woman, Mother Chair, who is the mother of matrons and great persons and knows the world.”

Nurse Keep said, “I do confess, she knows something — and I know something —”

She knew something Mistress Polish did not want Lady Loadstone to learn.

“Put your somethings together then,” Mistress Polish said.

Mother Chair said:

“Aye, here’s a chance fallen out that you cannot help, and less can this gentlewoman help.

“I can and will for both.

“First, I have sent by-chop away; the cause gone, the fame ceases.”

In other words: Remove the cause of the gossip, and the gossip ceases.

The “by-chop” is the bastard. It is a by-blow: 1) a man’s illegitimate child, and 2) a side-blow not directed at the main target. The man’s “arrow” was not aimed at and did not hit the main target: a wife’s vagina.

Mother Moth said:

“Then, by my caudle [medicinal drink] and my cullis [meat broth], I set my daughter on her feet about the house here. She’s young and must stir and arouse herself somewhat for necessity. Her youth will bear it out: She’s young enough to do it.

“She shall pretend to have had hysteria — a fit of the mother — and that is all that is needed if you have but a secretary laundress — one who can keep secrets — to blanch and whiten the linen.”

Placentia would get up and be active and pretend that she had not given birth: “Baby? What baby?”

A laundress who could keep a secret would wash the bloodstained sheets.

“Take the former counsels — confidences — into you; keep them safe in your own breasts, and make your market of them at the highest.”

The best market and the best price for the secrets involved keeping them secret. They still hoped to get a good marriage for Placentia. Such a marriage could benefit them as well as benefit Placentia.

Mother Chair continued:

“Will you go peach — turn informer — and proclaim yourself to be a fool at Grannam’s Cross?”

Grannam’s Cross was a public place. “Grannam” means “Old Woman,” and “cross” is a crossroad.

Mother Chair continued:

“Will you be laughed at and despised?”

“Will you betray a purpose that the deputy of a double ward or even his alderman with twelve of the wisest questmen — officials who investigate misdemeanors — could find out? Will you betray a purpose to these officials who are employed by the authority of the city?”

The purpose of switching babies was to secure a high social position for Mistress Polish’s daughter. Punishment for such an action would be heavy.

Mother Chair continued:

“Come, come, be friends, and keep these women-matters, smock-secrets, women’s secrets, to ourselves in our own verge, aka jurisdiction.

“We shall mar all if once we open the mysteries of the attiring house — dressing rooms — and tell what’s done within.

“No theaters are more cheated with — tricked by — appearances, or these shop-lights, than the age is, and folk in them, who seem most curious — most careful.”

Theaters rely on deception, and seeing things as they really are can be disappointing. The dashing young figure on stage may be a tired middle-aged man off stage.

Shop-lights can be kept low so that customers cannot closely inspect the merchandise on sale.

Our age, and we people in our age, are very badly tricked by appearances. Think of United States Supreme Court Justices who gave the appearance at their confirmation hearings that they believed that *Roe v. Wade* was settled law. Think of United States Senators who pretended to be shocked that those United States Supreme Court Justices had lied at their confirmation hearings.

Mistress Polish said:

“Breath of an oracle! You shall be my dear mother, wisest woman who ever tipped her tongue with point of reasons to turn — persuade — her hearers! She has sharpened her tongue with persuasive points as sharp as arrow tips. Mistress Keep, relent!”

She knelt and continued:

“I did abuse thee, I confess as far as to do penance, and on my knees I ask thee for forgiveness.”

Mother Chair said, “Rise. She does begin to melt, I see it —”

“Nothing grieved me as much as when you called me ‘bawd,’” Nurse Keep said. “‘Witch’ did not trouble me, nor ‘gypsy,’ no, nor ‘beggar.’ But ‘bawd’ was such a terrible name!”

Mother Chair said:

“No more rehearsals. No more repeating old words.”

Mistress Polish rose.

Mother Chair continued:

“Repetitions make things worse. The more we stir — you know the proverb, and it signifies a — stink.”

A proverb stated, “The more you stir, the more you stink.”



Mother Chair continued:

“What’s done and dead, let it be buried. New hours will fit fresh handles to new thoughts.”

In other words: Time will heal their differences.

They exited.

— 4.8 —

Sir Moth Interest stood in a room with his footboy.

He ordered the footboy, “Run to the church, sirrah. Get all the drunkards to ring the bells and jangle them for joy. My niece has brought an heir to the house, a lusty — a vigorous and lively — boy.”

The footboy exited.

Sir Moth Interest then asked himself, “Where’s my sister Loadstone?”

Lady Loadstone entered the room.

Sir Moth Interest said to her:

“Asleep during afternoons! It is not wholesome, against all rules of health, lady sister. The little doctor will not like it.

“Our niece is newly delivered of a chopping — vigorous — child, who can call the father by his name already, if it just opens its mouth round.”

Like other people, Sir Moth Interest thought that Compass was the father. The instrument with two legs and a movable joint that is used to make circles is known as a compass, and the baby would be saying “Compass” if it opened its mouth wide.

Hmm. “Instrument with two legs and a movable joint that is used to make circles.” Yep, that’s bawdy.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“Master Compass, he is the man, they say, rumor gives it out, who has done that act of ‘honor’ to our house and friendship, to pump out a son and heir who shall inherit nothing, surely nothing, from me at least.”

Illegitimate children who are known to be illegitimate often inherit little or nothing.

Compass entered the room.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“I come to invite Your Ladyship to be a witness — a godmother.”

Puritans did not use the word “godparent,” but instead used the word “witness.” Mistress Polish was a Puritan, and so was Lady Loadstone’s and Sir Moth Interest’s dead sister.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“I will be your partner and give it a horn spoon and a treen dish — the badges of bastards and beggars — with a blanket for dame the doxy — Madam Slut — to march round the circuit with bag and baggage — with all her possessions.”

A horn spoon was an inexpensive spoon made out of horn. A christening-gift for an upper-class infant was usually two silver spoons, each decorated with the image of an apostle.

A treen dish is a wooden bowl. Beggars used bowls in their begging.

Prostitutes walked behind a cart as they were paraded in public and mocked as punishment.

Compass said:

“Thou malicious knight, envious Sir Moth, who eats on that which feeds thee and frets — gnaws — her goodness who sustains thy being!”

Sir Moth Interest was biting the hand that fed him. That hand belonged to Lady Loadstone.

A proverb states, “Envy eats nothing but her own heart.”

Compass continued:

“What company of mankind would acknowledge thy brotherhood, except as thou have a title — a claim — to her blood whom thy ill-nature has chosen to insult and triumph over and she be thus vexed over an accident in her house as if it were her crime, good innocent lady!

“Sir Moth Interest, thou show thyself to be a true corroding vermin, such as thou art.”

Corroding vermin eat into their prey. The word “corrody” means a right to free quarters given by a lord or a religious house.

“Why, gentle Master Compass?” Sir Moth Interest said. “Because I wish you joy of your young son and heir to the house whom you have sent us?”

Sarcastically, Compass replied:

“Whom I have sent you? I don’t know what I shall do.”

Actually, he knew what he would do: He would call into the room some witnesses:

“Come in, friends.”

Captain Ironside, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, Master Bias, and Pleasance entered the room.

Compass said to Lady Loadstone, “Madam, I ask you to be pleased to trust yourself to our company.”

Lady Loadstone replied:

“I did that too recently, and it brought this calamity upon me with all the infamy I hear.

“Your soldier, that swaggering, quarrelsome guest —”

Compass interrupted:

“— who has returned here to you as our vowed friend and servant, comes to sup with you — and so we do all — and who will prove he has deserved that special respect and favor from you.

“Your fortunes with yourself to boot — in addition — cast on a featherbed and spread on the sheets under a brace — a pair — of your best Persian carpets, would scarcely be a price valuable enough to thank his happy merit.”

“Persian carpets” are bed and table coverings.

According to Compass, Captain Ironside had done something for Lady Loadstone that deserved to be repaid with all Lady Loadstone’s fortune and with Lady Loadstone herself.

“What impudence is this?” Sir Moth Interest asked. “Can you endure to hear it, sister?”

Compass said:

“Yes, and you shall hear it, who will endure it worse.”

Sir Moth Interest will suffer from hearing the news more than Lady Loadstone will.

Compass continued:

“What does he deserve in your opinion, madam, or your weighed judgment, he who — things thus hanging as they do in doubt, suspended and suspected, all involved and wrapped in error — can resolve the knot; redintegrate — restore and make perfect again — the reputation, first, of your house; restore Your Ladyship’s quiet; render and restore then your niece a virgin who is unvitiated and unspoiled; and make all plain and perfect, as it was?”

“What deserves the man who can stop a practice — a trick — to betray you and your name, and who can make all things right again?”

“He speaks impossibilities,” Sir Moth Interest said.

Compass drew Captain Ironside forward, and then he said:

“Here he stands whose fortune has done this, and you must thank him. To what you call his swaggering and quarrelsomeness, we owe all this.

“And that it may have credit with you, madam, here is your niece, whom I have married. These gentlemen — the knight, captain, and parson, and this grave and serious politic tell-truth of the court — witnessed the wedding.”

The “politic tell-truth” was Master Bias, who told the truth when it was politic to do so.

These people were able to confirm that Compass and Pleasance were married.

“Who is she whom I call niece, then?” Lady Compass asked.

If Pleasance were her niece, then who was Placentia?

Compass answered:

“She is Polish’s daughter. Her mother, Goody Polish, has confessed to Grannam Keep, the nurse, how they exchanged the children in their cradles.”

Lower-class women were called “Goody” or “Goodwife” as a respectful title.

“Grannam” meant 1) grandmother, or 2) old woman.

“For what purpose?” Lady Loadstone asked.

Compass answered, “To get the marriage portion, or some part of it.”

He then said to Sir Moth Interest, “You must now disburse the entire marriage portion to me, sir, providing that I gain Her Ladyship’s consent.”

“I bid God give you joy, if what you say is true,” Lady Loadstone said.

Compass said to her, “As true it is, lady, lady, in the song with the refrain ‘lady, lady.’”

One song that includes the words “lady, lady” is “There dwelt a man in Babylon,” about a woman named “Susannah,” who was true and loyal to her husband, Joacim.

“Susanna,” the source of and inspiration for the song, is an apocryphal book that is sometimes printed in Bibles.

Compass then said:

“The marriage portion’s mine with interest, Sir Moth.

“I will not ’bate you a single harington of interest upon interest. I won’t give you a single farthing.

“In the meantime, I commit you to the guard of Captain Ironside, my brother here, Captain Rudhudibras, from whom I will expect you or your ransom.”

The ransom would pay for Sir Moth Interest’s release from Captain Ironside.

“Sir, you must prove it and the possibility, before I believe it,” Sir Moth Interest said.

Compass would have to provide evidence that what he claimed was true. He would have to explain what had happened and how it had happened.

Compass replied:

“For the possibility, I leave to trial.

“Truth shall speak itself.”

Master Practice entered the scene.

“Oh, Master Practice, did you meet the coach?” Compass asked him.

“Yes, sir, but it was empty,” Master Practice said.

Compass said:

“Why, I sent it for you. The business was dispatched here before you came.

“Come in, I’ll tell you how. You are a man who will look for satisfaction and must have it.”

The satisfaction could be sought in a duel, or in a court of law. The latter was more likely.

All said, “So do we all, and long to hear the right — the truth that will make everything all right.”

#### **CHORUS 4 (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)**

Damplay said, “Truly, I am one of those who labor with the same longing for the right, for it is almost puckered and tangled and pulled into that knot by your poet, which I cannot easily, with all the strength of my imagination, untie.”

John Trygust replied, “Likely enough, nor is it in your office to be troubled or perplexed and confused with it, but to sit still and wait. The more your imagination busies itself, the more it becomes entangled, especially if (as I said in the beginning) you happen to find the wrong end.”

Probee said:

“He has answered sufficiently well, Brother Damplay.

“Our roles, which are the spectators who would hear a comedy, are to await the process and progress and outcome of things, as the poet presents them, not as we would corruptly fashion them.

“We come here to see plays and censure — judge — them as they are made and fitted and prepared for us, not to beslaver our own thoughts with censorious spittle tempering the poet’s clay as if we were to mold every scene anew. That would be a mere plastic ambition — creator’s invention — or potter’s ambition, most unbecoming the name of a gentleman.”

In other words: Audiences should allow the playwright to do his work without interference.

Probee continued:

“Let us pay attention and not lose the business on foot — in progress — by talking. Let us follow the right thread or find it.”

Damplay said, “Why, here his play might have ended, if he would have let it, and have spared us the vexation of a fifth act yet to come, which everyone here knows the issue of already, or may in part conjecture.”

Many comedies end with a marriage, but this play still has a few loose ends: Who is the father of Placentia’s baby? Will Sir Moth Interest hand over the marriage portion?



John Trygust said, “That conjecture is a kind of figure-flinging and astrological forecasting, or throwing the dice, for a meaning that was never in the poet’s purpose, perhaps. Stay and see his last act, his *catastrophe* — the outcome and final turn of events. See how he will perplex that, or spring some fresh cheat or surprise, to entertain the spectators with a convenient and appropriate delight, until some unexpected and new encounter breaks out to rectify all and make good the conclusion.”

In other words: We don’t have a happy ending yet. Ben Jonson still has a few plot elements to surprise the audience.

Probee said, “The play, ending here, would have shown itself to be dull, flat, and unpointed, without a clear purpose, without any shape or sharpness, Brother Damplay.”

“Well, let us wait and expect more then,” Damplay said. “And may the poet’s wit and intelligence help us.”

ACT 5 (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)

— 5.1 —

Master Needle and Tim Item talked together.

Master Needle said, “In truth, Master Item, here’s a house divided and quartered into parts by your doctor’s engine — his ingenious invention: He’s cast out such aspersions and false insinuations on My Lady’s niece here, of having had a child, as hardly will be wiped off, I doubt.”

“Why, isn’t it true?” Tim Item asked.

“True!” Master Needle said. “Did you think it to be true?”

“Wasn’t she in labor?” Tim Item asked. “Wasn’t the midwife sent for?”

“There’s your error now!” Master Needle said. “You have drunk of the same water. You believe what they believe!

“I believed it, and I gave it out as the truth, too,” Tim Item said. “I told it to others because I believed it.”

“More you wronged the party,” Master Needle said. “She had no such thing about her, innocent creature!”

“What had she then?” Tim Item asked.

“Only a fit of the mother!” Master Needle said. “She had a fit of hysteria! They burnt old shoes, goose-feathers, *asafoetida*, a few horn shavings, with a bone or two, and she is well again, and about the house —”

*Asafoetida* was a gum that was used as an antispasmodic.

“— is it possible?” Tim Item interrupted.

“See it, and then report it,” Master Needle replied.

“Our doctor’s urinal-judgment is half cracked, then,” Tim Item said.

Doctors examined a patient’s urine when diagnosing illness.

A half-cracked judgment is a judgment based on stupidity and ignorance.

“Cracked in the case most hugely, with My Lady and sad Sir Moth, her brother, who is now under a cloud a little,” Master Needle said.

A “case” can be a vagina.

“Of what?” Tim Item asked. “Disgrace?”

“He is committed into the custody of Rudhudibras, the Captain Ironside, because of displeasure from Master Compass, but it will blow off,” Master Needle said.

“The doctor shall reverse this instantly and set all right again, if you’ll assist in just a toy, a trifling matter, Squire Needle, that comes in my noddle — my head — now,” Tim Item said.

“Good — Needle and Noddle!” Master Needle said. “What may it be? I long for it.”

Tim Item said, “Why, just to go to bed and feign a distemper — a disorder — of walking in your sleep and talking in it a little idly and without sense, but so much as on it the doctor may have the grounds to raise a cure for his reputation.”

By “curing the illness,” Doctor Rut would “cure” his damaged reputation. Some people now knew him as the doctor who did not diagnose Placentia’s pregnancy.

“Anything to serve the worship — good name — of the man I love and honor,” Master Needle said.

Mistress Polish and Pleasance met each other.

Pleasance still believed that Mistress Polish was her mother.

Mistress Polish still wanted her daughter, Placentia, to wed a high-ranking man.

Mistress Polish said:

“Oh! May God give you joy, Mademoiselle Compass! You are his whirlpool now, all-to-be-married — thoroughly married — against your mother’s permission and without counsel!”

A whirlpool draws everything to itself.

Mistress Polish continued:

“He’s fished fair and caught a frog, I fear.

“What fortune do you have to bring him in a marriage portion? What dowry do you have? You can tell stories now: You know a world of secrets to reveal.”

Pleasance knew about the birth of Placentia’s child.

“I know nothing but what is told to me, nor can I discover anything,” Pleasance said.

Neither Mistress Polish nor Pleasance (unless Compass had told her, which is possible) knew at this point that Compass had learned that Mistress Polish was not Pleasance’s mother.

Mistress Polish said:

“No, you shall not discover anything, I’ll take order — I’ll take steps to prevent it.

“Go, get you in there. It is Ember Week! I’ll keep you fasting from his flesh for a while.”

Ember Week was a time of fasting on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

Mistress Polish would keep Pleasance and Compass from consummating their marriage for a while.

Pleasance exited.

“See who’s here?” Mother Chair said about Placentia. “She’s been with My Lady, who kissed her, all-to-kissed her — thoroughly kissed her — twice or thrice.”

“And called her niece again, and viewed her linen,” Nurse Keep said.

Placentia’s sheets were not bloodstained, as they would have been if she had given birth. Of course, a laundress had been busy.

“You have done a miracle, Mother Chair,” Mistress Polish said.

“Not I,” Mother Chair said. “My caudle has done it. Thank my caudle heartily.”

Her caudle — a medicinal drink — had enabled Placentia to leave her bed and see Lady Loadstone.

Mistress Polish said:

“It shall be thanked, and you, too, wisest Mother.

“You shall have a new, splendid, four-pound beaver hat, set with enameled studs, as mine is here, and a right — genuine — pair of crystal spectacles, crystal of the rock, thou mighty mother of dames, hung in an ivory case at a gold belt, and silver bells to jingle as you pace before your fifty daughters in procession to church, or from the church.”

The beaver hat would cost four pounds.

“Crystal of the rock” is transparent quartz.

Mother Chair had been present at the birth of fifty girls: her figurative daughters.

After childbirth women did not go to church for four weeks. The midwife then accompanied them as they went to church again.

“Thanks, Mistress Polish,” Mother Chair said.

“She deserves as many pensions as there are pieces in a — maidenhead, if I were a prince to give them,” Nurse Keep said.

“Pieces” are coins. They can also be penises.

A maidenhead can be sold. If a young prostitute is a good actress, it can be sold over or over.

Mother Chair deserved a pension for each young unmarried mother whom she helped to be married to a well-born man.

If Placentia can keep up the pretense of being a virgin, she can “sell” her “maidenhead” to a well-born husband.

Mistress Polish said to Placentia, “Come, sweet charge, you shall present yourself about the house. Be confident and bear up. You shall be seen.”

People needed to see that Placentia did not look like she had just given birth.

They exited.

### — 5.3 —

Compass and Captain Ironside argued with Master Practice.

Compass wanted to make peace with him, but Master Practice was angry because he had wanted to marry Pleasance, but Compass had tricked him.

“What!” Compass said. “I can make you amends, my learned counsel, and satisfy a greater injury and violation of rights to chafed, irritated Master Practice. Who would think that you could be thus testy?”

“He has a grave head, given over to the study of our laws!” Captain Ironside said.

“And to the prime honors of the commonwealth,” Compass said.

“And he has you to mind a wife,” Captain Ironside said.

Compass was focusing his attention on a wife, something that perhaps Master Interest did not have time to do because of his professional interests.

“What should you do with such a toy as a wife who might distract you or hinder you in your career course?” Compass asked.

“He shall not think of it,” Captain Ironside said.

Compass said, “I will make over and transfer to you my possession of that same place that has fallen void, you know, to satisfy you: Surveyor of the Projects General.”

To make amends with Master Practice, Compass will give him the possession of the office of Surveyor of the Projects General.

“And that’s an office you know how to stir in and be busy in,” Captain Ironside said.

“And make your profits from,” Compass said.

“Profits are, indeed, the ends and objectives of a gowned man — a lawyer such as you,” Captain Ironside said. “Show your activity and show how you are built for business.”

“I accept it as a possession, even if it is only a reversion,” Master Practice said.

A reversion is the right to succeed in the office; when the person who has that office dies, the successor takes possession of the office.

“You were the first who told me it was a possession,” Compass said.

Master Practice had told Compass that Thinwit, who held the office of Surveyor of the Projects General, had died. If that was true, the reversion had become a possession.

“Aye, I told you that I heard that,” Master Practice said.

“All is one. That doesn’t matter,” Captain Ironside said. “He’ll make reversion a possession quickly.”

In other words: Thinwit will die soon, if he isn’t already dead, and the reversion will become a possession. Apparently, Thinwit was in the process of dying.

“But I must have a general release from you,” Compass said.

A general release would acknowledge that Compass had given Master Practice the right of succession to the office, and so, if for some reason Master Practice did not succeed in obtaining the office, Compass would not be liable.

“Do one; I’ll do the other,” Master Practice said.

They would write two documents: one for giving away the reversion/possession, and one for the general release.

“It’s a match — an agreement — before my brother Ironside,” Compass said. “He will be the witness.”

“It is done,” Master Practice said.

They shook hands.



“We two are reconciled, then,” Compass said.

Two more humors had been reconciled.

“To a lawyer who can make use of a place, any half-title is better than a wife,” Captain Ironside said.

A half-title is a half-claim. A lawyer would know how to make the best use of it.

“And it will save the expense of coaches, velvet gowns, and cut-work smocks for a wife,” Compass said.

Cut-work smocks have open embroidery.

“He is to occupy an office wholly,” Captain Ironside said.

The work of the office will entirely fill the lawyer’s — Master Practice’s — time.

Compass said:

“That is true.

“I must talk with you nearer — about something that affects me more closely, Master Practice. It is about the recovery of my wife’s marriage portion, and what course of action I would be best to take to get it from Sir Moth Interest.”

“The plainest way,” Master Practice said.

“What’s that, for plainness?” Compass said.

Master Practice said:

“Sue him at common law.

“Arrest him on an action of choke-bail: five hundred thousand pounds. It will frighten him and all his sureties.”

“Choke-bail” is bail that is a huge sum of money and is intended to keep the accused in jail due to inability to raise the bail.

“Sureties” are people who would normally guarantee the bail, but in this case they would balk at being sureties for so large a sum.

Master Practice then asked:

“You can prove your marriage?”

“Yes,” Compass said. “We’ll talk of it inside, and we will hear what My Lady has to say.”

They exited.

— 5.4 —

Sir Moth Interest and Lady Loadstone talked together.

“I’m sure the brogue of the house went all that way,” Sir Moth Interest said. “She was with child, and Master Compass got it.”

The brogue is 1) a cheat, and 2) an escheat.

Since Placentia bore an illegitimate child, she was not eligible for the marriage portion, according to Sir Moth Interest. Therefore, the escheat.

Lady Loadstone said:

“Why, that, you see, is manifestly false.

“He’s married the other, our true niece, he says. He would not woo them both; he is not such a stallion to leap on and have sex with all.

“Also, no child appears that I can find with all my search and all the strictest inquiry I have made through all my family.”

Her “family” included all her household servants.

Lady Loadstone continued:

“A fit of the mother — that is, a fit of hysteria — the women say she had, which the midwife cured with burning bones and feathers.”

Doctor Rut entered the scene.

Seeing Doctor Rut coming, Lady Loadstone said:

“Here’s the doctor.”

Sir Moth Interest said, “Oh, noble doctor, didn’t you and your Tim Item tell me that our niece was in labor?”

“If I did, what follows?” Doctor Rut asked.

“And didn’t you tell me that Mother Midnight was sent for?” Sir Moth Interest asked.

“Mother Midnight” can be 1) a midwife, or 2) a bawd.

Here, of course, it refers to Mother Chair.

“So she was, and she is in the house still,” Doctor Rut said.

“But here has a noise — a rumor — been since, that Placentia was delivered of a brave — a splendid — boy, and it was of Master Compass’ begetting,” Sir Moth Interest said.

Doctor Rut said:

“I know no rattle of gossips, nor their noises.

“I hope you do not take me for a pimp errant — a wandering, wrong-doing pimp — to deal in smock-affairs.”

“Smock-affairs” are women’s affairs.

He then asked:

“Where’s the patient, the infirm man about whom I was sent for — where’s Squire Needle?”

“Is Needle sick?” Lady Loadstone asked.

“My apothecary tells me that he is in danger,” Doctor Rut said.

The apothecary, Tim Item, entered the scene.

“How are things, Tim? Where is he?” Doctor Rut asked.

“I cannot hold him down,” Tim Item said. “He’s up and walks and talks in his perfect sleep with his eyes shut, as sensibly as if he were broad awake. Although he is sound asleep, he appears as if he is in control of his senses.”

“Look, here he comes,” Sir Moth Interest said, looking up. “He’s fast asleep: observe him.”

Doctor Rut said, “He’ll tell us wonders.”

Seeing some women with Master Needle, he asked, “What are these women doing here?”

— 5.5 —

Half-undressed, Master Needle entered the scene. He was followed by Mistress Polish, Mother Chair, Nurse Keep, and Placentia.

“Hunting a man half naked?” Doctor Rut said. “You are fine beagles! You’d have his doucets.”

Beagles are a pack of hunting hounds, and doucets are deer testicles.

Master Needle said, “I have linen breeks — breeches — on.”

“Breeches” are a kind of underwear.

Master Needle had heard the reference to “doucets,” and he was responding to it.

“He hears, but he can see nothing,” Doctor Rut said.

Master Needle responded, “Yes, I see who hides the treasure yonder.”

“Huh?” Sir Moth Interest said. “What treasure?”

He was interested in treasure.

“If you ask questions, he awakens at once,” Doctor Rut said, “and then you’ll hear no more until his next fit.”

And I see whom she hides it for,” Master Needle said.

Doctor Rut said quietly to Sir Moth Interest, “Do you note that, sir? Listen.”

“A fine she-spirit it is, an Indian magpie,” Master Needle said. “She was an alderman’s widow, and she fell in love with our Sir Moth, My Lady’s brother.”

Indian magpies are literally a species of thieving, acquisitive, hoarding birds. Figuratively, they are ladies with expensive tastes.

Having fallen in love with Sir Moth Interest, the alderman’s widow may have left treasure for him.

“Do you hear this?” Doctor Rut said quietly to Sir Moth Interest.

Master Needle said, “And she has hidden an alderman’s estate, dropped through her bill in little holes in the garden, and she scrapes earth over them, where none can spy but I, who see all by the glow-worm’s light that creeps before.”

Birds have beaks, aka bills. Like a bird that gathers and hides bright objects, the alderman’s wife had apparently hidden treasure in little holes in the garden.

Glow-worms are lightning bugs, aka fireflies.

Mistress Polish said, “I knew the gentlewoman, Alderman Parrot’s widow, a fine speaker as any was in the clothing or the bevy. She did become her scarlet and black velvet, her green and purple —”

Parrots speak without understanding what they say.

The clothing is the distinctive clothing of an alderman’s wife, or the livery of a company, and the bevy is a group of ladies.

Doctor Rut interrupted, “— save thy colors, rainbow —”

He then said to Master Needle, “— or she will run thee over, and all thy lights.”

In other words: Madame Polish will talk over you and your lungs.

One meaning of “lights” is lungs.

Her talking would interfere with Master Needle’s story about hidden treasure, a story that interested Sir Moth Interest, who was present, and which they wanted Sir Moth Interest to hear.

Mistress Polish kept talking:

“She dwelt in Dolittle Lane atop of the hill there in the round cage, which was after — in the style of — Sir Chime Squirrel’s. She would eat nothing but almonds, I assure you.”

Some rolling cages for squirrels had chiming bells. They are exercise wheels. Small rolling cages are called hamster wheels.

Almonds are a treat for a squirrel.

“I wish thou had a dose of pills, a double dose of the best purge, to make thee turn tale the other way!” Doctor Rut said.

“Tale” sounds like “tail,” or posterior. Purging can be done with the mouth through vomiting, or with the posterior through defecation.

Mistress Needle exited, followed by Mother Chair, Nurse Keep, and Placentia.

Mistress Polish, Lady Loadstone, Doctor Rut, Sir Moth Interest, and Tim Item remained behind.

Mistress Polish said to Doctor Rut:

“You are a foul-mouthed, purging, absurd doctor. I tell you true, and I did long to tell it to you.

“You have spread a scandal in My Lady’s house here on her sweet niece that you never can take off with all your purges or your plaster of oaths, even if you were to distil your ‘damn me’ drop by drop in your defense.”

A “plaster” is a bandage.

Mistress Polish continued:

“As for your saying that she has had a child, here she spits on thee and defies thee, or I will do it for her.”

Doctor Rut said to Lady Loadstone:

“Madam, please bind and constrain her to her behavior.

“Tie your gossip — your companion — up, or send her to Bedlam Hospital for the Insane.”

Mistress Polish said:

“Go thou thither, who better has deserved it, shame of doctors!

“Where could she be delivered? By what charm could she be restored to her strength so soon? Who is the father? And where is the infant?”

“Ask your oracle — Master Needle — who walks and talks in his sleep.”

Doctor Rut said:

“Where is he? Gone?”

“You have lost a fortune listening to Mistress Polish, to her tabor.”

A tabor is literally a drum, and figuratively, here, a tongue.

The fortune, of course, was the treasure that Master Needle had been talking about as he “walked in his sleep.”

Doctor Rut continued:

“Good madam, lock her up.”

“You must give losers — those who have lost something — their leave to speak, good doctor,” Lady Loadstone said.

A proverb stated, “Give losers leave [permission] to speak.”

Doctor Rut said, “Follow his footing — Master Needle’s track — before he gets to his bed. This rest is lost else.”

Doctor Rut, Sir Moth Interest, and Tim Item exited.

Lady Loadstone and Mistress Polish remained behind.

— 5.6 —

Compass, Master Practice, and Captain Ironside entered the scene.

“Where is my wife?” Compass asked Mistress Polish. “What have you done with my wife, you gossip of the counsels?”



Mistress Polish was one of the group of people who advised Lady Loadstone.

“I, sweet Master Compass?” Mistress Polish said. “I honor you and your wife.”

“Well, do so still,” Compass said. “I will not call you mother, though, but Polish. Good Gossip Polish, where have you hidden my wife?”

“I hide your wife?” Mistress Polish said.

“Or she’s run away,” Compass said.

“That would make all suspected, sir, afresh,” Lady Loadstone said.

If Pleasance had run away, that would make people suspicious that she was not in fact Lady Loadstone’s niece. It would look as if she were running away because she was guilty of trying to fraudulently get Placentia’s marriage portion.

Lady Loadstone continued:

“Come, we will find her, if she is in the house.”

“Why should I hide your wife, good Master Compass?” Mistress Polish asked.

“I know no reason except that you are Goody Polish, who is good at malice, good at evil, all that can perplex or trouble a business thoroughly,” Compass replied.

“You may say what you will,” Mistress Polish said. “You’re Master Compass, and you carry a large sweep, sir, in your circle.”

The large sweep was a large amount of influence among his friends and associates. It also glanced at a large area made by a compass.

Lady Loadstone said to Mistress Polish:

“I’ll sweep all corners, gossip, to spring this, to make it appear out of hiding, if it is above ground.”

She meant that she would make Pleasance appear from out of hiding; however, readers know that if things worked out well, she could also make Mistress Polish’s secret come out of hiding and be made public.

Lady Loadstone continued:

“I will have her cried by the common crier — the town crier — throughout all the ward, but I will find her.”

She would raise a hue and cry of people to set out and find her.

“It will be an act worthy your justice, madam,” Captain Ironside said.

“And it will become the integrity, innocence and soundness, and worship of her name,” Master Practice said.

— 5.7 —

Doctor Rut and Sir Moth Interest entered the scene.

“It is such a fly, this gossip,” Doctor Rut said about Mistress Polish. “With her buzz, she blows on everything in every place!”

A fly blows — lays eggs — on everything. It makes everything dirty.

Mistress Polish’s buzzing and blowing breath had made it difficult to hear the “sleepwalking” Master Needle’s words about buried treasure.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“A busy woman is a fearful grievance!”

In other words, a meddling woman is a dreadful cause of suffering.

Sir Moth Interest then asked:

“Won’t he sleep again?”

Doctor Rut said:

“Yes, quickly, as soon as he is warm. It is the nature of the disease, and all these cold dry fumes that are melancholic, to work at first slowly and insensibly in their ascent from the stomach to the brain, until being got up; and then distilling down upon the brain, they have a pricking, irritating quality that breeds this restless rest (which we, the sons — the followers — of the art of medicine, call a walking in the sleep) and the telling of mysteries and secret knowledge that must be heard — softly, with art, as if we were sewing pillows under the patients’ elbows.”

According to Doctor Rut, they needed to tend the patient — Master Needle — carefully and quietly and without disturbing him. If they don’t disturb the patient, they may be able to hear his story.

Doctor Rut continued:

“If we don’t tend the patients gently, then they’d fly into a frenzy, run into the woods, where there are noises, huntings, shoutings, hallowings, amid the brakes and furzes and thickets and shrubs, run over bridges, fall into waters, scratch their flesh, sometimes drop down a precipice, and there be lost.”

Tim Item entered the scene.

Seeing him, Doctor Rut asked him:

“How are things now! What is Master Needle doing?”

“He is up again, and he begins to talk,” Tim Item said.

“About the former matter, Item?” Sir Moth Interest asked.

“The treasure and the lady: That’s his theme — that’s what Master Needle talks about,” Tim Item said.

“Oh, me, I am a happy — fortunate — man!” Sir Moth Interest said. “He cannot put off talking about it. I shall know all, then.”

Doctor Rut said quietly to himself:

“With what appetite and craving our own desires delude us!”

He then said:

“Listen, Tim. Let no man interrupt us.”

Tim Item replied, “Sir Diaphanous and Master Bias, his court friends, desire to kiss his niece’s hands and rejoice in and congratulate her in the firm recovery of her good fame and honor.”

Sir Moth Interest said:

“Good.

“Say to them, Master Item, that my niece, Placentia, is by My Lady’s side: they’ll find her there.

“I ask to be spared for only half an hour. I’ll see them soon.”

He wanted to stay and learn about the buried treasure.

Doctor Rut said:

“Do, put them off, Tim, and tell them the importance of the business.”

Master Needle entered the scene.

Seeing him, Doctor Rut said:

“Here, he has come, indeed, and we will have all the information out of him!

The “sleepwalking” Master Needle said:

“How do you do, ladybird? So hard at work still?

“What’s that you are saying? Do you bid me walk, sweet bird? And tell our knight?

“I will. What? Walk, knave, walk?

“I think you’re angry with me, Pol. Fine Pol! Pol’s a fine bird! O fine lady Pol! An almond for parrot. Parrot’s a brave — a splendid — bird.

“Three hundred thousand pieces have you stuck edge-long into the ground within the garden?

“O bounteous bird!”

“Edge-long” means “on the edge.” Doctor Needle is talking about Alderman Parrot’s widow placing coins on their edge into the hole.

“And me, most happy creature!” Sir Moth Interest said.

He was very happy indeed.

“Smother your joy!” Doctor Rut said, pretending that he was worried that Sir Moth Interest would wake up Master Needle.

“What?” Master Needle said. “And dropped twice so many —”

“Ha!” Sir Moth Interest said. “Where?”

This was an enormous number of coins: three hundred thousand coins buried, and six hundred thousand pieces dropped.

“Contain yourself,” Doctor Rut said to Sir Moth Interest.

“In the old well?” the “sleepwalking” Master Needle asked.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“I cannot contain myself. I am a man of flesh and blood.

“Who can contain himself to hear the ghost of a dead lady do such works as these? And a city lady, too, of the straight waist?”

A city lady with a straight waist was a city lady who was wearing a narrow-fitting corset. She was strait-laced, aka morally upright.

Master Needle started to leave.

“He’s gone,” Doctor Rut said.

“I will go and test the truth of it,” Master Needle said.

One way of testing the truth of what the ghost had said was to look for some of the coins.

He exited.

“Follow him, Tim,” Doctor Rut said. “See what he does. See if he brings you assay — a specimen — of it now.”

Tim Item exited.

“I’ll say he’s a rare fellow,” Sir Moth Interest said, “and he has a rare disease.”

“Rare” can mean 1) splendid, and/or 2) unusual.

“And I will work as rare a cure upon him,” Doctor Rut said.

“How, good doctor?” Sir Moth Interest asked.

Doctor Rut answered, “When he has uttered all that you would know from him, I’ll cleanse him with a pill as small

as a pea and stop his mouth, for there is his issue between the muscles of the tongue.”

“His issue” is 1) his medical problem, and/or 2) his words that issue from his mouth.

The human tongue has eight muscles.

Tim Item returned.

“He’s come back,” Sir Moth Interest said.

“What did he do, Item?” Doctor Rut asked.

“The first step he stepped into the garden, he pulled these five pieces up in a finger’s breadth one after another,” Tim Item said. “The dirt sticks on them still.”

A “piece” is a coin. The five pieces were tightly packed together with little or no room between them.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“I know enough.

“Doctor, proceed with your cure. I’ll make thee famous, famous among the sons of the physicians, Machaon, Podalirius, Aesculapius.

Aesculapius is the god of medicine, and Machaon and Podalirius are his sons and also physicians.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“Thou shall have a golden beard as well as Aesculapius had, and thy Tim Item here shall have one of silver: a livery beard. And so will all thy apothecaries who belong to — who work for — thee.”

A statue of Aesculapius at Epidaurus had a golden beard. Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, ordered that the beard be detached.

The apothecaries who work for Doctor Needle would wear a beard made of silver to show that they worked for him. The silver beards would be part of their livery: distinctive clothing that showed for whom they worked.

Sir Moth Interest then asked:

“Where’s Squire Needle? Gone?”

“He’s pricked — gone — away, now he has done the work,” Tim Item said.

“Prepare his pill and give it to him before supper,” Doctor Rut said.

“I’ll send for a dozen laborers tomorrow to turn the surface of the garden up,” Sir Moth Interest said.

“In mold?” Doctor Rut said. “Bruise every clod?”

He was asking if the soil would be thoroughly dug up. “Mold” is the top soil of a garden or other cultivated land.

“Clods” can be 1) lumps of dirt, or 2), a blockhead, aka clodpate.

Sir Moth Interest was a clodpate whose foolishness in believing this tale would soon be revealed.

Sir Moth Interest continued, “And I’ll have all the soil sifted — for I’ll not lose a piece of the bird’s bounty — and I’ll take an inventory of it all.”

He wanted *all* of the buried three hundred thousand coins.

Doctor Rut began, “And then I would go down into the well —”

Sir Moth Interest interrupted, “— myself. No trusting other hands. Add six hundred thousand to the first three, and you have nine hundred thousand pounds —”



Doctor Rut interrupted, “— it will purchase the whole bench of aldermanity stripped to their shirts.”

Not only would that amount of money buy all the aldermen, but it would also buy their outer clothing.

Prostitutes were paraded half-naked behind carts as a punishment.

Sir Moth Interest said, “There never did accrue so great a gift to man, and from a lady whom I never saw but once. I remember now that we met at Merchant Taylors Hall at dinner in Threadneedle Street.”

This was a place for prestigious entertainment.

“The name of Threadneedle Street was a sign Squire Needle should have the threading of this thread,” Doctor Rut said.

“That is true,” Sir Moth Interest said. “I shall love parrots better while I know him.”

“I’d have her statue cut now in white marble,” Doctor Rut said.

“And have it painted in most orient — brilliant — colors,” Sir Moth Interest said.

“That’s right!” Doctor Rut said. “All city statues must be painted; otherwise, they are worth nothing in their subtle and cunning judgments.”

The city aldermen are capable of being bribed. In order for their subtle and cunning — and unethical — judgments to be regarded in a good light, the alderman must be painted. That is, they must be misrepresented — they must be given a false coloring.

Statues in ancient Greece and Rome were painted, but Sir Henry Wotton called the painting of statues “an English barbarism” in his *The Elements of Architecture* (1624).

Master Bias entered the scene.

“My truest friend in court, dear Master Bias!” Sir Moth Interest said. “Have you heard of the recovery of our niece in fame and reputation?”

“Yes, I have been with her and congratulated her and rejoiced with her, but I am sorry to find the author of the foul aspersion here in your company,” Master Bias said. “I mean this insolent doctor.”

Sir Moth Interest replied:

“You are mistaken about him. He is clear got off on it: He is not responsible for it. A gossip’s jealousy first gave the hint. He drives and goes another way now, the way that I would have him go.

“He’s a rare man, the doctor, in his way. He’s done the noblest cure here in the house on a poor squire, my sister’s tailor, Master Needle, who talked in his sleep and who would walk to St. John’s Wood and Waltham Forest, escape by all the ponds and pits in the way, run over two-inch-wide bridges with his eyes fast asleep and eyelids shut fast and in the dead of night!”

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“I’ll have you better acquainted with him.”

He then said to Doctor Rut:

“Doctor, here is my dear, dear, dearest friend in court, wise, powerful Master Bias. I ask that you salute each other, not as strangers, but true friends.”

“Is this the gentleman you brought today to be a suitor to your niece?” Doctor Rut asked.

“Yes,” Sir Moth Interest answered.

“You made an agreement I heard,” Doctor Rut said. “Has the written agreement been drawn up between you?”

“And sealed and notarized,” Sir Moth Interest said.

“What broke you off?” Doctor Rut asked.

“This rumor about her, about Placentia, wasn’t it, Master Bias?” Sir Moth Interest asked.

“Which I find now false and therefore I have come to make amends in the first place,” Master Bias said. “I stand to — insist on — the old conditions.”

Doctor Rut said, “In faith, give them to him, Sir Moth, whatever they were. You have a brave, splendid occasion now to cross and thwart the flaunting, haughty show-off Master Compass, who pretends to have the right to the marriage portion by the other entail.”

An entail is a right to an inheritance.

“And he claims it,” Sir Moth Interest said. “You have heard that he’s married?”

Master Bias replied:

“We hear that his wife has run away from him, inside.

“She is not to be found in the house, despite all the hue and cry that is made for her through every room.

“The larders have been searched, the bake-houses, and bolting-tub, the ovens, the wash-house and the brew-house, indeed, the very furnace, and yet she is not heard of.”

Larders are places for storing food.

A bolting-tub is a tub in which bran is sifted from grain.

A furnace is an oven.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“May she never again be heard of. The safety of Great Britain lies not on it.”

In other words: Pleasance is not important; the safety of Great Britain does not rest on her.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“You are content with the ten thousand pounds, and with defalking — deducting — the four hundred pounds garnish money?”

The garnish money was for expenses: the expenses of fine clothing and whatever was necessary to impress Lady Loadstone and Placentia.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“That’s the condition here, before the doctor, and that’s your demand, friend Bias?”

“It is, Sir Moth,” Master Bias said.

Parson Palate entered the scene.

“Here comes the parson, then, who shall make the agreement all sure and secure,” Doctor Rut said.

“Go with my friend Bias, Parson Palate, to my niece, Placentia,” Sir Moth Interest said. “Assure them — witness their engagement — we are in agreement about the wedding.”

“And Mistress Compass — Pleasance — too, is found inside,” Parson Palate said.

“Where was she hidden?” Sir Moth Interest asked.

“In an old bottle-house where they scraped trenchers; there her mother had thrust her,” Parson Palate said.

A bottle-house is a place for storing bottles of ale and wine.

Trenchers are plates, often wooden.

“You shall have time, sir, to triumph on Compass when this fine feat is done, and to triumph on his Rud Ironside,” Doctor Rut said.

They exited.

— 5.9 —

Compass, Pleasance (now Mistress Compass), Lady Loadstone, Captain Ironside, Master Practice, Mistress Polish, Mother Chair, and Nurse Keep met together. A few servants were present.

Compass said, “Was any gentlewoman ever used so barbarously by a malicious gossip, pretending and claiming to be the mother to her, too?”

Mistress Polish had treated Pleasance badly by pretending to be her mother. She had deprived Pleasance of the knowledge that Lady Loadstone was her aunt, and she had attempted — and was still attempting — to get Pleasance’s marriage portion and to have it benefit Placentia.

“Pretending and claiming!” Mistress Polish said. “Sir, I am her mother, and I challenge — I assert that I have — a right and legal power and authority for what I have done.”

Compass said:

“Out, hag! Out, witch! Out, thou who have put all nature off and behaved unnaturally, and who have put off women’s nature!

“For sordid, foul, corrupt gain, thou betrayed the trust committed to thee by the dead, just as you betrayed the trust from the living, and thou exchanged the poor innocent infants in their cradles.

“For sordid, foul, corrupt gain, thou defrauded them of their parent.

“For sordid, foul, corrupt gain, thou changed their names, calling Placentia ‘Plesance,’ and calling Plesance ‘Placentia.’”

Not only had the babies been exchanged, but their names had also been exchanged.

To avoid confusion, this book will continue to use the name “Placentia” for the woman who has hitherto been called Placentia, and this book will continue to use the name “Plesance” for the woman who has hitherto been called Plesance. The only exception will be when a varlet refers to Compass’ wife as Placentia.

Madame Polish whispered to Nurse Keep, “How does he know this?”

Compass continued:

“For sordid, foul, corrupt gain, thou abused and did wrong to the neighborhood.

“But most of all thou abused this lady; thou did force this poor woman” — he pointed to Nurse Keep — “to make an oath on a pious book that she would keep close and secret thy impiety towards her child: Plesance.”

The lady who was abused was Lady Loadstone, whose child was Plesance.

Mistress Polish whispered to Nurse Keep, “Have you told this to Compass?”

“I told it?” Nurse Keep whispered. “No, he knows it, and much more, as he’s a cunning-man.”

“A cunning fool, if that is all,” Mistress Polish whispered.

So far, Compass had made allegations but had produced no evidence.

Compass said, “But now let’s turn to your true daughter, Placentia, who had the child and who is the proper Pleasance. We must have an account of that, too, gossip.”

Earlier, readers learned that when Mistress Polish had exchanged the two babies, she had also exchanged their names, calling Placentia “Pleasance,” and calling Pleasance “Placentia.”

Therefore, the woman who has been called “Placentia” is actually Pleasance. And therefore, Mistress Compass’ real name is Placentia.

“This is like all the rest of Master Compass,” Mistress Polish said.

Again, so far, Compass had made allegations but had produced no evidence.

— 5.10 —

Doctor Rut ran into the room and shouted:

“Help! Help, for charity!”

“Sir Moth Interest has fallen into the well.”

“Where? Where?” Lady Loadstone asked.

“In the garden,” Doctor Rut said.

Lady Loadstone exited, followed by Captain Ironside.

Doctor Rut then said, “We need a rope to save his life!”

“How did he come to be there?” Compass asked.

“He thought to take possession of a fortune, there newly dropped for him, and the old chain broke, and he, in the bucket, fell down into the well,” Doctor Rut said.

“Is it deep?” Compass asked.

“We cannot tell,” Doctor Rut said. “A rope — help with a rope!”

Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, Captain Ironside, Tim Item, Master Needle, and a wet Sir Moth Interest entered the scene.

“He has gotten out again,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said. “The knight has been saved.”

“A little soused — drenched — in the water,” Captain Ironside said. “Master Needle saved him.”

“The water saved him,” Tim Item said. “It was a fair and fortunate escape.”

He had fallen into water instead of hitting ground.

Master Needle asked Sir Moth Interest, “Are you hurt?”

“I’m a little wet,” Sir Moth Interest said.

“That’s nothing,” Master Needle said.

Doctor Rut said to Sir Moth Interest, “I wished you to wait, sir, until tomorrow, and I told you that it was not a lucky hour; since six o’clock all stars were retrograde.”

In other words: The astrological signs were unfavorable after six o’clock.

“In the name of fate or folly, how did you come to be in the bucket?” Lady Loadstone asked.



Sir Moth Interest said:

“That is a *quaere* of another time, sister.”

In other words: That is a query to be answered at another time.

He still believed in the treasure’s existence.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“The doctor will resolve you and tell you about why — the doctor who has done the admirablest cure upon your Needle!

“Give me thy hand, good Needle. Thou came timely — at a good time — to rescue me. Take off my hood and coat. And let me shake myself a little to throw the water off me.

“I have a world — a vast quantity — of business.”

He still thought that he had nine hundred thousand pieces of business to do.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“Where is my nephew Bias? And where is his wife?”

Master Bias, Placentia, and Parson Palate entered the scene.

Sir Moth Interest continued:

“Who bids God give them joy? Here they both stand as surely affianced — engaged to be married — as the parson or words can tie them.”

Master Bias and Placentia were not technically married, although Parson Palate had witnessed a betrothal ceremony between them.

“We all wish them joy and happiness,” Doctor Rut said.

“I saw the contract and can witness it,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

“He shall receive ten thousand pounds tomorrow,” Sir Moth Interest said. “You looked for and expected to get that amount of money, Compass, or a greater sum, but it is disposed of, this is, another way. I have but one niece, truly, Compass.”

“I’ll find another niece for you,” Compass said.

A varlet entered the scene.

“Varlet, do your duty,” Compass said.

A varlet is an official who has the power to arrest people.

The varlet said, “I arrest your body, Sir Moth Interest, in the king’s name, at the instigation of Master Compass and Dame Placentia, his wife. The action’s legally entered into the register. Five hundred thousand pounds is the bail.”

Mistress Compass’ real name (the name given at birth) was Placentia; however, to avoid confusion, this book will continue to use the name “Pleasant” for the woman who has hitherto been called Pleasant and who is now Mistress Compass.

“Do you hear this, sister?” Sir Moth Interest asked. “And has your house the ears to hear it, too? And to resound the affront?”

“I cannot stop the laws or hinder justice,” Lady Loadstone said. “I can be your bail, if it may be taken.”

Compass said, “With the captain’s, I ask no better.”

Compass was willing for Lady Loadstone and Captain Ironside to be sureties — guarantors — for Sir Moth Interest’s bail.

“Here are better men who will give their bail,” Doctor Rut said.

Compass said:

“But yours will not be taken, worshipful doctor. You are good security for a suit of clothes to the tailor who dares to trust you, but not for such a sum as is this action.”

People often owed tailors much money, but that amount of money would not come close to the sum needed now for bail: five hundred thousand pounds.

Compass then said, “Varlet, you know my mind.”

The varlet said to Sir Moth Interest, “You must go to prison, sir, unless you can find bail the creditor likes and is willing to accept as security.”

“I would eagerly find it, if you’d show me where,” Sir Moth Interest said.

Of course, Sir Moth Interest still believed that nine hundred coins were buried in the garden and dropped into the well.

“It is a terrible action, more indeed than many a man is worth,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said. “And it is called fright-bail.”

Captain Ironside said:

“In faith, I will bail him at my own apperil — my own risk.

“Varlet, begone. Go now.”

The varlet exited.

Captain Ironside continued:

“I’ll for this once have the reputation to be security for such a sum.

“Bear up, Sir Moth.”

Doctor Rut said to himself, “He is not worth the buckles about his belt, and yet this Ironside clashes.”

A saying of the time about a worthless person was that he was “not worth two shoe buckles.”

Captain Ironside was clashing: making a loud noise as of a soldier in combat.

Sir Moth Interest said quietly to Doctor Rut:

“Be quiet, lest he hear you, doctor. We’ll make use of him.”

Dionysus, the same tyrant of Syracuse who ordered that the golden beard of Aesculapius be detached from his statue, once said after seizing some gold and silver tablets from temples dedicated to the good gods, “Through their goodness we will make use of them.”

Captain Ironside had just volunteered to be a guarantor of Sir Moth Interest’s bail.

Sir Moth Interest then said to Captain Ironside:

“What does your brother Compass, Captain Ironside, demand of us by way of challenge thus?”

In other words: Why did Compass have me arrested? And what does he want?

“Your niece’s marriage portion, in the right of his wife,” Captain Ironside said.

Sir Moth Interest said:

“I have assured one marriage portion to one niece, and I have no more nieces to account for that I know of.

“What I may do in charity, if my sister will bid — ask for — an offering for her maid and him as a benevolent act of

charity to them after supper, I'll spit into the basin and entreat my friends to do the like."

A wedding tradition was for guests to put gifts into a basin.

Compass replied:

"Spit out thy gall and heart, thou viper; I will now show no mercy, no pity of thee, thy false niece, and Needle."

He then said to Placentia:

"Bring forth your child, or I will appeal you — I will accuse you — of murder, you, and this gossip here, and Mother Chair."

He was referring to Placentia, Mistress Polish, and Mother Chair.

"The gentleman's fallen mad!" Mother Chair said.

Mother Chair was still denying that there was a baby.

Pleasance stepped forward and said:

"No, Mistress Midwife. I saw the child, and you did give it to me and put it in my arms; by this ill token, this evil token, you wished me such another, and it cried."

Mother Chair wanted Pleasance either 1) to give birth to a healthy baby, or 2) to give birth to a bastard.

"The law is plain," Master Practice said. "If it were heard to cry and you do not produce it, he may indict all who conceal it of felony and murder."

A cry indicated a live birth, not a stillbirth.

Infanticide is murder. Being an accessory before or after the fact is a felony.

Hiding a pregnancy was also a crime.

“And I will take the boldness, sir, to do it,” Compass said, “beginning with Sir Moth here and his doctor.”

He was accusing them of hiding the pregnancy and perhaps worse.

“In good faith, this same is like to turn a business,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

It was likely to become a source of great trouble and distress.

People could lose their lives, not just money and reputation.

“And a shrewd, dangerous business, by the Virgin Mary,” Parson Palate said. “They all start at it. It makes them afraid.”

Compass said:

“I have the right thread now, I’m on the right path, and I will keep on it.

“You, Goody Keep, confess the truth to My Lady, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

Mistress Polish said:

“I scorn to be prevented — deprived — of my glories and achievements. I will acknowledge what I have done.

“I plotted the deceit, and I will own up to it. Love to my child and lucre — money — gained from the marriage portion provoked and motivated me; wherein, although the eventual outcome has failed in part, I will make use of the best side.”

She would look on the bright side.

“This” — she pointed to Placentia — “is my daughter, and she has had a child this day — to her shame, I now profess and confess it — by this mere false-stick Squire Needle.”

Squire Needle is a false-stick because his “stick” made Placentia pregnant, but he did not marry her.

Mistress Polish continued:

“But since this wise knight — Sir Moth Interest — has thought it good to change the foolish father of it by assuring — making sure of by engaging — her to his dear friend, Master Bias, and him again to her by clapping of him — making a bargain with him and clapping him on the back — with his free promise of ten thousand pounds, before so many witnesses —”

Mistress Polish was certain that Master Bias and Placentia would be married. There were witnesses that they were engaged to be married. Although Placentia’s true identity had been revealed, Mistress Polish thought that the marriage would occur because Placentia needed a husband and Master Bias wanted the ten thousand pounds that Sir Moth Interest had agreed to pay him in front of witnesses.

“Whereof I am one witness,” Sir Diaphanous Silkworm said.

“And I am another witness,” Parson Palate said.

Mistress Polish said:

“I would be unnatural to my own flesh and blood, if I would not thank him.”

She said to Sir Moth Interest:

“I thank you, sir, and I have reason for it.

“For here your true niece stands, fine Mistress Compass — I’ll tell you the truth, you have deserved it from me — fine Mistress Compass to whom you are by bond engaged to pay the sixteen thousand pounds that is her portion, due to her husband on her marriage-day.

“I speak the truth, and nothing but the truth.”

“You’ll pay it now, Sir Moth, with interest?” Captain Ironside said. “You see the truth breaks out on every side of you.”

“Into what nets of cozenage and trickery am I cast on every side!” Sir Moth Interest said. “Each thread has grown into a noose, a very mesh. I have run myself into a double brake — snare, trap — of paying twice the money.”

As things now stood, he would be paying money out twice, but not the same amount of money each time.

“You shall be released from paying me a penny, with these conditions,” Master Bias said.

“Will you leave her, Placentia, then?” Mistress Polish asked.

“Yes, and I will leave the sum twice told, before I take a wife to pick out — to unpick — Monsieur Needle’s basting threads,” Master Bias said.

“Basting” is “loosely sewed.”

Placentia had been loosely sowed. Master Needle had made her pregnant, but he had had no intention of being her husband or being a father to the child.

“Basting” is a procedure to keep meat moist.

“Basting threads” may be streams of semen.

“Basting” also means to pad a garment. Placentia’s belly had acquired padding.

“Picking out Monsieur Needle’s basting threads” may mean that marrying Placentia would ensure that Master Needle will no longer engage in basting Placentia. Master Bias, however, did not care what happened to Placentia.

Compass said to Mistress Polish:



“Gossip, you are paid.

“Although he is a fit nature, worthy to have a whore justly put on him, he is not bad enough to take your daughter on such a cheating trick.”

Mistress Polish had gotten a fit reward: Master Bias would not marry her daughter, and so there would be no husband and no ten thousand pounds for her.

Compass then asked Sir Moth Interest:

“Will you pay the marriage portion now?”

“What will you ’bate?” Sir Moth Interest asked.

“Not a penny the law gives me,” Compass said.

“Yes, Bias’ money,” Sir Moth Interest said.

Compass responded:

“Who? Your friend in court?”

“I will not rob you of him, nor the purchase, nor your dear doctor here.”

Compass would not rob Sir Moth Interest — take away from him — Master Bias. He also would not rob — take away from him — what he had bought: Master Bias’ influence at court. He also would not rob — take away from him — the credit for what he had bought.

Nor would he take away from him Doctor Rut.

Sir Moth Interest had paid Master Bias four hundred pounds to be his friend at court. This was a bribe with which he had purchased Master Bias. Compass would not take away the credit for that purchase by providing Sir Moth Interest with four hundred pounds from Pleasance’s marriage portion.

Compass continued:

“All of you stand all together —

“Birds of a nature all, and of a feather.”

A proverb stated, “Birds of a feather flock together.”

Lady Loadstone said:

“Well, we are all now reconciled to truth.”

In other words: All humors are now reconciled.

She continued:

“There rests yet a gratuity — a gift — from me to be conferred upon this gentleman” — she pointed to Captain Ironside — “who, as my nephew Compass says, was the cause, first of the offence, but since of all the amends.”

Compass was now her nephew-in-law because he was married to her niece.

Lady Loadstone continued:

“The quarrel caused the fright; that fright brought on the travail, which made peace; and then the peace drew on this new discovery, which ends all in reconciliation.”

The fright had caused Placentia to give birth.

“It ends in reconciliation when the marriage portion has been tendered — handed over — and received,” Compass said.

“Well, you must have it, as good do it at first as last,” Sir Moth Interest said.

He would hand over the marriage portion quickly.

Lady Loadstone said:

“It is well said, brother.

“And I, if this good captain will accept me, give him myself in marriage, endow him with my estate, and make him lord of me and all my fortunes. He who has saved my honor, though by chance, I’ll really study his honor and learn how best to thank him.”

“And I embrace you, lady, and your goodness,” Captain Ironside said, “and I vow to quit all thought of war hereafter, except what is fought under your colors and for your sake, madam.”

He would retire from being a soldier.

“More work then for the parson! I shall cap the Loadstone with an Ironside, I see,” Parson Palate said.

“Cap” can mean “cover.” In this context, it can mean the missionary sexual position.

Magnets attract iron.

What about Placentia and her baby?

Captain Ironside said:

“And I will take in these, the forlorn, wretched couple, with us, Needle and his thread — Placentia — whose marriage portion I will think about, as being a piece of business waiting on my bounty and generosity.

“Thus I do take possession of you, madam Loadstone, who are my true magnetic and attractive mistress and My Lady.”

**CHORUS 5, AND EPILOGUE (*The Magnetic Lady, or  
Humors Reconciled*)**

**CHORUS 5, *changed into an epilogue to the King***

John Trygust stepped forward, away from Probee and Damplay, and said to them:

“Well, gentlemen, I now must, under seal

“And the author’s charge, waive you [put you aside] and make my appeal

“To the supremest power, My Lord the King,

“Who best can judge of what we humbly bring.

“He knows our [the actors’] weakness and the poet’s [playwright’s] faults,

“Where he [Ben Jonson] doth [does] stand upright, go firm, or halts [limps],

“And he [the King] will doom [judge] him. To [In deference to] which voice he stands [Ben Jonson submits],

“And prefers [values] that ’fore [before, or instead of] all the people’s hands [applause, or lack of it].”

**NOTES (*The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled*)**

*strokes the gills* 20

(1.2.20)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 427.

Wikipedia defines “Trout tickling”:

*Trout tickling is the art of rubbing the underbelly of a trout with fingers. If done properly, the trout will go into a trance after a minute or so, and can then easily be retrieved and thrown onto the nearest bit of dry land.*

Source of Above: “Trout tickling.” Wikipedia. Accessed 13 June 2022

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trout\\_tickling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trout_tickling)

Wikipedia quotes a 1901 book detailing the practice:

*Thomas Martindale’s 1901 book, Sport, Indeed, describes the method used on trout in the River Wear in County Durham:*

*The fish are watched working their way up the shallows and rapids. When they come to the shelter of a ledge or a rock it is their nature to slide under it and rest. The poacher sees the edge of a fin or the moving tail, or maybe he sees neither; instinct, however, tells him a fish ought to be there, so he*

*takes the water very slowly and carefully and stands up near the spot. He then kneels on one knee and passes his hand, turned with fingers up, deftly under the rock until it comes in contact with the fish's tail. Then he begins tickling with his forefinger, gradually running his hand along the fish's belly further and further toward the head until it is under the gills. Then comes a quick grasp, a struggle, and the prize is wrenched out of his natural element, stunned with a blow on the head, and landed in the pocket of the poacher.*

Source of Above: "Trout tickling." Wikipedia. Accessed 13 June 2022

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trout\\_tickling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trout_tickling)

Look up "Trout Tickling" on YouTube. Here is one video:

*Trout Tickling on the Elk River (YouTube)*

*Is trout tickling real? Has it ever really been done? Watch the video taken on the Elk River near Fernie BC in September 2008 and you decide!*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tszDNiPqm5c&t=66s>

— 1.4 —

RUT

*Not very well. She cannot shoot at butts,  
Or manage a great horse, but she can crunch  
A sack of small coal, eat you lime and hair, 15  
\_Soap-ashes, loam, and has a dainty spice  
O'the green sickness.*

(1.4.13-17)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*. Volume 2. P. 431-432.

“Green sickness” is hypochemic anemia.

Here is some information from the article “Hypochemic anemia” on Wikipedia:

***Hypochromic anemia** is a generic term for any type of anemia in which the red blood cells are paler than normal. (Hypo- refers to less, and chromic means colour.) A normal red blood cell has a biconcave disk shape and will have an area of pallor in its center when viewed microscopically. In hypochromic cells, this area of central pallor is increased. This decrease in redness is due to a disproportionate reduction of red cell hemoglobin (the pigment that imparts the red color) in proportion to the volume of the cell. Clinically the color can be evaluated by the mean corpuscular hemoglobin (MCH) or mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration (MCHC). The MCHC is considered the better parameter of the two as it adjusts for effect the size of the cell has on its amount of hemoglobin. Hypochromia is clinically defined as below the normal MCH reference range of 27–33 picograms/cell in adults or below the normal MCHC reference range of 33–36 g/dL in adults.*

*Red blood cells will also be small (microcytic), leading to substantial overlap with the category of microcytic anemia. The most common causes of this kind of anemia are iron deficiency and thalassemia.*

*Hypochromic anemia was historically known as **chlorosis** or **green sickness** for the distinct skin tinge sometimes present in patients, in addition to more general symptoms such as a lack of energy, shortness of breath, dyspepsia, headaches, a capricious or scanty appetite and amenorrhea.*

[...]

### ***Historical understanding***

[...]

*In 1554, German physician Johannes Lange described a condition, which he called “the disease of virgins” because, he said, it was “peculiar to virgins”. The symptoms were wide-ranging, including an appearance which is “pale, as if bloodless”, an aversion to food (especially meat), difficulty in breathing, palpitations and swollen ankles. He prescribed that sufferers should “live with men and copulate. If they conceive, they will recover.” The symptom picture overlaps to some extent with an earlier condition described in English medical texts, “the green sickness”, which was a form of jaundice. However, Lange shifted the cause from digestive errors to the sufferer remaining a virgin, despite being of the age for marriage. The name “chlorosis” was coined in 1615 by Montpellier professor of medicine Jean Varandal from the ancient Greek word “chloros” meaning “greenish-yellow”, “pale green”, “pale”, “pallid” or “fresh”. Both Lange and Varandal claimed Hippocrates as a reference, but their lists of symptoms do not match that in the Hippocratic Disease of Virgins, a treatise that was translated into Latin in the 1520s and thus became available to early modern Europe.*



*In addition to “green sickness”, the condition was known as morbus virgineus (“virgin’s disease”) or febris amatoria (“lover’s fever”). Francis Grose’s 1811 Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue defined “green sickness” as: “The disease of maids occasioned by celibacy.”*

Source of Above: “Hypochemic anemia.” Wikipedia. Accessed 15 June 2022.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypochromic\\_anemia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypochromic_anemia)

— 2.3 —

*A wind bomb’s in her belly*

(2.3.20)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson. Volume 2. P. 450.*

The below is from David Bruce’s book *The Funniest People in Families: Volume 2*:

Senator Chauncey Depew once made fun of President William Taft’s obesity by looking at his waistline, then saying, “I hope, if it is a girl, Mr. Taft will name it for his charming wife.” President Taft overheard him and replied, “If it is a girl, I shall, of course, name it for my lovely helpmate of many years. And if it is a boy, I shall claim the father’s prerogative and name it Junior. But if, as I suspect, it is only a bag of wind, I shall name it Chauncey Depew.”

Source of Above: Retold from Nancy McPhee, *The Second Book of Insults*, pp. 21-22.

COMPASS

*He may entail a jest upon his house, though,*

*Enter IRONSIDE.*

*Or leave a tale to his posterity*

*To be told after him.*

(2.6.102-104)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson. Volume 2. P. 462.*

Both rich and poor people can makes jests with their wills or leave a good story:

Source of the Harry Lehr, aka America's Court Jester story in 2.6: Retold from H. Allen Smith, *The Compleat Practical Joker* (New York: Pocket Books, 1956), p. 199.

Source of the John Custis story in 2.6: Retold from Helen Chappell, *The Chesapeake Book of the Dead*, p. 12.

Other Stories:

- In a Cambridge, Massachusetts, cemetery is a funeral monument raised to TRUTH. Jonathan Mann (1821-1892) was a superintendent of the cemetery. He got into a disagreement about how some funds should be spent and took the matter to court, where he lost. Believing that TRUTH was dead, he had a funeral monument raised in her memory.

Source of Above: Retold from Robert E. Pike, *Granite Laughter and Marble Tears*, p. 70.

- On his deathbed, Heinrich Heine made a will that left everything to his wife, Mathilda — provided that she remarry. Why? Mr. Heine explained, “When Mathilda remarries, there will be at least one man who regrets my death.”

Source of Above: Retold from Lore and Maurice Cowan, *The Wit of the Jews*, p. 43.

- An epitaph in a cemetery near Stockton, Somerset County, Maryland, said, “You wouldn’t come to see me / When I was alive / Don’t come to see me / Now that I’m dead.”

Source of Above: Retold from Helen Chappell, *The Chesapeake Book of the Dead*, p. 67.

— **Chorus 2** —

BOY

*They are no other but narrow and shrunk natures, shrivelled  
up poor*

*things that cannot think well of themselves, who dare to  
detract others. That*

*signature is upon them, and it will last. A half-witted  
barbarism which no*

*barber’s art or his balls will ever expunge or take out!*

(Chorus 2, lines 37-40)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson. Volume  
2. P. 467.*

Below are two epigrams (bold added) by Martial that mention Cinnamus:

Martial, *Epigrams*. Book 6. Bohn's Classical Library (1897)

**LXIV. TO A DETRACTOR.**

*Although you are neither sprung from the austere race of the Fabii, nor are such as he whom the wife of Curius Dentatus brought forth when seized with her pains beneath a shady oak, as she was carrying her husband his dinner at the plough; but are the son of a father who plucked the hair from his face at a looking-glass, and of a mother condemned to wear the toga in public; <sup>1</sup> and are one whom your wife might call wife; <sup>2</sup> you allow yourself to find fault with my books, which are known to fame, and to carp at my best jokes,----jokes to which the chief men of the city and of the courts do not disdain to lend an attentive ear,----jokes which the immortal Silius deigns to receive in his library, which the eloquent Regulus so frequently repeats, and which win the praises of Sura, the neighbour of the Aventine Diana, who beholds at less distance than others the contests of the great circus. <sup>3</sup> Even Caesar himself the lord of all, the supporter of so great a weight of empire, does not think it beneath him to read my jests two or three times. But you, perhaps, have more genius; you have, by the polishing of Minerva, an understanding more acute; and the subtle Athena has formed your taste. May I die, if there is not far more understanding in the heart of the animal which, with entrails hanging down, and large foot, lungs coloured with concealed blood,----an object to be feared by all noses,----is carried by the cruel butcher from street to street You have the audacity, too, to write verses, which no one will read, and to waste your miserable paper upon*

*me. But if the heat of my wrath should burn a mark upon you, it will live, and remain, and will be noted all through the city; nor will even Cinnamus, with all his cunning, efface the stigma. But have pity upon yourself, and do not, like a furious dog, provoke with rabid mouth the fuming nostrils of a living bear. However calm he may be, and however gently he may lick your fingers and hands, he will, if resentment and bite and just anger excite him, prove a true bear. Let me advise you, therefore, to exercise your teeth on an empty hide, and to seek for carrion which you may bite with impunity.*

Source of Above:

Martial, *Epigrams*. Book 6. Bohn's Classical Library (1897)

[https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/martial\\_epigrams\\_book06.htm](https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/martial_epigrams_book06.htm)

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**Martial, Epigrams. Book 7. Bohn's Classical Library (1897)**

**LXIV. TO CINNAMUS.**

*You, Cinnamus, who were a barber well known over all the city, and afterwards, by the kindness of your mistress, made a knight, have taken refuge among the cities of Sicily and the regions of Aetna, fleeing from the stern justice of the forum. By what art will you now, useless log, sustain your years? How is your unhappy and fleeting tranquillity to employ itself? You cannot be a rhetorician, a grammarian, a school-master, a Cynic, or Stoic philosopher, nor can you sell your voice to the people of Sicily, or your applause to theatres of Some. All*

*that remains for you, Cinnamus, is to become a barber again.*

Source of Above: Martial, Epigrams. Book 7. Bohn's Classical Library (1897)

[https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/martial\\_epigrams\\_book07.htm](https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/martial_epigrams_book07.htm)

The below information comes from the Wikipedia article on “Barber’s pole”:

*During medieval times, barbers performed surgery on customers, as well as tooth extractions. The original pole had a brass wash basin at the top (representing the vessel in which leeches were kept) and bottom (representing the basin that received the blood). The pole itself represents the staff that the patient gripped during the procedure to encourage blood flow. (and the twined pole motif is likely related to the Staff of Hermes, aka the Caduceus, evidenced for example by early physician van Helmont’s of himself as “Francis Mercurius Van Helmont, A Philosopher by that one in whom are all things, A Wandering Hermite,” op. cit., preface.)*

Source of Above: “Barber pole.” Wikipedia. Accessed 20 June 2022 <

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barber%27s\\_pole](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barber%27s_pole) >.

A note in the Cambridge Ben Jonson states:

***balls** i.e. of soap. Cf. Epicene, 3.5.59-60: during the cursing of Cutbeard, the barber, Truewit suggests ‘if he would swallow all his balls for pills, let them not purge him’. Soap was apparently ingested as an emetic.*

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*. Volume 2. P. 467.

For Your Information: John Hunter lived much later than Ben Johnson's time, but apparently leeches were sometimes applied to testicles during bloodletting:

*John Hunter, the founder of modern surgery, advocated the use of bloodletting in his 1794 treatise for the treatment of apoplexy and inflammation.<sup>4</sup> He believed that in some cases bleeding could be effective in treating smallpox. For gonorrhoea, he recommended the application of leeches to the scrotum and testicles.*

Source of Above: Timothy M. Bell, MLS (ASCP)CM, "A Brief History of Bloodletting." For the Edward Hand Medical Heritage Foundation. *The Journal of Lancaster General Hospital* • Winter 2016 • Vol. 11 – No. 4.

<http://www.jlgh.org/JLGH/media/Journal-LGH-Media-Library/Past%20Issues/Volume%2011%20-%20Issue%204/Bloodletting.pdf>

For Your Information: "How to Make 16th Century Soap."

Cassidy Cash: "Experience Shakespeare: How to Make 16th Century Soap." YouTube. 9 February 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-LuyRfEyfs>

Also for Your Information: "16th Century Soap Recipes."

*Since hard soap can be shredded and reformed soap balls came into being, a luxury product used by the upper classes. In Tudor times botanicals were introduced into soap, and scented soap became a "must-have" item of the elite. Fine soaps were produced in Europe from the 16th century on, and many of these soaps are still produced, both industrially and by small-scale artisans. Castile soap is a popular example of the vegetable-only soaps evolved from the oldest "white soap"*

*of Italy. This hard white soap would be grated and used to make specially scented and herbed soap balls/ wash balls.*

Source of Above: "16th Century Soap Recipes." La Bella Donna: History is Beautiful. WordPress.

Posted on January 30, 2018 by Fleur-de-Gigi.

<https://fleurtyherald.wordpress.com/2018/01/30/16th-century-soap-recipes/>

— 3.1 —

KEEP

*I have a month's mind*

*To peep a little, too.*

(3.1.23-24)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson. Volume 2. P. 470.*

The below information comes from the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica* article on "Month's Mind":

**MONTH'S MIND**, in medieval and later England a service and feast held one month after the death of anyone in his or her memory. Bede speaks of the day as *commemorationis dies*. These "Minding days" were of great antiquity, and were survivals of the Norse *minne* or ceremonial drinking to the dead. "Minnyng Days," says Blount, "from the Saxon *Lemynde*, days which our ancestors called their *Monthes mind*, their *Year's mind* and the like, being the days whereon their souls (after their deaths) were had in special remembrance, and some office or obsequies said for them, as *Orbits*, *Dirges*." The phrase is still used in Lancashire. Elaborate



*instructions for the conduct of the commemorative service were often left in wills. Thus, one Thomas Windsor (who died in 1479) orders that “on my moneth’s minde there be a hundred children within the age of sixteen years, to say for my soul,” and candles were to be burned before the rood in the parish church and twenty priests were to be paid by his executors to sing Placebo, Dirige, &c. In the correspondence of Thomas, Lord Cromwell, one in 1536 is mentioned at which a hundred priests took part in the mass. Commemorative sermons were usually preached, the earliest printed example being one delivered by John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, on Margaret, countess of Richmond and Derby, in 1509.*

Source of Above: “Month’s Mind.” 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica*. WikiSource. Accessed 20 June 2022.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911\\_Encyclopædia\\_Britannica/Month%27s\\_Mind](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclopædia_Britannica/Month%27s_Mind)

— 3.1 —

KEEP

*How are they set?*

NEEDLE

*At the board’s end My Lady — 25*

KEEP

*And my young mistress by her?*

NEEDLE

*Yes. The parson*

*On the right hand (as he’ll not lose his place*

*For thrusting) and 'gainst him Mistress Polish.  
Next, Sir Diaphanous against Sir Moth:  
Knights, one again another. Then the soldier, 30  
The man of war, and man of peace, the lawyer;  
Then the pert doctor and the politic Bias,  
And Master Compass circumscribeth all.*  
(3.1.25-33)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson. Volume 2. P. 470.*

For Your Information:

*I've chosen to draw on Fabritio Caroso's "Nobilita di Dame" (1600) in his Dialog Between a Disciple and His Master, on the Conduct Required of Gentlemen and Ladies at a Ball and Elsewhere for some pointers on how to behave in court.*

[...]

*Guests were led into the dining chamber in order of precedence. In a great hall, seats were usually laid out in a U-shape, with the lord at the base of the U. The most honored position was to the right of the lord, and the lowest at the bottom of the tables to the left of the lord.*

*It was important to wash hands before a meal. This might be done on the way into the hall, at a ewery board. Servants might also bring a ewer and basin around to the guests to wash their hands. The servants themselves, particularly the carver and*

*sewer, visibly washed their hands as well. The ritual hand-washing in the dining chamber was more symbolic than thorough, but guests were definitely expected to have washed well beforehand. Grace was then said before the meal was served.*

*Next, the dishes were brought in and laid in a very precise order on the table, presentation being very important. Dishes were brought first to the high table, and then to the rest of the diners. Dishes requiring carving might be carried to a sideboard for carving. There were typically vast numbers of different dishes, but unlike modern feasts where everyone is expected to get a serving of every dish in a meal, not every dish would be within reach of every diner. Diners were expect[ed] to pick the things they liked best from the “messe” that was within reach of them. A messe is a set of dishes usually shared between 2-4 people.*

Source of Above: “Elizabethan Manners.” La tour du Lac, v2. Accessed 21 June 2022.

<http://www.latourdulac.com/manners/Elizabethan.html>

From the Bibliography:

Fabritio Caroso, *Courtly Dance of the Renaissance, a New Translation and Edition of the Nobilta di Dame (1600)*, trans. Julia Sutton, Dover Publications, NY.

— 3.5 —

COMPASS

*[To Practice] Yes, he has read the town. Towntop’s his author!*

(3.5.113)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*. Volume 2. P. 487.

For Your Information:

*The last top whipping master*

*“Whipping top” is a traditional game dating from ancient times that still enjoys great popularity in southern China. The residents in Daxi, Taiwan used to play whipping tops as kids, and the town itself is famous for producing king-sized versions of the toy. But these days, there’s only one craftsman in town that can make them.*

Source of Above: “The last top whipping master.” CNTV. 11 April 2011

[http://www.china.org.cn/video/2011-04/11/content\\_22333129.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/video/2011-04/11/content_22333129.htm)

Check out the photos on these pages:

[http://www.china.org.cn/video/2011-04/11/content\\_22333129.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/video/2011-04/11/content_22333129.htm)

<https://me.me/i/twelfth-night-act-1-scene-3-william-shakespeare-his-brains-turn-o-the-toe-like-a-lyrics-502bbe36073a4ee7aba67514ecf50b6f>

— 3.5 —

DIAPHANOUS

*Oh, you ha’ read the play there, The New Inn*

*Of Jonson’s, that decries all other valour*

*But what is for the public.*

(3.5.92-94)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson.*  
Volume 2. P. 487.

LOVEL

*So help me Love, and my good sword at need!*

*It is the greatest virtue, and the safety*

*Of all mankind; the object of it is danger.*

*A certain mean 'twixt fear and confidence:*

*No inconsiderate rashness, or vain appetite*

*Of false encount'ring formidable things;*

*But a true science of distinguishing*

*What's good or evil. It springs out of reason,*

*And tends to perfect honesty; the scope*

*Is always honour and the public good:*

*It is no valour for a private cause.*

*(The New Inn 4.4)*

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson.* Volume  
6. P. 279.

— 3.5 —

COMPASS

*This is a valour 145*

*I should desire much to see encouraged,*

*As being a special entertainment*

*For our rogue people, and make oft good sport*

*Unto 'em from the gallows to the ground.*

(3.5.145-149)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson.*  
Volume 2. P. 489.

For Your Information:

*Here's the actual text of the English law (on the books until 1870) outlining the death sentence for anyone convicted of high treason:*

*That you be drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution where you shall be hanged by the neck and being alive cut down, your privy members shall be cut off and your bowels taken out and burned before you, your head severed from your body and your body divided into four quarters to be disposed of at the King's pleasure.*

Source of Above: Dave Roos, "The 'Hanged, Drawn and Quartered' Execution Was Even Worse than You Think." HowStuffWorks. 29 June 2021

<https://history.howstuffworks.com/history-vs-myth/hanging-drawing-and-quartering.htm>

Note by David Bruce: Given the word order of "hung, drawn, and quartered," it seems plausible that "drawn" refers to the intestines being drawn out of the body.

— 4.7 —

*We shall mar all if once we ope the mysteries*

*O'the tiring house and tell what's done within:  
No theatres are more cheated with appearances,  
Or these shop-lights, than th'age 's, and folk in them, 45  
That seem most curious.*

(4.7.42-46)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson.*  
Volume 2. P. 509.

*Ruth St. Denis was accustomed to improvise on stage, and frequently did not memorize the steps of her dances. During her duet with husband Ted Shawn in Josephine and Hippolyte, they smiled at each other and talked together throughout the dance. The audience thought they were making love talk at each other; instead, she was saying things such as "Teddy, what do I do next?" Mr. Shawn was saying things such as, "Ruthie, take six steps stage right, turn, look, hold out your arm and I'll come back to tell you what's after that."*

Above Retold from this Source: Walter Terry, *Ted Shawn: Father of American Dance*, pp. 115-116.

— 4.8 —

COMPASS

*As true it is, lady, lady, i'th'song.*

(4.8.72)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson.*  
Volume 2. P. 513.

For Your Information: Here is a discussion of the lyrics:

<https://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=79610>

Here is the Book of Susanna, Chapter 1:

<https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Susanna-Chapter-1/>

— 5.7 —

*When he hath uttered all that you would know of him,  
I'll cleanse him with a pill as small as a pease  
And stop his mouth, for there his issue lies  
Between the muscles o'the tongue.*

(5.7.57-60)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson.*  
Volume 2. P. 528.

Here is some information about the muscles of the tongue:

*The tongue is all muscle, but not just one muscle — it's made up of 8 different muscles that intertwine with each other creating a flexible matrix, much like an elephant's trunk. It's called a muscular hydrostat, and the tongue muscles are the only muscles in the human body that work independently of the skeleton. Your tongue muscles do have amazing stamina and are used constantly for eating, talking, and swallowing. The tongue just never seems to get tired!*

Source of Above: "10 Fun Facts About Your Tongue and Taste Buds." Reviewed By: Charles Patrick Davis, MD, PhD. Reviewed on 5/14/2021. MedicineNet.



[https://www.medicinenet.com/fun\\_facts\\_about\\_tongue\\_and\\_taste\\_buds\\_slideshow/article.htm](https://www.medicinenet.com/fun_facts_about_tongue_and_taste_buds_slideshow/article.htm)

— 5.7 —

*Doctor, proceed with your cure. I'll make thee famous, 65*

*Famous among the sons of the physicians,*

*Machaon, Podalirius, Aesculapius.*

*Thou shalt have a golden beard as well as he had,*

*And thy Tim Item here have one of silver,*

*A livery beard.*

(5.7.65-70)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson.*

Volume 2. P. 528-529.

Here is some information about Aesculapius' golden beard:

*Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, thought fit to accompany his thefts from temples with witty remarks. ... When he ordered the golden beard to be detached from the statue of Asclepius at Epidaurus, he declared that it was not appropriate for Asclepius to have a beard, given that his father, Apollo, was beardless (Valerius Maximus, Memorable Deeds and Sayings 1.1 ext. 3).*

Source of Above: "Asclepius and Healing Sanctuaries." The Hippocrates Code: Unraveling the Ancient Mysteries of Modern Medical Terminology. Accessed 29 June 2022.

<http://hippocratescode.com/asclepius-healing-sanctuaries/>

Here is another translation:

*But why should manners be judged by nationality? Masinissa, brought up in the midst of a barbarians, undid another man's sacrilege; but Dionysius, born at Syracuse, used to make jests of his sacrileges, of which he committed more than we have now room to recount: for having plundered the temple of Proserpina at Locri, and sailing upon the sea with a prosperous gale, laughing to his friends, he said, "What a pleasant voyage have the gods granted to us sacrilegious robbers!" Having taken also a golden cloak of great weight from Olympian Jupiter, which Hieron the tyrant had dedicated to him out of the spoils of the Carthaginians; and throwing over the statue a woollen mantle, told his companions that a cloak of gold was too heavy in the summer, too cold in the winter; but a woollen cloak would serve for both seasons. The same person commanded the golden beard of Aesculapius to be taken from his statue in his temple at Epidaurus, saying that it was not appropriate for Apollo the father to be without a beard, and the son to have so large a one. He also took away the silver and golden tables [tablets] out of other temples, where finding certain inscriptions, after the manner of Greece, that they belonged to the good gods, then said he, "Through their goodness we will make use of them." He also took away the little statues of Victory, cups and crowns which they held in their hands being all of gold, saying that he did but borrow them, not take them quite away, saying that was an idle thing, when we pray to the gods for good things, not to accept them when they hold them forth to us. Who in his own person though he was not punished according to his deserts, yet in the infamy of his son, he suffered after death what in his lifetime he had escaped. For divine anger proceeds at a*

*slow pace to avenge itself, and compensates for the slowness with the gravity of the punishment.*

Source of Above:

Valerius Maximus, *Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri IX* (“Nine books of memorable deeds and sayings”). Book 1: Of Religion. Adapted from the translation by S. Speed (1678). Accessed 29 June 2022.

<http://www.attalus.org/translate/valerius1a.html>

The same anecdote is told by Cicero:

*He also gave orders for the removal of the golden beard of Aesculapius at Epidaurus, saying it was not fitting for the son to wear a beard when his father appeared in all his temples beardless.*

Source: Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, Book 3.83. Loeb Classical Library. 1933. In the Public Domain. Accessed 29 June 2022.

[https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cicero/de\\_Natura\\_Deorum/3B\\*.html#83](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cicero/de_Natura_Deorum/3B*.html#83)

**CHAPTER 13: Ben Jonson's *The New Inn, or The Light Heart***

**CAST OF CHARACTERS (*The New Inn, or The Light Heart*)**

**THE SCENE: Barnet, England**

GOODSTOCK, the HOST of the inn.

LOVEL, a complete and consummate gentleman, a soldier and a scholar, and a melancholic guest in the inn. At one point in the play, the Host asks him whether his name is Love-ill or Love-well.

FERRET, who is also called STOAT and VERMIN, is Lovel's man-servant, a fellow of a quick, nimble wit. His names suggest leanness.

FRANK, the Host's son, borrowed to be dressed as a lady.

NURSE, a poor charwoman in the inn, with an eyepatch over one eye, who tends the Host's son.

FRANCES, the Lady Frampul, reputed the Lord Frampul's sole daughter and heir, the barony descending upon her. She is a lady of great fortunes and beauty, but she is fantastical (devoted to fancies). She thinks nothing a felicity but to have a multitude of servants (men who admire her) and be called "Mistress" by them. She comes to the inn to be merry, with only a chambermaid and her guests, etc. The word "frampold" applied to a human means "bad tempered, cross, and peevish." But applied to a horse, it means "spirited, fiery, and mettlesome."

PRUDENCE, the chambermaid, is elected sovereign of the entertainments in the inn; as Queen of the Festivities, she governs and commands all. Prudence is the Lady Frampul's secretary, aka confidant.

LORD LATIMER and LORD BEAUFORT are a pair of young lords who are guests to the Lady Frampul. Both of them fall enamored of persons at the inn. Old French *latimier* means “Latin speaker.” A *beau fort* is a beautiful fortress. Lord Beaufort is attracted to beauty.

SIR GLORIOUS TIPTOE, a knight and colonel, has the luck to think well of himself and to think he is without a rival. He talks gloriously of anything, but he is very seldom in the right. He is Lady Frampul’s guest and her love-servant, too. He becomes friends with the Fly of the inn and the “militia” below stairs, and the servants Trundle, Barnaby, etc. His kind of “glorious” is “vainglorious.” A man who goes on tip toes is a man who bears himself with pride.

FLY is the parasite of the inn, the “inspector-general” of the house, one who is the inflamer of the reckonings — that is, he inflates customers’ bills. A parasite lives off someone else.

PIERCE, the drawer, knighted by Colonel Tiptoe, is called by him SIR PIERCE and is aka ANON, one of the chief of the “infantry,” aka metaphorical foot-soldiers. A drawer is a bartender. Bartenders had to pierce casks of alcoholic beverages, and they cried “Anon” — “Soon” — to customers who required their help.

JORDAN, the chamberlain, another of the metaphorical militia and a metaphorical officer, commands the *tertia* — the “regiment,” as of infantry — of the beds. A jordan is a chamber pot.

JUG, a tapster, is a thoroughfare of news — he collects and shares gossip. A tapster is a bartender.

PECK, the ostler. An ostler is a hostler: one who takes care of horses. A peck is a measure of the oats that horses eat.

BAT BURST, a broken citizen, is an in-and-in man. Brick-bats could be used to break things. “Burst” means bankrupt. “In-and-in” was a dice game. Bat Burst is a bankrupt gambler.

HODGE HUFFLE, Bar Burst’s champion. “Huffle” means “bluster.” “Hodge” is a nickname for someone named Roger. In Elizabethan and Jacobean theater, Roger is often the name of a rustic character.

NICK STUFF, Lady Frampul’s tailor. Tailors were stereotyped as dishonest and lecherous. Stuff is woven fabric.

PINNACIA, a wife. A pinnacle is a go-between or bawd. A pinnacle is also a boat.

TRUNDLE, a coachman.

BARNABY, a hired coachman.

STAGGERS, the blacksmith. Only talked about. He is frequently drunk.

TREE, the saddler. Only talked about. A saddler makes, repairs, and buys and sells saddles. A tree is the framework of a saddle.

FIDDLERS.

SERVANTS.

## NOTE

Ben Jonson’s society existed before the age of modern medicine. Doctors in his society believed that the human body had four humors, or vital fluids. Each humor made a contribution to the personality, and for a human being to be sane and healthy, the four humors had to be present in the right amounts. If a man had too much of a certain humor, it would harm his personality and health.

Blood was the sanguine humor. A sanguine man was optimistic.

Phlegm was the phlegmatic humor. A phlegmatic man was calm.

Yellow bile was the choleric humor. A choleric man was angry.

Black bile was the melancholic humor. A melancholic man was gloomy.

## ACT 1 (*The New Inn, or The Light Heart*)

### — 1.1 —

The Host of the Light Heart Inn and Ferret, the servant of Lovel, a melancholic guest at the inn, talked together. The Host had a light heart — he was usually cheerful — and he wanted his customers to also have light hearts.

The sign of the Light Heart Inn could be seen from where they stood. It was a two-sided sign with a rebus — a pictorial representation of a name or proverb — on each side. One rebus depicted “Light Heart,” and the other depicted “A heavy purse makes a light heart.”

The Host said, “I am not pleased — indeed, you are in the right — nor is my house pleased if my sign could speak, the sign of the Light Heart.”

He pointed at the sign and said, “There you may read it; so may your master, too, if he looks at it.

“It shows a heart weighed in a scale with a feather, and outweighed, too, by the feather! This rebus is a brain-child of my own, and I am proud of it!”

A rebus is a pictorial representation of a name. The heart in the scale outweighed by a feather means “light heart.” The word “light” can also mean happy and frivolous.

The Host continued, “And if His Worship — your master, Lovel — thinks to be melancholy here in spite of me or my wit, he is deceived.

“I will maintain the rebus against all humors and all complexions in the body of man or in the isle of Britain. That’s my word!”



A humor is a characteristic disposition. Lovel's humor was to be melancholic. The Host's humor was to be light and cheerful and sanguine.

"You have reason for your belief, my good Host," Ferret said.

"Sir, I have rhyme, too," the Host said.

He turned the sign to the other side and said, "Whether it be by chance or art, 'a heavy purse makes a light heart.' There it is expressed!"

The sign showed the images of a purse of gold and two turtle-doves and a heart with a lantern or a candle inside it.

"First, a purse of gold means 'a heavy purse', and then two turtle-doves, who are *mates* for life, means 'makes,' and then a heart with a light stuck in it means 'a light heart'!"

The Host continued, "Old Abbot Islip could not invent better, nor could Prior Bolton with his bolt and tun."

Abbot Islip and Prior Bolton also had rebuses. Abbot Islip's rebus showed an eye and the slip of a tree. A slip is a small cutting that can be used for grafting. Prior Bolton's rebus showed a bird-bolt and a tun. A bird-bolt is a weapon such as a blunt arrow used to kill birds, and a tun is a large cask of beer or wine.

The Host continued, "I am an innkeeper and know my grounds — my fundamental principles — and I study them; by the brain of man, I study them.

"I must have jovial guests to drive my plows and whistling boys to bring my harvest home, or I shall hear no flails thwack. "

The Host needed jovial guests who would drink and be merry and pay their bills at the inn.

Flails were tools used when harvesting grain. The Host harvested metaphorical grain when his customers paid their bills.

The Host continued, “Here your master and you have been this fortnight, drawing fleas out of my mats and impounding them in cages — flea-traps — cut out of cards, and those roped round with packthread drawn through bird-lime — a fine and subtle trick!”

Bird-lime was a sticky substance used to catch birds.

The Host continued, “Or your master and you have been poring through a magnifying glass at a captive crab-louse or a cheese-mite, which are to be dissected, as the jokes of nature, with a clean, bright Spanish needle — such speculations do become the age, I confess!”

Lovel was a natural scientist; he studied nature and its creatures.

The Host continued, “As if measuring an ant’s eggs in relation to the silkworm’s eggs with an ingenious instrument of thread shall give you their just difference, to a hair!

“Or else the reviving of dead flies with crumbs — another ingenious experiment of natural science — which I have seen you busy at through the key-hole, but never had the fate to see a fly —”

Lovel entered the room as the Host continued to speak:

“— alive in your cups nor have I once heard, ‘Drink, my Host,’ nor some other such cheerful chirping charm come from you.”

— 1.2 —

“What’s that?” Lovel asked. “What’s that?”

He stood with crossed arms — the sign of a melancholic man.

Ferret, Lovel's servant, said to him, "A buzzing of my Host about a fly! A complaining murmur that he has."

The Host said to Lovel, "Sir, I am telling your stoat here, Monsieur Ferret — for I hear that's his name — and I dare tell you, sir, that if you have a mind to be melancholy and musty, there's other places for you to reside. There's Footman's Inn at the town's end, by which I mean the stocks, or Carrier's Place, at the sign of the Broken Wain."

Stocks are used to punish criminals. The criminals' head, hands, and/or feet would be restrained, and people who did not like the criminals could torment them.

A wain is a wagon. The Broken Wain Inn had the image of a broken wagon on its sign.

Charles' Wain, which is part of the constellation Ursa Major (Big Bear), resembles a wagon.

The Host continued, "They are mansions of state! Take up your harbor — your lodging — there. At these mansions of state, there are both flies and fleas, and all variety of vermin for inspection or dissection."

These "mansions of state" were poor inns.

Lovel replied, "We have set our rest up here, sir, in your Light Heart Inn. This is our long-term lodging."

"Sir, set your heart at rest, you shall not do it — unless you can be jovial," the Host said. "By the brain of man, be jovial first and drink, and dance and drink!"

"Your lodging here with your daily states of melancholy is an absolute libel against my house and me. And, then, your scandalous commons — your daily food —"

“— what about it, my Host?” Lovel interrupted.

“Sir, they do scandalize upon the road, here,” the Host said.

The Light Heart Inn was in a good location on a well-traveled road, and the Host felt that his customers ought to eat better food than Lovel had been ordering.

The Host continued, “A poor quotidian — ordinary — neck of mutton, roasted dry, to be grated! And that driven down with beer and buttermilk mingled together or with clarified — separated — whey instead of claret wine!

“It is against my freehold, my inheritance, my Magna Carta, *cor laetificat*, to drink such balderdash or bonny-clabber!”

Psalm 104.15 states, “*Et vinem laetificat cor hominis.*” This means, “And wine gladdens the heart of man.”

Balderdash is adulterated beer. It can be beer mixed with wine, or beer mixed with milk. The word also means “a jumble of words” in addition to meaning “a jumble of liquors.”

Bonny-clabber is sour buttermilk.

A good customer ate good cuts of meat and drank good wine. Lovel was not a good customer.

The Host continued, “Give me good wine, whether it is from a Catholic country or a Christian country.”

This society was anti-Catholic, but the Host did not care from which kind of country wine came from, as long as it was good wine.

The Host continued, “Wine is the word that gladdens the heart of man, and mine’s the house of wine. ‘Sack,’ says my bush; ‘be merry and drink sherry’ — that’s my posy!”

Sack is white wine. Sherry is an alcoholic drink.

A “bush” is a bunch of ivy. It was hung up as a sign of an inn. The Host may be using “bush” metaphorically — his sign is much different from a bunch of ivy. Or he may have had a bunch of ivy as well as his sign advertising his inn.

A “posy” or “poesy” is a short saying engaged on the inside of a ring.

The Host’s personal motto was “Be merry and drink sherry.”

The Host continued, “For I shall never feel joy in my Light Heart Inn as long as I conceive a sullen guest or anything that’s earthy!”

Melancholic people were associated with the earth, which was thought to be heavy and dull.

“Capricious Host!” Lovel exclaimed.

“I don’t care if I am capricious,” the Host said.

“But you are airy — cheerful — also,” Lovel said. “I am not trying to defraud you of your rights, or encroach upon your privileges or great charter — for those are every ostler’s language now.”

Some ostlers talked about their rights and privileges. Some highly born people thought that these ostlers were acting above their station in life.

Lovel continued, “I say you were born beneath those smiling stars that have made you lord and owner of the Heart, of the Light Heart in Barnet; however, allow those of us who are more saturnine to enjoy the shade of your good roof yet.”

The Host was jovial and usually cheerful; Lovel was saturnine and often gloomy.

“Sir, I keep no shades nor shelters, I, for either owls or rermice,” the Host said.

Shades are sequestered places.

Reremice are bats.

Owls and bats are birds of the night. They are regarded as ominous signs.

— 1.3 —

Frank, the Host's son, entered the room.

Ferret said to the Host, "He'll make you a bird of night, sir."

One kind of figurative bird of night is a procurer.

The Host had given Ferret no reason to think that about him.

This was a rough kind of joking.

The Host spoke quietly to Frank, "Bless you, child."

He then said to Lovel and Ferret, "You'll make yourselves such."

Another kind of figurative bird of night is a thief.

Lovel and Ferret had given the Host no reason to think that about them.

This was a rough kind of joking.

"Is that boy your son, my Host?" Lovel asked.

"He's all the sons I have, sir," the Host answered.

"Pretty boy!" Lovel said. "Does he go to school?"

Ferret answered for the Host, "Oh, Lord, sir, he prates Latin as if he were a parrot or a boy-actor on the stage."

Lovel said, "You ... praise him fitly."

"To the pitch he flies, sir," Ferret said.

The pitch is the highest point of a bird of prey's flight.

Ferret continued, "He'll tell you what is the Latin for a looking-glass, a beard-brush, a rubber, or a quick warming pan."

"What's the meaning of that?" Lovel said.

Ferret bawdily explained:

"A wench, in the inn-phrase, is all of these: a looking-glass in her eye, a beard-brush with her lips, a rubber with her hand, and a warming pan with her hips."

Ferret was punning. A rubber can be a towel as well as a hand, and the word "quick" can mean "living," as in "quick warming pan," or it can mean a fast (quickly) warming pan.

A Scotch warming pan is a wench; a traveler in Scotland wanted his bed warmed before he got into it, so a serving-maid lay in his bed and warmed it. As you would expect, in some versions of this tale, the serving-maid takes off her clothes.

"This is in your scurrilous dialect," the Host said. "But my inn knows no such language."

"That's because, my Host," Ferret said, "you profess the teaching him yourself."

The Host, who kept bad language out of his inn because of his child, said, "Sir, I do teach him somewhat. By degrees and with a funnel, I make shift to fill the narrow vessel; he is but yet a bottle."

"Oh, let him lose no time, though," Lovel said.

"Sir, he does not," the Host replied.

"And let him less lose his manners," Lovel said.

Both education and manners are important.

“I provide for those, too,” the Host replied.

He then said, “Come hither, Frank. Speak to the gentleman in Latin. He is melancholy; say that I long to see him merry, and merrily I would like to treat him.”

Frank said to Lovel, “*Subtristis visu’ es esse aliquantulum patri, qui te laute excipere, atque etiam tractare gestit.*”

This means, “You present a somewhat melancholic appearance to my father, who is eager to welcome and treat you cheerfully.”

Lovel said, “*Pulchre.*”

This means, “Excellent.”

The Host said to Frank, “Tell him that I fear that his excessive reservedness bodes for us some ill luck.”

Frank said to Lovel, “*Veretur pater, ne quid nobis mali ominis apportet iste nimis praeclusus vultus.*”

This means, “My father is afraid that a too-reserved face will bring an evil omen to us.”

“*Belle,*” Lovel said. “Prettily spoken. A fine child!”

He then asked, “You would not part with him, my Host?”

The Host asked, “Who told you I would not?”

“I am only asking you,” Lovel replied.

“And I answer: To whom? For what?” the Host said.

“To me,” Lovel said, “To be my page.”

A page is a boy who is the personal attendant to a man of rank who can educate him in chivalry and gentlemanly behavior.



The Host replied, "I know no mischief yet that the child has done to deserve such a destiny."

"Why do you say that?" Lovel asked.

Usually, people regarded being a page as a good thing.

"Go down, boy," the Host said to Frank, "and get your breakfast."

Both Frank and Ferret exited.

The Host then said to Lovel, "Trust me, I would rather take a fair noose, wash my hands, and hang him myself, make a clean riddance of him, than —"

Surprised, Lovel said, "What!"

The Host continued, "— than damn him to that desperate course of life."

Lovel said, "Do you call being a page desperate, this occupation which by a line of institution, law, and custom from our ancestors has been conveyed down to us, and received in a succession, to be the noblest way of breeding up our youth in letters, arms, fair carriage and bearing, discourses, civil exercise, and all the blazon — record of virtues — of a gentleman?"

"Where can he learn to vault, to ride, to fence, to move his body more gracefully, to speak his language purer, or to tune his mind or manners more to the harmony of nature than in these nurseries of nobility?"

The Host said, "What you say was true. Yes, that was true when the nursery's self was noble, and when only virtue made it, not the market, when titles were not offered for sale at the drum of public proclamation or common auction; when goodness gave the greatness, and when greatness gave the recognition and respect. Then, every house became an

academy of honor, and those parts — well, we see those parts deviated from in the practice now, quite far from the institution.”

In other words, all of these virtues that were practiced then are no longer practiced now. The “virtues” of the Host’s “today” bear little resemblance to their originals. “Today,” for example, King James I sells titles for money when previously titles were granted for the virtue of excellence. Knights became knights through showing courage on the battlefield, not by paying the king money. Because of these changes, being a page “nowadays” is not a good thing, according to the Host.

“Why do you say so?” Lovel asked. “Why do you think so enviously? Don’t pages still learn there the Centaurs’ skill, the art of Thrace, which is to ride? Don’t they still learn Pollux’ skill, which is to fence? Don’t they still learn the Pyrrhic gestures, which are to both dance and spring in armor, so that they can be active for the wars?”

Centaurs are half-horse, half-man. Pollux (aka Polydeuces), the twin brother of Castor, was famed as a boxer. The Pyrrhic gestures are war-games that will help prepare their practitioners for battle.

Lovel continued, “Don’t pages still learn to study figures of speech and the numbers and proportions of rhetoric that may make them great in counsels and in the arts that grave Nestor and the wise Ulysses practiced — ‘To make their English sweet upon their tongue,’ as Reverend Chaucer says?”

Nestor was an aged king who advised Agamemnon, leader of the Greeks against the Trojans in the Trojan War. Odysseus was a master of rhetoric in both Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

The Friar in the Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* was described in this way: "Somewhat he lisped, for his wantonness, / To make his English sweet upon his tongue."

"Reverend" is a title indicating great respect.

"Sir, you are mistaken," the Host said. "What will a page of today learn?"

"To play Sir Pandarus and be a bawd, as my copy of Chaucer has it, and carry messages to Madam Cressida."

Pandarus was a go-between who enabled his niece Cressida and the Trojan warrior Troilus to have an affair.

The Host continued, "Instead of riding the brave steed in the mornings, to mount the chambermaid; and instead of a leap of the vaulting horse, to ply the vaulting house."

A vaulting horse is a piece of gymnastics equipment; a vaulting house is a brothel.

The Host continued, "For exercise of arms, a set of dice, or two or three packs of cards, to show the cheating trick and nimbleness of hand; to mis-take and steal a cloak from my lord's back, and pawn it; to ease my lord's pockets of a superfluous watch, or to geld a jeweled ornament of an odd stone, or so."

A stone can be a testicle.

The Host continued, "To pinch three or four buttons from off my lady's gown."

Buttons were sometimes made of gold.

The Host continued, "These are the arts or seven liberal deadly sciences of pagery, or rather paganism, as the times are now."

“To which, if the page applies himself, he may, perhaps, take a degree at Tyburn a year the earlier, come to deliver a lecture upon Aquinas at St Thomas a Waterings, and so go forth a laureate in a hemp circle!”

Tyburn was a place where public executions were held, as was St. Thomas a Waterings. A hemp circle is a noose.

St. Thomas a Waterings was located on a road taken by pilgrims to St. Thomas Becket’s shrine in Canterbury. The pilgrims watered their horses at St. Thomas a Waterings, which is how it got its name. St. Thomas Aquinas’ name contains a pun in *aqua*, Latin for “water.”

The Host was saying that pages no longer learned correct behavior; instead, they learned low behavior.

“You’re tart, my Host, and talk above your seasoning,” Lovel said. “You talk above what you seem to be; it should not come under your cap and occur to you, I think, this vein of salt and sharpness and these blows upon learning now and then.”

Normally, the host of an inn would not have such critical opinions about the doings of well-born people.

Lovel then asked the Host, “How long have you, if your dull guest may ask it, practiced this brisk and lively trade of keeping the Light Heart — your mansion, your palace here, your hostelry?”

“In truth, I was born to something, sir, above running an inn,” the Host said.

“I easily suspect that,” Lovel said. “My Host, what is your name?”

“They call me Goodstock,” the Host said.

A person who comes from good stock is well — that is, highly — born.

“Sir, you confess and reveal it, both in your language and discourse, and in your bearing,” Lovel said.

“Yet, sir, not all are sons of the white hen,” the Host said.

Eggs from white hens were valued more highly than eggs from brown and black hens. This was a metaphor for saying that not all people are highly born.

The Host continued, “Nor can we, as the ballad singer says, come all to be wrapped soft and warm in Lady Fortune’s smock when she is pleased to trick or trump mankind. Some may be wearing coats, as jacks, queens, and kings do in the playing cards, but then some must be knaves, some varlets, bawds, and ostlers, as aces, deuces, and cards of ten, to face and brazen it out in the game that all the world is.”

The face cards in a pack of playing cards are King, Queen, and Jack. A Jack is a knight’s knave — a servant to a knight.

Lovel said, “But it being in your free will, as it was, to choose what parts (as in a play) you would sustain, I think a man of your sagacity and clear nostril should have made another choice than of a place so sordid as the keeping of an inn, where every jovial tinker, for his chink, aka money, may cry, ‘My Host, to crambe! Give us drink, and do not slink, but skink, or else you stink!’”

The Latin word *sagacitas* refers to a keen sense of smell.

Crambe is a game in which a player gives a word or phrase and the next player must rhyme to it.

“Skink” means “draws liquor.”

Lovel continued, “Such people call you by the surnames ‘Rogue,’ ‘Bawd,’ and ‘Cheater’ — they are known *synonyma* — synonyms — of your profession.”

The Host replied, “But if I am not a rogue, a bawd, or a cheater, who then is the rogue — in understanding, sir, I mean? Who errs? Who tinkles and makes jingles then, or impersonates Tom Tinker?”

Tinkers had a reputation for being rogues.

The Host replied, “Your weasel — Ferret — here may tell you that I talk bawdy and teach my boy it; and you may believe him, but, sir, you do so at your own peril if I do not do that, and it is at his — Ferret’s — peril, too, if he does lie and affirm falsely that I do it.

“No slander strikes, much less hurts, the innocent.

“If I am honest, and if all the cheat is just of myself in keeping this Light Heart, where I imagine all the world’s a play, and where I imagine all the state of affairs and the state of men’s affairs, all the events and passages of life, where I imagine all these things to commence new scenes, to come in, to go out, and to change and vanish; and if I have got a seat to sit at ease here in my inn to see the comedy, and to laugh and chuckle at the variety and throng of humors and dispositions that come jostling in and out always, as if one drove away from here another one — why, will you envy me my happiness because you are sad and lumpish and low-spirited?

“Will you carry a loadstone in your pocket to hang knives on, or jet rings to entice light straws to leap at them?”

Loadstones and jet rings are amusing toys. A loadstone is a magnet. When a jet ring is rubbed, electromagnetism is created that will attract light objects such as straws.

“Aren’t you taken with the alacrities — the liveliness and sprightliness — of a host? Greater and more just, sir, is my wonder why you chose my house — a Fiddlers’ Hall, the seat of noise and mirth, an inn here — to be drowsy in and lodge your lethargy in the Light Heart, as if some cloud — some trouble — from court had been the harbinger of your arrival here, or Cheapside debt-books, or some mistress’ order, after she sees your love growing corpulent, to give it a diet by absence — some such moldy passion!”

The Host wondered why Lovel would choose an inn — a place of liveliness and music — to be gloomy in. Could the reason be problems at court, money problems, or love problems?

Lovel thought, *Unhappily, he has guessed correctly.*

Ferret entered the room and said, “My Host, you’re called for.”

Some new guests had arrived at the inn.

The Host said loudly, “I am coming, boys.”

He exited.

Lovel asked, “Ferret, have you been plowing with this mad ox, my Host? Or has he been plowing with you?”

“For what purpose, sir?” Ferret said.

“Why, to find my riddle out,” Lovel said.

The riddle was this: Why are you here in this inn, Lovel?

One of the answers the Host had guessed was the correct answer to the riddle.

In Judges 14:14, Samson posed a riddle: “*Out of the eater came forth meat [food], and out of the strong came forth sweetness*” (King James Version). The answer was honey

from bees that had made their home in the carcass of a lion. Samson told the answer to his wife, who revealed it to her people, the Philistines, with whom Samson had made a bet. The Philistines told Samson the answer to his riddle, and in Judges 14:18, Samson said, *“If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle”* (King James Version).

Cuckolds — men with unfaithful wives — were said to have invisible horns. The reference to the “mad ox” — the Host — was a joke that the Host was a cuckold, although the Host had given Lovel no reason to think that.

Ferret replied, “I hope you believe, sir, that I can find other discourse to be gossiping about my master with hosts and ostlers.”

“If you can, it is well,” Lovel said. “Go down and see what guests have come in, and then tell me what you have learned.”

Ferret exited.

— 1.4 —

Alone, Lovel said to himself, “Oh, love, what passion are you! So tyrannous and treacherous! First to enslave and then betray all who in loyalty do serve you! The result is that neither the wisest nor the wariest creature can ignore you no more than he can bear burning coals in his bare palm or bosom, and he can conceal or hide you less than he can conceal or hide a flash of inflamed powder, whose whole light lays it open to all discovery, even of those who have but half an eye, and less of nose!

“A host to find me out! A host who is, commonly, the log a little on this side of the signpost!”



According to Lovel, most hosts of inns have little more than the intelligence and sensitivity of a log — the support-post of the sign of the inn.

Lovel continued, “Or, at the best, some round-grown thing, a drinking-jug decorated with a bearded face, that and who pours out to the guests and takes in and receives from the fragments of their jests!

“But I may wrong this Host out of sullenness, or out of my mistaking, misjudging humor.”

The Host of the Light Heart Inn was a man of wit and intelligence.

Lovel continued, “I pray that you, fantasy — my delusive imagination — be laid to rest again. And, gentle melancholy, do not oppress me; I will be as silent as the tame lover should be, and as foolish.”

— 1.5 —

The Host returned and said, “My guest, my guest, be jovial, I ask you. I have fresh golden guests, guests of the game, guests who are gamesome, guests who seek entertainment, three coachfuls of guests! Lords and ladies newly arrived! And I will announce them to you and you to them, so that I can spring a smile in this brow of yours. You are like the rugged Roman alderman, old master Gross, surnamed Agelastos, who was never seen to laugh but at an ass.”

“Agelastos” is Latin for “unsmiling,” and it was the nickname of Marcus Licinius Crassus, who laughed just once in his life. The story is that rich Romans regarded thistles, properly prepared, as a delicacy, and they would not allow poor Romans to eat them. Agelastos laughed when he saw an ass eating thistles for free.

Ferret entered the room and said to Lovel, "Sir, here's the Lady Frampul —"

"What!" Lovel said.

Ferret continued, " — and her train of guests and servants: Lord Beaufort and Lord Latimer, the Colonel Tiptoe, with Mistress Pru the chambermaid, Trundle the coachman—"

"Stop!" Lovel ordered. "Settle the bill with the house and get my horses ready; tell the groom to bring them to the back gate."

Ferret exited to carry out his orders.

"What do you mean by this, sir?" the Host asked.

"To take fair leave of your inn, my Host," Lovel answered.

The Host replied, "I hope, my guest, that although I have talked somewhat above my share at large, and have been in the altitudes, the extravagants or regions beyond the ordinary boundaries — that is, although I have acted and talked above my social station — I hope that neither myself nor any of mine have given you the reason for you to quit my house thus so suddenly."

"No, I affirm that is not the reason for my leaving, I swear on my faith," Lovel replied. "Excuse me from such a rudeness. I was now beginning to relish and love you as a friend, and I am heartily sorry that any occasion should be so compelling to urge my abrupt departure thus. But — necessity's a tyrant and commands me to leave."

The Host said, "She shall command me first to set fire to my bush — the bunch of ivy that serves as one sign of my inn — and then to break up my house. Or if that will not serve, to break with all the world, turn country bankrupt in my own town upon the market day and be proclaimed for not paying my bills for my butter and eggs all the way to the last

measure of oats and bundle of hay, before you shall leave me.

“Before that happens, I will break my Heart; I will order coach and coach-horses, lords and ladies, to pack up and go packing!

“All my fresh guests shall stink!

“I’ll pull my sign down, convert my inn to an almshouse, or to a hospital for lepers or the poor folks who sell switches as whips or whisks; turn it into an academy of rogues, or give it away to be an independently run school to breed up beggars in and send them to the canting universities.

“I will do all and any of that before you leave me.”

“Cant” is the secret language of thieves. Calling universities “canting” is an insult.

Lovel replied, “Truly, I confess that I am loath, my Host, to leave you; your expressions both take and hold me.

“But in case I stay, I must enjoin you and your whole family and household to privacy, and to conceal me. For the secret is, I would not willingly see or be seen by any of this gang, especially the lady.”

“By the brain of man,” the Host said, “what monster is she? Is she a cockatrice in velvet, who kills like this?”

A cockatrice is a basilisk: a monster that can kill something merely by meeting its gaze.

Lovel was behaving as if one look at or by Lady Frampul would kill him.

“Oh, say good words, my Host,” Lovel said. “She is a noble lady, great in blood and fortune; she is beautiful, and she is a wit!

“But she is of so resolute a capricious nature that she thinks nothing is a happiness except to have a multitude of servants; and to get them, although she is very chaste, yet she ventures upon these dangerously steep precipices that would make her not seem chaste to some prying, narrow natures.”

The kind of servants Lady Frampul wanted were men who were devoted to her. This kind of servant was not necessarily slept with.

Lovel continued, “We call her, sir, the Lady Frances Frampul, daughter of and heir to the Lord Frampul.”

“Who?” the Host asked. “The Lord Frampul? He who lived in Oxford first as a student, and afterward married the daughter of —”

The Host paused as if trying to remember the name.

Lovel finished for him, “— Syllly.”

“Right,” the Host said, “of whom the tale went that he turned puppet-master —”

Lovel interrupted, “— and traveled with young Goose, the man who mounted puppet shows —”

The Host interrupted, “— and lay and lived with the gypsies for half a year, away from his wife.”

“He is the very same man — the mad Lord Frampul!” Lovel said. “And this same Lady Frampul is his daughter, who is as cock-brained and foolish as ever her father was!”

“There were two daughters, Frances and Laetitia, who was nicknamed Lettice, but Lettice was lost young, and, as the rumor flew then, the mother upon that happening lost her wits and became mentally disturbed.

“A foolish weak woman, she went away in a melancholy. Because she had brought her husband no children but girls,

she thought that he did not love her. And he, as foolish as she, too late repenting the reason she had given, went afterward in quest of her and has not been heard of since.”

“A strange division of a family!” the Host said.

Lovel said, “And a family scattered, as in the great confusion of language during the time of the Tower of Babel!”

Genesis 11:9 states, “*Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth*” (King James Version).

“But yet the lady, the heir, enjoys the land,” the Host said.

Lovel said, “And she takes all lordly ways how to consume it as nobly as she can, if clothes and feasting, and the authorized and sanctioned means of riotous revelry will do it.”

Conspicuous consumption by women in the form of fancy clothing and fancy feasting can be paid for through the sale of land.

“She shows her extraction,” the Host said, “and I honor her for it.”

— 1.6 —

Ferret entered the room and said to Lovel, “Your horses, sir, are ready and the house is dis —”

Lovel interrupted and finished the word, “— pleased, do you think?”

“I cannot tell,” Ferret said. “But dis-charged I am sure it is.”

“Charge it again, good Ferret, and make unready the horses,” Lovel said. “You know how: Chalk and renew the rondels. I have now decided to stay here at the inn.”

Scores (aka bills or tabs) were written down in chalk in inns. A rondel is a round sign — a circle — meaning a unit of money.

“I easily and readily thought you would, when you would hear what’s purposed,” Ferret said.

“What’s that?” Lovel asked.

“To throw the house out of the window!” Ferret said.

This was a proverb meaning to engage in riotous merry-making.

“By the brain of man, I shall have the worst of that!” the Host said. “Won’t they throw my household stuff out first? Cushions and table covers, chairs, stools, and bedding? Won’t their sport be my ruin?”

“Don’t fear, my Host, I am not of the fellowship,” Lovel said.

“I cannot see, sir, how you will avoid it,” Ferret said. “All of them know already, all of them, that you are in the house.”

“Who knows?” Lovel asked.

“The lords,” Ferret said. “They saw me and inquired about you.”

“Why were you seen?” Lovel asked.

“Because indeed I had no medicine or drug, sir, to make me invisible,” Ferret said. “I had no fern-seed in my pocket, nor had I an opal wrapped in a bay-leaf in my left fist to charm their eyes with.”

“Fern-seed” was supposed to be an invisible seed that would make its possessor also invisible.

An opal was supposed to make clear the sight of its possessor while clouding the sight of other people near its possessor.

The Host said to Lovel, "He gives you reasons as round and circular — complete and accomplished — as Gyges' ring, which, the ancients say, was a hoop ring; and that is, as round as a hoop!"

A hoop ring is a plain-band ring.

Ferret's reasons were circular: They went round and round, meaning that Ferret's reasons did not truly answer the question.

In Plato's *Republic*, the shepherd Gyges finds a ring that makes him invisible.

"You will have your rebus still, my Host," Lovel said.

"I must," the Host replied.

"My lady, too, looked out of the window and called me," Ferret said.

"My Lady" is the Lady Frances Frampul.

Prudence, the chambermaid of the Lady Frances Frampul, entered the room.

Ferret saw her and said, "And see where Secretary Pru comes from her, employed upon some embassy to you —"

The word "secretary" meant "confidant."

Secretary Prudence had come as an ambassador to Lovel from Lady Frampul.

The Host said, "I'll meet her and see if she comes upon that employment."

He then said to Prudence, "Fair lady, you are as welcome as your Host can make you."

“Forbear, sir,” Prudence replied. “I am first to have my audience before the compliment. My address is to this gentleman.”

She had come upon that employment they suspected she had come upon.

“And it is in state,” the Host said. “Yours is an official ambassadorship.”

He was mildly joking. Prudence was a chambermaid and a confidant, not an official ambassador.

Prudence said to Lovel, “My lady, sir, as glad of the encounter to find a servant here, and such a servant, whom she so values, with her best respects desires to be remembered, and invites your nobleness to be a part today of the society and mirth intended by her and the young lords, your fellow-servants, who are alike desirous of enjoying the fair request; and to that end have sent me — their imperfect orator — to obtain it.”

The Lady Frampul had recognized Lovel; he was a former servant — that is, an admirer of hers.

Prudence continued, “Which if I may, they have elected me and crowned me with the title of a sovereign of the day’s entertainments devised in the inn, provided that you will be pleased to add your consent to it.”

The Lady Frampul enjoyed entertainments, and she wanted Lovel to be a part of them.

Lovel replied, “Provided that I will be pleased, my gentle mistress Prudence? You cannot think me of that coarse condition to begrudge you anything.”

A mistress can be a female boss. Prudence was a chambermaid, but Lovel was allowing her to tell him what he should do.



The Host said, “That’s nobly said, and like my guest.”

Lovel said to Prudence, “I congratulate Your Honor, and I should cheerfully lay hold on any opportunity that could advance it. But for me to think that I can be any rag or particle of your lady’s care, more than to fill her list — she being the lady who professes always to love no soul or body but for ends that are her entertainments, and is not reluctant to speak this but does proclaim it in all companies — her Ladyship must pardon my weak counsels, and my weaker will, if it declines to obey her.”

Lovel was saying that Lady Frampul simply needed him to fill the lists; for example, to be the fourth player in a game of cards that required four people. He was saying that was the only reason she wanted him to participate in her games.

Prudence replied, “Oh, Master Lovel, you must not give credit to all that ladies publicly profess or talk at random and without prudent consideration to their servants. Their tongues and thoughts often lie far asunder.

“Yet, when they please, they have their cabinet-counsels — private counsels — and reserved thoughts, and can remove themselves to a private place as well as others.”

In other words, not all of what women say publicly can be believed; however, women do have private conversations in which they reveal real and private thoughts.

“Aye, the subtlest of us!” the Host said. “All that is born within a lady’s lips —”

Prudence finished the sentence for him, “— is not the issue of their hearts, my Host. It does not necessarily come from their hearts.”

The Host said, “Either kiss or drink before me.”

This idiom meant: You have taken the words out of my mouth.

Possibly, the idiom also meant: You spoke before me and in my presence; now kiss or drink in my presence.

The Host tried to kiss her.

Prudence said to the Host, “Wait, excuse me; my errand is not done.”

She said to Lovel, “Yet, if Her Ladyship’s slighting or disesteem, sir, of your service has formerly begot any offence that I do not know of, here I vow to you upon a chambermaid’s simplicity, preserving always the honor of my Lady, that I will be bold to hold the mirror up to her to show Her Ladyship where she has erred and how to tender satisfaction, provided that you grant that you will undergo the day’s venture.”

As the Lady Frampul’s intimate confidant, Prudence could criticize the Lady Frampul.

The Host said to Lovel, who was silent a long time because he was thinking, “What do you say, sir? Where are you? Are you within?”

The Host thumped Lovel on the chest to make him alert again.

Lovel made his mind up and said, “Yes, I will wait upon her and the company.”

“It is enough, Queen Prudence,” the Host said. “I will bring him, and I swear on this kiss.”

He kissed Prudence, and then she exited.

“I have longed to kiss a Queen!” the Host said.

“There is no life on earth except being in love!” Lovel said. “There are no studies, no delights, no business, no intercourse, or trade — method — of sense or soul, except what is love!

“I was the laziest creature, the most unprofitable sign of nothing, the veriest and greatest drone, and slept away my life more than the dormouse until I was in love!”

Drones are literally male honeybees whose job is to impregnate the Queen bee, while other bees do the work of gathering the honey and maintaining the nest. Figuratively, a drone is a person who lives off the work of others.

Dormice spend much of their lives sleeping.

Lovel continued, “And, now, I can outwake the nightingale, outwatch an usurer and outwalk him, too, stalk like a ghost that haunts near a treasure, and all that fancied treasure, it is love!”

Usurers kept a close watch on their creditors, and when necessary they pursued them relentlessly.

The Host asked, “But is your name Love-ill, sir, or Love-well? I would like to know that.”

“I do not know myself which of the two it is,” Lovel said. “But it is love that has been the hereditary passion of our family, my gentle Host, and, as I guess, my friend.

“The truth is, I have loved this lady long and ineffectively, with desire enough but with no success; for I have always forborne to express it in my person to her.”

“How did you express your love to her then?” the Host asked.

Lovel answered, “I have sent her toys (trifles of rhymes or prose, or small gifts), verses, and anagrams, samples of wit,

mere trifles she has commended, but she didn't know from where or whom they came, nor could she guess."

These anagrams were acrostic poems in which each line begins with a letter of the name of a loved one.

"This was a pretty riddling way of wooing!" the Host said.

True.

"I often have been, too, in her company," Lovel said, "and I have looked at her a whole day, admired her; loved her and did not tell her so, loved always, looked always and loved, and loved and looked and sighed. But, as a neglected man, I came off the field and retired from the encounter, and unregarded —"

"Could you blame her, sir," the Host said, "when you were silent and said not a word?"

"Oh, but I loved the more," Lovel said, "and she might read it best in my silence, had she been —"

The Host finished the sentence, "— as melancholic as you are."

He added, "Please tell me, why would you stand mute, sir?"

Lovel answered, "Oh, thereon hangs a history, my Host.

"Have you ever known, or heard, of Lord Beaufort, who served so bravely in France? I was his page and, before he died, his friend. I followed him, first in the wars; and then in the times of peace I waited on his studies, which were right.

"He had no King Arthurs, no Rosicleers, no Knights of the Sun, no Amadis de Gauls, no Primalions, and no Pantagruels, all of which are public nothings. He had no abortives of the fabulous, dark cloister, sent out to poison courts and attack manners."

All of the above names were names of characters in chivalric romances. Lovel (and Ben Jonson) regarded them as “public nothings.” The “abortives of the fabulous, dark cloister” were romances copied by monks.

Lovel continued, “But he did have the acts of great Achilles, Agamemnon’s acts, sage Nestor’s counsels, and Ulysses’ sleights, Tydides’ fortitude, as Homer wrought them in his immortal imagination, to serve as examples of the heroic virtue.”

The Lord Beaufort did have the good taste to revere the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. One of the characters in the *Iliad* was Tydides: the Greek warrior Diomedes, the son of Tydeus.

Achilles, a Greek, was the greatest warrior of the Trojan War. Agamemnon was the leader of the Greeks against the Trojans. Nestor was an aged advisor to Agamemnon. Ulysses was the trickiest of the Greeks; he came up with the idea of the Trojan Horse. Diomedes was an important Greek warrior, and he was the youngest of the Greek kings fighting the Trojans.

Lovel continued, “And, as Virgil, that master of the epic poem, limned — described — Pious Aeneas, his religious prince, bearing his aged parent on his shoulders, carried him from the flames of Troy with his young son, and these Lord Beaufort brought to imitate and to use as examples.”

In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Aeneas flees the sack of Troy while carrying his aged father on his shoulders and leading his young son by the hand. Aeneas was pious (in Latin, *pius*), which means he gave respect where respect was due, including to his gods, his city, and his family.

Lord Beaufort’s library was select: He had chosen the best examples of the heroic virtue from the works of the ancient epic poets.

Lovel continued, “Lord Beaufort gave me first my breeding, I acknowledge, and then he showered his bounties on me, like the Hours who open-handed sit upon the clouds and press the liberality of heaven down to the laps of thankful men.”

The Hours are goddesses who preside over seasonal changes: from spring to summer, from summer to autumn, etc.

Lovel continued, “But then the trust committed to me at his death was above all, and left so strong a tie on all my powers as time shall not dissolve it, until time dissolve and loosen itself, and bury all!

“The trust he gave to me was the care of his brave heir, and only son! Who being a virtuous, sweet, young, promising lord has cast his first affections on this lady.”

Lord Beaufort’s brave heir, now that Lord Beaufort had died, was now himself Lord Beaufort.

Lovel continued, “And although I know and may presume her such as out of her disposition will return no love, and therefore might without prejudice be made the courting-stock — object of courtship — for all to practice on” — a whipping-stock is a source of pain; for many people, a courting-stock is also a source of pain — “as she practices her scorn on all of us, yet, out of a religion — a scruple of conscience — to my charge and out of a professed debt to his father, I have made a self-decree never to reveal my personal feelings, although my passion burns me to cinders.”

The Host said, “Then you’re not so subtle or half so read in love-craft as I took you. Come, come, you are no phoenix; if you were, I would expect no miracle from your ashes.”

The Phoenix was a mythological bird that when old burned itself to ashes and then miraculously arose as a young bird.

The Host continued, "Take some advice; be always that rag of love you are. Burn on until you turn tinder."

Tinder was sometimes made of partially charred rags.

The Host continued, "This chambermaid may happen to prove the steel to strike a spark out of the flint, your mistress, who may yet beget bonfires. You do not know what light may be forced out and from what darkness."

"No," Lovel said. "I am so resolved that I will love still and always although I will not confess that I love."

"That's, sir, as it chances," the Host said. "We'll throw the dice for it. Cheer up!"

"I do," Lovel said.

ACT 2 (*The New Inn, or The Light Heart*)

— 2.1 —

Lady Frampul and Prudence, her chambermaid, talked together as Prudence pinned one of Lady Frampul's gowns on herself. Prudence was being dressed very well for a purpose that Lady Frampul had in mind: Prudence was going to be the Queen of the Festivities that Lady Frampul would hold at the Light Heart Inn.

"Come, wench, this dress will serve," Lady Frampul said. "Dispatch, make ready. This dress was a great deal too big for me, which made me stop wearing it after wearing it only once."

The dress was made by her tailor.

In this society, the word "wench" could be used affectionately. Its use was not necessarily derogatory.

She then asked, "How does it fit? Will the ends of the corset come together?"

Prudence, who had a much fuller figure than Lady Frampul, struggled with the gown to bring the ends of the corset together and said, "With difficulty."

"You must make do with it," Lady Frampul said. "Pride feels no pain. Girt thee hard, Pru — pull hard on the lacings. Pox on this errant tailor! He angers me beyond all limit of patience. These base people who work with their hands never keep their word in anything they promise."

Prudence replied, "It is their trade, madam, to swear and break — to swear their word and then break it. They all grow rich by breaking more than their words; their honesties and credits are always the first commodity they put off."



She was saying that tailors often break their word, and they often make money through dishonest means. Often, they break their word when they promise that a dress will be delivered by a certain date.

“And their credit grows worse and then worst, it seems, which makes them do it so often,” Lady Frampul said.

Although the tailors’ breaking their promises and doing dishonest actions might make them money in the short term, word soon got out about them and they ended up making less money in the long term, and so they had to double down on breaking their promises and doing dishonest actions.

Lady Frampul added, “If he had broken his promise with only me, I would have not cared, but with the company, the body politic —”

The body politic was her entourage at the Light Heart Inn. The tailor’s breaking his promise affected her entourage. The dress had been intended for Prudence, who would be Queen of the Festivities and would rule over the entourage.

Prudence interrupted Lady Frampul’s sentence, “— the tailor frustrates our whole design, having that time, and the materials in so long before!”

The tailor had all the materials and all the time he needed to make the dress and deliver it on time to Lady Frampul.

“And he to fail in all and disappoint us!” Lady Frampul said.

They were disappointed and dis-appointed. The word “appoint” means “accoutre” — impressively clothe.

Lady Frampul continued, “The rogue deserves a torture —”

Prudence suggested, “He should be cropped with his own scissors —”

She meant that the tailor's ears should be shortened and cut off with his own scissors.

"Let's devise a torture for him," Lady Frampul said.

Prudence continued, "— and have the stumps seared up with his own cering candle!"

"To cere" means "to cover with wax" or "to wrap in a cerecloth." A cerecloth is a shroud. Tailors used cering candles to waterproof garments. Of course, Prudence was punning on "searing."

Lady Frampul suggested, "Crop his ears close to his head, so his head will roll on his pillow! I'll have the lease of his house cut out to form measuring tapes."

Prudence asked, "And shall we strangle the tailor with them?"

Lady Frampul replied, "No, I would have no life touched, but he should be a little stretched on his own yard — his own measuring rod."

The rack was an instrument of torture in which the victim was stretched. The victim's arms were pulled in one direction, and the victim's legs were pulled in the opposite direction. The use of a measuring rod as a rack was a comic image because most measuring rods — yard sticks — used by tailors were too short to be used that way. Lady Frampul's tailor, however, was very short.

She added, "He should have the strappado."

The strappado was a torture in which the victim's hands were tied behind his back and he was lifted high with a pulley. He was then dropped partway down and his fall was suddenly stopped so his arms would be pulled out of their sockets.

Prudence suggested, “Or have an ell — 45 inches — of taffeta drawn through his guts by way of an enema and set on fire with *aqua-vitae*?”

*Aqua-vitae* was alcohol or brandy, which would soak the taffeta and then be set on fire.

Lady Frampul said, “Burning in the hand with the pressing iron cannot save him.”

An alternative to the death punishment was being branded on the hand. People who could read Latin were sometimes given this punishment instead of being executed. Avoiding death by being able to read Latin was known as benefit of clergy.

“Yes,” Prudence said. But she finished putting on the dress and said, “Now that I have finally gotten this dress on, I do forgive him for what robes he should have brought but did not.”

“You are not cruel, although you are strait-laced I see, Pru!” Lady Frampul said.

She was punning on cruel (severe) and crewel (a cheaper material for people who could not afford silk). She was also punning on “strait-laced” as meaning 1) tightly laced, and 2) strict in morality.

“This dress is well,” Prudence said.

“It is rich enough, but it is not what I meant you to have,” Lady Frampul said. “I would have had you braver — more splendidly dressed — than myself, and far brighter. It will fit the players yet, when you have done with it, and yield you somewhat.”

When Prudence was finished with the dress, she could sell it to actors, who would use it as a costume.

“Madam, it would be ill-bred and absolutely sordid and mercenary of me to allow a suit of clothing of yours to end up there,” Prudence said.

“Tut, all of us are players and but serve the scene,” Lady Frampul said. “Pru, dispatch. Finish your dressing. I fear you do not like the duty I have for you to perform because you are so long fitting yourself for it.”

She handed Prudence a scarf and said, “Here is a scarf to make you a finer knot.”

A knot is an ornamental bow.

“You send me a feast of clothing, madam,” Prudence said.

“Wear it, wench,” Lady Frampul said.

“Yes, I will,” Prudence said, “but with the permission of Your Ladyship, I would tell you that this can but bear the face of — look like — an odd journey.”

“Why, Pru?” Lady Frampul asked.

Prudence answered, “A lady of your rank and quality has come to a public inn, with so many men, young lords, and others in your company, and not a woman with you but myself, a chambermaid!”

Such an action can cause serious gossip.

“You fear that you will be over-laid, Pru?” Lady Frampul said. “Don’t worry; I’ll bear my part and share with you in the adventure.”

“To be over-laid” means 1) “to be over-laden, aka over-burdened,” and 2) “to be overly having sexual intercourse.”

Another pun is “bear my part,” which means “play my role,” and “bare my part,” which means “bare my genitalia.”

“Oh, but the censure and the gossip, madam, is the main concern,” Prudence said. “What will they say of you, or judge of me, who is transformed with quality clothing like this, above all the bound of fitness or decorum?”

Many people in this society regarded dressing above one’s station in life as a sin. In some cases, it was a crime.

“What, Pru!” Lady Frampul said. “Have you turned into a fool upon the sudden, and now talk idly in your best clothes? Do you shoot bolts and sentences — maxims — to frighten babies with?”

“Bolts” are arrows. A proverb stated, “A fool’s bolt is soon shot.” Anyone who shoots all the arrows in a quiver leaves him- or herself open to attack. A bolt is also a roll of fabric.

Lady Frampul continued, “As if I lived to any other degree or level than what’s my own, or sought myself, outside myself, away from my home, my natural place!”

“Your Ladyship, please pardon me for my fault,” Prudence said. “If I have over-shot, I’ll shoot no more.”

“Yes, do shoot again, good Pru,” Lady Frampul said. “I’ll have you shoot, and aim and hit; I know that what you say shows the love that is in you, and so I do interpret it.”

“Then, madam, I’d crave a farther leave,” Prudence said.

She wanted to make a request.

“Be it to license, it shall not lack an ear, Pru,” Lady Frampul said.

This meant, “Even if you want permission to live free and without restraints and licentiously, I will listen to what you say.”

Lady Frampul continued, “Tell me, what is it?”

“I have in mind a toy — a piece of fun — to raise a little mirth to the design you have in hand,” Prudence said.

“Out with it, Pru, if it will chime of mirth,” Lady Frampul said. “If it results in mirth, I am for it.”

Prudence said, “My Host has, madam, a pretty boy in the house: a dainty, delicate child, who is his son, and who is of Your Ladyship’s name, too. His name is Francis. This boy, if Your Ladyship would borrow him and give me permission to dress him as I would, should make the finest lady and kinswoman to keep you company, and deceive my lords upon the matter. This will be a fountain — a gushing source — of sport and entertainment.”

One of the lords in the inn might even be attracted to the boy, thinking him to be a lady.

“I understand you, and I understand the source of mirth that it may breed,” Lady Frampul said, “but is the child bold enough, and well assured?”

“He is as bold and well assured as I am, madam,” Prudence said. “Hold him in no more suspicion than you hold me.”

The Host entered the room.

Prudence said, “Here comes my Host. Will it please you to ask him for the loan of his son, or will you let me make the proposal?”

“You make the proposal, Pru,” Lady Frampul said.

— 2.2 —

“Your Ladyship and all your retinue of attendants are welcome,” the Host said.

“I thank my hearty Host,” Lady Frampul said.

“Your sovereignty is also welcome here,” the Host said, referring to Prudence.

He added, “Madam, I wish you joy in the possession of your new gown.”

“I should have had a new gown, my Host,” Lady Frampul said, “but Stuff, our tailor, has broken his word with us; you shall be of the counsel — you shall know the details.”

“He will deserve to hear such confidences, madam,” Prudence said to Lady Frampul.

She then said, “My lady has heard that you have a pretty son, my Host; she’d like to see him.”

“Aye, I am very eager to see him,” Lady Frampul said. “I ask you to please let me see him.”

“Your Ladyship shall see him immediately,” the Host said.

He called, “Ho!”

Pierce Anon, one of the Host’s employees, replied, “Anon!”

“Tell Frank to come here, Anon, to my lady,” the Host said.

Pierce the bartender was called “Anon,” aka “Quickly.” Pierce Anon, like many tapsters, aka bartenders, used that word often when serving customers.

The Host then said to Lady Frampul about his son, “He is a bashful child, unpretentiously brought up in a rude, devoid-of-culture hostelry. But the Light Heart Inn — it is his father’s, and it may become his.

Frank, the Host’s son, entered the room.

“Here he comes,” the Host said.

He then said, “Frank, salute and greet my lady.”

Frank said to Lady Frampul, “Madam, I do what I am designed to by my birthright as heir of the Light Heart Inn: I bid you most welcome.”

“And I believe your ‘most,’ my pretty boy,” Lady Frampul said, “being so emphasized by you.”

Frank said, “If you believe my ‘most welcome’ to be true, Your Ladyship is sure to make it most welcome.”

“Prettily answered!” Lady Frampul said. “Is your name Francis?”

“Yes,” Frank said.

Lady Frampul, whose first name was Frances, responded, “I love my own name all the better.”

“If I knew your name, I should make haste to do so, too, good madam,” Frank said.

“My name is the same name as yours,” Lady Frances Frampul said.

Frank said, “My name then acknowledges the luster it receives by being named after you.”

“You will excel me in compliment, and you will gain influence over me with flattery,” Lady Frampul replied.

“By silence,” Francis said.

He would not admit to excelling over her, and he would not admit to flattering her.

“A modest and a fair well-spoken child,” Lady Frampul said.

The Host said, “Her Ladyship shall have him, sovereign Pru, and whatever else I have besides; divide my heart and Heart — my heart and my Light Heart Inn — between you and



your lady. Make your use of it. My house is yours, and my son is yours. Behold, I tender him to your service.”

The Host then said to his son, “Frank, become what these brave ladies would have you become.”

Somehow, the Host knew already that these ladies wanted to dress his son up as a lady. He may have been eavesdropping at the door. That would explain how he knew that Prudence was now Lady Frampul’s “sovereign.” (Earlier, when he had kissed Prudence, he said that he had always wished to kiss a queen.) Good hosts and good servants often know more about the people they serve than those people think they know.

The Host then said to Lady Frampul, “Only remember this: There is a charwoman in the house, and she is Frank’s nurse.”

A nurse’s job was to take care of children.

The Host continued, “She is an Irish woman I took in who was a beggar, and she waits upon him. She is a poor defenseless simpleton, but she is as insolent, meddlesome, persistent, and stubborn as ever one was. She will vex you on all occasions, never be off, or away from you, except in her sleep, or in her drink, which makes her sleep. She does so much love him, or rather she dotes on him.

“Now, we need for the Nurse a shape — a stage costume or disguise — in which we may dress her. I’ll help provide the clothing. We need to outfit her with a rich taffeta cloak, an old French hood, and other pieces heterogeneous enough to go with these items.”

Prudence said, “We have brought a suit of apparel down because this tailor failed us in the main.”

The extra suit of apparel would be for the Nurse. She needed to be better dressed because she was now playing the role of the servant to a lady.

The Host said, “She — the Nurse — shall advance the game.”

“Set about it, then, and send Trundle, the coachman, here to me,” Prudence said.

“I shall,” the Host said.

He then whispered to Prudence, “But Pru, let Lovel have fair treatment.”

“He shall have the best,” Prudence replied.

“Our Host, I think, is very playful!” Lady Frampul said.

Prudence asked her, “How do you like the boy?”

“He is a miracle!” Lady Frampul answered.

“Good madam, take him in and select a suit of clothing for him,” Prudence said. “I’ll give our Trundle his instructions, and wait upon Your Ladyship in the instant.”

“But, Pru, what shall we call him when we have dressed him?” Lady Frampul asked.

“Call him My Lady Nobody, or anything else — whatever you want to call him,” Prudence answered.

“We’ll call him by my sister’s name, Laetitia,” Lady Frampul said, “and so it will contribute to our mirth, too, that we have in hand.”

In Latin, “Laetitia” means “Gladness.” The name would remind them of the mirth they had in mind.

Lady Frampul and Frank exited from the room as Trundle the coachman entered it.

Prudence said, “Good Trundle, you must immediately make ready the coach and lead the horses out just half a mile into the fields, wherever you will, and then drive in again, with the coach-window blinds put down so no one can see in. Go to the back gate and so on to the backstairs, as if you brought in somebody to my lady — a kinswoman whom she sent for.

“Make that your answer if you are asked, and spread that gossip in the house.”

Trundle replied, “What trick is this, good Mistress Secretary, that you’d put upon us?”

“Us?” Prudence said. “Do you speak plural?”

She was asking if he, a coachman, was using the majestic plural.

Trundle had meant by “us” himself and the people in the house, but he replied, “Me and my mares are ‘us.’”

“If you so join them, elegant Trundle,” Prudence said, “you may use your figures of speech.”

She was punning. The word “join” can mean 1) “harness together,” and 2) “construe.”

Prudence continued, “I can but tell you plainly that it is my lady’s service.”

“Good Mistress Prudence, you can speak plainly enough,” Trundle said. “I know you are secretary to my lady, and I know that you are Mistress Steward.”

A steward takes care of the finances of a household — the steward does not do the cleaning and other work, but the

steward hires (and fires) and pays the people who clean and who do other work. The steward also oversees their work and judges its quality.

Prudence said, “You’ll still be trundling, and have your wages stopped now at the audit.”

“Trundling” means going on. Prudence meant that Trundle would be still be talking and not working. As Mistress Steward, Prudence would be his boss. She was saying that if she wanted, she could hold an audit — an examination — of expenses, and she could fire him.

Trundle said, “It is true, for you are Gentlewoman of the Horse, too. Or whatever else you want to be, besides, Pru.”

The Gentleman of the Horse is in charge of the horses. As a carriage driver, Trundle would work for the Gentlewoman of the Horse as well as for Mistress Steward. Of course, Prudence would hold both jobs.

Trundle continued, “I think it is in my best interest to obey you.”

Prudence replied, “And I think so, too, Trundle.”

They exited.

#### — 2.4 —

Lord Beaufort and Lord Latimer talked together. They were a pair of young lords, servants and guests to the Lady Frampul.

Lord Beaufort said, “Why, here’s return enough of both our ventures, even if we make no more exploration.”

“Ventures” can mean 1) financial undertakings, or 2) adventures. They had been spending money to travel in search of interesting people and sights.

“What, than of this parasite?” Lord Latimer asked.

“Oh, he’s a dainty one,” Lord Beaufort said. “The parasite of the house.”

They were talking about a man named Fly. A parasite is a person who lives on the work of other people.

The Host entered the room.

Lord Latimer said to Lord Beaufort, “Here comes my Host.”

“My lords, you both are welcome to the Heart,” the Host said.

“To the Light Heart, we hope,” Lord Beaufort said.

“And the merry Heart, I swear,” Lord Latimer said. “We never yet felt such a fit of laughter as your glad Heart has offered us since we entered.”

“How did you come by this property?” Lord Beaufort asked the Host.

By “property,” he did not mean the Light Heart Inn, but the parasite within it. A property is a tool. Fly lived off the work of the Host, but he did help out in some ways.

“Who?” the Host asked. “My Fly?”

“Your Fly, if you call him that,” Lord Beaufort said.

“Nay, he is that,” the Host said. “And he will always be that.”

Fly would continue to be a parasite; he would continue to be a fly.

“In every dish and pot?” Lord Beaufort asked.

“In every cup and company, my lords,” the Host answered. “He is a creature of all liquors, all complexions. Be the drink what it will, he’ll have his sip.”

Fly was a drinker as well as a parasite.

“He’s fitted with a name,” Lord Latimer said.

“And he takes joy in it,” the Host said. “I had him, when I came to take the inn here, assigned to me over in the inventory as an old implement, a piece of furniture, and so he does remain.”

The Host was saying that when he acquired the inn, Fly came with it.

Lord Beaufort said, “We thought he was just such a thing.”

“Is he a scholar?” Lord Latimer asked.

“Nothing can be less a scholar,” the Host said. “But he colors for it: He attempts to act the part. As you can see, he wears a scholar’s black clothing, and he speaks a little tainted, fly-blown Latin after the Schoolmen.”

The Schoolmen were medieval theologians and philosophers.

Lord Beaufort said, “He speaks the Latin of Stratford of the Bow, for Lily’s Latin is to him unknown.”

William Lily was the author of a well-respected Latin grammar.

“What calling has he?” Lord Latimer asked.

The Host replied, “Only to call in, inflame the reckoning, be bold to charge a bill, and to bring up the shot in the rear, as his own word is.”

The Host was punning and using words and phrases that had both a military meaning and an inn-employee meaning.

“To call in” means 1) “to call soldiers to withdraw,” and 2) “to shout out an order.”

“To inflame” means 1) “to set [e.g., a town] on fire” and “to [unethically] increase” a customer’s bill.

“To charge a bill” means 1) “to charge a bill-man” (a bill is a kind of weapon), and 2) “to charge a customer’s bill.”

“To bring up the shot in the rear” means “to bring up in the rear the soldiers armed with firearms,” and 2) “to bring up an account in a rear room,” or possibly, “to bring up an account in arrears.”

Lord Beaufort asked, “And he does it in the discipline of the house, as corporal of the field, *maestro del campo*?”

A corporal of the field is a superior officer.

A *maestro del campo* is a quartermaster, but “campo” was a slang word for “privy.”

Lord Beaufort was saying that in a way, Fly was a superior officer: He was the quartermaster of the chamber pots. (Actually, a servant named Jordan took care of those, but Fly had a superior position to that of Jordan.) In military terms, a quartermaster is in charge of the pitching and maintaining of an army camp.

The Host said, “Yes, and he is the visitor-general of all the rooms. He has formed a fine militia for the inn, too.”

A visitor-general is an inspector.

The “militia” was the other employees of the inn.

“And he means to bring it to public notice?” Lord Beaufort asked.

The Host replied, “Yes, along with all his other titles. Some call him Deacon Fly, some call him Doctor Fly, some call him Captain Fly, and some call him Lieutenant Fly; but my folks call him Quartermaster Fly, which he is.”

Tiptoe and Fly entered the room. Tiptoe was a braggart knight and colonel who bore himself proudly, and Fly, as we have just learned, was a parasite.

They did not see the Host, Lord Beaufort, and Lord Latimer, who were off to the side.

Tiptoe said, “Come, Quartermaster Fly.”

The Host said quietly to Lord Beaufort and Lord Latimer, “Here’s one who has already gotten his titles.”

Tiptoe was a knight: Sir Glorious Tiptoe.

“Doctor!” Tiptoe said to Fly.

“Noble colonel!” Fly said to Tiptoe.

He then said, “I am no doctor, but yet I am a poor professor of ceremony here in the inn, and I am a retainer to the Host. I discipline the house.”

“Poor” can mean 1) impoverished, and 2) of low quality.

“Retainer” can mean “parasite.”

Tiptoe said, “You read — give — a lecture to the family here; when is the day?”

“This is the day,” Fly said.

He and Tiptoe would discuss such topics as fencing on this day.

“I’ll hear you, and I’ll regard you as a doctor,” Tiptoe said. “You shall be one — you have a doctor’s look! You have a disputative face, as if you were of Salamanca.”

Salamanca had a famous university: The University of Salamanca was the oldest university in Spain.



Because he did not know who Tiptoe was, the Host asked Lord Beaufort and Lord Latimer, “Who’s this?”

“He is the glorious Colonel Tiptoe, Host,” Lord Latimer said.

“He is one who talks upon his tiptoes, if you’ll hear him,” Lord Beaufort said.

“To walk upon tiptoes” means “to bear oneself with pride.”

Tiptoe said, “You have good learning in you, *macte* Fly.”

*Macte* is Latin for “honored.”

Fly responded, “And I say *macte* to my colonel.”

Tiptoe and Fly were members of a mutual admiration society.

The Host said quietly to Lord Beaufort and Lord Latimer, “Well *macte*-d of them both.”

“They are matched, truly,” Lord Beaufort said.

They were well matched as fools. Well, at least Tiptoe was a fool. Fly sometimes pretended to be a fool.

Tiptoe asked, “But, Fly, why *macte*?”

Fly answered, “*Quasi magis aucte*, my honorable colonel.”

In other words, Fly was saying, “I say *macte* as if *macte*, aka *m acte*, meant *magis aucte*, aka ‘more great.’”

*Quasi magis aucte* means “as it were, more great (that is, greater).”

*Auctus*, *actua*, *auctum* is a Latin adjective meaning “large, abundant, ample, enriched, enlarged.” Fly had used *aucte* to go with *macte*. The *-e* ending of *aucte* is used to indicate the masculine vocative.

Tiptoe said, “What, are you a critic?”

The Host said to himself, “There’s another title to your profession, Critic Fly.”

It was another title for Fly to use to refer to himself.

Lord Latimer said, “I fear a taint here in the mathematics. They say parallel lines never meet, but he has met his parallel in wit and school craft.”

Lord Latimer meant that Fly had met his parallel — Tiptoe — in wit (intelligence) and school craft (education). They were alike in lack of intellect.

Lord Beaufort said, “They run side by side, not meet, man; mend your metaphor, and save the credit of your mathematics.”

If Fly and Tiptoe were equals, they ran side by side without colliding. They did not meet.

“But, Fly, how did you come to be here, imprisoned in this inn?” Tiptoe asked.

“Upon suspicion of drink, sir,” Fly answered, “I was taken late one night, here, with the tapster and the under-officers, and so deposited here.”

“I will redeem you, Fly, and get you a better place,” Tiptoe said. “I will get you a job with a fair lady.”

“A lady, sweet Sir Glorious?” Fly said.

“A sovereign lady,” Sir Glorious Tiptoe answered. “You shall be the bird to sovereign Pru, Queen of our sports. You shall be her Fly, the Fly in household, and in ordinary; you shall be the bird of her ear, and she shall wear you there! You shall be a Fly of gold, enameled like a brooch, and a school-Fly.”

Fly would be Prudence's bird, or confidant. "A bird of one's own brain" meant "a secret." Fly would know Prudence's secrets.

An ordinary is an inn, and "in ordinary" meant "a member of the regular staff."

A school-Fly is Fly as a student.

The Host said quietly to Lord Latimer and Lord Beaufort, "The schools, then, are my stables or the cellar, where Fly studies deeply, at his hours, cases of cups — I do not know how spiced with conscience."

The word "case" means "pair," and the phrase "cases of conscience" means "cases that concern morality."

The Host continued, "I do not know how spiced with conscience for the tapster and the ostler. As whose horses may be cozened with buttered hay, or what jugs filled up with froth? That is his way of learning."

Horses will not eat buttered hay. A dishonest ostler could give buttered hay to horses, and sell the same buttered hay over and over.

One way for a tapster to cheat customers was to serve them more froth than beer.

These were the tricks that Fly was learning at "school."

The Host had spoken loudly enough to be noticed by Tiptoe, who asked Fly, "What antiquated feather's that, who talks?"

"A man of the first feather" was a showy man — a show-off.

The Host was wearing a velvet hat with a large feather as a decoration.

Fly replied, “He is the worshipful Host: my patron. His name is Master Goodstock, and he is a merry Greek and cants in comely Latin, and spins like the parish top.”

Every village had a large top that served as entertainment during cold weather when peasants could not work. Whipping the top kept them warm — and out of mischief.

A story-teller can spin tales.

A merry Greek is a roisterer.

“I’ll set him up like a top, then,” Tiptoe said.

He asked the Host, “Are you the *dominus*? Are you the master?”

“I am the factotum here, sir,” the Host said.

A factotum is someone who does many kinds of work — or all the work.

Tiptoe asked, “Are you the Host real — royal — of the house, and the cap of maintenance?”

A cap of maintenance is a symbol of authority.

The Host answered, “I am the lord of the Light Heart, sir, *cap-à-pie* — from head to toe — whereof the feather is the emblem, colonel, put up with the ace of hearts!”

The Host’s rebus for the Light Heart Inn included a feather.

In other words: I am the best card in a pack of playing cards.

“But why are you in *cuervo*?” Tiptoe asked. “I hate to see a host, and someone who is old, in *cuervo*.”

“*Cuervo*?” the Host said. “What’s that?”

*Cuervo* means “without a cloak.”

Tiptoe said, “It’s wearing light, skipping hose and doublet — the horse-boy’s garb!”

“Skipping” is an insulting word meaning “slight” or “vain.” A doublet is a jacket.

Tiptoe believed that the Host ought to be better dressed than he was.

He continued, “Poor white and parti-colored *cuervo* — they don’t partake of the gravity of a host, who should be king-at-arms — the chief herald — and master of ceremonies in his own house. Hosts should know all to the goldweights. They should know the exact amount that can be charged.”

Lord Beaufort said, “Why, that his Fly does for him here, your bird.”

Fly knew how much he could overcharge the Host’s guests.

“But I would do it myself, if I were my Host,” Tiptoe said. “I would not speak to a cook of quality, your Lordship’s footman, or my lady’s Trundle, in *cuervo*! If a dog but stayed below the second floor and required service, that would be a dog of fashion, and well-nosed.”

A dog can be 1) an animal, or 2) a gallant.

“Well-nosed” can mean 1) keen-scented, or 2) of distinguished appearance.

Tiptoe then talked about how he would dress as a Host serving customers:

“If such a dog could present himself, I would put on the Savoy chain about my neck, the ruff and cuffs of Flanders, then the Naples hat, with the Rome hatband, and the Florentine agate, the Milan sword, the cloak of Genoa set with Brabant buttons, all my given pieces — except my gloves, the natives of Madrid — to entertain him in.”

Tiptoe's fashion sense was international.

Tiptoe continued, "And I would compliment a tame coney as I would a prince who sent it!"

That is, he would compliment a tame, timid person serving as the prince's messenger the same way that he would compliment a prince: To both he would behave courteously.

One meaning of "a coney" is a rabbit, which is known as a timid creature.

The Host said, "The same deeds, though, do not become every man. What is suitable for a colonel will not be suitable for a host."

Tiptoe said, "A Spanish host is never seen in *cuero*; he is never seen without his *paramentos*, cloak, and sword."

*Paramentos* are ornaments.

Fly said to Tiptoe, "Sir, he has the father of swords within. It is a two-handed longsword, with a Cornish blade, styled of Sir Rud Hudibras."

Sir Rud Hudibras was the son of a mythical king. At this time, a two-handed longsword was old-fashioned.

"And why a longsword, bully bird?" Tiptoe said. "What is your reason?"

In this society, the word "bully" was a positive word meaning "jolly."

Fly said, "To note him as a tall — valiant — man and a master of fence."

"But does he teach the Spanish way of Don Luis?" Tiptoe asked.

Don Luis was a Spanish fencer.

Fly replied, “No, he teaches the Greek master, he does.”

Actually, the two systems of fencing were identical: They were the same system. Fly’s words revealed his ignorance because Fly thought that Euclid was a Greek master of fencing. Actually, Euclid was an ancient Greek mathematician known for geometry. The Euclidean system of fencing — which was the Spanish system of fencing — was so called because the fencers took up their stances and made movements with geometrical precision.

“What do you call him?” Tiptoe asked. “What’s the Greek master’s name?”

“Euclid,” Fly replied.

“Fart upon Euclid!” Tiptoe said. “He is stale and antique. Give me the moderns.”

“Sir, he minds no moderns,” Fly said.

He then quoted an expression of impatience that appeared in Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*: “Go by, Hieronimo!”

“Who was Hieronimo?” Tiptoe asked.

Fly answered, “The Italian who fenced with Abbot Antony in the Blackfriars, and with Blinkinsops the bold.”

“Aye, by the Virgin Mary, those are the names of famous fencers,” Tiptoe said. “What has become of them?”

The Host answered, “They had their times, and we can say they were. So had Carranza his, so has Don Luis.”

Carranza wrote a treatise titled *The Philosophy of Arms* on the topic of fencing.

“Don Luis of Madrid is the sole master now of the world!” Tiptoe said.

The Host said, “But Euclid demonstrates mastery of this in the other world! He — he’s for all; he’s the only fencer of name now in Elysium.”

“He’s for all” meant that he was willing to face anyone in a fencing match.

As an ancient Greek, Euclid was long deceased, and so he was in Hades: the Land of the Dead. The place in Hades where good souls went was Elysium, aka the Elysian Fields.

Fly said, “Euclid does it all by lines and angles, colonel, by parallels and sections. He has his diagrams.”

“Will you be flying, Fly?” Lord Beaumont asked.

“He will be flying at all game,” Lord Latimer said. “And why not? The air’s as free for a fly as for an eagle.”

Lord Beaumont said quietly to Lord Latimer and the Host about Fly, “A buzzard he is in his contemplation and ‘deep’ thought!”

Buzzards were useless for hawking.

Incredulous, Tiptoe said, “Euclid is a fencer, and he is in the Elysium!”

The Host joked, “He fenced a prize-fight last week with Archimedes, and beat him, I assure you.”

By “assure,” he meant “promise.”

Archimedes was an ancient mathematician and inventor.

Tiptoe said, “Do you assure me? For what?”

The word “assure” can mean 1) promise, or 2) insure.

The Host deliberately misunderstood him to be willing to make a bet on who had won the fencing match.



“For four in the hundred — that is, four percent,” the Host joked. “Give me five, and I assure you again.”

Tiptoe said, “Peremptory — obstinate — Host, you may be taken — beaten — in the wager. But where, whence had you this information?”

“Upon the road,” the Host joked. “A post-messenger who came from thence — Elysium — three days ago, here, left the information with the tapster.”

Fly said, “The tapster is indeed a thoroughfare of news. He is Jack Jug with the great belly, a witty fellow!”

“Your bird here heard him,” the Host said.

Tiptoe asked Fly, “Did you hear him, bird?”

The Host said quietly to Fly, “Speak in the faith of a fly.”

The Host was telling Fly to go along with the joke.

The Host then exited.

“Yes,” Fly said, “and he told us about one who was the Prince of Orange’s fencer —”

“Stevinus?” Tiptoe asked.

The late Simon Stevinus was a mathematician and inventor, but he was not known for fencing.

Fly replied, “Sir, the same. He had challenged Euclid at thirty weapons, more than Archimedes ever saw, and he used machines mostly of his own invention.”

Normal fencing bouts lasted six rounds, not thirty; in each round, a different weapon was used.

“This may have credit and chimes — rings out — reason, this!” Tiptoe said.

He believed what he had heard about events in Elysium.

Tiptoe continued, “If any man endanger Euclid, bird, observe (he had the honor to quit Europe this forty year) that it is Stevinus. He put down Scaliger.”

“And Scaliger was a great master,” Fly said.

“Not of fencing, Fly,” Lord Beaufort said.

This was true. Scaliger was a master of Greek and Latin — he was a Greek and Latin scholar.

“Excuse Fly, lord,” Tiptoe said. “Scaliger went on the same grounds.”

Tiptoe was saying that Joseph Scaliger did a kind of fencing in his controversial discussions of mathematics.

Lord Beaufort said, “On the same earth, I think, as other mortals?”

“I mean, sweet lord, the mathematics,” Tiptoe said. “*Basta!*”

*Basta!* means “Enough!”

Tiptoe continued, “When you know more, you will take less green honor — you will be less naïve, and you will praise him more. He had his circles, semicircles, quadrants —”

Fly said, “He wrote a book on the quadrature of the circle.”

Tiptoe said, “*Cyclometria*, I read —”

The title was actually *Cyclometrica Elementa*.

As Tiptoe and Fly talked loudly together, Lord Beaufort and Lord Latimer talked quietly together.

Lord Beaufort said quietly to Lord Latimer, “He read the title only.”

Lord Latimer quietly replied, “And the *indice*.”

He meant the index or table of contents, or both.

Lord Beaufort said quietly, “If it had one, yes, but whether it had one, *quaere* — it is a question.”

*Cyclometrica Elementa* did have a table of contents.

He then said, “What insolent, half-witted things these two are!”

Lord Latimer said, “It is true that all smatterers and dabblers are insolent and impudent.”

Lord Beaufort said, “They lightly and commonly go together.”

True: Insolence and impudence go together.

Lord Latimer said, “It is my wonder that two animals should hawk at — fly at — all discourse thus. They fly every subject to the mark or retrieve —”

Tiptoe had attempted to discourse learnedly on many subjects, but he had failed in every attempt. Fly may have simply been leading Tiptoe on to make him reveal his foolishness.

A hawk would retrieve felled game when the hunters had hit their mark — the animal or bird they had aimed at.

Lord Beaufort quietly said, “And never have the luck to be in the right.”

Lord Latimer quietly said, “It is some folk’s fortune.”

Lord Beaufort said, “Fortune’s a bawd and a blind beggar; their fortune is their vanity, and it shows most vilely!”

Tiptoe said, “I could take the heart now to write to Don Luis in Spain, to ask him to make a progress — a journey — to the Elysian Fields next summer —”

Lord Beaumont said quietly, “And persuade him to die for the fame of fencing with a shadow!”

The way to journey to the Elysian Fields is to die. Shadows are ghosts in Hades: the Land of the Dead.

Lord Beaumont then said, “Where’s my Host? I wish he had heard this bubble break, indeed.”

— 2.6 —

The Host entered, accompanied by the richly dressed Prudence, the Nurse, Lady Frampul, and Frank, the Host’s son, who was dressed and disguised as a woman.

“Make way!” the Host said. “Stand by for the Queen Regent, gentlemen.”

Lady Frampul’s entertainment was going to start. Part of the entertainment was play-acting. Everyone was supposed to treat Prudence the chambermaid as if she were a queen. As Queen of the Festivities, Prudence could rule on petitions presented to her. For example, Tiptoe had said that he would get Fly a better job — a job working for Prudence. Others could present petitions concerning love.

Tiptoe said to Fly, “This is your queen who shall be, bird, our sovereign.”

“Transformed Prudence!” Lord Beaumont said.

He reached out to touch her.

Playing her role, Queen Prudence said, “My sweet lord, hands off. It is not now as when plain Prudence lived and handed Her Ladyship —”

Joking, the Host finished her sentence “— the chamber pot.”

Not amused, Queen Prudence said, “The looking-glass, my Host; lose your house metaphor and tavern jest! Play your role properly.”

They were acting. Prudence was pretending to be a Queen, and the others had to act as if she were a Queen. The Host was not playing his role when he made rude jokes about her.

Queen Prudence continued, “You have a negligent memory indeed; speak a host’s proper language. Here’s a young lord — Beaufort — who will make your rude joking a precedent, otherwise. He will copy you and make rude jokes.”

“Well acted, Pru!” Lord Latimer said.

“This is the first minute of her reign!” the Host said. “What will she do forty years from now? God bless her!”

Queen Elizabeth I had reigned for forty-four years.

Queen Prudence said to Lord Beaufort, “If you will kiss or compliment, my lord, behold a lady.”

She pointed to the disguised Frank and continued, “She is a stranger, and my lady’s kinswoman.”

Lord Beaufort said, “I do confess my rudeness that I had need to have my eye directed to this beauty.”

He seemed taken by the disguised Frank at first sight of him as a woman. Of course, he did not know that Frank was the Host’s son.

The disguised Frank said, “My beauty was so little that it needed a perspicil — a telescope.”

He was displaying modesty.

Lord Beaumont asked the disguised Frank, “Lady, what is your name?”

The disguised Frank answered, “My lord, my name is Laetitia.”

“Laetitia!” Lord Beaumont said. “That is a fair omen, and I take it as such!”

“Laetitia” is a fair omen because the name means “gladness.”

Lord Beaumont kissed the disguised Frank and said, “Let me have always such lettuce for my lips.”

A nickname for Laetitia is Lettice.

Lord Beaumont then asked, “But what is the name of your family, lady?”

“Sylly, sir,” the disguised Frank said.

Lord Beaumont asked, “You are my lady’s kinswoman?”

“My lady” is Lady Frampul.

“I am so honored to be,” the disguised Frank said.

The Host said quietly to Lady Frampul, “Already it takes! Your practical joke is working!”

Lady Frampul replied quietly to the Host, “Your son is an excellent fine boy.”

The Nurse said to the Host, “He is descended of a right good stock, sir.”

Of course, Frank was. He was the son of Goodstock, the Host.

Lord Beaufort quietly asked the Host, “Who’s this? An antiquary?”

Antiquaries study old things. Lord Beaufort was joking about the Nurse’s age.

The Host replied, “By the old-fashioned dress she wears, you’d swear she is an antiquity! She’s an old Welsh herald’s widow, and she’s a wild Irish born, sir.”

She was not from the English settlement at Ulster.

The Host continued, “And she’s a hybrid — a mongrel of Welsh by marriage and Irish by birth — who lives with this young lady — Laetitia — a mile off here, and studies Vincent against York.”

Augustine Vincent, herald of Windsor, and Ralph Brook, herald of York, were authors and rivals. Brook published a catalogue of nobility, and Vincent corrected his errors.

Lord Beaufort said, “She’ll conquer, if she reads Vincent.”

The Latin word *vinco* means “I conquer.”

He continued, “Let me study her.”

He closely observed the Nurse.

The Host said, “She’s perfect in most pedigrees, most descents.”

The Nurse had studied Vincent, and so knew much about nobility.

Lord Beaufort thought, *She is a bawd, I hope, and knows how to blazon a coat.*

Bawds were go-betweens who helped men and women to have sex.

Lord Beaufort wanted to sleep with “Laetitia.”

The Nurse knew how to blazon a coat: how to paint a heraldic device such as a coat of arms.

By “blazon [blaze on] a coat,” Lord Beaufort also meant “set on sexual fire a petticoat.”

The Host said, “And she judges all things with a single eye.”

The Nurse had a single eye; she was wearing an eye patch. “To judge with a single eye” is an idiom for “to judge fairly.”

The Host then said, “Fly, come here.”

He said quietly to Fly, “Do not reveal anything of what you see to your Colonel Toe, or Tip, here, but keep all secret, even if it stands in the way of your preferment and promotion. Seek social advancement off from the road — not in a direct manner — discretely, no flattery for it, no lick-foot and no servility, on pain of losing your proboscis, my lickerish Fly.”

Fly wanted to get what he could from Tiptoe; he wanted to be Tiptoe’s parasite, at least for a while. Doing favors for Tiptoe could get him in Tiptoe’s favor.

“Lickerish” can mean 1) “fond of good food,” and 2) “lustful.”

The Host was telling Fly not to reveal to Tiptoe the trick of dressing Frank as a woman. Doing so could get Fly fired from the inn. Flies fed from their proboscis. If Fly got fired, he could no longer eat at the inn.

Tiptoe had seen but not heard Fly and the Host conferring.

He asked Fly, “What does old velvet-head say?”

The velvet-head was the Host, who was wearing a velvet cap decorated with a feather.

Fly said, “He will present me himself, sir, if you will not.”

Fly was saying that either the Host or Tiptoe would present him to Queen Prudence. Fly wanted to be presented to Queen Prudence because his sponsor could ask her for some boon to benefit Fly, such as a better job.



Actually the Host had not said he would present Fly to Queen Prudence. Fly was hoping that Tiptoe would do the presenting.

Tiptoe said, “Who, he present? What? Whom? A host, a groom, divide the thanks with me? Share in my glories! Lay up — nonsense! I say no more.”

A “groom” is a servant.

“Lay up” meant “go and lie down” — it is an idiom for “nonsense.”

Tiptoe wanted to have the “honor” of presenting Fly to Queen Prudence by himself — no sharing the “honor” with the Host.

The Host said, “Then be silent, sir, and hear the sovereign: Queen Pru.”

Tiptoe was unwilling to be silent, especially when asked to be silent by someone whom he considered to be his inferior.

He said, “Ostlers to usurp upon my Sparta or province, as they say? No broom but mine! I am the only one to sweep away a challenge!”

Sparta was located in Laconia. The Spartans were ferocious warriors on land.

The word *spartos* means “broom.”

The Host said to Tiptoe, “Still, colonel, you mutter!”

Tiptoe said, “I dare to speak out, just as one in *cuervo* can speak out.”

Tiptoe believed that he could speak out just as much as the Host could speak out, but the Host wanted to hear Queen Prudence speak.

Fly began, “Noble colonel —”

Tiptoe interrupted, “And carry what I ask —”

If he asked for something, he expected to get what he asked for.

The Host interrupted, “Ask what you can, sir, so long as it is in the house.”

The Host was in the business of satisfying guests’ requests. If Tiptoe asked for a certain kind of food and drink, the Host would sell it to him as long as it was available to sell.

Tiptoe said, “I ask for my rights and privileges, and although for form I please to call it a suit or request, I have not been accustomed to be repulsed.”

He was not used to hearing the word “no.”

Queen Prudence, who with the others had been listening to Tiptoe and the Host quarrel, said, “No, sweet Sir Glorious, you may still command —”

Yes, he could still ask for what he wanted.

The Host quietly commented on Queen Prudence’s sentence, “Yes, Tiptoe, you can ask and go without.”

Queen Prudence said, “But yet, sir, being the first, and having called it a suit, you’ll see it shall be such as we may grant.”

She would grant what she could.

Lady Frampul said, “Otherwise, if the request is not such as she may grant, the request will deny itself.”

Queen Prudence said, “You hear the opinion of the court.”

Tiptoe said, “I pay no mind to court opinions.”

Queen Prudence said, “But the court opinion is my lady’s, though.”

Of course, Queen Prudence was not a real Queen; the real lady with authority here was Lady Frampul.

Tiptoe said, “My lady is a spinster at the law, and my petition is of right.”

A spinster is an unmarried woman. Although Lady Frampul had the title “Lady,” she was entitled to no special treatment by the judge. Unmarried women had few rights, unless they were the daughters of a viscount or higher social rank.

Tiptoe’s petition was of right — he thought — because of his insistence on his rights and privileges.

Tiptoe wanted people such as the Host to show subservience to him. He also wanted them to show a degree of respect to his friend the Fly.

Queen Prudence asked, “What is your petition of right?”

Tiptoe said, “It is for this poor learned bird.”

“The Fly?” the Host asked.

Tiptoe replied, “This professor in the inn, here. This professor of small matters.”

Of course, “small matters” can mean “matters of little importance,” but it can also mean “narrowly focused matters.” Many modern professors become experts in narrowly focused matters, aka narrowly focused topics.

The others began to comment quietly, out of Tiptoe’s hearing.

Lord Latimer quietly said, “How Tiptoe commends the Fly!”

He had called Fly a professor.

The Host said quietly, “As to save himself in him.”

By praising one’s friends, one praises oneself for having such good people as friends.

Lay Frampul said quietly, “So do all politicians in their commendations.”

The Host said quietly, “This is a state-bird — a politician — and the verier — truer — fly!”

In other words, Tiptoe was more of a fly than Fly was.

Talking about Fly, Tiptoe said, “Hear him propound problems —”

He meant: Hear Fly put forward problems for discussion.

Queen Prudence said, “Bless us, what’s that? What do you mean?”

Tiptoe said, “Or argue by syllogisms, elenchize.”

A syllogism is an argument with two premises and a conclusion.

“To elenchize” is “to use a syllogism to refute a syllogism that has been defended.”

Lady Frampul said, “To be sure, petards to blow us up.”

Petards are bombs used to attack defensive strongholds. The petards she meant were words.

Lord Latimer said, “These are some ingenious strong words!”

“Ingenious” means “ingenious engines.”

The “engines” are the petards.

The Host said, “Tiptoe intends to erect a castle in the air and make his fly an elephant to carry it.”

To erect a castle in the air and have an elephant carry it means to make too much fuss over something trifling.

Tiptoe said, “He is a bird of the arts, and his name is Fly.”

Queen Prudence said, “Buzz! Nonsense!”

The Host said, “Blow him off, good Pru. His interjections will mar everything if you don’t.”

Tiptoe said, “The sovereign’s honor is to cherish learning.”

Queen Prudence said, “What, in a fly?”

“In anything industrious,” Tiptoe replied.

Queen Prudence said, “But flies are busy — they are meddlesome!”

“There’s nothing more troublesome, or importune, than a fly,” Lady Frampul said.

“There’s nothing more domestic, tame, or familiar than your fly in *cuerpo*,” Tiptoe said.

The Host said, “That is, when his wings are cut, he is tame indeed, but when his wings are not cut, there is nothing more impudent and greedy, licking —”

Lady Frampul interrupted, “— or saucy, good Sir Glorious.”

Queen Prudence said to Tiptoe, “Stop your advocateship.”

She then looked at Fly and said, “Except that we shall call you Orator Fly, and send you down to the sideboard and the dishes.”

“A good flap, that!” the Host said.

A fly-flap is an instrument used to swat flies. In this context, a “good flap” is a “good put-down.”

Queen Prudence said, “Commit yourself to the steam of the kitchen!”

Lady Frampul said, “Or else condemn yourself to the bottles.”

Queen Prudence said, “And pots. There is his quarry — his prey.”

The Host said, “Your bird — Fly — will chirp far better below.”

“And make you finer music,” Lady Frampul said.

“His buzz will there become him,” Queen Prudence said.

Tiptoe said to Fly, “Come away. Leave with me. Buzz in their faces. Give them all the buzz, dor in their ears and eyes; hum, dor, and buzz!”

“To give someone the dor” meant “to insult them.”

Tiptoe continued, “I will statuminate — prop up — and underprop — support — you. If they scorn us, let us scorn them — we’ll find the Thoroughfare below, and *quaere* — query — him.”

The Thoroughfare was Jug, the tapster who acquired news and gossip.

Tiptoe continued, “Leave these relicts — these forsaken people. Buzz; they shall see that I, in spite of their jeers, dare to drink, and with a fly.”

Tiptoe and Fly exited.

Lord Latimer said, “This is a fair removal at once of two impertinent, presumptuous persons!

“Excellent Pru, I love you for your wit and intelligence, no less than your state, position, and dignity.”

“One must preserve the other,” Queen Prudence said.

Lovel entered the room. The others did not address him at first.

Lady Frampul asked, “Who is this man here?”

“Oh, he is Lovel, madam,” Queen Prudence said. “He is your sad, grave, serious servant.”

“Sad?” Lady Frampul said. “He is sullen still, and wears a cloud about his brows. I don’t know how to approach him.”

“I will instruct you, madam, if that is all,” Queen Prudence said. “Go to him and kiss him.”

“What, Pru?” Lady Frampul said.

“Go and kiss him,” Queen Prudence said. “I command you to kiss him.”

“You are not wild, licentious, and demented, are you, wench?” Lady Frampul said.

“No,” Queen Prudence said. “I am tame and exceedingly tame, but I am still your sovereign.”

“Has too much splendid clothing made you mad?” Lady Frampul said.

“No, nor has it made me proud,” Queen Prudence said. “Do what I enjoin you to do. Do not dispute my prerogative with a look or a frown. Do not detract and decline. You know that the authority is mine, and I will exercise it swiftly if you provoke me.”

Lady Frampul said, “I have woven a net to ensnare myself!”

She then said to Lovel, “Sir, I am enjoined to tender you a kiss, but I do not know why or wherefore. I know only that

the royal pleasure will have it so and urges it. Don't triumph over and be elated by my obedience, seeing it forced thus."

She kissed him and said, "There it is."

"And it is welcome," Lovel said.

He said to himself, "Was there ever a kiss that was so relished thus, or had such a sting like this — a kiss of so much sweet nectar, but mixed with bitter aloes?"

Queen Prudence said, "No murmuring nor repining; I am fixed in my judgment and firmly resolved."

Lovel continued his reverie:

"It had, I think, a quintessence — the highest essence — of both nectar and aloes, but that which was the better drowned the bitter.

"How soon it passed away! How unrecovered!

"The distillation — the refined essence — of another soul was not as sweet as this kiss! And until I meet again that kiss, those lips, like relish, and this taste, let me fall into a consumption, be consumed by ardor, and here waste! Let me waste away from love-sickness!"

Queen Prudence said, "The royal assent is passed and cannot alter."

"You'll turn into a tyrant," Lady Frampul said.

"Don't be a rebel," Queen Prudence said. "The name of rebel is odious."

"Will you hear me out?" Lady Frampul asked.

"No, not on this topic," Queen Prudence said. "Would you make laws and be the first who breaks them?"



Lady Frampul had made Prudence Queen, and as such Prudence could make laws — orders — and expect them to be obeyed. But now Lady Frampul disliked some of those laws and wished to break them.

Queen Prudence continued, “The example is pernicious in a subject, and in a person of your quality, most pernicious.”

A subject ought to obey a Queen, and a subject who is a person of quality especially ought to obey a Queen.

“Excellent Princess!” Lord Latimer said.

“Just Queen!” the Host said.

“Brave sovereign!” Lord Latimer said.

“A she-Trajan, this Prudence is!” the Host said.

The Roman Emperors who have gone down in history as the Five Good Emperors are 1) Nerva (reigned 96–98 CE), 2) Trajan (98–117), 3) Hadrian (117–138), 4) Antoninus Pius (138–161), and 5) Marcus Aurelius (161–180), who presided over the most majestic days of the Roman Empire.

The Host and Lord Latimer were giving Queen Prudence high praise.

Lord Beaufort, who was and had been preoccupied with the disguised, dressed-as-a-woman Frank, said, “What is it?

“Proceed, incomparable Pru! I am glad I am scarcely at leisure to applaud you.”

He was happy to be preoccupied with Frank.

Lord Latimer said to Lord Beaufort, “It’s well for you that you have so happy expressions.”

Lord Beaufort was able to come up with expressions such as “incomparable Pru.” He was also able to express his

affection for Frank through such actions as ignoring everyone except Frank.

Lady Frampul said, “Yes, cry her up with acclamations, do, and cry me down, run all with sovereignty! Prince Power will never lack her parasites.”

The title “Prince” could refer to people of either sex. Prince Power is Queen Prudence.

Queen Prudence said, “Nor will Lady Murmur lack her false complaints and grumbles.”

Lady Murmur is Lady Frampul.

Using the royal plural, Queen Prudence then said, “Master Lovel, for so your document here — your bill of complaint — exhibited in our high court of sovereignty at this first hour of our reign, declares against this genteel and noble lady a disrespect you have conceived, if not received, from her —”

Lady Frampul seemed to dislike Lovel — that was his complaint against her.

The Host said, “Received, not conceived; so the charge lies in our bill.”

“We see it, Lovel’s learned counsel,” Queen Prudence said. “Stop your complaining.”

The Host was Lovel’s learned counsel. Lovel was Lady Frampul’s servant: He loved and served her.

Queen Prudence continued conversing about Lovel, “We who love our justice above all our other attributes, and have the nearness and intimacy to the situation to know your extraordinary merit, as also to discern this lady’s goodness, and find how loath she’d be to lose the honor and reputation she has had in having so worthy a servant, although only for a few minutes, do here enjoin —”

“Good!” the Host said.

Queen Prudence continued, “— charge, will, and command her Ladyship, on pain of our high displeasure and the committing of an extreme contempt to the court, our crown and dignity —”

“Excellent sovereign, and remarkable Pru!” the Host said.

Queen Prudence continued, “— to entertain you for a pair of hours. Choose the hours for when you please, on this day — with all respects and valuation of a principal servant, to give you all the titles, all the privileges, the freedoms, favors, rights, she can bestow —”

“Large, ample words, of a splendid extent!” the Host said.

Queen Prudence continued, “— or can be expected from a lady of honor or quality, in discourse, access, courtship to a lady —”

“Good,” the Host said.

Queen Prudence continued, “— not to give ear or admit conference with any person but yourself; nor when you are there, of any other topic but love, and the companion of it, noble courtship, and for your two hours’ service, you shall take two kisses —”

“Noble!” the Host said.

Queen Prudence continued, “— for each hour, a kiss, to be taken freely, fully, and legally, before us, in the court here and in our presence —”

“Splendid!” the Host said.

Queen Prudence continued, “— but those hours passed, and the two kisses paid, the binding contract is never to hope for the renewing of the time or of the suit on any circumstance.”

Yes, Lovel could talk about love to Lady Frampul for two hours and be kissed by her twice, but afterward he must never do those things again.

“A hard condition!” the Host said.

“Had it been easier, I would have suspected the sovereign’s justice,” Lord Latimer said.

The Host said, “Oh, you are servant — suitor — my lord, to the lady and you are a rival to Lovel. In point of law, my lord, you may be challenged and objected to.”

The Host believed that Lord Latimer loved Lady Frampul.

“I am not jealous!” Lord Latimer said.

Perhaps he loved someone else.

The Host said, “Of so short a time your Lordship need not be jealous, especially with it being done *in foro* — in open court.”

“What is Lovel’s answer?” Queen Prudence asked.

Would Lovel agree to spend two hours with and receive two kisses from Lady Frampul with the condition that afterward he must never do those things again?

The Host said, “Lovel craves time, madam, to consult with his learned counsel.”

Queen Prudence said, “You be his learned counsel, and go consult together quickly.”

Lovel and Host walked aside to talk together quietly.

“You are no tyrant?” Lady Frampul said to Queen Prudence.  
“You don’t think you are being a tyrant here?”

“If I am, madam, it would be best for you to impeach me!”  
Queen Prudence replied.

Lord Latimer said, “Beaufort —”

Preoccupied with Frank, Lord Beaufort said, “I am busy. Please let me alone. I have a cause in hearing, too.”

“In what court?” Lord Latimer asked.

“In Love’s Court of Requests!” Lord Beaufort replied.

“Bring it to the sovereignty,” Lord Latimer said. “It is the nobler court, before Judge Pru, who is the only learned mother of the law and lady of conscience, too!”

Queen Prudence was judging the appeals and petitions of the inn customers.

Lord Beaufort said, “It is well enough before this Mistress of Requests where it is.”

He was referring to Frank’s Nurse, with whom he now talked quietly.

Meanwhile, the Host and Lovel were also talking quietly together at a side of the room.

The Host said to Lovel, “Let them not scorn you. Bear up, Master Lovel, and take your hours and kisses. They are a fortune.”

“Which I cannot approve and put to the test, and much less make use of,” Lovel said.

“Still in this cloud of melancholy!” the Host said. “Why cannot you make use of them?”

“Who would be rich to be so soon undone?” Lovel said. “The beggar’s best is wealth he does not know, and just to show it to him inflames his want.”

Lovel did not want two hours of happiness with Lady Frampul if they would be followed by an unhappy remaining lifetime without Lady Frampul.

“Two hours of the height of love does not tempt you?” the Host asked.

Lovel replied, “That joy is too, too narrow if it would attempt to contain a love as infinite as mine, and once the two hours have passed they would leave an eternal loss.

“Who so prodigiously desires a feast that they would forfeit health and appetite to see it?

“Or who just to taste a spoonful would forgo all taste of delicacy and delight forever afterward?”

The Host said, “These yet are hours of hope.”

“But all hours following are years of despair, ages of misery!” Lovel said. “Nor can so short a happiness but spring — start — a world of fear with the thought of losing it. It is better to be never happy than to feel a little happiness, and then lose it forever.”

“I confess that Queen Prudence made it a strict injunction,” the Host said, “but then the hope is it may not be kept. A thousand things may intervene. We see the wind shift often, thrice a day sometimes. Decrees may alter upon better legal application and riper legal hearing. The best bow may warp — the strongest bow may bend — and the hand may vary and apply a greater or lesser pressure on the bow. Pru may be a sage in law, and yet not be bitter.”

A sage is a wise person; the herb sage is bitter. The Host was hoping that Prudence might change her mind and revoke her strict injunction.

The Host continued, “Sweet Pru, smooth Pru, soft, debonair, and amiable Pru may do as well as rough and rigid Pru, and

yet maintain her venerable and respected Pru, majestic Pru, and serenissimus — most famous and most splendid and most serene — Pru.

“Try but one hour first, and as you like the loose of that, draw home and try the other.”

“Loose” means 1) upshot, and 2) shooting of an arrow. To draw a bow home is to draw back the string as far as it will go.

“If one hour could make the other hour happy,” Lovel said, “I would attempt it —”

The Host interrupted, “— put it on, and do. Advance, and exert yourself.”

Lovel said, “Or in the blest attempt that I might die!”

He meant literally “die” in an attempt to get the love of Lady Frampul, but the Host deliberately misinterpreted this intended meaning of “die.” His misinterpretation gave the word “die” a bawdy meaning. In this society, one meaning of “die” is “ejaculate.”

The Host said, “Aye, by the Virgin Mary, there would be happiness indeed — happiness transcendent to the melancholy that you intended.”

The melancholy that Lovel intended was literally dying in an attempt to win Lady Frampul’s love.

The Host continued, “It — the dying that is ejaculation — would be a fate above a monument and all inscription to die so. It would be a death for emperors to enjoy, and the kings of the rich East to pawn their regions for, to show their treasure, open all their mines, spend all their spices to embalm their corpses, and wrap the inches up in sheets of gold that fell by such a noble destiny!”

The “inches” were 1) those of the height of an emperor, and 2) those of Lovel’s penis.

“Fell” referred to 1) the death of the emperor, and 2) the falling of Lovel’s penis after ejaculation.

The Host continued, “And as for the wrong to your friend Beaufort, that fear’s away. He rather wrongs himself, following fresh light — a new love — and new eyes to swear by.”

Lovel had vowed to stay away from Lady Frampul because Lady Frampul was in love with Lord Beaufort, the son of Lovel’s friend and patron. But Lord Beaufort’s actions now showed that he was enamored of the disguised-as-a-woman Frank.

The Host continued, “If Lord Beaufort changes, it is no crime in you to remain constant and to keep loving the same person: Lady Frampul. And upon these conditions, at a game so urged upon you.”

Lord Beaufort had once cast his affection upon Lady Frampul, but clearly Lord Beaufort had now cast his affection at first sight upon the disguised-as-a-woman Frank. So why shouldn’t Lovel pursue Lady Frampul?

Queen Prudence interrupted their conversation: “Sir, your resolution —”

She wanted to know what Lovel had decided after conferring with the Host.

The Host asked, “How is the lady — Lady Frampul — inclined toward spending two hours with Lovel?”

Queen Prudence replied, Sovereigns are not accustomed to ask their subjects’ consent and approval where it is due, but only where it is conditional.”



In other words, Lady Frampul had to do what her Queen — Prudence — had told her to do: Spend two hours with Lovel and give him two kisses. Lady Frampul’s feelings about the matter were of no concern to Queen Prudence.

Lord Latimer and the Host talked aside.

“A royal sovereign!” the Host said.

“And a rare stateswoman,” Lord Latimer said. “I admire her bearing in her new rule.”

The Host said to Lovel, “Come, choose your hours. It is better to be happy for a part of time than not to be happy for the whole, and it is better to be happy for a short part of your life than never.

“Shall I appoint the hours and pronounce them for you?”

“At your pleasure,” Lovel said. “As you please.”

The Host said to Queen Prudence, “Lovel designates his first hour after dinner, and his second hour after supper. What do you say? Are you content with these hours?”

“I am content,” Queen Prudence said.

“I am content,” Lady Frampul said.

“I am content,” Lord Latimer said.

“I am content,” the disguised-as-a-woman Frank said.

“What’s that?” said Lord Beaufort, who had not been paying attention to anyone other than the disguised-as-a-woman Frank. “I am content, too.”

“You have reason to be content,” Lord Latimer said. “You have taken the opportunity to do some wooing, and we have observed it.”

The Nurse, who was protective of Frank and who had an Irish accent, said, “Trot’, I am not content; in fait’ I am not.”

[The Nurse, who was protective of Frank and who had an Irish accent, said, “Truly, I am not content; in faith I am not.”]

The Host asked the Nurse, “Why aren’t you content, good Shelee-nien?”

“Shelee-nien” means “Sile-daughter.” “Sile” is a form of Celia. The Nurse’s full name is Shelee-nien Thomas. This means: Celia, daughter of Thomas.

The Nurse, who was possibly drunk, said about Lord Beaufort, “He tauk so desperate, and so debausht, so bawdy like a courtier and a lord, God bless him, one who tak’th tobacco.”

[The Nurse, who was possibly drunk, said about Lord Beaufort, “He talk so desperate, and so debauched, so bawdy like a courtier and a lord, God bless him, one who takes — uses — tobacco.”]

The Nurse was not happy about Lord Beaufort’s being attracted to the disguised Frank.

“Very well mixed,” the Host said.

In this society, the noun “mix” meant “dung and filth,” and it meant “fool or a vile person.” As an adjective, it meant “filthy and foul.”

Lord Beaufort was a mix: He was a courtier and a lord, but the Nurse believed that he displayed some not-so-good traits.

The Host asked, “What did Beaumont say?”

“Nay, nothing to the purposh, or very little, nothing at all to purposh,” the Nurse replied.

[“Nay, nothing to the purpose, or very little, nothing at all to purpose,” the Nurse replied.]

“Let him alone, Nurse,” the Host advised.

“I did tell him of Serly, which is a great family come out of Ireland, descended of O’Neill, MacCon, MacDermot, MacMurrough, but he paid no attention,” the Nurse said.

“Nor do I,” the Host said. “Good queen of heralds, ply the bottle and go to sleep.”

### ACT 3 (*The New Inn, or The Light Heart*)

#### — 3.1 —

Tiptoe, Fly, and Jug talked together.

Tiptoe said to Fly, “I like the design of your militia well! It is a fine militia, and it is well ordered, and the division is neat! It will be desired only that the expressions were a little more Spanish, for there’s the best militia of the world!”

Tiptoe greatly valued anything Spanish.

He continued, “To call them *tertias* — the *tertia* of the kitchen, the *tertia* of the cellar, the *tertia* of the chamber, and the *tertia* of the stables.”

*Tertia* is a Latinization of a Spanish word: *tercio*.

A *tertia* is a division of infantry. It also means “a third.”

Fly replied, “That I can, sir, and I can find very able, fit commanders in every *tertia*.”

“Now you are in the right!” Tiptoe said. “As in the *tertia* of the kitchen, you yourself being a person elegant and delicate of taste in sauces, there you will command as prime *maestro del campo* [quartermaster], chief master of the palate, for that *tertia*. Or the cook under you will command that *tertia* because you have a more important position: You are the marshal, and the officer in the field next to the Host.”

Tiptoe named the next — the second — commander of a *tertia*: “Then for the cellar, you have young Anon, who is a rare fellow — what’s his other name?”

“Pierce, sir,” Fly answered.

“Sir Pierce,” Tiptoe said. “I’ll have him be a cavalier.”

A cavalier is 1) a horseman (knight), or 2) a roisterer.

As a knight, Pierce would be Sir Pierce.

Tiptoe continued, “Sir Pierce Anon will pierce us a new hogshead!”

Tiptoe then named a subordinate officer for Sir Pierce: “And then your thoroughfare, Jug here, his *alferez* [Spanish word for an ensign], an able officer. Give me your beard, round Jug, I take you by this handle.”

Tiptoe pulled Jug’s beard.

Drinking jugs had depictions of a bearded face.

Tiptoe continued, “And I do love one of your inches!”

His inches were probably his height. Tiptoe liked people who were as tall as Jug. Or perhaps Tiptoe loved other kinds of inches.

Tiptoe named the third commander of a *tertia*, “In the chambers, Jordan, here. He is the *don del campo* [gentleman of the field] of the beds.”

A jordan is a chamber pot, another kind of jug.

Tiptoe moved on to the next and final commander of a *tertia*: “And for the stables, what’s his name?”

“Old Peck,” Fly answered.

“*Maestro del campo* Peck!” Tiptoe said. “His name is curt, a monosyllable, but he commands the horse well.”

A curtal is a horse with a cropped tail.

In this society, the word “horse” could be plural.

Fly said, “Oh, in an inn, sir, we have other horse.”

He was playing with language. The words “horse” and “whores” sound alike, and often whores could be found at the inns of the time.

Fly continued, “Let those troops rest a while. Wine is the horse that we must charge with here.”

The bartenders charged customers for the wine they drank.

Tiptoe said, “Bring up the troops — bring wine, or call for wine, sweet Fly; it is an exact, accomplished militia, and you are an exact professor and practitioner. Lipsius Fly you shall be called, and Jouse.”

Justus Lipsius was a respected scholar of the time.

“Jowse” is the juice of the grape — wine. It is also a variant of the non-Latinized form of the name Justus: Joest.

Ferret and Trundle entered the room.

Tiptoe began to joke about Ferret’s name.

“Jack Ferret!” Tiptoe said. “He’s welcome, the old trenchmaster, and colonel of the pioneers.”

Trenchers are wooden plates. As Lovel’s servant, Ferret served him at meals.

Pioneers are ditch-diggers; ferrets dig burrows.

Tiptoe continued, “What can you make bolt for us now? A coney or two out of Tom Trundle’s burrow here, the coach?”

A “coney” is 1) a rabbit, or 2) a prostitute.

Ferrets were used in hunting to go into an animal’s burrow and make the animal bolt out of its safe haven into the sight of the hunters.

A carriage or coach could bring prostitutes to an inn.

Tiptoe said about Trundle the carriage driver, “This is the master of the carriages! How is your driving, Tom? Good as it was?”

“It serves my lady, and our officer Pru,” Trundle said. “Twelve miles an hour! Tom has the old trundle still.”

Twelve miles an hour was an exaggeration; it was very fast for the time.

Tiptoe said, “I am taken with the family here, fine fellows, viewing the muster roll of the men.”

The family was the servants of the inn.

“They are splendid men,” Trundle said.

Ferret said, “And of the Fly-blown discipline all, the quartermaster!”

Fly was the figurative quartermaster.

A bad quartermaster might bring the troops fly-blown meat to eat. Fly-blown meat had fly eggs deposited in it.

“The Fly’s a rare bird in his profession,” Tiptoe said. “Let’s sip a private pint with him. I would have him quit this light sign of the Light Heart, my bird, and this lighter — even more frivolous — house — it is not for his tall and growing gravity, so cedar-like, to be the second to a host in *cuervo* who knows no elegancies.

“Let Fly use his own dictamen — order or pronouncement — and his genius; I would have him fly high and strike at all.”

Falcons darted at and struck their prey.

Pierce Anon entered the room.

Tiptoe said, “Here’s young Anon, too.”

“What wine is it you want, gentlemen: white or claret?”  
Pierce Anon asked.

“White, my brisk Anon,” Tiptoe said.

“I’ll draw you Juno’s milk that dyed the lilies, colonel,”  
Pierce Anon said.

In mythology, milk dripped from the goddess Juno’s breasts,  
fell to the ground, and created lilies.

“Do so, Pierce,” Tiptoe said.

As Pierce Anon exited the room, Peck entered it.

“A plague on all jades!” Peck complained. “What a clap he  
has given me!”

Jades are 1) poor horses, and 2) whores.

A clap is 1) a blow, or 2) a case of gonorrhoea.

“Why, what is it now, cousin?” Fly asked.

In this society, the word “cousin” often simply “friend.”

Fly took Peck aside.

Tiptoe asked, “Who’s that?”

Ferret answered, “Peck the ostler.”

Fly and Peck talked quietly and privately.

“What ails you, cousin Peck?” Fly asked.

“Oh, me! My haunches!” Peck complained. “As sure as you  
live, sir, he — the horse — knew perfectly I meant to cheat  
him. He did leer so on me, and then he sneered, as if he were  
one who would say, ‘Take heed, sirrah.’ And when he saw  
our half-peck, which you know was only an old court-dish  
— a bunch of bad scraps left over from the meals of other  
horses — lord, how he stamped!”



“I thought it had been for joy, when suddenly he cuts me a back caper with his heels and takes me just on the crupper — right on my butt. Down come I and my whole ounce of oats! “

An ounce of oats is short rations for both human beings and horses.

Peck continued, “Then he neighed out as if he had a mare by the tail.”

Fly said, “Truly, cousin, you are to blame when you treat the poor dumb Christians — the horses — so cruelly. You defraud them of their *dimensum* — their fixed allowance. Yonder’s Colonel Tiptoe’s horse — I looked in on him — keeping our Lady’s Eve!”

The Eve of the Annunciation was a fast day.

Fly continued, “The devil a bit of food he has got yet, since he came in! There he stands, and looks and looks, but it is your pleasure, coz, that he should look lean enough.”

“Coz” means cousin. Often it simply means friend.

Tiptoe’s horse was starving: It had not been fed edible food since Tiptoe arrived at the inn.

“He has hay in front of him,” Peck said.

“Yes,” Fly said, “but the hay is as gross as hemp, and the hay will choke as soon as a hemp rope would choke him unless he eats it buttered.”

Horses won’t eat buttered hay, and so the hay would not choke the horse.

Fly continued, “He had four shoes, and good ones, when he came in; it is a wonder that just by standing still he should have cast three.”

Peck had removed three of the horse's shoes in order to sell them or to charge Colonel Tiptoe for replacing them.

"Truly, Quartermaster," Peck said, "this trade is a kind of mystery that corrupts our standing manners quickly."

Trades are skilled labor; they are mysteries to those who don't know the skills involved.

"Standing" means "customary," but also refers to horses standing in stalls.

Peck continued, "Once a week I meet with such a brush — a setback — to mollify me. Sometimes a pair of setbacks, to awaken my conscience, yet still I sleep securely."

Cheaters grow used to cheating, and despite a setback now and then, they are accustomed to sleep soundly.

"Cousin Peck," Fly said, "you must use better dealing, indeed, you must."

"Truly," Peck said, "to give good example to my successors, I could be well content to steal but two girths and now and then a saddle-cloth, change a bridle for exercise, and stay there — leave it at that."

In order to be a good example to other ostlers, Peck might be willing to steal a little, not a lot.

To "change a bridle for exercise" means to "steal a bridle to exercise the action of stealing so that I don't forget how to do it."

"If you could, there would be some hope for you, coz," Fly said. "But the fate is you're drunk so early you mistake — steal — whole saddles, and sometimes a horse."

Peck began, "Aye, there's —"

He was interrupted by Pierce Anon's arrival. Pierce was carrying wine.

"— the wine," Fly said, finishing Peck's sentence. "Come, coz, I'll talk with you soon."

"Do," Peck said. "Lose no time, good Quartermaster."

The two men returned to the others.

Tiptoe said, "There are the horse come, Fly."

"Charge!" Fly said. "In, boys, in."

Jordan entered the room.

Fly said about Jordan, "Lieutenant of the ordnance, tobacco, and pipes."

The ordnance was fire to light the pipes.

"Who's that?" Tiptoe said. "Old Jordan, good! A suitable and necessary vessel."

Jordans are chamber pots; they are necessary vessels.

Tiptoe continued, "New-scoured he is. Here's to you, Marshal Fly. In milk, my young Anon says."

Tiptoe drank the toast to Fly.

Pierce Anon said, "Cream of the grape that dropped from Juno's breasts and sprung the lily!"

The cream of the grape is white wine.

Pierce Anon continued, "I can recite your fables, Fly. Here is also the blood of Venus, mother of the rose!"

He was referring to red wine.

In mythology, Venus' feet were scratched by rose thorns as she ran to her lover, whose name was Adonis. Her blood splashed a white rose, turning it red.

Music was heard coming from further within the inn.

Jordan said, "The dinner has gone up from the kitchens."

A whistle sounded within.

Jug said, "I hear the whistle calling the servants to wait on the tables."

"Aye, and the fiddlers," Jordan said. "We must all go wait on the diners."

Pierce Anon said, "A pox on this waiting, Quartermaster Fly."

It was a job he disliked.

Fly replied, "When chambermaids are sovereigns, their ladies wait on them. Fly scorns to breathe —"

Peck interrupted, "— or blow upon them."

One meaning of the adjective "fly-blown" was "dirty from the depositing of flies' eggs."

Peck was making a joke about Fly scorning to make the ladies pregnant.

Pierce Anon asked, "Old parcel Peck, are you there? How are you now? Are you lame?"

A parcel peck is a small amount; Peck gave small amounts of feed to the horses.

Peck had been kicked in the butt by a horse. He could very well be lame.

“Yes, indeed,” Peck said. “It is ill halting — limping — before cripples.”

Beggars faked being cripples in order to arouse sympathy in people so they would give the beggars money. To halt — limp — before cripples is ill because they are wise to the trick and cannot be fooled. Peck is a cheat, but he is among other cheats at the inn who know his tricks.

Peck continued, “I have got a dash — a blow — from a jade here that will stick by me.”

Pierce Anon said, “Oh, you have had some fantasy, fellow Peck. You have had some revelation —”

“What?” Peck said.

Pierce Anon said, “To steal the hay out of the racks again —”

By stealing the hay out of the horses’ feeding trough, Peck could sell it again.

“I told him so,” Fly said. “He could steal it when the guests’ backs were turned.”

Pierce Anon said, “Or bring his peck of feed the bottom upwards, heaped with oats, and cry, ‘Here’s the best measure upon all the road!’”

Peck could hold the feed container upside down, with oats piled on top of the container and inside the bottom rim to make the container look as if it were completely filled with oats.

Pierce Anon continued, “When, you know, the guest put in his hand to feel and smell the oats, the guest grated all his fingers upon the wood —”

At least one guest had discovered that trick.

“Mum!” Peck said. “Quiet!”

Pierce Anon continued, “— and found out your cheat.”

Peck said, “I have been in the cellar, Pierce.”

He meant that he knew about Pierce Anon’s tricks as a bartender.

“You were then there, upon your knees,” Pierce Anon said. “I remember it. You were begging to have the fact of your cheating concealed. I could tell more about the soaping of saddles, cutting of horses’ tails, and cropping — pranks of ale and hostelry —”

Peck adulterated the saddle-soap to save money; he also cut and cropped horses’ tails to sell the horsehair for use in brushes.

Of course, Pierce Anon had his own tricks of ale and hostelry.

Fly interrupted Pierce Anon, whom Tiptoe had said that he would make a cavalier, “— those tricks of yours Peck cannot forget, he says, young knight, no more than you can forget other deeds of darkness done in the cellar.”

“Well said, bold professor,” Tiptoe said to Fly.

“We shall have some truth explained,” Ferret said.

The truth would be about other tricks.

“We are all mortal, and we have our visions,” Pierce Anon said.

The visions can be faulty, and cheaters can help visions to be faulty, as Peck now pointed out: “Truly, it seems to me that every horse has his whole peck of feed, and tumbles up to the ears in litter.”

The horses may have seemed to be well fed and well cared-for to Peck (or so he pretended), and he went to lengths to make them seem well fed and well cared-for to other people, but the horses knew that they were not well fed and well cared-for.

Litter is straw that serves as bedding for animals.

Hay is nutritious; straw is not. Straw is the bare stalk. Hay is the stalk plus the rest of the plant, including the nutritious seeds. Hay is a nutritious crop grown for animals. Straw is a byproduct of a grain crop; it is what is left after the nutritious parts have been removed.

Fly said, “When, indeed, there’s no such matter, not a smell of provender.”

Ferret said, “There’s not as much straw as would tie up a horse-tail!”

Tying up a horse’s tail kept it clean and out of the harness. But in Peck’s stable there was not enough straw to do even that.

Fly said, “Nor is there anything in the rack but two old cobwebs, and as much rotten hay as had been a hen’s nest!”

Trundle said, “And yet Peck is always eager to sweep the mangers.”

Peck would sweep the mangers — the horses’ feeding troughs — to find uneaten hay to reuse.

“But he puts in nothing,” Ferret said.

Peck doesn’t put enough — or any — hay in the mangers.

Pierce Anon said, “These are fits and fancies that you must leave, good Peck.”

The inn employees all cheated their customers, but Peck was taking it too far.

Fly said to Peck, “And you must pray that it may be revealed to you at some times whose horse you ought to cozen and cheat, with what conscience, the how, and the when.”

According to Fly, there is a time and a place for cheating, but you must find that time and place. Overdoing it can result in getting caught and punished.

Fly added, “A parson’s horse may suffer —”

Pierce Anon interrupted, “— a horse whose master is double benefited. Put in that.”

A parson was supposed to have one and only one benefice: a permanent Church appointment in which pastors are allotted money and property in return for their pastoral services.

Fly and Pierce Anon agreed that it’s OK to cheat some kinds of people, such as rich, corrupt parsons.

Fly said, “A little greasing in the teeth — it is wholesome and keeps him in a sober shuffle — a slow gait.”

Greasing a horse’s teeth kept the horse from eating. Not eating resulted in a lack of energy.

Pierce Anon said, “His saddle, too, may lack a stirrup.”

The stirrup could be stolen and sold.

Fly said, “And, it may be sworn that his learning lay on one side and so broke it.”

The parson’s books were in a pack on one side of the saddle and so broke the stirrup on that side — at least, that’s the excuse that Peck could use to explain the loss of the stirrup.



Peck said, “They always have oats in their cloak-bags — clothes-bags — to affront us.”

Some parsons brought their own oats for their horses so that they wouldn’t have to pay the ostlers for oats.

Fly said, “And therefore it is a meritorious duty to tithe such soundly.”

In other words, it’s OK to tithe rich parsons — to take a tenth of the parson’s money — because rich parsons cheat by having two benefices and because they are miserly.

Pierce Anon said, “And a grazier’s horse may —”

Graziers grazed cattle to get them ready for sale. They were proverbially greedy.

Ferret said, “Oh, they are pinching puckfists!”

A puckfist is literally a puffball fungus. Figuratively, it is a braggart or a miser. Here, it is a pinching — tightly gripped — puckfist, and so the primary meaning is miser. (Misers have tightly closed fists; the hands of generous people are open.)

In other words, graziers are miserly.

Trundle said, “And they are suspicious.”

Pierce Anon finished the sentence he had started, “— suffer before the master’s face, sometimes.”

Fly said, “The grazier shall think he sees his horse eat half a bushel —”

Pierce Anon said, “When the sleight is, after the horse’s gums are rubbed with salt until all the skin comes off, the horse shall only mumble — chew as if with toothless gums — like an old woman who is chewing tough meat — and drop the food out again.”

“Well argued, cavalier,” Tiptoe said to Pierce Anon.

Fly said, “It may do well, and go for an example. But, cousin, have care of understanding horses — horses that understand they are being cheated — horses with angry heels, nobility horses with aristocratic owners, and horses that know the world.

“Let them have food until their teeth ache, and rub their coats until their ribs shine like a wench’s forehead.

“These horses’ owners are devils if you don’t do these things, and they will look into your dealings and discover that you are cheating.”

He was saying that in part so that Tiptoe would hear it and think that his horse was being well taken care of.

Peck said, “For my own part, I wish that the next horse of the pampered breed I cheat may be foundered.”

Founder is a disease that makes horses lame.

Fly said, “Say, ‘Foun-de-red.’ Prolate it right.”

Fly wanted Peck to lengthen the pronunciation of “foundered” by making it three syllables: found de (the) red. The disease called “founder” is inflammation of the hoof, and red is the color of inflammation.

Peck said, “And of all four hooves, I wish it. I love no crupper compliments.”

“Crupper” refers to a horse’s hindquarters. “Crupper compliments” are kicks.

Pierce Anon asked, “Whose horse was it?”

Peck answered, “Why, Master Burst’s.”

“Has Bat Burst come?” Pierce Anon asked.

“He has been here an hour,” Peck answered.

“Who is Burst?” Tiptoe asked.

“Master Bartholomew Burst,” Pierce Anon answered. “He is one who has been a citizen, and then a courtier, and is now a gambler. He has had all his whirls and bouts of fortune, and as a man would say, ‘Once a bat, and always a bat!’ He is a rermouse, aka bat, and he is a bird of twilight.”

Pierce Anon was saying of Bartholomew Burst: ‘Once a thief, always a thief.’”

“Bat” is 1) a shortened form of Bartholomew, and 2) a creature of the night, which is literally a nocturnal animal or bird and figuratively a thief.

Pierce Anon continued, “He has broken — gone bankrupt — thrice.”

Tiptoe said, “Then he is your better man, as the Geno’way proverb says. Men are not made of steel.”

A proverb stated, “In Genoa there are mountains without wood, sea without fish, women without shame, and men without conscience.”

This infers that the Genoese know the value of a well-timed bankruptcy.

Pierce Anon said, “Nor are they bound always to keep their promises or their principles.”

“Thrice honorable colonel!” Fly said to Tiptoe. “Hinges will crack —”

Tiptoe finished Fly’s sentence: “— although they are made of Spanish iron.”

Pierce Anon said about Bat Burst, “He is a merchant still, he is an adventurer at in-and-in, and he is our thoroughfare’s friend.”

In-and-in is a dicing game.

Jug was the thoroughfare: the man whom travelers confided in and told their news and gossip to.

Tiptoe asked, “Who? Jug’s friend?”

“The same,” Pierce Anon said, “and a fine gentleman was with him.”

Peck said, “He was Master Huffle.”

“Who? Hodge Huffle?” Pierce Anon asked.

“Who’s he?” Tiptoe asked.

Pierce Anon said, “He is a cheater, and another fine gentleman, a friend of the chamberlain’s — that is, a friend of Jordan’s. He is Master Huffle, and he is Burst’s Protection.”

Master Huffle is Burst’s friend, and when necessary, his bodyguard.

Fly said, “He fights and vapors — blusters — for Bat Burst.”

Pierce Anon said, “He will be drunk so civilly —”

Fly interrupted, “So discreetly —”

Pierce Anon continued, “— and punctually! Just at his hour.”

Fly said, “And then he will call for his jordan with that hum and state as if he pissed Aristotle’s *Politics*!”

Master Huffle could be pretentious.

Pierce Anon said, “And he will sup with his taffeta night-gear here so silently!”

“Taffeta night-gear” literally means “taffeta dressing gown,” but “taffeta night-gear” here may figuratively mean a wench.

Fly said, “No talk! Nothing but music!”

Pierce Anon said, “A dozen bawdy songs.”

Tiptoe asked, “And does the general — the Host — know this?”

Fly said, “Oh no, sir, *dormit* — *dormit patronus*, still. The master sleeps.

“Bat Burst and Master Huffle will steal in to bed —”

Pierce Anon interrupted, “— in private, sir, and pay the fiddlers with such modesty next morning.”

Fly said, “They will take a disjune — a breakfast — of muscadel and eggs!”

This breakfast was regarded as an aphrodisiac.

Pierce Anon said, “And pack away in their trundling cheats — coaches — like gypsies!”

To pack away meant to leave with all their possessions. Bat Burst and Master Huffle will pack up and leave in the morning — they hope without paying.

Trundle said, “Mysteries, mysteries, Ferret.”

“Aye, we see, Trundle, what the great officers in an inn may do,” Ferret said.

Some people — “great officers” — at an inn may sleep, dine, and dash — sleep, eat, and run away without paying.

Ferret continued, “I do not say the officers of the Crown, but the Light Heart.”

Ben Jonson was careful not to insult the officers of the royal monarchy. He also was making an in-joke: At this time there was an inn named the Crown Inn.

“I’ll see the Bat and Huffle,” Tiptoe said.

Ferret opted out of the visit: “I have some business, sir, I crave your pardon —”

“What is your business?” Tiptoe said.

Ferret answered, “To be sober.”

Such visits as Tiptoe intended involved drinking.

He exited.

Tiptoe said, “A pox on you, go, get you gone then. Trundle shall stay.”

Trundle said, “No, I beseech you, colonel. Your Lordship has a mind to be drunk in private with these brave gallants; I will step aside into the stables and salute — visit — my mares.”

He exited.

Pierce Anon said, “Yes, do, and sleep with them. Let him go, the base whipstock.”

A whipstock is the handle of a whip.

Pierce Anon added, “He’s as drunk as a fish now, and almost as dead.”

To be as drunk as a fish is to be very drunk.

Ferret and Trundle had left because of class differences. Colonel Tiptoe was of a higher social class than Ferret and

Trundle were — they were servants. Bat Burst and Master Huffle were also of a higher social class than they were. Sometimes servants could joke with those of a higher class, but socially drinking in private with those of a higher class would make most servants uncomfortable.

Pierce Anon was the bartender; he would serve the wine, so he stayed with Tiptoe.

Fly stayed because he had become friendly with Tiptoe, and he was hoping that Tiptoe could be advantageous to him. Fly was a parasite, after all.

Tiptoe said, “Come, I will see the flickermouse, my Fly.”

A flickermouse is a bat.

They all exited.

### — 3.2 —

Musicians entered the room and played.

Queen Prudence, ushered by the Host, entered the room and took her seat of judicature. The Nurse, the disguised Frank, Lord Beaufort, and Lord Latimer followed them. Also entering the room were Ferret, Trundle, Jug, and Jordan, who waited on the others. The Nurse, the disguised Frank, Lord Beaufort, and Lord Latimer would assist Queen Prudence by acting as judges.

This was a Court of Love. Lovel had a complaint against Lady Frampul: He loved her, and she did not return his love. Lovel was the appellant, and Lady Frampul was the defendant. Queen Prudence and the other judges would hear the cases each made and then judge them.

This was the first of two hours that Lovel was allowed to be with Lady Frampul and talk about love. At the end of each hour, Lady Frampul would give Lovel a kiss.

Queen Prudence said, “Here is the first hour set in advance; but first produce the parties, and clear the court. The time is now of price — the time is now valuable.”

The Host ordered, “Jug, get you down, and Trundle, get you up.”

The Host was telling Jug to leave and go to the cellar and telling Trundle to get up on the bench with the judges.

The Host continued, “You, Trundle, shall be the crier. Ferret here shall be the clerk.”

The crier made court announcements and called on people to testify.

The clerk kept a record of the trial. To be a clerk, Ferret had to know how to read and write. Not everyone in this society could do those things.

The Host ordered, “Jordan, you smell without — outside — until the ladies call you.”

The Host was punning. “Smell about” meant 1) sniff about, and 2) stink. As readers will remember, a jordan is a chamber pot.

The Host continued, “Take down the fiddlers, too. Silence that noise deep in the cellar, safe.”

In this society, a noise is a band of musicians.

Jug, Jordan, and the musicians exited.

“Who keeps the watch?” Prudence asked.

Someone had to keep track of the time: Lovel was allowed to spend one hour with Lady Frampul.

The Host answered, “Old Shelee-nien here is the Madam Tell-clock.”



The Host continued to play with language. A “tell-clock” is an idler, but here he used it to mean a time-keeper.

The Nurse said, “No, fait’ and trot’, sweet maister, I shall sleep; i’ fait’, I shall.”

[The Nurse said, “No, by my faith and truth, sweet master, I shall sleep; in faith, I shall.”]

Lord Beaufort said, “I pray that you do sleep then, screech-owl.”

A screech-owl is a bird of ill omen.

Lord Beaufort continued, “She brings to mind the fable of the dragon that kept the Hesperian fruit. I wish I could charm her asleep!”

Ladon was the dragon that entwined itself around the tree of golden apples and guarded them in the garden of the Hesperides.

If the Nurse were to go to sleep, Lord Beaufort hoped that he and the disguised-as-a-woman Frank, whom Lord Beaufort did not know was disguised as a woman, could have fun.

The Host said, “Trundle will do it with his hum.”

Again, the Host was punning, this time on the word “hum.” Trundle will make the Nurse fall asleep with his hum, meaning low murmur, or with his hum, meaning strong ale.

The Host then said, “Come, Trundle. Precede him, Ferret, in the form and due process of the court.”

Ferret would read out loud the necessary words, and Trundle would repeat them in a loud voice.

Ferret said, “Oyez, oyez, oyez.”

Trundle repeated, “Oyez, oyez, oyez.”

“Oyez” means “Be quiet and pay attention.”

Ferret said, “Whereas there has been awarded ...”

Trundle repeated, “Whereas there has been awarded ...”

Ferret said, “By the Queen Regent of Love ...”

Trundle repeated, “By the Queen Regent of Love ...”

Ferret said, “In this high court of sovereignty ...”

Trundle repeated, “In this high court of sovereignty ...”

Ferret said, “Two special hours of address ...”

Trundle repeated, “Two special hours of address ...”

Ferret said, “To Herbert Lovel, appellant ...”

Trundle repeated, “To Herbert Lovel, appellant ...”

Ferret said, “Against the Lady Frampul, defendant ...”

Trundle repeated, “Against the Lady Frampul, defendant ...”

Ferret said, “Herbert Lovel, come into the court ...”

Trundle repeated, “Herbert Lovel, come into the court ...”

Ferret said, “Make challenge in your first hour ...”

Trundle repeated, “Make challenge in your first hour ...”

“Make challenge” means “Make your case.”

Ferret said, “And save yourself and your bail.”

Trundle repeated, “And save yourself and your bail.”

Bail was meant to be a guarantee that the appellant and the defendant came to the place of trial.

Lovel entered the room, bowed, and sat at one side.

The Host said, “Look at where he, bowing, comes into the court!

“Clerk of the sovereignty, note down his appearance and how accoutered — how clothed and equipped — he comes as designated to the court!”

Queen Prudence’s Court of Love parodied a trial by combat.

In a trial by combat, first the two combatants enter, and then they must swear an oath that they are not bringing into the arena of combat any weapons other than those allowed. Also, they must swear that they have not brought any enchantments or charms with them.

Ferret wrote and said, “It is done. Now, crier, call the Lady Frampul, and by the name of:

“Frances, Lady Frampul, defendant ...”

Trundle repeated, “Frances, Lady Frampul, defendant ...”

Ferret said, “Come into the court ...”

Trundle repeated, “Come into the court ...”

Ferret said, “Make answer to the award ...”

Trundle repeated, “Make answer to the award ...”

Ferret said, “And save yourself and your bail.”

Trundle repeated, “And save yourself and your bail.”

Lady Frampul would make an answer to the award given by the court to Lovel. He had been awarded two hours of love-conversation with her and two kisses from her.

She entered the room and sat on the opposite side of the room, confronting Lovel.

The Host said about her, “She makes a noble and a just appearance. Set it down likewise, and set down how armed — furnished and ready — she comes.”

Ferret wrote.

Queen Prudence said, “Usher of Love’s court, give them their oath according to the form, upon Love’s missal.”

The Host, who was serving as the court usher, said, “Arise, and lay your hands upon the book.”

The book was not a Bible.

The Host continued, “Herbert Lovel, appellant, and Lady Frances Frampul, defendant, you shall swear upon the liturgy of love, Ovid’s *De Arte Amandi*, that you neither have, nor will have, nor in any wise do bear about you, anything or any things, pointed or blunt, within these lists, other than what are natural and allowed by the court: no enchanted arms or weapons, stones of virtue, herb of grace, charm, character or sign of the occult, spell, philter, or other power than Love’s only, and the justness of your cause. So help you Love, his mother, and the contents of this book.”

The lists are fields of combat at a tournament. The contestants joust in enclosed spaces.

“Stones of virtue” are stones with magical properties, but the word “stones” can mean “testicles” and so the phrase can mean “powerful testicles.”

“Herbs of grace” means “herb-grace”; that is, it is the herb rue, which is associated with regret.

A philter is an aphrodisiac or a love-potion.

Ovid’s book *Ars Amatoria* — *The Art of Love* — is a book about sexual seduction.

*De Arte Amandi* — *Concerning the Art of Loving* — is the Host's version of the title of Ovid's book.

Love is Cupid, and Love's mother is Venus.

The Host said, "Kiss it."

Kissing the book meant that they were swearing the oath that the Host had asked them to swear: They had not brought any banned articles or occult spells to the place of combat.

Lovel and Lady Frampul kissed the book.

The Host ordered them, "Return to your seats."

They returned to their seats.

The Host then said, "Crier, bid all to be silent."

Trundle cried, "Oyez, Oyez, Oyez."

As before, Ferret read the necessary words for the trial, and Trundle the crier repeated them loudly.

Ferret said, "In the name of the sovereign of Love ..."

Trundle repeated, "In the name of the sovereign of Love ..."

Ferret said, "Notice is given by the court ..."

Trundle repeated, "Notice is given by the court ..."

Ferret said, "To the appellant and defendant ..."

Trundle repeated, "To the appellant and defendant ..."

Ferret said, "That the first hour of address proceeds ..."

Trundle repeated, "That the first hour of address proceeds ..."

Ferret said, "And Love save the sovereign!"

Trundle repeated, "And Love save the sovereign!"

Then Trundle cried loudly, “Every man or woman keep silence, on pain of imprisonment.”

Any man or woman who interrupted the proceedings unnecessarily would be imprisoned.

Ferret would take written notes during the trial. He would capitalize the word “Love” when it meant Cupid, the god of love.

Queen Prudence told Lovel and Lady Frampul, “Do your endeavors — that is, do all you can do — in the name of Love.”

Lovel said, “I am ready to make my first approaches, then, in love.”

Lady Frampul requested, “Tell us what love is, so that we may be sure there’s such a thing, and that it is in nature.”

“Is in nature” means “really exists.” Lord Beaufort supposedly loved, or had loved Lady Frampul, and she had noticed his attentions to the disguised Frank.

“Excellent lady,” Lovel said, “I did not expect to meet an infidel — an unbeliever — much less an atheist here in Love’s lists! An atheist of so much unbelief to raise a question of Love’s existence —”

The Host said, “Well charged!”

The Host was punning. Jousts charge at each other in tournaments, and accusers make charges and arguments in trials.

Referring to love as masculine, Lovel continued, “I rather thought, and with religion — piously — think, that if all the character of love had been lost, his lines, dimensions, and whole signature (particularity of form) razed and defaced with dull humanity — ordinary people — that both his nature

and his essence might have found their mighty instauration — restoration — here, here where the confluence of fair and good meets to make up all beauty.

“For what else is love, but the most noble, pure affection of what is truly beautiful and fair?”

“What else is love but the desire of union with the thing beloved?”

Lovel had a spiritual view of love.

Lord Beaufort’s view of love, as would soon become apparent, was different.

Lord Beaufort asked Queen Prudence, “Have the assistants of the court their votes and the writ of privilege to speak them freely?”

A vote was an expression of opinion. A writ of privilege was a note that exempted a person from a crime.

Lord Beaufort wanted to speak freely and without negative consequences. He wanted to give his view of love.

Queen Prudence answered, “Yes, to assist, but not to interrupt.”

She meant to assist in achieving an understanding of love.

Lord Beaufort said, “Then I have read somewhere that man and woman were in the first creation both one piece, and being cleft asunder, ever since then love had been an appetite — a desire — for the two halves to be rejoined. As for example —”

He kissed the disguised Frank.

Lord Beaufort’s view of love was physical in nature.

In Plato's *Symposium*, in which the characters discuss love, the comic playwright Aristophanes tells a tale about human beings having four hands, four legs, two heads, two sets of genitals, and so on. Basically, they were two humans joined together. They threatened the gods, and so Zeus, king of the gods, cut each of the beings in half. Of course, the two beings who had been cut from the original singular being want to be reunited. The original sexes of these beings were both-male, both-female, and androgynous (half-male and half-female), and so today we find two men wanting to unite, two women wanting to unite, and a man and a woman wanting to unite. This is Aristophanes' explanation of sexual love and why people feel "whole" when they meet their mate.

The Nurse said, "*Cra-mo-cree!* What meansh 'tou?"

[The Nurse said, "Love of my heart! What do you mean by that?"]

Lord Beaufort said, "Only to kiss and part."

He may have meant: Just to take a kiss and then separate himself from the disguised Frank.

The Host said, "So much is lawful."

Lord Latimer said, "And it accords with the prerogative — the right and privilege — of Love's court."

Lord Beaufort, however, may have meant: Just to seduce and 'part — seduce and then depart and run away.

Lovel recognized the source from which Lord Beaufort had gotten his story: "It is a fable of Plato's in his *Banquet*, and uttered there by Aristophanes."

Plato's *Symposium* or *Banquet* is a dialogue in which at the end of a banquet the characters discuss love.



The Host said, “It was well remembered here, and put to good use. But go on with your description of what love is: the desire of union with the thing beloved.”

Lovel said, “I meant that as a definition. For I make the efficient cause, what’s beautiful and fair; the formal cause, the appetite of union; and the final cause, the union itself.”

Lovel was using Aristotelian terms. In other words:

What’s beautiful and fair, whether spiritually or physically, or both, is the means that causes and promotes love. (This is the efficient cause.)

The appetite of — desire for — union is the ideal essence of love. (This is the formal cause.)

The union itself, whether spiritual or physical, or both, is the end and outcome for which love is produced. (This is the final cause.)

Lovel continued, “But more fully, if you’ll have it, by description, it is a flame and ardor of the mind. It is dead in the proper corpse — that is, the body of the subject or lover — but it is quick and alive in another’s body. Love transfers the lover into the loved.”

In other words, the lover “dies” in his or her own body, but “lives” in the body of the beloved. The lover does not think of him- or herself, but instead is always thinking of the beloved.

Lovel continued, “The he or she who loves does engrave or stamp the idea — that is, the form or archetype — of what they love, first in themselves; and, similar to mirrors, their minds take in the forms of their beloved, and reflect them.”

By implication, the beloved will be attracted to that reflection.

Lovel continued, “It is the likeness of affections that is both the parent and the nurse of love.

“Love is a spiritual coupling of two souls, so much more excellent as it least relates to the body.

“Love is circular and perfect and complete, eternal, not feigned or made, but born.

“Love is so precious that nothing can value it but itself.

“Love is so free that nothing can command it but itself.

“And in itself love is so round and liberal that where it favors, it bestows itself.”

Lord Beaufort said, “And that do I.”

Lovel and Lord Beaufort both loved, but they loved in different ways. Lovel loved spiritually; Lord Beaufort loved physically.

Lord Beaufort said to the disguised Frank, “Here my whole self I tender, according to the practice of the court.”

The Nurse said, “Ay, ’tish a naughty practish, a lewd practish. Be quiet, man, dou shalt not leip her here.”

[The Nurse said, “Aye, it is a naughty, sinful practice, a lewd, sexually sinful practice. Be quiet, man. You shall not leap on her and have sex with her here.”]

Lord Beaufort said to the Nurse, “Leap her? I lip her — I kiss her. Foolish queen at arms, your blazon — your description — is false. Will you blaspheme your office?”

Lovel said, “But we must take and understand this love at length and in full still as a name of dignity, not pleasure.”

The Host said to Lord Beaufort, “Do you note that, my light young lord?”

In this culture, the word “light” can mean “lascivious.”

Lovel said, “True love has no unworthy thought.

“True love has no light, loose, unbecoming appetite or strain.

“Instead, true love is fixed, constant, pure, immutable.”

Lord Beaufort said, “I don’t relish these philosophical feasts.

“Give me a banquet of sense like that of Ovid.”

In 1595, George Chapman wrote a poem titled “Ovid’s Banquet of Sense.”

Lord Beaufort continued, “Give me a form to take the eye; a voice to take my ear; pure aromatics to go to my sense of smell; a soft, smooth, dainty hand to touch; and for my taste give me ambrosiac kisses to melt down the palate.”

Ambrosia is the food of the Greek and Roman gods. Aphrodisiacs are food and drink that inspire lust. “Ambrosiac” is a portmanteau word.

Lovel said, “The earthly, lower form of lovers are taken only with what strikes the senses, and they love by that loose scale.”

In this context, a scale is a ladder. A virtuous soul can scale a metaphorical ladder and reach Absolute Beauty. The earthly, lower forms of lovers are on that ladder, but they have much higher to climb.

A scale is also equipment that weighs. The earthly, lower form of lovers are taken with light love. A woman with light heels is a promiscuous woman whose heels are frequently up in the air as she lies on her back. Such a woman can be beautiful and can give delight, but there is a higher form of love.

Lovel continued:

“I grant that we like what’s fair and graceful in an object, and I grant that it is true that we would use it — our liking of what’s fair and graceful — in the all-perfection we desire in both our civil and our domestic deeds.

“Those civil and our domestic deeds include the ordering of an army (a multitude of people), and they include our style and manner of expression, apparel, gesture, building, or what not.

“It is true that all arts and actions do aspire to their beauty.”

In other words, the earthly, lower form of lovers are seeking beauty, and it is true that the beauty they seek is all-perfection. But they have higher to climb. They are like someone who can see a beautiful landscape from a height but if they were to climb higher, they would see much more beauty. They also are like people who see the beautiful exterior of a house, but if they were to go inside the house they would see much more beauty, including the beauty of the owner of the house. The house cannot love, but the owner of the house can love. The earthly, lower form of lovers are those who see the physical beauty of a lover without seeing the lover’s beautiful soul.

Love continued:

“But let me put the case:

“In travel I may meet some gorgeous structure, with a brave frontispiece — an aesthetically pleasing entrance. Shall I stay captive in the outer court, surprised and overwhelmed with that, and not advance to know who dwells there and inhabits the house?

“There is my friendship to be made, within, with what can love me in return; not with the walls, doors, windows, architraves [molding around doorways and windows], the

frieze [upper part of a wall], and coronice [molding on top of a wall].”

In this society, the word “friend” can mean “lover.”

Lovel continued:

“My end is lost in loving of a face, an eye, lip, nose, hand, foot, or other part, whose all is only a statue, if the mind does not move and affect me — only the mind can love in return.

“The end of love is to have two made one in will and in affection.

“The end of love is that the minds be first joined, not the bodies.”

Lord Beaufort said, “Give me the body, if it is a good one.”

He kissed the disguised Frank, who said, “Nay, my lord, I must appeal to the sovereign Prudence for better treatment, if you continue your practice — your kissing.”

Trundle shouted, “Silence, on pain of imprisonment! Hear the court.”

Lovel continued explaining what love is:

“The body’s love is frail, subject to change, and alters still with it.

“The mind’s love is firm, one and the same, and proceeds first from weighing and well examining what is fair and good, and then weighing and well examining what is fair and good in reason and fit in manners.

“That breeds good will, and good will breeds desire of union.

“So knowledge first begets benevolence, benevolence breeds friendship, and friendship breeds love.

“And where love serves and steps aside from this, it is a mere degenerate appetite. It is lost, morally perverse, depraved affection, and it bears no mark or character of true love.”

“How I am changed!” Lady Frampul said. “By what alchemy of love or language am I thus translated and changed in form! Lovel’s tongue is tipped with the philosopher’s stone, and that has touched and transformed me through every vein!”

The philosopher’s stone was supposed to be able to transform base metals into gold or silver.

The word “vein” can refer to 1) veins of blood, and 2) veins of metal ore.

Lady Frampul continued, “I feel that transmutation of my blood, as if I have quite become another creature, and all he speaks, it is projection!”

Projection is the final step in the creation of a philosopher’s stone: It is a test of the stone’s power. After the philosopher’s stone was created, a small part of it would be cast onto molten base metal; the philosopher’s stone would then transmute — turn — the base metal to gold.

Lady Frampul was saying that Lovel’s words had metaphorically transformed her from base metal into gold.

Queen Prudence said, “Well feigned, my lady; now her parts begin!”

These parts were acting parts.

Queen Prudence believed that Lady Frampul was like an actress acting a part — a role — in this play-court.

Lord Latimer said, “And she will act them subtly and artfully.”

“She fails me if she does not,” Queen Prudence said.

Level continued his discourse on love:

“Nor do they trespass within bounds of pardon — those people who, giving way and license to their love, divest him — the soul — of his noblest ornaments, which are his modesty and shamefacedness.

“And so they do who have unfit designs upon the parties — the persons — they pretend to love.

“For what’s more monstrous, what’s more an unnatural monstrosity, than to hear me protest truth of affection to a person whom I would dishonor?

“And what’s a greater dishonor than defacing another’s good while simultaneously forfeiting my own, and drawing on a fellowship of sin?

“From the stigma and reproach of which, though for a while we both may be kept safe by caution and avoiding public notice, yet the conscience cannot be cleansed.

“For what was hitherto called by the name of love becomes destroyed then with the fact of sin. The innocency once lost, the abating of affection soon will follow; and love is never true that is not lasting, no more than any love can be pure or perfect that entertains more than one object.

“*Dixi.*”

*Dixi* is Latin for “I have spoken.” In the law courts, it means, “I rest my case.”

Lady Frampul said, “Oh, speak and speak forever! Let my ear be always feasted and filled with this banquet! No sense can ever surfeit and overindulge on such truth. It is the marrow — the essence — of all lovers’ tenets!

“Who has read Plato, Heliodore, or Tatius, Sidney, d’Urfé, or all Love’s fathers, like him?

“He’s there the Master of the Sentences, their school and doctrine, their commentary, text, and gloss, and he breathes the true divinity of Love!”

All of the authors she mentioned had written about love.

Plato, of course, is the author of such dialogues as the *Symposium*.

Heliodore of Syria wrote a romance titled *Aethiopica*.

Achilles Tatius wrote *The Loves of Leucippe and Cleitophon*.

Sir Philip Sidney wrote *Arcadia*.

Honoré d’Urfé wrote a pastoral novel titled *L’Astrée*.

Peter Lombard wrote *Sententiae*.

When Lady Frampul called Lovel “the Master of the Sentences,” she was complimenting his speaking ability and ability to compose sentences orally. Of course, she was also praising his knowledge of love literature.

“Excellent actor!” Queen Prudence said. “How she hits a bull’s-eye and exactly imitates this passion!”

Lady Frampul said, “Whereas I have lived in heresy so long out of the congregation of Love, and stood irregular and outside and not in conformity with Love, by all Love’s canons.”

Lord Latimer, who was not sure that Lady Frampul was playing a part, asked, “But do you think she is acting?”

Queen Prudence replied, “Upon my sovereignty, pay close attention to her now.”



Prudence, a chambermaid, was playing the part of a Queen. Why couldn't Lady Frampul be playing the part of a woman newly in love with Lovel?

"I shake, and I am half jealous," Lord Latimer said.

Lord Latimer apparently had a crush on Lady Frampul.

Lady Frampul said, "What penance shall I do, to be received into and reconciled to the Church of Love?"

"Shall I go in procession barefoot as a pilgrim to his image and say some hundred penitential verses there, out of Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressid*?"

In *Troilus and Creseyde*, Troilus' love is betrayed. Such a choice of texts can make Lovel believe that Lady Frampul is playing a role instead of revealing her true feelings. On the other hand, Troilus loves sincerely, and so perhaps Lady Frampul loves Lovel sincerely.

Lady Frampul continued, "Or to Cupid's mother's shrine shall I vow a wax candle as large as the town maypole is, and pay for it?"

"Order me to do anything this court thinks fit, for I have trespassed against, offended against, and blasphemed against Love.

"I have, indeed, despised his deity, whom, until this miracle wrought on me, I knew not.

"But now I adore Love, and I would kiss the rushes that bear this reverend gentleman, Lovel, Love's priest, if that would expiate and atone and make amends — but I fear it will not."

In this society rushes were strewn on the floor. Lovel was standing on some rushes. Lady Frampul was saying that she would kiss the ground — that is, the rushes — beneath his feet.

Lady Frampul said, “For although he is somewhat struck in years and old enough to be my father, he is wise, and only wise men love; the others covet.

“I could begin to be in love with him, but I will not tell him yet because I hope to enjoy the other hour with more delight, and test him farther.”

Lovel may or may not have heard this last paragraph. When he heard Lady Frampul talk about his age, he may have turned away.

Queen Prudence said to Lady Frampul, “Most Socratic lady! Or if you will, most ironic and dissembling lady.”

Queen Prudence then said to Lovel, “May God give you joy of your Platonic love here, Master Lovel.”

She then said to Lady Frampul, “But pay him his first kiss yet, in the court, which is a debt and due, since the hour has run its course.”

Lady Frampul said, “How swift is time, and how slyly it steals away from them who would hug it, value it, embrace it! I would have thought it had run scarcely ten minutes, when the whole hour has fled.”

She then said to Lovel, “Here, take your kiss, sir, which I most willingly tender you in court.”

She kissed him.

Lord Beaufort said, “And we do imitate —”

He kissed the disguised Frank.

Lady Frampul said, “And I could wish it had been twenty kisses — provided that Queen Prudence’s poor narrow nature had decreed it so. But that is past and irrevocable, now. She did what her nature allows according to her latitude —”

Queen Prudence said, “Beware you do not conjure up a spirit you cannot lay.”

She was in part being bawdy. The “spirit” that would be conjured up could be a penis. The expression, however, also means “Don’t start something you can’t finish.”

“I dare you!” Lady Frampul said. “Do your worst. Show me just such an injustice; I would thank you to alter your award.

She was saying that she wanted Queen Prudence to order that she — Lady Frampul — must kiss Lovel twenty times.

“Surely, she is serious!” Lord Latimer said. “I shall have another fit of jealousy. I feel a grudging vexation and secret desire!”

The Host said to Lovel, “Cheer up, noble guest! We cannot guess what this may come to yet. The brain of man or woman is uncertain.”

“Tut, Lady Frampul dissembles!” Lovel replied. “She is acting! All that comes from her is feigned and counterfeit. If it were not, the Spanish monarchy, with both the East and West Indies, could not buy off the treasure of this kiss, or half give balance for my happiness.”

The Host said, “Why, as it is yet, it gladdens my Light Heart to see you roused thus from a sleepy humor of drowsy, non-essential melancholy, and it gladdens my Light Heart to see all those brave parts of your soul awake that did before seem drowned and buried in you, so that you express yourself as if you had ridden the muse’s horse, or got Bellerophon’s weapons!”

Bellerophon was a warrior who captured and rode the winged horse Pegasus, which was the Muses’ horse. Bellerophon, however, attempted to ride Pegasus to the top of Mount Olympus so he could join the gods — an act of

hubris that motivated Jupiter, king of the gods, to send a gadfly to sting Pegasus. This caused Bellerophon to fall off Pegasus.

Fly entered the room.

The Host asked, “What is the news with Fly?”

Fly answered, “I bring news of a newer lady, a finer, fresher, braver, bonnier beauty, a very *bona-roba* — a showy woman — and a bouncer in yellow, glistening, golden satin!”

The showy woman could bounce while on top of a man in bed. Or she could simply be a loud woman and bounce her words around.

Lady Frampul said, “Pru, adjourn the court.”

Queen Prudence ordered, “Cry, Trundle!”

Trundle cried:

“Oyez, any man or woman who has any personal attendance to give to the court.

“Keep the second hour, and may Love save the Sovereign!”

ACT 4 (*The New Inn, or The Light Heart*)

— 4.1 —

Jug, Barnaby, and Jordan talked together. Barnaby was a hired coachman.

“Oh, Barnaby!” Jug said.

“Welcome, Barnaby!” Jordan said. “Where have you been?”

“In the foul weather,” Barnaby said.

“Which has wet you, Ban,” Jug said.

Barnaby said, “I’m as dry as a woodchip!”

He was referring to being thirsty.

He said, “Good Jug, a cast of your name, as well as your office; bring in two jugs!”

The word “cast” means “a couple,” but it is normally used when speaking of hawks. The word “cast” also means a quantity of ale — the amount made at one time.

“By and by,” Jug said.

He exited.

“What lady’s this you have brought here?” Jordan asked.

“She’s a great lady!” Barnaby said. “I know no more. She is one who will test you, Jordan. She’ll find your gauge, your circle, your capacity.”

A great lady can be well born, and a great lady can be a very big lady.

He was joking about the capacity of a jordan, aka chamber pot, but perhaps he was also joking about the size of Jordan’s sexual equipment.

Barnaby then asked, “How are old Stagers the blacksmith and Tree the saddler? Do they still keep their penny-club?”

In this society, friends who were members of the lower class would often contribute a penny for an entertainment, such as the drinking of alcohol.

Jordan answered, “And they keep the old catch — tune — too, of ‘Whoop Barnaby.’”

“Do they sing at me?” Barnaby asked.

“They’re rioting and reeling at it in the parlor now,” Jordan said.

Stagers and Tree were drinking and singing now.

Jug returned with the wine.

“I’ll go to them,” Barnaby said. “Give me a drink first.”

Jordan handed Barnaby a drink and asked, “Where’s your hat?”

“I lost it by the way as I was driving the carriage,” Barnaby said.

He drank and then said, “Give me another.”

“Another hat?” Jug asked.

“Another drink,” Barnaby said.

“Take heed of taking cold, Ban,” Jug said.

“Ban” was a nickname for Barnaby.

Barnaby said, “The wind blew my hat off at Highgate, and my lady would not allow me to alight to pick it up, but made me drive bare-headed in the rain.”

“So that she might be mistaken for a Countess?” Jordan asked.

In this society, the fashion was for the drivers of great personages such as Countesses to wear no hats.

“Truly, that is likely enough!” Barnaby said.

The lady he had driven was not a Countess, but she wished to appear to be a Countess.

Barnaby added, “She might be an over-grown Duchess, for all I know.”

As would soon become apparent, she was a very big woman.

“What, with one man?” Jug said.

He meant a single serving-man. A real Duchess would have more than one servant. This particular serving-man was not Barnaby, who was the woman’s hired driver.

Barnaby said, “At a time — they carry no more, the best of them.”

Barnaby was talking bawdily. In the missionary position, a woman carries the weight of a man. According to Barnaby, the best women carry no more than the weight of one man at a time.

Jordan said, “Nor do the splendidly dressed.”

“And she is very splendidly dressed!” Barnaby said about the woman he had driven.

Jordan said, “She has on a stately gown and petticoat!”

“Have you spied her petticoat, Jordan?” Barnaby said. “You’re a notable peerer, an old rabbi at a smock’s hem, boy.”

Rabbis have much knowledge. Barnaby was teasing Jordan by saying that Jordan’s specialized knowledge was about women.

Jug said, “As he is chamberlain, he may do that by his place.”

Chamberlains were in charge of bed-chambers and chamber-pots.

“What’s her squire?” Jordan asked.

The squire was her single serving-man: He was a personal attendant.

Barnaby answered, “Her squire is a toy, a plaything, to whom she gives an allowance of eight-pence a day. He is a slight mannet — a little man — to transport and squire her up and down.

“Come, show me to my playfellows: old Staggers and father Tree.”

“Here, this way, Barnaby,” Jordan said.

They exited.

— 4.2 —

Tiptoe, Bat Burst, Master Huffle, and Fly talked together in the courtyard of the inn.

Tiptoe said, “Come, let’s take in *fresco* — in the open air — here one quart.”

“Two quarts, my man-of-war, my warrior,” Bat Burst said. “Let’s not be stinted!”

Master Huffle called, “Advance three jordans, varlet of the house.”

He was ordering three pots of wine. Apparently, Fly would not get a pot.

Tiptoe whispered to Fly, “I do not like your Burst, bird; he is saucy. He was some shopkeeper?”



“Yes, sir,” Fly answered.

Tiptoe whispered, “I knew it. He was a broken-winged, bankrupt shopkeeper! I nose — detect — them immediately. He had no father, I am sure, who dared to acknowledge that Bat Burst was his son. He was some foundling in a stable, or the church porch, brought up in Christ’s Hospital for poor children, and so bound to be an apprentice. Then he was master of a shop, and then one of the Court of Inquest, which judges cases involving debts of under forty shillings. Then he went bankrupt, or leapt to the position of an alderman. The original — the origin — of both bankrupts and aldermen is a church porch.”

Bat Burst was probably a defendant in the Court of Inquest, not one of the jurors.

Unwanted babies were left on church porches.

Aldermen are civil officers, or they are the head, master, or warden of a trade guild.

“The original of some, my colonel,” Fly said.

Tiptoe said, “In good faith, a church porch is the original of most of your shop citizens; they’re rude animals! And let them get but ten miles out of town, they will out-swagger all the wapentake.”

Tiptoe had little respect for the aldermen whom he called shop citizens.

“What’s that?” Fly asked.

Tiptoe answered, “A Saxon word to signify the hundred.”

They were referring to sub-divisions of English counties.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, another kind of alderman is “The senior judicial person in an English hundred.”

Some aldermen of a lower status such as those in trade guilds would pretend to be aldermen of a different, higher-status kind once they were among people who did not know them.

Pierce Anon came over to them, set down three pots of wine, and exited.

Bat Burst said, “Come, let us drink, Sir Glorious, some brave health upon our tiptoes.”

His words were ambiguous. They could mean: 1) Let’s drink a health — draught — to the Tiptoes, or 2) While we drink, let’s stand on our tiptoes.

Tiptoe raised his jug and said, “To the health of the Bursts!”

His words were ambiguous. They could mean: 1) Let’s drink a health — draught — to the Bursts, or 2) Let’s drink a health — draught — to the bankrupts.

One meaning of “burst” is “bankrupt.”

“Why Bursts?” Bat Burst asked.

“Why Tiptoes?” Tiptoe asked.

“Oh, I beg your mercy!” Bat Burst said, apologizing.

“It is sufficient,” Tiptoe said.

“What is so sufficient?” Master Huffle asked.

“To drink to you is sufficient,” Tiptoe said.

“On what terms?” Master Huffle asked.

He was suspicious.

Tiptoe replied, “That you shall give security to pledge me.”

In some circumstances, a man who was going to drink would ask someone to pledge him — to guard him while he was drinking — because a man who is drinking is in a vulnerable

position if enemies are near him. A drinking man's throat is exposed.

Tiptoe, however, should have been among friends. By asking Master Huffle to pledge — to guard — him, he was implying that Bat Burst was his — Tiptoe's — enemy.

Master Huffle said, "As long as you will name no Spaniard, I will pledge you."

In England, the Spanish were in bad repute because of the Spanish Armada, which attempted to escort an army from Flanders to England in 1588.

Master Huffle disliked the Spaniards; Tiptoe loved the Spaniards.

Master Huffle did not want Tiptoe to drink to any Spaniard.

Tiptoe said, "I rather choose to thirst, and will thirst forever, than leave that cream of nations unpraised. Perish all wine and liking for wine!"

He spilled his drink on Master Huffle. Deliberately doing this, of course, was an insult.

Master Huffle said, "What, spill it? Spill it at me?"

He was asking if the spill was deliberate.

"I care not, but I spilt it," Tiptoe said.

He did not care for Master Huffle, but he was not quite saying that he spilled the drink on Master Huffle on purpose.

"Nay, please be quiet, noble bloods," Fly said.

He did not want them to fight.

Bat Burst said, "No Spaniards I cry, with my cousin Huffle."

Bat Burst was another person who did not like the Spaniards.

“Spaniards?” Master Huffle said. “They are pilchers!”

Pilchers are thieves.

“Do not provoke my patient blade,” Tiptoe said with his hand on the hilt of his sword. “It sleeps and would not hear you; Huffle, you are rude and do not know the Spanish mental and physical constitution.”

“What is the recipe?” Bat Burst asked. “Name the ingredients.”

Tiptoe said, “Valor —”

“Two ounces of valor!” Bat Burst said.

Tiptoe said, “Prudence —”

“Half a dram!” Bat Burst said.

A dram is one-eighth of an ounce in Apothecaries’ weight, and one-sixteenth of an ounce in Avoirdupois weight. The Apothecaries’ grain equals the troy.

Tiptoe said, “Justice —”

“A pennyweight of justice!” Bat Burst said.

A pennyweight is one-twentieth of an ounce.

Tiptoe said, “Religion —”

“Three scruples of religion!” Bat Burst said.

A scruple is one twenty-fourth of an ounce.

Tiptoe said, “And of a *gravedàd* —”

*Gravedàd* is Spanish for gravity and dignity.

“A face-full of *gravedàd*!” Bat Burst said.

He meant that Spaniards had only the appearance of *gravedàd*.

Tiptoe said, “The typical Spaniard carries such a dose of it in his looks, actions, and gestures that it breeds respect to him even from savages, and reputation with all the sons of men.”

Bat Burst asked, “Will it give him credit with gamblers, courtiers, citizens, or tradesmen?”

“He’ll borrow money on the stroke of his beard, or the twist of an end of his *mustaccio* [mustache]!” Tiptoe said. “His mere *cuello*, or ruff about his neck, is a bill of exchange in any bank in Europe! Not a merchant who sees his gait but will immediately furnish him upon his pace!”

A glance at a well-dressed Spaniard as he walked would be enough to show that he deserved credit.

Master Huffle said, “I have heard that the Spanish name is terrible to children in some countries, and it is used to make them eat their bread and butter, or take their wormseed — their extract of wormwood.”

In other words: Children, eat your food and take your medicine, or the Spanish boogeyman will get you.

Supposedly, wormseed aided digestion.

“Huffle, you do shuffle,” Tiptoe said. “Your arguments are shifty.”

Pinnacia and a squire arrived and walked over to them. They were the “Countess” and her servant who had arrived with the hired driver Barnaby.

Pinnacia was much bigger than her squire: her personal servant. She was well dressed indeed — like a high-born lady.

“By God’s eyelid, here’s a lady!” Bat Burst said.

“And a lady gay!” Master Huffle said.

A pinnacle is a boat, and Tiptoe, Huffle, and Bat Burst used nautical words to talk about Pinnacia.

“A well-trimmed lady!” Tiptoe said.

“Well-trimmed” meant “well-dressed,” but to trim someone was to cheat that person.

“Let’s lay her aboard,” Master Huffle said.

“Lay her aboard” meant “approach her,” but the words also have a sexual meaning.

“Let’s hail her first,” Bat Burst said.

Tiptoe said to Pinnacia, “By your sweet favor, lady —”

Pinnacia’s squire said, “Good gentlemen, be civil; we are strangers. We are visitors.”

Bat Burst said, “We will treat you as if you were Flemings, sir!”

Bat Burst was saying that they would be welcome. The Dutch had an international reputation for heavy drinking, and so they were very welcome at an inn.

“Or Spaniards!” Master Huffle said.

“There are people here who have been at Seville in their days, and at Madrid, too!” Tiptoe said.

Pinnacia said about her squire, “He is a foolish fellow. I ask you to ignore him: He is my Protection.”

“In your protection he is safe, sweet lady,” Tiptoe said. “So shall you be in mine.”

Pinnacia was much larger than her squire.

“A share, good colonel,” Master Huffle said.

“A share of what?” Tiptoe asked.

“Of your fine lady!” Master Huffle said.

He then said to Pinnacia, “I am Hodge; my name is Huffle.”

“Huffle” means “bluster.” “Hodge” is a nickname for someone named Roger.

Tiptoe said, “Huffling Hodge, be quiet.”

“And I ask you to also be quiet, glorious colonel,” Bat Burst said. “Hodge Huffle shall be quiet.”

Master Huffle immediately began to sing:

*“A lady gay, gay.*

*“For she is a lady gay, gay, gay.*

*“For she’s a lady gay.”*

Angry, Tiptoe said, “Bird of the vespers, *vespertilio* Burst, you are a gentleman of the first head, but that head may be broken, as all the body is, Burst, unless you tie up your Huffle, quickly.”

A bird of the vespers is a bird of the evening. A bird of night is a thief.

*Vespertilio* is Latin for “bat.”

A “gentleman of the first head” is a social upstart; it means the first gentleman in a family, as opposed to a family with many ancestors who were gentlemen.

Master Huffle said, “Tie up dogs. Do not tie up a man.”

“Nay, please, Hodge, be still,” Bat Burst said.

“This steel here rides not on this thigh in vain,” Tiptoe said about his sword.

Master Huffle said, “Do you show your steel and thigh, you vain-glorious excrement? Then Hodge sings the ballad ‘Samson,’ and no ties shall hold.”

In Judges 16:6-14, Samson had Delilah tie him up, and then he broke the bonds.

Tiptoe and Master Huffle fought.

Hearing the noise, Pierce Anon, Jug, and Jordan entered the scene.

Pierce Anon said, “Keep the peace, gentlemen. What do you mean by fighting?”

“I will not discompose myself — ruin my composure — for Huffle,” Tiptoe said.

Fighting, or attempting to stop the fighting, everyone exited, except Pinnacia and her squire.

Pinnacia said to her squire, “You see what your entreaty and pressure still of gentlemen to be civil brings on?”

True, her squire had asked the gentlemen to be civil, but they had ended up fighting.

Pinnacia continued, “A quarrel, and perhaps manslaughter! You will carry your goose about you still, your planing-iron, your tongue to smooth everything! Is not here fine stuff?”

A “goose” is 1) a smoothing-iron (the handle resembled a goose), and 2) a swelling caused by venereal disease.

“Why, wife —” her squire said.

Pinnacia interrupted, “— your wife! Haven’t I forbidden you that? Do you think I’ll call you husband in this gown, or anything in that jacket but Protection? Here, tie my shoe and show my velvet petticoat and my silk stocking! Why do you make me a lady if I may not act like a lady in fine clothes?”



Her squire wore the velvet jacket of a footman; his wife was dressed like a fine lady. She was playing the role of a fine lady, and her husband was playing the role of a servant.

“Sweetheart, you may do what you will with me,” her squire said.

“Aye, I knew that at home,” Pinnacia said. “I knew what to do with you. But why was I brought here? To see fashions?”

“To see fashions” meant “to learn people’s ways.”

Her squire replied, “And wear them, too, sweetheart, but this wild company —”

“Why do you bring me in wild company?” Pinnacia asked. “You’d have me tame and civil in wild company? I hope I know wild company are fine company, and in fine company, where I am fine myself, a lady may do anything, deny nothing to a fine party. I have heard you say it.”

Pierce Anon entered the room, walked over to them, and said, “There is a company of ladies above — on the upper floor of the inn — who desire Your Ladyship’s company, and to take the safety of their lodgings away from the attack of these half-beasts, which were here even now, the Centaurs.”

When Pirithous, the King of the Lapiths, married Hippodamia, he invited the half-man, half-horse Centaurs to the wedding feast. The Centaurs got drunk and tried to rape Hippodamia and carry away the Lapith women. Pirithous and the Lapiths fought back and defeated the Centaurs.

“Are they fine ladies?” Pinnacia asked.

“Some very fine ladies,” Pierce Anon answered.

“As fine as I?” Pinnacia asked.

Pierce Anon replied, “I dare not make any comparisons because I am a servant, sent —”

Pinnacia interrupted, “Spoken like a fine fellow! I wish you were one; I’d not then deny you, but thank your lady.”

By “one,” she meant “servant,” aka male admirer of a lady.

Pierce Anon exited, and the Host entered the room and walked over to them and said, “Madam, I must request that you afford a lady a visit — a lady who wishes to excuse some harshness of the house you have received from the brute guests.”

Some of the things the men had said about her were not complimentary, and they had quarreled in her presence.

“This is a fine old man!” Pinnacia said. “I’d go with him if he were a little finer!”

She may have meant that she would have an affair with the Host if he were of a higher social class.

“You may, sweetheart,” her squire said. “It is my Host.”

He meant that she could go with the Host as he escorted her to the ladies on the upper floor of the inn.

“My Host!” Pinnacia said.

She was surprised that he was the Host of the inn.

“Yes, madam,” the Host said. “I must bid you welcome.”

“Do, then,” Pinnacia said.

“But do not stay,” her squire said.

“I’ll be advised by you, yes!” Pinnacia said.

She meant: I’ll be advised by you — fat chance!

They went into the inn.

Lord Latimer, Lord Beaufort, Lady Frampul, Prudence, the disguised Frank, and the Nurse talked together.

Referring to the fight between Tiptoe and Master Huffle that had recently ended, Lord Latimer asked, “What more-than-Thracian barbarism was this?”

The Thracians worshipped Bacchus, god of wine, and they worshipped Mars, god of war. Tiptoe and Master Huffle had been drinking and fighting.

“The battle of the Centaurs with the Lapiths!” Lord Beaufort said.

“There is no taming of the monster drink,” Lady Frampul said.

Drinking leads to many unnecessary fights.

“But what a glorious beast our Tiptoe showed!” Lord Latimer said. “He would not discompose — ruin his composure — himself, the Don! Your Spaniard never does discompose himself.”

“Don” is a Spanish title.

“Yet how Tiptoe talked and roared in the beginning!” Lord Beaufort said.

Prudence said, “And ran as fast as a knocked marrowbone —”

People knocked bones sharply to get the marrow to run out.

“So they all did at last, when Lovel went down and chased them around the court,” Lord Beaufort said.

Lord Latimer said, “For all Tiptoe’s Don Luis, or fencing after Euclid!”

Lovel had showed himself to be a good fencer. Tiptoe had not.

Lady Frampul said, “I never saw a lightning-bolt shoot so as my servant Lovel did. His rapier was a meteor, and he waved it over them like a comet as they fled from him!”

Comets and meteors were bad omens. Lovel was a bad omen for Tiptoe and Master Huffle.

Lady Frampul continued, “I noted Lovel’s manhood! Every stoop he made was like an eagle’s at a flight of cranes (as I have read somewhere).

Sophocles’ *Ajax* has a speech that describes how a flock of chattering birds react with terror and silence when the birds see an eagle.

“Splendidly expressed,” Lord Beaufort said about Lady Frampul’s words.

“And like a lover!” Lord Latimer said.

“Of Lovel’s valor, I am!” Lady Frampul said. “He seemed to be a body rarified to air, or it seemed that his sword and arm were of one piece — they went together so!”

The Host and Pinnacia entered the room.

“Here comes the lady, ” Lady Frampul said.

“A bouncing *bona-roba*, as the Fly said,” Lord Beaufort said.

“She is some giantess!” the disguised Frank said. “I’ll stand off to the side for fear she will swallow me.”

Lady Frampul looked over the silk gown that Pinnacia was wearing and asked, “Isn’t this our gown, Pru, that I ordered from my tailor?”

“It is the fashion you ordered!” Prudence said.

“Aye, and the same silk!” Lady Frampul said.

She felt the silk gown and said to Prudence, “Feel it! Surely, it is the same silk!”

Prudence felt the silk and saw the bottom of the petticoat that Pinnacia was wearing under the gown.

She said, “And it is the same petticoat, lace and all!”

When Lady Frampul had ordered the gown and petticoat from Stuff, she had supplied Stuff with the materials needed to make the clothing. Now she and Prudence recognized the silk cloth and the lace.

“I’ll swear it is mine,” Lady Frampul said. “How did it come to be here? Make a bill — a writ — of inquiry.”

Prudence said to Pinnacia, “You’ve a fine suit of clothing on, madam, and a rich one!”

“And of a skillful making!” Lady Frampul said.

“And it’s new!” Prudence said

Pinnacia replied, “As new as day.”

Lord Latimer said to the others, “She answers like a fishwife.”

Fishwives advertised their fish as being “As new — fresh — as day.”

“I put it on since noon, I assure you,” Pinnacia said.

“Who is your tailor?” Prudence asked.

“I tell you to tell me, what is your fashioner’s name?” Lady Frampul said.

A fashioner is a tailor.

“My fashioner is a certain man of my own,” Pinnacia said. “He’s in the house; his name doesn’t matter.”

The Host said, “Oh, but to satisfy this bevy of ladies, of whom a pair here longed to bid you welcome, tell them his name.”

The pair of ladies who had asked Pinnacia to visit them were Lady Frampul and Prudence.

“He’s one, in truth, I tittle my Protection,” Pinnacia said.

She then said to the Host, “Tell him to come up here.”

The Host called downstairs, “Our new lady’s Protection!”

He asked Pinnacia, “What is Your Ladyship’s title?”

She replied, “Countess Pinnacia.”

The Host called downstairs, “Countess Pinnacia’s manservant, come to your lady!”

Her squire entered the room.

He was immediately recognized.

Prudence said to Lady Frampul, “This is your Ladyship’s tailor: Master Stuff!”

“What!” Lady Frampul said. “Stuff? He is the Protection?”

Stuff was a small man; bodyguards tend to be large.

The Host said, “Stuff looks like a remnant — a scrap — of clothing.”

Stuff was very small compared to the size of his wife.

Falling to his knees, Stuff said, “I am ruined. I have been discovered!”

Prudence said to Lady Frampul, “It is the suit of clothing you ordered, madam, now without doubt. And this is some device to bring it home with.”

“To bring it home” means to complete the task. Completing the task meant delivering the gown to Lady Frampul, who had ordered it.

Pinnacia asked Stuff the tailor, “Why are you upon your knees? Is this your lady godmother?”

“Mum, Pinnacia, be quiet,” Stuff said. “It is the Lady Frampul, my best customer.”

“What dramatic show is this that you present us with?” Lady Frampul asked. “What do you mean by this?”

“I beg Your Ladyship, forgive me,” Stuff said. “She did but assay — try — the suit of clothing on.”

“Who?” Lady Frampul said. “Which she?”

“My wife, indeed,” Stuff said.

Pinnacia was Stuff’s wife.

“What? Mistress Stuff? Your wife!” Lady Frampul said. “Is that the answer to the riddle?”

The riddle was this: Who is Pinnacia?

Prudence said, “We all looked for a lady — a Duchess or a Countess at the least — to be the answer to the riddle.”

Stuff said, “She is my own lawfully begotten wife in wedlock. We have been coupled now seven years.”

He meant “lawfully gotten,” not “lawfully begotten.”

“And why is she thus disguised?” Lady Frampul said. “You are dressed like a footman, ha? And she is your Countess?”

A Countess would ride in the coach, while the footman would run alongside the coach.

Answering the question why she was dressed like a lady and her husband was dressed like a footman or squire, Pinnacia said, “To make a fool of himself, and of me, too.”

“I beg you, Pinnace, be quiet,” Stuff said.

Pinnacia replied, “Nay, it shall all come out, since you have called me your wife and openly dis-ladied me! Although I am dis-countessed, I am not yet dis-countenanced. These shall see.”

“Silence!” the Host said.

Ignoring the Host, Pinnacia said, “It is a foolish trick, madam, he has. For although he is your tailor, he is my beast.”

Ben Jonson’s Epigram 25 is titled “Sir Voluptuous Beast.” It is about a husband who has sex with his wife while she is dressed in various outfits.

Pinnacia continued, “I may be bold with him and tell his story. When he makes any fine garment that will fit me, or any rich thing that he thinks of worth, then I must put it on and be his Countess before he carries it to the owners.

“He hires a coach and four horses, and he runs in his velvet jacket thus to the towns of Romford, Croydon, Hounslow, or Barnet, the next bawdy road, and he takes me out of the carriage, carries me upstairs, and throws me upon a bed —”

Stuff’s fetish was having sex with his wife while she was pretending to be a great lady.

Shocked, Lady Frampul said, “Be silent, you immodest woman!”



Lady Frampul then said to the others, “She glories in the bravery of the vice.”

“It is a quaint vice!” Lord Latimer punned.

In this society, the word “quaint” can also mean “cunt.”

Lord Beaufort said, “A fine species — kind — of fornicating with a man’s own wife, found out by — what’s his name?”

“Master Nick Stuff,” Lord Latimer said.

This was a way of committing adultery without committing adultery: Have the wife pretend to be another woman.

The Host said, “The very figure of preoccupation in all his customers’ best clothes.”

Pinnacia occupied the clothing before Stuff’s customers received it, while Stuff occupied — that is, stuffed — his wife’s vagina before his customers received the clothing.

Lord Latimer said, “He lies with his own succuba in all your names.”

Stuff could pretend that Pinnacia was Lady Frampul.

A succuba is a female demon that has sex with men while they are sleeping.

Lord Beaufort said, “And all your credits.”

“Credits” meant 1) cloth that had been provided to the tailor to make clothing from, and 2) reputations.

“Aye, and at all their costs,” the Host said.

They were scandalized. They regarded it as immoral for a person to dress above his or her station. Pinnacia was NOT a countess. In some times and places, dressing above one’s station in life was illegal.

Lord Latimer asked, "This gown was then bespoken for the sovereign?"

The sovereign was "Queen" Prudence. Lady Frampul had ordered the gown so that Prudence could wear it as she played the role of Queen of the Festivities at the Light Heart Inn.

"Aye, by the Virgin Mary, it was," Lord Beaufort said.

Lady Frampul said, "And it is a main offence committed against the sovereignty, being not brought home to me in the time appointed; beside the profanation, which may call on the sentence of the court."

The profanation was Pinnacia's wearing the gown.

Such an offence and a profanation ought to be punished.

The Host said, "Let him be blanketed. Call up the quartermaster. Deliver him over to Fly."

If Nick Stuff were to be blanketed, he would be tossed in a blanket.

"Oh, my good lord!" Stuff said.

"Pillage the pinnace," the Host said.

"Let his wife be stripped," Lady Frampul said.

"Blow off her upper deck!" Lord Beaufort said.

"Tear all her tackle!" Lord Latimer said.

"Pluck the polluted robes over her ears, or cut them all to pieces," Lady Frampul said. "Make a fire of them!"

Prudence said, "To rags and cinders burn the idolatrous vestures!"

Fly and some other servants entered the room. Having heard the commotion, they had been listening outside the room.

The Host said, “Fly and your fellows, see that the whole sentence is thoroughly executed.”

“We’ll toss him bravely until the stuff stink again,” Fly said.

Fly was threatening to toss Stuff in the air until he soiled his clothing.

The Host added, “And send her home, divested to her flannel, in a cart.”

Lord Latimer said, “And let her footman beat the basin before her.”

In this culture, prostitutes were stripped and sometimes whipped, and then they walked behind or stood in a cart as they were paraded around town while someone beat on a basin to attract notice. People rented basins from barbers or used their own basins to beat on and make noise.

“The court shall be obeyed,” Fly said.

“Fly and his officers will do it fiercely,” the Host said.

“Merciful Queen Pru!” Stuff said, appealing to her good nature.

“I cannot help you,” Prudence said.

Fly exited with Stuff and Pinnacia.

“Go on your ways, Nick Stuff,” Lord Beaufort said. “You have nicked it for a fashioner of venery.”

For a long time, Stuff had nicked — stolen — the use of the clothing. He had also “nicked it” — that is, hit the target. In this case, the target was his wife’s vagina.

Lord Latimer said, “For his own hell, though he run ten miles for it.”

In this culture, the word “hell” could mean “vagina.”

“Oh, here comes Lovel for his second hour,” Prudence said.

She would be Queen Prudence again.

Lord Beaufort said, “And after him comes the type and image of Spanish valor.”

He was referring to Tiptoe.

— 4.4 —

Carrying a paper, Lovel entered the room. Tiptoe followed him.

Lady Frampul asked Lovel, “Servant, what have you there?”

This kind of servant was a man who loved and served a woman.

Lovel replied, “A meditation, or rather a vision and revelation, madam, and it is about beauty, our former subject.”

In their first hour together in Queen Prudence’s Court of Love, Lovel and Lady Frampul had talked about love and beauty.

“Please let us hear it,” Lady Frampul said.

Lovel read out loud:

*“It was a beauty that I saw,*

*“So pure, so perfect, as [that] the frame*

*“Of all the universe was lame [defective]*

*“To [Compared to] that one figure, could I draw*

*“Or give least line of it a law!*

*“A skein of silk without a knot!*

*“A fair march [gait] made without a halt [without limping]!*

*“A curious [artful] form without a fault!*

*“A printed book without a blot.*

*“All beauty, and without a spot.”*

Lady Frampul said, “They are noble words, and they deserve a note — music — set to them as noble as the words.”

Lovel, the author of the lines, replied, “I have tried my skill to close the second hour, if you will hear them. My boy by that time will have got it perfect.”

His serving-boy would have learned the lines by then, and he would sing them at the close of the second hour in the Court of Love.

Lady Frampul said to Lovel, “Yes, gentle servant. I would like to hear the lines sung.”

She then said to herself, “With what calm he speaks after this noise and tumult, so unmoved, with that serenity of countenance as if his thoughts did acquiesce and rest satisfied in that which is the object of the second hour and nothing else!”

The topic of the second hour would be valor — courage. Lady Frampul knew that because she was the person who would propose that topic.

Queen Prudence said, “Well, then, summon the court.”

Lady Frampul said, “I have a suit to the sovereign of Love, if it may stand with and be consistent with the honor of the

court, to change the topic from love to valor, in order to hear it said what true valor is, which often begets true love.”

For the first hour, they had talked about love. Now they would talk about courage. A man who shows that he is courageous, as Lovel had done, often deserves — and gets — love.

Lord Latimer said, “It is a question fit for the court to take true knowledge and cognizance of, and the change to this topic of valor has my just assent.”

“I am content,” Queen Prudence said, agreeing with Lord Latimer.

“I am content,” Lord Beaufort said.

“Content,” the disguised Frank said. “I am content. Give him his oath.”

The Host said, “Herbert Lovel, you shall swear upon *The Testament of Love* to make answer to this question propounded to you by the court: What is true valor?”

*The Testament of Love* is a medieval romance by Thomas Usk. Medieval romances were about both love and valor. Hero-knights followed the Code of Chivalry, performed daring deeds, and idealized women.

The Host continued, “And therein you shall swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help thee, Love, and your bright sword at need.”

Lovel put his hand on the book and swore, “So help me, Love, and my good sword at need!”

He then began to explain what true valor is:

“It is the greatest virtue, and the safety and safeguard and confidence of all mankind; the object of it is danger. It is a certain mean in between fear and over-confidence.”

He was referring to Aristotle's ethical theory of the mean between extremes. Valor (true courage) is the mean (middle) between too much courage (rashness) and too little courage (cowardice).

Lovel continued, "True valor is no inconsiderate rashness. It is no vain appetite and rashness of wrongly encountering formidable things.

"But true valor is a true science of distinguishing what's good or evil. It springs out of reason and tends to perfect honor; the end goal of true valor is always honor and the public good.

"An act is not valorous if it is done for a private cause or reason."

"It isn't?" Lord Beaufort asked. "Not for a reputation?"

He believed that a man could choose to be courageous in order to get a good reputation.

For example, a man who fought duels could get a reputation for valor.

Lovel replied, "Reputation is man's idol set up against God, the maker of all laws, who has commanded us that we should not kill, and yet we say we must kill for reputation."

Dueling for honor sometimes resulted in a death.

Lovel continued, "What honest man can either fear for his own reputation, or else will hurt another's reputation?"

"Fear to do base, unworthy things is valor. If base, unworthy things are done to us, to suffer and endure them is valor, too.

"The duty of a man who is truly valiant is worthy of consideration in three ways:

“The first is in respect of matter and cause, which always is danger.

“The second is in respect of form, wherein he must preserve his dignity.

“And the third is in the end, which must be always lawful.”

A valiant man who takes action must do so in a dangerous situation (if valor is to be involved), must do so in a way that preserves and protects his dignity, and must do so to accomplish a lawful end or goal — he must take action for a good reason and a good cause.

Lord Latimer objected, “But men, when they are heated and in passion, cannot consider.”

He was saying that sometimes when a man is angry, the man must act in a dangerous situation without first taking the time to think things through.

“Then it is not valor,” Lovel replied. “I never thought an angry person valiant. Virtue is never aided by a vice. What need is there of anger and of violent, tumultuous emotion, when reason can do the same things, or more?”

Lord Beaufort objected, “Oh, yes, it — anger — is profitable, and of use. It makes us fierce and fit to undertake an enterprise.”

Lovel replied, “Why, so will alcoholic drinks make us both bold and rash, and so will frenzy and madness, if you will. But do these make us valiant?”

“They are poor helps, and virtue does not need them.

“No man is made more valiant by being angry, except he who could not be valiant without anger; so that it comes not in the aid of virtue but in the stead of it.”

“He holds the right,” Lord Latimer said.



Lovel held the right opinion: He was making sense.

Lovel continued, “And it is an odious kind of remedy to owe our health to a disease.”

Tiptoe said, “If man should follow the dictamen — order or pronouncement — of his passion, he could not avoid or escape —”

Lord Beaufort finished Tiptoe’s sentence, “— discomposing himself.”

“Discomposing himself” meant “ruining his composure.”

Tiptoe had been angry at Bat Burst and Master Huffle. They had fought, but when Lovel had drawn his rapier and chased them Tiptoe had been discomposed — he had run away instead of showing valor.

Lord Latimer said, “According to Don Luis!”

“Or Carranza!” the Host said.

Don Luis and Carranza were two of Tiptoe’s favorite Spanish authorities on fencing.

Lovel said to Tiptoe, “Good Colonel Glorious, while we discuss valor, dismiss yourself.”

“You are not concerned,” Lord Latimer said.

Tiptoe had not shown valor, and so he ought not to participate in a discussion of true valor.

Lovel said to Tiptoe, “Go drink, and gather together the ostlers and the tapsters, the under-officers of your regiment; compose — make — your peace with them, and be not angry-valiant!”

Tiptoe, who had been angry but who had not been valiant in the recent fight, exited. In his case, anger was in the stead of valor and virtue.

“How does angry-valor differ from true valor?” Lord Beaufort asked.

Lovel said:

“Thus:

“First, it differs in the efficient, or that which makes it, for it proceeds from passion, not from judgment.

“Second, it differs in that brute beasts have it, and wicked persons — there it differs in the subject.

“Third, it differs in the form. It is carried out rashly and with violence.

“Fourth and finally, it differs in the end, where it does not respect and regard truth or public honor, but only pure revenge.

“Now, over-confident and undertaking — rebuking — valor sways from the true valor in two other ways:

“First, as being a trust in our own faculties, skill, or strength, and not a trust in the right or conscience (sense of right and wrong) of the cause that works it.

“And second, in the end, which is the victory and not the honor.”

Lord Beaufort said, “But the ignorant valor that knows not why it undertakes, but does it to escape the infamy and bad reputation merely —”

Lovel interrupted and finished Lord Beaufort’s sentence, “— is worst of all.”

He then said, “That kind of valor lies in the eyes of the on-lookers, and it is called valor with a witness — and it is valor with a vengeance.”

“Right,” Lord Beaufort said.

Lovel said, “The things true valor is exercised about are poverty, restraint, captivity, banishment, loss of children, and long disease. The least thing it is concerned about is death.”

True valor is used in the fight against poverty, restraint, captivity, banishment, loss of children, and long disease.

For example, health-care workers show valor when they take care of people who are ill with a contagious disease. The health-care workers may catch the disease.

Lovel continued:

“Here valor is beheld, properly seen; about these it is present.

“Valor is not beheld in trivial things, which merely require our confidence. Valor is more than confidence.

“And yet to those bad things — poverty, restraint, captivity, banishment, loss of children, and long disease — we must object and we must subject and expose ourselves, only for honor; if any other consideration be mixed with honor, we quite put out valor’s light.”

This kind of honor is gained through taking action.

Lovel continued:

“And as all knowledge, when it is removed or separated from justice, is called craft rather than wisdom, so a mind affecting or undertaking dangers for ambition or any personal pretext, not for the public, deserves the name of daring, not the name of valor, and over-daring is as great a vice as over-fearing.”

“Yes, and often greater,” Lord Latimer said.

Lovel said, “But as it is not the mere punishment, but the cause that makes a martyr, so it is not fighting or dying, but the manner of it that renders a man himself.

“A valiant man ought not to undergo or test a danger except worthily, and by selected ways: He undertakes the dangerous venture with reason, not by chance.

“His valor is the salt to his other virtues; they are all unseasoned without it. The waiting-maids, or the concomitants — ancillary effects — of it, are his patience, his magnanimity, his confidence, and his constancy, calmness, and peace of mind.

“He can assure himself against all rumor, he despairs of nothing, and he laughs at insults because he knows himself to be advanced in a height where injury cannot reach him nor aspersion touch him with disgrace!”

Lady Frampul said, “This is the most manly uttered of all!

“It is as if Achilles had the chair in valor, and Hercules were only a lecturer!”

Lady Frampul was rating Achilles, the greatest warrior of the Trojan War, above Hercules, the great PanHellenic hero.

Achilles became angry at Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces arrayed against Troy, and so Achilles stopped fighting. Many Greek warriors died because their best fighter was staying in his camp and was not on the battlefield. Later, Hector, the greatest warrior of the Trojans, killed Patroclus, Achilles’ best friend, in battle. Out of anger, Achilles killed Hector and desecrated his body.

Hercules sometimes became insane (due to the machinations of the goddess Juno, who hated him), and he sometimes became drunk. In a fit of insanity he killed his wife and

children. Hercules was a formidable killing machine, and he fought and killed monsters.

Both Achilles and Hector are thought of as men of valor, yet both sometimes acted out of anger or insanity, and so in those cases they were not measuring up to Lovel's definition of true valor.

Perhaps Lady Frampul was acting and so she was not really in love with Lovel.

And yet, at the end of the *Iliad*, Achilles gives up his anger, accepts the death of Patroclus, and allows Hector's father, King Priam, to ransom Hector's corpse so that he can give his son a decent burial and allow Hector's soul to enter the Land of the Dead. Achilles begins to fight again, not out of anger, but out of belief that he is fighting for a just cause: It was the Trojan prince Paris who ran away with the lawfully wedded wife of King Menelaus of Sparta — a violation of *xenia*, aka hospitality.

Perhaps Achilles is more valiant than Hercules.

And perhaps Lady Frampul was not acting and so she was really in love with Lovel.

Lady Frampul said, "Who would not hang upon those lips forever — those lips that strike such music? I could discourse about them, but modesty is such a schoolmistress that it keeps our sex in awe."

Queen Prudence said, "Or you can feign, my subtle and dissembling lady mistress!"

She thought that Lady Frampul was acting a role.

"I fear she means it, Pru, in too good earnest!" Lord Latimer said.

Lovel continued his discourse on true valor:

“The purpose of an injury or insult is to vex and trouble me. Now, nothing can do that to a man who is valiant.

“He who is affected with the least injury is less than it. It is but reasonable to conclude that that which hurts should be stronger still than that which is hurt.

“Now, no wickedness is stronger than what opposes it: Even Lady Fortune’s self, when she encounters virtue, leaves the field of battle both lame and less.”

Say that every day a bully beats up a smaller child. Every day the smaller child fights back but is defeated. Which person shows valor? Which person shows virtue? The bully who picks the fight, knowing that he will win, or the smaller child who fights back, knowing that he will lose? Should the smaller child feel worthless because he lost, or should he feel worthy because he resisted injustice? If the smaller child is worthy and the bully is unworthy, should we say that the bully is stronger?

Of course, the bully is physically stronger, but other kinds of strength exist. For example, strength of character exists.

Is it stronger to be valiant and virtuous or is it stronger to be a bully and unvirtuous?

Level continued:

“Why should a wise man, then, confess himself the weaker, by the feeling of a fool’s wrong?”

“There may an injury or insult be meant me. I may choose if I will accept it.”

In some societies, master fighters — such as samurai — decline to fight someone whom they think is unworthy. They will fight only people whom they respect. Bullies, however, fight those they do not respect — they fight those whom they are sure they can defeat.

If a fool insults you, should you be insulted? Or should you ignore the insult because it comes from a fool and you don't care what fools think?

Tiptoe, as well as Bat Burst and Master Huffle, were all fools who insulted each other and fought each other.

Lovel continued, "But we are now come to that delicacy and tenderness of sense that we think an insolence worse than an injury — we bear words worse than deeds. We are not so much troubled with the wrong as with the opinion of the wrong. Like children, we are made afraid with visors and masks and disguises."

In Homer's *Iliad*, Hector returns to Troy to ask his mother to pray to the gods, and while he is there, he is able to see his wife and his young son, who screams with fear when he sees Hector wearing his helmet. When Hector takes off his helmet, his son recognizes him and stops crying.

Lovel continued, "Such poor sounds as is the lie or common words of spite, wise laws thought never worthy a revenge. And it is the narrowness of human nature, our poverty and beggary of spirit, to take exception at these things.

"He laughed at me! He made a joke at my expense! A third took place of me!"

This society took social position seriously. For example, people of the upper classes entered a room in order of precedence. The person of highest social position entered the room first, followed by the others in order of descending social position. People sometimes argued about who should go before the other. In fact, heralds of the College of Heralds decided who had precedence over another person.

Lovel continued:

"How so very ridiculous are all these quarrels!

“They are signs of a queasy and sick stomach, laboring with lack of a true injury. The main part of the wrong is our vice of taking it.”

“Or our interpreting it to be such,” Lord Latimer said.

Lovel replied, “You take it rightly.

“If a woman or child should call me a liar, would I be angry?

“No, not if I were in my wits. Surely, I would think it no kind of a disgrace. No more is theirs a disguise, if I will think it, if given by those who are to be held in as contemptible a rank or worse.

“I am kept out of a masque, sometimes thrust out of one, or I am made to wait a day, two, three, for a word from a person of great social position, a word that, when it comes forth, is all frown and impudence.”

In this culture, sometimes a masque — an entertainment featuring masked performers — would have too many people attending it, and the people of greater social rank would throw out people of lower social rank.

“What laughter should this breed, rather than anger, out of the tumult of so many vexations, to feel with contemplation my own quiet!

“If a great person, a giant of the time, should do me an affront, surely I will bear it either out of patience or necessity.

“Shall I do more for fear than for my judgment?

“For me now to be angry with Hodge Huffle, or Burst, his bankrupt dependent, if he should be saucy, or our own type of Spanish valor, Tiptoe — who, if he were now necessitated to beg, would ask an alms like Conde Olivares, the Prime



Minister of Spain — would be just to make myself such a vain animal as one of them.

“If light wrongs don’t touch me and make me angry, no more shall great wrongs; if a few wrongs don’t touch me and make me angry, many wrongs shall not touch me and make me angry.

“There’s nothing so sacred with us but may attract a sacrilegious person, yet the thing is no less divine because the profane can reach it.

“The man who is not *hurt* in battle is the man who is shot-free in battle — not the man who is not *hit*.”

Apparently, Lovel meant not hurt mentally as well as physically. A person who is not hit by shot can yet be hurt by shot. Think of a shell-shocked soldier.

Lovel continued:

“So he who does not yield to wrongs is valiant, not he who escapes them.

“They who pull down churches and deface the holiest altars cannot hurt the godhead.

“A calm, wise man may show as much true valor amid these popular provocations as can an able captain show confidence by his bravely making his way through an enemy’s country.

“A wise man never goes the people’s way, but, as the planets always move contrary to the world’s motion, so does he to opinion.

“He will examine if those accidents, which common fame calls injuries, happen to him deservedly or not.

“If they come to him deservedly, they are not wrongs, then, but his punishments.

“If they come to him undeservedly, and he is not guilty, then the doer of them first should blush, not he.”

“Excellent!” Lord Latimer said.

“Truth, and right!” Lord Beaufort said.

“An oracle could not have spoken more truthfully!” the disguised Frank said.

“Or been more believed!” Lady Frampul said.

Queen Prudence said, “The whole court endorses your meaning, sir! And look, your second hour has almost ended.”

“It cannot be!” Lady Frampul said. “Oh, clip the wings of Time, good Pru, or make Time stand still with a magic spell. Distil the gout into Time, cramps, all diseases to arrest Time in the foot and fix Time here.

“Oh, for a way to keep back all clocks, or make the sun forget his motion!

“If I only knew what drink the Time now loved, I would set my Trundle at him, my own Barnaby!”

Trundle was a drinker and could get Time drunk. Barnaby was also a drinker.

Queen Prudence said, “Why, I’ll consult our Shelee-nien Thomas.”

She shook the Nurse, who was asleep.

The Nurse awoke and said, “*Er grae Chreest!*”

[The Nurse awoke and said, “For the love of Christ!”]

“Don’t wake her,” Lord Beaufort said.

When the Nurse was asleep, she was not keeping an eye on Lord Beaufort and the disguised Frank.

The Nurse said, "*Tower een cuppan d'usque bagh doone.*"

[The Nurse said, "Give us a cup of whiskey."]

Queen Prudence said, "*Usque bagh's* her drink. But it will not make the Time drunk."

"As it has her," the Host said, referring to the Nurse, who was already asleep again.

He then said to Lord Beaufort, "Away with her, my lord, but marry her first."

"Her" was Laetitia: the disguised Frank.

Lord Beaufort and the disguised Frank exited.

Queen Prudence said, "Aye, that'll be entertainment soon, too, for my lady: Lady Frampul."

She was referring to Lord Beaufort's marrying a boy: Frank.

Queen Prudence continued, "But she has other game to fly at yet. The end of the hour has come."

She said to Lady Frampul, "Your kiss."

Lady Frampul was supposed to kiss her servant, Lovel, a second time to mark the end of the second hour.

"My servant's song, first," Lady Frampul said.

"I say the kiss, first," Queen Prudence said, "and I so enjoined it. At your own peril, commit contempt of the court by not kissing your servant."

Lady Frampul said to Lovel, "Well, sir, you must be paid, and legally."

She kissed him.

Queen Prudence said to Lovel, "Nay, nothing, sir, beyond that kiss."

Lovel said, “One more kiss! I take exception! I object! This was but half a kiss, and I would reciprocate it.”

“The court’s dissolved, removed, and the play ended,” Queen Prudence said. “No sound or breath of love more; I decree it.”

Lovel complained, “From what a happiness has that one word thrown me into the gulf of misery! To what a bottomless despair! How like a court removing or an ended play shows my abrupt, unrestrained, and precipitate condition.”

Lovel was quoting from John Donne’s poem “The Storm”:

*“And all our beauty, and our trim, decays,*

*“Like courts removing, or like ended plays.”*

The poem is about the calm or peace that follows a war. We might expect that such calm would be welcome, but Donne’s speaker finds no relaxation in the calm:

*“In calms, Heaven laughs to see us languish thus.”*

People can be worn out by war and be unable to enjoy peace. Or people can find that being in danger makes them feel vibrantly alive, and they can find peace boring.

Lovel and Lady Frampul had been contestants in the Court of Love, and now the contest — which had been in part a parody of two jousts in a tournament — was over.

Queen Prudence’s Court of Love had removed (her authority was ending, and so the court was no longer in existence) and the “play” that she, Lovel, and Lady Frampul had performed had now ended. Lovel had won the contest — all had agreed with his views on love and valor — and yet he now was enjoined from being with Lady Frampul. This kiss was supposed to be his last. For Lovel the calm was not welcome.

The Court of Love may also have removed from Queen Prudence's jurisdiction to Lady Frampul's jurisdiction, but that did not help Lovel because he felt that she had been only acting a role when she had publicly professed love for him. Lovel felt that actually Lady Frampul disdained him.

Lovel continued:

“By how much more my vain hopes were increased by these false hours of conversation! Didn't I prophesy this of myself, and didn't I give the true prediction?”

“Oh, my brain, how are you turned, and my blood congealed, my sinews slackened, and my marrow melted, so that I can't remember where I have been, or what I am?”

“Only my tongue's on fire, and, burning downward, it hurls forth coals and cinders to say this temple of love will soon be ashes!”

“Come, Disdain of Love, now, and be my mistress. No more of Love's ingrateful and ungrateful and harsh tyranny, his wheel of torture and his pits of bird-lime, his nets of nooses, whirlpools of vexation, his mills to grind his servants into powder.”

The wheel of torture was an implement of torture: A criminal was tied to a wheel, and then torturers broke the criminal's bones.

Bird-lime was used to catch birds.

Small birds were caught in nets, and the holes in the nets were like nooses that strangled the birds.

Lovel continued, “I will go catch the wind first in a sieve, weigh smoke and measure shadows, plow the water and sow my hopes there, before I stay in love.”

In other words: Rather than stay in love — a love that was not reciprocated — Lovel preferred to do things that are impossible to do.

“My jealousy is off,” Lord Latimer said. “I am now secure.”

Was he in love with Lady Frampul?

Lovel said:

“Farewell the craft of crocodiles, woman’s piety and their practice of it, in this art of flattering and fooling men!

“I have not lost my reason, although I have lent myself out for two hours, thus to be disgraced by a chambermaid, Prudence, and the good actor, her lady, before my Host of the Light Heart here, who has laughed at all —”

“Who, I?” the Host said.

“Laugh on, sir,” Lovel said. “I’ll go to bed and sleep, and dream away the whim of love, if the house and your sly, underhanded drunkards let me.”

Everyone exited except Lady Frampul, Prudence, and the Nurse.

Lady Frampul said, “Pru.”

Prudence answered, “Sweet madam?”

“Why would you let him go away like this?” Lady Frampul asked.

She was talking about Lovel.

Prudence answered, “In whose power was it to make him stay, more proper than my lady’s power?”

“Why in your lady’s?” Lady Frampul asked. “Aren’t you the sovereign?”

“Would you in conscience, madam, have me vex his patience more?” Prudence said.

“No, but I would have you apply the cure,” Lady Frampul said, “now that his patience is vexed.”

“That’s but one person’s work,” Prudence said. “Two cannot do the same thing handsomely and fitly.”

When a man is lovesick because of a woman, only that woman can cure his lovesickness.

Lady Frampul asked, “But didn’t you have the absolute authority?”

Queens are powerful.

“And weren’t you in rebellion, Lady Frampul,” Prudence asked, “from the beginning?”

“I was somewhat obstinate, I must confess,” Lady Frampul said, “but obstinateness sometimes becomes and graces a beauty, being only a visor — a mask — put on. You’ll let a lady wear her mask, Pru! You’ll let a lady disguise her true feelings!”

“But how do I know when Her Ladyship is pleased to leave the mask off, unless she tells me so?” Prudence asked.

“You might have known that by my looks and language, had you been either watchful or observant,” Lady Frampul said. “One woman reads another’s character without the tedious trouble of deciphering, if she but gives her mind to it.

“You knew well it could not befit any reputation of mine to submit first, having stood aloof so long, without conditions for my honor.”

Prudence replied, “I thought you expected none, you so jeered him, and put him off with scorn —”

“Who, I, with scorn?” Lady Frampul said. “I did express my love to idolatry rather, and so I am justly plagued, not understood.”

Lady Frampul believed that she had expressed her love of Lovel so strongly that her love was idolatrous.

Prudence said, “I swear I thought you had dissembled, madam, and I suspect you are doing so yet.”

Prudence thought that Lady Frampul had been putting on an act when she said she loved Lovel.

“Dull, stupid wench!” Lady Frampul said. “Stay in your state of ignorance still, be damned, an idiot chambermaid! Has all my care, my breeding you in fashion, your rich clothes, honors, and titles wrought no brighter effects on your dark soul than thus?”

“Well! Go your ways. If the tailor’s wife weren’t to be demolished, ruined, and stripped, you should be the she who would be demolished, ruined, and stripped, I vow.”

Prudence had pride.

Tearing off her gown, which had been given to her by Lady Frampul, she said, “Why, take your spangled articles of clothing, your costumes, your gown, and your scarves!”

“Pru, Pru, what do you mean?” Lady Frampul said.

“I will not buy this play-actor-boy’s bravery at such a price, to be upbraided for it, thus, every minute,” Prudence said.

In this society, women did not act on stage. Instead, boys performed the roles of the women in plays. The rich gowns of upper-class women sometimes were sold and became stage costumes.

“Don’t take it so to heart,” Lady Frampul said.



She had spoken out of anger, without thinking first.

“The tailor’s wife?” Prudence said. “There was a word of scorn!”

“It was a word that fell from me, Pru, by chance,” Lady Frampul said.

“Good madam, please to undeceive yourself,” Prudence said. “I know when words do slip and when they are darted with all their bitterness. Stripped? Demolished? An idiot chambermaid, stupid and dull? Be damned for ignorance? I will be so, and think I do deserve it, that and more, much more I do.”

She wept.

The Host entered the room.

“Here comes my Host!” Lady Frampul said. “No crying, good Pru.”

She then asked, “Where is my servant Lovel, Host?”

“You have sent him up to bed,” the Host said. “I wish that you would follow him, and make my house amends!”

“Would you advise it?” Lady Frampul said.

“I wish that I could command it,” the Host said. “My Light Heart should leap until midnight.”

One kind of leaping is dancing; another kind is leaping on someone and having sex.

“I ask you not to be sullen and melancholy,” Lady Frampul said. “I yet must have your counsel and advice.”

She said to Prudence, “You shall wear, Pru, the new gown yet.”

“After the tailor’s wife?” Prudence asked.

“Come, don’t be angry or grieved,” Lady Frampul said. “I have a plan.”

Lady Frampul and Prudence exited.

The Host said to the Nurse, who was still asleep, “Wake, Shelee-nien Thomas!”

He shook the Nurse awake and asked, “Is this your heraldry and keeping of records, to lose the main — to miss out on the important thing? Where is your charge?”

Her charge — her responsibility — was Frank. She was supposed to watch over him.

“*Gra Chreest!*” the Nurse said.

*Gra* means “love” in Gaelic.

“Go ask the oracle of the bottle at your girdle,” the Host said. “There you lost it.”

The Nurse had a small bottle of whiskey attached to her belt instead of the keys or small Bible many women carried. The whiskey had made her fall asleep and give Lord Beaufort the opportunity to run off with the disguised Frank.

The Host then said sarcastically, “You are a sober setter of the watch!”

The Nurse exited.

**ACT 5 (*The New Inn, or The Light Heart*)**

**— 5.1 —**

Fly entered the room, and he and the Host talked together.

The Host said, “Come, Fly, and legacy, the bird of the Heart; the prime insect of the inn, professor, quartermaster, as ever you deserved your daily drink, paddling in sack and licking in the same, now show that you are an implement — tool — of value and help raise a nap to us out of nothing.”

Sack is white wine. Insects can fall into the wine, paddle around in the wine, and use their proboscis to suck up the wine.

The Host wanted Fly’s help in weaving together all the various actions going on in the inn. The surface of cloth is called nap, and it gets worn away with age. The Host wanted the events happening in his inn to be good. Lots of people were gloomy, and the Host wanted them to be merry.

He then asked Fly, “You saw them married?”

Fly replied, “I do think I did, and I heard the words, ‘I, Philip, take you, Laetice.’”

“I gave her away, too. I was then the father Fly, and I heard the priest do his part as far as five nobles would lead him in the lines of matrimony.”

Nobles are gold coins.

“Where were they married?” the Host asked.

“In the new stable,” Fly said.

“Ominous!” the Host said. “I have known many a church that has been made a stable, but not a stable made a church until now.”

He was referring to churches that after the Reformation had been desecrated. Apparently, the Host was OK with that particular kind of churches being desecrated, and he did not want them to return to being churches.

The Host continued, “I wish them joy. Fly, was he a full priest?”

Fly, punning on “full” as meaning “with his belly full,” said, “He had the belly for it. He also had his velvet sleeves and his branched — embroidered — cassock; a long, sweeping gown; and all his formalities — insignia of office. He was a good crammed divine!”

The priest was dressed like a doctor of divinity, and he was crammed with theological knowledge — and with food.

Fly continued, “I went not far to fetch him — the next inn, where he was lodged — for the action of performing the marriage.”

“Had they a marriage license?” the Host asked.

Fly answered, “They had a license of love, I saw no other; and they had a purse to pay the dues both of church and house. The angels flew about.”

They needed a marriage license to get married, but Lord Beaufort had money and the angels — gold coins — flew about as he paid the priest to marry them without a license. Lord Beaufort also paid all other necessary fees.

About the flying angels, the Host said, “Those birds send luck, and mirth will follow.”

He thought about bad events and said, “I had thought to have sacrificed to merriment tonight in my Light Heart, Fly, and like a noble poet to have had my last act best, but all fails in the plot.”

He had thought that the Light Heart Inn would enjoy much merriment this night, but things were not working out for the most part.

The Host continued, “Lovel has gone to bed; the Lady Frampul and sovereign — Queen — Pru have fallen out; Tiptoe and his regiment of mine-men” — miners, because they worked in the cellar of the inn — “are all drunk dumb, from his whoop Barnaby to his hoop Trundle. They are his two tropics: the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.”

Barnaby and Trundle were the kind of people Tiptoe now associated with and by implication felt most comfortable around.

“Whoop Barnaby” is a song, and hoops are the bands on a quart pot of an alcoholic beverage.

The Host continued, “There is no project to rear laughter on but this: the marriage of Lord Beaufort with Laetitia.”

Seeing Lady Frampul and Prudence approaching, the Host said, “Wait, what’s here? The satin gown redeemed, and Pru restored in it to her lady’s grace!”

At one point, Lady Frampul was intending to burn the gown that Pinnacia had been caught wearing, but Lady Frampul had obviously decided not to do that because Prudence was now wearing it.

Fly said, “She is set forth in it, rigged for some employment!”

“An embassy at least!” the Host said.

“Some conference of state!” Fly said.

The Host said, “It is a fine tack about — a reversal of course — and worth the observing.”

The Host and Fly stood to the side and watched.

— 5.2 —

Lady Frampul and Prudence, who was magnificently dressed in the gown that Pinnacia had worn, entered the room.

“Sweet Pru, aye, now you are a Queen indeed!” Lady Frampul said. “These robes do royally and you become them, and just so they become you. Rich garments are fit only for the parties they are made for; they shame others.

“How did they look when they were on Goody — Goodwife — Tailor’s back? Like a caparison for a sow, God save us!”

Usually, caparisons are cloths that are put on a horse’s back, not on a pig’s back.

Lady Frampul said, “Your putting them on has purged and hallowed them from all the pollution intended by the mechanics — the artisans who labor with their hands.”

Stuff the tailor was the mechanic meant.

She continued, “Hang him, poor snip, a secular — unlearned — shop-wit!”

Stuff the tailor was “poor snip.”

Lady Frampul continued, “He has nothing but his shears to assert a claim by, and his measures. His apprentice may as well put in for his needle and plead a stitch.”

Stuff the tailor’s dignity was no more than that of his apprentice, who got all his dignity from wielding a needle and making stitches.

Lady Frampul continued, “The clothes have no taint in them now of the tailor.”

Prudence said, “Yes, they do. They have the taint of his wife’s haunches, which are thick of fat. I smell his wife’s haunches on the fabric.”

Prudence had smelled Pinnacia’s grease — sweat — when putting on the gown. In fact, she still smelled Pinnacia’s grease on the clothing.

Lady Frampul said, “It is restorative, Pru! With your but chafing — warming — it, a barren hind’s grease may work miracles.”

The word “but” meant “just” or “only,” but in fact Prudence’s butt would chaff the gown.

Lady Frampul referred to a “barren hind.” “Barren” means “childless.” “Hind” can mean 1) deer, 2) behind, aka butt, or 3) menial.

Lady Frampul continued, “Just find Lovel’s chamber door, and he will rise to you!”

Lady Frampul believed that Pinnacia’s sex pheromones, which were in her sweat, could cause Lovel to end his renunciation of love. He would “rise” — that is, 1) rise out of bed, and 2) get an erection.

She continued, “Or, if you please, feign to be the wretched party herself — Pinnacia — and come to him *in forma pauperis* to crave the aid of his knight-errant valor to the rescue of your distressed robes! Name just your gown and he will rise to that.”

*In forma pauperis* means “as a pauper.” In courts of law, paupers were able to sue or to defend themselves without cost.

Her distressed robes were the gown that Pinnacia had sweated in.

Prudence said, "I'll fire the charm first."

She would burn the costume first before she would pretend to be Pinnacia. She was not interested in giving Lovel an erection — at least not when the erection was caused solely by the clothing she was wearing.

Prudence continued, "I had rather die in a ditch with Mistress Shore, without a smock, as the pitiful story has it, than owe my wit to clothes, or have my wit beholden."

Elizabeth "Jane" Shore, who was the mistress of King Edward IV of England, was supposed to have died in a ditch. People thought that the place was named Shoreditch because of this, but the story is apocryphal.

The Host said quietly to Fly, "Prudence still has the spirit of Pru!"

"And smelling of the sovereign!" Fly quietly replied.

Prudence said to Lady Frampul, "No, I will tell him the truth as it is indeed. I come from the fine, froward, frampul lady, one who was run mad with pride and who was wild with self-love."

The word "frampul" is a variant of the adjective "frampold," which means "bad tempered, cross, and peevish." But applied to a horse, it means "spirited, fiery, and mettlesome."

Prudence continued:

"I will tell him that I come from the fine, froward, frampul lady, who after recently encountering a wise man who scorned her, and knew the way to his own bed without borrowing her warming pan — that is, without taking her with him to warm his bed — she has recovered part of her wits, so much as to consider how far she has trespassed, upon whom, and how."



Really, if Lovel were to have an erection, Prudence believed, it ought to be caused by Lady Frampul. It ought not to be caused by the clothing Prudence was wearing.

Prudence continued, “And now she sits penitent and solitary like the forsaken turtledove, in the volary — large bird-cage — of the Light Heart, the cage she has abused, mourning her folly, weeping at the height she measures with her eye from whence she has fallen since she did branch it — flourish — on the top of the wood.”

Turtledoves mate for life; they are symbols of faithfulness.

Lady Frampul said, “I tell you, Pru, to abuse me enough — that is, to treat me as you think fit — any coarse way to humble me.

“But either bring me home again or bring me Lovel again.

“You do not know my sufferings — what I feel. My fires and fears are met; I burn and freeze.”

In this society, burning and freezing were considered to be symptoms of lovesickness.

Lady Frampul continued, “My liver’s one great coal, and my heart has shrunk up with all the fibers and the mass of blood.”

We think of the heart as being the seat of love; this society thought of the liver as being the seat of love.

She continued:

“Within me is a still lake of fire curled with the cold wind of my gelid — ice-cold — sighs, which drive a drift of sleet through all my body and shoot a cold February through my veins.

“Until I see him, I am drunk with thirst and surfeited with hunger of his presence.

“I don’t know whether I exist or not, or whether I speak, or whether you hear me.”

“Stop your expressions,” Prudence said. “I’ll once more venture for and help Your Ladyship, provided that you will use your fortunes reverently.”

Lady Frampul said, “I will use my fortunes religiously, dear Pru.

“Love and his mother — Cupid and Venus — I’ll build them separate churches, shrines, and altars, and overhead I’ll have, in the stained-glass windows, the story of this day painted round for the poor laity — ordinary worshippers — of love to read.”

Some stained-glass windows are round, and her story would be told around the area because she would build more than one church that would have a round stained-glass window devoted to telling her story.

Lady Frampul continued, “I’ll make myself their book, nay, their example, to bid the viewers of the stained-glass windows to take occasion — opportunity — by the forelock and play no after-games of love hereafter.”

One must seize Opportunity by the forelock when she runs near you. If you are late in grabbing her forelock, you will lose Opportunity because the back of her head is bald.

An after-game is a second game played to improve one’s outcome after a bad outcome from the first game.

The Host now came forward with Fly, revealing their presence to Lady Frampul and Prudence.

The Host said, “And here your Host and his Fly witness your vows. And like two lucky-omened birds, we bring the presage of a loud jest: Lord Beaufort has been married.”

Lord Beaufort had shown great interest in Frank, the Host's son, who had been disguised as a woman.

Lady Frampul responded, "Ha!"

Fly said, "They are all-to-be-married."

This meant: They are completely married.

"To whom?" Prudence said. "Not your son?"

"The same, Pru," the Host said. "If Her Ladyship could make truce a little with her passion, and give way to their mirth now running —"

Lord Beaufort's marrying a boy could very well be mirthful.

"Runs it mirth, let it come," Lady Beaufort said, "It shall be well received and much made of it."

Prudence said, "We must make much of this; it was our own conception."

It had been their plan to disguise Frank as a woman.

### — 5.3 —

Lord Latimer entered the room and said, "Strew the room with green rushes! Raise the fiddlers, chamberlain! Call up the house in all readiness!"

Green rushes were strewn on floors for celebrations of such events as weddings.

"This will rouse Lovel," the Host said.

"And bring him on, too," Fly said.

Lord Latimer said, "Shelee-nien Thomas — the Nurse — runs like a heifer bitten with a gadfly about the court, crying against Fly and cursing."

"For what, my lord?" Fly said.

Lord Latimer replied, "It is best that you hear that from her. It is not an office, Fly, suitable for my narration."

Seeing Lord Beaufort and the disguised Frank approaching, Lord Latimer said, "Here comes the happy couple!

"Joy to you, Lord Beaufort!"

"And to my young lady, too!" Fly said about the disguised Frank.

"May God give you much joy, my lord!" the Host said.

— 5.4 —

Lord Beaufort, the disguised Frank, Ferret, Jordan, Pierce Anon, Jug, some fiddlers, and a servant walked over to them.

"I thank you all," Lord Beaufort said. "I thank you, Father Fly."

He then said to Madam Frampul, "Madam, my cousin, you look discomposed. I have been bold with a salad after supper of your own lettuce here."

He was punning on the name "Lettice," which is a nickname for women named "Laetitia."

"You have, my lord," Lady Frampul said. "But laws of hospitality and fair rites would have made me acquainted."

Lord Beaufort was a guest of Lady Frampul at the inn. As such, he should have let her know that he was going to marry the disguised Frank, whom he thought was a female friend of hers.

"In your own house, I do acknowledge that," Lord Beaufort said. "If I had not let you know in that case, I would have much trespassed against you."

“But in an inn, and a public inn, where there is license of all fellowship, a pardon by regular process of law may be applied for in court: the Court of Love.”

The Court of Love would allow people to marry suddenly, and in this case, to marry without informing Lady Frampul in advance.

“A pardon will be applied for, my lord, and it will be granted,” Lady Frampul said. “I do not see how any storm or tempest can help it now.”

A fit of anger would not annul the marriage.

Prudence said to Lady Frampul, “The thing being done and past, you bear it wisely and like a lady of judgment.”

“She is that, Secretary Pru,” Lord Beaufort said.

“Why do you call me Secretary Pru, my wise lord?” Prudence said. “Is your brain lately married?”

She was asking why he didn’t call her Queen Pru. Was his brain addled because of his marriage?

“Your reign is ended, Pru,” Lord Beaufort said. “You are no sovereign now. Your term is out, and your dignity of office has expired.”

“I am annulled,” Prudence said to Lady Frampul. “How can I negotiate with Lovel without a new commission?”

“Your gown is your commission,” Lady Frampul said.

Prudence was Queen Prudence once more.

“Have patience, Pru,” the Host said. “Wait. Bid the lord joy.”

This meant: Wait for a while before you begin exercising your royal authority. First, wish Lord Beaufort joy.

“And this brave lady, too,” Queen Prudence said. “I wish both of them joy.”

It was traditional to wish joy to a newly married couple.

“Joy!” Pierce Anon said

“Joy!” Jordan said.

“All joy!” Jug said.

“Aye, the house full of joy!” the Host said.

Fly said, “Play the bells; fiddlers, crack your strings with joy!”

Music played.

Queen Prudence said to the disguised Frank, “But Lady Lettice, you showed a neglect un-to-be-pardoned — not to be pardoned — towards my lady, your kinswoman, because you did not consult with her before you married.”

Lord Beaufort said, “Good politic Pru, urge not your state-advice, your after-wit — wisdom after the event, aka hindsight — it is close to upbraiding.”

He was recognizing Prudence as Queen at the Light Heart Inn.

Lord Beaufort then said, “Get our marriage bed ready, chamberlain, and, Host, get a bride-cup ready. You have splendid delicacies and good ingredients; an old host upon the road always has his provocative drinks.”

Provocative drinks either encouraged lust (they were aphrodisiacal) or appetite (they were medicinal).

Lord Latimer whispered to Lord Beaufort about the Host, “He is either a good bawd or a physician.”

Lord Beaufort whispered back, “It was well he didn’t hear you; his back was turned.”

He then said loudly, “A bed, the genial bed, the marriage bed! Tonight I play for a brace — a pair — of boys.”

He hoped to get the disguised Frank pregnant with twin boys this night.

“Give us points, my lord,” Queen Prudence said.

Points are laces. For example, laces connected the doublet (jacket) to the breeches. Bridegrooms would tear off some of their laces to show their impatience to go to bed.

Tearing off his laces, Lord Beaufort said, “Here, take them, Pru, my codpiece point and all.”

A codpiece is a bag — a piece of clothing — which covered a man’s genitals.

He then said, “I have clasps: my Lettice’s arms.”

He was punning. Clasps are other kinds of fastenings for clothing, as well as embraces from a beloved.

Lord Beaufort said to the servants, “Here, take the laces, boys.”

He took off his doublet — his jacket.

He then said to the servants, “What? Is the chamber ready? Speak! Why do you stare at each another?”

“No, sir,” Jordan said.

“And why not?” Lord Beaufort asked.

“My master has forbid it,” Jordan answered. “He yet doubts that you are married.

“Ask his vicar general, his Fly here,” Lord Beaumont said.

“I must make that good,” Fly said. “I can verify it. They are married.”

“But I must make it bad, my hot young lord,” the Host said. “Give him his doublet again; the air is piercing.”

The Host then said to Lord Beaufort, “You may take cold, my lord. See whom you have married — your Host’s son, and a boy!”

He pulled off Frank’s headdress, revealing that Frank had been in disguise.

“You are deceived,” Fly said to Lord Beaufort.

“Much joy, my lord!” Lady Frampul said.

Queen Prudence said, “If this is your Laetitia, she’ll prove a counterfeit mirth and a clipped lady.”

Gold coins were sometimes clipped. Bits of gold were shaved from the edges of the coins, making them less valuable. If too much gold was clipped from the coins, they were no longer legal currency.

“A boy! A boy!” a servant said. “My lord has married a boy!”

“Raise all the house in shout and laughter: a boy!” Lord Latimer said.

Lord Beaufort had loved physically without first knowing spiritually the person he loved.

“Wait, who is here?” the Host said, seeing the Nurse approaching. “Peace, rascals, stop your throats! Quiet!”



The Nurse entered the room and said, “That maggot, that worm, that insect! Oh, my child, my daughter! Where’s that Fly? I’ll fly in his face, the vermin. Let me come to him.”

“Why, Nurse Shelee?” Fly asked.

“Hang you, you parasite, you son of crumbs and leftovers!” the Nurse said. “You have ruined me and my child, my daughter, my dear daughter.”

The Host asked, “What does this mean?”

Daughter? What daughter?

“Oh, sir, my daughter, my dear child is ruined by this your Fly here,” the Nurse said. “My dear child was married in a stable and given to a husband.”

Frank was married in a stable and given to a husband. Isn’t Frank the Host’s son, and isn’t Frank a boy?

The Host said, “Stint your crying, Harlot, if that is all. Didn’t you sell him — Frank — to me for a boy? And brought him in boy’s rags here to my door to beg an alms of — charity from — me?”

“I did, good master, and I crave your pardon,” the Nurse said. “But she is my daughter, and she is a girl.”

The Host asked, “Why did you say that it was a boy and why did you sell him then to me with such entreaty for ten shillings, Carline?”

A carline is a witch.

The Nurse answered, “Because I heard you were a charitable man, good master, and would raise him well. I would have given him to you for nothing gladly. Forgive the lie of my mouth! It was to save the fruit of my womb. A parent’s needs

are urgent, and few know as well as I that tyrant over good natures.

“But you relieved her and me, too, the mother, and took me into your house to be the nurse, for which may Heaven heap all blessings on your head for as long as there is still one blessing that can be added!”

The Host said, “Surely you speak quite like another creature than you have lived here in the house, a Shelee-nien Thomas, an Irish beggar.”

The Nurse was not speaking with a heavy Irish accent.

“So I am, God help me,” the Nurse said.

True, she was speaking differently.

“Who are you?” the Host asked. “Tell me.”

He added, “The match is a good match for anything I see.”

If Frank was a girl, then the marriage was a real marriage. Real marriages ought to be celebrated.

The Host ordered, “Ring the bells once again.”

The musicians began to play.

Lord Beaufort yelled, “Stint, I say, fiddlers! Stop playing!”

They stopped playing, and he started to leave.

“No going off, my lord,” Lady Frampul said. “You can’t leave now.”

Lord Beaufort responded, “Nor coming on, sweet lady, things thus standing!”

He was punning. His words had a bawdy meaning. A thing is a penis, and a stand is an erection. “Coming on” means what you think it means.

He did not want to consummate the marriage.

Fly said to the Host, “But what’s the heinousness of my offence, or the degrees of wrong you suffered by it, in having your daughter matched — married — thus happily into a noble house, by marrying a brave young blood and a prime peer of the realm?”

The Host’s son — uh, daughter — had married a lord.

“Was that your plot, Fly?” Lord Beaufort asked.

He thought that this had been a plot to make him marry an impoverished girl, someone of lesser social class than even the daughter of an innkeeper.

“Give me a cloak,” Lord Beaufort said.

He was intent on leaving.

He then said, “Take her again among you. I’ll have none of your Light Heart fosterlings — foster children — no inmates or inn-mates or lodgers, supposititious fruits of a Host’s brain and his Fly’s hatching, to be put upon me.”

“Supposititious” can mean “founded on false suppositions.” Lord Beaufort had thought that he had married the daughter of the Host, but now it seemed to him that he had been mistaken. To him it seemed that the Host and Fly had conspired to make him marry someone to whom he now did not wish to be married.

Lord Beaufort said, “There is a royal court of the Star Chamber that will scatter all these mists, disperse these vapors, and make clear the truth. Let beggars match with — marry — beggars.

“The royal court of the Star Chamber shall decide this; I will try it there.”

The Star Chamber was a judicial body that was feared because of its power.

This society had laws against providing lodging for paupers, and Lord Beaufort was threatening to turn in the Host for providing lodging to the Nurse and her child. Lord Beaufort was also threatening to turn in the Host and Fly for arranging a marriage under false pretenses.

The Nurse said, “Nay, then, my lord, I see it’s not enough for you to be licentious, but you will also be wicked.

“You’re not content just to take my daughter against the law” — they had not had a marriage license — “but, having taken her, you would repudiate and cast her off now at your pleasure, like a beast of power, without all cause or any semblance of a cause that either a noble or an honest man should dare to except against: her poverty.”

The poverty of the Nurse’s daughter was the ignoble reason why Lord Beaufort did not want to be married to her.

The Nurse asked, “Is poverty a vice?”

Lord Beaufort said, “The age counts it so.”

Many people regard poverty as a vice.

The Nurse said, “God help Your Lordship, and your peers who think so, if there are any who think as you do! If not, God bless them all, and help the number of the virtuous, if poverty should be a crime. You may say that our beggary is the result of an accident of birth, but you cannot say there is a deeper cause such as a lack of character; our poverty is no inherent baseness.

“And I must tell you now, young lord of dirt, as an incensed mother, she — my daughter — has more and better blood running in those small veins than all the race of Beauforts

have in mass, although they distill their drops from the left rib of John of Gaunt.”

Lord Beaufort was a “young lord of dirt.” He owned much land, but he was not now a good person. “Dirt” can mean 1) land, or 2) excrement.

John of Gaunt and his mistress Catherine Swynford were the ancestors of the Beauforts. In 1397 the two married, and in 1398 King Richard II legitimized their children. Eve was made from Adam’s left rib, and without legitimization the Beauforts would have descended from the female line.

The Host asked the Nurse, who was a student of heraldry, “Old mother of records, you know her pedigree, then. Whose daughter is she?”

The Nurse answered, “She is the daughter and co-heir to the Lord Frampul, this lady’s sister!”

“My sister!” Lady Frampul said. “What is her name?”

“Laetitia,” the Nurse answered.

“She is the girl who was lost?” Lady Frampul asked.

“The true Laetitia,” the Nurse answered.

“Sister! Oh, gladness!” Lady Frampul said.

She then asked the Nurse, “Then you are our mother?”

“I am, dear daughter,” the Nurse answered.

Lady Frampul kneeled and said, “On my knees, I bless the light I see you by.”

The Nurse replied, “And to the Author of that blest light, I open my other eye, which has now for almost seven years been shut dark, as my vow was, never to see light until such

a Light restored it as It restored my children or your dear father, who, I hear, is no longer living.”

The Nurse took off her eye patch, and Lady Frampul stood up.

“Give me my wife,” Lord Beaufort said. “I own her now, and I will have her.”

By “own,” he meant that he recognized their marriage. Frank — uh, Laetitia — was a member of the wealthy Frampul family, not the impoverished son of an innkeeper or impoverished daughter of a beggar.

“But you must ask my leave first, my young lord,” the Host said. “Leave is but light.”

“Leave is but light” means “It is easy to ask permission.” The Host was claiming that it was his prerogative to give Frank (Laetitia) to whomever he wanted.

The Host then ordered, “Ferret, go bolt your master, Lovel. Here’s events that will startle him.”

Ferrets made animals such as rabbits bolt from their lairs.

Ferret exited.

“I cannot keep the passion in me,” the Host said. “I am even turned into a child, and I must weep.”

He then ordered, “Fly, take away my Host.”

The Host removed his disguise — his hat and false beard — and gave the items to Fly.

He then said, “Take my beard and cap here away from me, and fetch my Lord.”

“Fetch my Lord” meant “Fetch me the clothing that will make me look like a lord again.”

Fly exited.

The Host said to Lord Beaufort, “I am Laetitia’s father, sir, and you shall now ask for my consent before you have her.”

The Host said to the Nurse, “Wife, my dear and loving wife! My honored wife! Who here has gained but I? I am Lord Frampul, the cause of all this trouble. I am he who has measured — traveled — all the shires of England over, Wales and her mountains, seen those wilder nations of people in the Peak and Lancashire; their pipers, fiddlers, strewers of rushes, puppet-masters, jugglers, and gypsies, all the sorts of vagabonds who use the cant or language of thieves, and colonies of beggars, tumblers, traveling entertainers with performing apes, for to these savages I was addicted, wanting to search their natures and make odd discoveries and explorations!

“And here my wife, like a she-Mandeville, ventured in diligent search after me.”

Sir John Mandeville was a man who wrote about his travels.

Fly returned, carrying Lord Frampul’s robes, which Lord Frampul — the Host — put on.

“I may look up and wonder,” the Nurse (Lord Frampul’s wife) said. “I cannot speak yet to my lord and husband.”

“Take heart and breath,” the Host (Lord Frampul) said. “Recover yourself. You have recovered me, who here had coffined myself alive in a poor hostelry in penance of my wrongs done to you, whom I long since gave up as lost.”

“So did I give you up for lost,” the Nurse (Lord Frampul’s wife) said. “Until, stealing my own daughter from her sister, I lighted on this error that has cured all.”

Lord Beaufort said, “And in that cure include my trespass, mother, and father, for my wife —”

He was referring to the Host (Lord Frampul) and the Nurse (Lord Frampul's wife) as his father-in-law and his mother-in-law.

The Host (Lord Frampul) said, "No, the Star Chamber."

Lord Beaufort had threatened to sic the Star Chamber on the Host.

"Away with that!" Lord Beaufort said. "Never mention that! You sour the sweetest lettuce that was ever tasted."

"May God give you joy, my son," the Host (Lord Frampul) said. "Don't cast her off again."

He was acknowledging Lord Beaufort as his son-in-law.

Lovel entered the room.

The Host (Lord Frampul) said to him, "Oh, call me father, Lovel, and call the Nurse your mother if you like. But take your mistress first, my child. I have power to give her now, with her consent; her sister has been given already to your brother Beaufort."

Lovel took Lady Frampul by the hand; this was a handfast — a marriage contract. Her father — seemingly the Host, but actually Lord Frampul — would be his father-in-law. In addition, the Nurse — actually Lord Frampul's wife — would be his mother-in-law. Lord Beaufort, who had married Frank — actually Laetitia — would be his brother-in-law.

"Is this a dream now, after my first sleep?" Lovel asked. "Or are these fantasies made in the Light Heart and sold in the New Inn?"

In this society, some people thought that morning dreams were true, but this was not morning. Lovel was having a hard time believing these new developments.



“Best go to bed and dream it over, all,” the Host (Lord Frampul) said. “Let’s all go sleep, each with his turtledove, aka mate.”

He ordered, “Fly, provide us lodgings, get beds prepared; you’re master now of the inn. You are now the Lord of the Light Heart. I give it to you.”

The Host (Lord Frampul) then said to the others, “Fly was my fellow gypsy. All my family — that is, my inn employees — indeed, were gypsies, tapsters, ostlers, chamberlains, reduced and impoverished vessels of citizenship.”

Earlier, the Host (Lord Frampul) had said that Fly was a legacy that came with the inn. Now, he was saying that Fly was a gypsy. Apparently, he was now telling the truth.

The Host (Lord Frampul) continued, “But here stands Pru neglected, who is the most deserving of all who are in the house or in my Heart. Although I cannot help her to a fit husband, I’ll help her to that which will bring her one: a just portion — a good dowry. I have two thousand pounds in bank for Pru. She may call for it whenever she will.”

“And I have as much,” Lord Beaufort said.

He would also give Prudence two thousand pounds.

“There’s somewhat yet: four thousand pounds!” the Host (Lord Frampul) said. “That’s better than sounds the proverb ‘Four bare legs in a bed.’”

The full proverb is “More belongs to marriage than four bare legs in a bed.” A good and happy marriage is more likely when financial security is present.

Lovel said, “Prudence has the power to coin her mistress and me up to whatever amount she will.”

In other words, Prudence could rely on Lovel and Lady Frampul for financial assistance. She could get any amount of money from them at any time.

“Infinitely powerful Pru!” Lady Frampul said.

“But I must do the crowning act of bounty!” Lord Latimer said.

“What’s that, my lord?” the Host (Lord Frampul) asked.

“Give her myself, which here, by all the holy vows of love, I do,” Lord Latimer said. “Spare all your promised portions; she is a dowry so all-sufficient in her virtue and her manners that fortune cannot add to her.”

Lord Latimer wanted to marry Prudence.

Previously, he had seemed to be interested in Lady Frampul. Perhaps Pinnacia’s pheromones were affecting him.

“My lord,” Prudence said to Lord Latimer, “your praises are instructions and lessons to my ears, whence you have made your wife to live your servant.”

She would be his wife and servant — in this context, “his wife and servant” meant that she would be his loving wife.

The Host (Lord Frampul) called, “Lights! Get us all individual lights!”

They would get candles and lamps to light their ways to their rooms.

“Wait,” Lovel said. “Let my mistress — Lady Frampul — just first hear my vision sung, my dream of beauty, which I have brought, prepared, to bid us joy and light us all to bed; it will be in the stead of airing of the sheets with a sweet odor.”

There would not be time to air the sheets, but they could hear the air — the tune — of the song he had written.

The Host (Lord Frampul) said, “It will be an incense to our sacrifice of love tonight, where I will woo afresh, and, like Maecenas, having but one wife, I’ll marry her every hour of life hereafter.”

Maecenas, the patron of Virgil, author of the *Aeneid*, and his wife quarreled frequently, but he loved her and always made up with her. Each reconciliation was like a new marriage.

They exited, with a song — Lovel’s song:

*“It was a beauty that I saw,*

*“So pure, so perfect, as [that] the frame*

*“Of all the universe was lame [defective]*

*“To [Compared to] that one figure, could I draw*

*“Or give least line of it a law!*

*“A skein of silk without a knot!*

*“A fair march [gait] made without a halt [without limping]!*

*“A curious [artful] form without a fault!*

*“A printed book without a blot.*

*“All beauty, and without a spot.”*

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Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print.

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Jonson, Ben. *The Devil is an Ass: and Other Plays*. Kidnie, Margaret Jane, editor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.

## NOTES (*The New Inn, or The Light Heart*)

— 1.4 —

*That like the rugged Roman alderman,  
Old master Gross, surnamed Agelastos,  
Was never seen to laugh but at an ass.*

(1.4.6-8)

Source of Above: Jonson, Ben. *The New Inn*. Michael Hattaway, editor. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988. Print.

*II. That Crassus never laughed but once, and that was at an Ass eating Thistles, seems strange to the Doctor, yet he gives no reason for this, but only that the object was unridiculous, & that laughter is not meerly voluntary. But these are no reasons: for a more ridiculous object there cannot be, then to see such a medley of pleasure and pain in the Asses eating of Thistles;<sup>o</sup> for whilst he bites them, they prick him, so that his tongue must needs be pricked, though perhaps his lips may be hard, and not so easily penetrable; when arose the Proverb, Like lips, like lettice. But there was something else in this that moved Crassus to laugh: For he saw here the vanity both of most men taking pleasure in those things which are accompanied with much pain and sorrow: Besides, he saw here the folly of the Roman rich men, who held Thistles for such a dainty dish, that they would not suffer poor men to eat thereof, engrossing them with great summes of money to themselves, which notwithstanding the Asses did eat on free cost. Was it not then a ridiculous thing to see rich men pay so dear for Asses food, and to debarre poore men from that meat which they permitted to Asses?*

Source of Above: An excerpt from this book and these pages:

Alexander Ross (1652) *Arcana Microcosmi*, Book II, Chapter 15, pp. 174-179.

<https://penelope.uchicago.edu/ross/ross215.html#9>

Roman farmer Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella (4 BC-70 AD) writes about cheese-making in *De Re Rustica* (Book VII, Chapter VIII):

*“Cheese should be made of pure milk, which is as fresh as possible, for if it is left to stand or mixed with water, it quickly turns sour. It should usually be curdled with rennet obtained from a lamb or a kid, though it can also be coagulated with the flower of the wild thistle or the seeds of the safflower, and equally well with the liquid which flows from a fig-tree if you make an incision in the bark while it is still green. [...]”*

Source of Above: Jess, “What Did the Ancient Romans eat?” *Medium*. 9 September 2020

<https://medium.com/equestrian-explorers/what-did-the-ancient-romans-eat-9ba2b595046c>

The below information comes from “The History of Artichokes”:

*Thistles—in the form of artichokes and cardoons—have been on the human table since at least the days of ancient Greece and Rome.*

*[...]*

*Both today’s cultivated artichoke and cardoon are, scientists believe, descended from the wild cardoon, a tougher, meaner, and pricklier plant, likely a native*

*of north Africa and Sicily. Pliny the Elder mentions two types of edible thistles known to first-century Romans: one which “throws out numerous stalks immediately it leaves the ground,” which sounds like a cardoon; the other “thicker, and having but a single stem” and purple flowers, which may be a progenitor of the modern globe artichoke. This last, according to Pliny, had a number of beneficial medicinal effects, among them curing baldness, strengthening the stomach, freshening the breath, and promoting the conception of boys. Though Pliny doesn’t mention it, it was also purportedly an aphrodisiac. The Roman ate them pickled in honey and vinegar, and seasoned with cumin.*

[...]

*Similarly, wild thistles—the atrociously spiny stuff Winnie-the-Pooh’s doleful donkey Eeyore munches in his Gloomy Place—are said to have edible (even delicious) leaf ribs. I personally can’t attest to this, but even devoted wild-food aficionados agree that wild thistle is a challenge to gather, unless you happen to be wandering through the woods wearing elbow-length leather gloves.*

Source of Above: Rupp, Rebecca, “The History of Artichokes.” *National Geographic*. 12 November 2014

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/artichokes>

— 4.3 —

Pinnacia said:

*It is a foolish trick, madam, he has;*

*For though he be your tailor, he is my beast.*

(4.3.63-64)

Source of Above: Jonson, Ben. *The New Inn*. Michael Hattaway, editor. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988. Print.

The below is Ben Jonson's Epigram #25:

*XXV. — ON SIR VOLUPTUOUS BEAST.*

*While BEAST instructs his fair and innocent wife,  
In the past pleasures of his sensual life,  
Telling the motions of each petticoat,  
And how his Ganymede mov'd, and how his goat,  
And now her hourly her own cucquean makes,  
In varied shapes, which for his lust she takes:  
What doth he else, but say, Leave to be chaste,  
Just wife, and, to change me, make woman's haste.*

Source of Above: Jonson, Ben. *The Works of Ben Jonson*. Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Co., 1853. 787.

<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/jonson/epigram25.htm>

Ganymede is a beautiful shepherd boy whom Zeus, king of the gods, loved and made his cupbearer.

A cucquean is a woman with an unfaithful husband.

— 5.5 —

*And, like Maecenas, having but one wife,*

*I'll marry her every hour of life hereafter. (5.5.155-56)*

Source of Above: Jonson, Ben. *The New Inn*. Michael Hattaway, editor. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988. Print.

The below information comes from William Smith, *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology*:



## *Terentia*

2. Also called *TERENTILLA*, the wife of *Maecenas*. *Dio Cassius* (54.3) speaks of her as a sister of *Murena* and of *Proculeius*. The full name of this *Murena* was *A. Terentius Varro Murena*: he was perhaps the son of *L. Licinius Murena*, who was consul B. C. 62, and was adopted by *A. Terentius Varro*. *Murena* would thus have been the adopted brother of *Terentia*: *Proculeius* was probably only the cousin of *Murena*. [See Vol. III. p. 540b.]

*We know nothing of the early history of Terentia, nor the time of her marriage with Maecenas. She was a very beautiful woman, and as licentious as most of the Roman ladies of her age. She was one of the favourite mistresses of Augustus; and Dio Cassius relates (54.19) that there was a report at Rome that the emperor visited Gaul in B. C. 16, simply to enjoy the society of Terentia unmolested by the lampoons which it gave occasion to at Rome. The intrigue between Augustus and Terentia is said by Dio Cassius to have disturbed the good understanding which subsisted between the emperor and his minister, and finally to have occasioned the disgrace of the latter. Maecenas however had not much right to complain of the conduct of his wife, for his own infidelities were notorious. But notwithstanding his numerous amours, Maecenas continued to his death deeply in love with his fair wife. Their quarrels, which were of frequent occurrence, mainly in consequence of the morose and haughty temper of Terentia, rarely lasted long, for the natural uxoriousness of Maecenas constantly prompted him to seek a reconciliation ; so that Seneca says (Ep. 114) he married a wife a thousand times, though he never had more than one. Once indeed they*

*were divorced, but Maecenas tempted her back by presents (Dig. 24. tit. l. s. 64). Her influence over him was so great, that in spite of his cautious temper, he was on one occasion weak enough to confide to her an important state secret respecting the conspiracy of her brother Murena. (D. C. 54.3, 19, 4.7 ; Suet. Aug. 66, 69 ; Frandsen, C. Cilnius Maecenas, pp. 132-136.)*

Source of Above: William Smith. *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology*. London. John Murray: printed by Spottiswoode and Co., New-Street Square and Parliament Street. In the article on Soranus, we find: “at this present time (1848)” and this date seems to reflect the dates of works cited. 1873 is probably the printing date.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0104%3Aalphabetic+letter%3DT%3Aentry+group%3D4%3Aentry%3Dterentia-bio-2>

The below information comes from Suetonius: *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*:

### *C. Clinius Maecenas*

*But though seemingly in possession of all the means and appliances of enjoyment, Maecenas cannot be said to have been altogether happy in his domestic life. We have already alluded to an intrigue between Augustus and his wife Terentia; but this was not the only infringement of his domestic peace; Terentia, though exceedingly beautiful, was of a morose and haughty temper, and thence quarrels were continually occurring between the pair. Yet the natural uxoriousness of Maecenas as constantly prompted him to seek a reconciliation; so that Seneca remarks that he married a wife a thousand*

*times, though he never had more than one. Her influence over him was so great, that in spite of his cautious and taciturn temper, he was, on one occasion, weak enough to confide an important state secret to her, respecting her brother Murena, the conspirator. Maecenas himself, however, was probably in some measure to blame for the terms on which he lived with his wife, for he was far from being the pattern of a good husband. His own adulteries were notorious. Plutarch relates of him the story of the accommodating husband, Galba, who pretended to be asleep after dinner in order to give him an opportunity with his wife.*

Source of Above: Suetonius: *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*; An English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates. Suetonius. Publishing Editor. J. Eugene Reed. Alexander Thomson. Philadelphia. Gebbie & Co. 1889.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3A1ife%3Dmaecenas>

## **CHAPTER 14: Ben Jonson's *Sejanus' Fall***

### **THE ARGUMENT (*Sejanus' Fall*)**

#### **[Summary of Subject Matter]**

#### **Sejanus' Early History and Disgrace by Drusus Senior**

Aelius Sejanus was the son of Seius Strabo, a gentleman of Rome, and he was born at Vulsinium.

After his long service in court, first under Augustus, and afterward under Tiberius, Sejanus grew into such favor with Tiberius, and won him by his arts, that there lacked nothing but the name to make him a co-partner of the Empire.

Drusus Senior, the Emperor's son, did not like and did not tolerate this greatness of Sejanus. After many smothered dislikes, his dislike one day broke out, and Drusus Senior struck Sejanus publicly on the face.

To revenge this disgrace and to learn Drusus Senior's plans and secrets, Sejanus conspired and plotted with Livia, the wife of Drusus Senior. Livia was seduced by Sejanus to her dishonor before the plot to kill Drusus Senior proceeded, Sejanus also plotted together with her physician, who was called Eudemus, and with a man called Lygdus, who was a eunuch, to poison Drusus Senior.

#### **Sejanus Grows Ambitious to Become Emperor**

Their inhuman act had successful and not-suspected passage — the death of Drusus Senior aroused no suspicion — and it emboldened Sejanus to farther and more insolent projects, leading even to his ambition of becoming Emperor.

Finding the obstacles and hindrances he must encounter to be many and hard, in respect of the descendants of Germanicus (who were next in line for the succession), Sejanus devised to make Tiberius' self his means, and

instilled into his ears many doubts and suspicions both against the princes and against their mother, Agrippina.

Tiberius jealously hearkening to these things, he as ardently as Sejanus consented to their ruin and to their friends' ruin.

### **Sejanus Plots to Marry Livia and Plots Against Tiberius**

In this time, the better to mature and strengthen his design, Sejanus labored to marry Livia, and worked with all his ingenuity and cunning to remove Tiberius from the knowledge of public business, with allurements of a quiet and retired life, the latter of which Tiberius (out of a proneness to lust and a desire to hide those unnatural pleasures that he could not so publicly practice) embraced.

### **Sejanus' Downfall**

Sejanus' desire to marry Livia enkindled Tiberius' fears and gave him the first reason to fear and be suspicious of Sejanus. Against Sejanus, Tiberius raised in private a new instrument to do his bidding, one Sertorius Macro, and by use of Macro, Tiberius took clandestine measures and worked against Sejanus, discovered the other's plots and secrets, his means and his ends, and sounded the affections of the Senators, who were divided into factions, and distracted them.

At last, when Sejanus least looked for trouble and was most secure, Tiberius decoyed and enticed him away from his guards with the pretext of doing him an unwonted honor in the Senate; and with a long, ambiguous, and equivocal letter, in one day he had Sejanus suspected, accused, condemned, and torn into pieces by the rage of the people.

### **Ben Jonson Gives His Reason for Writing This Tragedy**

This play we advance as a mark of terror to all traitors and treasons, to show how just the heavens are in pouring and

thundering down a weighty vengeance on their unnatural intents, even to the worst princes; much more to those for guard of whose piety and virtue the angels are in continual watch, and God himself miraculously working.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS (*Sejanus' Fall*)

### MALE CHARACTERS

**Tiberius.** Second Roman Emperor. Successor to Caesar Augustus, who was his step-father and adoptive father. Ruled from 14-37 C.E. He was the father of Drusus Senior and the uncle of Germanicus. At birth he was named Tiberius Claudius Nero. After becoming Emperor, he was known as Tiberius Caesar Augustus. Tiberius is often referred to as Caesar.

**Drusus Senior.** He was the son of Tiberius and his first wife: Vipsania. He was the second husband of Livia. First in line of succession to Tiberius.

**Sejanus.** He was Consul in the first half of 31 C.E. Sejanus' father was a knight, and so Sejanus was a member of the equestrian (knight) class of citizens, which were ranked just below the noble class. He was executed in 31 C.E.

**Nero.** He was the oldest son of Germanicus, who was Tiberius' nephew and adopted son, and Agrippina. Sejanus plotted against him. Second in line of succession to Tiberius. This Nero is NOT the Nero who became the fifth Roman Emperor. That Nero was born in 54 C.E., well after the events of Jonson's play, which ends in 31 C.E.

**Latiaris.** Supporter of Sejanus. Betrayer of Sabinus.

**Drusus Junior.** Second son to Germanicus and Agrippina. Third in line of succession to Tiberius. Drusus "Junior" means Drusus "the Younger." When Germanicus died, however, Drusus Senior took care of Drusus Junior.

**Varro.** Follower of Sejanus.

**Caligula.** Youngest son of Germanicus and Agrippina. Fourth in line of succession to Tiberius. "Caligula" is a

nickname that means “Little Military-Boot.” He succeeded Tiberius and became the third Roman Emperor.

**Macro.** *Vigiles* (Watch, Night Watch, Police, Firefighters) Prefect. Enemy to Sejanus. Sertorius Macro.

**Arruntius.** A Senator of good character. Lucius Arruntius.

**Cotta.** A man without scruples.

**Silius.** A general under Germanicus. Caius Silius.

**Afer.** An excellent orator with excessive ambition.

**Sabinus.** A knight. Close to Agrippina, the widow of Germanicus, who had been his friend. Titus Sabinus.

**Haterius.** An orator well noted for the style of his orations. Noted for the content of his orations? Not so much.

**Lepidus.** A Senator of integrity and capability. Marcus Lepidus.

**Sanquinius.** A Senator.

**Cordus.** An historian and defender of free speech. Cremutius Cordus.

**Pomponius.** A follower of Sejanus.

**Gallus.** Husband of Vipsania, who had been Tiberius’ first wife.

**Postumus.** An underling of Sejanus. The name “Postumus” means “born after the death of the father.” Julius Postumus.

**Regulus.** Opponent to Sejanus.

**Trio.** Consul on the side of Sejanus.

**Terentius.** Friend to Sejanus.

**Minutius.** Friend to Sejanus.



**Laco.** Commander of the *Vigiles* (Watch, Night Watch, Police, Firefighters). Gracinus Laco.

**Satrius.** Client of Sejanus. Satrius Secundus.

**Eudemus.** Physician to Livia.

**Natta.** Client of Sejanus. Pinnarius Natta.

**Rufus.** An ex-Praetor. Supporter of Sejanus. Enemy to Sabinus.

**Opsius.** Supporter of Sejanus. Enemy to Sabinus.

**Tribuni.** Military Tribunes of the Praetorian Guard.

## **FEMALE CHARACTERS**

**Agrippina.** Widow of Germanicus. She was the granddaughter of Caesar Augustus. Her mother was Julia, Caesar Augustus' daughter. In history, she is known as Agrippina the Elder.

**Livia.** Lover of Sejanus. Husband to Drusus Senior. Sister to Germanicus. In history, she is known as Livilla, a nickname meaning "Little Livia." She was named after Livia Drusilla, the third and final wife of Caesar Augustus. She was the sister of Claudius, who became the fourth Roman Emperor.

**Sosia.** Wife of Silius. Friend of Agrippina.

## **MINOR CHARACTERS**

**Praecones.** Heralds. Criers in meetings of the Senate. This book uses the word "Heralds."

**Lictors.** They held the *fasces* — a bundle of rods and an axe that served as a symbol of power — as they preceded magistrates through the streets.

**Flamen.** Priest. This book uses the word “Priest” rather than “Flamen.”

**Ministri.** Attendants. This book uses the word “attendants.”

**Tubicines.** Trumpeters. This book uses the word “trumpeters.”

**Tibicines.** Flautists. This book uses the word “flautists.”

**Nuntius.** Messenger. This book uses the word “messenger.”

**Servi.** Servants. The singular is “servus.” This book uses the word “servant.”

**Praetor.** Second in rank to a Consul.

**Guards.**

**The Scene:** Rome

**NOTES:**

In this retelling, I use the scene divisions that appear in this book: Ben Jonson, *Sejanus his Fall*. W. F. Bolton, editor. A New Mermaid Dramabook. New York: Hill and Wang, 1966. I, however, did add a scene division — scene 4 — to Act 2, and a scene division — scene 3 — to Act 3 and a scene division — scene 5 — to Act 4. I also added two scene divisions to Act 5. In making scene divisions, I followed the practice of starting a new scene after everyone has exited.

Germanicus, having died in 19 C.E., does not appear in the play. He was the nephew and adopted son of Tiberius.

Tiberius, the second Roman Emperor, was born in 42 B.C.E. and died in 37 C.E. He ruled from 14 C.E. to 37 C.E. and was succeeded by Caligula.

Sejanus was born in 20 B.C.E. and died in 31 C.E.

Sejanus wanted to succeed Tiberius as Emperor, but some of Tiberius' relatives were in his way. These men were eligible to succeed Tiberius:

- Drusus Senior. The son of Tiberius and his first wife: Vipsania. First to be expected to succeed.
- Nero. First son to Germanicus and Agrippina. Nero was Tiberius' nephew and adopted son. Second to be expected to succeed.
- Drusus Junior. Second son to Germanicus and Agrippina. Third to be expected to succeed.
- Caligula. Third son to Germanicus and Agrippina. He would eventually succeed Tiberius.

In Ben Jonson's society, a person of higher rank would use "thou," "thee," "thine," and "thy" when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use "you" and "your" when referring to a person of higher rank.

"Sirrah" was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

The word "wench" at this time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

### **Roman Offices**

Consuls: The office of Consul was the highest political office of the Roman Republic. Two Consuls were elected each year and served for one year.

Praetors: A Praetor can be 1) the commander of an army, or 2) a magistrate. The office of Praetor (magistrate) was the second highest political office of the Roman Republic. They were subject only to the veto of the Consuls. Praetors could

take the auspices, the performance of which was a religious rite.

**Lictors:** Lictors served the Consuls and carried rods and axes as symbols of the Senators' authority. Rods were symbols of the Consuls' power to inflict corporal punishment, and axes were symbols of their power to inflict capital punishment. Lictors executed punishments on people who had been convicted of serious crimes.

**Tribunes:** Tribunes were administrative officers. Some were judicial Tribunes, and some were military Tribunes.

**Aediles:** An Aedile was a Roman magistrate who was in charge of maintaining public buildings. They also organized public festivals and were in charge of weights and measures.

**Censors:** They supervised public morality and maintained the census.

**Prefects:** They had civil or military power, but that power was delegated to them from others.

**Praecones:** Heralds. Criers in meetings of the Senate. They cry loudly things during a trial, such as "Silence!"

## ACT 1 (*Sejanus' Fall*)

### — 1.1 —

Sabinus and Silius met each other.

Silius had been a general under Germanicus, the nephew and adopted son of Tiberius, who was currently the Roman Emperor, after having succeeded Caesar Augustus.

Sabinus, a knight, was close to Agrippina, the widow of Germanicus, who had been his friend.

“Hail, Caius Silius!” Sabinus greeted his friend.

“Titius Sabinus, hail!” Silius replied. “You’re rarely — seldom and splendidly — met in court.”

“Therefore, we are well met,” Sabinus replied.

“It is true; indeed, this place — the court — is not our sphere,” Silius said.

Neither man liked the court or the politics that occurred in the court.

Sabinus said:

“No, it isn’t, Silius. We are no good at being plotters and schemers.

“We lack the ‘fine’ arts of conspiring and their thriving use that should make us graced or favored of the times.

“We have no successive changes of faces to use in duplicity, no cleft tongues, no soft and glutinous bodies that can stick like snails on painted walls, or on our breasts creep up like a snake, to fall from that proud height to which we did climb by slavery, not by service.”

One way to climb to wealth and office is through slavery: being servile to those men who are in high office. When

Caesar Augustus assumed power, the boldest men opposing him had died, and those who were willing to be subservient to him were rewarded.

Sabinus continued:

“We are no guilty men, and therefore we are no great men.

“We have no place in court, no office in state that we can say we have due to our crimes.”

Another way to climb to wealth and office is through committing crimes, a word that can also mean sins.

Sabinus continued:

“We burn with no black secrets —”

Black secrets can make one susceptible to being servile to the man who knows one’s black secrets. And if you are the one who knows black secrets, it can make other men — the ones with black secrets — servile to you.

One wonders what black secrets Vladimir Putin (killer of Ukrainian pregnant women and babies) knows about Donald Trump.

Sabinus continued:

“— black secrets that can make us dear to the pale authors —”

“Dear” can mean “costly.” Paying blackmail to the man who knows one’s black secrets can be costly. Buying someone’s silence is expensive. The pale authors of the black secrets would pay much money and/or render other services to Silius and Sabinus — if Silius and Sabinus knew any black secrets.

In addition, the people paying the blackmail can treat the blackmailers well out of fear of arousing their anger — anger that could result in making black secrets known.

Sabinus and Silius neither had nor knew any black secrets.

Sabinus continued:

“— or make us live in fear of the still-waking anger of those being blackmailed, to raise ourselves a fortune by subverting and destroying theirs.”

One way to raise and advance oneself is by causing someone else to fall.

Sabinus continued:

“We stand not in the lines that advance to that so courted point.”

Lines of people seek a point — a goal — that points to the court.

Satrius and Natta entered the scene. Both men were clients of Sejanus, who was their patron. Sejanus supported them, and in return, the clients were bound to serve him and protect his life.

Silius said, “But yonder lean a pair who do.”

The pair leaned toward the side of doing bad deeds to advance themselves. Satrius and Natta were not morally upright. They leaned on Sejanus for support. They supported Sejanus, and in turn he supported them. But clearly they knew that Sejanus was the alpha male.

Latiaris entered the scene. He supported Sejanus.

“Good cousin Latiaris,” Sabinus greeted him.

In this society, the word “cousin” meant “kinsman.”

Silius and Sabinus talked together at the side as Latiaris joined Satrius and Natta.

Silius said:

“Satrius Secundus and Pinnarius Natta, the great Sejanus’ clients: There are two men who know more than honest counsels.

“Their close breasts and secret hearts, if they were ripped up and opened to light, would show that it would be a poor and idle sin to which their trunks had not been made fit organs.”

In other words: Closely examine their hearts, and you will hardly find a sin that they have not committed.

Silius continued:

“These two men can lie, flatter, and swear, forswear [swear falsely], defame and disparage, inform on traitors or ‘traitors,’ smile, and betray; make men ‘guilty,’ and then beg the forfeit lives to get the livings.”

People could grow wealthy by informing on traitors or “traitors.” As a reward for their information, they would acquire some of the convicted man’s property as a reward. These informers would “beg” to get wealth and property. The penalty for treason was usually a horrible death.

Silius continued:

“These two men can cut men’s throats with whisperings; they can sell to gaping suitors the empty smoke — empty promises — that flies about the palace.”

The Roman proverb *fumum vendere* means literally “to sell smoke” and figuratively “to make empty promises.”

Silius continued:



“These two men can laugh when their patron laughs, sweat when he sweats, be hot and cold with him, and change every mood, demeanor, and garb, as often as he varies.

“These two men observe their patron as his watch observes his clock.”

A soldier of the Night Watch could be observing the time, or a man could be checking the time on his watch against a public clock. In other words, Satrius and Natta observe Sejanus — their patron — closely and often.

Silius continued:

“And, true as turquoise in the dear lord’s ring, these two men look well or ill, according to how their patron, Sejanus, looks.”

Turquoise was believed to change color according to the health of its wearer.

Silius continued:

Satrius and Natta are ready to praise his Lordship — Sejanus — if he spits, or simply pisses fair, if he should have an indifferent stool, or if he breaks wind well.

“Nothing can escape their notice.”

Sabinus said:

“Alas, these things deserve no note, compared with other vile and filthier flatteries that corrupt the times, when not alone the great personages of the state are eager to make their safety and security by doing such sordid acts, but all our Consuls, and no little part of such as have been Praetors — yea, the most of Senators, who otherwise do not use their voices, start up in public Senate, and there strive who shall propound the most abject, despicable, and base things, so

much that often Tiberius has been heard, while leaving the court, to cry, ‘O race of men, prepared for servitude!’

“This showed that he, who least the public liberty could like, as loathly brooked their abject servility.”

To advance themselves, highly ranked bad men would flatter the Emperor Tiberius, who knew that they were flattering him and who loathed — or appeared to loath — such flattery and such bad men.

Silius said:

“Well, all is deserved by us — and we deserve more — who with our riots and debauches, pride, and civil hate have so provoked the justice of the gods.

“We who within these fourscore years were born free, equal lords of the conquered world, and knew no masters but passions, to which, betraying first our liberties, we since became the slaves to one man’s lusts, and now to many.”

Not too long ago, the Romans had enjoyed a republic. Julius Caesar had fought a civil war and seemed to be on the verge of becoming a King or an Emperor, but Brutus and Cassius had assassinated him. A new civil war had broken out, and Caesar Augustus had become the first Roman Emperor. When he died, Tiberius succeeded him.

Sabinus and Silius mourned the loss of the old Roman Republic. They believed that they had lost much freedom in the new Roman Empire.

Silius continued:

“Every ministering spy who will accuse and swear is lord of you, of me, of all, and of all our fortunes and our lives.

“Our looks are called into question, and our words, howsoever innocent, are made crimes.

“We shall shortly not dare to tell our dreams, or think, but it will be treason.”

Greedy men would closely listen to other people’s words, hoping that those other people would say something that could be twisted and interpreted as treasonous. Greedy men could turn in traitors and “traitors” and profit by so doing.

Sabinus said:

“Tyrants’ arts are to give flatterers grace, accusers power,

“So that those [flatterers and accusers] may seem to kill whom they [tyrants] devour.”

Cordus and Arruntius entered the scene.

Cordus was a historian and a defender of free speech, and Arruntius was a Senator of good character.

Sabinus said, “Now here is good Cremutius Cordus.”

Cordus replied to Sabinus, “Hail to Your Lordship!”

Silius, Sabinus, Cordus, and Arruntius walked aside and whispered together.

Natta asked, “Who is that man who greets your cousin Sabinus?”

Latiaris answered, “He is named Cordus, a gentleman of Rome. He has written historical annals recently, they say, and very well.”

“Annals?” Natta said. “Of what times?”

“I think of Pompey’s, and Caius Julius Caesar’s, and so down to these,” Latiaris replied.

Pompey was a general whom Julius Caesar defeated in a civil war.

Natta asked, "How stands he inclined to the present state? Is he either Drusian, or Germanican? Or ours, or neutral?"

Tiberius' time was marked by factionalism. Political factions supported Drusus Senior, or Germanicus' relatives, or Sejanus.

"I don't know him well enough to know that," Latiaris replied.

"Those times are somewhat hazardous and unsettled to be touched," Natta said. "Have you either seen or heard part of his work?"

"No," Latiaris said. "He intends that they shall be public shortly."

"Oh," Natta said. "Do you call him Cordus?"

"Aye," Latiaris said.

Satrius, Natta, and Latiaris exited.

Sabinus said, "But these our times are not the same, Arruntius."

Arruntius replied:

"These our times?"

"The men, the men are not the same; we are base, poor, and degenerated from the exalted strain of our great fathers.

"Where is now the soul of god-like Cato the Younger? — he who dared to be good when Julius Caesar dared to be evil; and who had the power not to live as Julius Caesar's slave, but instead to die as his master.

"Or where is now the loyal Brutus, who being proof against all the charm and allurements of benefits and favors did strike

so brave a blow into the monster's heart that sought unnaturally to make captive and enslave his country?

“Oh, they have fled the light.”

Cato the Younger had fought against Julius Caesar. When Cato's side was defeated, he committed suicide rather than live on in what he considered would be a tyranny under Julius Caesar.

Brutus and Cassius led the plot that led to the assassination of Julius Caesar.

Arruntius continued:

“Those mighty spirits lie raked up with their ashes in their urns, and not a spark of their eternal fire glows in a present bosom; all's but a momentary blaze of brightness, flashes, and smoke, wherewith we labor so, there's nothing Roman in us, nothing good, gallant, or great.

“What Cordus says is true: ‘Brave Cassius was the last of all that race.’”

“Stand aside!” Sabinus said. “Lord Drusus is coming.”

Drusus Senior and Haterius entered the scene.

“The Emperor's son!” Haterius shouted. “Give place! Make room!”

Arruntius, Silius, Cordus, and Sabinus stood to the side as Drusus Senior and Haterius walked around.

Drusus Senior was expected to succeed Tiberius, and Haterius was an orator.

“I like the prince well,” Silius said.

Drusus Senior and Haterius exited.

“Drusus Senior is a riotous youth,” Arruntius said. “There’s little hope of him.”

“His age will, as it grows, correct that fault of being riotous,” Sabinus said. “I think he bears himself each day more nobly than the previous day; and he wins no less on men’s affections than his father loses. Believe me, I love him, and I love him chiefly for his opposing Sejanus.”

Silius said, “And I love him for gracing his young kinsmen so, the sons of Prince Germanicus; it shows a gallant clearness in him, a straight and upright mind that does not maliciously envy their father’s name in them.”

Drusus Senior, who opposed Sejanus, had a reputation for partying, but most Roman citizens forgave him that because of his youth and good deeds.

Drusus Senior had acted as a father to the sons of the deceased general Germanicus. Drusus Senior was the son of Tiberius, and Germanicus had been the adopted son of Tiberius, and so Drusus Senior and Germanicus had been step-brothers.

Germanicus’ sons were Nero, Drusus Junior, and Caius, who was nicknamed Caligula and would eventually succeed Tiberius.

“The name of Germanicus was, while he lived, above and superior to all malicious envy; and now that he is dead, is without all malicious envy,” Arruntius said. “Oh, that man! If there were seeds of the old moral virtue and valor left, they lived in him.”

Silius said:

“He had the fruits, Arruntius, more than the seeds.”

The fruits of virtue include justified fame and good reputation.

Dead or alive, Germanicus was respected.

Silius continued:

“Sabinus and I myself had the means and opportunity to know him inside and out, and we can report on him and his true character.

“We were his followers, but he would call us his friends.

“Germanicus was a man most like to virtue in all and every action.

“He was nearer to the gods than men in nature, of a body as fair as was his mind, and no less worthy of reverence in face than fame.

“He could so use his state and high rank, tempering his greatness with his gravity, so that it banished and sent away all self-love in him and spite in others.

“What his funerals lacked in images and pomp, they had supplied with honorable sorrow — soldiers’ sadness — a kind of silent mourning, suitable for such men who know no tears except those that their captives are accustomed to show in very great losses.”

The soldiers remained silent while mourning because they associated tears with their captives.

Cordus said, “I thought once, considering their outward forms and appearances, age, manner of deaths, the nearness of the places where they died, to have paralleled him with great Alexander, for both were of the best features and appearance, of high race and exalted heritage, aged but to thirty at their deaths, and in foreign lands, by their own people, alike made away.”

Plutarch’s *Lives* paired one Greek biography with one Roman biography.

Cordus had thought of pairing the biography of the Roman Germanicus with the biography of the Greek Alexander the Great. Both were remarkable men, and both were rumored to have died young after being poisoned.

Plutarch was born in 46 C.E. and so was not yet born at the time Ben Jonson's play was set. Plutarch did write about Alexander the Great, but he paired Alexander with Julius Caesar.

Sabinus disagreed that Germanicus should be compared to Alexander the Great, who was from Macedon and who died after a drinking bout:

“I don't know about Germanicus' death, how you might wrest and interpret it. But as for his life, it did as much disdain comparison with that voluptuous, rash, giddy, and drunken Macedonian's life as mine does with my bondman's — my slave's.

“All the good in Alexander — his valor and his fortune — Germanicus made his. But he had other touches of late Romans that more did describe and proclaim who Germanicus was.

“He had Pompey's dignity; the innocence, blamelessness, and uprightness of Cato; Caesar's spirit; wise Brutus' temperance.

“Every virtue that, imparted to others, gave them good name and good reputation, flowed mixed all together in him.”

In other words: Virtues that went singly and individually to some great men, had all grouped together and had all gone to Germanicus.

Sabinus continued his praise of Germanicus:



“He was the soul of goodness, and all our praises of him are like streams drawn from a spring that still rise full and leave the part remaining greatest.”

All their praises of Germanicus could not do justice to his goodness.

Arruntius said, “I am sure that he was too great for us, and that they knew who did remove him hence.”

These words can mean 1) the people who poisoned Germanicus knew how good a man he was, and/or 2) important people knew who were the people who had poisoned Germanicus.

Tiberius was rumored, influenced by his mother, to have had Germanicus poisoned because of malicious envy of him. To do that, he had Germanicus serve far from Rome. Germanicus died in Antioch, which is near the modern city of Antakya in Turkey.

Sabinus said:

“When men grow securely and deeply honored and loved, there is a trick in state, which jealous princes never fail to use, how to deflect and thwart that growth with fair pretext and honorable appearances of employment, either by embassy, the war, or such, to shift them forth into another air, where they may purge, and lessen; so was Germanicus securely and deeply honored and loved, and he had his seconds — his secondaries — there, sent by Tiberius and his more subtle dam — his mother, Livia, the wife of Caesar Augustus — to discontent him, to breed and cherish mutinies, detract his greatest actions, give audacious check to his commands, and work to put him out in open act of treason.”

Thee seconds were Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso and his wife Plancina, who were thought to have poisoned Germanicus

and killed him. Piso was governor of Syria when Germanicus was reorganizing Rome's Asian provinces and kingdoms.

Sabinus continued:

“When his wise cares prevented all of these snares, a fine poison was thought on to mature their practices.”

“Here comes Sejanus,” Cordus said.

“Now observe the stoops, the bendings, and the falls,” Silius said.

The followers of Sejanus were obsequious and frequently bended the knee and bowed to him. One or both knees would fall to the ground.

A fall can also be a moral decline or a trap to ensnare others.

“Most creeping base!” Arruntius said.

Sejanus' base, aka followers, were base.

Sejanus, Satrius, Terentius, and some other followers of Sejanus entered the scene.

Terentius was a friend to Sejanus, and Satrius was one of Sejanus' clients. Satrius pointed to the group of men who admired Germanicus and did not admire Sejanus: Arruntius, Cordus, Sabinus, and Silius.

Sejanus said to Satrius, “I note them well. No more. What do you have to say to me?”

Satrius began, “My lord, there is a gentleman of Rome who would buy —”

“What do you call the man whom you talked with?” Sejanus interrupted.

“Please Your Lordship, he is Eudemus, the physician to Livia, the wife of Drusus Senior,” Satrius said.

Livia was Germanicus’ sister and Tiberius’ niece.

Sejanus said, “Continue on with your suit. He would buy, you said —”

“A Tribune’s place, my lord,” Satrius said.

Eudemus wanted to buy the political position of Tribune. He could do that by bribing Sejanus.

“What will he give?” Sejanus asked.

Satrius answered, “Fifty sestertia.”

“Livia’s physician, you say, is that fellow?” Sejanus asked.

“He is, my lord,” Satrius said. “What is your Lordship’s answer?”

“Answer to what?” Sejanus said.

“The place, my lord,” Satrius said. “It is for a gentleman whom your Lordship will well like when you see him, and one you may make yours by the grant.”

By making him a Tribune, Sejanus could make a follower of Eudemus, the physician to Livia, the wife of Drusus Senior.

“Well, let him bring his money and his name,” Sejanus said.

The word “name” can mean “reputation.”

Satrius said, “I thank Your Lordship. He shall, my lord.”

“Come closer,” Sejanus said.

He asked quietly, “Do you know this same Eudemus? Is he learned?”

Satrius answered, “He is reputed to be learned, my lord, and of deep practice.”

“Deep practice” can mean 1) learned medical practice, and/or 2) treacherous practices.

Sejanus said quietly, “Bring him in to me, in the gallery [a long, narrow apartment], and find a reason to leave him and me there, together. I want to confer with him about an ailment.”

He then said out loud, “Let’s continue on our way.”

Sejanus, Satrius, Terentius, and some other supporters and clients of Sejanus exited; a few other supporters and clients of Sejanus remained.

Arruntius said:

“So, yet another? Yet? Oh, desperate state of groveling honor!”

They had just witnessed a bribe.

Because such honors as Tribuneships could be purchased with groveling bribes, they were groveling honors.

Arruntius continued:

“See thou this, O sun, and do we see thee after?

“I think that day should lose its light when men do lose their shames and for the empty circumstance — trivial details — of life betray their cause of living, aka their reason for living.”

Juvenal in his eighth Satire, wrote, in G.G. Ramsay’s translation, “[...] count it the greatest of all sins to prefer life to honor, and to lose, for the sake of living, all that makes life worth having” (lines 83-84).

Freedom makes life worth having. Why give up your freedom to bribe your way into a political office? Bribing someone demonstrates that that person is your superior.

Eudemus was going to both give money to Sejanus and become beholden to him.

Silius said in reply to Arruntius:

“Not so.”

Men do evil, and the day keeps its light. The natural world does not necessarily punish evil men. Indeed, Sejanus now appeared to have more power than the natural world.

Silius continued:

“Sejanus can repair, if Jove — Jupiter, the King of the gods — should ruin.

“Sejanus is the now — current — court-god; and well applied to and supplicated by the sacrifice of knees, of crooks, and cringe — the knees bend and kneel to him — he will do more than all the house of heaven can, for a thousand hecatombs.”

Hecatombs of 100 oxen per hecatomb are public sacrifices to the gods. A thousand hecatombs would require the sacrifice of 100,000 oxen.

Silius continued:

“It is he who makes us our day, or night; hell and Elysium are in his look; we talk of the judge Rhadamanth in the Land of the Dead, the avenging spirits known as the Furies, and fire-brands — those already burning or destined to burn in hell — but it is his frown that is all these, where on the adverse part — the opposite side — his smile is more than poets ever yet feigned, aka invented, of bliss and cool, leafy shades, the gods’ drink that is called nectar —”

Arruntius said about Sejanus:

“A serving boy!

“I knew him at Caius Caesar’s table, when for hire he prostituted his abused body to that great gourmand, fat Apicius, and was the noted pathic — boy prostitute — of the time.”

Caius Caesar was the grandson of Caesar Augustus, who adopted him in hopes that he would be his heir, but Caius died in 4 C.E. and Augustus died in 14 C.E.

Apicius spent his fortune on pleasure; when he had spent most of his money, he committed suicide.

Sabinus said:

“And now, the second face of the whole world, the partner of the Empire, has his image reared equal with the image of Tiberius, borne in ensigns — military standards.”

Sejanus’ effigy was displayed in the center of military camps, where the ensigns were stored.

Sabinus continued:

“Sejanus commands and disposes every important, dignified office.

“Centurions, Tribunes, heads of provinces, Praetors, and Consuls, all that heretofore Rome’s general suffrage — collective vote — gave, is now his to sell.”

A Centurion was a military officer who commanded a century: a unit of Roman soldiers.

Sabinus continued:

“The gain, or rather spoil, of all the earth, one man, and his family, receives.”

Silius said, “He has recently made him a strength, too, in an exceptional way, by reducing all the Praetorian bands into one camp, which he commands, after alleging that the soldiers, because of living loose and scattered, fell to debauchery, and that if any sudden attack should be attempted, their united strength would be far more than if the bands of guards were severed and divided into smaller bands, and their life more strict if they were more removed and distant from the city.”

From 14 C.E. until a little before his death, Sejanus was Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, aka the Roman imperial bodyguard, which also policed the city of Rome. They had been stationed in various places, but he consolidated them into one camp, which gave him many soldiers to quickly command. His excuses were that the soldiers were prone to dissolute behavior when in widely separated locations, and there would be more discipline if they were consolidated; in addition, he said that they would be a more powerful force if they were all together. The new camp was located outside, but near, Rome.

Sabinus said:

“Where now he builds what kind of forts he pleases, is heard to court the soldier by his name, woos, feasts the chiefest men of action, whose needs, not loves, compel them to be his.

“And, although he never has been liberal by nature, yet to his own dark ends he’s most profuse and lavish and letting fly he does not care what toward his ambition.”

“Does he yet have ambition?” Arruntius asked. “Is there any step in state that can make him higher? Or more? Or is there anything that he is, except less?”

“Nothing, but Emperor,” Silius said.

Sejanus was the second most important man in the Roman Empire. The only higher man and position was Emperor.

“I hope that Tiberius will keep the name of Emperor, howsoever he has foregone the dignity and power,” Arruntius said.

Tiberius preferred a quiet life to the burdens of being Emperor.

“To be sure, while he lives,” Silius said.

“And when Tiberius is dead, the Emperorship comes to Drusus Senior,” Arruntius said. “Should he fail, aka die, the Emperorship comes to the brave offspring of Germanicus, and they are three: Is that too many for him to have a plot upon?”

The three sons of Germanicus were Nero, Drusus Junior, and Caligula. When Tiberius died, the four men in line to succeed him were his son, Drusus Senior, and the three sons of Tiberius’ nephew and adopted son: Germanicus.

In order for Sejanus to succeed Tiberius as Emperor, he would have to kill the four men in line ahead of him. If he wanted the deaths to appear to be natural, they would have to be spaced out.

“I do not know the heart of Sejanus’ designs; but surely the face — the outward appearance — of his designs and plans looks farther than the present,” Sabinus said.

Arruntius said:

“By the gods, if I could guess he had but such a thought, my sword should cleave him down from head to heart, but I would find it out; and with my hand I’d hurl his panting brain about the air, in mites as small as atoms, to undo the knotted bed —”



The “knotted bed” was Sejanus’ immoral plans.

A knot is a jumble of ropes. Arruntius may be comparing Sejanus’ thoughts to a nest of snakes or to the intricately woven threads of plots.

“You’re observed, Arruntius,” Sabinus said. “You’re being watched.”

Some of Sejanus’ clients were watching him.

Arruntius said, “Death! I dare tell him so, and all his spies.”

He turned to Sejanus’s clients and said, “You, sir, I would — do you look? And you?”

Sabinus said to Arruntius, “Forbear. Don’t do this.”

Satrius and Eudemus entered the scene. They stood apart from the Germanicans: Sabinus, Arruntius, Silius, and Cordus.

Satrius was a follower of Sejanus, and he was the go-between for Eudemus and Sejanus. Eudemus was the physician of Livia, the wife of Drusus Senior. Eudemus was bribing Sejanus in order to become a Tribune.

Satrius said to Eudemus, “Sejanus will quickly be here. Let’s walk a turn. You’re musing, Eudemus?”

Cautious, Eudemus said to Satrius, “Not I, sir.”

He said to himself, “I wonder why Sejanus should mark me out for attention so! Well, may Jove and Apollo form it for the best.”

Jove (aka Jupiter) and Apollo were Roman gods.

Satrius said:

“Your fortune’s made for you now, Eudemus, if you can just lay hold upon the means.”

The means is service.

Satrius continued:

“Do but observe his mood, and — believe it — he’s the noblest Roman, where he takes —”

Sejanus entered the scene, and Satrius said, “Here comes His Lordship.”

“Now, good Satrius,” Sejanus said.

“This is the gentleman, my lord,” Satrius said.

“Is he?” Sejanus asked.

He said to Eudemus, “Give me your hand. We must be more acquainted. Report, sir, has spoken out about your skill and learning, and I am glad I have so needful cause (however in itself painful and hard) to make me known to so great ability.”

He then said to Satrius, to get him out of the way, “Look, who’s that, Satrius?”

Taking the hint, Satrius exited.

Sejanus then said to Eudemus, “I have a grief — an injury — sir, that will desire your help. Your name’s Eudemus?”

“Yes,” Eudemus said.

“Sir?” Sejanus said.

Sejanus wanted Eudemus to be more respectful to him, which Eudemus immediately recognized and obliged.

Eudemus said, “It is, My Lord.”

“I hear that you are the physician to Livia, the princess?” Sejanus said.

“I minister unto her, my good lord,” Eudemus replied.

“You minister to a royal lady, then,” Sejanus said.

“She is royal, my lord, and fair,” Eudemus replied.

Sejanus said:

“Being fair — beautiful — is understood of all their sex, who are, or would be so.

“Those who would be fair, cosmetic treatment soon can make them so.

“For those who are fair, their beauties fear no colors.”

Colors are 1) makeup, and 2) battle flags.

“Your Lordship is conceited,” Eudemus said.

In this context, the word “conceited” means “full of conceits, aka ideas,” aka “witty.”

Sejanus said:

“Sir, you know it. And I can, if necessary, deliver a learned lecture on this and other secrets.

“Please tell me, what other ladies, besides Livia, do you have as your patients?”

Eudemus answered, “Many, my good lord. The great Augusta, Urgulania, Mutilia Prisca, and Plancina, many different —”

Augusta was the mother of Tiberius.

Urgulania was one of Augusta’s best friends.

Mutilia Prisca was another intimate friend of Augusta’s.

Plancina, another of Augusta’s friends, was the wife of Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso. Plancina and Piso were thought to have poisoned Germanicus and killed him.

Sejanus interrupted, “— and all of these tell you the particulars of every different grief? How first it grew, and then increased? What action caused that? What passion caused that? And they answer to each point — each question — that you will put to them?”

“If they did not, my lord, we doctors would not know how to prescribe the remedies,” Eudemus said.

“Bah, you’re a subtle, cunning nation of persons, you physicians! And you are grown to be the only cabinets — the only repositories— in court of ladies’ privacies and secrets.”

“Cabinets” are private apartments or boudoirs.

“Privacies” can be “intimacies” and/or “private parts.”

Sejanus then asked, “Indeed, which of these is the most pleasant and amusing lady, in her physic?”

“Physic” is “medicine.” It can include such practices as taking cathartics or purgatives. “Physic” can also mean “healthy practices.”

Eudemus hesitated. Physicians know things that their patients would not like to be made public knowledge.

Sejanus said, “Come, you are modest now.”

“It is fitting for me to be modest, my lord,” Eudemus said.

Sejanus said:

“Why, sir, I do not ask you about their urines.

“I do not ask you whose urine smells most like violets as a result of using violets in herbal medicines, or whose excrement is best, or who makes the hardest faces on her toilet-stool during a difficult defecation.

“I do not ask you which lady sleeps with her own face a-nights, which lady takes her teeth off with her clothes, in court, or which lady takes off her hair, or which lady takes off her complexion, and in which box she puts it.

“These would be questions that might, perhaps, have put your gravity to some defense of blush. But I inquired, which was the wittiest, merriest, most wanton?”

The word “wanton” can mean 1) “playful,” or 2) “lustful.”

Sejanus continued:

“I made harmless interrogatories and asked questions that are simply harmless whims.”

Manipulative people will often test other people in small ways to see if those people can be manipulated in big ways.

He then asked:

“I think Augusta should be most perverse and unreasonable by temperament?”

“She’s so, my lord,” Eudemus said.

Yes, Eudemus can be manipulated.

“I knew it,” Sejanus said. “And Mutilia is the most jocund?”

“It is very true, my lord,” Eudemus said.

Sejanus said:

“And why would you conceal this from me, now?”

“Come, what about Livia? I know she’s quick and quaintly spirited, and she will have strange thoughts when she’s at leisure.

“She tells them all to you?”

“Quaintly” can mean “elegantly” or “cleverly,” but in Ben Jonson’s society, the word “quaint” also meant “cunt.”

A “strange woman” can be a promiscuous woman.

Eudemus said, “My noblest lord, there is no man alive and breathing in the Empire or on earth whom I would be ambitious to serve in any act that may preserve my honor before Your Lordship.”

If Eudemus were to answer Sejanus’ prying questions, Eudemus would NOT be preserving his own honor.

Sejanus said:

“Sir, you can lose no honor by trusting anything — any information — to me. The coarsest act done to my service I can so reward in such a way that all the world shall style it honorable.

“People’s idle, foolish, virtuous definitions keep honor poor, and are as scorned as vain;

“Those deeds breathe honor that do suck in gain.”

According to Sejanus, honorable deeds are those that bring you wealth.

Eudemus objected: “But, my good lord, if I should thus betray the private counsels of my patient, and the private counsels of a lady of her high place and worth, what might Your Lordship — who soon are to trust me with your own private counsels — judge about my trustworthiness?”

Soon, if Sejanus were to make Eudemus his physician, Sejanus would entrust Eudemus with his own secrets. If Eudemus were to tell Sejanus the secrets of Eudemus’ patients, wouldn’t Sejanus think that Eudemus would tell other people the secrets of Sejanus?

Sejanus said:

“I would judge your trustworthiness to be only the best, I swear.

“Say now that I should utter to you my illness, and with it the true cause: that my illness is love, and love for Livia; if you should tell her this, should she suspect your faith? I wish you could tell me as much from her; see if my brain could be turned mistrustful.”

Sejanus was claiming to be lovesick for Livia, a married woman.

Eudemus said, “Happily, my lord, I could in time tell you as much, and more, as long as I might safely promise but the first to her from you.”

The word “happily” can mean “perhaps.”

Sejanus said, “You may tell it as safely, my Eudemus (I now dare call thee so) as I have put the secret into thee.”

Sejanus had been using the formal “you” to refer to Eudemus, but now he used the familiar “thee,” indicating that he was regarding Eudemus as a friend.

Eudemus said, “My lord —”

“Don’t protest,” Sejanus said. “Thy looks are vows to me; use only speed, and, if you just move and persuade her with Sejanus’ love, thou art a man made to make Consuls. Go.”

A man made to make Consuls is a powerful man: He can decide who is to be Consul, which in itself is an important position.

“My lord, I’ll promise you a private meeting this day, together with her,” Eudemus said.

“Can thou?” Sejanus asked.

“Yes,” Eudemus said.

“The place?” Sejanus asked.

“My gardens, to where I shall fetch Your Lordship,” Eudemus said.

Sejanus said:

“Let me adore my Aesculapius!”

Aesculapius is the god of medicine.

Sejanus continued:

“Why, this indeed is physic, and outspeaks — is more significant than — the knowledge of cheap drugs, or any use that can be made out of it! More comforting than all your opiates, juleps, apozems, magistral syrups, or —”

Opiates, juleps, apozems, and magistral syrups are different kinds of medicine.

Sejanus broke off his words and then continued:

“Begone, my friend, not barely styled, but created so. Expect things greater than thy largest hopes to overtake thee. Fortune shall be taught to know how ill she has deserved, thus long to come behind thy wishes. Go, and be successful.”

Lady Fortune had been slow in answering Eudemus’ prayers, but Sejanus would make sure that Eudemus’ wishes were now quickly answered. Sejanus was promising that he was not making an empty promise but would do what he said he would do.

Eudemus, who had just agreed to arrange a meeting between Sejanus and a married woman, exited.

People who arrange such meetings are sometimes called panders.



Sejanus, who had just manipulated Eudemus, said to himself:

“Ambition makes more trusty slaves than does need. These fellows — doctors — by the favor of their art and skill, have always the means to tempt, and they have often the power.”

Sejanus was going to use Eudemus to tempt Livia. As a doctor, Eudemus knew Livia’s secrets, and so he had inside information on what would tempt her.

Eudemus was ambitious, as shown by his wanting to be a Tribune, and so he would make a trusty slave to Sejanus.

Sejanus continued:

“If Livia will be now corrupted, then thou have the way, Sejanus, to work out the secrets of him, who, thou know, endures and tolerates thee not. I mean to find out the secrets of her husband, Drusus Senior, and to work against them.

“Prosper it, Pallas, thou who betters wit;

“For Venus has the smallest share in it.”

Pallas Athena is a warrior goddess, while Venus is the goddess of sexual passion. Sejanus was more concerned about killing Drusus Senior than he was about getting an orgasm. Seducing Livia was simply a means to a more immoral end.

Because Pallas Athena is also the goddess of wisdom, she can better wit, aka intelligence. Venus, as the goddess of sexual passion, has much less to do with reason.

Tiberius and Drusus Senior, attended by Haterius, Latiaris, Satrius, Natta, etc., entered the scene.

A man knelt before Tiberius, who said:

“We will not endure and tolerate these flatteries.

“Let him stand.

“Our empire, ensigns, axes, rods, and state don’t take away our human nature from us.

‘Look up at us like a man, and fall before the gods.’”

Axes and rods make up the *fasces*, symbol of the Emperor’s power.

Tiberius wanted his followers to look at him as the man — not god — he was, but also to look up to him.

Suetonius wrote about Tiberius’ aversion to flattery. In Alexander Thomson’s translation:

*He had such an aversion to flattery, that he would never suffer any senator to approach his litter, as he passed the streets in it, either to pay him a civility, or upon business. And when a man of consular rank, in begging his pardon for some offence he had given him, attempted to fall at his feet, he started from him in such haste, that he stumbled and fell. If any compliment was paid him, either in conversation or a set speech, he would not scruple to interrupt and reprimand the party, and alter what he had said. Being once called “lord,” by some person, he desired that he might no more be affronted in that manner. When another, to excite veneration, called his occupations “sacred,” and a third had expressed himself thus: “By your authority I have waited upon the senate,” he obliged them to change their phrases; in one of them adopting persuasion, instead of “authority,” and in the other, laborious, instead of “sacred.”*

“How like a god speaks Caesar!” Sejanus said.

This, of course, was flattery. One way to flatter someone is to say that that person does not like flattery. And, of course, Sejanus was comparing Tiberius to the gods.

Arruntius said to Cordus, Silius, and Sabinus:

“There, observe! Tiberius can endure that second supporter who flatters him secondly — that’s no flattery — ha!

“Oh, what is it proud slime will not believe of his own worth, to hear it equally praised thus with the gods!”

“He did not hear what Sejanus said, sir,” Cordus said.

Arruntius said:

“He did not?”

“Tut, he must not; we think meanly and ignobly.

“It is your most courtly, known confederacy to have your private parasite redeem what he in public subtlety will lose to making him a name.”

In other words: It is most courtly to have a flatterer restore a name privately that the Emperor or other high-ranking person declines publicly in order to please the citizens. Tiberius was saying that he was not a god, but Sejanus was comparing him to the gods.

Silius will soon say that Tiberius has a secret love of flattery although he rejects flattery publicly.

Haterius gave Tiberius some letters and began, “Right mighty lord —”

Using the majestic plural, Tiberius interrupted and said, “We must stop up our ears against these assaults of charming and enchanted tongues; we ask that you use no longer these contumelies to us; don’t call us either ‘lord,’ or ‘mighty.’ We profess ourself to be the servant of the Senate, and we are proud to enjoy them as our good, just, and favoring lords.”

The noun “contumely” means “insulting language.” Tiberius considered flattery directed toward himself to be insulting language.

Cordus said to Arruntius, Sabinus, and Silius, “Splendidly dissembled!”

The word “dissimulation” means “concealment of one’s thoughts.”

Earlier, Sabinus had said about Tiberius: “Often Tiberius has been heard, while leaving the court, to cry, ‘O race of men, prepared for servitude!’”

Tiberius did not highly regard all of the Senators and other members of the court.

Tiberius was very capable of saying one thing but doing the opposite.

Arruntius said, “Princelike, to the life.”

Sabinus said:

“When power, which may command, so much descends,

“Their bondage, whom it stoops to, it intends.”

Sabinus believed that Tiberius was manipulating the Senators and the people listening to him.

Tiberius asked Haterius, “From where come these letters?”

“From the Senate,” Haterius answered.

“I see,” Tiberius said.

Latiaris gave him more letters.

Tiberius asked, “From where come these?”

“From the Senate, too,” Latiaris said.

“Are the Senators sitting now?” Tiberius asked.

“They await thy answer, Caesar,” Latiaris said.

The Senators were waiting for his answer to the letters.

Silius and the other Germanicans continued to talk privately among themselves.

Silius said:

“If this man just had a mind allied to his words, how blest a fate it would be to us, and Rome! We could not imagine that state for which we would exchange Tiberius’ state, although the aim were our old liberty.”

In other words: If Tiberius’ actions matched his words, we cannot imagine another government that we would exchange for his government, even if the new government were to give us back our old liberty.

Silius continued:

“The ghosts of those who fell for that would grieve that their bodies lived not now, so that they could again serve. Men are deceived who think there can be thrall — bondage — beneath a virtuous prince. Wished-for liberty never looks lovelier than that which is under such a crown.

“But when his grace is merely only lip-good — and not good in deeds — and that no longer than he airs himself abroad in public, there to seem to shun the strokes and stripes of flatterers, which within his true character are lechery unto him —”

To some people, the strokes and stripes of flattery are sexually pleasurable.

Silius continued:

“— and so feed his brutish sense with their afflicting sound, as, dead to virtue, he permits himself to be carried like a pitcher, by the ears, to every act of vice.”

In other words: He can be easily manipulated by flattery to do evil.

Silius continued:

“This is a case that deserves our fear and presages the close and secret approach of blood and tyranny.

“Flattery is midwife to princes’ rage, and nothing sooner helps bring forth a tyrant than that, and whisperers’ grace, who have the time, the place, the power to make all men offenders.”

Arruntius said:

“Tiberius should be told this, and he should be advised to dissemble with fools and blind men. We who know the evil should hunt the palace-rats, or give them poison, frighten away from here these worse than ravens. Flatterers devour the living, where ravens just prey upon the dead.

“Tiberius shall be told it.”

A proverb stated, “Flatterers are worse than crows.”

Sabinus said:

“Wait, Arruntius, we must wait for our opportunity, and practice what is fitting, as well as what is needful.

“It is not safe to approach by force a sovereign’s ear;

“Princes hear well, if they at all will hear.”

Arruntius replied:

“Ha! Do you say so? Well.

“In the meantime, Jove — don’t say that I am doing this, but I am calling upon thee now —

“Of all wild beasts, preserve me from a tyrant.

“And of all tame beasts, preserve me from a flatterer!”

“It is well prayed,” Silius said.

Tiberius said to Haterius:

“Deliver to the lords this voice and message:

“We are their servant, and it is fitting that a good and honest prince, whom they, out of their bounty, have instructed and provided with so enlarged and absolute a power should owe the performance of it to their service, and to the good of all and the good of every citizen.

“Nor shall it ever make us regret to have wished the Senate just and favoring lords to us, since their free loves yield no less defense to a prince’s state than his own innocence.

“Say then, there can be nothing in their thought that shall fail to please us, which has pleased them. Our suffrage shall rather anticipate and come before than stay behind their wills.

“It is empire — supreme power — to obey where such, so great, so grave, so good, determine.”

Tiberius explained why he had allowed one temple to be erected to him but would not allow another temple to be erected to him:

“Yet for the suit of Spain to erect a temple in honor of our mother and ourself, we must (with pardon of the Senate) not assent to.

“Their Lordships may object that we did not deny the same recent request to the Asian cities. We desire that our defense for allowing that should be known in these brief reasons, with our after-purpose — our intention for the future.

“Since deified Augustus did not stop a temple to him from being built at Pergamum in honor of himself and sacred Rome, we, who have all observed all the deeds and words observed of Augustus always in place of laws, we rather

followed that pleasing precedent because, with our own reverence, the Senate's reverence also there was joined.

“But as to have once received it may deserve the winning of pardon, so to be adored with the continued style and note — reputation or name — of gods through all the provinces would be wild ambition, and no less pride. Yea, even Augustus' name should early vanish, should it be profaned with such promiscuous flatteries.”

Tiberius then explained how he wished to be regarded:

“As for our part, we here protest it, and we desire that posterity should know this: We are mortal, and we can do only the deeds of men. It would be glory enough if we could be truly a prince. And they shall add abounding grace to our memory who shall report us worthy of our forefathers, taking care of your affairs, constant and standing firm in dangers, and not afraid of any private frown when acting for the public good. These things shall be to us temples and statues, reared in your minds, the fairest and most enduring imagery.

“For those of stone or brass, if they become odious in judgment of posterity, are more contemned as dying sepulchers than taken for living monuments.”

Tiberius then explained what he wanted from the gods and men:

“We then make here our suit, alike to gods and men.

“Our suit to the gods is to, until the end of our life, inspire us with a free and quiet mind, discerning both divine and human laws.

“Our suit to men is to vouchsafe us after death an honorable mention, and fair praise to accompany our actions and our name.



“The rest of greatness princes may command, and therefore may neglect; they should, without being satisfied, pursue only a long, lasting, high, and happy memory.

“Contempt of fame — reputation — begets contempt of virtue.”

“Splendid!” Natta said.

“Most divine!” Satrius said.

“The oracles have ceased to speak, so that only Caesar might speak with their tongue,” Sejanus said.

Oracles were believed to speak with the voice of gods. For example, the oracle at Delphi spoke with the voice of Apollo.

The oracles, including the oracle at Delphi, were said to have ceased speaking after the birth of Christ.

Sejanus said blasphemously that now the oracles are said to have stopped speaking on account of Tiberius, who speaks god-like words.

Arruntius said to Cordus, Silius, and Sabinus, “Let me be gone! This is most perceived and open!”

He did not like the flattery of Tiberius that he was hearing. He also did not like what he considered to be manipulative words by Tiberius.

Cordus said to Arruntius, “Stay.”

Arruntius said to Cordus, Silius, and Sabinus, “Why? To hear more cunning, and to hear more fine words with their sound flattered, before their sense is meant?”

Tiberius said:

“Their choice of Antium, there to place the gift vowed to the goddess for our mother’s health, we want the Senate to know we fairly like.”

The gift was a statue of Fortuna Equestris, which was donated by the Roman equestrian order and placed in Fortuna’s temple at Actium. The gift was an offering to Lady Fortune asking for Augusta to have good health.

Tiberius continued:

“We also like the Senate’s permission to Marcus Lepidus to repair the Aemilian place, and to restore those monuments.”

Lepidus wanted to improve the Basilica of Paulus at his own expense.

Tiberius continued:

“We like their grace, too, in the confining of Silanus to the other isle Cythera, at the suit of his religious sister. This grace much commends their wisdom and policy, being so tempered with their mercy.”

Silanus was supposed to be exiled on an island that was barren, but his religious sister had asked that he instead be exiled on the island of Cynthus (called Cythera here).

Tiberius continued:

“But, for the honors that they have decreed to our Sejanus, to raise his statue in Pompey’s Theater — whose ruining fire his vigilance and labor kept restrained in that one loss —”

Pompey’s Theater had been destroyed by a fire. Tiberius gave credit to Sejanus for keeping the destruction restricted to one place instead of spreading through the city, and the Senators voted for a statue of Sejanus to be placed in the restored theater.

Tiberius praised both the Senate and Sejanus:

“— they have therein outgone their own great wisdoms by their skillful choice and placing of their generous bounties on a man whose merit more adorns the dignity than that dignity can adorn him, and gives a benefit in taking, greater than it can receive.

“Blush not, Sejanus, thou great aid of Rome, associate of our labors, our chief helper.

“Let us not do violence to thy unfeigned modesty by attempting to give thee thy deserved praise, for we cannot do more than attempt to do so, since there’s no voice that can undertake it.

“No man here receive our speeches as hyperboles, for we are as far from flattering our friend, let malicious envy know, as from the need to flatter.

“Nor let them ask the reasons of our praise.

“Princes have always their grounds reared with themselves, above the poor low flats of common men, and whoever will search the reasons of their acts must stand on equal bases.”

High princes stand on high grounds, while common men stand on a lower firmament. The “high grounds” can be justifying motives.

Tiberius concluded:

“Lead, let’s go! Our loves will go to the Senate.”

Tiberius, Sejanus, Haterius, Latiaris, Satrius, Natta, etc., exited.

Arruntius shouted at the departing Tiberius, “Caesar!”

Holding Arruntius back, Sabinus said, “Peace! Be quiet!”

Cordus said, “Great Pompey’s Theater was never ruined until now that proud Sejanus has a statue reared on its ashes.”

Arruntius said, “Place the shame of soldiers above the best of generals? Crack the world, and bruise and crush the name of Romans into dust, before we behold it!”

According to Arruntius, the best of generals is Pompey, and the shame of soldiers is Sejanus.

“Check your passion,” Silius said. “Lord Drusus carries.”

Drusus Senior approached Arruntius, Cordus, Satrius, and Sabinus.

Drusus Senior, who greatly disliked Sejanus, said:

“Is my father mad?”

“Weary of life and rule, lords? Thus to heave an idol up with praise? Make him his mate? His partner in the Empire?”

“O good prince!” Arruntius said.

Drusus Senior said, “Allow him statues? Titles? Honors? Such as he himself refuses?”

“Bravo, brave Drusus!” Arruntius said.

Drusus Senior said, “The first ascents to sovereignty are hard, but once entered, there never lacks either means or ministers to help the aspirer on.”

“True, gallant Drusus,” Arruntius said.

Drusus Senior said, “We must shortly pray to Modesty that he — Sejanus — will rest contented —”

Modesty is the goddess Pudicitia.

“Aye, where he is, and not write Emperor,” Arruntius said.

Sejanus, Satrius, Latiaris, and some of Sejanus’ clients entered the scene. They took no notice at first of Drusus Senior and the Germanicans.

Sejanus said to his clients, “There is your bill, and yours. Bring your man. I have interceded for you, too, Latiaris.”

Bills are official documents. Apparently, these bills were letters of appointment to positions.

Sejanus then walked into and bumped Drusus Senior.

“What!” Drusus Senior said, “Is your vast greatness grown so blindly bold that you will walk over us?”

“Why, then give way,” Sejanus said.

Drusus Senior said, “Give way, Colossus?”

The Colossus of Rhodes was a huge statue. Drusus Senior was accusing Sejanus of carelessly walking as if he were a mobile but blindly bold huge statue. Sejanus’ hugeness lay in his ambition and power.

“Do you lift your hand against us?” Drusus Senior said. “Do you advance yourself against us? Take that!”

Drusus Senior struck Sejanus.

“Good! Splendid! Excellent brave prince!” Arruntius said.

Drusus Senior said to Sejanus, “Nay, come, approach.”

He then drew his sword and said:

“What! Do you stand away from us? Do you gaze at us with wonder? It looks too full of death for thy cold spirits.

“Avoid my eye, dull camel, or my sword shall make thy bravery and finery fitter for a grave than for a triumph. I’ll raise a statue of your own bulk; but it shall be on the cross, where I will nail your pride at breadth and length, and crack those sinews, which are yet but stretched with your swollen fortune’s rage.”

Crucifixion was an ignominious death.

“A noble prince!” Arruntius said.

The spectators who supported Drusus Senior all cried, “A Castor, a Castor, a Castor, a Castor!”

Castor was a famous gladiator.

Everyone except Sejanus exited.

Sejanus said to himself:

“He who is moved with such wrong but can bear it through with patience and an even mind knows how to turn it back.

“Wrath, covered, carries fate and achieves revenge.

“Revenge is lost, if I express my hate.

“What was my intrigue recently, I’ll now pursue as my deadly justice. This has changed my intrigue and made its goal a deadly revenge.”

At this point in Ben Jonson’s play, a Chorus of Musicians performed.

## ACT 2 (*Sejanus' Fall*)

### — 2.1 —

Sejanus, Livia, and Eudemus talked together.

Sejanus said to Eudemus, “Physician, thou are worthy of a province for the great favors done to our loves. And, except that Livia — greatest among the great — bears a part in the requital of thy services, I should alone despair of any adequate way to give them worthy satisfaction.”

Livia said, “Eudemus, I will see to it that you shall receive a fit and full reward for your large merit.”

She then said, “But for this potion we intend to give to Drusus Senior — who is no longer our husband now — whom shall we choose as the most apt and capable instrument to administer it to him?”

The potion was poison.

“I say Lygdus,” Eudemus said.

“Lygdus?” Sejanus asked. “Who’s he?”

Livia answered, “He is a eunuch whom Drusus Senior loves and respects.”

“Aye, and he is his cup-bearer,” Eudemus said.

In Ben Jonson’s society, the words “Ganymede” and “cup-bearer” were then-slang for “catamite,” aka the “bottom” in gay anal sex. In mythology, Jupiter, the king of the gods, may have had a homosexual relationship with Ganymede, who was Jupiter’s cupbearer.

Sejanus said, “Don’t name a second person to do this. If Drusus loves and respects him, and he has that position of cup-bearer, we cannot think of a fitter person to administer the poison.”

Eudemus said, "True, my lord, for free access and trust are two main aids."

Lygdus had access to the presence of Drusus Senior, and Drusus Senior trusted him.

"Skillful physician!" Sejanus said.

Livia said, "But he must be wrought and persuaded to the undertaking with some elaborate art."

"Is he ambitious?" Sejanus asked.

"No," Livia said.

"Or covetous?" Sejanus asked.

"Neither," Livia answered.

"Yet gold is a good general charm," Eudemus said.

"What is he, then?" Sejanus asked.

"Indeed, only wanton, light," Livia answered.

"What! Is he young? And fair?" Sejanus asked.

"He is a delicate youth," Eudemus answered.

Sejanus said: "Send him to me. I'll work on him."

He then worked on Livia:

"Royal lady, though I have loved you long, and with that height of zeal and duty (like the fire, which the more it mounts, the more it trembles), thinking nothing could add to the fervor that your eye had kindled, yet, now I see your wisdom, judgment, strength, quickness, and will to apprehend the means to your own good and greatness, I protest myself thoroughly purified, and I have turned into all flame because of my affection and love for you.



“Such a spirit as yours was not created to be the idle second, aka follower, to a poor flash — fop — as Drusus, but to shine bright as the moon among the lesser lights and share the sovereignty of all the world.

“Then Livia triumphs in her proper sphere, when she and her Sejanus shall divide the name of Caesar, and Augusta’s star should be dimmed by the glory of a brighter beam.

“At that time Agrippina’s fires will be quite extinct, and the scarcely seen Tiberius will borrow all his little light from us, whose folded arms — mutual embrace — shall make one perfect orb.”

Augusta was the mother of Tiberius, and Agrippina was the widow of Germanicus.

Knocking sounded on the door.

Sejanus said:

“Who’s that? Eudemus, look. Isn’t it Drusus Senior?”

“Lady, do not fear.”

“Not I, my lord,” Livia said. “My fear and love of him left me at once.”

Sejanus said, “Illustrious lady! Wait —”

Eudemus entered while saying to someone, “I’ll tell His Lordship.”

“Who is it, Eudemus?” Sejanus asked.

Eudemus answered, “One of Your Lordship’s servants, who brings you word that the Emperor Tiberius has sent for you.”

“Oh!” Sejanus said. “Where is he?”

He then said to Livia, “With your fair permission, dear princess. I’ll just ask a question, and return.”

He went out.

Eudemus said to Livia, “Fortunate princess! How you are blest in the fruition — the possession and enjoyment — of this unequalled man, this soul of Rome, the life of the Empire, and the voice of Caesar’s world!”

Livia responded, “So blessed, my Eudemus, as to know the bliss I have, with what I ought to owe the means — that is you, Eudemus — that wrought it. How do I look today?”

“Excellently clear, believe it,” Eudemus said. “This same fucus was well laid on.”

Fucus is a kind of face makeup.

“I think it is not white here,” Livia said, looking in a mirror.

“Lend me your scarlet cloth, lady,” Eudemus said. “It is the sun that has given some little taint unto the ceruse.”

Ceruse is white lead (or another foundation cream), used as a cosmetic. It was sensitive to light.

Painting her cheeks, Eudemus said, “You should have used some of the white oil I gave you.”

Eudemus was a cosmetician as well as a medical doctor.

He then said, “Sejanus, for your love! His very name commands above Cupid, or his shafts —”

The god Cupid shot arrows that caused people to fall in love, but according to Eudemus, Sejanus had more power than Cupid and his arrows.

“Nay, now you’ve made it worse,” Livia said.

Did her words refer only to the makeup?

Eudemus said:

“I’ll fix it right away —

“And, Sejanus’ name, just pronounced, is a sufficient charm against all rumor; and of absolute power to satisfy for any lady’s honor.”

Eudemus prepared more cosmetic.

“What are you doing now, Eudemus?” Livia asked.

Eudemus said:

“Making a light fucus, to give you a touch-up.

“Honored Sejanus! What act (though never so abnormal, and immoderate) exists but that a title will at least carry it off, if it does not expiate and atone for it?”

If you are a VIP like Sejanus is, you can get away with any act. So said Eudemus.

“Here, good physician,” Livia said.

Eudemus said:

“I like this undertaking to preserve the love of such a man, who does not come every hour to greet the world. It is now well, lady, that you should use some of the dentifrice I prescribed you, too, to clear and clean your teeth, and the prepared pomatum, to smooth the skin.”

A pomatum is a scented ointment for the skin.

Eudemus continued:

“A lady cannot be too careful of her shape and beauty, who always would hold the heart of such a person, made her captive, as you have his — who, to endear him more in your clear eye, has put away his wife, the trouble and vexation of his bed and your delights, fair Apicata, and made spacious room to your new pleasures.”

One reason for Sejanus to divorce Apicata, his wife and the mother of his three children, and then marry Livia is that Livia was the sister of Germanicus, and Germanicus was the nephew and adopted son of Tiberius. Such a marriage could increase Sejanus' chances of becoming Emperor.

Livia responded, "Haven't we given Sejanus a sufficient return for that, with our hatred of Drusus Senior, and by revealing all of Drusus' secrets?"

Eudemus said:

"Yes, and wisely, lady.

"The ages that succeed and stand far off to gaze at your high prudence shall admire and reckon it an act beyond the comprehension of your sex. It has that rare — splendid and remarkable — appearance.

"Some will think your fortune could not yield a deeper sounding than mixed with Drusus Senior; but when they shall hear that and the thunder of Sejanus meet — Sejanus, whose high name strikes the stars, and rings about the concave — the vault of heaven — great Sejanus, whose glories, style, and titles are appropriate to himself, the often iterating of Sejanus — they then will lose their thoughts and be ashamed to take acquaintance of them."

Sejanus returned and said, "I must make a rude departure, lady. Caesar sends to me to come to him with all his haste both of command and prayer."

Hmm. It seems that Caesar's high name strikes the stars, and rings about the concave — the vault of heaven. It is certain that Sejanus quickly obeys Tiberius' command to come to him.

Sejanus continued saying to Livia, "Be resolute in our plot; you have my soul, as certainly yours as it is my body's."

He then said to Eudemus:

“And, wise physician, so prepare the poison in such a way that you may blame the subtle operation upon some natural disease of his.

“Send your eunuch to me.”

The poison Eudemus would prepare would be intended to make Drusus Senior’s death look as if it were due to natural causes.

Sejanus said to Livia, “I kiss your hands, glory of ladies, and I commend my love to your best faith and memory.”

Livia responded:

“My lord, I shall but repeat and return your words to you.

“Farewell.

“Yet, remember this for your heed: Drusus Senior does not love you. You know what I have told you: His designs and plans are full of grudge and danger.

“We must use more than a common speed.”

“Excellent lady, how you do set my blood on fire!” Sejanus said.

Livia said:

“Well, you must go?

“The thoughts that are best are least set forth to show.”

Sejanus exited.

“When will you take some medicine, lady?” Eudemus asked.

The medicine may be makeup.

“When I shall have a mind to, Eudemus,” Livia said, “but let Drusus’ drug be prepared first.”

Eudemus said:

“If Lygdus were prepared to act, that’s already done: I have it ready.

“And tomorrow morning I’ll send you a perfume, first to dissolve and procure sweat, and then prepare a bath to cleanse and clear the skin; in preparation for when, I’ll have an excellent new fucus made, resistant against the sun, the rain, or the wind, which you shall blow on your skin in powder form or rub on your skin after the powder is mixed with oil, as you like best, and the fucus will last some fourteen hours.

“This change came timely, lady, for your health, and for restoring your complexion, which Drusus’ choler — his hot anger — had almost burnt up. In this, your fortune has prescribed you better medicine than the medical art could do.”

Livia said:

“Thanks, good physician. I’ll use my fortune — you shall see — with reverence.

“Is my coach ready?”

Eudemus said, “It attends Your Highness.”

— 2.2 —

While waiting to see Tiberius, Sejanus said to himself:

“If this is not revenge, when I have finished and made it perfect, then let Egyptian slaves, Parthians, and barefoot Hebrews brand my face and print my body full of injuries.”

Sejanus then addressed Drusus Senior, who was not present, in an apostrophe:

“Thou lost thyself, child-prince Drusus, when thou thought thou could outskip my vengeance, or withstand the power I had to crush thee into air.”

Sejanus was using the word “thou” to contemptuously mean Drusus Senior.

Sejanus continued:

“Thy follies now shall taste what kind of man they have provoked, and this thy father’s house shall crack in the flame of my incensed and kindled rage whose fury shall admit no shame or moderation.

“Adultery? It is the lightest ill I will commit.”

Matthew 5:32 states, “*But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*” (King James Version)

Matthew 19:9 states, “*And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*” (King James Version)

Mark 10:11-12 ((King James Version) states:

11. *And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.*

12. *And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.*

Sejanus had put away his wife, although she had not committed fornication.

Sejanus continued his apostrophe to Drusus Senior:

“A race of wicked acts shall flow out of my anger and overspread the world’s wide face, which no posterity shall ever approve, nor yet keep silent — things that for their cunning, close, and cruel mark, thy father — Tiberius — would wish his — and shall, perhaps, carry the empty name, but we the prize.”

“Emperor” can be an empty name if someone else has the power of an Emperor.

Sejanus then addressed his soul:

“Onward then, my soul, and don’t flinch and swerve from thy course. Though heaven drop sulphur — lightning — and hell belch out fire, laugh at the idle terrors.

“Tell proud Jove that between his power and thine there is no odds.

“It was only fear first in the world made gods.”

Tiberius and some attendants entered the room.

“Has Sejanus come yet?” Tiberius asked an attendant.

Sejanus said, “He’s here, dread Caesar.”

Tiberius sat on his throne and ordered his attendants, “Let all depart that chamber, and the next.”

He did not want this conversation to be overheard.

His attendants exited, leaving Tiberius and Sejanus alone.

The two would hold a Machiavellian conversation. Possibly, each person was trying to manipulate the other person.

Tiberius said to Sejanus:

“Sit down, my comfort.



“When the master prince of all the world, Sejanus, says he fears, is it not fatal?”

Tiberius was saying that he feared some people and he was asking, Isn't such a fear fatal?

His words, however, could be interpreted as saying that Sejanus was “the master prince of all the world.”

Sejanus answered, “Yes, to those whom the master prince fears.”

One way not to fear someone was to kill that person.

“And not to him?” Tiberius asked.

“Not if he wisely turns that part of fate he holds first on them,” Sejanus said.

“Nature, blood, and laws of kinship forbid that,” Tiberius said.

Killing relatives is unnatural and there are laws against murder.

“Do state policy and state concerns forbid it?” Sejanus asked.

State policy and state concerns are often cynical and cunning.

“No,” Tiberius said.

“Let the rest of poor scruples and considerations go by, then. Ignore them,” Sejanus said. “Statecraft is enough to make the act just, and it is enough to make them guilty.”

“Long hate pursues such acts,” Tiberius said.

Other people may — make that will — want to avenge an unjust killing.

“Whom hatred frightens, let him not dream on sovereignty,” Sejanus said.

Want to remain an Emperor? Kill your enemies, and don't worry about the hatred of the friends and family of those whom you kill.

“Are rites of faith, love, piety, to be trodden down?” Tiberius asked. “Forgotten? And made vain?”

What about love and morality? Should they be trodden down in the service of ambition?

Sejanus said:

“All of them should be, for a crown.”

He meant the crown of an Emperor, but a crown is also a piece of money.

Sejanus continued:

“The prince who is ashamed to bear the name of tyrant shall never dare do anything but fear.

“All the command of scepters quite perishes if command begins to cherish religious thoughts:

“Whole empires fall, swayed by those fine, delicate, fastidious respects.

“It is the lawlessness of dark deeds that protects even the most hated states, when no laws resist the sword, and the sword enacts what it wishes.”

If you wish to be an Emperor, be prepared to be called a tyrant and be prepared to do the things a tyrant does.

“Yet in that way we may do all things cruelly, not safely,” Tiberius said.

“We can do them safely if we do them thoroughly,” Sejanus said.

Tiberius asked, “Does Sejanus know yet at whom we point?”

Sejanus replied, “Aye, or else my thought, my sense, or both do err: Is it Agrippina?”

Agrippina was the widow of Germanicus and the granddaughter of Caesar Augustus.

“She, and her proud race,” Tiberius said.

He feared not only her, but some of her family members. Her sons could replace him as Emperor before his time.

Sejanus said, “Proud? They are dangerous, Caesar. For in them the father’s spirit quickly shoots up. Germanicus lives in their looks, their gait, their form, to upbraid us with his close — secretly arranged — death, if not to revenge the same.”

Tiberius was suspected of having arranged the death by poison of Germanicus, his nephew and adopted son.

“The act’s not known,” Tiberius said.

Tiberius was suspected, but there was no proof.

Sejanus said:

“The act’s not proved. But whispering rumor gives ‘knowledge and proof’ to the jealous — the suspicious — who, rather than admit their ignorance, would believe their own imagination.”

A proverb stated, “Jealousy is no judge — nor is suspicion proof.”

Sejanus continued:

“It is not safe for the children to draw long breath and live a long time, when they are provoked by a parent’s death.”

Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Book 1, ACT 15, section 14, states, “Foolish is he who, having killed the father, suffers the children to live.”

Aristotle was quoting from *Cypria*, a lost epic.

Tiberius said:

“It is as dangerous to make them hence,

“If nothing except their birth is their offence.”

If the only thing against them is that they are the children of a foe, then it would be dangerous to remove them.

Sejanus said, “Wait until they strike at Caesar: Then their crime will be enough, but late, and out of time for him to punish.”

The alternative would be to let them strike first, but then it will be too late — Tiberius will no longer be Emperor.

“Do they purpose it?” Tiberius said.

Do they intend to depose Tiberius?

Sejanus answered:

“You know, sir, thunder speaks not until it hits.”

Lightning strikes first, and then we hear the thunder. Light travels faster than sound.

Tiberius’ opponents can strike first, and after they strike, Tiberius will know the outcome.

Sejanus continued:

“Don’t be free from anxiety over your safety; none are more swiftly oppressed than they whom over-confidence betrays to rest.

“Let not your daring make your danger such.

“All power’s to be feared, where it is too much. The youths are, of themselves, hot, violent, full of great thought; and that male-spirited — ambitious — dame, their mother, Agrippina, neglects no means to promote their interests, by large allowance and approbation, public appearances, increase of train and state, suing for titles. She has them commended with like prayers, like vows, to the same gods, with Caesar.”

Tiberius became angry when the high priests added prayers for Nero and Drusus Senior — Agrippina’s two oldest sons — to those prayers said for himself.

Sejanus continued:

“Agrippina spends days and nights in banquets and ambitious feasts for the nobility, where Caius Silius, Titus Sabinus, old Arruntius, Asinius Gallus, Furnius, Regulus, and others of that discontented list are the prime guests.

“There, and to these, Agrippina tells whose niece [the Latin *neptis*, which Ben Jonson is translating, means ‘granddaughter’; in Ben Jonson’s day, the word ‘niece’ still meant ‘granddaughter’] she was, whose daughter she is, and whose wife she was.”

Agrippina was the granddaughter of Caesar Augustus, the daughter of Julia (Augustus’ daughter), and the wife — now widow — of Germanicus (Tiberius’ nephew and adopted son).

Sejanus continued:

“And then she insists that they compare her with Augusta, aye, and prefer her, too, commend her form, and extol her fruitfulness.”

Agrippina had three daughters and three sons. The three sons were Nero, Drusus Junior, and Caligula.

In mythology, Niobe was proud of her fruitfulness. She had given birth to six sons and six daughters, and she boasted aloud, “I am more worthy of respect than the goddess Leto, who has given birth to only two children: the twins Apollo and Artemis.” Leto’s children were angry at the disrespect shown to their mother, and with the anger of the gods, they killed all of Niobe’s children in one day by shooting them with arrows. Because of Niobe’s pride, Apollo and Diana turned her to stone. Even when she was stone, she grieved for the deaths of her children, and tears trickled down her marble cheeks. Niobe was so proud that she thought she was a better mother than the goddess mother of the god Apollo and the goddess Diana.

Sejanus continued:

“At which speech of hers, a shower of tears falls for the memory of Germanicus, a memory that they blow over and rekindle immediately with windy praise and puffing — puffed-up — hopes of her aspiring, ambitious sons, who, with these hourly gratifications, grow so pleased, and wantonly conceited of themselves that now they do not hesitate to believe they’re such as these flatterers give them out to be; and they would be thought to be — more than competitors — the immediate heirs to Tiberius.”

Tiberius’ Emperorship was not legally hereditary; however, certain people related to him were expected to succeed him.

Sejanus continued:

“While to their thirst of rule they win the rabble, who are always the friend of political change, with hope of future freedom, which on every political change, that rabble greedily, though emptily, expects.

“Caesar, it is age that in all things breeds neglects, and princes who will keep old dignity must not admit too youthful heirs to stand close by — not even their own descendants, except so darkly and humbly, because not in public, set as shadows are in picture, to give height and luster to the princes themselves.”

Using the royal plural, Tiberius said, “We will command their rank and haughty thoughts down, and, with a stricter hand than we have yet put forth, we must abate — reduce in size — their retinues, their titles, feasts, and factions.”

Sejanus said, “Or else your state — your power — will be abated. But how, sir, will you work?”

“Confine them,” Tiberius said. “Imprison them.”

Sejanus objected:

“No. They are too great and powerful, and that is too faint a blow to give them now. It would have served at first, when, with the weakest touch, their knot — their tight-knit group — had burst.”

A knot is a jumble of ropes. Sejanus may be comparing the knot of enemies to a nest of snakes.

Sejanus continued:

“But now your care and concern must be not to expose and reveal the smallest cord or line — the snares — of your suspicion. For such who know the weight of princes’ fear will, when they find themselves discovered, rear their forces, like seen snakes, which otherwise would lie rolled in their circles, close.

“Nothing is more wrathful, daring, or desperate than offenders who have been found out. Where guilt is, rage and courage both abound.

“The course must be to let them still swell up, riot, and surfeit on blind Fortune’s cup.”

Lady Fortune was often depicted as blindfolded and holding a cornucopia.

Sejanus continued:

“Give them more status and standing, more dignities, more style. Call them to court, to Senate.

“Meanwhile, take from their strength some one or two, or more of the main supporters and partisans — it will frighten the rest — when you have some incidental pretext or side opportunity.

“Thus, with slight sleight you shall disarm them first, and they, in night of — that is, blinded by — their ambition, shall not perceive the lure until, in the trap, they are caught and slain.”

Tiberius said:

“We would not kill them if we knew how to save.

“Yet, rather than a throne, it is cheaper to give them a grave.”

He then asked:

“Is there no way to bind them by deserts?”

In other words: Is there any way to bind them in loyalty to me by giving them rewards? Can’t I do things that deserve their gratitude?

Sejanus said:



“Sir, wolves do change their hair, but not their hearts. While thus your thought is tied to a mean, you neither dare enough, nor act with foresight.”

Sejanus was arguing against a middle course on the grounds that it meant not being brave enough and not having foresight enough.

Sejanus continued:

“All modesty is fond; that is, all moderation is foolish. And chiefly where the subject is no less compelled to bear than praise his sovereign’s acts.”

Tyrants should be tyrants: They need not observe moderation.

Tiberius said:

“We can no longer keep on our mask to thee, our dear Sejanus.

“Thy thoughts are ours, in all things, and we just tested your thoughts’ voice, in our designs, which thou has more confirmed us by thy assenting than if heartening Jove had, from his hundred statues, bid us strike, and at the stroke clicked all his marble thumbs.”

Tiberius was saying that he had tested Sejanus, and finding that their thoughts were in accord, he would now speak openly to him.

Many marble statues were erected to Jove, aka Jupiter, King of the gods. Imagine Jove’s marble thumbs clicking as he judged thumbs-down to all of Tiberius’ enemies. In today’s popular opinion, thumbs-down in gladiatorial contests meant death.

The thumbs-down sign, however, may mean something different.

Turnebus, in his *Turnebi adversariorum tomi* (1591), a book in Ben Jonson's library, wrote, "To hold the thumb down was, among the Romans, a sign of the greatest approbation." Using this interpretation of the thumbs-down sign, Jupiter would be expressing approval of the working together of Tacitus and Sejanus.

Tiberius continued:

"But who shall first be struck down?"

Sejanus advised:

"First, Caius Silius. He is the most outstanding and most remarkable, and the most dangerous: In power and in reputation, he is equally strong, having commanded an imperial army seven years together, vanquished Sacrovir in Germany, and thence obtained the right to wear the triumphal ornaments."

A triumph — a triumphal procession in Rome — was at this time reserved for the royal family, but victorious generals could be given and wear triumphal ornaments — devices and clothing — that conferred honor on them.

Sejanus continued:

"His steep fall, by how much it does give the weightier crack of sound, will send more wounding terror to the rest, and command them to stand aloof and give more way to our ambushing of the principal actor."

Tiberius asked, "But what about Sabinus?"

Sejanus advised:

"Let him grow a while; his fate is not yet ripe. We must not pluck at all together, lest we catch ourselves.

"And there's Arruntius, too; he only talks.

“But Sosia, Silius’ wife, a friend to Agrippina, should be wound in and ensnared now, for she has one Fury in her breast more than hell ever knew; and she should be sent thither — to hell — in time.

“Then there is one Cremutius Cordus, a writing fellow they have got to gather notes of the precedent times and make them into annals — a most tart and bitter spirit, I hear, who, under color — pretense — of praising those precedent times, taxes and accuses the present state, criticizes the men, the actions, leaves no trick, no practice unexamined, draws parallels between the times and the governments. He is a professed champion for the old liberty —”

Tiberius interrupted:

“— a perishing, destructive wretch!

“As if there were that chaos bred in things that laws and liberty would not rather choose to be quite broken and taken hence by us than to have the stain of disgrace to be preserved by such men as the Germanicans.

“Have we the means to make these guilty first?”

Did they have evidence — real or trumped up — to make these people either known to be guilty or seem to be guilty?

Sejanus said:

“Entrust that to me.

“Let Caesar, by his power, just call and cause a formal meeting of the Senate, and I will have substance — evidence or ‘evidence’ — for an indictment and I will have accusers ready.”

“But how?” Tiberius said. “Let us consult.”

Sejanus replied:

“We shall misspend the time of action. We should take action rather than talk now.”

A proverb stated: “Take not counsel in time of combat.”

Sejanus continued:

“Counsels are unfit in business, where all rest is more pernicious than rashness can be. Acts of this close kind thrive more by execution than by advice and consultation.

“There is no lingering in that work begun,

“Which cannot be praised until thoroughly done.”

Tiberius replied:

“Our edict shall forthwith command a Senate court of adjudication. While I can live, I will prevent earth’s fury.

*“Εμου θανοντος γαια μιχθητω πυρι.”*

The Greek, translated by W.R. Paton, means, “When I am dead, may earth be overwhelmed with fire.”

Tiberius exited.

Postumus entered the scene.

Julius Postumus, who was one of Sejanus’ supporters, knew Agrippina well. He was a spy for Sejanus.

He began, “My lord Sejanus —”

“Julius Postumus, come with my wish!” Sejanus said. “I was just wishing for you! What is the news from Agrippina’s household?”

“Indeed, there is none,” Postumus said. “The members of Agrippina’s household all lock up themselves late, and they talk in code. I have not seen a company so changed. Perhaps they had intelligence by augury of our scheming.”

Perhaps a fortune teller had told them about Sejanus' plot, which included Postumus.

"When were you there?" Sejanus asked.

"Last night," Postumus said.

"And what guests did you find there?" Sejanus asked

Postumus answered, "Sabinus, Silius — the old list — Arruntius, Furnius, and Gallus."

"Wouldn't these talk?" Sejanus asked.

"They talked only a little, and yet we offered them their choice of topic," Postumus said. "Satrius was with me."

Satrius was a client of Sejanus.

"Well, their often meeting is guilt enough," Sejanus said. "You forgot to extol the hospitable lady?"

"To extol" means "to raise too high" and "to exaggeratively praise."

People bursting with pride may say things that they would not otherwise say.

Postumus answered, "No, that trick was well put fully to use, and it would have succeeded, too, except that Sabinus coughed a caution out, for Agrippina began to swell with pride."

Sejanus said:

"And may she burst!

"Julius Postumus, I would have you go instantly to the palace of the great Augusta, and, by your kindest friend, get swift access.

“Acquaint her with these meetings. Tell her the words of Silius that you brought me, the other day. Add somewhat to them. Make her understand the danger of Sabinus, and the danger of the times, out of his secretiveness. Attribute to Arruntius words of malice against Caesar; the same, attribute to Gallus. But, above all, attribute words of malice against Caesar to Agrippina.

“Say, as you may truly, that Agrippina’s infinite pride, propped with the hopes of her too-fruitful womb, with the devotion of the people opens her mouth wide to swallow sovereignty and have absolute power, and threatens Caesar.

“Stress to Augusta, then, that for her own, great Caesar’s, and the public safety, she should stress to Tiberius the urgency of these dangers.

“Caesar is too over-confident, he must be told, and he’ll take it best from a mother’s tongue.

“Alas! What is it for us to sound and investigate, to explore, watch, oppose, plot, practice, or prevent,

“If he for whom it is so strongly labored shall, out of greatness and free spirit, be supinely negligent?

“Our city’s now divided as it was in time of the civil war, and men don’t stop themselves from declaring themselves a part of Agrippina’s faction.”

Civil wars had occurred: one between Julius Caesar and Pompey, and one between Mark Antony/Octavian and Brutus/Cassius. Octavian had then fought Mark Antony. After becoming Emperor, Octavian became Caesar Augustus.

Sejanus continued:

“Every day the faction multiplies, and it will do more if it is not resisted. You can best enlarge and embroider it as you find suitable for your audience.

“Noble Postumus, commend me to your Prisca, and request that she will solicit this great business to earnest and most present execution, with all her utmost credit with Augusta.”

Prisca was a woman with whom Postumus was committing adultery. Prisca was close to Augusta.

“I shall not fail in my instructions,” Postumus said.

He exited.

Alone, Sejanus said to himself:

“This assistance from Augusta, Tiberius’ mother, will well urge our recent design and plot, and spur on Caesar’s rage, which otherwise might grow slack.

“The way to put a prince in an alert state of full vigor is to present the shapes of dangers greater than they are, like late or early shadows of the evening or morning, and, sometimes, to feign dangers where there are none, only to make him fear.

“His fear will make him cruel; and once entered into cruelty, he does not easily learn to stop, or spare where he may doubt.

“This have I made my rule, to thrust Tiberius into tyranny, and make him toil to turn aside those blocks and obstacles that I, working alone, could not remove with safety.

“Drusus Senior once gone, Germanicus’ three sons would clog my way, but their guards have too much faith to be corrupted, and their mother is known to have too, too unproved a chastity to be attempted and seduced, as light Livia was.”

Sejanus wanted to get rid of Drusus Senior and of Agrippina’s three sons (fathered by Germanicus) because

they were ahead of him in the expected line of succession to the throne. Her servants, however, were too loyal and honest to be bribed, and Agrippina was a completely chaste woman who could not be seduced.

Sejanus continued:

“I will work then my art on Caesar’s fears, as they work on those they fear, until all my obstacles be cleared, and he buries his own state and high position in the ruins of his family and the hatred of all his subjects.”

Sejanus wanted to make Tiberius and Agrippina fear each other.

Sejanus continued:

“Then, with my peace and safety, I will rise by making him the public sacrifice.”

Sejanus exited.

### — 2.3 —

Satrius and Natta talked together in the house of Agrippina. Both men were clients of Sejanus, who was their patron.

Satrius said, “The Germanicans have grown exceedingly circumspect and wary.”

As Postumus had said, the Germanicans had grown cautious.

“They have us in the wind — they smell us,” Natta said. “And yet Arruntius cannot contain himself and restrain his tongue.”

Arruntius was a Senator of good character.

“Tut, he’s not yet sought after and desired,” Satrius said. “There are others more desired, who are more silent.”

That is, more desired to be gotten rid of.



Those others were Silius and Sabinus.

“Here he comes,” Natta said. “Away! Let’s leave!”

Satrius and Natta exited the scene just as Sabinus, Arruntius, and Cordus entered the scene.

Seeing Satrius and Natta leaving, Sabinus asked Arruntius and Cordus, “How is it that these beagles haunt the house of Agrippina?”

In Ben Jonson’s society, being called a beagle was an insult.

Arruntius said, “Oh, they hunt, they hunt. There is some game here lodged, which they must rouse, to make the great ones sport.”

Cordus asked, “Did you observe how they inveighed against Caesar?”

Arruntius said, “Aye, baits, baits for a trap for us to bite at. If I were to have my flesh torn by the public hook, these qualified hangmen should be my company.”

The corpses of executed criminals were dragged with a hook — the *uncus* — to the *Gemoniae*, aka Gemonian stairs, a flight of stairs in a corner of the Roman Forum, and displayed for three days. They were then dragged to the Tiber River and either left on the river bank or thrown into the river.

Sejanus wanted his obstacles to be executed and treated in this way.

“Here comes another,” Cordus said.

Afer the orator walked by them and then exited.

Arruntius said:

“Aye, there’s a man — Afer the orator!”

“He is one who has phrases, figures of speech, and metaphorical fine flowers to strew his rhetoric with, and he is in a hurry to get himself a notable reputation or name by any proposal or opportunity where blood or gain are objects. He steeps his words, when he would kill, in artificial tears — he is the crocodile of Tiber!

“Him I love, that man is mine. He has my heart, and voice, when I would curse, he, he!”

Arruntius loved to curse Afer the orator.

“Afer” means “African,” and crocodiles come from Africa.

Sabinus said:

“Contemn and heap scorn on the slaves;

“Their present lives will be their future graves.”

Sabinus, Arruntius, and Cordus exited.

## — 2.4 —

Silius, Agrippina, Nero, and Sosia talked together.

Sosia was Silius’ wife. She was also a friend to Agrippina.

Nero was Agrippina’s oldest son. If Drusus Senior, Tiberius’ son, were to die, Nero would be expected to become Emperor when Tiberius died.

Silius said to Agrippina, “May it please Your Highness not to forget yourself — I dare not, without detriment to my manners, trouble you farther.”

“Farewell, noble Silius,” Agrippina said.

“Most royal princess,” Silius replied.

“Sosia stays with us?” Agrippina asked.

“She is your servant, and she owes Your Grace an honest but unprofitable love,” Silius said.

“How can that be, when there’s no gain but virtue’s?” Agrippina asked.

Silius replied:

“You take the moral, not the politic sense.

“I meant, as she is bold, and free of speech, earnest to utter what her zealous thought labors with, in honor of your house, which act, as it is simply born in her and done without calculation, partakes of love and honesty, but may, by the over-often and untimely use, turn to your loss and danger — for your state and high rank is waited on by as many envies as there are eyes; and every second guest your tables take is a paid-for spy, to observe who goes, who comes, what conference you have, with whom, where, when, what the discourse is, what the looks, the thoughts of every person there, and they take these things out of context, and make a different substance out of it.”

Sosia was honest but outspoken, and her being outspoken was politically dangerous to Agrippina when spies were watching her and her household and were willing to misinterpret words to put Agrippina and her associates in the worst possible light.

Agrippina said:

“Hear me, Silius.

“If all Tiberius’ body were stuck with eyes, and every wall and hanging in my house as transparent as this fine linen I wear, or as transparent as air; yea, and if Sejanus had both his ears as long as to reach into my inmost private room, I would hate to whisper any thought, or change an act, even to be made Juno’s rival.

“Virtue’s forces show always noblest in conspicuous courses of action.”

According to Virgil’s *Aeneid*: “Rumor has wings and many feathers. Her many eyes never sleep, and she has many tongues and many ears. By night she flies, and by day she watches and listens. She values lies as much as she values truths.”

Juno was the wife of Jupiter, King of the gods, and so she was Queen of the gods. One kind of rival of hers would be someone who wanted to be Queen. Another kind of rival would be someone who wanted to sleep with her husband.

Juno was a jealous wife with an often-adulterous husband, and she hated her sex rivals and often punished them. For example, she punished Io, one of the many mortal women with whom Jupiter slept, by changing her into a cow. One of Juno’s servants was Argus Panoptes, who had one hundred eyes, which never slept all at the same time. He was given the job of always keeping an eye on Io, so that she could not be rescued. Jupiter sent Mercury, the swift messenger of the god, to charm Argus asleep and then kill him. After the act was performed, Jupiter changed Io back into a human woman.

Apollo was once challenged to a music contest by a satyr. Midas judged the contest, and he declared that the satyr had won the contest. Angry, Apollo gave Midas donkey ears. Midas kept his long ears hidden; no one knew about them except his barber, who was forbidden to tell anyone Midas’ secret. The barber, wanting to tell the secret, dug a hole in the ground, whispered the secret into the hole, and then filled it up again. Reeds grew in that spot, and when wind blew through the reeds, they whispered, “Midas has the ears of an ass.” Soon, everyone knew the secret.

Agrippina was a strong woman who did not want to restrict her freedom of speech and of actions in order to be safe.

Silius responded:

“It is great, and bravely spoken, like the spirit of Agrippina; yet Your Highness knows that there is neither loss nor shame in careful foresight.

“Few can do what all should do: Beware enough.

“You may perceive with what officious and eagerly attentive face Satrius and Natta, Afer and the rest, visit your house recently, to inquire the secrets, and with what bold and privileged art they rail against Augusta, yea, and at Tiberius, tell tricks of Livia, and Sejanus, all to excite and call your indignation on, so that they might hear it at more liberty.”

The confederates of Sejanus were deliberately speaking in such a way that could get Agrippina overly emotional and cause her to say things that she would not say if she were calm. She could be overly emotional because of anger or because of pride.

In his conversation with Sejanus, Postumus had spoken of an attempt to make Agrippina overly emotional with excessive praise. Sabinus, however, had put a stop to it.

“You’re too suspicious, Silius,” Agrippina said.

Silius responded:

“I pray to the gods that I am so, Agrippina, but I fear some subtle intrigue.

“They who dared to strike at so example-less — unparalleled — and unblamed a life as that of the renowned Germanicus will not rest content with that exploit alone.

“He who has injured one person, threatens many.”

Nero, Agrippina's oldest son, said, "It would be best to rip out their tongues, sear and burn out their eyes, when next they come."

"That is a fit reward for spies," Sosia said.

Drusus Junior, Agrippina's middle son, entered the room and said, "Have you heard the rumor?"

"What rumor?" Agrippina asked.

"Drusus Senior is dying," Drusus Junior said.

Drusus Senior was the son of Tiberius. "Drusus Senior" means "Drusus the Older," and "Drusus Junior" means "Drusus the Younger." After the boys' father, Germanicus, had died, however, Tiberius had given the boys into the care of his — Tiberius' — son: Drusus Senior.

"Dying?" Agrippina said.

"That's strange!" Nero said.

"You were with him last night," Agrippina said.

Drusus Junior said, "Someone met Eudemus the physician who was sent for just now. Eudemus thinks that Drusus Senior cannot live."

Silius said, "Thinks? If he has arrived at that opinion, he *knows*, or no one knows."

"This is quick!" Agrippina said. "What is said to be his disease?"

Silius said quietly to himself, "Poison, poison —"

Hearing him, but not clearly, Agrippina said, "What, Silius!"

"What's that?" Nero asked.

“Nay, nothing,” Silius said. “There was, recently, a certain blow given on the face.”

“Aye, to Sejanus?” Nero asked.

“True,” Silius said.

“And what of that?” Drusus Junior asked.

“I’m glad I’m not the person who gave Sejanus that blow,” Silius said.

“But there is something else?” Nero asked.

Silius answered, “Yes, private meetings, with a great lady, at a physician’s, and a wife turned away and divorced —”

“Ha!” Nero said.

“Trifles, mere trifles,” Silius said.

He was unwilling to clearly state what he believed was the truth.

He then asked, “What wisdom’s now in the streets? What’s in the common mouth?”

Drusus Junior said, “Fears, whisperings, tumults, noise, I don’t know what. They say the Senate is meeting.”

“I’ll go there, immediately, and see what’s in the forge,” Silius said. “I’ll see what’s cooking.”

“Good Silius, do,” Agrippina said. “Sosia and I will go in.”

Silius said:

“Make haste, my lords, to visit the sick prince. Tender your loves and sorrows to the people.

“This Sejanus, trust my divining soul, has plots on all;

“No tree that stops his view but must fall.”

In other words, Sejanus was out to get rid of everyone who stood between him and his becoming Emperor.

Everyone exited.

At this point in Ben Jonson's play, a Chorus of Musicians performed.



## ACT 3 (*Sejanus' Fall*)

### — 3.1 —

Heralds, Lictors, Varro, Sejanus, Latiaris, Cotta, and Afer entered the Senate.

In meetings of the Senators, the Heralds were criers.

Lictors held the *fascēs* — a bundle of rods and an axe that served as a symbol of power — as they preceded magistrates through the streets.

Varro was one of the current Consuls. His father and Silius had been enemies, and Varro was hostile toward Silius. In this society, that animus, aka hostility, was a sign that Varro's motives were honest.

Latiaris was a supporter of Sejanus.

Cotta was a man without scruples.

Sejanus said to Varro:

“It is only you who must make the case against Silius, Varro. Neither I nor Caesar may appear therein, except in your defense, who are the Consul, and under the color — the pretense — of late enmity between your father and his [actually, should be *him* — Silius, not Silius' father], may better do it, as free from all suspicion of a plot and machination.”

He handed Varro some notes and then continued:

“Here are your notes, showing you what points to touch on. Read them. Be cunning in them. Afer has them, too.”

“But is he — Silius — summoned to come to the Senate for trial?” Varro asked.

“No,” Sejanus said. “It was considered by Caesar and concluded as most fitting to take him unprepared.”

Afer added, “And prosecute all under the name of treason.”

“I understand,” Varro said.

Sabinus, Gallus, Lepidus, and Arruntius entered the scene and conferred privately. They were Germanicans.

Gallus was the husband of Vipsania, who had been Tiberius’ first wife.

Like Arruntius, Lepidus was a Senator of integrity.

Sabinus said, “His son, Drusus Senior, being dead, Caesar will not be here.”

“What should the business of this Senate be?” Gallus asked.

Arruntius said:

“That is something the subtle whisperers can tell you. We, who are the good-dull-noble lookers-on, are called on only to keep the marble benches warm.

“What should we do with those deep mysteries, proper to these fine heads? Let them alone.

“Our ignorance may, perchance, help us be saved from whips and Furies.”

Furies, who were often depicted holding a whip of scorpions in one hand and a torch in the other, were avenging spirits from the Land of the Dead. They especially punished those who killed relatives.

“See, see, see, their action and operation!” Gallus said.

The Germanicans watched the followers of Sejanus in action and commented on what they saw. No followers of Sejanus overheard them.

Arruntius said, "Aye, now their heads do travail, now they work. Their faces run like shuttles used in weaving; they are weaving some skillfully intricate cobweb to catch flies."

"Watch," Sabinus said. "They take their places."

"What, so low!" Arruntius said.

The Senators were sitting on lower benches, not in their usual higher benches, as a sign of mourning for the death of Drusus Senior.

"Oh, yes," Gallus said. "They must be seen to flatter Caesar's grief, though but in sitting."

Varro said to the Heralds, "Bid silence for us. Bring the Senate to order."

"Silence!" the First Herald shouted.

Varro said, "Fathers conscript, may this our present meeting turn fair and fortunate to the commonwealth."

"Fathers conscript" are Senators.

Silius and some other Senators entered the scene.

"Look, Silius enters," Sejanus said.

"Hail, grave fathers!" Silius said.

A Lictor said loudly:

"Stand! Stay where you are!

"Silius, forbear thy place. Don't sit among the Senators."

The Senators, surprised, said, "What!"

The First Herald said, "Silius, stand forth. The Consul Varro has to charge thee."

A Lictor shouted, “Make way for Caesar! Make room for Caesar!”

Arruntius said to Sabinus, “Has he come, too? In that case, then, expect a trick.”

Sabinus replied, “Silius accused? Surely he will answer nobly.”

Tiberius and some attendants entered the scene.

Because his son, Drusus Senior, had just died, Tiberius had not been expected to show up in the Senate. Tiberius was showing that he was made of sterner stuff. He also would say that he expected the Senators not to allow themselves to droop because of the death of Drusus Senior.

Tiberius said:

“We stand amazed, fathers, to behold this general dejection. For what reason sit Rome’s Consuls thus weeping, as if they had lost all the remembrance both of style and place?

“It is not becoming.”

As a sign of grieving, the Senators were not sitting in their usual places of high honor.

Tiberius continued:

“No woes are of fit weight to make the honor of the Empire stoop —

“Though I, in my private self, may meet just reprehension, that so suddenly, and in so fresh a grief following the death of Drusus Senior, would greet the Senate, when private tongues of kinsmen and allies, inspired with comforts, loathly are endured, the face of men not seen, and scarcely the day, to thousands who communicate our loss.”

Tiberius acknowledged that he could be criticized for showing up in the Senate after the death of his son, while thousands of others would communicate and share their grief at the kind of loss he had suffered by loathly enduring seeing other men and hearing their comforting words and by scarcely even enduring the sight of day.

Tiberius continued:

“Nor can I accuse these people of weakness, since they take but natural ways, yet I must seek for stronger aids and draw out those fair helps from warm embraces of the commonwealth — the Roman people.

“Our mother, great Augusta, is old and struck with time, ourself impressed with aged characters — the marks of time.

“Drusus Senior is gone, his children young, and babes.”

Drusus Senior had two children who lived to adulthood: Livia Julia and Tiberius Julius Caesar Nero Gemellus, who was co-heir with Caligula. When Tiberius died in 37 C.E., Caligula either had Drusus Senior’s son killed or forced him to kill himself.

A meeting of the Senate took place in 23 C.E., after the death of Drusus Senior. The trial of Silius took place in 24 C.E. The trial of Cordus took place in 25 C.E. Ben Jonson conflated these three events into this one event you are reading about now. Such telescoping of time is common in history plays of the time.

Tiberius continued:

“Our aims must now reflect on and consider those who may give timely succor to these present ills and are our only glad-surviving hopes: the noble issue of Germanicus: Nero and Drusus Junior.

“Might it please the Consul to bring them in with honor — they both wait outside this meeting place —

“I would present them to the Senate’s care and raise those suns — and sons — of joy, which should drink up these floods of sorrow in your drowned eyes.”

Arruntius said to Sabinus, “By Jove, I am not Oedipus enough to understand this Sphinx.”

The Sphinx is a mythological creature with the head of a woman and the body of a lion. In Sophocles’ tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, the Sphinx asks Oedipus this riddle: What goes on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening? If Oedipus cannot answer this riddle correctly, the Sphinx will kill him. Fortunately, Oedipus does answer the riddle correctly: Man, who goes on hands and knees as a crawling baby, two legs as a healthy adult, and two legs and a cane as an old person.

Sabinus replied, “The princes come.”

Nero and Drusus Junior and some attendants entered the scene.

Tiberius said to Nero and Drusus Junior:

“Approach, noble Nero, noble Drusus Junior.”

Tiberius then said to the Senators:

“These princes, fathers, when their parent died, I gave to their uncle, with this prayer:

“That, though he’d proper, legitimate, and admirable children of his own, he would bring up and foster these boys no less than he would bring up that self-blood — his own children — and by that act confirm their worths to him and to posterity.”

When Germanicus had died, Tiberius had given his — Germanicus' — boys, Nero and Drusus Junior, into the care of their uncle: Drusus Senior. But now Drusus Senior had died.

Drusus Senior and the boys' father, Germanicus, had been step-brothers. Germanicus was the nephew of Tiberius, who adopted him. Tiberius will call Germanicus Augustus' nephew, but Ben Jonson's society used the word "nephew" loosely. Germanicus was Augustus' great-nephew.

Tiberius continued speaking to the Senators:

"Drusus Senior having died and been taken away from here, I turn my prayers to you, Senators, and, before our country and our gods, I beseech you to take, and rule, Augustus' nephew's sons — the sons of Germanicus — sprung of the noblest ancestors; and so accomplish and fulfill both my duty and your own."

Tiberius then said:

"Nero and Drusus Junior, these Senators shall be to you in place of parents, these Senators shall be your fathers, these shall be, and not unfitly; for you are so born as all your good or ill is the commonwealth's."

Tiberius said to the Senators:

"Receive them, you strong guardians."

Tiberius prayed to the gods:

"And, blest gods, make all their actions answer to their bloods.

"Let their great titles find increase by them, and let they not find increase by titles. Set them, as in place and rank, so in example, above all the Romans, and may they know no rivals but themselves.

“Let Fortune give them nothing they don’t deserve but attend upon their virtue — and let virtue always come forth greater than hope, and better than their fame.”

Tiberius said to the Senators:

“Relieve and support me, fathers, with your general and collective voice.”

The Senators answered, “May all the gods consent to Caesar’s wish, and add to any honors that may crown the hopeful issue — promising children — of Germanicus!”

Tiberius said, “We thank you, reverend fathers, on their behalf.”

Tiberius had said all the right words regarding Germanicus’ children.

Arruntius, Sabinus, and Gallus, seated together, whispered among themselves.

Arruntius said, “If this were true now! But the space, the space between the breast and lips — Tiberius’ heart lies a thought farther than another man’s.”

Arruntius believed that there was a difference between Tiberius’ private thoughts and his public words.

Tiberius said:

“My comforts are so flowing in my joys as, in them, all my streams of grief are lost, no less than are land waters in the sea, or showers in rivers, although their cause was such as might have sprinkled even the gods with tears.

“Yet since the greater does embrace the less, we covetously — eagerly — obey.”



Tiberius was not crying. His comforts — the Senators' support of Nero and Drusus Junior — outweighed his grief. So said Tiberius.

“Well acted, Caesar,” Arruntius said.

Tiberius said:

“And now I am the happy witness made of your so-much-desired affections to this great issue, Nero and Drusus Junior, I could wish the Fates would here set a peaceful period — end — to my days.

The three Fates determined the length of mortal lives. Clotho spun the thread of life, Lachesis measured it, and Atropos cut it. When a mortal's thread of life was cut, the mortal died.

Tiberius continued:

“However, to my labors, I entreat, and beg some fit ease of this Senate.”

“Laugh, fathers, laugh!” Arruntius said. “Have you no spleens about you?”

In Ben Jonson's time, the spleen was regarded as the source of laughter — and of melancholy.

Tiberius now spoke about his desire or supposed desire to delegate his authority to others and so lessen the burden that rested on his own shoulders:

“The burden is too heavy that I sustain on my unwilling shoulders; and I pray that it may be taken off, and conferred from me to the Consuls, or some other Roman, more able and more worthy than I.”

“Laugh on, still,” Arruntius said.

“Why, this renders suspect all the rest!” Sabinus said.

“It poisons all,” Gallus said.

“Oh, do you taste — perceive — it then?” Arruntius said.

“It takes away my faith in anything that he shall hereafter speak,” Sabinus said.

They did not believe that Tiberius wished to delegate authority. Not believing that, they did not believe what Tiberius had said earlier about the care of Germanicus’ children — nor would they believe whatever Tiberius would say hereafter.

Arruntius said, “Aye, to pray for that which would be to his head as hot as thunder — against which he wears that charm — should but the court receive him at his word.”

According to Suetonius, Tiberius was afraid of thunder and lightning and wore a laurel wreath during lightning storms because of a folk belief that laurel was a protection against lightning.

“Hear!” Gallus shouted.

Gallus wanted everyone to pay attention to and listen to Tiberius.

Tiberius said, “For myself, I know my weakness, and I so little covet — like some others gone past — the weight that will oppress me. My ambition is the counterpoint.”

Ambition was the counterpoint — the opposite — to what Tiberius said he really wanted: seclusion.

Rather than power and responsibility, Tiberius was saying that he wanted peace, quiet, and seclusion.

“Finely maintained,” Arruntius said. “It is good still.”

Sejanus said, “But Rome, whose blood, whose nerves, whose life, whose very frame relies on Caesar’s strength, no

less than heaven relies on Atlas, cannot admit it except with general ruin.”

Atlas held up the sky on his shoulders.

Allowing Tiberius to go into seclusion would ruin Rome. So said Sejanus.

Arruntius said about Sejanus, “Ah! Are you there, to bring him off and aid and rescue him?”

And take his place? And then ruin Rome?

Sejanus said, “Let Caesar no more, then, urge a point so contrary to Caesar’s greatness, the grieved Senate’s vows, or Rome’s necessity.”

Sejanus was saying that Tiberius ought not to go into seclusion.

“He comes about,” Gallus said.

“More nimbly than Vertumnus,” Arruntius said.

Vertumnus was the god of seasons, and of changes.

Tiberius said:

“For the benefit of the public, I may be persuaded to show I can neglect all private aims, although I desire my rest.

“But if the Senate still commands me to serve, I must be glad to practice my obedience.”

“You must, and will, sir,” Arruntius said. “We do know it.”

In other words: You, Tiberius, will continue to be Emperor. All these words that you are speaking now are part of an act.

The Senators shouted:

“Caesar!

“Live long, and happy, great and royal Caesar!

“The gods preserve thee, and thy modesty [your moderation], thy wisdom, and thy innocence!”

“Where is it?” Arruntius said. “The prayer’s made before the subject.”

Arruntius was saying that the Senators were praying for the preservation of qualities that Tiberius did not have. If he did not have them, how could they be preserved?

The Senators shouted, “Guard his meekness, Jove, his piety, his care, his bounty —”

Arruntius said quietly, “And his tricky subtlety, I’ll put in — yet he’ll keep that himself, without the help of the gods. All prayers are vain for him.”

Tiberius said:

“We will not hold your patience, fathers, with long answer, but shall still contend to be what you desire, and work to satisfy so great a hope.

“Proceed to your affairs.”

The trial of Silius was about to begin.

Afer came forward.

“Now, Silius, guard thee,” Arruntius said. “The curtain’s drawing. Something’s about to happen. Afer advances.”

The First Herald shouted, “Silence!”

“Cite Caius Silius,” Afer said.

“Caius Silius!” the First Herald shouted.

Silius came forward and said, “Here.”

Afer began his speech by mentioning a revolt led by Julius Sacrovir of the Aedui in Gaul in 21 C.E., a revolt that Silius, then the governor of upper Germany, had put down with two Roman legions.

Afer said:

“The triumph that thou had in Germany for thy recent victory over Sacrovir, thou have enjoyed so freely, Caius Silius, that no man maliciously envied thee it; nor would Caesar or Rome permit and allow that thou would be then defrauded of any honors that thy deserts could claim in the fair service of the commonwealth.

“But now, if after all their loves and graces, thy actions and their courses being discovered and made known, it shall appear to Caesar, and this Senate, thou have defiled those glories with thy crimes —”

Silius interrupted, “ — crimes?”

“Patience, Silius,” Afer said.

Silius replied:

“Tell thy mule about patience! I am a Roman.

“What are my crimes? Proclaim them.

“Am I too rich? Too honest for the times? Have I treasure, jewels, land, or houses that some informer gapes for?”

People could bring unjustified charges against someone in the hope that the accused person’s property would be seized and the accuser would get a part of it. These people’s mouths gape — open wide — with greed.

Silius continued:

“Is my strength too much to be admitted? Or my knowledge?

“These now are crimes.”

Afer said, “Silius, if the name of crime makes you so angry and irritates thee, with what impotence — inability to defend yourself, and inability to restrain your passions — will thou endure the matter to be searched?”

Silius replied:

“I tell thee, Afer, with more scorn than fear: Employ your mercenary — hired — tongue and art.

“Where’s my accuser?”

Varro came forward and said, “Here.”

Arruntius said, “Varro? The Consul? Is he thrust in the plot?”

Varro said:

“It is I who accuse thee, Silius.

“Against the majesty of Rome and Caesar, I do pronounce and declare thee here a guilty cause and guilty agent, first, of beginning and occasioning, and next, of drawing out the war in Gallia, for which thou recently enjoyed a triumph in Germany.

“Thou falsely pretended a long time that Sacrovir was an enemy, only to make thy provisions and revenue for fighting the war from the state more, while thou, and thy wife Sosia, plundered the province.

“Wherein, with sordid-base desire of gain, thou have discredited thy actions’ worth and been a traitor to the state.”

According to Varro, Silius had done good service in defeating Sacrovir, but he had made the war last longer than it needed to in order to get money from Rome to fight the

war. Also, Silius and his wife had plundered Gaul, where the war took place.

“Thou lie,” Silius said.

“I thank thee, Silius,” Arruntius said quietly. “Speak so still, and often.”

Varro said to Tiberius, “If I do not prove my allegations, Caesar, but unjustly have called Silius into trial, here I bind myself to suffer what I claim against him, and yield to have what I have spoken confirmed by judgment of the court, and all good men.”

Silius said to Tiberius, “Caesar, I crave to have my case deferred until this man’s Consulship is over.”

Tiberius said, “We cannot, nor may we grant it.”

“Why?” Silius asked. “Shall he appoint my day of trial? Shall he impeach me? Is he my accuser? And must he be my judge?”

Tiberius said:

“It has been usual, and it is a right that *custom* has allowed the magistrate, to call forth private men and to appoint their day.

“This privilege we may not in the Consul see infringed, by whose deep watches and industrious care it is so accomplished with labor and managed that the commonwealth receives no loss by any oblique, evil course.”

Silius said, “Caesar, thy fraud is worse than violence.”

The fraud was pretending that the Consul Varro had the moral authority to be both the accuser and one of the judges of Silius. Tiberius had just referred to custom, by which he meant extraordinary privileges given to Consuls in times of crisis, but there was now no time of crisis.

Tiberius said:

“Silius, don’t mistake us.

“We dare not use the credit and authority of the Consul to thy wrong, but we only preserve and protect his place and power so far as it concerns the dignity and honor of the state.”

“Believe him, Silius,” Arruntius said.

He was sarcastic.

Overhearing him, Cotta said, “Why, so he may, Arruntius.”

“I say so,” Arruntius said. “And he may choose to.”

He may choose to believe Tiberius. But Arruntius will not choose to believe Tiberius.

Tiberius said, “By the Capitol, and all our gods, except for when the dear Republic, our sacred laws, and just authority are interested — involved and have an interest in — therein, I should be silent.”

Afer said, “May it please Caesar to give permission to hold his — Silius’ — trial. He shall have justice.”

Silius said, “Nay, I shall have law. Shall I not, Afer? Speak.”

“Would you have more?” Afer asked.

Silius replied:

“No, my well-spoken man, I would have no more.

“Nor would I have less as long as I might enjoy it natural — by which I mean uncontrived — and not taught to speak unto your present ends.

“And as long as it is free from thine, his, and all your unkind — unnatural — handling, furious enforcing, most unjust



presuming, malicious and manifold applying, foul wresting, and impossible construction and interpretation of the law.”

Yes, he wanted law, but he wanted law that was justly applied.

“He raves, he raves,” Afer said.

Silius replied, “Thou would not dare to tell me so, if thou didn’t have Caesar’s permission. I can see whose power condemns me.”

“This betrays his spirit,” Varro said. “This does enough declare what he is.”

“What am I?” Silius said. “Speak.”

“An enemy to the state,” Varro said.

Silius said, “Because I am an enemy to thee, and such corrupted ministers of the state who here are made a present instrument to gratify it with thine own disgrace.”

“This, to the Consul, is most insolent!” Sejanus said. “And impious!”

The Consuls performed religious as well as civic duties, and so Sejanus was saying that criticizing a Consul was impious.

Silius said:

“Aye, take part. Take sides. Reveal yourselves.

“Alas, don’t I scent your confederacies, your plots and combinations? Don’t I know that minion — that darling — sSejanus hates me, and that all this boast of law, and law, is just a form, a net of Vulcan’s making, a complete trap, to take that life by a pretext of justice that you pursue in malice?”

Venus had an affair with Mars, the god of war. The two had fallen in lust although Venus, the goddess of sexual passion, was married to Vulcan, the gifted blacksmith god. Vulcan learned of the affair, so he set a trap for the illicit lovers. He created a fine net that bound tightly, he placed the net above his bed, and then he pretended to leave his mansion to journey abroad. Mars ran to Venus, and together they ran to bed. Mars and Venus lay down in bed together, and then the fine net snared them, locked in lust.

Silius' reference to Vulcan's net, however, is unhappy because Vulcan's net caught a guilty — not innocent — couple.

Silius continued:

“Do I lack brain or nostril — to smell a rat — to persuade me that your ends and purposes are made to what they are, before my answer?

“O you impartial gods, a world of wolves-turned-into-men shall not make me accuse your justice, however they provoke me.

“Have I for this so often engaged myself, stood in the heat and fervor of a fight, when Phoebus the sun-god sooner has forsaken the day than I the battlefield against the blue-eyed Gauls and curly-haired Germans, when our Roman eagles — legionary standards — have fanned the fire with their laboring wings, and there was no blow dealt that left not death behind it?

“And have I for this so often engaged myself when I have charged, alone, into the troops of curly-haired Sicambrians, routed them, and came off the battlefield not with the backward ensigns of a slave, but forward marks, wounds on my breast, and face, wounds that were intended for thee, O Caesar, and thy Rome?”

Silius' scars were on the front of his body, not on the back. He had gotten his scars while fighting, not while running away.

Because Silius and his troops had remained loyal to Rome during a period of unrest, they had saved Rome and had taken the wounds that would have been Rome's had they had not remained loyal.

Silius boasted about this when he returned to Rome, and his boastfulness may have been a cause of his downfall. His enemies believed or said they believed that Silius' boastfulness made Tiberius look weak.

Silius continued:

“And have I this return? Did I, for this, perform so noble and so brave defeat on Sacrovir?”

“O Jove, let it become me to boast about my deeds, when he, whom they concern, shall thus forget them!”

Afer said:

“Silius, Silius, these are the common customs and traits of thy blood and temper, when it is high with wine, as now with rage.

“This well agrees with that intemperate boast thou recently made at Agrippina's table, that when all other of the troops were prone to fall into rebellion, only thine remained in their obedience. Thou boasted that thou were the man who saved the Empire, which would have then been lost, had but thy legions, there, rebelled, or mutinied.

“Thou boasted that thy virtue met and fronted every peril.

“Thou boasted that thou gave to Caesar and to Rome their safety.

“Thou boasted that their name, their strength, their spirit, and their state, and even their being was a donative — a gift — from thee.”

“Well worded, and most like an orator,” Arruntius said.

“Is this true, Silius?” Tiberius asked.

“Save thy question, Caesar,” Silius said. “Thy spy, of infamous reputation, has confirmed it.”

Indeed, Afer had spied on Agrippina and her household.

“Excellent Roman!” Arruntius said.

“He does answer stoutly,” Sabinus said.

“If this is so, there needs no farther ground for charges against him,” Sejanus said.

Varro said, “What can more impeach the royal dignity and state of Caesar than to have pressed upon his attention a benefit that he cannot pay for?”

“In this, all Caesar’s fortune is made unequal to the courtesy,” Cotta said.

In other words: If Silius’ claims are true, then Tiberius would never be able to reward him as he deserves.

“His means are clean destroyed, who should requite,” Latiaris said.

“Nothing is great enough for Silius’ merit,” Gallus said.

Arruntius asked Sabinus, “Is Gallus on that side, too?”

Silius said:

“Come, do not hunt and labor so about for circumstantial evidence to make the man — me — guilty whom you have foredoomed and pre-judged.

“Take shorter ways; I’ll fall in with your purposes.

“The words were mine; and more I now will say:

“Since I have done thee that great service, Caesar, thou always have feared me, and, in place of grace, returned me hatred. So soon, all best services, with fearful princes, turn into deep injuries in estimation, when they greater rise than can be repaid. Benefits, with you, are of no longer pleasure than you can with ease recompense them; that transcended once, your studies are not how to thank, but kill.

“It is your nature to have all men slaves to you, but you acknowledging to none. The means that make your greatness must not be mentioned when speaking about your greatness. If it is mentioned, it takes so much away, you think; and that which helped shall soonest perish, if it stand within eyesight and is seen, where it may affront and confront or just upbraid the high.”

“Allow him to speak no more,” Cotta said.

“Just note his spirit,” Varro said.

To Varro, Silius was being arrogant.

“This reveals him in the rest,” Afer said. “If he is guilty in this, then he is guilty in all.”

“Let him be judged,” Latiaris said.

“He has spoken enough to prove that he is Caesar’s foe,” Sejanus said.

“His thoughts look through his words,” Cotta said.

“A censure,” Sejanus said. “A judgment.”

Silius said:

“Wait, wait, most officious Senate!

“I shall immediately cheat thy fury. Silius has not placed his guards within himself, against Fortune’s spite, so weakly but he can escape your grasp.

“You Senators are only hands of Lady Fortune. She herself, when virtue does oppose, must lose her threats.

“All that can happen in human life, the frown of Caesar, proud Sejanus’ hatred, base Varro’s spleen, and Afer’s bloodying tongue, the Senate’s servile flattery, and these mustered to kill, I’m fortified against, and can look down upon; they are beneath me.

“It is not life that I stand enamored of, for my end shall make me accuse my fate.

“The coward and the valiant man alike must fall; only the cause, and manner how, distinguishes them, which then are gladdest when they cost us dearest.

“Romans, if any are here in this Senate who would like to know how to mock Tiberius’ tyranny, look upon Silius, and so learn how to die.”

He stabbed himself.

“Oh, desperate act!” Varro said.

“An honorable hand!” Arruntius said.

“Look and see if he is dead,” Tiberius ordered.

“It was nobly struck, and home,” Sabinus said.

Arruntius said, “My thought did prompt him to it. He read my mind. Farewell, Silius! Be famous forever for thy great example.”

Tiberius said, “We are not pleased in this sad accident that thus has forestalled and abused our mercy. We had intended to preserve thee, noble Roman, and to anticipate thy hopes.”

Silius had killed himself so that Tiberius and the Romans could not execute him, but now that Silius was dead, Tiberius was saying that he would have shown mercy to Silius.

Arruntius did not believe Tiberius.

“Excellent wolf!” Arruntius said. “Now that he is full, he howls.”

Sejanus said, “Caesar does wrong his own dignity and safety, thus to mourn the deserved end of so professed a traitor, and he does, by this lenience of his, instruct others as factious to the like offence.”

“The confiscation merely of his estate would have been enough,” Tiberius said.

“Oh, that was gaped for, then?” Arruntius said.

The accusers’ mouths had gaped wide open in anticipation of swallowing Silius’ estate. When an estate was confiscated, informers received part of it.

“Remove the body,” Varro said to the Lictors.

They carried the body out.

“Let a summons go out for Sosia,” Sejanus said.

Sosia was the wife of Silius.

“Let her be proscribed,” Gallus said. “And for the goods, I think it fitting that half go to the public treasury, half to the children.”

Silius and Sosia had children.

When Sosia was proscribed, she would be exiled and lose her estate.

By committing suicide before being proscribed, Silius had avoided proscription.

By law, one quarter of the confiscated wealth would go to the accusers.

Lepidus said:

“With the leave of Caesar, I would think that a fourth part, which the law does cast on the informers, should be enough; the rest go to the children —

“By doing this, the prince — Tiberius — shall show humanity and bounty, not to force them by their want, which in their parents’ trespass they deserved, to take ill courses.”

“It shall please us,” Tiberius said.

Arruntius said:

“Aye, out of necessity.

“This Lepidus is grave and honest, and I have observed a moderation always in all his judgments.”

Sabinus said, “And inclining to the better course of action —”

Cordus, guarded by Lictors, Satrius, and Natta, entered the scene.

Arruntius said:

“Wait, who’s this?

“Cremutius Cordus? What! Is he brought in? More blood to the banquet?

“Noble Cordus, I wish thee good. Be as thy writings: free, open, candid, and honest.”

Arruntius was talking quietly. Cordus did not hear him.



“Who is he?” Tiberius asked.

“He is here because of the annals, Caesar,” Sejanus said.

Annals are history books that cover years in chronological order.

“Cremutius Cordus!” the first Herald shouted.

“Here,” Cordus said.

“Satrius Secundus, Pinnarius Natta, you are his accusers,” the First Herald said.

Arruntius said, “They are two of Sejanus’ bloodhounds, whom he breeds with human flesh, to bay at citizens.”

Afer said to Satrius and Natta, “Stand forth before the Senate, and confront him.”

Satrius said, “I do accuse thee here, Cremutius Cordus, to be a man factious and dangerous, a sower of sedition in the state, a turbulent and discontented spirit, which I will prove from thine own writings here, the annals thou have published, where thou bite the present age, and with a viper’s tooth, being a member of it, dare to do that ill which never yet degenerate and unworthy-of-family bastard did upon his parent.”

Vipers were said to give birth by the process of the progeny biting their way out of the parent.

Natta said, “To this I subscribe, and, out of a world of more particulars, cite only one instance as proof: Comparing men and times, thou praise Brutus, and affirm that ‘Cassius was the last of all the Romans.’”

“What!” Cordus said. “What are we, then?”

The answer, of course, is: We are Romans.

“What is Caesar?” Varro asked. “Nothing?”

Afer said:

“My lords, this strikes at every Roman’s private, personal interest, in whom reigns gentry and rank and nobility and grandeur of spirit and mettle, to have a Brutus brought in parallel — a parricide, an enemy of his country — ranked and preferred to any real worth that Rome now holds.”

Brutus was a parricide in that he had helped kill the father of his country: Julius Caesar. In Latin Brutus was *patriae parentis parricida*.

Afer continued:

“This is most strangely abusive, vituperative, most full of spite and insolent upbraiding.

“Nor is it the time alone that is here dispraised and held in contempt, but the whole man of time, yea, Caesar’s self, brought into disvalue; and he — Caesar — is aimed at most by oblique glance — covert allusion — of his licentious pen.

“Caesar, if Cassius were the last of the Romans, thou have no name, no reputation, no status.”

“The whole man of time” is praise of Tiberius: He is “the whole man” produced by the processes of time.

“Let’s hear him answer,” Tiberius said. “Silence.”

Cordus said:

“So innocent I am of any evil deed, my lords, that only the words I have written are argued to be evidence; yet those words do not affect either prince or prince’s parent — either Tiberius or his father, Caesar Augustus.

“Your law of treason comprehends and includes only malicious words directly affecting princes to be treason.

“I am charged to have praised Brutus and Cassius, whose deeds, when many more besides myself have written about them, not one has mentioned them without honoring them.

“Great Titus Livius, aka Livy, a Roman historian great for eloquence and authority among us, in his *History*, with so great praises did extol Pompey that often Caesar Augustus called Livy a Pompeian — yet this did not hurt their friendship.

“In his book Livy often names Metellus Scipio, Lucius Afranius, yea, the same Cassius, and this same Brutus, too, as worthiest men; not thieves and parricides, which negative titles and stigma are now imposed upon their reputations.”

Metellus Scipio and Lucius Afranius fought against Julius Caesar and were defeated.

Cassius and Brutus assassinated Julius Caesar and then fought against Octavian (later named Caesar Augustus) and were defeated.

Cordus continued:

“Asinius Pollio’s writings on the civil war quite throughout give them a noble memory.

“Similarly, Messalla gave a noble memory about and gave renown to his general Cassius — yet both of these men lived with Augustus, full of wealth and honors.”

Messalla fought under Cassius and then wrote a history about the civil wars.

Cordus continued:

“To Cicero’s book, where Cato was heaved up equal with heaven, what else did Caesar answer, being then dictator, but with a penned oration, as if before the judges?”

Cicero wrote a book titled *Cato*, which praised Cato the Younger, and Julius Caesar wrote an opposing book in response titled *Anticato*.

Cordus continued:

“Do but see Antonius’ letters; read but Brutus’ pleadings, what vile reproach they hold against Augustus — false, I confess, but with much bitterness.

“The epigrams of Roman authors Bibaculus and Catullus are read, although they are fully stuffed with spite of both the Caesars; yet deified Julius, and no less Augustus, both endured them and regarded them with contempt — I don’t know readily enough to speak it, whether it was done with more equanimity or wisdom; for such obloquies, if they are quietly despised, they die suppressed, but if with rage acknowledged, they are confessed.”

Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar ignored some writings that insulted them. They may have done it with equanimity, not caring about the insults. Or they may have done it with wisdom, knowing that acknowledging the insults and being enraged by them can be interpreted as a confession that the insults are true.

Cordus continued:

“The Greeks I slip by, whose license not alone, but also lust did escape unpunished. Or where someone, by chance, took exception, he revenged the words with words — not deeds.

“But in my work, what could be aimed more free from, or farther off from the time’s scandal, than to write of those whom death had exempted from grace or hatred?”

Cordus was writing about dead — not living — people.

Cordus continued:

“Did I, with Brutus and with Cassius, armed, and possessed of the Philippi fields, incense the people in the civil cause of the state with dangerous speeches? Or do they, being slain seventy years ago, as by their images — which the conqueror has not defaced — appears, retain that guilty memory with writers?”

Plutarch wrote an anecdote about Caesar Augustus coming across a statue of his enemy, Brutus, in a town. Rather than defacing or tearing down the statue, he ordered it kept in place.

Cordus continued:

“Posterity pays every man his honor, nor shall there lack, though I am condemned, those who will not only well approve Cassius, and be mindful of great Brutus’ honor, but who will, also, make mention of me.”

“Freely and nobly spoken,” Arruntius said.

“With good temper,” Sabinus said. “I like him because he is not moved with passion and strong emotion.”

Tiberius and his followers conferred privately.

The Germanicans talked quietly among themselves.

Arruntius said, “Cordus puts them to their whisper.”

Speaking out loud, Tiberius said, “Take him away from here. We shall make a decision about him at the next sitting of the Senate.”

A Lictor exited with Cordus in his custody.

Ben Jonson does not write about this, but Cordus committed suicide by starving himself.

“In the meantime, order the Aediles to burn his books,” Cotta said.

“You have well advised,” Sejanus said.

“It is not fitting that such licentious things should live to upbraid the age,” Afer said.

“If the age were good, they might,” Arruntius said.

The writings might continue to live, at least for a while, as in fact they did. Some copies of his writings were hidden, and they later circulated.

“Let them be burnt,” Latiaris said.

“All sought, and burnt, today,” Gallus said.

“The court is over,” the First Herald said. “Lictors, resume the fasces.”

The Lictors carried the fasces as they led the magistrates away.

Everyone except Arruntius, Sabinus, and Lepidus exited.

Lepidus was a Senator of integrity and capability.

“Let them be burnt!” Arruntius said. “Oh, how ridiculous appears the Senate’s brainless diligence, whose members think they can, with present power, extinguish the memory of all succeeding times!”

Sabinus said:

“It is true that the book burners look ridiculous, when, contrary to their intention, the punishment of genius makes the authority of the genius increase.

“Nor do they anything, who practice this cruelty of interdiction and prohibition, and this rage of burning, but purchase to themselves rebuke and shame, and to the writers an eternal name.”

Lepidus said, “It is an argument that the times are sore and distressed when virtue cannot safely be advanced and promoted, nor vice reprov’d.”

Arruntius replied, “Aye, noble Lepidus. Augustus well foresaw what we should suffer under Tiberius, when he pronounced the Roman race most wretched that should live between so slow jaws, and so long a-bruising.”

Suetonius, in his “Life of Tiberius” in *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* (III.21), wrote, in Alexander Thomson’s translation, “I know, it is generally believed, that upon Tiberius’s quitting the room, after their private conference, those who were in waiting overheard Augustus say, ‘Ah! unhappy Roman people, to be ground by the jaws of such a slow devourer!’”

The devouring caused the bruising.

They exited.

—3.2—

Tiberius and Sejanus talked together.

Tiberius said:

“This business has succeeded well, Sejanus — and quite removed all jealousy of practice — all suspicion of a conspiracy — of us against Agrippina and our nephews.

“Now we must think how to plant our traps for the other pair: Sabinus and Arruntius.

“And Gallus, too — however much he flatters us, we know his heart.”

Sejanus said:

“Give it some respite, Caesar.”

He may have meant for Tiberius to spare Gallus for a while. Or he may have meant to be slow in bringing down the next enemy. Too many enemies being removed too quickly can cause suspicion. Best to let things rest for a while and then go into action again.

Sejanus continued:

“Time shall mature and bring to perfect crown — bring to perfection what we with so good vultures have begun.”

At the founding of Rome, vultures appeared to its founders: Romulus and Remus. Tiberius and Sejanus are perhaps attempting to found a new kind of Rome.

Vultures are birds of omen. Good vultures can perhaps mean that good omens predict that the snares Tiberius and Sejanus will set will be successful.

Sejanus continued:

“Sabinus shall be next.”

Tiberius objected: “Rather Arruntius.”

Sejanus said, “By any means preserve him. His frank tongue, being lent the reins, will take away all thought of malice in your course against the rest. We must keep him to stalk with.”

A stalking horse is a horse behind which hunters hide. Sejanus wanted to use Arruntius as a screen behind which he and Tiberius could hunt their prey. Arruntius’ tongue would divert attention to himself while Tiberius and Sejanus secretly set their snares.

Tiberius replied, “Dearest head — dearest person — I yield to thy most auspicious plan.”

Sejanus said:



“Sir — I’ve been so long trained up in grace and favor, first with your father, great Augustus, and since then with your most happy bounties so familiar, that I would not sooner commit my hopes or wishes to the gods than to your ears.

“Nor have I ever yet been covetous of overbright and dazzling honors; instead, I have been covetous to watch and work hard for great Caesar’s safety, like the most common soldier.”

“I concede that what you say is true,” Tiberius said.

Sejanus said:

“The only gain, and which I count most fair of all my fortunes, is that mighty Caesar has thought me worthy his alliance.

“Hence begin my hopes.”

Tiberius said, “Hmm?”

In other words: What are you getting at, Sejanus?

Sejanus said:

“I have heard that Augustus, in the bestowing of his daughter in marriage, thought without prejudice of equestrian gentlemen of Rome.”

Sejanus meant that Caesar Augustus had thought that members of the noble class *and* members of the equestrian class were worthy of marrying his daughter.

Caesar Augustus’ daughter was Julia. Her first husband was Marcus Claudius Marcellus, a nephew of Augustus. Marcellus was not born a noble. He died when she was sixteen, and she then married Tiberius and became his second wife.

Sejanus was a member of the equestrian class of citizens, which were ranked just below the noble class. Marriages could be arranged between the children of the two social classes to strengthen alliances. Sejanus' daughter had been betrothed to a son of the future emperor Claudius, who was a nephew of Tiberius, but a few days after the betrothal, Claudius' son died, according to Suetonius, by choking to death on a pear he had thrown into the air and caught in his mouth.

Sejanus continued:

“If this is so — I don't know how to hope for so great a favor — but if a husband should be sought for Livia, and I should be had in mind, as Caesar's friend, I would but properly use the glory of the familial relationship.”

Livia was the widow of Drusus Senior and the sister of Germanicus. A marriage to her would be a politically wise move for Sejanus. Germanicus had two younger siblings: Livia and Claudius, the future Roman Emperor.

Sejanus continued:

“It should not make me slothful, or less caring about Caesar's state; it would be enough to me if it did confirm, establish, and strengthen my weak house — family — against the now unequal opposition of Agrippina; and for dear regard to my children, this I wish.

“I myself have no ambition farther than to end my days in service of so dear a master.”

Tiberius replied:

“We cannot but commend thy piety — filial duty and grateful devotion — most loved Sejanus, in acknowledging those bounties, which we, faintly, remember.

“But to thy suit.

“The rest of mortal men, in all their designs and counsels, pursue profit. Princes, alone, are of a different destiny, directing their main actions always to fame and reputation.

“We therefore will take time to think, and answer.

“As for Livia, she can best, herself, decide if she will marry after Drusus, or continue to live in the family as a widow; besides, she has a mother, and a grandam yet, whose nearer counsels she may guide herself by —

“But I will simply deal with this matter straightforwardly.”

Livia’s grandmother was Augusta (Tiberius’ mother), and Livia’s mother was Antonia the Younger, the daughter of Marc Antony and Octavia.

Tiberius continued:

“That enmity that thou fear in Agrippina would burn more if Livia’s marriage should, as it would, divide in parts the imperial house.

“A rivalry between the women might break forth, and discord might ruin the sons and nephews on both hands.

“What if it causes some immediate quarreling?”

“Thou are not safe, Sejanus, if thou attempt and try and test it. Can thou believe that Livia, first the wife to Caius Caesar, then to my Drusus, now will be contented to grow old with thee, who was born not noble but only a private gentleman of Rome, and raise thee with her — Livia’s — loss, if not her shame?”

Livia had been married to Caius Caesar, Augustus’ grandson and his possible successor. After his death, she then had been married to Drusus Senior, Tiberius’ son and his possible successor.

Tiberius continued:

“Or say that I should wish it, can thou think that the Senate, or the people, who have seen her brother Germanicus, her father, and our ancestors in the highest place of empire, will endure it?”

“The state and high office thou hold already is talked about.

“Men murmur at thy greatness; and the nobles do not hesitate, in public, to upbraid thy climbing above our father’s — Augustus’ — favors, or above thy own degree — and these nobles dare accuse me because of their hate to thee.

“Be wise, dear friend.

“We would not hide these things out of friendship’s dear respect.

“Nor will we stand adverse to thine or Livia’s designments.

“What we had purposed to thee, in our thought, and with what near degrees of love to bind thee and make thee equal to us, for the present we will forbear to — we will not — speak.

“Only believe thus much, our loved Sejanus: We do not know that height in blood, or honor, which thy virtue, and thy favorable mind toward us, may not aspire to with merit.

“And this we’ll proclaim, on all suitable and watched-for public occasions that the Senate or the people shall present to us.”

Sejanus replied:

“I am restored, and I have regained my sense, which I had lost in this so blinding suit. Caesar has taught me better to refuse than I knew how to ask.”

Sejanus was saying that he had been blinded when making his request to marry Livia, but Tiberius’ words had restored his sight — and his sense.

Sejanus realized that Tiberius did not want to be closely related to him.

Sejanus changed the subject:

“How does it please Caesar to embrace my recent advice for leaving Rome?”

“We are resolved to do so,” Tiberius said.

Giving him a piece of paper, Sejanus said, “Here are some more motives, which I have thought on since, that may more confirm your decision.”

The motives were reasons for leaving Rome.

Tiberius said:

“Careful and solicitous Sejanus!

“We will immediately peruse them.

“Go forward in our main design and prosper.”

The main design was the plot to get rid of Sabinus.

Tiberius exited, leaving Sejanus alone.

Sejanus said to himself:

“If those but take — that is, if the motives motivate — I shall prosper, indeed. Dull, heavy Caesar!

“Would thou tell me that thy favors were made crimes — that thy favors to me have been characterized as crime?

“And would thou tell me that my fortunes were esteemed as thy faults for favoring me?

“And would thou tell me that thou, because of me, were hated?

“And would thou not think I would with winged haste anticipate and prevent that change, when thou might win all to thyself again by the sacrifice of me?”

“Did those foolish words fly swifter from thy lips than this my brain, this sparkling forge, created me an armor to encounter chance, and thee?”

“Well, read my charms — my motives for you to leave Rome — and may they lay that hold upon thy senses as if thou had snuffed up powder of poison hemlock, or drunk the narcotic juice of poppy and of mandrakes.

“Sleep, voluptuous Caesar, and let complacency and carelessness seize on thy stupefied powers, and leave them dead to public cares, awake only to thy lusts — the strength of which makes thy libidinous soul itch to leave Rome; and I have thrust it on, with blaming of the city business, the multitude of suits to thee, the confluence of suitors, and then their importunacies in asking for favors — the manifold distractions he must suffer, besides ill rumors, envies, and reproaches.

“A quiet and retired life, larded and garnished with ease and pleasure, would avoid all of these things.

“And yet, for any weighty and great affair, it — Rome — would be the fittest place to give the soundest counsels.

“By means of this, I shall remove him both from thought and knowledge of his own dearest, most important affairs. I will draw all dispatches through my private hands, and I will know his designments.”

Sejanus was the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, and since the dispatches Sejanus mentioned were carried on horseback by members of the Praetorian Guard, Sejanus could intercept all these important communications and intimately learn their contents.

If Tiberius were away from Rome, he would not intimately know the political affairs going on in Rome.

Sejanus continued:

“And I shall pursue my own designments, make my own strengths, by giving suits and places, conferring dignities and offices on people who will follow me. And these who hate me now, lacking access to him, Tiberius, will make their envy none, or less. For when they see me arbiter of all, they must treat me with honor — or else, with Caesar, fall.”

Sejanus exited.

— 3.3 —

Alone, Tiberius said to himself:

“To marry Livia? Will no less, Sejanus, content thy aims?  
No lower object?”

“Well! Thou know how thou are wrought into our trust,  
woven in our design; and thou think we must now use thee,  
whatsoever thy projects are.

“It is true. But yet with caution, and fit care.

“And, now we better think —

He called for a servant:

“Who’s there, within?”

A servant entered the room.

“Caesar?” the servant asked.

Still thinking, Tiberius said:

“To leave our journey off would be to sin against our decreed  
delights, and it would appear to be doubt — or, what still less  
becomes a prince, low fear.

“Yet, doubt has its own law, and fears have their excuse, where princes’ states plead necessary use and vital benefit, as ours does now — more because of Sejanus’ pride than all fierce Agrippina’s hates beside.

“Those are the dreadful, to-be-feared enemies we raise with favors and make dangerous with praise.

“Those injured by us may have the same desire to harm us, but it is the favorite who has the power to strike us.”

The people a highly placed man like Tiberius either rewards or punishes may both want to harm him, but the people whom Tiberius rewards are those who can get close to Tiberius and have the opportunity to harm him.

Tiberius continued:

“And fury ever boils more high and strong,

“Heated with ambition, than revenge of wrong.

“It is then a part of supreme skill to grace

“No man too much, but hold a certain space

“Between the ascender’s rise and thine own level, lest, when all the rungs of the ladder are reached, his aim be that: to strike us.

“It is thought —”

Realizing that a servant was in the room, Tiberius said to him, “Is Macro in the palace? Find out. If he is not, go seek him and tell him to come to us.”

The servant exited to carry out the errand.

Tiberius said to himself:

“Macro must be the organ we must work by now, though no one is less apt for trust.”



Macro was a bad man. Tiberius wanted to pit him against another bad man: Sejanus.

Tiberius continued:

“Need does allow what choice would not. I’ve heard that the poisonous herb aconite, being timely taken, has a healing might against the scorpion’s stroke. We’ll give that idea a trial — so that, while two poisons wrestle, we may live.

“Sejanus has a spirit too energetic to be used except to the encounter of his like. We must fight his evil with another evil.

“Excused are wiser sovereigns then, who raise one ill

“Against another, and both safely kill.

“The prince who feeds great natures, they will sway him.

“He who nourishes a lion must obey him.”

The servant returned with Macro.

“Macro, we sent for you,” Tiberius said.

“I heard so, Caesar,” Macro replied.

Tiberius said to the servant, “Leave us for a while.”

The servant exited.

Tiberius said, “When you shall know, good Macro, the causes of our sending to you, and the ends, you then will listen more closely — and be pleased that you stand so high, both in our choice and trust.”

Macro said, “The humblest place in Caesar’s choice or trust may make glad Macro proud, without ambition — except to do Caesar service.”

Tiberius said:

“Put aside your courting of us. Let’s talk straightforwardly.

“We intend, Macro, to depart the city for a time, and see Campania — not for our pleasures, but to dedicate a pair of temples, one to Jupiter at Capua, the other at Nola, to Augustus. In this great work, perhaps, our stay will be extended beyond our will.

“Now, since we are not ignorant what danger may be born out of even our very shortest absence in a state so subject to envy, and embroiled with hate and faction, we have thought on thee, among a field — a large number — of Romans, worthiest Macro, to be our eye and ear, and to keep a strict watch on Agrippina, Nero, Drusus Junior — aye, and on Sejanus.

“Not that we distrust his loyalty, or that we repent one grace and favor of all that heap we have conferred on him — for that would be to disparage our election of him and call that judgment now in doubt which then seemed as unquestioned as an oracle of a god — but greatness has its cankers and sores.

“Worms and moths breed out of too fit matter in the things that they afterward consume, transferring quite the substance of their makers into themselves.”

In other words, Sejanus is ambitious and wants to replace Tiberius as Emperor.

Tiberius continued:

“Macro is sharp and understands. Besides, I know him to be subtle, close, wise, and well-read in man and his large nature. He has studied affections, feelings, and passions, and he knows their springs, their ends, and which way and whether they will work.

“It is proof enough of his great merit that we trust him.

“Then let us get to the point — because our conference cannot be long without suspicion.”

People keep a close eye on Emperors, and if they knew that Tiberius and Macro had had a long conversation, they would wonder what they had talked about.

Tiberius continued:

“Here, Macro, we assign thee, both to spy, inform, and chastise. Think, and use thy means, thy ministers, what, where, on whom thou will. Explore, plot, practice underhanded schemes.

“All that thou do in this shall be as if the Senate or the laws had given it privilege, and thou thence styled and given the title of the Savior both of Caesar and of Rome.

“We will not take thy answer except in act — whereto, as thou proceed, we hope to hear by trusted messengers sent from thee to us.

“If it be inquired why we called you, say that you have been given the responsibility to see that our chariots and our horses are ready.

“Be always our loved and — shortly — honored Macro.”

Tiberius exited.

Alone, Macro said to himself:

“I will not ask why Caesar bids me to do this, but I will take joy in the fact that he bids me to do this. It is the bliss of courts to be employed, no matter how.

“A prince’s power makes all his actions virtue. We, whom he works by, are dumb instruments, to do, but not inquire about why we do something; Tiberius’ great purposes are to be served, not searched into and questioned.

“Yet, as that bow is most in hand and used whose owner best knows how to effect, obtain, and accomplish his aims, so let that statesman hope to be of most use and most price, that statesman who can hit his prince’s target and scope.

“Nor must he look at what or whom to strike but let loose and shoot our metaphorical arrows at everyone; each mark and target must be alike.

“If the mark were to plot against the fame, the life of one with whom I am like a twin; remove a wife from my warm side, a wife as loved as is the air; do away with each parent; draw my heir in the compass of my plots, though I have only one heir; work all my kin to swift perdition; leave no trap unset, for friendship or for innocence; nay, make the gods all guilty, I would undertake this, which is being imposed on me, both with gain and ease.

“The way to rise is to obey and please.

“He who will thrive in state must neglect the trodden paths that truth and right respect, and trod and try new, wilder ways.”

Macro then said something that sounds much like Nietzsche’s concept of master morality versus slave morality. In doing so, Macro used “in state” to mean “in high government.”

“Virtue, there — in state — is not that narrow thing that she is elsewhere.”

In other words: Virtue has a different meaning in state — in high government — than it has elsewhere.

Macro continued:

“Men’s fortune there — in state — is virtue; reason there — in state — is their will.”

In other words: In high government, virtue is whatever will bring oneself good fortune. And whatever one wills — whatever one desires — is their rational reason for acting.

Macro continued:

“Their license there — in state — is their law; and their observance [deferential service to a superior], there — in state — is their skill [ability to accomplish something].”

In other words: In high government, one’s law is their license: One does whatever one wants. And one’s ability to accomplish something rests in their deferential service to a superior.

Macro continued:

“Occasion there — in state — is their foil; conscience there — in state — is their stain.”

In other words: In high government, opportunity and opportunism are one’s attractive adornment. And one’s conscience is their disgrace. (Of course, in high government, conscience is to be avoided.)

Macro continued:

“Profit there — in state — is their luster; and whatever else there is, is there — in state — their vain.”

In other words: In high government, profit gives oneself luster. And anything other than profit has no value.

In summary: The man who wants to rise in high government must have the morality of a master: What is right is what will benefit himself. This is a reversal of conventional morality — what Nietzsche would call slave morality.

Macro continued:

“If then it is the lust and pleasure of Caesar’s power to have raised Sejanus up, and in an hour to overturn him, tumbling him down from the height of all, we are Caesar’s ready instrument; and Sejanus’ fall may be our rise.

“It is no uncouth, aka unfamiliar, thing

“To see fresh buildings from old ruins spring.”

Macro exited.

At this point in Ben Jonson’s play, a Chorus of Musicians performed.

## ACT 4 (*Sejanus' Fall*)

### — 4.1 —

Gallus and Agrippina talked together in Agrippina's house.

Gallus was the husband of Vipsania, who had been Tiberius' first wife.

Agrippina was upset because Tiberius and Sejanus had attacked friends of hers.

"You must have patience, royal Agrippina," Gallus said.

Agrippina replied:

"I must have vengeance first — and that would be nectar to my famished spirits."

Nectar is the drink of the gods.

Agrippina continued:

"O my Fortune, let what thou prepares against me be sudden! Strike all my powers of understanding blind and let me be ignorant of my destiny to come!

"Let me not fear, I who cannot hope."

Gallus said, "Dear princess, these tyrannies you place on yourself are worse than Caesar's."

Agrippina said:

"Is this the happiness of being born great?

"Always to be aimed at by my enemies? Always to be suspected? To live the subject of all jealousies? To be at least the color — the pretext — made, if not the ground — the cause and reason — to every painted — to every made-up — danger?"

“Who would not choose at once to fall, rather than thus to hang forever?”

Gallus began, “You might be safe, if you would —”

Agrippina interrupted:

“— if I would what, my Gallus?

“Be lewd Sejanus’ strumpet? Or the bawd to Caesar’s lusts now that he has gone to practice lust?”

One well-believed reason for Tiberius’ leaving Rome was to find a place where he could indulge his lusts.

Agrippina continued:

“Not even doing these things would make me safe, here where nothing is safe.

“You yourself, while thus you stand but by me, are not safe.

“Was Silius safe? Or the good Sosia safe? Or was my niece, dear Claudia Pulchra, safe? Or innocent Furnius?

“They who very recently have, by being made guilty, added reputation to Afer’s eloquence?”

Silius, Sosia, Claudia Pulchra, and Furnius were all found guilty, and their being found guilty advanced the reputation of Afer the orator, who spoke against them.

Claudia Pulchra died in exile in 26 C.E.

Furnius was put to death in in 26 C.E. after being found guilty of committing adultery with Claudia Pulchra.

Agrippina continued:

“O foolish friends, could not such fresh examples warn your loves, but you must buy my favors with that loss to



yourselves — and when you might perceive that Caesar’s cause of raging must forsake him before his will?”

In other words: Tiberius will cease his raging only when the objects of his rage — his perceived enemies — have been found guilty and disposed of.

Agrippina continued:

“Go away, good Gallus, leave me.

“Here it is dangerous to be seen; to speak is treason; to pay me the least duty is called faction.

“You are unhappy in me, and I am unhappy in everything.

“Where are my sons, Nero and Drusus Junior? We are those who are shot at. Let us fall alone, away from others, and not, in our ruins, sepulcher our friends.

“Or shall we do some action, like the offence they charge us with, to mock their efforts that would make us seem to be guilty by actually becoming guilty? Shall we frustrate practice by anticipating it?

“The danger’s equal, whether we are innocent or guilty, for whatever they can contrive, they will make good. No innocence is safe when power contests and challenges that innocence. Nor can they trespass more greatly, whose very being was all crime before.”

Nero, Drusus Junior, and Caligula entered the scene.

“Have you heard that Sejanus has come back from Caesar?” Nero asked.

“No. How has he come back? Disgraced?” Gallus asked.

“He is now more graced by Tiberius than ever,” Drusus Junior said.

“By what mischance?” Gallus asked

“By a chance occurrence that seemed likely enough at one time to be bad,” Caligula said.

“But turned too good, to both,” Drusus Junior said.

“What chance occurrence was it?” Gallus asked.

Nero said:

“While Tiberius was sitting at his meal in a farmhouse they call Spelunca, sited by the seaside, among the Fundane Hills, within a natural cave, part of the grotto about the entry fell and overwhelmed some of the waiters; others ran away.

“Only Sejanus, with his knees, hands, face, overhanging Caesar, did oppose himself to the remaining ruins, and was found in that so laboring posture by the soldiers who came to help him.

“With which adventure he has so fixed himself in Caesar’s trust that thunder cannot move him, and he has come, with all the height of Caesar’s praise, to Rome.”

Part of a cave ceiling had fallen, and Sejanus had protected Tiberius by standing over him.

Agrippina said:

“And he has come with the power to turn all those ruins on us and bury whole posterities beneath them.

“Nero, and Drusus Junior, and Caligula, your places are the next in line to succeed Tiberius, and therefore you are most resented by them.”

“Them” were Tiberius and Sejanus.

Agrippina continued:

“Think on your birth and blood, awake your spirits, encounter their violence; it is princely when a tyrant does oppose you, and it is a fortune sent to exercise your virtue, as the wind does try and test strong trees, which by vexation grow more sound and firm.”

Trees that are buffeted by wind are forced to grow strong roots to survive.

Agrippina continued:

“After your father’s fall, and your uncle’s fate — the deaths of Germanicus and Drusus Senior — what can you hope for but all the change of stroke and variety of blows and attacks that force or sleight can give?”

“So then stand upright; and although you do not act, yet suffer nobly.

“Be worthy of my womb, and take strong cheer.

“What we do know will come, we should not fear.”

They exited.

#### — 4.2 —

Macro, alone, considered his situation.

Tiberius had made it clear to him that he wanted Sejanus watched and gotten rid of, but now Macro was hearing news that Sejanus was again favored by Tiberius. What should Macro do? What would keep him safe? Was Sejanus really reconciled to Tiberius?

Alone, Macro said to himself:

“Has Sejanus returned so soon? And he is renewed in trust and grace!

“Is Caesar then so weak? Or has the place but wrought this alteration with the air, and Caesar, on the next part of his journey, will all repair and make things as they were before?”

“Macro, thou art engaged, committed, and involved; and what before was public, now must be thy private, more than before.

“The weal of Caesar fitness did imply, but thine own fate confers necessity on thy employment; and the thoughts borne nearest unto ourselves move swiftest still, and dearest.

“If Sejanus recovers Tiberius’ favor, thou art lost: Yea, all the weight of preparation for Sejanus’ fall will turn on thee and crush thee.

“Therefore, strike before Sejanus settles, to prevent the like strike against thyself.

“He who knows his advantage is he who presses it home and gives the foremost blow.”

He exited.

### — 4.3 —

Latiaris, Rufus, and Opsius talked together.

They were Senators who supported Sejanus, and they were enemies to Sabinus, although Sabinus trusted Latiaris.

Latiaris said:

“It is a service great Sejanus will see well requited and will accept nobly.

“Here place yourselves, at a height between the roof and the ceiling, and when I bring him — Sabinus — to utter words of danger that can be used against him, reveal yourselves and take him.”

In his *Annals* IV.69, translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, Tacitus wrote, “Three senators thrust themselves into the space between the roof and ceiling, a hiding-place as shameful as the treachery was execrable.”

In real life, this would be an attic. In theatrical practice, this would be the upper stage, which is between the roof and the upper-stage floor that forms a ceiling for part of the lower stage.

“Has he come?” Rufus asked.

“I’ll now go fetch him,” Latiaris said.

He exited.

“With good speed,” Opsius said. “I long to merit from the state in such an action.”

“I hope it will obtain the Consulship for one of us,” Rufus said.

“We cannot think of less as a reward to bring in one as dangerous as Sabinus,” Opsius said.

Rufus said:

“He was a follower of Germanicus, and he still pays dutiful attention and is a client to Germanicus’ wife — the widow Agrippina — and children, though they have declined in favor.

“He is a daily visitant, keeps them company in private and in public, and is noted to be the only client of the house.

“Pray Jove that Sabinus will be free and frank of speech to Latiaris!”

“He’s allied to him and trusts him well,” Opsius said.

“And he’ll return his trust?” Rufus asked.

Opsius answered, “To do an office so welcome to the state, I know no man but would strain nearer bands than kindred —”

According to Opsius, Latiaris and Sabinus were kindred, but that would not stop Latiaris from betraying Sabinus in order to do Tiberius and Sejanus a favor.

“Listen, I hear them coming,” Rufus said.

“Let’s shift to our hiding holes with silence,” Opsius said.

They hid.

Latiaris and Sabinus entered the scene.

Latiaris said:

“It is a noble constancy you show to this afflicted house.

“Unlike the others — the friends of season, aka fair weather friends — you do not follow Fortune. And unlike the others, you do not in the winter of their fate forsake the place whose glories warmed you.

“You are just, and worthy of such a princely patron’s love as was the world’s renowned Germanicus.

“When I remember his ample merit and see his wife and children made objects of so much envy, jealousy, and hate, it makes me ready to accuse the gods of negligence, as men of tyranny.”

Sabinus said, “Germanicus’ wife and sons must be patient; so must we.”

Latiaris said:

“O Jove! What will become of us, or of the times, when to be high, or noble, are made crimes?”

“When having land and treasure are most dangerous faults?”

Having land and treasure can be dangerous; evil men may accuse you of treason in hopes of getting that land and treasure even if it causes the real owner’s death.

Sabinus replied:

“When our table, even our bed, assaults our peace and safety?”

During evil times, guests at the table, and spouses in bed, can be spies and informers. Some of Agrippina’s guests at the table were spies and informers. Her son Nero’s wife told her mother about him, and Nero’s wife’s mother told Sejanus.

Nero’s wife’s mother was Livia, who had been seduced by Sejanus.

Sabinus continued:

“When our writings are, by any ill-willed agents who dare apply them to the guilty, made to speak what Tiberius and Sejanus will have, to fit their tyrannous revenge and vengeance?”

“When ignorance is scarcely innocence, and knowledge is made a capital offence?”

“When not so much but the bare empty shade of liberty is taken away from us by force?”

“And when we are made the prey to greedy vultures and vile spies who first transfix us with their murdering eyes?”

In fact, Latiaris, Opsius, and Rufus were right now transfixing Sabinus with their murdering eyes.

Latiaris said:

“I think the genius of the Roman race should not be so extinct but that bright flame of liberty might be revived again, which no good man except with his life should lose, and we should not sit like spent and patient fools, still puffing in the dark at one poor ember, held on by hope, until the last spark is out.”

A person should lose his liberty only at the same time he loses his life.

Latiaris said:

“The cause is public, and the honor, the reputation, the immortality of every soul who is not a bastard or a slave in Rome is therein concerned.

“Whereto, if men would change the wearied arm, and, for the weighty shield so long sustained, employ the ready sword, we might have some assurance of our vows, desires, and prayers.

“This ass’ fortitude — Sejanus’ persistence — does tire us all.

“Active valor must redeem our loss, for nothing else will. The rock and our hard steel — our swords — should meet, to enforce those glorious fires again whose splendor cheered the world, and heat gave life no less than does the sun’s.”

The image was flint hitting steel and creating sparks to light tinder and start a fire.

Sabinus said:

“It would be better to stay in lasting darkness, and despair of day.

“No ill should force the subject to undertake revolution against the sovereign, any more than hell should make the gods do wrong.



“A good man should and must sit down with loss rather than rise unjustly in rebellion — although when the Romans first did yield themselves to one man’s power, they did not mean their lives, their fortunes, and their liberties should be his absolute spoil, as if purchased by the sword.”

Latiaris said:

“Why, we are worse, if to be slaves and bondsmen to Caesar’s slave — the proud Sejanus — is to be worse!

“He who is all, does all — Sejanus gives Caesar leave to hide his ulcerous and covered-with-ointment face, with his bald crown, at Rhodes, while he here stalks upon the heads of Romans and their princes, free to absolutely rule an empire.”

Oops! Ben Jonson made a historical error here. Tiberius was at Rhodes years before this time; he was at Rhodes during part of the reign of his adoptive father: Caesar Augustus. Tiberius was not at Rhodes at the time of this play.

Sabinus said, “Now you touch a point, indeed, wherein he shows his art as well as his power.”

“And villainy in both,” Latiaris said. “Do you observe where Livia lodges? How Drusus Senior came to be dead? What men have been cut off?”

Sabinus said:

“Yes, those are things distant in time.

“I nearer looked into Sejanus’ later practice, where he stands declared a master in his profession.

“First, before Tiberius went, Sejanus wrought his fear and made him think that Agrippina sought his death.

“Then he put those fears in her; he sent her often word, under the show of friendship, to beware of Caesar, for Caesar had laid plots to poison her.

“Sejanus drove them — Tiberius and Agrippina — to frowns, to mutual suspicions, which now in visible hatred have burst out.”

Because of Sejanus’ machinations, Tiberius and Agrippina each feared that the other was trying to poison him or her.

Sabinus continued:

“Since then, Sejanus has had his hired agents work on Nero, and heave him up and exalt him and feed his pride and his ambition.

“They tell him that Caesar’s old.

“They tell him that all the people, yea, all the army have their eyes on him — Nero.

“They tell him that both the people and the army long to have him undertake something of worth, to give the world a hope.

“Through his hired agents, Sejanus bids Nero to court the grace of both the people and the army.

“The easy youth perhaps gives ear, and immediately Sejanus writes this comment about Nero to Caesar:

“‘See yonder dangerous boy. Note but the practice of the mother, there. She’s linking him, for purposes soon to be revealed, with men of the sword.’

“Here’s Caesar put in fright against son and mother — against Nero and Agrippina.

“Yet Sejanus does not stop at this.

“The second brother, Drusus Junior, has a fierce nature and is fitter for Sejanus’ snare because Drusus Junior is ambitious and full of malicious envy.

“Sejanus clasps and hugs him, poisons him with praise, tells him what hearts Drusus Junior wears — that is, who is devoted and loyal to him — how bright he stands in popular expectation, that Rome suffers with him in the wrong his mother does him by preferring and promoting Nero.

“Thus Sejanus sets Nero and Drusus Junior asunder, each against the other, devises the course of action that enables him to condemn the two brothers, and he keeps the reputation of being a friend to all, while driving all on to ruin.”

Latiaris asked, “Caesar sleeps, and nods at this?”

Sabinus said, “I wish that he might always sleep, bogged in his filthy lusts!”

Opsius and Rufus revealed themselves.

“Treason to Caesar!” Opsius shouted.

“Lay hands upon the traitor, Latiaris, or take the name of traitor thyself,” Rufus said.

“I am for Caesar,” Latiaris said. “I am on Caesar’s side, not on the side of traitors.”

They apprehended Sabinus.

“Am I then caught?” Sabinus said.

“What do you think, sir?” Rufus said. “You are.”

Sabinus said:

“Spies of this head!”

The word “head” can mean 1) category, or 2) white-haired.

Sabinus continued:

“So white! So full of years! Well, my most reverend monsters, you may live to see yourselves thus snared.”

“Reverend” can mean 1) venerable, or 2) old.

“Away with him!” Opsius said.

“Hale him away,” Latiaris said.

“To be a spy for traitors is honorable vigilance,” Rufus said.

His words were ambiguous. They could mean that 1) he was spying on behalf of a traitor (Sejanus), or that 2) he was spying out traitors on behalf of a legitimate ruler.

Sabinus said:

“You do well, my most officious instruments of state, men of all uses. Drag me away from here.

“The year is well begun, and I fall fit to be an offering to Sejanus. Go.”

Sabinus was referring to himself as a New Year’s sacrifice to Sejanus. Normally, no executions were held on the Kalends — the first day — of January.

“Cover him with his garments,” Opsius said. “Hide his face.”

“There is no need for that,” Sabinus said. “Forbear your rude assault. The fault’s not shameful that villainy makes a fault.”

They exited.

— 4.4 —

Macro and Caligula talked together.

Macro said:

“Sir, just observe how thick your dangers meet in his — Sejanus’ — clear and obvious schemes!

“Your mother and your brothers are now cited to the Senate!

“Their friend Gallus, feasted today by Caesar, has since been committed to prison!

“We met Sabinus here, being hurried to fetters!

“The Senators are all struck with fear and silence, except those whose political hopes depend not on good means but force their private prey from public spoil!

“And you must know that if you stay here, your property and position are sure to be the subject of his hate, as now they are the object.”

Now Caligula’s property and position are targeted by Sejanus; soon they will belong to Sejanus.

“What would you advise me to do?” Caligula asked.

Macro replied:

“I advise you to go to Capri immediately; and there give up yourself, entirely, to your great-uncle Tiberius.

“Tell Caesar, since your mother is accused, rather than to fly for succors to Augustus’ statue, and to the army, with your brethren, you have instead chosen to place your trust in him than to live suspected, or to live in fear each hour that you will be thrust out by bold Sejanus’ plots — which you shall confidently state to be most full of peril to the state and Caesar, as the plots are being laid to achieve Sejanus’ particular, private ends.

“And you will persuade Tiberius that these plots are not to be allowed to run with common safety.”

Emperors were always surrounded by plots as people tried to advance themselves at the expense of others. This plot, however, was different: Sejanus was trying to advance himself at the expense of Tiberius.

Sejanus continued:

“All of this, in support of you, I’ll make plain,

“So both shall love and trust with Caesar gain.”

Caligula said, “Let’s go away, then! Let’s prepare ourselves for our journey.”

They exited.

— 4.5 —

Alone, Arruntius, a Senator of good character, prayed:

“Still do thou suffer and tolerate this, heaven? Will no flame, no heat of sin make thy just wrath boil in thy distempered bosom, and overflow the pitchy blazes — smoky fires — of impiety kindled beneath thy throne?

“Can thou still sleep, patient, while vice does make an antic — grotesquely grinning face — at thy dread power, and blow dust and smoke into thy nostrils? Jove, will nothing wake thee?

“Must vile Sejanus pull thee by the beard before thou will open thy black-lidded eye, and kill him with a look?”

Pulling someone’s beard was a major insult.

Arruntius continued:

“Well, snore on, dreaming gods, and let this last of that proud giant race heave mountain upon mountain against your state.”

Two twin-brother giants — Ephialtes and Otus — attempted to put one mountain on top of another mountain in order to reach the Olympian gods and make war on them. Ephialtes and Otus were Titans: pre-Olympian gods. According to Arruntius, Sejanus is the last of this race of rebelling giants.

Seeing Lepidus, another Senator of integrity, coming toward him, Arruntius said:

“Be good to me, Lady Fortune, and you powers whom I, complaining about you, have profaned.

“I see something that is equal to a prodigy: a great, a noble, and an honest Roman who has lived to be an old man!”

Lepidus walked over to Arruntius.

Arruntius said:

“O Marcus Lepidus, when is our turn to bleed?

“Thyself and I, without our boast — even if we were not the ones to say this — are almost all the few left to be honest in these impious times.”

Lepidus replied, “What we are left to be, we will be, Lucius, although tyranny did stare as wide as death to frighten us from it.”

“Tyranny has in fact stared as wide as death on Sabinus!”  
Lucius Arruntius said.

Lepidus was returning from the Gemonian stairs — a staircase — upon the Aventine hill, where the bodies of some executed people were displayed for a few days (and subjected to desecration) before being thrown into the Tiber River or displayed on the bank of the river. The corpse was dragged with a hook and moved from place to place. Lepidus had witnessed the corpse of Sabinus being treated in this way.

Lepidus said about Sabinus, “I saw him now drawn from the Gemonian stairs, and, what increased the direness of the crime, his faithful dog, upbraiding all us Romans, never forsook the corpse, but, seeing it thrown into the stream, leaped in, and drowned with it.”

Arruntius said:

“Oh, an act to be envied him by us men!

“We are the next the hook lays hold on, Marcus Lepidus.

“What are thy arts — good patriot, teach them to me — that have preserved thy hairs to this white dye, and kept so reverend and so dear a head safe on its comely shoulders?”

Lepidus replied:

“Arts, Arruntius?

“None but the plain and passive fortitude to suffer and be silent; never stretch these arms against the torrent; live at home, with my own thoughts and innocence about me, not tempting the wolf’s jaws: These are my arts.”

Lepidus’ arts were effective: He lived to be old.

Arruntius said:

“I would begin to study those arts, if I thought they would secure me.

“May I pray to Jove in secret, and be safe? Aye, or aloud? With open wishes? So long as I do not mention Tiberius, or Sejanus?

“Yes, I must mention Tiberius and Sejanus, if I speak out. It is hard, that.

“May I think, and not be tortured by having my limbs pulled out of joint on the rack? What danger is it to dream? Talk in one’s sleep? Or cough? Who knows the law?

“May I shake my head, without a comment being made about it?

“May I say that it rains, or that the fair weather continues, and not be thrown upon the Gemonian stairs?



“These now are things on which men’s fortune, yea, their fate depends.

“Nothing has privilege against the violent ear that twists the meanings of words. No place, no day, no hour, we see, is free — not even our religious and most sacred times — from one kind of cruelty or another.”

New Year’s Day was a sacred day, but Sabinus was put to death on that day.

Arruntius continued:

“All matter, nay, any occasion and any pretext will serve to please evil men. Madmen’s rage, the idle comments of drunkards, women’s meaningless talk, jesters’ simplicity — all, all is good that can be seized on.

“Nor is now the end of any person, or for any crime, in doubt; for it is always one and the same: Death, with some little difference of place, or time.”

Seeing some people coming toward him, he said, “What’s this? Prince Nero? Guarded?”

Laco, the commander of the Night Watch, arrived with Nero, who was guarded by Lictors.

Laco said, “On, Lictors, keep on your way.”

He then said to Arruntius and Lepidus:

“My lords, don’t speak to him.

“On pain of Caesar’s wrath, no man attempt speech with the prisoner.”

Nero said to Lepidus and Arruntius:

“Noble friends, be safe. To lose yourselves for words would be as vain hazard to you as it would be small comfort to me.

“Fare you well.

“I wish that all Rome’s sufferings in my fate did dwell!”

“Lictors, away!” Laco said.

“Where does Nero go, Laco?” Lepidus asked.

“Sir, he’s banished into Pontia, by the Senate,” Laco answered.

Arruntius said, “Do I see, and hear, and feel? May I trust my senses? Or does my fantasy — imagination — form it?”

Lepidus asked Laco, “Where’s Nero’s brother?”

“Drusus Junior is prisoner in the palace,” Laco answered.

Nero died in 31 C.E. while in exile on the island of Ponza. Drusus Junior died in prison in 33 C.E. Both Nero and Drusus Junior were starved to death.

Arruntius said:

“Huh. I smell it now; it is rank.

“Where’s Agrippina?”

“The princess is confined, at Pandataria, one of the Pontine islands in the Tyrrhenian Sea,” Laco said.

Arruntius said:

“Bolts, Vulcan — thunderbolts for Jove! Phoebus, thy bow. Stern Mars, thy sword, and you blue-eyed maiden, thy spear. Thy club, Alcides.”

He was swearing.

Vulcan, the blacksmith god, made thunderbolts for Jupiter.

The blue-eyed maiden is Pallas Athena, who is a virgin goddess, and Alcides is another name for Hercules. Alcides

means “grandson of Alcaeus.” Alcaeus’ father was Perseus, so Hercules’ great-grandfather is Perseus.

Arruntius continued:

“All the armory of heaven is too little!”

Too little to oppose Sejanus?

Aware that what he said could be used against him, he said:

“To guard the gods, I meant.”

He then said:

“Fine, rare dispatch! This same was swiftly borne!  
Confined? Imprisoned? Banished? Most tripartite!”

In February 1405, Owain Glyndower, Edmund Mortimer, and Henry Percy, 1st Earl of Northumberland signed the Tripartite Indenture, which divided Britain among them if they succeeded in their rebellion against King Henry IV of England.

Arruntius then asked Laco, “What is the reason for Nero’s arrest, sir?”

“Treason,” Laco answered.

“Oh?” Arruntius said. “The complement of all accusings? That will hit the target, when all else fails.”

Lepidus said:

“This turn is strange!

“Just yesterday, the people would not allow even a far less serious crime than treason to be alleged against Nero and Agrippina, but instead they cried out that Caesar’s letters accusing Nero and Agrippina were false and forged; that all these plots were malice; and that the ruin of the prince’s

house — Tiberius' family — was practiced against his knowledge.

“Where are their voices now that they behold his heirs locked up, disgraced, led into exile?”

Arruntius said:

“Their voices are hushed. Drowned in their bellies.

“Wild Sejanus' breath has, like a whirlwind, scattered that poor dust — the people — with this rude blast.”

The belly, which feels hunger, is more insistent in its demands than the head is.

Dust is that to which we return after we die.

Arruntius turned to Laco and the others and said:

“We'll talk no treason, sir, if that is what you wait for. Fare you well. We have no need of horse-leeches.”

Horse-leeches are literally very large leeches; metaphorically, they are very greedy people.

Arruntius continued:

“Good spy, now that you are spied, begone.”

Laco, Nero, and the Lictors exited.

“I fear you wrong him,” Lepidus said. “He has the reputation of being an honest Roman.”

Arruntius answered:

“And entrusted to this work?”

“Lepidus, I'd sooner trust Greek Sinon than a man our state employs.”

To end the Trojan War, Ulysses came up with the idea of the

Trojan Horse. The Trojan War had been fought for 10 years, and the forces of Agamemnon and the other Greeks had not been able to conquer Troy by might, and so Ulysses had the idea of using trickery to conquer Troy. The Greeks built a huge wooden horse and left it outside Troy, and then they seemed to sail away in their ships and return home. However, the Trojan Horse was hollow and filled with Greek soldiers, including Ulysses and Diomedes, and the ships sailed behind an island so that the Trojans could not see them. A lying Greek named Sinon stayed behind and pretended that he had escaped from Ulysses, who had wanted to kill him. Sinon told the Trojans that if the Trojans were to take the Trojan Horse inside the walls of Troy, then Troy would never fall. Amid great rejoicing, the Trojans took the Trojan Horse inside the walls of Troy. That night, the Greek warriors came out of the Trojan Horse, went to the gates of Troy, killed the Trojan guards, and opened the gates of Troy. Agamemnon and his troops were outside the gates, after returning from hiding behind the island. The Greeks then conquered Troy, killing many, many Trojans, including Trojan women and children.

Arruntius continued:

“He’s gone; and since he is gone, I dare tell you — whom I dare better trust — that our night-eyed Tiberius does not see his minion’s drifts; or if he does, he’s not as arrant subtle — thoroughly cunning — as we fools take him to be, to breed a mongrel up in his own house with his own blood, and, if the good gods please, encourage him with his own flesh to take a leap at his own throat.”

Tiberius had the reputation of being able to see at night immediately after waking up, although his night vision soon faded.

Dogs were encouraged to hunt by being given a piece of the flesh of the animals they hunted. This was called being

“fleshed.” Sejanus was being “fleshed” with members of Tiberius’ own family. Arruntius believed that soon Sejanus could hunt Tiberius.

Arruntius continued:

“I do not beg it, heaven; but if the Fates grant it to these eyes, they must not close.”

He would not close his eyes if Sejanus metaphorically tore out Tiberius’ throat.

“They must not see it, Lucius Arruntius,” Lepidus said.

“Who should prevent them?” Arruntius asked.

“Zeal and duty, with the thought that Tiberius is our prince,” Lepidus said.

Arruntius said:

“He is our monster: forfeited to vice so far that no racked — forced out of him — virtue can redeem him.

“His loathed person is fouler than all crimes. He is an emperor only in his lusts; he has retired from all regard of his own reputation, or Rome’s, to an obscure island, Capri, where he lives, acting his tragedies while wearing a comic face like a mask appropriate to comedy, amid his rout of Chaldees — that is, astrologers.”

Tiberius is thought to have had many sores on his face in his old age.

Arruntius continued:

“Tiberius is spending hours, days, weeks, and months in the unnatural abuse of grave and serious astrology, to the bane — the woe — of men, casting the scope of men’s nativities, and, having found anything worthy in their fortune, he kills

them, or throws them precipitately in the sea, and boasts that he can mock fate!

“Nay, don’t wonder; these are far from the limits of his evil, they are scarcely steps toward the end limit.

“Tiberius has his slaughterhouse at Capri, where he studies murder as an art; and they are dearest in his grace who can devise the deepest tortures.

“Thither, too, he has his boys and beautiful girls taken up out of our noblest houses, the best formed, best nurtured, and most modest. What is good in them serves to provoke his bad. Some are allured, some are threatened; others, detained by their relatives and held back in an attempt to protect them, are kidnapped and taken away by force like captives, and, in sight of their most grieved parents, dealt away to his spintries, sellaries, and slaves, masters of strange and newly invented lusts, for which wise nature has not left a name.”

Spintries and sellaries are male prostitutes.

Slaves are servants.

Arruntius continued:

“In addition to this — what most strikes and pierces us and bleeding Rome to the heart — he has, with all his craft, become the ward to his own vassal, a stale catamite, whom he upon our low and suffering necks, has raised from excrement to stand beside the gods, and be sacrificed to in Rome as if he were a god, which Jove beholds, and yet will sooner rive a senseless oak with thunder than his trunk — his body.”

According to Arruntius, Tiberius had metaphorically become the ward of Sejanus, who had been a catamite: a boy used for homosexual sex. Arruntius may also be saying that Tiberius is now Sejanus’ catamite.

One can wonder whether Trump is Putin's catamite.

Although Jupiter has witnessed this and has witnessed Sejanus' rise to power and misuse of that power, Jupiter still refrains from striking Sejanus with a lightning bolt.

Laco, Pomponius, and Minutius entered the scene.

Pomponius and Minutius were followers of Sejanus.

Laco, Pomponius, and Minutius talked among themselves, while Arruntius and Lepidus observed them from some distance away and commented privately on them.

"These letters make men doubtful what to expect, whether Tiberius' coming back to Rome, or his death," Laco said.

Tiberius' letters sometimes said that he was well and would soon return to Rome, and they sometimes said that he was deathly ill and unable to return to Rome.

Pomponius said, "True, both — and whichever comes soonest, thank the gods for it."

Arruntius said quietly to Lepidus, "Listen, their talk is about Caesar. I would hear all voices."

Minutius said, "One day, he's well, and will return to Rome. The next day, he is sick, and does not know when to hope for his return."

Laco said, "True, and today, one of Sejanus' friends was honored by special writ; and on the next morning another of Sejanus' friends was punished —"

"— by more special writ," Pomponius said.

Minutius said:

"One man receives Tiberius' praises of Sejanus. A second man receives a letter with only slight mention of Sejanus. A



third man receives a letter with no mention of Sejanus. A fourth man receives a letter with rebukes of Sejanus.

“And thus Tiberius leaves the Senate divided and suspended, all uncertain.”

Laco said:

“These forked — saying one thing and then saying the opposite thing — tricks, I don’t understand them.

“I wish that he would tell us whom he loves or hates, so that we might follow, without fear or doubt!”

Arruntius said quietly to Lepidus, “Good heliotrope! Is this your honest man? Let him be yours so still. To me, he is a knave and a scoundrel.”

Literally, a heliotrope is a plant that turns its flowers to face the sun. Figuratively, a heliotrope is a person who serves people who are waxing and deserts people who are waning.

Pomponius said:

“I cannot tell whom to follow.

“Sejanus still goes on, and mounts higher, we see. New statues of Sejanus are proposed, fresh pages of titles, large inscriptions read, his fortune is sworn by, he himself newly gone out as Caesar’s colleague in the fifth Consulship. More altars smoke to him than all the gods.

“What more would he wish for?”

Arruntius said to himself, “That the dear smoke of the altars would choke him. That is what I would wish more for Sejanus.”

“Peace, good Arruntius,” Lepidus said quietly.

“But there are letters come, they say, even now, which do forbid that last,” Laco said. “The letters forbid sacrifices to any human being.”

“Do you hear so?” Minutius asked.

“Yes,” Laco said.

“By Pollux, that’s the worst,” Pomponius said.

“By Hercules, that’s the best!” Arruntius said to himself.

“I did not like the sign, when Regulus, whom we all know is no friend to Sejanus, did, by Tiberius’ so precise command, succeed a fellow in the Consulship. It boded somewhat,” Minutius said.

Pomponius said, “Not a mote. Regulus’ partner, Fulcinus Trio, is Sejanus’ own follower, and loyal to him.”

Tiberius and Sejanus were *Consules ordinarii* who were appointed at the beginning of the year.

Regulus and Fulcinus Trio were *Consules suffecti* who held office during the second part of 31 C.E. They took office when, as became the custom during the reign of Caesar Augustus, the *Consules ordinarii* resigned their office partway during their Consulships so that others could share the honor of being Consul.

Regulus, who was not friendly to Sejanus, was appointed to office at the command of Tiberius.

Fulcinus Trio was a follower of Sejanus.

Seeing Terentius coming toward them, Pomponius said, “Here comes Terentius. He can give us more information.”

Terentius walked over to them.

Pomponius, Minutius, and Laco talked quietly with Terentius.

Lepidus and Arruntius, still standing apart, conversed together.

Lepidus said:

“I’ll never believe anything except that Caesar has some scent of bold Sejanus’ footing [dancing, established place]. These cross-points [crossing the feet in dancing, devious plots] of varying letters and opposing Consuls, mingling his honors and his punishments, feigning now ill, now well, raising Sejanus and then depressing him, as now of late in all reports we have it, cannot be empty of scheming.

“It is Tiberius’ art.

“Tiberius has found his favorite grown too great, and, with his greatness, strong, so that all the soldiers of the Praetorian Guard have been, with their leaders, made devoted and loyal to him, so that almost all the Senate are his creatures or are mainly dependent on him, either by reason of benefit, or hope, or fear.

“Tiberius has lost much of his own patronage by sharing his power with Sejanus.

“Tiberius, by the increase of his rank lusts and rages has quite disarmed himself of love or other public means to dare an open contestation.

“Therefore, Tiberius’ subtlety has chosen this doubling line — manipulating Sejanus this way and then that — to hold Sejanus always in check: not so much to frighten Sejanus as to wholly put him out and make him uncertain, and yet check his farther boldness.

“In the meantime, by his employments of Sejanus, Tiberius makes him odious to the staggering, fickle crowd, whose aid

in the end Tiberius hopes to use, as dependable, who, when they hold sway, bear down, and overturn all objects in their way.”

Tiberius was able to withdraw support from Sejanus by being fickle in his praise and dispraise of him. Since the Romans did not know whether Sejanus was in or out of favor with Tiberius, many Romans did not openly support or not support him but waited until they could find out whether or not Tiberius supported him. Tiberius also gave Sejanus tasks to perform that made him unpopular.

Arruntius said, “You may be a Lynceus, Lepidus, yet I can see no reason why a politic tyrant, who can so well disguise it, should not have taken a nearer way: pretended to be honest and loyal to Sejanus, and come home to cut Sejanus’ throat, by law.”

Lynceus was a sharp-sighted Argonaut of Jason and the Argonauts fame. He was reputed to be able to see objects that were underground.

Lepidus said, “Aye, but Tiberius’ fear would never be masked, although his vices were.”

The clients of Sejanus had been whispering among themselves. Now their voices became louder.

Lepidus and Arruntius listened to them.

“His Lordship then is still in grace?” Pomponius said.

“I assure you, he had never been in more, either of grace or of power,” Terentius said.

“The gods are wise and just,” Pomponius said.

Arruntius said to himself, “The fiends they are, to suffer thee to belie them!”

Arruntius was cynical, and he wondered why the gods had not punished such an evil person as Pomponius for saying that they were wise and just.

If the gods were wise and just, would Sejanus have so much power?

Terentius showed Pomponius, Minutius, and Laco some letters and said, "I have here his last and present letters, where Tiberius writes and calls him the 'partner of his cares' and 'his Sejanus' —"

Laco asked, "But is it true that it is prohibited to sacrifice to Sejanus?"

Terentius answered, "Some such thing Caesar makes scruple of, but he does not forbid it, no more than to himself; he says that he could wish that making sacrifices to human beings were desisted from by all."

"Is it no other?" Laco said. "Is that how it is?"

"No other, on my trust," Terentius said. "For your better assurance, here is that letter, too."

He showed them that letter from Tiberius.

Arruntius said quietly:

"How easily do wretched men believe what they would have! When men really want to believe something, they will believe it on little evidence."

He then asked Lepidus, "Does this look like a plot by Tiberius?"

Lepidus said quietly, "Noble Arruntius, wait."

Laco looked at the letter and said, "Tiberius names Sejanus here without adding Sejanus' titles."

As a mark of respect, people would mention other people's titles.

Lepidus said quietly to Arruntius, "Note that."

Arruntius replied quietly, "Yes, and if I take note of what Laco says, I will come off — turn out to be — a notable fool. I will, indeed."

"Tiberius addresses him as no other than Sejanus," Laco said. "No titles are mentioned at all."

"That's but haste in him who writes," Pomponius said. "Here Tiberius gives large amends."

He showed the others another letter from Tiberius.

"And with his own handwriting?" Minutius asked.

"Yes," Pomponius said.

"Indeed?" Laco said.

Terentius replied, "Believe it, gentlemen, Sejanus' breast has never received more full contentments than in this letter at this present time."

Pomponius asked, "Does Sejanus take well the escape of young Caligula with Macro?"

Caligula was on the island of Capri with Tiberius.

Terentius replied, "Indeed, at the first airing of that escape — when the escape first became known — it somewhat troubled him."

Lepidus said quietly to Arruntius, "Do you see this?"

Arruntius replied quietly, "This is nothing. Riddles. Until I see Sejanus struck down, no rumor about his downfall strikes — affects — me."

Some of us have said the same thing about Trump and Putin.

Arruntius and Lepidus exited.

“I don’t like it,” Pomponius said. “I wonder why Sejanus would not attempt something — a rebellion — against Tiberius during Sejanus’ Consulship, seeing the people begin to favor Caligula.”

Terentius said, “He now repents not rebelling then, but he’s employed Pagonianus to follow Caligula; and he holds that correspondence — that communication — there with all who are near and close around Caesar, in such a way that no thought — no scheme — can pass without his knowledge from there to become an act to confront and threaten him.”

“I welcome the news,” Pomponius said.

“But how did Macro come to be so trusted by and in favor with Caligula?” Laco asked.

Pomponius answered, “Oh, sir, Macro has a wife, and the young prince Caligula has an appetite. Macro can look up and spy flies in the roof when there are fleas in bed, and he has a learned nose to assure his sleeps.”

Macro can ignore things near him and keep an eye on things that are away from him. He can sleep soundly because he has a nose that scents what he needs to know to sleep soundly. Such skills ensure that he will ignore the affair of his wife with Caligula.

Pomponius continued, “Who, to be favored of the rising sun, would not lend a little of the waning moon? It is the safest ambition.”

The rising sun is Caligula, and Macro’s wife is the waning moon.

Pomponius then said, “Noble Terentius!”

Terentius said, “The night grows fast upon us. At your service.”

All present exited.

At this point in Ben Jonson’s play, a Chorus of Musicians performed.



## ACT 5 (*Sejanus' Fall*)

### — 5.1 —

Alone, Sejanus said to himself:

“Swell, swell, my joys, and don’t be afraid to declare yourselves as ample as your causes are.

“I did not live until now, this my first hour, wherein I see my power reach my thoughts. Just this one final thing, and I will seize my wishes.

“Great, and high, the world knows only two. That’s Rome, and I. My roof does not receive me — I have risen above it; it is air I tread — and, at each step, I feel my advanced — raised high — head knock out a star in heaven!”

Sejanus had risen above his house: his family. He was not a member of the highest social class, but he had grown to be the second most important person in the Roman world, and he believed that he soon would be the first most important person in that world.

Sejanus continued:

“Reared to this height, all my desires now seem modest, poor, and slight, which previously sounded impudent. It is place, not blood, that discerns and distinguishes the noble and the base.

“Isn’t there something more than to be Caesar?”

Using the royal plural, Sejanus continued:

“Must we rest there? It irks to have come so far, to be so near a standstill.

“Caligula, we wish that thou would stand steadfast and resolute, and many of you, in our way!

“Winds lose their strength when they fly empty, unmet by woods or buildings; great fires die when they lack matter to withstand them.

“So it is our grief, and it will be our loss, to know our power shall lack opponents, unless the gods, by mixing in the cause, would bless our fortune with our conquest of them.

“That would be worth Sejanus’ strife, if the Fates dared but bring it forth.”

Sejanus wanted the gods to oppose him because he would gain great glory by defeating them.

Terentius and a servant entered the scene.

“May great Sejanus be safe!” Terentius said.

“What is it now, Terentius?” Sejanus asked.

“Hasn’t my lord heard the wonder?” Terentius asked.

“No,” Sejanus said. “Tell me what it is.”

“The news is violent in the mouths of people I meet who run, in mobs, to Pompey’s Theater to view your statue, which, they say, sends forth a smoke as from a furnace, black and dreadful,” Terentius said.

“Some traitor has put fire in the statue,” Sejanus replied.

He then said to a servant, “You, go and see. And let the head of the statue be taken off, to see what is inside.”

The servant exited.

Sejanus said, “Some slave has practiced an imposture and deception to stir up and excite the people.”

Satrius, Natta, and the servant entered the scene. Satrius and Natta were clients of Sejanus.

“What is it now?” Sejanus asked.

He asked the servant, “Why do you return?”

Satrius said, “The head, my lord, already has been taken off. I saw it; and, at the opening, there leapt out a great and monstrous serpent!”

“Monstrous!” Sejanus said. “Why? Did it have a beard? And horns? No heart? A tongue as forked as flattery? Did it have the hue of such men as live in great men’s bosoms — who live under the protection of great men? Was the spirit of it Macro’s?”

Natta answered, “May it please the most divine Sejanus, in my days — and by his sacred Fortune I affirm it — I have not seen a more extended and reached-out, grown, foul, spotted, venomous, ugly —”

“Oh, the Fates!” Sejanus said. “What a wild muster’s here of attributes, to describe a worm, a snake!”

“But how should that come there, my lord!” Terentius said.

“What!” Sejanus said. “And you, too, Terentius? I think you mean to make it a prodigy — an ill omen — in your reporting.”

“Can the wise Sejanus think that heaven has meant it to mean less?” Terentius replied.

“Oh, superstition!” Sejanus said. “Why, then the falling of our couch, which broke this morning because it was burdened with the populous weight of our clients waiting to salute and greet us, or the running of the cat between our legs, as we set forth to go to the Capitol, were also prodigies.”

Terentius said:

“I think that they are ominous, and I wish that they had not happened!

“As, today, the fate of some of your servants, who, diverting from their way, not able to follow you because of the throng of people, slipped down the Gemonian stairs and broke their necks.

“Besides, in taking your last augury, no prosperous, auspicious bird appeared, but croaking ravens — birds of ill omen — flew unsteadily, and from the sacrifice flew to the prison, where they sat, all night, beating the air with sounds from their obstreperous and noisy beaks.

“I dare not counsel, but I could entreat great Sejanus to try to move the gods, once more, with sacrifice.”

Sejanus said:

“What excellent fools religion makes of men!

“Does Terentius believe that if these were dangers, as I shame to think them to be, that the gods could change the certain course of fate?

“Or, if they could, that they would — now, in a moment — for the sacrificial fat from an ox, or less, be bribed to invert those old decrees?

“If so, then think that the gods, like flies, are to be captivated with the steam of flesh or blood diffused about their altars; think that their power is as cheap as I esteem it small.

“Of all the throng of gods who fill the hall of Mount Olympus, and, without pity, lade the back of poor Atlas, who holds up the sky, I don’t know even one deity other than Fortune to whom I would throw up, in begging smoke, even one grain of incense, or whose ear I’d buy with thus much oil.

“Lady Fortune I indeed adore, and I keep her pleasing image in my house, an image previously belonging to a Roman King, but now called mine, as by the better style.”

Sejanus believed that he had a better style — title — than the old Roman Kings, and so he was a better owner of the statue of Lady Fortune.

Sejanus continued:

“I don’t care if, just for satisfying your scrupulous — distrustful and anxious — fantasies, I offer a sacrifice to Lady Fortune.

“Tell our priest to prepare for us honey, milk, and poppy, his masculine — strong — incense on the altar, and his night vestments. Say that our rites are pressing and are to be performed immediately.

“Once these rites are performed, you’ll see how vain, and how worthy of laughter, your fears are.”

They exited.

## — 5.2 —

Cotta and Pomponius met each other and talked together.

Pomponius was a follower of Sejanus, and Cotta was a man without scruples.

“Pomponius! Where are you going so speedily?” Cotta asked.

Pomponius replied, “I go to give my lord Sejanus notice —”

“Notice of what?” Cotta asked.

“Of Macro,” Pomponius answered.

“Has he come back to Rome?” Cotta asked.

“He entered just now the house of Regulus,” Pomponius answered.

“The Consul opposing Sejanus?” Cotta asked.

“Some half-hour ago,” Pomponius said.

“And by night, too!” Cotta said. “Wait, sir. I’ll bear you company.”

“Come along, then,” Pomponius said.

They exited.

— 5.3 —

Macro and Regulus talked together. A servant was present.

Macro said to Regulus, “It is Caesar’s will to have a fully attended Senate, and therefore your edict must lay a deep mulct — a heavy fine — on such as shall be absent.”

“So my edict does,” Regulus said.

He told the servant, “Bear it to my fellow Consul to subscribe and add his name to it.”

Macro said to the servant, “And tell him it must be proclaimed early; the place is Apollo’s temple.”

The servant exited.

“That’s remembered,” Regulus said.

“And the edict must say at what hour,” Macro said.

“Yes,” Regulus said.

Macro asked, “Did you forget to send someone for the Provost of the Watch — for Laco?”

“I have not,” Regulus said. “Here he comes.”

Laco entered the scene.

Macro said, “Gracinus Laco, you are a friend most welcome. By and by I’ll speak with you.”

He then said to Regulus, “You must procure for me this list of the Praetorian cohorts, with the names of the Centurions, and their Tribunes.”

Tiberius had secretly placed these soldiers under the command of Macro.

“Aye,” Regulus replied.

Macro said to Laco, “I bring you letters and a wish for your good prosperity from Caesar. “

“Sir, both are welcome,” Laco said.

Macro said to Regulus, “And listen, with your note, find for me those men who are the eminent men, and the men most of action.”

“That shall be done for you, too,” Regulus said.

Macro turned to Laco and said, “Most worthy Laco, Caesar salutes you.”

Regulus, the Consul, exited.

Turning back to where Regulus had been, Macro said, “Consul! Death and Furies! Gone now?”

He said to Laco, “The theme of my conversation will please you, sir.”

He called, “Ho! Regulus?”

He then said, “May the anger of the gods follow his diligent legs and overtake them in the likeness of the gout!”

Gout is a disease that causes acute pain, especially in the feet.

Regulus returned.

Macro said to him, “Oh, my good lord, we lacked your presence. I want you to send another man to Fulcinius Trio, who supports Sejanus, straightaway, to tell him you will come and speak with him — the content of what you will speak to him about we’ll devise — to keep him there and out of the way, while I, with Laco, survey the soldiers of the Watch.”

While Macro turned to Laco, Regulus exited again.

Macro asked Laco, “What are your strengths in soldiers, Gracinus?”

Gracinus Laco answered, “Seven cohorts.”

Cohorts are military units of a Roman legion. Cohorts today would be called battalions.

Turning back to where Regulus had been, Macro said:

“You see what Caesar writes, and — gone again?

“Regulus surely has a vein of swift-winged Mercury in his feet.”

He asked Laco, “Do you know what store of the Praetorian soldiers Sejanus holds about him for his bodyguard?”

Laco answered, “I don’t know the exact number — but I think three centuries.”

A century is a unit originally of 100 soldiers, but at this time the usual number was 80 soldiers.

“Three?” Macro said. “Good.”

“Three at most, not four,” Laco said.

“And who are those Centurions?” Macro asked.

“That the Consul Regulus can best inform you,” Laco said.



“When he’s away?” Macro said sarcastically. “A spite on his nimble industry!”

He then asked, “Gracinus, do you find in these letters what place you hold in the trust of royal Caesar?”

Gracinus Laco answered, “Aye, and I am —”

Macro interrupted, “Sir, the honors there proposed are but beginnings of his great favors.”

Laco began, “They are more —”

Macro interrupted, “I heard him when he did study what to add.”

Laco said, “— my life, and all I hold —”

Macro interrupted, “You were his own first choice, which does confirm as much as you can speak; and this plan of action will, if we succeed, make more.”

He then asked, “Your guards are seven cohorts, you say?”

“Yes,” Laco answered.

“Those we must hold still in readiness, and undischarged,” Macro said.

“I understand so much,” Laco said. “But how can it —”

Macro interrupted, “— be done without suspicion, you’ll object?”

Regulus returned and asked, “What’s that?”

Laco answered, “The keeping of the Night Watch in arms when morning comes.”

Macro said, “The Senate shall be met, and shall be set so early in the temple, that all notice of the Night Watch in arms will be avoided.”

Regulus said, “If we need to, we have the commission to possess the palace, free Prince Drusus, and make him our chief.”

Drusus Junior was imprisoned in the palace. If Sejanus were to summon armed men, then Drusus Junior would be freed and placed at the head of Tiberius’ armed men.

Macro said to himself, “That secret would have burnt his reverend mouth, had he not spit it out now.”

Regulus had said something that Macro wished he had not said.

Macro said to Regulus:

“By the gods, you carry things, too. You have responsibilities.

“Let me borrow a man or two, to bear these —”

Regulus exited.

Macro said to Laco, “That idea of freeing Drusus Caesar is projected as the last, and utmost — the last resort; it is not otherwise to be remembered.”

Regulus returned with some servants.

“Here are servants,” he said.

Giving letters to the servants, Macro said:

“Carry these to Arruntius, these to Lepidus, this letter bear to Cotta, this one to Latiaris.

“If they ask you about me, say that I have taken a fresh horse and departed.”

The servants exited.

Macro said to Regulus:

“You, my lord, go to your colleague the Consul Fulcinius Trio, and be sure to hold him there with a long narration of the new fresh favors meant to be given Sejanus, his great patron.

“I, with trusted Laco here, will go to the guards.

“So then, let us separate from each other.

“For night has many eyes,

“Whereof, although most do sleep, yet some are spies.”

— 5.4 —

Trumpeters, flautists, Heralds, a Priest, Attendants, Sejanus, Terentius, Satrius, Natta, etc., met together in Sejanus’ house.

The First Herald said loudly, “Everything profane be far from here! Fly, fly far off. Be absent a far distance. Far from here be all profane.”

Heralds preceded the Priest to keep away all profane things from him and the sacrifice. Participants in the ritual were also supposed to keep away all profane thoughts.

The trumpeters and flautists sounded while the Priest washed as part of the ritual.

The Priest said, “We have been faulty, but we repent us now, and we bring pure hands, pure vestments, and pure minds.”

As part of the ritual, the Priest repented his sins.

“Pure vessels,” the First Minister said.

“And pure offerings,” the Second Minister said.

“Pure garlands,” the Third Minister said.

The Priest said, “Bestow your garlands, and, with reverence, place the vervin on the altar.”

Vervin are branches of such trees as laurel, myrtle, olive, and cypress.

“Favor your tongues!” the First Herald said loudly. “Be silent!”

One reason for silence was to avoid saying any words of ill omen.

The Priest prayed to Lady Fortune: “Great mother Fortune, Queen of human state, rectress — female ruler — of action, arbitress of fate, to whom all sway, all power, all empire bows, be present, and be propitious to our vows!”

“Favor it with your tongues!” the First Herald said loudly. “Be silent!”

“Be present, and be propitious to our vows!” the First Minister said.

The trumpeters and the flautists sounded again.

The Priest took up some of the honey with his finger and tasted it, and then he ministered to all the rest. He did the same with the milk; in an earthen vessel, he dealt the milk around him.

This done, he sprinkled milk upon the altar, then imposed the honey, and kindled and inflamed his aromatic gums, and after swinging his censer about the altar to perfume it, he placed his censer thereon, into which they put several branches of poppy.

“Gums” are aromatic substances — incense — that are burned in the censer.

The music ceased, and the Priest said, “Accept our offering, and be pleased, great goddess.”

“See, see, the image stirs!” Terentius said.

“And it turns away!” Satrius said.

“Lady Fortune averts her face!” Natta said.

The statue of Lady Fortune had turned her face away from the sacrifice.

The Priest said:

“Avert, you gods, the bad omen.”

Lady Fortune continued to look away from the sacrifice.

The Priest continued:

“Still! Still! We have neglected some pious rite.”

Lady Fortune continued to look away from the sacrifice.

The Priest continued:

“Yet!

“Heaven, be appeased, and let all the tokens — the divine signs — be false, or void, that speak thy present wrath!”

Sejanus said:

“Be thou dumb, fearful Priest. Be silent, and gather up thyself, with these thy wares, which I, in spite of thy blind mistress, or thy juggling mystery and cheating, deceiving trade, religion, throw thus, scorned, on the earth.”

Sejanus swept the altar clean.

He addressed the statue:

“Nay, hold thy look averted, until I woo thee to turn again; and thou shall stand to all posterity the eternal object of mockery and laughter, with thy neck writhed to thy tail and turned backwards like a ridiculous cat.

He ordered:

“Clear away these fumes, these superstitious lights, and all these cozening, duping ceremonies — you, your pure and spiced — over-scrupulous and over-delicate — conscience!”

The Priest, trumpeters, flautists, Heralds, attendants, etc. picked up the sacrificial items and exited.

Sejanus, Terentius, Satrius, and Natta remained.

Sejanus said:

“I — the slave and mock of fools who scorn my worthy head — I have been titled and adored as a god, yea, and been sacrificed unto, myself, in Rome, no less than Jove — and I am brought to do rites to a peevish giglot — a peevish wanton woman?”

“Perhaps the thought and shame of that made Fortune turn her face, knowing herself the lesser deity, and only my servant.

“Bashful Queen, if that is so, Sejanus thanks thy modesty.”

Seeing some men coming he asked, “Who’s that?”

Pomponius and Minutius entered the scene.

Pomponius said to Minutius, “His fortune suffers until he hears my news. I’ve waited here too long.”

He then said to Sejanus, “Macro, my lord —”

Sejanus said, “Speak lower, and withdraw with me.”

Sejanus took Pomponius aside. The others conversed while Sejanus and Pomponius conferred privately.

“Are these things true?” Terentius asked.

“Thousands are gazing at it, in the streets,” Minutius answered.

Returning from his conference with Pomponius, Sejanus asked, “What’s that?”

Terentius said, “Minutius tells us here, my lord, that, a new head being set upon your statue, a rope has since been found wreathed about it; and, just now, a fiery meteor, in the form of a great ball, was seen to roll along the troubled air, where yet it hangs, its flight unfinished, the amazing wonder of the multitude!”

“No more,” Sejanus said. “That Macro’s come is more ominous than all these other things!”

“Has Macro come?” Terentius asked.

“I saw him,” Pomponius said.

“Where?” Terentius asked. “With whom?”

“With Regulus,” Pomponius said.

Sejanus said, “Terentius —”

“My lord?” Terentius said.

Sejanus ordered, “Send for the military Tribunes. We will immediately have more of the soldiers sent up for our bodyguard.”

Terentius exited.

Sejanus said, “Minutius, we want you to go for Cotta, Latiaris, Trio the Consul, and whatever other Senators you know are sure and are on our side.”

Minutius exited.

Sejanus ordered, “You, my good Natta, go for Laco, Provost of the Watch.”

Natta exited.

Sejanus said, “Now, Satrius, the time of proof comes on. Arm all our servants, and do it without tumult.”

Satrius exited.

Sejanus ordered, “You, Pomponius, hold some good conversation with the Consul Regulus. Attempt to influence him to be on our side, noble friend.”

Pomponius exited.

Alone, Sejanus said to himself:

“These things begin to look like dangers, now, that are worthy of my fates.

“Lady Fortune, I see thy worst. Let doubtful states of affairs and uncertain things hang upon thy will. Surest death shall render me a certain accounting still.

“Yet why is now my thought turned toward death, when I am a man whom the Fates have let go on so far in breath, unchecked and unproved?

“I am the man who helped to fell the lofty cedar of the world: Germanicus.

“I am the man who, at one stroke, cut down Drusus Senior, that upright elm; withered his vine — his wife, Livia; laid Silius and Sabinus, two strong oaks, flat on the earth; besides those other shrubs — insignificant people — Cordus and Sosia, Claudia Pulchra, Furnius and Gallus, which I have grubbed up and uprooted; and since have set my axe so strong and deep into the root of spreading Agrippina; lopped off and scattered her proud branches, Nero, Drusus Junior, and Caius Caligula, too, although replanted —”

Caligula was replanted on the island of Capri, where was the Emperor Tiberius.



Sejanus continued:

“If it is your will, Destinies — the three Fates — that, after all this, I faint now, before I touch my goal, you are just cruel; and I already have done things great enough.”

The three Fates determined the length of mortal lives.

Sejanus continued:

“All Rome has been my slave. The Senate sat and was an idle onlooker and witness of my power, when I have blushed and was ashamed more to command it than to suffer it.”

The Senate had approved whatever Sejanus wanted. Sejanus could have asked for more things for the Senate to approve, but he was ashamed to ask for more, having gotten so much already.

Sejanus continued:

“All the Senate fathers have sat ready and prepared to give me empire, temples, or their throats, when I would ask for them. And, what crowns the top, Rome, Senate, people, all the world have seen Jove as just my equal, Caesar as just my second.

“It is then your malice, Fates, who, except your own,

“Envy and fear to have any power long known.”

— 5.5 —

Terentius and some Tribunes stood together.

Terentius said to the Tribunes, “Stay here. I’ll tell His Lordship that you have come.”

“His Lordship” was Sejanus.

Minutius, Cotta, and Latiaris, all of whom were carrying letters from Tiberius, entered the scene.

Latiaris supported Sejanus. Cotta was a Senator without scruples.

Minutius said, "Marcus Terentius, please tell my lord that here are Cotta and Latiaris."

"Sir, I shall," Terentius said.

He exited.

Cotta and Latiaris conferred over and compared their letters.

Cotta said, "My letter is the very same as yours; it only requires me to be present there, and to give my voice — my vote — to strengthen Tiberius' design."

"Doesn't he name what it is?" Latiaris asked.

"No, nor does he name it to you," Cotta said.

"It is strange, and singularly ambiguous!" Latiaris said.

"So it is!" Cotta said. "It may be the case that all has been left to Lord Sejanus."

Natta and Laco entered the scene.

"Gentlemen, where's my lord?" Natta asked.

"We await him here," a Tribune said.

"The Provost Laco?" Cotta said. "What's the news?"

Latiaris began, "My lord —"

He was interrupted by the arrival of Sejanus and Terentius.

Sejanus said:

"Now, my right dear, noble, and trusted friends. How much I am a captive to your kindness!

"Most worthy Cotta, Latiaris; Laco, give me your valiant hand; and gentlemen, give me your loves.

“I wish I could divide myself unto you; or I could wish that it lay within our” — he was using the majestic plural — “narrow powers to give satisfaction to you for your so enlarged bounty to me.

“Gracinus Laco, we much ask you, hold your guards undischarged when morning comes.”

He then asked Minutius:

“Did you see the Consul?”

“Trio will very quickly be here, my lord,” Minutius answered.

“They are just giving orders for the edict to officially summon the Senate,” Cotta said.

The two Consuls were telling the Senators to assemble.

“What! The Senate?” Sejanus said.

Normally, he would know all the doings of the Senate.

“Yes,” Latiaris said. “This morning, in Apollo’s temple.”

“We are ordered by letter to be there, my lord,” Cotta said.

“By letter?” Sejanus said. “Please let me see the letter.”

Latiaris whispered to Cotta, “Doesn’t His Lordship know about this?”

“His Lordship” was Sejanus.

Cotta whispered back, “It seems that he doesn’t!”

“A Senate ordered to assemble?” Sejanus said. “Without my knowledge? And this suddenly? Senators by letters required to be there! Who brought these?”

“Macro,” Cotta answered.

“My enemy!” Sejanus said. “And when?”

“This midnight,” Cotta said.

Sejanus said, “Time, along with every other circumstance, shows that it has some strain of plot in it!”

Seeing Satrius coming, he said, “What is the news now?”

Satrius entered the scene, and Sejanus and he talked together privately.

Satrius said to Sejanus, “My lord, Sertorius Macro is outside, alone, and he requests to have a private conference about business of high nature with Your Lordship, he says to me. This business much regards and affects you.”

“Let him come here,” Sejanus said.

“It is better, my lord, to withdraw,” Satrius advised. “You will betray what number and strength of friends are now about you, which information he comes here to spy and learn.”

“Isn’t he armed?” Sejanus asked.

“We’ll search him,” Satrius said.

Sejanus ordered, “No, but take and lead him to some room where you, concealed, may keep a guard upon us.”

Satrius exited.

Sejanus then said, “Noble Laco, you are our trust, and until our own cohorts can be brought up, your strengths must be our guard.”

He then spoke humbly to his supporters: “Now, good Minutius, honored Latiaris, most worthy, and my most unwearied friends, I will return very quickly.”

He exited.

“Most worthy lord!” Latiaris said.

“His Lordship has suddenly turned kind, I think,” Cotta said.  
“I have not observed it in him heretofore.”

“It is true, and it becomes him nobly,” the First Tribune said.

“I am enraptured with it,” Minutius said.

“By Mars, he has my lives, even if they were a million, for this single grace,” the Second Tribune said.

“Aye, and to call a man by some title!” Laco said.

Sejanus had called them “good Minutius, honored Latiaris, most worthy, and my most unwearied friends.”

“As he did me!” Latiaris said.

“And me!” Minutius said.

“Who would not spend his life and fortunes to purchase but the look of such a lord?” Latiaris said.

Laco said to himself, “He who would be neither a lord’s fool nor the world’s.”

— 5.6 —

Sejanus, Macro, and Satrius were in a room together.

Sejanus said, “Macro! Most welcome, as my most desired and wished-for friend! Let me enjoy my longings. When did you arrive?”

“About the noon of night,” Macro said.

Sejanus said, “Satrius, allow us to speak alone.”

Satrius exited and then concealed himself in a place where he could watch and guard Sejanus.

Macro said, "I have been, since I came, with both the Consuls, Regulus and Trio, on a private mission from Caesar."

"How fares it with our great and royal master?" Sejanus asked.

Macro answered:

"Right plentifully well, as with a prince who still extends the great proportion of his large favors to the man whom his judgment has already made once divine choice — like the god who does not fail nor is wearied to bestow his bounty on the man whose merit deserves it, as merit does in you, already the most happy, and, before the sun shall climb the south, the most high Sejanus.

"Let not my lord be amazed. For to this end was I by Caesar sent for, to come to the isle of Capri, where he is, with special caution to conceal my journey; and from there I had my dispatch as privately again to Rome. I was ordered to come here by night, and only to the Consuls make narration of his great purpose, so that the benefit might come fuller and more striking by how much it was less looked for or aspired by you, or least given form in the common thought."

"What may this be?" Sejanus asked. "You are part of myself, my soulmate, dear Macro! If it is good, speak out and share it with your Sejanus."

Macro said:

"If it were bad, I should forever loathe myself to be the messenger to so good a lord.

"I exceed my instructions by acquainting your Lordship with thus much; but I am willing to rely on your wise secrecy and prudent silence, and I do this because I would have no apprehensive fear molest or rack your peace of thought.

“For I assure you, my noble lord, that no Senator yet knows the business meant, though all, by separate letters, are told to be there and give their votes, only to add to the state and grace — dignity and favor — of what is purposed.”

“You take pleasure, Macro, like a coy wench, in torturing your devoted friend,” Sejanus said. “What can be worth this suffering?”

Macro said, “That which follows, the tribunicial power that you, Sejanus, are to have this day conferred upon you, and by public Senate.”

Macro was saying that Sejanus would get the *tribunicia potestas*, which would mark him as the heir to Tiberius. A person with the tribunicial power could veto Senatorial decrees and could propose laws, and his person was inviolable.

“Lady Fortune, be mine again!” Sejanus said. “Thou have answered sufficiently and given satisfaction for thy imagined disloyalty.”

“My lord, I have no longer time,” Macro said. “The day approaches, and I must go back to Caesar.”

“Where’s Caligula?” Sejanus asked.

Most people would have assumed that Caligula would be the successor to Tiberius.

Macro said:

“That I forgot to tell Your Lordship.

“Why, he lingers yonder, about Capri, disgraced. Tiberius has not seen him yet.

“Caligula would have insisted on thrusting himself to go with me, against my wish and will, but I have repaid his

presumptuous trouble with as reluctant a response as my neglect or silence could afford him.

“Your Lordship cannot now command me anything because I take no knowledge that I saw you, but I shall boast to live to serve Your Lordship, and so I take my leave.”

“Honest and worthy Macro, your love and friendship,” Sejanus said.

He called, “Who’s there?”

Satrius showed himself.

Sejanus said, “Satrius, attend my honorable friend as he goes forth.”

Macro and Satrius exited, leaving Sejanus alone.

Sejanus said to himself:

“Oh, how vain and vile a passion is this fear! What base, uncomely things it makes men do!

“Suspect their noblest friends, as I did this man, Macro, flatter poor enemies, entreat their servants, stoop, court, and catch at the benevolence of creatures to whom, within this hour, I would not have vouchsafed a quarter-look — a contemptuous sidelong glance — or the sight of a piece of my face!

“You, whom fools call gods, hang all the sky with your prodigious signs, fill earth with monsters, drop the Scorpion down out of the zodiac, or the fiercer Lion — Leo — shake off the loosened globe from her long hinge — the long axle of the earth — roll all the world in darkness, and let loose the enraged winds to turn up groves and towns!

“When I fear again, let me be struck with forked fire — lightning — and unpitied die.



“He who fears, is worthy of calamity.”

— 5.7 —

Terentius, Minutius, Laco, Cotta, Latiaris, some Tribunes, and others met Pomponius and the two Consuls: Regulus and Trio.

“Isn’t my lord here?” Pomponius asked about Sejanus.

“Sir, he will be here very soon,” Terentius answered.

Cotta asked Trio the Consul quietly, “What is the news, Fulcinius Trio?”

They held a hushed conversation.

Trio answered:

“Good, good tidings, but keep it to yourself.

“My lord Sejanus is to receive this day, in open Senate, the tribunicial power.”

“Is it true?” Cotta asked.

“No words — do not give voice to your thought — but sir, believe it,” Trio answered.

Latiaris joined in this hushed conversation.

“What does the Consul say?” Latiaris asked.

“Don’t tell anyone,” Cotta said. “He tells me that today my lord Sejanus —”

Trio interrupted, “— I must entreat you, Cotta, on your honor not to reveal it.”

“On my life, sir,” Cotta said.

“Say it,” Latiaris said.

Cotta did:

“— is to receive the tribunicial power.

“But as you are an honorable man, let me conjure you not to utter it, for that information was entrusted to me with that condition.”

“I am Harpocrates,” Latiaris said.

Harpocrates was the Egyptian god of silence. Images show him holding a finger to his lips.

“Can you guarantee that it is true?” Terentius asked.

“The Consul told it to me, but he told me to keep it secret,” Pomponius said.

“Lord Latiaris, what’s the news?” Minutius asked.

Latiaris said, “I’ll tell you, but you must swear to keep it secret —”

He was interrupted by the arrival of Sejanus.

Sejanus said, “I knew the Fates had on their distaff left more of our thread, than so.”

The Fates spun the thread of life of each man. Sejanus had been afraid that his life would be cut short, but now he was reassured that he would live long and prosper.

The then-current proverb “to have more tow [flax] on one’s distaff than one can spin” means “to have trouble waiting for one.”

“Hail, great Sejanus!” Regulus said.

“Hail, the most honored!” Trio the Consul said.

“Happy Sejanus!” Cotta said.

“High Sejanus!” Latiaris said.

“Do you bring prodigies, too?” Sejanus asked.

A prodigy is 1) an omen, or 2) a monster, or 3) a marvel.

Trio said, “May all omens turn to those fair effects, whereof we bring our Lordship news!”

“May it please my lord to withdraw?” Regulus asked.

Sejanus replied, “Yes.”

He then said to some people who were standing nearby, “I will speak with you soon.”

“My lord, what is your pleasure for the Tribunes?” Terentius asked.

“Why, let them be thanked, and sent away,” Sejanus said.

The Tribunes were his bodyguards, whom Sejanus did not think he needed now.

Minutius, Sejanus’ friend, began to object, “My lord —”

Laco interrupted, “Will it please Your Lordship to command me?”

“No,” Sejanus said. “You’re troublesome.”

“The mood has changed,” Minutius said.

Earlier, Sejanus had been respectful to other people, including Laco.

“Not speak?” the First Tribune asked.

“Nor look?” the Second Tribune asked.

Laco said:

“Aye. He is ‘wise’ and will make him friends

“Of such who never love but for their ends.”

Sejanus would be friends only with people who thought he could help them in some way.

Arruntius and Lepidus stood together.

Some other Senators, including Sanquinius and Haterius, passed by them on their way to see Sejanus.

Arruntius made a commentary on the Senators, who did not overhear him:

“Aye, go, make haste. Take heed that you are not the last person to tender your ‘All hail!’ in the wide hall of huge Sejanus.”

“All hail” was a greeting. The wide hall was where Sejanus met his clients.

Arruntius continued:

“Run a Lictor’s pace.”

Lictors were quick-footed. They cleared the way for magistrates and made arrests.

Arruntius continued:

“Don’t wait to put your robes on, but go, with the pale troubled ensigns — signs — of great friendship stamped in your face!”

Arruntius said:

“Now, Marcus Lepidus, you still believe your former augury?”

“Sejanus must go downward? You perceive his wane approaching fast?”

Sejanus seemed to be approaching the highest mark of his life.

“Believe me, Lucius,” Lepidus said. “I wonder at this rising of Sejanus!”

Lucius Arruntius replied:

“Aye, and that we must give our vote to it? You will say that it is to make his fall steeper and more grievous?”

“It may be so. But those who think that way try with idle wishes to bring back time.

“In desperate cases, all hope is crime.

“See, see! What troops of his officious friends flock to salute my lord! And they appear before my great proud lord, to get a lord-like nod!

“See what they do:

“Attend my lord as he goes to the Senate house!

“Bring back my lord!

“Like servile ushers, make way for my lord!

“Proclaim his idol Lordship, more than ten criers, or a band of six trumpets!

“Bend legs and make bows, kiss hands, and brush a scattered hair from my lord’s eminent shoulder!

“See Sanquinius, with his big belly that slows him, and his dropsy! Look what toiling haste he makes! Yet here’s another, retarded with and slowed by the gout, who will crowd in front of Sanquinius!

“Get thee Liburnian porters, thou gross fool, to bear thy obsequious fatness, like thy peers.

“They’re met! The gout returns, and his great carriage.”

He was referring to the gout-ridden Haterius and the overweight Sanquinius.

Some Lictors, the two Consuls, and Sejanus passed by them.

A Lictor called, "Give way! Make place! Room for the Consul!"

"Hail, hail, great Sejanus!" Sanquinius said.

"Hail, my honored lord!" Haterius said.

Everyone except Arruntius and Lepidus exited.

"We shall be noticed and marked soon for our not-hail to Sejanus," Arruntius said.

"That has already been done," Lepidus said.

"It is a note of upstart greatness to observe and watch for these poor trifles, which the noble mind neglects and scorns," Arruntius said.

The poor trifles were the hails to Sejanus.

Lepidus said, "Aye, and they think themselves deeply dishonored where they are omitted, as if they were necessities that helped to the perfection of their dignities and hate the men who just withhold them from them."

Arruntius replied, "Oh, there is a farther cause of hate. Their breasts are guilty that we know their obscure origins and base beginnings. Thence the anger grows. Let's go on and follow them!"

They exited.

Macro and Laco talked together.

Marco said, “When all have entered, shut the temple doors, and bring your guards up to the gate.”

“I will,” Laco said.

“If you hear commotion in the Senate, present yourself — and charge on any man who attempts to come forth.”

“I understand my instructions,” Laco said.

They exited.

— 5.10 —

The Senate assembled in the temple of Apollo Palatine.

Present were Heralds, Lictors, Regulus, Sejanus, Trio, Haterius, Sanquinius, Cotta, Pomponius, Latiaris, Lepidus, and Arruntius, along with Natta, a Praetor, and other Senators.

“How well His Lordship looks today!” Haterius said.

“As if he had been born or made for this hour’s state,” Trio said.

“This hour’s state” was “this hour’s greatness”: The rumor was that Sejanus would be invested with tribunicial power.

“Your fellow Consul’s come about, I think?” Cotta said.

The fellow Consul was Regulus, who had been an enemy to Sejanus. Cotta meant that Regulus had come about and was now on the side of Sejanus.

“Aye, he’s wise,” Trio said.

“Sejanus trusts him well,” Sanquinius said.

“Sejanus is a noble, bounteous lord,” Trio said.

“He is, indeed, and he is most valiant,” Haterius said.

“And most wise,” Latiaris said.

“He’s everything,” the First Senator said.

“He’s worthy of all, and more than bounty can bestow,” Latiaris said.

“This dignity will make him worthy,” Trio said.

“Above Caesar,” Pomponius said.

“Tut, Caesar is only the rector — ruler — of an isle,” Sanquinius said. “Sejanus is the ruler of the Empire.”

“Now he will have power more to reward than ever,” Trio said.

Sejanus would have more power than ever to reward those who were loyal to him.

“Let us make sure that we will not be slack in giving him our votes,” Cotta said.

“I won’t be slack,” Latiaris said.

“Nor I,” Sanquinius said.

“The readier we seem to propagate his honors and make them grow, the more we will bind his thought to ours,” Cotta said.

They wanted to keep what honors they had — and get more — by being followers of Sejanus.

“I think right with Your Lordship,” Haterius said. “It is the way to have us hold our places.”

“Aye, and get more,” Sanquinius said.

“More official positions, and more titles,” Latiaris said.

“I would not lose the part I hope to share in these fortunes of his, for my inheritance,” Pomponius said.



“See how Arruntius sits, and Lepidus,” Latiaris said.

Other Senators, but not Arruntius and Lepidus, were sitting as close as possible to Sejanus.

Arruntius and Lepidus were definitely not followers of Sejanus.

“Let them alone,” Trio said. “They will be marked soon.”

“I’ll do the same as the others,” the First Senator said.

“So will I,” the Second Senator said.

“And I,” the Third Senator said. “Men grow not in the state except as they are planted warm in his favors.”

“Noble Sejanus!” Cotta said loudly so that Sejanus would hear him.

“Honored Sejanus!” Haterius said loudly.

“Worthy and great Sejanus!” Latiaris said loudly.

Noticing this, Arruntius said quietly to Lepidus:

“Gods! How the sponges open and take in! And shut again!

“Look, look!

“Isn’t he blest who gets a seat within eye-reach of Sejanus?

“Isn’t he more blessed who comes within ear- or tongue-reach?

“Oh, but most blest of all is he who can claw his crafty, cunning elbow, or with a buzz flyblow Sejanus’ ears!”

The Praetor said to the Heralds, “Proclaim the Senate’s silence, and read out loud the final summons by the edict.”

The First Herald shouted, “Silence! In the name of Caesar and the Senate, silence!”

The First Herald then read out loud the final summons:

*“Memmius Regulus and Fulcinius Trio, Consuls, these present kalends of June with the first light, shall hold a Senate in the temple of Apollo Palatine.”*

The kalends of June is June 1, and the year was 31 C.E., but Ben Jonson has the wrong date: Sejanus was actually condemned on 18 October 31 C.E.

The First Herald then continued to read out loud the final summons:

*“All who are fathers and are registered fathers who have the right of entering the Senate, we tell you to be in full number present.*

*“Take knowledge that the business is the commonwealth’s.*

*“Whosoever is absent, his fine or mulct will be taken. His excuse will not be taken.”*

“Note who are absent, and record their names,” Trio ordered.

Regulus the Consul said:

“Fathers conscript, may what I am to utter turn good and happy for the commonwealth.

“And thou, Apollo, god of light and truth, in whose holy house we here are met, inspire us all with truth and with liberty of judgment to our thought.

“The majesty of great Tiberius Caesar propounds to this grave Senate the bestowing upon the man he loves, honored Sejanus, the tribunicial power.

“Here are his letters, signed with his signet.

“What please now the fathers to be done?”

The Senators said, “Read, read them, openly and publicly, read them.”

“Caesar has honored his own greatness much in thinking of this act,” Cotta said loudly.

“It was a happy thought, and worthy of Caesar,” Trio said loudly.

“And the lord as worthy it, on whom it is directed!” Latiaris said loudly.

“Most worthy!” Haterius said loudly.

Sanquinius said loudly, “Rome did never boast the virtue that could give envy bounds, but his: the virtue of Sejanus —”

“Honored and noble!” the First Senator said loudly.

“Good and great Sejanus!” the Second Senator said loudly.

Arruntius said to himself, “Oh, most tame slavery, and ardent flattery!”

The First Herald ordered, “Silence!”

The First Herald then read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle — letter — out loud:

*“Tiberius Caesar to the Senate, greeting.*

*“If you conscript fathers, with your children, are in health, it is abundantly well. We with our friends here are so.*

*“The care of the commonwealth, howsoever we are removed in person, cannot be absent to our thought, although, often, even to princes most present, the truth of their own affairs is hidden, than which nothing falls out more miserable to a state, or makes the art of governing more difficult.*

*“But since it has been our easeful happiness to enjoy both the aids and industry of so vigilant a Senate, we profess to have been the more indulgent to our pleasures, not as being careless of our office, but rather secure of the necessity.”*

Tiberius meant that he felt confident that he did not need to be present in Rome because the Senate was capable of handling things in his absence.

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“Neither do these common rumors of many and infamous libels published against our retirement at all afflict us, being born more out of men’s ignorance than their malice; and will, neglected, find their own grave quickly, whereas too feelingly acknowledged and reacted to, it would make their obloquy ours.*

*“Nor do we desire that their authors, though found, be censured, since in a free state (as ours) all men ought to enjoy both their minds and tongues free.”*

Arruntius said to himself, “The lapwing! The lapwing!”

Lapwings are birds that nest on the ground, and they are loudest when away from their nest to keep enemies away from their nestlings. Sometimes they pretend to have an injured wing and cry while leading enemies away from the nest. When the enemy is a safe distance from the nest, the lapwing takes flight. A group of lapwings is called a deceit of lapwings.

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“Yet, in things which shall worthily and more nearly concern the majesty of a prince, we shall fear to be so unnaturally cruel to our own fame and reputation as to neglect them.*

*“True it is, conscript fathers, that we have raised Sejanus from obscure and almost unknown gentry and birth —”*

“Hear! Hear!” the Senators said.

The expression means to pay attention to the speaker and implies approval of what is being said.

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“— to the highest and most conspicuous point of greatness, and, we hope, deservedly; yet not without danger — it being a most bold hazard in that sovereign who, by his personal love to one, dares risk the hatred of all his other subjects.”*

Arruntius said to himself, “This touches; this wounds; the mood changes.”

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“But we have faith in your loves and understandings, and do in no way suspect the merit of our Sejanus to make our favors offensive to any —”*

“Oh! Good, good!” the Senators said.

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“— though we could have wished his zeal had run a calmer course against Agrippina and our nephews, howsoever the openness of their actions declared them delinquents; and that he would have remembered no innocence is so safe, but it rejoices to stand in the sight of mercy — the use of which in us he has so completely taken away toward them by his loyal fury, as now our clemency would be thought but wearied cruelty, if we should offer to exercise it.”*

Tiberius Caesar was now openly criticizing Sejanus.

He was obliquely saying that there would be no clemency — mercy — for Sejanus.

Is weariness of cruelty mercy? No.

What is weariness of cruelty? Being so tired of committing cruelty that one stops being cruel. E.g., whipping someone until one's arm grows so tired that one cannot whip that someone any more.

Recognizing what was happening, Arruntius said to himself, "I thank him; there I looked for it. A good fox!"

A proverb of the time stated, "A fox may grow grey but never good."

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar's epistle out loud:

*"Some there are who would interpret Sejanus' public severity to be personal ambition, and that under a pretext of service to us he does but remove his own hindrances; citing the strengths he has made to himself by the Praetorian soldiers, by his faction in court and Senate, by the offices he holds himself and confers on others, his practice of courting popularity and dependents, his urging (and almost driving) us to this our unwilling retirement, and lastly, his aspiring to be our son-in-law."*

"This is strange!" the Senators said.

Arruntius said quietly to himself about Marcus Lepidus, "I shall soon believe your vultures, Marcus."

Vultures are birds of omen. Lepidus had speculated about a coming downfall for Sejanus.

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar's epistle out loud:

*“Your wisdoms, conscript fathers, are able to examine and judge these suggestions. But, were they left to our acquitting verdict, we dare to pronounce them, as we think them, most malicious.”*

“Oh, he has restored all!” the Senators said. “Listen!”

It sounded as if Tiberius were still on the side of Sejanus.

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“Yet are they offered to be averred and proven true, and on the lives of the informers.*

*“What we should say, or rather what we should not say, lords of the Senate, if this should be true, our gods and goddesses confound us if we know!*

*“Only, we must think we have placed our benefits ill; and conclude that in our choice, either we were lacking to the gods, or the gods to us.”*

Now it definitely sounded as if Tiberius were NOT on the side of Sejanus.

The Senators shifted uneasily in their places.

Arruntius said to himself, “The place grows hot; they shift.”

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“We have not been desirous, honorable fathers, to change; neither is it now any new lust that alters our affection, or old loathing, but those needful concerns of state, which warn wiser princes, hourly, to provide for their safety, and teach them how learned — deeply read in history — a thing it is to beware of the humblest enemy, much more of those great ones whom their own employed favors have made fit for their fears.”*

“Let’s leave!” the First Senator said.

“Let’s sit farther away,” the Second Senator said.

“Let’s remove ourselves,” Cotta said.

They suddenly wanted to move away from Sejanus.

Arruntius said to himself, “Gods! How the leaves drop off, even in this little wind!”

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“We therefore desire that the offices he holds be first seized by the Senate and himself suspended from all exercise of place or power —”*

“What!” the Senators said.

Getting up to leave his place near Sejanus, Sanquinius said, “By your leave.”

Arruntius said quietly to himself about Sanquinius, “Come, porpoise.”

A proverb stated, “The porpoise plays before a storm.” In other words, the activity — dancing — of a porpoise was thought to foretell a storm.

“Where’s Haterius?” Arruntius asked. “His gout keeps him most miserably constant — in one place.”

That place was near Sejanus.

Speaking of Sanquinius, Arruntius said, “Your dancing shows a tempest.”

“Read no more,” Sejanus said to the First Herald.

“Lords of the Senate, keep your seats,” Regulus the Consul said.



He then ordered the First Herald, “Read on.”

“These letters, they are forged,” Sejanus said.

Regulus called, “A guard!”

Then he ordered everyone, “Sit still.”

Laco entered with the guards.

Arruntius said to himself, “Here’s change!”

Regulus the Consul said to the First Herald, “Bid the others to be silent, and read forward. Continue to read the epistle out loud.”

The First Herald shouted, “Silence!”

The First Herald then continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“— and himself suspended from all exercise of place or power, but until due and mature trial be made of his innocency, which yet we can faintly apprehend the necessity to doubt.”*

One meaning of the word “doubt” at this time is “fear.”

The First Herald continued to read Tiberius Caesar’s epistle out loud:

*“If, conscript fathers, to your more searching wisdoms there shall appear farther cause — or of farther proceeding, either to seizure of lands, goods, or more — it is not our power that shall limit your authority, or our favor that must corrupt your justice. Either would be dishonorable in you, and both would be uncharitable to ourself.*

*“We would willingly be present with your counsels in this business, but the danger of so potent a faction, if it should prove so, forbids our attempting it, unless one of the Consuls*

*would be entreated for our safety to undertake the guard of us as we return home; then we should most readily risk the journey back to Rome.*

*“In the meantime, it shall not be fitting for us to importune and urge so judicious a Senate, who know how much they hurt the innocent by sparing the guilty, and how grateful a sacrifice to the gods is the life of an ingrateful and ungrateful person.*

*“We reflect not in this on Sejanus — notwithstanding, if you keep an eye upon him — and there is Latiaris, who is a Senator, and Pinnarius Natta, who are two of Sejanus’ most trusted ministers, and so professed, whom we desire not to have apprehended, except as the necessity of the cause exacts it.”*

Regulus the Consul said to a guard, “Put a guard on Latiaris!”

“Oh, the spy!” Arruntius said. “The reverend spy is caught! Who pities him?”

Latiaris was a Senator, and therefore he was reverend.

Arruntius said to Latiaris, “Reward, sir, for your service. Now that you have done your property — your function — you see what use is made of you? And you see how you are treated?”

Under guard, Latiaris and Natta exited.

Arruntius said, “Hang up the instrument.”

An instrument is a tool; it can be a person who is made use of.

The image here is of a musical instrument that has been played and is then being hung on a wall.

Attempting to leave, Sejanus said, “Give me leave.”

Brandishing his weapon, Laco said, “Stand, stand! He comes upon his death who does advance an inch toward my point.”

“Have we no friend here?” Sejanus asked.

“Hushed,” Arruntius said. “Where are now all the hails and acclamations?”

Macro entered the scene.

He said, “Hail to the Consuls and to this noble Senate!”

Sejanus said to himself, “Is Macro here? Oh, thou are lost, Sejanus.”

The Senators began to rise.

Macro said to the Senators:

“Sit still, and unfrightened, reverend fathers.

“Macro, by Caesar’s grace the new-made Provost [Commander of the Praetorian Guard], and now in charge of the Praetorian bands — an honor that recently belonged to that proud man —”

He pointed to Sejanus.

Macro continued, “— bids you to be safe; and to your constant doom — your loyal and firm judgment — of his deservings, offers you the surety — the safety — of all the soldiers, Tribunes, and Centurions received in our command. They will guard and keep you safe.”

Regulus the Consul said, “Sejanus! Sejanus!”

Sejanus appeared not to hear.

Regulus called, “Stand forth, Sejanus!”

“Am I called?” Sejanus asked.

Macro said, “Aye, thou, thou insolent monster, are ordered to stand.”

Macro used the word “thou” to refer to Sejanus, a word that he would use to speak to an inferior.

Sejanus replied, more courteously than Macro had spoken to him, “Why, Macro, it has been otherwise between you and me! This court, who knows us both, has seen a difference, and can, if it is pleased to speak, confirm whose insolence is most.”

Macro said:

“Come down, Typhoeus.”

Typhoeus, who had 100 snake heads on his shoulders, was a Titan who attempted but failed to overthrow Jupiter, the King of the gods.

Macro continued:

“If my insolence be most, lo, thus I make it more:

“I kick up thy heels in air, tear off thy robe, and play with thy beard and nostrils.”

As Macro mentioned all these actions, he performed them.

Macro continued:

“Thus it is fitting — and let no man take compassion on thy state — let them treat the ingrateful and ungrateful viper as deserved and tread his brains into the earth.

Regulus the Consul said, “Forbear from acting that way. Stop.”

Macro replied:

“If I could lose all my humanity now, it would be well to torture so deserving a traitor.”

He meant that if he lost all his humanity, he could torture Sejanus as harshly as Sejanus deserved.

Macro continued:

“Wherefore, fathers, do you sit amazed and silent, and do not censure this wretch, who in the hour he first rebelled against Caesar’s bounty, did condemn himself?”

“Phlegra, the field where all the sons of earth mustered against the gods, never acknowledged so proud and huge a monster.”

Phlegra is the battlefield where Jupiter defeated the Titans, aka the sons of earth.

Regulus the Consul ordered, “Take Sejanus away from here. And may all the gods guard Caesar!”

Trio the Consul said to the Lictors, “Take him away from here.”

“Hence!” Haterius said.

“To the dungeon with him!” Cotta said.

“He deserves it,” Sanquinius said.

“Crown all our doors with laurel wreaths!” the First Senator said.

Laurel wreaths were a sign of victory.

“And let an ox with gilded horns and garlands immediately be led to the Capitol!” Sanquinius said.

“And sacrificed to Jove for Caesar’s safety!” Haterius said.

“May all our gods be present still to Caesar!” Trio said.

“Phoebus Apollo!” Cotta said.

“Mars!” Sanquinius said.

“Diana!” Haterius said.

“Pallas Athena!” Sanquinius said.

“Juno, Mercury, all guard him!” the Second Senator said.

Macro said to Sejanus, “Go forth, thou prodigy — monster — of men!”

Under guard, Sejanus exited.

“Let all the traitor’s titles be defaced,” Cotta said.

“Let his images and statues be pulled down,” Trio the Consul said.

“Let his chariot wheels be broken,” Haterius said.

Arruntius said sardonically, “And the legs of the poor horses, which have deserved no punishment, let them be broken, too.”

They were talking about the chariot wheels and the legs of the horses that were part of the statues of Sejanus.

“O violent change and whirl of men’s affections!” Lepidus said.

Arruntius said, “It is as if both their bulks — bodies — and souls were bound on Fortune’s wheel and must act only with her motion.”

When the wheel of Lady Fortune raises Sejanus high, people treat him one way.

When the wheel of Lady Fortune lowers Sejanus, people treat him a different way.

Macro, Regulus, Trio, Haterius, Sanquinius, etc., exited.

Lepidus, Arruntius, and a few Senators remained behind.

Lepidus said:

“Who would depend upon the shifting popular air and favor, or voice of men, who have today beheld that which, even if all the gods had foredeclared it, would not have been believed: Sejanus’ fall?”

“He who this morning rose as proudly as the sun, and, breaking through a mist of clients’ breath, came on as gazed at and admired as he — the sun — when superstitious Moors salute his light!

“He who had our servile nobles waiting upon him as common servants, and hanging on his look, no less than human life hangs on destiny!

“He who had men’s knees bow to him as frequently as they bow to the gods, and who had more sacrifices than Rome had altars —

“And yet this man fall!

“Fall? Aye, without a look who dared to appear his friend, or lend so much of vain relief to his changed state as pity!”

Arruntius said:

“They who before, like gnats, played in his beams, and thronged to encircle him, now not seen! Nor deign to share a bench with him!

“Others, who waited on him and escorted him as he went to the Senate, now inhumanely seize and carry him off to the prison!

“Him whom, just this morning, they followed as their lord, now they guard through the streets, bound like a captured runaway slave!

“Instead of wreaths, they give him fetters; they give him strokes instead of stoops and bows; they give him blind

shame instead of honors; and they give him black taunts instead of titles!

“Who would trust slippery chance?”

Lepidus said:

“They who would make themselves her plunder, and foolishly forget that when Lady Fortune flatters, she then comes to prey.

“Lady Fortune, thou would have no deity if men had wisdom. We have placed thee so high because of our foolish belief in thy felicity.”

The Senators shouted outside, “The gods guard Caesar! All the gods guard Caesar!”

Macro, Regulus the Consul, and some Senators entered the scene.

Macro said:

“Now, great Sejanus, you who awed the state and sought to bring the nobles to your whip.

“You who would be Caesar’s tutor and dispose of dignities and offices; you who had the public always deferential — as shown by their heads being uncovered and bare of hat — to your designs and plots; and you who made the general voice to echo yours, who looked for salutations twelve score off — 240 paces — and would have pyramidal monuments, yea, temples reared to your huge greatness!”

What were called pyramids in this society were often obelisks.

The distance of 240 paces was that of a typical shot of an arrow.

Macro concluded:



“Now you lie as flat as was your pride advanced.”

“Thanks to the gods!” Regulus the Consul said.

The Senators said, “And praise to Macro, who has saved Rome! Liberty, liberty, liberty! Lead on! And praise to Macro, who has saved Rome!”

Macro, Regulus, and the Senators exited.

Arruntius and Lepidus remained behind, alone.

Arruntius said, “I prophesy, due to this Senate’s flattery, that this new fellow, Macro, will become a greater prodigy — monster — in Rome than he who now has fallen.”

Terentius entered the scene and said:

“O you whose minds are good, and have not forced all mankind — all human feeling — from your breasts, who yet have so much stock of virtue left to pity guilty highly-ranked people, when they are wretched:

“Lend your soft, compassionate ears to hear and eyes to weep deeds done by men beyond the acts of Furies.

“The eager multitude, who never yet knew why to love or hate, but only pleased to express their rage of power, no sooner heard the murmuring rumor of Sejanus in decline but, with that speed and heat of appetite with which they greedily run and devour the way to some great sports event or a new theatre —

“They — the eager multitude — filled the Capitol and Pompey’s Cirque — his Theater; where, like so many mastiffs, biting stones, as if his statues now were grown sensitive to their wild fury, first they tore the statues down; then fastening ropes to them, they dragged them along the streets, crying in scorn, ‘This, this was that rich head that

was crowned with garlands and with odors — the smoke of incense — this head that was in Rome so revered!

“Now that the furnace and the bellows shall go to work, the great Sejanus shall crack and piece by piece shall drop in the founder’s pit.”

They were melting the metal of Sejanus’ statues so it could be recast as different objects in the founder’s pit, which held the molds.

“O popular rage!” Lepidus said.

Terentius said:

“All this while, the Senators, at the temple of Concord, make haste to meet again, and thronging they cry:

“Let us condemn him, tread him down in water, while he lies upon the bank of the Tiber River. Away!”

Terentius continued:

“Where some, more tardy, cry unto their bearers — the people carrying them:

“He will be judged and censured before we come. Run, knaves!”

“And they use that furious diligence, for fear their bondmen should inform against their slackness, and bring their quaking flesh to the hook.

“The rout of men follow with confused voices, crying that they’re glad, and they say they could never abide him.

“They inquire: What man was he? What kind of face? What beard did he have? What nose? What lips? They protest that they always did presage he’d come to this.

“They never thought him wise or valiant; they ask after his garments; they ask when he dies? What kind of death?”

“And not a beast of all the herd demands: What was his crime? Or, who were his accusers? Under what proof or testimony he fell?”

“‘There came,’ says one, ‘a huge, long, worded letter from Capri against him.’”

“‘Did there so? Oh!’”

“They are satisfied with no more evidence than that.”

“Alas!” Lepidus said. “They follow Fortune, and hate men who are condemned, whether they are guilty or not.”

Arruntius said, “But had Sejanus thrived in his plot, and successfully oppressed the old Tiberius, then, in that same minute, these same rascals in the rabble, who now rage like Furies, would have proclaimed Sejanus Emperor.”

“But what has followed these events?” Lepidus asked.

Terentius said:

“He was sentenced by the Senate to lose his head — which was no sooner off, but that head and Sejanus’ unfortunate trunk were seized by the rude and ignorant multitude. They, not content with what the eager justice of the state officiously had done, with violent rage have rent his corpse limb from limb.

“A thousand heads, a thousand hands, ten thousand tongues and voices, were employed at once in several different acts of malice!

“Old men were not staid by age, virgins were not staid by shame, recent wives (new widows) were not staid by loss of husbands, mothers were not staid by loss of children.”

The word “staid” meant 1) “made sober,” and 2) “stayed,” aka “held back.”

Terentius continued:

“All of them losing all grief in joy of his sad fall, ran quite transported with their cruelty:

“These mounting and jumping at his head and pulling it off the end of a spear, and then these attacking his face, these digging out his eyes, and those with parts of his brain sprinkling themselves, their houses, and their friends.

“Others are met who have ravished thence an arm and deal small pieces of the flesh for favors. These men with a thigh; this man has cut off his hands. And this man has cut off his feet, these men have cut off his fingers, and these men have cut off his toes. That one has his liver; this one has his heart.

“There lacks nothing but room for wrath and place for hatred. Both wrath and hatred are overfilling room and place.

“What cannot often be done is now overdone.

“The whole, and all of what was great Sejanus, and next to Caesar did possess the world, is now torn and scattered, as if he needs no grave.

“Each little part of him is covered by a small amount of dirt and dust.

“So he lies nowhere, and yet he is often buried.

A messenger entered the scene.

“Do you have more information about Sejanus?” Arruntius asked.

“Yes,” the messenger said.

“What can be added?” Lepidus asked. “We know that he is dead.”

The messenger replied:

“Then there begin your pity.

“There is enough still to come to melt even Rome and Caesar into tears — since never slave could yet so highly offend, but tyranny, in torturing him, would make him worth lamenting.

“A son and daughter to the dead Sejanus, of whom there is not now so much remaining as could be fastened to the hangman’s hook, have they drawn forth for farther sacrifice.

“The children’s tenderness of knowledge, unripe years, and childish simple innocence was such as scarcely would give them feeling or knowing the danger they were in.

“The girl so simple, as she often asked, Where would they lead her? For what cause did they drag her? She cried that she would do no more wrong. That she could take warning with beating.

“And because our laws allow no immature virgin to die, the cleverly and strangely — unnaturally — cruel Macro delivered her to be deflowered and spoiled by the rude lust of the licentious hangman, then to be strangled with her harmless brother.”

The law stated that no immature virgin should be executed. The emphasis was on maturity versus immaturity rather than virginity versus lack of virginity. Sejanus’ daughter was immature and suggested that she be spanked as a punishment. Instead, she was given to the executioner, who raped her and then strangled her and her brother.

Lepidus said, “Oh, act most worthy hell and lasting night, so they can hide it from the world!”

The messenger continued:

“Their bodies were thrown onto the Gemonian stairs.

“I don’t know how or by what accident she returned to Rome, but the children’s mother, the divorced Apicata, found them there.

“When she saw them lying spread on the steps, she unleashed a world of fury on herself, tearing her hair, defacing her face, beating her breasts and womb, kneeling distraught, crying to heaven, and then crying to her children.

“At last her drowned voice got up above her woes, and despite her grief, she was able to speak, and with such black and bitter execrations as might frighten the gods and force the sun to run backward to the east — nay, make the old deformed Chaos rise again, to overwhelm them, us, and all the world — she fills the air, upbraids the heavens with their unfair dooms, defies their tyrannous powers, and demands to know what she and those poor innocents have transgressed with the result that they must suffer such a share in vengeance, while Livia, Lygdus, and Eudemus live, who, as she says, and firmly vows to prove it to Caesar and the Senate, poisoned Drusus Senior!”

“Were they confederates with her husband?” Lepidus asked.

“Aye,” the messenger answered.

“Strange and unnatural act!” Lepidus said.

“And strangely revealed,” Arruntius said. “What says now my monster, the multitude? They reel now after being intoxicated with anger, don’t they?”

“Their gall is gone, and now they begin to weep for the evil they have done,” the messenger answered.

“I thank them for weeping, the rogues!” Arruntius said.

The messenger said:

“Part are so stupid, or so flexible and easily persuaded, that they believe Sejanus to be innocent. All grieve, and some, whose hands yet reek with his warm blood, and grip the part that they did tear off him, wish that he could be collected and created new.”

Lepidus said, “How Fortune plies her sports, when she begins to practice them! Pursues, continues, adds! Confounds and ruins, with varying her impassioned moods!”

Arruntius said:

“Do thou hope, Lady Fortune, to redeem thy crimes? To make amends for thy ill-placed favors with these strange punishments? Forbear, you things that stand upon the pinnacles of state, to boast your slippery height.

“When you do fall, you smash yourselves in pieces, never to rise.

“And he who lends you pity is not wise.”

Terentius said:

“Let this example move the insolent man not to grow proud and careless of the gods. It is an odious wisdom — exercise of intelligence — to blaspheme, much more to slighten or deny their powers.

“For whom the morning saw so great and high,

“Thus low and little, before the evening, does lie.”

## NOTES (*Sejanus' Fall*)

This tragedy was first acted in the year 1603 by the King's Majesty's Servants.

The principal tragedians were:

RICHARD BURBAGE [Sejanus]

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE [Probably Tiberius]

AUGUSTINE PHILLIPS

JOHN HEMMINGES

WILLIAM SLY

HENRY CONDELL

JOHN LOWIN

ALEXANDER COOKE

With the allowance of the Master of Revels.

— 1.1 —

*[...] I think day*

*Should lose its light when men do lose their shames*

*And for the empty circumstance — trivial details — of life*  
(200)

*Betray their cause of living.*

(Act 1, lines 198-201).

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.



Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 247.

Juvenal in his eighth Satire, wrote, in G.G. Ramsay's translation:

“[...] *count it the greatest of all sins to prefer life to honour, and to lose, for the sake of living, all that makes life worth having.*” (Juvenal, *Satires* 8.83-84)

Source of Above: G.G. Ramsay. Juvenal, *Satires* (1918). “Satire 8.”

[https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/juvenal\\_satires\\_08.htm](https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/juvenal_satires_08.htm)

— 1.1 —

*TIBERIUS*

(One knelt to him.) *We will not endure and tolerate these flatteries.*

*Let him stand.*

(Act 1, lines 374-375)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 255.

Suetonius wrote about Tiberius' aversion to flattery. In Alexander Thomson's translation:

*He had such an aversion to flattery, that he would never suffer any senator to approach his litter, as he passed the streets in it, either to pay him a civility, or upon business. And when a man of Consular rank, in begging his pardon for some offence he had given him, attempted to fall at his feet, he started from him in such haste, that he stumbled and fell. If any compliment was paid him, either in conversation or a set speech, he would not scruple to interrupt and reprimand the party, and alter what he had said. Being once called "lord," by some person, he desired that he might no more be affronted in that manner. When another, to excite veneration, called his occupations "sacred," and a third had expressed himself thus: "By your authority I have waited upon the senate," he obliged them to change their phrases; in one of them adopting persuasion, instead of "authority," and in the other, laborious, instead of "sacred."*

Source of Above:

Suetonius: *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; An English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates*. Suetonius. Publishing Editor. J. Eugene Reed. Alexander Thomson. Philadelphia. Gebbie & Co. 1889.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dtib.%3Achapter%3D27>

— 2.2 —

*It is not safe the children draw long breath,*

*That are provokèd by a parent's death.*

(Act 2, lines 198-199)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 276.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Book 1, Chapter 15, section 14, states (quoting from *Cypria*, a lost epic):

*Foolish is he who, having killed the father, suffers the children to live.*

Source of Above:

*Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 22, translated by J. H. Freese. Aristotle. Cambridge and London. Harvard University Press; William Heinemann Ltd. 1926.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0060%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D15%3Asection%3D14>

— 2.2 —

*Εμου θανοντος γιαια μιχθητω πυρι.*

(Act 2, line 330)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 282.

The Greek means:

*When I am dead, may earth be overwhelmed with  
fire.*

Source of Above:

*The Greek Anthology*, Book 7. 704. Trans. W.R. Paton. Loeb  
Classical Library.

[https://www.loebclassics.com/view/greek\\_anthology\\_7/1917/pb\\_LCL068.375.xml](https://www.loebclassics.com/view/greek_anthology_7/1917/pb_LCL068.375.xml)

— 2.2 —

*Thy thoughts are ours, in all, and we but tested (280)*

*Their voice, in our designs, which by assenting*

*Hath more confirmed us than if heart'ning Jove*

*Had, from his hundred statues, bid us strike,*

*And at the stroke clicked all his marble thumbs.*

(Act 2, lines 280-284)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin  
Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 279-280.

The below information is an excerpt from an article titled  
“THE TRUTH ABOUT GLADIATORS AND THE  
THUMBS UP”:

*The fate of a gladiator, in terms of whether the audience was voting for a kill, was decided with what is known as “pollice verso”, a Latin term which roughly translates to “turned thumb”. More precisely what this means isn’t known and there are no accounts that have survived to this day that describe it in any real detail. As such, we’re unable to say for sure which way the thumb was supposed to be pointed if the audience wanted a given gladiator to be killed or if they could just wave their thumbs around at random, which it seems may well have been the case.*

*So that’s voting for death, what about life? The gesture to spare a given gladiator’s life seems to have been neither a thumbs up nor a thumbs down. Instead, you had to hide your thumb inside your fist, forming a gesture known as pollice compresso, “compressed thumb”.*

Source: Karl Smallwood. “THE TRUTH ABOUT GLADIATORS AND THE THUMBS UP.” Today I Found Out. 23 October 2014. Accessed 17 February 2022

<http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2014/10/give-thumbs-gesture-get-start/>

— 2.3 —

*Were all Tiberius’ body stuck with eyes, (450)*

*And every wall and hanging in my house*

*Transparent as this lawn I wear, or air;*

*Yea, had Sejanus both his ears as long*

*As to my inmost closet, I would hate*

*To whisper any thought, or change an act, (455)*

*To be made Juno's rival. Virtue's forces  
Show ever noblest in conspicuous courses.*

(Act 2, lines 450-457)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 287-288.

The below is a quotation from my book *Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*:

*Rumor has wings and many feathers. Her many eyes  
never sleep, and she has many tongues and many  
ears. By night she flies, and by day she watches and  
listens. She values lies as much as she values truths.*

Source of Above: David Bruce, *Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*.

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/277646>

— 3.1 —

*Augustus well foresaw what we should suffer  
Under Tiberius, when he did pronounce (485)  
The Roman race most wretched that should live  
Between so slow jaws, and so long a-bruising.*

(Act 3, lines 484-487)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 312.

Suetonius, in his “Life of Tiberius” (*Lives* III.21), wrote:

*I know, it is generally believed, that upon Tiberius's quitting the room, after their private conference, those who were in waiting overheard Augustus say, “Ah! unhappy Roman people, to be ground by the jaws of such a slow devourer!”*

Source of Above:

Suetonius: *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars; An English Translation, Augmented with the Biographies of Contemporary Statesmen, Orators, Poets, and Other Associates*. Suetonius. Publishing Editor. J. Eugene Reed. Alexander Thomson [translator]. Philadelphia. Gebbie & Co. 1889.

<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dtib.%3Achapter%3D21>

— 3.2 —

*I have heard Augustus, (515)*

*In the bestowing of his daughter, thought*

*But even of gentlemen of Rome.*

(Act 3, Lines 515-517)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 313.

Note by David Bruce: Sejanus was a member of the equestrian class of citizens, which were ranked just below the noble class. Marriages could be arranged between the children of the two classes to strength alliances. Sejanus' daughter had been betrothed to a son of the future emperor Claudius, but a few days later, Claudius' son died, according to Suetonius, by choking to death on a pear he had thrown into the air and caught in his mouth.

See Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, "Life of Claudius," 27.

<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0132%3Alife%3Dcl.%3Achapter%3D27>

— 4.1 —

*Was Silius safe? Or the good Sosia safe? (20)*

*Or was my niece, dear Claudia Pulchra, safe?*

*Or innocent Furnius?*

(Act 4, lines 22-22)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.



Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 323-324.

The below is Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 4, Chapter 52:

*At Rome meanwhile, besides the shocks already sustained by the imperial house, came the first step towards the destruction of Agrippina, Claudia Pulchra, her cousin, being prosecuted by Domitius Afer. Lately a praetor, a man of but moderate position and eager to become notorious by any sort of deed, Afer charged her with unchastity, with having Furnius for her paramour, and with attempts on the emperor by poison and sorcery. Agrippina, always impetuous, and now kindled into fury by the peril of her kinswoman, went straight to Tiberius and found him, as it happened, offering a sacrifice to his father. This provoked an indignant outburst. "It is not," she exclaimed, "for the same man to slay victims to the Divine Augustus and to persecute his posterity. The celestial spirit has not transferred itself to the mute statue; here is the true image, sprung of heavenly blood, and she perceives her danger, and assumes its mournful emblems. Pulchra's name is a mere blind; the only reason for her destruction is that she has, in utter folly, selected Agrippina for her admiration, forgetting that Sosia was thereby ruined." These words wrung from the emperor one of the rare utterances of that inscrutable breast; he rebuked Agrippina with a Greek verse, and reminded her that "she was not wronged because she was not a queen." Pulchra and Furnius were condemned. Afer was ranked with the foremost orators, for the ability which he displayed, and which won strong praise from Tiberius, who pronounced him a speaker of*

*natural genius. Henceforward as a counsel for the defence or the prosecution he enjoyed the fame of eloquence rather than of virtue, but old age robbed him of much of his speaking power, while, with a failing intellect, he was still impatient of silence.*

Source of Above:

Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 4, Chapter 52.

*Complete Works of Tacitus.* Tacitus. Alfred John Church. William Jackson Brodribb. Sara Bryant. edited for Perseus. New York: Random House, Inc. Random House, Inc. reprinted 1942.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D4%3Achapter%3D52>

— 4.3 —

*Here place yourselves, between the roof and ceiling, (95)*

(4.95)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 327.

The below is Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 4, Chapter 69:

*The men whom I have named now consulted how these conversations might fall within the hearing of more persons. It was necessary that the place of meeting should preserve the appearance of secrecy, and, if witnesses were to stand behind the doors,*

*there was a fear of their being seen or heard, or of suspicion casually arising. Three senators thrust themselves into the space between the roof and ceiling, a hiding-place as shameful as the treachery was execrable. They applied their ears to apertures and crevices. Latiaris meanwhile having met Sabinus in the streets, drew him to his house and to the room, as if he was going to communicate some fresh discoveries. There he talked much about past and impending troubles, a copious topic indeed, and about fresh horrors. Sabinus spoke as before and at greater length, as sorrow, when once it has broken into utterance, is the harder to restrain. Instantly they hastened to accuse him, and having despatched a letter to the emperor, they informed him of the order of the plot and of their own infamy. Never was Rome more distracted and terror-stricken. Meetings, conversations, the ear of friend and stranger were alike shunned; even things mute and lifeless, the very roofs and walls, were eyed with suspicion.*

Source of Above:

Tacitus, *Annals*, Book 4, Chapter 69.

*Complete Works of Tacitus*. Tacitus. Alfred John Church. William Jackson Brodribb. Sara Bryant. edited for Perseus. New York: Random House, Inc. Random House, Inc. reprinted 1942.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078%3Abook%3D4%3Achapter%3D69>

The *Annals* (From the Passing of the Divine Augustus) (1876) by Tacitus, translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Annals\\_\(Tacitus\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Annals_(Tacitus))

In real life, “the space between the roof and ceiling” would be an attic, but what would that space be on the stage?

I think it would be the upper stage, which is under the roof and whose floor forms a ceiling for part of the lower stage.

— 4.5 —

*Some are allured, (395)*

*Some threatened; others, by their friends detained,*

*Are ravished hence like captives, and, in sight*

*Of their most grievèd parents, dealt away*

*Unto his spintries, sellaries, and slaves,*

*Masters of strange and new-commented lusts, (400)*

*For which wise nature hath not left a name.*

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 2.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 341.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, spintries and sellaries are male prostitutes. Suetonius wrote about spintries and sellaries in his *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, “Life of Tiberius,” section 43, but frequently some of what he wrote is not translated in older books out of modesty. Sometimes the most salacious parts are left in Latin, untranslated, and put in an appendix.

This is section 43 of Suetonius, *Lives*, “Life of Tiberius,” uncensored:

*On retiring to Capri he devised a pleasure for his secret orgies: teams of wantons of both sexes, selected as experts in deviant intercourse and dubbed analysts, copulated before him in triple unions to excite his flagging passions. Its bedrooms were furnished with the most salacious paintings and sculptures, as well as with an erotic library, in case a performer should need an illustration of what was required. Then in Capri's woods and groves he arranged a number of nooks of venery where boys and girls got up as Pans and nymphs solicited outside bowers and grottoes: people openly called this "the old goat's garden," punning on the island's name.*

Source of Above:

Suetonius *Lives*, "Life of Tiberius." Section 43. Trans. J.C. Rolfe.

[https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/suetonius/12caesars/tiberius\\*.html](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/suetonius/12caesars/tiberius*.html)

A discussion of the word "spintriae" occurs here:

<https://humanities.classics.narkive.com/p88vT0Qg/spintriae>

A "sellary" may be defined in this way:

*A large sitting-room, drawing room, or reception room that is furnished with chairs or benches.*

McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Architecture and Construction. Copyright © 2003 by McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

This definition is not found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

## **CHAPTER 15: Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News***

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS (*The Staple of News*)**

**PENNYBOY JUNIOR:** the son. The heir and suitor. In some ways, he is a prodigal son. He has long legs.

**PENNYBOY SENIOR:** the uncle, a usurer.

**CANTER:** a beggar. A user of cant, specialized language used by people such as beggars and thieves. A canter can also be a singer, aka chanter. The Canter wears ragged clothing. Pennyboy Junior calls him his “founder.” In a way, the Canter is the founder of Pennyboy Junior’s fortune. He brought Pennyboy Junior the news that his father had died. Pennyboy Junior becomes wealthy through inheritance.

**CYMBAL:** Master of the Staple of News Office. He deals with empty gossip and is named after a tinkling cymbal.

**Note:** A Staple is an export commodities market. Also, it is a warehouse full of the commodity, or it is the commodity itself.

**FITTON:** Emissary Court and jeerer. The rare word “fitten” means “lie.” He dresses ostentatiously.

**Note:** Emissaries are news seekers. Emissary Court means that the person seeks news at Court.

**ALMANAC:** Doctor in physic (medicine) and jeerer. Also he compiles almanacs. He is a small man.

**SHUNFIELD:** Sea-captain and jeerer. A person who shuns the field of battle is not a brave person.

**MADRIGAL:** Poetaster and jeerer. A madrigal is a form of poetry. A poetaster is a petty and poor poet.

**Note:** Jeerers are sneerers.

PICKLOCK: Man of Law and Emissary Westminster. The Courts of Law were held at Westminster Hall. Someone who picks locks unethically engages in subterfuge.

PIEDMANTLE: Pursuivant-at-arms and heraldet. Pursuivant-at-arms is the lowest grade of heralds. This lowest grade has four members, which are named Rouge Dragon, Rouge Croix, Portcullis, and Blue Mantle, the name which Jonson burlesques in the name Piedmantle. A heraldet is a petty herald. “Pied” means “motley,” and “mantle” means “coat,” so Piedmantle is wearing the motley clothing of a fool.

REGISTER: Of the Staple of News Office. A register is a senior book-keeper or clerk.

Note: The Staple of News Office is also called the Staple of News and the News Office and the News Staple and the Staple Office and the Office. It is a business place that gathers and publishes news. In addition, it has a residential section where Cymbal and others can live. This author of this retelling usually calls it the Staple of News Office or the News Office to avoid confusion.

NATHANIEL: First Clerk of the Staple of News Office. Nathaniel Butter published the first edition of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, and he was one of the first publishers of a newspaper in English. The Nathaniel in this book is not Nathaniel Butter, but Ben Jonson is playing with the idea that Butter has become a lowly clerk instead of being a big-shot publisher.

THOMAS BARBER: Second Clerk of the Staple of News Office. Physically, he is a little man.

AURELIA CLARA PECUNIA: Infanta of the Mines. *Pecunia* is Latin for “money.” She is wealthy. The word “Infanta” loosely means “great lady.” Throughout the play,

she is literally a woman and figuratively money. Sometimes, she plays an allegorical role in the play.

**MORTGAGE:** Lady Pecunia's nurse. A nurse takes care of children or takes care of and chaperons young women.

**STATUTE:** Lady Pecunia's first serving-woman.

**BAND:** Lady Pecunia's second serving-woman. A band is a bond, aka security. Bands were also ribbons used to tie official documents.

**ROSE WAX:** Lady Pecunia's chambermaid. Wax often becomes pliant with little effort; the same is true of some chambermaids.

**BROKER:** Secretary and gentleman-usher to Her Grace (Lady Pecunia). A secretary is a knower of secrets: a trusted attendant who attends to the personal business of the employer. A gentleman-usher acts as an usher to a gentlewoman. He escorts her to places she needs to go. The word "broker" means a person who acts as a middleman in business deals between other people. To gain access to Lady Pecunia, some people attempt to bribe Broker. He has a beard.

**LICKFINGER:** A master-cook. A good cook is able to lick his fingers.

**FASHIONER:** The tailor. A fashioner is a tailor.

**LINENER:** A shirt-maker and dealer in linen goods.

**HABERDASHER:** A hatter.

**LEATHERLEG:** A shoemaker.

**SPURRIER:** A maker of spurs.

**CUSTOMERS:** Male and female (including DOPPER, a she-Anabaptist).



PORTER.

DOGS: Two, named LOLLARD and BLOCK, belonging to Pennyboy Senior.

Musicians.

NICHOLAS (NICK): A boy singer.

PROLOGUE: One who speaks the prologue of the play.

GOSSIP MIRTH.

GOSSIP TATTLE.

GOSSIP EXPECTATION.

GOSSIP CENSURE, or Curiosity.

Note: Gossips are godmothers. The word “gossip” when applied to a person may be a term of endearment used by women, or it may mean “an idle chatterer.” A gossip can be a confidante.

BOOKHOLDER: A stage prompter.

A COUNTRY WOMAN.

TIREMEN: Stagehands.

**The Scene: LONDON**

**NOTES:**

An intermean is a passage of dialogue between acts.

Ben Jonson often regards the word “news” as plural.

## THE INDUCTION (*The Staple of News*)

The scene is a stage in London in 1626, and the King of England is Charles I.

The Prologue steps on stage. Following him are audience members Gossip Mirth, Gossip Tattle, Gossip Expectation, and Gossip Censure. All four are gentlewomen, and they are dressed like ladies. At this time, audience members were sometimes seated on the stage. Sometimes, badly behaved (and loud) audience members caused problems.

The Prologue began to address the audience: “For your own sake, not ours —”

Gossip Mirth said loudly to Gossip Tattle, “Come, gossip, don’t be ashamed. The play is *The Staple of News*, and you are the mistress and lady of Tattle; let’s have your opinion of it.”

Gossip Tattle had been hanging back, a little abashed.

Gossip Mirth then said to the Prologue, “Do you hear me, gentleman? Who are you? Gentleman-usher to the play? Please, help us to some stools here.”

The Prologue was not an usher, but the speaker of the prologue of the play. Nevertheless, he wanted the women to be seated quickly so that he could do his job.

He answered, “Where do you want some seats? On the stage, ladies?”

“Yes, on the stage,” Gossip Mirth said. “We are persons of quality, I assure you, and women of fashion, and we have come to see and to be seen — my Gossip Tattle here, and Gossip Expectation, and my Gossip Censure, and I am Mirth, the daughter of Christmas and spirit of Shrovetide. They say, ‘It’s merry when gossips meet.’ I hope your play will be a merry one!”

People often go to the theater to see and to be seen. Many people wear their best clothing at such times.

Shrovetide is a period of revelry before Lent.

“Or you will make it such, ladies,” the Prologue said.

He then said to a stagehand, “Bring a bench here.”

The stagehand brought a bench and placed it on stage, and the ladies sat down.

The Prologue said to them, “But what will the noblemen think, or the grave wits here, to see you seated on the bench thus?”

Usually men, not women, had seats on stage.

“Why, what should they think?” Gossip Mirth said. “But that they had mothers, as we had, and those mothers had gossips, aka godmothers (if their children were christened), as we are, and such as had a longing to see plays and sit upon and judge them, as we do, and arraign and censure both them and their poet-playwrights.”

“Oh, is that your purpose?” the Prologue said. “Why, Mistress Mirth and Madam Tattle, enjoy your delights freely.”

“See that your news is new and fresh, Master Prologue, and untainted,” Gossip Tattle said. “I shall find them to be otherwise, if they are stale or fly-blown, quickly!”

The Prologue began, “We ask no favor from you, only we would entreat of Madam Expectation —”

Gossip Expectation interrupted, “— what, Master Prologue?”

“That Your Ladyship would expect no more than you understand,” the Prologue answered.

“Sir, I can expect enough!” Gossip Expectation said.

“I fear too much, lady,” the Prologue said, “and do you teach others to do the like?”

“I can do that, too, if I have cause,” Gossip Expectation said.

“I beg your mercy,” the Prologue said. “You never did wrong, but with just cause.”

Ben Jonson believed that if a play of his failed, the cause was the lack of understanding of the audience.

The Prologue then asked, “Who’s this lady?”

“She is Curiosity, my Lady Censure,” Gossip Mirth answered.

“Oh, Curiosity!” the Prologue said. “You come to see who wears the new suit today? Whose clothes are best feathered, whatever the part may be? Which actor has the best leg and foot? What king plays without cuffs and his queen without gloves? Who rides post in stockings and dances in boots?”

Feathers were decorations for hats.

“To ride post” meant “to ride on horseback quickly.” Post-riders wore more than stockings on their feet.

Dancing in boots can be clumsy.

“Yes, and which amorous prince makes love in drink, or does overact prodigiously in embroidered satin and, having got the trick of it, will be monstrous still, in despite of counsel!” Gossip Censure said.

“Makes love” meant woos or flirts.

Looking at and criticizing actors’ costumes and actions were part of seeing and being seen.

The book-holder, aka prompter, entered the scene and said, “Mend your lights, gentlemen. Master Prologue, begin.”

The tiremen, aka stagehands, entered and attended to the lights, which were candles whose wicks needed to be trimmed.

“Ay me!” Gossip Tattle said.

“Ay me” is an expression indicating concern.

“Who’s that?” Gossip Expectation asked.

They were a little worried about the tiremen. Some plays used firecrackers and other such effects to excite the audience.

“Nay, don’t be startled, ladies,” the Prologue said. “These men carry no fireworks to frighten you, but a torch in their hands, to give light to the business. The truth is, there are a set of gamesters within in travail — in labor — of a thing called a play, and they are eager to be delivered of it, and they have entreated me to be their man-midwife, the Prologue, for they are likely to have a hard labor of it.”

Giving birth to a play can be difficult, indeed.

“Then the poet-playwright has abused himself, like an ass, as he is,” Gossip Tattle said.

“No, his actors will abuse him enough by acting badly, or I am deceived,” Gossip Mirth said.

She began to talk about Ben Jonson, the writer of the play they were about to see:

“Yonder he is within (I was in the tiring-house — dressing room — for a while to see the actors dressed), rolling himself up and down like a large barrel in the midst of them, and he was foaming with sweat. Never did a vessel of unfermented beer or wine work and begin to ferment so! His sweating put

me in mind of a good shroving dish (and I believe it would be taken up for a service of state somewhere if it were known) — a stewed poet!”

A good shroving dish is rich food for Shrovetide. A service of state is a rich banquet.

“He sits like an unbraced drum — a drum with no tension on the drumhead — with one of his heads beaten out. For that you must note: A poet has two heads, as a drum has, one for creating, the other for reciting, and his reciting head is all to pieces — they may gather it up in the dressing room — for he has torn the play’s script in a poetical fury and put himself to silence with bad wine, which, even if there were no other vexation, would be sufficient to make him the most miserable emblem of Patience.”

Gossip Censure said, “The Prologue. Quiet!”

**THE PROLOGUE FOR THE STAGE (*The Staple of  
News*)**

**(AND READERS OF THIS BOOK)**

For your own sakes, not his, he bade me say,  
Would [The playwright Ben Jonson wishes] you were come  
to hear, not see, a play.  
Though we his actors must provide for those  
Who are our guests, here, in the way of shows,  
The maker hath [poet-playwright has] not so; he'd have you  
wise  
Much rather by your ears than by your eyes,  
And prays you'll not prejudge his play for ill,  
Because you mark it not and sit not still,  
But have a longing to salute [greet] or talk  
With such[-and-such] a female, and from her to walk [move  
on]  
With your discourse to what is done, and where,  
How, and by whom, in all the town — but here.  
Alas! What is it to his scene [dramatic design, play] to know  
How many coaches in Hyde Park did show [appear]  
Last spring, what fare today at Medley's [a fashionable  
tavern that also served meals] was,  
If Dunstan [the Devil and St. Dunstan Tavern, whose sign  
showed St. Dunstan twisting the Devil's nose] or the  
Phoenix [another tavern] best wine has?  
They are things — but yet, the stage might stand as well

If it did neither hear these things, nor tell.  
Great noble wits, be good unto yourselves,  
And make a difference 'twixt [between] poetic elves [petit  
poets]  
And poets; all that dabble in the ink,  
And defile quills, are not those few [who] can think,  
Conceive, express, and steer the souls of men,  
As with a rudder, round thus [the Prologue demonstrated this  
with a quill] with their pen.  
He [The real poet] must be one that [who] can instruct your  
youth,  
And keep your acme [maturity, high point] in the state of  
truth,  
Must enterprise [undertake] this work; mark but his ways,  
What flight he makes, how new. And then he says,  
If that not like you [If you don't like] that [play which] he  
sends tonight,  
It is you have left [ceased] to judge, not he to write. [It is  
your judgment that is lacking, not the poet-playwright's  
(Jonson's) skill.]



**THE PROLOGUE FOR THE COURT (*The Staple of  
News*)**

**(IF THE PERSON READING THIS IS KING  
CHARLES III, THIS IS YOUR PROLOGUE)**

A work not smelling of the lamp [A work that is new],  
tonight,

But fitted for Your Majesty's disport [amusement],

And writ to the meridian [written to suit the taste] of your  
court,

We bring; and hope it may produce delight —

The rather, being offered as a rite [solemn offering]

To scholars, that [who] can judge and fair report

The sense they hear above the vulgar sort

Of nut-crackers, that [who] only come for sight.

Wherein, although our title, sir, be News,

We yet adventure here to tell you none,

But show you common follies, and so known

That though they are not truths, th'innocent [the innocent]  
Muse

Hath [Has] made so like as Fancy could them state,

Or Poetry, without scandal, imitate.

\*\*\*

Note: Audience members in Ben Jonson's day used to crack  
nuts, thus making much distracting noise. Artists still have  
such problems:

Soprano Frances Alda once was scheduled to give a concert at Versailles in the home of the Marquise de Brou. However, the audience was very noisy, and so she did not start singing even when her accompanist began to play. The Marquise asked her what was the matter, and Ms. Alda replied, "I know I am supposed to have a very strong voice, but even so it would be impossible for me to make myself heard above all this *tohu-bohu*." This shocked the audience into silence, and she sang without distractions. By the way, Mary Garden once told Ms. Alda, "I am always having to explain you to people. Half of them think you're a grand person, and the rest think you're a b\*tch." Ms. Alda replied, "They're both right."

Source: Alda, Frances. *Men, Women, and Tenors*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937. Pp. 61-62, 112-113.

Note: David Bruce retold this anecdote in his own words.

## ACT 1 (*The Staple of News*)

### — 1.1 —

In the lodging of Pennyboy Junior were Pennyboy Junior himself and Leatherleg the shoemaker.

The shoemaker had just helped Pennyboy Junior pull on a new pair of boots, and now Pennyboy Junior was walking in his gown, waistcoat, and breeches, awaiting his tailor.

“Many thanks, Leatherleg,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Get me the spur-maker, and then your part of helping to outfit me will be done.”

“I’ll do it immediately,” Leatherleg the shoemaker said as he exited.

Pennyboy Junior said to himself, “Look to me, wit, and look to my wit, land.”

His land was his inheritance, but “land” also meant “compatriots.”

“Look to my wit, land” therefore meant “Compatriots, admire my wit,” and unintentionally by Pennyboy Junior, “Inheritance, make up for whatever intelligence I lack.”

He continued, “That is, look upon me, and look upon me with all your eyes — male, female, and yes, hermaphroditic eyes — and in addition to those bring all your helps and magnifying lenses to see me at best advantage and augment my form as I come forth, for I do feel that I will be one worth looking at, shortly.

“By ‘shortly,’ I mean now, by and by.”

A succession of people were coming in by and by to outfit Pennyboy Junior in new, expensive, fine clothing.

He heard a noise and said, “It strikes!”

Pennyboy Junior drew out of a pocket his watch, which was striking the hours, and he set it on a table.

“One, two, three, four, five, six,” he counted. “Enough, enough, dear watch. Your pulse has beaten enough.”

The day was starting.

He continued, “Now sleep, and rest. I wish that you could make the time to rest, too. I’ll wind you up no more. The hour has come that I have awaited for so long!”

Pennyboy Junior had just attained his maturity: He was now twenty-one years old and had come into his inheritance.

He took off his gown that he had been wearing that night. In this society, such a gown could be informal dress for during the day.

But now that Pennyboy Junior had attained maturity, he would dress differently, and better. He would no longer be a ward, or dependent. He would dress like a great man.

He dropped his gown and said:

“There, there, drop my wardship, my pupil age, and my vassalage and my being in a state of servitude all together with you.

“Liberty and full rights, come, throw yourself about me, in a rich suit, cloak, hat, and band of linen for a collar, for now I’ll sue out no man’s livery but my own.”

The kind of suing he had in mind was a lawsuit as an heir to gain possession of his inheritance: his land and income. But he was also punning: Livery is the distinctive clothing worn by a great man’s servants. A glance at the livery would reveal for whom the servant worked. Pennyboy Junior was now no longer a dependent: He had figuratively thrown off that status when he threw off his gown: a nightgown in

which he slept. He had come into his inheritance. He would have his own servants.

“I stand on my own feet,” Pennyboy Junior said. “I have so much income a year, right, round, and sound, the lord of my own ground, and (to rhyme to it) threescore thousand pounds!”

“Threescore thousand pounds” are 60,000 pounds. Pennyboy Junior was a rich young man. This gave him an income of over 2,000 pounds per year.

Still waiting for his tailor, he went to the door and looked out.

“Not come?” he said. “Not yet? Tailor, you are a vermin, worse than the same you prosecute and prick in subtle — narrow — seam. Bah, I say no more —”

Tailors were traditionally regarded as lecherous, and many people made jokes about a tailor’s needle being a tailor’s penis, but a real needle could be used to kill lice hidden in seams.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “Thus to retard my longings, on the day I reach manhood, to beat you.”

One longing was to be finely dressed on this day of achieving his maturity, and another longing was to beat his tailor — or so he said.

He believed that great men had the prerogative of beating their tailor, and he was looking forward to doing it — or so he said.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “One-and-twenty years of life, since the clock struck, completed! And you will feel it, you foolish animal! I could pity him (if I were not heartily angry with him now) for this one piece of folly he bears about him:

to dare to tempt the fury of an heir with an income above two thousand pounds a year, yet hope to have his custom!

“Well, Master Fashioner, there’s some must break — a head — for this your breaking your appointment.”

One kind of breaking is going bankrupt. A tailor who does not keep his appointments could go bankrupt — or get his head broken.

Seeing the tailor enter the room, he said, “Have you come, sir?”

— 1.2 —

Carrying a suit of clothing, the tailor walked over to Pennyboy Junior and said, “May God give Your Worship joy.”

“Joy of what?” Pennyboy Junior asked. “Of your tardiness? And joy of your leaving me to stalk here in my breeches, like a tame heron, for you?”

Hérons have long legs, and so did Pennyboy Junior. He was “tame” because he could not leave his house without wearing the proper clothing that his tailor was bringing him.

The tailor said, “I just waited below until the clock struck.”

“Why, if you had come a quarter of an hour earlier, would it so have hurt you in reputation to have waited here?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“No, but Your Worship might have pleaded nonage, if you had got the suit of clothing on, before I could make just affidavit of the time,” the tailor replied.

To “plead nonage” meant to plead that one was not responsible for paying a debt because one was underage at the time the debt was incurred.

“That jest has gained your pardon,” Pennyboy Junior said. “You would have lived condemned to your own hell otherwise, and you would have never wrought even one stitch more for me or any Pennyboy.”

The “jest” was not a jest; it can be regarded as an insult.

Despite Pennyboy Junior’s words about beating his tailor, he was good-natured.

“Hell” was a place where tailors kept scraps of clothing. Without Pennyboy Junior’s custom, the tailor would have no reason to leave his shop and deliver clothing to Pennyboy Junior.

“I could have hindered your career, but now you are mine,” Pennyboy Junior said, “for one-and-twenty years, or for the longest length of one of three persons’ lives, choose whichever three persons you will. I’ll make you a copyholder of land, and I’ll pay your first bill without questioning its details.”

Pennyboy Junior was promising the tailor to give him his custom for 21 years, or for as long as the longest lived of any three people the tailor named lived.

A copyholder holds land with the permission of the land owner.

He then said, “Help me get this on.”

“Immediately, sir,” the tailor said. “I am bound to Your Worship.”

He helped Pennyboy Junior put on the suit of clothing.

“You shall be, when I have sealed for you a lease of my custom and guaranteed that I will be your customer,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“Your Worship’s barber is outside, waiting,” the tailor said.

“Who?” Pennyboy Junior asked. “Tom?”

He called, “Come in, Tom.”

Thomas Barber entered the room.

Pennyboy Junior said to him, “Set your things upon the table and spread your cloths and lay all forth *in procinctu* — in readiness — and tell us what’s the news.”

“Oh, sir, a Staple of News!” Thomas Barber said. “Or the New Staple, whichever you please.”

A Staple of News is a center for news. In this culture, newspapers were just now coming into existence.

“What’s that?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“It is an office, sir, a fine young office set up,” the tailor said. “I forgot to tell Your Worship.”

“An office set up for what?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

Thomas Barber said, “To enter all the news, sir, of the time —”

The tailor interrupted, “— and vent — publish — it as occasion serves! A place of huge commerce it will be! News will be vended as well as vented.”

“Please, be quiet,” Pennyboy Junior said to the tailor. “I cannot abide a talking tailor. Let Tom — he’s a barber — by his place relate it.”

Barbers are known for being talkative. Because they talk so much with their customers, they are purveyors of news — and gossip.

Pennyboy Junior then asked, “What is it? An office, Tom?”

Thomas Barber answered, “Newly erected here in the house you are staying, almost on the same floor, it is a place where



all the news of all sorts shall be brought, and there be examined, and then registered, and so be issued under the seal of the Office, as Staple News. No other news will be current.”

The Staple of News Office would determine which news was current — that is, authentic.

Pennyboy Junior said, “I say, you are speaking of a splendid business, Tom.”

The tailor said, “Nay, if you knew the brain that hatched it, sir —”

“I know you well enough,” Pennyboy Junior said to the tailor.

He then said, “Give him a loaf, Tom.”

Not only were tailors stereotypically lecherous, they also stereotypically loved bread.

Pennyboy Junior added, “The loaf will quiet his mouth; that oven will be venting otherwise.”

The tailor’s mouth needed to be closed because what would be coming from it was hot air.

Pennyboy Junior then said to Thomas Barber, “Proceed.”

“The tailor is telling you the truth, sir,” Thomas Barber said. “Master Cymbal is Master of the Staple of News Office; he came up with the idea of it. He resides here in the house, and the great rooms he has taken for the Office and to set up his desks and bookcases, tables, and his shelves —”

The tailor interrupted, “— he’s my customer and a wit, sir, too. But he has splendid wits under him —”

Thomas Barber interrupted, “— yes, four emissaries —”

“— emissaries?” Pennyboy Junior interrupted. “Wait, there’s a fine new word, Tom! Pray God it signify anything. What are emissaries?”

Thomas Barber answered, “Men employed outward who are sent abroad to fetch in the commodity.”

Emissaries are men sent on a mission to gather information. These particular emissaries were reporters.

The tailor said, “From all regions where the best news are made —”

Thomas Barber interrupted, “— or vented forth —”

The tailor interrupted, “— by way of exchange, or trade —”

Pennyboy Junior interrupted, “— nay, you insist on speaking —”

“— my share, sir,” the tailor finished the sentence. “There’s enough to say for both the barber and me.”

Pennyboy Junior nodded, giving the tailor permission to speak: “Go on, then; speak all you know. I think the ordinaries should help them much.”

By “ordinaries,” he meant fashionable eating places: upscale taverns.

Misunderstanding what Pennyboy Junior meant by “ordinaries,” the tailor said, “Sir, they have ordinaries and extraordinaries, as many changes and variations as there are points in the compass.”

In this society, post ordinary and post haste were speeds of delivering messages and letters. Post ordinary were regular letter carriers, while post haste were very quick letter carriers. These letter carriers rode very quickly on horseback.

Thomas Barber began, “But the four cardinal quarters —”

Pennyboy Junior interrupted, “— aye, those, Tom —”

Thomas Barber interrupted, giving the four main places news could and would be gathered: “— the Court, sir, St. Paul’s, the Exchange, and Westminster Hall.”

The center aisle of St. Paul’s Cathedral was a center of gossip.

The Courts of Common Law and of Chancery were located at Westminster Hall, and much gossip occurred there.

The Court and the Royal Exchange were also places of gossip.

“Who is the chief?” Pennyboy Junior asked. “Who has the precedence?”

“The governor of the Staple of News Office, Master Cymbal,” Thomas Barber answered. “He is the chief; and after him are the emissaries.

“The First Emissary is at the Court, one Master Fitton. He’s a jeerer, too.”

“He’s a jeerer, too” is ambiguous. It can mean, 1) “Cymbal is a jeerer, and so is Fitton,” or 2) “Fitton is an emissary, and he is also a jeerer.”

“A jeerer?” Pennyboy Junior asked. “What’s that?”

“A wit,” the tailor answered.

One kind of “wit” is to jeer at and mock other people.

“Or half a wit,” Thomas Barber said. “Some of them are half-wits, two to a wit; there are a set of them.

“Master Ambler is the Emissary at St. Paul’s. He is as fine-paced a gentleman as you shall see walk the middle aisle.

“And then my froy — that is, handsome — Hans Buzz, a Dutchman, is Emissary at the Exchange.”

The tailor said, “I had thought Master Burst, the merchant, had been made Emissary at the Exchange.”

“No,” Thomas Barber said. “He has a rupture; he has sprung a leak — he has gone bankrupt.”

In fact, the word “burst” meant bankrupt.

Thomas Barber continued, “The Emissary at Westminster Hall is undisposed of yet. That emissary has not yet been named.

“Then the other positions are the examiner, the register, and two clerks — they manage all at home, and sort, and file, and seal the news, and issue them.”

Pennyboy Junior said, “Tom, dear Tom, what may my means and wealth do for you? Ask, and have it. I would like to be doing some good — it is my birthday — and I’d do it promptly. I feel a secret longing to be bountiful and generous, and I would not long lie fallow.

“I ask you to think, and speak, and wish for something.”

Thomas Barber said, “I wish that I had just one of the clerks’ places in this Staple of News Office.”

“You shall have it, Tom, if silver or gold will fetch it,” Pennyboy Junior said. “What’s the rate? At what is it set in the market?”

Masters received payment to take on a new apprentice.

“Fifty pounds, sir,” Thomas Barber said.

“Even if it were a hundred pounds, Tom, you shall not lack it,” Pennyboy Junior said.

The tailor leapt at and hugged him, saying, “Oh, noble master!”

“What is this now, Aesop’s ass!” Pennyboy Junior said.

One of Aesop’s fables is about an ass that observed its master favoring a lap dog. Wanting similar attention, the ass decided to act like a lap dog, and it jumped up on its master’s lap. Of course, the ass’ hooves and weight hurt its master, and the master’s servants drove the ass back to its stable with many blows.

Tom Barber was a little man; the tailor was much larger.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “Because I play with Tom, must I necessarily run into your rude embraces? Stand still, sir. Clown’s fawnings are like a horse attempting a salutation by curtsying.”

He then asked Thomas Barber, “How do you like my new suit of clothing, Tom?”

“Master tailor has hit your measures, sir,” Thomas Barber said. “He’s molded you and made you, as they say.”

Clothes and a tailor make a man.

“No, no, not I,” the tailor said. “I am an ass, old Aesop’s ass.”

“Nay, tailor,” Pennyboy Junior said. “I can do you a good turn, too. Don’t be musty and peevish, although you have molded me, as little Tom says. I think you have put me in moldy pockets.”

He pulled out his pockets.

“Your pockets are perfumed,” the tailor said, “with good and right Spanish perfume — the Lady Estifania’s. The cost is twelve pounds for a pair of perfumed pockets.”

“Your bill will say so,” Pennyboy Junior said, drily. “Please tell me, tailor, what authors you read to help your invention? Italian prints? Or tapestries? They are tailors’ libraries.”

Much English fashion was copied from the fashions of other countries.

“I scorn such helps,” the tailor said.

He relied on his own invention for his fashions.

Pennyboy Junior said, “Oh, though you are a silkworm, and deal in satins and velvets and rich plushes, you cannot spin all forms out of yourself; they are quite other things.

“I think this suit of clothing has made me wittier than I was.”

“Believe it, sir,” the tailor said. “Clothes do much to improve the wit, as weather does on the brain; and thence comes your proverb: ‘The tailor makes the man.’”

The right kind of weather can affect the brain and make it alert and sharp, and the wrong kind of weather can affect the brain and make it dull and drowsy. Modern operating rooms are kept at the cold temperature proven to keep surgeons alert and sharp.

Clothes can make the man. Think of the king in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

The king’s duds was all black, and he did look real swell and starchy. I never knowed how clothes could change a body before. Why, before, he looked like the orneriest old rip that ever was; but now, when he’d take off his new white beaver and make a bow and do a smile, he looked that grand and good and pious that you’d say he had walked right out of the ark, and maybe was old Leviticus himself.

The tailor continued, “I speak by experience of my own customers. I have had gallants, both court and country, who would have fooled you completely into believing while they were wearing a new suit of clothing that they were the best wits in being. They kept their social acceptability up as long as their clothes lasted and were handsome and neat; but then as their elbows wore out again, or their clothes had a stain or spot, these gallants sank in social respectability most wretchedly.”

Pennyboy Junior said, “What you report is but the common calamity, and seen daily. And therefore you’ve another, answering proverb: ‘A broken sleeve keeps the arm back.’”

A person with a broken sleeve would like to keep that fact hidden and so would not move that arm and would avoid drawing attention to the broken sleeve.

“It is true, sir,” the tailor said. “And thence we say that such a one plays at peep-arm.”

If a sleeve had a tear in it or is worn through, one could peep at the arm inside. Therefore, the person wearing the broken sleeve tried to cover up the tear or worn-through spot.

“Do you say that?” Pennyboy Junior said. “It is wittily said. I wonder that gentlemen and men of means will not maintain themselves fresher in wit — I mean in clothes — to the highest point possible.

“For he who is out of clothes is out of fashion, and to be out of fashion is to be out of countenance, and to be out of countenance is to be out of wit.”

A person who is out of countenance is flustered. The word “countenance” refers to appearance, such as the expression on one’s face.

He then asked, “Hasn’t rogue haberdasher come?”

The haberdasher, the linener, and Leatherleg the shoemaker entered the room. They were carrying apparel and bills. The haberdasher was primarily a hat-maker, and the linener was primarily a shirt-maker.

“Yes, here I am, sir,” the haberdasher said. “I have been waiting outside the door this half-hour.”

“Give me my hat,” Pennyboy Junior said.

Everyone became busy, helping him.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “Put on my belt. Rascal, does my ruff sit well?”

The ruff was a frilled collar.

“In print,” the linener said.

“In print” meant “perfectly.”

“Slave,” Pennyboy Junior said.

He believed that great men could be rude, and he believed that he was a great man. To him, a great man was a rich man.

The linener gave him a mirror and said, “Look at yourself.”

Scrutinizing himself, Pennyboy Junior asked, “Is this same hat of the block *passant*?”

He was asking if his hat was in the latest style.

He then said, “Do not answer me; I cannot stay for an answer. I do feel the powers of one-and-twenty like a tide flow in upon me, and I perceive that an heir can conjure up all spirits in all circles.

“Rogue, rascal, slave — give tradesmen their true names, and they appear to them immediately.”



By saying the correct name of a spirit along with other words, a conjurer can summon the spirit and keep it safely contained within a protective circle.

“For profit,” the linener said.

“Come, cast my cloak about me,” Pennyboy Junior said.

He was punning on “casting a spell.”

He continued. “I’ll go see this Staple of News Office, Tom, and be trimmed afterwards.”

“Trimmed” means 1) barbered, and 2) cheated, as in excessive billing for services rendered.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “I’ll put you in possession of the clerk’s office, my prime work!”

His spur-maker then came into the room, carrying spurs.

“By God, my spurrier!” Pennyboy Junior said. “Put them on me, boy, quickly. I was about to have lost my spurs with too much speed.”

The spurrier helped Pennyboy Junior put on his spurs.

Pennyboy Junior had not actually done anything to win his spurs; he had merely purchased them with inherited money.

### — 1.3 —

Singing, the Canter walked over to them. He was wearing a patched cloak, and he was carrying a bag of money. In his song and conversation, he compared Pennyboy Junior and the tradesmen to a military officer and his troops. In his conversation, Pennyboy Junior continued the same comparison.

The Canter sang:

*“Good morning to my joy, my jolly Penny-boy!*

*“The lord and the prince of plenty!*

*“I come to see what riches you bear in your breeches,*

*“The first of your one-and-twenty.*

*“What, do your pockets jingle? Or shall we need to mingle*

*“Our strength both of foot and horses?*

*“These fellows look so eager as if they would beleaguer*

*“An heir in the midst of his forces!*

*“I hope they are sergeants who hang upon your margents!”*

“Sergeants” were 1) officers who arrested debtors, or 2) military personnel.

“Margents” were 1) margins, or 2) military flanks.

Looking at the spurrier, the Canter said, “This rogue has the jowl — jaw — of a jailor!”

The young Pennyboy Junior sang in response:

*“Oh, founder, no such matter, my spurrier, and my hatter,*

*“My linen-man, and my tailor —”*

He then said in his normal conversational voice, “You should have been brought in, too, shoemaker, if the time had been longer, and Tom Barber.”

He then asked, “How do you like my company, old Canter? Don’t I muster a brave troupe? All are billmen —”

A bill is a weapon — half-ax and half-spear — that is also known as a halberd. Another kind of bill is a document of a debt that must be paid.

Pennyboy Junior said to the tradesmen, “Present your arms before my founder here. This is my founder, this same learned Canter!”

The Canter was a pseudo-father for Pennyboy Junior.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “He brought me the first news of my father’s death. I thank him, and ever since I have called him my founder.

“Worship him, boys.”

The word “worship” means adore.

Pennyboy Junior then took the bills from the tradesmen and said, “I’ll read only the sums, and pass them immediately.”

Leatherleg the shoemaker said, “Now ale!”

All the other tradesmen said a toast: “And strong ale bless him!”

Pennyboy Junior said, “By God, some ale and sugar for my founder!”

In this society, people used sugar to sweeten ale, which was also often warmed.

Putting the tradesmen’s bills in his pockets, Pennyboy Junior said, “They are good bills, sufficient and properly drawn-up bills; these bills may pass.”

He meant that he would pay them without challenging any of the items on the bills.

The Canter said, “I do not like those paper squibs, good master.”

“Squibs” are firecrackers.

This kind of “master” is a man who has come of age.

The Canter continued, “They may undo your store — I mean, your store of credit — and fire your arsenal, if perhaps you do not in time make good those outer works, your pockets, and take a garrison in of some two hundred to beat these pioneers off who carry a mine that would blow you up at last.”

Pioneers are under-miners. They would dig a tunnel — a mine — under a city wall and plant bombs to blow it up.

The bills could be like a bomb that would blow up Pennyboy Junior’s line of credit if he could not pay them off in good time. It would be wise for him to have two hundred or so coins in reserve so that he could pay his bills in a timely manner, and it would be wise for him not to spend the two hundred or so coins quickly.

The Canter advised, “Secure your casemates.”

Casemates are vaulted chambers used by soldiers defending a fortification. Pennywise Junior could defend his line of credit by keeping money in reserve — and not spending it quickly.

The Canter, who was holding a bag of money, continued, “Master Picklock, sir, your man of law and learned attorney, has sent you a bag of munitions.”

Taking the bag, Pennyboy Junior asked, “What is it?”

“Three hundred pieces,” the Canter said.

The pieces were figuratively bullets and literally gold coins.

“I’ll dispatch them,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“Do that,” the Canter said. “I would have your strengths lined and perfumed with gold as well as ambergris.”

The strengths were strongholds. In this case, they were Pennyboy Junior’s pockets.

Pennyboy Junior's pockets were already perfumed — ambergris is used in the making of perfume — but he also needed gold coins as a line of defense against becoming impoverished.

A young man who has recently come into a lot of money can be a big spender and too soon discover that he has no money left to spend.

The Canter understood “dispatch” to mean “stow away” (a rare meaning), but Pennyboy Junior meant that he would dispense the gold coins right away.

“Godamercy,” Pennyboy Junior said to the Canter. “May God reward you.”

He then said to the tradesmen, “Come; *ad solvendum*, boys! Settling-up time! There, there, and there, etc.”

He paid all the tradesmen what he owed them.

As he dispensed the coins, Pennyboy Junior said, “I look on nothing but *totalis*.”

He did not examine the individual items of the bills to check for inaccuracies, but simply paid their totals.

The Canter said to himself, “Look! See the difference between the covetous and the prodigal: The covetous man never has money, and the prodigal man will have none shortly!”

Misers say that they have no money to spend, give, or lend, and prodigious spenders soon have no money to spend.

“Ha, what does my founder say?” Pennyboy Junior said.

He then said to the tradesmen, “I thank you. I thank you, sirs.”

The tradesmen replied, “God bless Your Worship, and Your Worship’s chanter.”

A chanter is a singer: The Canter had entered the scene singing.

Leatherleg the shoemaker, the linerer (shirt-maker), and the haberdasher (hatter) exited.

The Canter said, “I say that it is nobly done to cherish shopkeepers, and pay their bills without examining them, as you have just done.”

Chances are, he was being sarcastic. It is good to pay bills in a timely manner, but it is also good to make sure that the bills are accurate.

“Alas!” Pennyboy Junior said. “They have had a pitiful hard time of it, a long vacation from their cheating.”

The Inns of Court had a long summer vacation, making tradesmen complain about lack of custom because so many of their customers had left London. In addition, in early 1626, London was still recovering from the plague.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “Poor rascals, I do it out of charity. I want to advance their trade again, and I want to have them make haste to be rich, swear, and forswear wealthily.”

One way to become wealthy — many people believe — is to swear and forswear. That is, to swear and then commit perjury, or to make and then break promises.

Pennyboy Junior then asked the spurrier, “Why are you staying here, sirrah?”

“Sirrah” was used to address a man of lower social standing than the speaker. The use of the word by a gentleman to refer to a tradesman was not regarded as impolite.

“I stay because of my box, sir,” the spurrier said.

He kept his tips in a money box.

“Your box?” Pennyboy Junior said. “Why, there’s an angel.”

An angel was a coin worth ten shillings; Pennyboy Junior was a generous tipper.

Pennyboy Junior then said, “If my spurs are not true Ripon —”

Ripon was a town that had the reputation of making very good rowels — pointed spur-wheels.

The spurrier interrupted, “— never give me a penny if I don’t strike through your bounty with the rowels.”

Ripon rowels were reputed to be so good that they could pierce a coin such as an angel.

The spurrier exited.

Pennyboy Junior asked the Canter, who was wearing a patched cloak, “Do you want any money, founder?”

“Who, sir, I?” the Canter said. “Didn’t I tell you I was bred in the mines, under Sir Bevis Bullion?”

These were gold and silver mines.

“That is true,” Pennyboy Junior said. “You did tell me, but I quite forgot. You mine-men lack no money; your streets are paved with it. There the molten silver runs out like cream on cakes of gold.”

“And rubies grow like strawberries,” the Canter said.

“It would be splendid being there!” Pennyboy Junior said.

He then said to Thomas Barber, “Come, Tom, we’ll go to the office now.”

“What office?” the Canter asked.

“The News Office, the New Staple,” Pennyboy Junior said. “You shall go, too. It is here in the house, on the same floor, Tom says.”

Actually, Thomas Barber had said it was “almost on the same floor.”

Pennyboy Junior continued, “Come, founder, let us indulge in ale and nutmegs.”

In this society, ale was sometimes flavored with nutmegs.

— 1.4 —

The register and Nathaniel, a clerk, were in the Staple of News Office, which was located in the same building in which Pennyboy Junior lodged. A country woman entered the room through another door and stood there.

The register asked Nathaniel the clerk, “Are those desks fit now? Set forth the table, the carpet, and the chair. Where are the news that were examined last? Have you filed them up?”

“Not yet,” Nathaniel the clerk said. “I had no time.”

The register then asked, “Are those news registered that Emissary Buzz sent in last night? The news of Spinola and his eggs?”

Marquis Ambrosio Spinola was the commander of the Spanish forces in the Netherlands. The eggs were weapons: incendiary egg-grenades.

“Yes, sir, and they are filed,” Nathaniel the clerk said.

“What are you working on now?” the register asked.

“The news that our new Emissary Westminster gave us about the Golden Heir,” Nathaniel the clerk answered.



The Golden Heir was Pennyboy Junior, who was now a rich young man.

“Dispatch that speedily!” the register said. “That’s news indeed, and of importance.”

The country woman approached them.

“What would you have, good woman?” the register asked.

“I would have, sir, a groatsworth of any news, I don’t care what, to carry down into the country this Saturday to our vicar,” the country woman said.

A groat was worth four pence.

“Oh, you are a butter-woman,” the register said. “Ask Nathaniel the clerk, who is standing there.”

A butter-woman sells butter, but Nathaniel Butter was one of the first news-publishing figures in London.

Nathaniel the clerk said, “Sir, I tell her that she must wait until Emissary Exchange or Emissary St. Paul’s send their news in, and then I’ll fix her up with what she wants.”

“Good woman, have patience,” the register said. “It is not now as when the captain lived.”

The country woman exited.

The captain was a reference to Thomas Gainsford, who had assisted Nathaniel Butter. Both the register and Nathaniel the clerk wanted to publish reputable news and not just produce “news” to make a buck.

Nathaniel the clerk said, “You’ll blast the reputation of the office now, in the bud, if you dispatch these groats so soon.”

In other words: If you send out fake news, quickly you will ruin the reputation of the Staple of News Office, almost before the News Office has started its work.

Nathaniel the clerk continued, “Let the customers wait, in the name of policy — it’s a good idea to keep them waiting until we have real news to give them.”

— 1.5 —

Cymbal and Fitton ushered Pennyboy Junior into the room. Following them were Thomas Barber and the Canter, both of whom stood to the side.

“Truly, they are pleasant rooms,” Pennyboy Junior said. “What place is this?”

“This is the outer room, where my clerks sit and keep their sides,” Cymbal said. “That is, they look after their own sections. The register is in the midst; the examiner sits in a private office there, within; and here I have my various rolls and files of news by the alphabet, and all put up under their heads.”

One function of the Staple of News Office was to examine news and determine its worth and believability.

“But are those various rolls and files of news, too, subdivided?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“Into authentical and apocryphal,” Cymbal replied.

Fitton added, “Or news of doubtful believability, such as barbers’ news.”

Cymbal and Fitton often interrupted each other and finished each other’s sentences.

“And tailors’ news, porters’ news, and watermen’s news,” Cymbal added.

Watermen are people who work on the river and do such things as row customers from one side of the Thames to the other.

Fitton said, “Whereto, beside the *coranti* and *gazetti* —”

The *coranti* and *gazetti* are sheets of news.

Cymbal interrupted, “— I have the news of the season.”

Fitton added, “Such as vacation-news, term-news, and Christmas-news.”

These were news at various times in London, such as when the Inns of Court were in session (term-news).

“And news of the faction,” Cymbal added.

Factions can be of various kinds, including religious.

Fitton explained, “Such as the Reformed news, Protestant news —”

Reformed equals Calvinist, Protestant equals Lutheran, and Pontifical equals Catholic.

Cymbal interrupted, “— and Pontifical news. For each of these, the day-books, characters and ciphers, and precedents (from which copies are made) are kept, together with the names of special friends —”

Day-books were records of the day’s events.

Fitton interrupted, “— and men of correspondence in the country —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— yes, of all ranks and all religions —”

Fitton interrupted, “— representatives and factors —”

“Factors” are agents.

Cypher interrupted, “— liegers who lie throughout all the shires of the kingdom.”

“Liegiers” are resident agents. “Lie” can mean 1) reside, or 2) tell falsehoods.

“This is fine and bears a brave relation!” Pennyboy Junior said. “It is worth hearing! But what says Mercurius Britannicus to this?”

Some of Butter’s newsbooks of the time contained the phrase “printed for *Mercurius Britannicus*.”

The Latin name means the *British Mercury*. Mercury was a Roman god who was the messenger of the gods, and so a “mercury” is a person who brings news.

Cymbal and Fitton began to talk about and criticize the news endeavors of *Mercurius Britannicus* and other pioneers of the conveying of news.

Cymbal said, “Oh, sir, he gains by it half in half.”

In other words, his profits have greatly improved.

“Nay, more,” Fitton said. “I’ll vouch for it. For where he was accustomed to get in hungry captains, obscure statesmen —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— fellows to drink with him in a dark room in a tavern, and eat a sausage —”

Fitton interrupted, “— we have seen it —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— as obliged to keep so many politic and crafty pens going, to feed the press —”

To get news that would make a profit, rival news publishers used such “sources” as hungry military captains and obscure statesmen. Such sources would tell a tale — often a false tale — to get a meal and a pint.

Fitton interrupted, “— and dish out ‘news,’ whether true, or false —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— now all that charge is saved the public chronicler —”

The Staple of News Office would use reliable sources and dispense with the cost of paying bad sources.

Fitton interrupted, “— how do you call him there? —”

A man named Edmund Howes was a then-contemporary public chronicler who continued the historian John Stow’s *Annals of England* — a series of chronicles of England — after Stow died.

Cymbal interrupted and continued his sentence, “— and gentle reader —”

The newsbooks of the time used this phrase in their prefaces.

Fitton interrupted, “— he who has the maidenhead of all the books.”

Cymbal added, “Yes, dedicated to him —”

Fitton interrupted, “— or rather prostituted —”

News purveyors can pander to their readers. Pandering is literally sexual in nature, but Cymbal and Fitton were referring to a metaphorical pandering.

“You are right, sir,” Pennyboy Junior said.

Cymbal said, “The gentle readers no more shall be abused.

“Nor shall country parsons of the Inquisition and busy justices trouble the peace, and both torment themselves and their poor ignorant neighbors with inquiries after the many and most innocent monsters that never came in the counties they were charged with.”

Sometimes rumors of monsters in the rural areas circulated and were written about in the news-sheets.

“Why, I think, sir,” Pennyboy Junior said, “if the honest common people will willfully be hoodwinked, why shouldn’t they have their pleasure in believing the lies that are made for them, just as you yourselves in the Staple of News Office take pleasure in making up the lies?”

If people wish to believe made-up stories about Bigfoot and alien abductions, why interfere with that?

“Oh, sir, it is the printing of such made-up stories that we oppose!” Fitton said.

One purpose of the Staple of News Office was to print only real news.

“We do not forbid that any news be made up, but we do forbid that it be printed,” Cymbal said, “for when news is printed, it ceases, sir, to be news.”

Cymbal seemed to be saying that old news is no news. Once new news is printed, it becomes old news. New news must take its place.

Cymbal continued, “While the news is but written and not printed —”

Fitton interrupted, “— though it be never so false, it runs news still.”

News that is not printed but continues to be spread through gossip will remain current although it is false. The same tales about Bigfoot and alien abductions will continue to spread.

“See diverse men’s opinions!” Pennyboy Junior said. “To some people the very printing of tales makes them news. Some people don’t have the heart to believe anything but what they see in print.”

Fitton said, “Aye, that’s an error that has abused many; but we shall reform it, as we hope to reform many things besides that have crept among the popular abuses.”

It is an error to believe everything you read, and Fitton and Cymbal wanted to reform people so that they would not make that error.

Hmm. One way to reform people so that they would not believe everything they read would be to print news that was unbelievable.

If Fitton and Cymbal were to print news that was completely reliable and believable, they would be training people to believe everything they read.

Cymbal said, “Nor shall the publisher and bookseller cheat upon the time, by uttering over again —”

Fitton interrupted, “— in seven years, as the age dotes —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— and grows forgetful of them, his antiquated pamphlets, with new dates.”

Old pamphlets of sensational news stories about such topics as marauding headless bears were sometimes slightly altered and reissued years later as new news.

Cymbal continued, “But all shall come from the mint —”

Fitton interrupted, “Fresh and new stamped —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— with the office seal: Staple Commodity.”

Fitton said, “And if a man wants to feel certain of his news, he may. For twopence a sheet he shall be warranted, and have a policy — a written guarantee — for it.”

The Staple of News Office would guarantee the certainty and reliability of its news.

“Sir, I admire the method of your place,” Pennyboy Junior said. “All things within it are so digested, fitted, and composed that it shows that here Wit has married Order.”

Fitton said, “Sir —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— we did the best we could to invite the times and attract contemporary taste.”

Fitton said, “It has cost sweat and freezing —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— and some broken sleeps before it came to this.”

They had put in much thought and effort before starting their Staple of News Office.

“I easily think it,” Pennyboy Junior said.

Fitton said, “But now it has the shape —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— and has come forth.”

“It is a most polite — fine — neat thing!” Pennyboy Junior said. “It has all the limbs that sense can taste!”

The Staple of News Office had all the parts that the mind can savor.

Cymbal said, “It is, sir, although I myself am saying it, as well-begotten a business, and as fairly helped into the world.”

“You must be a midwife, sir!” Pennyboy Junior said. “Or else the son of a midwife, please pardon me, to have helped it forth so fortunately!

“What news do you have? News of this morning? I would like to hear some fresh from the forge, as new as day, as they say.”

“And such we have, sir,” Cymbal said.



The register said, "Show him the last roll of Emissary Westminster's: 'The Heir.'"

"Come nearer, Tom," Pennyboy Junior said.

Thomas Barber, who had been standing to the side with the Canter, came forward.

Nathaniel the clerk read the news roll out loud:

*"There is a brave, young heir who has come of age this morning: Master Pennyboy."*

Pennyboy Junior, pleased that he had made the news, said, "That's I!"

Nathaniel the clerk continued reading out loud:

*"His father died on this day seven nights ago."*

"True!" Pennyboy Junior said.

Nathaniel the clerk continued reading out loud:

*"At six of the clock in the morning, just a week before Pennyboy Junior was one-and-twenty."*

"I am here in the news roll, Tom!" Pennyboy Junior said.

He then said to Nathaniel the clerk, "Proceed, please."

Nathaniel the clerk continued reading out loud:

*"An old canting beggar first brought him the news. Pennyboy Junior has employed the beggar to follow him since."*

"Why, you shall see him!" Pennyboy Junior said.

He called to the Canter, "Founder, come here!"

The Canter stepped forward.

Pennyboy Junior said, “He is no follower; instead, he is my companion.”

He then said to Cymbal, “Please put my companion in the news roll, friend.”

He then said to Nathaniel the clerk, “There’s an angel.”

Pennyboy Junior gave an angel — a coin — to Nathaniel the clerk.

He said to Cymbal, “You do not know he’s a wise old fellow, although he seems patched thus and made up of pieces.”

The Canter’s clothing was patched.

Pennyboy Junior said to the Canter, “Founder, we are in, here, in the Staple of News Office!”

Nathaniel the clerk exited.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “We are in this day’s news roll, already!”

He then said to Cymbal and Fitton, “I wonder how you came by this information about us, sirs.”

Cymbal explained, “A Master Picklock, a lawyer, who has purchased here a place, this morning, of an emissary under me —”

Fitton interrupted, “— Emissary Westminster —”

Cymbal continued, “— gave the news to the Staple of News Office —”

Fitton interrupted, “— for his essay, his masterpiece.”

The lawyer had demonstrated his ability to get news by giving the Staple of News Office the news about Pennyboy Junior.

To become a master, apprentices had to demonstrate their mastery of the skill they were studying by creating a master piece of work, aka masterpiece. “Essay” is another word for “masterpiece.”

“My man of law!” Pennyboy Junior said. “He’s my attorney, and my solicitor, too.”

Attorneys do legal work requiring appearances in court, while solicitors do legal work that does not require appearances in court.

He continued, “He’s a fine pragmatic man of business! What’s his place worth?”

Cymbal said, “A *nemo-scit*, sir.”

*Nemo scit* means “Nobody knows.” The job holder would be paid according to the news brought in and printed.

Fitton said, “It depends on the news that come in —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— and as they are issued. I have the just moiety — exactly half — for my part; then the other moiety is parted into seven shares. The four emissaries — whereof my cousin Fitton here’s for Emissary Court, Ambler for Emissary St. Paul’s, and Buzz for the Emissary Exchange, Picklock for Emissary Westminster, with the examiner and register — they have full parts, and then one part is underparted — subdivided — to a couple of clerks. And there’s the just and exact division of the profits!”

“Have you hired those clerks, sir?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

One of the two clerk positions had been filled; Nathaniel had it.

“There is one desk empty, but it has many suitors,” Cymbal said.

“Sir, may I present one more suitor for the position and carry — win — it, if his qualities, or gifts, whatever you will call them —”

If Pennyboy Junior were to carry — win — the position of clerk for Thomas Barber, he would carry — bear — the cost.

Cymbal finished the sentence: “— be sufficient, sir.”

“What are your present clerk’s abilities?” Pennyboy Junior asked. “How is he qualified?”

The present clerk was Nathaniel.

“He was a decayed stationer,” Cymbal replied, “but he knows news well and can sort and rank them.”

A decayed stationer is a bankrupt publisher or book seller.

Fitton added, “And he can make news when necessary.”

Cymbal said, “He’s true St. Paul’s bred, in the churchyard.”

Many booksellers’ and publishers’ shops could be found at the courtyard of St. Paul’s. On the west door of St. Paul’s, people posted advertisements for employment.

Pennyboy Junior said, “And this one is true bred at the west door, on the other side. He’s my barber, Tom, an apt scholar, and a Master of Arts — he was made, or went out, Master of Arts in a throng at the university, as before, one Christmas, he got into a masque at court by his wit, and the good means of his cittern, holding it up like this” — he pantomimed strumming a cittern — “as he pretended to be one of the musicians.”

Barbers often had citterns in the shops for customers to play.

In 1615, King James I of England paid a visit to Cambridge University, which conferred Master of Arts degrees on his entire retinue. Some people, including apothecaries and

barbers, got degrees because they crowded in among the members of the entourage when they received degrees.

A cittern is a stringed instrument that is an early forerunner of a guitar.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “Tom’s a nimble fellow, and alike skilled in every liberal science, as having certain snaps of all.”

Barbers snapped their fingers while plying their trade. The word “snaps” also meant oddments or scraps: Tom Barber knew a little about a lot.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “He has a neat, quick vein in forging news, too.”

“Forging” can mean 1) creating, making, or gathering, or 2) counterfeiting.

Pennyboy Junior continued:

“I do love him, and I promised him a good turn, and that I would do it.

“What’s your price? What’s the value?”

“Fifty pounds, sir,” Cymbal said.

Thomas Barber had earlier stated that exact sum: He was a news gatherer, in fact.

Pennyboy Junior said to Thomas Barber, “Get in, Tom; take possession; I install you.”

He paid Cymbal the fifty pounds so that Tom could become the second clerk in the Staple of News Office.

Pennyboy Junior said to Cymbal, “Here, count your money.”

He then said to Thomas Barber, “May God give you joy, good Tom, and let me hear from you every minute of news

while the New Staple stands or the News Office lasts, which I wish may never be less for your sake.”

Nathaniel the clerk returned and said to Cymbal, “The Emissaries, sir, want to speak with you and Master Fitton; they have brought in news, three bales altogether.”

A bale is a big bundle.

Cymbal said to Pennyboy Junior, “Sir, you are welcome here.”

“So is your creature,” Fitton said.

The word “creature” meant “creation.” Pennyboy Junior had created Tom the Barber’s new prosperity by buying for him his position as clerk of the Staple of News Office.

Cymbal and Fitton now said their goodbyes.

“Business calls us off, sir, business that may concern the News Office,” Cymbal said to Pennyboy Junior.

“Keep me in your good graces, sir, always in your Staple of News Office,” Pennyboy Junior said. “I am here your friend, and I am on the same floor.”

“We shall be your servants,” Fitton said.

Everyone exited except Pennyboy Junior and the Canter.

“How do you like it, founder?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“All is well,” the Canter said, “except that your man of law, I think, isn’t appearing at the time appointed for him to come.”

He heard a noise, looked up, saw the man of law approaching, and said, “Oh, here comes Master’s Worship.”

Picklock entered the room and asked, "How is the heir, bright Master Pennyboy? Is he awake yet in his one-and-twenty?"

Seeing Pennyboy Junior's new clothes, he said, "Why, this is far better than to wear cypress, dull smutting gloves, or melancholy blacks, and have a pair of twelvepenny broad ribbons laid out like labels."

Cypress was a gauzy fabric that was used in mourning veils and other mourning garments after being dyed black. "Smutting" meant "black." "Labels" were strips of cloth that hung from the sides of a bishop's mitre.

Pennyboy Junior's outfit was much different from the clothing that he would have worn at a funeral.

Pennyboy Junior said, "I should have managed to have laughed as heartily in my mourner's hood as in this suit of clothing, if it had pleased my father to have been buried with the trumpeters."

"The heralds of arms, you mean," Picklock said.

Pennyboy Junior said, "I mean, all noise that is superfluous!"

Burial with trumpeters in attendance was expensive, and burial by heralds was very expensive. Fortunately for Pennyboy Junior, his father was frugal and against such expense.

"All that idle pomp and vanity of a tombstone your wise father did, by his will, prevent," Picklock said. "Your Worship had —"

Pennyboy Junior finished the sentence: "— a loving and obedient father of him, I know it: He was a right, kind-natured man, to die so opportunely."

Children should be obedient, more so than fathers.

Did Pennyboy Junior mean that he wanted his father to die, or did he just mean that his father had arranged things so that his death would cause him as little trouble as possible?

“Opportune” can mean 1) convenient, 2) fitting, or 3) advantageous.

Picklock added, “And to settle all things so well, compounded for your wardship the week before, and left your estate entire without any charge upon it.”

Pennyboy Junior’s father had made sure that Pennyboy Junior would be able to inherit his entire estate without becoming a ward whose estate was managed by someone else. The word “compounded” meant both “arranged” and “made a payment.” Pennyboy Junior’s father had apparently paid any necessary legal fees before he died.

Pennyboy Junior said, “I must say that I lost an officer of him, a good bailiff, and I shall miss him.”

Pennyboy Junior’s father had been a good administrator of the estate. A bailiff is a steward or manager of an estate.

He added, “But all peace be with him. I will not wish him alive again, not I, for all my fortune.”

He planned to enjoy his new wealth.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “May God give Your Worship joy of your new place, your emissaryship, in the Staple of News Office!”

Picklock was Emissary Westminster. The Courts of Law were held at Westminster Hall.

“Do you know you why I bought it, sir?” Picklock asked.

“No, I don’t,” Pennyboy Junior said.



“To work for you, and carry a mine — carry out a stratagem — against the master of it, Master Cymbal, who has a plot upon a gentlewoman who was once designated for you, sir,” Picklock said.

“For me?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“Your father, old Master Pennyboy, of happy memory, and wisdom, too, as any in the county, being careful to find a fit marriage match for you in his own lifetime (but he was prevented from doing so), left it in writing in a codicil — an addition — here to be annexed to his will” — he showed the document — “that you, his only son, upon his charge, and blessing, should take due notice of a gentlewoman, sojourning with your uncle, Richer Pennyboy.”

Pennyboy Junior’s father wanted his son, Pennyboy Junior, to marry well.

Pennyboy Junior’s uncle, Richer Pennyboy, was also known as Pennyboy Senior, a miser.

“A Cornish gentlewoman,” Pennyboy Junior said. “I know her: Mistress Pecunia Do-all.”

A proverb states, “Money can do anything.”

“Do-all” can mean “Have sex with all.”

Picklock said, “A great lady indeed she is, and not of mortal race. She is Infanta of the Mines. Her Grace’s grandfather was duke and cousin to the King of Ophir, the Subterranean, but let that pass.”

In 1 Kings 2:28 King Solomon acquires gold from Ophir: “*And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon*” (King James Version).

Much wealth is subterranean; it comes from mines.

Picklock continued, “Her name is, or, rather, her three names are (for such she is) Aurelia Clara Pecunia, a great princess, of mighty power, although she lives in private with a contracted family — a diminished entourage.”

Aurelia Clara Pecunia means “Golden Bright Money.”

In this society, the word “family” often meant one’s household servants.

Picklock continued, “Her secretary —”

The Canter interrupted, “— who is her gentleman-usher, too —”

Picklock interrupted, “— his name is Broker.”

He then listed the rest of Aurelia Clara Pecunia’s entourage: “And then two gentlewomen, Mistress Statute and Mistress Band, with Wax, the chambermaid, and Mother Mortgage, the old nurse; two grooms — Pawn and his fellow.”

Grooms are man-servants.

Picklock continued, “You have not many to bribe, sir.”

Pennyboy Junior could bribe Aurelia Clara Pecunia’s entourage in order to gain access to Aurelia Clara Pecunia.

Picklock continued, “The work is feasible, and the approaches easy, by your own kindred.”

Because of his late father, and his wealth, Pennyboy Junior could easily find a way to approach Aurelia Clara Pecunia.

Picklock continued, “Now, sir, Cymbal — the master here and governor of the Staple of News Office — thinks by his fine arts and pomp of his great place to attract her. He concludes she is a woman, and that as soon as she hears of the Staple of News Office she’ll come to visit it, as women

all have longings to see new sights and shows. But your bounty, person, and finery must achieve her.”

Pennyboy Junior and Cymbal would be rivals for Aurelia Clara Pecunia.

“She is the talk of the time!” the Canter said. “She is the adventure — and venture — of the age!”

She was a financial venture — whoever married her would marry her fortune, too.

“You cannot put yourself upon an action of more importance,” Picklock said.

He felt that Pennyboy Junior could do nothing more important than marry a very rich woman.

“All the world are suitors to her,” the Canter said.

“All sorts of men and all professions!” Picklock said.

“You shall have stall-fed doctors, crammed divines pay court to her, and with those studied and perfumed flatteries as no room can stink more elegantly than where they are,” the Canter said.

Stall-fed doctors can mean 1) manger-fed or trough-fed (that is, overfed — think of pigs at a trough) doctors, or 2) doctors who have fed their minds with books from the book-stalls.

Divines — preachers — can be crammed with knowledge and/or with food.

“Well chanted, old Canter!” Picklock said. “You sing truly.”

“And, by your leave,” the Canter said, “good Master’s Worship, some of your velvet coat — well-dressed lawyers — make corpulent curtsies to her until they crack for it.”

They bowed so low that 1) their backs cracked, and/or 2) they farted.

“There’s Doctor Almanac woos her, one of the jeerers, a fine physician,” Picklock said.

The Canter said, “Your sea-captain, Shunfield, says that he’ll attack head-on the cannon for her —”

Picklock interrupted, “— although his loud mouthing — hot air — gets him little credit.”

The Canter said, “Young Master Piedmantle, the fine herald, professes to trace her heritage through all ages, from all the kings and queens who ever were.”

Picklock added, “And Master Madrigal, the crowned poet of these our times, offers to her praises as fair as any, when it shall please Apollo, god of poetry, that wit and rhyme may meet both in one subject.”

The Canter added, “And for you to bear her from all these, it will be —”

Picklock interrupted, “— a work of fame.”

The Canter continued, “— a work of honor.”

Picklock said, “It will be a celebration —”

The Canter interrupted, “— worthy your name.”

Picklock said, “The Pennyboys to live in it.”

The Pennyboys would live in fame.

The Canter said, “It is an action you were built for, sir.”

Picklock said, “And none but you can do it.”

“I’ll undertake it,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“And carry it,” the Canter said.

“Don’t worry about me,” Pennyboy Junior said, “for since I came of mature age, I have had a certain itch in my right eye, this corner, here — do you see? — to do some work that is worthy of a chronicle.”

Chronicles recorded noteworthy events. In this case, the noteworthy event would be the courting of a rich woman.

**THE FIRST INTERMEAN: AFTER THE FIRST ACT**  
*(The Staple of News)*

Gossip Mirth said to Gossip Censure, “How are you now, Gossip Censure! How does the play please you?”

“Very scurvily, I think, and sufficiently naught,” Gossip Censure said.

“Naught” can mean 1) nothing, or 2) naughty, or evil.

Gossip Expectation said, “As naught as a body would wish. Here’s nothing but a young prodigal come of age, who makes much of the barber, buys him a place in a new office — in the air, I know not where — and his man of law to follow him, with the beggar to boot, and those two help him to a wife.”

Gossip Mirth said, “Aye, she is a proper piece that such creatures can broke for! With two such scoundrels acting as her agents, she must be quite the woman!”

“Piece” can mean 1) piece of money, aka a coin, 2) woman, or 3) piece of ass. Gossip Mirth does not think that Lady Pecunia is a respectable woman.

Gossip Tattle said, “I cannot abide that nasty fellow, the beggar. If he had been a court-beggar in good clothes, a beggar-in-velvet, as they say, I could have endured him.”

The Canter was a beggar who wore patched clothing.

Many courtiers wear velvet and beg for favors from the King.

Gossip Mirth said, “Or a begging scholar in black, or one of these beggarly poets, Gossip Tattle, who would hang upon a young heir like a horse-leech.”

Many kinds of beggars and parasites — hangers-on — exist in the world.

Gossip Expectation said, "Or a threadbare doctor of medicine, a poor quacksalver."

A quacksalver is a quack.

"Or a sea-captain, half-starved," Gossip Censure said.

Some ships were shipwrecked or lost their cargo or profit in some way.

"Aye, these were tolerable beggars, beggars of fashion!" Gossip Mirth said. "You shall see some such soon."

They began to talk about what they would like to see in the play.

Gossip Tattle said, "I would like to see the fool, Gossip Mirth; the fool is the finest man in the company, they say, and he has all the wit. He is the very Justice of the Peace of the play, and he can commit whom he will, and he can commit what he will, such as error and absurdity, as the whim takes him, and no man will say black is his eye, but they will laugh at him."

"No man will say black is his eye" meant "No man will impugn his character."

Gossip Mirth said, "But they have no fool in this play, I am afraid, Gossip Tattle."

"It's a wise play, then," Gossip Tattle said.

"They are all fools the rather, in that," Gossip Expectation said.

"That is likely enough," Gossip Censure said.

Gossip Tattle said:

“My husband, Timothy Tattle (God rest his poor soul), was accustomed to say there was no play without a fool and a devil in it; he was for the devil always, God bless him.

“The devil for his money, he would say: ‘I would like to see the devil.’

“‘And why would you so like see the devil?’ I would say.

“‘Because he has horns, wife, and may be a cuckold, as well as a devil,’ he would answer.

“‘You are even such another, husband,’ I would say. ‘Was the devil ever married? Where do you read that the devil was ever so honorable to commit matrimony?’

“‘The play will tell us that,’ he would say. ‘We’ll go see it tomorrow: *The Devil Is an Ass*. He is an errant learned man who made it and can write, they say, and I am foully deceived unless he can read, too.’”

Ben Jonson, the poet-playwright of *The Devil is an Ass*, which featured fools and devils, was an errant — erring — learned man, who could read as well as write. He killed a fellow actor in a duel, and he escaped the likely punishment of being executed by pleading benefit of clergy: He proved that he could read Latin, something that the clergy were able to do. The Vulgate Bible is written in Latin.

Gossip Mirth said, “I remember *The Devil is an Ass*, Gossip Tattle; I went with you. By the same token, Mistress Trouble-Truth discouraged us from going, and told us he — Ben Jonson — was a profane poet, and all his plays had devils in them; that he kept school upon the stage, could conjure there above the school of Westminster, and the astrologer Doctor Lamb, too. Not a play he made but had a devil in it; and that he would teach us all to make our husbands cuckolds at plays; by another token, that a young married wife in the company said she could find in her heart



to steal thither and see a little of the vanity through her mask, and come practice at home.”

One criticism of plays of the time is that by having immoral characters in them, they taught the audience to practice immorality.

Gossip Tattle said, “Oh, it was Mistress —”

Gossip Mirth interrupted, “Nay, Gossip Tattle, I name nobody. It may be it was myself.”

Gossip Expectation asked, “But was the devil a proper man, Gossip Mirth?”

“As fine a gentleman of his inches as ever I saw trusted to the stage, or anywhere else, and he loved the commonwealth as well as ever a patriot of them all,” Gossip Mirth answered.

“A gentleman of his inches” meant “a gentleman from head to toe.” But perhaps Gossip Mirth was referring to the inches of the devil’s penis.

Some members of Parliament who were critics of the Crown were called patriots.

She continued, “He would carry away the Vice on his back, quick to Hell, in every play where he came, and reform abuses.”

Some old-fashioned plays had a riotous character called the Vice, which the Devil carried off to Hell in a noisy, action-packed scene at the end of the play.

Gossip Expectation said, “There was *The Devil of Edmonton*, no such man, I warrant you.”

Gossip Censure said, “The conjurer cozened him with a candle’s end. He — the Devil — was an ass.”

*The Merry Devil of Edmonton* was a very popular play (and folktale) in which the conjuror Peter Fabel makes a deal with the Devil. In one version of the tale, in return for granting Fabel certain privileges, the Devil will get his soul when a certain candle burns out. Fabel puts the candle in his pocket so he can keep it safe. The version of the play that has come down to us does not have that incident, but it does contain a comic character named Smug.

Gossip Mirth said, “But there was one Smug, a blacksmith, who would have made a horse laugh and break his halter, as they say.”

“Oh, but the poor man had an unfortunate mischance one day,” Gossip Tattle said.

Gossip Expectation asked, “How, Gossip Tattle?”

Gossip Tattle said, “Smug the Blacksmith had dressed a rogue jade in the morning that had the staggers, and Smug had got such a dose of the staggers himself by noon that they would not go away but continued all the playtime, do what he could, for his heart.”

A jade is a bad horse. The jade described has the disease called the staggers, which made the horse stagger. Dressing a horse means to curry and groom it.

Smug enjoyed drinking to excess. This gave him a case of a different kind of staggers, which made him stagger throughout the play.

A dose is a medicinal drink; many people consider alcohol to be a medicinal drink.

Gossip Mirth said, “It was his part, Gossip Tattle; he was to be drunk, by his part.”

“Do you say so?” Gossip Tattle said. “I didn’t understand it that way.”

Apparently, she thought the comic actor playing Smug had really gotten drunk.

Gossip Expectation said, “I wish we had such another part and such a man in this play! I fear that this play will be an excellent dull thing.”

Seeing the actors come back on stage, Gossip Censure said, “Wait. Pay attention to the play.”

## ACT 2 (*The Staple of News*)

### — 2.1 —

Pennyboy Senior was Pennyboy Junior's uncle, and he was a miser and a usurer. He talked now outside his house with Aurelia Clara Pecunia, Mortgage (Pecunia's nurse), Statute (Pecunia's first serving-woman), Band (Pecunia's second serving-woman), and Broker (Pecunia's secretary and gentleman-usher). They were outside breathing the fresh air.

Pennyboy Senior was an old miser who loved Lady Pecunia and wished to be her minion — her favorite, her lover. Lady Pecunia, however, to her credit, did not wish to romantically enslave such old men.

Pennyboy Senior said to Lady Pecunia, “Your Grace is sad, I think, and melancholy. You do not look upon me with that face as you were accustomed to, my goddess, bright Pecunia.

“Although Your Grace has fallen by two in the hundred in vulgar estimation, yet I am Your Grace's servant still, and I teach this body of mine to bend, and these my aged knees to buckle in adoration and just worship of you.”

The Latin word *pecunia* means money. The face of *pecunia* is a coin, and gold is a bright color that does not tarnish. To be “fallen of two in the hundred” refers to a then-recent law against usury that lowered the legally allowed interest rate from ten percent to eight percent.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “Indeed, I confess, I have no shape to make a minion of — that is, I'm not handsome enough to be a lover — but I'm your martyr, Your Grace's martyr.

“I can hear the rogues, as I walk the streets, whisper and point: ‘There goes old Pennyboy, the slave of money, rich Pennyboy, Lady Pecunia's drudge, a sordid rascal, one who

never made a good meal in his sleep, but sells the delicacies that are sent to him — fish, fowl, and venison — and preserves himself, like an old hoary rat, with moldy pie-crust.”

A proverb stated, “Beggars and misers may feast in their dreams.” Another proverb stated, “Golden dreams make men wake hungry.” Pennyboy Senior, however, is so much a miser that he does not feast even in his dreams.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “This I do hear, rejoicing I can suffer this and much more for your good Grace’s sake.”

“Why do you so, my guardian?” Lady Pecunia said. “I don’t bid you to do that. Cannot my grace and favor be gotten, and held, too, without your self-tormentings and your staying up at night, your wasting of your body thus with cares and scantings of your diet and rest?”

Lady Pecunia much preferred that Pennyboy Senior not dote on her and instead enjoy his life.

Misers prefer to have money rather than the good things of life. They will eat inexpensive, not-so-good food rather than spend money to buy much better food.

Pennyboy Senior replied, “Oh, no, your services, my princely lady, cannot with too much zeal of rites be done because they are so sacred.”

“But my reputation may suffer, and the respect of my family, when by so servile means they both are sought,” Lady Pecunia said.

Money can be a good thing when used correctly. One should avoid the extremes of being a miser like Pennyboy Senior and a prodigal like Pennyboy Junior. An excessive love of money — either for the money itself or for the things that money can buy — gives the love of money a bad reputation.

1 Timothy 6:10 states, “*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*” (King James Version).

Pennyboy Senior said, “You are a noble, young, generous, gracious lady, and you would be bountiful to everybody, but you must not be so. Only a few know your merit, lady, and can value it.

“You yourself scarcely understand your proper, inherent powers. They are almighty, and we your servants, who have the honor here to stand so near you, know them and can use and exploit them, too.”

One way to use and exploit money is usury: to lend it out at an excessive rate of interest.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “All this nether world — world beneath the heavens — is yours. You command it and sway it. You command the honor of it and the honesty, the reputation, aye, and the religion (I was about to say, and I would not have erred) is Queen Pecunia’s — for that title is yours, if mortals knew Your Grace, or their own good.”

Money does have its gifts. Horace, in his *Epistles*, wrote, “Of course a wife and dowry, credit and friends, birth and beauty, are the gift of Queen Cash.” Horace, in his *Satires*, wrote, “Indeed, all things, divine and human, serve the beauty of riches — virtue, reputation, honor; and he who hoards it up will be famous, strong, and just.”

Pennyboy Senior also thought that Pecunia and *pecunia* — money — could be adored like the god of a religion. The verb “worship” means adore.

Some people trust in God. Other people trust in money.

Mortgage, who was Lady Pecunia's nurse, and Band, who was one of Lady Pecunia's serving-women, attempted to get her to retire inside.

"May it please Your Grace to retire," Mortgage said.

"I fear Your Grace has taken too much of the sharp air," Band said.

"Oh, no!" Lady Pecunia said. "With my constitution I could endure to take a great deal more, if it were left up to me.

"What do you think about it, Statute?"

Statute, another of Lady Pecunia's serving-women, replied, "A little air now and then does you well, and keeps Your Grace in your good health."

Band added, "And true temper."

Mortgage objected, "But too much, madam, may increase cold rheums, nourish catarrhs, green-sicknesses, and agues, and put you in consumption."

"Cold rheums" are runny noses. "Rheums" are discharges, and catarrhs are buildups of mucus. Green-sickness is anemia, and agues are fevers. "Consumption" is wasting away.

Mortgage was saying that Lady Pecunia might catch a cold.

Pennyboy Senior advised, "It's best to take the advice of your honorable women, noble madam. They know the state of your body, and have studied Your Grace's health —"

Band interrupted, "— and honor. Here will be visitants or suitors by and by; and it is not fitting that they find you here."

"It will make Your Grace too cheap to give them audience immediately," Statute said.

News is a commodity that can make a profit, and Lady Pecunia was being treated by the people around her as a commodity that could make a profit.

“Leave your secretary here to answer them,” Mortgage the nurse said.

“Wait here, Broker,” Lady Pecunia said to Broker, her secretary.

“I shall stay here, madam, and do Your Grace’s trusts with diligence,” Broker said.

Everyone except Broker exited.

— 2.2 —

Piedmantle the herald, who wanted to be a suitor to Lady Pecunia, entered the scene.

“What luck’s this?” he said. “I have come an inch too late.”

He had caught a glimpse of Lady Pecunia exiting.

Piedmantle then asked Broker, “Do you hear me, sir? Is Your Worship of the family unto the Lady Pecunia?”

Her “family” consisted of her household servants.

“Sir, I serve Her Grace, Aurelia Clara Pecunia, the Infanta,” Broker said.

An Infanta is a daughter of the King of Spain or Portugal, although the term came to be used to mean “great lady.”

“Has she all those titles, and ‘Her Grace’ besides?” Piedmantle the herald said. “I must correct that ignorance and oversight before I present myself and my research.”

As a herald, he did genealogical research, and he had researched Pecunia’s ancestry.



He continued, “Sir, I have drawn a pedigree for Her Grace, although I am yet a novice in that so noble study.”

“Are you a herald at arms?” Broker asked.

“No, sir, I am a pursuivant. My name is Piedmantle.”

“Good Master Piedmantle!” Broker said, perhaps pretending to recognize the name.

Piedmantle said, “I have traced her lineage —”

Broker interrupted, “— from all the Spanish mines in the West Indies, I hope, for she comes that way by her mother, but by her grandmother she’s Duchess of Mines.”

“From man’s creation I have brought her,” Piedmantle said.

He had traced Lady Pecunia’s ancestry back to Adam and Eve, he claimed.

“No further?” Broker said. “You must trace her heritage before, sir, long before Adam and Eve; otherwise, you have done nothing. Your Mines were before Adam.”

*Pecunia* is money, and money comes from mines (in the sense of underground deposits of gold and silver), and mines existed before the creation of Adam, the first man.

Broker was mocking Piedmantle by pretending that Mines was a family name.

Broker continued, “Search your office. Search roll five-and-twenty, and you will find it so.”

This kind of roll — roll number 25 — was a document at the College of Arms.

Broker continued, “I would have seen you are only a novice, Master Piedmantle, even if you had not told me so.”

Pennyboy Senior entered the scene from behind the two men and concealed himself so that he could eavesdrop.

Piedmantle said, “Sir, I am an apprentice in armory — in the story of coats of arms.”

Armory deals with blazoning — describing, depicting, painting — coats of arms. It is the science of heraldry.

Piedmantle continued, “I have read the *Elements* and *Accidence*, and all the leading books.”

The books Piedmantle referred to were *The Elements of Armories* and *The Accidence of Armory*.

“Accidence” means fundamentals or first principles.

He continued, “And I have now upon me a great ambition to be brought to Her Grace to kiss her hands.”

Piedmantle gave Broker a gold coin as a bribe, and Broker now began to give Piedmantle helpful information. Bribes to servants are useful in gaining access to a great lady.

Broker said, “Why, if you have acquaintance with Mistress Statute, or Mistress Band, my lady’s gentlewomen, they can introduce you to Lady Pecunia.

“One, Mistress Statute, is a judge’s daughter, but somewhat stately and haughty; the other, Mistress Band — her father’s only a scrivener, a professional scribe — but she can exert influence almost as much with my lady as the other, especially if Rose Wax, the chambermaid, is willing.

“Do you not know her, sir, neither?”

He was referring to Rose Wax, the chambermaid.

“No, truly, sir,” Piedmantle said.

Broker said, “She’s a good pliant wench and easy to be manipulated, sir.”

Softened wax could be easily manipulated. One way to soften a person is with a bribe.

He continued, “But the nurse, Old Mother Mortgage — if you have a tenement” — an apartment or a land holding — “or such a morsel? Although she has no teeth, she loves a sweetmeat, anything that melts in her warm gums. She could command it — access to Lady Pecunia — for you on such a trifle, a toy.”

According to Broker, the entire group of household servants could be bribed, just like Broker had been.

Bribery had worked on him. Why shouldn’t it work on the other servants of Lady Pecunia?

He continued, “Sir, you may see how for your love and this so pure complexion, a perfect sanguine, I have ventured thus the straining of a ward, opening a door into the secrets of our family.”

“Complexion” meant tinge, and “sanguine” meant red. In this society, gold was said to be colored red. Broker was referring to the gold coin that Piedmantle had used to bribe him.

“The straining of a ward” meant especially “the stretching of a boundary.” Broker should have been protecting Lady Pecunia.

A “ward” can be 1) a wardship, 2) a protectorate, 3) a fortification, or 4) a part of a lock.

Piedmantle said, “I ask you to let me know, sir — you to whom I am so much beholden — do but tell me your name.”

“My name is Broker. I am secretary and usher to Her Grace.”

“Good Master Broker!” Piedmantle said.

“Good Master Piedmantle,” Broker said.

Piedmantle said, “Why, you could do me, if you would, now, this favor on your own initiative.”

He had already bribed Broker. Why was it necessary to bribe anyone else? Why couldn’t Broker introduce him to Lady Pecunia?

“Truly, I think I could,” Broker said, “but if I would, I hardly should, unless either Mistress Band or Mistress Statute would lease to endorse it, or the good nurse I told you about, Mistress Mortgage.

“We know our places here. We don’t mingle in another’s sphere, but all of us move orderly in our own orbs; yet we are all concentrics.”

They all had their own duties, and they all revolved around Lady Pecunia.

In order for Piedmantle to be introduced to Lady Pecunia, he would have to get by the servants who were supposed to protect her.

“Well, sir, I’ll wait for a better season,” Piedmantle said.

“Do, and study the right means — the right way to be introduced to her,” Broker said. “Get Mistress Band to urge on your behalf, or little Wax.”

Piedmantle turned to go, and Broker made a mocking face at him, but Piedmantle did not see it. Although Piedmantle had bribed him, Broker did not respect Piedmantle.

“I have a hope, sir, that I may, by chance, alight on Her Grace as she’s taking the air,” Piedmantle said.

As Piedmantle exited, Broker made another mocking face at him.

Broker said, “That air of hope has blighted many an eyrie of kestrels like yourself, good Master Piedmantle.”

Broker was comparing Piedmantle’s alighting on Pecunia as she took the air to a hawk alighting on its prey in the air. An eyrie, aka aerie, is the nest of a bird of prey. A kestrel literally is a small hawk, and figuratively it is a human fool.

Pennyboy Senior came out of his hiding place and said, “Well said, Master Secretary; I stood behind you two and heard everything you said. I honor your dispatches — I like the way you got rid of him.

“If they are rude, untrained in our method, and have not studied the rule, dismiss them quickly.”

Piedmantle did not fit in with Broker and Pennyboy Senior. He gave money; he did not take it.

Pennyboy Senior did not mention the bribe Piedmantle had given to Broker; if he had noticed it, chances are he would have approved of Broker’s taking the bribe *and* still getting rid of Piedmantle.

Pennyboy Senior then said, “Where’s Lickfinger, my cook? That unctuous, greasy rascal — he never keeps his appointments in a timely manner, that vessel of kitchen stuff!”

The kitchen stuff was Lickfinger’s big belly, which was stuffed with food from the kitchen.

— 2.3 —

Lickfinger the cook entered the room.

“Here he has come, sir,” Broker said.

“Pox upon him and his kidney — he is always too late!” Pennyboy Senior said.

The word “kidney” meant character and temperament. Lickfinger’s character was to be always late.

“Too late to wish that you had them, I confess, who have them already,” Lickfinger said.

The pox was smallpox, which left pocks on the victims’ faces.

“What?” Pennyboy Senior asked.

“The pox!” Lickfinger answered.

“May the piles, the plague, and all diseases light on him who doesn’t know to keep his word,” Pennyboy Senior said.

The piles are hemorrhoids.

He continued, “I’d keep my word for sure! I hate that man who will not keep his word. When did I break my word?”

“Or I, until now?” Lickfinger said. “And I am late only half an hour —”

“Half a year,” Pennyboy Senior said, “to me who values a minute of time. I am a just man; I love always to be just.”

A just man is an exact man; Pennyboy Senior loved always to be on time.

Lickfinger responded, “Why, do you think that I can run like light-foot Ralph, or keep a wheelbarrow with a sail in town here to whirl me to you? I have lost two stone of suet in the service hastening hither.”

Light-foot Ralph was a fast runner.

A stone of weight is 14 pounds.

Suet was the greasy sweat dripping from Lickfinger's body as he "hurried" to see Pennyboy Senior.

Lickfinger continued, "You might have followed me like a watering pot and seen the knots I made along the street."

He sweat so much that he was like the spout of a watering pot, and as he "hurried," his dripping sweat made knots — intricate designs — in the dirt he walked on.

Lickfinger continued, "My face dropped grease like the skimmer in a fritter pan."

A skimmer is a slotted utensil used to raise fritters from a frying pan; grease drips from the skimmer.

As he wiped his face, Lickfinger continued, "And my whole body is yet, to say the truth, a roasted pound of butter with grated bread in it!"

He was referring to a kind of rich pastry.

Pennyboy Senior said, "Believe you, he who chooses."

This meant: I don't believe you.

He continued, "You delayed in order to have my venison stink and my fowl mortified, so that you might have them —"

A mortified fowl is one whose carcass is hung until it is tender. Hang it too long and it decays and is worth less money if it is sold, just as stinking venison brings in less money.

Mortified fowl, however, acquired a taste that some people prized and paid more for. It may be the case that Pennyboy Senior, who was not a glutton, cared nothing about taste and simply thought that Lickfinger was costing him money.

Lickfinger interrupted, “— a shilling or two cheaper. That’s your suspicion.”

Pennyboy Senior sold off gifts of food, and he wanted to receive a good price for them.

“Perhaps it is,” Pennyboy Senior said.

He added, “Will you go in and view and value all? Yonder is venison sent to me, and fowl and fish, in such abundance I am sick to see it!

“I wonder what they mean — I have told them about it — to burden a weak stomach and provoke a dying appetite! To thrust a sin upon me I never was guilty of — nothing but gluttony, gross gluttony, that will ruin this land!”

Possibly, some of the people who owed him money were paying their debts with food. Or they were using food to pay for an extension of their loan.

Gluttony is one of the Seven Deadly Sins; it is a sin that Pennyboy Senior was not guilty of.

“And abating two in the hundred,” Lickfinger said.

He was referring to the reduction in interest legally allowed to be charged. He knew that Pennyboy Senior believed that the reduction in legally allowed interest would ruin the land.

As a usurer, Pennyboy Senior was against reducing the interest rate. He believed or pretended to believe that lessening the profit of the usurer would make it harder for people — including poor people — to borrow money. Perhaps that is true. Lending to the poor can be risky. Moneylenders take risks to make more money, and they may be willing to risk money at ten percent interest that they would not be willing to risk at eight percent interest.



Pennyboy Senior sounded like a populist, but others could argue that usurious interest rates eat up the poor. Think of Payday Loans in the USA.

Pennyboy Senior said, “Aye, that same — abating two in the hundred — is a crying sin, a fearful damned device. It eats up the poor, devours them —”

Lickfinger said, “Sir, take heed what you give out.”

Pennyboy Senior did take care what he lent out; he wanted to get his money back and his interest, too.

Lickfinger’s words also meant, Don’t be a hypocrite. You care more about money than you do about the poor.”

Lickfinger’s words also meant for Pennyboy Senior to be careful what he said out loud. The politicians who backed the reduction in interest rates would not like his words.

Pennyboy Senior said, “What words I give out against your grave, great Solons? *Numae Pompilii*, they who made that law to take away the poor’s inheritance?”

Solon was an Athenian lawmaker. His name became a word meaning a wise ruler. Numa Pompilius succeeded Romulus as ruler of Rome. His name also became associated with wise rule. *Numae Pompilii* is the plural of Numa Pompilius. Of course, Pennyboy Senior’s use of these names for the lawmakers who had reduced the legal interest rate of loans was sarcastic; he did not think that these lawmakers were wise.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “It was the poor’s due, I will guarantee it, and the lawmakers have robbed them of it, plainly robbed them. I still am a just man; I tell the truth. When moneys went at ten in the hundred, I, and such as I, the servants of Pecunia, could spare the poor two out of ten, and did it.”

This sounds as if he had been charging the poor eight percent interest all along.

If that were true, why is he complaining? Lessening the interest rate two percent from ten percent would have the same effect as charging what the lawmakers allowed — actually, it would be the same thing, at least as far as the poor were concerned.

Pennyboy Senior disliked the fact that charging eight percent interest was now compulsory; now he could get no credit for being charitable.

But also perhaps the ten-percent interest he charged non-poor people allowed him to charge the poor only eight-percent interest.

Pennyboy Senior then asked, “What do you say, Broker?”

Lickfinger said to himself, “Ask your echo.”

He thought that Broker was a yes-man to Pennyboy Senior.

“You did it,” Broker said.

“I am for justice,” Pennyboy Senior said. “When did I leave justice? We knew it was theirs. The poor had right and title to it. Now —”

Lickfinger interrupted, “You can spare them nothing —”

Pennyboy Senior interrupted, “Very little —”

Lickfinger interrupted, “— as good as nothing.”

“The legislators have bound our hands with their wise, solemn act,” Pennyboy Senior said. “They have shortened our arms.”

Short arms are unable to reach deep into pockets to take out money to give to the poor.

Lickfinger said, “Beware lest those worshipful ears, sir, be shortened, and you play Crop in the Fleet, if you use this license.”

One punishment of the time was to crop — cut off part of — an offender’s ears. Such a punishment could be carried out in Fleet Prison.

“What license have you, knave?” Pennyboy Senior asked. “Are you an informer?”

Some people, such as Fools, have license to mock other people. An informer could have such license: Either let me mock you, or I shall inform the authorities about what you said.

“I am Lickfinger, your cook.”

“A saucy jack you are, that’s for sure.” Pennyboy Senior said.

The word “jack” means “knave.” A Jack Sauce is a saucy knave. As a cook, Lickfinger dealt with sauces.

Pennyboy Senior asked, “What did I say wrong, Broker?”

“Nothing that I heard, sir,” Broker said.

“I know his gift,” Lickfinger said to himself. “He can be deaf when he wishes.”

Pennyboy Senior asked Lickfinger, “Have you provided for me my bushel of eggs that I asked you for? I do not care how stale or stinking they are; let them be rotten because they are ammunition here to pelt the boys who break my windows.”

Lickfinger said, “Yes, sir, I have spared them for you and not used them for the mayor’s custard politic.”

At the annual Lord Mayor’s Feast in London, a jester would leap into a giant bowl of custard.

“It is well,” Pennyboy Senior said. “Go in, take hence all that excess food. Make what you can of it, your best. And when I have friends whom I invite at home, provide me such, such, and such a dish as I ask for, one at a time, no superfluity. Or if you don’t have it, return to me the money. You know my ways.”

“They are a little crooked,” Littlefinger said.

“What, knave?” Pennyboy Senior asked.

Lickfinger explained, “Because you do indent.”

Some legal documents were cut into two parts with a crooked line. The two parts could be shown to be a genuine document because the jagged lines of the two parts would fit together. Lickfinger was saying that Pennyboy Senior’s ways were crooked.

“It is true, sir,” Pennyboy Senior said. “I do indent that you shall return me money —”

One meaning of “indent” is “specify by contract.” People gave gifts of food to Pennyboy Senior, and Lickfinger sold them and gave the money to Pennyboy Senior.

Lickfinger interrupted, “— rather than food, I know it. You are just still.”

Pennyboy Senior preferred money to the gifts of food.

“I love it — money — still,” Pennyboy Senior said. “And therefore if you spend — serve and/or consume — the red-deer pies in your house, or sell them forth, sir, arrange it so that I may have their coffins — the crusts of the pies — all returned here and piled up. I would be thought to keep some kind of house.”

He wanted to keep track of household expenses.

“By the moldy signs?” Lickfinger asked.

“Mold” can be 1) a pie-crust, or 2) the earth of a grave.

“Moldy” can mean rotten.

Pennyboy Senior said, “And then remember, meat for my two dogs: fat flaps of mutton, kidneys, rumps of veal, good plenteous scraps. My maid shall eat the leftovers —”

“When you and your dogs have dined!” Lickfinger said. “A sweet remnant.”

Pennyboy Senior’s dogs ate well — better than the maid, and possibly better than Pennyboy Senior.

Seeing some people coming, Pennyboy Senior said, “Who’s here? My courtier and my little doctor, my muster-master — and what plover’s that whom they have brought to pluck and cheat?”

The courtier was Fitton. The little doctor was Almanac. The muster-master was Shunfield, who was a sea captain and as such kept a muster-list of sailors. The unknown person — the plover, or dupe — would turn out to be Madrigal, a poetaster, an inferior poet.

“I don’t know,” Broker said. “Some green plover. I’ll find out who he is.”

The jeerers wanted Madrigal to borrow money from Pennyboy Senior; if Madrigal got the loan, they would help Madrigal spend the money.

“Do, for I know the rest,” Pennyboy Senior said. “They are the jeerers — they are mocking, flouting jacks.”

— 2.4 —

Fitton, Almanac, Shunfield, and Madrigal entered the room. All four of them were jeerers, but Madrigal was the newest jeerer. They enjoyed mocking other people.

“How are you now, old money-bawd?” Fitton said. “We’re come —”

A money-bawd is a usurer.

Pennyboy Senior interrupted, “— to jeer me, as you are accustomed to do. I know you.”

He knew that they were also visiting him to borrow money.

“No, to give you some good security,” Almanac said, “and see Pecunia.”

“What is the security?” Pennyboy Senior asked.

“Ourselves,” Fitton said.

“We’ll be one bound for another,” Almanac said.

They would guarantee the repayment of each other’s loans.

Fitton pointed to Almanac and said, “I will be bound for this noble doctor here.”

Almanac pointed to Fitton and said, “I will be bound for this worthy courtier here.”

Fitton pointed to Shunfield and said, “This man of war, he was our muster-master.”

A muster-master keeps the muster-list of soldiers or sailors.

Almanac said, “But a sea-captain now, brave Captain Shunfield.”

Pennyboy Senior held up his nose and sniffed.

“You sniff the air now, as if the scent displeased you?” Shunfield said.

Some sea-goers smell strongly of fish and brine.

Fitton said to Pennyboy Senior, “You need not fear him, man. His credit is sound.”

Almanac added, “And seasoned, too, since he took salt at sea — that is, since he took to being a sailor.”

“I do not love pickled — brined — security,” Pennyboy Senior said. “I wish I had one good fresh-man in for all of you because the truth is that you three stink.”

A fresh-man is a novice, someone who can be taken advantage of. Also, a fresh-man is someone who bathes in fresh water.

The three who stank, stank because of bad character in addition to whatever odors they had.

“You are a rogue,” Shunfield said.

“I think I am, but I will lend no money on that security, Captain,” Pennyboy Senior replied.

Fitton, Almanac, and Shunfield were not good security: They were not people Pennyboy Senior wished to lend money to.

Almanac said, “Here’s a gentleman, a fresh-man in the world, one Master Madrigal.”

Madrigal was their plover; he was their dupe.

“Of an untainted credit,” Fitton said. “What do you say to him?”

According to Fitton, Madrigal would be good security to repay the loan.

Madrigal had stepped aside with Broker.

“He’s gone, I think,” Shunfield said. “Where is he?”

He called, “Madrigal?”

Pennyboy Senior said, “He has an odd singing — resounding — name. Is he an heir?”

He was punning on “heir” and “air” — a song. A madrigal is a song with parts for many voices.

Fitton said, “An heir to a fair fortune —”

Almanac interrupted, “— and full hopes. He is a dainty scholar and a pretty poet!”

Unfortunately, many poets don’t make much money, so their “full hopes” are quite modest, financially. They may have cultural capital without having financial capital. They may be heir to an air: a song.

“You’ve said enough,” Pennyboy Senior said. “I have no money, gentlemen. If he goes to it in rhyme even once, not a penny.”

Pennyboy Senior had money, but he had no money to lend to a poet.

He sniffed again.

“Why, he’s of years, although he has little beard,” Shunfield said. “He is an adult.”

“His beard has time to grow,” Pennyboy Senior said. “I have no money. Let him still dabble in poetry. No Pecunia is to be seen.”

Almanac said, “Come, you love to be costive always in your courtesy, but I have a pill, a golden pill, to purge away this melancholy.”

The word “costive” can mean 1) stingy, and 2) constipated. “Courtesy” here means generosity. “Costive generosity” is a contradiction in terms.



The jeerers wanted golden pills — coins, golden coins — to drive away their melancholy — melancholy that was caused by a lack of money.

A golden pill of this kind would drive away Pennyboy Senior's melancholy because he was a miser.

Disappointed at not being able to borrow money, the jeerers began to jeer at Pennyboy Senior.

Shunfield said, "His melancholy is caused by nothing but his keeping of the house here, with his two drowsy dogs."

Fitton said, "A drench — drink — of sack at a good tavern, and a fine fresh pullet, would cure him."

A pullet can be 1) a chicken, or 2) a woman, or 3) a prostitute.

"Nothing but a young hare in white broth," Lickfinger said. "I know his diet better than the doctor."

He may have meant "heir" in addition to "hare." Usurers can devour people they lend money to, including heirs.

Shunfield recognized him: "What, Lickfinger, my old host of the Ram Alley? You have some market here."

Ram Alley was a place with a bad reputation. Cookshops and taverns could be found there.

"Some dosser — pannier, aka basket — of fish or fowl to fetch off," Almanac said.

"An odd bargain of venison to drive," Fitton said.

Lickfinger did sell Pennyboy Senior's food.

Pennyboy Senior said to Lickfinger, "Will you go inside, knave?"

"I must necessarily go," Lickfinger replied.

He then said, “You see who drives me, gentlemen.”

Pennyboy Senior shoved him inside the house.

“Not the devil,” Almanac said.

A proverb states, “He must needs [necessarily] go whom the devil drives.”

“Pennyboy Senior may be, in time,” Fitton said. “He is the devil’s agent, now.”

“You are all cogging jacks — cheating knaves,” Pennyboy Senior said. “You are a covey — a set — of wits. You are the jeerers, who always assemble at meals.”

Having no money, the jeerers sought free meals where they could find them.

Pennyboy Senior added, “Or rather you assemble at an eyrie, for you are birds of prey and fly at and jeer all — nothing’s too big or high for you — and you are so truly feared, but not beloved, one of another as no one dares break company from the rest, lest they should fall upon and insult the man who is absent.”

They continued to jeer at Pennyboy Senior.

“Oh, the only oracle that ever squeaked or spoke out of a jacket!” Almanac said.

“How the rogue stinks, worse than a fishmonger’s sleeves!” Shunfield said.

“Or currier’s hands!” Fitton said.

Horace was once jeered by a man who said that he had often seen Horace’s father wipe his nose on his fist.

A currier 1) grooms horses, or 2) dresses leather. Either kind of currier can stink.

“And such a parboiled visage!” Shunfield said.

Fitton added, “His face looks like a dyer’s apron, exactly!”

Pennyboy Senior’s face was botched red and white.

“A sodden — stewed — head, and his whole brain a posset curd!” Almanac said.

A posset curd is hot milk curdled in hot spiced ale or sack.

“Aye, now you jeer,” Pennyboy Senior said. “Jeer on; I have no money.”

“I wonder what religion he’s of?” Almanac asked.

“No certain species surely,” Fitton said. “He’s a kind of mule that’s half an ethnic Heathen, half a Christian!”

A mule is the impotent offspring of a horse and a donkey.

“I have no money, gentlemen,” Pennyboy Senior said.

Shunfield said, “This blockhead — he has no sense of any virtue, honor, gentry, or merit.”

Pennyboy Senior replied, “You say very rightly, my meritorious captain — as I take it you are.”

*Meretrix* is Latin for “prostitute.” A *meretrix* can make money to pay the bills. One now-obsolete meaning of “meritorious” is “earning money through prostitution.”

Another meaning of “meritorious” is “having merit.”

A person with the “merit” of a Shunfield cannot make money to pay the bills.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “Merit will keep no house, nor pay no house-rent. Will Mistress Merit go to market, do you think? Set the pot on the stove, or feed the family? Will gentry settle up with the butcher or the baker, fetch in a

pheasant or a brace — a pair — of partridges from goodwife Poulterer for my lady's supper?"

A poulterer sells poultry.

"See this pure and utter rogue!" Fitton said.

"This rogue has money, though," Pennyboy Senior said. "My worshipful brave courtier has no money — no, nor does my valiant Captain Shunfield."

"Hang you, rascal!" Shunfield said.

Pennyboy Senior said to Almanac, "Nor do you, my learned doctor. I loved you while you did hold your practice and killed tripe-wives, and kept yourself to your urinal."

He liked Almanac when Almanac actually worked as a doctor, killing women who dressed and sold tripe and inspecting the urine collected in urinals.

Medical practices of the time, such as bleeding, often killed patients.

Inspection of urine can show the state of the patient's health; urine is supposed to be clear, and cloudy or bloody urine can indicate bad health.

But now Almanac compiled and consulted almanacs and ephemerides and indulged in astrology. Ephemerides were tables of astronomical data that gave the predicted position of celestial objects such as the planets.

Pennyboy Senior continued, "But since your thumbs have greased the ephemerides, casting horoscopes, and turned over the pages of almanacs for your candle-rents, and your twelve houses in the Zodiac, with your almutens, almacantaros, you truly shall cant — speak — in vain as far as Pennyboy Senior is concerned."

“Candle-rents” are revenue gained from residential properties. Unless a residence is continually well maintained, such property depreciates just like a candle that continually melts away.

People would use the astrological almanacs to help them predict their revenue from rental properties. Imagine a farmer using weather predictions in *The Farmer’s Almanac* to predict crop yields.

“Almutens” are the astrological ruling planets.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an “almucantara” is “A circle on the celestial sphere parallel to the horizon, typically one of a series that cut the meridian at equal angular separations; a parallel of altitude.”

Almucantarans are used in astrological almanacs.

Almanac spent his time consulting almanacs and indulging in astrology instead of doctoring.

Shunfield said to the other jeerers, “I told you what we should find him to be: an absolute bawd.”

“A rogue, a cheater,” Fitton said.

Pennyboy Senior said, “Say what you please, gentlemen. I am of that humble nature and condition never to mind Your Worships, or take notice of what words you throw away like this. I keep house here like a lame cobbler who is never out of doors, with my two dogs, my friends, and as you say, I drive a quick, pretty trade always.”

A proverb states, “A cobbler is a king at home.”

He continued, “I get money, and as for titles, be they ‘rogue’ or ‘rascal,’ or whatever Your Worships fancy, let them pass as transitory things. These titles are mine today and yours tomorrow.”

“Hang you, dog!” Almanac said.

“You cur!” Shunfield said.

“You see how I blush and am ashamed of these grossly insulting attributes?” Pennyboy Senior said sarcastically. “Yet you have no money.”

Almanac said, “Well, wolf, hyena, you old pock-marked rascal, you will have the hernia fall down again into your scrotum, and I shall be sent for. I will remember then, that; and I will remember your *fistula in ano* I cured you of.”

“*Fistula in ano*” means fistula in the anus. An anal fistula is a passage from the inside of the anus to the skin around it.

If Almanac really could cure such hurts, he ought to keep his practice as a doctor of medicine.

“Thank your dog-leechcraft,” Pennyboy Senior said.

The word “dog” was used as an insult. “Dog-leechcraft” is quackery. Or perhaps Pennyboy Senior was calling Almanac a dog-doctor.

Perhaps Almanac really did cure Pennyboy Senior’s ailments. If he had continued his practice and not become a jeerer, most likely his credit would be good with Pennyboy Senior.

Doctors can do people good, and they can get good money for doing so.

Some people may see astrology as a help in getting rich quick; if it ever works, it works for very few. Famous astrologers, maybe?

“They were ’olesome piles, before you meddled with them,” Pennyboy Senior said.

They were wholesome hemorrhoids, and they were hemorrhoids in a hole.

Perhaps Almanac had not cured Pennyboy Senior's ailments.

They continued to jeer at Pennyboy Senior.

"What an ungrateful wretch is this!" Almanac said.

Shunfield said, "He remembers a courtesy no more than London Bridge remembers what arch was mended last."

London Bridge was in a state of disrepair, hence the children's song "London Bridge is Falling Down."

"He never thinks, more than a log, of any grace at court a man may do him, or that such a lord reached him his hand," Fitton said.

A proverb stated, "A friend in court is worth a penny in purse."

Fitton was a courtier, and he was saying that he could do Pennyboy Senior favors at court — if Pennyboy Senior lent him money.

"Oh, yes!" Pennyboy Senior said. "If grace would cancel the brewer's tally, or my good lord's hand would settle the bill; but, sir, they will not do it."

Fitton's good will would not pay Pennyboy Senior's bills.

Pennyboy Senior showed the jeerers a gold coin and said, "Here's a piece — it is my good Lord Piece, and it does everything. It goes to the butcher's and fetches in a mutton, and then it goes to the baker's and brings in bread. It makes fires, gets wine, and does more real courtesies than all the milords I know.

“My sweet Lord Piece! You are my lord; the rest are cogging jacks, under the rose.”

“Under the rose,” aka *sub rosa*, is an idiom meaning “between you and me” or “confidentially.”

“Rogue!” Shunfield said. “I am tempted to beat you now.”

“Truly, captain, if you dared to beat any other person, I would believe you,” Pennyboy Senior said.

Shunfield was good at threatening, but he was not good at actually fighting.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “But indeed you are hungry. You are not angry, captain, if I know your character rightly, good captain. No Pecunia is to be seen, even if Mistress Band would speak, or little Blushet — Blushing, aka Rose — Wax be never so easy.

“I’ll stop my ears with her against the sirens Court and Philosophy.”

In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Odysseus wanted to hear the song of the Sirens, who used their beautiful voices to lure sailors to their death. He ordered his men to stop their ears with wax so they wouldn’t hear the song of the Sirens, and he ordered his men to tie him to the mast so that when he heard the song, he wouldn’t jump overboard to go to the Sirens, which would result in his death.

The Sirens whom Pennyboy Senior and Pecunia were stopping their ears against and rejecting were Court and Philosophy: the courier Fitton and the natural philosopher Almanac, who was a doctor and so studied or was supposed to study the effects of natural medicines. Pennyboy Senior had no interest in hearing whatever these jeerers — or any jeerers — said.



“God be with you, gentlemen,” Pennyboy Senior said. “If you provide better names, Pecunia is for you.”

“God be with you” means “Goodbye.”

The jeerers need better names than they have (that is, they need to be different people with better characters than they have) if they want to borrow money from him. They also need to provide better names than they had been using to refer to him — “wolf, hyena, you old pocky rascal” — if they want to borrow money from him.

Fitton said, “What a damned Harpy he is!”

Harpies are mythological creatures that are half-bird and half woman. They are usually nuisances, but sometimes they are oracles.

Fitton then asked, “Where’s Madrigal? Has he sneaked away from here?”

Madrigal returned with Broker.

Shunfield said, “Here he comes with Broker, Lady Pecunia’s secretary.”

Almanac said, “He may do some good with him, perhaps.”

Who is he, and who is him?

He may be Broker, who may get bribe money from Madrigal. Or he is Madrigal, who may get access to Lady Pecunia and her women from Broker. But possibly, Madrigal may be able to borrow money from Pennyboy Senior.

Almanac asked, “Where have you been, Madrigal?”

“Above with My Lady’s women, reading verses,” Madrigal replied.

Apparently, Lady Pecunia was not present.

Fitton said, "That was a favor."

It was a favor for Madrigal to have been admitted into the ladies' presence. Whether hearing Madrigal's verses was a favor to the ladies is open to interpretation.

Fitton then said to Broker, "Good morning, Master Secretary."

"Good morning, Master Usher," Shunfield said to Broker.

Almanac said, "Sir, by both your worshipful titles and your name, Mas' Broker, good morning."

*Mas'* is short for *Master*.

Madrigal said, "I did ask him if he were Amphibian Broker."

An amphibious animal such as otters can live both on land and water: river otters and sea otters.

"Why?" Shunfield said.

Almanac said, "Because he has two offices, he is a creature of two natures."

Broker was Lady Pecunia's secretary and her gentleman-usher. These were his offices: his jobs.

"You may jeer," Broker said. "You have the wits, young gentlemen, but your hope of Helicon will never carry it here with our fat — dull and complacent — family."

The Muses resided on Mount Helicon. Poets have long attempted to climb that mountain.

Broker continued, "We have the dullest, most unbored — unpenetrated and unenlightened — ears for verse among our females."

He said to Madrigal, "I grieved that you read so long, sir. Old nurse Mortgage snored in the chair, and Statute, if you

noticed her, fell fast asleep, and Mistress Band nodded, but not with any consent to what you read.

“They must have somewhat else to chink — clink — than rhymes; if you could make an epitaph on your land — imagine it on the point of departing from you — such a poem would wake them and bring Wax to her true temper.”

If Madrigal would sell his land, then he could bribe Lady Pecunia’s women servants with gold coins they could clink. That would keep them awake.

“To temper wax” is “to make wax malleable by kneading it.” Rose Wax would become pliant through the application of money to her hand.

Madrigal was supposed to be inheriting land — that is why the jeerers were attempting to take advantage of him. If they succeeded, Madrigal could well make an epitaph on the departure of his land.

“Truly, sir, and I will try,” Madrigal said.

“It is only earth, fit to make bricks and tiles of,” Broker said.

Broker wanted Madrigal to sell his land so that he — Broker — could get bribes.

Madrigal could also get money by mortgaging his land to Pennyboy Senior — and lose his land through non-payment of his debt.

Shunfield said, “A pox upon land. It is only for pots or pipkins — small earthen pots — at the best. If it would keep us in good tobacco pipes —”

Broker interrupted, “— it would be worth keeping.”

Fitton added, “Or in porcelain dishes, there would be some hope.”

“But this is a poor, hungry soil,” Almanac said. “And must be helped.”

Fitton said, “Who would hold any land to have the trouble to marl it?”

To marl land meant to improve it with marl, a kind of clayey soil used to improve sandy land.

“Not a gentleman,” Shunfield said.

Broker said, “Let rustics and laborers who love plows, carts, and harrows pursue such work; they always are busy in vexing the dull element.”

The dull element is earth.

They were working hard to persuade Madrigal that land was not worth having.

Many gentlemen at the time, of course, got their income from land.

“Our sweet songster shall rarify it into air,” Almanac said.

They wanted Madrigal to mortgage his land so they could burn through his money, which would go up in smoke and dissipate into the air.

Fitton whispered to Broker, “And you, Mas’ Broker, shall have a feeling.”

The jeerers would be happy to “borrow” money from Madrigal once he had mortgaged or sold his land, and Broker would have a share for helping to persuade Madrigal to mortgage or sell his land.

A “feeling” is a tip — or a bribe.

Broker said, “So it will gratify or soften, sir, the nerves.”

Tips gratify; bribes soften.

“Oh, it shall be palpable,” Madrigal said. “It shall make you run through a finger-ring, or a thumb-ring, run through the nose — hole — of a tobacco pipe, and draw your ductile — flexible — bones out like a knitting needle, to serve my subtle turns.”

Attendant spirits — familiars — were thought to be kept in a ring.

Madrigal was aware that money had power to turn greedy people into servants.

“I shall obey, sir,” Broker said “And run a thread, like an hourglass.”

Broker was a greedy person.

He would run continually like a trickle of sand in an hourglass to serve Madrigal and get bribes. Once Madrigal was out of money, the sand in the hourglass would cease to run. No bribes, no service.

Pennyboy Senior entered the room and asked, “Where is Broker?”

Seeing that the jeerers were still present, he asked, “Aren’t these flies — these parasites — gone yet?”

He said to the jeerers, of whom Madrigal was now one, “Please, leave my house. I’ll smoke you out else.”

Smoke is a way to keep unwelcome visitors such as mosquitoes away.

“Oh, the prodigal!” Fitton said. “Will you be at so much charge — expense — with us, and loss?”

The expense would be the cost of the wood — probably juniper wood to cleanse the house.

Madrigal pretended that Pennyboy Senior would be upset at the loss of fragrant smoke escaping from his house.

Madrigal said to Pennyboy Senior, “I have heard you have offered, sir, to lock up smoke, and caulk your windows, spar up — bolt — all your doors, thinking to keep it a close prisoner with you, and wept when it went out, sir, at your chimney.”

According to the jeerers, misers don’t wish to let go of any possession, even smoke, except in return for money.

“And yet his eyes were drier than a pumice because of the smoke,” Fitton said.

Shunfield said, “He is a wretched rascal, who will bind the nose of his bellows lest the wind get out when he’s abroad!”

Almanac said, “He sweeps down no cobwebs here, but instead he sells them for cut fingers.”

Cobwebs were used to stop cuts from bleeding.

Almanac continued, “And he sells the spiders, which are creatures reared of dust and cost him nothing, to fat old ladies to feed to their pet monkeys.”

Fitton said, “He has offered to gather up spilt water and to preserve each hair that falls from him to stuff balls with.”

Hair was used to stuff tennis balls.

Shunfield said, “He is a slave, and an idolater to Pecunia!”

Pennyboy Senior replied to the jeerers, “You all have happy memories, gentlemen, in rocking my poor cradle.”

Possibly, at one time, the jeerers had money, which they had borrowed from Pennyboy Senior, using their land as security. Pennyboy Senior had slept soundly with such

security. Now, possibly, Pennyboy Senior had money *and* the jeerers' lands.

Pennyboy Senior continued, "I remember, too, when you had lands, and credit, worship and honor, friends, yes, and could give security in the form of land.

"Now you have none, or will have none very shortly."

He was thinking of Madrigal, whose new friends would most likely convince him to sell or mortgage his land.

Pennyboy Senior continued, "Time and the vicissitude of things can bring these things about."

He could also have mentioned that having the wrong kind of "friends" can bring these things about.

He continued, "I have all these, and money, too, and do possess them, and I am right heartily glad of all our memories, and both the changes: the change for the better in my case, and the change for the worse in your cases."

Fitton said to the other jeerers, "Let us leave the viper."

Pennyboy Senior had struck a nerve.

Everyone exited except Pennyboy Senior and Broker.

Pennyboy Senior said to himself about Fitton, "He's glad he is rid of his torture, and so soon."

He then said, "Broker, come here. Go up and tell your lady that she must be ready immediately, as well as Statute, Band, Mortgage, and Wax.

"My prodigal young kinsman will straightaway be here to see her. He is the top of our house, the flourishing and flaunting Pennyboy Junior."

The top of the house is the best of the house: the heir who will marry and produce descendants to carry on the family name. The other Pennyboys were unable to have children. Pennyboy Junior's father was dead, and Pennyboy Senior was old.

He continued, "We were but three of us in all the world. My brother Francis, whom they called Frank Pennyboy, was the father to this Pennyboy Junior — Frank Pennyboy is dead.

"This Pennyboy Junior is now the heir.

"I, Richer Pennyboy, not 'Richard,' but old Harry Pennyboy, and (to make a rhyme) close, wary Pennyboy, I shall have all at last, my hopes do tell me."

"Old Harry" was one of the devil's nicknames.

For some reason, Pennyboy Senior thought he would have all the family wealth. Possibly he thought this because Lady Pecunia resided with him.

Pennyboy Senior said to Broker, "Go, see that all is ready, and where my dogs have faulted on the floor, remove it with a broom, and sweeten all with a sprig of juniper — not too much, but sparing. We may be faulty ourselves otherwise, and turn prodigal in the entertaining of the Prodigal."

Fragrant juniper wood was burned to sweeten the air.

Broker exited.

Seeing his nephew approaching, Pennyboy Senior said, "Here he is! And with him — who? A clapper dudgeon!"

A clapper dudgeon is a beggar. "Dudgeon" is a wood used to make bowls and knife handles. A clapper is a lid to a clapper-dish or begging-bowl. Beggars could make noise by hitting their wooden begging bowl with a lid or a knife handle.



Clappers are also tongues: Beggars ask for alms while holding their begging bowl.

Pennyboy Senior said, “That’s a good sign, to have the beggar follow him so near at his first entry into fortune.”

Why would that be a good sign?

Pennyboy Senior had just had the jeerers trying to borrow money from him without good security. They were unlikely to ever be able to pay the money back.

By contrast, a real beggar was an improvement. A beggar would ask for alms and not make false promises to pay the money back.

A real beggar would also be a reminder to Pennyboy Junior not to waste his wealth.

— 2.5 —

Pennyboy Junior, Picklock, and the Canter entered the scene. The Canter was the clapper dudgeon whom Pennyboy Senior had seen.

Broker, Pecunia, Statute, Band, Wax, and Mortgage were in a neighboring study, where they could not be seen.

“How now, old uncle?” Pennyboy Junior said. “I have come to see you and the splendid lady here, the daughter of Ophir, they say you keep.”

Lady Pecunia was Pennyboy Senior’s guest.

Pennyboy Senior said, “Sweet nephew, even if she were the daughter of the sun, she’s at your service, and so am I, and the whole family, worshipful nephew.”

The family was the household servants.

“Do you say so, dear uncle?” Pennyboy Junior said.  
“Welcome my friends, then. Here is Domine Picklock, my man of law.”

Learned professionals were called by the title “Domine,” aka “Master.”

Pennyboy Junior continued, “He solicits all my causes, follows my business, makes and settles my quarrels between my tenants and me, sows all my strifes and reaps them, too, troubles the country for me, and vexes any neighbor whom I please.”

“But with commission?” Pennyboy Senior asked.

A lawyer who worked under commission could cause problems and then receive payment for correcting them.

“Under my hand and seal,” Pennyboy Junior replied.

The lawyer definitely got paid.

“A worshipful — honorable — place!” Pennyboy Senior said.

Definitely a profitable job.

“I thank His Worship for it,” Picklock said.

Pennyboy Senior pointed to the Canter and said, “But who is this old gentleman?”

The Canter said, “A rogue, a vagrant, a very canter; aye, sir, one who maunds upon the pad — that is, I am one who begs upon the highway.”

In using words such as “maunds” and “pad,” the Canter was using cant: the specialized jargon used by beggars.

The Canter continued, “We should be brothers, though, for you are nearly as wretched as myself. You dare not use your money, and I have none.”

A person who will not use money when it ought to be used is like a person who owns books but does not read them.

Money should be used to make oneself comfortable, and good books ought to be read.

“Not use my money, you cogging jack — you cheating knave?” Pennyboy Senior said, angrily. “Who uses it at better rates? Who lends it for a greater percentage in the hundred than I do, sirrah?”

He used his money in usury.

Pennyboy Junior said, “Don’t be angry, uncle.”

“What?” Pennyboy Senior said. “To disgrace me with my queen? As if I did not know her value.”

His queen was Queen Pecunia and Queen *Pecunia*.

*Pecunia* is Latin for “money.”

He worshiped money, and money can be a quean — a whore.

The Canter said, “Sir, I meant that you dare not to enjoy it.”

For example, he could burn more juniper wood than he did to perfume the air in his house.

“Hold your peace,” Pennyboy Senior said. “You are a jack.”

A jack is a knave.

Now Pennyboy Junior was angry.

He said, “Uncle, he shall be a John — he shall be my servant, And, what’s more, for all that, he’s as good a man as you are.

If I can make him so, he will be a better man. Perhaps I will, too.”

He then said to the Canter and Picklock, “Come, let us go.”

Pennyboy Senior said, “Nay, kinsman, my worshipful kinsman, and the top of our house, don’t do your penitent uncle that affront, because of a rash word to leave his joyful threshold before you see the lady whom you long for, the Venus of the time and state, Pecunia!

“I perceive your bounty loves the man — the Canter — for some concealed virtue that he hides under those rags.”

The Canter said, “I owe my happiness to him, the waiting on His Worship, since I brought him the happy news, welcome to all young heirs.”

The “happy news” was that Pennyboy Junior’s father had died and left him all the father’s wealth.

Pennyboy Junior said, “You did it, indeed, for which I thank you yet.”

He then said to his uncle, “Your fortunate princess, uncle, is long in coming.”

*Pecunia* was fortunate in that it was a fortune.

Pennyboy Senior replied, “She is not rigged, sir. Setting forth some lady will cost as much as furnishing a fleet.”

An expensive fleet sailed against Spain in the Cádiz expedition of 1625. Women’s clothing and accessories can be expensive.

“Not rigged” meant that she had not completed getting ready for Pennyboy Junior’s visit.

The door to the study opened. Lady Pecunia sat in state, attended by Statute, Band, Wax, Mortgage, and Broker.

Pennyboy Senior said, "Here she's come at last, and like a galley gilt in the prow."

"Is this Pecunia?" Pennyboy Junior asked.

Pennyboy Senior said to Lady Pecunia, "Please give my promising kinsman, gracious madam, the favor of your hand."

"Nay, of my lips, sir, to him," Pecunia replied.

She kissed him.

Pennyboy Junior said to himself, "She kisses like a mortal creature."

He then said out loud to Pecunia, "Almighty madam, I have longed to see you."

Pecunia replied, "And I have my desire, sir, to behold that youth and shape which in my dreams and waking hours I have so often contemplated, and felt warm in my veins and native as my blood."

"When I was told of your arrival here, I felt my heart beat as if it would leap out in speech, and all my face was on fire. But how it came to pass I do not know."

Pennyboy Junior said, "Oh, beauty loves to be prouder than nature, and nature made you blush! I cannot satisfy my curious eyes, by which alone I'm happy in my beholding you."

He kissed her.

The Canter said to the others, "They pass the compliment prettily well."

The compliment was kissing. They were passing kisses back and forth.

“Aye, he does kiss her,” Picklock said. “I like him.”

Pennyboy Junior said, “My passion was clear contrary — internally vexed — and doubtful. I shook for fear, and yet I danced for joy. I had such motions as the sunbeams make against a wall or playing on water, or trembling vapor of a boiling pot —”

Pennyboy Senior said to the others, “That’s not so good. It should have been a crucible with molten metal; she would have understood it.”

In alchemy, the final step of producing a philosopher’s stone is Projection: the testing of the power of the philosopher’s stone. A base metal is melted, some of the powder of the philosopher’s stone is cast into the melted metal, and the base metal is turned into gold or silver.

Pennyboy Junior said to Pecunia, “I cannot talk, but I can love you, madam. Are these your gentlewomen? I love them, too.”

Her gentlewomen were her serving-women.

He began to name and kiss them.

“And which is Mistress Statute? Mistress Band? They all kiss intimately; the last stuck to my lips.”

Broker identified the last serving-woman whom Pennyboy Junior had kissed: “It was my lady’s chambermaid, soft Wax.”

No wonder their lips had stuck together: Wax was used as a sealant.

“Soft lips she has, I am sure of it,” Pennyboy Junior said.

He had not yet kissed Lady Pecunia’s aged nurse.

He said, “Mother Mortgage.”

He hesitated and then said, "I'll owe her a kiss, until she is younger."

He then kissed the three younger serving-women again, saying, "Statute, sweet Mistress Band, and honey, little Wax, we must be better acquainted."

Statute said, "We are only servants, sir."

Band said, "But he whom Her Grace is so content to grace we shall obey —"

Wax interrupted, "— and with all fit respect —"

Mortgage interrupted, "— in our poor places —"

Wax interrupted, "— being Her Grace's shadows."

Pennyboy Junior said, "A fine, well-spoken family."

He then asked Broker, "What's your name?"

"Broker."

Pennyboy Junior whispered to him, "I think my uncle should not need you: He is a crafty knave enough, believe it."

A proverb stated, "A crafty knave needs no broker."

He then asked, "Are you Her Grace's steward?"

"No, I am her gentleman-usher, sir," Broker replied.

Pennyboy Junior pretended that he had said he was a gentleman-'usher — gentleman-brusher — someone who brushed or swept the floors.

"What, of the hall?" Pennyboy Junior asked. "You have a sweeping face; your beard is like a broom."

"Sweeping face" can mean "majestic face."

“I have no barren chin, sir,” Broker said. “I am no eunuch, although I am a gentleman-usher.”

Gentleman-ushers were sometimes thought to be effeminate.

“You shall go with us,” Pennyboy Junior said.

He then said to Pennyboy Senior, “Uncle, I must have my princess forth today.”

“Whither you please, sir, you shall command her,” Pennyboy Senior said.

“I will do all grace to my new servant,” Lady Pecunia said.

This kind of servant was a man who was devoted to a woman.

Pennyboy Senior said to her, “Thanks to your generosity in treating him so well. He is my nephew and my chief, the point, tip, top, and tuft — chief — of all our family!”

He then said to Pennyboy Junior, “But, sir, on the condition always that you shall return Statute and Band home, with my sweet, soft Wax, and my good nurse here, Mortgage.”

“Oh! Who else?” Pennyboy Junior said.

Pennyboy Senior answered, “Ushered by Broker.”

“Do not fear,” Pennyboy Junior said.

Lady Pecunia would be well chaperoned.

Pennyboy Senior said, “She shall go with you, whither you please, sir, anywhere.”

The Canter said quietly to Picklock, “I see a money-bawd is commonly a flesh-bawd, too.”

Picklock quietly answered, “Do you think so?”



Wealthy people do engage in match-making, often in an attempt to gain more wealth.

Picklock said to himself, “Now, I swear on my faith, this canter would make a good grave burgess — magistrate — in some barn.”

Beggars gathered in barns like drinkers gather in taverns. The burgess of the barn would be the king of the beggars.

The Canter had shown some good sense in his speech.

Pennyboy Junior said to Pennyboy Senior, “Come, you shall go with us, uncle.”

“By no means, sir,” Pennyboy Senior said.

“We’ll have both sack and fiddlers,” Pennyboy Junior said.

Sack is a fortified white wine.

“I’ll not draw that charge upon Your Worship,” Pennyboy Senior said.

The Canter said quietly to Picklock, “He speaks modestly, and like an uncle.”

Pennyboy Senior said, “But Mas’ Broker here, he shall attend you, nephew, Her Grace’s usher, and what you fancy to bestow on him — be not too lavish, use a temperate bounty — I’ll take it as being done to myself.”

“I will be princely while I possess my princess, my Pecunia,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“Where is it you will eat?” Pennyboy Senior asked.

“Nearby, at Picklock’s lodging,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Old Lickfinger’s the cook, here in Ram Alley.”

Many lawyers had offices near Ram Alley.

“Lickfinger has good fare,” Pennyboy Senior said. “Perhaps I’ll come and see you.”

The Canter took Pennyboy Junior to the side, and, along with Picklock, began to persuade him to move the feast.

“Oh, bah!” the Canter said. “An alley, and a cook’s shop, gross! It will savor, sir, most rankly of them both. Let your food rather follow you to a tavern.”

Lickfinger could deliver the food from the cook-shop to the tavern where Pennyboy Junior would dine.

“A tavern’s as unfit, too, for a princess,” Picklock said.

“No, I have known a princess, and a great one, to come forth of a tavern,” the Canter said.

“Not go in, sir, though,” Picklock said.

Picklock was interpreting “come forth” as meaning “born in.”

“She must go in, if she came forth,” the Canter said. “The blessed Pocahontas, as the historian Captain John Smith calls her because she often saved his life, and great king’s daughter of Virginia, has been in the womb of a tavern.”

“Been in the womb of a tavern” meant that she had resided in a tavern.

Captain John Smith wrote *The Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624). Pocahontas visited England in 1616 and stayed at two inns: The Bell Savage Inn and an inn across the Thames at Brentford. She attended one of Ben Jonson’s masques, and he met her.

The Canter continued, “And, besides, your nasty uncle will spoil all your mirth, and be as disagreeable as the alley and the cook’s shop.”

“That’s true,” Picklock said.

“No, truly,” the Canter said, “dine in the Apollo Room in the Devil Tavern at Bell Temple, Fleet Street with Pecunia. That’s brave Duke Wadloe’s place. Have your friends around you and make a day of it.”

Simon Wadloe was the innkeeper at the Devil’s Inn.

“I am content, truly, to do that,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Our food shall be brought thither. Simon the king will bid us welcome.”

A song of the time was “Old Simon the King.” King Simon was a tippler. The present Simon the King was Simon Wadloe.

“Patron, I have a suit,” Picklock said. “I have a favor to ask of you.”

“What’s that?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“That you will carry the Infanta — Pecunia — to see the Office of the Staple of News. Her Grace will be a grace to all the members of it.”

“I will do it,” Pennyboy Junior said, “and I will have her arms set up there with her titles — Aurelia Clara Pecunia, the Infanta — and in the Apollo Room.”

Great people often displayed their arms and titles at places they visited.

“Come, sweet princess, let us go,” Pennyboy Junior said to Lady Pecunia.

“Broker, be careful of your charge,” Pennyboy Senior said.

Broker was the main chaperone.

“I promise you that I will be careful,” Broker replied.

They exited.

## THE SECOND INTERMEAN: AFTER THE SECOND ACT (*The Staple of News*)

“Why, this is duller and duller!” Gossip Censure complained. “Intolerable! Scurvy! There is neither a devil nor a fool in this play! I pray to God that some of us are not a witch, Gossip Mirth, to foretell the matter thus.”

The gossips had accurately predicted that no fool or devil would be in the play, and Gossip Censure was saying that she hoped that none of the gossips were witches.

Gossip Mirth replied, “I fear that we are all such, if we were old enough; but we are not all old enough to make one witch.”

A stereotype of witches is that they are old and withered. In Ben Jonson’s day, boys played all female roles on stage. The combined ages of the four boys playing the gossips would not be enough to make up the age of one witch.

Gossip Mirth then asked, “How do you like the Vice in the play?”

“Which character is the Vice?” Gossip Expectation asked.

Gossip Mirth answered, “There are three or four: old Covetousness, the sordid Pennyboy Senior; he is the money-bawd who is a flesh-bawd, too, they say.”

“But here is never a fiend to carry him away,” Gossip Tattle said. “Besides, he hasn’t a wooden dagger! I’d not give a rush for a Vice that has not a wooden dagger to snap at everybody he meets.”

In old medieval morality plays, the Vice character carried a wooden dagger, which he brandished. The Vice character represented evil. Sometimes, the Vice character had a name such as Inequity, which is unfairness, aka lack of justice.

A rush is a plant of little worth. A common cliché of the time stated, “Not worth a rush.”

Gossip Mirth said, “That was the old way, Gossip Tattle, when Iniquity came in like Hocus-Pocus the conjuror, wearing a juggler’s jerkin, with false skirts like the Knave of Clubs.”

The Knave of Clubs is the Jack of Clubs. One meaning of “knave” is “a knight’s personal attendant.” On playing cards, Jacks wear aristocratic clothing. Apparently, such clothing included long coats with slits on the sides.

Gossip Mirth continued, “But now they are attired like men and women of our own time, the Vices, male and female!”

That was certainly true of Ben Jonson’s earlier play *The Devil Is an Ass*.

Gossip Mirth continued, “Prodigality is like a young heir, and his mistress Money (whose favors he scatters like counters) is pranked up like a prime lady, the Infanta of the Mines.”

Prodigality, of course, is Pennyboy Junior, and Money, of course, is Lady Pecunia.

Counters are fake coins; think of chips in a casino. “Aye,” Gossip Censure said, “therein they abuse an honorable princess, it is thought.”

“By whom is it so thought?” Gossip Mirth said. “Or where lies the abuse?”

Gossip Censure said, “It is plain in the giving her the title ‘Infanta’ and giving her three names. “

The Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia was the daughter of King Phillip II of Spain. Some people who saw or read the play

could think that the Infanta of the Mines, Lady Pecunia, represented her.

People often thought that Ben Jonson's satire was directed against specific people. If that were true, Jonson could get into serious trouble, and so he objected or pretended to object to such interpretations.

"Take heed it lies not in the vice of your interpretation," Gossip Mirth said. "What have Aurelia, Clara, Pecunia to do with any person? Do they any more but express the property of money, which is the daughter of earth and drawn out of the mines? Is there nothing to be called 'Infanta' but what is open to criticism?"

"Why not have the 'Infanta of the Beggars,' or 'Infanta of the Gypsies,' as well as the 'King of Beggars' and the 'King of Gypsies'?"

Gossip Censure said, "Well, if there were no wiser people than I, I would sew him in a sack and send him by sea to his princess."

The wiser people would stop her from doing that. If not for the wiser people, she would do that.

Gossip Mirth said, "Indeed, if he — Ben Jonson — heard you, Censure, he would go near to stick the ass' ears to your high dressing, and perhaps to all our high dressings for hearkening — listening — to you."

A high dressing is an elaborate hairstyle in which the hair is combed very high.

Fools were given ass' ears in plays; think of Bottom in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Never insult a satirist. If you do, people may read insulting things about you hundreds of years later.

Gossip Tattle said, “By our Lady, the Virgin Mary, but he would not do that to mine. I would hearken and hearken and censure, if I saw cause, for the other princess’ sake, Pocahontas, surnamed the Blessed, whom he has abused indeed (and I do censure him, and will censure him) by saying she came forth of a tavern — that was said like a paltry poet.”

“That’s only one gossip’s opinion, and my Gossip Tattle’s, too!” Gossip Mirth said. “But what says Gossip Expectation here? She sits sullen and silent.”

“Truly, I await the sight of their office, their great office, the Staple of News Office, to see what it will be! They have talked about it, but we haven’t seen it open yet. I wish Butter the newsman would come in and spread — reveal — itself a little to us!”

“Or the butter-box, Buzz, the emissary,” Gossip Mirth said.

Hans Buzz, a Dutchman, was Emissary at the Exchange.

The Dutch had a reputation for loving butter and were called butter-boxes. Dutch people would carry boxes of butter when traveling so that they could add butter to the meals they purchased.

“When it is churned and dished up, we shall hear of it,” Gossip Tattle said.

Gossip Expectation said, “If it is fresh and sweet butter; but what if it is sour and wheyish?”

Gossip Mirth said, “Then it is worth nothing, mere pot-butter, fit to be spent in suppositories or greasing coach wheels, stale stinking butter, and such I fear it is, by its being barreled up so long.”

Pot-butter is salted butter stored in pots.



Because it was taking so long to see the Staple of News Office, Gossip Mirth expected that there would not be much to see.

“Or rank Irish butter,” Gossip Expectation said.

“Have patience, gossips,” Gossip Censure said. “Say that contrary to our expectations it proves to be right well-seasoned and -preserved salt butter?”

Gossip Mirth said, “Or to the time of year, in Lent, delicate almond butter!”

During Lent, people ate almond butter instead of dairy butter. Almond butter was sweetened with sugar.

Gossip Mirth continued, “I have a sweet tooth yet, and I will hope for the best, and sit down as quiet and calm as butter, look as smooth and soft as butter, be merry and melt like butter, laugh and be fat like butter — so long as Butter answer my expectation and be not mad butter.”

A proverb stated, “Butter is mad twice a year.” It is too soft in summer and too hard in winter.

Gossip Mirth finished, “If it is mad butter, it shall both July and December see. I say no more — except *Dixi*.”

*Dixi* means literally “I have spoken” and figuratively “I rest my case.”

## TO THE READERS

In this following act, the Office of the Staple of News is opened and shown to the Prodigal and his princess, Pecunia, wherein the allegory and purpose of the author has hitherto been wholly mistaken, and so sinister an interpretation been made as if the souls of most of the spectators had lived in the eyes and ears of these ridiculous gossips who tattle between the acts.

But the author — Ben Jonson — asks you thus to mend it: to consider the news here vented to be none of his news or any reasonable man's, but news made like the time's news — a weekly cheat to draw money — and could not be fitter reprehended than in raising this ridiculous Staple of News Office, wherein the age may see her own folly or hunger and thirst after published pamphlets of news, set out every Saturday, but made all at home, and no syllable of truth in them, than which there cannot be a greater disease in nature or a fouler scorn put upon the times.

“And so apprehending it, you shall do the author and your own judgment a courtesy, and perceive the trick of alluring money to the Staple of News Office and there cheating the people. If you have the truth, rest quiet, and consider that

*“Ficta, voluptatis causa, sint proxima veris.”*

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Ben Jonson translated this Latin passage from Horace's *Art of Poetry* (338) in this way:

“Poet never credit gained

“By writing truths, but things (like truths) well fained  
[feigned, faked].”

Please note:

The news-books of the time were generally published on Saturday, and they went from new news to old news in six days.

Attempting to verify news can be difficult, and news writers and publishers must decide to which degree the news they write and publish must be verified. A bad news writer and a bad publisher will write and publish unverified “news.”

The “news” recounted in the Staple of News Office in Jonson’s play is a parody of news.

## ACT 3 (*The Staple of News*)

### — 3.1 —

Fitton and Cymbal talked together in the Staple of News Office. Lady Pecunia was a rich woman, and Cymbal wanted her for her money. His rival for Pecunia was Pennyboy Junior.

Fitton said to Cymbal, “You hunt upon a wrong scent still, and think the air of things will carry them, but it must be reason and proportion, not fine sounds, that must get you this lady, I say to you, my cousin — my partner — Cymbal.

“You have here entertained a pettifogger, name of Picklock, with the trust of an emissary’s place, and he is all for the young prodigal, Pennyboy Junior. You see that he has left us and gone over to the young prodigal’s side.”

A pettifogger conducts petty cases and shady business.

Fitton did not trust Picklock.

“Come, you do not know him, you who speak like this about him,” Cymbal said. “He will have a trick to open us a gap by a trap-door — a sneaky trick — when they least dream of it.”

Seeing Picklock coming, Cymbal said, “Here he comes.”

Picklock walked over to them.

Cymbal asked him, “What news do you bring?”

Picklock said loudly, “Where is my brother Buzz? My brother Ambler? Where are the register, examiner, and the clerks? Appear and let us muster all in pomp.

The register, Nathaniel the clerk, and the new clerk, Thomas Barber, entered the room.

Picklock said, "Let us be in pomp to put on a show for the rich Infanta, who is coming here straightaway, to make her visit. Pennyboy Junior the heir, my patron, has gotten permission for her to play and amuse herself, with all her train of servants, from the old churl her guardian: Pennyboy Senior.

"Now is your time to make all court to her, so that she may first just know, and then love, the place, and show it by her frequent visits here, and afterwards you must get her to sojourn with you. She will be weary of the prodigal quickly."

"Excellent news!" Cymbal said.

"And the counsel of an oracle!" Fitton said.

"What do you say, cousin Fitton?" Cymbal asked.

Fitton said, "Brother Picklock, I shall adore you for this parcel of tidings. It will cry up and proclaim the credit of our Staple of News Office eternally, and make it immortal!"

Picklock said, "See that your words to her, then, are fair and fit, and entertain her and her entourage, too, with all the *migniardise* — daintiness — and quaint caresses you can put on them."

"You seem by your language no less a courtier than a man of law," Fitton said. "I must embrace you."

Fitton had been suspicious of Picklock, but now he was impressed by the man.

Picklock replied, "Tut, I am Vertumnus on every change or chance; upon occasion, I am a true chameleon; I can change color for it."

He could change his appearance and manner of speaking and acting as needed for whatever goal he wished to achieve.

Picklock continued, “I move upon my axle like a turnstile, fit my face to the parties, and become, straightaway, one of them.”

Vertumnus was the Roman god of change; he could change himself to woo the goddess Pomona. The guises he used to court her included fisherman, gardener, reaper, soldier, and old woman.

The two men embraced.

Cymbal said to the register, Nathaniel the clerk, and Tom Barber, “Sirs, up, go to your desks, and spread the rolls upon the table, so.”

The register, Nathaniel the clerk, and Tom Barber took their places.

“Is the examiner set?” Cymbal asked.

The register answered, “Yes, sir.”

“The Emissaries Ambler and Buzz are both out of the office now,” Cymbal said.

“We’ll sustain their parts,” Picklock said.

They would make the Staple of News Office appear to be a thriving business by seeming to have lots of people busy at work, either inside or outside the Staple of News Office.

Picklock continued, “It does not matter; let them ply the affairs outside. Leave it to us within; I like that well.

“On with the cloak, and you with the Staple of News Office gown.”

Fitton put on the Staple of News Office cloak, and Cymbal put on the gown.

Picklock continued, “Preserve your dignity; stoop only to the Infanta. We’ll have a flight at Mortgage, Statute, and Band, and it shall be difficult but with some luck, we’ll bring Wax to the retrieve.”

Trained hawks would fly at their prey, kill it, and then retrieve it — bring it to their masters.

Cymbal, Fitton, and Picklock wanted to get Lady Pecunia’s servants on their side.

Picklock continued, “Each man must know his individual province, and discharge it.”

Fitton now completely supported Picklock.

“I do admire this nimble stratagem, Picklock,” Fitton said.

Cymbal whispered to Fitton, “Cuz — partner. What did I say?”

Fitton whispered back, “You have rectified my error!”

Fitton now trusted Picklock to do his part in their plot.

They were all going to play roles in the Staple of News Office and make it look like a high-status and very successful place of business. By doing so, they hoped to help Cymbal win Lady Pecunia.

### — 3.2 —

Some new visitors entered the Staple of News Office: Pennyboy Junior, the Canter, Pecunia, Statute, Band, Mortgage, Wax, and Broker.

“By your leave, gentlemen, what is the news?” Pennyboy Junior said. “Good, good still, in your new Staple of News Office?”

He then said to Lady Pecunia, “Princess, here’s the Staple of News Office. This is the Governor; kiss him, noble princess, for my sake.”

Lady Pecunia kissed Cymbal.

Pennyboy Junior then asked Thomas Barber, the new clerk of the Staple of News Office, “Tom, how is it, honest Tom? How does your place, and you?”

He said to Lady Pecunia, “He is my creature, princess; this is my creature. I am his patron. I purchased his job for him. Give him your hand to kiss.”

Thomas Barber kissed Lady Pecunia’s hand.

Pennyboy Junior said, “He was my barber, but now he signs himself *Clericus* — Clerk! I bought this place — this job — for him and gave it to him.”

The Canter said, “He should have spoken of that, sir, and not you. Two do not do one office well.”

Thomas Barber should have acknowledged Pennyboy Junior’s patronage. Pennyboy Junior should not have mentioned it.

“It is true, but I am loath to lose my courtesies,” Pennyboy Junior said.

He did not want to miss out on the credit for doing a good deed.

The Canter said, “So are all they who do them to vain ends, and yet you do lose when you pay yourselves.”

Proverbs 27:2 states, “*Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips*” (King James Version).



“No more of your moral maxims, Canter; they are stale,” Pennyboy Junior said. “We come for news; remember where you are.”

He then said, “I ask you to let my princess hear some news, good Master Cymbal.”

“What news would she like to hear, or of what kind, sir?” Cymbal asked.

“Any, any kind, so long as it is news, the newest that you have,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Some news of state, for a princess.”

Cymbal said to Thomas Barber, “Read the news from Rome, there.”

Thomas Barber read out loud:

*“They write that the King of Spain has been chosen Pope.”*

Actually, Philip IV (Spanish: Felipe IV) King of Spain (1621–1665), never became Pope. Pope Urban VIII was Pope from 1623-1644.

“What!” Pennyboy Junior said.

Thomas the Barber continued, “And Holy Roman Emperor, too, the thirtieth of February.”

“Is the previous Holy Roman Emperor dead?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“No,” Cymbal said, “but he has resigned, and trails a pike now under Tilly —”

Actually, Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II served 1619-1637. He never resigned and never served as a common soldier under Johann Tzerclaes, Count of Tilly, who was the general of the army of the Catholic League.

Soldiers held a pike — a pole weapon for thrusting — in their hands at the sides, and the end of the pike trailed behind them.

Fitton interrupted, “— for penance.”

“These will beget strange turns in Christendom!” Pennyboy Junior said.

If the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope were the same person, that person would have both ecclesiastical and secular authority and power.

Thomas Barber read out loud:

*“And Spinola has been made general of the Jesuits.”*

“Stranger news!” Pennyboy Junior said.

“Sir, all these news are alike true and certain,” Fitton said.

There were two famous Spinolas. One was Charles Spinola the Jesuit (1564-1622), who was martyred in Japan. The other was Ambrogio di Spinola (1569-1630), a Spanish general. The two were sometimes confused.

They began to talk about the Fifth Monarchy.

Cymbal said, “All the prospects of establishing the Fifth Monarchy were held to be but vain until the ecclesiastic and secular powers were united like this, both in one person who is both the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope.”

The Fifth Monarchy is Christ’s Kingdom on Earth. An extreme Puritan sect believed that the year 1666 would be the year human beings would cease to rule the earth and Christ would begin to rule for 1,000 years. The Fifth Monarchy has yet to come about.

In history, the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor were frequently rivals for power. In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante

criticized such power struggles. He believed that the Pope should be the spiritual leader and the Holy Roman Emperor should be the political leader. Each leader should be happy with his own sphere of power.

“It has been long the aim of the house of Austria,” Fitton said.

“Just see Maximilian’s letters to the Baron of Bouttersheim, or Scheiterhuysen,” Cymbal said.

Maximilian I was Elector of Bavaria, and he was the founder of the Catholic League of Imperial Princes.

“Bouttersheim” means, roughly, “Butters-home.”

“Scheiterhuysen” means, roughly, “Shit-house.”

Fitton objected, “No, of Liechtenstein — Lord Paul, I think.”

Karl von Liechtenstein was a governor of Bohemia, and he presided over the country’s conversion to Catholicism.

“Lord Paul” is an inaccuracy made by Fitton.

“I have heard of some such thing,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“Don Spinola made general of the Jesuits!”

Pennyboy Junior said, “And he is a priest!”

Priest and general seem to be incompatible occupations.

Cymbal said, “Oh, no, he is dispensed — released from his religious vows — now, and so are the whole Society of Jesuits, who do now appear to be the only engineers of Christendom —”

Engineers are 1) schemers, or 2) inventors.

Pennyboy Junior said, “They have been thought so for a long time, and rightly, too —”

Fitton said, “Witness the engine that they have presented to Spinola to travel to the moon and thence make all his discoveries!”

According to this news, Jesuit engineers had invented a rocket for Spinola to travel to the Moon.

Cymbal said to Thomas Barber, “Read on.”

Thomas Barber read out loud:

*“And Vitellesco, he who was last general, being now turned cook to the Society, has dressed His Excellence — Spinola — such a dish of eggs —”*

Mutio (aka Muzio and Mutius) Vitellesco was Superior General of the Society of Jesuits from 1615 to 1645. Spinola had not been made general of the Jesuits. And Vitellesco had not been made a cook.

“Eggs? What, poached?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“No, powdered,” Thomas Barber answered.

“Powdered” means 1) seasoned, or 2) filled with gunpower.

Cymbal said, “All the yolk is wildfire, as he shall need beleaguer and besiege no more towns. Now he can just throw his egg in.”

Spinola had undertaken a siege of Breda in the Netherlands in 1624-25. Time wore on, and Spinola grew tired of waiting for Breda to capitulate and so he used incendiary devices — the “eggs” — to set fire to Breda. On 2 June 1625, Breda capitulated.

Wildfire is a chemical mixture that, once ignited, is hard to extinguish.

“It shall clear and clearly consume palace and place, demolish and bear down all strengths before it!” Fitton said.

“It will never be extinguished until all becomes one ruin!”  
Cymbal said.

Fitton began, “And from Florence —”

Thomas Barber interrupted:

“— *they write that there was found in Galileo’s study a burning glass, which they have sent to Spinola, too, to set on fire any fleet that’s out at sea —*”

They began to talk about a burning glass by moonshine in the water that could be used as a weapon against enemy ships.

Cymbal interrupted, “By moonshine, isn’t that right?”

“Yes, sir, in the water,” Thomas Barber said.

“Moonshine in the water” was an idiom for saying that something was unreal nonsense.

“His strengths will be irresistible, if this hold!” Pennyboy Junior said. “Have you no news against him on the contrary?”

Nathaniel the Clerk said, “Yes, sir.”

He read out loud:

“*They write here that one Corneliuson has made for the Hollanders an invisible eel to swim the haven at Dunkirk and sink all the shipping there.*”

A man named Cornelius Drebbel was an inventor of weaponry. He had invented a boat that was mostly underwater but allowed the occupant’s head to be above the water. The eel sounds much like a torpedo, but invisible.

Dunkirk was a haven for pirates.

Pennyboy Junior asked Thomas Barber, “Why haven’t you got this news, Tom?”

Cymbal said, “Because he keeps the pontifical side.”

Thomas Barber covered the news about the Catholics.

Pennyboy Junior wanted Thomas Barber to change sides — let someone else cover the news about the Catholics. Pennyboy Junior did not support the Pope, and he felt that the Catholics were against British interests.

“What!” Pennyboy Junior said, “Change sides, Tom. It was never in my thought to put you up against ourselves. Come down from your seat, quickly.”

“Why, sir?” Cymbal asked.

“I did not venture my money upon those terms,” Pennyboy Junior said. “If he may change, why so. I’ll have him keep his own side, sure.”

“Why, let him,” Fitton said. “It is just writing so much over again.”

“For that I’ll bear the charge,” Pennyboy Junior said. “There’s two pieces.”

He offered two gold coins to Cymbal.

Fitton said to Cymbal, “Come, do not saddle the gentleman with a position he dislikes.”

“I’ll take no money, sir,” Cymbal said, “And yet he shall have the place.”

He was permitting the change of place. And he was saying that he would not take the money. Why? So that he could impress Lady Pecunia with the success of the Staple of News Office.

Unnecessarily, Pennyboy Junior offered more money: “The number of coins shall be ten, then.”

Pennyboy Junior said to Thomas Barber, “Up, Tom; and the News Office shall take the money. Keep your side, Tom. Know your own side; do not forsake your side, Tom.”

Tom Barber and Nathaniel the clerk changed desks.

Cymbal said to Thomas Barber, “Read.”

Thomas Barber read out loud:

*“They write here that one Corneliuson has made the Hollanders an invisible eel to swim the haven at Dunkirk and sink all the shipping there.”*

“But how is it done?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“I’ll tell you, sir,” Cymbal said. “It is an automa, runs underwater, with a snug, trim nose, and has a nimble tail — a nimble stern or propeller — that is made like an auger, with which tail she wriggles between the ribs of a ship and sinks it straightaway.”

Actually, “automaton” is the singular of “automata.”

“Whence have you this news?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“From a right hand, I assure you,” Fitton answered. “The eel boats here that lie before Queenhithe came out of Holland.”

Queenhithe Dock was near the Southwark Bridge in London.

“A most splendid device to murder their flat bottoms — their boats!” Pennyboy Junior said.

“I grant you that,” Fitton said. “But what if Spinola should have a new project to bring an army over in cork shoes, and land them, here, at Harwich? All his horses are shod with cork, and fourscore pieces of ordnance, mounted upon cork-

carriages, with inflatable bladders instead of wheels to run the passage over at a spring tide.”

“Is it true?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“As true as the rest of the news,” Fitton replied.

“He’ll never leave his ingenious plots,” Pennyboy Junior said.

He then said, “I would like to hear now some curious — occult — news.”

“As what?” Cymbal asked.

“Magic, or alchemy, or flying in the air, I don’t care what,” Pennyboy Junior said.

Nathaniel the clerk read out loud:

*“They write from Leipzig — pardon the use of coarse language — that the art of drawing farts out of dead bodies is by the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross produced to perfection, in so sweet and rich a tincture —”*

The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross refers to the German followers of Christian Rosencreutz: the Rosicrucians.

Fitton interrupted, “— as there is no princess but may perfume her chamber with the extraction.”

Even princesses fart, but Fitton meant that princesses could use the farts from corpses to perfume their bedchambers.

Pennyboy Junior said to Lady Pecunia, “There’s something for you, princess.”

“What, a fart for her?” the Canter asked.

“I mean the spirit,” Pennyboy Junior said.



Aristotle divided the soul (or spirit) into three parts: Nutritive, Sensitive, and Rational. The nutritive soul is responsible for nourishment and digestion and excretion.

The Canter said, “Beware how she resents it.”

If Lady Pecunia actually used the extracted farts, she would re-scent them.

Pennyboy Junior then asked, “And what news do you have, Tom?”

They began to talk about the perpetual motion.

Thomas Barber read out loud:

*“The perpetual motion is here found out by an alewife in Saint Katherine’s at the sign of the Dancing Bears —”*

“What, from her tap?” Pennyboy Junior said. “I’ll go see that, or else I’ll send old Canter. He can make that investigation.”

The perpetual motion was ale flowing from the alewife’s taps and down her customers’ throats. This alewife kept bears that she brought out to dance for her customers.

The Canter said, “Yes, in ale.”

Cornelius (Cornelis) Drebbel presented King James I with what was supposed to be a perpetual clockwork machine.

Noise came from outside. People were coming into the Staple of News Office to buy news.

“Let me have all this news prepared and sealed,” Pennyboy Junior said.

The register said, “The people press upon us; if it pleases you, sir, withdraw with your fair princess. There’s a room within, sir, to retire to.”

The Staple of News Office included some rooms to serve as residences.

“No, good register,” Pennyboy Junior said. “We’ll remain out here and observe your office and what news it issues.”

The register’s office or position was called the House of Fame.

*Fama* is Rumor. Virgil wrote about *Fama* in his *Aeneid* (Book 4, lines 181ff): “Evil moves quickly, and of all evils, rumor moves the quickest. Rumor is the daughter of Mother Earth, who bore her after Jupiter had killed two of her sons: the Titan Coeus and the Giant Enceladus. Mother Earth gave birth to Rumor as a way to get revenge for the death of these sons. Rumor has wings and many feathers. Her many eyes never sleep, and she has many tongues and many ears. By night she flies, and by day she watches and listens. She values lies as much as she values truths.”

“My office is the House of Fame, sir,” the register said, “where both the curious and the negligent, the scrupulous and careless, the wild and grave, the idle and laborious, all meet to taste the *cornucopiae* — cornucopias — of her rumors, which Lady Fame, the mother of sport and play, pleases to scatter among the vulgar. Baits, sir, for the people! And they will bite like fishes.”

“Let’s see your office in action,” Pennyboy Junior said.

Some news customers entered the room. The first news customer was Dopper, a woman Anabaptist.

A dipper is a believer in immersion in water during baptism, rather than being sprinkled. The Dutch word *dooper* means “dipper.”

Dopper asked, “Have you, in your profane shop, any news about the saints at Amsterdam?”

Many Anabaptists were in Amsterdam, a city of religious toleration.

“Yes,” the register said. “How much would you like?”

“Six pennyworth,” Dopper answered.

“Lay your money down,” the register said.

Dopper paid the money.

The register then said, “Read, Thomas.”

Thomas Barber read out loud:

*“The saints do write, they expect a prophet shortly, the Prophet Baal, to be sent over to them to calculate a time, and half a time, and the whole time, according to Naometry.”*

Over and over, people throughout history have used numerology to determine the dates of events predicted in the Bible, including the return of Christ. So far, Christ has not returned and all predicted dates of His return have been wrong.

Revelation 12:14 states, *“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent”* (King James Version).

Naometry attempted to predict future events by using the measurements of Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem.

“What’s that?” Pennyboy Junior said.

Thomas Barber answered, “The measuring of the Temple. A cabal — body of esoteric lore — found out but lately, and set out by Archy, or some such head, of whose long coat they have heard, and, because the coat is black, they desire it.”

Archibald Armstrong was court jester to King James I and King Charles I. He mourned, wearing a black coat, when King James I died.

Actually, a German scholar named Simon Studion invented Naometry.

Anabaptists wore black coats.

Dopper said, "Peace be with them!"

"So there had need, for they are still by the ears — at odds — one with another," the register said.

There was need for peace between the secular rulers and the religious people. King James I was Protestant, but in his reign, an Anabaptist named Edward Wightman became the last person to be burned at the stake for heresy in England.

"It is their zeal," Dopper said.

Anabaptists strongly believed in religious zeal. The virtue of Zeal is opposed to the sin of Sloth.

"Most likely," the register replied.

"Have you any other news of that species?" Dopper asked.

"Yes, but it is more expensive," the register said. "It will cost you a shilling."

Dopper offered some money, but she said, "Verily, there is a ninepence; I will spend no more."

The price the register had asked for this news was twelvecence: a twelve-penny shilling.

"Not to hear about the good of the saints?" the register asked.

"I am not sure that man is good," Dopper said.

She may have been referring to the prophet Baal.

The register said to Thomas Barber, “Read, from Constantinople, nine pennyworth of news.”

Thomas Barber read out loud:

*“They give out here the grand Signor — the Sultan of Turkey — has certainly turned Christian, and to clear up the controversy between the Pope and him, who is the Antichrist, he means to visit the church at Amsterdam this very summer, and quit all marks of the Beast.”*

Chances, the writer wanted “the Antichrist” to mean the Pope, but as written, “the Antichrist” means the grand Signor.

In Revelation, the damned wore the marks of the Beast. Protestants associated the marks of the Beast with Catholics; Catholics did not.

Revelation 16:2 states, *“And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image”* (King James Version).

Dopper said, “Now, these are joyful tidings! Who brought in this? Which emissary?”

“Buzz, your countryman,” the register said.

Hans Buzz, a Dutchman, was Emissary at the Exchange.

“Now, blessed be the man, and his whole family, with the nation!” Dopper said.

“Yes, for Amboyna, and the justice there!” the register said.

On 9 March 1623, the Dutch executed ten Englishmen who were at a trading post in Amboyna. They had confessed — after torture — that they had intended to capture the Dutch castle of Amboyna. A kind of justice was achieved: A plague

was said to have killed 1,000 people there shortly after the execution.

The register whispered to Tom Barber, “This is a Dopper, a she-Anabaptist! Seal and deliver her news to her. Dispatch!”

A second customer spoke up as Dopper stepped aside to receive her parcel of news.

“Have you any news from the Indies?” the second customer asked. “Any miracles done in Japan by the Jesuits, or in China?”

In 1624, John Gee’s book *The Foot out of the Snare: with a Detection of Sundry Late Practices and Impostures of the Priests and Jesuits in England. Whereunto is Added a Catalogue of Such Bookes as in this Authors Knowledge have been Vented Within Two Yeeres Last Past in London, by the Priests and their Agents* appeared in print. John Gee called the stories of miracles done by priests and Jesuits “old wonder-working tales.” Stories about Jesuits in Japan and China tended to be stories of martyrdom rather than of miracles.

Nathaniel the clerk answered, “No, but we hear of a colony of cooks who will be set ashore on the coast of America for the conversion of the cannibals, and making them good-eating Christians. Here comes the colonel who undertakes it.”

“Good-eating Christians” could be 1) Christians who eat well, 2) Christians who taste good when eaten, or 3) both.

The third customer, accompanied by Lickfinger, approached them.

“Who?” the second customer asked. “Captain Lickfinger?”

We can assume that “Colonel” and “Captain” were honorary titles. As will become apparent later, Lickfinger thought of cooked food as resembling military fortifications.

Lickfinger said, “News, news, my boys! I am to furnish a great feast today, and I would have what news the Staple of News Office affords.”

He considered this feast, prepared for the Golden Heir, to be news.

Nathaniel the clerk said, “We were venting some news about you, about your new project —”

“Venting” means expressing. It can also mean selling, but Nathaniel the clerk had forgotten to collect the money before expressing the news.

The register interrupted, “— before it was paid for. You, Nathaniel, were somewhat too hasty.”

Pennyboy Junior asked, “What, Lickfinger, will you convert the cannibals with spit-and-pan divinity?”

Meat was roasted on a spit.

Lickfinger replied, “Sir, for that I will not urge, but for the fire and zeal to the true cause, I have undertaken this:

“With two lay-brethren to myself, no more — one of the broach, aka spit, the other of the boiler — in one six-month period, and by plain cookery, no magic to it except old Japhet’s physic (fire is the father of the European arts) to make such sauces for the savages and cook their meats with those enticing steams as it would make our cannibal-Christians forbear the mutual eating one another, which they do, and which they do more cunningly than the wild Anthropophagi who snatch only strangers, like my old patron’s dogs there.”

Japhet's physic is fire, which was given to human beings by Prometheus, son of Japhet.

The Anthropophagi were a legendary race of man-eaters.

Lickfinger was comparing the Anthropophagi's literal cannibalism to the Christians' figurative cannibalism.

The Anthropophagi ate only strangers, but the Christians — Catholics and Protestants — figuratively ate one another.

Lickfinger's old patron was Pennyboy Senior.

"Oh, my uncle's!" Pennyboy Junior said. "Is dinner ready, Lickfinger?"

"When you please, sir," Littlefinger said. "I was asking for just a parcel of news to supplement the long meal with, but it seems that you are furnished with news here already."

The news could be read out loud in between courses, or it could be posted so that people could read it before or after eating.

"Oh, not half!" Pennyboy Junior said.

He wanted more news.

"What court news is there?" Lickfinger asked. "Any proclamations or edicts to come forth?"

Thomas Barber said, "Yes, there is one that the King's barber has got for aid of our mystery — that is, trade — of barbering, whereof there is a manifest decay."

Trades are mysteries to those who do not know how to do them.

Thomas Barber continued, "There is a precept — an edict — for the wearing of long hair, to run to seed, to sow bald pates



with, and the preserving of fruitful heads and chins, to help a craft, almost antiquated.”

Men with fruitful heads would allow their hair to grow long and produce seeds, which would be used to sow bald heads and make them fruitful. This would help increase barbers’ business.

Some men, however, had heads that would not be fertile fields for the hair seeds.

Thomas Barber continued, “Men who are bald and barren beyond hope are to be separated and set by to be gentlemen-ushers to old countesses —”

Gentleman-ushers had access to high-ranking women. To avoid scandal, those gentleman-ushers could be effeminate, or old.

Lickfinger said, “And coachmen to mount their boxes, reverently, and drive like lapwings with a shell upon their heads through the streets.”

Countesses of the time engaged in the affectation of making their coachmen ride bare-headed. The bald coachmen’s heads were as smooth as the shells of lapwings. Lapwing chicks were thought to be precocious and to start leaving the nest even while they had part of the shell they had hatched from on their heads.

Lickfinger asked, “Have you no news of the stage? They’ll ask me about new plays at dinnertime, and I should be as dumb — silent — as a fish.”

“Oh, yes!” Thomas Barber said. “There is a legacy left to the King’s Players, both for their various shifting of their scenes and the dexterous change of their persons to all shapes and all disguises, by the right reverend Archbishop of Spalato.”

The Archbishop of Spalato had a disagreement with the Pope. He visited King James I to spread his idea of a Universal Church, but the idea never bore fruit. Eventually, he returned to Rome. After the death of Pope Gregory XV, the Inquisition declared Spalato a relapsed heretic, and he was confined to the Castel Sant'Angelo and in September 1624 he died there of natural causes.

Actors are changeable; they play many roles.

The Archbishop of Spalato was also changeable. He disagreed with the Pope, but he later reconciled with him.

Lickfinger said, "He is dead who played him!"

The actor William Rowley, who played the Fat Bishop in Thomas Middleton's play *A Game at Chess*, died in February 1626. The character of the Fat Bishop was based on the Archbishop of Spalato.

"Then he's lost his share of the legacy," Thomas Barber said.

Lickfinger said, "What news is there about Gondomar?"

Thomas Barber answered, "He has a second fistula, or an excoriation at the least, for putting the poor English play that was written about him to such a sordid use, as is said he did, of cleansing his posteriors."

An excoriation is 1) a sore, or 2) a severe criticism.

The Count of Gondomar (1567-1626) did have an anal fistula. Gondomar was satirized in Thomas Middleton's play *A Game at Chess*, which was first staged in August 1624, in the character of the Black Knight. Gondomar had a special chair made so he could sit without discomfort. The chair was mentioned in the play, and Gondomar forced the play to close.

Gondomar is neither the first nor the last person to wipe his butt with the pages of a play.

Gondomar was a Spanish ambassador to England, and he became a friend to King James I. He promoted friendly relations between Catholic Spain and Protestant England. He also favored the beheading of Sir Walter Raleigh on 29 October 1618. Gondomar stayed in London from 1613 to 1618 and from 1619 to 1622. Many English hated him because of his effective promotion of Spanish interests.

Referring to Gondomar's second fistula, Lickfinger said, "That's justice! Justice!"

Thomas Barber said, "Since when he lives condemned to his chair at Brussels, and there he sits filing certain politic — crafty — hinges to hang the states on he's heaved off the hooks."

From 1625-1626, Gondomar was in Brussels on a diplomatic mission to the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands.

In the late 1500s, several Dutch provinces revolted against Spanish rule and declared their independence.

According to Thomas Barber, Gondomar sat on his special chair in Brussels and devised political schemes against the States General of the United Provinces, aka the Protestant Netherlands.

The southern Netherlands, including Belgium, were under southern control, and many Protestants therefore fled to the north.

Hinges are movable joints. Apparently, Gondomar was plotting politic — crafty — hinges that would move the Protestant Netherlands into becoming part of the Spanish Netherlands, with the result that the Protestant Netherlands

would be hung out to dry. In addition, he traveled with his special chair. To make it portable, it may have had hinges and hooks.

“What must you have for these news?” Lickfinger asked. “What is the price?”

“You shall pay nothing,” Pennyboy Junior, a generous heir, said, “but include their price in with the other items in the bill for the feast.”

He then said to Thomas Barber, “There’s twenty pieces — twenty coins — that her Grace bestows upon the Staple of News Office, Tom. Write that down for news.”

Her Grace was Lady Pecunia, but Pennyboy Junior was paying the money. He wanted her to get the credit and to be mentioned in the news the Staple of News Office published.

“We may well do it,” the Register said. “We have not many such news.”

Pennyboy Junior wanted it definitely in the news published by the Staple of News Office, so he now made the news more newsworthy by doubling the amount of money.

He put down twenty more coins and said, “There’s twenty more pieces, if you say so. My princess is a princess! And put that, too, under the Staple of News Office seal.”

Cymbal took Pecunia aside, and he courted and wooed her to the Staple of News Office. He wanted her to take his roof for “covert,” a word that means 1) haven, 2) shelter, 3) protection, 4) control, and 5) jurisdiction.

As you would expect, Cymbal wanted Lady Pecunia to make a large investment in the Staple of News Office.

Cymbal said to her, “If it will please Your Grace to sojourn here and take my roof for covert, you shall know the rites

belonging to your blood and birth, which few can apprehend. These sordid servants, who are your keepers rather than your attendants, should not come near your presence.”

The word “keepers” means guards. Guards can keep someone in custody, or they can protect someone. They are either jail-keepers, or guardians in the sense of guardian-angels.

Cymbal continued, “I would have you waited on by ladies, and your train borne up by persons of quality and honor.”

They would lift up the train of her dress so it didn’t trail on the floor, and they would make up her train of attendants.

He continued, “Your food should be served in with curious dances, and set upon the board with virgin hands tuned to their voices; not a dish removed but to the music, nor a drop of wine mixed with its water without harmony.”

Pennyboy Senior was a miser who accumulated money. Cymbal was a would-be spendthrift who, if he had access to someone else’s money, would spend it on luxuriousness. Pennyboy Junior was a prodigal who spent too freely, but who did good deeds with his money, including paying tradesmen well and buying Thomas Barber an office, aka job position.

Lady Pecunia said to Cymbal, ‘You are a courtier, sir, or somewhat more, who have this tempting language.’

Not all courtiers are good people. The bad ones can persuade other people to do evil.

“I’m your servant, excellent princess,” Cymbal said, “and I would have you appear as that which you are. Come forth, state and wonder of these our times.”

A person of state is a person of social standing. The word “state” also means splendor.

He continued, “Dazzle the vulgar eyes and strike the people blind with admiration!”

The word “vulgar” means 1) common, or 2) tasteless.

The Canter, who had been listening, said, “Why, that’s the end of wealth!”

He was punning. Certainly Cymbal believed that the end — the purpose — of wealth was ostentatious display. The Canter, however, was aware that such ostentatious spending was a way to end — get rid of — all of one’s wealth.

The Canter continued, “Thrust riches outward, and remain beggars within; contemplate nothing but the vile sordid things of time, place, money, and let the noble and the precious go. Virtue and honesty — hang them, poor thin membranes of honor, who respects them? Oh, the Fates!”

He was criticizing a life in which riches were thrust outside — money was used for conspicuous spending — and in which other riches — such as virtue and honesty — were ignored.

The Canter continued, “How has all just, true reputation fallen since money, this base money, began to have any reputation!”

While Cymbal was working on Lady Pecunia to persuade her to stay at the Staple of News Office, Fitton was working on Lady Pecunia’s waiting-women to convince them to persuade her to stay at the News Office, which he described as a paradise. They were having none of it, and they were jeering him.

“It’s a pity the gentleman is not immortal!” Band said

Band was unpersuaded by Fitton’s arguments and so she said that it was a pity that Fitton was not immortal because if he

were an immortal god he would have the power to make the Staple of News Office as good as he said it was.

Wax said, “As he gives out, the place is, by description — ”

Fitton interrupted, “— a veritable paradise, as you would know if you could see it all, lady.”

“I am the chambermaid, sir,” Wax said. “You mistake. My lady may see all.”

Fitton should be showing all of the Staple of News Office to Lady Pecunia, not Wax the chambermaid.

Fitton said, “Sweet Mistress Statute, gentle Mistress Band, and Mother Mortgage, do but get Her Grace to sojourn here.”

Picklock said, “I thank you, gentle Wax.”

He was referring to her comment that Lady Pecunia may see all of the Staple of News Office.

Mortgage said, “If it were a chattel — a movable possession — I would try my credit.”

She would try her credit with her mistress: Lady Pecunia. That is, she would recommend that Lady Pecunia invest in the Staple of News Office.

“So it is, for term of life,” Picklock said. “We account it so.”

Statute said, “Mortgage means inheritance to Fitton and his heirs, or that he could assure a state of years. If that were to happen, I’ll be his Statute-Staple, Statute-Merchant, or whatever he pleases me to be.”

“Statute-Staple” and “Statute-Merchant” referred to a contract in which “Statute-Staple” was the mayor of a staple market and “Statute-Merchant” was a merchant of that staple. In the presence of the mayor, the debtor would swear that a debt would be repaid by a certain time. In this contract,

if the debtor failed to repay a debt by the appointed time, then the creditor could seize the debtor's land.

A title to a property could be granted for a term of life — until the person dies. Or it could be granted for a term of years — for a certain number of years.

Cymbal and Fitton wanted Lady Pecunia to invest in the property: the Staple of News Office. The investment included the real estate of the Staple of News Office, and Statute knew that Lady Pecunia would like a good investment if she in fact invested in the Staple of News Office.

Cymbal had a term of life contract in the Staple of News Office.

A term of life investment could turn out to be a bad investment if the person with a term of life contract died quickly.

But if Cymbal were to die and the Staple of News Office passed on to Fitton, the contract could stipulate that Lady Pecunia's contract with Cymbal would still apply to Fitton.

“He — Fitton — can expect no more,” Picklock said.

Band said, “Fitton's cousin, Alderman Security, whom he did talk of so, just now —”

Statute interrupted, “— who is the very brooch of the bench, gem of the city —”

Band interrupted, “— let he — Alderman Security — and his deputy just assure his life for one period of seven years.”

If Alderman Security and his deputy were to insure Cymbal's life for seven years, then the serving-gentlewomen would see about interesting Lady Pecunia in the investment.



Of course, the contract would have to be legal, as attested by Alderman Security and his deputy: old Chain.

Statute said, “And see what we’ll do for him, upon his scarlet motion —”

Aldermen wore a scarlet gown.

Band said, “And old Chain, who draws — attracts — the City ears —”

Aldermen sometimes wore a ceremonial chain.

Wax interrupted, “— when he says nothing, but twirls his chain like this.”

She demonstrated him twirling his chain.

Statute said, “A moving oratory!”

The oratory was both persuasive and in the demonstration of the twirling of the chain, moving.

Band said, “Dumb rhetoric and silent eloquence, as the fine poet Samuel Daniel says.”

Fitton said to Picklock, “Come, they all scorn us. Don’t you see it? The family of scorn!”

Broker said to the serving-women, “Do not believe him!”

Broker was on the side of Fitton and Picklock. He was willing to make their case to the serving-women and even lie.

He then said, “Gentle Master Picklock, they did not understand. The gentlewomen, they thought you would have my lady sojourn with you at the Staple of News Office, whereas you desire only now and then a visit.”

Cymbal and Fitton definitely wanted Lady Pecunia to sojourn at the Staple of News Office.

Picklock replied, “Yes, if she pleased, sir. But her continual residence would much advance the Staple of News Office! I speak but as a member.”

As a lady of high social standing, Lady Pecunia’s staying at the Staple of News Office would greatly enhance its reputation. Also, of course, Lady Pecunia’s wealth would follow her.

Broker said, “It is enough.”

He whispered to Picklock, “I apprehend you. And it shall go hard, but I’ll so work as somebody shall work her.”

Broker was in league with Picklock to persuade Lady Pecunia to invest in — and stay at — the Staple of News Office. He understood that Picklock wanted her to stay at the News Office and he — Broker — would work hard to persuade at least one of the serving-women to help persuade Lady Pecunia to do that.

Picklock said to Broker, “Please, exchange with our master just a word about it.”

They stepped aside to talk privately.

Pennyboy Junior said, “Well, Lickfinger, see that our food is ready. You have enough news.”

Lickfinger replied, “I need some news about Bethlem Gabor, and then I’m gone.”

Gabriel Bathlen was a Prince of Transylvania who first wanted to marry the Emperor Frederick’s daughter and when he was rebuffed, he wanted to marry the sister of the Elector of Brandenburg. Bathlen wanted land, and he wanted to marry a woman who would bring him land; in return for marrying such a woman, he would fight on her father’s side, whether Protestant or Catholic. The Elector of Brandenburg was Protestant; Emperor Frederick was Catholic. During the

Thirty Years War (1618-1648), Bathlen was changeable in his religious and political alliances.

Thomas Barber read out loud about Gabriel Bathlen:

*“We hear he has devised a drum to fill all Christendom with the sound, but that he cannot draw his forces near it to march yet because of the violence of the noise. And therefore he is obliged by a design to carry them in the air and at some distance until he is married; then they shall appear.”*

“Or never,” Lickfinger said.

Omens were popularly believed in, including such omens as the appearance of armies in the air.

Lickfinger then said, “Well, may God be with you.”

He started to leave, but seeing some people entering the Staple of News Office, he said, “Wait, who’s here?”

Two more customers of news entered the room.

Lickfinger said to Nathaniel the Clerk, “A little of the Duke of Bavier, and then —”

Bavier is Bavaria.

Nathaniel said, “He’s taken the grey habit of the Franciscans, and he has become the church’s miller. He grinds the Catholic grist with every wind; and Tilly takes the toll.”

Maximilian I was Elector of Bavaria, and he was the founder of the Catholic League of Imperial Princes.

Johann Tzerclaes, Count of Tilly, was the general of the army of the Catholic League.

The fourth customer asked, “Have you any news of the pageants to send down into the several counties? All the

country expected from the city very splendid speeches now at the coronation.”

King Charles I was crowned on 2 February 1626, but his reign began on 27 March 1625. London was recovering from the effects of the plague, and the celebrations of the crowning were muted.

Lickfinger said, “It — all the country — expected more than it understood, for they — the pageants — stand mute, poor, innocent, dumb things. They are but wood, as is the bench and blocks they were wrought on, yet when May Day comes, and the sun shines, perhaps they’ll sing like Memnon’s statue and be vocal.”

The pageants were wood, figuratively and literally. They were figuratively wood because they were silent and did nothing. The speakers, because they were silent, were like blockheads — blocks of wood for displaying hats or wigs. They were literally wood because the structures (such as platforms) and furniture (such as benches) were made of wood.

At Karnack in Egypt was a statue of Amenhotep III. When the sun shone on the statue after it was damaged in an earthquake, the statue made a twanging sound like a plucked harp string. Apparently the sun warmed one side, expanding it, and causing friction as it moved against the unwarmed side.

The fifth customer asked, “Have you any forest news?”

Thomas Barber said, “None very wild, sir. Some rumor there is out of the Forest of Fools: A new park is being made there, to separate cuckolds of antler from the rascals. Such men as those whose wives are dead and have since cast their heads — shed their antlers — shall remain cuckolds-pollard.”

Parks are enclosed areas.

Rascals are 1) inferior male deer, or 2) inferior male humans.

Cuckolds are men with unfaithful wives; they are said to have invisible horns growing on their heads.

The word “pollard” means “without horns.”

The purpose of the park was to separate horned cuckolds from unhorned cuckolds.

“I’ll have that news,” Lickfinger said.

“And I,” Dopper said.

“And I,” the second customer said.

“And I,” the third customer said.

“And I,” the fourth customer said.

“And I,” the fifth customer said.

Sex news is always popular.

Pennyboy Junior invited the Master of the Staple of News Office — Cymbal — to dine.

Cymbal replied, “Sir, I desire to be excused; and, madam, I cannot leave my Staple of News Office the first day. But my cousin Fitton here shall wait upon you, and my emissary Picklock.”

“And Tom *Clericus*?” Pennyboy Junior asked, referring to Thomas Barber.

“I cannot spare him yet,” Cymbal said, “but he shall follow you when they have ordered the rolls.”

The news was written on rolls of paper.

Cymbal ordered the clerks, “When you have finished, shut up the Staple of News Office until two o’clock.”

Everyone except the clerks exited.

— 3.3 —

Three jeerers entered the Staple of News Office: Shunfield, Almanac, and Madrigal. They were looking for a free meal somewhere.

Shunfield said, “If you don’t mind, clerks, let us ask where shall we dine today? Do you know?”

“Where’s my friend Fitton?” Almanac asked.

“He’s just now gone out,” Thomas Barber said.

“Can’t your Staple of News Office tell us what splendid fellows eat together today in town, and where?” Shunfield asked.

Splendid fellows are likely to have money enough to be able to treat others to a meal.

“Yes, there’s a gentleman, the brave heir, young Pennyboy Junior, who dines in the Apollo Room in the Devil Tavern,” Thomas Barber answered.

“Come, let’s go thither, then,” Madrigal said. “I have supped in the Apollo Room.”

“With the Muses?” Almanac asked.

“No, not them, but with two gentlewomen called the Graces,” Madrigal said.

“They were always three in poetry,” Almanac said.

“That was the truth, sir,” Madrigal said.

The Muses were muses of the arts, including lyric poetry and epic poetry.

The Three Graces were goddesses of beauty, charm, and creativity.

Madrigal's two Graces were possibly prostitutes.

"Sir, Master Fitton's there, too," Thomas Barber said.

"All the better," Shunfield said.

"We may have a jeer, perhaps," Almanac said.

"Yes, you'll drink, Doctor Almanac, if there is any good food, as much good wine now as would lay up a Dutch ambassador," Shunfield said.

They would possibly have a jeer and good cheer — good food and drink.

The Dutch loved butter — and wine.

Thomas Barber said, "If he dines there, he's sure to have good food, for Lickfinger the cook provides the dinner."

"Who?" Almanac said. "The glory of the kitchen, who believes that cookery is a trade that goes all the way to Adam, who quotes Adam's broths and salads, and swears that Adam is not dead yet, but translated — conveyed — in some immortal crust, the paste of almonds?"

Lickfinger believed that Adam, the first man, lived on in the art of cookery.

"The same," Madrigal said. "He believes that no man can be a poet who is not a good cook — only good cooks know the palates and several tastes of the time. He derives all arts out of the kitchen but especially the art of poetry, which he concludes the same with cookery."

Lickfinger valued the art of cookery as highly as he did the art of poetry. Both cookery, as in the case of Adam, and

poetry, as in the case of Ben Jonson, could make men immortal.

Shunfield said, “Tut, he maintains more heresies than that. He’ll draw the magisterium — the philosopher’s stone — from a minced-meat pie, and he’ll prefer jellies to your juleps, doctor.”

Powdered philosopher’s stone was supposed to turn base metals into silver and gold.

Some cooks are so good that they can make metaphorical gold out of an assortment of common ingredients. When Lickfinger created a minced-meat pie, it was if he had created the philosopher’s stone.

Juleps are sweetened medicinal drinks.

Almanac said, “I was at an *olla podrida* of his making.”

*Olla podrida* is a Portuguese dish that consists of a jumble or stew of spiced meats and vegetables.

Almanac continued, “The *olla podrida* was a brave piece of cookery at a funeral. Although it was a funeral, by opening the pot-lid, he made us laugh who’d wept all day, and sent us such a tickling into our nostrils as if the funeral feast had been a wedding dinner.”

Shunfield said, “Give him allowance, and that but moderate, he will make a Siren sing in the kettle. He will also send in an Arion in a splendid broth of a watery green color, just like the sea color — Arion will be mounted on the back of a grown conger, aka eel, but in such a posture as all the world would take him for a dolphin.”

Sirens were mythological monsters, but they sang beautifully.



A dolphin listened to Arion's music and then saved him when he was in danger of drowning in the sea. The dolphin carried Arion on its back to land.

Lickfinger's Arion was possibly an onion.

"He's an excellent fellow, without question," Madrigal said. "But he holds some paradoxes — unorthodox views."

"Aye, and pseudodoxes — false opinions," Almanac said. "But by the Virgin Mary, to be sure, for mostly he's orthodox in the kitchen."

"And he knows the clergy's taste," Madrigal said.

"Aye, and the laity's," Almanac said.

"You're not thinking about the time," Shunfield said. "We'll arrive too late if we don't go immediately."

"Let's leave, then," Madrigal said.

Shunfield said to the clerks, "Sirs, you must get some of this news for your Staple of News Office — news about who dines and sups in the town, where, and with whom. It will be beneficial, when you have news; and as we like our fare, we shall reward you."

The jeerers would use the news to decide whom to sponge off of that day.

The three jeerers — Madrigal, Almanac, and Shunfield — exited.

"A hungry trade it will be," Nathaniel said.

The jeerers lacked money to give to the clerks.

"Much like Duke Humphrey's," Thomas Barber said. "But, now and then, as the wholesome proverb says, it will *obsonare famem ambulando*."

“To dine with Duke Humphrey” was an idiom for “to go hungry.” Some gallants would go hungry and spend the meal hour on Duke Humphrey’s Walk at St. Paul’s. If they were lucky, someone would see them and invite them to dine with him.

The Latin *obsonare famem ambulando* means to get an appetite through walking.

“Shut up the Staple of News Office, gentle brother Thomas,” Nathaniel the clerk said.

Thomas Barber replied, “Brother Nathaniel, I have the wine for you — let me buy you a drink. I hope to see us, one day, promoted to be emissaries.”

“Why not?” Nathaniel the Clerk said. “By God’s eyelid, I despair because I am not a Master!”

He wanted a much higher position than he had.

### — 3.4 —

In Pennyboy Senior’s house, Broker walked into a room and met Pennyboy Senior, who was startled to see Broker, who was supposed to be with Lady Pecunia.

“What is this now?” Pennyboy Senior said. “I think I was born under Hercules’ star! Nothing but trouble and tumult to oppress me!”

Hercules’ star was under the influence of the planet Mars, which was named after the Roman god of war.

Pennyboy Senior asked, “Why have you come back? Where is your charge? Where is Lady Pecunia?”

“I have brought a gentleman to speak with you,” Broker said.

This can’t have made a good impression on Pennyboy Senior. Broker was ignoring his responsibilities to do a favor

for someone else — someone who almost certainly was going to ask Pennyboy Senior for money.

“To speak with me?” Pennyboy Senior said. “You know it is death for me to speak with any man.”

He was pretending to be ill. If he were ill, he need not engage in social courtesies such as standing when his visitor arrived.

He continued, “Who is he? Set me a chair.”

Broker brought him a chair and said, “He’s the master of the great News Office.”

“What?” Pennyboy Senior asked.

“The Staple of News Office, which is a mighty thing,” Broker said. “They talk six thousand a year.”

They could talk about making six thousand pounds a year — or they could spread six thousand rumors a year.

“Well, bring your six in,” Pennyboy Senior said. “Where have you left Pecunia?”

“Sir, in the Apollo Room,” Broker said. “They have scarcely sat down.”

“Bring in the six,” Pennyboy Senior said.

Broker exited and returned with Cymbal.

“Here is the gentleman,” Broker said.

“He must pardon me,” Pennyboy Senior said. “I cannot rise because I am a diseased man.”

“Rise by no means, sir,” Cymbal said. “Respect your health and ease.”

“My not rising is not because of pride in me, but because of pain, pain!” Pennyboy Senior said. “What’s your errand, sir, to me?”

He then said, “Broker, return to your charge; be Argus-eyed.”

The mythological Argus had eyes all over his body.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “Be awake to the affair you have in hand; serve in Apollo, but take heed of Bacchus.”

In other words, listen to music, but don’t get drunk.

Apollo is the god of music, among other things, and Bacchus is the god of wine.

Broker exited.

Pennyboy Senior said to Cymbal, “Go on, sir.”

“I have come to speak with you,” Cymbal said.

“It is pain for me to speak, a very death,” Pennyboy Senior said, “but I will hear you.”

“Sir, you have a lady who sojourns with you,” Cymbal said.

Pennyboy Senior pretended to have an affliction in his ears: “Ha? I am somewhat short in my sense of hearing, too —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— Pecunia.”

Pennyboy Senior pointed to one ear and continued his sentence, “— on that side, very imperfect; on —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— whom I would draw oftener to a poor News Office I am master of —”

“My hearing is very dead,” Pennyboy Senior said. “You must speak quicker.”

“Quick” is “living.” It is opposed to Pennyboy Senior’s very dead hearing, and “quicker” means for Cymbal to speak louder — livelier.

Cymbal said, “Or, if it would please you, sir, to let her sojourn in part with me, I have a moiety we will divide: half of the profits.”

This was a bribe.

“Ha?” Pennyboy Senior said. “I hear you better now. How come the profits in? Is it a certain business, or a casual business?”

“For I am loath to seek out doubtful courses, or run any hazardous paths. I love straight ways. I am a just and upright man!”

“Now all trade totters. The trade of money has fallen two percent in the hundred, but it was a certain trade while the age was thrifty and men were good managers of their financial affairs, looked after their supplies of goods, and had their minds fixed where they ought to be fixed.

“Now all the public riots as if all of them were prostitutes. The public wastes resources by spending money on coaches and on footmen’s coats and waiting-women’s gowns.

“They must have velvet haunches — with a pox — now taken up, and yet they do not pay the use.”

Haunches are a woman’s tight-fitting undergarment.

“With a pox” can be emphatic, or it can refer to venereal disease.

“Taken up” means 1) borrowed, or 2) removed.

“Use” means “interest.” It can also refer to sex.

This was a topic that Pennyboy Senior felt strongly about. He talked vehemently and loudly.

“Reduce the interest rate?” he shouted. “I am mad — furious — with this time’s manners.”

“You said just now that it was death for you to speak,” Cymbal said.

“Aye,” Pennyboy Senior said, “but an anger, a just anger, such as this is, puts life in man.”

He regarded his anger as righteous wrath.

He continued, “Who can endure to see the fury of men’s gullets and their groins? What fires, what cooks, what kitchens might be spared?”

He became angrier and angrier.

He continued, “What stews, ponds, parks, coops, garners, storehouses? What velvets, tissues, scarves, embroideries, and laces they might lack?”

“Stews” were tanks in which fish were kept until they were cooked and eaten.

Garners are storehouses.

Tissues are fabrics that are made of silk and precious metals.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “They covet things superfluous always, when it would be much more honorable for them to want and buy necessary things! What need has Nature of silver dishes or gold chamber pots, of perfumed handkerchiefs, or a numerous family of household servants to watch her eat?”

“Poor and wise, Nature requires food only. Hunger is not ambitious.

“Say that you were the emperor of pleasures, the great dictator of fashions for all Europe, and you had the pomp of all the courts and kingdoms on display for you to make a selection to make yourself gazed at and admired?”

“The pomp of all the courts and kingdoms” was fashionable clothing for people of high social standing.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “You must go to bed and take your natural rest.

“And then, all this show vanishes. Your finery was only shown; it was not possessed. While it was boasting itself, it was then perishing.”

While we are asleep, we are not gazed at and admired — or at least we are not aware of it.

Usually, people regard dreams as illusions opposed to reality. To Pennyboy Senior, waking reality, when focused on the pomp of all the courts and kingdoms, was the illusion.

Was Pennyboy Senior really saying what he believed when he said, “Your finery was only shown; it was not possessed. While it was boasting itself, it was then perishing”? He certainly was not telling the truth when he said that talking would be the death of him.

Cymbal said to himself, “This man has healthy lungs.”

Pennyboy Senior said, “All that excess appeared as little yours as the spectators’. It scarcely fills up the expectation of a few hours that entertains men’s lives.”

Splendid clothing is hardly the best thing one can accomplish in life.

After all, shouldn’t we be better than our clothing? If people were to judge our clothing to be good and our selves to be bad, shouldn’t that make us concerned?

Cymbal said to himself, "He has the monopoly of sole-speaking."

Pennyboy Senior was doing all the talking and not giving Cymbal the opportunity to speak.

Angry, Cymbal said, "Why, good sir, you do all the talking!"

"Why shouldn't I?" Pennyboy Senior said. "Aren't I under my own roof, my ceiling?"

"But I came here to talk with you," Cymbal said.

"Why, if I will not talk with you, sir, you are answered," Pennyboy Senior said. "Who sent for you?"

Cymbal said, "Nobody sent for me —"

Pennyboy Senior interrupted, "— but you came."

He then said, "Why, then, go as you came; here's no man who keeps you here. There, there lies your way. You see the door."

"This is strange!" Cymbal said.

"It is my civility, my code of conduct, when I do not relish the party or his business," Pennyboy Senior said. "I say to you, be gone, sir. I'll have no venture in your ship, the office, your bark of six, even if it were sixteen, good sir."

Investors could invest in a bark: a ship that would travel overseas. To entice people to invest in the risky voyage, rich profits were promised. In this case, even if the venture promised a profit of 16,000 pounds rather than 6,000 pounds, Pennyboy Senior was not interested.

Angry, Cymbal said, "You are a rogue!"

"I think I am, sir, truly," Pennyboy Senior said.

"A rascal and a money-bawd!" Cymbal said.



“Those are my surnames,” Pennyboy Senior said.

“A wretched rascal!” Cymbal said.

“You will overflow and spill all,” Pennyboy Senior said.

Cymbal called him additional names: “Caterpillar, moth, horse-leech, and dung-worm —”

“— still you lose your labor,” Pennyboy Senior interrupted.

“I am a broken vessel, all runs out. I am a shrunken old dryfat — a broken barrel good only for dry goods.

“Fare you well, good six.”

Cymbal exited the house, and then Pennyboy exited the room.

**THE THIRD INTERMEAN: AFTER THE THIRD  
ACT (*The Staple of News*)**

“This old Pennyboy is a notable tough rascal!” Gossip Censure said. “Right city-bred!”

Gossip Mirth said, “In Silver Street, the region of money, a good headquarters for a usurer.”

Many silversmiths resided on Silver Street.

Gossip Tattle said, “He has rich ingredients in him, I promise you, if they were extracted — a true recipe and formula to make an alderman, if he were well wrought upon according to art.”

“I would like to see an alderman in *chimia*!” Gossip Expectation said. “That is a treatise of aldermanity truly written.”

“In *chimia*” means to be subjected to alchemical analysis.

“To show how much it differs from urbanity,” Gossip Censure said.

“Aye, or humanity,” Gossip Mirth said. “Either would appear in this Pennyboy Senior, if he were rightly distilled. But how do you like the news? You haven’t mentioned that.”

“Oh, the news are monstrous, scurvy, and stale!” Gossip Censure said. “And too exotic and outlandish! Ill-cooked and ill-dished!”

“They were as good yet as butter could make them!” Gossip Expectation said.

Of course, Nathaniel Butter was a prominent newsman of Ben Jonson’s time.

“In a word, they were beastly buttered!” Gossip Tattle said. “He — butter — shall never come on my bread more, nor in my mouth, if I can help it.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb “come” has meant “ejaculate” since at least 1604.

Gossip Tattle continued, “I have had better news from the bake-house by ten thousand parts in a morning, or the conduits in Westminster, all the news of Tuttle Street and both the Almonries, the two Sanctuaries, Long and Round Woolstaple — with King Street and Cannon Row to boot!”

Gossip — news — can be found in many places.

King Henry VII had built two almshouses for the poor to the west of Westminster Abbey: the Great and Little Almonries.

Gossip Mirth said, “Aye, my Gossip Tattle knew what fine slips grew in Gardiner’s Lane.”

The word “slip” can mean 1) twig, and 2) counterfeit. In this context, it means illegitimate children.

Gossip Mirth continued, “My Gossip Tattle also knew who kissed the butcher’s wife with the cow’s breath, what matches were made in the Bowling Alley and what bets won and lost, how much grist went to the mill and what besides, who conjured in Tuttle Fields and how many, when they never came there, and which boy rode upon the astrologer Doctor Lamb in the likeness of a roaring lion that run away with him in his teeth and has not devoured him yet.”

Gossip Mirth was confused, and it showed in her language:

1) Some conjurors conjured in Tuttle Fields and they — the conjurors? the spirits? — never came there.

2) A boy rode on Doctor Lamb when Doctor Lamb took the form of a roaring lion and yet the boy was in Doctor Lamb's teeth.

Gossip Tattle said, "Why, I heard about it from my serving-maid, Joan Hearsay, and she heard it from a limb of the school, she says."

"A limb of Satan" is a young rascal or a young imp.

Gossip Tattle continued, "This was a little limb of nine years old, who told her that the master left out his conjuring book one day, and he found it, and so the fable came about. But whether it were true or no, we gossips are bound to believe it, if it is once out and afoot. How should we pass the time else, or find ourselves in fashionable discourse for all companies, if we do not credit all and make more of it in the reporting?"

"For my part, I believe it," Gossip Censure said. "If there were no wiser than I am and it were up to me, I would never have a cunning schoolmaster in England — I mean a cunning man, a schoolmaster, who is a conjurer, or a poet, or who had any acquaintance with a poet."

A cunning man is a conjuror or a smart schoolmaster.

Gossip Censure said, "They make all their scholars play-boys!"

In this context, play-boys are boys who act in plays.

She continued, "Isn't it a fine sight to see all our children made interluders? Do we pay our money for this? We send them to learn their grammar and their Terence, and they learn their play-books!"

Interludes are pauses between play acts.

Terence was a Roman playwright.

Gossip Censure continued, “Well, they say that we shall have no more Parliaments, God bless us.”

In August 1625, King Charles I dissolved Parliament. In February 1626, Parliament was recalled, but in June 1626, King Charles I again dissolved it.

Gossip Censure continued, “But if we have, I hope Zeal-of-the-land Busy and my gossip — friend — Rabbi Troubletruth will start up and see that we shall have painstaking — and sometimes painful — good ministers to keep school and catechize our youth, and not teach them to speak plays and act fables of false news in this manner, to the super-vexation of town and country, with a wanion — with a vengeance.”

Zeal-of-the-land Busy, who is a character in Ben Jonson’s play *Bartholomew Fair*, and Rabbi Troubletruth were Puritans who disliked the theater.

## ACT 4 (*The Staple of News*)

### — 4.1 —

Pennyboy Junior, Fitton, Shunfield, Almanac, Madrigal, the Canter, and Picklock were in the Devil Tavern. They had finished eating the noon meal.

“Come, gentlemen, let’s take a break from drinking to each other’s healths for a while,” Pennyboy Junior said. “This Lickfinger has made us a good noon dinner for our Pecunia. What shall we do with ourselves while the women water and the fiddlers eat?”

“Women water” can mean 1) the women freshen themselves with sweet water, or 2) the women urinate.

“Let’s jeer a little,” Fitton said.

He was referring to the jeering game that he and his friends practiced. The game involved insulting other people — and each other. It was far removed from legitimate satire.

“Jeer?” Pennyboy Junior asked. “What’s that?”

“Wait and see, sir,” Shunfield said.

Almanac said, “We first begin by jeering at ourselves, and then at you.”

“It is a game we are accustomed to play,” Shunfield said.

Madrigal said, “We jeer all kind of persons we meet with, of any rank or quality, and if we cannot jeer them, we jeer ourselves.”

The Canter said, “It is a pretty sweet society — and a grateful one!”

This kind of “grateful” is “full of grating.”

“Please, let’s see some jeering,” Picklock said.

Shunfield said, "Have at you then, lawyer."

This meant: Prepare to be attacked.

Shunfield continued, "I am going to jeer you. ... They say there was one of your coat in Bedlam hospital for lunatics lately —"

Lawyers wore a distinctive coat that indicated their profession.

"I marvel that all his clients were not there," Almanac said.

"They were the madder sort," Madrigal said.

Picking up on *mad* and *Madrigal*, Picklock said, "They were all not there except, sir, one like you, and he made verses."

Fitton said, "Madrigal, you have been jeered."

"I know I have," Madrigal said.

Shunfield asked Picklock, "But what did you do, lawyer, when you made love to Mistress Band at dinner?"

"To make love" means "to woo."

Madrigal said, "Why, from being an advocate, he grew the client."

Mistress Band would grow if she were successfully wooed and became pregnant.

"Well played, my poet!" Pennyboy Junior said.

Madrigal continued, "And he showed that the law of nature was there above the common law."

The law of nature governs such things as reproduction. It existed long before Humankind created the common law.

Common law is “the general law of a community,” or “[t]he unwritten law of England,” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

“Quit, quit!” Shunfield said. “Touché! Touché!”

“Call you this jeering?” Pennyboy Junior said. “I can play at this. It is like a ball at tennis.”

Fitton said, “It is very likely that you can play at this, but we were not well started in the game.”

Almanac agreed with Pennyboy Junior that the game of jeering was like the game of tennis, “It is indeed, sir, when we speak at volley — fire volleys back and forth — all the ill we can at one another —”

Shunfield interrupted, “— as we this morning — I wish that you had heard us — at the rogue your uncle —”

Almanac interrupted, “— that money-bawd —”

Madrigal interrupted, — we called him a coat-card of the lowest order.”

A coat-card is a court-card or face-card in which the figure wears fancy clothing — king, queen, jack (aka knave).

“What’s that?” Pennyboy Junior asked. “A knave?”

“Some readings have it so,” Madrigal said.

Some manuscripts could use the word “jack” rather than the word “knave.”

Different manuscripts could also use the word “knave” to mean different things.

A knave can be 1) the attendant of a knight, or 2) a low, dishonest rogue.



Madrigal continued, “My manuscript uses ‘knave’ to mean ‘varlet.’”

A varlet can be 1) an attendant or servant, or 2) a low, dishonest rogue.

The Canter said, “And your manuscript calls yourself a fool of the first rank, and one who shall have the leading — take the precedence — of the right-hand file under this brave commander.”

Madrigal’s manuscript was bad enough to identify himself as a fool. The brave commander was probably Pennyboy Junior, host of the feast the jeerers had been enjoying.

The Canter was saying that if Pennyboy Junior was a knave, then Madrigal was the head fool serving under him.

“What do you say, Canter?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

The Canter said sarcastically, “Sir, I say this is a very wholesome exercise, and comely — it is just like lepers showing one another their scabs, or flies feeding on ulcers.”

“What is the news, gentlemen?” Pennyboy Junior said. “Have you any news for after dinner? I think we should not spend our time unprofitably.”

“They never lie, sir, between meals,” the Canter said.

He was punning on the word “lie”: 1) They never tell news, aka lies, between meals, and 2) They never lie down between meals, which means that they can stay awake and gather more news, aka lies.

The Canter added, “In preparation for supper — the evening meal — you may have a bale or two of news brought in.”

The jeerers began to talk quietly together.

Fitton said to the other jeerers, "This Canter is an old envious knave!"

"A very rascal!" Almanac said.

"I have watched him all this meal," Fitton said. "He has done nothing but mock, with scurvy faces, all we said."

"A supercilious rogue!" Almanac said. "He looks as if he were the patrico —"

Madrigal interrupted, "— or archpriest of canters."

A patrico is a hedge-priest — the uneducated parson of the beggars.

The archpriest is the leading Catholic in England.

A patrico and the archpriest were leading figures of underground organizations.

"He's some primate metropolitan rascal," Shunfield said.

A metropolitan is the leader of an ecclesiastical province, and a primate is the leader of metropolitans. In other words, Shunfield is obliquely saying the Canter is like the Archbishop of *Canterbury* — but for beggars.

Shunfield said, "Our shot-clog makes so much of him."

A shot-clog is a person who is not liked, but who is tolerated because he pays the shot — the bill — for the others. The jeerers regarded Pennyboy Junior as a sucker and a shot-clog. The jeerers were repaying generous hospitality with insults.

Almanac said, "The law and he do govern him."

In other words, Picklock and the Canter govern Pennyboy Junior.

"What are you saying, gentlemen?" Pennyboy Junior asked.

Fitton said, “We were saying that we don’t wonder that your man of law — Picklock — should so enjoy your favor; but how does it happen that this rogue, this Canter, enjoys your favor?”

Other people may wonder how does it happen that the jeerers enjoy Pennyboy Junior’s favor.

“Oh, speak good words,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Speak gentle words.”

He did not want the Canter to be criticized.

Fitton said, “He is a fellow who speaks no language —”

Almanac interrupted, “— except what jingling gypsies and peddlers trade in —”

Gypsies jingle because many gypsies sew small bells in their clothing.

Jingling gypsies and peddlers speak cant — specialized language that they understand but most others cannot.

Fitton said, “And no honest Christian can understand it.”

The Canter said to all the jeerers, “— why, by that argument you all are canters.”

He pointed to the jeerers in turn and said, “You, and you, and you — all the whole world are canters. I will prove it in your professions.”

“I would like to hear this,” Pennyboy Junior said.

He saw Lady Pecunia coming and said, “But wait, my princess comes. Get ready, Canter, to prove that all the world are canters — I’ll call for the proof soon.”

He then said to Lady Pecunia, “How is Your Grace?”

Lickfinger, Lady Pecunia, Statute, Band, Wax, and Mortgage walked over to them. The ladies had finished freshening up and Lickfinger had finished cleaning up after the noon meal.

“I hope the fare was good,” Lickfinger said.

“Yes, Lickfinger, and we shall thank you for it and reward you,” Lady Pecunia said.

Lickfinger and Madrigal had earlier been arguing over the relative importance of cookery and poetry. Now they continued the argument.

“Nay, I’ll not lose my argument, Lickfinger,” Madrigal said. “Before these gentlewomen, I affirm that the perfect and true strain of poetry is rather to be given the quick — lively — cellar than the fat — greasy — kitchen.”

Madrigal was asking this: What is the most important part of a banquet? The food you eat that makes you sluggish, or the wine you drink that enlivens you while also encouraging you to engage in conversation that also enlivens you.

In ancient Athens, people would eat and then following the meal would be a time for drinking and conversing. For example, in Plato’s *Symposium*, people ate a meal and following the meal they drank and talked about love.

Intoxicating wine can cause inspiration; heavy food can cause a nap.

Lickfinger responded, “Heretic, I see that you are for the vain Oracle of the Bottle. The hogshead, Trismegistus, is your Pegasus.”

Hogsheads are barrels that can contain wine.

In *Pantagruel* V:5, the Oracle of the Bottle is “Trinc,” which means “Drink.” Panurge, a character in *Pantagruel*, calls the bottle “trismegistian Bottle,” which means “thrice-renowned bottle.” The priestess tells Panurge that “by wine we become divine.”

“Trismegistus” means “thrice-greatest.”

Lickfinger continued, “Thence flows your Muse’s spring, from that hard hoof.”

The winged horse Pegasus struck its hoof on Mount Helicon, home of the Muses, and a spring arose from where Pegasus struck its hoof. Whoever drinks from that spring is poetically inspired.

Lickfinger continued, “Seduced poet, I say to you that a boiler, range, and dresser — kitchen table — were the fountains of all the knowledge in the universe.

“And they’re the kitchens, where the master cook — you don’t know the man, nor can you know him, until you have served some years in that deep school that’s both the nurse and mother of the arts, and hear him read, interpret, and demonstrate!

“A master cook! Why, he’s the man of men for a professor! He designs, he draws, he paints, he carves, he builds, he fortifies, he makes citadels of exotic fowl and fish.

“Some he dry-ditches like a dry moat, some he moats round with broths, he mounts marrowbones as if they were cannon, he cuts fifty-angled custards, he rears bulwark pies, and for his outerworks he raises ramparts of immortal crust, and he teaches all the tactics at one dinner. What ranks, what files to put his dishes in — he teaches the whole military art.”

Lickfinger was comparing cooking to building a fortification. For example, many forts were built with angles.

Doing so meant that often cannonballs would hit the defensive walls at an angle and thus the damage to the wall would be minimized. In addition, angles made it easier for defenders on the walls of the fort to see and fight attackers.

Lickfinger continued, “Then, he knows the influence of the stars upon his meats, and all their seasons, tempers, qualities, and so to fit his relishes and sauces, he has Nature in a pot above all the alchemists or airy brethren of the Rosy Cross — the Rosicrucians.

“He is an architect, an engineer, a soldier, a physician, a philosopher, a general mathematician.”

“It is granted,” Madrigal said.

Lickfinger continued, “And that you may not doubt that he is a poet —”

Almanac interrupted, “— this fury shows that he is a poet, if there were nothing else, and it is divine! I shall forever hereafter admire the wisdom of a cook.”

Almanac, a jeerer, respected cooks.

“And we, sir!” Band said.

Pennyboy Junior, who had been courting Lady Pecunia all the while, said, “Oh, how my princess draws me with her looks and hales me in, as eddies draw in boats or strong Charybdis ships that sail too near the reefs of love!”

Charybdis was a whirlpool that sucked down ships that got too close to it. Jason and the Argonauts and Odysseus and his men had to pass between Scylla and Charybdis. Scylla was a monster whose six heads would each snatch a sailor from a ship and eat him.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “The tides of your two eyes, wind of your breath, are such as suck in all who approach you!”

“Who has changed my servant?” Lady Pecunia asked.

This kind of servant was a male admirer.

Pennyboy Junior answered, “Yourself, who drink my blood up with your beams as the sun drinks up the sea! Pecunia shines more in the world than the sun, and makes it spring wherever she favors! If it pleases her just to show her delicately molded wrists, or bare her ivory hands, she captivates always!

“Her smiles, they are Love’s fetters! Her breasts, his apples! Her nipples, strawberries, where Cupid, if he were present now, would cry, ‘Farewell, my mother’s milk; here’s sweeter nectar!’”

Cupid is Venus’ son; she breastfed him.

Pennyboy Junior said, “Help me to praise Pecunia, gentlemen. She’s your princess; lend your wits.”

Fitton said, “She is a lady whom the Graces taught to move!”

“Whom the Hours did nurse!” Almanac said.

The Horae or Hours — goddesses who preside over the seasons — were the first to attend the goddess Venus when she was born from sea-foam.

“Whose lips are the instructions of all lovers!” Fitton said.

“Her eyes are their lights, and her eyes are rivals to the stars!” Almanac said.

“A voice as if Harmony still spoke!” Fitton said.

Harmony is the Music of the Spheres. The ears of the fallen cannot hear it.

“And polished skin whiter than Venus’ foot!” Almanac said.

“Young Hebe’s neck or Juno’s arms!” Fitton said.

Hebe was the ancient Greek goddess of youth, and Juno is called “white-armed Hera” in Homer’s *Iliad*. Hera is the Greek name for Juno.

Almanac said, “A hairstyle as large as the Morning’s, and her breath as sweet as meadows after rain and just newly mown!”

In this society, the rays of the morning sun were sometimes compared to hair.

“Leda might yield to her, for a face!” Fitton said.

Jupiter, the king of the gods, took the form of a swan and impregnated Leda, who gave birth to Helen, who became Helen of Troy. In a beauty contest of faces, Leda might come in second to Lady Pecunia. Or, possibly, Leda might be seduced because of Lady Pecunia’s face.

“Hermione, for breasts!” Almanac said.

Hermione was the daughter of King Menelaus and Helen (of Troy). Hermione married Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles. Helen was the most beautiful woman in the world.

“Flora, for cheeks!” Fitton said.

Flora is the goddess of flowers.

“And Helen, for a mouth!” Almanac said.

“Kiss, kiss them, princess,” Pennyboy Junior said to Lady Pecunia.

Lady Pecunia kissed them.



“The pearl strives to compare in whiteness with her neck —”  
Fitton said.

Almanac interrupted, “— but loses the contest. Here the snow thaws snow; one frost dissolves another!”

“Oh, she has a forehead too dangerous to be looked upon!”  
Fitton said.

“And glances that beguile the seer’s eyes!” Almanac said.

“Kiss, kiss again,” Pennyboy Junior said to Lady Pecunia.

She kissed them again.

Pennyboy Junior then asked, “What says my man of war?”

Shunfield, who had been quiet up to now, said, “I say she’s more than Fame can promise of her. A theme that’s overcome with her own matter! Praise is struck blind and deaf and dumb with her! Lady Pecunia astonishes commendation!”

In other words, words cannot adequately express her beauty.

“Well pumped, indeed, old sailor,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“Well pumped” meant that Shunfield’s praise was well worked: He had thought up good words to say, although as he said, words could not adequately express Lady Pecunia’s beauty.

“Kiss him, too, although he’s a sluggard,” Pennyboy Junior said to Lady Pecunia.

Captain Shunfield was late in praising Lady Pecunia, who kissed him anyway.

Pennyboy Junior then asked Madrigal, “What says my poet-sucker?”

A poet-sucker is an unweaned poet — a poet who is still a beginner.

Pennyboy Junior added, “He’s chewing his muse’s cud. I can see that by looking at him.”

Madrigal was working on a poem of praise for Lady Pecunia.

“I have almost finished,” Madrigal said. “I just lack the conclusion.”

“That’s the ill luck of all his works always,” Fitton said.

“What?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“To begin many works, but finish none,” Fitton said.

“How does he do his mistress’ work?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

Madrigal’s mistress was Erato, the Muse of love poetry and lyric poetry.

“Imperfectly,” Fitton said.

“I cannot think he will finish that,” Almanac said.

“That” was the poem Madrigal was now working on.

“Let’s hear it,” Pennyboy Junior said to Madrigal.

“It is a madrigal,” Madrigal said. “I much like that kind of poem.”

“And because of that, you have the name Madrigal,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“It is his rose,” Fitton said. “He can make nothing else.”

Ben Jonson knew of a painter who could paint nothing but a rose — a practice he defended by saying that a rose was higher than any other subject of painting.

Madrigal said, “I made it to the tune the fiddlers played that we all liked so well.”

Poems often were used as song lyrics.

“Good,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Read it, read it.”

Madrigal read, “*The sun is father of all metals, you know, silver and gold —*”

“Aye, leave unsaid your prologues,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Read your poem!”

Madrigal read his poem out loud:

*“As bright as is the Sun, her sire,*

*“Or Earth, her mother, in her best attire,*

*“Or Mint, the midwife, with her fire,*

*“Comes forth Her Grace!”*

Pennyboy Junior said, “That ‘Mint, the midwife’ does well.”

Madrigal continued reading his poem out loud:

*“The splendor of the wealthiest mines!*

*“The stamp and strength of all imperial lines,*

*“Both majesty and beauty shines*

*“In her sweet face!”*

“That’s fairly said of money,” Fitton said.

The faces of imperial lines — kings and queens — are stamped on coins.

Madrigal continued reading his poem out loud:

*“Look how a torch of taper light [lit],*

*“Or of that torch’s flame, a beacon bright —”*

“Good!” Pennyboy Junior said.

Madrigal said, “Now, there I lack a line to finish, sir.”

Pennyboy thought up a line and then said it out loud:

*“Or of that beacon’s fire, moonlight —”*

Madrigal thought up the concluding line and then said it out loud:

*“So takes she [Pecunia] place [precedence]!”*

“It is good,” Fitton said.

Madrigal then said, “And then I have a saraband.”

A saraband is a slow and stately Spanish dance in triple time — three beats to the bar. Madrigal’s saraband was composed to that rhythm.

Madrigal recited his saraband:

*“She makes good cheer, she keeps full boards [provides abundant food],*

*“She holds a fair of knights and lords,*

*“A market of all offices,*

*“And shops of honor, more or less.*

*“According to Pecunia’s grace,*

*“The bride hath [has] beauty, blood, and place,*

*“The bridegroom virtue, valor, wit,*

*“And wisdom, as he stands for it.”*

“Call in the fiddlers,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Nick, the boy, shall sing the saraband.”

Pennyboy Junior then said to Lady Pecunia, “Sweet princess, kiss him. Kiss them all, dear madam, and, at the close, deign to call them cousins.”

“Cousins” are kin — or friends.

As she kissed them in turn, Lady Pecunia said, “Sweet cousin Madrigal, and cousin Fitton, my cousin Shunfield, and my learned cousin —”

The Canter said to himself, “Al-manach, although they call him Almanac.”

“Al” is Arabic for “the.” Al-manach is “the man — ach.” “Ach” is an interjection that expresses disgust and dismay and irritation, among other negative reactions.

Picklock said to himself, “Why, here the prodigal is prostituting his mistress!”

Pennyboy Junior was urging Lady Pecunia to engage in much kissing.

Pennyboy Junior said, “And Picklock, he must be a kinsman, too. My man of law will teach us all to win and keep our own.”

He then said to the Canter, “Old founder —”

“Nothing, I, sir?” the Canter said.

The Canter was saying that he did not feel he was worthy to be kissed by Lady Pecunia.

He continued, “I am a wretch, a beggar. She, the fortunate, can lack no kindred; we, the poor, know none.”

“Nor shall you know any, as far as I’m concerned,” Fitton said.

“I agree with Fitton,” Almanac said.

The fiddlers and Nick, the boy singer, entered the room.

“Sing, boy,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Stand here.”

The boy sang Madrigal’s saraband, and the guests danced.

The Canter said to himself, “Look, look, how all their eyes dance in their heads — look at them! — crazed by lust at the sight of their brave idol! How they are tickled with a light air, the bawdy saraband! They are all a kind of dancing machines, and they are set by nature thus to run alone to every sound! All things within and outside them move except their brain, and that stands still!

“Mere monsters here, in a chamber, of most subtle feet! And they make their legs be in tune while walking in the streets!

“These are the gallant spirits of the age, the miracles of the time, who can praise and denigrate men’s wits and set whatever rate on things their half-brained fancies please.

“Now, a pox upon them!

“See how attentively he — Pennyboy Junior — learns the jig, as if it were a mystery — a holy rite — of his faith!”

The Canter was hard on the dancing because it was inspired by love of money, but poetry, music, and dance can spiritually uplift human beings. So can food — think of *Babette’s Feast*.

Some art is better than other art, but even art that is not the best — or close to it — can be appreciated by at least some people.

The dancers were all struck with admiration of Madrigal.

“A dainty ditty!” Shunfield said.

“Oh, he’s a fine, delicate poet when he sets his mind to it,” Fitton said.

“And a dainty scholar,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“No, no great scholar,” Almanac said. “He writes like a gentleman.”

Rich gentlemen need not write for money; in this society, some scholars who had graduated from Oxford or Cambridge often did. In Ben Jonson’s *Epicene*, Jack Daw — who is a fool — distinguished between poets and versifiers. To Jack Daw, a poet is someone who makes money from poetry. Jack Daw preferred mere versifiers, who did not write for money, to true poets.

This society valued money: It is better to have money and not have to write for money.

Ben Jonson, of course, was a scholar who made his living from his literary endeavors.

“A pox on your scholar!” Shunfield said.

The Canter said to himself, “A pox on your distinction between scholars and gentlemen! As if a scholar were no gentleman. With these, to write like a gentleman will in time become the same as to write like an ass.

“These gentlemen? These rascals! I am sick of indignation at them.”

“How do you like it, sir?” Pennyboy Junior asked Fitton.

“It is excellent!” Fitton said.

“It was excellently sung!” Almanac said.

“A dainty air!” Fitton said.

“What says my Lickfinger?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

Lickfinger answered, “I am telling Mistress Band and Mistress Statute what a brave gentleman you are, and Wax

here, how much better it would be if My Lady's Grace would here take up residence, sir, and keep house with you."

"What do they say?" Pennyboy Junior asked.

"We could consent, sir, willingly," Statute said.

"Aye, if we knew Her Grace had the least liking," Band said.

"We must obey Her Grace's will and pleasure," Wax said.

"I thank you, gentlewomen," Pennyboy Junior said.

He then said, "Ply them, Lickfinger. Give Mother Mortgage, there —"

Lickfinger finished the sentence, "— her dose of sack. I have it for her, and her quantity of hum — strong ale."

Sack is wine.

Lickfinger served wine all around.

The gallants were all gathered around Lady Pecunia.

"Indeed, therein I must confess, dear cousin, that I am a most unfortunate princess," Lady Pecunia said.

"And you still will be so, when Your Grace may help it," Almanac said.

According to Almanac, Lady Pecunia would cease being unfortunate if she lodged with Pennyboy Junior rather than continuing to stay with Pennyboy Senior.

As a miser, Pennyboy Senior did not treat Lady Pecunia — money — the way she ought to be treated.

Madrigal said, "Who'd lie in a room, with a close-stool and garlic, and kennel with his dogs, who had a prince like this young Pennyboy to sojourn with?"



A close-stool is a chamber pot that is enclosed in a box or a stool.

Shunfield said, “He’ll let you have your liberty —”

Almanac said, “He’ll let you go forth to where you please, and to whatever company you please —”

Misers keep money shut away from society.

Pennyboy Junior was not a miser.

Madrigal said, “He’ll let you scatter yourself — circulate — among us —”

Pennyboy Junior said to Madrigal, “Hope of Parnassus! Your ivy shall not wither, nor will your bays.”

Mount Parnassus was regarded as the source of poetic inspiration.

Ivy was sacred to Bacchus, god of wine. The bay laurel was sacred to Apollo, god of music, and poets were crowned with laurel wreaths.

Pennyboy Junior had more respect for Madrigal than he had before Madrigal’s song was sung.

Pennyboy Junior added, “You shall be had into Her Grace’s cellar, and there know sack and claret all December. Your vein of poetry is rich, and we must cherish it. Poets and bees swarm nowadays, but yet there are not those good taverns for the one sort as there are flowery fields to feed the other.

“Although bees are pleased with dew — ask little Wax who brings the honey to her lady’s hive — the poet must have wine. And he shall have it.”

Honey is stored in *beeswax*.

Pennyboy Senior — the miser — entered the room.

“Broker!” Pennyboy Senior called. “What, Broker!”

“Who’s that?” Pennyboy Junior said. “My uncle!”

“I am abused,” Pennyboy Senior said. “Where is my knave, my Broker?”

Lickfinger pointed and said, “Your Broker is laid out upon a bench, yonder. Sack has seized on him, in the shape of sleep.”

Broker was drunk and asleep.

“He has been dead to us almost this entire hour,” Picklock said.

“This entire hour?” Pennyboy Senior said.

Broker was supposed to have been looking after Lady Pecunia. If he had done his job, perhaps she would not have kissed so many men.

The Canter asked Pennyboy Senior, “Why do you sigh, sir? Because he’s at rest?”

“It breeds my unrest,” Pennyboy Senior replied.

Lickfinger offered him a drink and asked, “Will you take a cup of sack and see if you can sleep?”

“No, cogging jack — cheating rascal,” Pennyboy Senior said. “You, and your cups, too, perish!”

He struck the sack out of Lickfinger’s hand.

“Oh, the sack!” Shunfield said.

“The sack! The sack!” Madrigal said.

“A madrigal on sack!” the Canter said.

“Or rather an elegy, for the sack is gone,” Picklock said.

“Why do you do this, sir — spill the wine, and rave?” Lady Pecunia asked. “Because of Broker’s sleeping?”

“What?” Pennyboy Senior said. “Through sleep and sack, my trust has been wronged.”

He had trusted Broker, but Broker had not acted as he should have acted.

“But I am still awake to wait upon Your Grace,” Pennyboy Senior said. “Does it please you to quit this strange, lewd, ill-mannered company? They are not for you.”

“No, guardian,” Lady Pecunia said. “I do like them very well.”

“Your Grace’s pleasure will be observed, but you, Statute, and Band, and Wax, will go with me,” Pennyboy Senior said.

Statutes, bands (bonds), and wax (for sealing documents) are all useful to misers.

“Truly, we will not,” Statute said.

Band said, “We will stay and wait here upon Her Grace, and this your noble kinsman — Pennyboy Junior.”

“Noble! How noble?” Pennyboy Senior asked. “Who has made him noble?”

Pennyboy Junior answered, “Why, my most noble money has, or shall — my princess, here. She who, had you but kept and treated her kindly, would have made you noble and wise, too; nay, perhaps she would have done for you that which an Act of Parliament could not do: made you honest.”

Money, properly used, can do great good. So can a wise, kind, and noble person.

Under King James I, however, money actually could buy a kind of nobility. He sold peerages for money.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “The truth is, uncle, that Her Grace dislikes her treatment and conditions of employment, and especially her lodging.”

“Nay, say her jail,” Lady Pecunia said. “Never was an unfortunate princess so badly treated by a jailer. Ask my women.”

She then said, “Band, you can tell, and Statute, too, how he has treated me, kept me close prisoner, under twenty bolts —”

Statute interrupted, “— and forty padlocks —”

Band interrupted, “— all the malicious engines a wicked smith could forge out of his iron, such as locks and keys, shackles and manacles, to torture a great lady.”

Misers keep gold and money locked away.

Statute said, “He’s abused your Grace’s body.”

“No,” Lady Pecunia said. “He would have done so, but that lay not in his power. He had the use of your bodies, Band, and Wax, and sometimes Statute’s.

“Once he would have smothered me in a chest and strangled me in leather, but you came to my rescue, then, and gave me air.”

Statute said, “For which rescue he crammed us up in a closed box, all three — Band, Wax, and me — together, where we saw no sun in one six-month period.”

“A cruel man he is!” Wax said.

Band said, “He’s left my fellow Wax out in the cold —”

Statute finished the sentence, “— until she was as stiff as any frost, and crumbled away to dust, and almost lost her form.”

“There was much trouble taken to recover me,” Wax said.

“Women jeerers!” Pennyboy Senior said. “Have you learned, too, the subtle faculty? Come, I’ll show you the way home, if drink or a too-full diet have disguised — intoxicated — you.”

Band said, “The truth is that we have no mind, sir, to return —”

Statute interrupted, “— to be bound back to back —”

Band interrupted, “— and have our legs turned in, or writhed about —”

Wax interrupted, “— or else displayed —”

“Displayed” meant 1) literally lying down with the legs spread open, or 2) figuratively displayed like the pages of a document.

Statute interrupted, “— and be lodged with dust and fleas, as we were accustomed to be —”

Band interrupted, “— and dieted with dogs’ dung.”

Dogs poop on papers. Since dogs know nothing about which papers are valuable, such papers as bands (legal bonds), if accidentally dropped on the floor, can be pooped on.

Pennyboy Senior said, “Why, you whores, my bawds, my instruments, what should I call you that Humankind may think base enough for you?”

An “instrument” can be a tool, a document, or a woman’s genitalia.

“Listen, uncle,” Pennyboy Junior said. “I must not hear this of my princess’ servants, and in Apollo, in Pecunia’s room.”

They were in the Apollo Room.

The sun — Apollo is the sun-god — is the alchemical symbol for gold.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “Go, get you down the stairs, home to your kennel as swiftly as you can. Consult your dogs, the *lares* of your family, or, believe it, the fury of a footman and a bartender hangs over you.”

The Roman *lares praestites* were guardians of the state, and the Roman *lares familiaris* were household gods. Dogs are loyal guardians and are devoted to the family.

The jeerers all threatened Pennyboy Senior.

“A cudgel and a pot threaten a kind of vengeance,” Shunfield said.

“Barbers are at hand,” Madrigal said.

“Washing and shaving will ensue,” Almanac said.

The jeerers were threatening to cut his hair and beard.

“The well pump is not far away,” Fitton said. “If it were far away, the sink — cesspool — is near, or a good jordan — chamber pot.”

If necessary, they would shave him using sewer water.

Madrigal said, “You have now no money —”

Shunfield finished the sentence, “— but you are a rascal.”

Pennyboy Senior said, “I am cheated, robbed, jeered by confederacy.”

The jeerers kicked him.

“No, you are kicked and treated as fittingly as you should be,” Fitton said.

“You are spurned from all commerce of men, you who are a cur,” Shunfield said.

They began to kick Pennyboy Senior out.

“You are a stinking dog in a doublet with foul linen,” Almanac said.

“You are a snarling rascal,” Madrigal said. “Get out.”

“Out!” Shunfield said.

Retreating, Pennyboy Senior said, “Well, remember, I am cheated by my kinsman and his whore. Bane of these meetings in Apollo!”

Trying to lead him away, Lickfinger said, “Go, sir. You will be tossed like Block in a blanket, if you don’t leave.”

Block was one of Pennyboy Senior’s dogs.

Men and dogs could be punished by being tossed in a blanket.

“Down with him, Lickfinger!” Pennyboy Junior said.

Shaking Lickfinger off, Pennyboy Senior said, “Saucy jack, away! Pecunia is a whore!”

Pennyboy Senior exited, followed by Lickfinger.

Pennyboy Junior said to the musicians, “Play him down, fiddlers, and drown his noise!”

Seeing someone approach, he asked, “Who’s this?”

Recognizing the newcomer, Fitton said, “Oh, Master Piedmantle!”

Piedmantle, who had brought the Lady Pecunia her pedigree, entered the room and walked over to them. A pedigree is a genealogical tree or table.

“With your permission, gentlemen,” Piedmantle said.

Fitton began, “Her Grace’s herald —”

Almanac interrupted, “— no herald yet. He’s a heraldet.”

A heraldet is a petty herald.

“What’s that?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“A canter,” the Canter said.

“Oh, you said you would prove that all of us are canters,” Pennyboy Junior said.

Cant is specialized jargon. Beggars and thieves use cant, but many occupations have their own cant. The Canter was going to show that the people present had their own cant.

Piedmantle’s cant was in heraldry.

Almanac’s cant was in medicine and in astrology.

Shunfield’s cant was in military matters.

Madrigal’s cant was in poetry and song.

Fitton’s cant was the cant of courtiers at the court. Such cant involved business — often fraudulent business. He did favors or pretended to be able to do favors for business people at the court. Fitton was a courtier, but he was also a court gossip.

Referring to Piedmantle, the Canter said, “Sir, here is one who will prove himself to be a canter, immediately. So shall the rest, in time.”



Seeing the pedigree that Piedmantle was holding, Lady Pecunia said to him, “My pedigree? I tell you, friend, he must be a good scholar who can know my descent. I am of princely race, and as good blood as any is in the mines runs through my veins.

“I am every limb a princess! The Duchess of Mines was my great-grandmother, and by the father’s side I come from Sol. My grandfather was Duke of Or, and he matched — married — in the blood royal of Ophir.”

“Sol” and “or” both mean gold. “Sol” is the personified sun, and “or” is the heraldic term for gold.

Piedmantle pointed to the pedigree and said, “Here’s his coat of arms.”

Lady Pecunia said, “I know it if I hear the blazon.”

The blazon is the description of heraldic arms using heraldic terms.

The heraldic terms are, of course, cant.

Piedmantle began to describe the coat of arms in heraldic terms: “He bears, in a field azure, a sun proper, beamy, twelve of the second.”

A field azure is a blue background. A sun proper, beamy, is the sun represented by a human face surrounded by twelve sunny rays or beams, and of the second color that had been mentioned: the sun’s color — which is or, aka gold. The word “proper” meant having its natural color. In the case of the sun, that color is gold. The first color mentioned was azure.

The Canter whispered sarcastically to Pennyboy Junior, “How far is this from canting!”

Pennyboy Junior whispered to the Canter, “Her Grace understands it.”

Cant can communicate, but often a study of the specialized terms must first be made. Lady Pecunia had grown up using these terms and so she had learned them naturally. Piedmantle, however, had to study to become a heraldet, and he was not yet a full herald.

The Canter whispered back, “She can cant, sir.”

Pointing to the pedigree, Lady Pecunia asked, “What are these? Besants?”

Besants are small gold circles. Originally, the term referred to large gold coins.

“Yes, if it pleases Your Grace,” Piedmantle answered.

“That is our coat of arms, too, as we come from Or,” Lady Pecunia said. “What line’s this?”

Piedmantle answered, “The rich mines of Potosi, the Spanish mines in the West Indies.”

Mount Potosi, which is in Bolivia (not the West Indies), was a rich source of silver.

A good herald ought to have a good knowledge of geography.

Lady Pecunia asked, “And what’s this?”

“The mines of Hungary,” Piedmantle said. “And this is the mines of Barbary.”

“But this, this little branch?” Lady Pecunia asked.

Piedmantle answered, “That’s the Welsh mine, that.”

“I have Welsh blood in me, too,” Lady Pecunia said. “Blaze, sir, that coat.”

In other words, describe in heraldic terms the Welsh coat of arms.

Piedmantle said, "That coat of arms bears (if it pleases you) argent, three leeks vert in canton or, and tasseled of the first color: argent."

Leeks are related to onions. They are not normally found in heraldic devices. Vert is the color green. Argent is the color silver.

In non-heraldic terms, the coat of arms of the Welsh mines had a silver background. In a gold square (canton or) were three green leeks. The coat of arms was adorned with silver tassels.

The Canter whispered to Pennyboy Junior, "Isn't this canting? Do you understand him?"

Pennyboy Junior whispered back, "I can't understand him, but it sounds well, and the whole pedigree is splendidly painted. I will have such a scroll, whatever it costs me."

Lady Pecunia said to Piedmantle, "Well, at better leisure we'll take a view of it, and so reward you."

"Kiss him, sweet princess, and give him the title of cousin," Pennyboy Junior said.

"I will, if you will have it," Lady Pecunia said.

She kissed Piedmantle and said to him, "Cousin Piedmantle!"

"I love all men of virtue, from my princess to my beggar here, old Canter," Pennyboy Junior said. "On, on to your proof. Whom will you prove to be the next canter?"

"The doctor here," the Canter said. "I will proceed with the learned. When he discourses of dissection, or any point of anatomy, and he tells you of *vena cava* and of *vena porta*,

the *meseraics*, and the *mesenterium*, what does he do but cant?”

Of course, the italicized terms were part of the specialized vocabulary of doctors. Often, specialized terms are necessary: Doctors can use them to communicate much information to other doctors and nurses quickly. Giving such information to a patient takes longer because simpler words must be used. More than once, the writer of this book has been spoken to by a doctor but has had to request, “Can you say that in English, please?”

Almanac was an astrologer as well as a doctor. Two kinds of astrology existed. Natural astrology was concerned with predicting tides, seasons, eclipses, etc. Judicial astrology was concerned with the supposed effect of the planets and the zodiac on human beings.

The Canter began to speak about the cant of astrology: “Or if he run to his judicial astrology, and troll — move his tongue nimbly as he speaks about — the trine, the quartile, and the sextile, platic aspect, and partile, with his *hyleg* or *alchochoden*, cusps, and horoscope, doesn’t he cant? Who here can understand him?”

Once again, the Canter mentioned many specialized terms, this time those of astrology. One of his points about cant was that specialized terms can be used to deliberately confuse the audience and make the audience think that something non-scientific is scientific.

“This is no canter, though,” Almanac said about the Canter.

The Canter was making too much sense and criticizing his “betters” too strongly to be a beggar.

Talking about Shunfield’s cant — military jargon — the Canter said, “Or when my muster-master talks about his tactics, and his ranks and files, his bringers-up, his leaders-

on, and cries, ‘Faces about to the right hand!’ or ‘The left!’ or cries, ‘Now, as you were!’ and then tells you about redoubts, cats, and cortines, doesn’t he cant?”

“Yes, indeed,” Pennyboy Junior said.

The Canter then talked about Madrigal’s use of the cant of poetry and song, “My egg-chinned — smooth-chinned — laureate here, when he comes forth with dimeters and trimeters, tetrameters, pentameters, hexameters, catalectics, his *hyper-* and his *brachy-catalectics*, his *Pyrrhics*, *epitrites*, and *choriambics*, what is all this but canting?”

Madrigal said to the others, “The Canter is a rare fellow!”

Shunfield said, “He is some begging scholar.”

The Canter had a good knowledge of specialized vocabulary, and he did not have a job. Some scholars are like that.

Fitton said, “He is a decayed — down on his luck — doctor, at least!”

“Nay, I do cherish virtue, though in rags,” Pennyboy Junior said.

The Canter said, “And you, Mas’ Courtier —”

Interrupting, Pennyboy Junior said to Fitton, “— now he treats of you. Stand forth to him fair.”

The Canter said, “You use cant with all your fly-blown — corrupt — projects.”

The projects were financial schemes, many of them doomed to fail. Courtiers such as Fitton said that they were able to bring projects to the attention of people who could finance them.

The Canter continued, “You also use look-outs of the politics, and you use your shut faces.”

Courtiers such as Fitton learned court gossip from observers at the court, and when they thought it appropriate, they used shut rather than open faces — they used looks that hid their intentions.

The Canter continued:

“You also use reserved — tried and tested and set aside until you need to use them — questions and answers that you play the game with.

“Such as:

“Is it a clear business? Will it manage well? My name must not be used else. Here, it will dash.”

“Dash” means founder. When a bill was rejected in Parliament, it was said to be dashed. But “dash” can also mean run or rush.

The Canter continued:

“Or: ‘Your business has received a taint; leave off and give it up. I may not prostitute myself.’

“Or: ‘Tut, tut, that little dust I can blow off at pleasure. Here’s no such mountain, yet, in the whole work that a light purse cannot level — a little money can smooth things over.’

“Or: ‘I will carry through this affair for you — give it freight and passage.’

“Give it freight and passage” means “give me some money.” “Freight and passage” refers to money for passage. In other contexts, the word “freight” can mean “cargo.”

The Canter continued, “You use such mint-phrases — fancy new phrases. This use of language is the worst of canting because of how much it pretends to have the sense it doesn’t have.”

In other words, Fitton's cant pretended to have sense and meaning that it did not actually have. Fitton pretended to help people whom he did not really help.

In contrast, doctors' cant does have sense and meaning, and doctors really can help people.

Fitton said to the others about the Canter, "This is someone who is other than he seems!"

"How do you like him?" Pennyboy Junior asked him.

"This man cannot be a canter!" Fitton said.

"But he is, sir," Pennyboy Junior said, "And he shall be still, and so shall you be, too. We'll all be canters. Now I think about it, noble whimsy's come into my brain. I'll build a college, I and my Pecunia, and I'll call it Canters' College. Does this idea sound well?"

"Excellent!" Almanac said.

Pennyboy Junior said, "And here stands my father rector" — he pointed to the Canter and then to the canters — "and here stand you professors — you shall all profess something, and live there with Her Grace and me, your founders. I'll endow it with lands and means, and Lickfinger shall be my master cook."

He looked around for Lickfinger and said, "What! Has he gone?"

The Canter said, "And Lickfinger shall be a professor."

"Yes, he will," Pennyboy Junior said.

The Canter said, "And he will read and teach Apicius' *De re culinaria* to your brave doxy and you!"

Apicius was a Roman gourmand. Another Apicius was credited with writing a book about cooking titled *De re culinaria*.

A doxy is a beggar's mistress. The Canter was referring to Lady Pecunia. In that case, the beggar would be Pennyboy Junior.

Pennyboy Junior said, "You, cousin Fitton, shall, as a courtier, read Aristotle's *Politics*."

By "read," he meant that Fitton would teach that book at Canters' College.

Pennyboy Junior continued:

"Doctor Almanac shall read astrology.

"Shunfield shall read the military arts —"

The Canter interrupted, "— such as carving and assaulting the cold custard."

Pennyboy Junior continued, "And Horace here shall read the *Art of Poetry*."

Horace, the author of *Arts Poetica*, or the *Art of Poetry*, was a Roman poet much appreciated by Ben Jonson. Pennyboy Junior was using the name to compliment Madrigal.

Pennyboy Junior continued, "He shall read his lyrics and his madrigals, fine songs which we will have at dinner, steeped in claret, and, in preparation for supper, soused in sack."

Madrigal would teach his own work at Canters' College.

"Truly a divine whimsy!" Madrigal said.

"And a worthy work fit for a chronicle!" Shunfield said.

The Cantors' College would give them a source of income.



“Isn’t it?” Pennyboy Junior said.

“A chronicle to and for all ages,” Shunfield said.

“And Piedmantle shall give us all our coats of arms,” Pennyboy Junior said. “But Picklock, what would you be? You can cant, too.”

“In all the languages in Westminster Hall: Pleas, Bench, or Chancery,” Picklock the lawyer said.

The great hall of Westminster Palace housed the Courts of Common Law (Pleas and Bench) and the Court of Chancery.

Picklock continued with a list of cant terms, especially those relating to property, owners, and tenants, used in these courts:

“Fee-farm, fee-tail, tenant in dower, at will, for term of life, by copy of court roll, knight’s service, homage, fealty, escuage, soccage, or frank almoin, grand sergeanty, or burgage.”

If you, the reader, don’t understand these terms, don’t worry about it. Neither did most of Ben Jonson’s original audience. If the non-lawyers in the audience could understand all these terms, then these terms wouldn’t be cant.

“You appear, Κατ’ ἔξοχὴν — par excellence — a canter,” Pennyboy Junior said. “You shall read all Littleton’s *Tenures* to me, and indeed all my conveyances.”

Littleton’s *Tenures* was a treatise on land law.

Picklock asked, “And make all your conveyances, too, sir? Keep all your courts, be steward of your lands, let all your leases, keep your evidences?”

If Picklock were to have all this legal power, and if he were an unscrupulous man, he could arrange things to favor himself and not Pennyboy Junior.

Picklock continued, “But first, I must procure and pass your mortmain. You must have license from above, sir.”

Property held in mortmain could be conveyed only with royal license or permission; such property was controlled by a corporation.

The Canter, who was knowledgeable about legal cant, as he was knowledgeable about so much else, knew that if Picklock could procure and pass a mortmain for Pennyboy Junior, and if he could manipulate Pennyboy Junior into giving him — Picklock — control over Pennyboy Junior’s wealth, he could arrange things to favor himself and not Pennyboy Junior.

Of course, if Picklock were both honest and competent, he could be a good steward of Pennyboy Junior’s wealth.

“Fear not,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Pecunia’s friends shall do it.”

“But I shall stop it,” the Canter said.

The Canter then revealed his true identity. He was not a beggar; instead, he was Pennyboy Junior’s father. He had faked his own death in order to find out how Pennyboy Junior would treat his inherited wealth — and Lady Pecunia.

The Canter — hereafter called Pennyboy Canter — said, “I am Your Worship’s loving and obedient father, your painstaking steward and lost officer, and I have done this to test how you would use *pecunia* — wealth — and Lady Pecunia when you had her.

“Now that I have seen how you treat her, I will take home the lady to my charge, and these her servants, and leave you my ragged cloak to wear as you travel to Beggars’ Bush!”

Beggars' Bush was a tree that was a notable rendezvous for beggars. "To go to Beggars' Bush" was an idiom meaning "to fall into poverty."

Pennyboy Canter continued, "A seat has been built already, and furnished, too, worth twenty of your imagined structures, Canters' College."

The seat was a place by Beggars' Bush for Pennyboy Junior.

Fitton said to the others, "The Canter is Pennyboy Junior's father!"

"He's alive, I think," Madrigal said.

"I knew he was no rogue!" Almanac said.

Pennyboy Canter said to his son, "You, prodigal, was I so solicitous for you to procure and plot with my learned counsel, Master Picklock, this noble match for you, and do you prostitute her, scatter your mistress' favors, and throw away her bounties as if they were red-burning coals too hot for you to handle, on such rascals who are the scum and excrements of men?"

"If you had sought out good and virtuous persons of these professions, I would have loved you, and I would have loved them — for these shall never have that plea against me or have the opportunity of claiming that I hate their callings — but I do hate their manners and their vices."

Specialized jargon can be used to communicate, or it can be used to deceive. Similarly, people can be good courtiers, soldiers, heralds, almanac-makers (lists of such things as times of tides and seasons can be useful), doctors, and poets — all of these are respectable occupations — or people can be corrupt practitioners of these professions.

Pennyboy Canter continued, "A worthy courtier is the ornament of a king's palace, his great master's honor."

He pointed to Fitton and said, “This is a moth, a rascal, a court-rat that gnaws the commonwealth with broking — unscrupulous — suits and eating grievances!”

He then said, “A true soldier is his country’s strength, his sovereign’s safety, and, to secure his sovereign’s peace, he makes himself the heir of danger, nay, the subject of it, and runs those virtuous hazards and heroic risks that this scarecrow” — he pointed to Shunfield — “cannot endure to hear of.”

“You are pleasant, sir,” Shunfield said.

He meant: You are making jokes.

Pennyboy Canter, however, was deadly serious in his mocking of Shunfield.

Pennyboy Canter replied, “With you I dare to be pleasant!”

Shunfield would not fight him. Shunfield was the type of person who shuns a battlefield.

Pennyboy Canter then pointed to Piedmantle and said, “Here is Piedmantle. Because he’s an ass and I don’t love him, does that mean I don’t love a herald who is the pure preserver of descents, the fair keeper of all nobility, without which all would run into confusion?”

Seeing a bad herald — one who mistakes a coat of arms for true nobility (a virtuous character) and one who makes a pedigree simply in order to suck up to a wealthy person — made Pennyboy Cantor love good heralds all the more.

Despising a bad herald does not mean one despises heraldry and good heralds.

Pennyboy Canter continued, “If Piedmantle were a learned herald, I would tell him that he can give coats of arms and marks of distinction; however, he cannot give honor, no

more than money can make one noble — it may give place and rank, but it can give no virtue — and he would thank me for this truth.”

Two kinds of nobility exist: one is based on titles, and the other is based on a virtuous character. Sometimes, the two kinds of nobility can be found in one person, but being given — or buying — a title does not make one noble in the virtuous sense.

A person can be given a medal without having earned it.

Pennyboy Canter pointed to Almanac and said, “This dog-leach, this dog-doctor, you title him ‘Doctor’ — which means ‘learnéd’ — because he can compile an almanac, perhaps erect a scheme — a horoscope — for my great madam’s monkey when it has taken an enema and befouled the ephemerides.”

Ephemerides are books of tables of the positions of celestial bodies at various times. The great madam’s monkey has excreted solid waste on the ephemerides.

Pennyboy Canter continued, “Do I despise a learned physician when I call Almanac a quack?”

If the physician is truly learned, Pennyboy Canter would not call him a quack. But Almanac is not truly learned and so Pennyboy Canter does call him a quack.

Pennyboy Canter then said, “Or do I wither the ever-living garland, always green, of a good poet when I say that the wreath of this man” — he pointed to Madrigal — “is pieced and patched together with dirty, withered flowers?”

“Away!

“I am out of patience with these ulcers — I call you ulcers so that I will not call you something worse. There is no sore

or plague but you to infect the times. I abhor your very scent.”

He then said to Lady Pecunia, “Come, lady, since my Prodigal didn’t know how to entertain you according to your worth, I’ll see if I have learned how to receive you with more respect to you and your fair train of attendants here.”

He then said to his son, Pennyboy Junior, “Farewell, my beggar in velvet, for today.”

Normally, a beggar in velvet is a courtier who seeks favor from the king. In this case, Pennyboy Junior was wearing fancy clothing, but he had no money because he now had no inheritance due to his father still being alive.

Pennyboy Cantor was leaving, and he was taking Lady Pecunia with him.

Pennyboy Canter pointed at the patched cloak that he had thrown to the floor and said to his son, “Tomorrow you may put on that grave robe and enter your great work of Canters’ College, your work, and worthy of a chronicle.”

## THE FOURTH INTERMEAN: AFTER THE FOURTH ACT (*The Staple of News*)

“Why, this was the worst of all!” Gossip Tattle said. “The catastrophe!”

The *catastrophe* is the resolution of the play. Gossip Tattle meant *catastasis* — an extra complication in the play.

Or perhaps she meant that the conclusion of the last scene was a disaster.

“The play’s content began to be good just now — and he has spoiled it all with his beggar there!” Gossip Censure said.

“He” means Ben Jonson, the playwright of *The Staple of News*.

“A beggarly jack it is, I warrant him, and akin to the poet,” Gossip Mirth said.

The beggarly jack is Pennyboy Canter, and the poet is Ben Jonson.

“Like enough, for he — the Canter — had the chiefest part in his play, if you pay attention to it,” Gossip Tattle said.

Gossip Expectation said, “Absurdity on him, for a huge overgrown play-maker!”

Ben Jonson was a heavy man.

She continued, “Why should he — the playwright — make him — Pennyboy Junior’s father — live again, when they and we all thought him dead? If he had left him to his rags, there had been an end of him.”

Gossip Tattle said, “Aye, but set a beggar on horseback, he’ll never lin — cease — until he is a-gallop.”

“The young heir grew a fine gentleman in this last act!”  
Gossip Censure said.

“So he did, Gossip Censure, and kept the best company,”  
Gossip Expectation said.

“And feasted them and his mistress!” Gossip Censure said.

“And showed her to them all! He was not jealous —” Gossip  
Tattle said.

Gossip Mirth interrupted, “— but very communicative and  
liberal and generous, and began to be magnificent, if the  
churl his father would have let him alone.”

Certainly, Pennyboy Junior has been generous, but  
sometimes he has been generous to the wrong people — such  
as the jeerers, who were happy to eat his food but called him  
a shot-clog.

And certainly, he has not been jealous. He has allowed many  
people to kiss Lady Pecunia. Indeed, he has encouraged  
them to kiss Lady Pecunia.

Of course, other people may object that Pennyboy Junior had  
allowed unworthy people to kiss Lady Pecunia.

Money may at times be a whore, but we ought not to  
encourage such whoredom.

Gossip Censure said, “It was spitefully done of the poet to  
make the chuff — the churl — take him off in his height,  
when he was going to do all his brave deeds!”

The poet is Ben Jonson. The chuff — a mean-spirited person  
— is Pennyboy Canter, according to Gossip Censure. The  
man in his height, about to do all his brave deeds, is  
Pennyboy Junior.

“To found an academy!” Gossip Expectation said.



“Erect a college!” Gossip Tattle said.

“Plant his professors and water his lectures —” Gossip Expectation said.

“— with wine, gossips, as he meant to do; and then to defraud his purposes —” Gossip Mirth interrupted.

“— kill the hopes of so many towardly — promising — young spirits —” Gossip Expectation interrupted.

“As the doctor’s —” Madam Tattle interrupted.

Madam Censure interrupted, “— and the courtier’s! I say, I was in love with Master Fitton. He did wear all he had, from the hat-band to the shoe-tie, so fashionably, and would stoop and look invitingly —”

Both hat-bands and shoe-ties could be ostentatious in this society.

“— and lie so, in wait for a piece of wit, like a mousetrap!” Gossip Mirth said.

“Lie” can mean 1) lie in wait, or 2) lie in one’s throat.

“Indeed, Gossip Mirth, so would the little doctor. All his behavior was only glister!” Gossip Expectation said.

“Glister” can mean 1) luster, or 2) enema.

She continued, “On my conscience, he would make any party’s physic in the world work with his discourse.”

Con men, including quacks, are often good with language. It is true, however, that a good bedside manner is helpful to patients and it is true that good doctors cultivate a good bedside manner.

Gossip Mirth said, “I wonder they would suffer it, a foolish old fornicating father — Pennyboy Canter — to ravish away his son’s mistress —”

“— and all her serving-women at once, as he did!” Madam Censure said.

“I would have flown in his gypsy’s — rogue’s — face, in faith,” Gossip Tattle said.

“To fly at someone” means “to attack that person.”

“It was a plain piece of political incest, and worthy to be brought before the high commission of wit,” Gossip Mirth said.

The political incest was Pennyboy Canter’s taking Lady Pecunia away from his son: Pennyboy Junior.

“The high commission of wit” is the four gossips.

“The high commission of wit” is also you — the reader of this book. It’s a compliment — when it’s not sarcastic.

All of you will have to decide whether Pennyboy Canter is justified in taking Lady Pecunia away from Pennyboy Junior.

“Suppose we were to censure Pennyboy Canter,” Gossip Mirth said. “You are the youngest voice, Gossip Tattle, so you begin.”

“By the Virgin Mary, I would have the old cony-catcher — trickster — cheated of all he has, in the young heir’s defense, by his learned counsel, Master Picklock,” Gossip Tattle said.

“I would rather the courtier had found out some trick to beg him from his estate,” Gossip Censure said.

The courtier Fitton could falsely inform on Pennyboy Canter and beg the king for Pennyboy Canter’s lands and property.

For example, Fitton could lie and say that Pennyboy Canter had spoken treasonous words and then ask the king to give him Pennyboy Canter's lands and property as a reward.

"Or the captain had courage enough to beat him," Gossip Expectation said.

"Or the fine madrigal-man, in rhyme, to have run him out of the country like an Irish rat," Gossip Censure said.

Some Irish believed that bards could kill rats or drive them away with rhymed incantations.

Gossip Tattle said, "No, I would have Master Piedmantle, Her Grace's herald, pluck down Pennyboy Canter's hatchments, reverse — turn upside down — his coat-armor, and nullify him for no gentleman."

Gossip Tattle was describing the ceremony of degradation.

Hatchments are escutcheons or ensigns armorial. They often showed the coat of arms of a deceased person. Since Pennyboy Canter was not deceased, Piedmantle might take away his hatchments.

Coat-armor was a coat of arms depicted on an outer coat and worn over armor. Coat-armor could also be displayed on vests or shields.

Piedmantle would degrade Pennyboy Canter's social status and make him no longer a gentleman and no longer entitled to a coat of arms.

Gossip Expectation said, "Nay, then let Master Doctor dissect him, have him opened, and his tripes taken to Lickfinger, to make a probation dish — a test of cookery — of."

"Agreed!" Gossip Censure said.

"Agreed!" Gossip Tattle said.

Gossip Mirth said, “By my faith, I would have him flat — completely — disinherited by a decree of court, bound to make restitution of the Lady Pecunia, and the use of her body to his son.”

“And the use of the bodies of her train of attendants given to the gentlemen,” Gossip Expectation said.

“And both the poet and himself — Ben Jonson and Pennyboy Canter — to ask them all forgiveness —” Gossip Censure said.

“And us, too —” Gossip Tattle interrupted.

“— in two large sheets of paper —” Gossip Censure interrupted.

Ben Jonson and Pennyboy Canter would each write their apology on a separate sheet of paper.

“Or to stand in the pillory wearing a piece of parchment, which the court please —” Gossip Expectation interrupted.

The pillory was a form of punishment. An offender’s head and hands would be placed in holes in boards called stocks that would limit their movement. The stocks were placed on a pole so that the offender would be standing.

Gossip Censure interrupted, “And those filled with news —”

The parchment Ben Jonson and Pennyboy Canter would wear could list their crimes — that is the news Gossip Censure was referring to.

Gossip Mirth interrupted, “— and dedicated to the sustaining of the Staple —”

Gossip Expectation interrupted, “— which their poet has let fall, most abruptly.”

Ben Jonson hadn't written much about the Staple of News Office in the last few scenes.

"Bankruptly, indeed!" Gossip Mirth said.

"You say wittily, Gossip Mirth, and therefore let a protest go out against him —" Gossip Censure said.

"A mournival of protests, or a gleek at least —" Gossip Mirth interrupted.

A mournival is four aces, four kings, four queens, four jacks, or four of anything. A gleek is 1) three aces, three kings, three queens, three jacks, or three of anything, or 2) an insult.

Three of the gossips had been doing a lot of talking recently, but Gossip Tattle had been relatively quiet.

"In all our names —" Gossip Expectation said.

"As a decayed wit —" Gossip Censure interrupted.

"Broken —" Gossip Expectation interrupted.

"Non-solvent —" Gossip Tattle interrupted.

"And forever forfeit —" Gossip Censure interrupted.

Gossip Mirth interrupted, "— to scorn of Mirth!"

Gossip Censure said, "— to scorn of Censure!"

Gossip Expectation said, "— to scorn of Expectation!"

Gossip Tattle said, "Subsigned, Tattle."

All were agreed that they would condemn Ben Jonson. As a playwright, he should have provided a good play with *The Staple of News*. In the opinion of the four gossips, he had not done that, and so they would scorn him because he had forfeited the good name of poet.

Gossip Tattle said, "Wait, the actors are coming again."

## ACT 5 (*The Staple of News*)

### — 5.1 —

Alone, Pennyboy Junior was wearing the patched cloak that his father had left him.

Pointing to his clothing, he said to himself, “Nay, they fit as if they had been made for me, and I am now a thing worth looking at, just as I said I would be in the morning.

“No rogue at a *comitia* — assembly — of the canters did ever there become his parent’s robes better than I do these. I am a great fool and beggar!

“Why don’t all who are of those societies come forth and welcome me as one of theirs? I think I should be, on every side, saluted as the Dauphin — Prince — of Beggars! The Prince of Prodigals!

“I, who have so fallen under the ears and eyes and tongues of all, have become the cautionary fable of the time, the subject matter of scorn, and the object of reprehension!

“I now begin to see my vanity shine in this glass, reflected by the foil.”

The glass, aka mirror, was the ragged cloak he was wearing on his shoulders. The foil, or contrasting element, was the extravagant clothing he was still wearing under the ragged cloak.

Pennyboy Junior continued, “Where are my fashioner, my feather-man, my linener, perfumer, barber, all that tail of rioters who followed me this morning?

“Not one is here! But there is a dark solitude about me worthy my cloak and patches, as if I had the epidemical disease upon me, and I’ll sit down with it.”

The epidemical disease was the plague, which London was still recovering from.

He sat on the ground.

Thomas Barber entered the scene and said, “My master! My maker!”

Pennyboy Junior was Thomas Barber’s maker in that he had paid for his position as clerk at the Staple of News Office.

“How are you?” Thomas Barber asked. “Why do you sit thus on the ground, sir? Have you heard the news?”

“No, nor do I care to hear any,” Pennyboy Junior said. “I wish I could sit here always, and let slip away the next one-and-twenty years, if that would result in having this day forgotten, and the day razed — scraped — out and destroyed, expunged from every ephemerides or almanac!

“Or, if it must stay in existence because time and nature have decreed it, still, then let it be a day of tricking prodigals as if tickling fish about the gills to catch them.

“Let it be a day of deluding gaping — open-mouthed — heirs, setting loose their loves and their discretions.

“Let it be a day of falling from the favors of their best friends and parents, falling from their own hopes, and entering the society of canters!”

“A doleful day it is, and dismal times have come upon us,” Thomas Barber said. “I am completely undone and ruined.”

“How, Tom?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“Why, broke! Broke! Wretchedly broke!” Thomas Barber answered.

“What?” Pennyboy Junior said, not understanding.

“Our Staple of News Office is all to pieces,” Thomas Barber said. “It is quite dissolved!”

“What?” Pennyboy Junior said, still not understanding.

“It is shivered as if it had been in an earthquake!” Thomas Barber said. “Haven’t you heard the crack and ruins? We are all blown up!”

“As soon as they heard that the Infanta was taken away from them, whom they had so devoured in their hopes for Lady Pecunia to be their patroness and sojourn with them, our emissaries, register, and examiner flew into vapor; our grave governor Cymbal flew into a subtler air, and he has returned, we hear, to again be the grand captain of the jeerers.”

Cymbal’s true nature had been revealed: He was the chief of the jeerers and he, along with the other jeerers, had hoped to gain wealth from Lady Pecunia.

Thomas Barber continued:

“I and my fellow melted into butter and spoiled our ink, and so the News Office vanished.

“The last hum — buzz of gossip and news — that it made was that your father and Picklock, the man of law, have quarreled.”

Pennyboy Junior said, “What!”

He stood up and said, “This awakens me from my lethargy.”

Thomas Barber said, “And a great lawsuit is likely to be made between them.

“Picklock denies that the feoffment, aka the endowment, that your father made of the whole estate to him is a trust.



“Your father says that he did this action as a trust in the event of his death when he first laid this recent device — plan and plot — to test you.”

As part of his test of his son, Pennyboy Canter had signed over his assets to Picklock. According to Pennyboy Canter, the document was a trust: Picklock would hold the estate in trust and would deliver it to Pennyboy Junior in the event of Pennyboy Canter’s death. Pennyboy Canter meant for the trust to be revocable — he wanted it to last only as long as he was testing his son.

Picklock, however, was saying that the document was an absolute deed — Pennyboy Canter had given his estate away to Picklock with no conditions. If it was in fact not a trust and was in fact an absolute deed, then Picklock has and had no responsibility to do anything whatsoever for Pennyboy Junior.

“Has Picklock then a trust?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“I cannot tell what the truth is,” Thomas Barber said.

So far, it was one person’s word against the other person’s word: Pennyboy Canter says this, and Picklock says that.

A close examination of the document by a court of law might determine the truth.

Thomas Barber saw Picklock coming and said, “Here comes the worshipful —”

Pennyboy Junior motioned for Thomas Barber to hide himself behind an arras: a wall hanging in front of an alcove. Thomas Barber did so.

Picklock entered the room and said, “What? My velvet — foppish — heir, turned beggar in mind, as in robes?”

Some of Pennyboy Junior's fancy clothing was made of velvet.

"You see what case — condition and clothing — your and my father's plots have brought me to," Pennyboy Junior said.

"Your father's, you may say, indeed, but not mine," Picklock said. "He's a hard-hearted gentleman! I am sorry to see his rigid resolution.

"That any man should so put off affection and human nature, to destroy his own, and triumph in a victory so cruel!

"Your father has quarreled with me because I am your follower and serve you, and he calls me a knave and a traitor to his trust. He says that he will have me disbarred —"

Pennyboy Junior interrupted, "— have you deserved it?"

"Oh, good heaven knows my conscience and the silly — innocent — latitude of it!" Picklock said.

Good heaven does indeed know our conscience and whether it is good or bad.

He continued, "I am a narrow-minded man, and my thoughts dwell all in a lane or line indeed, with no turning or scarce obliquity in them. I still look right forward to the intent and scope of that which he would go from now."

As a narrow-minded man, Picklock's mind is narrowly focused on one thing. His mind makes the lane to that one thing straight as well as narrow. He will not take side trips that lead him away from that one thing. What that one thing is he does not say, and he does not say whether pursuing that one thing is ethical or unethical.

Picklock does say that there is no scarce obliquity in his thoughts. "Obliquity" means deviance from moral conduct.

If there is no scarce obliquity in his thoughts, there may be abundant obliquity in his thoughts.

“Had you a trust, then?” Pennyboy Junior said.

Picklock answered, “Sir, I had something that will keep you still lord of all the estate, if I am honest — as I hope I shall be.”

One kind of trust is a document giving someone assets to hold in trust for someone else. Another kind of trust is to trust someone.

If you trust someone, you believe that person to be trustworthy and responsible, including morally responsible.

If Picklock had a trust and if he were honest, that might keep Pennyboy Junior lord of the estate. (If nothing else, Pennyboy Junior would eventually inherit the estate.)

Pennyboy Canter, however, could argue that the trust was revocable and that he was revoking it. Picklock would presumably argue that the trust (if it were not an absolute deed giving all of Pennyboy Canter’s wealth to Picklock) was irrevocable.

But Picklock says that he hopes he shall be honest. Referring to appearance, being honest means looking respectable, decent, and presentable. If Picklock had a trust, that could keep Pennyboy Junior lord of the estate. But Picklock could then manipulate Pennyboy Junior into giving him control of the estate. (Or he could say that the document was an irrevocable trust in which he would have control of the wealth until Pennyboy Cantor’s death.) Picklock would then use the estate for his own benefit, including using it to buy fine clothing that would make him look respectable, decent, and presentable.

Picklock continued, “My tender scrupulous breast will not permit me to see the heir defrauded and, like an alien, thrust out of the blood. The laws forbid that I should give consent to such a civil — legal — slaughter of a son!”

“Where is the deed?” Pennyboy Junior asked. “Do you have it with you?”

“No,” Picklock said. “It is a thing of greater consequence than to be borne about in a black box like a Low-Country *Verlof* or Welsh legal brief.”

*Verlof* is a leave of absence or furlough. The Welsh had a reputation for being litigious.

Legal documents were sometimes carried in a black box. But this was a *very* important legal document.

Picklock continued, “It is at Lickfinger’s, under lock and key.”

“Oh, fetch it here,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“I have told him to bring it so that you might see it,” Picklock said.

Pennyboy Junior thought and then asked, “Does he know what he is bringing?”

“No more than a gardener’s ass knows what roots it carries,” Picklock answered.

Pennyboy Junior thought and then said, “I was going to send my father, like an ass, a penitent letter, but I am glad I did not, now.”

“Hang him!” Picklock said. “He is an austere and sour grape that has no juice but what is verjuice in him.”

Verjuice is the juice of unripe grapes. It is used in cooking.

Pennyboy Junior thought and then said, "I'll show you my letter."

He left the room.

Alone, Picklock said to himself, "Show me a defiance — a challenge! If I can now get father and son to legally fight each other, make my profits out of both, commence a lawsuit with the old man for his whole estate, and go to law with the son's credit, undo and ruin both (both with their own money), it would be a masterpiece of chicanery worthy my lawyer's nightcap — white skull-cap — and the lawyer's gown I wear. It would be Picklock's name in law — that is, worthy of the name of Picklock."

Picklock's true nature has been revealed: He is an unscrupulous lawyer who is willing and eager to seize the wealth of Pennyboy Canter and Pennyboy Junior.

He then called Pennyboy Junior, "Where are you, sir? What is taking you so long?"

Pennyboy Junior returned and said, "I cannot find where I have laid the penitent letter, but I have laid it somewhere safe."

"It doesn't matter, sir," Picklock said. "Trust yourself to my trust. It is that which shall secure you, an absolute deed!"

The absolute deed was the trust Picklock wanted Pennyboy Junior to have in him: Trust Picklock absolutely, and certainly you will have control of the estate.

Picklock continued, "And I confess, it was in trust for you lest anything mortal might have happened to him."

He was admitting that the document was a deed of trust, not an absolute deed.

Picklock continued:

“But there must be a gratuity — a fee — thought on, and aid, sir, for the expenses, which will be great, of the lawsuit against such a mighty man as is your father, and a man possessed of so much land, Lady Pecunia, and her friends.

“I am not able to wage law and go to law against him, yet I must maintain the thing as my own right, always for your good, and therefore must be bold to use your credit to raise money.”

Picklock would be using Pennyboy Junior’s money — borrowed with Pennyboy Junior’s credit — to pursue the lawsuit against Pennyboy Canter. It takes money to wage law.

Picklock claimed that the lawsuit would be for the benefit of Pennyboy Junior, but actually it would be for the benefit of Picklock, who would be serving his own ends, including trying to enrich himself.

The lawsuit might be Picklock versus Pennyboy Canter, in which case Picklock would be saying that the document was an absolute deed giving all of Pennyboy Canter’s wealth to Picklock. In that case, Picklock would be saying — actually, lying — that he would give the wealth to Pennyboy Junior.

Or the lawsuit might be Pennyboy Junior versus Pennyboy Canter, in which case Picklock would be saying that the document was an irrevocable trust in which he would have control of the wealth until Pennyboy Cantor’s death.

Of course, Picklock would prefer to have the document regarded as an absolute deed, but he would benefit if it were an irrevocable trust.

Since Picklock had said, “I must maintain the thing as my own right,” the lawsuit would be Picklock versus Pennyboy Canter. The other lawsuit could be used, if needed.

Pennyboy Junior said, “Do what you will, so long as we are safe, and the trust will bear it.”

“Fear not,” Picklock said. “It is he who must pay arrearages — the debts — in the end. We’ll milk him and Pecunia and draw their cream down before he gets the deed into his hands. My name is Picklock, but he’ll find me a padlock.”

Of course, if Pennyboy Canter were to get the legal document in his hands, it would be Game Over. No legal document, no lawsuit to argue over the document.

— 5.2 —

Pennyboy Canter entered the scene and said to his son, “What are you doing now? Conferring with your learned counsel about the cheat? Are you part of the plot to cheat me?”

“What plot?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“Your counsel there, Master Picklock, knows,” Pennyboy Canter said.

He then asked Picklock, “Will you restore the trust yet?”

He wanted Picklock to give him the deed of trust, thereby revoking it.

Picklock replied:

“Sir, be patient and search your memory, and think to yourself: What trust? Where does it appear?”

“I have your deed. Does your deed specify any trust? Isn’t it a perfect and completed act, and absolute in law, sealed and delivered before witnesses, the day and date emergent?”

“Emergent” means “unspecified.” Picklock was denying that Pennyboy Canter had specified a day and date to deliver the estate to his son; however, that date was upon Pennyboy

Canter's death. When Pennyboy Canter died, his entire estate was supposed to be given to his son: Pennyboy Junior.

Pennyboy Canter said, "But what about the conversation we had? What about the oaths and vows that preceded the deed?"

"I will tell you, sir, since I am urged to tell you," Picklock said. "As I remember, you told me you had got a grown — huge — estate by griping and grasping means, sinisterly and dishonestly —"

Shocked, Pennyboy Canter said, "What!"

Picklock continued, "— and you were quite weary of your estate. If the parties lived from whom you had wrested it —"

Shocked, Pennyboy Canter said again, "What!"

It sounded as if Picklock were saying that Pennyboy Canter had caused deaths in acquiring his estate.

Picklock continued, "— you could be glad to part with all and give it back to them, for the satisfaction of your conscience. But since they'd yielded to humanity and had died, and since just heaven had sent you, for a punishment — you did acknowledge it — this riotous heir who would bring all to beggary in the end, and daily sowed consumption wherever he went —"

"You'd cheat both of us, then?" Pennyboy Canter said. "You'd cheat your confederate, my son, too?"

Picklock continued, "After a long, mature deliberation, you could not think where better how to place it —"

Pennyboy Canter interrupted, "— than on you, rascal?"

Picklock replied, "Use whatever name you please in your passionate anger, but with the return of your reason, you will



come around and think that I am a faithful and a frugal friend to be preferred.”

“Preferred before a son?” Pennyboy Canter said.

Normally, in this society fathers left their property to their sons.

“He is a prodigal, a tub without a bottom, as you termed him,” Picklock said.

A proverb stated, “Every tub must stand on its own bottom.”

He continued, “For which I might return you a vow or two and seal it with an oath of thankfulness. I do not repent it, neither have I cause, yet —”

He might give a vow to and thank Pennyboy Canter for the estate, but he did not repent Pennyboy Canter’s giving the estate to him. The vow could be to do something for Pennyboy Canter’s son.

Pennyboy Canter said, “Forehead of steel and mouth of brass!”

He was saying that Picklock had a forehead that was incapable of blushing for shame and a mouth that was capable of saying anything.

Pennyboy Canter continued, “Has impudence polished so gross a lie, and dare you vent it? You engine, composed of all mixed — impure — metals! Get away from here! I will not exchange one syllable more with you until I may meet you at a bar in court before your judges.”

Pennyboy Junior’s porter arrived. Pennyboy Junior talked to him quietly and received a document and some keys from him. Picklock, who was busy talking to Pennyboy Canter, did not see this.

Picklock said to Pennyboy Canter, “To a court of law it must come before I part with it — your wealth to you, or” — he looked at Pennyboy Junior — “you, sir.”

“I will not listen to you anymore,” Pennyboy Canter said.

His son said to him, “Sir, listen to me, though. Not simply because I see through his intricate and tangled plots and hidden ends, nor simply because my parts — my shares in the estate — depend upon the unwinding of this so knotted skein, do I ask for your patience. To me he has confessed the trust.”

Earlier, Picklock had said to Pennyboy Junior, “And I confess, it was in trust for you lest anything mortal might have happened to him.”

But now Picklock denied saying that: “What? I confess it?”

“Aye, you did, you false man,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“Stand up to him and confront him,” Pennyboy Canter said to his son.

Picklock asked, “Where? When? To whom?”

“To me, just now, and here,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Can you deny it?”

“Can I eat or drink, sleep, wake, or dream, arise, sit, walk, or stand, do anything that’s natural?” Picklock said.

Yes, he could deny it. To him, lying came naturally.

“Yes, you lie,” Pennyboy Junior said. “It seems you can lie and perjure yourself — that is natural!”

“Oh, me!” Picklock said. “What times are these, of frontless carriage — of shameless conduct! An egg of the same nest! The father’s bird! It runs in a blood — a family — I see.”

Cicero once said, “*O, tempora! O, mores!*” This means, “Oh, the times! Oh, the customs!” It is an expression of despair at how bad the times have become.

“I’ll shut your mouth,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“With what?” Picklock asked.

“With truth,” Pennyboy Junior answered.

“With noise,” Picklock said. “I must have testimony before I shut my mouth. Where is your witness? Can you produce a witness?”

“As if my testimony were not twenty witnesses, compared with your testimony,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“So say all prodigals, sick of self-love, but that’s not law, young Scattergood,” Picklock said. “I live by law.”

“Scattergood” is a name for prodigals.

“I live by law” can mean 1) I live in accordance with the law, or 2) I make my living through law.

Pennyboy Junior said, “Why, if you have a conscience, that is a thousand witnesses.”

A proverb stated, “Conscience is a thousand witnesses.”

Picklock said, “No court grants out a writ of summons for the conscience that I know, nor a subpoena, nor an arrest warrant. I must have witness testimony, and of your producing, before this can come to a hearing, and it must be heard on oath and witness.”

Pennyboy Junior said, “Come forth, Tom.”

Thomas Barber, a witness who had heard Picklock say to Pennyboy Junior, “And I confess, it was in trust for you lest

anything mortal might have happened to him,” came from the alcove behind the arras.

Pennyboy Junior said to him, “Speak what you heard, the truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. What did this varlet say?”

“A rat behind the hangings!” Picklock said, seeing Thomas Barber.

Readers will remember the scene in William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (Act 3, Scene 4) in which Hamlet kills Polonius, who is behind an arras. Hamlet says, “How now, a rat!” and then stabs him.

Thomas Barber said, “Sir, he said it was a trust, an act the which your father had will to alter, but his tender breast would not permit him to see the heir defrauded and, like an alien, thrust out of the blood — the laws forbid that he should give consent to such a civil slaughter of a son!”

Pennyboy Junior said, “And he talked of a gratuity to be given, and aid to the charges of the lawsuit, which he was to maintain in his own name, but for my benefit, he said.”

The lawsuit would be Picklock versus Pennyboy Canter.

“It is enough,” Pennyboy Canter said.

Thomas Barber said, “And he said that he would milk Pecunia and draw down her cream before you got the trust again.”

Pennyboy Canter said to Picklock, “Your ears are in my pocket, knave; go shake them the little while longer you will have them.”

Cropping a person’s ears was sometimes a legal punishment. Pennyboy Canter was telling Picklock that he would put Picklock’s ears in his pocket after they were cut off.

“You do trust to your great purse,” Picklock said.

He was saying — that is, lying — that Pennyboy Canter had bribed Thomas Barber to be his witness.

Pennyboy Canter said, “I have you in a purse-net, good Master Picklock, with your worming brain and wriggling engine-head — snare — of maintenance, which I shall see you hole with very shortly — a fine round head, when those two lugs — ears — are off, to trundle — roll — through a pillory.”

Purse-nets were nets in the shape of a bag used to catch rabbits.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “maintenance” means “wrongfully aiding and abetting litigation.”

Picklock would end up in a pillory with his earless head trapped in the hole made by a pair of stocks.

Pennyboy Canter asked Thomas Barber, “You are sure that you heard him speak this?”

Pennyboy Junior answered for Thomas Barber, “Aye, and more.”

“Much more!” Thomas Barber said.

Picklock said, “I’ll prove that your lawsuit against me is maintenance and conspiracy, and sue you all.”

“Do, do, my gowned vulture,” Pennyboy Junior said. “Crop in reversion.”

A gowned vulture is one way to describe a lawyer.

By “crop in reversion,” Pennyboy Canter meant “crop my and my son’s ears,” with “if you can” implied.

Pennyboy Canter continued, “I shall see you quoited — thrown — over the bar, as bargemen do their billets.”

In a game of quoits, players threw rings of iron, rope, rubber, etc., at a target.

Bargemen threw their cargo — billets, aka wood cut for fuel — on the quay, aka dock.

Picklock said, “This it is when men repent of their good deeds and would have them in again.”

Picklock was saying that Pennyboy Canter’s good deed was giving his estate to Picklock — an estate that Picklock said that Pennyboy Canter had gotten immorally.

He continued, “They are almost mad, but I forgive their *lucida intervalla*.”

Picklock was planning a defense in which he claimed that Pennyboy Canter and Pennyboy Junior were mentally incompetent. Of course, he would claim that Pennyboy Canter was having a *lucida intervalla* — a period of mental competence — when he signed what Picklock claimed was an absolute deed giving his estate to Picklock.

Although Pennyboy Canter had a witness in Thomas Barber, Picklock believed that he had an ace up his sleeve — the document that Pennyboy Canter had signed.

Seeing Lickfinger enter the room, Picklock called to him, “Oh, Lickfinger! Come here.”

He then asked him quietly, “Where’s my writing?”

The writing was the document that Pennyboy Canter had signed.

Pennyboy Canter and Pennyboy Junior, who was holding a document and some keys that he had gotten from his porter

earlier but had kept hidden, also talked together quietly at a distance from Picklock and Lickfinger.

— 5.3 —

Lickfinger replied, “I sent it to you, together with your keys.”

“What!” Picklock said.

Lickfinger said, “By the porter who came for it, from you —”

Seeing the worried expression on Picklock’s face — Picklock had not received the document — Lickfinger added, “— and by the warrant of the token you had given me, the keys —”

The keys were Picklock’s keys, which had been used to lock up the document. Picklock had sent a porter to tell Lickfinger to bring him the document, and he had sent his keys so that Lickfinger could open the container and get the document and bring it to him. The keys were a token showing that the request really came from Picklock.

Lickfinger then finished his original sentence, “— and the porter bade me bring it.”

“And why didn’t you?” Picklock asked.

He had not received the document.

Lickfinger asked, “Why did you send a countermand?”

The countermand was a command revoking a previous command. The first command was for Lickfinger himself to bring the document to Picklock.

“Who, I?” Picklock asked.

“You, or some other you whom you put in trust,” Lickfinger said.

“In trust?” Picklock said.

“Your trust’s another self, you know,” Lickfinger said. “And without trust, and your trust, how should he take notice of your keys or of my charge?”

Actually, Pennyboy Junior had sent his porter to Lickfinger to get the document. (This is a second porter, not the porter whom Picklock had sent.) When Pennyboy Junior had told Picklock that he was going to get the letter he had written asking his father for forgiveness, he had actually been sending the porter to Lickfinger to get the document, which Picklock had said had been locked up. Thus, Pennyboy Junior knew about Picklock’s keys, which Picklock must have given to Lickfinger so that he could get the document. Pennyboy Junior had told his porter about Picklock’s keys. The second porter’s knowledge of the keys and the document had convinced Lickfinger that the second porter had really come from Picklock.

As Picklock and Lickfinger had talked, Pennyboy Junior had revealed to his father his plot of sending for the document by the porter, and that he was in possession of the deed and Picklock’s keys. Now Pennyboy Junior and Pennyboy Canter listened to Picklock and Lickfinger talk.

Picklock asked, “Did you know the man?”

Lickfinger replied, “I know he was a porter — and a sealed porter, for he bore the badge on his breast, I am sure.”

A sealed porter is a member of the Company of Porters. Their members wore a distinctive badge.

“I am lost! A plot! I scent it!” Picklock said.



“Why, and I sent it by the man you sent, whom else I would not have trusted,” Lickfinger said.

“A plague on your trust!” Picklock said. “I am trussed up among you.”

“Trussed up” means “ensnared.”

Pennyboy Junior, “Or you may be.”

Pennyboy Junior meant that Picklock could be trussed up in a noose on a gallows.

“In my own halter,” Picklock said. “I have made the noose.”

A halter is a noose.

Picklock exited.

“What was it, Lickfinger?” Pennyboy Junior asked.

“A document, sir,” Lickfinger said. “He sent for it by a token. I was bringing it, but then he sent a porter, and the porter seemed to be a man of decent carriage.”

Porters tend to be men of good carriage; their job is to carry things such as luggage.

“It was good fortune!” Pennyboy Canter said. “To cheat the cheater was no cheat, but justice.”

He then said to his son, “Take off your rags and be yourself again. This act of piety and good affection has partly reconciled me to you.”

Pennyboy Junior, who wanted to be fully reconciled to his father, began, “Sir —”

His father interrupted, “No vows, no promises. Too much protestation often makes suspected that which we would use to persuade.”

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Queen Gertrude said, "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" (Act 3, Scene 2). In other words, she thought that the lady was objecting so much that she was losing credibility.

A proverb stated, "Too much protesting makes the truth suspected."

"Have you heard the news?" Lickfinger asked.

"The Staple of News Office is down," Pennyboy Junior said. "How should we have heard it?"

"But the news about your uncle?" Lickfinger asked.

Because the news was about his uncle, someone could have brought Pennyboy Junior the news.

"No," Pennyboy Junior said.

"He's run mad, sir," Lickfinger said.

Startled, Pennyboy Canter asked, "What, Lickfinger!"

"Your brother is stark staring mad," Lickfinger said. "He has almost killed his serving-maid —"

"Now, heaven forbid!" Pennyboy Canter said.

Lickfinger said, "He would have succeeded except that she's cat-lived and squirrel-limbed. He threw bed-staves at her."

Cats are supposed to have nine lives.

Bed-staves are short wooden sticks; they were used to support a mattress.

Lickfinger continued, "He has set wide his outer doors, and now keeps open house for all the passersby to see his justice.

"First, he has arrested his two dogs because he suspects them of being participants in the plot to cheat him, and there he

sits like an old worm of the peace, wrapped up in furs, at a square table, interrogating, examining, and committing the poor curs to two old cases of close-stools” — these are boxes that used to contain a chamber-pot — “as prisons, the one of which he calls his Lollard’s tower, and the other his Block-house, because his two dogs’ names are Block and Lollard.”

Lollard’s Tower was a prison for religious heretics; “block-house” was a slang term for a prison.

“This would be splendid content for the jeerers,” Pennyboy Junior said.

“Aye, if the subject were not so wretched,” Pennyboy Canter said.

“Sure, I met them all, I think, upon that quest,” Lickfinger said.

He had met the jeerers going to Pennyboy Senior’s house to jeer at him. The jeerers thought that wretchedness was funny.

“Indeed, likely enough,” Pennyboy Canter said. “The vicious always are swift to show their natures. I’ll go there, too, but with another aim, if all succeed well and my simples work.”

Simples are medicines that have a single ingredient.

Pennyboy Canter’s aim, aka goal, was to restore his brother to health.

They exited in order to go to Pennyboy Senior’s house.

— 5.4 —

In a room of his house, Pennyboy Senior sat at his table with papers before him.

A porter entered the room and Pennyboy Senior asked him, "Where are the prisoners?"

"They are forthcoming, sir," the porter answered, "or coming forth, at least."

Pennyboy Senior said to himself, "The rogue has gotten drunk since I committed the prisoners to his charge."

He then said out loud, "Come here — near me. Yet nearer; breathe upon me."

The porter came near him, and Pennyboy Senior sniffed and said, "I smell wine! Wine, on my honor! Sack, canary sack!"

Canary sack is a sweet wine from the Canary Islands.

He asked the porter, "Couldn't your badge have been drunk with fulsome ale or beer, the porter's element? But sack!"

Ale and beer were cheaper than wine.

"I am not drunk," the porter said. "We had, sir, just one pint, an honest carrier and myself."

"Who paid for it?" Pennyboy Senior asked.

"Sir, I gave it to him," the porter answered.

"What?" Pennyboy Senior said. "And spend sixpence? A frock spend sixpence! Sixpence!"

A frock is a loose garment worn by workmen; it is often called a frock-smock.

As a miser, Pennyboy Senior was outraged that a porter would spend sixpence.

"Once in a year, sir," the porter replied.

"In seven years, varlet!" Pennyboy Senior said.

In seven years at 10 percent interest per year, the interest would roughly equal the principal.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “Do you know what you have done? Do you know what a consumption you have made of an estate? It might please heaven to let you, a healthy and young knave, live some seventy years longer, until you are fourscore-and-ten, perhaps a hundred — say, seventy years. How many times seven in seventy? Why, seven times ten is ten times seven.

“Pay attention to me, I will demonstrate to you on my fingers.

“Sixpence in seven years (because of use upon use, aka compound interest) grows in that first seven-year period to be a twelpence.”

A shilling is twelpence. It is one-twentieth of a pound.

Pennyboy Senior continued, “That, in the next seven-year period, grows to two shillings.

“In the third seven-year period, it grows to four shillings.

“In the fourth seven-year period, it grows to eight shillings.

“In the fifth seven-year period, it grows to sixteen shillings.

“In the sixth seven-year period, it grows to thirty-two shillings, aka one pound and twelve shillings.

“In the seventh seven-year period, it grows to three pounds and four shillings.

“In the eighth seven-year period, it grows to six pounds and eight shillings.

“In the ninth seven-year period, it grows to twelve pounds and sixteen shillings.

“And in the tenth seven-year period, it grows to five-and-twenty pounds and twelve shillings.

“This money you have fallen from and have lost out on, because of your riotous living, should you live seventy years, by spending sixpence once at the beginning of the first seven-year period.

“But in a single day to waste it! There is a sum that number cannot reach!

“Get out of my house, you pest of prodigality! Seed of consumption, get away from here! A wicked jailor is often worse than the prisoners.”

He gave the porter some money and said, “There’s your penny: four tokens for you. Out, away!”

A token is a small coin worth a farthing, aka one-fourth of a penny.

The porter exited.

Pennyboy Senior said to himself, “My dogs may yet be innocent and honest. If not, I have an entrapping question or two more to put to them, a cross-examination, and I shall catch them.”

He called one of his dogs, “Lollard!”

He then released Lollard from the close-stool that was Lollard’s prison.

Pennyboy Senior believed that his dogs were part of the plot to get Lady Pecunia and her serving-women away from him. He believed that his dogs had known that the ladies would leave and not return and that his dogs had done nothing to stop them.

Pennyboy Senior said to Lollard, "Silence! What whispering was that you had with Mortgage when you last licked her feet? The truth, now. Ha? Did you smell she was going?"

He then said an imaginary recorder, "Put down that."

Recorders recorded words spoken during a trial.

He continued, "And not, not to return? You are silent. Good. And when you leaped on Statute? As she went forth? You say, 'Consent'! There was consent as she was going forth? It would have been fitter at her coming home, but you knew that she would not? To your Tower."

He put Lollard in one of the close-stools, saying, "You are cunning, are you? I will meet your craft."

He then called his other dog, Block, and released it from the close-stool that was Block's prison. The dog licked him, and he said, "Block, show your face; stop your caresses.

"Tell me, and tell me truly, what affronts do you know that were done to Lady Pecunia, with the result that she left my house?

"None, do you say? Not that you know, or will admit to knowing?

"I fear that I shall find you an obstinate cur.

"Why did your fellow, Lollard, cry this morning? Because Broker kicked him? Why did Broker kick him? Because he pissed against my lady's gown?"

According to Pennyboy Senior's reasoning, Lady Pecunia may have decided to leave Pennyboy Senior's house because Lollard peed on her dress.

Pennyboy Senior continued, "Why, that was no affront? No? No distaste? You knew of none? You're a dissembling cur."

He put Block in the other close-stool, saying, "To your hole, again, your Block-house."

Pennyboy Senior said, "Lollard, arise."

He released Lollard from the close-stool and said, "Where did you lift your leg up last? Against what? Are you struck dummerer now, and whine for mercy?"

A dummerer is a beggar who fakes muteness, pretending to be unable to speak to gain sympathy and alms.

Pennyboy Senior asked, "Whose kirtle — woman's gown, outer petticoat, or skirt — was it you gnawed, too? Mistress Band's? And Wax's stockings? Who? Did Block bescumber — befoul with feces — Statute's white suit with the parchment lace there, and Broker's satin jacket? All will out. They had offence, offence enough to quit me."

Parchment lace is a kind of decorative trim.

He then said, "Appear, Block! Bah, it — your guilt — is manifest. He shows his guilt. Should he forswear it, make all the affidavits against it that he could before the bench and twenty juries, he would be convicted. He bears an air about him that does confess it! To prison again, close prison!"

He put Block back in a close-stool.

He then said, "Not you, Lollard. You may enjoy the liberty of the house. And yet there is a notion come in my head for which I must commit you, too, and close. Do not repine; it will be better for you."

He put Lollard back in a close-stool.

— 5.5 —

"This is enough to make the dogs mad, too," Cymbal said, looking into the room. "Let's go in upon him."



He and the other jeerers had been watching Pennyboy Senior. His door was open.

The jeerers — Cymbal, Fitton, Shunfield, Almanac, and Madrigal — entered the room.

“What is it now?” Pennyboy Senior said to them. “What’s the matter? Have you come to seize the prisoners? Make a rescue?”

“We have come to bail out your dogs,” Fitton said.

“They are notailable,” Pennyboy Senior said. “They stand committed without bail or mainprise — without anyone allowed to go surety for their release. Your bail cannot be taken.”

“Then the truth is that we have come here to vex you,” Shunfield said.

“To jeer you,” Almanac said.

“To bait and torment you, rather,” Madrigal said.

“A baited usurer will be good flesh,” Cymbal said.

“Baited” means “tormented.” A cruel sport of the time was bear-baiting. A bear or bull was tied to a stake so it could not flee, and then dogs were set loose to torment it. Some people of the time thought that baited bull meat tasted better than the meat of a bull that had not been baited.

“A baited” is also a pun for “abated” — “lessened.” Pennyboy Senior was complaining about loss of wealth because he had lost Lady Pecunia.

People had given Pennyboy Senior gifts of food when Lady Pecunia was with him. Now that she had left him, those gifts of food may not be forthcoming, and so Pennyboy Senior’s weight could also soon be abated.

“And tender, we are told,” Fitton said.

“Who is the butcher among you who has come to cut my throat?” Pennyboy Senior asked.

“You would die a calf’s death gladly, but it is an ox’s death that is meant for you,” Shunfield said.

A “calf” is a fool.

Fitton began, “To be fairly knocked on the head —”

Shunfield finished the sentence, “— with a good jeer or two.”

Oxen could be killed with blows to the head.

“And from your jawbone, Don Assinigo?” Pennyboy Senior said to Shunfield.

According to the Old Testament book Judges, Samson used the jawbone of an ass to slay a thousand Philistines.

The Spanish word *asnico* means “little ass.” Pennyboy Senior was calling Shunfield a little fool.

“Shunfield, he gave you a jeer,” Cymbal said. “You have suffered it.”

“I do confess a swashing — fiercely slashing — blow,” Shunfield said.

He then replied to Pennyboy Senior, “But, Snarl — you who might play the third dog because of your teeth — you have no money now?”

The first two dogs were Pennyboy Senior’s pets.

“No, nor no Mortgage,” Fitton said.

“Nor Band,” Almanac said.

“Nor Statute,” Madrigal said.

“No, nor blushet” — rose, aka Rose — “Wax,” Cymbal said.

“Nor you no office, as I take it,” Pennyboy Senior said.

The Staple of News Office was out of business now.

“Cymbal, he gave you a mighty jeer,” Shunfield said.

“A pox on these true jests, I say,” Fitton said.

Two proverbs of the time were 1) True jests are the worst, and 2) The truest jests sound worst in guilty ears.

“He will turn out to be the better jeerer,” Madrigal said.

Almanac said, “Let’s set upon him, and if we cannot jeer him down in wit —”

Madrigal interrupted and finished the sentence: “— let’s do it in noise.”

The jeerers knew that they had limitations: Almanac and Madrigal acknowledged that their wit — intelligence — was limited. All acknowledged a lack of money.

“I am content to do that,” Shunfield said.

“Charge, man of war!” Madrigal said to Shunfield.

“Belay him! Aboard! Board him!” Almanac said to Shunfield.

“We’ll give him a broadside first,” Shunfield said.

“Where’s your venison now?” Fitton asked Pennyboy Senior.

“Where’s your red-deer pies?” Cymbal asked Pennyboy Senior.

“With your baked turkeys?” Shunfield asked Pennyboy Senior.

“And your partridges?” Almanac asked Pennyboy Senior.

“Your pheasants and fat swans?” Madrigal asked Pennyboy Senior.

Back when Lady Pecunia lodged with Pennyboy Senior, people often gave him gifts of food.

“Like you, they have turned geese,” Pennyboy Senior replied.

“Geese” can mean fools.

“But such as will not keep your capitol!” Madrigal said.

In ancient Roman times, enemy soldiers known as the Gauls were trying to sneak up the Capitoline Hill, but geese sacred to Juno cackled and alerted the Romans to the approach of the enemy soldiers.

Shunfield began, “You were accustomed to have your breams —”

A bream is a kind of fish.

Almanac interrupted, “— and trouts sent in —”

Cymbal interrupted, “— fat carps and salmons —”

Fitton interrupted, “— aye, and, now and then an emblem of yourself, an over-grown pike?”

Pikes were so voracious that they ate other pike.

“You are a jack, sir,” Pennyboy Senior said.

“You have made a shift to swallow twenty such poor jacks before now,” Fitton said.

Almanac began, “If he should come to feed upon poor john  
—”

“Poor jack” and “poor john” were phrases that meant dried hake — a kind of fish.

Madrigal interrupted, “— or turn pure Jack-a-Lent after all this?”

A Jack-a-Lent was a stuffed puppet that served as a target for stone-throwing children during Lent and was then burned.

Fitton began, “Tut, he’ll live like a grasshopper —”

Madrigal interrupted, “— on dew.”

Shunfield added, “Or like a bear, with the licking of his own claws.”

Pliny the Elder, author of *Naturalis Historia* (*Natural History*), wrote that grasshoppers had no mouths and lived on dew, and he wrote that during hibernation bears lived by sucking on their own fore-paws.

Cymbal said, “Aye, if his dogs were away.”

“He’ll eat them, first, while they are fat,” Almanac said.

“Indeed, and when they are gone, here’s nothing left to be seen,” Fitton said.

“Except his kindred — spiders, natives of the soil,” Cymbal said.

Almanac said, “He will have enough dust here to breed fleas.”

Pliny the Elder wrote that fleas could be brought into being by the sun shining on dust.

“But by that time, he’ll have no blood to rear them,” Madrigal said.

Shunfield began, “He will be as thin as a lantern; we shall see through him —”

Almanac interrupted, “— and through his gut colon — his belly — and count his *intestina* —”

*Intestina* is Latin for intestines.

We can count the ribs of a thin person; to count someone’s intestines, they must be *really* emaciated.

Pennyboy Senior said, “Rogues! Rascals!”

His dogs began to bark.

“He calls his dogs to his aid,” Fitton said.

“Oh, they just rise at the mention of his tripes,” Almanac said.

“Let them alone,” Cymbal said. “They don’t bark for him.”

“They bark *se defendendo* — in self-defense,” Madrigal said.

According to Madrigal, the dogs are barking because they don’t want Pennyboy Senior to get so hungry that he eats them.

“Or for custom,” Shunfield said. “As commonly curs do, one for another.”

Lickfinger entered the room and said, “Arm, arm yourselves, you gentlemen jeerers! The old Pennyboy Canter is coming in upon you with his forces — the gentleman who was the Canter.”

“Let’s go hence!” Shunfield said.

“Let’s go away!” Fitton said.

“Who is he?” Cymbal asked.

He had not heard that the Canter was actually Pennyboy Junior's father, who had faked his own death.

"Stay not to ask questions," Almanac said.

"He's a flame," Fitton said.

"A furnace," Shunfield said.

"A consumption," Almanac said. "He kills wherever he goes."

The jeerers all ran away.

"See, the whole covey is scattered!" Lickfinger said. "'Ware, 'ware the hawk! I love to see him — Pennyboy Canter — fly."

"Beware the hawk!" meant "Look out! A dangerous figure is coming!"

Pennyboy Canter was coming to fly at and attack the jeerers, but they had escaped by running away.

— 5.6 —

Pennyboy Canter and Pennyboy Junior arrived, along with Lady Pecunia and her train of attendants: Mortgage, Statute, Band, and Wax.

Pennyboy Canter said to Pennyboy Junior, "You see by this amazement and distraction what your companions were: a poor, frightened, and guilty race of men, who dare to stand and face no breath of truth, but, conscious to themselves of their no-wit and no-honesty, ran routed at every panic — frenzied — terror they themselves bred.

"They did that in a place where, elsewhere, as confident as sounding brass, their tinkling captain, Cymbal, and the rest dare put on any visor — mask — to deride the wretched, or,

with buffon license, jest at whatsoever is serious, if not sacred.”

“Buffon license” is licentious buffoonery.

The jeerers were happy to mock wretched people and serious and sacred things; they were afraid to face righteous fury.

“Who’s this?” Pennyboy Senior asked. “My brother, and restored to life!”

He had not heard that the Canter was actually his brother, who had faked his death.

“Yes, I am your brother, and restored to life,” Pennyboy Canter said, “and I have been sent here to restore your wits, if your short madness is not more than anger conceived for your loss —”

In his *Epistles* I.2.62, Horace wrote that anger is a short madness.

Pennyboy Canter continued, “— which I return to you. See here, your Mortgage, Statute, Band, and Wax, without your Broker, have come to abide with you and vindicate the prodigal from stealing away the lady.

“Nay, Pecunia herself has come to free him fairly, and discharge all ties, except those of love, to her person, to treat her like a friend, not like a slave or like an idol.”

The word “friend” can mean “lover.”

Pennyboy Canter continued:

“Superstition violates the deity it worships no less than scorn does.

“And believe it, brother, the use of things is all, and not the store.



“Surfeit and fullness have killed more than famine.”

Pennyboy Canter meant that money must be used wisely and not just stored away — and he knew that that was the way his brother would interpret the two sentences — but the two sentences were ambiguous. The truth of the two sentences is also debatable because extremes are dangerous.

“The use of things is all, and not the store” is ambiguous.

“Use” can mean “interest,” as in lending money at interest, and “store” can mean “possessions.”

In that case, the sentence means, “Lending money at interest is all, and not having possessions.”

But “use” can mean “putting things to work, such as spending money to buy things that you can use,” and “store” can mean “savings.”

In that case, the sentence means, “Spending money to buy useful possessions is all, and not having savings.”

The above two interpretations of the sentence are contradictory. If you believe in Aristotle’s theory of the mean between extremes, both sentences are also false.

“Surfeit and fullness have killed more than famine” is also ambiguous.

“Surfeit and fullness” can refer to having 1) too much money, or 2) too many possessions.

“Famine” can refer to having 1) a lack of money, or 2) a lack of possessions.

The ambiguity of the second sentence results in contradictory meanings:

1) Having too much money has killed more than not having enough money.

2) Having too much money has killed more than not having enough possessions.

3) Having too many possessions has killed more than not having enough possessions.

4) Having too many possessions has killed more than not having enough money.

The extremes of both the ambiguous first sentence and the ambiguous second sentence in both pairs of sentences show that Aristotle's ethical theory of the Golden Mean is correct: Avoid excesses and search for the middle.

If you believe in Aristotle's theory of the mean between extremes, you want to avoid the extremes of having too much money or too little money, and having too many possessions or too few possessions.

Being a miser is bad, and being a prodigal is bad. The middle way is liberality: spending and giving what is yours freely but without going to the extreme of being a spendthrift. A person who seeks the Golden Mean will buy things he or she needs and will donate money to charity but will also have an emergency fund. That person will also have a few luxuries when they are affordable and desirable.

Pennyboy Canter said, "The sparrow, with his little plumage, flies, while the proud peacock, overcharged with plumes, is fain to sweep the ground with his grown train and load of feathers."

"Wise and honored brother!" Pennyboy Senior said. "None but a brother, and one sent from the dead, as you are to me, could have altered my character. I thank my destiny, which is so gracious.

“Are there no pains and punishments, no penalties decreed from where you have come to us that smother money in chests and strangle her in bags?”

If Pennyboy Canter had been sent to him from the dead, then he had been to the Land of the Dead, where he had seen usurers.

In Dante’s *Inferno*, the usurers are punished in Circle 7. In contrast to the Blasphemers, who take something that ought to be fertile and make it infertile, the Greedy Moneylenders (usurers) take something that ought to be infertile and make it fertile. The definition of usury has changed over time, but originally, as in the Bible, it meant lending money at interest. The Bible is against lending money at interest to relatives or to poor people, although Jews are allowed to lend money at interest to non-Jews; thus, Jews became moneylenders in the Middle Ages. In modern times, usury is charging an unethically high rate of interest.

Because the Greedy Moneylenders have been taking something that ought to be infertile and making it fertile, they are in a burning plain with fire raining down on them. Here they are bent over, just like the Greedy Moneylenders of Dante’s time who bent over their tables and counted their money. Hanging from their necks are moneybags. Dante cannot recognize any of the Greedy Moneylenders by looking at their faces; they were so preoccupied with making money that they have lost their individuality.

Pennyboy Canter answered, “Oh, on the usurers are imposed mighty, intolerable fines and penalties, of which I come to warn you, forfeitures of whole estates, if they are known to be immorally acquired!”

“I thank you, brother, for the light you have given me,” Pennyboy Senior said. “I will prevent them all by taking action to repent my sins now.

“First, free my dogs, lest what I have done to them and against law is a *praemunire* — a violation of legal process — for, by Magna Carta, they could not be committed as close prisoners, my learned counsel, my cook, tells me here — and yet he showed me the way, first.”

“Who did? I?” Lickfinger said. “I encroach upon the liberty of the subjects?”

Pennyboy Senior was blaming someone else — someone innocent — for his crime. This is not a good way to repent.

“Peace!” Pennyboy Canter said. “Quiet! Picklock, your lodger, that stentor — that loud-voiced lawyer — has infected you.”

True, bad people can infect other people. If you are going to blame someone else, make sure that that person is guilty — blame the right person. But also remember that you have free will, and you can use that free will to resist the influence of bad people. Pennyboy Canter was strong enough not to become a jeerer; Madrigal was not strong enough to resist the bad influence of the jeerers. Pennyboy Senior needs to be strong enough to resist the bad influence of Picklock.

Pennyboy Canter added, “But I have Picklock safe enough in a wooden collar.”

The wooden collar was the stocks of a pillory.

Pennyboy Senior continued his reformation:

“Next, I restore these servants to their lady with freedom, heart of cheer, and countenance. It is their year and day of jubilee.”

In biblical times, Hebrew slaves were set free in the year of jubilee. In the year 1625, when *The Staple of News* was first performed, a jubilee was celebrated.

Pecunia's train of serving-women said, "We thank you, sir."

Pennyboy Senior then said, "And lastly, to my nephew I give my house, goods, lands, all but my vices, and those I go to cleanse — kissing this lady, whom I give to him, too, and join their hands."

He joined the hands of Pennyboy Junior and Lady Pecunia. The two would be married.

In giving away all his money, Pennyboy Senior was not choosing the Golden Mean, but if he were mentally ill — he believed that his brother was resurrected from the Land of the Dead — it's good that his money is in the hands of a guardian.

Still, by joining the hands of Pennyboy Junior and Lady Pecunia, Pennyboy Senior affirmed that Lady Pecunia — and money — should be properly loved and valued.

Pennyboy Canter said to you, the readers, "If the spectators will join their hands and applaud, we thank them."

Pennyboy Junior added, "And we wish they may, as I, enjoy Pecunia."

Lady Pecunia added:

"And so Pecunia herself wishes that she may always be an aid for their good uses.

"Pecunia does not wish to be a slave to their pleasures or a tyrant over their fair desires, but instead to teach them all the Golden Mean.

"She wishes to teach the prodigal how to live, and she wishes to teach the sordid and the covetous how to die.

"She wishes to teach the sordid and the covetous how to die with sound mind, and she wishes to teach the prodigal how to live with safe frugality."

If the loss of Lady Pecunia can drive Pennyboy Senior mad, then death must be terrifying to misers because the moment we die, our money abandons us. Value money correctly, and you can die with a sound mind.

The prodigal — including Pennyboy Junior — need to value money correctly, too, so that they can live with safe — secure — frugality. Get money, spend money for the things you need and some of the things you want (and donate some money to charity), don't waste money, and have an emergency fund. Safe frugality includes such things as having enough food, being warm enough in cold weather, not being homeless, and having money in the bank.

Art Linkletter once asked a young boy on one of his daytime television programs, "What is happiness?" The boy answered, "A steady paycheck."

Apparently, the boy had lived through times when his parents did not have a steady paycheck.

## THE EPILOGUE (*The Staple of News*)

Thus have you seen the maker's [the playwright's] double  
scope [two aims or intentions],

To profit [instruct] and delight, wherein our hope

Is, though the clout we do not always hit,

It will not be imputed to his wit —

A tree [bow] so tried and bent as it will not start [let fly].

Nor doth [does] he often crack [break] a string of art,

Though there may other accidents as strange

Happen: the weather [disposition] of your looks may change,

Or some high wind of misconceit [misconception] arise

To cause an alteration in our skies.

If so, we're sorry that [we] have so misspent

Our time and tackle [equipment, arrows]; yet he's confident,

And vows the next fair day he'll have us shoot

The same match o'er [over] for him, if you'll come to it.

### Notes:

The clout is the center of an archery target: It is the white pin that attaches the target to a structure that holds it up.

Ben Jonson says that his play may not hit the clout, but not through lack of wit (intelligence). An arrow may miss because the bow has lost its elasticity or because the weather or wind makes hitting the clout difficult. A playwright may do his best to write a good play, and yet the play, although the playwright thinks it is good, may fail.

## NOTES (*The Staple of News*)

### THE FIRST INTERMEAN: AFTER THE FIRST ACT

*I would fain see the fool, gossip; the fool is the finest man  
i'the*

*company, they say, and has all the wit. He is the very Justice  
o'Peace o'the*

*play, and can commit whom he will, and what he will, error,  
absurdity, as*

*the toy takes him, and no man say black is his eye, but laugh  
at him. 20*

(First Intermean, 17-20)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin  
Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 49.

This is speculation on my part, but I wonder if the Justice of the Peace mentioned here is a reference to the Lord Chief Justice of England who appears in *The Famous Victories of Henry V*. The Justice in *The Staple of News* is both a fool and a man whom “no man will say black is his eye,” which means “No man will impugn his character.” Prince Hal in *The Famous Victories of Henry V* regards the Chief Justice as not worthy of being shown respect, but as King Henry V he has much respect for him.



“Of course a wife and dowry, credit and friends, birth and beauty, are the gift of Queen Cash.”

Source of Above: Horace, *Epistles*, 1.6.36-7. H. Rushton Fairclough, Translator. Loeb Classics. Harvard University Press. 1929. P. 289.

[https://www.loebclassics.com/view/horace-epistles/1926/pb\\_LCL194.289.xml?readMode=recto](https://www.loebclassics.com/view/horace-epistles/1926/pb_LCL194.289.xml?readMode=recto)

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“Indeed, all things, divine and human, serve the beauty of riches — virtue, reputation, honour; and he who hoards it up will be famous, strong, and just.”

Source of Above: Horace, *Satires*, 2.3.37. Quoted in

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 52.

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Below is another translation of the (slightly longer) *Satires* passage:

“For every thing, virtue, fame, glory, divine and human affairs, are subservient to the attraction of riches; which whoever shall have accumulated, shall be illustrious, brave, just — What, wise too? Ay, and a king, and whatever else he pleases.”

Source of Above:

This eBook of *The Works of Horace* belongs to the public domain. Complete book.

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<http://www.authorama.com/works-of-horace-7.html>

Also:

*The Works of Horace*. Christopher Smart, trans. Wikisource.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:The\\_works\\_of\\_Horace\\_-\\_Christopher\\_Smart.djvu/215](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:The_works_of_Horace_-_Christopher_Smart.djvu/215)

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_works\\_of\\_Horace/Second\\_Book\\_of\\_Satires](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_works_of_Horace/Second_Book_of_Satires)

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_works\\_of\\_Horace](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_works_of_Horace)

— 2.4 —

*“How the rogue stinks, worse than a fishmonger’s sleeves”*

(2.4.50)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 63.

*HORATIUS FLACCUS was a native of Venusium, his father having been, by his own account, a freedman and collector of taxes, but, as it is generally believed, a dealer in salted (541) provisions; for some one with whom Horace had a quarrel, jeered him, by saying; “How often have I seen your father wiping his nose with his fist?”*

Source of Above: *The Life and Works of Suetonius*. “Life of Horace.” Trans. J.C. Rolfe.

[https://archive.org/stream/1thecompleteworksofsuetonius/1%20-%20The%20Complete%20Works%20of%20Suetonius\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/1thecompleteworksofsuetonius/1%20-%20The%20Complete%20Works%20of%20Suetonius_djvu.txt)

— 2.4 —

“*clapper dungeon*”

(2.4.209)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*  
7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Here are some definitions of “clapper dudgeon”:

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 70.

*A clapperdudgeon, or clapper dudgeon, was a type of con artist common during the Elizabethan era. In order to appear as pitiful and deserving of alms as possible, one would give themselves sores by applying salt, various plants, etc. to their skin, dress in bloody rags and then beg for money.*

Source of Above:

ellesleg, “Tuesday Word: clapperdudgeon.” Live Journal. 22 April 2014. Accessed 9 May 2021.

<https://1word1day.livejournal.com/516149.html>

*Brewer's: Clapper-dudgeons*

*Abram-men (q.v.). The clapper is the tongue of a bell, and in cant language the human "tongue." Dudgeon is a slang word for a beggar.*

Source of Above:

*Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, E. Cobham Brewer, 1894.

<https://www.infoplease.com/dictionary/brewers/clapper-dudgeons>

*A cant name for a beggar born; also used as a term of reproach or insult.*

Source of Above: "clapperdungeon." *Oxford English Dictionary*.

— 3.2 —

The paragraph about Virgil's description of Fama, aka Rumor, comes from my book:

Bruce, David. *Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*. Self-Published. 2013.

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/277646>

Independently published. Available at major online eBook retailers.

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*"So there had need, for they are still by the ears  
One with another."*

(3.2.134-135)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 89.

The below information comes from the Wikipedia article titled “British Anabaptism”:

*Following the death of Elizabeth, James I became the new ruler of England. He continued the policies of his predecessor that valued conformity under the state.[14] As Holland and England continued to maintain trade relations, it was of no surprise that Anabaptist ideas still made their way into England. Under his rule, the last public burning of heretics took place. Edward Wightman was the last to be burned publicly for heresy in England, and he was an Anabaptist. Although James I valued conformity for political reasons, this still shows the value he placed on making a public statement about religious minorities as well.*

Source of Above Information: “British Anabaptism.”  
Wikipedia. Accessed 15 May 2021

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_Anabaptism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Anabaptism)

The below information comes from the Wikipedia article titled “Edward Wightman”:

*Edward Wightman (c. 1580 – 11 April 1612) was an English radical Anabaptist, executed at Lichfield on charges of heresy.[1][2] He was the last person to be burned at the stake in England for heresy.[3]*

Source of Above Information: “Edward Wightman.”  
Wikipedia. Accessed 15 May 2021

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward\\_Wightman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Wightman)

— 4.2 —

In *Pantagruel* V:5, the Oracle of the Bottle is “Trinc,” which means “Drink.” Panurge, a character in *Pantagruel*, calls the bottle “trismegistian Bottle,” which means “thrice-renowned bottle.” The priestess tell Panurge that “by wine we become divine.”

Note: The edition used is Project Gutenberg’s *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Book V., by Francois Rabelais. Translated into English by Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty and Peter Antony Motteux.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/8170/8170-h/8170-h.htm#2HCH0045>

**THE FOURTH INTERMEAN: AFTER THE FOURTH  
ACT**

*“Or to stand wearing a piece of parchment, which the court please —”*

(FOURTH INTERMEAN, line 56)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 135.

Here is some information on pillories and parchment/paper from Terry Bracher’s “The Pillory as Punishment” at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre website:

*[...] sometimes the offender was drawn to the pillory on a hurdle, accompanied by minstrels and a paper sign hung around his or her head displaying the offence committed.*

*At the Quarter Sessions of October 1626 in Marlborough, “Thomas Edmonds was indicted for making and publisheing Libell which he confessed to be true, and thereupon convicted to goale there to remaine until Saterdag next, and then to stand under the pillorie situate in Marlborough for the space of two howres together in the Markett tyme. And then alsoe to have a broad white pap [paper] upon his forehead subscribed with these words in great letters (vizt) for a libel and (then he is to return to prison until the next assizes &c).”*

*In Devizes in 1615 Nicholas Powell was convicted for deceiving John Smithe of thirty shillings with false letters. He was whipped in the open market “untille his backe doth bleede, and afterwards sett on the pillory.” Again paper was placed on his head displaying the crimes of cosonage (cheating) and obtaining money by counterfeit letters.*

Source of Above: Terry Bracher, “The Pillory as Punishment.” Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre. 10 October 2014

<https://wshc.org.uk/blog/item/the-pillory-as-punishment.html>

— 5.6 —

*“The use of things is all, and not the store.*

*“Surfeit and fullness have killed more than famine.”*

(5.6.26-27)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 155.

The below is a brief description of Aristotle's Mean Between Extremes:

### **Moral Virtue, and the Mean Between Extremes**

Aristotle thought that we can acquire two different kinds of virtue: moral and intellectual. The appetitive element (the desiring element) of the human soul can lead us to moral virtue, if we have desires toward worthy goals and these desires are subjected to the rational regulating principle known as the mean between extremes.

This theory of the mean between extremes is a famous part of Aristotle's thought. He believed in moderation — as most Greeks did. If you have too much or too little of something, you will suffer from an excess or a deficiency of that thing. What you need is exactly the right amount. Thus courage is the mean between the extremes of rashness (excess) and cowardice (deficiency). Applying Aristotle's ideas (but not always his names for the qualities listed), we can make a list illustrating some means between extremes:

#### **1. Courage**

Rashness (Excess); Courage (Mean/Virtue); Cowardice (Deficiency)

#### **2. Liberality**

Prodigality (Excess); Liberality (Mean/Virtue); Miserliness



(Deficiency)

### **3. Charitable**

Overly Generous (Excess); Charitable (Mean/Virtue); Cheap (Deficiency)

### **4. Weight**

Obese (Excess); Normal Weight (Mean/Virtue); Anorexic (Deficiency)

### **5. Nobility**

Vanity (Excess); Nobility (Mean/Virtue); Ignobility (Deficiency)

### **6. Good Temper**

Hot Temper (Excess); Good Temper (Mean/Virtue); Indifference (Deficiency)

### **7. Truthfulness**

Boastfulness (Excess); Truthfulness (Mean/Virtue); False Modesty (Deficiency)

The first example shows that courage is the mean between the excess of rashness and the deficiency of cowardice. Let's say that a person is walking down the street and sees a house on fire. A rash person would shout, "Don't worry, I'll save you," and rush inside the burning building without even bothering to find out whether anyone is inside to be rescued! A coward would ignore the fire and not even call the fire department. However, a courageous person would call the fire department, find out whether anyone was trapped inside the burning building, and render whatever assistance he or she rationally can.

The second example shows that liberality is the mean between the excess of prodigality and the deficiency of

miserliness. A prodigal person would leave a \$100 tip after eating a \$10 pizza (however, this can be a good deed when done by someone who can easily spare the money and wants to help the server. If I give a \$100 tip for a \$10 pizza, I am being prodigal. If Microsoft founder Bill Gates gives a \$100 tip for a \$10 pizza, he is doing a good deed / being charitable). A miser would not leave any tip at all. However, a person who is liberal with money would leave a 15 percent tip for good service. (This example refers to the USA; most other countries don't have tipping.)

The third example shows that being charitable is the mean between the excess of being overly generous and the deficiency of being cheap. An overly generous person will give away all of his or her money to charity, not saving enough to live on. A cheap person will never give money to charity. However, a charitable person will pay his or her bills, keep enough money to live on (and keep some to save), but also give a portion that he or she can afford to charity.

The fourth example shows that normal weight is the mean between the excess of obesity and the deficiency of anorexia. An obese person pigs out every night (and every morning, and every noon, and two or three other times a day). An anorexic person will do 100 sit-ups after chewing a stick of sugarless gum. However, a person who maintains his or her normal, healthy weight will eat three square meals a day, and is willing to eat cake and ice cream at birthday parties (and salad for lunch the next day).

One point to notice is that not all activities have a mean between extremes. Some activities are already excessive in themselves. Thus, adultery is always wrong. You will never be able to commit adultery with the right person at the right time and in the right manner. (You should never say, "I don't want to commit too little adultery or too much adultery; I want to commit exactly the right amount of adultery"!)

Also, the mean can vary among people (see liberality above). In determining how much food to eat, the mean for a 300-pound weightlifter will be much greater than the mean for a 100-pound secretary. Also, a wealthy person such as Microsoft founder Bill Gates can afford to give much more money to charity than a college student can.

The way we acquire moral virtue, according to Aristotle, is through imitation and acquiring good habits. If we act the way a brave person acts, we will become brave. If we act the way a truthful person acts, we will become truthful. If we act the way a noble person acts, we will become noble.

Source: David Bruce. *Philosophy for the Masses: Ethics*. Self-Published. 2009.

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/374071>

— 5.6 —

Pennyboy Senior says this to his brother, Pennyboy Canter:

*Wise and honoured brother!*

*None but a brother, and sent from the dead,*

*As you are to me, could have altered me.*

*I thank my destiny, that is so gracious.*

*Are there no pains, no penalties decreed (35)*

*From whence you come to us that smother money*

*In chests and strangle her in bags?*

(5.6.31-37)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 155.

In Chapter 5, scene 6, I described what Dante writes in his *Inferno* about the punishment of the Greedy Moneylenders (Usurers). That description was taken from this book:

Source: David Bruce, *Dante's Inferno: A Discussion Guide*. Self-Published. 2009.

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/342391>

From the same book is a description of the punishment of the Hoarders and Wasters of Money in the Fourth Circle of the Inferno:

### **The Incontinent: The Wasters and the Hoarders**

As the god of wealth, Plutus is an appropriate guard for the Wasters and the Hoarders, who were incontinent when it came to managing money. The Wasters are Spendthrifts, who spent every penny they could, saving nothing for emergencies. The Hoarders are Misers, who saved every penny they could, spending little even to make themselves comfortable. These two opposed groups are condemned to roll great weights at each other. Each group sets off in an opposing direction around the Circle, and then they meet and crash the weights together, one group crying “Why hoard?” (*Inferno* VII.30) and the other group crying “Why waste?” (*Inferno* VII.30). Then they roll the weights back and meet again on the other side of the Circle. These two groups were opposed to each other in life; now they are eternally opposed to each other in death. In addition, Dante does not recognize any of the souls here. These souls were undiscerning in life — they did not know what true wealth is. Now, in death the souls are unable to be discerned by the living Dante. (He

does recognize that some of the souls were monks by their haircuts, but he does not know their names.)

Note: The brief quotations are from Mark Musa's translation of Dante's *Inferno*.

## **CHAPTER 16: Ben Jonson's *A Tale of a Tub***

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS (*A Tale of a Tub*)**

#### **CHANON HUGH**

*Vicar of Pancras, and Captain Thumbs.*

*Chanon Hugh is a petty — of lesser importance — member of the clergy.*

*“Chanon” is an archaic spelling of “canon.” A chanon, or canon, is a clergyman.*

*Chanon Hugh is sometimes called Sir Hugh; “Sir” was a title given to clergymen as well as to knights.*

*Pancras is St. Pancras, a parish in Middlesex. It is in the middle of the villages mentioned in Ben Jonson's play, and it is the location of the church.*

*Pancras is also called Pancridge in Ben Jonson's play.*

#### **SQUIRE TRIPOLY TUB**

*Of Totten Court.*

*Squire Tub is older than Audrey, who is of an age to be married.*

*Totten Court is a village.*

#### **BASKET HILTS**

*Squire Tub's serving-man, and his governor.*

*A basket is a sword guard that is located on the sword's hilt.*

*A governor is a tutor and protector.*

#### **JUSTICE PREAMBLE**

*Of Maribone, alias Bramble.*

*Justice Preamble dislikes being called Bramble.*

**MILES METAPHOR**

*Justice Preamble's clerk.*

**LADY TUB**

*Of Totten Court. Squire Tub's mother.*

**POL-MARTEN**

*Lady Tub's gentleman-usher.*

*A marten is an animal whose fur is valued. An usher escorts and serves a lady.*

**DIDO WISP**

*Lady Tub's serving-woman.*

*In Virgil's Aeneid, Dido was Queen of Carthage. Read Book 4 of the Aeneid for her story.*

**TOBIAS "TOBY" TURF**

*High Constable of Kentish Town.*

*A High Constable is a senior parish official in charge of constables. They keep the peace.*

*Kentish Town is a village.*

**DAME SYBIL TURF**

*Tobias Turf's wife.*

**MISTRESS AUDREY TURF**

*The Turfs' daughter, the bride.*

**JOHN CLAY**

*Of Kilburn. Tile-maker, the appointed bridegroom.*

*Kilburn is a village.*

### **IN-AND-IN MEDLEY**

*Of Islington. Cooper, joiner, and headborough.*

*In-and-in is a kind of dice game. A medley is a mixture. A joiner is a carpenter. A cooper makes tubs and barrels. Headboroughs help keep the peace, and they assist constables.*

*In-and-In Medley is a parody of Inigo Jones, with whom Ben Jonson created masques. The two men argued over who should get the most credit for their collaborations. Two of Inigo Jones' favorite words were "feasible" and "conduce."*

*Islington is a village.*

### **RASI CLENCH**

*Of Hampstead. Farrier and petty constable.*

*Farriers work with horses' hooves, trimming and shoeing them.*

*A clench is part of a nail used in shoeing horses.*

*A petty constable is also known as a headborough.*

*Clench is an older man.*

*Hampstead is rural; Ben Jonson's play refers to Hampstead Heath.*

### **TO-PAN**

*Tinker or metal-man of Belsize, thirdborough.*

*To-Pan works with pans. A thirdborough is a petty constable.*

*Belsize is a manor in Hampstead.*



## **D’OGENES SCRIBEN**

*Of Chalcot, the great writer.*

*Diogenes was an ancient Greek philosopher; he was a Cynic.*

*Chalcot is a hamlet.*

**NOTE:** The Council of Finsbury — the “wise” ones of Finsbury — consists of In-and-In Medley, Rasi Clench, To-Pan, and D’ogenes Scriben.

## **BALL PUPPY**

*The High Constable’s serving-man.*

*“Ball” is a nickname for “Hannibal”; it is also a common name for a dog. Hannibal was a great Carthaginian general, known for taking African elephants across the Alps to attack Rome.*

## **FATHER ROSIN (and his two boys)**

*The minstrel, and his two boys.*

*Rosin is used in lubricating musical bows.*

## **JOAN, JOYCE, MADGE, PARNEL, GRISELL, KATE**

*Maids of the bridal (wedding feast).*

## **BLACK JACK**

*The Lady Tub’s butler.*

*“Black Jack” means “beer jug.”*

## **TWO GROOMS (serving-men)**

**THE SCENE: FINSBURY HUNDRED (an open area in Middlesex)**

**THE TIME: Valentine’s Day**

**THE PLOT:** In this play, Mistress Audrey Turf is courted by four men. She is supposed to marry John Clay on this day — Valentine’s Day — but other men interfere to prevent that marriage and try to get her to marry someone else. Two of the other men who want to marry her are Squire Tub and Justice Bramble. A fourth man also wants to marry her. (Ball Puppy also inquires whether she could love him, but he is rejected and takes it calmly and marries someone else.)

**RUSTIC DIALECT:**

Several characters have a rustic dialect, including Ball Puppy, Basket Hilts, John Clay, D’ogenes Scriben, In-and-In Medley, Rasi Clench, and To-Pan.

The major characteristics of the rustic dialect are these:

Z is often but not always used for S

zealed bags o’silver = sealed bags of silver

Zin Valentine = Saint Valentine (in some places, “saint” is pronounced “sin”)

deadly zin = deadly sin

V is often used for F

vifty pound = fifty pounds

*’un, ’hun, ’hum* are the rustic dialect form for *’im, him, them*

*’cham* means *I am*

*’che* and *’ch* mean *I* — possibly, *’ch* is related to *ich* (German for “I”)

Some R sounds are transposed.

preform = perform

perportions = proportions

## NOTES:

In Ben Jonson's society, a tale of a tub meant the same thing as a cock-and-bull story.

A cock-and-bull story is a ridiculous story. The term may have come from two inns that coaches stopped at in Stony Stratford, England. One inn was called the Cock and the other was called the Bull. Travelers would tell outrageous, unbelievable stories to entertain themselves and others.

In Ben Jonson's society, a person of higher rank would use "thou," "thee," "thine," and "thy" when referring to a person of lower rank. (These terms were also used affectionately and between equals.) A person of lower rank would use "you" and "your" when referring to a person of higher rank.

"Sirrah" was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker. Friends, however, could use it to refer to each other.

The word "wench" in Ben Jonson's time was not necessarily negative. It was often used affectionately.

The word "clown" can mean "rustic fellow" as well as "comic fellow."

The phrase "go to" can be imprecatory. These days, it is used in "go to Hell!"

Proverbs are often words of wisdom, but they can also be short pithy sayings in general use. In this sense, they can be clichés.

A hundred is a subdivision of a county or a shire; it has its own court. The setting, of course, is Finsbury Hundred (an open area in Middlesex).

## PROLOGUE

No state affairs, nor any politic club  
Pretend [Claim] we in our tale, here, of a tub,  
But acts of clowns [comic rustics] and constables today  
Stuff out the scenes of our ridiculous [funny] play.  
A cooper's wit, or some such busy spark,  
Illumining the High Constable and his clerk  
And all the neighborhood, from old records  
Of antique [old; also possibly "antic," aka funny] proverbs,  
drawn from Whitsun-lords,  
And their authorities at wakes and ales,  
With country precedents and old wives' tales,  
We bring you now, to show what different things  
The cotes of clowns are from the courts of kings.

\*\*\*

"Whitsun-lords" are mock-lords who rule at Whitsun, which is the Christian High Holy Day of Pentecost.

In this context, "wakes" are festivals.

"Ales" are "ale-drinkings."

"Cotes of clowns" are the cottages of rustics.

## ACT 1 (*A Tale of a Tub*)

### — 1.1 —

Alone, and standing outside Squire Tub's residence in Totten Court, Hugh Chanon, the vicar of Pancras, said to himself on February 14: Valentine's Day:

"Now, by my faith, old Bishop Valentine, you have brought us nipping weather. Just as the proverb states — 'Februere doth cut and shear' — your day and diocese are very cold.

"All of your parishioners, as well as your lay persons and your quiristers — your choristers — have need to keep to their warm feather-beds if they are provided with loves."

In other words, everyone who already has a husband or wife can stay in bed late and stay warm on Valentine's Day. Those who are without mates need to be stirring.

The choristers are songbirds, which according to folklore, chose their mates on Valentine's Day.

Chanon Hugh continued:

"This is no season to seek new makes in."

"Makes" meant "mates." The word especially applied to birds.

Chanon Hugh continued:

"However, Sir Hugh of Pancras has come hither to Totten Court with news for the young lord of the manor, Squire Tripoly, about his mistress."

Squire Tub was also known as Squire Tripoly. His first name was Tripoly.

In this context, the word “mistress” meant a woman to whom a man was devoted. The word did not necessarily mean a sexual relationship. The Squire wanted to marry this woman.

Vicars were given the honorary title “Sir.”

Chanon Hugh called, “What, Squire, I say!”

He continued speaking to himself:

“Tub, I should call him, too.

“Sir Peter Tub was his father, a saltpeter man, who left his mother, Lady Tub of Totten Court, here to revel, and keep open house in; with the young Squire her son, and his governor Basket Hilts, both by sword and dagger.”

Some swords and daggers had basket hilts that protected the hand.

Saltpeter is potassium nitrate, which is used in making gunpowder.

He called, “*Domine Armiger Tub! Squire Tripoly! Expergiscere!*”

This meant, “Lord Squire Tub! Squire Tripoly! Wake up!”

An *armiger* is a person who is entitled to heraldic arms; that is, the person is someone who is entitled to have a coat of arms.

Chanon Hugh continued:

“I dare not call aloud lest Lady Tub should hear me and think I conjured up the spirit, her son, in priest’s lack-Latin. Oh, she is jealous of all mankind for him.”

In this context, “jealous” meant “suspicious,” and so she was carefully guarding her son. Lady Tub was vigilant in looking out for the well-being of her son.

A “lack-Latin” is a person who doesn’t know Latin well. Some priests of the time were ill-educated.

Squire Tub appeared at a window and said, “Chanon, is it you?”

“Yes, it is the Vicar of Pancras, Squire Tub! Wa’hoh!”

“Wa’hoh” is a cry made by a falconer.

Squire Tub said, “I come, I stoop to the call, Sir Hugh! I come in answer to your falconer’s call.”

“Stoop” meant “swoop down.”

He disappeared from the window above and came down in his night clothes.

Chanon Hugh said, “He knows my lure is from his love, fair Audrey, the High Constable’s daughter of Kentish Town here. The High Constable is Master Tobias Turf.”

Audrey Turf was a maiden of an age to be married, and many men in the area were well aware of that, Squire Tub among them.

“What news comes from Tobias Turf?” Squire Tub asked.

Chanon Hugh answered:

“He has awakened me an hour before I would usually get up, sir. And my duty is to the young worship of Totten Court, Squire Tripoly, who has my heart, as I have his.

“Your mistress — Audrey Turf — is to be made away from you, this morning, St. Valentine’s Day.

“A knot of clowns, aka rustics, the Council of Finsbury, so they are y-styled — styled, aka titled — met at her father’s.

“All the wise of the hundred there met together: Old Rasi Clench of Hampstead, petty constable; In-and-In Medley,

cooper and headborough of Islington; with loud To-Pan, the tinker, or metal-man of Belsize, and a thirdborough; and D'ogenes Scriben, the great writer of Chalcot."

A hundred is a division of a county. All the great men of the hundred had met together to make a decision about an important matter.

"And why did all these wise men meet?" Squire Tub asked.

Chanon Hugh answered, "Sir, to decide in council who shall be a husband or a make — a mate — for Mistress Audrey. That person they have named and chosen: He is John Clay of Kilburn, a tough young fellow, and a tile-maker."

"And what must he do?" Squire Tub asked.

Chanon Hugh answered:

"Cover her, they say, and keep her warm, sir."

One meaning of "cover" is "have sex with."

Chanon Hugh continued:

"Mistress Audrey Turf last night did draw John Clay's name to be her Valentine."

In this society, Valentines were traditionally awarded by chance: the picking of lots.

Chanon Hugh continued:

"This chance occurrence has so taken her father and mother — because they themselves drew lots that matched them so, on Valentine's Eve thirty years ago — that they will have her married today by any means.

"They have sent a messenger to Kilburn, post-haste, for John Clay; which when I knew, I came post-haste with the like



message to worshipful Tripoly, the Squire of Totten Court: and my advice is to cross and counteract it.”

Chanon Hugh wanted Squire Tub, not John Clay, to be the man who married Audrey.

“What is it, Sir Hugh?” Squire Tub asked.

“Where is your governor Hilts?” Chanon Hugh asked.  
“Basket must do it.”

Basket Hilts would help in the plot to get Squire Tub married to Audrey. Basket Hilts was Squire Tub’s governor: his tutor and protector.

“Basket shall be called,” Squire Tub said.

He called, “Hilts! Can you see to rise?”

Basket Hilts called from inside Squire Tub’s house, “Cham [I am] not blind, sir, with too much light.”

“Open your other eye, and see if it is day,” Squire Tub said.

Basket Hilts answered, “Che [I] can spy that at as little a hole as another, through a millstone.”

Two proverbs of the time were these: 1) “One may see daylight at a little hole,” and 2) “I can see as far into a millstone as another man.”

Squire Tub said to Hugh Chanon, “He will have the last word, even though he talk bilk for it.”

“Bilk?” Chanon Hugh said. “What’s that mean?”

“Why, nothing,” Squire Tub said. “It is a word signifying nothing, and it is borrowed here to express nothing.”

“A fine device!” Chanon Hugh said.

“Yes, until we hear a finer,” Squire Tub said. “What’s your device now, Chanon Hugh?”

A device can be a trick, a plan, and/or a plot. And a bilk can be a hoax or a person who is a cheat.

Chanon Hugh said, “I will tell you in private. Lend it your ear. I will not trust the air with it, or scarcely my shirt; my cassock shall not know it. If I thought it did, I’d strip it off and burn it.”

A cassock is a full-length clerical garment.

Squire Tub replied, “That’s the way. You have thought up a plan to get a new one, Hugh. Is it worth it? Let’s hear it first.”

“Then hearken and receive it,” Chanon Hugh said.

They whispered together as Chanon Hugh told Squire Tub his plan for getting Audrey and Squire Tub married to each other.

Chanon Hugh said, “That is the plan, sir. Do you relish it?”

Basket Hilts entered the scene, and walked nearby, making himself ready — he was finishing getting dressed — to be of service.

“If Hilts is secret enough to carry it, there’s all,” Squire Tub said.

Basket Hilts said:

“It is no sand, nor buttermilk?”

These items are difficult to carry without containers.

He continued:

“If’t be, Ich’am [I am] no zieve [sieve], or wat’ring-pot, to draw knots i’your ’casions. If you trust me, zo. If not,

praform [perform] it your zelves. 'Cham no man's wife, but resolute Hilts. You'll vind me i'the butt'ry."

Knots are criss-crossing lines made by water pouring from watering pots.

"Draw knots in your occasions" means "make difficulties in your business."

"'Cham no man's wife" means "I am no man's wife," aka "I depend on no one." In this context, "wife" means "dependant."

A buttery is a place where alcoholic drinks such as ale are stored.

Basket Hilts exited.

Squire Tub said:

"He is a testy clown, but a clown as tender — soft — as wool, and as melting as the weather in a thaw!

"He'll weep like all April, but he'll roar and bluster at you like middle March before. He will be as mellow, and as tipsy, too, as October; and as grave and bound up like a frost, with the new year, in January.

"He is as rigid as he is rustic."

A proverb stated, "A windy March and a rainy April make a beautiful May."

October was the traditional month for brewing ale.

Chanon Hugh said, "You know his nature, and describe it well. I'll leave him to your managing."

Squire Tub said, "Wait, Sir Hugh; take a good angel with you for your guide, and let this guard you homeward, as the blessing to our plan."

Squire Tub, who was punning on “guardian angel,” gave Chanon Hugh a gold coin that was known as an angel. Such coins were stamped with the image of an angel.

Chanon Hugh said:

“I thank you, Squire’s worship, most humbly —”

Squire Tub exited.

Chanon Hugh continued:

“— for the next angel: for this angel I am sure of.

“Oh, for a choir of these voices now, to chime in a man’s pocket, and cry chink! One does not chirp: It makes no harmony.”

Chanon Hugh hoped for more angels to chink in his moneybag and make beautiful music.

He continued:

“Grave Justice Bramble next must contribute an angel. His charity must offer at this wedding.

“I’ll bid more to the basin and the bride-ale, although only one can bear away the bride.”

At the bride-ale — wedding-feast — gifts were cast into a basin or bowl.

He was offering to give a gift at a second wedding; if a second wedding should be proposed, he hoped to get money from a second suitor.

Chanon Hugh continued:

“I smile to think how like a lottery these weddings are.

“Clay has Audrey in his possession.

“Squire Tub hopes to circumvent the tile-maker John Clay and marry Audrey.

“And now, if Justice Bramble do come off — pay up — it is two to one but Tub may lose his bottom and not marry Audrey.”

Justice Preamble, whom many people called Justice Bramble, was a third man who hoped to marry Audrey.

A “bottom” is a “deep place.” Women have a deep place.

Chanon Hugh was not loyal to Squire Tub. If he could get money by serving Justice Bramble, he would.

Chanon Hugh exited.

— 1.2 —

Rasi Clench, In-and-In Medley, D’ogenes Scriben, To-Pan, and Ball Puppy were standing outside Tobias Turf’s house in Kentish Town.

Clench of Hampstead was a farrier and petty constable.

Medley was the cooper of Islington and a headborough.

To-Pan of Belsize was a tinker, aka metal-man.

Scriben of Chalcot was a writer.

The Council of Finsbury — the “wise” ones of Finsbury — consisted of In-and-In Medley, Rasi Clench, To-Pan, and D’ogenes Scriben.

Ball Puppy was the High Constable’s serving-man.

Remembering what day it was, and what happened thirty years ago on that day, Clench said, “Why, it is thirty years, even as this day now, Zin [Saint] Valentine’s Day, of all kursined [christened, aka Christian] days, see. And the zame

day of the month, as this Zin Valentine, or I am vouldy deceived —”

Medley interrupted, “— that our High Constable, Master Tobias Turf, and his dame were married. I think you are right. But what was that Zin Valentine? Did you ever know ’un [him], goodman Clench?”

Clench answered, “Zin Valentine, he was a deadly Zin, and dwelt at Highgate, as I have heard, but it was avore [before] my time. He was a cooper, too, as you are, Medley, an In-an’-In: a woundy brag — an extremely spirited — young vellow, as the ’port [report] went o’hun [of him] then, and in those days.”

Scriben asked, “Didn’t he write his name as ‘Sim Valentine’? Vor I have met no ‘Sin’ in Finsbury books, and yet I have writ ’em six or seven times over.”

Scriben may be the clerk who keeps the Finsbury records. And/or he may have meant to say that he has read the records six or seven times.

To-Pan said, “Oh, you mun [must] look for the nine deadly Sims in the church books, D’oge: not the High Constable’s, nor in the county’s. Zure [To be sure], that same Zin Valentine, he was a stately and noble Zin, if he were a Zin, and kept brave house —”

“Kept brave house” means “provided splendid hospitality.”

The seven deadly sins are anger, envy, gluttony, greed, lust, pride, and sloth.

To-Pan was confusing church theological books with the church books that recorded such things as births, marriages, and deaths.

Clench interrupted:

“— at the Cock and Hen Inn in Highgate.

“You have ’freshed my rememory [refreshed my memory] well in it, neighbor Pan. He had a place in the last King Harry’s time, of sorting and matching all the young couples: joining them, and putting them together; which is yet praformed, as on his day — Zin Valentine, as being the Zin of the shire, or the whole county. I am old rivet still, and bear a brain, the clench, the varrier [farrier], and true leech [physician] of Hampstead.”

An old rivet is an old fastening — a kind of nail. Old nails are still usable, and Clench’s brain was still usable.

A clench is a part of a nail that is turned back when one wants to clench: to fasten more securely.

The last King Harry was King Henry VIII, but Saint Valentine lived long before Henry VIII’s time.

To-Pan said, “You are a shrewd and keen-witted antiquity [antiquary], neighbor Clench, and a great guide to all the parishes! The very bell-wether of the hundred, here, as I may zay.”

A bell-wether is a leading sheep; it wears a bell and makes noise.

To-Pan continued, “Master Tobias Turf, the High Constable, would not miss you, for a score on [of] us, when he do ’scourse [discourse] of the great Charty [Magna Carta] to us.”

This was a compliment: Tobias Turf would not take twenty fellows for one Clench.

In 1215, King John I of England agreed to the bill of rights in the Magna Carta. It recognized some rights for barons, some of whom were rebelling, and for the Church.

Puppy asked, “What’s that, a horse? Can ’scourse naught but a horse?”

“’scourse” can mean horse trading in addition to discourse.

Puppy continued, “I never read o’hun [about him], and that in Smithveld Horse Fair — Charty? —”

Puppy was interpreting “Charty” [Carta] as meaning “carthorse.”

Puppy continued, “— in the old Fabian’s *Chronicles*; nor I think in any more chronicles of more recent times. He may be a giant there, for aught [anything] I know.”

Robert Fabian wrote history books about the time up to Henry VII.

“You should do well to study records, fellow Ball, both law and poetry,” Scriben said.

Puppy replied, “Why, all’s but writing and reading, is it, Scriben? If it is any more, it’s mere cheating zure [to be sure], vlat [flat] cheating; all your law and poets, too.”

According to some philosophic critics such as Plato, poets and artists create works of art that are far removed from reality: They are mere imitations of reality.

“Master High Constable comes,” To-Pan said.

Puppy said, “I’ll zay’t avore ’hun. [I’ll say it before him.]”

### — 1.3 —

Tobias Turf, the High Constable of Kentish Town and the father of Audrey, entered the scene and said, “What’s that which makes you all so merry and loud, sirs, huh? I could have heard you all the way to my privy walk [private garden].”



Clench said, “A contervarsy ’twixt [controversy between] your two learned men here: ’Annibal [Hannibal] Puppy says that law and poetry are both flat [completely] cheating. All’s but writing and reading, he says, be it verse or prose.”

Tobias Turf said, “I think in conziencie, he do’ zay true! Who is it do thwart’un [contradict him], huh?”

“Why, my friend Scriben, if it please Your Worship,” Medley said.

Tobias Turf said:

“Who, D’oge? My D’ogenes? A great writer, by the Virgin Mary! He’ll vace me down and put me down, me myself sometimes, and say that verse goes upon veet [feet], as you and I do.

“But I can gi’ ’un [give him] the hearing; zit me down and laugh at ’un; and to myself conclude that the greatest clerks [scholars] are not the wisest men ever.

“Here they are both! What, sirs, disputin’, and holdin’ arguments of [about] verse and prose?

“And no green thing afore [before] the door that shows or speaks [announces] a wedding?”

Greenery was used as decorations during times of celebration such as weddings.

Scriben said, “Those were verses now that your Worship spoke, and they run upon vive [five] feet.”

Indeed, some of Tobias Turf’s dialogue could be divided into lines that were pentameters and so had five metrical feet.

Tobias Turf said, “Feet, vrom [from] my mouth, D’oge? Leave your ’zurd upinions [absurd opinions] and get me in some boughs to serve as decorations.”

Scriben said, “Let ’em have leaves first. There’s nothing green but bays and rosemary.”

It was February, after all, and so boughs did not have green leaves. Bay leaves and rosemary do not grow on boughs.

“And they’re too good for strewings, your maids say,” Puppy said.

Tobias Turf said:

“You take up ’dority [authority] still to vouch [cite] against me. All the twelve smocks [women] in the house, to be zure, are your authors.

“Get some fresh hay then, to lay under foot. Get some holly and ivy to make vine [fine (and entwine)] the posts.

“Isn’t it Son Valentine’s day, and isn’t Mistress Audrey, your young dame, to be married?”

Puppy exited to get the required plants.

Tobias Turf then said:

“I marvel that Clay should be so tedious [late in coming]; he’s to play Son Valentine, and the clown [rustic] sluggard’s not come fro’ [from] Kilburn yet!”

Medley asked, “Do you call your son-i’-law a clown, if it please Your Worship?”

Tobias Turf answered:

“Yes, and vor [for] worship — out of respect — too, my neighbor Medley.

“He is a Middlesex clown, and one of Finsbury: They were the first colons of the kingdom here, the primitory [primary] colons, my D’ogenes says.

“Where’s D’ogenes, my writer, now? Who were those you told me, D’ogenes, who were the first colons [he meant ‘colonists’] of the country? The ones whom the Romans brought in here?”

Scriben said, “The English word ‘clown’ comes from the Latin word *coloni*. Sir, *colonus* is an inhabitant, a clown original: as you’d zay, a farmer, a tiller of the earth, e’er sin’ [ever since] the Romans planted their colony first, which was in Middlesex.”

Tobias Turf said:

“Why so!

“I thank you heartily, good D’ogenes, you have zertified me and confirmed what I said. I had rather be an ancient colon, as they zay, a clown of Middlesex, a good rich farmer, or High Constable.

“I’d play [wager] hun ’gain [him against] a knight, or a good squire, or gentleman of any other county in the kindom [kingdom (and population)].”

To-Pan said:

“Outcept [Except] Kent, for there they landed all gentlemen, and came in with the Conqueror, mad Julius Caesar, who built Dover castle.

“My ancestor To-Pan beat the first kettle-drum avore ’hun [him], here vrom Dover on the march.”

In this society some people incorrectly thought that Julius Caesar had built the Tower of London. It was actually founded as part of the 1066 Norman Conquest. After Caesar’s time, the Romans built a fort at Dover.

To-Pan was mixing up William the Conqueror and Julius Caesar, and he was mixing up the fort at Dover and the Tower of London.

To-Pan continued:

“Which piece of monumental copper [the kettle-drum] hangs up, scoured, at Hammersmith yet; for there they came over the Thames at a low-water mark, vore [before] either London, aye, or Kingston Bridge, I doubt, were kursined [blessed].”

Ball Puppy returned with John Clay, who was supposed to marry Audrey on this Valentine’s Day.

Tobias Turf said:

“Zee, who is here: John Clay! Zon Valentine, and bridegroom!

“Have you zeen your Valentine-bride yet, sin’ you came, John Clay?”

John Clay was from Kilburn; he was a tile-maker, and he had been appointed to be the bridegroom to Audrey Turf.

— 1.4 —

“No, wusse [certainly],” John Clay said. “Che [I] alighted, I, just now in the yard. Puppy has scarce unswaddled my legs yet.”

Tobias Turf said:

“What, wisps o’your wedding-day, zon?”

John Clay had twisted hay around his stockings to protect his inner legs from chaffing. He was wearing shoes instead of high riding boots that would have protected his legs.

Ball Puppy had helped him remove the hay.

Tobias Turf continued:

“This is right originous [original and natural] Clay, and Clay of Kilburn, too! I would have had boots on this day, zure, zon John.”

John Clay explained, “I did it to save charges [costs]. We mun [must] dance, on this day, zure, and who can dance in boots? No, I got on my best straw-colored stockings, and swaddled them over to zave charges, I.”

Tobias Turf said:

“And his new chamois doublet, too, with points!”

Points are laces that connect stockings to a doublet (a jacket).

Sausage-hose, which will be mentioned next, are stuffed stockings that resemble sausages.

Tobias Turf continued:

“I like that yet; and his long sausage-hose, like the commander of four smoking tile-kils [tile-kilns], which he is captain of, captain of Kilburn; Clay with his hat turned up, of the leer [larboard, aka port, aka left] side, too, as if he would leap [have sex with] my daughter yet before night, and spring a new Turf to the old house!”

The bridal maidens, carrying rosemary and bay, entered the scene.

Seeing them, Tobias Turf said, “Look, an [if] the wenches ha’ not vound ’un [found him] out and do parzent ’un [present him] with a van [fan] of rosemary and bays, to vill [fill] a bow-pot [bouquet], trim the head of my best vore-horse [fore- or front-horse that leads the team]! We shall all have bride-laces or points, I zee; my daughter will be valiant, and prove a very Mary Ambry in the business.”

Bride-laces are laces or ribbons that are used to tie some rosemary to be worn at a wedding. Points are laces. Both points and bride-laces were given to wedding guests.

Mary Ambry was a valiant woman who was celebrated in a ballad about the capture of Ghent.

Clench said, “They zaid Your Worship had ’sured her [had promised her] to Squire Tub of Totten Court here; all the hundred rings of it.”

According to gossip in Finsbury Hundred, Audrey Turf had been engaged to marry Squire Tub.

Tobias Turf said:

“That’s a tale of a tub, sir, a mere tale of a tub. Lend it no ear, I pray you [please]. The Squire Tub is a fine man, but he is too fine a man, and has a Lady Tub, too, to [for] his mother. I’ll deal with none of these vine [fine] silken Tubs.

“I prefer John Clay and cloth-breech [homespun clothing] for my money and daughter.”

Squire Tub was from a family of a higher social class than the Turf family, and so Tobias Turf did not want his daughter to marry him.

Father Rosin, a musician, and two boys entered the scene.

Seeing him, Tobias Turf said:

“Here comes another old boy, too, vor his colors, will stroke down my wive’s udder of purses empty of all her milk-money this winter quarter.”

Father Rosin will stroke musical instruments with a bow, and he will be paid for his music with the money Tobias Turf’s wife had gotten from selling milk. This will empty her purse of money.

Of course, there is a bawdy meaning in “stroke down my wive’s udder.”

Tobias Turf continued:

“He is old Father Rosin, the chief minstrel here, chief minstrel, too, of Highgate. She has hired him and all his two boys for a day and a half, and now they come for ribanding and rosemary. Give them enough, girls, give them enough, and take it out in his tunes anon [quickly].”

The girls will give old Father Rosin and his two boys ribanding and rosemary, and old Father Rosin will repay them with music. A riband is a ribbon.

Clench said, “I’ll ha’ [have] the song ‘Tom Tiler,’ for our John Clay’s sake, and the tile-kils, zure.”

Medley the joiner said, “And I’ll ha’ the song ‘The Jolly Joiner,’ for my own sake.”

To-Pan the tinker said, “I’ll ha’ ‘The Jovial Tinker’ for To-Pan’s sake.”

“We’ll all be jovy [jovial] this day vor Son Valentine, my sweet son John’s sake,” Tobias Turf said.

“There’s another reading now,” Scriben said. “My master reads it Son and not Sin Valentine.”

John Clay is Audrey’s Valentine, Tobias Turf wants John Clay to be his son-in-law, and so John Clay is Son Valentine.

“Nor Zim,” Puppy said. “And he is in the right; he is High Constable. And who should read above ’un [’im], or avore ’hun [before him]?”

Tobias Turf said:

“Son John shall bid us all welcome on this day. We’ll zerve under his colors. Lead the troop, John.

“And Puppy, see the bells ring. Press [Impress, aka enlist] all noises [bands of musicians] of Finsbury, in our name.

“D’ogenes Scriben shall draw a score of warrants vor the business.

“Does any wight parzent [person represent] Her Majesty’s person this hundred, ’bove the High Constable?”

“No, no,” the others said.

“Use our authority then to the utmost on’t [in this business],” Tobias Turf said.

They exited.

— 1.5 —

Chanon Hugh (the vicar of Pancras) and Justice Preamble talked together.

“So you are sure, sir, to prevent [forestall] ’em all,” Chanon Hugh said, “and throw a block [an obstacle] in the bridegroom’s way, John Clay, that he will hardly leap over.”

Justice Preamble replied, “I conceive [understand] you, Sir Hugh; as if your rhetoric would say, whereas the father of her is a Turf, a very superficies [surface layer] of the earth, he aims no higher than to match in Clay and there has pitched his rest.”

“Has pitched his rest” means “has staked everything.”

“Right, Justice Bramble,” Chanon Hugh said. “You have the winding [devious] wit, encompassing all.”

Justice Preamble said:

“Subtle [Cunning] Sir Hugh, you now are in the wrong, and err with the whole neighborhood, I must tell you, for you mistake my name.



“‘Justice Preamble’ is how I write myself; which with the ignorant clowns here — because of my profession of the law, and place of the peace [my job as judge] — is taken to be Bramble.

“But all my warrants, sir, do run Preamble: Richard Preamble.”

“Sir, I thank you for it,” Chanon Hugh said. “I thank you that Your good Worship would not let me run longer in error but would take me up thus.”

Justice Preamble said, “You are my learned and canonic neighbor; I would not have you stray. But the incorrigible nott-headed beast, the clowns or constables, still let them graze, eat salads, chew the cud. All the town music will not move a log.”

“Nott-headed” means “with close-cropped hair,” but “nott-headed,” of course, sounds like “knot-headed.”

Logs have knots.

Amphion was able to build the walls of the ancient Greek city Thebes by playing his lyre. As a result of the music, huge stones moved themselves into the correct position.

Chanon Hugh said, “The beetle and wedges will, where you will have them.”

A proverb stated, “There goes the wedge where the beetle drives.”

A beetle is a kind of hammer that is used with a wedge to split wood.

“True, true, Sir Hugh,” Justice Preamble said.

Miles Metaphor entered the scene.

Seeing Metaphor, Justice Preamble said, “Here comes Miles Metaphor, my clerk. He is the man who shall carry it, Chanon, by my instructions.”

Metaphor would help them carry out a plan to get Justice Preamble married to Audrey Turf.

Chanon Hugh said, “He will do it *ad unguem*, Miles Metaphor! He is a pretty fellow.”

“*Ad unguem*” means “to perfection.” The Latin translation is “to the fingernail.” Sculptors would scrape a fingernail over stone to check for flaws.

Justice Preamble said:

“I don’t love to keep shadows, or halfwits, to foil [frustrate] a business.

“Metaphor, have you see a king ride forth in state?”

“Sir, that I have,” Metaphor said. “King Edward, our late liege and sovereign lord, and I have set down the pomp.”

King Edward VI died in 1553. Metaphor had taken notes on the pomp that was on display when King Edward VI had ridden forth in state.

Justice Preamble said:

“Therefore I asked you.

“Have you observed the Messengers of the Chamber, what habits — liveries — they were in?”

The Messengers of the Chamber carried messages, of course, but they also had the legal power to make arrests.

Metaphor answered, “Yes, minor surcoats emblazoned with coats of arms. To the guard, a dragon and a greyhound, for the supporters of the arms.”

In other words, the dragon and greyhound were on either side and holding up the shield bearing the coat of arms. “To the guard” means “full-face.”

“Well noticed!” Justice Preamble said. “Do you know any of the Messengers of the Chamber?”

Metaphor said, “I know one who dwells here in Maribone.”

Justice Preamble asked, “Have you enough acquaintance with him that you could borrow his coat for an hour?”

“Or just his badge,” Metaphor said. “It will serve; it’s a little thing he wears on his breast.”

Justice Preamble said to Metaphor, “His coat, I say, is of more authority. Borrow his coat for an hour.”

He said to Chanon Hugh, “I love to do all things completely and perfectly, Chanon Hugh.”

He said to Metaphor, “Borrow his coat, Miles Metaphor, or borrow nothing.”

Metaphor said, “The tabard — official coat — of his office I will call it, or the coat-armor of his place, and so insinuate with him by that trope.”

“Coat-armor” is a heraldic garment worn over armor.

“Insinuate” means “suggest indirectly.”

A “trope” is a figure of speech.

Metaphor was going to borrow the coat by using rhetorical flourishes.

This particular coat was worn by a person who had the power to make arrests: a pursuivant. Therefore, we can assume that Justice Preamble and Chanon Hugh’s plot involved making an arrest or threatening to make an arrest.

Justice Preamble said, "I know your powers of rhetoric, Metaphor. Fetch him off in a fine figure of speech for his coat, I say."

Metaphor exited to carry out his errand.

Chanon Hugh said, "I'll take my leave, sir, of Your Worship, too, because I may expect the issue of our plan soon."

Justice Preamble said, "Wait, my diviner counsel. Take your fee."

He gave Chanon Hugh some money and said:

"We who take fees allow them to our counsel, and to our prime learned counsel, we allow double fees.

"There are a brace of angels — a pair of gold coins — to support you in your foot-walk this frost, for fear of falling, or spraining of a point of matrimony, when you come at it."

The "spraining of a point of matrimony" means "misinterpreting the marriage laws."

The marriage laws would be misinterpreted (if needed) in such a way as to allow Chanon Hugh to marry Justice Preamble and Audrey Turf to each other.

No one had actually proposed to Audrey Turf. Her bridegroom, John Clay, had been chosen for her.

"I am in Your Worship's service," Chanon Hugh said. "That the exploit is done, and you possessed of Mistress Audrey Turf —"

Justice Preamble interrupted, "I like your plan."

He exited.

Alone, Chanon Hugh said:

"And I like this effect of two to one."

Squire Tub had tipped him only one angel, but Justice Preamble had tipped him two angels.

Chanon Hugh continued:

“It works in my pocket against the Squire, and his half bottom [half-assed undertaking] here, of half a piece [a piece was a coin worth either 20 or 22 shillings, depending on when it was minted], which was not worth the stepping over the stile for.”

Justice Preamble tipped better than Squire Tub, and so Chanon Hugh would serve Justice Preamble.

Chanon Hugh continued:

“Squire Tub’s mother has quite marred him. Lady Tub is such a vessel of *faeces*; she is all dried earth! *Terra damnata*! She has not a drop of salt or peter in her!”

*Terra damnata* is a name for the sediment that is left over after an alchemical process. Both *faeces* and *terra damnata* are sediment.

Lady Tub was over-protective of her son.

Chanon Hugh continued:

“All her niter is gone.”

“Niter” is “saltpeter.” It is also nitrate fertilizer.

Lady Tub had no drop of peter and no fertilizer in her.

A drop of peter (semen) can be fertile.

Her late husband’s name was Peter Tub.

Chanon Hugh exited.

Lady Tub of Totten Court (Squire Tub's mother), and Pol-Marten (her usher, aka male attendant) talked together.

Lady Tub said:

“Is the horse ready, Marten? Call my son the Squire.

“This frosty morning we will take the air about the fields; for I do mean to be somebody's Valentine, in my velvet gown, this morning, even though it should be but a beggar-man.

“Why do you stand still, and do not call my son?”

Pol-Marten answered:

“Madam, if he had lain down with the lamb, he would have no doubt been stirring with the lark. But he sat up at play and watched the cock until his first warning scolded him off to rest.

“Late watchers are no early wakers, madam.

“But if Your Ladyship will have him called —”

Lady Tub said:

“Will I have him called? Why did I, sir, order that he be called, you weasel, you vermin of an usher?

“You will return your wit to your first style — title — of Martin Polecat, as a result of these stinking tricks, if you do use them.”

Polecats were known for their offensive stink.

Lady Tub continued:

“I shall no more call you Pol-Marten, by the title of a gentleman, if you go on like this —”

“I am gone,” Pol-Marten said.

He exited.

Shouting after him, Lady Tub said:

“Be quick then, in your come off — your return — and make amends, you stoat!”

She then said to herself:

“Was there ever such a foumart as serve as an usher to a great worshipful lady, such as myself!”

A foumart is a foul marten. A marten is a weasel-like animal, as is a polecat.

She continued:

“Who, when I heard his name first, Martin Polecat — a stinking name, and not to be pronounced without an apologetic bow in any lady’s presence — my very heart even grieved, seeing the fellow young, pretty, and handsome, being then, I say, a basket-carrier, and a man condemned to the saltpeter works.

“I made it my suit to Master Peter Tub that I might change the man’s name and position, and call him as I do now, by Pol-Marten, to have it sound like a gentleman in an official position, and I made him my own foreman, my daily waiter.”

A “foreman” is a servant who walks ahead of his employer. Waiters are servants.

She continued:

“And he to serve me thus! Ingratitude beyond the coarseness yet of any clownage shown to a lady!”

Pol-Marten returned.

Lady Tub asked him, “What now, is he stirring?”

“He is stirring early out of his bed and ready,” Pol-Marten said.

“And so then he is coming?” Lady Tub asked.

“No, madam, he is gone,” Pol-Marten said.

“Gone!” Lady Tub said. “To where? Ask the porter where he has gone.”

“I met the porter and have asked him about him,” Pol-Marten said. “The porter says he let Squire Tub go forth an hour ago.”

“An hour ago!” Lady Tub said. “What business could he have so early? Where is his serving-man, grave Basket Hilts, his guide and governor?”

“Gone with his master,” Pol-Marten said.

Lady Tub said:

“Has he gone, too?”

“Oh, that same surly knave is his indispensable right-hand man, and he leads my son amiss. He has carried him to some drinking match or other.

“Pol-Marten — I will call you so again, I’m friends with you now — go, get your horse and ride to all the towns about here where his haunts are, and cross the fields to meet and bring me word of where he is. He cannot be gone far, being on foot.

“Be curious — careful and diligent — to inquire about him, and tell Wisp, my serving-woman, to come and wait on me.”

Pol-Marten exited to carry out his orders.

Lady Tub said to herself, “We mothers bear our sons we have bought with pain, and this makes us often view them



with too worriful eyes, and look over them with a zealous fear, beyond what is fitting.”

She was aware of her shortcoming, but she was unable to resist it.

— 1.7 —

Dido Wisp, Lady Tub’s serving-woman, arrived on the scene.

“How are you now, Wisp!” Lady Tub said. “Have you a Valentine yet? I’m taking the air to choose one.”

“May Fate send Your Ladyship a fit one then,” Wisp replied.

“What kind of one is that?” Lady Tub said.

Wisp answered, “A proper — handsome — man to please Your Ladyship.”

Lady Tub said:

“Away with that vanity that takes the foolish eye!

“I rather wish for any poor creature whose want may need my alms or courtesy; so Bishop Valentine left us his example to do deeds of charity:

“To feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the weak and sick, entertain the poor, and give the dead a Christian funeral.

“These were the works of piety Bishop Valentine practiced, and bade us imitate them, and not look for lovers, or handsome images to please our senses.

“Please, Wisp, deal freely with me now. We are alone, and we may be merry a little.

“Thou are not one of the court glories, aka great women at court, nor are thou one of the wonders for wit and intelligence or for beauty in the city.

“Tell me, what man would satisfy thy present fancy, had thy ambition the ability to choose a Valentine within the queen’s dominion, with the provision that he be a subject of the queen’s?”

Wisp answered:

“You have given me a large scope, madam, I confess, and I will deal with Your Ladyship sincerely. I’ll utter my whole heart to you.

“I would have him be the bravest, the richest, and the properest — the most handsome — man a tailor could make up; or all the poets, along with the makers of perfumes.”

The bravest man could be the most splendidly dressed (as a tailor could make him) or the most courageous (as an epic poet or writer of romances could make him).

Wisp continued:

“I would have him be such as not another woman but should feel spite and anger toward me!

“Three city ladies should run mad for him, and an infinite number of country madams.”

Lady Tub said, “You’d spare me and let me hold my wits and not run after him?”

Wisp said:

“I should with you — for the young squire, my master’s sake — dispense and concede a little; but it should be very little.

“Then all the court-wives I’d have be jealous of me, and all their husbands I’d have be jealous of them. And every

lawyer's puss — wench — of any quality would lick her lips for a snatch in the term-time when the law courts are busy.”

In this context, “snatch” means a quick treat of a sexual nature — in other words, a quickie.

Lady Tub said:

“Come, let's walk; we'll hear the rest as we go on.

“You are this morning in a good vein, Dido; I wish I could be as merry! My son's absence troubles me not a little, although I seek these ways to put it off, which will not help.

“Care [Worry] that is entered once into the breast

“Will have the whole possession, before it rest.”

They exited.

## ACT 2 (*A Tale of a Tub*)

### — 2.1 —

Tobias Turf, John Clay, In-and-In Medley, Rasi Clench, To-Pan, D’ogenes Scriben, and Ball Puppy talked together.

Tobias Turf said:

“Zon Clay, cheer up, the better leg avore.”

A proverb states, “Set the best foot forward.”

He continued:

“This is a veat that is once done, and no more.”

The feat was a wedding.

Clench said, “And then it is done vorever, as they say.”

A proverb states, “The thing done has an end.”

“Right!” Medley said. “Vor a man ha’ his hour, and a dog his day.”

Two proverbs state, “Every man has his hour,” and “Every dog has his day.”

Both proverbs mean: Every person will have a successful moment.

Tobias Turf replied, “True, neighbor Medley, you are still In-and-In.”

Medley said to himself, “I would be Master Constable, if ’ch [I] could win.”

Yes, he would like a promotion to Chief Constable and take the place of Tobias Turf.

To-Pan said:

“I zay, John Clay, keep still on his old gait [chosen path, chosen course].

“Wedding and hanging both go at a rate [the same pace].”

A proverb stated, “Wedding and hanging go by destiny.”

Tobias Turf said:

“Well said, To-Pan. You have still the hap — the good fortune — to hit the nail of the head at a close.”

A close is a conclusion or a termination.

A proverb states, “Hit the nail on the head.”

Tobias Turf continued:

“I think there never was a marriage managed with a more advisement [deliberation] than was this marriage, although I say it who should not say it. Especially 'gain' [against] my own flesh and blood: my wedded wife.

“Indeed, my wife would have had all the young bachelors and maidens, indeed, of the zix parishes hereabout. But I cried, ‘None, sweet Sybil, none of that gear [business], I.’ It would lick zalt, I told her, by her leave.”

“Salt” can mean “lasciviousness.” All the young bachelors and maidens would be courting each other.

Tobias Turf continued:

“No, three or vour [four] of our wise, choice, honest neighbors, upstantial [substantial] persons, men who have borne office, and my own family would be enough to eat our dinner.

“What! Dear meat’s a thief. I know it by the butchers and the market-volk.”

In other words, expensive food is a thief. He did not want to pay an excessive amount of money for food.

Tobias Turf continued:

“Humdrum, I cry.”

He wanted a wedding feast that was humdrum and simple, not fancy.

Tobias Turf continued:

“No half ox in a pie. A man that’s invited to a bride-ale, if he has cake and drink enough, he need not veer his stake.”

A man with enough cake and ale will get a good return on his investment of coming to the wedding and giving a wedding gift.

Clench said, “That is right; he has spoken as true as a gun, believe it.”

Dame Sybil Turf, Audrey Turf, and six maids entered the scene. The maids were extra wedding guests.

Tobias Turf said:

“Come, Sybil, come; didn’t I tell you about this? Didn’t I tell you that this pride and muster — vanity and gathering — of women would mar all? Six women to one daughter, and a mother!

“The Queen — God save her — has no more herself.”

Queen Elizabeth I, who never married, had no children. Neither did Queen Mary I, although she did marry. Both queens had more than six serving-women.

Dame Turf said, “Why, if you keep so many maidens as servants, Master Turf, why shouldn’t all present our service and show our respects to her?”

Tobias Turf said:

“Your service? Good! I think you’ll write ‘your very loving and obedient mother’ to her shortly.

“Come, send your maids off; I will have them sent home again, wife. I love no trains of Kent or Christendom, as they say.”

A train can be a tail. Thomas à Becket was said to have fixed tails to the breeches of men of Kent because one of them cut off Thomas’ horse’s tail.

A train can also be an entourage.

Joyce, one of the maids, said, “We will not go back and leave our dame.”

Madge, another of the maids, said, “Why should Her Worship lack her tail of maids more than you do of men?”

“What? Are you mutinying, Madge?” Tobias Turf asked.

Joan said, “Zend back your c’lons [colons, aka clowns] agen [again], and we will vollow.”

“Else we’ll guard our dame,” all the maids said.

“I ha’ zet the nest of wasps all on a flame,” Tobias Turf said.

The maids were buzzing angrily.

Dame Turf said:

“Come, you are such another, Master Turf.”

“You are such another” means “You are just as bad as they are.”

Dame Turf continued:

“A clod you should be called, of a High Constable, to let no music go before your child to church, to cheer her heart up this cold morning!”

Tobias Turf said:

“You are for Father Rosin and his consort [company] of fiddling boys, the great feats [skills] and the less, bycause [for the reason, because] you have entertained [hired] them all from Highgate.

“To show your pomp you’d have your daughter and maids dance over the fields like fays [fairies], to church [in] this frost?”

February is a frosty month.

Tobias Turf said:

“I’ll have no roundels [round dances], I, in the queen’s paths.

“Let ’un [them] scrape the gut at home, where they have filled it, at afternoon.”

The musicians could scrape their catgut — play their strings — in the afternoon, at the Turfs’ home.

“I’ll have them play at dinner,” Dame Turf said.

Clench said, “She is in the right, sir, vor your wedding-dinner is starved without the music.”

“If the pies do not come in piping hot, you have lost that proverb,” Medley said.

“Piping hot” means “very hot,” as in “so hot it makes a piping — hissing — sound.”

Some kinds of music-making involve pipes.

“I yield to truth,” Tobias Turf said. “Wife, are you sissified [satisfied]?”



“A right good man!” To-Pan said. “When he knows right, he loves it.”

Scriben said, “And he will know it and show it, too, by his place of being High Constable, if nowhere else.”

— 2.2 —

Basket Hilts, who was bearded, carried a sword and a dagger. Ball Puppy carried a walking-stick made out of ash-wood; it could be used as a weapon.

Basket Hilts, the serving-man of Squire Tub, was also carrying out part of a plot to get Audrey Turf to marry Squire Tub.

“Well overtaken, gentlemen!” Basket Hilts said. “Please, which man among you is the queen’s high constable?”

“The tallest man,” Ball Puppy said. “Who else should he be, do you think?”

The tallest man is 1) the greatest in height, and/or 2) the bravest.

“It is no matter what I think, young clown,” Basket Hilts said. “Your answer savors of the cart. It is worthy only of a yokel.”

Criminals were sometimes paraded in public on a cart.

“What! Cart? And clown?” Ball Puppy said. “Do you know whose team you are speaking to?”

“Team” is a word that applies to cart-horses as well as to people.

Ball Puppy worked for the High Constable.

“No, nor do I care,” Basket Hilts said. “Whose jade may you be?”

A jade is an inferior horse.

“Jade? Cart? And clown?” Ball Puppy said. “Oh, for a lash of whipcord! Three-knotted cord!”

Whipcord was used for whips; the knots in the cord would sharpen the pain dealt by the whip.

Basket Hilts said:

“Do you mutter? Sir, snarl this way so that I may hear you, and answer for what you say with my school dagger about your costard, sir.”

A costard is 1) literally, an apple, or 2) metaphorically, a head.

His dagger was a school dagger because he would use it to teach Ball Puppy some manners.

Basket Hilts continued:

“Look to it, young grouse. I’ll lay it on, and sure.

“Take it off who’s wull. [Let whoever is well and willing to try to stop me.]”

He was threatening to beat anyone who interfered with him.

Clench said, “Nay, please, gentleman —”

Basket Hilts interrupted, “Go to, I will not bate him an ace [small part] of it.”

The phrase “go to” is often used in “go to Hell.”

He began to draw his dagger and said, “What? Roly-poly [Rascal]? Maple [Mottled like maple wood] face? All fellows? [Are all of you cowards?]”

Ball Puppy said:

“Do you hear me, friend?”

“I’d wish for you, vor your own good, to tie up your brended [brindled, aka variegated] bitch [sword] there, your dun-colored, rusty, pannier-hilt poinard [basket-hilted dagger], and not vex the young people with showing the teeth of it.

“We now are going to church in way of matrimony, some of us. Th’a’ rung all in a’ready. [They have rung the bell that announces that all is ready.]

“If they had not already rung the bell, all the horn-beasts [cattle] that are grazing in this close [enclosed field] should not have pulled me away from here, until this ash-plant [walking-stick] had rung noon on your pate, Master Broom-beard.”

Ball Puppy was saying that he would hit Hilts on the head twelve times with his walking-stick if he [Ball Puppy] didn’t have a wedding to go to.

“Rung noon” also refers to a cook’s custom on knocking on something to announce that the noon meal was ready.

Basket Hilts replied, “That would I fain zee [like to see], quoth [said] the blind George of Holloway. Come, sir!”

He drew his sword and dagger.

“Oh, their naked weapons!” Audrey exclaimed.

The word “weapon” was sometimes used to mean “penis.”

“For the passion of man, stop, gentleman and Puppy!” To-Pan said.

“Murder! Oh, murder!” John Clay shouted.

“Oh, my father and mother!” Audrey shouted.

“Husband, what do you mean?” Dame Turf said. “Why aren’t you stopping this fight? Son Clay, for God’s sake —”

“I charge you in the queen’s name, keep the peace,” Tobias Turf, the High Constable, said.

“Tell me about no queen or kaiser,” Basket Hilts said. “I must have a leg or a haunch of him before I go.”

A proverb stated, “He fears nor [neither] king nor kaiser [emperor].”

Medley objected, “But, zir, you must obey the queen’s high officers.”

“Why must I, goodman Must?” Basket Hilts asked.

“You must, an’ you wull,” Medley said.

“An’” can mean “and” or “if.”

“Wull” can mean “will” or “would.”

Tobias Turf said, “Gentleman, I’m here for fault, High Constable. I am here for lack of better circumstances —”

Basket Hilts interrupted, “Are you zo! What then?”

Tobias Turf said, “Please, sir, put up your weapons; do, at my request. As for him — Puppy — on my authority, he shall lie by the heels with his feet in the stocks, *verbatim continente*, an’ [if] I live.”

He meant by the Latin word *verbatim* “by my words” or “I say.” The Latin word *continente* means “continent.” He probably meant to say *continenter*, which means “continuously.”

The stocks were pieces of wood with half-circles carved out of one edge; when two pieces of wood were put together, the half-circles would form circles. A person would be restrained by having his or her feet put in the circles. The stocks would restrain Ball Puppy’s freedom of movement.

Dame Turf said, “Out on him for a knave! What a dead fright he has put me into! Come, Audrey, do not shake.”

“But isn’t Puppy hurt?” Audrey asked. “Or is the other man hurt?”

“No, bun,” John Clay said, “but if I had not cried ‘murder,’ I wusse [I know] —”

“Bun” is a term of endearment, like “sweetheart.”

Ball Puppy interrupted:

“Sweet goodman Clench, I pray you revise [malapropism for ‘advise’] my master I may not zit in the stocks until the wedding is over.

“Otherwise, Dame Turf and Mistress Audrey, I shall break the bride-cake.”

Ball Puppy was supposed to carry the wedding-cake in the procession.

He was unlikely to drop the wedding-cake and break it on purpose, so he may have meant that he would take a piece of the cake with him so he could eat it while he was in the stocks.

Clench said, “Zomething must be to save authority, Puppy.”

Something had to be done to preserve the status of the High Constable: Tobias Turf.

That thing could be to put Ball Puppy in the stocks immediately.

Dame Turf began, “Husband —”

Clench began, “And gossip [friend] —”

Audrey began, “Father —”

Tobias Turf interrupted, “Treat [Entreat] me not. It is in vain. If he does not lie by the heels, I’ll lie there for ’hun [him]; I’ll teach the hine [hind = servant] to carry a tongue in his head to his superiors.”

A proverb stated, “Keep a civil tongue in one’s head.”

“Subsuperiors” are superiors (who in fact may not be superior).

“This is a wise constable!” Basket Hilts said. “Where does he keep school? Where does he live?”

“In Kentish Town,” Clench said. “He is a very survere [severe] man.”

Basket Hilts said:

“But, as survere as he is, let me, sir, tell him, he shall not lay his man by the heels [put his serving-man in the stocks] for this.

“This was my quarrel; and by his office leave, if it carry ’hun [him] for this, it shall carry double, vor he shall carry me, too.”

In other words, if Tobias Turf puts Puppy in the stocks, he will have to put him [Basket Hilts] in the stocks, too, for they are guilty of the same offense.

“By the breath of man!” Tobias Turf said. “He is my chattel [property], my own hired goods, and if you do abet ’un [aid and encourage him] in this matter, I’ll clap you both by the heels, ankle to ankle.”

Basket Hilts said:

“You’ll clap a dog of wax as soon, old Blurt!”

A “man of wax” may be a man who is having a fit of anger. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one meaning

of “wax” is “angry feeling; a fit of anger.” “Wax” mainly means this in the expression “to be in a wax.”

“Man of wax,” however, can be used to emphatically praise a man. It may mean that a man is as handsome as a statue or that a particular man is a man of growth. The man may have grown literally or metaphorically.

One meaning of “dog” is a metal rest placed on either side of a fireplace to support burning wood. A dog made of wax would be useless.

Being called “old Blurt” is an insult.

Basket Hilts continued:

“Come, don’t spare me, sir; I am no man’s wife — treat me as a man!

“I don’t care, I, sir, three skips of a louse for you, and I would not if you were ten tall — brave — constables, not I.”

“Nay, please, sir, don’t be angry, but content,” Tobias Turf said. “My man [employee: Ball Puppy] shall make you what amends you’ll ask ’hun [him].”

Basket Hilts said, “Let ’hun mend his manners then, and know his betters. It’s all I ask ’hun [of him]; and it will be his own, and his master’s, too, another day. ’Che vore ’hun. [I assure him.]”

A proverb stated, “Let him mind his manners; it will be his own another day.” In other words: “Let him mind his manners; it will be to his advantage in the long run.”

Basket Hilts did not want Ball Puppy to be put in the stocks.

Medley said, “As right as a club, still! Zure [To be sure,] this angry man speaks very near the mark when he is pleased.”

“As right as a club” may mean “Might makes right.”

“I thank you, sir,” Ball Puppy said. “If I meet you at Kentish Town, I will have the courtesy of the hundred for you.”

In other words, Ball Puppy would buy Basket Hilts a drink should they meet in Kentish Town.

Basket Hilts said:

“Gramercy [Thank you], good High Constable’s hine [hind = servant]!

“But do you hear me?

“Mas’ [Master] Constable, I have other manner of matter to bring you about than this. And so it is: I do belong to [am a retainer of] one of the queen’s captains, a gentleman of the battlefield, one Captain Thumbs.

“I don’t know whether you know ’hun [him] or not. It may be you do, and it may be you do not again.”

“No,” Tobias Turf said. “I assure you on my constableness that I do not know ’hun [him].

Basket Hilts said to himself, “Nor do I know him, either, indeed.”

There was no Captain Thumbs to know. As would soon become apparent, Captain Thumbs would be Chanon Hugh in disguise.

Basket Hilts said out loud:

“It skills — matters — not much.

“My captain and myself, having occasion to come riding by here, this morning, at the corner of St. John’s Wood some miles west of this town, were set upon by a group of country fellows, who not only beat us but robbed us most sufficiently and efficiently, and bound us to restrain our behavior, hand and foot; and so they left us.



“Now, Don [a complimentary title] Constable, I am to charge you in Her Majesty’s name, as you will answer it at your apperil [peril], that forthwith you raise a hue and cry in the hundred, for all such persons as you can dispect [suspect], by the length and breadth of your office.

“Vor I tell you the loss is of some value; therefore, look to it.”

The words “hue” and “cry” both mean “outcry.” The law officers were obliged to raise a hue and cry of citizens pursuing criminals. If they did not, the borough would be obliged to compensate the victim. In Ben Jonson’s play, the High Constable is responsible for making the payment.

Tobias Turf said:

“As fortune mend me now, or any office of a thousand pounds, if I know what to zay.”

He didn’t know what to say, and he still wouldn’t know what to say even if he should have good fortune or an appointment worth a thousand pounds.

This emergency was coming at a bad time: This was the wedding day of his daughter.

Tobias Turf continued:

“I wish that I were dead or vair hanged up at Tyburn, that place of capital punishment, if I do know what course to take, or how [which way] to turn myself.

“Just at this time, too, now, my daughter is to be married!

“I’ll just go to Pancridge church nearby, and return instantly, and all my neighborhood shall go about the hue and cry.”

He would see John Clay and Audrey married, and then he would return and lead the hue and cry.

Basket Hilts' goal was to have Audrey Turf marry someone else. Because he did not want the marriage to John Clay to happen, he said:

“Tut, Pancridge me no Pancridge! Don't try to get out of your duty! If you let it slip, you will answer for it, and your cap will be made out of wool.”

By law, lower-class men wore wool caps. If Tobias Turf did not do his duty, he could lose his job and status.

Basket Hilts continued:

“Therefore take heed, you'll feel the smart else, Constable.”

Tobias Turf replied, “Nay, good sir, stay.”

He then asked, “Neighbors, what do you think about this?”

His wife, Dame Turf, began, “Indeed, man —”

Tobias Turf said:

“By God's precious blood, woman, hold your tongue, and mind your pigs on the spit at home; you must have your oar in everything.”

He then asked Basket Hilts, “Please, sir, what kind of fellows were they?”

Basket Hilts answered, “Thieves' kind, I have told you.”

“I mean, what kind of men?” Tobias Turf replied.

“Men of our make and kind,” Basket Hilts said.

Tobias Turf responded:

“Nay, but with patience, sir, we who are officers must inquire about the special marks, and all the tokens of the despected [suspected] parties, or perhaps, else, we will be never the near [nearer] of our purpose in apprehending them.

“Can you tell what apparel any of them wore?”

Basket Hilts said:

“In truth, no; there were so many o’hun [of them], all similar to each another.”

Basket Hilts then described the leader of the robbers as looking exactly like John Clay:

“Now I remember that there was one busy fellow who was their leader.

“He was a blunt, squat swad [stupid, thickset bumpkin], but lower [shorter] than yourself.

“He had on a leather doublet with long points, and a pair of pinned-up breeches, like pudding-bags, with yellow stockings, and his hat turned up with a silver clasp, on his leer [left] side.”

Dame Turf said, “Judging by these marks, the leader of the robbers should be John Clay, now bless the man!”

“Peace, and be naught [be quiet]!” Tobias Turf said. “I think the woman be in a frenzic [frenzy].”

“John Clay?” Basket Hilts said. “Who’s he, good mistress?”

Audrey said, “He is the man who shall be my husband ”

“What!” Basket Hilts said. “Your husband, pretty one?”

Audrey said, “Yes, I shall soon be married.”

She pointed to John Clay and said, “That’s he.”

Tobias Turf said, “Passion of me, I am undone! I am ruined!”

He thought that John Clay, his son-in-law-to-be, was a robber.

“Bless master’s son!” Ball Puppy said.

Basket Hilts said to John Clay, “Oh, you are well apprehended. Do you know — recognize — me, sir?”

“No’s my record [answer],” John Clay said. “I never zaw you avore [before].”

“You did not?” Basket Hilts said. “Where were your eyes then? Out at washing?”

If the eyes were too dirty to see with, they must have needed a wash.

Tobias Turf said:

“What should a man zay? Who should he trust in these days?”

“Listen, John Clay, if you have done any such thing, tell the truth and shame the devil.”

“In faith, do that,” Clench said. “My gossip [friend] Turf zays well to you, John.”

“Speak, man,” Medley said, “but do not convess, nor be avraid.”

Instead of “confess,” Medley may have meant to say, “hold back.”

To-Pan said, “A man is a man, and a beast’s a beast, look to it.”

In other words, act like a man, not like a beast.

Dame Turf said:

“In the name of men or beasts, what are you doing?”

“Hare [Harry] the poor fellow out of his five wits, and seven senses?”

In Shakespeare's time, people were believed to have five wits: memory, fantasy, judgment, imagination, and common sense.

The traditional five senses are hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell.

The others all seemed to think that John Clay was guilty of robbery.

Dame Turf comforted him:

“Do not weep, John Clay.”

She then said to all the others:

“I swear the poor wretch is as guilty from [of] it as the child is who was born this very morning.”

She meant that he was as innocent of committing robbery as was a newly born child.

John Clay said:

“No, as I am a kyrstin [Christian] soul, I wish I were hanged if ever I —

“Alas! I wish I were out of my life so I wish I were, and in again —”

He was very upset, and he was wishing that he were dead if he had committed robbery.

Ball Puppy said:

“Nay, Mistress Audrey will say nay to that.

“No in-and-out? If you were out of your life, what should she do for a husband? Who should fall aboard of her then? [Who should mount her then?]”

If John Clay were dead, Audrey would not like it because she would have no in-and-out (sex) and she would have no husband.

Ball Puppy then said to himself:

“Ball? He’s a puppy!

“No, Hannibal has no breeding!”

Ball Puppy was of a low social class, and he had no wife with whom to have sex. And Audrey would be likely to reject him if he asked her to marry him.

He then said out loud:

“Well, I say little.”

A proverb stated, “Though he say little, he thinks much.”

He continued:

“But hitherto all goes well — pray it prove no better.”

He probably meant to say: But so far all goes well — let’s hope the future proves to be no worse.”

“Come, father; I wish we — John Clay and I — were married!” Audrey said. “I am a-cold.”

Valentine’s Day was cold, but a husband would warm her up.

Basket Hilts said:

“Well, Master Constable, this your fine groom [a groom can be a servant] here, bridegroom, or whatsoever groom else he is, I charge him with the felony, and I order you to carry him back forthwith to the village of Paddington to my captain, who awaits my return there.

“I am to go to the next justice of peace, to get a warrant to raise a hue and cry and bring him and his fellows all afore ’hun [before him].

“Fare you well, sir, and look to ’hun [him] and keep him secure, I charge you, as you’ll answer it.

“Take heed; the business, if you defer it, may prejudicial [injure] you more than you think for [more than you expect].

“Zay [Say] I told you so.”

Basket Hilts exited.

Tobias Turf said:

“Here’s a bride-ale indeed!

“Ah, zon John, zon Clay! I little thought you would have proved a piece — a coin — of such false metal.”

And false mettle.

John Clay replied to his prospective father-in-law:

“Father, will you believe me?

“I wish I might never stir in my new shoes if ever I would do so voul a fact [so foul an evil deed].”

Tobias Turf said:

“Well, neighbors, I do order you to assist me with taking ’hun [him] to Paddington.

“If he is a true man, good; all the better for ’hun [him].

“I will do my duty, even if he were my own begotten son a thousand times.”

Dame Turf said, “Why, do you hear me, man? Husband? Master Turf?”

He ignored her and exited with Clench, Medley, To-Pan, and Scriben, and with John Clay in his custody.

Dame Turf said:

“What shall my daughter do?”

“Puppy, stay here.”

In this society, young women such as Audrey were accompanied by male protectors or by chaperones.

Dame Turf followed her husband and neighbors. Her maids went with her, leaving Audrey Turf and Ball Puppy behind.

Audrey said, “Mother, I’ll go with you and with my father.”

— 2.3 —

Ball Puppy said, “Nay, stay, sweet Mistress Audrey. Here are none but one friend — as they zay — who desires to speak a word or two, cold, with you.”

A proverb stated, “Here are none but friends.”

The words were “cold” because they were unexpected by Audrey. They were also spoken in cold weather.

“How do you veel yourself this frosty morning?” Ball Puppy asked.

Audrey replied, “What have you to do to ask, I ask you? [Why do you ask?] I am a-cold.”

The word “cold” can mean “without passion.” Puppy wanted her to be passionate.

Ball Puppy touched her hand and said, “It seems you are hot, good Mistress Audrey.”

“You lie,” Audrey said, slapping his hand away. “I am as cold as ice is. Feel someone or something else.”



“Nay, you have cooled my courage,” Ball Puppy said. “I am past it. I have done feeling with you.”

“Courage” can mean 1) “valor,” or 2) “desire for sex.”

The word “do” can mean “have sex with.”

“Done with me! [Had sex with me!]” Audrey said. “I do defy you, so I do, to say you have done with me. You are a saucy Puppy.”

“Oh, you mistake my meaning!” Ball Puppy said. “I meant not as you think I meant.”

“Meant you not knavery, Puppy?” Audrey asked.

“No, not I,” Ball Puppy said. “Clay meant you all the knavery, it seems, who, rather than he would be married to you, chose to be wedded to the gallows first.”

Many criminals, including robbers, such as John Clay was accused of being, were hung.

“I thought he was a dissembler,” Audrey said. “I thought that he would prove to be a slippery merchant in the frost. He might have married one first, and have been hanged after, if he had had a mind to it. But you men — bah!”

Ball Puppy asked, “Mistress Audrey, can you vind [find] in your heart to fancy Puppy? Me, poor Ball?”

Audrey said, “You are disposed to jeer at and mock one, Master Hannibal.”

Basket Hilts entered the scene.

Seeing him, Audrey said, “Have pity on me — it’s the angry man with the beard!”

Ball Puppy took off his hat.

Basket Hilts said to Ball Puppy, “Put on thy hat, I look for no despect.”

“Despect” sounds like “des’spect,” aka “disrespect,” and it means “looking-down-on,” but Basket Hilts meant that he was looking for no marks of respect.

“Where’s thy master?” Basket Hilts asked Ball Puppy.

“By the Virgin Mary, he has gone with the picture of despair to Paddington,” Ball Puppy replied.

The picture of despair was John Clay.

Basket Hilts said:

“Please run after ’hun [him] and tell ’hun he shall find my captain lodged at the Red Lion in Paddington; that’s the inn.

“Let ’un [him] ask vor Captain Thumbs. And take that for thy pains.”

He gave Ball Puppy some money and said, “He may seek long enough else.”

In other words: Otherwise, he may look for him for a long time.

Basket Hilts said, “Hie thee again.”

In other words: Hurry back.

“Yes, sir,” Ball Puppy said. “You’ll look to [after] Mistress Bride the while?”

“That I will,” Basket Hilts said. “Please hurry.”

Ball Puppy exited.

“What, Puppy!” Audrey said. “Puppy!”

He was leaving her with the angry bearded man.

“Sweet Mistress Bride, he’ll come again very soon,” Basket Hilts said.

He said ironically to himself:

“Here was no subtle device to get a wench. This Chanon has a brave pate [head] of his own! A shaven pate, and a right monger, i’ vaith!”

Chanon Hugh was a priest, and he had a shaven tonsure; still, he was a right monger — a disreputable dealer or trader — and possibly a whoremonger.

Basket Hilts continued talking to himself:

“This was his plot!

“I follow Captain Thumbs? We robbed in St. John’s Wood? In my other hose! [Pull my other leg!] I laugh to think what a fine fool’s finger they have of this wise constable, in pricking — pointing — out this Captain Thumbs to his neighbors.”

The “fool’s finger” is the middle finger, which is pointed at fools.

Basket Hilts continued talking to himself:

“You shall see the tile-man, too, set fire on his own kiln, and leap into it to save himself from hanging.”

The tile-man is John Clay.

Basket Hilts continued talking to himself:

“You talk of a bride-ale? Here was a bride-ale broke in the nick!”

The words “pricking” and “nick” have bawdy meanings. A “nick” is a notch or indentation. Bawdily, a prick can fit in a nick. Of course, “nick” can also mean “nick of time.”

Basket Hilts continued talking to himself:

“Well, I must yet dispatch this bride to my own master, the young Squire, and then my task is done.”

He said out loud to Audrey:

“Gentlewoman, I have in some sort done you some wrong, but now I’ll do you what right I can.

“It’s true you are a proper woman, but to be cast away on such a clown-pipe as Clay!”

A pipe can be 1) a wind instrument, or 2) a container for holding liquids.

John Clay is a clown-pipe or rustic-pipe. He is a rural fellow and may be talkative and have a beer belly.

Basket Hilts continued talking to Audrey:

“I think that your friends are not as wise as nature might have made them.

“Well, go to; there’s better fortune coming toward you, if you do not deject and regret it. Take a vool’s counsel” — as many characters in this play do, Basket Hilts unintentionally said the opposite of what he meant; he was unlikely to consider himself a fool — “and do not stand in your own light and undersell yourself.

“It may prove to be better than you expect, you will see.”

Audrey asked, “Alas, sir, what is it you would have me do? I’d fain — eagerly — do all for the best, if I knew how.”

Basket Hilts replied, “Don’t forsake a good turn when it is offered to you, fair mistress Audrey — that’s your name, I take it?”

“I am no Mistress, sir. My name is Audrey.”

She was no Mistress — “Mistress” was a polite title for a female head of household, and Audrey was still not married. She, however, was a woman whom men loved and so she was a mistress in that (nonsexual) sense.

Basket Hilts said, “Well, it so happens that there is a bold young squire, the blood — lively aristocratic man — of Totten Court, Tub, and Tripoly —”

“Squire Tub, you mean,” Audrey said. “I know him; he knows me, too.”

“He is in love with you; and more, he’s mad for you,” Basket Hilts said.

“Aye, so he told me — he is in his wits, I think,” Audrey said. “But he’s too fine for me, and he has a Lady Tub as his mother.”

“Lady” was a higher title than “Squire.”

Squire Tub entered the scene.

Seeing him, Audrey said, “Here he comes himself!”

— 2.4 —

“Oh, you are a trusty governor!” Squire Tub said to Basket Hilts.

“What ails you?” Basket Hilts said. “You do not know when you’re well, I think. You’d have the calf with the white face, sir, would you? I have her for you here; what more do you want?”

A calf with a white face is a pretty calf or a pretty fool.

“Quietness, Hilts, and I would hear no more of it,” Squire Tub said.

“No more of it, do you say?” Basket Hilts said. “I do not care if some of us had not heard so much of it, I tell you truly. A man must carry and vetch like Bungy’s dog for you.”

Friar Bungay was a magician; the familiar spirits of magicians had the form of animals.

Squire Tub asked, “What’s he?”

Basket Hilts answered:

“A spaniel — and scarcely be spit in the mouth for it.”

In this society, people believed that dogs liked to be spit in the mouth and so it was a sign of approval.

Basket Hilts continued:

“A good dog deserves, sir, a good bone, from a free — generous — master.

“But, if your turns are served and you have gotten what you needed, the devil a bit — not at all — you care for a man after, ever a lard — lord — of you.

“‘Like will to like, indeed,’ quoth the scabbed squire to the mangy knight, when both met in a dish of buttered vish.”

A proverb stated, “A scabbed horse is good enough for a scabbed squire.”

Normally, a squire and a knight might meet *over* a dish of buttered fish while sharing a meal.

Basket Hilts continued:

“One bad, there’s never a good —”

A proverb stated, “One bad, the other worse.”

Another proverb stated, “One bad apple spoils the barrel.”

Basket Hilts continued:

“— and not a barrel better herring among you.”

In other words: You lords and masters are all alike — bad.

Squire Tub said:

“Nay, Hilts, please, don’t grow frampold [peevish and disagreeable] now.

“Turn not the bad cow after thy good sope [draught].”

A proverb stated that “a curst cow gives a good pail of milk but throws it down with her heels.” That is, a cursed cow gives a good pail of milk but then kicks it over with her hoof.

In other words: You have done something good; don’t ruin it now by doing something bad.

Squire Tub continued:

“Our plot has hitherto taken good effect; and should it now be troubled or stopped up, it would prove to be the utter ruin of my hopes.

“I ask thee to hasten to Pancridge, to the Chanon [Chanon Hugh], and give him notice of our good success. Tell him to make all things in readiness.

“Pretty Audrey and myself will cross the fields, using the nearest path.

“Good Hilts, make thou some haste, and meet us on the way.”

He then said, “Come, gentle Audrey.”

Basket Hilts said:

“Vaith, I wish I had a few more geances for it!”

The word “geances” may mean 1) a rustic pronunciation of “chances,” 2) a rustic pronunciation of lira “genovese,” aka

small Genovese coins, or 2) “’geances,” aka acts of vengeance.

The best answer is probably that he would like a reward for his work: some coins.

Basket Hilts continued:

“If you say the word, send me to Jericho.

“Outcept [Unless] a man were a post-horse, I have not known the like of it; yet if he had kind words, it would never irk ’hun [him].

“But a man may break his heart out in these days and get a flap with a foxtail when he has done.

“And there is all!”

The idiom “get a flap with a foxtail” means “be scorned for his efforts.”

Squire Tub said:

“No, don’t say that, Hilts.”

He gave him some money and said:

“Wait a moment, there are crowns [coins] — my love and respect for you bestows them on thee for thy reward.

“If gold will please thee, all my land shall drop in bounty thus, to recompense thy merit.”

Basket Hilts said:

“Tut, keep your land and your gold, too, sir. I seek neither-nother [neither] of ’hun [them]. Learn to get more: You will know to spend that zum you have early enough.

“You are assured of me. I love you too, too well to live on the spoil of you — money plundered from you.



“For your own sake, I wish that there were no worse than I!

“All is not gold that glisters [glistens].

“I’ll go to Pancridge.”

Filled with emotion, he exited, weeping.

Squire Tub said:

“See how his love does melt him into tears! An honest, faithful servant is a jewel.

“Now the adventurous Squire has time and leisure to ask his Audrey how she is doing, and to hear a grateful answer from her.”

He waited a moment, and then he said:

“She does not speak.

“Has the proud tyrant, frost, usurped the seat of former beauty in my love’s fair cheek, staining the roseate tincture of her blood with the dull dye of blue-congealing cold?

“No, surely the weather dares not so presume to hurt an object of her brightness.

“Yet the more I view her, she but looks so, so.

“Ha! Give me leave — permission — to search this mystery!

“Oh, now I have it.”

He said to Audrey, “Bride, I know your grief. The last night’s cold has bred in you such horror of the assigned bridegroom’s constitution, the Kilburn claypit — that frost-bitten marl [fertilizer], that lump in courage, melting cake of ice — that the conceit [understanding] thereof has almost killed thee.

“But I must do thee good, wench, and refresh thee.”

He was saying that she was upset because she had discovered that John Clay was a robber.

“You are a merry man, Squire Tub of Totten Court!” Audrey said. “I have heard much of your words, but not of your deeds.”

“Thou say the truth, sweet,” Squire Tub said. “I have been too slack in deeds.”

“Yet I was never so strait-laced — so grudging — to you, Squire,” Audrey said.

“Why, did you ever love me, gentle Audrey?” Squire Tub asked.

“Love you? I cannot tell,” Audrey said. “I must hate nobody, my father says.”

“Yes, Clay and Kilburn,” Squire Tub said. “Audrey, you must hate them.”

If she married him, she would have to hate John Clay and the village from which he came: Kilburn.

“It shall be for your sake then,” Audrey said.

To love a higher-class man such as Squire Tub, she believed that she would have to hate some lower-class people and places.

“And ‘for my sake’ shall yield you that gratuity,” Squire Tub said.

The “gratuity” was meant to be a kiss.

He attempted to kiss her, but she pushed him back.

“Soft and fair, Squire,” Audrey said. “There go two words to a bargain.”

In this context, “soft and fair” meant “not so fast.” She wanted to be treated soft and fair: gently and fairly and with respect.

“What are those two words, Audrey?” Squire Tub asked.

“Soft and fair” can mean “gentle and beautiful.”

Audrey could bring these qualities to a marriage to Squire Tub that would give her a rise in social status.

“Nay, I cannot tell,” Audrey said. “My mother said, zure [to be sure], if you married me, you’d make me a lady the first week, and put me in I know not what, the very day.”

He would make her a lady, and he would do a second thing.

“What was it?” Squire Tub asked about the second thing. “Speak, gentle Audrey, thou shall have it yet.”

Audrey answered:

“A velvet dressing for my head is, they say, something that will make one brave — splendid.

“I will not know Bess Moale nor Margery Turnup; I will look another way upon them, and I will be proud.”

“Moale” may mean “mo’ ale” or “more ale,” and “Turnup” is similar to “Turnip.” “Moale” can also mean “mole.” “Turnup” can also mean “turn up,” as in an upturned nose. Food that turns one’s stomach is food that the stomach rejects and revolts against.

She would no longer be friends with her friends because of her rise in society. She would look down on them.

Marriage to Squire Tub would put her in fine clothing and would put her in a position where, she thought, she would have to look down on her friends.

Squire Tub said to himself:

“Truly, I could wish my wench a better wit. I could wish that she were more intelligent.”

Possibly, they were not communicating. Possibly, Audrey believed that if she became Squire Tub’s wife, he would want her to become proud and look down on her friends. But possibly, Squire Tub wanted her to hate her former beau, John Clay, but not to look down on her friends, After all, he had shown sensitivity to Basket Hilts’ feelings.

But possibly, Audrey did not want to be proud. Possibly, she was resisting marriage with Squire Tub, whom she believed was too socially high-ranking for her.

Squire Tub continued speaking to himself:

“But what she lacks in intelligence, her face supplies — makes up for.

“There is a sharply pointed luster — beauty — in her eye that has shot quite through me and has hit my heart, and thence it is I first received the wound that rankles and festers now, which only she can cure.

“Eagerly would I escape from this state of mind, but, being flesh, I cannot. I must love her, the naked truth is; and I will go on, were it for nothing but to cross my rivals.”

He then said out loud:

“Come, Audrey, I am now resolved to have thee.”

He wanted her to be his wife.

— 2.5 —

Justice Preamble and Miles Metaphor entered the scene.

Miles Metaphor was dressed as a pursuivant, a royal messenger. A pursuivant-at-arms has the legal authority to make arrests.

“Do it quickly, Miles,” Justice Preamble said. “Why do thou shake, man? Just speak his name; I’ll second thee myself.”

Justice Preamble was saying that Miles Metaphor need only speak the name of the man he was “arresting.” Justice Preamble would do what else needed to be done.

“What is his name?” Miles Metaphor asked.

“Squire Tripoly, or Tub,” Justice Preamble said. “Anything \_\_\_”

They walked over to Squire Tub.

Miles Metaphor said, “Squire Tub, I arrest you in the queen’s majesty’s name, and the name of all the Privy Council’s.”

“Arrest me, varlet?” Squire Tub said.

“Keep the peace, I order you,” Justice Preamble said.

“Are you there, Justice Bramble?” Squire Tub asked. “Where’s your warrant?”

Justice Preamble answered, “The warrant is directed here to me, from the whole Privy Council table; wherefore I would ask you to be patient, Squire, and make good the peace.”

He had no warrant, so he lied and said that the Privy Council table was sending him one.

Squire Tub replied, “Well, at your pleasure, Justice. I am wronged.”

He then asked Miles Metaphor, “Sirrah, who are you who have arrested me?”

“He is a pursuivant-at-arms, Squire Tub,” Justice Preamble said.

“I am a pursuivant,” Miles Metaphor said. “You can see by my coat.”

Miles Metaphor was wearing a pursuivant’s distinctive coat.

“Well, pursuivant, go with me,” Squire Tub said. “I’ll give you bail.”

Justice Preamble said:

“Sir, he may take no bail. It is a warrant in special from the Council, and it commands your personal appearance.

“Sir, I must take your weapon and then deliver you as a prisoner to this officer.”

He took Squire Tub’s sword and said:

“Squire Tub, I ask you to conceive of me no other than as your friend and neighbor.

“Let my person be severed from my office in the deed I am performing here, and I am clear and beyond reproof.”

He then said to Miles Metaphor:

“Here, pursuivant, receive him into your hands, and treat him like a gentleman.”

“I thank you, sir,” Squire Tub said. “But where must I go now?”

Justice Preamble replied:

“Nay, that must not be told you until you come to the place assigned by his instructions.

“I’ll be the maiden’s convoy — her escort — to her father for this time, Squire.”

Squire Tub said:

“I thank you, Master Bramble. I doubt or fear you will make her the balance — the scales of justice — to weigh your justice in. Please, do me right and don’t lead her, at least, out of the way.

“Justice is blind, and having a blind guide,

“She may be apt to slip aside.”

Squire Tub realized that Justice Preamble wanted to marry Audrey.

“I’ll see to her,” Justice Preamble said.

“See” means “look after,” but in this context it means that Justice Preamble would not be blind justice.

Justice Preamble and Audrey exited.

Squire Tub said:

“I see my wooing will not thrive. Arrested just as I had set my rest up — made a firm decision — for a wife, and being so fair for it, as I was! Everything was working out well!

“Well, Lady Fortune, thou are a blind bawd and a beggar, too, to cross me thus, and let my only rival get her from me! That’s the spite of spites.”

Whom does Squire Tub regard as his only rival?

His only rival was Justice Preamble, who intended to marry Audrey at Pancridge church.

John Clay was out of the picture because he was suspected of being a robber.

Squire Tub continued:

“But what I most wonder at is that I, being none of the court, am sent for thither by the Council.

“My heart is not as light as it was in the morning.”

— 2.6 —

Basket Hilts entered the scene and said to Squire Tub:

“You mean to make a hoyden — a fool — or a hare of me, to hunt counter thus and to make these doubles.”

“Doubles” are sharp turns, sometimes moving back on the course, and “to hunt counter” means to follow the scent of the hunted prey in the wrong direction — away from, not toward, the prey.

He continued:

“And you mean no such thing as you send about — as you said you would do!

“Where’s your sweetheart now, I wonder?”

He was wondering why Audrey wasn’t present. Basket Hilts had gone to a lot of trouble to get her for his master: Squire Tub.

“Oh, Hilts!” Squire Tub said.

Basket Hilts said:

“I know you of old! Never halt — that is, limp — in front of a cripple. Don’t attempt to trick me.

“Will you have a caudle? Where’s your grief and pain, sir? Speak.”

A caudle is a medicinal drink.

“Do you hear me, friend?” Miles Metaphor said to Basket Hilts. “Do you serve this gentleman?”



“What then, sir? What if I do?” Basket Hilts said. “Peradventure yea, peradventure nay. Maybe I do, and maybe I don’t. What’s that to you, sir? Speak.”

“Nay, please, sir, I meant no harm, in truth,” Miles Metaphor said. “But this good gentleman has been arrested.”

Angry, Basket Hilts said, “What! Say that to me again.”

Squire Tub said, “Nay, Basket, never storm. I am arrested here, upon command from the Queen’s Council and I must obey.”

“You say, sir, very truly, that you must obey,” Miles Metaphor said. “You are an honest gentleman, indeed!”

“He must?” Basket Hilts said.

“But that which most torments me is this: Justice Bramble has taken away from here my Audrey,” Squire Tub said.

Basket Hilts said:

“What! What!

“Stand aside a little, sirrah, you with the badge on your breast. Let’s know, sir, who and what you are.”

Miles Metaphor said, “I am, sir — please, do not look so terribly angry — a pursuivant.”

“A pursuivant!” Basket Hilts said. “What is your name, sir?”

Miles Metaphor said, “My name, sir —”

“What is it?” Basket Hilts interrupted. “Speak!”

He answered, “Miles Metaphor, and Justice Preamble’s clerk.”

Squire Tub asked Basket Hilts, “What does he say?”

Basket Hilts said, “Please, let us alone.”

He then asked Miles Metaphor, “You are a pursuivant?”

Afraid, Miles Metaphor answered, “No, indeed, sir, I wish I might never stir from you. I was made a pursuivant against my will.”

“Ha!” Basket Hilts said, “And who made you one? Tell the truth, or my will shall make you nothing, instantly.”

He drew his sword, and Miles Metaphor fell to his knees.

Miles Metaphor said, “Put up your frightful blade, and your dead-doing — death-dealing — look, and I shall tell you everything.”

“Speak then the truth, and the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” Basket Hilts ordered.

Miles Metaphor said:

“My master, Justice Bramble, hearing that your master, the Squire Tub, was coming on this way with Mistress Audrey, the High Constable’s daughter, made me a pursuivant and gave me warrant — the authority — to arrest him, so that he might get the lady, with whom he has gone to Pancridge, to the vicar, not to her father’s.

“This was the plot, which, I beseech [beseech] you, do not tell my master.”

Squire Tub said, “Oh, wonderful! Well, Basket, let him rise.”

Miles Metaphor rose.

Squire Tub said to him, “Forge some excuse for my free escape. I’ll post — quickly go — to Paddington to acquaint old Tobias Turf with the whole business, and so stop the marriage.”

Squire Tub exited.

Basket Hilts said, “Well, bless thee. I wish thee grace to keep thy master’s secrets better or be hanged.”

Miles Metaphor replied:

“I thank you for your gentle admonition and advice.

“Please, let me call you godfather hereafter.”

Godfathers provide spiritual guidance.

He continued:

“And, as your godson Metaphor, I promise to keep my master’s privities sealed up in the valise — traveling bag — of my trust, locked close and secret forever, or let me be trussed up at Tyburn shortly.”

“Privities” are 1) secrets, and 2) private parts, genitals.

Basket Hilts replied, “May thine own wish save or choke thee! Let’s go.”

They exited.

### ACT 3 (*A Tale of a Tub*)

#### — 3.1 —

Tobias Turf, Clench, Medley, To-Pan, Scriben, and John Clay stood together outside Tobias Turf's house.

Tobias Turf said:

“By the passion of me, was any man ever thus crossed? All things run arsy-varsy [topsy-turvy], upside down.

“High Constable! Now by Our Lady of Walsingham, I had rather be marked out as a Tom Scavenger, and with a shovel make clean the highways, than have this office of a constable, and a High Constable!”

Walsingham was a place of pilgrimages.

A scavenger was a street-cleaner.

The job of High Constable was turning out to have a lot of responsibility. Tobias Turf had to make a hue and cry after non-existent robbers, although he did not know that they were non-existent. He also had to arrest John Clay, the man who had been about to marry Audrey, the High Constable's daughter.

Tobias Turf continued:

“The higher the charge, it brings more trouble, more vexation with it.”

The greater the job and responsibility, the more the trouble and the vexation it brings with it.

Tobias Turf continued:

“Neighbors, good neighbors, 'vize me [advise me] what to do.

“How shall we bear ourselves in this hue and cry?

“We cannot find the Captain; no such man lodged at the Lion or came thither hurt.

“The morning we have spent in privy search, and because of that the bride-ale is deferred. The bride, she’s left alone in Puppy’s charge. The bridegroom, John Clay, goes under a pair of sureties — that is, under two people who have stood bail for him — and he is considered by all as a respected person.”

John Clay was not locked up because he had been bailed out by two people — including Tobias Turf, as will soon become known — who had guaranteed his presence at the time of trial. Now he was assisting in the hue and cry — the search — for the so-called other robbers.

Earlier, everyone had suspected that John Clay was a robber, but now they were returning to their original opinion that he was worthy of respect. That is why two people had stood surety for him.

Tobias Turf concluded:

“How should we bustle forward? Give me some counsel how to bestir our stumps in these cross ways.”

“Stumps” are legs.

Clench said:

“Indeed, gossip Turf, you have, you say, remission [commission] to comprehend [apprehend] all such as are dispected [suspected].

“Now would I make another privy search through this town, and then you have zearched two towns.”

Medley said:

“Masters, take heed, let’s not vind too many. One’s enough to stay the hangman’s stomach.”

That is, one criminal is enough to satisfy the hangman's appetite for hanging.

Medley continued:

"There is John Clay, who is yvound [found] already. He is a proper [handsome] man, a tile-man by his trade. He is a man, as one would zay, molded in clay, as spruce and smart in appearance as any neighbor's child among you."

Saying that a man was molded in wax was a compliment. Such a man was a perfect man, one who resembled a statue.

Medley continued:

"And he — you zee — is taken on conspition [suspicion], and two or three — they zay — what call you 'em?"

"Zuch as the justices of *coram nobis* [the King's Bench] grant — I forget their names, you have many of them, Master High Constable, they come to you.

"I ha' it at my tongue's end — coney-burrows, to bring him straight avore the zessions house."

Medley was trying to think of the word "warrants"; the word "warrens," meaning a habitat for rabbits, is close to it.

Conies are rabbits, and most species of rabbits burrow into the earth to create homes. A group of coney-burrows is called a warren.

"Oh, you mean warrens [warrants], neighbor, don't you?" Tobias Turf asked.

"Aye, aye, thick same [the very same]! You know 'un [them] well enough," Medley said.

Tobias Turf said:

"Too well, too well; I wish I had never known them!"

“We good vreeholders [freeholders] cannot live in quiet, but every hour new purcepts [precepts, orders], hues and cries, put us to requisitions night and day.”

A freeholder is a person who owns land and is able to dispose of it at will.

“Requisitions” is possibly a portmanteau word combining “requirements” and “inquisitions.” Duties such as raising a hue and cry, however, do requisition and require the High Constable’s time.

Tobias Turf continued:

“What should a man zay? Should we leave the zearch?

“If I do, I am in danger [liable] to reburse [reimburse] as much as he was robbed of; aye, and pay his hurts [pay for the damage done to him].

“If I should vollow it [continue the search], all the good cheer — food — that was provided for the wedding dinner will be spoiled and lost. Oh, there are two vat pigs a-zindging [being singed] by the vire [fire], now by Saint Tony, too good to eat except on a wedding-day.”

Saint Anthony the Abbot (not Saint Anthony of Padua), aka Saint Anthony of the Desert, is the patron saint of swineherds.

Tobias Turf continued:

“And then there is also being cooked a goose that will bid you all, ‘Come cut me!’”

A proverb stated, “Here is a goose so finely roasted it cries, ‘Come eat me.’”

Tobias Turf continued:

“Zun Clay, zun Clay — for I must call thee so — be of good comfort; take my muckinder [handkerchief] and dry thine eyes.”

John Clay, Tobias Turf’s still prospective son-in-law, had been crying.

A possible punishment for robbery was hanging.

Tobias Turf continued:

“If thou are true and honest, and if thou find thy conscience clear vrom [from] it [the robbery you are suspected of committing], pluck up a good heart [cheer up]: We’ll do well enough.

“If not, confess, in truth’s name.

“But in faith, I dare to be sworn upon all holy books that John Clay would never commit a robbery on his own head.”

“On his own head” means 1) against himself (i.e., he would never rob himself), and/or 2) on his own responsibility.

John Clay said:

“No, truth is my rightful judge; I have kept my hands here hence [away] from evil speaking, lying, and slandering, and my tongue from stealing.

“The man does not live this day who can say ‘John Clay, I have zeen thee, except in the way of honesty.’”

This meant: All who have seen me, John Clay, have never seen me be dishonest.

To-Pan said, “Indeed, neighbor Medley, I dare to be his borrow [security] that he would not look a true man in the vace.”



Of course, if John Clay were honest, he would look a true man in the face.

John Clay said:

“I take the town to concord [agree], where I dwell, all Kilburn be my witness, if I were not begot in bashfulness, brought up in shamefacedness [modesty].

“Let ’un [them] bring a dog but to my vace, that can zay I ha’ beat ’hun [him], and without a vault [fault].”

In other words, when John Clay beats a dog, the dog deserves it.

John Clay continued:

“Or but a cat that will swear upon a book I have as much as zet avire [set on fire] her tail, and I’ll give him or her a crown for ’mends [amends].

“But to give out and zay I have robbed a captain!

“Receive me at the latter day, if I ever thought of any such matter, or could mind it —”

The latter day is the Day of Judgment. Instead of “Receive me,” he meant, “Refuse me,” aka “Reject and condemn me.”

In-and-In Medley said:

“No, John, you are come of too good personage [family].

“I think my gossip [friend] Clench and Master Turf both think you would attempt no such vould matter.”

Tobias Turf said:

“But how unhappily it comes to pass just on the wedding-day!

“I beg your mercy, I had almost forgotten the hue and cry.

“Good neighbor Pan, you are the thirdborough [petty constable], and D’ogenes Scriben, you are my learned writer, so make out a new purcept [precept].”

A precept is a writ or warrant. The warrant would be for the men they were pursuing in a hue and cry.

Tobias Turf continued:

“Lord, for thy goodness, I had forgotten my daughter all this while!

“The idle knave has brought no news from her.”

Seeing Ball Puppy coming, he said:

“Here comes the sneaking Puppy.

“What’s the news? My heart! My heart! I fear all is not well. Something’s misshaped [mis-happed, gone wrong] since he has come without Audrey.”

— 3.2 —

Ball Puppy and Dame Turf entered the scene.

Ball Puppy said, “Oh, where’s my master? My master! My master!”

Dame Turf said, “Thy master! What would thou want with thy master, man?”

She pointed to her husband and said, “There’s thy master.”

“What’s the matter, Puppy?” Tobias Turf asked.

“Oh, master!” Ball Puppy said. “Oh, dame! Oh, dame! Oh, master!”

“What do thou want to say to thy master, or thy dame?” Dame Turf asked.

“Oh, John Clay! John Clay! John Clay!” Ball Puppy cried.

“What about John Clay?” Tobias Turf asked.

“May good fortune grant that he doesn’t bring us news that John Clay shall be hanged!” Medley said.

“The world forfend [forbid]!” Clench said. “I hope it is not so well [he meant ‘ill’].”

“Oh, Lord!” John Clay said. “Oh, me, what shall I do? Poor John!”

In this society, salted fish were called “poor john.”

“Oh, John Clay! John Clay! John Clay!” Ball Puppy cried.

John Clay said to himself, “Woe to me that I was ever born! I will not stay and endure it, for all the tiles in Kilburn.”

Unobserved, he fled.

“What about Clay?” Dame Turf asked. “Speak, Puppy. What about him?”

Ball Puppy began, “He has lost, he has lost —”

Tobias Turf said, “For luck’s sake speak, Puppy. What has he lost?”

“Oh, Audrey, Audrey, Audrey!” Ball Puppy said.

“What about my daughter, Audrey?” Dame Turf said.

Ball Puppy said, “I tell you, Audrey — do you understand me? Audrey, sweet master, Audrey, my dear dame —”

“Where is she?” Tobias Turf asked. “What’s become of her, I ask thee?”

Ball Puppy said, “Oh, the serving-man! The serving-man! The serving-man!”

He was talking about Basket Hilts.

Tobias Turf asked, “Why do thou talk about the serving-man? Where’s Audrey?”

“Gone with the serving-man! Gone with the serving-man!” Ball Puppy said.

“Good Puppy, where has she gone with him?” Dame Turf asked.

Ball Puppy said:

“I cannot tell.

“He bade me bring you word that the Captain was staying at the Lion, and before I came back, Audrey was gone with the serving-man.

“I tell you, Audrey’s run away with the serving-man.”

Tobias Turf said, “‘Od ’socks, my woman, what shall we do now?”

“‘Od ’socks” is a mild curse: “By God’s socks.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “godsokers” is “Used as an exclamation or oath expressing surprise or affirmation.”

Dame Turf said, “Now, if you don’t help, man, I don’t know, I.”

Tobias Turf said, “This was your pomp — unnecessary train — of maids! I told you about it. Six maids to vollow you, and leave not one to wait upon your daughter! I zaid Pride would be paid her old vippence [fivepence] one day, wife.”

In other words, pride would get its deserts.

A proverb states, “Pride goes before a fall.”

A common expression of the time was “as fine as fivepence.”

Dame Turf should have allowed one of her maids to wait on Audrey and serve as a chaperone.

Medley asked Ball Puppy, “What about John Clay, Ball Puppy?”

Ball Puppy began, “He has lost —”

Medley interrupted, “His life for a felony [felony]?”

Ball Puppy said, “No, his wife by villainy.”

Tobias Turf said:

“Now villains both! Oh, that same hue and cry! Oh, neighbors! Oh, that cursèd serving-man! Oh, maids! Oh, wife!

“But John Clay, where is he?”

Everyone looked around for him, but he had fled.

Tobias Turf continued:

“What! Fled for veer [fear], zay ye? Will he slip us now? [Will he give us the slip now?] We who are sureties must require [inquire about and seek] ’hun [him] out.

“What shall we do to find the serving-man?

“Cock’s bodikins [By God’s body], we must not lose John Clay!

“Audrey, my daughter Audrey, too! Let us zend to all the towns and zeek her; but alas, the hue and cry, that must be looked to!”

If he found the serving-man, Basket Hilts, he believed that he would find his daughter, Audrey.

Squire Tub entered the scene and asked, “What, in a passion, Turf?”

Tobias Turf replied, “Aye, good Squire Tub. Honest varmers [farmers] were never thus perplexed.”

Squire Tub replied:

“Turf, I am privy to — I know — thy deep unrest, the ground of which springs from an idle plot laid for a suitor to your daughter Audrey — and thus much, Turf, let me advertise [advise] you.

“I met your daughter Audrey on the way, with Justice Bramble in her company, who intends to marry her at Pancridge church. And Chanon Hugh is there ready to meet them.

“To prevent this marriage, you must not trust delay, but with wingèd speed you must cross and oppose their sly intent.”

A proverb stated, “Delay in love is dangerous.”

Squire Tub continued:

“So then hie — hurry — thee, Turf; hasten to forbid the bans.”

He wanted Tobias Turf to stop the marriage.

Tobias Turf replied:

“Has Justice Bramble got my daughter Audrey? A little while shall he enjoy her, zure.”

He meant that Justice Bramble would enjoy her for only a little while. A bawdy cynic might say that he would enjoy her for about fifteen minutes.

Tobias Turf continued:

“But oh, the hue and cry! That hinders me; I must pursue that or neglect my journey.”

He could pursue the hue and cry in search of the “robbers” (and John Clay), or he would neglect his journey to take John Clay to Paddington.

Of course, if he pursued the hue and cry, he would not be able to stop the marriage of his daughter to Justice Preamble.

Tobias Turf continued:

“I’ll even leave all, and with the patient ass, the over-laden ass, throw off my burden, and cast aside my office; pluck in my large ears betimes [while I have time], lest some disjudge ’em [misjudge them] to be horns.”

A proverb stated, “An ass endures his burden, but not more than his burden.”

In the fable “The Hare and Its Ears,” a lion was angry at all animals that have horns, and so a hare avoided the lion lest the hare’s long ears be mistaken for horns.

Thomas Dekker in his play *Match Me in London*, wrote, “If the lion say the ass’s ears are horns, the ass, if he be wise, will swear it.”

Tobias Turf continued:

“I’ll leave [cease] to beat it on the broken hoof and ease my pasterns.”

Tobias Turf was going to quit before he suffered any more.

Pasterns are the horse’s ankles.

Tobias Turf continued:

“I’ll no more High Constables.”

He would no longer carry out the responsibilities of a High Constable.

Squire Tub said:

“I cannot choose but smile to see thee troubled with such a bald, half-hatchèd [badly thought-out] circumstance!

“The Captain [Chanon Hugh in disguise] was not robbed, as is reported; that trick the Justice craftily devised to break the marriage with the tile-man Clay.

“The hue and cry was merely counterfeit.”

It was counterfeit because it was based on a lie.

How did Squire Tub learn this?

Earlier, Miles Metaphor had told Squire Tub that the warrant against him, supposedly from the Queen’s Council, was a fake. Miles Metaphor, however, had not stated that the hue and cry against John Clay was based on a lie. Squire Tub had then left to inform Tobias Turf that Tobias’ daughter was in danger of being married to Justice Preamble.

Squire Tub continued:

“The rather may you judge it to be such because the bridegroom was described to be one of the thieves, first in the velony.”

The phrase “first in the velony” meant that he was the leader of the criminals committing the felony.

Squire Tub continued:

“Which, how far it is from him, yourselves may guess.

“It was Justice Bramble’s vetch [fetch, aka trick], to get the wench.”



Squire Tub had used his power of reasoning to figure out that the hue and cry against John Clay was based on a lie.

“And is this true, Squire Tub?” Tobias Turf asked.

Squire Tub replied, “Believe me, Turf, as I am a squire; or less, a gentleman.”

A squire ranks below a knight and above a gentleman.

Some people may consider having the qualities (rather than the rank) of a gentleman to be more important than having a high social rank.

Tobias Turf said:

“I take my office back, and my authority, upon Your Worship’s words.”

He then said:

“Neighbors, I am High Constable again.

“Where’s my zon Clay? He shall be my zon [son-in-law] yet.

“Wife, your meat by leisure: Draw back the spits.”

The phrase “your meat by leisure” means “your food without haste.” Tobias Turf wanted his wife to strive to keep the meat warm so it could be eaten later without being overcooked. Drawing back the spits meant that the meat would not be directly over the fire.

“That’s done already, man,” Dame Turf said.

Tobias Turf said:

“I’ll break off this marriage between Justice Preamble and Audrey; and afterward, she shall be given to her first betrothed: John Clay.

“Look after the meat, wife, look well to the roast.”

He exited with Clench, Medley, To-Pan, and Scriben.

“I’ll follow him aloof — at a distance — to see the outcome,” Squire Tub said.

He exited.

Ball Puppy said, “Dame, mistress, although I do not turn the spit, I hope yet to have the pig’s head.”

He wanted to eat the head of one of the pigs roasting on a spit.

“Come up, Jack-sauce — you impudent fellow — it shall be served to you,” Dame Turf said.

“No, no service,” Ball Puppy said, “but a reward for service.”

“I always took you for an unmannerly Puppy,” Dame Turf said. “Will you come, and vetch more wood to the vire, Master Ball?”

Ball Puppy said:

“I, vetch wood to the vire? I shall piss the vire out first. You think to make me even your ox, or ass, or anything.

“Although I cannot right myself and get revenge for myself on you, I’ll sure revenge myself on your meat.”

They exited.

— 3.4 —

Lady Tub, Pol-Marten, and Wisp talked together.

Pol-Marten said:

“Madam, to Kentish Town we have arrived at length, but by the way we cannot meet the Squire, nor by inquiry can we hear of him.

“Here is the house of Turf, the father of the maiden.”

Lady Tub said:

“Pol-Marten, look, the streets are strewed with herbs, and here has been a wedding, Wisp, it seems! I pray to Heaven that this bridal — this wedding — is not for my son!

“Good Marten, knock; knock quickly; ask for Turf.

“My thoughts misgive me and make me apprehensive, I am in such a fear —”

Pol-Marten knocked and said loudly, “Who keeps the house here?”

From inside Tobias Turf’s house, Ball Puppy answered, “Why, the door and walls keep the house.”

“I ask then, who’s within?” Pol-Marten asked.

“Not you who are without — outside,” Ball Puppy replied.

“Look forth, and speak into the street, here,” Pol-Marten said. “Come before my lady.”

Ball Puppy replied:

“Before my lady! Lord have mercy upon me.

“If I come before her, she will see the handsomest man in all the town, pardee!”

“Pardee!” means “By God!”

Ball Puppy opened the door, came outside, and said, “Now stand I vore [before] her, what zaith velvet she?”

“Velvet” was a luxurious cloth. Lady Tub was wearing a velvet gown.

“Sirrah, whose man are you?” Lady Tub asked.

“Madam, my master’s,” Ball Puppy answered.

“And who’s thy master?” Lady Tub asked.

“What you tread on, madam,” Ball Puppy answered.

“I tread on an old turf,” Lady Turf said.

“That Turf’s my master,” Ball Puppy said.

“A merry fellow!” Lady Tub said. “What’s thy name?”

“They call me Ball Puppy at home; away from my home, they call me Hannibal Puppy.”

Lady Tub said, “Come hither, I must kiss thee, Valentine Puppy.”

She then asked, “Wisp, have you got yourself a Valentine?”

“None, madam,” Wisp said. “He’s the first stranger whom I saw.”

According to custom, Valentines could be made by chance meetings as well as by the casting of lots.

Lady Tub said, “To me he is so, and such. Let’s share him equally.”

Both Lady Tub and Wisp attempted to kiss Ball Puppy.

He shouted:

“Help, help, good dame! A rescue, and in time!

“Instead of bills, come with colstaves; instead of spears, come with spits. Your slices shall serve for slicing swords, to save me and my wits. A lady and her woman here, their usher also by their side — but he stands mute — have plotted how to divide your Puppy.”

Bills are weapons with long blades. Colstaves are sticks used to carry stuff; spits were used for spit-roasting. Slices are flat kitchen utensils.

Ball Puppy was calling for help from the kitchen staff, who could use common items found in kitchens as weapons.

— 3.5 —

Dame Turf and her maids came outside.

“What is this now? What noise is this with you, Ball Puppy?”  
Dame Turf asked.

Ball Puppy said:

“Oh, dame! And fellows of the kitchen! Arm, arm, for my safety, if you love your Ball!

“Here is a strange thing called a Lady, a mad-dame and madam, and a device of hers, yclept [called] her woman [serving-woman].”

The Lady is Lady Tub, and the device (perhaps Ball Puppy meant by “device” a puppet) is Dido Wisp.

Ball Puppy continued:

“They have plotted against me in the king’s highway to steal me from myself, and cut me in halves, to make one Valentine to serve them both. This one for my right-side love, and that one for my left-hand love.”

“So saucy, Puppy?” Dame Turf said. “To show no more reverence than that to my lady and her velvet gown?”

High-ranking women wore velvet gowns.

Lady Tub said:

“Turf’s wife, don’t rebuke him; your serving-man pleases me with his conceit. “

The conceit was the imaginative idea of splitting himself into half-Valentines.

Lady Tub then said to Ball Puppy:

“Wait, there are ten old nobles” — she gave him money —  
“to make thee merrier yet, half-Valentine.”

“I thank you, right-side,” Ball Puppy said. “If my left-side could give me as much money as you have, it would make me a man of mark: young Hannibal!”

Nobles and marks are kinds of money.

Lady Tub said:

“Dido shall make that good, or I will for her.

“Here, Dido Wisp, there’s something for your Hannibal.”

Lady Tub gave her money, and then she said:

“He is your countryman, as well as your Valentine.”

Dido was a famous Queen of Carthage, and Hannibal was a famous general of Carthage.

Dido Wasp handed Hannibal Puppy the money and said, “Here, Master Hannibal: This is my lady’s bounty for her poor woman, Wisp.”

Ball Puppy said, “Brave Carthage queen! And such was Dido: I will forever be champion to her, who Juno is to thee.”

The goddess Juno supported Carthage, not Rome. In an attempt to prevent the Trojan Prince Aeneas from going to Italy and becoming an important ancestor of the Romans, she made Dido fall in love with Aeneas, hoping that Aeneas would stay in Carthage.

In Ball Puppy’s comparison, Lady Tub was Juno, and Dido Wisp was the Queen of Carthage.

Dame Turf said, “Your Ladyship is very welcome here. May it please you, good madam, to go near the house.”

“Turf’s wife, I come thus far to seek thy husband, having some business to impart to him,” Ball Puppy said. “Is he at home?”

Dame Turf said:

“Oh, no, if it shall please you. He is posted hence to Pancridge, with a witness.”

“With a witness” is an idiom for “hastily.”

Dame Turf continued:

“Young Justice Bramble has kept level coil [made a disturbance] here in our quarters and stolen away our daughter, and Master Turf’s run after, as fast as he can, to stop the marriage, if it can be stopped.”

“Level coil” is the game *lever le cul*, aka changing chairs.

Pol-Marten said, “Madam, these tidings are not much amiss, for if the Justice should have the maiden in keep [under his control], you need not fear the marriage of your son to her.”

Lady Tub said, “That somewhat eases my suspicious breast.”

She then asked, “Tell me, Turf’s wife, when was my son with Audrey? How long has it been since you saw him at your house?”

Ball Puppy said to Dame Turf, “Dame, let me take this rump out of your mouth.”

Ball Puppy was pretending that he didn’t want to use the word “tale,” which when spelled “tail” can mean “butt,” but of course the use of “rump” in this sentence is indelicate.

“What mean you by that, sir?” Dame Turf asked.

Ball Puppy said, “Rump and tail’s all one. But I would use a reverence for my lady. I would not zay, sir-reverence, ‘Take the tale out of your mouth,’ but rather ‘Take the rump.’”

“Sir-reverence,” aka “save your reverence,” was used to mean “excrement.” It also was used to apologize for using an indelicate phrase.

“To take the tale out of someone’s mouth” meant “to tell the tale for someone.”

“A well-bred youth!” Dame Turf said. “And vull of favor — attractive features — you are.”

Ball Puppy said:

“What might they zay, when I were gone, if I did not weigh my wordz? ‘This Puppy is a vool; Great Hannibal’s an ass: He had no breeding.’”

“No, Lady gay [Lady Tub], you shall not zay that your Val [Valentine] Puppy was so unlucky in speech as to fail and name a tail, be as be may be, ’vore a fair lady.”

“Stop jesting,” Lady Tub said. “Tell us when you saw our son.”

Ball Puppy began to pun on sun/son.

“By the Virgin Mary, it is two hours ago,” he said.

“Since you saw him?” Lady Tub asked.

“You might have seen him too, if you had looked up,” Ball Puppy said. “For it shined as bright as day.”

“I mean my son,” Lady Tub said.

“Your sun and our sun, are they not all one?” Ball Puppy asked.



“Fool, thou mistake my word. I asked thee for my son!”  
Lady Tub said.

“I had thought there had been no more sons than one,” Ball Puppy said. “I know not what you ladies have — or may have.”

Some ladies may have more sons than they acknowledge having.

Pol-Marten asked, “Didn’t thou ever hear my lady had a son?”

Ball Puppy replied:

“She may have twenty; but for a son, unless she mean precisely Squire Tub, her zon, he was here just now, and brought my master word that Justice Bramble had got Mistress Audrey.

“But to where he has gone, here’s none can tell.”

Lady Tub said to Pol-Marten:

“Marten, I wonder at this strange discourse.

“The fool, it seems, is telling the truth; my son the Squire was doubtless here this morning.

“As for the match, I’ll smother what I think, and staying here, I’ll attend the sequel of this strange beginning.”

She then said:

“Turfs’ wife, my people and I will trouble thee, until we hear some tidings of thy husband; the rather for my parti-Valentine.”

Lady Tub and Dido Wisp would stay here at the Turfs’ home partly so they could be close to their half-Valentine: Ball Puppy.

They went inside the house.

— 3.6 —

Tobias Turf, Audrey, Clench, Medley, To-Pan, and Scriben talked together.

Tobias Turf had done a heroic deed: He had rescued his daughter from a man who had attempted to carry her away and marry her. Now he was thinking about his place in future pageants celebrating heroes.

He said:

“Well, I have succeeded, and I will triumph over this justice as becomes a constable, and a High Constable.”

Roman generals who won notable victories over enemy armies were allowed to ride into Rome triumphal processions with their army, spoils, and prisoners. These were great honors.

He continued:

“Next to our Saint George, who rescued the king’s daughter, I will ride; I will ride ahead of Prince Arthur.”

Saint George is the patron saint of England. One of his exploits was killing a dragon.

Prince Arthur may be King Arthur or, possibly, King Henry VIII’s elder brother.

Tobias Turf and his friends began to discuss some other people who could appear in a pageant with the High Constable.

“Or ahead of our Shoreditch Duke,” Clench said.

“Or Pancridge Earl,” Medley said.

The Shoreditch Duke and the Pancridge Earl are mock-aristocratic titles given to champion archers of the Finsbury Archers.

“Or Bevis, or Sir Guy, who were both High Constables,” To-Pan said.

Sir Bevis of Hampton and Sir Guy, who married the heiress of Warwick, were heroes of medieval romances.

Clench said, “One of Southampton —”

Medley said, “— the other of Warwick Castle.”

Tobias Turf said, “You shall work my exploit into a story for me, neighbor Medley, over my chimney.”

The story would be a narrative in pictures. Medley was a carpenter, and so the story would perhaps be an inlaid panel.

Scriben said, “I can give you, sir, a Roman story of a petty constable, who had a daughter who was called Virginia, similar to Mistress Audrey, and as young as she, and I can tell how her father bare [bore] himself in the business against Justice Appius, a decemvir in Rome, and justice of assize.”

Virginia’s father killed her rather than give her to the evil Appius Claudius. Livy tells the story in his *History of Rome*, Book 3, Chapters 44-49.

A decemvir was a justice, one of a group of ten, in ancient Rome.

Tobias Turf said, “That, that, good D’ogenes! A learned man is a chronicle.”

“I can tell you a thousand stories about great Pompey, Caesar, Trajan, all the High Constables there,” Scriben said.

“That was their place!” Tobias Turf said. “They were no more.”

“Dictator and High Constable were both the same positions,” Scriben said.

“High Constable was a higher position, though!” Medley said. “He laid Dick Tator by the heels.”

“Dick Tator” is Medley’s interpretation of “dictator.”

“Dick Tooter!” To-Pan said.

“Dick Tooter” is To-Pan’s interpretation of “Dick Tator.”

To-Pan continued, “He was one of the waits — musicians — of the city, I have read about ’hun [him]. He was a fellow who would be drunk, debauched — and he did zet ’un [him] in the stocks indeed: His name was Vadian, and a cunning Tooter.”

A tooter likely plays a wind instrument.

In To-Pan’s dialect, V is often used for F.

A Fabian is a member of the Roman gens (family) Fabia. This was a patrician family name.

In 221 and 217 B.C.E., Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosis — known as Cunctator — was Roman Dictator. “Cunctator” means “Delayer,” and as dictator he harassed the Carthaginian general Hannibal’s army without ever fighting it in open battle. This is probably the “Vadian” To-Pan meant.

Audrey said:

“Was a silly maid ever thus posted — handed — off, who should have had three husbands in one day, yet, by bad fortune, am possessed of — the owner of, or possessed by — none?”

“I went to church and would have been wed to Clay.

“Then Squire Tub seized me on the way and thought to have had me, but he missed his aim.”

In bawdy terms, Squire Tub’s “arrow” did not hit its feminine target.

Audrey continued:

“And Justice Bramble, nearest of the three, was almost married to me, when by chance in rushed my father and broke off that dance.”

Sex can be likened to a kind of dance.

Tobias Turf said:

“Aye, girl, there’s never a justice among them all who shall teach the Constable how to guard his own.

“Let’s go back to Kentish Town, and there make merry. These news will be glad tidings to my wife.

“Thou shall have Clay, my wench; that word shall stand.”

In Elizabethan slang the word “stand” can meant “erection.”

Tobias Turf continued:

“He’s found by this time, surely, or else he’s drowned.

“The wedding dinner will be spoiled; make haste.”

Audrey said, “Husbands, they say, grow thick but thin are sown. I don’t care who my husband shall be, as long as I have one.”

The word “thick” can mean “stupid.”

A part of a husband can grow thick during the wedding night but then become thin once the sowing is done.

A farmer’s proverb stated, “Thick sown but thin came up.”

Tobias Turf said, “Aye, zay you zo? Perhaps you shall have none for that. [Perhaps you don’t deserve one.]”

“Now out on me!” Audrey said. “What shall I do then?”

“Sleep, Mistress Audrey, dream about proper, handsome men,” Medley said.

They exited.

— 3.7 —

Chanon Hugh and Justice Preamble talked together in Justice Preamble’s house.

Chanon Hugh said:

“*O bone Deus!* [Oh, good God!] Have you seen the like?”

“Here was, ‘Hodge hold thine ear fair, while I strike.’”

This was an idiomatic expression for a brawl.

He continued:

“By the body of me, how did this gear — this trouble — come about?”

Justice Preamble said:

“I don’t know, Chanon, but it falls out contrary to what we wanted. Nor can I make conjecture by the circumstance of these events; it was impossible, being so close and politicly — secretly and shrewdly — carried, to come so quickly to the ears of Turf.

“Oh, priest, had thy slow delivery just been nimble, and thy lazy Latin tongue you had just run the forms over with that swift dispatch — speed — as had been requisite and needed, all would have been well!”

Chanon Hugh said:

“What should have been, that never loved the friar.”

A proverb stated, “What was good, the friar never loved.”

In other words: It would have been good to be quick, but that’s not my — Chanon Hugh’s — way.

He continued:

“But thus you see the old adage verified, *multa cadunt inter* — you can guess the rest.”

He then translated the Latin proverb *Multa cadunt inter calicem supremaque labra*:

“Many things fall between the cup and lip.”

Chanon Hugh continued:

“And though they touch, you are not sure to drink.

“You lacked good fortune, we had done our parts.

“Give a man fortune, throw him in the sea.”

In other words: Good fortune is followed by bad fortune.

A play at this time was titled *Give a Man Luck and Throw Him into the Sea*.

He continued:

“The properer the man, the worse the luck. Stay a time.

“*Tempus edax* — in time the stately ox, etc.

“Good counsels usually never come too late.”

The Latin proverb *Tempus edax rerum* means “Time, consumer of things.”

The full English proverb is “In time the savage ox does bear the yoke.”

Justice Preamble said, “You, sir, will run your counsels out of breath.”

Chanon Hugh said, “Spur a free horse, he’ll run himself to death.”

A proverb stated, “Do not spur a willing horse.”

Miles Metaphor entered the scene.

Seeing him, Chanon Hugh said, “*Sancti Evangelistae!* [Oh, holy Evangelists!] Here comes Miles!”

“What is the news, man, with our new-made pursuivant?” Justice Preamble asked.

Miles Metaphor said:

“A pursuivant! I wish that I were either more pursy [like a moneybag] and had more store of money, or less pursy [fat] and had more store of breath.

“You call me pursuivant!

“But I could never vaunt of [boast about] any purse I had since you were my godfathers and godmothers and gave me that nickname.”

They had given him the name of “pursuivant” and so they were his godfathers and godmothers.

“What’s the matter now?” Justice Preamble asked.

“Nay, it’s no matter [it’s not important],” Miles Metaphor said. “I have been simply beaten.”

“What has become of the Squire Tub, who was thy prisoner?” Chanon Hugh asked.

Miles Metaphor replied, “The lines of blood, which ran streaming from my head, can speak what rule the Squire has kept with me.”



A ruler can be used to make lines; the Squire had used his ruling power to make lines of blood run down Metaphor's head.

"Please, Miles, relate the manner how that happened," Justice Preamble said.

Miles Metaphor replied:

"Be it known unto you by these presents then, that I, Miles Metaphor, Your Worship's clerk, have even been beaten to an allegory by a multitude of hands."

He had been beaten out of himself, aka he had been beaten so hard that he was no longer metaphor but was instead allegory — all gory.

Miles Metaphor continued:

"Had they been but some five or six, I'd whipped them all like tops in Lent, and hurled them into Hobbler's hole, or the next ditch."

Hobbler's hole is a children's game involving a top and a hole. Possibly, children would try to spin the top in such a way that it would travel to and fall in the hole.

Miles Metaphor continued:

"I would have cracked all their costards — heads — as nimbly as a squirrel will crack nuts, and flourished similar to Hercules, the porter, among the pages."

Hercules was a porter of large size who served Queen Elizabeth I.

Miles Metaphor continued:

"But when they came on like bees about a hive, crows about carrion, flies about sweetmeats, nay, like watermen [ferrymen] about a fare [a customer], then was poor

Metaphor glad to give up the honor of the day and surrender, to quit his charge to them, and run away to save his life, only to tell this news.”

Chanon Hugh said:

“How indirectly — how contrary — all things have fallen out!

“I cannot choose but wonder who they were who rescued your rival from the keep of Miles Metaphor.

“But most of all, I cannot well digest in what way Tobias Turf came to learn our plot.”

Justice Preamble said:

“Miles, I will see that all thy wounds are medically dressed.

“As for the Squire Tub’s escape, it doesn’t matter. We have by this means disappointed him, and that was all the main thing I aimed at.

“But Chanon Hugh, now muster up thy wits, and call thy thoughts into the consistory — the ecclesiastical court. Search all the secret corners of thy priest’s four-cornered cap to find another ingenious scheme to disappoint and stop her marriage with this Clay.

“Do that, and I’ll reward thee jovially.”

“Jovially” means “in the manner of the god Jupiter” — that is, handsomely.

Chanon Hugh replied, “Well said, Magister [Scholar] Justice. If I don’t fit you with such a new and well-laid stratagem as never yet your ears did hear a finer, call me with Lily *Bos, Fur, Sus, atque Sacerdos.*”

The Latin words, which mean “bull/cow, thief, boar/sow, and priest/priestess,” come from W. Lily’s *Brevissima institutio seu ratio grammatices* (1567), a Latin grammar.

In other words: If I don’t come up with a new good plan, class me among the animals.

Justice Preamble said, “I hear there’s comfort in thy words yet, Chanon. I’ll trust thy regulars and say no more.”

The Latin word *regula* means “grammatical rule.”

Chanon Hugh was part of the regular clergy.

Justice Preamble and Chanon Hugh exited.

Miles Metaphor said to himself, “I’ll follow, too. And if the dapper priest be just as cunning, point in his device [skillful in his plot], as I was in my lie, my master Preamble will stalk as if led by the nose with these new promises and fattened with supposes — expectations — of fine hopes.”

Miles Metaphor’s lie was that Squire Tub had been freed by men who had fought Miles. Instead, Basket Hilts had intimidated him, and Miles Metaphor had quickly released Squire Tub and told him about the plot by Justice Preamble and Chanon Hugh. Squire Tub had then informed Tobias Turf.

### — 3.8 —

Tobias Turf, Dame Turf, Lady Tub, Pol-Marten, Audrey, and Ball Puppy spoke together at the Turfs’ house.

“Well, madam, I may thank the Squire, your son,” Tobias Turf said to Lady Tub. “If not for him, I would have been outwitted.”

Squire Tub had let the High Constable know that Justice Preamble had Audrey.

“May Heaven’s blessing alight upon his heart now!” Dame Turf said. “We are beholden to him, indeed, madam.”

“But can you inform me where he is?” Lady Tub asked. “And can you inform me about what he intended?”

“Madam, whatever he intended was no whit concerning me, and therefore was I less inquisitive,” Tobias Turf said. “Whatever he intended had nothing to do with me.”

Of course, he was wrong. Squire Tub had intended to marry Audrey. This is something that Squire Tub did not tell Tobias Turf.

Lady Tub said to Audrey, “Fair maiden, in faith, speak truth and do not dissemble. Doesn’t he often come and visit you?”

Audrey answered, “His Worship now and then, if it please you, takes pains to see my father and mother; but as for me, I know that I am too mean — of too lowly birth — for his high thoughts to stoop at, more than asking a light question to make him merry, or to pass his time.”

Lady Tub said, “You are a sober and serious maiden.”

She then ordered, “Call for my serving-woman, Marten.”

Her serving-woman was Dido Wisp.

Pol-Marten said, “The maids and her half-Valentine have plied her with courtesy of the bride-cake and the bowl, and so she is tipsy and lying down for a while.”

Lady Tub said:

“Oh, let her rest! We will cross over to Canonbury in the interim, and so make for home.

“Farewell, good Turf, and thy wife. I wish your daughter joy.”

Tobias Turf said, “We give thanks to Your Ladyship.”

Lady Tub and Pol-Marten exited.

Tobias Turf asked his wife, “Where is John Clay now? Have you seen him yet?”

Dame Turf said, “No, he has hidden himself out of the way because of fear of the hue and cry.”

Tobias Turf said:

“What, does that shadow walk avore ’un [before him] still?”

In 3.3 Squire Tub had told him that the hue and cry in search of John Clay was a counterfeit: It was based on a lie.

Tobias Turf continued:

“Puppy, go seek ’un [him] out. Search all the corners that he frequents, and call ’un [him] forth.

“We’ll go once more to the church and try our vortunes.

“Luck, son Valentine!

“Where are all the wise men of Finzbury?”

Ball Puppy replied:

“Where wise men should be: at the ale and bride-cake.

“I wish that this couple had their destiny — either to be hanged or to be married — out of the way. A man cannot get the mounenance [amount] of an eggshell to stay his stomach.”

Some neighbors arrived on the scene and walked over to Tobias Turf.

Ball Puppy continued:

“Vaith, vor my own part, I have zupped up so much broth as would have covered a leg of beef over head and ears [that is, completely immersed it] in the porridge-pot, and yet I cannot sussify [satisfy] wild nature.

“I wish that they were at once dispatched [married] so that we might go to dinner.

“I am with child of a huge stomach, and long for food, until by some honest midwife-piece-of-beef I am delivered of it.”

He was hungry with urgings for food like a pregnant woman, but the marriage had not occurred and so he could not eat yet. A piece of beef would satisfy his huge appetite and stop his hunger pangs the way a midwife stops birth pains.

Ball Puppy concluded:

“I must go now and hunt out for this Kilburn calf, John Clay, whom I don’t know where to find, nor which way to go.”

A “calf” is a fool.

Ball Puppy exited.

### — 3.9 —

Chanon Hugh, in the personage of Captain Thumbs, entered the scene.

He said to you, the readers:

“Thus as a beggar in a king’s disguise, or an old cross well sided with [standing beside] a maypole, comes Chanon Hugh, accoutered as you see, disguised soldado-like. Note his scheme.”

A soldado is a soldier.

He continued:

“The Chanon is that Captain Thumbs, who was robbed.

“These bloody scars created with makeup upon my face are wounds. This scarf upon my arm shows my recent wounds, And thus am I to gull — fool — the constable.

“Now you have a man at arms among you! Look out! I’m a soldier!”

He then asked out loud:

“Friends, by your leave, which of you is the man named Turf?”

Tobias Turf answered, “Sir, I am Turf, if you want to speak with me.”

“Yes, with thee, Turf, if thou are High Constable,” the disguised Chanon Hugh said.

“I am both Turf, sir, and High Constable,” Tobias Turf said.

The disguised Chanon Hugh said:

“Then, Turf or Scurf, high or low constable, know that I was once a captain at the Battle of Saint Quentins in northern France, and passing across the ways over the country this morning, between this place — Kentish Town — and Hampstead Heath, I was by a crew of clowns robbed, bobbed [buffeted], and hurt.”

“Scurf” is flakes of skin. An example: dandruff. The word can also mean a scab.

The disguised Chanon Hugh continued:

“No sooner had I got my wounds bound up, but with much pain I went to the next justice, one Master Bramble, here at Maribone, and here a warrant is, which he has directed for you, one Turf — if your name is Toby Turf — who have let fall and allowed to lapse, they say, the hue and cry.

“And you shall answer it before the Justice.”

He presented a warrant to Tobias Turf.

“Heaven and Hell, dogs, devils, what is this!” Tobias Turf said. “Neighbors, was ever any constable thus crossed? What shall we do?”

In 3.3 Squire Tub had told Tobias Turf that the hue and cry in search of John Clay was a counterfeit: It was based on a lie. Tobias Turf, however, still believed that a man named Captain Thumbs had been attacked, although not by John Clay.

“Truly, we all must go hang ourselves,” Medley said. “I know no other way to escape the law.”

Ball Puppy entered the scene and said, “News, news! Oh, news —”

“What, have thou found out where John Clay is?” Tobias Turf asked.

“No, sir, the news is that I cannot find him,” Ball Puppy said.

The disguised Chanon Hugh asked Tobias Turf:

“Why do you dally, you damned russet coat?”

Peasants wore russet coats.

He continued:

“You peasant, you clown, you constable!

“See that you bring forth the suspected party, or by my honor — which I won on the battlefield — I’ll make you pay for it before the Justice.”

Tobias Turf said:

“Darn! Darn!

“Oh, wife, I’m now in a fine pickle.



“He who was most suspected is not found, and what now makes me think that he did the deed is that he thus absents him and dares not be seen.”

Now Tobias Turf was again thinking that John Clay was guilty of robbery.

He continued:

“Captain, my innocence will plead for me.

“Wife, I must go, necessarily and reluctantly, for I am the one whom the devil drives. Pray for me, wife and daughter, pray for me.”

The disguised Chanon Hugh said, “I’ll lead the way.”

He then said to himself, “Thus is the wedding-match put off, and if my plot succeeds, as I have laid it, my captainship shall cost him in fines many a crown.”

The disguised Chanon Hugh, Tobias Turf, and the neighbors exited.

Dame Turf said sarcastically, “So, we have brought our eggs to a fair market.”

She then said, “Curse that villain Clay! Would he do a robbery? I’ll never trust any smooth-faced tile-man for his sake.”

Audrey said, “Mother, the still sow eats up all the draff [pig swill].”

In other words: The quiet ones get it all.

Audrey and Dame Turf exited.

Alone, Ball Puppy said:

“Thus is my master, Toby Turf, the pattern of all the painful adventures now in print!”

Lawrence Twine had written a prose romance titled *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* (1576).

Ball Puppy continued:

“I never could hope better of this match, this bride-ale, because of what happened the night before today — which is within man’s memory, I take it —”

Ball Puppy now listed many bad omens — the wedding feast was ominous for all the farm animals that were slain to provide the food for the feast.

The first omen — the talking ox — has a precedent in literature. In Livy’s *History of Rome*, Book 35, Chapter 21, Line 4, he wrote about an ox speaking and advising the Romans to beware before the Roman war with Antiochus (192 B.C.E.).

Ball Puppy continued:

“— at the first report of the wedding, an ox did speak, who died soon after; a cow lost her calf; the bell-wether sheep was flayed — skinned — for it; a fat hog was singed, and washed, and shaven all over, to remove its bristles so it would look ugly in preparation for this day; the ducks they quacked; the hens also cackled, at the noise whereof a drake was seen to dance a headless round; the goose was cut in the head to hear it, too.”

Fowl such as chickens will flap their wings soon after their heads are cut off with an axe.

Ball Puppy continued:

“Brave Chant-it-clear, his noble heart was done, his comb was cut, and two or three of his wives, or fairest concubines, had their necks broken before they would zee this day.”

Chanticleer is a traditional name for a cock.

Ball Puppy continued:

“To mark the verven’ [fervent] heart of a beast, the very pig, the pig this very morning, as he was a-roasting, cried out his eyes, and made a show as if he would have bit in two the spit, as if he would say, ‘There shall no roast meat be this dismal day.’”

Grease dripping from the eyes is a sign that the pig is fully roasted or close to it.

Ball Puppy continued:

“And zure [surely], I think, if I had not gotten his tongue between my teeth and eaten it, he would have spoken it.

“Well, I will go in and cry, too; I will never stop crying until our maids may drive a buck — soak the clothes — with my salt tears at the next washing day.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the phrase “to drive the buck” means “to carry through the process of bucking.” “Buck-washing” is a form of bleaching in which clothing is soaked or boiled in alkaline lye as the first part of the process.

He exited.

## ACT 4 (*A Tale of a Tub*)

### — 4.1 —

Justice Preamble, Chanon Hugh (disguised as Captain Thumbs), Tobias Turf, and Miles Metaphor talked together in Justice Preamble's house in Maribone.

Justice Preamble said:

“Keep out those fellows; I'll have none come in but the High Constable, the man of peace, and the queen's Captain, the brave man of war.

“Now, neighbor Turf, the reason why you are called before me by my warrant, but unspecified and not yet made clear in the warrant, is this, and please note it thoroughly!

“Here is a gentleman, Captain Thumbs, and, as it seems, both of good birth, fair speech, and peaceable, who was this morning robbed here in the wood.

“You, for your part, a man of good report and reputation, of credit, landed [owner of land] and of fair demesnes [domains], and by authority High Constable, are notwithstanding touched in this complaint, of being careless and not acting diligently in the hue and cry.

“I cannot choose but grieve a soldier's loss, and I am sorry, too, for your neglect of your duty, since you are my neighbor. This is all I accuse you of.”

The disguised Chanon Hugh said:

“This is not all; I can allege far more, and almost argue that he is an accessory to the robbery.

“Good Master Justice, give me permission to speak, for I am the plaintiff. Don't let his living in the neighborhood make him secure, and don't let him stand on his privilege as High Constable.”

Justice Preamble said, “Sir, I dare use no partiality. Accuse him then of what you please, as long as it is the truth.”

This sentence is ambiguous: It can mean 1) Accuse him then of what you please, as long as you truthfully accuse him, or 2) Accuse him then of what you please, as long as what you accuse him of is him being truthful.

The disguised Chanon Hugh said, “This more — and which is more than he can answer — beside his letting fall the hue and cry, he protects the man charged with the felony, and keeps him hidden, I hear, within his house, because he is affianced and engaged to his daughter.”

Tobias Turf said:

“I do defy ’hun [repudiate him]; so shall she do, too.

“I ask Your Worship’s favor, let me have hearing.

“I do convess, I was told of such a velony, and it disgrieved me not a little, when it was told to me, vor I was going to church to give Audrey away in marriage; and who should marry her but this very Clay, who was charged to be the chief thief o’hun [of them] all.

“Now I — may the halter stick me [may I be hanged] if I tell your worships any leazins [lies] — did forethink ’un [previously think that he] was the truest man, until he waz run away.

“I thought I had had ’un [him] as zure as in a zawpit, or in my oven, or in the town pound [lock-up].”

A sawpit is a hole in the ground.

He continued:

“I was zo zure o’hun [of him], I’d have given my life for ’un [him], until he did escape and run away.

“But now I zee ’un guilty, az var as I can look at ’un [as far as I can see]. Would you have more?”

Tobias Turf was again thinking that John Clay was guilty of robbery.

The disguised Chanon Hugh said:

“Yes, I will have, sir, what the law will give me.

“You gave your word to see him safe forthcoming; I challenge that [I call on you to make it good], but that is forfeited.

“Besides, your carelessness in the pursuit is evidence of your slackness and neglect of duty, which ought to be punished with severity.”

Justice Preamble said:

“He speaks but reason, Turf. Bring forth the man, and you are quit; but otherwise, your word binds you to make amends for all his loss. And think yourself befriended and let off lightly, if he takes it without a farther suit or going to law.

“Come to an agreement with him, Turf. The law is costly, and it will draw on charge — it will be expensive.”

Tobias Turf said:

“Yes, I do know, I vurst mun vee a returney [I first must fee an attorney], and then make legs — bow down to and request — my great man of law to be of my counsel and take trouble-vees [trouble-fees = money from me], and yet zay nothing vor me, but devise all district [strict, harsh] means to ransackle [ransack] me of my money.”

Some lawyers take fees, but then they do nothing for the money.

Tobias Turf continued:

“May a pestilence prick the throats of hun [him]! I do know hun [him], as well az if I waz in their bellies, and brought up there.

“What would you have me do? What would you ask of me?”

The disguised Chanon Hugh said:

“I ask the restitution of my money taken from me in the theft, and I will not abate one penny of the sum: fourscore and five pounds. I ask in addition for amendment for my hurts; my pain and suffering are loss enough for me, sir, to sit down with — that is, to put up with.

“I’ll put it to Your Worship; what you award me I’ll take, and I will give him a general release.”

Justice Preamble asked, “And what do you say now, neighbor Turf?”

Tobias Turf said:

“I put it rather to Your Worship’s bitterment [arbitrement, aka arbitration], hab, nab.”

“Hab, nab” means “however it may turn out, win or lose.”

Tobias Turf continued:

“I shall have a chance of the dice for it, I hope, let them even run, and —”

He meant that he hoped that he would win. A win in this situation would be a small fine.

Justice Preamble said to the disguised Chanon Hugh, “Faith, then I’ll pray you, because he is my neighbor, to take a hundred pounds and to give him day — to let him off.”

The hundred pounds were for the fourscore and five pounds the disguised Chanon Hugh said that he — Captain Thumbs

— had been robbed of, plus fifteen pounds for pain and suffering.

Of course, no robbery and no pain and suffering had occurred. Justice Preamble and Chanon Hugh were defrauding Tobias Turf. A judge and a clergyman were committing a crime against the High Constable.

“Saint Valentine’s Day, I will, this very day, before sunset,” the disguised Chanon Hugh said. “My bond is forfeit otherwise.”

The bond was the warrant to have Tobias Turf arrested.

“Where will you have it paid?” Tobias Turf asked.

The disguised Chanon Hugh said, “In faith, I am a stranger here in the country. Do you know Chanon Hugh, the vicar of Pancras?”

“Yes, who doesn’t know him?” Tobias Turf said.

“I’ll make him my attorney to receive it, and I’ll give you a discharge of the charges against you,” the disguised Chanon Hugh said.

“Whom shall I send for the money?” Tobias Turf asked.

“Why, if you please, send Metaphor, my clerk,” Justice Preamble said. “And, Turf, I much commend thy willingness. It’s evidence of thy integrity.”

Tobias Turf said:

“But my integrity shall be myzelf still.

“Good Master Metaphor, give my wife this key, and do but whisper it — give it secretly — into her hand. She knows it well enough.



“Bid her, by that, to deliver to you the two zealed bags of silver that lie in the corner of the cupboard that stands at my bedside — they’re vifty pounds apiece — and bring them to your master.”

Miles Metaphor said:

“If I don’t prove to be as good a carrier as my friend Tom Long was, then call me his curtal, and change my name of Miles to Guiles, Wiles, Piles, Biles, or the foulest name you can devise, to play the game of crambo with for ale.”

Tom Long was proverbially a dilatory carrier.

A curtal is a horse or a dog with a docked tail.

The word “guiles” means “deceit” and “insidious intelligence.” The word “wiles” means “deceitful tricks.” The word “piles” means “hemorrhoids.” Bile is a secretion of the liver, and it is anger. The foulest name may be the vilest name, and so Viles’.

Crambo is a game in which a word is given and players have to find a rhyme for it.

The disguised Chanon Hugh said quietly to Miles Metaphor:

“Come here, Miles.

“Bring by that token, too, fair Audrey. Say that her father has sent for her. Say that John Clay has been found and waits at Pancras church, where I am waiting to marry them in haste.

“For by this means, Miles, I may say it to thee, thy master must be married to Audrey.

“But say not a word but instead be mum! Go, get thee gone. Be wary of thy charge and keep it close and secret.”

Miles Metaphor said quietly, “O super-dainty Chanon! Vicar incony! [Fine vicar!] Make no delay, Miles, but go away, and bring the wench and money.”

He exited.

The disguised Chanon Hugh said to Tobias Turf:

“Now, sir, I see you meant but honestly and except that business calls me hence away, I would not leave you until the sun were lower —”

He whispered to Justice Preamble:

“But Master Justice, one word, sir, with you.

“By the same token is your mistress sent for by Metaphor, your clerk, as from her father, who, when she comes, I’ll marry her to you, unwitting [unknown] to this Tobias Turf, who shall wait for me at the parsonage.”

He said to himself:

“This was my plot, which I must now make good; I must turn back into Chanon Hugh again, in my square cap.”

The disguised Chanon Hugh then said out loud:

“I humbly take my leave.”

Justice Preamble said:

“Adieu, good Captain Thumbs.”

The disguised Chanon Hugh exited.

Justice Preamble then said:

“Trust me, neighbor Turf, he seems to be a sober gentleman, but this distress has somewhat stirred his patience, and men, you know, in such extremities don’t incline themselves to points of courtesy.

“I’m glad you have made this end.”

Tobias Turf said:

“You stood as my friend, and I thank Your Justice-Worship.

“I ask me to be prezent soon at the tendering of the money, and zee me have a discharge, vor I have no craft in your law quibblins.”

“Craft” is “trickery.”

“Quibblins” are quibbles and tricks.

Justice Preamble said, “I’ll secure you, neighbor.”

They exited.

— **The Scene Interloping** —

**[An Unauthorized and Unlicensed Scene]**

Medley, Clench, To-Pan, and Scriben talked together.

Medley said:

“Indeed there is a woundy [very great] luck in names, sirs, and a main mystery, if a man knew where to vind it.

“My godsire’s name, I’ll tell you, was In-and-In Shittle, and a weaver he was, and it did fit his craft, for so his shittle went in and in still, this way, and then that way.

“And he named me In-and-In Medley; this name serves a joiner’s craft, because we do lay things in and in, in our work. But I am truly *architectonicus professor*, rather, that is, as one would zay, an architect.”

“Shittle” is a mispronunciation of “shuttle.”

Joiners sometimes do inlay work.

An *architectonicus professor* is a professor of architecture.

Clench said, “As I am a varrier and a visicary [a farrier and a physician/apothecary], horse-smith of Hampstead, and the whole town leech [doctor] —”

Clench medically treats people as well as horses.

Medley interrupted, “Yes, you have done woundy [very great] cures, gossip [friend] Clench.”

Clench said:

“If I can zee the stale [urine] once through a urine-hole, I’ll give a shrewd guess, be it man or beast.”

One hopes that “urine-hole” is a mispronunciation of “urinal.”

The shrewd guess would be about the illness and its cure.

Clench continued:

“I cured an ale-wife once who had the staggers worse than five horses, without rowelling.”

An ale-wife with the staggers may be a drunk ale-wife.

“Staggers” is also a horse disease.

“Rowelling” was a medical treatment for horses. It involved placing a piece of leather with a hole in it between the skin and flesh.

Clench continued:

“My godphere [godfather] was a Rabian [an Arabian] or a Jew — you can tell, D’oge, about ’un [him] — they called ’un [him] Doctor Rasi.”

“One Rasis was a great Arabic doctor,” Scriben said.

“He was King Harry’s doctor, and my godphere [godfather],” Clench said.

Doctor Rasi was King Henry VIII's physician.

A famous Arabian physician was known as Rhazes (Mohammed-ben-Zakaria).

To-Pan said, "My godphere [godfather] was a merry-Greek [merry companion], To-Pan of Twyford, a jovial tinker, and a stopper of holes, who left me metal-man of Belsize, his heir."

"A stopper of holes" has a bawdy meaning.

"But who was godphere [godfather], D'ogee?" Medley asked.

D'ogenes Scriben said:

"Vaith, I cannot tell if mine were kursined [christened] or not, but I am zure he had a kursin [Christian] name that he left me, Diogenes.

"A mighty learned man, but pestilence-poor — that is, extremely, plaguy poor — vor he had no house, save an old tub, to dwell in — I vind that in records — and always he turned the tub in the wind's teeth, so it blew on his backside, and there they would lie routing — roaring — one at the other a week, sometimes."

Diogenes was an ancient Greek philosopher who rejected wealth and lived in a tub or barrel. According to D'ogenes Scriben, he farted into the wind.

That's not a good idea. Neither is spitting into the wind.

"Thence came a tale of a tub," Medley said, "and the virst tale of a tub, old D'ogenes' tub."

"That was avore [before] Sir Peter Tub or his lady," Scriben said.

"Aye, or the Squire their son, Tripoly Tub," To-Pan said.

“The Squire is a fine gentleman!” Clench said.

“He is more: a gentleman and a half, almost a knight — within zix inches. That’s his true measure,” Medley said.

“Zure, you can gauge — measure — ’hun [him],” Clench said.

Medley said:

“To a streak, aka mark, or less; I know his diameters and circumference.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a circumference is “That which surrounds, environment.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a diameter is “the diametrical or direct opposite; contrarity, contradiction.”

The direct opposite of “that which surrounds” is that which is surrounded: If it isn’t surrounding, it is surrounded. In this context, that would be an interior life: thoughts and emotions. The environment is part of the exterior life: the place where one lives and acts.

Medley is claiming to know the Squire inside and out.

Medley continued:

“A knight is six diameters, and a squire is vive [five] and zomewhat more; I know it by the compass and scale of man.”

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “compass” means “Artifice, skilful or crafty device.”

People’s guilt or innocence can be weighed in the scales of justice.

Knights are supposed to be gentlemen, and any knight who uses immoral and crafty devices and plots will be found

guilty when weighed in the scales of justice. This kind of character is diametrically opposite to the character a knight should have.

Knights are supposed to abide by a higher standard of chivalry than squires and so they have more dimensions, aka diameters. More is expected of knights than is expected of squires. Knights are supposed to encompass a greater portion and quality of nobility.

Medley continued: “I have upon my rule here the just perportions [proportions] of a knight, a squire; with a tame justice, or an officer rampant [upright] upon the bench, from the High Constable down to the headborough, or tithingman, or meanest — lowest in rank — minister of the peace, God save ’un [him].”

“Rampant” means “upright”; a lion rampant is a lion standing on its hind legs.

To-Pan said, “Why, you can tell us by the squire, neighbor, whence he is called a constable, and whaffore [wherefore].”

“Squire” can mean 1) esquire, and/or 2) a mason’s square.

“No, that’s a book-case,” Medley said. “Scriben can do that. That’s writing and reading, and records.”

“Book-case” means “something that needs to be explained in words, not with math.”

Scriben said, “Two words, *cyning* and *staple*, make a constable, or as we’d say, a hold or stay for the king.”

“Cyning” is an old spelling for “king.”

“Staple” means “supporting thing,” such as a column that supports a roof.

“All constables are truly Johns-for-the-king, whatever their names are, be they Tony or Roger,” Clench said.

“John” is a name associated with servants. A song of the time was titled “John for the King.”

“And all are sworn, as vingers [fingers] on one hand, to hold together against the breach of the peace,” Medley said. “The High Constable is the thumb, as one would zay, the holdfast of the rest.”

A “holdfast” is something that binds.

To-Pan said, “Let’s hope to luck that he speed well in the business between Captain Thumbs and him!”

Medley said:

“I’ll warrant ’un [him] for a groat — I’ll put my money on him.

“I have his measures here in arithmetic [written down in figures], how he should bear ’unself [himself] in all the lines of his place and office.

“Let’s zeek ’un [him] out.”

They exited.

#### — 4.2 —

Squire Tub and Basket Hilts talked together.

“Hilts, how do thou like this, our good day’s work?” Squire Tub asked.

“As good even never a whit, as never the better,” Basket Hilts replied.

In other words: A waste of time.

“Shall we go to Pancridge or shall we go to Kentish Town, Hilts?” Squire Tub asked.



“Let Kentish Town or Pancridge come to us, if either will,” Basket Hilts said. “I will go home again.”

Squire Tub said:

“Indeed, Basket, our success has been but bad, and nothing prospers that we undertake, for we can neither meet with John Clay, nor Audrey, nor the Chanon Hugh, nor Tobias Turf the constable.

“We are like men who wander in strange woods and lose ourselves in search of those whom we seek.”

Basket Hilts said:

“This was because we rose on the wrong side of the bed.

“But as I am now here, just in the midway, I’ll zet my sword on the pommel, and that line the point valls [falls] to we’ll take, whether it be to Kentish Town, the church, or home again.”

The pommel is the rounded knob at the end of a sword’s hilt. To make a decision about which way to go, a person would set a sword on its pommel and let it go. Whichever way the sword pointed when it fell, that way the person would go.

Miles Metaphor, who was still disguised as the pursuivant, entered the scene, but he did not see Squire Tub or Basket Hilts. Miles Metaphor was walking to the Turfs’ house at Kentish Town.

Seeing him, Squire Tub said, “Stop, stop thy hand. Here’s Justice Bramble’s clerk. The unlucky hare has crossed us all this day. I’ll stand aside while thou pump out of him his business, Hilts, and how he’s now employed.”

When an unlucky cat — a black cat — crosses the way ahead of one, it’s supposed to be bad luck in this culture. Miles Metaphor was an unlucky hare: Hares are thought to be

timid; after all, they are prey, not predators. Miles Metaphor was timid.

“Leave it to me,” Basket Hilts said. “I’ll treat him as he deserves.”

Miles Metaphor said to himself:

“Oh, for a pad-horse [an easily padding — easy-paced — horse], pack-horse, or a post-horse, to bear me on his neck, his back, or his croup [hind quarters]!

“I am as weary with running as a mill-horse that has led the mill once, twice, thrice about, after the breath has been out of his body.

“I could get up upon a pannier, a panel, or, to say the truth, a very pack-saddle, until all my honey were turned into gall, and I could sit in the seat no longer.”

A pannier is a basket for carrying goods, and a panel is a saddle-cloth: a cloth placed under the saddle.

Miles Metaphor was tired of walking, and he would like to ride a horse until he became tired of riding.

He continued:

“Oh, for the legs of a lackey now, or a footman, who is the surbater of a clerk courant [running clerk], and the confounder of his trestles dormant [sleeping tables]!”

Lackeys are servants who do a lot of running around as they serve their master, and footmen run beside the coach of their master. Actually, lackeys are footmen, and they are especially running footmen.

A surbater is a person who makes another person footsore. Here it may mean “outrunner.” They outrun the clerk courant, whose feet become sore as he tries to catch up.

“To surbate” means “to make footsore.”

A trestle table is a table made of one or more boards laid on top of trestles; trestles are frameworks that have a beam that is supported by two pairs of sloping legs.

The trestles dormant [sleeping tables] are the tables the clerks rest their heads on and sleep instead of working.

Miles Metaphor wants to have the legs of a footman so his feet will be accustomed to all the walking he is doing and so won't be sore.

Basket Hilts came forward.

Seeing him, Miles Metaphor said, “But who have we here, just in the nick?”

“Nick” means 1) at the critical moment, 2) in a tight place, or 3) the devil.

“I am neither Nick, nor in the nick,” Basket Hilts said. “Therefore you lie, Sir Metaphor.”

These were fighting words: “You lie.”

“Lie!” Miles Metaphor said. “How?”

“Lie so, sir,” Basket Hilts said.

He knocked him down.

“I lie not yet in my throat,” Miles Metaphor said.

Being accused of lying in one's throat was the worst kind of accusation of lying.

“Thou lie on the ground,” Basket Hilts said. “Do thou know me?”

“Yes, I did know you too late,” Miles Metaphor said.

If he had seen him earlier, he could have avoided meeting him.

“What is my name, then?” Basket Hilts asked.

“Basket,” Miles Metaphor answered.

“Basket what?” Basket Hilts asked.

Miles Metaphor said, “Basket the great —”

“The great what?” Basket Hilts asked.

Miles Metaphor said, “Lubber — I should say, lover of the Squire, his master.”

A “lubber” is a lout.

Basket Hilts said:

“Great is my patience to forbear thee thus, thou scrapehill scoundrel, and thou scum of man! Uncivil, orange-tawny-coated clerk!”

A scrapehill is a person who rakes dunghills.

Basket Hilts continued:

“Thou came but half a thing into the world, and were made up of patches, parings, shreds.

“Thou, who when last thou were put out of service, travelled to Hampstead Heath on an Ash Wednesday, where thou did stand six weeks the Jack of Lent for boys to hurl things, three throws a penny, at thee, to make thee some money to put in a purse.”

A Jack of Lent is a stuffed puppet that serves as a target for boys to throw things at.

A purse is a bag for money.

Basket Hilts continued:

“Do thou see this bold, bright blade? This sword shall shred thee as small unto the grave as minced meat for a pie.

“I’ll set all of thee in earth, except thy head and thy right arm, which shall be at liberty to keep thy hat off to show respect to me, while I question thee what, why, and whither thou were going now, with a face ready to break out — erupt — with business.

“And tell me truly, lest I dash it in pieces.”

Miles Metaphor said, “Then, Basket, put thy smiter — thy sword — up and hear what I say. I don’t dare tell the truth to a drawn sword.”

Hilts sheathed his sword and said, “It is sheathed; stand up and speak without fear or wit [cunning].”

Miles Metaphor stood up and said:

“I don’t know what they mean; but Constable Turf sends here his key for monies in his cupboard, which he must pay the Captain who was robbed this morning.

“Do you smell anything?”

He meant: Do you smell a trick?

Basket Hilts said, “No, not I. Thy breeches yet are honest.”

He meant that they were not yet soiled.

Miles Metaphor said:

“As is my mouth.

“Don’t you smell a rat?

“I tell you the truth: I think all’s knavery. For the Chanon whispered to me in my ear, when Turf had given me his key, to by the same token bring Mistress Audrey as if her father has sent for her to come thither, and to say that John Clay

has been found — which is indeed to get the wench forth for my master, who is to be married when she comes there. The Chanon has his rules — his prayer book — ready and all there to dispatch the matter.”

Squire Tub came forward and said:

“Now, on my life, this is the Chanon’s plot!

“Miles, I have heard all thy discourse to Basket. Will thou be true and loyal to me? I’ll reward thee well, if thou make me happy in my Mistress Audrey.”

Miles Metaphor said, “Your Worship shall dispose of Metaphor through all his parts, even from the sole of the head to the crown of the foot, to be fully in your service.”

Squire Tub said:

“Then give thy message to the Mistress Turf:

“Tell her thy token, bring the money here, and likewise take young Audrey into thy charge.

“That done, then here, Metaphor, we will wait, and intercept and meet thee. And for thy reward, you two — you and Basket Hilts — shall share the money, and I will have the maiden.

“If anyone should take offence, I’ll make all good.”

Miles Metaphor asked, “But shall I have half the money, sir, indeed?”

“Aye, on my squireship and my land, I swear thou shall,”  
Squire Tub said.

Miles Metaphor said:

“Then if I don’t make, sir, the cleanliest excuse to get her hither, and be then as careful to keep her for you as if it were

for myself, then get down on your knees, and pray that honest Miles may break his neck before he get over two stiles.”

— 4.3 —

Squire Tub replied, “Make haste, then; we will wait here for thy return.”

Miles Metaphor exited, and Squire Tub said:

“This unlooked-for luck has revived my hopes, which were oppressed with a dark melancholy.

“In happy time we lingered on the way to meet these summons of a better sound, which are the essence of my soul’s content.”

Basket Hilts said:

“This heartless — cowardly — fellow, shame to serving-men, stain of all liveries, disgrace to his uniform, what fear makes him do!

“What sordid, ignoble, wretched, and unworthy things he does!

“Betray his master’s secrets, open the closet of his master’s plots, force the foolish Justice to make way for your love, plotting of his own —

“He is like a man who digs a trap to catch another man but falls into it himself!”

Squire Tub said, “So would I have it, and I hope it will prove a jest to twit — mock — the Justice with.”

“But that this poor white-livered, cowardly rogue should do it!” Basket Hilts said. “And only out of fear!”

“And hope of money, Hilts,” Squire Tub said. “Even a valiant man will nibble at that bait.”

“Who but a fool will refuse money offered to him?” Basket Hilts, who was hoping to get fifty pounds soon, said.

“And sent by so good chance and fortune?” Squire Tub said. “Pray heaven he speed and succeed.”

Basket Hilts said, “If he comes back empty-handed, let him count on going back empty-headed; I’ll not leave him so much of brain in his pate, with pepper and vinegar, that could be served in for sauce to a calf’s head.”

In the slang of the time, a calf is a fool.

“Thou treat him rightly, Hilts,” Squire Tub said.

Basket Hilts said:

“I’ll seal az much with my hand as I dare say now with my tongue.”

He shook hands with Squire Tub and asked:

‘But if you get the lass [away?] from Dargison, what will you do with her?’

The lass is Audrey.

“Dargison” may mean “son of darg.” In Scottish dialect, “darg” is a day’s work. Squire Tub may be calling Justice Preamble a working man as an insult. Basket Hilts had just referred to “the foolish Justice” and Squire Tub was hoping to twit Justice Preamble. Certainly, many people were working hard on this day to marry Audrey or to get Audrey married.

But perhaps “Dargison” is Miles Metaphor, Justice Preamble’s clerk, who was getting Audrey and bringing her



to Squire Tub. Now Miles was working for Squire Tub and so he was a working man.

“Dargasson” means “de lad” or “de boy.” The French *le gamin* means “the boy” or “the lad,” and the French *gosse* means “lad, kid, brat.” This could be Miles Metaphor.

Squire Tub said, “We’ll think of that when once we have her in possession, governor.”

— 4.4 —

Ball Puppy, Miles Metaphor, and Audrey talked together in the Turfs’ house.

Ball Puppy said:

“You see we trust you, Master Metaphor, with Mistress Audrey. Please, treat her well, as a gentlewoman should be treated.

“For my part, I do incline a little and am sympathetic to the serving-man. We have been of a coat — that is, we were in the same occupation. I had a coat like yours, until it did play me such a sleeveless — pointless — errand as I had nothing where [nowhere] to put my arms in, and then I threw it off.”

Sleeves have ends.

“Err ends” might be nonexistent sleeves.

And nonexistent ends might be “air ends.”

Ball Puppy continued:

“Please, go before her and walk in front of her, like a serving-man, and see that your nose does not run and drop.

“For an example, you shall see me. See how I go before her! So you should do, sweet Miles.

“She, for her own part, is a woman who doesn’t care what man can do to her in the way of honesty and good manners.

“So farewell, fair Mistress Audrey; farewell, Master Miles. I have brought you thus far onward on your way. I must go back now to make clean the rooms where my good lady has been.

“Please commend me to bridegroom Clay and tell him to bear up stiff.”

“Stiff” has a bawdy meaning in addition to the meaning of “steadfast.”

“Thank you, good Hannibal Puppy,” Miles Metaphor said. “I shall fit the leg of your commands with the strait buskins of dispatch very quickly.”

“Strait buskins” are tightly fitting coverings for feet and legs.

“Farewell, fine Metaphor,” Ball Puppy said.

He exited.

Miles Metaphor said to Audrey, “Come, gentle mistress, will you please to walk?”

“I don’t love to be led,” Audrey said. “I’d go alone.”

Miles Metaphor said, “Let not the mouse of my good meaning, lady, be snapped up in the trap of your suspicion, to lose the tail (or tale) there, either of her truth, or swallowed by the cat of misconstruction.”

In this culture, people thought that mice could escape traps by leaving behind their tail.

“You are too finical — too affected — for me,” Audrey said. “Speak plainly, sir.”

Squire Tub and Basket Hilts entered the scene.

“Welcome again, my Audrey, welcome, love!” Squire Tub said. “You shall go with me; in faith, deny me not. I cannot brook and endure the second hazard, mistress.”

“Forbear, Squire Tub,” Audrey said. “Stop. As my own mother says, I am not for your mowing. You’ll be flown before I am fledged.”

One meaning of “mow” is “have sex with.”

Squire Tub was older than Audrey. Metaphorically, Audrey was saying that Squire Tub would have flown away from the nest before she had grown the feathers that would enable her to fly.

Since Squire Tub had a tutor and protector in Basket Hilts, and since his mother was so protective of him, however, he may not have been much older than Audrey. She may have been using age as an excuse for not being interested in him.

“Have thou the money, Miles?” Basket Hilts asked.

“Here are two bags,” Miles Metaphor said. “Here’s fifty pounds in each bag.”

Squire Tub said, “Nay, Audrey, I possess you for this time.”

He gave Miles Metaphor and Basket Hilts the money and said, “Sirs, take that coin between you and divide it.”

He then said to Audrey, “My pretty sweeting, give me now the leave to challenge — claim — love and marriage at your hands.”

Audrey said:

“Now out upon you. Aren’t you ashamed?”

“What will my lady say? Indeed, I think she was at our house, and I think she asked for you, and I think she hit me in the teeth with you — that is, she reproached me about you.

“I thank Her Ladyship, and I think she means not to go away from here until she has found you.”

Squire Tub asked, “What are you saying? Was then my lady mother at your house?”

He then said, “Let’s have a word with you aside, in private.”

“Yes, twenty words,” Audrey said.

Tub and Audrey talked together apart from the others.

Lady Tub and Pol-Marten arrived on the scene.

Lady Tub said:

“It is strange, a motion — an impulse — but I know not what, comes into my mind, to leave the way to Totten Court and turn my journey to Kentish Town again.

“And look! Pol-Marten, my son is with his Audrey!

“A while ago, we left her at her father’s house, and has he thence removed her in such haste!

“What shall I do? Shall I speak fair words to him, or chide him?”

Pol-Marten advised, “Madam, your worthy son with duteous care can govern his affections. So then, break off their conversation some other way, pretending ignorance of what you know.”

Kneeling before Audrey, Squire Tub said to her, “If this is all, fair Audrey, I am thine.”

He felt that he could overcome any objections she had to their marriage.

Lady Tub approached him and said, “Mine you were once, though scarcely now your own.”

“By God’s eyelid, my lady, my lady!” Basket Hilts said.

“Is this my lady bright?” Miles Metaphor asked.

“Madam, you took me now a little tardy — you surprised me,” Squire Tub said, rising from his knees.

Lady Tub said:

“At prayers I think you were. What, are you so devout lately that you will shrive you — confess your sins — to all confessors you meet by chance?”

“Come, go with me, good Squire, and leave your linen.”

Audrey was dressed in linen for her wedding, if it should occur.

Lady Tub was wearing velvet, and velvet is more expensive than linen.

Lady Tub continued:

“I have now some business, which is of some importance, to impart to you.”

“Madam, please, spare me just an hour,” Squire Tub said.

“May it please you to walk before me, and I will follow you.”

“It must be now,” Lady Tub said. “My business lies this way.”

Squire Tub said, “Won’t you excuse me until an hour from now, madam?”

Lady Tub said:

“Squire, these excuses argue more your guilt. You have some new plan now to project that the poor tileman — John Clay — scarcely will thank you for.

“What? Will you go?”

Squire Tub said, “I have taken a charge upon me to see this maiden conducted to her father, who with the Chanon Hugh waits for her at Pancras, to see her married to the same John Clay.”

Lady Tub said, “It is very well, but Squire, don’t you worry about that. I’ll send Pol-Marten with her for that office. You shall go along with me — it is decided.”

“I have a little business with a friend, madam,” Squire Tub said.

Lady Tub replied, “That friend shall wait for you, or you for him.”

She then said, “Pol-Marten, take the maiden into your care. Commend me to her father.”

“I will follow you,” Squire Tub said.

“Tut, don’t talk to me about following,” Lady Tub said.

“I’ll but speak a word,” Squire Tub said.

Lady Tub said:

“No whispering; you forget yourself, and you make your love too palpable and obvious.

“A squire, and think so meanly? Fall upon a cow-shard?”

A cow-shard is cow dung.

A proverb stated, “The beetle flies over many a sweet flower and lights on a cow-shard.”

Lady Tub continued:

“You know my mind. Come, I’ll go to Tobias Turf’s house and look for Dido and our Valentine.”

Their Valentine was Ball Puppy.

Then she ordered:

“Pol-Marten, look after your charge; I’ll look after mine.”

Everyone except Pol-Marten and Audrey exited.

Pol-Marten said to himself:

“I smile to think that after so many offers of marriage this maiden has had, she now should fall to me, so that I should have her in my custody!

“It would be but a mad trick to make the attempt, and jump — make — a match with her immediately.

“She’s fair and handsome, and she’s rich enough. Both time and place provide a fair opportunity to do so.

“Have at it then! I’ll do it!”

He asked Audrey, “Fair lady, can you love?”

“No, sir,” Audrey answered. “What’s that?”

“A toy that women use,” Pol-Marten said.

A proverb stated, “Love is a toy [trifle].”

“If it is a toy, it’s good to play with,” Audrey said.

The noun “toy” can mean amorous activity such as flirtation.

“We will not stand talking about the toy,” Pol-Marten said.

“The way is short. Does it please you to prove it — to try it — mistress?”

“If you do mean to stand so long upon it, I ask you to let me give it a short cut, sir,” Audrey said.

A shortcut is a short way.

A cut is a vulva. Because a vulva consists of the labia (the cut) and the mound of Venus (no cut), aka *mons veneris*, the cut is a short cut.

The verb “stand” can mean to have an erection, which can be another kind of toy.

“It’s thus, fair maid: Are you disposed to marry?” Pol-Marten asked.

“You are disposed to ask,” Audrey said.

“Are you disposed to grant?” Pol-Marten asked.

“Now I see you are disposed indeed,” Audrey said.

“Disposed” can mean “inclined to jest.”

Pol-Marten said to himself, “I see that the wench lacks just a little wit and intelligence, and that defect her wealth may well supply.”

Actually, Audrey had made a good pun. She understood him quite well.

He then asked out loud, “In plain terms, tell me, will you have me, Audrey?”

Audrey replied:

“In as plain terms, I tell you who would have me.

“John Clay would have me, but he has too-hard — and two hard — hands. I don’t like him; besides, he is a thief.

“And Justice Bramble, he would eagerly have caught me and made me his wife.



“But the young Squire, he, rather than his life, would have me yet and make me a lady, he says, and be my knight to do me true knight’s service, before his lady mother.

“Can you make me a lady, if I were to have and marry you?”

No, he could not give her the social status of being a lady.

What could he give her?

Pol-Marten said, “I can give you a silken gown and a rich petticoat, and a French hood.”

He then said to himself, “All fools love to be brave — splendid. I find her humor, and I will pursue it.”

Her humor — personal desire — was to be splendidly dressed. So Pol-Marten thought.

But Audrey did not want to be a lady, and so she was resistant to marrying Squire Tub.

They exited.

— 4.6 —

Lady Tub, Dame Turf, Squire Tub, and Basket Hilts talked together in the Turfs’ house.

Lady Tub said:

“And as I told thee, she was intercepted by the Squire here, my son, and this bold Ruffin, his serving-man, who safely would have carried her to her father and the Chanon Hugh.

“But for more care of the security, my usher has her now in his grave charge.”

“Ruffin” is a name for a devil; it also means “ruffian.”

Squire Tub’s serving-man was Basket Hilts.

Lady Tub’s usher was Pol-Marten.

Dame Turf said:

“Now on my faith and halidom, we are beholden to Your Worship.”

“Halidom” is something held to be sacred.

She continued:

“She’s a girl, a foolish girl, and soon may be tempted. But if this day should pass well once over her head, I’ll wish her trust to herself and be responsible for herself, for I have been a very — a true — mother to her, though I am the one who says it.”

Some things such as praise of oneself are better said by someone else.

Squire Tub said, “Madam, it is late, and Pancridge is in your way. I think Your Ladyship forgets yourself.”

Lady Tub said:

“Your mind runs much on Pancridge. You think a lot about it.

“Well, young Squire, the black ox never trod yet on your foot — adversity has not yet tested you. These idle fancies will forsake you one day.”

She then said:

“Come, Mistress Turf, will you go take a walk over the fields to Pancridge, to your husband?”

Dame Turf answered:

“Madam, I would have been there an hour ago, except that I waited on my serving-man, Ball Puppy.”

She called:

“What, Ball, I say!”

She then said:

“I think the idle slouch has fallen asleep in the barn, he stays away so long.”

Terrified, Ball Puppy entered the scene and said:

“Satin, in the name of velvet Satin, dame!”

By “Satin,” he meant, “Satan.”

Ball Puppy continued:

“The devil! Oh, the devil is in the barn!

“Help, help! A legion — spirit Legion is in the barn! In every straw is a devil!”

“Legion” with a capital L is the name of a devil; “legion” with a small l is a large number.

“Why do thou bawl so, Puppy?” Dame Turf asked. “Speak, what ails thee?”

He replied, “My name’s Ball Puppy, and I bawl. I have seen the devil among the straw. Oh, for a cross, a collop of Friar Bacon, or a conjuring stick of Doctor Faustus! Spirits are in the barn.”

A “collop” is a slice of bacon.

Friar Bacon and Doctor Faustus were famous magicians.

“What!” Squire Tub said. “Spirits in the barn? Basket, go and see.”

Basket Hilts replied:

“Sir, if you were my master ten times over, and Squire as well, as I already know you are, then you shall pardon me.

“Send me among devils? I zee you love me not.

“Hell be at their game, I’ll not trouble them.”

“Go and see,” Squire Tub said. “I warrant thee there’s no such matter.”

“If they were giants, it would be another matter,” Basket Hilts said. “But devils! No, if I should be torn in pieces, what is your warrant worth? I’ll see the fiend set fire to the barn before I come there.”

“Now all zaints bless us, if he should be there!” Dame Turf said. “He is an ugly sprite, I warrant.”

Ball Puppy said:

“As ugly as any sprite that ever held flesh-hook, dame, or handled fire-fork, rather.”

Devils often carried long hooks or forks. Flesh-hooks could be used for hanging the flesh of sinners; fire-forks were used for stirring the fire.

Ball Puppy continued:

“They have put me in a sweet pickle, dame. Except that my lady Valentine smells of musk, I should be ashamed to press into this presence.”

In other words: Lady Tub’s perfume covers up the stink in his pants that has resulted from his great fear.

“Basket, please, see what is the miracle!” Lady Tub said.

Squire Tub said to Basket Hilts, “Come, go with me. I’ll lead. Why stand thou still, man?”

Basket Hilts replied, “Cock’s precious, master, you are not mad indeed? You will not go to Hell before your time?”

“Cock’s precious” is an oath that has been sanitized for ears that are accustomed to listening for blasphemy. The original oath is “By God’s precious blood.”

“Why are thou thus afraid?” Squire Tub asked.

“No, not afraid,” Basket Hilts said. “But by your leave, I’ll come no nearer to the barn.”

“Puppy, will thou go with me?” Squire Tub asked.

Ball Puppy said:

“What! Go with you? Whither? Into the barn? Go to whom? The devil? Or to do what there? To be torn among ’hum [them]?”

“Wait for my master, the High Constable, or In-and-In, the headborough; let them go into the barn with warrant, seize the fiend, and set him in the stocks for his ill rule.

“It is not for me who am but flesh and blood to meddle with ’un [him]. Vor I cannot, nor I wu’not [and I would not].”

“I pray thee, Tripoly, look and see what is the matter!” Lady Tub said.

Squire Tripoli Tub replied, “That shall I, madam.”

He exited.

“May Heaven protect my master!” Basket Hilts said. “I tremble in every joint until he comes back.”

Ball Puppy said:

“Now, now, even now the spirits are tearing him in pieces.

“Now are they tossing his legs and arms like they were tossing loggets at a pear-tree.”

In a game called loggets, small pieces of wood were thrown near a stake.

The word “pear” can be used to mean vulva, and you can guess what a logget would be. (Parolles uses “pear” to refer to Helena’s virgin vulva in Act 1, Scene 1 of William Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well*.)

Ball Puppy continued:

“I’ll go to the hole, peep in, and see whether he lives or dies.”

“I would not be in my master’s coat for thousands of pounds,” Basket Hilts said.

In a way, Basket Hilts was wearing his master’s coat: He was wearing his master’s livery, clothing that identified him as being the servant to a particular master.

Ball Puppy said, “Then pluck it off and turn thyself away.”

By taking off his master’s livery, Basket Hilts would show that he was quitting his job.

Ball Puppy peeped through a hole and said, “Oh, the devil! The devil! The devil!”

“Where, man? Where?” Basket Hilts asked.

“Alas, that we were ever born!” Dame Turf said. “So near, too!”

They were near to the “devil.”

“The Squire has him in his hand, and leads him out by the collar,” Ball Puppy said.

Squire Tub led John Clay over to the others.

“Oh, this is John Clay,” Dame Turf said.

“John Clay is at Pancras,” Lady Tub said. “He is there to be married.”

“This was the spirit that reveled in the barn,” Squire Tub said.

Ball Puppy said:

“The devil he was! Was this the he [the man] who was crawling among the wheat-straw? Had it been the barley, I should have taken him for the devil in drink, the spirit of the bride-ale!”

Barley is used in making alcoholic beverages: ale and spirits such as brandy.

Ball Puppy continued:

“But poor John, tame John of Clay, that sticks about the bung-hole —”

A bung-hole is a hole in a cask; it is stopped with a bung.

Basket Hilts said:

“If this be all your devil, I would take it in hand to conjure him — I would drive him away.

“But may Hell take me if ever I come in a right — a real — devil’s way, if I can keep myself out of it.”

“Well meant, Hilts,” Squire Tub said.

He exited.

Lady Tub asked, “But how came John Clay thus hid here in the straw, when news was brought to you all that he was at Pancridge, and you believed it?”

Dame Turf answered, “Justice Bramble’s serving-man told me so, madam; and by that same token and other things such

as a key, he took away my daughter and two sealed bags of money.”

“Where’s the Squire?” Lady Tub said, not seeing him. “Has he gone away from here?”

“He was here, madam, just now,” Dame Turf said.

“Has the hue and cry passed by?” John Clay asked.

“Aye, aye, John Clay,” Ball Puppy answered.

“And am I out of danger to be hanged?” John Clay asked.

Robbers could be hanged.

“Hanged, John?” Ball Puppy said. “Yes, to be sure; unless, as with the proverb, you mean to make the choice of your own gallows.”

A proverb stated, “If I be hanged, I’ll choose my gallows.”

“Nay, then all’s well,” John Clay said. “Hearing your news, Ball Puppy, that you brought from Paddington, I even stole home here, and I thought to hide myself in the barn ever since.”

“Oh, wonderful!” Ball Puppy said. “And news was brought us here that you were at Pancridge, ready to be married.”

“No, in faith,” John Clay said. “I ne’er was funder [further] than the barn.”

Dame Turf said:

“Make haste, Puppy! Call forth Mistress Dido Wisp, my lady’s gentlewoman, to her lady, and call yourself forth, and a couple of maids, to wait upon me. We are all undone and ruined! My lady is undone! Her fine young son, the Squire, has gotten away.”

Dame Turf was afraid that Squire Tub would marry Audrey.



So was Lady Tub, who said to Ball Puppy, “Make haste, haste, good Valentine.”

Dame Turf said, “And you, John Clay, you are undone, too! All! My husband is undone, by a true key but a false token; and I myself am undone by parting with my daughter, who’ll be married to somebody whom she should not, if we don’t make haste.”

## ACT 5 (*A Tale of a Tub*)

### — 5.1 —

Squire Tub, Pol-Marten, and Audrey talked together.

Squire Tub said, “Please, good Pol-Marten, show thy diligence and faith at the same time. Bring her, but so disguised that the Chanon may not know her and leave me to plot the rest. I will expect thee here.”

Pol-Marten replied, “You shall, Squire. I’ll perform it with all care, if all my lady’s wardrobe will disguise her.”

Squire Tub exited.

“Come, Mistress Audrey,” Pol-Marten said.

“Has the Squire gone?” Audrey asked.

“He’ll meet us by and by, where he appointed,” Pol-Marten said. “You shall be splendidly dressed at once so that no one shall know you.”

They exited.

### — 5.2 —

Clench, Medley, To-Pan, and D’ogenes Scriben talked together. They were outside Chanon Hugh’s house in St. Pancras.

“I wonder where the queen’s High Constable is?” Clench said. “I veer they have made ’hun away [carried him away].”

Medley said, “No, zure [to be sure], the Justice dare not consent to that. He’ll zee ’un [him] forthcoming.”

In other words: Justice Preamble will make sure that the High Constable appears.

To-Pan said, "He must, vor we can all take corpulent oath that we zaw 'un [him] go in the house."

A corporal oath is ratified by swearing on a Bible or other sacred object.

Scriben said, "Aye, upon record the clock dropped [chimed] twelve at Maribone."

"You are right, D'oge!" Medley said to Scriben. "Zet down to a minute; now it is a'most your [almost four o'clock]."

Squire Tub and Basket Hilts entered the scene.

"Here comes Squire Tub," Clench said.

"And his governor, Master Basket Hilts," Scriben said. "Do you know 'hun [him]? A valiant wise vellow, az tall a man on his hands as goes on veet."

Scriben was combining two proverbs:

"He is a tall man with his hands." In other words: He is skillful.

"As good a man as ever went on his legs."

Scriben then said, "Bless you, Mas' [Master] Basket."

"Thank you, good D'oge," Basket Hilts said.

"Who's that?" Squire Tub asked.

"D'oge Scriben, the great writer, sir, of Chalcot," Basket Hilts replied.

"And who are the rest?" Squire Tub asked.

Basket Hilts replied, "The wisest heads of the hundred. Medley the joiner, headborough of Islington; Pan of Belsize, and Clench, the leech [physician] of Hampstead: the High Constable's Council, here, of Finsbury."

Squire Tub said, “Prezent me to them, Hilts: Squire Tub of Totten Court.”

Basket Hilts said, “Wise men of Finsbury, make place for a squire: I bring to your acquaintance, Tub of Totten Court. Squire Tub, my master, loves all men of virtue, and longs, az one would zay, until he is one of you.”

“His Worship’s welcun to our company,” Clench said. “I wish that our company were even wiser for ’hun [for his sake]!”

To-Pan said, “Here are some of us who are called the witty — that is, wise — men over a hundred —”

Scriben interrupted, “And zome a thousand, when the Muster Day comes.”

Muster Day was a day of military parades and inspecting the troops.

Squire Tub said:

“I long, as my man Hilts said, and my governor, to be adopted and accepted into your society.

“Can any man make a masque here in this company?”

“A masque!” To-Pan said. “What’s that?”

Scriben answered, “A mumming — a short show, with vizards and fine clothes.”

Vizards are masks. Mummings often had disguised characters.

Clench said:

“A disguise, neighbor, is the true word [the older word] for a masque.”

He then pointed to Medley and said, “There stands the man who can do it, sir: Medley the joiner, In-and-In of Islington, the only man at a disguise in Middlesex.”

In other words: Medley is the only — the best — man in Middlesex for making a masque.

“But who shall write it?” Squire Tub said.

“Scriben, the great writer,” Basket Hilts said.

Scriben said:

“In-and-In Medley will do it alone, sir; he will join with no man, although he is a joiner.”

In addition to being a carpenter, a joiner can be a collaborator.

Scriben continued:

“In design, as he calls it, he must be sole inventor. In-and-In draws with no other in planning his project, he’ll tell you.

“It cannot else be feazible or conduce: Those are his ruling words!

“Will it please you to hear ’hun [him]?”

The verb “conduce” means “bring about a particular result.”

Squire Tub said, “Yes. Master In-and-In, I have heard of you.”

“I can do nothing, I,” Medley said.

“He can do all, sir,” Clench said.

“They’ll tell you so,” Medley said.

Squire Tub said:

“I’d have a toy presented, *A Tale of a Tub*, a story of myself.

“You can express a Tub?”

A toy can be an entertainment, or a trifle.

Medley said, “If it conduce to the design, whatever is feazible. I can express a wash-house, if need be, with a whole pedigree of Tubs.”

Squire Tub said, “No, one will be enough to note and give an account of our name and family, Squire Tub of Totten Court, and to show my adventures this very day. I’d have it in Tub’s Hall, at Totten Court, my lady mother’s house, which is my house indeed, for I am heir to it.”

Medley said, “If I might see the place and had surveyed it, I could say more. For all artistic invention, sir, comes by degrees and on the view [consideration] of nature. A world of things concurs to the design, which makes it feazible, if art conduces.”

He wanted to see the location of the masque and sketch its layout; such a knowledge of the location could give him ideas on how to present the masque. Such presentations could include mechanical contrivances.

“You say well, witty Master In-and-In,” Squire Tub said. “How long have you studied engine?”

The noun “engine” means the making of contrivances; it involves mechanics.

Medley answered, “Since I first joined [first practiced carpentry] or did inlay in wit [using my intelligence], some vorty [forty] years.”

“A pretty time!” Squire Tub said.

He then said:

“Basket Hilts, you go and wait on Master In-and-In to Totten Court, and all the other wise masters. Show them the hall and taste the language of the buttry to them.”

In other words: Show them the hall and give them a drink.

Squire Tub continued:

“Let them see all the Tub family members about the house, who can talk to him about the matter, until I come — which shall be within an hour at least.”

Clench said, “It will be glorious if In-and-In will undertake it, sir. He has a monstrous medley wit of his own.”

Squire Tub said:

“Spare for no cost, either in boards or hoops, to architect — design — your tub.”

Apparently, a very large tub was planned for the masque.

He continued:

“Haven’t you a cooper at London called Vitruvius? Send for him, or old John Heywood, call him to you to help.”

Vitruvius was a first-century Roman architect, and John Heywood was an English playwright and musician who went into exile in 1564.

“He scorns the proposal,” Scriben said. “Trust to In-and-In Medley alone.”

— 5.3 —

Lady Tub, Dame Turf, John Clay, Ball Puppy, and Dido Wisp entered the scene.

Lady Tub said:

“Oh, here’s the Squire!

“You slipped away from us finely, son! These manners to your mother will commend you, but in another age, not this.

“Well, Tripoly, your father, good Sir Peter, rest his bones, would not have done this.

“Where’s my usher: Pol-Marten? And where is your fair Mistress Audrey?”

“I did not see them,” Squire Tub said. “I saw no creature but the four wise masters here of Finsbury Hundred, who came to cry and make public their concern about their constable, Tobias Turf, who they say is lost.”

Dame Turf said, “My husband lost! And my fond — foolish — daughter, I fear, is lost, too!

“Where is Pol-Marten, your gentleman, madam?”

“Poor John Clay, thou have lost thy Audrey.”

“I have lost my wits, my little wits, good mother,” John Clay said. “I am distracted and confused.”

Ball Puppy said:

“And I have lost my mistress, Dido Wisp, who frowns upon her Puppy, Hannibal.”

This kind of mistress is a woman to whom one is devoted; it does not necessarily imply a sexual relationship.

Ball Puppy continued:

“Loss! Loss on every side! A public loss! Loss of my master! Loss of his daughter! Loss of favor, friends, my mistress! Loss of all!”

Justice Preamble and Tobias Turf entered the scene.

“What cry is this?” Justice Preamble asked.



“My serving-man, Ball Puppy, speaks of some loss,” Tobias Turf said.

“My master has been found!” Ball Puppy said. “Good luck, if it be thy will, alight on us all!”

“Oh, husband, are you alive?” Dame Turf said. “They said you were lost.”

“Where’s Justice Bramble’s clerk?” Tobias Turf asked. “Did he get the money that I sent for?”

“Yes, two hours ago,” Dame Turf said. “He got two bags of fifty pounds each in silver, and Audrey, too.”

“Why Audrey?” Tobias Turf said. “Who sent for her?”

“You, Master Turf, the fellow said,” Dame Turf answered.

“He lied,” Tobias Turf said. “I am cozened and cheated, robbed, undone, ruined! Miles Metaphor, your serving-man, is a thief, and has run away with my daughter, Master Bramble, and with my money.”

“Neighbor Turf, have patience; I can assure you that your daughter is safe,” Lady Tub said. “But as for the money, I know nothing about that.”

“My money is my daughter, and my daughter, she is my money, madam,” Tobias Turf said.

“I do wonder how your Ladyship has come to know anything in these affairs,” Justice Preamble said.

Lady Tub said, “Yes, Justice Bramble, I met the maiden in the fields by chance in the company of the Squire, my son. How he alighted upon — found — her, he himself best can tell.”

Squire Tub said, “I intercepted her as she was coming hither to her father, who sent for her by Miles Metaphor, Justice

Preamble's clerk. And if Your Ladyship hadn't hindered it, I would have paid back fine Master Justice for his newly made warrant, and for the new pursuivant he served it by this morning."

"Do you know that, sir?" Justice Preamble asked.

Lady Tub said, "You told me, Squire, quite another tale, but I didn't believe you, which made me send Audrey another way by my Pol-Marten, and take my journey back to Kentish Town, where we found John Clay hidden in the barn in order to escape the hue and cry after him; and here he is."

Tobias Turf said:

"John Clay again! Then set cock-a-hoop!"

"Set cock-a-hoop!" means "Let's celebrate!" The cock (tap) of a beer or wine cask would be opened so the liquor would flow freely.

He continued:

"I have lost no daughter, nor no money, Justice.

"John Clay shall pay; I'll look to you now, John. Vaith, out it must, as good at night as morning."

John Clay had broken his bail by escaping, and now Tobias Turf would make him pay back the money that Tobias Turf had spent because John Clay had escaped: one hundred pounds.

Tobias Turf continued:

"I am even as vull [full] as a piper's bag with joy, or a great gun upon carnation [malapropism for 'coronation'] day!

"I could weep lion's tears — huge tears — to see you, John.

“It is but two bags of vifty pounds each I have ventured for you, but now I have you, you shall pay the whole hundred.

“Run from your borrows, son!”

In other words: Tobias Turf was shocked that John Clay had run from the pledges he had made to get Tobias Turf to stand — guarantee — his bail. Those pledges included not running away.

Tobias Turf continued:

“Faith, even be hanged, if you once earth yourself and hide in a hole, John, in the barn, then I have no daughter vor you.”

He then asked:

“Who did verret ’hun [ferret John Clay out]?”

Dame Turf answered, “My lady’s son, the Squire here, vetched ’hun [him] out. Puppy had put us all in such a vright [fright] that we thought the devil was in the barn, and nobody dared to venture against hun [him].”

“I have now resolved who shall have my daughter,” Tobias Turf said.

“Who?” Dame Turf asked.

“He who best deserves her,” Tobias Turf said.

That person could be Squire Tub, who had shown courage in going into the barn when others thought that at least one devil was inside.

Seeing Chanon Hugh coming, Tobias Turf said, “Here comes the vicar.”

He then said to him, “Chanon Hugh, we have vound John Clay again! The matter’s all come round.”

“Has Miles Metaphor returned yet?” Chanon Hugh asked.

“All is turned here to confusion, and we have lost our plot,” Justice Preamble said. “I fear my serving-man has run away with the money, and John Clay has been found, in whom old Tobias Turf is sure to save his stake.”

“What shall we do then, Justice?” Chanon Hugh asked.

“The bride was met in the young Squire’s hands,” Justice Preamble said.

“And what’s become of her?” Chanon Hugh asked.

“None here can tell,” Justice Preamble said.

“Wasn’t my mother’s serving-man, Pol-Marten, with you, and a strange gentlewoman in his company, recently here, Chanon?” Squire Tub asked.

“Yes, and I dispatched them,” Chanon Hugh said.

“Dispatched them!” Squire Tub said. “What do you mean?”

“Why, I married them, as they desired, just now,” Chanon Hugh said.

“And do you know what you have done, Sir Hugh?” Squire Tub asked.

“No harm, I hope,” Chanon Hugh said.

Squire Tub said, “You have ended all the quarrel: Audrey is married.”

He had guessed the truth: The strange gentlewoman who had gotten married to Pol-Marten was Audrey, dressed in fine clothing.

“Married! To whom?” Lady Tub asked.

“My daughter Audrey married, and she not know of it!” Tobias Turf said.

Certainly, no one had anticipated the marriage: Apparently, no one, including Audrey, had ever thought that Pol-Marten would be her groom.

“Nor her father or mother!” Dame Turf said.

“Whom has she married?” Lady Tub asked

“Your Pol-Marten, madam,” Squire Tub said. “A groom who was never dreamt of.”

“Is he a man?” Tobias Turf asked.

“That he is, Turf,” Lady Tub said, “and I have made him a gentleman.”

Pol-Marten was her gentleman-usher.

“If he is a gentleman, then let Audrey shift for herself,” Dame Turf said.

If Audrey had married a gentleman, she had married well, and yes, she could look after herself.

Chanon Hugh said:

“She was so bravely — splendidly — dressed, I didn’t know who she was, I swear. And yet as a vicar I officiated at the wedding and married her by her own name to him.

“But she was so disguised, so ladylike, I think she did not know herself the while!

“I married them to each other as if they were a complete pair of strangers to me, and they presented themselves to me as such.”

“I wish them much joy, as they have given me heart’s ease,” Lady Tub said.

She was relieved that her son had not married Audrey.

Squire Tub said, "Then, madam, I'll entreat you now to relinquish your anxiety about and mistrust of me, and please to take all this good company home with you to supper. We'll have a merry night of it and laugh."

Lady Tub said:

"That is a very good proposal, Squire, which I yield to and grant and thank them to accept my invitation.

"Neighbor Turf, I'll have you and your wife be merry, and you, Sir Hugh, shall be pardoned for this your happy error by Justice Preamble, your friend and patron."

"If the young Squire can pardon it, then so do I," Justice Preamble said.

Most of them exited.

— 5.5 —

Ball Puppy, Dido Wisp, and Chanon Hugh tarried behind.

Ball Puppy said:

"Stay, my dear Dido.

"Good Vicar Hugh, we have some business with you.

"In short, this: If you dare knit another pair of strangers, Dido of Carthage and her countryman, stout Hannibal, stand to it. I have asked consent to marry her, and she has granted me her consent."

"Stands to it" means that he is ready to be married; the phrase also has a bawdy meaning.

"But does Dido say so?" Chanon Hugh asked.

Dido Wisp replied, "I dare not demur from what Ball Hanny has said."

"Come in then," Chanon Hugh said. "I'll dispatch you and marry you to each other. A good supper, good company, good discourse would not be lost, and above all, a place and time where wit has any source."

They exited.

— 5.6 —

Pol-Marten, Audrey, Squire Tub, and Lady Tub talked together at Totten Court.

Pol-Marten said, "After the hoping of your pardon, madam, for many faults committed, here my wife and I do stand, awaiting your mild judgment and sentence on us."

"I wish thee joy, Pol-Marten, and thy wife as much, Mistress Pol-Marten," Lady Tub said. "Thou have tricked — dressed — her up in very fine clothing, I think."

"For that I made bold with Your Ladyship's wardrobe, but I have trespassed within the limits of your leave — I hope," Pol-Marten said.

Lady Tub said:

"I give her what she wears; I know that all women love to be finely dressed.

"Thou have deserved it of me: I am extremely pleased with thy good fortune."

Justice Preamble, Tobias Turf, Dame Turf, and John Clay entered the scene.

Lady Tub said:

"Welcome, good Justice Preamble.

“Tobias Turf, look merrily on your daughter: She has married a gentleman.”

“So I think,” Tobias Turf said. “I dare not touch her, she is so fine; yet I will say, God bless her!”

If she were not so very well dressed, he would give her a hug and kiss to celebrate her marriage.

“And I, too, my fine daughter!” Dame Turf said. “I could love her now twice as well as if John Clay had married her.”

Squire Tub said:

“Come, come, my mother is pleased. I pardon all.

“Pol-Marten, come in, and wait upon my lady.

“Welcome, good guests!

“See that supper is served in with all the plenty of the house and with all respect and ceremony.

“I must confer with Master In-and-In Medley about some alterations in my masque.

“Send Basket Hilts out to me; tell him to bring the Council of Finsbury hither.

“I’ll have such a night that shall make the name of Totten Court immortal and be recorded to posterity.”

Everyone except Squire Tub exited.

— 5.7 —

In-and-In Medley, Clench, To-Pan, and Scriben entered the scene.

“Oh, Master In-and-In, what have you done about the masque?” Squire Tub said.

In-and-In Medley said:



“Surveyed the place, sir, and designed the layout or starting point of the work; and this it is.

“First, I have fixèd in the earth a tub, and an old tub, like a saltpeter tub, preluding by [malapropism for ‘alluding to’] your father’s name, Sir Peter, and the antiquity of your house and family, originating from saltpeter.”

“Good, in faith,” Squire Tub said. “You have shown reading about and proper knowledge of our family history here, sir.”

“I have a little knowledge in design, which I can vary, sir, to *infinito* [to infinity, aka indefinitely],” Medley said.

“*Ad infinitum*, sir, you mean,” Squire Tub said.

*Ad infinitum* is Latin; *infinito* is Italian.

Medley said:

“I do. I stand not on my Latin; I don’t know Latin well.

“I’ll invent, but I must be alone then, joined with no man. This we call the stand-still — starting point and foundation — of our work.”

“Who are those ‘we’ you now joined to yourself?” Squire Tub asked.

“I mean myself still, in the plural number,” Medley said, “And out of this we raise our *Tale of a Tub*.”

Squire Tub said:

“No, Master In-and-In, my *Tale of a Tub*.

“By your leave, I am Tub: the tale is about me and my adventures! I am Squire Tub, *subjectum fabulae* — the subject of our story.”

“But I am the author,” Medley said.

Squire Tub said:

“The workman, sir! The artificer, I grant you.”

An artificer is 1) a skilled craftsman, and/or 2) a trickster.

He continued:

“So John Skelton the laureate was the artificer of *Elinour Bumming*, but she was the subject of the rout and tunning.”

A rout is a fuss, and tunning means pouring liquor into a large beer or wine cask.

Skelton’s poem was actually titled *The Tunning of Elinor Rumming*.

“He has put you to it, neighbor In-and-In,” Clench said. “He has caught you out.”

“Do not dispute with him,” To-Pan said. “He who pays for all will always win.”

Scriben asked, “Are you revised [malapropism for ‘advised’] of that? Are you sure of that? A man may have wit and intelligence, and yet take off his hat to show respect to someone else.”

Medley continued his description of what he had created for the masque:

“Now, sir, this tub I will have capped — topped — with paper, a fine oiled lantern paper that we use.”

“Yes, every barber, every cutler has it,” To-Pan said.

Medley said:

“Which in the tub does contain the light to the business and shall with the very vapor of the candle drive all the motions of our matter about, as we present them.”

The device was a large tub or barrel that lay on its side with a candle and puppets inside. The candlelight cast shadows of the puppets on the fine oiled lantern paper, which allowed the shadows to be seen. The candlelight also flickered, causing the puppets to seem to move.

“Motions” are puppets; the “matter” was the entertainment.

Medley continued:

“For example, first the Worshipful Lady Tub —”

Squire Tub interrupted: “Right Worshipful, please; I am Worshipful myself.”

Lady Tub had a title superior to his, and so she was entitled to be called “Right Worshipful.”

Medley said:

“Your Squireship’s mother passes by — her usher Master Pol-Marten, bare-headed before her — in her velvet gown.”

Squire Tub asked, “But how shall the spectators, as it might be I, or Hilts, know it is my mother? Or that it is Pol-Marten, there, who walks before her?”

“Oh, we do nothing if we do not make that clear,” Medley said.

He did not explain how that would be made clear.

“You have seen none of his works, sir,” Clench said to Squire Tub.

To-Pan mentioned one of Medley’s works: “All the postures — positions at drill — of the trained bands of citizen-soldiers of the country, aka county.”

“All their colors — their banners,” Scriben added.

“And all their captains,” To-Pan added.

“All the cries of the city, and all the trades in their liveries,”  
Clench added.

Scriben said:

“He has his whistle of command, seat of authority, and virge  
— rod of office — to interpret [explain his purpose], tipped  
with silver, sir!

“You don’t know him and how excellent he is.”

Medley would use a whistle to give commands concerning  
the masque.

“Well, I will leave it all to him,” Squire Tub said.

“Give me the brief — the abstract — of your subject. Leave  
the whole state of the thing to me,” Medley said.

Basket Hilts entered the scene and said, “Supper is ready, sir.  
My Lady calls for you.”

“I’ll send the brief to you in writing,” Squire Tub said to  
Medley.

“Sir, I will render feazible and facile — practicable and easy  
to accomplish — what you expect,” Medley promised.

Squire Tub said:

“Hilts, let it be your responsibility to see the wise of Finsbury  
made welcome. Let them lack nothing.

“Has old Rosin been sent for?”

“He’s come and is inside,” Basket Hilts said.

Squire Tub went inside.

“Lord, what a world of business the Squire dispatches!”  
Scriben said.

“He is a learned man,” Medley said. “I think there are only a vew [few] who are of the Inns of Court or the Inns of Chancery like him.”

The Inns of Court and the Inns of Chancery were legal associations and institutions.

“Let’s take care to do what he needs,” Clench said.

Everyone exited except Basket Hilts.

— 5.8 —

Black Jack, Lady Tub’s butler, walked over to Basket Hilts and said, “Yonder’s another wedding couple, Master Basket, brought in by Vicar Hugh.”

“Who are they, Jack?” Basket Hilts asked.

“The High Constable’s serving-man, Ball Hanny, and Mistress Wisp, our lady’s serving-woman,” Black Jack said.

“And are the table merry?” Basket Hilts asked.

“There’s a young tile-maker who makes all laugh,” Black Jack said. “He will not eat his food, but cries at the table that he shall be hanged.”

Of course, he was in no danger of being hanged. The robbery he had been accused of committing was a lie: It never happened.

“He has lost his wench already,” Basket Hilts said. “He might as well be hanged.”

“Was the mistress — loved one — of Pol-Marten, our fellow servant, the wench intended for that sneak-John?” Black Jack asked.

“Sneak-John” is John Clay, whom Black Jack regards as shifty.

Basket Hilts said:

“Indeed, Black Jack, he should have been her bridegroom.

“But I must go to wait on my wise masters.

“Jack, you shall wait on me, and see the masque soon; I am half Lord Chamberlain in my master’s absence.”

The Lord Chamberlain arranged entertainments such as masques for the royal court.

“Shall we have a masque?” Black Jack asked. “Who makes it?”

Basket Hilts replied:

“In-and-In Medley, the maker — craftsman — of Islington.

“Come, go with me to the sage sentences — the sages who provide wise judgment — of Finsbury.”

They exited.

— 5.9 —

Two servants prepared a room for the masque by setting out chairs for the audience.

“Come, bring in the great chair for my lady,” the first servant said, “and set it there, and set out this chair for Justice Bramble.”

“This chair is for the Squire, my master, on the right hand,” the second servant said.

“And this chair is for the High Constable,” the first servant said.

“This chair is for his wife,” the second servant said.

“Then here are chairs for the bride and bridegroom,” the first servant said. “Here is Pol-Marten’s chair.”

“And the chair for she Pol-Marten is at my lady’s feet,” the second servant said.

“Right,” the first servant said.

“And beside them is the chair for Master Hannibal Puppy,” the second servant said.

“And his she-Puppy, Mistress Wisp who was,” the first servant said. “Here’s all the chairs that are mentioned in the note.”

The second servant said, “No, a chair is also needed for Master Vicar, the petty Chanon Hugh.”

In Chanon Hugh’s case, “petty” means 1) a minor cleric, and 2) small-minded.

“And a chair is needed for cast-by — rejected — John Clay,” the first servant said.

They finished setting out the chairs, and the first servant said, “There are all the chairs that are needed.”

Squire Tub entered the room and said:

“Cry, ‘A hall! A hall!’

“It is merry in Tottenham Hall, when beards wag all.”

The cry “A hall! A hall!” meant “Clear space for an entertainment!”

Squire Tub then called, “Come, Father Rozin, with your fiddle now, and two tall — fine — tooters. Play a flourish to announce the masque!”

The musicians entered and played a flourish.

Justice Preamble entered the hall, followed by Lady Tub, Tobias Turf, Dame Turf, Pol-Marten, Audrey, Puppy, Wisp, Chanon Hugh, John Clay, and the Council of Finsbury: In-and-In Medley, Scriben, To-Pan, and Clench.

All took their seats. Basket Hilts stood off to the side. His job was to cry “Peace!” aka “Silence!” before each episode of the masque.

Lady Tub said:

“Neighbors, all are welcome! Now Totten Hall looks like a court, and hence shall first be called so.”

The name would be Totten Court, aka Tottenham Court.

Lady Tub continued:

“Your witty short confession, Master Vicar, [which you gave in another room](#), has been the prologue, and has revealed much to my son’s device, his *Tale of a Tub*.”

“Let my masque show itself, and In-and-In, the architect, appear,” Squire Tub said. “I hear the whistle.”

In-and-In Medley was blowing the whistle to announce that the masque was ready to start.

Basket Hilts said loudly, “Peace! Let there be silence!”

In-and-In Medley appeared in front of the curtain that the stage had in front. He would give brief descriptions of each episode of the masque.

Medley read the introduction of the masque out loud:

*“Thus rise I first, in my light linen breeches,*

*“To run the meaning over in short speeches.*



*“Here is a tub: a Tub of Totten Court,*

*“An ancient Tub, has called you to this sport  
[entertainment].*

*“His father was a knight, the rich Sir Peter,*

*“Who got his wealth by a tub and by saltpeter,*

*“And left all to his Lady Tub, the mother*

*“Of this bold Squire Tub, and to no other.*

*“Now of this Tub and’s [and his] deeds, not done in ale,*

*“Observe, and you shall see the very tale.”*

In other words: Squire Tub was not drunk when he did these deeds; this Tub did not contain ale.

In-and-In Medley then drew the curtain and revealed the top of the tub.

Basket Hilts said loudly, “Peace! Let there be silence!”

Music played to announce the first episode of the masque.

For each motion, or episode, of the masque, candlelight cast the shadows of the puppets onto oiled lantern paper, and Medley read out loud a poem that interpreted what the audience was seeing.

Medley read the first episode of the masque out loud:

*“Here Chanon Hugh first brings to Totten Hall*

*“The High Constable’s counsel, tells the Squire all;*

*“Which, though discovered [revealed] — give the devil his  
due —*

*“The wise [men] of Finsbury do still pursue.*

*“Then with the Justice doth [does] he [Chanon Hugh] counterplot,*

*“And his clerk, Metaphor, to cut that knot [prevent that marriage];*

*“Whilst Lady Tub, in her sad [dark-colored] velvet gown,*

*“Missing her son, doth [does] seek him up and down.”*

“With her Pol-Marten bare-headed before her,” Squire Tub said.

Medley said, “Yes, I have expressed it here in the shadow-figure, and Mistress Wisp, her woman, holding up her train.”

“In the next page report your second strain — the second part of your poem,” Squire Tub said.

Basket Hilts said loudly, “Peace! Let there be silence!”

Music sounded.

Medley read the second episode of the masque out loud:

*“Here the High Constable and sages walk*

*“To church. The dame, the daughter, bride-maids talk*

*“Of wedding-business, till a fellow in comes,*

*“Relates the robbery of one Captain Thumbs;*

*“Chargeth the bridegroom with it, troubles all,*

*“And gets the bride; who in the hands doth [does] fall*

*“Of the bold Squire, but thence soon is ta'en [taken]*

*“By the sly Justice and his clerk profane,*

*“In shape [disguise] of pursuivant; which he not long*

*“Holds, but betrays all with his trembling tongue;*

*“As truth will break out and show —”*

The “clerk profane” is Miles Metaphor, who is a civil clerk and not a clerk in holy orders.

Squire Tub interrupted, looking at the shadow-figures, “Oh, thou have made him kneel there in a corner, I see now. There is simple — sterling — honor for you, Hilts!”

Basket Hilts had knocked Miles Metaphor down.

Miles Metaphor’s cowardice is also mentioned in episode four of the masque.

“Didn’t I make him confess all to you?” Basket Hilts asked.

Squire Tub replied, “True, In-and-In has done you right, you see.”

He then requested, “Thy third part of the poem, please, witty In-and-In.”

Clench said, “The Squire commends ’un [him: In-and-In Medley]; he likes all well.”

“He cannot choose not to,” To-Pan said. “This is gear made to sell — it is good.”

Basket Hilts said loudly, “Peace! Let there be silence!”

Music sounded.

Medley read the third episode of the masque out loud:

*“The careful [troubled] Constable here drooping comes,*

*“In his deluded search [he has been fooled into making the search] of [that is, for] Captain Thumbs.*

*“Puppy brings word his daughter’s run away*

*“With the tall [valiant] serving-man [Basket Hilts]. He frights [frightens] groom Clay*

*“Out of his wits. Returneth then the Squire,*

*“Mocks all their pains, and gives fame out a liar [shows that the report is a lie]*

*“For falsely charging Clay, when ’twas [it was] the plot*

*“Of subtle Bramble, who had Audrey got*

*“Into his hand by this winding [devious] device.*

*“The father makes a rescue in a trice,*

*“And with his daughter, like Saint George on foot,*

*“Comes home triumphing to his dear heart root [to his beloved wife];*

*“And tells the Lady Tub, whom he meets there,*

*“Of her son’s courtesies [courting of Audrey], the bachelor,*

*“Whose words had made ’em fall [that is, made them give up] the hue and cry.*

*“When Captain Thumbs coming to ask him why*

*“He had so done, he cannot yield him cause,*

*“But so he runs his neck into the laws [he becomes caught up in legal trouble].”*

Basket Hilts said loudly, “Peace! Let there be silence!”

Music sounded.

Medley read the fourth episode of the masque out loud:

*“The laws, who have a noose to crack his neck,*

*“As Justice Bramble tells him, who doth [does] peck*

*“A hundred pounds out of his purse, that comes*

*“Like his teeth from him, unto Captain Thumbs.”*

A proverb stated, “To get money from him is like pulling teeth.”

Medley continued reading the fourth episode of the masque out loud:

*“Thumbs is the Vicar in a false disguise,*

*“And employs Metaphor to fetch this prize,*

*“Who tells the secret unto Basket Hilts,*

*“For fear of beating. This the Squire quilts [that is, stitches together]*

*“Within his cap, and bids him but purloin [steal]*

*“The wench for him; they two shall share the coin.*

*“Which the sage lady [Lady Tub] in her ’foresaid gown*

*“Breaks off, returning unto Kentish Town*

*“To seek her Wisp, taking the Squire along,*

*“Who finds Clay John, as hidden in straw throng [in tightly pressed, aka thick, straw].”*

Basket Hilts said:

“Oh, how I am beholden to the inventor, who would not, on record against me, write about my slackness here to enter the barn!

“Well, In-and-In, I see thou can discern!”

Squire Tub said to Medley, “Go on with your last episode, and come to a conclusion.”

Basket Hilts said loudly, “Peace! Let there be silence!”

Music sounded.

Medley read the fifth and final episode of the masque out loud:

*“The last is known, and needs but small infusion [pouring]*

*“Into your memories, by leaving in*

*“These figures as you sit [by letting the puppets remain still, just as the audience members whom the puppets represent are sitting still]. I, In-and-In,*

*“Present you with the show: first, of a Lady*

*“Tub and her son, of whom this masque here made I.*

*“Then bridegroom Pol and Mistress Pol the bride,*

*“With the sub-couple, who sit them beside [sit beside them].”*

The sub-couple were Ball Puppy and Dido Wisp.

Squire Tub said, “That is the only verse I altered for the better, *euphonia gratia*.”

*Euphonia gratia* is supposed to mean “for the sake of euphony,” but the correct Latin phrase is *euphoniae gratia*.

Medley finished reading the fifth episode out loud:

*“Then Justice Bramble, with Sir Hugh the Chanon,*

*“And the bride’s parents, which I will not stan’ on [stand on, insist upon],*

*“Or the lost Clay, with the recovered Miles;*

*“Who thus unto his master him ’conciles [reconciles],*

*“On the Squire’s word, to pay old Turf his club [pay his contribution — that is, pay the money stolen from him].*

*“And so doth [does] end our Tale, here, of a Tub.”*

## EPILOGUE (*A Tale of a Tub*)

Squire Tub said to you, the audience:

“This tale of me, the Tub of Totten Court,

“A poet [playwright] first invented for your sport  
[entertainment],

“Wherein the fortune of most empty tubs,

“Rolling in love, are shown, and with what rubs [difficulties]

“We’re [We are] commonly encountered, when the wit  
[intelligence]

“Of the whole Hundred so opposeth [opposed] it.

“Our petty Chanon’s forkèd [devilish] plot in chief,

“Sly Justice’s arts, with the High Constable’s brief

“And brag [spirited] commands; my lady mother’s care  
[worry, suspicion],

“And her Pol-Marten’s fortune; with the rare

“Fate of poor John, thus tumbled in the cask;”

[“Poor john” is dried, salted fish that is preserved in a cask.]

[Being in a cask as others roll it would certainly shake up someone, as has metaphorically happened to poor John Clay in this play.]

Squire Tub concluded:

“Got In-and-In to gi’t [to present it to] you in a masque:

“That [So that] you be pleased, who came to see a play,

“With those that [who] hear and mark [notice] not what we say.

“Wherein the poet’s fortune is, I fear,

“Still [Always] to be early up, but ne’er the near.”

[Getting up early and making a good play will not solve the problem of audience members who don’t pay attention.]



## NOTES (*A Tale of a Tub*)

### — Cast of Characters —

#### RASI CLENCH

For Your Information:

NOMAD - How to use clench nails.

*This video is about a fastening technique found in wooden boatbuilding called “clench nailing”. It’s pretty simple and very effective. It is primarily used in small boats but older Pacific commercial fishing craft also employed a variation of the technique.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=240NwYVCnew>

#### D’OGENES SCRIBEN

Many Cynics were beggars and the Cynic Diogenes was sometimes called the Dog. The word “Cynic” means “Dog-like.”

The Cynics believed in rejecting wealth, fame, and power and instead living a simple life. They often publicly and caustically rejected wealth, fame, and power and the people who pursued them.

Diogenes once carried a lit lamp during the daytime and claimed to be looking for a man — any man — but all he could find were scoundrels. (Retellings of this story sometimes say that he was looking for an honest man.)

Alexander the Great heard about Diogenes, met him, and asked if he could do anything for him. In doing so, Alexander stood between the famous Cynic and the sun and cast a shadow on him. Diogenes replied, “Yes, you can stand out of my sunlight.”

Alexander told him, “If I were not Alexander, I would want to be Diogenes.” Diogenes replied, “If I were not Diogenes, I would want to be Diogenes.”

When Alexander wondered why Diogenes was looking at a pile of bones, Diogenes replied, “I am looking for the bones of your father, but I cannot distinguish them from the bones of his slaves.”

— 1.5 —

*HUGH*

*The beetle and wedges will, where you will have 'em.* 25

(1.5.25)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 571.

Here is some information on beetle and wedges:

*Old-fashioned terms defined from John Fairfield's 1646 will (Gen. 1: John)*

***A beetle and fowre wedges***

*A beetle is a tool resembling a hammer but with a large head (usually wooden); used to drive wedges or ram down paving stones or for crushing or beating or flattening or smoothing. “The beetle and wedge ... a very effective way of splitting large logs for firewood,” says an English website. “The beetle is a heavy hammer, and the iron wedges are*

*hammered in to force the log apart, using much less effort than splitting with an axe.” Thomas Tusser, who farmed in Suffolk and Essex in the 16th century, published a book, Five Hundred Points of Husbandrie, in 1573. It contained this verse:*

*When frost will not suffer, to dike and to hedge then  
get thee a heat, with they beetle and wedge:*

*Once Hallomas come, and a fire by the hall, such  
slivers do well, for to lie by the wall.*

Source of Above:

“Descendants of John Fairfield of Wenham: A genealogy site inspired by the research of Wynn Cowan Fairfield.” Accessed 14 May 2022.

<http://www.fairfieldfamily.com/records/court%20documents/html/oldterms.html>

— 2.1 —

*I love no trains o’ Kent*

*Or Christendom, as they say.*

(2.1.37-38)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 578.

Below is some information about “trains [tails] o’ Kent”:

Kentish Longtails

BY IAN · PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 6, 2012 ·  
UPDATED DECEMBER 10, 2018

The inhabitants of Strood in Kent were once nicknamed Kentish Longtails. Though this could relate to the belief in medieval mainland Europe that the English had tails, there is a folk tale relating a curse placed on the people of Strood by Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury.

It is said that whilst Thomas Becket (Born 1118 – Died 29 December 1170) was riding through Strood, a town that supported King Henry II against the Archbishop, he was waylaid by the inhabitants and an argument ensued. Robert de Broc, or a nephew of his cut off the tail of Thomas Becket's horse. The story goes on to say that the result of this insult was a curse put on the people of Strood and de Broc, by Thomas Becket, that all their descendants would be born with tails.

There is an historical account which mentions Robert de Broc, the cutting off of a horses tail and subsequent excommunication by Becket. According to William Fitz Stephen (William Fitzstephen) (Died 1191) – Becket's household clerk. *'On Christmas eve he read the lesson from the gospel, "the book of the generation", and celebrated the midnight mass. Before high mass on Christmas day, which he also celebrated, he preached a splendid sermon to the people, taking for his subject a text on which he was wont to ponder, namely, "on earth peace to men of good will". When he made mention of the holy fathers of the church of Canterbury who were therein confessors, he said that they already had one archbishop who was a martyr, St Alphege, and it was possible that they would shortly have another. And*

*because of the shameful injury inflicted on the horse of a certain poor peasant of his, a servant of the church of Canterbury, by cutting off its tail, he bound Robert de Broc with a sentence of excommunication. He had previously threatened him through messengers, while inviting him to make reparation. But Robert, being contumacious, had returned answer by a certain knight, David of Romney, that if the archbishop excommunicated him he would act like an excommunicate. Also, those who had violently taken possession of his two churches of Harrow and Throwley and had refused to admit his officers, he involved in the same sentence.'*

Source: Ian. "Kentish Longtails." *Mysterious Britain and Ireland*. 10 December 2018

<https://www.mysteriousbritain.co.uk/folklore/kentish-longtails/>

— 2.2 —

*Hare the poor fellow out on his five wits,*

*And seven senses? (145)*

(2.2.144-145)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 585.

Here is some information on the five wits:

## Five Wits

In the time of William Shakespeare, there were commonly reckoned to be **five wits** and **five senses**. The five wits were sometimes taken to be synonymous with the five senses, but were otherwise also known and regarded as the **five inward wits**, distinguishing them from the five senses, which were the five *outward* wits.

Much of this conflation has resulted from changes in meaning. In Early Modern English, “wit” and “sense” overlapped in meaning. Both could mean a faculty of perception (although this sense dropped from the word “wit” during the 17th century). Thus “five wits” and “five senses” could describe both groups of wits/senses, the inward and the outward, although the common distinction, where it was made, was “five wits” for the inward and “five senses” for the outward.

The inward and outward wits are a product of many centuries of philosophical and psychological thought, over which the concepts gradually developed, that have their origins in the works of Aristotle. The concept of five outward wits came to medieval thinking from Classical philosophy, and found its most major expression in Christian devotional literature of the Middle Ages. The concept of five inward wits similarly came from Classical views on psychology.

Modern thinking is that there are more than five (outward) senses, and the idea that there are five (corresponding to the gross anatomical features — eyes, ears, nose, skin, and mouth — of many higher animals) does not stand up to scientific scrutiny. (For more on this, see Definition of sense.) But the idea of

five senses/wits from Aristotelian, medieval, and 16th century thought still lingers so strongly in modern thinking that a sense beyond the natural ones is still called a “sixth sense”.

The “inward” wits

Stephen Hawes’ poem *Graunde Amoure* shows that the five (inward) wits were “common wit”, “imagination”, “fantasy”, “estimation”, and “memory”. “Common wit” corresponds to Aristotle’s concept of *common sense* (sensus communis), and “estimation” roughly corresponds to the modern notion of instinct.

Shakespeare himself refers to these wits several times, in *Romeo and Juliet* (Act I, scene 4, and Act II, scene iv), *King Lear* (Act III, scene iv), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Act I, scene i, 55), and *Twelfth Night* (Act IV, scene ii, 92). He distinguished between the five wits and the five senses, as can be seen from Sonnet 141.

Source of Above: “Five Wits.” Wikipedia. Accessed 6 June 2022.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five\\_wits](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_wits)

The traditional five senses are hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell, and no doubt the joke here is that Dame Turf has gotten the number wrong.

Two other senses, however, may be balance (vestibular sense) and movement (proprioception).

For Your Information:

### ***Vestibular***

*The vestibular system explains the perception of our body in relation to gravity, movement and balance. The vestibular system measures acceleration, g-force, body movements and head position. Examples of the vestibular system in practice include knowing that you are moving when you are in an elevator, knowing whether you are lying down or sat up, and being able to walk along a balance beam.*

### ***Proprioception***

*Proprioception is the sense of the relative position of neighbouring parts of the body and strength of effort being employed in movement. This sense is very important as it lets us know exactly where our body parts are, how we are positioned in space and to plan our movements. Examples of our proprioception in practice include being able to clap our hands together with our eyes closed, write with a pencil and apply with correct pressure, and navigate through a narrow space.*

Source: of Above: “What are the 7 Senses?” 7 Senses Foundation. Accessed 6 June 2022.

<http://www.7senses.org.au/what-are-the-7-senses/>

### — 2.3 —

*I laugh to think what a fine fool’s finger they have*

*O’this wise constable, in pricking out*

*This Captain Thumbs to his neighbors.*

(2.3.41-43)

Source of Above:



*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 588.

Below is some information on “fool’s finger”:

The dully-named *middle finger* was, to our forbears the *fool’s finger*, but not, alas, because it was covered in ink. Instead we got the name from the Romans who called it the *digitus infamis* (*infamous*), *obscenus* (*obscene*), and *impudicus* (*rude*). Nobody is sure why the Romans bore such a grudge against the middle finger, but it seems that it was they who invented the habit of sticking it up at those they did not like.

As Martial so delicately put it:

*Rideto multum qui te, Sextille, cinaedum  
dixerit et digitum porrigito medium*

Which translates *extraordinarily* loosely as:

*If you are called a poof don’t pause or linger  
But laugh and show the chap your middle finger.*

Source of Above:

“Digital Information and Flipping the Finger.”  
Blog.inkyfool.com. 10 December 2010

<https://blog.inkyfool.com/2010/12/digital-information-and-flipping-finger.html>

Below is more information about the middle finger:

The middle finger is mostly known from Greek comedy, but it is also mentioned in some Latin sources.

Martial's *Epigram* 28, lines 1–2:

Rideto multum qui te, Sextille, cinaedum  
Dixerit et digitum porrigito medium.

“Laugh at the man who calls you a faggot, Sextillus, and extend your middle finger.”

And:

Logeion, s.v. *impudicus*, gives Martial 6.70.5 which mind you isn't specified as being the middle finger. But there's an interesting and amusing commentary on that passage in an article (CJ 47:67) on Roman Elementary Mathematics by J. Hilton Turner, which makes it pretty clear that it was. Elsewhere in the same article, there's a translation of a chunk of Bede in which he talks of the middle finger (clear from the context, despite no Latin original in the article) as *impudicus*.

In Muratori (XI, part 3, p126), in the anonymous *Liber de computo sive kalendario* attributed to Cyril of Alexandria, §138 there's another *digitus impudicus*; here too in the context of representing numbers on one's fingers.

Roger Pack, “Catullus, Carmen V: Abacus or Finger-Counting?”, *AJP* 77:47-51 at [JSTOR](#) builds on another part of the Turner article, by suggesting that the Catullus poem maybe is best viewed not on an abacus with Turner, but in finger-counting, and there's a bit about the *impudicus* in his article as well.

Source: “Was the middle finger obscene in Ancient Rome?”  
Accessed 16 May 2022.

<https://latin.stackexchange.com/questions/1389/was-the-middle-finger-obscene-in-ancient-rome>

— 3.1 —

*Oh, there are two vat pigs*

*A-zindging by the vire, now by Saint Tony,*

*Too good to eat but on a wedding-day; 50*

(3.1.48-50)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 598.

This is some information about Saint Anthony’s association with pigs:

***The Possible Connections with Pigs***

*So what is the connection with St. Anthony and pigs?  
Here are several various explanations.*

*The first explanation is that the pig represents evil that St. Anthony had to overcome as he fought the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Pigs, for obvious reasons, are associated with the ground and the earth. Thus, the idea is that some artists wanted to depict how St. Anthony defeated the*

*earthly temptations by including a pig to represent the worldly sins.*

*Another related explanation is that the pig represents the demonic. As St. Athanasius records in his biography, St. Anthony experienced many attacks from the devil which sometimes came in the form of wild animals perhaps even wild pigs. And the image of wild pigs brings to mind the story in the Gospels where Jesus permitted the demons to enter the pigs who then promptly drowned themselves. (Luke 8:32-33)*

*A third possible association with pigs is related to skin disease. St. Anthony was known to be an intercessor for people who were suffering from various skin diseases. The reason for that was probably because of the excellent health which he maintained throughout the course of his life in spite of his ascetic lifestyle.*

*Skin diseases were often treated using pork fat because it would reduce the inflammation and itching. In order to make the connection between St. Anthony and his patronage for sufferers of skin diseases, the artists might have included a pig with the saint.*

*A later explanation is related to an order of that was founded centuries after his death--the Hospitallers of St. Anthony--who took the saint for their patron. The order was founded around 1095 by Gaston of Dauphiné who started the ministry of giving aid to the poor in thanksgiving from his own miraculous cure of a disease known as St. Anthony's Fire. The disease which is now known as ergotism was of epidemic proportions and responsible for the deaths of many in Europe over the centuries.*

*The order was supported in part by pigs. First, the order was allowed to raise pigs. Second, people would donate a pig to the order, raise the pig themselves, and give it to the order on the feast of St. Anthony which is the 17th of January.*

*Finally, there is the most appealing explanation (at least for pigs) which is that the saint healed a wild pig and through that action befriended the animal who remained with him in the desert. Of course, St. Anthony was a vegetarian so the pig would not ever have to worry about becoming his dinner.*

*In celebration of this story, there is a tradition of bringing domestic animals, including pigs, to the parish on January 17th in order to have them blessed by the priest.*

*Whichever story made the first connection between the saint and pigs, eventually pig herders latched on to his association with pigs and he became their patron as well as the patron of pigs, of course, and domestic animals, in general.*

Source: "A Pig in the Desert: Why Saint Anthony the Great is Shown with a Pig." Letter From the Saints.com. 11 August 2019

<https://www.lettersfromthesaints.com/blog/a-pig-in-the-desert-why-st-anthony-the-great-is-shown-with-a-pig>

— 3.3 —

*I'll e'en leave all, and with the patient ass,*

*The over-laden ass, throw off my burden,*

*And cast mine office; pluck in my large ears. 20*

*Betimes, lest some disjudge 'em to be horns.*

(3.3-18-21)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 601-602.

The reference to “large ears” and “horns” comes from one of Aesop’s Fables that has more than one moral:

*A hurt Lion banned all horned animals from his kingdom. A Hare saw his ears looked like horns in his shadow decided to leave, ending a long-term friendship.*

***Paranoia can change everything.***

### **Aesop For Children (The Hare and His Ears)**

The Lion had been badly hurt by the horns of a Goat, which he was eating. He was very angry to think that any animal that he chose for a meal, should be so brazen as to wear such dangerous things as horns to scratch him while he ate. So he commanded that all animals with horns should leave his domains within twenty-four hours.

The command struck terror among the beasts. All those who were so unfortunate as to have horns, began to pack up and move out. Even the Hare, who, as you know, has no horns and so had nothing to fear, passed a very restless night, dreaming awful dreams about the fearful Lion.

And when he came out of the warren in the early morning sunshine, and there saw the shadow cast by his long and pointed ears, a terrible fright seized him.

“Goodby, neighbor Cricket,” he called. “I’m off. He will certainly make out that my ears are horns, no matter what I say.”

### **Moral**

*Do not give your enemies the slightest reason to attack your reputation.*

*Your enemies will seize any excuse to attack you.*

### **JBR Collection**

The Lion being once badly hurt by the horns of a Goat, went into a great rage, and swore that every animal with horns should be banished from his kingdom. Goats, Bulls, Rams, Deer, and every living thing with horns had quickly to be off on pain of death. A Hare, seeing from his shadow how long his ears were, was in great fear lest they should be taken for horns. “Good-bye, my friend,” said he to a Cricket who, for many a long summer evening, had chirped to him where he lay dozing: “I must be off from here. My ears are too much like horns to allow me to be comfortable.” “Horns!” exclaimed the Cricket, “do you take me for a fool? You no more have horns than I have.” “Say what you please,” replied the Hare, “were my ears only half as long as they are, they would be quite long enough for any one to lay hold of who wished to make them out to be horns.”

Source of Above: Daboss, “The Hare Afraid of Its Ears.” 14  
May 2014

<https://fablesfaesop.com/hare-afraid-ears.html>

Another moral is this:

“Cowards die many times before their death.”

Source: “Bedtime stories - The Hare and its Ears - stories for kids - Storytime with R.” Storytime with Rajju Aunty.” YouTube. 18 April 2016

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uL3FbeIGKI>

— 3.6 —

*His name was Vadian, and a cunning Tooter.*

(3.6.26)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 608.

A Fabian is a member of the Roman gens (family) Fabia. This was a patrician name.

In 321 B.C.E., Quintus Fabius Ambustus was nominated to be Dictator. A fault in the auspices forced him to resign.

In 315 B.C.E., Quintus Fabius Maximus Rullianus was Dictator.

In 216 B.C.E., Marcus Fabius Buteo was named Dictator after the Battle of Cannae in which the Carthaginian general Hannibal achieved a great victory against the Romans.



In 221 and 217 B.C.E., Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosis — known as Cunctator — was dictator. “Cunctator” means “Delayer,” and as dictator he harassed Hannibal’s army without ever fighting it in open battle. This is probably the “Vadian” To-Pan meant.

In other words:

Vadian = Fabian = Fabius

Of course, we remember:

Octavian = Octavius

— 3.9 —

*At the report of it, an ox did speak,*

(3.9.56)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 616.

Below is the passage from Livy that Ben Jonson used above:

*2] Before the consul and praetors set out for their provinces, a supplication was held by reason of prodigies. [3] A she-goat was reported from Picenum to have given birth to six kids at one time, and at Arretium a boy with one hand was born, at Amiternum [4??] there was a shower of earth, at Formiae the wall and gate were struck by lightning, and, a thing which caused the greatest terror, at*

*Rome a cow belonging to the consul Gnaeus Domitius spoke, saying, "Rome, for thyself beware."*

Source of Above:

Livy. *History of Rome*. Books XXXV-XXXVII With An English Translation. Cambridge. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd. 1935: published without copyright notice.

<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0165%3Abook%3D35%3Achapter%3D21>

— 3.9 —

*The hens too cackled, at the noise whereof*

*A drake was seen to dance a headless round;*

*The goose was cut i'the head to hear it too.*

(3.9.61-63)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 616.

Below is some information about why chickens move after their heads are cut off:

*When you chop off a chicken's head, the pressure of the axe triggers all the nerve endings in the neck, causing that little burst of electricity to run down all the nerves leading back to the muscles, to tell them*

*to move. The chicken appears to flap its wings and to run around — even though it's already dead.*

Source of Below:

Jan Poole, “Curious Kids: how can chickens run around after their heads have been chopped off?” *The Conversation*. 25 September 2018

<https://theconversation.com/curious-kids-how-can-chickens-run-around-after-their-heads-have-been-chopped-off-103701>

— 4.3 —

*But if you get the lass from Dargison,*

*What will you do with her?*

(4.3.27-28)

Source of Above:

*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*

7 Volume Set. Volume 6.

Ben Jonson (Author), David Bevington (Editor), Martin Butler (Editor), Ian Donaldson (Editor).

Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print. P. 628.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this is the definition of “darg”:

*A day's work, the task of a day*

“Dargison” could mean “son of work,” and so it could mean a working man.

Here is a comment that may be relevant:

*Dargasson. In Irish gasson (from the French) means de lad or boy. Though it's slightly derogatory it's far more preferable to the alternative manin that is on the point of insult.*

Source of Above:

“Dargason.” *The Session*. Comment by Peter.

*Posted by pfiddle@gmail.com 13 years ago [2009].*

<https://thesession.org/tunes/9468>

“The [de] lad” is the meaning of the French *le gamin* and *le garçon*.

The French *gosse* means “kid, child, brat.”

Perhaps “Dargason” is “De Gascon.”

“De” can mean “from” or “the.”

Miles Metaphor may be a young man and so be referred to derogatorily as “the boy.”

Here are two definitions of “gascon” in the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

*A native or inhabitant of Gascony, a region and former province in south-west France.*

*A person who resembles a Gascon in character; a braggart, a boaster.*

The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first recorded instance of the second definition, however, is from 1757.

Miles Metaphor did some boasting when he said, “Had they been but some five or six, I'd whipped them all like tops in Lent, and hurled them into Hobbler's hole, or the next ditch.”

But he said that to Chanon Hugh and Justice Preamble.  
Squire Tub would not be aware of that boasting.

## CHAPTER 17: Ben Jonson's *Volpone, or the Fox*

### CAST OF CHARACTERS (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

#### The Main Man and His Main Servant

VOLPONE, a *Magnifico*. *Volpone* is Italian for “fox.” Volpone is crafty, is sly, and lacks morals. A *magnifico* is a wealthy, distinguished gentleman. *Magnifico* is Italian for “magnificent.” In particular, a *magnifico* is a plutocrat — his power comes from his wealth.

MOSCA, Volpone's Parasite. *Mosca* is Italian for “fly.” Mosca is a human parasite: He lives on other people. Many parasites are flatterers and hangers-on, but Mosca works hard at making himself indispensable to Volpone.

#### The Legacy-Hunters

VOLTORE, an Advocate. *Voltore* is Italian for “vulture.” An advocate is a lawyer. Voltore is a legacy-hunter: He wants to inherit Volpone's wealth. Vultures feed on dead animals.

CORBACCIO, an Old Gentleman. *Corbaccio* is Italian for “raven.” Corbaccio is a legacy-hunter: He wants to inherit Volpone's wealth. Ravens feed on dead animals. Ravens were also believed to neglect their young.

CORVINO, a Merchant. *Corvino* is Italian for “crow.” Corvino is a legacy-hunter: He wants to inherit Volpone's wealth. Crows feed on dead animals. Merchants sell things, and Corvino is willing to sell his wife's honor.

#### Two People with Good Morality

BONARIO, Son to Corbaccio. *Bonario* is Italian for “good-tempered.”

CELIA, Corvino's Wife. The Latin word “*caelia*” means “the Heavenly, aka celestial, one.”

## **Volpone's Less Important Servants**

NANO, a Dwarf. *Nano* is Italian for “dwarf.” Many dwarves made their living as entertainers.

CASTRONE, a Eunuch. He has been castrated; some boys were castrated to preserve their high singing voice.

ANDROGYNO, a Hermaphrodite. His name is based on “androgynous” — both male and female. Volpone calls Androgyno his Fool — his jester.

## **Travelers**

SIR POLITIC WOULD-BE, an English Knight and wannabe VIP. He wants to be thought to be important in affairs of state. “Pol” is a name for a parrot. A poll parrot chatters. “Politic” refers to statesmanship and diplomacy.

LADY POLITIC WOULD-BE, Sir Politic Would-Be's Wife. Also known as FINE MADAME WOULD-BE. She is in Venice to learn the womanly arts by studying the well-regarded Viennese prostitutes.

PEREGRINE, an English Gentleman Traveler. A peregrine falcon is a kind of hawk. A peregrine falcon is a predatory bird.

## **Law Officials**

COMMANDATORI: Police Officers, aka Officers of Justice.

ADVOCARI: Judges, four Magistrates.

NOTARY, the Registrar to the court, aka Clerk of Court.

## **Other Characters**

THREE MERCHANTS. Three merchants help Peregrine fool Sir Politic Would-be.

**CROWD.** A crowd of people watch the mountebank's performance.

**WOMEN:** Lady Politic Would-be's female attendants.

**SERVANTS.**

**SCENE**

**VENICE, ITALY.** To the Elizabethans, Venice was wealthy, sophisticated, and immoral.

**DATE**

Probably February or March 1606.



## THE ARGUMENT (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

*Volpone, childless, rich, feigns sick, [feigns] despair,*

*Offers his estate to hopes of several heirs,*

*Lies languishing: his parasite receives*

*Presents from all, assures, deludes; then weaves*

*Other cross plots [counter-plots], which open themselves  
[unfold and reveal themselves and] are told [exposed].*

*New tricks for safety are sought; they thrive: when bold,*

*Each tempts the other again, and all are sold [betrayed,  
ruined].*

\*\*\*

The “argument” of the play is a brief summary of the plot. This argument is an acrostic; the first letter of each line spells out VOLPONE.

Volpone is a rich man who has no children. Other rich people would like to inherit his property, so Volpone pretends to be sick and near death. The other rich people give him many expensive presents, hoping to be named his heir in his will. Characters immorally compete with each other, and in the end, all guilty persons are punished.

A parasite is a person who lives off another person. Mosca is Volpone’s parasite, his main servant.

## PROLOGUE (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

Now, if God will send us a little luck, a little wit will serve to make our book a hit, according to the tastes of the literary season and audiences. However, here in this book is rhyme, and the rhyme is not empty of reason.

This we were bid to believe from our author, Ben Jonson, whose true intention, if you would know it, in all his books always has been this measure: to mix profit with your pleasure.

His intention has not been that of some authors, whose throats fail because of their envy as they cry hoarsely, “All he writes is excessively critical.” And when his books come out, these overly prolific authors think that they can insult his books by saying that he took a year to write each of them.

To this Mr. Jonson need not say that it is a lie because all he needs to do is to point to this work of art, which did not exist two months before it was first seen — Mr. Jonson wrote it in less than two months.

And although Mr. Jonson dares to give them five lives to mend his book — depending on your opinion of his value as an author, that’s five lives to look for non-existent errors to correct, or five lives to correct all the numerous errors — let it be known that it took him only five weeks to fully write it. He did not use the services of a co-author, a journeyman author paid to write some of the scenes, a beginning author working under his direction, or a tutor to provide direction to him.

Yet thus much I can give you as a token of his play’s worth: No eggs are broken, nor are there quaking custards — quivering cowards — frightened by fierce teeth. This book contains no slapstick of the kind that delights the ordinary crowd of ordinary people.

Nor does the author drag in a fool who recites clichés and stale jokes to stop gaps in loose, badly constructed writing, and nor does the author drag in characters who engage in a great many monstrous and forced actions — such things might make the book a hit at Bedlam, the hospital for the insane. Nor has he made his book out of jests stolen from each table where joke-tellers eat, but instead he has written his own jokes as they appear naturally and fit the events that occur in this book.

The author presents quick, lively, refined comedy, in accordance with the best critics: Aristotle and Horace. He observes the laws of time, place, and persons. This book can be read in a day, and the events take place in a day. The events also take place in locations that can be reasonably reached in a day. Also, the characters remain consistent in character: Greedy characters stay greedy, and good characters stay good. Any changes that occur are those that can realistically occur.

From no needful rule does the author stray. An unnecessary rule — to be followed only sometimes — is the law of action: The book should have only one plot. This book has a main plot and a sub-plot related to the theme of the main plot, and so the law of action is obviously not a needful rule.

All gall and copperas, aka sulphuric acid — from his ink the author has drained, and only a little salt — sediment — remains, wherewith he'll rub your cheeks, so that red with laughter, they shall look fresh for the upcoming week.

Yes, bitter gall and acid shall be absent from this book, although a little salty wit shall be present so that you shall laugh and be cheerful for a week.

## ACT 1 (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

### — 1.1 —

Volpone and Mosca were talking one morning in a room in Volpone's house in Venice.

Volpone said, "Good morning to the day; and next, good morning to my gold. Open the shrine, so that I may see my saint."

Mosca opened a treasure chest, revealing gold and other precious metals, jewels, etc. Volpone was a very wealthy man.

Some religious people believe in beginning the day with a prayer to what the people most value. Many Christians begin the day with a prayer to God. Volpone valued seeing the Sun — that is, being alive — and he valued material wealth. He now parodied a Christian's morning prayer.

Looking at the treasure, Volpone said, "Hail the world's soul, and my soul!"

Some systems of thought regard the *anima mundi* — the world's soul — as the most vital force in the universe.

He continued, "The teeming — pregnant — earth is glad to see the longed-for Sun peep through the horns of the celestial Ram."

In astrology, the Sun enters the astrological sign Aries, the Ram, at the beginning of spring in the Northern hemisphere. With the arrival of more minutes of sunshine, the Northern hemisphere is able to give birth to the many potential plants in seeds in the earth.

Volpone continued, "But I am even gladder than the teeming earth seeing the Sun when I see my treasure's splendor darkening the splendor of the Sun by contrast. My treasure,

lying here among my other hoards of treasure, appears as bright as a flame by night, or like the first day of creation, when God created the Sun and the Moon out of chaos, and all darkness fled to Earth's center, where Hell is located."

In Exodus 13, God had appeared as a pillar of fire in order to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land.

Volpone then referred to the son of Sol; Sol is the Sun, and alchemists referred to gold as the son of Sol.

"Oh, you son of Sol, but brighter than your father, let me kiss you with adoration, and let me kiss every relic of sacred treasure in this blessed room.

"Well did wise poets, by your glorious name, title that age which they would have the best."

He was referring to the Golden Age, the best age, an age in which men lived easy lives. Life in the classical Golden Age is comparable to life in the Garden of Eden. Greed for gold, however, was not known in the Golden Age. Love of gold often leads to sin.

1 Timothy 6:10 states, "*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*" (King James Version).

Referring to gold, Volpone said, "You are the best of all things, and you far transcend all kinds of joy — joy in children, parents, friends, or any other waking dream on Earth. I would rather have gold than any of these other things.

"People talk about golden Venus, the most beautiful goddess. They should have given Venus twenty thousand Cupids — such are your beauties and our loves! Gold is so beautiful that if Venus is golden, she should have been made

pregnant twenty thousand times and given birth to twenty thousand Cupids, the god of cupidity.

“Gold, you are my dear saint. Riches are the dumb God that gives all men tongues. Gold cannot speak, yet all men will speak volumes — including volumes of lies — to acquire gold.

“Gold, you can do nothing, and yet you make men do all things — including evil things — to acquire you. Gold, you are the Unmoved Mover.

“Think of the price of souls. The Son of God gave his life to redeem the souls of sinners. But if a sinful life contains gold, sinners will consider Hell to be worth as much as Heaven. Gold is as valuable as the blood of Christ because both gold and the blood of Christ buy souls.

“Gold, you are virtue, fame, honor, and all other things. Whoever can get you shall be regarded as noble, valiant, honest, wise —”

Mosca interrupted, “And whatever else he wishes to be regarded as, sir. Riches are in fortune a greater good than wisdom is in nature. It is better to be lucky enough to acquire riches than it is to be born with wisdom.”

Proverbs 16:16 states, “*How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!*” (King James Version). Mosca — and Volpone — disagree.

“True, my beloved Mosca,” Volpone said. “Yet I glory more in the cunning acquisition of my wealth than in its glad possession, since I gain wealth in no ordinary, common way.

“I don’t engage in business. I don’t engage in risky speculations. I wound no earth with plows, I fatten no beasts

to feed the slaughterhouses. I have no mills for iron, olive oil, corn, or men, to grind them into powder.”

Men can be ground down through excessively hard work.

Volpone continued, “I blow no subtly conceived glassware. I expose no ships to the threats of the furrow-faced — wave-wracked — sea. I make no monetary speculations in the public bank, nor am I a private moneylender —”

Mosca interrupted, “No sir, nor do you devour soft, easily manipulated prodigal sons who spend their money before they inherit it. Some people will swallow a melting heir — an heir whose wealth melts wastefully away — as glibly as your Dutch will swallow pills — mouthfuls — of butter, and never purge — take an emetic or a laxative — for it. They digest the heir so thoroughly that there is no need for such remedies, and they are able to do so without purging — being punished for — their actions.

“Such people tear forth the fathers of poor families out of their beds, and coffin them alive in some kind, clasping — fetters are clasping — prison, where their bones may be forthcoming, when the flesh is rotten. In other words, they won’t leave the debtors’ prison alive.

“But your sweet nature abhors these courses of action. You loathe the widow’s or the orphan’s tears that would then wash your pavements, and their piteous cries that would ring in your roofs, and beat the air for vengeance.”

“You are right, Mosca,” Volpone said. “I do loathe it.”

He had seen the tears and had heard the cries of distress.

Mosca continued, “And besides, sir, you are not like a thresher who stands with a huge flail, watching a heap of corn, and, although he is hungry, he dares not taste the

smallest grain, but instead feeds on mallows — vegetation that is eaten during famines — and other such bitter herbs.

“Also, you are not like the merchant who has filled his vaults with fine wines from Greece and rich wines from Crete, yet drinks the dregs of bad, vinegary wine from Lombardy.

“You will not lie in straw while moths and worms feed on your sumptuous hangings and soft beds.”

In other words, Volpone knew how to spend money and enjoy himself. He was a *bon vivant*, not a miser.

Mosca continued, “You know the use of riches, and dare give now from that bright heap, to me, your poor servant, or to your dwarf, or your hermaphrodite, your eunuch, or what other household-trifle — menial servant — your pleasure permits to work for you.”

Volpone’s servants included a dwarf, a eunuch, and a hermaphrodite. He had hired these people to keep him entertained.

“Stop, Mosca,” Volpone said.

He took a coin from his treasure chest and held it out to Mosca, saying, “Take this from my hand.”

Mosca took the coin.

Volpone then said, “You strike on the truth in all things, and those people who call you a parasite are envious of you.

“Bring here my dwarf, my eunuch, and my Fool, and let them entertain me.”

Mosca exited to summon Nano the dwarf, Castrone the eunuch, and Androgyno the hermaphrodite, who was also Volpone’s Fool, aka professional jester.



Alone, Volpone said to himself, “What should I do, but cocker up my genius, and live free to all delights my fortune calls me to?”

By “cocker up my genius,” Volpone meant “indulge my appetites.” “Cocker up” was a fitting term because many of his appetites were sexual.

Volpone continued, “I have no wife, no parent, child, or relative to give my possessions to, so whomever I choose must be my heir, and this makes men flatter and pay attention to me. My lack of an heir draws new flatterers daily to my house, women and men of all ages, who bring me presents, send me gold and silver vessels and utensils, money, and jewels in the hope that when I die (which they expect each greedy minute) their gifts shall then return ten-fold to them.

“And some, greedier than the rest, seek to have a monopoly of me and inherit all I have, and they work to undermine their competitors who would also like to inherit all I have. They compete in giving gifts because the bigger the gift, the bigger appears to be their love for me.

“All of these things I allow to happen. I play with their hopes, and I am happy to turn their hopes into my profit. I am happy to look upon their kindness, and accept more of the gifts they bring, and look upon those gifts. All the time I take these flatterers in hand and manipulate them. I tie a cherry to a string and let the cherry knock against their lips, and I let it get close to their mouths, and then I draw the cherry back before they can bite it.”

Hearing a noise, he said, “What’s that?”

— 1.2 —

Mosca arrived with Nano the dwarf, Castrone the eunuch, and Androgyno the hermaphrodite. The three had been summoned to entertain Volpone. Nano was holding a paper.

Nano the dwarf said, reading from his notes, *“Now, make room for fresh performers, who want you to know, they bring you neither play, nor university show.”*

They were giving a performance, but it was not like a play in a theater, nor was it like a university show that would display vast learning. Actually, their show would display vast learning, but it would do so in a satiric manner. They would mock the belief in progress, using the Pythagorean idea of reincarnation, or the transmigration of souls.

Nano the dwarf held the notes as he recited, *“Therefore we entreat you that whatsoever we performers rehearse, may it not fare a whit the worse, for the false pace of the verse.”*

By “rehearse,” he meant “recite,” but sometimes performers regard each performance as the rehearsal for the next performance.

Nano the dwarf recited, *“If you wonder at this, you will wonder more before we pass, for know, here in the body of Androgyno the hermaphrodite is enclosed the soul of Pythagoras, that divine trickster, as hereafter shall follow.”*

Nano the dwarf now explained the origin of this particular soul and how through the process of reincarnation it came to be Pythagoras’ soul and eventually became Androgyno the hermaphrodite’s soul.

Nano the dwarf recited, *“Pythagoras’ soul, fast and loose, sir, came first from the god Apollo.”*

Apollo was the classical god of prophecy, music, archery, medicine, plague, and more.

The soul was fast and loose. In reincarnation, it was connected fast to a body and then became loose and so was able to travel to another body. “Fast and loose” was also a con game in which a chain or string was placed on a table

with the chain or string making loops. The sucker was supposed to pick the loop that was fast, but the con man could arrange the chain or string in such a way that whichever loop the sucker picked, the loop would be loose. Similarly, since humans are mortal, the soul always eventually comes loose from the body.

Nano the dwarf recited, “*And then the soul was breathed into Aethalides, Mercury’s son, where it had the gift to remember all that ever was done.*”

Aethalides was the herald of Jason and the Argonauts, who are famous for traveling to acquire the Golden Fleece. Mercury was the herald of the gods, and he gave Aethalides perfect memory. Because of this, all who had the soul, including Pythagoras, were able to remember all his or her previous incarnations.

Nano the dwarf recited, “*From Aethalides the soul fled forth, and made quick transmigration to goldy-locked Euphorbus, who was killed in good fashion, at the siege of old Troy, by the cuckold of Sparta.*”

Euphorbus, who decorated his hair with gold clips, was the first warrior to wound Patroclus, the beloved friend of Achilles, the greatest warrior of the Trojan War. Euphorbus was killed by Menelaus, who was cuckolded by Paris, Prince of Troy, who ran away with Menelaus’ wife, Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world.

Nano the dwarf recited, “*Hermotimus was next (I find it in my notes) to whom the soul did pass, where no sooner it was missing but with one Pyrrhus of Delos it learned to go a fishing, and from him did it enter the sophist of Greece.*”

Hermotimus was a philosopher, and Pyrrhus was a fisherman. The sophist of Greece was Pythagoras himself, who is famous for the Pythagorean theorem, among other things.

Nano the dwarf recited, *“From Pythagoras, the soul went into a beautiful piece of ass named Aspasia, who was a meretrix, which is Greek for ‘prostitute.’ She was a meretrix who performed merry tricks and who was the mistress of the Greek statesman Pericles. And the next toss of her — the soul — was from a whore to a philosopher again.”*

The “next toss” meant both “next sexual bout” and “next reincarnation.”

Nano the dwarf recited, *“As the soul itself does relate, the soul became Crates the Cynic, a disciple of the Cynic philosopher Diogenes. Since then the soul has resided in kings, knights, and beggars, knaves, lords and fools, and the soul has resided in ox and ass, camel, mule, goat, and badger, in all which it has spoken, as it has in the cobbler’s cock.”*

Lucian of Samosata was a satirist who wrote in Greek. In his work “The Dream, or the Cock,” he wrote about a cock — a rooster — that claimed to be the reincarnation of the soul of Pythagoras. The cock also recounted many other reincarnations of the soul. The work is a Cynic sermon that praises poverty and argues that wealth does not necessarily lead to happiness. In this work, a cock awakens Micyllus the cobbler. He threatens to kill the cock, but the cock makes him invisible and shows him how the rich live in private, proving that he, a cobbler, is better off than the wealthy.

Nano the dwarf recited, *“But I didn’t come here to discourse about that matter of reincarnation, or his one, two, or three, or his great oath, BY QUATER! Nor did I come here to discourse about his musics, his trigon, his golden thigh, or his telling how elements shift.”*

Pythagoras believed in the importance of mathematics in understanding reality. The quaternion consisted of the first four whole numbers (1, 2, 3, 4). These numbers added up to

ten, an important number. These numbers also could be used to construct a trigon, an equilateral triangle with four dots as the bottom level, three dots as the next level, two dots as the next level, and one dot as the top level. Each side would have four dots.

Pythagoras used numbers and ratios to investigate such things as the musical scale.

According to myth, Pythagoras had a golden thigh, and he believed that the four elements — air, fire, water, and earth — were constantly changing into each other.

Nano the dwarf recited to Androgyno the hermaphrodite, *“But I would ask, how of late have you experienced transformation and how have you shifted your coat in these days of reformation.”*

The days of reformation referred to the Protestant Reformation; the most radical of the Protestants were the Puritans. “Shifted your coat” meant “changing sides” — leaving Catholicism to become Protestant.

Androgyno the hermaphrodite recited, *“Like one of the reformed, I am a fool, as you see, accounting all old doctrine as heresy.”*

Androgyno the hermaphrodite was wearing the costume of a Fool, a professional jester. As a Fool, he regarded the old doctrines — such as those of Catholicism — as heretical.

Nano the dwarf recited, *“But have you eaten food that is forbidden to you?”*

Pythagoreans were forbidden to eat meat, fish, and beans.

Androgyno the hermaphrodite recited, *“My soul dined on fish, when first my soul entered a Carthusian.”*

Carthusians were members of a religious sect that allowed devotees to eat fish.

Nano the dwarf recited as he asked about the soul, *“Has your dogmatical silence ever left you?”*

Pythagoreans — and Carthusians — made a vow of silence for a number of years.

Androgyno the hermaphrodite recited, *“Of that an obstreperous lawyer bereft me.”*

The soul had once entered a loud lawyer.

Nano the dwarf recited, *“Oh, what a wonderful change, when Sir Lawyer forsook the soul! For Pythagoras’ sake, what body then did the soul take?”*

Androgyno the hermaphrodite recited, *“A good dull mule.”*

Lawyers rode mules.

Nano the dwarf recited, *“What! And by that means you were brought to allow yourself to eat beans?”*

Although Pythagoreans were forbidden to eat beans, mules were fed them.

Androgyno the hermaphrodite recited, *“Yes.”*

Nano the dwarf recited, *“But from the mule into whom did the soul pass?”*

Androgyno the hermaphrodite recited, *“Into a very strange beast, by some writers called an ass. By other writers, the very strange beast is called a precise, pure, illuminate brother, one of those who devour flesh, and sometimes one another, and who will drop you forth a libel, or a sanctified lie, between every spoonful of a nativity pie.”*

The very strange beast was a Puritan. Puritans are “precise” because they are strict, and they are “illuminate” because they have seen religious light. The name “Puritan” comes from their claim to be “pure.”

Puritans literally ate the flesh of animals, and they metaphorically ate the flesh of their fellow human beings through their sharp business dealings.

Puritans were fond of publishing libelous pamphlets denouncing their enemies.

Due to a hatred of Catholicism, including Catholic masses, Puritans avoided the use of the syllable “mas” and so they ate what they called nativity pie rather than Christmas pie, which was the same thing except for the name.

Nano the dwarf recited, *“Now move on, out of respect for Heaven, from that profane sect of Puritanism, and gently report your next transmigration.”*

Androgyno the hermaphrodite recited, *“I, the soul, then entered the body you see before you. I am in the body of Androgyno the hermaphrodite.”*

Nano the dwarf recited, *“This body is a creature of delight, and, what is more than a Fool, it is a hermaphrodite! Now, please, sweet soul, in all your variation, which body would you choose to be in to keep up your station?”*

Androgyno the hermaphrodite recited, *“Truly, I prefer this body I am in. This is the body in which I would tarry.”*

Nano the dwarf recited, *“Because here the delight of each sex you can experience? As a hermaphrodite, you can experience sex as a man and as a woman.”*

Androgyno the hermaphrodite recited, *“Unfortunately, those pleasures are stale and forsaken. No, it is your Fool wherewith I am so taken. The Fool is the one and only*

*creature that I can call blessed. For all other forms I have taken have proven to be most distressed.”*

Nano the dwarf recited, *“That is spoken truly, as if you were still in Pythagoras. This learned opinion we will celebrate, fellow eunuch, as behooves us, with all our wit and art, to dignify that whereof ourselves are so great and special a part.”*

Nano the dwarf and Castrone the eunuch were part fool, as are we all.

Volpone said, “Now, that was very, very pretty! Mosca, was this your invention? Did you write this?”

Mosca said, “If it pleases you, my patron, I admit that I wrote it. But if you don’t like it, I did not write it.”

“It does please me, good Mosca,” Volpone said.

“Then I wrote it, sir,” Mosca said.

The skit was cynical. A god created the soul, but the bodies the soul inhabited varied greatly and did not progress, but if anything, regressed. Nothing was learned from ascetic and religious practices, as these varied from body to body with no consistency. The skit pointed out the soul’s lack of progress.

Readers could argue that although this is cynical, it is true. Despite millennia of religious education, many people of Ben Jonson’s day and our own seem determined to turn themselves into animals.

Nano the dwarf and Castrone the eunuch then sang this song about Fools:

*“Worth men’s envy, or admiration,*

*“Free from care or sorrow-taking,*



*“Selves and others merry making,*

*“All that Fools speak or do is sterling.*

*“Your Fool is your great man’s darling,*

*“And your ladies’ sport [entertainment] and pleasure;*

*“Tongue and bauble are his treasure.”*

A Fool’s bauble is the court jester’s baton, which has a face carved at the top. “Bauble” was also a slang word for “penis,” and a Fool could use his tongue and penis to entertain the ladies.

*“Even his face begets laughter,*

*“And he speaks truth free from slaughter.”*

Professional Fools were given free speech. They could almost always say insulting things without being punished as long as they were witty.

*“He’s the grace of every feast,*

*“And sometimes the chiefest guest.”*

Sometimes, the Fool sat in the seat of honor: at the top of the table, beside the host.

*“He has his trencher [plate] and his stool,*

*“When Wit waits upon the Fool.”*

The master of the house, who is presumably intelligent — “wit” means “intelligent person” — waits on the Fool. Also, the god of Wit serves the Fool by making the Fool witty.

*“Oh, who would not be*

*“He, he, he?”*

As Nano the dwarf and Castrone the eunuch laughed “*he, he, he,*” they pointed to Androgyno the hermaphrodite, who was wearing a Fool’s costume and who carried a Fool’s bauble.

Knocking sounded on the door.

Volpone asked, “Who’s that?”

He then ordered the entertainers to leave: “Away!”

Nano the dwarf and Castrone the eunuch exited.

Volpone said, “Look and see who it is, Mosca.”

Seeing Androgyno the hermaphrodite, Volpone ordered, “Fool, begone!”

Androgyno the hermaphrodite exited.

Mosca said, “It is Signior Voltore, the lawyer. I know him by his distinctive knock.”

*Voltore* is Italian for “vulture.”

Volpone needed to appear to be ill and bedridden when he saw Voltore, so he ordered, “Fetch me my gown, my furs, and my caps. Tell him that my bed is being changed, and let him entertain himself for a while outside in the gallery.”

The caps were worn for warmth. One cap buttoned under the chin and covered hair and ears. The other cap was a skullcap with ear flaps.

Mosca exited.

Volpone said to himself, “Now, now, my clients begin their visitation!”

Clients would visit their patron in the early morning as a form of respect.

Volpone continued, “Vulture, kite, raven, and carrion-crow, all my birds of prey who think that I am turning into a carcass, now they come.”

Voltore was the vulture, Corbaccio was the raven, and Corvino was the crow. These birds all ate carrion, but did not usually kill it — they waited for it to die. Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino were all waiting for Volpone to die. The kite really is a bird of prey, and if anyone is the kite, events would show that Mosca is.

Volpone said, “I am not for them yet.”

He was not yet ready to meet them, nor was he yet a corpse.

Mosca returned with the gown and other items.

Volpone asked, “What is the news?”

Mosca said, “Voltore has brought a piece of plate, sir.”

The plate was a gold utensil.

“How big?” Volpone asked.

“Huge, massy, and antique, with your name inscribed and your coat of arms engraved,” Mosca replied.

“Good!” Volpone said. “And doesn’t it show a fox stretched on the earth, with fine delusive sleights, mocking a gaping crow?”

He was imagining that a sly fox would be a suitable image to engrave on the plate. Foxes would sometimes pretend to be dead. When scavenging birds came near the fox, the fox would spring up and kill a bird and feed on it. Volpone pretended to be near death so that suckers would give him expensive gifts such as this huge plate.

Volpone was also referring to one of Aesop’s fables. A crow had a piece of cheese in its beak, and a fox wanted to eat the

cheese. The fox began to praise the crow, and when the fox praised the crow's singing voice, the crow opened its beak to caw. The cheese fell out of the crow's mouth, and the fox gobbled it up.

Volpone laughed, "Ha, Mosca?"

He replied, "Your wit is sharp, sir."

Volpone said, "Give me my furs."

The furs were meant to keep an ill man warm.

Volpone, putting on his invalid's clothing, asked Mosca, "Why are you laughing so much, man?"

"I cannot refrain from laughing, sir," Mosca replied, "when I think about what thoughts Voltore has now, outside, as he walks. He thinks that this might be the last gift he will give to you. He thinks that this gift might be the one that will convince you to make him your heir. He is thinking that if you die today, and give him all you own, what a wealthy man he will be tomorrow. He thinks about what a large return he would get from all his gifts to you. He thinks about how he would be worshiped, and revered, by other people. He thinks about how he would ride with his furs on a horse wearing an ornamental cloth that reaches its hooves. He thinks about how he would be waited on by herds of fools and clients. He thinks about how he would have a way cleared for his mule that is as lettered — educated — as himself. He thinks about how he would be called the great and learned lawyer, and then he concludes that there's nothing impossible."

Volpone said, "Yes, one thing is impossible: to be learned, Mosca."

"Oh, no — you are wrong," Mosca said. "Being rich implies being learned. Hood an ass with reverend purple, so you can

hide its two ambitious ears, and it shall pass for a cathedral doctor.”

Doctors wore purple hoods to show that they were learned. Hide an ass’ ears with such a hood, and people will think that the ass is learned.

An ambitious man aspires to a high position; an ass’ ears have a high position.

“My nightcaps, my nightcaps, good Mosca,” Volpone said.

He put on the two nightcaps and then said, “Bring Voltore in.”

“Wait, sir,” Mosca said. “You need your ointment for your eyes.”

The ointment made Volpone’s eyes appear to be those of a sick man. Volpone would act as if he were nearly blind, nearly deaf, and nearly dead.

“That’s true,” Volpone said. “I need to use that ointment. Hurry, hurry.”

Mosca helped him by applying the cosmetics and ointment that made him appear to be ill.

Volpone said, “I long to have possession of my new present.”

“That, and thousands more, I hope to see you lord of,” Mosca said.

“Thanks, kind Mosca,” Volpone said.

Mosca began, “And that, when I am dead and lost in blended dust, as are a hundred such servants as I am, in succession  
—”

He was wishing Volpone an incredibly long life, one in which Volpone would outlive him and one hundred other servants who would, one at a time, take Mosca's place.

"No, that would be too much, Mosca," Volpone said.

"You shall live, continually, to delude these Harpies," Mosca said.

Harpies are half-women, half-birds who torment people by eating their food and fouling the food that they do not eat. Sometimes, they are sent to bedevil sinners. They are also a symbol of greed.

"Loving Mosca!" Volpone said. "My disguise is well done now. Give me my pillow, and let Voltore enter."

Mosca exited to bring in Voltore.

Poets such as Homer and Virgil began their epics with an invocation to a god or gods to help them with their epic poems. For example, Homer began his *Iliad* in this way:

*Rage.*

*Goddess, use me to tell the story of the rage of Achilles, a Greek warrior who had the rage of a god. The rage of the son of Peleus made corpses of many men and sent their souls to the Land of the Dead. Dogs and birds feasted on warriors' flesh, all because of Achilles and the will of Zeus, king of gods and men.*

Volpone now parodied these invocations by praying not to a god or goddess for help but by praying to a number of feigned illnesses for help.

He prayed, "Now, my feigned cough, my feigned tuberculosis, and my feigned gout, my feigned paralysis, feigned palsy, and feigned watery discharges from my nose and eyes, with your artificially induced functions help this

my imposture, wherein, these past three years, I have milked their hopes.

“Voltore comes; I hear him.”

Volpone then faked some weak coughs and a groan.

— 1.3 —

Mosca returned, leading Voltore, who was holding a large piece of plate.

Mosca said to Voltore, “You still are what you were in Volpone’s affections, sir. Only you, of all the rest, are the man who commands his love, and you do wisely to preserve it thus, with visits early in the morning, and kind gifts that show your good intentions to him, which, I know, cannot but be accepted most gratefully.”

He then said loudly to Volpone, “Patron! Sir! Signior Voltore has come —”

Volpone interrupted with a weak voice, “What did you say?”

Mosca said, “Sir, Signior Voltore has come this morning to visit you.”

“I thank him,” Volpone said.

“And he has brought you the gift of a piece of antique plate, bought from a goldsmith’s shop in the Piazza di San Marco.”

“He is welcome,” Volpone said weakly. “Ask him to come more often.”

“Yes,” Mosca said.

Voltore asked, “What did he say?”

Mosca replied, “He thanks you, and he wants you to see him often.”

“Mosca,” Volpone said.

“My patron!” Mosca replied.

“Bring Voltore near to me,” Volpone said. “Where is he? I long to feel his hand.”

Knowing what Volpone was really interested in, Mosca said, “The plate is here, sir.”

Voltore asked, “How are you, sir? How is your health?”

“I thank you, Signior Voltore,” Volpone said. “Where is the plate? My eyes are bad.”

Voltore put the plate into Volpone’s hands and said, “I’m sorry to see you still this weak.”

Mosca thought, *He’s sorry that Volpone is not weaker.*

Volpone said, “You are too munificent — too generous.”

“No, sir,” Voltore said. “I wish to Heaven that I could give health to you as well as that plate!”

“You give, sir, what you can,” Volpone said. “I thank you. Your love shows judgment in this, and it shall not be unrewarded. I ask that you see me often.”

“Yes, I shall, sir,” Voltore said.

“Be not far from me,” Volpone said.

“Do you observe that, sir?” Mosca asked Voltore.

Volpone said, “Listen to me carefully; it will concern you.”

Mosca said to Voltore, “You are a happy man, sir; know your good. Know what good thing will happen to you.”

Volpone said, “I cannot now last long —”

Mosca said to Voltore, “You are his heir, sir.”



Voltore asked, “Am I?”

“I feel me going,” Volpone said.

He faked some coughs and groans.

He added, “I’m sailing to my port.”

He faked some more coughs and groans.

He added, “And I am glad I am so near my haven.”

The haven is Heaven, although Volpone may have been optimistic when he called it “my haven.”

“Alas, kind gentleman!” Mosca said, “Well, we must all go —”

Voltore interrupted, “But, Mosca —”

Mosca ignored him and continued, “Age will conquer.”

Voltore said, “Please listen to me. Am I officially made his heir for certain?”

“Are you?” Mosca said. “I beg you, sir, to be pleased to write my name in your list of servants and dependents. All my hopes depend upon your worship: I am lost once Volpone is dead, unless the rising Sun shines on me.”

Volpone’s wealth would make the Sun — Voltore — rise.

“It shall both shine on and warm you, Mosca,” Voltore said.

“Sir, I am a man who has not done your love all the worst services,” Mosca said. “Here I serve you. It is as if I am trusted with your keys so that I can see that all your coffers and all your caskets are locked, and so that I can keep the poor inventory of your jewels, your plate, and your monies. I am your steward, sir. I husband your goods here.”

Mosca claimed to have Volpone's keys and to take care of Volpone's wealth — wealth that according to Mosca would soon belong to Voltore.

"But am I the sole heir?" Voltore asked.

"You are the heir without a partner, sir," Mosca replied. "This was confirmed this morning. The wax of the seal is still warm, and the ink is scarcely dry upon the parchment."

"Happy, happy me!" Voltore said. "For what reason did he make me his sole heir, sweet Mosca?"

"Your merit, sir," Mosca said. "You deserved it. I know no second reason."

"Your modesty won't allow you to know it," Voltore said, "but I know the help that you have given to me. Well, I shall requite it."

He may have meant that Mosca will be well rewarded for his services, but given his greed, he may have simply meant that Mosca would receive a small reward.

Mosca said, "Volpone has always liked your manner of acting, sir. That was what first took his fancy and made you his favorite. I often have heard him say how he admired men of your large profession, who promise much and advocate for every side, right or wrong, and who advocate for things that are complete contradictions, until the lawyers are hoarse again, and yet all that they say is lawful to be said. They take any case and argue any position. Men of your large profession, with very quick agility, are men who turn and return, and who make knots and undo them. Men of your large profession give forkéd-tongued, ambiguous counsel. They take provoking gold [Mosca thought, *Either they take a bribe, or they take money to petition a judge to take up a case*] from either side of a dispute, and put it away in their pocket. These men, he knew, would thrive with their

humility [Mosca thought sarcastically, *They must be humble because, like beggars, they accept money from anyone*], and for his part, he thought he would be blest to have his heir of such a suffering spirit, so wise, so grave, of so perplexed a tongue, and also so loud, which would not wag, nor scarcely lie still, without a fee, when every word your worship lets fall is a chequin!”

Mosca’s “praise” of the legal profession was hardly praise. A lawyer’s tongue would scarcely lie still — either not move at all or be constantly lying — without a fee. A chequin is a Venetian gold coin.

Loud knocking sounded at the door.

Mosca said, “Who’s that? Someone is knocking. I would not have you seen, sir. And yet — pretend you came and went in haste. I’ll make up an excuse.

“And, gentle sir, when you come to swim in golden lard, up to the arms in honey, so that your chin is held up stiff, with the fatness — richness — of the flood, think about me, your vassal. Just remember me. I have not been your worst of clients.”

Mosca was telling Voltore that soon Voltore would be up to his chin in riches and that he hoped that Voltore would remember him. Once Voltore inherited Volpone’s wealth, Mosca would be out of a job.

Voltore said, “Mosca!”

Mosca asked, “When will you have your inventory brought, sir? Or see a copy of the will?”

The inventory was of Volpone’s goods, goods that Voltore thought he would soon inherit.

The knocking continued, and Mosca shouted, “Coming!”

Mosca then said to Voltore, “I will bring them to you, sir. Leave, be gone, look serious as if you were doing business here.”

Voltore exited.

Volpone jumped out of bed and said, “Excellent Mosca! Come here, and let me kiss you.”

“Keep still, sir,” Mosca said, looking out of a window. “Corbaccio is here to see you.”

Volpone said, “Put the plate away. The vulture’s gone, and the old raven’s come!”

— 1.4 —

Mosca put the plate on the treasure chest, where it was visible, and said to the plate, “Betake you to your silence, and your sleep. Stand there and multiply.”

Mosca was parodying part of Genesis 1:28:

*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (King James Version)*

One meaning of “stand” in Elizabethan and Jacobean English was “to have an erection.”

Mosca thought, *Now, we shall see a wretch who is indeed more impotent than this wretch — Volpone — can feign to be, yet the first wretch hopes to hop over the second wretch’s grave.*

Volpone was pretending to be so ill that he was impotent, but Corbaccio was an old man who really was impotent.

If Corbaccio were more intelligent, he would realize that he was much more likely than Volpone to die first.

Corbaccio entered the room. *Corbaccio* is Italian for “raven.”

Mosca greeted him: “Signior Corbaccio! You’re very welcome, sir.”

Corbaccio asked, “How is Volpone, your patron?”

“Indeed, just as he was before,” Mosca said. “He has not gotten better.”

Corbaccio, an old man who was hard of hearing, asked, “What! Is he getting better?”

“No, sir. He’s rather worse,” Mosca said.

Corbaccio, who hoped to inherit Volpone’s goods, said, “That’s good. Where is he?”

“Upon his couch, sir, newly fallen asleep,” Mosca said.

Volpone was using the couch as a daybed.

“Does he sleep well?” Corbaccio asked.

“Not a wink, sir, all this night,” Mosca said. “Nor did he sleep yesterday. He only dozes.”

“Good!” Corbaccio said. “He should take some advice from physicians. I have brought him an opiate here, from my own doctor.”

“He will not hear of drugs,” Mosca said. “He refuses to take them.”

“Why?” Corbaccio said. “I myself stood by while it was made, I saw all the ingredients, and I know that it cannot but most gently work. I would bet my life against his that the purpose of this potion is just to make him sleep.”

Lying on the couch, Volpone thought, *Yes, to make him sleep his last sleep — the eternal sleep — if he would take it.*

“Sir,” Mosca said, “he has no faith in medicine.”

“What did you say?” Corbaccio asked. “What did you say?”

“He has no faith in medicine,” Mosca repeated. “He thinks that doctors are the greater danger, and the worse disease, to escape. I often have heard him protest that a physician should never be his heir.”

A proverb stated that only a fool would make his physician his heir.

The hard-of-hearing Corbaccio asked, “I won’t be his heir?”

“No, a physician will not be his heir, sir,” Mosca said.

“Oh, no, no, no,” Corbaccio said. “I do not intend for a physician to be his heir.”

“No, sir,” Mosca said, “and he says that he cannot endure their fees. He says that they financially flay a man before they kill him.”

“Right,” Corbaccio said. “I understand you.”

“And then they do it by experimenting with ‘cures’ on the patient,” Mosca said, “for which the law not only absolves them, but gives them great reward, and he is loath to pay a doctor to kill him.”

“It is true,” Corbaccio said. “Doctors kill with as much license as a judge.”

“No, with even more license than a judge,” Mosca said. “A judge kills, sir, only when the law condemns a man to death, but a doctor can kill even a judge when the judge is the doctor’s patient.”

“Yes,” Corbaccio said, “or the doctor can kill me or any other man.”

He then asked about Volpone’s health, “How is his apoplexy? Is that strong on him still?”

Apoplexy is the condition of incapacity that follows having suffered a stroke. Strong apoplexy is deadly.

“Very violent,” Mosca said. “His speech is broken, and his eyes are set and staring. His face is drawn longer than it was accustomed to be.”

“What? What? He is stronger than he was accustomed to be?” Corbaccio asked, mishearing.

“No, sir,” Mosca said. “His face is drawn longer than it was accustomed to be.”

“Oh, good!” Corbaccio said. He wanted Volpone to die soon.

Mosca said, “His mouth is always open and gaping, and his eyelids hang.”

“Good,” Corbaccio said.

“A freezing numbness stiffens all his joints,” Mosca said, “and makes the color of his flesh like lead.”

“That is good,” Corbaccio said.

“His pulse beats slowly, and dully.”

“These are all good symptoms, still,” Corbaccio said.

Mosca said, “And from his brain —”

“I understand you,” Corbaccio interrupted. “Good.”

Mosca continued, “— flows a cold sweat, with a continual watery discharge from the sagging corners of his eyes.”

Discharge from the brain was a sign of imminent death.

“Is it possible?” Corbaccio said. “Despite my old age, I am in better shape than he is, ha!”

He then asked, “How fares Volpone with the swimming of his head?”

“Oh, sir, he has gone past the dizziness and dimness of vision,” Mosca said. “He has gotten worse. He now has lost his feeling, and he has stopped snoring. You can hardly perceive that he breathes.”

“Excellent, excellent!” Corbaccio said. “Surely I shall outlast him. This makes me young again by a score of years. I feel twenty years younger.”

“I was coming for you, sir,” Mosca said.

This could mean that he was coming to bring Corbaccio to Volpone’s deathbed, or that he was setting a trap for Corbaccio.

“Has Volpone made his will?” Corbaccio asked. “What has he given me?”

“No, sir,” Mosca said, answering the first question.

Thinking that Mosca was answering the second question, the hard-of-hearing Corbaccio said, “Nothing! What!”

Mosca clarified, “Volpone has not made his will, sir.”

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” Corbaccio said. “But why was Voltore, the lawyer, here?”

“He smelled a carcass, sir, when he heard that my master was thinking about his testament,” Mosca said. “I urged Volpone to make his last will and testament for your good.”

“Voltore came to Volpone, did he?” Corbaccio said. “I thought so.”



“Yes,” Mosca said, “and Voltore presented Volpone with this piece of plate.”

“In order to be his heir?” Corbaccio asked.

“I do not know, sir,” Mosca replied.

“True,” Corbaccio said, mishearing. “I know it, too.”

Mosca thought, *Yes, you would think that Voltore gave the plate in order to become Volpone’s heir. You are judging Voltore by your own scale. You are thinking that Voltore is doing what you are doing. Of course, you are correct.*

Corbaccio said, “Well, I shall yet prevent him from succeeding. See, Mosca, look. I have brought here a bag of bright chequins that will quite weigh down his plate.”

He meant that the bag of gold coins was more valuable than the plate that Voltore had given to Volpone.

Taking the bag of gold coins, Mosca said, “Yes, indeed, sir. This is truly health-giving; this is your sacred medicine. Opiates do not compare to this great elixir!”

An elixir was a health potion. Alchemists sought to create the Elixir of Life, which was thought to make humans live very long lives, and perhaps forever.

Corbaccio said, “It is *aurum palpabile*, if not *potabile*.”

These are Latin terms. *Aurum palpabile* is touchable gold; *aurum potabile* is drinkable gold. *Aurum potabile* was a drink containing gold; it was thought to promote health.

Mosca joked, “It shall be administered to him in his bowl.”

He was joking that he would pour the gold coins into Volpone’s bowl so that Volpone could eat them and restore his health.

“Yes, do, do, do,” Corbaccio said.

“This is a very blessed cordial!” Mosca said. “This will restore his health.”

“Yes, do, do, do,” Corbaccio said.

“I think it were not best, sir,” Mosca said.

“To do what?” Corbaccio asked.

“To restore Volpone’s health.”

“Oh, no, no, no,” Corbaccio said. “By no means.”

Mosca said, “Why, sir, this bag of gold coins will work some strange effect on Volpone, if he would feel it.”

“That is true,” Corbaccio said. “Therefore, let’s not let him feel it. I’ll take my bag of gold coins. Give it back to me.”

“By no means,” Mosca said, “pardon me.”

He meant for “By no means” to be an introductory element, but “By no means pardon me” was good advice.

He added, “You shall not do yourself that wrong, sir. I will so advise you that you shall inherit *all* of Volpone’s wealth.”

“What!” Corbaccio asked.

“All of it, sir,” Mosca said. “It is your right, your own. No man can claim a part of Volpone’s wealth. It is yours, without a rival, and decreed by destiny.”

“How, how, good Mosca?” Corbaccio asked.

“I’ll tell you, sir,” Mosca said. “He shall recover from this fit.”

“I understand,” Corbaccio said.

“And, at the first opportunity after he has regained his senses, I will importune him to make his last will and testament, and I will show him this bag of gold coins.”

“Good, good,” Corbaccio said.

“It will be better yet,” Mosca said, “if you will listen to me, sir.”

“Yes, with all my heart,” Corbaccio said.

“Now, I advise you to speedily go home. There, make a will in which you shall inscribe my master as your sole heir.”

“And disinherit my son!” Corbaccio said.

“Oh, sir, it is all for the better,” Mosca said. “This new will shall have an outward appearance that conceals the truth in order to make this trick much more plausible.”

“Oh, so the new will is only a trick?” Corbaccio said.

Mosca said, “This will, sir, you shall send to me. Now, when I come to emphasize, as I will, your cares, your watchings at Volpone’s sickbed, and your many prayers for him, your more than many gifts, and your this day’s present, and finally, I produce your will — where, without thought or the least regard for your legitimate son, a son so brave and highly meriting, the stream of your diverted love has thrown you upon my master and made him your heir, Volpone cannot be so stupid, or stone dead, but out of conscience, and complete gratitude —”

Corbaccio interrupted: “— he must pronounce me his heir.”

“That is true,” Mosca said.

Corbaccio said, “I have thought of this plot previously.”

“I believe it,” Mosca said, flattering Corbaccio.

The hard-of-hearing Corbaccio asked, “Don’t you believe it?”

“Yes, sir,” Mosca said. He really did not believe it.

“My own plot,” Corbaccio said.

Mosca said, “Which, when he has done, sir —”

Corbaccio interrupted, “Made me his heir?”

Mosca said, “And you so certain to survive him —”

“Yes,” Corbaccio said.

Mosca said, “Being so lusty a man —”

One meaning of “lusty” was healthy; the other meaning definitely did not apply to Corbaccio because he was impotent.

“That is true,” Corbaccio replied to Mosca.

“Yes, sir,” Mosca said.

Corbaccio said, “I thought of that, too. You, Mosca, are the exact instrument that expresses my thoughts!”

Mosca began, “You have not only done yourself a good —”

Corbaccio interrupted: “— but multiplied it on my son.”

Corbaccio thought that he would outlive Volpone, and so Corbaccio’s son would inherit Volpone’s wealth as well as Corbaccio’s wealth.

“That is right, sir,” Mosca said.

“This is still what I have plotted previously,” Corbaccio said.

Mosca said, “Alas, sir! Heaven knows that it has been all my concern, all my care — I even grow gray from it — how to work things —”

“I understand, sweet Mosca,” Corbaccio said.

“You are the man for whom I labor here,” Mosca said.

“Yes, do, do, do,” Corbaccio said. “I’ll see to the will immediately.”

He started for the door.

Mosca said quietly so that Volpone but not Corbaccio could hear him, “May a rook go with you, raven!”

This meant, *May you — who are the raven — be rooked, aka cheated.*

Corbaccio said to Mosca, “I know that you are honest.”

Mosca said quietly so that Volpone but not Corbaccio could hear him, “You lie, sir!”

Corbaccio said, “And —”

Mosca finished the sentence quietly so that Volpone but not Corbaccio could hear him, “— your knowledge is no better than your ears, sir.”

Corbaccio said, “I do not doubt that I will be a father to you.”

Corbaccio was a father who was going home to write a will that disinherited his son.

Mosca said quietly so that Volpone but not Corbaccio could hear him, “Nor do I doubt that I will cheat my brother out of his blessing.”

Mosca intended to cheat Corbaccio’s son out of his inheritance, and so if Corbaccio were Mosca’s father, then Mosca would be cheating his brother out of his inheritance.

In Genesis 27, Jacob cheats Esau, his brother, out of their father’s blessing.

Corbaccio said, “I may have my youth restored to me. Why not?”

Mosca said quietly so that Volpone but not Corbaccio could hear him, “Your worship is a precious ass!”

“What did you say?” Corbaccio asked.

Mosca replied, “I desire your worship to make haste, sir.”

“It is done,” Corbaccio said. “It is done. I am going.”

He exited.

Volpone leapt out of bed and said, “Oh, I shall burst with laughter! Loosen my clothing so I can laugh! Loosen my clothing!”

Mosca said, “Contain your flux of laughter, sir.”

“Flux” means both “flood” and “dysentery.” The illness dysentery results in a flood of bloody diarrhea.

Mosca added, “You know this hope of inheriting all your wealth is such a bait that it covers any hook.”

Volpone said, “Oh, but the way you work with the bait, and the way that you place it in front of them! I cannot hold back my good feelings. Good rascal, let me kiss you. I have never known you to be in so rare a humor. I have never seen you be so effective in trapping suckers — you are in excellent form!”

“I do not deserve such praise, sir,” Mosca said. “I am only doing as I have been taught. I follow your grave instructions: I trick them with words, I pour oily flattery into their ears, and I send them away.”

“It is true! It is true!” Volpone said. “What a rare punishment is avarice to itself! A greedy man punishes himself!”

“Yes, with our help, sir,” Mosca said.

Volpone said, “So many cares and worries, so many maladies, so many fears attend on old age, yes, that death is so often called on, as no wish other than for death can be more frequent with old men. Their limbs are weak, their senses are dull, and their seeing, hearing, and walking are all dead before them. Yes, even their teeth, their instruments of eating, fail them. Yet this is reckoned life!

“Just now, here was an old man, who has now gone home, who wishes to live longer! He does ‘not’ feel his gout or his palsy. He pretends to himself that he is younger by scores of years. He flatters his age by confidently lying about it. He hopes that he may, with the use of magic charms, like Aeson, have his youth restored.”

Aeson was the father of Jason, leader of the Argonauts. Medea, a young witch, helped Jason get the Golden Fleece. Medea and Jason then married, and Medea used magic to restore Aeson’s youth.

Volpone continued, “And with these thoughts he so fattens himself, as if fate would be as easily cheated as he himself, and all turns to air! He regards old age as a delusion!”

Knocking sounded at the door.

Volpone asked, “Who’s that there, now? A third visitor?”

Mosca said, “Quiet. Get into your bed again. I hear the visitor’s voice. He is Corvino, our spruce, dapper, well-dressed merchant.”

Volpone lay down on the bed and said, “I am ‘dead.’”

Mosca said, “Let’s have another bout, sir, with your eyes.”

He used the ointment again to make Volpone’s eyes look like those of a very ill man.

Mosca asked loudly, “Who’s there?”

— 1.5 —

Corvino entered the room. *Corvino* is Italian for “crow.”

Mosca said, “Signior Corvino! You have come when you were most wished for! Oh, how happy would you be, if you knew it, now!”

Corvino asked, “Why? What? Wherein?”

“The tardy hour has come, sir,” Mosca said.

“Volpone is not dead, is he?” Corvino asked.

“He is not dead, sir, but he is as good as dead,” Mosca replied. “He knows no man.”

Corvino asked, “What shall I do then?”

“What do you mean, sir?” Mosca asked.

“I have brought him here a pearl as a gift,” Corvino said.

If Volpone could not recognize Corvino, Corvino would get no credit for giving him a valuable gift.

Mosca said, “Perhaps he has enough remembrance left as to know you, sir. He continually calls for you. Nothing but your name is in his mouth.

“Is your pearl orient, sir?”

Pearls from the orient were the most valuable.

“Venice was never owner of the like,” Corvino said.

Volpone said faintly, “Signior Corvino.”

“Listen,” Mosca said.

Volpone again said faintly, “Signior Corvino.”



Mosca said, “He calls you; step over to him and give him the pearl.”

Mosca said to Volpone, “Signior Corvino is here, sir, and he has brought you a rich pearl.”

Corvino gave the pearl to Volpone, who grabbed it and held it tightly.

Corvino said to Volpone, “How are you, sir?”

He then said to Mosca, “Tell Volpone that the pearl doubles the twelfth carat.”

The pearl’s size was twenty-four carats; it was a very large and very valuable pearl.

“Sir, he cannot understand; his hearing’s gone, and yet it comforts him to see you.”

Corvino said, “Say that I have a diamond for him, too.”

Mosca said, “It’s best for you to show it, sir. Put it into his hand; it is only there he apprehends. He has his feeling, yet.”

Volpone grabbed the diamond.

Mosca said, “See how he grasps it!”

“Alas, good gentleman!” Corvino said. “How pitiful the sight is!”

“Tut!” Mosca said, “You forget, sir. The weeping of an heir should always be laughter under a mask.”

“Why, am I his heir?” Corvino asked.

Mosca replied, “Sir, I am sworn. I may not show you the will until Volpone is dead, but here has been Corbaccio, here has been Voltore, here have been others, too. I cannot number them because they were so many. All of them had their mouths open hoping for legacies: They all want to inherit

Volpone's wealth. But I, taking the opportunity given by his calling for you — 'Signior Corvino, Signior Corvino' — took paper, and pen, and ink, and there I asked him whom he would have to be his heir? 'Corvino.' Who should be his executor? 'Corvino.' And, to any question he was silent to, I always interpreted the nods he made, through weakness and palsy, for consent, and I sent home the others, with nothing bequeathed to them, except a reason to cry and curse."

According to Mosca's story, Volpone's illness included palsy, which made him nod. Although the nods were involuntary movements caused by the palsy, Mosca had always interpreted them as being voluntary acknowledgments that Volpone wanted Corvino to be his heir and the executor of his will.

Corvino said, "Oh, my dear Mosca!"

He hugged him.

Corvino asked, "Doesn't he perceive us?"

"No more than a blind harper would," Mosca replied.

A blind harper such as the epic poet Homer, who strummed a lyre as he sang his poems, would perceive quite a lot.

Mosca continued, "He knows no man, no face of friend, nor name of any servant, nor who fed him last or gave him something to drink. Not even those he has begotten, or brought up, can he remember."

"Has he children?" Corvino asked.

"Bastards," Mosca said. "Some dozen, or more, whom he begot on beggars, gypsies, and Jews, and blacks, when he was drunk. Didn't you know that, sir? It is the common talk of the town. The dwarf, the Fool, and the eunuch in this house are all his. He's the true biological father of his family, in all, except me — but he has given them nothing."

“That’s good, that’s good,” Corvino said. “Are you sure he doesn’t hear us?”

“Am I sure, sir?” Mosca said. “Why, look and listen, then give credit to your own senses.”

Mosca shouted in Volpone’s ear, “May the pox — syphilis — approach, and add to your diseases, if it would send you into the hereafter sooner, sir, because your sexual incontinence has deserved syphilis through and through, and thoroughly, and it deserves the plague to boot!”

What Mosca said about Volpone’s sexual incontinence may be true, but Volpone was pretending to be so ill that he is incapable of sexual incontinence.

Mosca said to Corvino, “You may come close, sir.”

Mosca shouted in Volpone’s ear, “I wish that you would once and for all close those filthy eyes of yours that flow with slime like two frog-ponds, and I wish the termination of those same hanging cheeks that are covered with hide instead of skin —”

Mosca said to Corvino, “Help me, sir.”

Mosca continued, “— and that look like frozen dishrags set on end!”

Corvino said loudly, “Or that look like an old smoked wall, on which the rain ran down in streaks!”

“Excellent! Sir, speak out,” Mosca said. “You may be louder still. A firearm discharged in his ear would hardly penetrate it and make itself heard.”

Corvino shouted, “His nose is like a common sewer, always running.”

“That is good!” Mosca said. “And what about his mouth?”

“It is a complete cesspool,” Corvino said.

“Oh, stop his mouth,” Mosca said. “Suffocate him.”

“By no means,” Corvino said. “No way.”

“Please let me do it,” Mosca said. “Truly, I could stifle him excellently with a pillow — as well as any woman could who should look after him.”

“Do as you will,” Corvino said, “but I’ll be gone.”

Corvino did not want to witness the murder.

“Do as you wish,” Mosca said. “It is your presence that makes him last so long.”

“Please use no violence,” Corvino said.

“No?” Mosca said. “Sir, why not? Why should you have such scruples, sir?”

“Use your discretion,” Corvino said.

Mosca had called Corvino’s bluff. Corvino did not mind if Mosca were to murder Volpone, but Corvino did not want to witness it or get in legal trouble for it.

“Well, good sir, leave,” Mosca said.

Corvino said, “Shouldn’t I trouble Volpone now and take my pearl back?”

Mosca said, “Pooh! Nor your diamond.”

Mosca meant that Corvino should not trouble Volpone by taking his pearl and diamond back again.

Mosca said, “What a needless worry is this that afflicts you? Isn’t everything that is here yours?”

If Corvino were Volpone's heir, as Corvino supposed, Corvino would inherit all of Volpone's wealth, including the diamond and pearl that Volpone was holding.

Mosca said, "Am not I here, whom you have made your servant? Am I not here, who owe my being to you?"

Mosca had stated that he was willing to murder Volpone for Corvino. If this happened, Corvino would get back his two jewels quickly.

"Grateful Mosca!" Corvino said. "You are my friend, my fellow, my companion, and my partner, and you shall share in all my fortunes."

"Excepting one," Mosca said.

"What's that?" Corvino said.

"Your gorgeous wife, sir."

Corvino immediately exited. He was a jealous man, and he was leaving to check up on his wife. Soon, however, he would be willing to allow Volpone to sleep with his wife if it would get him Volpone's wealth. Because he was willing to allow Volpone to cuckold him, it is appropriate that he gave Volpone a diamond and a pearl — two precious stones. In this society, testicles were called stones. They are still known as the family jewels.

Mosca said, "Now he is gone. We had no other way to shoo him away from here, but this."

"My divine Mosca!" Volpone said. "You have outdone yourself today!"

Knocking sounded on the door.

Volpone said, "Who's there? I will be troubled with no more visitors. Prepare for me music, dances, banquets, and all

delights. The Turk is not more sensual in his pleasures than Volpone will be.”

The Turk was Mahomet III, the Ottoman Sultan, who was also known as the Grand Turk. He was known for taking great delight in sensual, including sexual, pleasures.

Mosca exited.

Volpone looked over the morning’s profits, saying, “Let me see. A pearl! A diamond! Plate! Gold coins! A good morning’s haul! Why, this is better than robbing churches, even. Or getting fat, by eating, once a month, a man.”

The eating of a man was metaphorical. He was referring to devouring a man by collecting the interest each month on usurious loans, or by grinding down the man through excessive hard work. One man’s ruin can be another man’s source of wealth.

Mosca returned.

“Who is it?” Volpone asked.

“‘The beauteous Lady Politic Would-be, sir. Wife to the English knight, Sir Politic Would-be.’ These are the exact words I have been demanded to say to you. She has sent a squire to learn how you slept last night and to ask whether you would be willing to entertain visitors.”

“Not now,” Volpone said. “She can visit me some three hours from now.”

“I told the squire as much,” Mosca said.

Volpone said, “When I am high with mirth and wine, then, then.

“Before Heaven, I wonder at the desperate valor of the bold English, that they dare let loose their wives to all encounters!”

Venetian men such as Corvino kept a close eye on their wives; in contrast, Englishmen such as Sir Politic Would-be gave their wives free rein.

Mosca said, “Sir, this knight had his name not for nothing. He is politic and cunning, and knows, however his wife may affect strange airs, she hasn’t the face to be dishonest.”

In other words, the knight’s wife’s face was not pretty enough to have an affair.

He continued, “But if she had Signior Corvino’s wife’s face ...”

“Has she so excellent a face?” Volpone asked.

“Oh, sir, her face is the wonder, the blazing star of Italy!” Mosca said. “She is a wench of the first year! She is a beauty as ripe as harvest! Her skin is whiter than a swan all over; it is whiter than silver, snow, or lilies! She has a soft lip that would tempt you to an eternity of kissing! And she has flesh that melts in the touch to blood!”

Touching her skin would make her blush — or grow hot with sexual passion.

Mosca continued, likening her to what Volpone loved best: “She is as bright as your gold, and as lovely as your gold!”

“Why haven’t I known this before?” Volpone asked.

“Alas, sir,” Mosca said. “I myself discovered it only yesterday.”

“How might I see her?” Volpone asked.

“Oh, that is not possible,” Mosca said. “She’s guarded as warily as is your gold. She never goes out of doors and never gets fresh air except at a window. All her looks are sweet as the first grapes or cherries, and her looks are watched as closely as the first grapes or cherries are.”

The first grapes or cherries are watched very carefully to ensure that the crop is harvested at the best time.

“I must see her,” Volpone said.

“Sir, there is a guard of spies ten thick upon her,” Mosca said. “The spies are Corvino’s whole household. Each spy is set to spy upon his fellow, and all the spies have their orders to spy upon his wife. When Corvino leaves or enters his home, he has his spies report to him.”

“I will go see her, though but at her window,” Volpone said.

“If you do, wear some disguise, then,” Mosca said.

“That is true,” Volpone said. “I must maintain my pretense of being a seriously ill man. We’ll think about which disguise I can use.”



## ACT 2 (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

### — 2.1 —

At Saint Mark's Place, at a corner near Corvino's house, Sir Politic Would-be and Peregrine were talking. Both were travelers from England, and they had just met. In fact, Peregrine had just disembarked on this day.

Sir Politic Would-be said, "Sir, to a wise man, all the world's his soil, aka country."

A proverb states, "A wise man may live anywhere."

He continued, "It is not Italy, nor France, nor Europe, that must bound me, if my fates call me forth. Yet, I protest, it is no salty, wanton desire of seeing countries, changing my religious affiliation, or suffering any disaffection to the state of England, where I was bred and to which I owe my dearest projects, that has brought me out of England, much less Ulysses' idle, antique, stale, gray-headed project of knowing men's minds and manners!"

Ulysses was the Roman name of Odysseus, hero of Homer's *Odyssey*. In the beginning of the *Odyssey*, we learn that Odysseus has traveled to many lands and learned the minds of many men. Learning the minds of many men is a very good reason to travel.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, "Instead, a peculiar humor, aka inclination or whim, of my wife's laid for this height of Venice."

Venice is definitely at sea level; Sir Politic Would-be liked to use fancy language, and he was using "height" to mean "latitude."

He continued, "We came to observe, to make notes, to learn the language, and so forth."

He paused and then asked, "I hope you travel, sir, with license?"

English travelers were required to get a permit from the Privy Council to travel aboard. Some travelers did not do this.

"Yes," Peregrine replied.

"Since you have a permit, I dare the more safely to converse with you," Sir Politic Would-be said.

English travelers with licenses were not supposed to talk to English travelers without licenses.

He then asked, "How long, sir, has it been since you left England?"

"Seven weeks."

"You left so recently!" Sir Politic Would-be said. "You have not been with my lord ambassador?"

English travelers with permits were required to be presented to the English lord ambassador.

"Not yet, sir," Peregrine replied.

"Please," Sir Politic Would-be said, "tell me what news, sir, vents our climate?"

"Vents our climate" was a fancy way of saying "comes from England."

He continued, "I heard last night a very strange thing reported by some of my lord ambassador's followers, and I long to hear how it will be seconded."

By "seconded," he meant "confirmed."

"What was it, sir?" Peregrine asked.

Sir Politic Would-be whispered as if he were imparting a secret, “Indeed, sir, the news was of a raven that was said to have built a nest in a ship royal of the King’s.”

A raven was thought to be an omen of evil, and the building of a nest on a ship was also thought to be a bad omen. However, these were superstitions, and Peregrine marveled at how seriously Sir Politic Would-be was taking them.

Peregrine thought to himself, *This fellow, is he trying to trick me and make me look like a fool, or has he himself been tricked and made to look like a fool, do you suppose? Sir Politic Would-be is either trying to make me a fool, or he is a fool himself.*

He asked, “What is your name, sir?”

“My name is Politic Would-be.”

Peregrine thought, *Oh, his name sums him up. He wants people to think that he is in the know about political matters, including political intrigues. But if he takes these superstitions seriously, he can’t be in the know. He is a fool, and that gives me license to make fun of him.*

He asked, “Are you a knight, sir?”

Sir Politic Would-be wore spurs, although in Venice there was no use for spurs.

“I am a poor knight, sir,” Sir Politic Would-be replied.

Peregrine was likely to agree.

Peregrine said, “Is your lady lying — staying — here in Venice to acquire knowledge of fashions of clothing, including headdresses, and behavior, among the courtesans? Is she the fine Lady Would-be?”

Venetian courtesans were renowned for their fashionable clothing and courteous conversation.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Yes, sir; the spider and the bee often suck from one and the same flower.”

He did not say which — his wife or the courtesan — was the spider and which was the bee, but apparently he meant that his wife could learn from the courtesans without having any of the reputation of the courtesans rub off on her. This may not be a good thing since in some circles the courtesans had an excellent reputation.

“Good Sir Politic Would-be,” Peregrine said, “I beg your pardon. I have heard much about you. What you said about the raven is true.”

“You know that for a fact?” Sir Politic asked.

“Yes,” Peregrine replied, “and I know about the lion’s whelping in the Tower of London.”

Lions were kept in the Tower of London, and a lioness named Elizabeth whelped on 5 August 1604 and on 26 February 1605. Such births to cubs in the Tower of London were unprecedented.

“Another whelp!” Sir Politic Would-be exclaimed.

“Yes, another, sir,” Peregrine said.

“Now, by Heaven, what prodigies are these? We have also had the fires at Berwick and the new star!”

On 19 July 1333, the Battle of Halidon Hill occurred, in which the army of King Edward III of England defeated the Scottish army of Sir Archibald Douglas. A letter written on 15 January 1605 described a recently witnessed spectral battle between two armies in the sky above Halidon Hill, which is near Berwick. Today, we think that superstitious people witnessed the aurora borealis.

On 30 September 1604, a supernova appeared in the sky and remained visible for seventeen months.

Superstitious people regarded such unusual things appearing in the sky as ominous.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, “All these things happened at the same time; this is strange and full of omen! Did you witness those atmospheric phenomena?”

“I did, sir,” Peregrine replied.

“They are fearsome signs!” Sir Politic Would-be said. “Please, sir, confirm this for me, if you can. Were three porpoises seen above the London Bridge, as has been reported?”

On 19 January 1606, a porpoise was captured in a small creek where no one would expect a porpoise to be, but it was captured below London Bridge. Peregrine knew that only one porpoise had been captured, but he was willing to have fun at Sir Politic Would-be’s expense.

Peregrine replied, “Six porpoises, and a sturgeon, sir.”

Actually, sturgeons were commonly found in the Thames River at the time.

“I am astonished,” Sir Politic Would-be said.

“Sir, don’t be astonished,” Peregrine said. “I’ll tell you a greater prodigy than these.”

“What should these things portend?” Sir Politic Would-be asked. “They must foretell important events.”

Peregrine said, “The very day — let me be sure — that I put forth from London, a whale was discovered in the river, as high as Woolwich, that had waited there, few know how many months, for the subversion of the Stode fleet.”

Ships belonging to the English Merchant Adventurer's fleet were at Stade (then known as Stode), located northwest of Hamburg, Germany. A few days after the porpoise mentioned previously was captured, a whale was sighted in the Thames River at Woolwich, eight miles from London. "To subvert" is "to destroy completely." What connection a whale in the Thames River could have with the complete destruction of a fleet of English ships at Stade, Germany, is something that needs explanation.

"Is it possible?" Sir Politic Would-be said. "Yes, believe that it is possible. The whale was either sent from Spain, or the archdukes. It is Spinola's whale, upon my life and my reputation! Won't the Spaniards cease these projects that attempt to destroy England?"

At this time, England and Spain were at peace, due to a peace treaty signed in 1604, but Sir Politic Would-be was still suspicious of Spaniards. He thought that the whale could have come directly from Spain or from the archdukes. The archdukes were Albert of Austria and his wife, the Infanta Isabella, who ruled the Spanish Netherlands. ("Infanta" means daughter of the King of Spain.) Ambrogio Spinola commanded the Spanish army that was located in the Netherlands. In reality he was a very successful commander, but some credulous people believed that he was a military mastermind who thought of having a whale swim up the Thames River to London, where it would take in water and then spout the water over London, drowning the city.

Sir Politic Would-be said, "Worthy sir, please give me some other news."

Peregrine said, "Indeed, Stone the Fool is dead, and the people he entertained lack a tavern fool extremely."

Stone the Fool, the court jester of King James I of England, had been whipped in the spring of 1605 for making jokes

about the Lord Admiral, who had been part of the English delegation to end the Anglo-Spanish War, which had lasted for nineteen years. Professional Fools were supposed to have immunity to such punishment, but occasionally one went too far.

“Is Master Stone dead?” Sir Politic Would-be asked.

“He’s dead, sir,” Peregrine replied. “Why, I hope that you didn’t think him to be immortal?”

He thought, *Oh, this knight, if he were well known, would be a precious thing to put on our English stage, but anyone who would write such a character would be thought to feign extremely, if not maliciously. Such a character as Sir Politic Would-be would not be believed.*

“Stone dead!” Sir Politic Would-be said.

“Dead,” Peregrine said. “Lord, how deeply, sir, you apprehend it! You feel it deeply, sir. Was he a kinsman of yours?”

“Not that I know of,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “Well! That same fellow was an unknown Fool.”

He meant that people really did not know Stone the Fool; Stone the Fool kept his real character secret.

“And yet you knew him, it seems?” Peregrine asked.

“I did know him,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “Sir, I knew him to have one of the most dangerous heads living within the state, and so I held him.”

“Indeed, sir?”

“While he lived, he actively took action against the interests of England. He received weekly intelligence reports, upon my knowledge, out of the Low Countries, for all parts of the world, secreted in cabbages. And those intelligence reports

he dispensed again to ambassadors, in oranges, melons, apricots, lemons, citrons, and such-like foods for the upper class. Sometimes he hid the intelligence reports in oysters from Colchester and cockles from Selsey.”

“You make me marvel,” Peregrine said.

“Sir, I say these things upon my knowledge,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “I’ve observed him, at your public tavern, take his instructions in a plate of food from a traveller who was a secret agent, and immediately, before the meal was done, convey an answer in a toothpick.”

“Strange!” Peregrine said. “How could this be done, sir?”

“Why, the meat was cut so like his code, and so laid, as he must easily read the cipher,” Sir Politic Would-be said.

A fashion of the time was to cut food into strange shapes, sometimes including the shapes of letters. Sir Politic Would-be was claiming that Stone the Fool’s food had been cut in such a way that it contained a secret message in the form of a cipher, aka secret code.

He didn’t explain how an answer could be conveyed in a toothpick.

“I have heard,” Peregrine said, “that Stone the Fool could not read, sir.”

“That misinformation was cunningly spread as part of a plan by those who employed him,” Sir Politic Would-be said, “but he could read, and he knew many languages, and to add to these things, he had as sound a noggin —”

Peregrine interrupted, “I have heard, sir, that baboons were spies, and that they were a kind of cunning nation near China.”



Sir Politic Would-be agreed: “Yes, yes. They are known as the Mamuluchi. Indeed, they had their hand in a French plot or two, but they were so extremely given to women that they revealed everything, yet I received intelligence and news here, on Wednesday last, from someone on their side, that they were returned, made their reports, as the fashion is, and now stand ready for fresh employment.”

Actually, the Mamuluchi had nothing to do with either baboons or China, but Sir Politic Would-be wanted to appear to be in the know. What he called the Mamuluchi were actually the Mamelukes; they were former slaves who in 1254 seized power in Egypt and who beginning in 1517 ruled Egypt under an Ottoman viceroy. Many powerful Mamelukes were eunuchs, not womanizers.

“By God’s heart!” Peregrine said.

He thought, *This Sir Pol will admit to ignorance of nothing.*

“Pol” is short for “politician” or “parrot.” A parrot speaks without understanding, as do many politicians.

Peregrine said, “It seems, sir, you know all.”

“Not all, sir, but I have some general notions,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “I love to note and to observe. Although I live outside of London, free from the active torrent, yet I wish to mark the currents and the passages of things for my own private use, and I want to know the ebbs and flows of state.”

“Believe, sir,” Peregrine said, flattering Sir Politic Would-be, “that I hold myself in no small obligation to my good fortune for casting me thus luckily upon you, whose knowledge, if your generosity in imparting it equal it, may do me great assistance in instruction for my behavior and my bearing, which are still so rude and raw.”

“Why, have you come forth out of England without knowledge of the rules for travel?” Sir Politic Would-be asked.

“Indeed, I had some common rules from out of that vulgar grammar that he who cried Italian to me, taught me,” Peregrine said.

The grammar was vulgar because it was written in the vulgar, aka common, language: Italian, not Latin. Peregrine said that the writer “cried” rather than “taught” Italian because Italian is an expressive language.

“Why, this is what spoils all our brave young bloods,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “We entrust our hopeful gentry — our splendid young gentlemen — to pedants, who are fellows of exterior surface, and mere bark, aka shell. They have nothing worthwhile inside. You seem to be a gentleman of noble race. I do not teach my knowledge professionally, but my fate has been to be where I have been consulted with in matters of this high kind, touching some great men’s sons, who are persons of good blood and honor.”

He was saying that he had imparted his important knowledge to other young gentlemen.

## — 2.2 —

Mosca and Nano the dwarf, wearing disguises, arrived, carrying material for erecting a temporary stage. Their disguises were those of zanies — the mountebank’s assistants, who would also perform. Some curious people followed them.

Peregrine asked, “Who are these people, sir?”

He was either asking about the gentlemen to whom Sir Politic Would-be had claimed to impart his important knowledge, or he was asking about the newly arrived people.

Mosca said, “Under that window, there the stage must be.”

Nano the dwarf pointed to a window, and Mosca said, “The same.”

The window was part of Corvino’s residence.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “These are fellows who will mount a bank. Didn’t your instructor in the valuable languages ever discourse to you about the Italian mountebanks?”

A mountebank is someone like the proprietor of an American medicine show. The term “mountebank” originated in the late 16th century. It comes from the Italian *montambanco*, which in turn comes from *monta in banco!* This means, “Climb on the bench!” Often, the mountebank would stand on a bench or other raised platform while performing and while selling his medicine.

Mountebanks would mount a *bank* — climb upon a temporary stage, which was often made of a bench or benches — and entertain the crowd of people who would gather. The mountebanks would then sell the crowd of people quack medicines.

“Yes, sir,” Peregrine replied.

“Why, here you shall see one,” Sir Politic Would-be said.

“They are quacks,” Peregrine said. “They are fellows who live by venting — loudly advertising and selling — oils and drugs.”

“Was that the character he gave you of them?” Sir Politic Would-be asked. “Is that what sort of people he told you Italian mountebanks are?”

“That’s what I remember,” Peregrine said.

“Pity his ignorance,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “Italian mountebanks are the only knowing — knowledgeable — men of Europe! They are great general scholars, excellent physicians, very admired statesmen, and the professed favorites and private advisors to the greatest princes. They are the only languaged men of all the world! They know the most languages, and they speak the most skillfully!”

Sir Politic Would-be believed the lies that mountebanks said while speaking to the crowds.

Peregrine said, “And, I have heard, they are most ignorant impostors, whose language consists of fancy words and bits of knowledge to use to baffle their audience with bullshit. They lie about being the favorites of great men just as much as they lie about their own vile medicines; they tell these lies while also making monstrous oaths. They will sell a drug for two-pence, before they depart, that they have valued at twelve crowns previously.”

Sir Politic Would-be replied, “Sir, calumnies are answered best with silence. You yourself shall judge for yourself.”

He asked the disguised Mosca and Nano the dwarf, “Who is it mounts, my friends? Who is the mountebank?”

Mosca replied, “Scoto of Mantua, sir.”

Scoto of Mantua was a famous Italian mountebank who had performed juggling and sleight-of-hand tricks before Queen Elizabeth I in England around 1576.

“Is it he?” Sir Politic Would-be said.

He then said to Peregrine, “Now, then, I’ll proudly promise, sir, you shall behold a different man than the man who has been fantasied to you. I wonder, though, that he should mount his bank — his stage — here in this undistinguished

nook. After all, he has been accustomed to appear in the main part of the Piazza!”

Of course, “Scoto of Mantua” — actually, Volpone — was performing here because he wanted to see Corvino’s wife at the window under which he would perform.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Here he comes.”

Volpone, disguised as a mountebank doctor, arrived. A crowd of people followed him.

Volpone said to the disguised Nano the dwarf, “Mount, zany. Climb up to the temporary stage.”

Nano the dwarf climbed up on stage; he would perform.

The crowd made excited noises.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “See how the people follow him! He’s a man who may write a check for ten thousand crowns on a bank here. He’s wealthy.”

The disguised Volpone now climbed up on the temporary stage.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Observe closely how he moves. I always observe closely his stateliness as he climbs on stage.”

“It is worth seeing, sir,” Peregrine said.

The disguised Volpone said to the crowd, “Most noble gentlemen, and my worthy patrons! It may seem strange that I, your Scoto Mantuano, who was always accustomed to fix my bank, aka stage, in the main part of the public Piazza, near the shelter of the Portico to the Procuratia, where VIPs are seen, should now, after eight months’ absence from this illustrious city of Venice, humbly retire myself and mount my stage in an obscure nook of the Piazza.”

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Didn’t I just now say the same thing?”

Peregrine shushed him, “Be quiet, sir.”

The disguised Volpone said, “Let me tell you that I am not, as your Lombard proverb saith, cold on my feet, or content to part with my commodities at a cheaper rate than I am accustomed to sell them for. Don’t look for bargain-basement prices.”

The Lombard proverb about cold on one’s feet meant that someone was so impoverished that he would sell things very cheaply out of a deep need to buy necessities.

The disguised Volpone continued, “Also, don’t believe that the calumnious reports of that impudent detractor, and shame to our profession — Alessandro Buttone, I mean — who stated in public that I had been condemned a *sforzato*, aka slave, to the galleys, for poisoning the Cardinal Pietro Bembo’s ... shall we say ‘cook’ ... have at all taken possession of me as would a serious illness or an officer of the law, much less merely dejected me.

“No, no, worthy gentlemen; to tell you the truth, I cannot endure to see the rabble of these ground *ciarlitani*, aka charlatans, who spread their cloaks on the pavement and stand on them rather than on a stage, as if they meant to do feats of acrobatics, and then come in lamely, with their moldy tales out of Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, like the stale Tabarine the storyteller did. Some of these ground *ciarlitani* talk about their travels and about their tedious captivity in the Turks’ galleys, when, indeed, if the truth were known, they were the Christians’ galleys, where very temperately they ate bread and drank water, as a wholesome penance, prescribed them by their confessors, for base pilferies.”

According to the disguised Volpone, the ground *ciarlitani* were lucky to be the slaves of Christians, who helped them to be temperate — a virtue — by giving them only bread and water for nourishment.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Observe closely the mountebank’s bearing and his contempt for his rivals.”

The disguised Volpone continued, “These turdy-facey-nasty-patey-lousy-fartical rogues, with one poor goat’s-worth of unprepared antimony, finely wrapped up in several individual *scartoccios*, are able, very well, to kill their twenty patients a week, and then these rogues play and have fun with the money they made.”

A goat was worth four-pence.

The disguised Volpone was using “antimony” to baffle his hearers with bullshit. Unprepared antimony is the silvery ore; antimony is a chemical element that is a grey metalloid. The antimony is poisonous and kills people. Volpone may have wanted his hearers to think of anti-mony as anti-monk or monks’ bane. Antimony was used effectively in chemical purification, but any monk foolish enough to swallow the poisonous antimony as a purgative would probably die.

A *scartoccio* was a piece of paper. A dose of medicine was placed in the piece of paper and sold.

The disguised Volpone was saying that his mountebank rivals took a little medicine — oops, I meant poison — divided it into a large number of individual doses, and then sold it to enough people that it would kill twenty people a week. This gave the rivals enough money to play for a week.

The disguised Volpone continued, “Yet, these meager, starved spirits, who have half stopped the organs of their minds with earthy oppilations that cause mental constipation, do not lack their favorers among your shriveled

salad-eating artisans, who are overjoyed that they may have their half-pennyworth of medicine. Even though the medicine may purge them into another world, it doesn't matter."

The disguised Volpone was making fun of the salad-eating Italians. At least one of the English members of Volpone's audience — the English were meat eaters — approved.

"Excellent!" Sir Politic Would-be said to Peregrine. "Have you ever heard better language, sir?"

"Well, let them go," the disguised Volpone said. "And, gentlemen, honorable gentlemen, know that for this time our stage, being thus removed from the clamors of the *canaglia* — the riff-raff — shall be the scene of pleasure and delight, for I have nothing to sell, little or nothing to sell."

"I told you, sir, his purpose," Sir Politic Would-be said.

He believed that the mountebank's purpose was to serve and improve Humankind, not to make money.

"You did so, sir," Peregrine said.

The disguised Volpone continued, "I protest that I and my six servants are not able to make enough of this precious liquor" — he held up a glass vial of the "medicine" he was selling — "so fast is it fetched away from my lodging by gentlemen of your city, foreigners from Venice's mainland holdings, honorable merchants, and yes, senators, too. These people, ever since my arrival here in Venice, have detained me to serve them by giving me their splendid — most splendid — liberalities.

"And this has been to their great benefit, for what avails a rich man to have his storehouses stuffed with muscatel wine, or with wine of the purest grape, when his physicians



prescribe him, on pain of death, to drink nothing but water boiled and flavored with aniseeds?

“Oh, health! Health! The blessing of the rich! The riches of the poor! Who can buy you at too dear a rate, since there is no enjoying this world without you?”

“Be not then so sparing of your purses, honorable gentlemen, as to abridge and shorten the natural course of life.”

Peregrine said, “You see his purpose in being here.”

He meant that the purpose was to make money.

Sir Politic Would-be replied, “Yes, isn’t it good?”

He meant that the purpose was to make people healthy.

The disguised Volpone continued, “For, when a humid discharge of catarrh, aka mucous, by the mutability of air, falls from your head into an arm or shoulder, or any other part, take a ducat, or a gold chequin, and apply it to the place affected, and see what good effect it can work.”

In other words, money and gold won’t cure a disease such as rheumatism, which people at this time thought was caused by a change in the weather making mucous descend from the head into another part of the body.

The disguised Volpone continued, “No, no, money and gold won’t cure the disguise. It is this blessed *unguento*, aka unguent, aka ointment, this rare extraction, that has the only power to disperse all malignant humors that proceed either of hot, cold, moist, or windy causes.”

Peregrine said, “I wish that he had mentioned dry, too.”

The disguised Volpone had mentioned “hot, cold, moist, or windy causes” of illnesses. According to the medical theory of humors, the causes of illnesses were hot, cold, moist, or dry.

Sir Politic Would-be said, "Please observe him closely."

The disguised Volpone said, "This blessed ointment has the power to fortify the sourest stomach suffering from indigestion, yes, even if it were one that, through extreme weakness, vomited blood, by applying only a warm napkin to the place, after the application of the ointment and massage.

"This blessed ointment has the power to cure dizziness in the head if you put only a drop in your nostrils and likewise behind your ears. It is a most sovereign and approved remedy.

"This blessed ointment can also cure these ailments:

"The *mal caduco*, aka the falling sickness, aka epilepsy.

"Cramps.

"Convulsions.

"Paralyses.

"Epilepsies.

"*Tremor cordia*, aka palpitations of the heart.

"Retired nerves, aka shrunken sinews.

"Ill vapors of the spleen, aka hysteria.

"Stoppings of the liver.

"The stone, aka kidney stones.

"The strangury, aka difficult urination.

"*Hernia ventosa*, aka a windy hernia.

"*Iliaca passio*, aka painful obstruction of the small intestine.

"It also immediately stops dysentery.

“It eases the torsion of the small guts, aka colic.

“It also cures *melancholia hypocondriaca*, aka depression.

“This medicine cures all of these diseases as long as it is taken and applied according to my printed instructions.”

The disguised Volpone held high first the instructions and then the vial of medicine as he said these things:

“For this is the physician, and this is the medicine.

“This counsels, and this cures.

“This gives the direction, and this works the effect.”

He then said, “And, in sum, both together may be termed an abstract of the theory and practice in the Aesculapian art.”

Aesculapius is the god of medicine.

The disguised Volpone continued, “It will cost you eight crowns. And —”

He pointed to Nano the dwarf and said, “Zan Fritada, please sing a verse extempore in honor of it.”

“Zan Fritada” means “Jack Pancake.” He was a zany who was famous for his skills in providing entertainments such as storytelling, singing, and ad-libbing.

Sir Politic Would-be asked, “How do you like him, sir?”

Peregrine replied, “Most strangely, I do!”

“Strangely” meant “unfavorably,” and it meant “exceptionally.” Peregrine meant “unfavorably,” but Sir Politic Would-be understood him to mean “exceptionally well.”

Sir Politic Would-be asked, “Is not his language rare?”

Peregrine replied, "I never heard the like except for alchemy or Broughton's books."

Alchemical texts were very difficult to understand, as were the theological texts of the Puritan Hugh Broughton.

The disguised Nano the dwarf and the disguised Mosca played musical instruments and sang this song:

*"Had old Hippocrates, or Galen,*

*"That to their books put med'cines all in,*

*"But known this secret, they had never*

*"(Of which they will be guilty ever)*

*"Been murderers of so much paper,*

*"Or wasted many a hurtless [harmless] taper [candle];*

*"No Indian drug had e'er been famed,*

*"Tobacco, sassafras not named;*

*"Ne [Nor] yet, of guacum one small stick, sir,*

*"Nor Raymond Lully's great elixir.*

*"Ne [Nor] had been known the Danish Gonswart,*

*"Or Paracelsus, with his long sword."*

Hippocrates and Galen were ancient physicians, each of whom had written many books, thereby murdering paper and candles.

Tobacco, sassafras, and guacum were used as medicines. Guacum came from the guacium tree.

Raymond Lully was thought to be an alchemist who had discovered the Elixir of Life, which would greatly lengthen one's life, possibly even making the person immortal.

The Danish Gonswart kept his secrets so closely hidden that no one today knows who he was. Or, possibly, “Danish Gonswart” is a portmanteau word combining “Danewort” (an herb also known as Dwarf Elder) and Goutwort (an herb used to cure gout). A “wort” is an herb used in medicine.

Paracelsus was an early Renaissance physician who combined medicine with magic. He was believed to keep his most important medicine and magics in the hollow pommel of his long sword. He was believed to have made the Philosopher’s Stone, which would turn base metals into gold and silver. Powdered Philosopher’s Stone was believed, if consumed, to cure all illnesses and greatly extend life.

Peregrine said, “All this, yet, will not do. Eight crowns is too high a price to pay.”

The disguised Volpone said to Nona the dwarf, “No more.”

He then said to his audience, “Gentlemen, I wish I had time to discourse to you the miraculous effects of this my oil, surnamed *Oglio del Scoto*, aka Scoto’s Oil, with the countless catalogue of those whom I have cured of the illnesses I have mentioned, and of many more diseases.

“Gentlemen, I wish I had time to discourse to you the patents and privileges of all the princes and commonwealths of Christendom.”

Patents are official certificates that confer certain rights, such as the right and the privilege to sell something. Of course, the disguised Volpone wanted his audience to think that all the princes and commonwealths of Christendom had given this right and privilege to him.

The disguised Volpone continued, “Gentlemen, I wish I had time to discourse to you just the depositions of those who appeared on my behalf before the Signiory of the Sanita, which licenses mountebanks, and the most learned College

of Physicians, where I was authorized, after notice was taken of the admirable virtues of my medicaments, and my own excellency in the matter of rare and unknown secrets, not only to disperse them publicly in this famous city, but also in all the territories that happily experience joy under the government of the most pious and magnificent states of Italy.

“But some gallant fellow may say, ‘Oh, there are many people who claim to have as good, and as proven-by-experiments medicinal formulas as yours.’

“Indeed, very many people have attempted, like apes, in imitation of that which is really and essentially in me, to make this oil. They have bestowed great cost in such alchemical equipment as furnaces, stills, and alembicks, as well as continual fires and preparation of the ingredients (as indeed there goes into it six hundred different herbs, besides some quantity of human fat, for the conglutination, aka gluing together — we buy the human fat from the anatomists), but when these practitioners come to the last decoction, aka boiling down, they blow, blow, puff, puff to make the fire hotter, and all flies *in fumo* — everything goes up in smoke! Ha! Ha! Ha!”

Anybody who consumes the “medicine” is consuming human fat and so is a cannibal.

*In fumo* is Latin for “in smoke.”

“Poor wretches! I pity their folly and indiscretion rather than their loss of time and money because time and money may be recovered by industry, but to be born a fool is an incurable disease.

“As for myself, I always from my youth have endeavored to get the rarest secrets, and learn them, either in exchange for my own secret knowledge or for money. I have spared neither cost nor labor, where anything was worthy to be learned.

“And gentlemen, honorable gentlemen, I will undertake, by virtue of chemical art, out of the honorable hat that covers your head, to extract the four elements — that is to say, the fire, air, water, and earth — and return to you your felt hat without burn or stain.”

The secret knowledge that the disguised Volpone said he had labored so hard for so long and so expensively to acquire allows him to remove burn marks and stains from felt hats.

The disguised Volpone continued, “For, while others have been playing the ball game known as the Balloo, I have been at my books and I am now past the craggy paths of study and have come to the flowery plains of honor and reputation.”

Sir Politic Would-be said, “I do assure you, sir, that is his aim.”

According to Sir Politic Would-be, the mountebank’s aim was to acquire honor and reputation.

The disguised Volpone continued, “But, about our price —”

Peregrine said, “And that is another of his aims, Sir Pol.”

According to Peregrine, the mountebank’s aim was to acquire money.

The disguised Volpone continued, “You all know, honorable gentlemen, I have never valued this ampulla, or vial, at less than eight crowns, but for this time, I am content to be deprived of it for six. Six crowns is the price, and less, I know you cannot offer me out of courtesy.

“Take it, or leave it; in either case, both it is and I am at your service. I ask you not for the price that the value of the thing would demand, for then I should demand from you a thousand crowns.

“That is the price that the Cardinals Montalto and Fernese, the great Duke of Tuscany, the godfather of my child, and several other princes, have given me, but I despise money.

“Only to show my affection to you, honorable gentlemen, and your illustrious State here, I have neglected the messages of these princes, neglected my own duties, made my journey here, just to present you with the fruits of my travels.”

He then turned to the disguised Nano the dwarf and the disguised Mosca and said, “Tune your voices once more to the touch of your instruments, and give the honorable assembly some delightful recreation.”

Peregrine said, “What monstrous and most painful circumstance — unnecessary ado — is being made here just to get some three or four small coins, some three-pence in the whole! For that is what the profits will come to.”

The disguised Nano the dwarf and the disguised Mosca sang this song:

*“You that [who] would last long, list [listen] to my song,*

*“Make no more coil [fuss], but buy of this oil.*

*“Would you be ever fair [always beautiful] and young?*

*“Stout of teeth, and strong of tongue?*

*“Tart [Keen] of palate? Quick of ear?*

*“Sharp of sight? Of nostril clear?*

*“Moist of hand? [Horny.] And light of foot?*

*“Or, I will come nearer to’t [state what I mean more clearly],*

*“Would you live free from all diseases?*

*“Do the act your mistress pleases;*



*“Yet fright [frighten] all aches from your bones?”*

*“Here’s a med’cine for the nones.”*

The song stated that the medicine would do such things as give the taker a keen appetite and clear his or her sinuses. It was also very good at helping clear up sexual troubles. It would make the taker moist of hand — a sign of amorousness. You can guess the act that pleases your mistress. The medicine would also make the taker light of foot — promiscuous. It would also frighten the ache from the taker’s bones — it would cure the venereal disease that made the bones ache.

It is a medicine for the nones — it will cure none, aka no one person, and it will cure none, aka no one disease, and it will cure at none, aka no one time or occasion. That is the reason for the plural: nones. Volpone, however, wanted the audience to think that “nones” was “nonces.” “Nonce” means “particular purpose” and “particular occasion.” This medicine would cure no one particular purpose at no one particular occasion.

The disguised Volpone said, “Well, I am in a humor — the mood — at this time to make a present of the small quantity my coffer contains; to the rich, in courtesy, and to the poor for God’s sake.

“Therefore, now listen carefully: I asked you to pay six crowns, and six crowns, at other times, you have paid me, but you shall not now give me six crowns, nor five, nor four, nor three, nor two, nor one; nor half a ducat; no, nor a moccinigo. Six—”

Crowns, ducats, and moccinigos are all pieces of money.

The disguised Volpone paused to make the audience wait for the medicine’s true price, and then he continued, “— pence it will cost you, or else it will cost you six hundred pounds,

for I won't go any lower — expect no lower price, for I swear by the banner displayed in front of my stage that I will not abate a bagatine, or knock off a farthing.”

He continued, “I will have only a small amount of money that is a pledge of your loves, so that I can carry something from among you away to show I am not despised by you.

“Therefore, now, toss your handkerchiefs, cheerfully, cheerfully, and be advised that the first heroic spirit who deigns to grace me with a handkerchief, I will give him or her a little remembrance of something, in addition to the medicine, that shall please that heroic spirit better than if I had presented it with a double pistolet.”

The disguised Volpone was promising to give the first buyer an extra gift that would be valued at more than a double pistolet, which is a valuable coin.

Buyers of the medicine would tie the money in a handkerchief and toss it to the mountebank, who would take the money, tie the medicine in the handkerchief, and toss it back to the buyer. The first buyer would receive an additional gift in the handkerchief. At this time, handkerchiefs were used for ornamental rather than hygienic purposes.

Peregrine asked, “Will you be that heroic spark, Sir Pol? Will you be the first buyer?”

Celia, Corvino's wife, had been watching from the window. She now threw down her handkerchief — in which was tied six pence — to the disguised Volpone.

Peregrine said, “Oh, look! The lady at the window has beaten you and got there first.”

The disguised Volpone said, “Lady, I kiss your bounty, and for this timely grace you have done your poor Scoto of

Mantua, I will return you, over and above my oil, a secret of such high and inestimable nature that it shall make you forever enamored of that minute wherein your eye first descended on so mean, yet not altogether to be despised, an object.

“Here is a powder concealed in this paper, about which, if I would state its true worth, nine thousand volumes were but as one page, that page as a line, that line as a word — so short is this pilgrimage of man (which some call life) to the expressing of it.”

The disguised Volpone had been speaking volumes of words about Scotto’s oil — and now this powder — but if he were to state their true worth, he could do it in one word: crap.

He continued, “Would I reflect on the price? Why, the whole world is but as an empire, that empire as a province, that province as a bank, that bank as a private purse to the purchase of it.”

The price of his medicine had gone from eight crowns to six pence. At this time, one crown was worth five shillings. A shilling was worth twelve pence. Therefore, one crown was worth 60 pence. The original price was eight crowns, or 480 pence. The final price was six pence.

He continued, “I will only tell you; it is the powder that made Venus a goddess (Apollo gave the powder to her) and kept her perpetually young, cleared her wrinkles, firmed her gums, filled her skin and made it free of wrinkles, and colored her hair.

“From Venus the secret of the powder went to Helen of Troy, and at the sack of Troy it was unfortunately lost until now, in this our age, it was as happily recovered, by a studious antiquarian, out of some ruins of Asia, who sent a moiety of it (but much adulterated) to the court of France and the ladies there now color their hair with it.

“The rest, at this present time, remains with me; it has been refined to a quintessence, so that, wherever it simply touches, it perpetually preserves that part in youth, restores the complexion in age, and seats your teeth — even if they have danced like the strings of a piano — as firmly as a wall and makes your teeth as white as ivory, even if they were as black as —”

— 2.3 —

Corvino arrived. He saw and recognized Celia’s handkerchief, and he was instantly jealous, although she had given him no reason for being jealous.

Corvino finished the disguised Volpone’s sentence for him in his own way: “— blood of the devil, and black as my shame!”

He then ordered the disguised Volpone, “Come down here from the stage! Come down! Have you no house but mine to make your scene?”

Corvino recognized that what he was seeing was like a *commedia dell’arte* comedy skit that used stock characters. Flaminio was the name of the lover in many skits. Franciscina was the name of the saucy, sexually willing maidservant. Pantalone di Besogniosi (Pantaloon of the Paupers) was the name of the aging, miserly merchant who wore pantaloons (a kind of trouser) and whose young wife often cuckolded him.

Corvino said to the disguised Volpone, “Signior Flaminio, will you come down, sir? Down? What, is my wife your Franciscina, sir? Are there no windows on the whole Piazza here to make your theatrical properties, but mine? None but mine?”

He beat the disguised Volpone and drove him and the disguised Nano and Mosca away. They ran fast.

He then said, “By God’s heart, before tomorrow I shall be newly christened and called the Pantalone di Besogniosi by everyone in town.”

Peregrine asked, “What does this mean, Sir Pol?”

“It is some trick of state, believe it,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “I will go home.”

Peregrine said, “It may be some design on you. Someone may be wanting to trick you.”

The only person wanting to trick Sir Politic Would-be was Peregrine, who wanted to trick him into making more of a fool of himself.

“I don’t know,” Sir Politic Would-be said, “but I’ll be on my guard.”

“It is your best option, sir,” Peregrine said.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “For the past three weeks, all my pieces of intelligence and news — all my letters — have been intercepted.”

Actually, he had recently said that last Wednesday he had received intelligence and news about the Mamuluchi.

“Indeed, sir!” Peregrine said. “You had best be careful.”

“So I will,” Sir Politic Would-be said.

He exited.

Peregrine said to himself, “This knight, I must not lose him — because I want to laugh at him — until night.”

He followed Sir Politic Would-be.

Volpone and Mosca talked together in a room in Volpone's house.

“Oh, I am wounded!” Volpone said.

“Where, sir?” Mosca asked.

“Not on the outside,” Volpone said. “Corvino's blows were nothing. I could bear them forever. But angry Cupid, shooting arrows like thunderbolts from Corvino's wife's eyes, has shot himself into me like a flame. There, now, he flings about his burning heat, just like an ambitious — rising — fire, whose vent is stopped in a furnace. The fight is all within me.”

A closed vent would cause the fire to die down through lack of air, so Volpone was saying the opposite of what he meant.

“I cannot live, unless you help me, Mosca. My liver melts, and I, without the hope of some soft air from her refreshing breath am but a heap of cinders.”

Giving a fire more air would reduce the material being burned to a heap of cinders more quickly, so Volpone was saying the opposite of what he meant.

“Alas, good sir,” Mosca said. “I wish that you had never seen her!”

“I wish that you had never told me about her!” Volpone said.

“Sir, it is true,” Mosca said. “I confess I was made unfortunate and you were made unhappy by my telling you about her, but I'm bound in conscience no less than in duty to do my best to bring about the release of your torment, and I will, sir.”

One way to release Volpone's torment would be to find a way to have Corvino's wife sleep with him.

“Dear Mosca, shall I hope to have my torment relieved?” Volpone asked.

“Sir, you who are more than dear to me, I will not advise you to despair of being without anything that a human can bring about,” Mosca said. “And what you want is something that I can bring about.”

“Oh, there spoke my better angel,” Volpone said.

This is ironic. Volpone’s “better angel” is someone who is willing to help him commit adultery, a sin that is punished in the Inferno unless it is repented while the adulterer is still alive.

“Mosca” means “fly,” and Beelzebub is the Lord of the Flies. Beelzebub is a winged demon and a fallen angel.

Volpone handed Mosca his keys and said, “Mosca, take my keys. My gold, plate, and jewels, all’s at your devotion.”

He meant “at your disposal.” The word “devotion” has ironic religious overtones. “Devotion” is a word used to name how many people react to God. Of course, Volpone worshipped and was devoted to gold and other material possessions.

Volpone continued, “Employ them however you will; indeed, coin me and employ me, too, as long as you crown my longings and get them satisfied, Mosca. Use whatever you have to, to get Corvino’s wife to sleep with me.”

“Use your patience,” Mosca said.

He meant that it would take some time.

“So I have,” Volpone replied.

He had not.

“I have no doubt that I will bring success to your desires,” Mosca said. “I will get you what you want.”

“In that case, I don’t repent me being in my recent disguise as a mountebank,” Volpone said.

“If you can horn Corvino, sir, you need not repent being disguised as a mountebank,” Mosca said.

By “horn,” he meant make a cuckold out of Corvino by sleeping with his wife. This society joked that cuckolds had invisible horns growing on their foreheads.

“That is true,” Volpone said. “Besides, I have never meant Corvino to be my heir.”

He meant that since he had never meant Corvino to be his heir, it was OK to make Corvino a cuckold. Actually, if he had meant Corvino to be his heir, it would make some (but not moral) sense to sleep with Corvino’s wife. If she gave birth to a son for Volpone, eventually Volpone’s son would inherit Volpone’s wealth. The word “cuckold” comes from the cuckoo bird, which lays its eggs in other birds’ nests; the other birds raise the cuckoo’s nestlings.

Thinking about “heir” led Volpone to think about “hair,” and he asked, “Won’t the color of my beard and eyebrows make my identity known? Won’t Corvino recognize that the mountebank is me because of the color of our hair?”

Foxes are known for red fur, and Volpone’s hair and beard were red.

“Not a chance,” Mosca said.

“I did my performance as the mountebank well,” Volpone said.

Mosca replied, “So well that I wish I could follow you in my performance, with half the happiness and success!”

Mosca would put on a performance to manipulate Corvino to allow Volpone to sleep with his wife.



He thought, *And yet I would escape your epilogue — the beating that Corvino gave you!*

Volpone asked, “But were they gulled — fooled — with the belief that I was Scoto the mountebank?”

“Sir, Scoto himself could hardly have distinguished you from himself!” Mosca said. “But I don’t have the time to flatter you now. We’ll part, and as I prosper, so applaud my art. I will get you what you want.”

— 2.5 —

A very angry and jealous Corvino dragged his innocent wife, Celia, into a room of their house. He had a sword in his hand.

Corvino said, “Death of my honor, with the city’s fool! A juggling, tooth-pulling, prating mountebank!”

Mountebanks sometimes performed tooth extractions.

He continued, “And at a public window! Where, while he, with his strained overacting, and his mugging of faces, to his drug lecture draws your itching ears, a crew of old, unmarried, noted lechers stood leering up like satyrs, and you smiled most graciously and fanned your favors forth — that is, you flirted — to give your hot spectators satisfaction!

“Was your mountebank their call? Their whistle? Were the spectators using the mountebank to call and whistle to you like hunters calling and whistling to lure birds to be caught?

“Or were you enamored of his copper rings and his saffron jewelry with the toadstone in it?”

Copper rings were cheap rings that could fool fools into thinking they were made of gold. Saffron jewelry was jewelry that was stained to make it look like gold. Toads were thought to have a precious jewel with magical abilities located in their head.

He continued, “Or were you enamored of his embroidered suit with the cope-stitch, a suit that was made out of a hearse-cloth? Or were you enamored of his old tilt-feather? Or were you enamored of his starched beard?”

Hearse cloth was a drape for a coffin. According to Corvino, the mountebank had made a suit of the cloth and embroidered it to make it fancy, using a cope-stitch — a stitch used in making copes, aka ecclesiastical gowns. Some men at this time stiffened their beards with egg whites or gum so that they kept a fashionable shape.

Corvino continued, “Well, you shall have him, yes! He shall come home, and minister to you the fricace — massage — for the mother.”

To treat a woman for hysteria, aka the mother, doctors would massage the woman’s genitals until the woman had an orgasm. Actually, many doctors disliked doing this because it took so much time and so they trained midwives to do it.

Corvino continued, “Or, let me see, I think you’d rather mount; wouldn’t you mount?”

He meant that his wife would like to mount the platform on which the mountebank performed — and he meant that his wife would like to sexually mount the mountebank.

He continued, “Why, if you’ll mount, you may; yes, truly, you may. And so you may be seen, down to the foot.”

If his wife climbed on the platform, people would get a good view of her and perhaps see more of her than this society thought was proper to be seen.

He continued, “Get yourself a cittern, Lady Vanity, and be a dealer with the manly man. Make one.”

Prostitutes often played the musical instrument called a cittern. “To be a dealer” meant to be either a prostitute or a

bawd. To “make one” meant to copulate and make one person out of two.

Corvino continued, “I’ll just protest that I am a cuckold and save your dowry.”

A wife who was convicted of committing adultery forfeited her dowry to her husband.

He continued, “I’m a Dutchman, I am! For, if you thought me to be an Italian, you would be damned before you did this, you whore!”

Dutchmen were thought to be calm, while Italians — such as Corvino — were thought to be hot-tempered and capable of great violence.

He continued, “You would tremble to imagine that the murder of your father, mother, brother, and the rest of your family would follow your adultery — that is the Italian way of justice.”

His wife, Celia, pleaded, “Good sir, have patience.”

Corvino replied, “What could you propose I do to yourself less than that in this heat of wrath and stung with my dishonor I should strike this steel sword into you with as many stabs as you were gazed on by goatish — lecherous — eyes? That is what you deserve!”

“Alas, sir, be at peace!” Celia said. “I could not think that my being at the window would move your impatience now more than at other times. I did no harm by being at the window.”

“No!” Corvino said. “You didn’t try to seek and entertain a parley — conversation — with a known knave, before a multitude of witnesses! You were an actor with your handkerchief, which he most sweetly kissed when he got it, and might, no doubt, return it with a letter, and appoint a

place where you might meet — your sister’s, your mother’s, or your aunt’s might serve the turn.”

In this society, the word “aunt” sometimes meant “bawd.” “Serve the term” meant both “serve the purpose” and “provide the sexual service.”

Celia said, “Why, dear sir, when do I make these excuses, or ever stir out of doors, except to go to the church? And that I do so seldom —”

“Well, it shall be less in the future,” Corvino said. “And your restraint before was liberty compared to what I now decree, and therefore pay close attention to what I now say.

“First, I will have this bawdy light — this window — dammed up, aka boarded up. And until that is done, some two or three yards away from the window, I’ll chalk a line. If you happen to set your desperate, reckless, violent foot over that line, more Hell, more horror, and more wild remorseless rage shall seize on you than shall seize on a conjurer who has heedlessly left his circle’s safety before his devil was sent back to Hell.”

Conjurors were reputed to be able to call devils from out of Hell, but devils were dangerous, and so conjurors made a magic circle to keep themselves safe while the devil was present. If a conjuror stepped out of the magic circle, he was at the nonexistent mercy of the devil.

Corvino held up a chastity belt and said, “And then here’s a lock that I will hang upon you.”

The chastity belt prevented a woman from having sex.

He continued, “And, now I think about it, I will keep you backwards. Your lodging shall be backwards, at the back of the house. You will walk backwards. What you see — your prospect — all shall be backwards, and the only sexual

pleasure that you shall know will be backwards — the back hole rather than the front hole.

“Indeed, since you force my honest nature, know that it is your own fault. Your being too open makes me treat you thus because you will not contain your subtle and cunning nostrils — used for smelling out lust — in a sweet room, but they must snuff the air of rank and sweaty passersby.”

Knocking sounded at the door.

Corvino said, “Someone is knocking.”

He said to his wife, “Leave, and don’t be seen, on pain of your life. Don’t look toward the window. If you do — wait and hear this — then let me not prosper, whore, unless I will make you an anatomy by dissecting you myself, and read a lecture about you to the city, and in public.”

To make her an anatomy meant to make her a skeleton through dissecting her. It also meant to dissect her moral character in a lecture. Of course, Corvino now thought because of his jealousy that her moral character is bad.

He said, “Go away! Leave!”

A servant entered the room.

Corvino asked, “Who’s there at the door?”

“It is Signior Mosca, sir.”

— 2.6 —

“Let him come in.”

The servant exited.

Corvino, assuming that Volpone had died and that Mosca had come to tell him that news, said to himself, “His master’s dead. There’s yet some good to counteract the bad.”

Mosca entered the room.

“My Mosca, welcome!” Corvino said. “I guess your news.”

“I fear you cannot, sir,” Mosca said.

“Isn’t your news that Volpone is dead?”

“Rather the contrary.”

“Not his recovery?”

“Yes, sir,” Mosca said.

“I am cursed, I am bewitched, my crosses meet to vex me,” Corvino said.

To Corvino, the cross that he bore in Volpone’s not dying was similar to the cross that Christ endured.

Corvino asked, “How? How? How? How?”

“Why, sir, with the mountebank Scotto’s oil,” Mosca replied. “Corbaccio and Voltore brought some of it to Volpone, while I was busy in an inner room.”

“God’s death!” Corvino said, “That damned mountebank! If not for the law, I could now kill the rascal! It cannot be that his oil should have the virtue of restoring Volpone’s health. Haven’t I known the mountebank Scotto to be a common rogue? He comes fiddling into the *osteria*, aka inn, with a tumbling whore, aka female acrobat or whore, whose work is tumbling in the hay, and when he has done all his forced tricks — tricks he is forced to perform to survive — hasn’t he been glad to get a poor spoonful of stale wine with flies in it?”

“It cannot be that his oil is effective. All his ingredients consist of a sheep’s gall, a roasted bitch’s marrow, some few boiled insects, pounded caterpillars, a little capon’s grease,

and fasting spittle. I know his ingredients to the smallest portion.”

“Fasting spittle” is a starving man’s spit. No doubt Corvino thought that Scoto was often a starving man.

“I don’t know, sir,” Mosca said, “but some of it they there poured into his ears, and some in his nostrils, and the medicine made him recover. All they did in addition was to massage the oil into his skin.”

“A pox on that massage!” Corvino said.

“And since then, to seem the more zealous and flattering of — giving him high hopes concerning — his health, there, they have had, at extremely high fees, the college of physicians consulting about him and trying to determine how they might restore him to complete health.

“One doctor wants Volpone to have a poultice of spices. Another doctor wants a flayed ape clapped to Volpone’s breast. A third doctor would have it be a dog, and a fourth doctor would have it be an oil, with wild cats’ skins.

“At last, they all resolved that to preserve him there was no other means but that some young woman who is lusty and full of juice must be immediately sought out to sleep by him.”

“Lusty” means “healthy and energetic” and “horny.” “Full of juice” means “energetic” and “wet between the legs.”

In 1 Kings 1:1-4, a young woman is brought to sleep with the very old King David to keep him warm, but he does not have sex with her:

*I Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.*

*2 Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat.*

*3 So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.*

*4 And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not. (King James Version)*

Mosca continued, “And in this service, most unhappily and most unwillingly I am now employed: I have been sent to find a young woman to sleep with Volpone. I thought to pre-acquaint you with that here, in order to get your advice, since it concerns you most and because I would not do anything that might cross your ends. I don’t want to do anything that might prevent you from inheriting Volpone’s wealth. On you I am wholly dependent, sir. After Volpone dies, I will need a new position.

“Yet, if I do not find a young woman to sleep with Volpone, Corbaccio and Voltore and the physicians may report my slackness to Volpone and work me out of his good opinion, and then all your hopes, ventures, or whatsoever will all be frustrated!

“I do but tell you, sir; I am simply reporting news you need to know. Besides, they are all now competing to determine who shall first present him with a young woman to sleep with. Therefore ... I entreat you to quickly decide what you will do, and I entreat you to act first and forestall them, if you can.”

“This is death to my hopes!” Corvino said. “This is my villainous fortune! It is best to hire some common courtesan — some common prostitute.”



“Yes, I thought about that, sir,” Mosca said. “But whores are all so cunning, so full of artifice, and men of old age on the other hand are doting and gullible, so that — I cannot tell for sure — but we may, perhaps, light on a whore who may cheat us all. *She* may inherit Volpone’s wealth!”

“That is true,” Corvino said.

“So no, no to using a prostitute,” Mosca said. “The young woman must be one who has no tricks, sir. Some simple thing, a creature who can be made to do it, some wench you may command. Have you no kinswoman you can order to do it? God’s so —”

This expletive meant “By God’s soul” and sounded like “*cazzo*,” which is Italian for “cock.”

Mosca continued, “Think, think, think, think, think, think, think, sir.”

He hesitated and then added, “One of the doctors there offered his daughter.”

“What!” Corvino said.

“Yes, Signior Lupo, the physician.”

*Lupo* is Italian for “Wolf.”

“His daughter!” Corvino said.

“And she is a virgin, sir,” Mosca said. “Why? Alas, the physician knows the state of Volpone’s body, what it is. The physician knows that nothing can warm Volpone’s blood, sir, but a fever. The physician knows that no incantation can raise Volpone’s spirit. A long forgetfulness has seized that part.”

In other words, Mosca is saying nothing can raise Volpone’s penis; he has been impotent for a long time.

Mosca added, “Besides, sir, who shall know it? Some one or two —”

Corvino interrupted, “Please let me think for a moment.”

He walked a short distance away to think.

He said to himself, “If any man but I had had this luck. . . . The thing in itself, I know, is nothing. . . . Why shouldn’t I command my blood and my affections just like this dull doctor does? In the point of honor, the cases are all one of wife and daughter.”

“Command my blood and my affections” meant both “control my passions and feelings” and “order my relative, who is one with me and who is the object of my affections” to do something. In Corvino’s case, the relative was his wife; in the doctor’s case, the relative was his daughter. (Of course, Mosca had simply made up the doctor and daughter.)

Mosca said to himself, “I hear him coming.”

The “coming” was “coming around to the way Mosca was persuading him” and “Corvino beginning to move toward Mosca.”

Corvino said to himself, “She is my wife — she shall do it. It is done: I have made my decision. By God’s light! If this doctor, who is not engaged, unless it be for his counsel, which is nothing, offers Volpone his daughter, what should I, who am so deeply in, do? The doctor stands to make a fee, but I stand to inherit all of Volpone’s wealth. I will forestall the doctor.

“Wretch! Covetous wretch!”

Was he thinking that perhaps the doctor was making an attempt at inheriting Volpone’s wealth and was therefore a covetous wretch? Or was Corvino referring to himself?

Corvino said out loud, "I have determined what I shall do."

"What is that, sir?" Mosca asked.

"We'll make all sure," Corvino said. "We'll make me sure of inheriting Volpone's wealth. Mosca, the party you know of shall be my own wife."

He used the euphemism "party you know of" because he was unwilling to say "young woman who shall sleep with Volpone."

Mosca said, "Sir, that is the thing — except that I would not seem to advise you — I would have proposed to you at the first. And now you make your count and inventory all of Volpone's possessions, which you are sure to inherit, because with this decision you have cut all your competitors' throats in this cutthroat competition.

"Why, this decision is directly taking a legal possession of Volpone's wealth!

"And when Volpone suffers his next fit, we may let him go and die. All we need to do is only to pull the pillow from under his head, and he is throttled to death. It would have been done previously, except for your moral scruples and doubts."

When people in this society were dying, their pillows were taken away from under their heads to make it easier to die. Mosca was making a joke: Removing Volpone's pillow would make it easier for Volpone to die because Mosca would use the pillow to smother Volpone to death.

"Yes, a plague on it," Corvino said. "My conscience fools my wit! My conscience won't allow me to do what my intelligence tells me I need to do to inherit Volpone's wealth.

"Well, I'll be quick, and so you should be, lest they should be before us and find a young woman to sleep with Volpone.

“Go home, prepare Volpone, tell him with what zeal and willingness I am doing it. Swear that it was on my first hearing about it (as you may do truly) that I made my own freely made proposal.”

“Sir, I promise you that I’ll so possess him with your generosity that the rest of his starved clients shall all be banished from his house and only you shall be allowed to visit him. But do not come, sir, until I send the OK to you because I have something else to ripen for your good — but you must not know what it is.”

Mosca did not want Corvino and Celia to arrive early.

Corvino said, “Be careful not to forget to send the OK to me.”

“You don’t need to worry about that,” Mosca said.

Mosca exited.

— 2.7 —

Corvino called, “Where are you, wife? My Celia? Wife?”

Corvino’s wife, Celia, entered the room. She was crying.

Corvino said to her, “What, blubbing? Come, dry those tears. I think you thought that I was in earnest when I pretended to be jealous. Ha! By this light I swear that I talked like that only in order to test you. I think that the lightness of the occasion — the lack of any real reason for me to be jealous — should have assured you that I was only pretending to be jealous. Come, I am not jealous.”

“No?” Celia asked.

“Indeed, I am not jealous, and I have never been jealous,” Corvino said. “Jealousy is a poor and unprofitable emotion.”

He was hoping to make considerable profit by not being jealous and by prostituting his wife to Volpone.

He continued, "Don't I know that if women have a will and the desire to engage in adulterous sex, they'll do it despite all the watchmen in the world, and don't I know that the fiercest spies are tamed with gold? Guards can be bribed.

"Tut, I am confident in you. You shall see it, and you'll see that I'll give you reason, too, to believe that I am confident in you."

Celia thought that he meant that he was confident that she was honest and chaste, but he meant that he was confident that she would do what he ordered her to do.

Corvino said, "Come kiss me. Go and make yourself ready, immediately. Wear all your best attire and your choicest jewelry. Put them all on, and with them, put on your best looks. We are invited to a formal banquet, at old Volpone's, where it shall appear how far I am free from jealousy or fear."

Corvino was lying to Celia about the formal banquet. He simply wanted her to dress extremely nicely as if she were going to a formal banquet.

Corvino also had no intention of waiting for Mosca's OK. He wanted to do this immediately.

## CHAPTER 3 (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

### — 3.1 —

Mosca stood alone in the Piazza, aka public square.

He said to himself, “I fear that I shall begin to grow in love with my dear self, and my most prosperous parts, aka flourishing talents, because they so spring and burgeon and grow big that I can feel a whimsy in my blood. I don’t know how, but success has made me wanton. I could skip out of my skin, now, like a cunning snake, I am so limber.”

Mosca was in a good mood because his manipulation of Corvino had gone so well, and his good mood was such that it was like a sexual excitement. It was like the excitement that made a penis grow and come out from under its foreskin.

Now he began to reflect on parasites, people who live by flattering and serving other people. Some parasites are more capable than other parasites.

He said to himself, “Oh, your parasite is a very precious thing, dropped from above and God-given. Parasitism is not bred among clods and blockheads here on earth.

“I wonder why the mystery of parasitism has not been made a science because it is so liberally professed!”

In this society, a “mystery” is a craft such as being a carpenter or a blacksmith; it is skilled labor. In contrast is “science,” aka liberal arts, which is what gentlemen study in higher education. The liberal arts consist of knowledge that is worthy for a free man. *Liber* is Latin for “free” and for “book.”

“Liberally professed” meant both that parasitism is widely practiced and that even gentlemen practice it.

Mosca continued, “Almost all the wise world is little else, in nature, but parasites, or sub-parasites.

“And yet, by a true parasite, I don’t mean parasites who have only a bare town-art, which is enough to know who’s able to feed them. They have no house, no family, and no care, and therefore they mold tales — devise scandals — for men’s ears, to tempt their hearing.

“Or they get kitchen-invention, and some stale receipts to please the belly and the groin.”

Kitchen-invention is both gossip and food — both are cooked up in the kitchen. The stale receipts are stale recipes — uninteresting food. But the word “stale” also means “prostitute,” and so stale receipts are the tricks of whores. Food that pleases the groin is aphrodisiacal.

To Mosca, a true parasite does more than simply serve his master by telling the master gossip and providing the master with whores.

Mosca continued, “Nor by ‘parasite’ do I mean those with their court dog-tricks, who can fawn and flear, and make their revenue out of legs and faces, echo my lord, and lick away a mote.”

To Mosca, a true parasite does more than simply serve his master by fawning like a dog. To “flear” is to “smile obsequiously.” Such poor parasites make legs, aka bows, and faces, aka smirks. They echo their master’s opinions back to him, and they are sycophants who will remove lint from their master’s coat or shirt. Mosca emphasized these parasites’ servility by saying that they would lick away such items.

Mosca now described what he considered a true parasite:

“But a true parasite is your fine elegant rascal, who can rise and stoop, almost at the same time, and like an arrow shoot through the air as nimbly as a falling star, aka meteor, and who can turn as quickly as a swallow does, and be here, and there, and here, and yonder, all at once, and who can be present to any humor and all occasions, and change a visor, aka mask, aka his personality, swifter than a thought!”

According to Mosca, a true parasite is very changeable. He will change to fit his master’s every mood, and he will change to fit any occasion. A true parasite can adapt.

Mosca himself was a master of adapting. He was able to think of ways to manipulate other people to serve his master, Volpone. He had certainly shown that in his dealings with Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino.

Mosca continued, “This is the creature who has had the art of parasitism born with him. He doesn’t toil to learn it, but he practices it out of most excellent nature, and such sparks are the true parasites. Other parasites are only their zanis — their comic servants.”

And yet Mosca was doing the same things that he criticized lesser parasites of doing. He had certainly flattered Volpone for his performance as a mountebank, and he was acting as a pander when he was manipulating Corvino into allowing Volpone to sleep with Celia. He also had invented gossip and scandal: Signior Lupus is offering his virgin daughter to Volpone to sleep with! A parasite is a flatterer; Mosca had flattered Volpone and his victims, and in this conversation with himself, Mosca was flattering himself.

The difference between a true parasite and other parasites may be enjoyment and competence. A true parasite enjoys being a parasite. A true parasite is at ease when adapting to every mood and every occasion, and a true parasite is at ease



while manipulating other people. A true parasite enjoys using his wits and is competent at manipulating other people.

— 3.2 —

Bonario walked onto the scene.

Mosca said, “Who’s this? Bonario, old Corbaccio’s son? The exact person I was going to seek!”

He said to Bonario, “Fair sir, you are happily met.”

“I cannot be happily met by you,” Bonario replied.

“Why not, sir?” Mosca asked.

“Please know your path and go on your way and leave me,” Bonario said. “I would be loath to engage in conversation with such a contemptible fellow as you are.”

“Courteous sir, don’t scorn me because of my poverty,” Mosca said.

“I don’t, by Heaven,” Bonario said, “but you shall give me leave to hate you because of your baseness.”

“My baseness!” Mosca said.

“Yes,” Bonario said. “Answer me this: Isn’t your sloth sufficient reason for me to hate you? And your flattery? And your means of getting food to eat?”

The charge of sloth may seem unfair. Mosca certainly acted quickly to serve his master. But one meaning of sloth — found in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* — is slackness in pursuing the things that ought to be pursued. Mosca worked hard to serve Volpone, but he did not work hard to save his own soul.

“May Heaven be good to me!” Mosca said. “Sir, these imputations are too commonly made and easily stuck on

virtue when she's poor. Poor people are often undeservedly called base.

“You are unequal — unjust to, and of higher social standing than — me, and even if what you say about me were righteous, yet you are not righteous when you — before you know me — proceed to censure me. May St. Mark, patron saint of Venice, bear witness against you because what you are doing is inhuman.”

Mosca pretended to cry.

Bonario said to himself, “What! Is he crying? The crying is a soft and good sign; it indicates a gentle nature. I am sorry that I was so harsh to him.”

Mosca said, “It is true that because I am swayed by strong necessity, I am forced to eat my gotten-with-much-trouble bread with too much obsequiousness. It is true, besides, that I am fain to spin my own poor raiment — obtain my own clothing — out of my service as a servant alone, being not born to a free fortune ...”

The word “fain” means both “obliged” and “eager.” Mosca wanted Bonario to think that he (Mosca) was forced to be a parasite in order to get clothing, but actually Mosca enjoyed being a parasite — it gave him an opportunity to use his wits to manipulate other people and attempt to improve his situation in life.

Matthew 6:28 asks, “*And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin*” (King James Version).

Mosca continued, “... but that I have done base offices, in rending friends asunder, dividing families, betraying counsels, whispering false lies, or undermining men with praises, enticed their credulity with perjuries, corrupted chastity, or that I am in love with my own tender ease, but

would not rather undergo as a test the most rugged and laborious course that might redeem my present estimation and lift my reputation from bad to good, let me here perish in all hope of goodness.”

This is ambiguous. Does “It is true” apply to these words?

If “It is true” applies to these words, then Mosca was saying the truth: It is true that he has done these evil deeds and it is true that he would rather not do the rugged and laborious deeds that would give him a good reputation, and it is true that Bonario ought to allow him to die here and now so that Mosca would not be able to do these evil deeds and so that goodness would exist.

If “It is true” does not apply to these words, then Mosca was lying to Bonario: He (Mosca) has not done these evil things, and he would prefer to do the rugged and laborious deeds that would give him a good reputation, and if what he just claimed is not true, then let him (Mosca) perish in all hope of goodness — let him give up all hope of eternal life in Heaven.

By being ambiguous, Mosca was able to lie to Bonario yet tell the truth to himself.

Bonario was convinced by Mosca’s crying and by his words. He thought, *This cannot be an impersonated passion. This cannot be false emotion.*

He said to Mosca, “I am to blame. I was mistaken about your nature and character. Please forgive me and tell me your business.”

“Sir, it concerns you,” Mosca said, “and although I may seem at first to make a grievous offence in my manners, and in my gratitude to my master, yet out of the pure love that I bear all right, and out of my hatred of the wrong, I must reveal it.

“At this very hour, your father is carrying out his intention to disinherit you —”

“What!” Bonario said.

Mosca continued, “— and thrust you forth into the world, as a complete stranger to his blood. It is true, sir. The work in no way concerns me personally, except as I claim an interest in the general state of goodness and true virtue, which I hear abounds in you, and only for that reason and without a second, ulterior motive, sir, I have done it.”

“This tale has lost you much of the recent trust I had in you,” Bonario said. “What you say is impossible. I don’t know how to believe that my father should be so unnatural as to disinherit me, his flesh and blood.”

“You have a confidence in your father that well becomes your filial piety,” Mosca said, “and it is formed, no doubt, from your own simple innocence, which makes the wrong done to you all the more monstrous and abhorred.”

“Simple” can mean “straightforward,” but Mosca was thinking of “simple-minded.”

Mosca continued, “But, sir, I now will tell you more. This very minute, the act of disinheriting you is now or soon will be happening, and if you shall only be pleased to go with me, I’ll bring you, I dare not say where you shall *see*, but where your *ear* shall be a witness of the deed. You will hear yourself written off as a bastard, and you will hear yourself proclaimed to be the common issue of the earth.”

“The common issue of the earth” means “of unknown parentage.”

“I am amazed!” Bonario said. “I am bewildered!”

“Sir, if I don’t do what I said I would do, draw your just sword, and mark your vengeance on my forehead and face

— mark me up as your villain. You are having too much wrong done to you, and I suffer for you, sir. My heart weeps blood in anguish —”

Bonario interrupted, “Lead. I will follow you.”

— 3.3 —

In a room in Volpone’s house stood Volpone, Nano the dwarf, Androgyno the hermaphrodite, and Castrone the eunuch.

Volpone said, “Mosca has stayed away for a long time, I think. Bring forth your skills in entertainment, and help to make the wretched time sweet. I am bored; entertain me.”

Volpone had sent Mosca to persuade Corvino to allow his wife to sleep with him. Volpone did not know about Mosca’s conversation with Bonario.

Nano the dwarf, Androgyno the hermaphrodite, and Castrone the eunuch performed a skit in which they competed to be Volpone’s favorite. In doing so, they were mocking the greedy legacy-hunters: Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino.

Nano the dwarf recited:

*“Dwarf, fool, and eunuch, well met here we be.*

*“A question it were now, whether [which] of us three,*

*“Being all the known delicates [acknowledged darlings/favorites] of a rich man,*

*“In pleasing him, claim the precedency can?”*

Castrone the eunuch recited:

*“I claim for myself.”*

Androgyno the hermaphrodite, who was the professional Fool of the group, recited:

*“And so does the Fool.”*

Nano the dwarf recited:

*“It is foolish indeed. Let me set you both to school [instruct you both].*

*“First for your dwarf, he’s little and witty,*

*“And everything, as it is little, is pretty [the littler it is, the prettier it is];*

*“Else why do men say to a creature of my shape,*

*“So [As] soon as they see him, ‘It’s a pretty little ape’?*

*“And why a pretty ‘ape,’ but for pleasing imitation*

*“Of greater men’s actions, in a ridiculous fashion?”*

Some dwarves made a living by imitating and mocking VIPs.

Nano the dwarf continued:

*“Besides, this feat [dainty] body of mine does not crave*

*“Half the meat, drink, and cloth, one of your bulks [large bodies] will have.”*

*Nano the dwarf now began to talk about Androgyno the hermaphrodite, who was the professional Fool of the group:*

*“Admit [that] your Fool’s face be [is] the mother of laughter,*

*“Yet, [as] for his brain, it must always come after [be less important]:*

*“And though that [a funny face that causes laughter] do feed him, it is a pitiful case,*

*“His body is beholding [beholden] to such a bad face.”*

Knocking sounded at the door.

“Who’s there?” Volpone said.

He then said, “I must go to my couch and appear to be ill.”

He then said to Androgyno the hermaphrodite and Castrone the eunuch, “Leave!”

Androgyno the hermaphrodite and Castrone the eunuch exited.

Volpone then said, “Go and look, Nano. See who it is. But give me my caps, first.”

Nano the dwarf handed him his two caps.

Volpone then said to him, “Go and enquire who it is.”

Nano the dwarf exited.

Volpone prayed to the god of love, “Now, may Cupid let the knocker be Mosca, and may Cupid let Mosca come with good news!”

The good news would be that Volpone could sleep with Corvino’s wife.

Nano the dwarf returned and said, “It is the beauteous madam —”

“Lady Would-be? Is it she?” Volpone asked.

Lady Would-be was not beauteous, but that was how she required people to announce her presence.

“The same,” Nano the dwarf replied.

“Now torment has come to me!” Volpone said.

He did not want to talk to her, but he had earlier told Mosca to tell her squire to tell her to come back later and visit him.

He said, “Escort her in because she will enter my room or dwell forever in the outer room. Bring her in quickly. The quicker she is here, the quicker she will leave.”

Nano the dwarf exited.

Volpone lay on the sleeping couch and said, “I wish that this hardship — her visit — were over. This is one Hell, and I fear a second Hell, too — I fear that my loathing this woman, Lady Would-be, will quite expel my appetite for the other woman, Celia. I wish that the tedious Lady Would-be were now taking her leave. Lord, what I am about to suffer threatens me!”

— 3.4 —

Nano the dwarf escorted Lady Would-be into the room. She resembled a parrot. Her dress was green with a red collar, and her nose was red from makeup.

“I thank you, good sir,” Lady Would-be said to Nano the dwarf. “Please signify to your patron that I am here.”

She looked at herself in a mirror and said, “The top of my dress does not show enough of my neck.”

The current Italian fashion was to wear a low-cut dress that displayed the breasts more than the English considered proper.

She said to Nano the dwarf, “I need to trouble you, sir. Let me request that you tell one of my women to come here to me.”

Nano the dwarf exited to carry out the request.



Looking at herself in the mirror again, Lady Would-be said sarcastically, “Truly, I am dressed most favorably, today! It doesn’t matter; it is good enough.”

In part, she meant that her waiting-women had not dressed her well, including dressing her hair.

The first waiting-woman and Nano the dwarf entered the room.

Looking in the mirror, Lady Would-be had noticed that the curls on the top of her head were uneven. One curl on the side of her head was higher than all the others.

She said to her waiting-woman about the uneven curls, “Look, and see these insolent, petulant things.”

She then said, “How could they have done this?”

“They” referred to both the waiting-women and the curls.

Volpone, unnoticed by Lady Would-be, said to himself, “I feel the fever entering my body at my ears.”

Unfortunately for him, it was not a sexual fever.

He added quietly, “Oh, for a charm to frighten it away.”

Lady Would-be said to the waiting-woman, “Come nearer. Is this curl in its right place, or is it in this place that you see? Why is this curl higher than all the rest? You have not yet washed your eyes! You can’t see because you still have sleep-gum in your eyes! Or are your eyes uneven in your head? Where is your fellow waiting-woman? Bring her to me.”

The first waiting-woman exited.

Nano the dwarf said to himself, “May St. Mark deliver us now! Soon, she will beat her serving-women because her nose is red.”

The first serving-woman returned with the second serving-woman.

Lady Would-be said, "Please look at my headdress and my hair, forsooth. Are all things apt, or no? Is everything in its right place?"

Pointing, the first serving-woman said, "One hair a little, here, sticks out, forsooth."

Lady Would-be said, "Does it, forsooth? And where was your dear sight, when it did so, forsooth! What! Are you bird-eyed?"

She said to the second serving-woman, "And are you bird-eyed, too?"

"Bird-eyed" meant "round-eyed." The serving-women were surprised and frightened at how seriously Lady Would-be was treating such a small thing.

Lady Would-be said to the two serving-women, "Please, both of you come to me and fix my hair."

They did.

Lady Would-be scolded them as if she were a professor and they were her pupils: "Now, by that light, I muse that you are not ashamed! I, who have preached these things so often to you, read you the principles, argued all the grounds and fundamentals, disputed the pros and cons of every fitness and every grace, called you to meetings to discuss my frequent hairdressing sessions —"

Nano the dwarf thought, *She protects her hair more carefully than she does her reputation or honor.*

Lady Would-be continued, "I have made you acquainted with what an ample dowry the knowledge of these things would be to you. With this knowledge of hairdressing, you

would be able, alone, to get yourselves noble husbands at your return to England, and still you neglect to acquire that knowledge like this!

“Besides, you know what a curious and particular nation of people the Italians are. What will they say about me? They will say, ‘The English lady cannot dress herself.’ Here’s a fine imputation for our country of England to be charged with.

“Well, go your ways, and stay in the next room.

“This fucus — skin makeup — I am wearing is too coarse, too, but it doesn’t matter.”

She asked Nano the dwarf, “Good sir, will you entertain them?”

Nano the dwarf and the two waiting-women exited.

Lady Would-be had been so busy looking in the mirror and complaining to her serving-women that she had not noticed Volpone, who now said to himself, “The storm comes toward me.”

Seeing Volpone, Lady Would-be went over to him and asked, “How is my Volpone doing?”

“Troubled with noise, I cannot sleep,” Volpone replied. “I dreamt that a strange Fury entered, just now, my house, and with the dreadful tempest of her voice, she split my roof in two.”

A Fury is an avenging goddess. They especially take vengeance on people who tear families apart. When Orestes murdered his mother, the Furies pursued and tormented him. Volpone was very willing to tear Corvino’s marriage apart by sleeping with his wife, Celia.

Volpone was comparing Lady Would-be in part to the Fury. Furies keep their victims from finding any rest, and Lady Would-be was doing that to him.

Lady Would-be was oblivious to the hint that she was disturbing Volpone. Rather than listen to him, she immediately came up with something to say.

Believing that the topic of conversation was dreams, she said, “Believe me, I had the most fearful dream, if I could remember it.”

Volpone thought, *Damn my fate! I have given her the opportunity to torment me. Now she will tell me her dream.*

Lady Would-be said, “I thought that the golden mediocrity is polite and delicate —”

The “golden mediocrity” is the golden mean. Horace used the phrase “*aurea mediocritas*” in his *Odes* Book 2, Poem 10, line 5. The golden mean is the ideal moderate position that lies between two immoderate extremes. For example: Too little courage is cowardice. Too much courage is foolhardiness and rashness. The golden mean is true courage.

In this case, the “golden mediocrity” is a telling phrase. Most of the characters in *Volpone* are immoderately pursuing gold, and that leads to them being golden mediocrities. For example, rather than doing anything important with his life, Volpone spends much of his time pretending to be a very ill man even though this leads to a lack of freedom for him. Because he is supposed to be close to dying, he cannot leave his home unless he is in disguise.

Volpone said to Lady Would-be, “Oh, if you respect and love me, say no more. I sweat and I suffer at the mention of any dream. You can feel me to see how I am still trembling.”

Unfortunately, Volpone's mention of his trembling gave Lady Would-be the opportunity to diagnose the "illness" and to prescribe "cures."

"Alas, good soul!" she said. "You suffer from the passion — the suffering — of the heart."

This referred to heartburn and illnesses other than lovesickness affecting the heart.

She instantly began making recommendations of what she considered to be cures: "Seed-pearl would be good now, boiled with syrup of apples, tincture of gold, and coral, citron-pills, elicampane root, myrobalanes —"

Volpone thought, "Damn, I have taken a grasshopper by the wings!"

Grasshoppers make noise with their legs. Holding a grasshopper by the wings does not prevent it from making noise.

Although Volpone wanted Lady Would-be to leave, it seemed as if every word he said was making her stay.

Lady Would-be continued, "— burnt silk, and ambergris. You have good muscatel in the house —"

Ingredients for a cure were often crushed and mixed with muscatel wine for the ill person to drink.

Volpone asked, "Won't you have a drink, and then depart?"

It was customary for visitors ending their visit to be offered a drink before they left.

Lady Would-be said, "No, don't worry that I will do that."

She continued her list of cures: "I'm afraid that we won't be able to get some English saffron — half a dram would be

enough. We also need sixteen cloves, a little musk, dried mints, bugloss, and barley-meal —”

Her “cures” were indiscriminate; they were used for a wide range of illnesses, including smallpox and depression, not just for heartburn and other heart ailments.

Volpone thought, *She’s set off again! Before, I faked illnesses. Now, I feel as if I really have one!*

Lady Would-be said, “And these ingredients need to be made into a poultice and applied with a true-scarlet cloth.”

Volpone thought, *Another flood of words! A complete torrent!*

Lady Would-be asked, “Shall I, sir, make you a poultice?”

“No, no, no,” Volpone said. “I am very well. You need prescribe no more medicines.”

“I have studied medicine a little,” Lady Politic said, “but now, I’m all for music, except I have an hour or two for painting in the mornings.

“I want ladies, indeed, to know all arts and letters, aka fine arts and the literary arts. She should be able to discourse, to write, and to paint, but principal in importance, as Plato holds, is music — and wise Pythagoras, I take it, believes the same thing. Music is the true rapture and harmony.

“When there is harmony in face, in voice, and clothes, that is, indeed, the female sex’s chiefest ornament.”

Harmony in face apparently includes even — not lopsided — curls, harmony in voice apparently includes talk, talk, talk, and harmony in clothes apparently includes low-cut dresses.

Volpone said, “The poet as old in time as Plato, and as knowing, says that the highest female grace is silence.”

In Sophocles' *Ajax*, as translated by R. C. Trevelyan, Tecmessa, Ajax' spear-bride, states that Ajax once told her, "Woman, silence is the grace of woman."

Lady Would-be asked, "Which of your poets? Petrarch, or Tasso, or Dante? Guarini? Ariosto? Aretine? Cieco d'Adria? I have read them all."

She was ignorant of exactly when Plato and these Italian writers lived. None of the writers she mentioned is "as old in time as Plato."

Plato (died 348-347 BCE) is famous for his *Dialogues*, many of which have Socrates as a main speaker. "Plato" means "broad." If you are not cynical, you can think of "broad-shouldered." If you are cynical, you can think of "fatso."

Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) is a great Italian writer of love poetry.

Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) wrote the epic poem *Gerusalemme Liberata* about the First Crusade. In English, the title is *Jerusalem Delivered*.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), one of the greatest poets who ever lived, wrote *The Divine Comedy*, which consists of the *Inferno*, *Purgatory*, and *Paradise*. It describes his imaginative trip to the three destinations of the afterlife.

Battista Guarini (1537-1612) wrote the pastoral tragicomedy *Il Pastor Fido*. In 1602, it was translated into English as *The Faithful Shepherd*. Although Lady Would-be thought Guarini to be a contemporary of Plato, he was still alive at the time she was speaking.

Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) wrote *Orlando Furioso* about Charlemagne, Orlando (aka Roland), and the Franks, a collection of Germanic peoples.

Pietro Aretine (1492-1556), a satirist, wrote his “Sonnets of Lust” to accompany sixteen pornographic images by the artist Giulio Romano. The Italian title is *Sonetti Lussuriosi*.

Cieco d’Adria (1541-1585) was a playwright who also translated the first book of Homer’s *Iliad*. He is much less well known as an author than the other literary figures mentioned. *Cieco d’Adria* means “the blind man of Adria.” His real name is Luigi Groto. Adria is a town in the Veneto region of Northern Italy.

Volpone said to himself, “Is everything a cause to my destruction? Does everything I say cause her to talk and talk and talk?”

Lady Would-be said, “I think I have two or three of their books with me.”

Volpone said to himself, “The Sun and the sea will both stand still sooner than her eternal tongue; nothing can escape it.”

Lady Would-be found a book and said, “Here’s Battista Guarini’s *Pastor Fido* —”

Volpone said to himself, “Maintain an obstinate silence. That’s now my safest course of action.”

Lady Would-be said, “All our English writers, I mean such as are happy enough to be proficient in the Italian language, will deign to steal out of this author, Battista Guarini, mainly. They will steal from him almost as much as from Montagnié’s *Essays*.”

She pronounced the name Montaigne with too many syllables.

She continued, “Battista Guarini has so modern and facile a vein, befitting the time, and catching the court-ear!



“Petrarch is more passionate, yet he, in the days when writing sonnets was popular, entrusted English writers with much for them to imitate.

“Dante is hard, and few can understand him.

“For an outrageous wit, there’s Aretine, but his pictures are a little obscene.”

The pictures were actually by the artist Giulio Romano, and they were definitely pornographic.

Lady Would-be said to Volpone, who was maintaining an obstinate silence, “You aren’t listening to me.”

Volpone replied, “Alas, my mind is perturbed.”

Lady Would-be said, “Why, in such cases, we must cure ourselves. We must make use of our philosophy —”

“Oh, me!” Volpone groaned.

Lady Would-be continued, “— and as we find that our emotions strongly rebel, we must encounter them with reason, or divert them, by giving scope to some other emotion of lesser danger.”

If we are overcome by one emotion, we may be able to overcome it by reason, or by making an effort to feel another emotion. A person who feels too much melancholy may be able to realize rationally that things are better than they seem or to realize rationally that a certain plan of action will improve things, or may be able to perform some action — listen to music or take a walk, perhaps — that will relieve the melancholy.

Lady Would-be continued, “Just as, in political bodies, there’s nothing more that overwhelms the judgment, and clouds the understanding, than too much settling and fixing, and, as it were, subsiding upon one object.”

She was using alchemical terms. “Settling” refers to dregs settling in a liquid. “Fixing” refers to making a volatile substance not volatile. “Subsiding” refers to the precipitation of sediment. A political body can spend too much time on one issue. It can expend all its effort on the one issue and then subside into inaction. A more effective political body may work on more than one issue at a time and make incremental improvements on each issue.

Lady Would-be continued, “For the incorporating of these same outward things — these things that compete for our attention — into that part, which we call mental, leaves some certain dregs that stop the organs, and as Plato says, assassinate our knowledge.”

Plato wrote about the Theory of the Forms in his books, including *The Republic*. True reality is found in the Forms, such as the Form of Justice. What most people call reality, according to Plato, is only a reflection of true reality. Lady Would-be’s meaning is unclear. Perhaps she meant that people need to take time on think about more important matters. Concentrating on trivial things can be intellectually debilitating, and concentrating on the doing of immoral actions can be very spiritually debilitating. If so, she has made an important point. Concentrating on amassing wealth through immoral means is very debilitating; less debilitating is concentrating on whether one’s hairstyle has exactly even curls. Concentrating on achieving something of lasting positive importance can be intellectually and spiritually uplifting.

Volpone said to himself, “May the spirit of patience help me now!”

Lady Would-be said, “Come, truly I must visit you on more days and make you well. I need to make you laugh and be lusty.”

One meaning of “lusty” is “to be in vigorous good health.”

Volpone said to himself, “May my good angel save me!”

Lady Would-be said, “There was but one sole man in all the world with whom I ever could sympathize, and he would lie, often, three, four hours together to hear me speak, and he would be sometimes so rapt, that he would answer me quite from the purpose, with a non sequitur, like you, and you are like him, exactly.”

Apparently, the man either wasn’t paying attention to her conversation or wanted to get rid of her.

She continued, “I’ll tell you, if only for the purpose, sir, to make you fall asleep, how that man and I spent our time and loves together, for some six years.”

Volpone moaned one time for each of the six years: “Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!”

Lady Would-be said, “For we were *coetanei* — the same age — and brought up —”

Volpone said to himself, “May some power, some fate, some fortune rescue me!”

— 3.5 —

Mosca entered the room and said, “May God save you, madam!”

“Good sir,” Lady Would-be said.

“Mosca?” Volpone said. “Welcome. Welcome to my redemption.”

Mosca went over to Volpone and asked, “What do you mean, sir?”

Volpone said quietly so that Lady Would-be would not hear, "Oh, rid me of this my torture, quickly. There she is: my madam, with the everlasting voice. The church bells, in times of pestilence, when they ring constantly to announce each new death from the plague, never made a noise like hers or were in perpetual motion like her tongue! The noise made in cockpits when cocks fight and men gamble is not close to the noise she makes. My entire house, just now, steamed like a bath because of her thick breath. A lawyer could not have been heard, nor scarcely another woman, such a hail of words she has let fall. For Hell's sake, make her leave my home."

Mosca asked, "Has she given you a present?"

Visitors, and especially visiting legacy-hunters, often gave Volpone presents.

"Oh, I do not care about a present from her," Volpone said. "I'll pay any price and suffer any loss for her absence."

Mosca said, "Madam —"

Lady Would-be now gave her present: "I have brought your patron a trifle, a cap here, with my own embroidery."

"That is good," Mosca said.

He added, "I forgot to tell you that I saw your husband the knight at a place where you would little think he would be."

"Where?" Lady Would-be asked.

"Indeed, where yet, if you make haste, you may find him," Mosca said. "He is rowing on the water in a gondola with the most skillful courtesan of Venice."

"Is that true?" Lady Would-be asked.

"Pursue them, and believe your own eyes," Mosca said. "Leave, and I will give your gift to my patron."

Lady Would-be exited hastily.

Mosca said to Volpone, "I knew that trick would work because it is common knowledge that those who give themselves the greatest freedom to flirt are always the most jealous."

Many Italian men were surprised at how much freedom Englishwomen had.

Volpone said, "Mosca, I give you hearty thanks for your quick lie to Lady Would-be and for your delivery of me.

"Now, about my hope to sleep with Celia, Corvino's wife, what news do you have?"

Lady Would-be reentered the room and said, "Listen to me, sir."

Volpone said to himself, "Again! I fear a paroxysm. Any more of this, and I will have a stroke."

Lady Would-be asked Mosca, "Which way did they row together? In which direction were they headed?"

"Toward the Rialto Bridge," Mosca replied.

"Please lend me your dwarf," Lady Would-be requested.

"Please take him," Mosca replied.

Lady Would-be exited.

Mosca said to Volpone, "Your hopes, sir, are like happy blossoms. They are fair, and they promise timely fruit, if you will wait for the ripening. Keep lying on your couch. Corbaccio will arrive quickly with the will. When he has gone, I'll tell you more."

Mosca exited.

Volpone said to himself, “My blood and my spirits are returned. I am alive, and like your reckless gamester, at the game of primero, whose thought had whispered to him, do not go less, I think that I lie, and draw, for an encounter.”

The terms he used were from the game of primero. “Not go less” meant either “not make a smaller bet” or “make the highest bet.” “Lie” meant “place the bet.” “Draw” meant “draw a card.” “Encounter” meant “have the cards for a winning hand.”

Volpone intended to go through with the seduction. He would lie on the couch and draw Celia toward him for a sexual encounter. He would not go for less than that.

— 3.6 —

Mosca and Bonario talked; they were within hearing distance of Volpone’s room.

Mosca showed Bonario a closet and said, “Sir, here you may be entirely concealed, but please have some patience, sir.”

Knocking sounded at the door.

Mosca said, “That is the way that your father knocks. I have to leave you.”

“Do so,” Bonario said.

Mosca exited.

Bonario said to himself, “Yet, I cannot imagine that this is true. I can’t believe that I am doing this, and I can’t believe that my father would disinherit me.”

He went into the closet.

Mosca answered the door and discovered that he had been mistaken. He had expected Bonario's father, Corbaccio, to come, and so he had thought that Corbaccio had knocked. Instead, Corvino and his wife, Celia, were at the door. This was contrary to Mosca's plan. He wanted Bonario to witness his father disinheriting him; he did not want Bonario to witness Volpone sleeping with Celia.

"Death on me!" Mosca said. "You have come too soon. Why did you? Didn't I say that I would send word to you about when to come?"

"Yes, but I feared that you might forget," Corvino said, "and then my rivals might strike first."

Mosca thought, *They might strike first! Has a man ever been so eager to be given the horns of a cuckold! A courtier would not work this eagerly even for a sinecure — a position with much money but little work — at court!*

He said, "Well, now there's no helping it. Stay here. I'll be right back."

He exited.

Corvino looked behind him and said, "Where are you, Celia? Do you know why I have brought you here?"

Celia replied, "Not well, except what you have told me."

Corvino said, "Now I will tell you in more detail. Come here and listen."

They talked together.

Mosca went to the closet in which Bonario was concealed and knocked.

Bonario opened the closet door, and Mosca said to him, “Sir, your father has sent word that it will be half an hour before he comes, and therefore, if you please to walk to that gallery at the upper end, there are some books to entertain you and pass the time, and I’ll take care that no man shall come and see you, sir.”

Bonario replied, “Yes, I will stay there.”

He thought, *I don’t trust this fellow.*

He exited.

Mosca watched him go and said to himself, “He is far enough away there that he can hear nothing. And, as for his father, I can keep him away until the right time.”

Mosca then went to Volpone’s room, where Volpone was lying on a couch, pretending to be ill. Mosca entered the room and went to him.

Meanwhile, Bonario returned and reentered the closet because he did not trust Mosca. Bonario could hear whatever happened in Volpone’s room.

Corvino and Celia argued as he forced her into Volpone’s room. Volpone and Mosca were able to overhear them.

Corvino said, “Now, there is no going back, and therefore, resolve upon doing what I tell you to do. I have so decreed: It must be done. Nor would I tell you before this because I wanted to avoid all shifts and tricks that might deny me what I want.”

Celia said, “Sir, let me beg you not to continue to make these strange trials of my chastity.”

Earlier, Corvino had said that he was testing her when he “pretended” to be jealous of her and the mountebank. Celia was hoping that this was another test.



She continued, "If you doubt my chastity, why, lock me up forever: Make me the heir of darkness. Let me live where I may set your jealous fears to rest, even if I don't have your trust."

"Believe it, I have no such jealousy," her husband said. "All that I speak I mean, yet I'm not mad. Nor am I horn-mad, do you see?"

A horn-mad man was afraid of being cuckolded, or he was angry at being cuckolded. Corvino was acting in such a way that it seemed he wanted his wife to cuckold him, and so he was not horn-mad.

He said, "Show me that you are an obedient wife."

"Oh, Heaven!" Celia said.

"I say to you that I want you to do this," Corvino said.

"Is this a trap you have set for me?" Celia asked.

"I've told you the reasons for doing this," her husband said. "The physicians have determined that Volpone is impotent and is dying."

So Corvino had been led to believe.

He continued, "Volpone's death and his will concern me very much. I have made commitments in this business venture: I have given many expensive gifts to Volpone, and it is a necessity for me to regain those gifts and a profit in the form of a legacy. Therefore, if you are my loyal wife, be won over to my side and respect my venture by doing what I tell you to do."

"Should I respect your venture more than I respect your honor?" Celia asked. "Is your financial venture more important than your honor?"

“What is ‘honor’?” Corvino asked. “Tut, it is only a breath. There’s no such thing in nature. ‘Honor’ is a mere term invented to awe fools. What! Is my gold the worse because other people have touched it? Are my clothes the worse because other people have looked at them? Why, this is no more.”

No more? He meant that his wife would be no worse should Volpone touch her and see her in bed. She would also be no worse if she slept with Volpone.

Corvino continued, “Volpone is an old decrepit wretch, and he has lost the use of his senses. He has no strength. He has to be fed his food with other people’s fingers. All he knows is to open his mouth when his gums are scalded with hot food. Volpone is only a voice, a shadow. How can this man hurt you?”

Celia prayed, “Lord, what evil spirit has entered my husband?”

Corvino said, “And as for being worried about your reputation, that’s such a laughable excuse. As if I would go and tell what you will have done, and shout it out loud on the Piazza! Who shall know what you will have done, except Volpone, who cannot speak and tell anyone about it, and this fellow Mosca, whose lips are in my pocket? He serves me, and so he will be quiet about this. Unless you yourself proclaim what you will have done, I know no other way that others shall come to know about it.”

Celia asked, “Are Heaven and saints then nothing? Will they be too blind to see this, or too stupid to understand what they see?”

“What!” Corvino said.

“Good sir,” Celia said, “continue to be jealous about me. Emulate Heaven and the saints. Think about what hate they burn with toward every sin.”

“I grant that if I thought this were a sin, I would not urge you to commit it,” Corvino said. “If I would offer this to some young Frenchman, or some hot Tuscan blood who had read Aretine, conned all his pornographic prints, knew every twist and turn within lust’s labyrinth, and were a professed expert in lechery, and if I would look upon him and applaud him, then this would be a sin.

“But this here is the contrary of a sin. It is a pious work, a good deed, and complete charity that will help an ill man, and it is an honorable course of action to assure that I will get my own.”

What he considered “his own” were the gifts he had given to Volpone and the legacy he expected to receive when Volpone died.

“Oh, Heaven!” Celia said. “Can you, Heaven, endure such a change as this that has occurred in my husband?”

Corvino had gone from being overly jealous of his wife to being overly eager to place her in a position in which she could willingly commit adultery — or be raped.

Volpone said quietly, “You are my honor, Mosca, and my pride, my joy, my tickling, my delight! Go and bring them near.”

Mosca went to Corvino and said, “Please come near, sir.”

Corvino said to Celia, “Come on.”

She stood still, and he said, “What! I won’t allow you to be rebellious! By that light —”

Mosca said to Volpone, “Sir, Signior Corvino has come here to see you.”

“Oh!” Volpone said weakly.

Mosca said, “And hearing about the medical consultation held so recently about your health, he has come to offer, or rather, sir, to prostitute —”

One meaning, now obsolete, of “to prostitute” was “to offer selflessly with complete devotion.”

“Thanks, sweet Mosca,” Corvino said.

Mosca continued, “— freely, unasked, and untreated —”

“That is well said,” Corvino said.

Mosca continued, “— as the true fervent instance of his love for you, his own most fair and proper wife, the beauty only of price in Venice —”

Celia was Corvino’s fair and proper wife. She was beautiful, she was his legally married wife, and she was proper in her behavior. She was seemly, decorous, and respectable. To Corvino, however, she was “only of price.” What he valued was only the wealth she could bring him by sleeping with Volpone.

“Only of price” also means “unique in value.”

Corvino said to Mosca, “You have stated that well.”

Mosca continued, “— to be your female comforter, and to preserve and save you.”

Volpone said weakly, “Alas, I am already past being saved!”

Some readers may agree.

He continued, “Please thank him for his good care and promptness, but despite his good care and promptness, it is

a vain labor even to fight against Heaven, and to apply fire to stone —”

He broke out in a fit of coughing: “Uh! Uh! Uh! Uh!”

“To apply fire to stone” was an expression denoting uselessness. It is useless to apply fire to stone in an attempt to make the stone catch on fire.

However, “stone” was also a slang word meaning “testicle,” and bringing Celia to Volpone was applying sexual fire to Volpone’s testicles.

Volpone had started coughing in order to keep himself from laughing at his own pun.

Volpone continued, “— or to make a dead leaf grow again.”

A part of Volpone’s body that was supposed to be dead would start to grow again if Volpone were left alone with Celia, if Volpone had his way, and his way with her.

Volpone continued, “I take his wishes kindly, though, and you may tell him what I have done for him.”

Corvino listened closely, thinking that Volpone had definitely made him his heir.

Volpone continued, “Indeed, my state is hopeless. I wish for him to pray for me, and to use his fortune with reverence, when he comes to have it.”

“Reverence” means “deep respect.” Corvino’s actions showed that he had no reverence for Volpone, Celia, or God.

Mosca said to Corvino, “Did you hear that, sir? Go to him with your wife.”

Corvino tried to make Celia go over to Volpone’s bed, but she resisted.

He swore, "Heart of my father! Will you persist in being thus obstinate? Come, please, come. You can see that it is nothing, Celia."

He meant that she could see that Volpone was too ill to be able to engage in sex.

Corvino continued, "By this hand—"

He raised his hand in the air and threatened her with it.

He continued, "— I swear that I shall grow violent. Come, do it, I say."

"Sir, kill me, instead," Celia said. "I will swallow poison, eat burning coals, do anything —"

Corvino interrupted, "Be damned! Sweetheart, I'll drag you away from here to home, by the hair. I will cry out in the streets that you are a strumpet. I will rip your face from your mouth to your ears, and I will slit your nose like I would slit the nose of a raw rotchet!"

A rotchet is a fish that is now called the red gurnard. Its head is bony, and to cut it requires much force.

He continued, "Do not provoke me. Come, yield to me, I am loath —"

He was loathsome.

Corvino continued, "By God's death I swear I will buy some slave whom I will kill, and I will bind you — alive — to him, and I will hang you outside my window. I will imagine some monstrous crime that I, in capital letters, will use acid and burning corrosives to eat into the flesh of your stubborn breast. Now, by the blood you have incensed in me, I'll do it!"

"Sir, what you please, you may do," Celia replied. "I am your martyr."

“Don’t be obstinate like this,” her husband said. “I have not deserved it. Think who it is who is entreating you to do this. Please, sweetheart, you shall indeed have jewels, gowns, clothing and headdresses. Think of what you want, and ask for it. Only go and kiss him, or just touch him ... for my sake ... at my request ... just this once. You won’t! No! You will not! I shall remember this. Will you disgrace me thus? Do you crave — thirst for — my undoing, my ruination?”

Mosca said to Celia, “Gentle lady, be persuaded.”

“No, no,” Corvino said. “She has watched for the right time she can strike and ruin me. By God’s precious blood, this action of hers is scurvy, it is very scurvy, and you, Celia, are —”

“Be calm, good sir,” Mosca said.

Corvino continued, “—an arrant locust, by Heaven, a locust! A plague of locusts! Whore, crocodile, you who have prepared your tears in advance, anticipating the best time that you can let them flow —”

Crocodiles were thought to cry tears in order to draw their prey toward them. Earlier, Mosca had shed tears in order to manipulate Bonario.

“Please, sir,” Mosca said. “She will consider your request.”

Celia said, “I wish that the loss of my life would serve to satisfy —”

“By God’s death!” Corvino swore. “If she would just speak to him, and save my reputation, it would be something, but she spitefully desires my utter ruination!”

Mosca said, “It is true that you have now put your fortune in her hands.”

In other words, Celia *must* sleep with Volpone, or Corvino will be ruined.

Mosca continued, “Why, truly she is holding back because of her modesty. I must acquit her of having any other motivation. If you were absent, she would be more forthcoming.”

He thought, *And she would be more cumming.*

He continued, “I know it, and I dare undertake to say that for her. What woman can before her husband?”

Can what? Commit adultery.

Mosca continued, “Please, let us depart, and leave her here.”

Corvino said, “Sweet Celia, you may still redeem everything. I’ll say no more. If you don’t, consider yourself as lost.”

Corvino and Mosca began to leave.

Celia tried to follow them, but her husband ordered her, “No, stay there.”

Corvino and Mosca exited.

Celia said to herself, “Oh, God, and His good angels! To where, where, has shame fled from human breasts? How is it possible that with such ease men dare put off your — God’s and the good angels’ — honors, and their own? Is honorable marriage, which always was a cause of life — a reason to live, and an honorable way to bring children into the world — now placed beneath the basest circumstance? Is honorable marriage now valued less than the worst situation? And has modesty been made an exile because of money?”

Volpone said with vigorous good health, “Yes, in the case of Corvino, and other such earth-fed minds —”



He jumped off the couch and continued “— who have never tasted the true Heaven of love. Assure yourself, Celia, that he who would sell you only for the hope of gain — and that hope uncertain — would have sold his portion of Paradise for ready money, if he had met a merchant who would buy it.”

Celia, of course, was amazed to see Volpone’s vigorous good health.

Volpone asked, “Why are you amazed to see me thus revived? You should rather applaud the miracle that your beauty has made; my revival is your great work. Your beauty has, not just now, but many times raised me, in several shapes.”

One shape was the form of an erect penis; the other shape was the disguise of a mountebank. He was lying that he had assumed additional shapes, aka figures, aka disguises, to see her.

He continued, “Just this morning, I assumed the disguise of a mountebank in order to see you at your window. Yes, before I would have stopped my scheming for your love, in varying figures, I would have contended with the blue Proteus, or the horned flood.”

Proteus was a sea-god who was a shape-shifter. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Menelaus tells a story of sneaking up on Proteus and holding on to him as he changed shapes and tried to escape. After Proteus gave up trying to escape, he answered Menelaus’ questions. As a sea-god, Proteus was sea-colored, aka blue.

In this culture, rivers were often called floods. The horned flood referred to was the shape-shifting river-god Achelous. Hercules and Achelous fought over the mortal woman Deianira. Achelous assumed three shapes — a bull, a snake,

and a man with an ox-like face — but Hercules defeated each shape.

Volpone said, “Now you are welcome.”

“Sir!” Celia said, backing away from him as he advanced toward her.

“No, don’t flee from me,” Volpone said. “And don’t let your false imagination that I was bedridden make you think I am so. You shall not find that to be true. I am now as fresh, as hot, as high, and in as Jovian a situation as when, in that so celebrated scene, at the recitation of our comedy, for the entertainment of the great Valois, I acted the part of young Antinous and attracted the eyes and ears of all the ladies present — they admired each of my graceful gestures, notes, and movements.”

A typical Jovian situation is one in which Jove, King of the gods, transforms himself into another shape in order to commit adultery — often consisting of rape — with a mortal woman. For example, he transformed into a swan in order to have sex with Leda, who gave birth to Castor and Pollux, and he transformed into a shower of gold in order to have sex with Semele, who became the mother of Bacchus.

The “great Valois” is Henry of Valois, who became King Henry III of France. When his brother King Charles IX of France died without leaving children in 1574, Henry returned to France. He traveled through Venice, where he was royally entertained, including with theatrical entertainments.

Antinous was a beautiful young man who was a favorite of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. Henry of Valois was thought to be a transvestite who would have enjoyed looking at — and perhaps more — the beautiful young man.

Volpone thought of Jove — and himself — as so good-looking that women found themselves attracted to them. But Jove often committed rape.

Volpone now sang this song:

*“Come, my Celia, let us prove [try],*

*“While we can, the sports of love,*

*“Time will not be ours forever,*

*“He [Time], at length, our good [well-being] will sever;*

*“Spend not then his gifts in vain;*

*“Suns, that set, may rise again:*

*“But if once we lose this light,*

*“It is with us perpetual night [death].*

*“Why should we defer our joys?*

*“Fame [Reputation] and rumor [gossip] are but toys [trifles].*

*“Cannot we delude the eyes*

*“Of a few poor household spies?*

*“Or his [Corvino’s] easier ears beguile,*

*“Thus removed [not present] by our wile [trick]? —*

*“It is no sin love’s fruits to steal:*

*“But the sweet thefts to reveal;*

*“To be taken [caught in the act], to be seen,*

*“These have crimes accounted been.”*

This was a *carpe diem* — seize the day — song. Soon we will die, and therefore we ought to enjoy what pleasure we can. It was also a seduction song arguing that it is not the committing of adultery that is wrong — instead, getting caught committing adultery is wrong.

Celia prayed, “May some malignant mist blast me or some dire lightning strike this my offending face!”

Her face offended her because its beauty was causing Volpone to act like a beast.

“Why droops my Celia?” Volpone said. “You have, in place of a base husband, found a worthy lover. Use your fortune well, with secrecy and pleasure.”

He opened his treasure chest and said, “Look and behold what you are Queen of, not merely in expectation, as I feed the hope of expectation to others; instead, you are definitely possessed of this treasure, and you are crowned as its Queen.”

Volpone held a necklace and said, “Look! Here is a pearl necklace. Each pearl is more valuable than that pearl the brave Egyptian queen caroused with. Dissolve these pearls and drink them.”

Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, once dissolved a very valuable pearl in vinegar and drank it in order to impress Mark Antony. Things ended badly for them; both of them committed suicide.

Volpone held some jewels and said, “Look! Here is a ruby that may put out both the eyes of our St. Mark of Venice.”

The ruby was so valuable that, according to Volpone, it could bribe even a saint to close his eyes and not see adultery being committed under his nose.

Volpone continued, “Here is a diamond that would have bought Lollia Paulina, when she came in like starlight, hidden under jewels that were the spoils of provinces.”

Lollia Paulina, wife of the Roman Emperor Caligula, wore alternate layers of emeralds and pearls “upon her head, in her hair, in her wreaths, in her ears, upon her neck, in her bracelets, and on her fingers,” according to the Roman historian Pliny. Her grandfather had taken the jewels from the provinces he ruled. Things ended badly for all of these people. Caligula was assassinated, and both Lollia and her grandfather committed suicide.

Volpone continued, “Take these jewels and wear and lose them. There still remains an earring valuable enough to purchase them again, and this whole state of Venice.”

His words were ambiguous. They could have meant that there still remained an earring that was valuable enough to purchase again the lost jewels as well as the whole state of Venice (in which case, he was lying), or his words could have meant there still remains a valuable earring and there still remains the whole state of Venice.

He continued, “A gem that is worth only an individual person’s entire estate is nothing: We will eat the value of such a gem at a single meal. The heads of parrots, the tongues of nightingales, and the brains of peacocks and ostriches shall be our food, and if we could get the phoenix, although the bird would become extinct, it would be our dish.”

The phoenix is a mythical bird of Arabia. Only one exists at a time, and every five hundred years it sets itself on fire and is reborn from the ashes. Since only one phoenix exists, if Volpone and Celia were to eat it, it would become extinct.

Celia said, “Good sir, these things might move a mind affected by such delights, but I, whose innocence is all I can

think is valuable, or worth the enjoying, and which, once lost, I have nothing to lose beyond it, cannot be captured with these sensual baits. If you have a conscience —”

Volpone interrupted, “A conscience is the beggar’s virtue. If you have wisdom, listen to me, Celia. Your baths shall be the juice of July-flowers and of the spirit of roses and of violets, the milk of unicorns, and panthers’ breath gathered in bags, and mixed with Cretan wines.”

July-flowers are clove-scented pinks, unicorns are mythological beings associated with virgins, panthers were believed to have sweet breath that attracted prey, and wine from Crete was expensive.

He continued, “Our drink shall be prepared with gold and ambergris, which we will drink until my roof whirls round with the vertigo. And my dwarf shall dance, my eunuch shall sing, and my Fool shall make up the antic, aka grotesque dance, while we, in changed shapes, will enact Ovid’s tales of changes and metamorphoses. Now you shall be like Europa, and I will be like Jove.”

Europa was a Phoenician woman whom Jove, King of the gods, lusted after. He transformed himself into a white bull, Europa climbed onto his back, and he kidnapped her by running into the ocean and swimming to Crete, where he either seduced or raped her. She became the first Queen of Crete and the mother of Minos. Europe is named after her.

Volpone continued, “Then I will be like Mars, and you will be like Erycine.”

Erycine is a name for Venus, goddess of sexual passion. A temple on Mount Eryx in Sicily was dedicated to her. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, a blind bard sings a story of how the two immortals had an affair, which ended badly for them. Being immortal, Mars and Venus cannot die, but Venus’ husband, Vulcan, discovered the affair and set a trap for them. While

they were having sex, he threw fine chains over them, netting and trapping them. Then he called over the gods and goddesses to look at and laugh at the unhappy adulterers. The goddesses were embarrassed and stayed home, but the gods came to jeer and mock and laugh. By the way, the immortals' Greek names are Ares (Mars), Aphrodite (Venus), and Hephaestus (Vulcan).

Volpone continued, "We will change into the shapes of all the rest of the lovers in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* until we have quite run through them and wearied all the fables of the gods.

"Then I will have you sexually in more modern forms. You will be attired like some sprightly dame of France, a splendid Tuscan lady, or a proud Spanish beauty. Sometimes, you will seem to be the Persian Shah's wife, or the Grand Signior of Turkey's mistress, and for a change you will appear to be one of Venice's most skillful courtesans, or some sexually quick and lively Negro, or a cold Russian, and I will meet you sexually in as many shapes where we may so transfuse our wandering souls" — he kissed her, an act that in the case of spiritual love involved an interchange of souls — "out at our lips, and score up such sums of pleasures —"

He sang these lines:

*"That the curious shall not know*

*"How to tell [count] them as they flow;*

*"And the envious, when they find*

*"What their number is, will be pined [pained]."*

They would kiss so many times that curious onlookers would not be able to count them and envious people, once they found out the number of kisses, would feel pain.

As she tried to escape from Volpone's advances, Celia pleaded, "If you have ears that will be pierced — or eyes that

can be opened — or a heart that may be touched — or any part that yet proclaims manhood about you —”

Volpone would think that his penis proclaims his manhood, but for Celia true manhood lay in spiritual strength.

She continued, “— if you have the slightest trace of the purity of the holy saints — or of Heaven — give me mercy and let me escape — if not, be bountiful and kill me. You know that I am a creature, here ill betrayed by one — my husband — whose shame I would like to forget it is.

“If you will deign to give me neither of these graces, yet feed your wrath, sir, rather than your lust — wrath is a vice that comes closer to manliness — and punish that unhappy crime of nature, that crime which you miscall my beauty. Skin my face, or poison it with ointments, as a punishment for its seducing your blood and passion to this rebellion against ethical conduct. Rub these hands of mine with something that may cause an eating leprosy all the way down to my bones and marrow. Do anything that will disfigure me, except when it comes to my honor — and I will kneel to you, I will pray for you, I will make a thousand hourly vows, sir, for your health, and I will report to everyone — and believe it, too — that you are virtuous —”

The thought of his being virtuous enraged Volpone, who considered it a charge of impotence.

He said, “Do you think that I am cold, frozen, and impotent, and so you will report that to everyone? You seem to think that I have Nestor’s hernia.”

Nestor was an old Greek advisor to Agamemnon, leader of the Greek troops during the Trojan War. The Roman satirist Juvenal wrote much later that Nestor had a hernia. Some hernias occur in the groin.



Volpone said, “I degenerate and abuse my nation by playing with opportunity thus long.”

By “degenerate and abuse my nation,” he meant that he had not been acting as macho as he felt Italian men should act.

He continued, “I should have done the act of sex with you, and then have conversed with you. Yield to me, or I’ll force you — I’ll rape you!”

He grabbed her.

Celia prayed, “Oh, just God!”

Volpone said, “You pray in vain.”

Bonario had been listening. Now he rushed in and separated Volpone and Celia, saying, “Forbear, foul ravisher, libidinous swine! Free the forced lady, or you die, impostor. Except that I’m loath to snatch your punishment out of the hand of justice, you would yet be made the timely sacrifice of vengeance before this altar and this dross, your idol.”

The altar was Volpone’s treasure chest, and the dross was his gold.

Bonario said to Celia, “Lady, let’s leave this place; it is the den of villainy. Fear nothing, you have a guard: me. And he, Volpone, before long, shall meet his just reward.”

Bonario wanted a law court to justly punish Volpone.

Bonario and Celia exited.

Volpone cried, “Fall on me, roof, and bury me in ruin. Become my grave, you that were my shelter! Oh, I am unmasked, dispirited and flaccid, undone and ruined, betrayed to beggary, betrayed to infamy —”

Mosca entered the room. His face was bleeding where Bonario had wounded him.

He said, “Where shall I, the most wretched shame of men, run so I can beat out my unlucky brains?”

“Here, here,” Volpone said, intending to comfort Mosca, but unintentionally answering his question. “What! Are you bleeding?”

“Oh, I wish that Bonario’s well-driven sword had been so good as to have cleft me down to the navel before I lived to see my life, my hopes, my spirits, my patron, all thus desperately entangled as a result of my error!”

“Woe on your fortune!” Volpone said.

“And on my follies, sir,” Mosca said.

“You have made me miserable,” Volpone said.

Mosca had arranged for Celia to come to Volpone. Mosca would also claim to not know that Bonario had hidden himself and eavesdropped on Volpone and Celia.

“And I have made myself miserable, sir,” Mosca said. “Who would have thought that Bonario would have eavesdropped, so?”

“What shall we do?” Volpone asked.

“I don’t know,” Mosca said. “If my heart could expiate — do penance for — this mischance, I’d pluck it out. Will you please hang me? Or cut my throat? And I’ll requite you, sir; I’ll do the same for you. Let us die like Romans, since we have lived like Grecians.”

The Greeks had a reputation for extravagant and reckless living. The Romans had a reputation for dying with honor;

some famous Romans had preferred to commit suicide rather than surrender. For example, Cato the Younger had committed suicide rather than surrender to Julius Caesar. Also, Brutus and Cassius committed suicide rather than surrender to Octavian Caesar.

Knocking sounded on the door.

“Listen,” Volpone said to Mosca. “Who’s there? I hear some footsteps. Venetian police officers have come to apprehend us! I feel the brand hissing already at my forehead; now, my ears are boring.”

A Venetian punishment was to brand offenders, often on the forehead. A short while ago, Celia had asked Volpone if he had ears that could be pierced — by her words. Now, his ears were boring — making a hole in themselves. Now, he was wishing that he had listened to her.

Mosca said, “Go to your couch, sir. You must make that place good, whatever it takes. You must keep up the pretense of being an invalid.”

Volpone lay down on the couch.

Mosca said, “Guilty men always dread and anticipate what they deserve.”

— 3.9 —

Mosca opened the door and said, “Signior Corbaccio!”

Corbaccio, Bonario’s elderly father, walked into the room.

Seeing Mosca’s bloody face, Corbaccio said, “Why, what has happened, Mosca?”

The legacy-hunter Voltore arrived and stood in the doorway, unnoticed.

“Oh, I am ruined, amazed, and confused, sir,” Mosca said. “Your son, I don’t know how, became aware of your changing your will and changing it to make my patron and not him your heir. Bonario violently entered our house, and with his sword drawn he sought you, called you an unnatural wretch, and vowed that he would kill you.”

In Mosca’s story, Bonario regarded his father as unnatural because his father was disinheriting him. It’s natural for parents to take care of their children and make them their heirs.

“Kill me!” Corbaccio said.

“Yes, and he said that he would kill my patron,” Mosca said.

“This act shall disinherit him indeed,” Corbaccio said.

He gave Mosca a paper and said, “Here is my will naming Volpone as my heir.”

Originally, the will was supposed to be a ruse to get Volpone to reciprocate by naming Corbaccio as his heir, but now Corbaccio really intended to disinherit his own son.

“This is good, sir,” Mosca said. “It is in the proper legal form.”

“It is right and well,” Corbaccio said. “Be you as careful now for me. Look after my interests.”

“My life, sir, will not be treated with more tender concern than I will have for your interests,” Mosca said. “I am only yours.”

“How is Volpone?” Corbaccio asked. “Will he die shortly, do you think?”

“I fear that he’ll outlast May,” Mosca said.

The hard-of-hearing Corbaccio asked, “Today?”

“No, I fear that he will live through May, sir.”

“Can’t you give him a dram?” Corbaccio asked.

A dram is a measure of liquid medicine, but Mosca understood that Corbaccio meant liquid poison.

Mosca replied, “Oh, by no means, sir.”

“I’ll not beg you to,” Corbaccio said.

Voltore stepped into the room and said, referring to Mosca, “This is a knave, I see.”

Seeing Voltore for the first time, Mosca thought, *What! Signior Voltore! Did he overhear me?*

Voltore hissed, “Parasite!”

Mosca said, “Who’s that? Oh, sir, you have come at a very good time.”

He walked over to Voltore so that Corbaccio could see but not hear them.

“I am scarcely in time to discover your tricks, I fear,” Voltore said. “You are only his? And you are only mine, also? Isn’t that right?”

“Who?” Mosca said. “I, sir?”

“You, sir,” Voltore said. “What plot is this about a will?”

“It is a plot to benefit you, sir,” Mosca said.

“Come on,” Voltore said. “Don’t put your foists upon me; I shall scent them.”

The word “foist” means both “trick” and “silent fart.” The name “Voltore” means “vulture,” and vultures have a keen sense of smell.

“Didn’t you hear the plot?” Mosca asked.

“Yes, I heard that Corbaccio has made your patron there” — he pointed to Volpone — “his heir.”

“That is true,” Mosca said. “This happened as a result of my action. He was persuaded to make the will by my plot, with the hope —”

Voltore interrupted, “— that your patron should reciprocate and make Corbaccio his heir? And you have promised Corbaccio that that will happen?”

“Yes, I did that for your benefit, I did, sir,” Mosca said. “Even more, I told his son and brought and hid him here, where he might hear his father give the deed to me. I was determined to do this course of action by the thought, sir, that the unnaturalness (it is unnatural for a father to disinherit a son), first, of the act, and then his father’s often disclaiming Bonario as his biological son would surely enrage Bonario (a rage that I intended to inflame) and make him do some violence upon his parent. Because of that violence, the law would take sufficient hold on Bonario to deny him the inheritance, and you would be instated in a double hope.”

Mosca was saying that Bonario would kill Corbaccio, his father. Volpone would then inherit Corbaccio’s wealth, and after Volpone died, Voltore would inherit the wealth of both Corbaccio and Volpone.

Apparently, Mosca really did want Bonario to kill Corbaccio; this would allow Volpone to immediately inherit Corbaccio’s wealth. Mosca was willing to be not only a pimp for Volpone but also an accessory to murder.

Mosca said, “With truth as my comfort and my conscience, I swear that my only aim was to dig you a fortune out of these two old rotten sepulchers —”

Mosca was comparing Corbaccio and Volpone to old rotten sepulchers that contained wealth — wealth that would be robbed from the sepulchers.

Voltore said, “I beg your pardon, Mosca.”

Mosca continued, “— a fortune worth your patience, and your great merit, sir. But see the change that Bonario has created in my plan!”

“Why, what happened?” Voltore asked.

“Misfortune,” Mosca said. “You must help, sir. While we were awaiting the old raven, Corbaccio, in comes Corvino’s wife, sent here by her husband —”

“What, with a present?” Voltore asked.

“No, sir, she was visiting,” Mosca said. “I’ll tell you why, soon. Because she stayed a long time, the young Bonario grew impatient, rushed forth, seized the lady, wounded me, and made her swear — or he would murder her, that was his vow — to charge that my patron, Volpone, tried to rape her.”

Mosca pointed to Volpone, who was lying on the couch, pretending to be a very ill old man, and said, “You can see how unlikely it is that he would attempt to rape her!”

He then continued, “And now with that pretext he’s gone away from here to accuse his father, defame my patron, and defeat you in the matter of a legacy from Volpone.”

“Where is her husband?” Voltore said. “Let him be sent for immediately.”

“Sir, I’ll go and fetch him,” Mosca said.

“Bring him to the Scrutineo.”

Voltore, a lawyer, was very familiar with the Scrutineo, the law court in the Senate House.

“Sir, I will,” Mosca said.

“This must be stopped,” Voltore said.

“Oh, you do nobly, sir,” Mosca said. “Alas, all this was labored, sir, for your good, nor was there any lack of sagacity and planning in the plot. But fortune can, at any time, overthrow the projects of a hundred learned scholars, sir.”

The hard-of-hearing Corbaccio asked, “What’s that?”

Voltore asked him, “Will it please you, sir, to go along with me?”

Voltore and Corbaccio exited.

Mosca said to Volpone, “Patron, go in and pray for our success.”

Volpone rose from the couch and said, “Need makes devotion: People pray most when they most need help. May Heaven bless your labor!”



## ACT 4 (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

### — 4.1. —

Sir Politic Would-be and Peregrine talked while standing on a street.

Sir Politic Would-be said, referring to the episode with the mountebank (but his words were appropriate to the just-finished episode of *Volpone* and *Celia*), “I told you, sir, it was a plot! You see what observation is! You see what keeping your eyes open can do for you!”

He added, “You mentioned to me that you had the need for some instructions about traveling. Since we have met here in this height, aka latitude, of Venice, I will tell you, sir, a few particulars I have set down that are relevant only for this meridian of Venice and are fit to be known by your inexperienced traveller, and they are these that I will tell you. I will not touch, sir, on your language or your clothes, for they are old.”

Sir Politic Would-be was using the word “your” indefinitely — “your clothes” meant the clothing of travelers in general. This use of “your” was an affectation that then-travelers to Venice picked up, but in order to make a joke, Peregrine pretended that Sir Politic Would-be was criticizing his clothes.

“Sir, I have better clothes,” Peregrine said.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “I meant, as they are themes, aka topics. Language and clothes are old themes that have been much talked about, and so travelers tend to know much about them.

“Oh, sir, proceed,” Peregrine said. “I’ll slander you no more of wit, good sir.”

His last sentence was ambiguous. Sir Politic Would-be understood it to mean this: I won't misrepresent what you say in order to make a joke. Peregrine meant this: I won't slander you by saying that you have wit.

Sir Politic Would-be said, "First, as for your demeanor, you must be grave and serious, very reserved, and closed-mouthed. Do not tell a secret on any terms, not even to your father. You can just barely tell a fable, aka fictitious story, but use caution: Make sure choice both of your company and of your discourse. Be careful that you never speak a truth —"

"What!" Peregrine said.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, "Don't tell the truth to foreigners, for those are the people you must most converse with. Others — travelers from Britain — I would not know, sir, except at a distance, so that I still might be a saver in them. Otherwise, you shall have tricks passed upon you hourly."

A saver is a gambler who neither wins nor loses, but comes out even. By avoiding travelers from his own country — Sir Politic Would-be ignored his own advice when it came to Peregrine — he lost what could have been new friends, but he saved money that he could have lost if he had given them loans. (Sir Politic Would-be spent much time thinking about money; he had taken out loans from the Jewish moneylenders of Venice.)

He added, "And then, as for your religion, profess none, but wonder at the diversity of all religions, and, for your part state that if there were no other than simply the laws of the land, you could be happy. Nick Machiavelli and Monsieur Bodin were both of this mind."

Sir Politic Would-be advised professing to be an atheist as a way of keeping out of trouble while traveling in Venice. At

the time, much anti-Catholic feeling was current in England, and Protestant English rulers worried that English travelers might acquire what the rulers considered to be bad religious thought in Catholic countries such as Italy.

Niccolo Machiavelli wrote in *The Prince* that political goals came before religious goals. Jean Bodin argued in *La Republique* that to avoid civic unrest political rulers ought to be religiously tolerant. It is wrong to say that these authors advocated atheism.

Of course, believers consider it a virtue not to hide their religion.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, “Then you must learn the use and handling of your silver fork at meals and the metal of your glass (these are important matters to your Italian) and to know the hour when you must eat your melons and your figs.”

Forks were still not widely used in England at the time, but they would be in a few years. Venice was famous for its glassware, and the “metal” of the glass referred to the quality of the molten glass used to make the glassware.

“Is that a point of state, aka a point of diplomacy, too?” Peregrine asked.

“Here in Venice it is,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “As for your Venetian, if he sees a man who is even a little bit preposterous and not behaving in the conventionally correct manner, he immediately makes a judgment about his character, and he strips him of his dignity by taunting him.”

Actually, that is true of many people other than Venetians. It was true of Peregrine, for example, as events have already and would soon show.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, “I’ll acquaint you, sir, with the knowledge that I now have lived here some fourteen months since the first week of my landing here. Everyone took me for a citizen of Venice because I knew the forms so well —”

Peregrine thought, — *the forms and nothing else.*

He meant that Sir Politic Would-be knew the outward appearance but nothing of any real substance.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “I had read Contarini.”

Cardinal Gasparo Contarini’s *De Magistratibus et Republica Venetorum*, was published in 1589. Sir Lewis Lewkenor’s English translation *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice* was published in 1599.

He continued, “I leased a house, dealt with my Jewish moneylenders to furnish it with moveable property — well, if I could but find one man, one man after my own heart, whom I dared to trust, I would —”

“Would what, sir?” Peregrine asked.

“— make him rich,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “Make him a fortune. He should not think again. I would command it.”

The other man would not have to think; Sir Politic would do the thinking for both of them.

“How?” Peregrine asked.

“With certain projects that I have,” Sir Politic Would-be said, “which I may not reveal.”

Sir Politic Would-be seems to have been leery of lending money to other travelers. That is good advice for Peregrine. Many people have hare-minded projects that are certain or almost certain to lose money. That was true then, and it is true now.

Peregrine thought, *If I had even one person to wager with, I would lay odds now that Sir Politic will reveal his projects to me immediately.*

“One of my projects,” Sir Politic Would-be said, “and it is one that I don’t care greatly who knows about it, is to serve the state of Venice with smoked herrings for three years, and at a certain rate, from Rotterdam in the Netherlands, where I have correspondence.”

Given that Venice is located on the Adriatic Sea, one wonders about the intelligence of importing fish all the way from the Netherlands.

Holding a paper, Sir Politic Would-be continued, “There’s a letter, sent me from one of the States, and to that purpose.”

The word “States” was deliberately ambiguous. By “one of the States,” Sir Politic Would-be meant “one of the provinces”; Rotterdam is located in the province of South Holland. However, he was hoping that Peregrine would understand “one of the States” to mean “one of the members of the Dutch States-General,” the bicameral legislature of the Netherlands.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, “He cannot write his name, but that’s his mark.”

He wanted Peregrine to think the correspondent could not write his name on the letter because of the confidential content of the letter, but Peregrine was likely to think, *Yes, Sir Politic Would-be is exactly the kind of man who would receive a letter from a man who is unable to write anything, including his own name.*

Peregrine called the bluff: “Is the writer of the letter a Chandler?”

A Chandler is either a retail grocer or a ship’s provisioner.

Sir Politic Would-be replied, “No, a cheesemonger — a seller of cheeses and other dairy products. There are some others, too, with whom I treat about the same negotiation, and I will undertake it. For this is how it will work: I’ll do it with ease because I have planned it all. Your hoy carries only three men in her, and a boy.”

A hoy is a small Dutch sloop used for short hauls along the coast; it is too small for a voyage from the Netherlands to Venice, Italy.

He continued, “And she shall make me three round trips a year.”

That means three cargoes of smoked herring.

He continued, “So, if there comes to fruition only one of three, I save.”

He would break even if the hoy successfully made one voyage. However, this is true only if the first voyage is successful. If the hoy sinks on the first voyage, there will not be a second or a third voyage.

He continued, “If two voyages are successful, I can defalk.”

The word “defalcation” means “diminution” or “reduction.” Presumably, Sir Politic Would-be meant that if two voyages were successful, he would make a profit on the business venture and could pay back some of the money he owed to Jewish moneylenders. We should note that word “defalk” is very close to the spelling of the word “default,” which is likely what Sir Politic Would-be would do with any loan gotten to finance the business venture.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, “But this is only if my main project fails.”

“Then you have others?” Peregrine asked.

“I would be loath to draw the subtle and cunning air of such a place as Venice without coming up with a thousand schemes of my own,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “I’ll not lie, sir. Wherever I come to live, I love to be considerative: I love to analyze what is around me.

“And it is true that I have during my free hours thought upon some certain benefits for the state of Venice, which I call ‘my Precautions,’ and, sir, which I mean, in hopes of being granted a pension, to propound to the Great Council, then to the Forty, and so on up to the Ten.”

The Great Council, the Forty, and the Ten were the most important governing bodies of Venice.

He continued, “My means are made already —”

The “means” were his means of access. He had to get access to the Great Council, the Forty, and the Ten in order to make his proposals to them. Normally, to do that you had to know someone important.

“By whom are they made?” Peregrine asked.

“Sir, by one whom, although his position is obscure and low, yet he can sway, and they will hear him. He’s a police officer.”

This is a minor court official who is in charge of arresting and summoning offenders.

“What!” Peregrine said. “A common sergeant?”

He was incredulous that such a minor court official could get Sir Politic Would-be access to the Great Council, the Forty, and the Ten.

“Sir, even minor court officials such as the police officer put into the mouths of the Great Council, the Forty, and the Ten

what they should say, sometimes, just like greater men do. I think I have my notes to show you —”

He began to look through his pockets.

Peregrine began, “Good sir —”

Sir Politic Would-be interrupted, “But you shall swear to me, as you are a gentleman, not to steal my ideas —”

“I, sir!” Peregrine said.

“— nor to reveal any of the details of my plans.”

He stopped searching his pockets and said, “My notes are not on me.”

“Oh, but you can remember your ideas, sir,” Peregrine said.

“My first idea concerns tinderboxes,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “You must know that no family is here without its tinderbox. Now, sir, let’s say that you or I were ill disposed toward the Venetian government. Tinderboxes are very portable, and with one in our pockets, might not you or I go into the Arsenal and come out again?”

The implication was that they could easily set fire to the Arsenal, which was the shipyard where ships and ordnance were located. In fact, in the 1560s, the Arsenal had exploded and burned.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, “And no one would be the wiser.”

“Except yourself, sir,” Peregrine said. Peregrine would definitely *not* set fire to the Arsenal, and he did not think the people of Venice would do so. Since the Arsenal was heavily guarded, it also seemed unlikely that the enemies of Venice would be able to use tinderboxes to set fire to the Arsenal.



“Very well, then,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “I therefore would warn and advise the Venetian government how fitting it would be that none but such people as are known patriots, sound lovers of their country, should be allowed to enjoy tinderboxes in their houses. Also, those tinderboxes would be licensed at some government office, and they would be so big that they could not be hidden in pockets.”

“Admirable!” Peregrine said.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “My next idea concerns how to find out by an immediate demonstration whether a ship, newly arrived from Syria or from any suspected part of all the Levant, aka the Eastern Mediterranean, is guilty of carrying the plague.”

This would be useful, indeed, if it could be done accurately.

He continued, “Right now ships are quarantined for forty, fifty days, sometimes, around the two islands with a lazaretto, aka quarantine house, for their trial period. If no signs of plague show up after forty or fifty days, then the ships can come to Venice. I’ll save that expense and loss for the merchant, and in an hour show whether or not the ship carries the plague —”

“Indeed, sir!” Peregrine said.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, “— or I will lose my labor.”

If his test for determining whether a ship was or was not carrying the plague were implemented and failed, he could lose his life — and thousands of other people could lose their lives.

Peregrine said, “By my faith, that’s much.”

“Sir, understand me,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “It will cost me in onions, some thirty *livres* —”

*Livres* are French pounds.

“Which is one pound sterling,” Peregrine said.

“Beside my waterworks,” Peregrine said, “for this is what I will do, sir. First, I will bring in your ship between two brick walls, but those the state shall invest in. On the one wall I will stretch a fair tarpaulin, and in that I will stick my onions, cut in halves. The other wall will be full of loop-holes, out at which I will thrust the noses of my bellows; and those bellows I will keep, using the waterworks, in perpetual motion, which is the easiest matter of a hundred. Now, sir, your onion, which does naturally attract the infection of plague, and your bellows blowing the air upon the onion, will show, instantly, by its changed color, that there is contagion, or if there is no contagion of the plague the onion will remain as fair as it was at the first.”

His plan had a few faults:

1) The waterworks are powered by moving water, but Venice is unlikely to have a suitable source of moving water. Sir Politic Would-be seems to have gotten this part of his idea from a water-driven mill on a river.

2) People of the time believed that a cut onion would absorb plague particles from the air. This is wrong, but Sir Politic Would-be would look at the cut onion and see if its color had changed. In a short time, a cut onion will turn brown through exposure to even pure air. If Sir Peregrine were to look instantly at the onion, as he had said, the onion would not have changed color and so his test would conclude that every ship was free of the plague. If Sir Peregrine waited a short time to look at the onion, since it would take time for the test to be done, the onion would have changed color and so his test would conclude that every ship was infected with the plague.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Now my idea is known, it is nothing.”

He meant that once his idea was known, it seemed obvious.

“You are right, sir,” Peregrine said.

He meant that the idea was worth nothing.

“I wish I had my notes,” Sir Politic Would-be said as he looked through his pockets.

“Indeed, I wish the same thing,” Peregrine said. “But you have done well for once, sir.”

He had done well at amusing Peregrine.

“If I were traitorous, or would be made so,” Sir Politic Would-be said, “I could show you ways that I could sell this state of Venice now, to the Turks, in spite of the Venetian galleys, or their —”

He was verging on getting himself — and Peregrine — in real trouble with the Venetian government, whose enemies were the Turks.

Peregrine began to caution him, “Please, Sir Pol —”

Sir Politic Would-be took the hint and said, “I don’t have my notes on me.”

“I feared that,” Peregrine said, meaning both Sir Politic Would-be’s treasonous ideas and his not having his notes on him.

Sir Politic Would-be found a notebook, and Peregrine said, “There are your notes, sir.”

“No,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “This is my diary, in which I note my actions of the day.”

“Please let me see it, sir,” Peregrine said.

Sir Politic Would-be handed him his diary, and Peregrine asked, “What is here?”

He read a part of Sir Politic Would-be’s diary out loud:

*“Notandum, a rat had gnawn my spur-leathers; notwithstanding, I put on new spur-leathers, and did go forth, but first I threw three beans over the threshold.”*

*Notandum* is Latin for “It should be noted.”

Sir Politic Would-be wore spurs to indicate his status as a knight, despite there being no practical reason for wearing spurs in Venice, a city without horses. Spur-leathers are laces that are used to tie spurs to boots.

His diary entry showed that he was superstitious. Throwing three beans over the threshold was supposed to ward off the evil foretold by the rat’s gnawing the spur-leather.

Peregrine continued reading out loud:

*“I went and bought two toothpicks, of which I broke one immediately, in a discourse with a Dutch merchant about ragion’ del stato.”*

*Ragion’ del stato* are “reasons of state,” aka “political matters.”

Peregrine continued to read Sir Politic Would-be’s diary out loud:

*“From him I went and paid a moccinigo, aka small coin, for mending my silk stockings. Along my way, I bargained for herring, and at St. Mark’s I peed.”*

Peregrine said, “Indeed, these are politic notes!”

Meanings of “politic” include “political, shrewd, cunning, and scheming.” A better word to describe the contents of Sir Politic Would-be’s diary is “trivial.”

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Sir, I let pass no action of my life without making a note of it.”

“Believe me, that is wise!” Peregrine said.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Sir, continue to read.”

— 4.2 —

Lady Would-be now arrived. With her were Nano the dwarf and her two waiting-women.

Lady Would-be said, “Where would this loose knight be, I wonder? I’m sure he’s in a whorehouse and part of his body is housed in a whore’s body.”

“Why, then he’s fast,” Nano the dwarf said, punning on the con game known as fast and loose.

By “fast,” he meant “fast-moving.”

She replied, “Yes, he plays both — fast and loose — with me. By “loose,” she meant that he was wanton and that he was now with a “loose” woman.

“Please stay here and rest for a moment. This heat will do more harm to my makeup than his heart is worth. I do not care to hinder and stop him, but instead to take him in the act.”

She rubbed the side of her nose and said, “How my makeup is coming off!”

The first woman-servant saw Sir Politic Would-be and said, “My master’s yonder.”

“Where?” Lady Would-be asked.

The first woman-servant pointed and added, “He’s with a young gentleman.”

Lady Would-be said, “That person is the party we’re after. She’s dressed in male apparel!”

Venice was known for both its female courtesans and for its many homosexual transvestite prostitutes. Resenting the competition, some female courtesans began to wear men’s clothing, apparently hoping to get business in sodomy. Lady Would-be thought that Peregrine, a young man, was a female courtesan who was wearing men’s clothing.

Lady Would-be said to Nano the dwarf, “Please, sir, jostle my knight to get his attention. I’ll be gentle out of concern for his reputation, however much he deserves blame.”

Seeing her, Sir Politic Would-be said, “My lady!”

“Where?” Peregrine asked.

“It is she indeed, sir,” he replied. “You shall know her. She is, I would say even if she were not mine, a lady of much merit as concerns fashion and behavior, and as for beauty I dare compare —”

“It seems you are not jealous,” Peregrine said, “since you dare to praise her to another man.”

“As for discourse and conversation —”

“Being your wife, she cannot miss that.”

Peregrine meant that if she were Sir Politic Would-be’s wife, she must be talkative.

Sir Politic Would-be tried to introduce Peregrine and his wife, “Madam, here is a gentleman. Please treat him well. He seems to be a youth, but he is —”

Lady Would-be finished the sentence: “— none.”

She meant that Peregrine was a female prostitute dressed in men’s clothing.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Yes, he is a gentleman who has put his face so soon into the world —”

By “so soon,” he meant “at so early an age.”

Lady Would-be misunderstood him: “You mean, ‘as early’? As early as today?”

She meant that Peregrine had begun to dress as a man only this day.

Sir Politic Would-be asked, “What do you mean?”

His wife replied, “Why, I mean in this suit of clothing, sir; you understand me, I am sure.”

She believed that her husband definitely knew that Peregrine was a female courtesan dressed in men’s clothing.

She continued, “Well, Master Would-be, this does not become you. I had thought the odor, sir, of your good name would have been more precious to you. I had thought that you would not have done this dire massacre on your honor, especially considering your gravity and rank! But knights, I see, care little for the oaths they make to ladies — chiefly, their own ladies.”

One such oath is the oath they make in the marriage ceremony.

“Now by my spurs, the symbol of my knighthood —” Sir Politic Would-be began.

Peregrine thought, *Lord, how his brain is humbled for an oath!*

In thinking of an oath to make to his wife, Sir Politic Would-be’s brain, aka thought, went down to his heels where his knight’s spurs were. Also, Peregrine believed that Sir Politic Would-be had bought his knighthood rather than earned it.

King James I of England made people knights in return for money.

Sir Politic Would-be finished his oath, “— I don’t understand you.”

His wife said, “Right, sir, your cunning may carry it off, thus. Go ahead. Pretend that you don’t understand me.”

She then said to Peregrine, “Sir, I want to have a word with you. I would be loath to argue publicly with any gentlewoman, or to seem perverse, or violent. I want to act as *The Courtier* advises.”

*The Courtier* was a famous book of etiquette.

She continued, “Doing that comes too near rusticity, aka country vulgarity, in a lady, which I would shun by all means, and whatever I may deserve from Master Would-be, yet to have one fair gentlewoman thus be made the unnatural instrument to wrong another, and one she does not know, and to persevere in doing so ... well, in my poor judgment, that is not warranted because it is a solecism in our sex, if not in manners.”

A “solecism” is an impropriety in grammar or in behavior.

In addressing Peregrine, she sometimes referred to him as male and sometimes as female. She believed him to be biologically female but dressed as male.

“What is this!” Peregrine said.

Sir Politic Would-be said to his wife, “Sweet madam, come nearer to your aim. Speak more plainly.”

“Indeed, and I will, sir,” Lady Would-be said, “since you provoke me with your impudence and laughter about your light, aka licentious, land-Siren here, your Sporus, your hermaphrodite —”



In Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*, Sirens are dangerous creatures with beautiful voices that they use to lure sailors to sail their ships close to shore and wreck them on the rocks. Since her husband was on dry land, Lady Would-be called Peregrine a land-Siren.

Sporus was a young boy who was a favorite of the dissolute Roman Emperor Nero, who had him castrated and dressed in female clothing. Nero then "married" him.

"What do we have here?" Peregrine said. "Poetic fury, and historic storms?"

The Sirens came from poetry, and Sporus came from history.

Sir Politic Would-be said about Peregrine, "The gentleman, believe it, is a worthy man, and he is from our nation."

He meant that Peregrine was from England.

His wife said, "Yes, he is from your Whitefriars nation."

Whitefriars was a place in London where prostitutes flocked because it was a "liberty," a place where sanctuary was given.

Lady Would-be said, "Come, I blush for you, Master Would-be, and I am ashamed you should have no more forehead, aka sense of shame, than thus to play the patron, or St. George, to a lewd harlot, a base fricatrice, a female devil, wearing a male's appearance."

A "fricatrice" is a masseuse, or in this case, a prostitute.

Sir Politic Would-be now understood what his wife thought Peregrine was, and he thought that she might be right!

He said to Peregrine, "If you are such a person as my wife thinks you are, I must bid adieu to your delights. The case appears too liquid."

The word “liquid” meant “clear and transparent.”

His wife said to him as he exited, “Yes, you may carry it clear and pretend not to know that this ‘man’ is a woman, with your state-face — your hypocritical demeanor!

“But as for this, your carnival concupiscence, who has fled here to Venice for liberty of conscience, from the furious persecution of the Marshal, I will discipline her.”

The “carnival concupiscence” was Peregrine, whom she thought to have the lechery that was displayed by many people during carnivals.

Lady Would-be thought that Peregrine had fled to Venice for liberty of conscience. Puritans and Catholics and other people whose religion was persecuted used “liberty of conscience” to mean religious freedom, but she used it to mean “freedom from conscience” — the freedom to do whatever evil action one wishes to do without having to worry about being punished — often with a whipping — by the Marshal.

“This is fine, indeed!” Peregrine said. “And do you often act like this? Is this the way you exercise your wits in preparation for when you have the opportunity to use them? Madam —”

“Come off it, sir,” Lady Would-be said sarcastically.

She grabbed his shirt and tried to pull it off in an attempt to show that Peregrine was in fact a woman.

“Do you hear me, lady?” Peregrine said. “Why, if your knight has made you beg for shirts, or to invite me home, you might have done it a nearer way, by far.”

Peregrine was now thinking that Sir Politic Would-be had set a trap for him, a trap that perhaps included pimping his wife to Peregrine.

Lady Would-be said, “Your words won’t get you out of my snare.”

She held on tightly to his shirt.

“Why am I in your snare?” Peregrine said. “Tell me that. Indeed, your husband told me you were fair, and so you are, only your nose inclines, that side that’s facing the Sun, to the queen-apple.”

The queen-apple is red. Peregrine was saying that one side of her nose was red. The other side had lost its makeup when Lady Would-be had rubbed her nose.

“This cannot be endured by any patience,” Lady Would-be said.

— 4.3 —

Mosca entered the scene.

Seeing Lady Would-be, he asked, “What is the matter, madam?”

She replied, “If the Venetian Senate doesn’t do me justice in the suit I will make to them about this, I’ll protest to all the world that they are no aristocracy.”

Niccolo Machiavelli had stated in *The Prince* that Venetian aristocrats could not be real aristocrats because they were merchants.

“What is the injury he has done to you, lady?” Mosca asked.

“Why, the callet — the whore — you told me about, I have here taken disguised.”

“Who?” Mosca said. “This person! What does your ladyship mean? The creature — the callet — I mentioned to you is apprehended now, and she is appearing before the Senate; you shall see her —”

“Where?” Lady Would-be asked.

“I’ll take you to her,” Mosca said. “As for this young gentleman, I saw him land this morning at the port.”

“Is it possible!” Lady Would-be said. “How my judgment has wandered astray!”

She said to Peregrine, “Sir, I must, blushing, say to you that I have erred, and I beg your pardon.”

A wary Peregrine said, “What, still more changes!”

Lady Would-be said, “I hope that you lack the malice to remember a gentlewoman’s passion. If you stay in Venice here, please use me, sir —”

By “passion,” she meant “anger,” but the word is also used in the phrase “sexual passion.”

By “use,” she meant “allow me to help you” — she could help him socially. But the word is also used to mean “use sexually.”

“Will you go now, madam?” Mosca asked.

Lady Would-be continued to speak to Peregrine, “Please, sir, use me. Indeed, the more you use me, the more I shall conceive ... that you have forgot our quarrel.”

One meaning of the word “conceive” is “get pregnant.”

Lady Would-be, Mosca, Nano the dwarf, and the two serving-women exited.

Peregrine was certain that Sir Politic Would-be was prostituting his wife to him.

Alone, Peregrine said to himself, “This is strange! Sir Politic Would-be? No, his name ought to be Sir Politic Bawd. To make me thus acquainted with his wife!

“Well, wise Sir Pol, since you have played this trick upon my innocent freshmanship, I’ll test your salt-head to see how invulnerable it is against a counter-plot.”

A salt-head is an experienced head. The word “salt” also means “wanton.”

— 4.4 —

Voltore, Corbaccio, Corvino, and Mosca arrived at the Scrutineo.

Voltore, who was a lawyer and would be speaking for them in the court of law, said, “Well, now you know the management and conduct of the business. Your constancy is all that is required to the safety of it.”

They had met and determined on the lying story they would tell the four Advocari, aka Judges. To get away with their lie, they had to stick to their story.

Mosca asked, “Is the lie safely and surely communicated among us? Is that definitely the case? Does every man know his burden?”

The “burden” is the refrain to a song. Mosca was asking whether each man knew his part of the lying story they would tell the Judges.

“Yes,” Corvino said.

“Then shrink not,” Mosca said, going over to Corvino.

“But does Voltore the advocate know the truth?” Corvino quietly asked Mosca.

The truth was that Corvino had tried to prostitute his wife, Celia, to Volpone.

“Oh, sir, by no means,” Mosca quietly said. “I devised a tale that has completely saved your reputation. But be valiant, sir.”

Corvino said quietly, “I fear no one but Voltore the lawyer. I fear that his pleading on our behalves could make him stand for a co-heir —”

“Co-halter!” Mosca quietly said. “Hang him.”

A “halter” is a hangman’s noose. Mosca wanted to put to rest Corvino’s fear that anyone but him would be Volpone’s heir.

Mosca quietly continued, “We will only use his tongue, his noise, as we do Croaker’s here.”

“Croaker” was a way of referring to Corbaccio, who as an old man spoke in a croaking voice.

“What shall he — Corbaccio — do?” Corvino said.

“When we have done, you mean?” Mosca asked.

“Yes.”

“Why, we’ll think about that,” Mosca said. “We’ll sell him for mummia; he’s half dust already.”

Mummia was a medicine that was made from mummies, or from dried corpses. As an old man, Corbaccio was already half-dried out.

Mosca went over to Voltore and said quietly, referring to Corvino, “Doesn’t it make you smile to see this buffalo and how he playfully tosses his head?”

Buffalo and cuckold have horns. Celia had not cuckolded Corvino, but that was not what these four men would testify in court.

Mosca thought, *I also will toss my head playfully if everything turns out well.*

Mosca said loudly to the hear-of-hearing Corbaccio, “Sir, only you are that man who shall enjoy the crop of all Volpone’s wealth, and these other two men — Corvino and Voltore — don’t know for whom they are toiling.”

“True,” Corbaccio said. “Peace. Be quiet.”

He was worried that Corvino and Voltore would hear.

Mosca said to Corvino loudly enough for Voltore to hear, “But you shall eat the crop — you shall enjoy Volpone’s wealth.”

He then went to Voltore and quietly said, “Fat chance!”

He then said to Voltore loudly enough for all to hear, “Worshipful sir, may Mercury sit upon your thundering tongue, or the French Hercules.”

Mercury is the god of eloquence, as well as the god of thieves and liars. The gods are much stronger than mortals.

After Hercules completed his Tenth Labor, stealing the cattle of Geryon, he passed through France and became the ancestor of the French people. According to the satirist Lucian, Hercules became a master of eloquence in his old age.

If Mercury were to sit upon Voltore’s thundering tongue, he quite possibly could get it dirty or he could make it capable of telling eloquent lies.

If Mercury were to sit upon the French Hercules, it would be a case of might makes right. Hercules is strong, and the truth is strong, but both can be overcome by a greater strength and by guile.

Hercules killed the Centaur Nessus when Nessus tried to rape Hercules' wife, Deianira. As Nessus was dying, he told Deianira that his blood was charmed. She should soak one of Hercules' shirts with the blood and then give him the shirt if Hercules were ever attracted to another woman. Much later, Hercules was attracted to another woman, and Deianira gave him the shirt, but Nessus' blood was like acid, and Hercules killed himself to escape the torment.

Mosca loudly continued, "And may Hercules make your language as conquering as his club, to beat at full length flat, as with a tempest, our adversaries."

He then said quietly to Voltore, "But they are much more your adversaries, sir."

Voltore was going to argue to defeat his two adversaries in court: Celia and Bonario. In addition to defeating them, he was hoping to defeat his other two adversaries — Corvino and Corbaccio — and inherit all of Volpone's wealth.

"Here they come," Voltore said. "Be quiet now."

The four Judges and Celia, Bonario, the Notary, and the police officers were coming.

"I have another witness, if you need one, sir, whom I can produce," Mosca said.

"Who is it?" Voltore asked.

"Sir, I have her," Mosca said.

Events would reveal the other witness: Lady Would-be.

— 4.5 —

The four Judges, Celia, Bonario, the Notary, the police officers, and others arrived. The four Judges had already listened to the testimony of Bonario and Celia.



The four Judges sat and talked.

The First Judge said, “The like of this case the Venetian Senate has never heard of.”

The Second Judge said, “It will sound most strange to them when we report it.”

The Judges reviewed cases and could recommend them to go before the Venetian Senate. In this case, however, the Judges would decide to make the judgment themselves.

The Fourth Judge said, “Celia, the gentlewoman, has always been held to have an unreproved reputation. She has always been thought to be of good character.”

The Third Judge said, “So has the youth Bonario.”

The Fourth Judge said, “The more unnatural part is that of his father, Corbaccio.”

Corbaccio had disinherited his son; this was unnatural — it was not something a biological father would do.

The Second Judge said, “Even more unnatural is the act of Celia’s husband, Corvino.”

Corvino had attempted to prostitute his wife, Celia, to Volpone.

The First Judge said, “I don’t know what name to give his act because it is so monstrous!”

The Fourth Judge said, “But the impostor, Volpone, is a thing created to exceed precedent!”

Volpone was an impostor because he was pretending to be a seriously ill man although he was well enough to attempt to rape Celia.

The First Judge said, “And he was created to exceed all future possibilities!”

The Second Judge said, “I never heard a true voluptuary described, except for him.”

A voluptuary is a sybarite, a person who is self-indulgent in the pursuit of luxury or gratification of the senses.

The Third Judge asked, “Has everyone who was subpoenaed arrived?”

The Notary replied, “All, except for the old *magnifico*, Volpone.”

A *magnifico* is a great person in Venice.

The First Judge asked, “Why isn’t he here?”

“If it please your Fatherhoods, here is Volpone’s advocate,” Mosca said. “Volpone himself is so weak, so feeble —”

“Fatherhoods” is in fact the correct way to address the Judges.

The Fourth Judge asked Mosca, “Who are you?”

“Volpone’s parasite, his knave, his pandar,” Bonario said. “I beseech the court to force Volpone to come to the court so that your grave eyes may bear strong witness of his strange impostures.”

Voltore the lawyer said to the Judges, “Upon my faith and my credit with your virtues, I swear that Volpone is so ill that he is not able to endure the air.”

The Second Judge said, “Bring him here, nevertheless.”

The Third Judge said, “We will see him.”

The Fourth Judge said, “Fetch him.”

Voltore said, “May your Fatherhoods’ fitting pleasures be obeyed.”

Some officers of the law exited to get Volpone.

Voltore then said, “But surely, the sight of Volpone will rather move your pities than your indignation.

“May it please the court that in the meantime, he may be heard in me — I am his representative and can speak for him. I know that this place is most void of prejudice, and therefore I crave to be heard, since we have no reason to fear that our truth would hurt our case.”

The Third Judge said, “Speak freely.”

Voltore said, “Then know, most honored fathers, I must now reveal to your strangely imposed-upon ears the most prodigious and most shameless piece of downright impudence and treachery that vicious nature ever yet brought forth to shame the state of Venice.”

He pointed to Celia and said, “This lewd woman, who lacks no artificial looks or tears to help the vizard — the mask — she has now put on, has long been known to be a secret adulteress with that lascivious youth there.”

Celia was crying at being called “lewd.” She was wearing the half-mask that many Venetian women wore while in public, but Voltore was saying that she wore a mask of innocence to hide her guilt.

He pointed to Bonario and then continued, “She has not just been suspected, I say, but definitely known, to be an adulteress, and she has been taken in the act with him.”

He pointed to Corvino, her husband, and said, “She has been pardoned by this man, the too-easy, too-credulous husband, whose everlasting generosity makes him now stand here as

the most unhappy, innocent person that man's own goodness ever made accused."

He then said, "Celia and Bonario received a gift of forgiveness of such very dear grace and mercy that they didn't know how to respond to it except with shame because it was such a very dear gift that they could never repay it. They began to hate the gift, and rather than to accept the gift with thanks, they tried to find a way to root out and eradicate the memory of the gift.

"I pray to your Fatherhoods to observe the malice of their reaction to the gift, yes, the rage of creatures discovered in their evils, and I pray to your Fatherhoods to observe the brazen insolence such people exhibit, even in their crimes — but that will become more apparent soon."

He pointed to Corbaccio and said, "This gentleman, the father, hearing of this foul crime, with many others, which daily struck at his too-tender ears, and grieved in nothing more than that he could not preserve himself as a parent — his son's ills growing to that strange flood and unnatural profusion of evil — at last decided to disinherit him."

The First Judge said, "These are strange turns of event!"

The First Judge said, "Bonario's reputation was always fair and honest."

Voltore said, "So much more full of danger is his vice, which can beguile so under the shade of virtue.

"But, as I said, my honored sires, his father had this settled purpose of disinheriting Bonario. We don't know by what means Bonario learned about this settled purpose, but after he learned that this day was appointed for the deed of disinheritance, that parricide — I cannot give Bonario a better title — he and Celia, his paramour, made a secret arrangement. She would be there when he entered Volpone's

house. Volpone was the man, your Fatherhoods must understand, designated by Corbaccio to inherit his wealth.

“In Volpone’s house, Bonario sought his father, Corbaccio. But for what purpose did Bonario seek his father, my lords? I tremble to pronounce it. I tremble to say that a son toward a father, and toward such a father, should have so foul, felonious intent! Bonario’s intention was to murder him.

“Fortunately, he was unable to do that because of his father’s lucky absence. But what did Bonario do then? He did not check his wicked thoughts; no, now he thought up new evil deeds.

“Evil always ends where it begins.”

In other words, once evil is thought up, it will find an outlet. Evil thoughts always lead to evil deeds. Bonario had thought of committing an act of horror, and now he would commit an act of horror. The verb “ends” means “concludes” or “finishes.”

Voltore continued, “Bonario committed an act of horror, Fathers! He dragged forth the aged gentleman Volpone — who had there lain bedridden three years and more — out of and off his innocent couch, naked in invalid’s clothes upon the floor, and left him there.

“He also wounded Volpone’s servant Mosca in the face.

“He also, along with this strumpet — Celia — who was the prostitute decoy to his invented, fraudulent plot and who was glad to be so sexually active — I shall here desire your Fatherhoods to note my conclusions as being most remarkable — thought at once to stop his father’s intention to disinherit him.

“They attempted to discredit his father’s free choice of the old gentleman, Volpone, as his heir. They also attempted to

redeem themselves by laying infamy upon this man, Celia's husband, Corvino, to whom, with blushing, they should acknowledge as due their lives."

The First Judge asked, "What evidence do you have of this?"

Bonario interrupted, "Most honored fathers, I humbly beg that you give no credit to this man's mercenary tongue."

The First Judge said, "Stop interrupting. Be quiet."

Bonario said, "His soul lives in his fee. He cares more for money than he does for his soul."

Shocked, the Third Judge said, "Oh, sir!"

Bonario said, "This fellow, for six more small coins, would plead against his Maker."

The First Judge said, "You forget yourself. Remember where you are."

Voltore said, "Grave Fathers, let him have permission to speak. Can any man imagine that he will spare his accuser, me, when he would not have spared his parent? He was willing to murder his father, so he is certainly willing to insult and slander me."

The First Judge said to Voltore, "Well, produce your proofs. Show us your evidence."

Celia said, "I wish I could forget I were a creature."

One meaning of "creature" is "despicable person," but she meant a creature of God, Who created all human beings.

Voltone called a witness: "Signior Corbaccio."

Corbaccio came forward to testify.

The First Judge asked, "Who is he?"

Voltore replied, "He is Bonario's father."

The Second Judge asked, "Has he sworn under oath to tell the truth?"

The Notary answered, "Yes."

"What must I do now?" Corbaccio asked.

The Notary answered, "Your testimony's required. It is craved."

The hard-of-hearing Corbaccio asked, "Speak to the knave?"

By "knave," he meant his son, Bonario.

Corbaccio continued, "I'll have my mouth first stopped with earth — I'll die first. My heart hates knowing him. I disclaim any part of him. I am no kin of his."

The First Judge asked, "Why do you say that?"

Corbaccio said, "He is the mere portent of nature! He is a freak of nature! He is an utter stranger to my loins. I am not his biological father."

Bonario interrupted, "Have they forced you to say this?"

Corbaccio said, "I will not hear you — you monster of men, you swine, you goat, you wolf, you parricide! Speak not, you viper."

Because of Mosca's lies, he was convinced that Bonario had intended to murder him.

Bonario, an obedient son, said, "Sir, I will sit down, and rather wish my innocence should suffer than I resist the authority of a father."

Voltore called the next witness: "Signior Corvino!"

Corvino came forward to testify.

The Second Judge said, “This is strange.”

The First Judge asked, “Who’s this?”

The Notary replied, “Celia’s husband.”

The Fourth Judge asked, “Has he sworn under oath to tell the truth?”

The Notary answered, “Yes.”

The Third Judge said to Corvino, “Speak, then.”

Corvino said, “This woman, Celia, if it please your Fatherhoods, is a whore, of very hot sexual exercise, even more lecherous than a partridge, which is the most lecherous of creatures, according to Pliny’s *Natural History* and Aelian’s *On the Characteristics of Animals*. This is well known.”

Shocked by Corvino’s language and its content, the First Judge said, “No more.”

Corvino said, “She neighs like a jennet — a horse — when it’s in heat.”

Shocked by Corvino’s language and its content, the Notary ordered, “Preserve the honor of the court.”

“I shall,” Corvino said, “and I shall preserve the modesty of your most reverend ears. And yet I hope that I may say that these eyes of mine have seen her glued to that piece of cedar, that fine well-timbered gallant named Bonario.”

“Well-timbered” meant “well-built” and hinted at “well-hung.”

Corvino pointed to his forehead, where a cuckold’s horns were said to grow, and said, “Here the letters may be read, through the horn, that make the story complete.”



The cuckold's letter is V, and it is created by the cuckold's horns. Corvino used the plural "letters" because he was testifying that he had been cuckolded more than once.

He was also referring to a student's hornbook. Students would study a page that had the letters of the alphabet on it; a thin layer of horn protected the page. When it is very thin, horn is transparent, and when heated, horn is malleable.

Mosca said to Corvino, "Excellent testimony, sir!"

Corvino whispered to Mosca, "There's no shame in this now, is there?"

Corvino was worried that his testimony might not preserve the honor and the modesty of the court.

"None at all," Mosca replied.

Mosca meant that Corvino's testimony was shameless.

Corvino continued his testimony: "And I hope that I may say that I hope that Celia is well on her way to her damnation, if there is in fact a Hell that is greater than whore and woman — a good Catholic Christian may doubt that there is."

Corvino was not a good Catholic Christian.

The Third Judge said, "Corvino's grief has made him frantic."

The First Judge said, "Remove him from here."

Hearing that her husband hoped that she was well on her way to Hell, Celia fainted.

The Second Judge said, "Look after the woman."

"Splendid!" Corvino said. "Prettily feigned and acted, again!"

The Fourth Judge said, "Stand back from her."

The First Judge said, "Give her some air."

The Third Judge asked Mosca, "What can you say? What is your testimony?"

Mosca said, "My wound, may it please your wisdoms, speaks for me. I received it as I went to aid my good patron, Volpone, when Bonario missed his sought-for father and when that well-taught dame, Celia, had her cue given to her to cry out, "Rape!"

Bonario interrupted, "Oh, this is very carefully planned impudence! Fathers —"

The Third Judge interrupted, "Sir, be silent. You had your hearing free from interruption, and so must they."

The Second Judge said, "I begin to fear that there is some willful and fraudulent deception here."

He was beginning to believe that Bonario was at fault.

The Fourth Judge said, "This woman, Celia, has too many moods."

Voltore said, "Grave fathers, Celia is a creature of a most professed and prostituted lewdness."

By "creature," he meant "despicable person."

Corvino said, "Grave fathers, she is very impetuous and she is insatiable."

Voltore said, "I hope that her feignings will not deceive your wisdoms. Just this day she tempted a stranger, a grave knight, with her loose eyes, and more with her lascivious kisses."

He pointed to Mosca and said, "This man saw them together on the water in a gondola."

Mosca said, “Present is the lady herself who saw them, too. She is outside. When she saw them, she pursued them in the open streets in hopes of saving her knight’s honor.”

The First Judge said, “Produce that lady.”

The Second Judge said, “Let her come.”

Mosca exited to get Lady Would-be.

The Fourth Judge said, “These things strike me with wonder!”

The Fourth Judge said, “I am astonished. I have been turned into a stone.”

— 4.6 —

Mosca returned with Lady Would-be.

He said to her, “Be resolute, madam.”

He had coached her on what to say in the courtroom. Mosca had already told her that Peregrine was not a prostitute dressed as a woman. He, however, may have convinced her that Celia was a prostitute who had been with her husband on a gondola. Or he may have convinced her to deliberately commit perjury.

Lady Would-be pointed to Celia and said, “Yes, this same woman is she.”

She was falsely testifying that her husband and Celia had been together on a gondola.

She said to Celia, “Get out, you chameleon harlot! Now your eyes vie with the tears of the hyena. Do you dare to look upon my wronged face?”

She called Celia a chameleon because she believed that although Celia was a prostitute, she could put on an innocent appearance.

Lady Would-be was mixing up the tears a crocodile sheds and the sound a hyena makes. A crocodile was believed to shed tears to lure its victims, while a hyena was believed to mimic a human voice to lure its victims.

Lady Would-be said to the Judges, “I beg your pardons, I fear I have forgettingly transgressed against the dignity of the court —”

The Second Judge said, “No, you haven’t, madam.”

Lady Would-be continued, “— and been exorbitant and immoderate in my speech.”

The Second Judge said, “You haven’t, lady.”

The Fourth Judge said, “This evidence is strong.”

Lady Would-be said, “Surely, I had no intention of scandalizing your honors, or my sex.”

The Second Judge said, “We believe you.”

Lady Would-be said, “Surely, you may believe it.”

The Second Judge said, “Madam, we do.”

Lady Would-be said, “Indeed, you may; my breeding is not so coarse —”

The First Judge said, “We know it.”

Lady Would-be continued, “— as to offend with pertinacy —”

She was correct: She was not currently bringing up anything in court that was pertinent to the case.

The Third Judge said, “Lady —”

Lady Would-be continued, “— such a court! No, surely.”

The First Judge said, “We well think it.”

Lady Would-be continued, “You may think it.”

The First Judge said, “Let her conquer us and have the last word.”

He then asked Bonario, “What witnesses have you to make good your report?”

Bonario replied, “Our consciences.”

Celia added, “And Heaven, which never fails the innocent.”

The Fourth Judge said, “These are no testimonies.”

Bonario said, “Not in your courts, where a greater number of, and louder, witnesses overcome.”

The Fourth Judge said, “Now you grow insolent.”

The officers who had gone after Volpone now returned, carrying Volpone on a couch. Volpone was acting as if he were very ill and utterly without the strength needed to engage in sex.

Voltore said, “Here comes the testimony that will convict and put to utter dumbness the bold tongues of Bonario and Celia.”

He pointed to Volpone and said sarcastically, “See here, grave fathers, here’s the ravisher, the rapist, the rider on other men’s wives, the great impostor, the grand and horny voluptuary!

“Don’t you think these limbs engage in sex? Don’t you think these eyes covet a concubine? Please look at these hands — aren’t they fit to stroke a lady’s breasts?”

“Or perhaps he is faking his illness!”

“So he is,” Bonario said.

“Would you have him tortured?” Voltore asked.

“I would have him tested,” Bonario said.

Voltore said, “Best test him then with spikes, or burning irons. Put him to the strappado.”

The strappado is a form of torture in which the victim’s hands are tied behind his or her back with a rope and then the victim is lifted high in the air. To increase the pain, weights can be tied to the victim’s feet, or the victim can be raised and dropped partway, coming to a sudden stop. In this torture, the victim suffers dislocated shoulders.

Voltore sarcastically continued, “I have heard that the rack has cured the gout.”

The rack is a form of torture in which ropes are tied to the victim’s hands and other ropes are tied to the victim’s feet, and the ropes are used to stretch the victim until their limbs are dislocated.

Being threatened with the rack is enough to make even a person suffering from gout try to run away.

Voltore sarcastically continued, “Indeed, put Volpone on the rack, and help rid him of a malady; be courteous.

“I say, before these honored Fathers, that Volpone is so ill that he shall still have as many diseases left as Celia has Biblically known adulterers, or as you, Bonario, have Biblically known strumpets.”

He paused and then said to the Judges, “Oh, my just hearers, if these deeds, acts of this bold and most outrageous kind, may be done with impunity, can even one citizen escape losing his or her life and reputation to anyone who dares to

slander him or her? Which of you are safe, my honored Fathers?

“I would ask, with the permission of your grave Fatherhoods, if their plot has any appearance of or resemblance to truth? With your permission, let me ask if, to the dullest nostril here, their plot does not smell like rank and most abhorred slander?”

“I beg your care of this good gentleman, Volpone, whose life is much endangered by their lies, and as for them, I will conclude with this: Vicious persons, when they’re hot and fleshed in — initiated in and eager for more — impious acts, their constancy abounds.

“Damned deeds are done with greatest confidence and boldness.”

The First Judge said, “Take Bonario and Celia into custody, and separate them.”

The Second Judge said, “It is a pity that two such monsters should live.”

The First Judge said, “Let the old gentleman, Volpone, be returned to his home with care.”

Some officers of the law carried Volpone away on his couch.

The First Judge added, “I’m sorry our credulity — our believing Bonario and Celia at first — has wronged him.”

The Fourth Judge added, “Bonario and Celia are two creatures! They are thoroughly evil!”

The Third Judge said, “I feel as though I have an earthquake inside me.”

The Second Judge added, “Their shame, even in their cradles, fled their faces. Even from infancy, Bonario and Celia have been shameless.”

The Fourth Judge said to Voltore, “You have done a worthy service to the state, sir, by revealing their crimes.”

The First Judge said, “You shall hear, before night, what punishment the court decrees upon them.”

Voltore replied, “We thank your Fatherhoods.”

The Judges, Notary, and officers of the law exited with Bonario and Celia.

Voltore asked Mosca, “How do you like the result of the trial?”

“It is splendid,” Mosca replied. “I’d have your tongue, sir, tipped with gold for this. I’d have you be the heir to the whole city. I’d have the earth lack men before you lack a living: They’re bound to erect your statue in St. Mark’s.”

He then said, “Signior Corvino, I want you to go and show yourself in public, so people know that you have conquered in this trial.”

“Yes,” Corvino replied.

Mosca and Corvino began to talk quietly together.

Mosca said, “It was much better that you should profess yourself a cuckold in public like this than that the other thing should have been proved.”

The other thing was Corvino’s attempt to prostitute his wife, Celia.

Corvino replied, “I considered that. Now it is her fault.”

“It could have been yours,” Mosca said.

“True,” Corvino said, “but I still fear this lawyer: Voltore.”

He still regarded Voltore as a rival who could inherit Volpone’s wealth.



“Indeed, you need not fear him,” Mosca said. “I dare to ease you of that fear.”

“I trust you, Mosca,” Corvino said.

Mosca replied, “You can trust me as you trust your own soul, sir.”

Corvino’s soul was rotten.

Corvino exited.

Corbaccio said, “Mosca!”

Mosca replied, “Now for your business, sir.”

“What?” the hard-of-hearing Corbaccio asked. “Do you have business?”

“Yes, yours, sir,” Mosca replied.

“Oh, none else?”

“None else, not I,” Mosca said. “I have only your business.”

“Be careful, then,” Corbaccio said.

Voltore and Lady Would-be were listening. Because Corbaccio was hard of hearing, Mosca was speaking loudly.

“You can sleep with both your eyes shut,” Mosca said.

“Don’t worry about anything.”

“Dispatch my business,” Corbaccio said.

He meant this: Get Volpone to make me his heir.

“Instantly,” Mosca said. “Right away.”

Corbaccio said, “And look that everything, whatever it is, is put in the inventory of his goods: jewels, plate, moneys, household stuff, bedding, curtains.”

Mosca said, “Curtain-rings, sir.”

The sarcasm went over Corbaccio's head.

Mosca added, "The advocate's fee must be deducted from the wealth you will gain."

"I'll pay him now," Corbaccio said. "You'll be too prodigal and generous."

Mosca said. "Sir, I must give Voltore his fee as advocate."

Corbaccio asked, "Two chequins is enough?"

"No, give him six chequins, sir," Mosca said.

"It is too much."

"He talked a long time. You must consider that, sir."

Corbaccio said, "Well, there's three," handing it over.

"I'll give it to him," Mosca said.

"Do so, and here's something for you."

Corbaccio handed Mosca a small coin.

Corbaccio exited.

Mosca said sarcastically, "Bountiful bones! What horrid and strange offence did he commit against nature in his youth to give him this old age?"

People who commit some horribly evil deed during their youth may be punished with suffering in their old age.

Mosca said to Voltore, who had heard everything, "You see, sir, how I work to help you accomplish your goals."

He gave Voltore the three chequins and added, "Take no notice of the smallness of this fee. It's not worth worrying about."

Voltore, whose eyes were on Volpone's wealth and whose mind was on making all of that wealth his, said, "I won't. I'll leave you now."

Mosca replied, "Good advocate!"

Voltore exited.

Mosca thought, *All is yours, the devil and all.*

This meant, *You think that everything is yours, including the devil and everything else.*

Mosca then said to Lady Would-be, "Madam, I'll escort you to your home."

"No, I'll go see your patron, Volpone," she replied.

"That you shall not," Mosca said, "and I'll tell you why. My intention is to urge my patron to rewrite his will and make you his heir because of the zeal you showed as you helped him with your testimony today. Before your testimony, you were only third or fourth in line to inherit his wealth, but you shall now be the first in line. But if you were present as I tried to persuade Volpone to rewrite his will, it would appear as if you were begging for his money. Therefore —"

Lady Would-be interrupted, "You shall sway me. I will go home."

Possibly, this is the exact time Lady Would-be became a legacy-hunter.

## ACT 5 (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

### — 5.1 —

Volpone was alone in his room.

He said to himself, “Well, I am here, and all this turmoil is in the past. I never disliked my disguise as a seriously ill person until this moment that just ended. Here in private my disguise is good, but out in public ...

“Let me *cave* — take care — as I catch my breath.”

*Cave* is Latin for “be wary” and “be on guard.”

Volpone needed to be on his guard in case anyone — such as Lady Would-be — visited and caught him out of bed.

He continued, “By God, my left leg began to have the cramp, and I feared immediately that some power had struck me with a dead palsy.”

A “dead palsy” is serious paralysis such as a stroke can cause.

He continued, “Well! I must be merry and shake it off. Too many of these fears would give me some villainous disease if they would come fast and thick upon me. I’ll stop them. Give me a bowl of lusty wine to frighten away this sense of dread from my heart.”

He poured himself some wine and drank deeply.

“Ah! The sense of dread is almost gone already; I shall conquer it completely. Any trick, now, of rare ingenious knavery that would possess me with a violent laughter, would make me a man again.”

He drank deeply again.

“Ah! This heat is life; it is blood by this time.”

This society believed that wine turned to blood after it was consumed. As blood, it conveyed heat and courage to the person who had consumed the wine.

— 5.2 —

Mosca entered the room.

“Mosca!” Volpone greeted him.

“How are you, sir?” Mosca asked.

He then asked rhetorically, “Does the day look clear again? Have we recovered from what could have been a disaster, and have we gotten off the path of error and gotten back to our correct path so that we can see our path before us? Is our path free from obstruction once more?”

He was mocking religious language about leaving the path of moral error and getting back on the path of moral behavior. Volpone and he were now free to continue their con games.

Volpone said, “Exquisite Mosca!”

Mosca was an exquisitely ingenious scoundrel.

“Was it not carried off learnedly?” Mosca asked.

“Yes, and stoutly and bravely,” Volpone said. “Good wits are greatest in extreme crises.”

“It would be a folly beyond thought to trust any grand act to a cowardly spirit,” Mosca said. “You are not delighted with it enough, I think?”

Mosca knew Volpone well. Volpone was one to up the ante, to push things to an extreme that could break them. Mosca was usually satisfied with enough.

Volpone replied, "Oh, I was delighted more than if I had enjoyed the wench: Celia. The pleasure of sexually enjoying all womankind is not like the greater pleasure I got from deceiving the court."

"Why, now you're talking, sir," Mosca said. "That's exactly right."

He hesitated and then said, "We must here be fixed and stop while we're ahead. Here we must rest. This is our masterpiece: We cannot think to go beyond this."

"True," Volpone said, but soon he would seek to go beyond this. "You have played your prize part, my precious Mosca."

"Yes, sir," Mosca said, "To fool the court —"

Volpone interrupted, "And quite divert the torrent of the law upon the innocent."

"Yes," Mosca said, "and to make so splendid a music out of discords." The discords were the rival legacy-hunters who had come together and made splendid music to fool the court into finding innocent people guilty.

"Right," Volpone said. "That still to me is the strangest wonder: how you managed to do it! That these people, being so divided among themselves and not trusting each other, should not smell a rat either in me or in you, or doubt and fear the other members of their own side."

"True, they will not see it," Mosca said. "Too much light blinds them, I think. They ignore what should be obvious. Each of them is so possessed and stuffed with his own hopes of inheriting your money that anything to the contrary, no matter how true or apparent or palpable, they will resist it —"

Volpone sarcastically said, "— like a temptation of the devil."

Many people will strenuously resist a temptation of the devil, but the legacy-hunters were not such people. One temptation of the devil was the hope of inheriting Volpone's wealth.

"Right, sir," Mosca said. "Merchants may talk of trade, and your great signiors may talk of land that yields well, but if Italy has any glebe — plot of land — more fruitful than these fellows, I am deceived."

Volpone had gotten much wealth from the legacy-hunters.

Mosca asked, "Didn't your advocate, Voltore, perform splendidly?"

"Oh, he did," Volpone said.

He parodied Voltore's performance in the courtroom: "My most honored Fathers, my grave Fathers, under correction of your Fatherhoods, what face of truth is here? If these strange deeds may pass, most honored Fathers."

He added, "It took a lot of effort to keep from laughing."

Mosca said, "It seemed to me that you sweat, sir."

Volpone said, "True, I did a little."

Volpone had been afraid.

"Confess, sir," Mosca said. "Weren't you daunted?"

"Truly, I was a little in a mist — a little dazed — but I was not dejected and downcast. I was always my own self."

"I believe it, sir," Mosca said. "Now, so truth help me, I must necessarily say this, sir, and out of conscience for your advocate, Voltore. He has taken pains, truly, sir, and has very richly deserved, in my poor judgment — I speak it with goodwill and not to contradict you, sir — to be well cheated."

Mosca believed that Voltore deserved to be well cheated because he had lied in the courtroom. Applying the same logic to others, we have to conclude that Corbaccio, Corvino, Lady Would-be, Volpone, and Mosca also deserved to be well cheated.

“True,” Volpone said, “I think so, too, judging by what I heard him say in the latter end of the trial.”

Volpone had not been present for the first part of the trial.

“Oh, but what he said before you arrived, sir,” Mosca said, “had you heard him first make the chief points of his argument and then aggravate and exaggerate the injuries he claimed Bonario and Celia had done, and then make his vehement figures — gestures and lawyerly figures of speech — I kept expecting him to change his shirt because of his sweating.”

He added sarcastically, “And to think that he did this out of pure love, with no hope of gain.”

“You are right,” Volpone said. “He deserves to be cheated. I cannot repay him, Mosca, as I would like to, not yet; but for your sake, at your entreaty, I will begin, even now — to vex them all, this very instant.”

Mosca had entreated him to cheat Voltore, and now Volpone was intending to vex all the legacy-hunters.

“Good sir —” Mosca said, wondering what Volpone was planning.

Volpone interrupted, “Call Nano the Dwarf and Castrone the Eunuch to come here.”

Mosca called, “Castrone! Nano!”

Nano the dwarf and Castrone the eunuch entered the room.

“Here we are,” Nano the dwarf said.



Volpone asked, "Shall we have a jig now?"

A jig or dance was often performed after a play was finished. Volpone and Mosca had just finished performing their parts in the trial. However, Volpone had in mind a con rather than a dance.

"Whatever you please, sir," Mosca said, wondering what Volpone was up to.

Volpone said to Nano the dwarf and Castrone the eunuch, "Go immediately into the streets, you two, and say that I am dead. Do it in character — do it seriously, do you hear? Say that I have died because of the grief caused me by being recently slandered as a would-be rapist."

Nano the dwarf and Castrone the eunuch exited.

"What do you have in mind, sir?" Mosca asked.

Volpone said, "My vulture, crow, and raven shall immediately come flying hither, on hearing the news, to peck for carrion. So will my she-wolf, and all will be greedy and full of expectation of inheriting my wealth."

The she-wolf was Lady Would-be, who usually was parrot-like.

"And then to have it ravished from their mouths!" Mosca said.

"That is true," Volpone said.

He elaborated on his plan: "I will have you put on more-respectable clothing, and you shall act as if you were my heir. You shall show them a will. Open that chest, and take out one of those wills that have the name of my beneficiary blank. I'll immediately write in your name."

Mosca gave him the will and said, "This is a splendid plot, sir."

“Yes,” Volpone said. “When they just stand, open-mouthed, and find themselves deluded —”

“Yes,” Mosca said.

“And you will treat them scurvily!” Volpone said. “Hurry. Put on better clothing, the clothing of an upper-class man!”

Mosca put on a fine shirt and asked, “But what about, sir, if they ask after the body?”

“Say that it was beginning to rot.”

“I’ll say it stank, sir,” Mosca said, “and I was obliged to have it coffined up immediately, and sent away.”

“Say anything that you want,” Volpone said. “Wait, here’s my will. Get yourself a cap, and have an account book, pen and ink, and papers in front of you. Sit as if you were taking an inventory of my property. I’ll get up behind the curtain, on a stool, and listen. Occasionally, I’ll peep over the curtain to see how they look, and with what degrees their blood leaves their faces. Oh, it will give me a rare meal of laughter!”

Mosca put on a cap, and put the required items on a table in front of him.

He said, “Your advocate, Voltore, will turn stark dull — completely insensible — upon hearing that I am your heir.”

“It will take off his oratory’s sharpness,” Volpone said.

Mosca added, “But your *clarissimo*, Corbaccio, old round-back, he will crump — curl up — like a wood louse when it is touched.”

*A clarissimo* is a grandee of Venice.

Corbaccio, an old man, was stooped-over.

“And what about Corvino?” Volpone asked.

“Oh, sir, look for him tomorrow morning to run around in the streets with a rope and dagger, thinking about committing suicide or violence,” Mosca said. “When he learns that I am your heir, he must run mad. Lady Would-be, too, who came into the court to bear false witness for your worship —”

“Yes, and kissed me in front of the Fathers, although all my face flowed with oils,” Volpone said.

“And with sweat, sir,” Mosca said, saying the same thing that Volpone had said but using the less genteel term.

Mosca added, “Why, your gold is such medicine that it dries up all those offensive smells. It transforms people who are the most deformed, and it restores them and makes them lovely, as if it were the strange poetical girdle of Venus that makes anyone who wears it irresistible. Jove himself — the King of the gods — could not invent for himself clothing more cunning to pass by the guards of Acrisius.”

Jove, aka Jupiter, had in fact worn gold when he visited Danaë, the daughter of Acrisius. He had appeared to her in a shower of gold after Acrisius had locked her in a tower after hearing a prophecy that she would give birth to a son who would kill him. Jove slept with Danaë, who gave birth to Perseus, who grew up and killed Acrisius.

Mosca continued, “Gold is the thing that gives all the world her grace, her youth, her beauty.”

“I think she loves me,” Volpone said, referring to gold.

“Who? The Lady Would-be, sir?” Mosca asked.

Realizing that Volpone was referring to gold, and knowing that Volpone would think he was referring to Lady Would-be, Mosca said, “She’s jealous of you.”

In addition to the meaning we know best, the word “jealous” had two meanings that are now obsolete: 1) devoted, and 2) doubtful and mistrustful.

Mosca meant that gold, like Lady Fortune, was a fickle mistress. Already Mosca was planning to make use of the will that Voltore had given to him.

“Do you think so?” Volpone said. “Do you think Lady Would-be is jealous of me?”

Knocking sounded at the door.

“Listen,” Mosca said. “Someone is here already.”

“Look and see who it is,” Volpone ordered.

Mosca looked out a window and said, “It is the vulture: Voltore. He has the quickest scent.”

Vultures are known for their ability to quickly sniff out dead bodies.

“I’ll go to my place behind the curtain,” Volpone said. “You be ready to act as though I am dead and you are my heir.”

Volpone went behind the curtain.

Mosca said, “I am ready.”

Volpone said, “Mosca, play the skilled torturer now. Torture them splendidly.”

### — 5.3 —

Voltore entered the room and asked, “How are you now, my Mosca?”

Mosca sat at the desk, writing as he inventoried Volpone’s wealth. He said, “Turkish carpets, nine —”

Voltore said with approval, “Taking an inventory! That is good.”

Mosca said, “Two suits of bedding, tissue —”

Voltore interrupted, “Where’s the will? Let me read that while you take inventory.”

Some servants entered, carrying Corbaccio in a chair.

Corbaccio said, “Set me down, and all of you go home.”

The servants exited.

Voltore said, “Has he, Corbaccio, come now to trouble us!”

Mosca said, “— of cloth of gold, two more —”

Tissue of cloth of gold is high-quality cloth that has strands of gold and silver woven into it.

Corbaccio asked, “Is it done, Mosca?”

He was asking if Volpone’s will had been changed to name him as heir.

Mosca said, “Of separate velvet hangings, eight —”

Voltore said, “I like the care Mosca is taking as he makes the inventory.”

Corbaccio asked, “Didn’t you hear me?”

Corvino entered the room and said, “Ha! Has the hour of Volpone’s death come, Mosca?”

Volpone looked over the curtain and said, “Yes, now they muster.”

Corvino asked, “What are the advocate Voltore and old Corbaccio doing here?”

Corbaccio asked, “What are Voltore and Corvino doing here?”

Lady Would-be entered the room and said, “Mosca! Is Volpone’s thread spun?”

She was referring to the Three Fates. Clotho spun the thread of a human’s life, Lachesis measured it, and Atropos cut the thread at the time of the human’s death.

Mosca said, “Eight chests of linen —”

Volpone looked over the curtain and said, “Oh, my fine Dame Would-be, too!”

Corvino said, “Mosca, give me the will so that I may show it to these people and get rid of them.”

Mosca said, “Six chests of linen with a diamond-shaped pattern, four of damask.”

He then picked up the will that named him as heir, and gave it to Corvino carelessly over his shoulder, saying, “There.”

Corbaccio asked, “Is that the will?”

Mosca said, “Down-beds, and bolsters —”

A bolster is a long pillow placed under other pillows as support.

Volpone looked over the curtain and said, “Splendid! Continue to be busy. Now the legacy-hunters begin to flutter! They never think of me. Look! See! See! See! How their swift eyes run over the long deed, to the name, and to the legacies, seeking what is bequeathed to them there —”

Mosca said, “Ten sets of wall hangings —”

Volpone looked over the curtain and said, “Hangings, yes, in their garters, Mosca. Now their hopes are at the last gasp.”

An insult of the time was, “Go hang yourself in your own garters!”

Voltore said, “Mosca is the heir?”

The hard-of-hearing Corbaccio asked, “What’s that?”

Volpone looked over the curtain and said, “My advocate, Voltore, is struck dumb. Look at my merchant, Corvino; he has heard of some strange storm, a ship of his has been lost, and he faints. My lady will swoon. Old glass-eyes, aka Corbaccio with his eyeglasses, has not reached his despair yet.”

Corbaccio took the will, saying, “All these others are out of hope. I am surely the man who has been named Volpone’s heir.”

Corvino asked, “But, Mosca —”

Still writing the inventory, Mosca said, “Two cabinets.”

Corvino asked, “Is this in earnest? Is this for real?”

Mosca said, “One made of ebony —”

Corvino asked, “Or are you only deluding me?”

Mosca said, “The other, made of mother of pearl.”

He looked at Corvino and said, “I am very busy. Indeed, this is a fortune that has been thrown upon me —”

He wrote as he said, “Item, one salt cellar made out of agate —”

He looked at Corvino and said, “— a fortune that has been thrown upon me without my seeking it.”

This is something that would especially hurt the legacy-hunters. They had sought the legacy and not gotten it; Mosca had not sought the legacy and had gotten it.

Lady Would-be asked, “Do you hear me, sir?”

Mosca said, “A perfumed box —”

He said to Lady Would-be, “Please stop bothering me. You see I’m busy —”

He continued, “— made of an onyx —”

Lady Would-be said, “What!”

Mosca said to all the legacy-hunters, “Tomorrow or the next day, I shall be at leisure to talk with you all.”

Corvino asked, “Is this the end result of my great expectations?”

Lady Would-be said to Mosca, “Sir, I must have a fairer answer.”

“Madam!” Mosca said. “Indeed, and you shall. Please fairly leave my house.”

She looked angry.

He added, “No, raise no tempest with your looks, but listen to me. Remember what your ladyship offered me to put you in Volpone’s will as an heir.”

Mosca was saying obliquely that she had offered him sex. Apparently, this had happened after the trial.

He added, “Go ahead, think on it. And think on what you said even the best madams did to provide for themselves, and why shouldn’t you? Enough. Go home, and treat the poor Sir Pol, your knight, well, out of fear I tell some riddles — some secrets. Go and be melancholy.”

Lady Would-be exited.

Volpone looked over the curtain and said, “Oh, my fine devil!”



Corvino said, “Mosca, I would like a word with you.”

“Lord!” Mosca said. “Won’t you take your leave from here yet? I think, of all the legacy-hunters here, you should have been the example for the others and left first. Why should you stay here? What are you thinking? What do you think you will get? Listen to me. Don’t you know that I know you are an ass, and that you would most eagerly have been a willing cuckold, if fortune would have allowed you to be? Don’t you know that I know you are declared to be a cuckold, and you are OK with it?”

He picked up various jewels as he said, “This pearl, you’ll say, was yours? That is correct. This diamond, you’ll say, was yours? I’ll not deny it, but I will say ‘Thank you.’ Much here else, you’ll say, was yours? It may be so. Why, think that these good deeds — your gifts — may help to hide your bad deeds.”

He added, “I’ll not betray you. Although you are extraordinary, and you are a cuckold only in title but not in deed, since Celia never committed adultery, it is enough. Go home. Be melancholy, too, or be insane.”

Corvino exited.

Volpone looked over the curtain and said, “Splendid Mosca! How his villainy becomes him!”

Voltore said to himself, “Certainly Mosca is deluding all these other legacy-hunters for me.”

Looking at the will, the eyeglasses-wearing Corbaccio said, “Mosca is the heir!”

Volpone looked over the curtain and said, “Oh, his four eyes have found it.”

Corbaccio said, “I am tricked, cheated, by a parasite slave.”

He said to Mosca, "Harlot, you have gulled me."

At this time, the word "harlot" meant "rascal" when applied to a man.

"Yes, sir," Mosca said. "I have cheated you. Stop your mouth, or I shall pull out the only tooth that is left.

"Aren't you he, that filthy covetous wretch, with the three legs — one of them a cane — who here, in hope of prey, have, any time these past three years, snuffed about, with your most groveling nose, and would have hired me to poison my patron, sir?"

"Aren't you the man who has today in court professed the disinheriting of your son?"

"Aren't you the man who has today in court perjured yourself?"

"Go home, and die, and stink. If you but croak a syllable, all comes out. Go away, and call your porters to carry you home!"

Corbaccio exited.

Mosca said, "Go. Go and stink."

Volpone looked over the curtain and said, "Excellent varlet!"

Voltore said, "Now, my faithful Mosca, I find your loyalty \_\_\_"

"Sir!" Mosca said.

"— to be sincere," Voltore finished.

Mosca wrote on the inventory and said, "A table made of porphyry."

He then said to Voltore, “I marvel that you’ll be thus troublesome to me.”

Volpone said, “Stop your act now. The others are gone. We are alone.”

“Why? Who are you?” Mosca said. “What! Who sent for you?”

He began to imitate Voltore: “Oh, I beg your mercy, reverend sir! In good faith, I am grieved for you that any good luck of mine should thus defeat your — I must necessarily say — most deserving travails.”

Voltore had worked very hard and suffered travails in his attempts to inherit Volpone’s wealth.

Mosca continued, “But I protest, sir, Volpone’s fortune was cast upon me, and I could almost wish to be without it except that the will of the dead must be observed.

“Indeed, my joy is that you don’t need it. You have a gift, sir — thank your education — that will never let you go without while there are men and malice to breed lawsuits. I wish I had only half the means of making a living like yours. For that, I would give all my fortune, sir!

“If I should have any lawsuits — but I hope, since things are so easy and direct and the will is so clear, I shall not — I will make bold with your obstreperous, aka noisy, aid. Please understand, sir, that I will pay your usual fee, sir.

“In the meantime, I know that you who know so much law will also have the conscience not to be covetous of what is mine.

“Good sir, I thank you for my plate — the gold plate you gave to Volpone that is now mine. It will help to set up in life a young man — me.

“Indeed, you look as if you were constipated. You had best go home and take a laxative, sir.”

Voltore exited.

Volpone came out from behind the curtain and said, “Tell him to eat a lot of lettuce; I hear it acts as a laxative.

“My witty mischief, let me embrace you. Oh, I wish that I could now transform you to a Venus!”

To Volpone, cheating people was an aphrodisiac; it made him horny.

He added, “Mosca, go, immediately get my outdoors clothing of a *clarissimo* — a Venetian gentleman. Now that everyone thinks that you are rich, you can wear it. Put it on, and walk on the public streets. Be seen by the legacy-hunters, and torment them some more. We must pursue, as well as plot. Who would have lost this feast? Who would have missed out on all this fun?”

“I fear doing that will lose them,” Mosca said.

He feared that any more mockery would kill the geese that had been laying golden eggs — the legacy-hunters would never again give gifts.

“Oh, my recovery shall recover all,” Volpone said optimistically. “They will find that I am still alive, and they will be as greedy as ever for my wealth.

“I wish that I could now think of some disguise that I could wear and meet them and ask them questions. How I would vex them always at every turn!”

“Sir, I can fit you,” Mosca said. “I can give you what you need.”

He was ambiguous when he said “what you need.” Volpone needed a disguise — and a comeuppance.

“Can you?” Volpone asked.

“Yes,” Mosca said. “I know one of the Commandatori, one of the police officers, sir, a man who greatly resembles you. I will immediately make him drunk and bring you his uniform.”

Volpone, who had been drinking, said, “This will be a splendid disguise, and one that is worthy of your brain! Oh, I will be a sharp pain to the legacy-hunters.”

“Sir, while in disguise, you must look for curses — the legacy-hunters will definitely curse you.”

Volpone said, “They will curse me until they burst. The fox always fares best when he is cursed.”

That is true. When the fox escapes the hunters, they curse it.

— 5.4 —

Outside Sir Politic Would-be’s house, Peregrine, who was in disguise, and three merchants talked.

Peregrine asked, “Am I well enough disguised?”

The First Merchant said, “I promise that you are.”

“All my ambition is only to frighten him,” Peregrine said. “That is the extent of my goal.”

The Second Merchant said, “If you could ship him away, it would be excellent.”

The Third Merchant said, “To Zant, or to Aleppo?”

Zant was a Greek island under the control of Venice, and Aleppo was a Syrian city. The merchants were talking about kidnapping Sir Politic Would-be and sending him far, far away.

“Yes, we could do that,” Peregrine said, “and then he would have his adventures put in the *Book of Voyages* and his gulled story registered for the truth.”

He was against kidnapping Sir Politic Would-be, although they could if they wanted. If they were to kidnap Sir Politic Would-be and ship him away, he would make up a fantastic tale — a tale to fool other people by making his part in it much more heroic than the reality — and it would appear in popular travel books of extraordinary tales. One such travel book was Richard Hakluyt’s three-volume *The Principal Navigations, Voiages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*.

Peregrine said, “Well, gentlemen, when I have been inside for a while, and you think that Sir Politic Would-be and I are warm in our conversation, know your war-like approaches. Show up at the right time.”

The First Merchant said, “Trust it to our care. We will do it right.”

The merchants hid themselves.

Peregrine knocked, and a waiting-woman arrived.

He said, “May God save you, fair lady! Is Sir Pol inside?”

“I do not know, sir,” the waiting-woman replied.

“Please say to him that I am a merchant, on serious business, and I want to speak with him.”

“I will see, sir.”

She allowed him to go inside into a waiting room.

“Thank you.”

The waiting-woman exited.

Peregrine said to himself, "I see the servants of the household are all female here."

He had recently referred to Sir Pol as "Sir Bawd." He thought that Sir Pol's house was a brothel.

The waiting-woman returned and said, "He says, sir, that he has weighty affairs of state that now require his whole attention. At some other time you may possess his time."

Peregrine said, "Please go to him again and say that if those weighty affairs of state require his whole attention, these weighty affairs of state that I will talk to him about will forcibly compel him to pay attention. Those are the kinds of weighty affairs of state that I am bringing him tidings of."

The waiting-woman exited.

Peregrine said to himself, "What might be his grave affair of state now! How to make Bolognian sausages here in Venice, leaving out one of the ingredients in order to reduce the cost of making them?"

The waiting-woman returned and said, "Sir, he says that he knows by your word 'tidings' that you are no statesman, and therefore he wills you to wait."

Sir Politic Would-be believed that a statesman would use the word "intelligence" instead of "tidings."

The waiting-woman's words about willing Peregrine to wait were not clear. Peregrine thought that Sir Pol regarded him as being no statesman and therefore of no importance, and so Sir Pol was telling him to wait until Sir Pol deigned to meet him.

An angry Peregrine said, "Sweetheart, please return to him. I have not read as many proclamations and studied them for words to use, as he has done, but —"

He saw Sir Politic Would-be coming and said, “But — here he deigns to come.”

The waiting-woman’s words about willing Peregrine to wait really meant that since Peregrine was no statesman he was not dangerous to Sir Politic Would-be and so Sir Politic Would-be in fact would be out quickly to meet him. Sir Politic believed, or pretended to believe, that spies were watching him.

The waiting-woman exited.

Sir Politic Would-be said to the disguised Peregrine, “Sir, I must crave your courteous pardon. There has chanced today an unkind disaster between my lady and me, and I was penning my apology, to give her satisfaction, just as you came now.”

Sir Politic Would-be’s “weighty affairs of state” had been writing a letter of apology to his wife.

The disguised Peregrine said, “Sir, I am grieved that I bring you a worse disaster. The gentleman you met at the port today who told you that he was newly arrived —”

He was referring to himself.

Sir Politic Would-be asked, “Yes, was he a fugitive prostitute?”

He still believed that Peregrine had been a female prostitute dressed in men’s clothing.

“No, sir,” Peregrine said. “He was a spy set on you, and he related to the Venetian Senate that you professed to him to have a plot to sell the State of Venice to the Turks.”

“Oh!” Sir Politic Would-be said.

That crime was punishable by torture and death.



The disguised Peregrine said, “For which crime, warrants have been signed by this time to arrest you, and to search your study for papers —”

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Alas, sir, I have none, except notes drawn out of play-books —”

Many of his political ideas came out of books of plays.

“All the better to convict you, sir,” the disguised Peregrine said.

In fact, political authorities read and watched plays to ascertain if they were guilty of sedition. Political authorities sometimes arrested and tortured or threatened to torture playwrights.

Sir Politic Would-be continued, “— and some essays.”

Ben Jonson disliked many essays because he believed that the authors made too great use of quotations, thus making the essay’s information second-hand. Since Sir Politic Would-be got some of his political ideas from essays, any of that information he would impart would be third-hand.

Sir Politic Would-be asked, “What shall I do?”

The disguised Peregrine said, “Sir, it would be best to hide yourself in a chest for holding sugar. Or, if you could lie curled up, a frail would be splendid. In either case, I could send you onboard a ship.”

A frail is a rush basket used to ship figs and raisins.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Sir, I just talked about the plot merely for the sake of conversation.”

Knocking sounded at the door.

The disguised Peregrine said, “Listen! They are here!”

“I am a wretch! A wretch!” Sir Politic Would-be said.

“What will you do, sir?” the disguised Peregrine said. “Haven’t you a cask or barrel to leap into? They’ll torture you on the rack; you must be quick to avoid being arrested.”

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Sir, I have a stratagem —”

The Third Merchant yelled from outside, “Sir Politic Would-be!”

The Second Merchant yelled from outside, “Where is he?”

Sir Politic Would-be continued, “— that I have thought up before this time in case it was needed.”

“What is it?” the disguised Peregrine asked.

“I shall never endure the torture,” Sir Politic Would-be said to himself.

He then said to the disguised Peregrine, “Indeed, it is, sir, a tortoise shell that is fit for this emergency. Please, sir, help me.”

He lifted a cover to reveal the shell of a large sea turtle and said, “Here I’ve got a place, sir, to put my legs. Please lay the shell on me, sir.”

He lay down while the disguised Peregrine placed the shell on top of him.

Sir Politic Would-be said, “With this cap, and my black gloves, I’ll lie, sir, like a tortoise, until they are gone.”

The disguised Peregrine thought, *And you call this a stratagem?*

“It’s my own idea,” Sir Politic Would-be said. “Good sir, tell my wife’s waiting-women to burn my papers.”

The disguised Peregrine exited.

The three merchants now rushed into the room.

The First Merchant asked, "Where has he hidden?"

The Third Merchant said, "We must and surely will find him."

The Second Merchant asked, "Which is his study?"

The disguised Peregrine returned.

The First Merchant asked, "Who are you, sir?"

The disguised Peregrine said, "I am a merchant who came here to look at this tortoise."

The Third Merchant said, "What!"

The First Merchant said, "By St. Mark, what beast is this!"

The disguised Peregrine said, "It is a fish."

The Second Merchant said to the "tortoise," "Come out here!"

The disguised Peregrine said, "You may strike the tortoise, sir, and walk on him. He's strong enough to bear a cart."

The First Merchant said, "What? Strong enough to bear a cart running over him?"

The disguised Peregrine said, "Yes, sir."

The Third Merchant said, "Let's jump on him."

The Second Merchant said, "Can't he move?"

"He creeps, sir," the disguised Peregrine said.

The First Merchant said, "Let's see him creep."

"No, good sir," the disguised Peregrine said. "You will hurt him."

The Second Merchant said, “By God’s heart, I will see him creep, or I will prick his guts.”

The Third Merchant said to the “tortoise,” “Come out here!”

“Please, sir!” the disguised Peregrine said.

He whispered to Sir Politic Would-be, “Creep a little.”

The First Merchant said, “Come forth.”

The “tortoise” moved a little.

The Second Merchant said, “Come farther still.”

“Good sir!” the disguised Peregrine said.

He whispered to Sir Politic Would-be, “Creep.”

The Second Merchant said, “We’ll see his legs.”

The three merchants pulled the shell off Sir Politic Would-be.

The Third Merchant said, “By God’s soul, the tortoise is wearing garters!”

The First Merchant said, “Yes, and gloves!”

The Second Merchant said, “Is this your fearful tortoise!”

The tortoise at one time had made its prey fearful, but now the “tortoise” was full of fear.

Peregrine removed his disguise and said, “Now, Sir Pol, we are even. I shall be prepared for your next project. I am sorry for the funeral — on a burning pier — of your notes, sir.”

Peregrine thought that Sir Politic Would-be had tried to set a trap for him with the help of Lady Would-be. Peregrine was wrong.

The First Merchant said, “This would make a splendid puppet show to be seen in Fleet Street.”

The Second Merchant said, “Yes, in the Term, when the law courts are in session and lots of people are in town.”

The First Merchant said, “Or at Smithfield, when Bartholomew Fair is being held.”

Because the three merchants had a good knowledge of England and were apparently good friends with Peregrine, they may have sailed together on the same ship to Venice and disembarked earlier this day.

The Third Merchant said, “I think this is just a melancholy sight.”

Peregrine said, “Farewell, most politic tortoise!”

Peregrine and the three merchants exited.

Sir Politic Would-be said to the waiting-woman, “Where’s my lady? Does she know about this?”

He thought that she might have known about the trick.

The waiting-woman replied, “I don’t know, sir.”

Sir Politic Would-be said, “Find out.”

The waiting-woman exited.

He lamented, “Oh, I shall be the fable told at all feasts, the freight of the newspapers, the tale of the ship-boys, and which is worst, even the main topic of gossip at the taverns.”

The waiting-woman returned and said, “My lady’s come home. She is very melancholy and says, sir, she will immediately go to sea for her health.”

Sir Politic Would-be said, “And I will go to sea in order to shun this place and climate forever. I will creep with my

house on my back and think it well to shrink my poor head in my politic shell.”

Sir Politic Would-be and his wife would most likely return home to England. Apparently, he had learned something: not to pretend to be a statesman or a spy. A tortoise is a symbol of positive qualities: It does not pretend to be what it is not. Its house, which it carries on its back, is exactly what it needs. No tortoise has a grander or a lesser house than it needs. The tortoise is known for its slow but steady movement, and its ability to steadily move toward a goal often allows it to achieve the goal when faster, flashier, overconfident animals cannot; this is the moral of the Aesop fable “The Tortoise and the Hare.” Whether or not Sir Politic Would-be had come to Venice to gain knowledge, he had gained knowledge.

Erasmus wrote that “the mind fortified with virtue and philosophy fears the assaults of Fortune no more than a tortoise fears flies.” Many characters in this book need to learn this.

— 5.5 —

Just outside Volpone’s house, Volpone and Mosca were talking. Mosca was wearing the clothing of a *clarrissimo*, aka Venetian gentleman. Volpone was wearing the uniform of a police officer.

Volpone asked, “Do I look like the police officer?”

“Oh, sir, you are he,” Mosca said. “No man can tell the difference between you.”

“Good,” Volpone said.

“But what do I look like?” Mosca asked.

“Before Heaven, I say that you look like a brave *clarissimo*. You finely suit that suit of fine clothing! It’s a pity that you weren’t born a *clarissimo*.”

Mosca thought, *If I can hold on to my artificial position of clarissimo, it will go well for me.*

Volpone said, “I’ll go and see first what the news is at the court.”

Mosca said, “Do so.”

Volpone exited.

Alone, Mosca said, “My fox is out of his hole, and before he shall re-enter it, I’ll make him languish in his borrowed disguise until he comes to terms with me.”

He called, “Androgyno, Castrone, Nano!”

The three servants entered and said, “Here!”

Mosca said, “Go and entertain yourselves outside; go and have fun.”

They exited.

Alone, Mosca said, “So, now I have the keys, and I am possessed.”

He meant that he was in possession of the house. Readers may be forgiven if they thought he was possessed by a demon of Hell.

He continued, “Since Volpone wants to be dead before his time, I’ll bury him or gain by him. I am his heir, and so I will continue to be, until he at least shares his wealth with me. To cheat him out of everything he has would be only a well-deserved con: No man would call it a sin. Let the entertainment he gets out of conning others pay for his being conned; this is called the Fox-trap.”

Let's think about this.

According to Mosca, to cheat Corbaccio and Corvino out of everything they have would be only a well-deserved con: No man would call it a sin.

It's not true. By cheating Corbaccio, Volpone is also cheating Bonario, Corbaccio's innocent son. By cheating Corvino, Volpone is also cheating Celia, Corvino's innocent wife.

Even in the case of Mosca's cheating Voltore, cheating him is still a sin and a crime.

— 5.6 —

Corbaccio and Corvino talked on a Venetian street.

Corbaccio said, "They say that the court is set. It is ready to begin."

Corvino said, "We must continue to maintain the tale we told at the first court session, for both our reputations."

He meant that they needed to continue to tell the falsehoods they had earlier told. In Corvino's case, he needed to continue to lie that his wife had cuckolded him.

Corbaccio said, "Why, mine's no tale: My son would there have killed me."

He was telling only part of the truth — or at least part of what he believed to be the truth. When he had made Volpone his heir, his son had not even been suspected of anything evil. Of course, his son had had no intention of murdering him.

"That's true, I had forgotten —" Corvino said.

He thought, *My testimony is a tale — a lie — I am sure.*



He continued, "But as for your will, sir."

"Yes, I'll make a demand upon Mosca for that hereafter, now that his patron, Volpone, is dead."

Mosca still had the will that Corbaccio had made that listed Volpone as his heir.

Volpone, disguised as a police officer, entered the scene. His purpose was to torment the two legacy-hunters with their failure to inherit his wealth.

"Signior Corvino! And Corbaccio!" he called.

He said to Corbaccio, "Sir, much joy to you."

Corvino asked, "Much joy from what?"

"The sudden good that has dropped down upon you," the disguised Volpone answered.

"Where?" Corbaccio asked.

"None knows how, but it came from old Volpone, sir," the disguised Volpone said.

"Go away, arrant knave!" Corbaccio said.

"Don't allow your too much wealth, sir, to make you furious," the disguised Volpone said.

"Go away, you varlet!" Corbaccio said.

"Why, sir?" the disguised Volpone asked.

"Do you mock me?" Corbaccio asked.

"You mock everyone in the entire world, sir," the disguised Volpone said. "Didn't you and Volpone make each other your heir?"

Corbaccio said, "Out, harlot!"

The disguised Volpone said, “Oh, if Corbaccio didn’t inherit Volpone’s wealth, then probably you are the man, Signior Corvino. Indeed, you carry your new wealth well; you haven’t grown insane because of your new riches. I love your spirit: You haven’t swollen up like bread with too much yeast because of your fortune. Some people would swell now like a wine-vat with such an autumn harvest of grapes, which is a metaphor for your new riches. Did he give you everything, sir?”

“Get lost, you rascal!” Corvino said.

“Truly, your wife has shown that she is every inch a woman by committing adultery, but you are well and you need not care because you have a good estate to bear the burden of being a cuckold, sir, and your estate is made much, much better by Volpone’s death — unless Corbaccio has a share.”

“Go away, varlet,” Corbaccio said.

“You will not acknowledge that you are the heir, sir,” the disguised Volpone said. “Why, that is wise. Thus do all gamblers, at all games, mislead other people. No man wants to appear as if he has won.”

Corvino and Corbaccio exited.

Seeing Voltore coming toward him, the disguised Volpone said, “Here comes my vulture, heaving his beak up in the air, and snuffing.”

— 5.7 —

Voltore complained to himself, “Outstripped thus, by a parasite — a man dependent upon another for the necessities of life! A slave who used to run errands, and make bows for crumbs! Well, what I’ll do —”

The disguised Volpone said, “The court waits for your worship. I even rejoice, sir, at your worship’s happiness, and

I rejoice that it fell into so learned hands, which understand the fingering —”

Clever cheaters make clever use of their fingers.

“What do you mean?” Voltore interrupted.

“I mean to be a suitor to your worship, for the small tenement, which needs repairs and is at the end of your long row of houses by the Piscaria, aka the fish market. It was, in the time of Volpone, your predecessor, before he grew diseased, as handsome, pretty, and well patronized a bawdy-house as any was in Venice, with no dispraise intended toward any of them. But it fell into disrepair along with him; his body and that house decayed, together.”

The disguised Volpone was pretending that Voltore had inherited the tenement from Volpone, who may have received income from the bawdy-house before making money from legacy-hunters.

“Come sir, stop your prating,” Voltore said.

“Why, if your worship will just give me your hand in a handshake to acknowledge that I may have the first refusal, I will have finished. That house is a mere toy, aka trifle, to you, sir; it is candle-rents.”

“Candle-rents” are the rents that come from a house that is dilapidated and growing worse. The house is wearing out and soon will bring in no more rent. Similarly, candles give off light, but they consume themselves in the process.

The disguised Volpone continued, “As your learned worship knows —”

Voltore interrupted, “What do I know?”

“Indeed, you know no end of your wealth, sir,” the disguised Volpone said. “May God decrease it!”

He deliberately said “decrease” rather than “increase.” A stereotype of police officers was they made many malapropisms — they misused words.

“Mistaking knave!” Voltore said. “Are you mocking my misfortune?”

“God’s blessing on your heart, sir,” the disguised Volpone said. “I wish it were more!”

The “more” could be God’s blessing on Voltore’s heart or God’s decreasing Voltore’s wealth.

Voltore exited.

The disguised Volpone said, “Now I will go to and mock my first victims — Corbaccio and Corvino — again, at the next corner.”

— 5.8 —

Corbaccio and Corvino stood on another part of the street as Mosca appeared and walked by them.

“Look at him,” Corbaccio said. “He is wearing our clothing — the clothing of a Venetian gentleman! Look at the impudent varlet!”

“I wish that I could shoot my eyes at him like stone cannonballs,” Corvino said.

The disguised Volpone walked over to them and asked, “But is this true, sir, about Mosca the parasite?”

Corbaccio said, “You again! Here to afflict us! Monster!”

“In good faith, sir,” the disguised Volpone said, “I’m heartily grieved that a man with a beard of your grave length should be so overreached. I never could endure that parasite’s hair; I thought that even his nose looked like that of a con man.

There always was something in his look that promised the bane of a *clarissimo*.”

Corbaccio, Corvino, Voltore, and Volpone himself all had the title of *clarissimo*.

Corbaccio began, “Knave —”

The disguised Volpone interrupted, “I still think that you, who are so experienced in the world, a witty merchant, the fine bird, Corvino, who have such moral emblems on your name, should not have sung your shame, and dropped your cheese, to let the fox laugh at your emptiness.”

A moral emblem is an illustration with a printed explanation that points out the moral. Many moral emblems come from animal fables.

Volpone was referring to Aesop’s fable about the Fox, the Cheese, and the Crow. Corvino, whose name means “crow,” had sung about his shame — the shame of being cuckolded — in open court. Now the fox — Volpone — was laughing at Corvino’s emptiness. The crow’s belly was empty in the fable, but Corvino’s head was empty. He lacked intelligence and moral insight.

Corvino said, “Sirrah, you think the privilege of the place, and your red saucy cap, that seems to me nailed to your blockhead with those two chequins, can warrant and officially sanction your abuses.”

They stood on a public street, and in particular a public street just outside the courtroom. No violence would be tolerated there. In addition, Volpone was wearing the uniform of a police officer, which included a cap with two medallions of St. Mark — the medallions resembled the gold coins known as chequins.

He continued, “If you come hither, you shall perceive, sir, that I dare to beat you; approach.”

“There is no haste, sir,” the disguised Volpone said. “I know your valor well, since you dare to publish what you are, sir.”

Volpone did know Corvino’s valor well; Corvino had beaten Volpone when he was disguised as a mountebank; however, Volpone’s “compliment” was actually an insult: Corvino must be a brave man in order to announce publicly in court that he is a cuckold.

Corvino said, “Wait, I want to speak with you.”

“Sir, sir, another time,” the disguised Volpone said.

“No, now,” Corvino insisted.

“Oh lord, sir!” the disguised Volpone said, adding sarcastically, “I would be a wise man if I would stand and face the fury of a distracted cuckold.”

He began to run away just as Mosca returned.

Corbaccio said, “What! Mosca has come again!”

Volpone said as he neared Mosca, “Face them, Mosca! Save me!”

Corbaccio said, “The air’s infected where Mosca breathes.”

Corvino said, “Let’s flee from him.”

Corbaccio and Corvino exited.

Volpone said to Mosca, “Excellent basilisk! Voltore is coming. Turn upon the vulture.”

A basilisk is a mythical serpent that can kill anyone with its look.

Voltore walked over to Mosca and said, “Well, flesh-fly, it is summer with you now.”

A flesh-fly is a fly that lays its eggs in dead bodies. The Italian word *mosca* means “flesh-fly.”

Voltore continued, “Your winter will come on.”

Flies die in the winter in the Northern Hemisphere.

Mosca replied, “Good advocate, please don’t rail, nor threaten out of place like this. You will make a solecism, as madam — Lady Would-be — says.”

A solecism is a breach of propriety.

Mosca continued, “Get yourself another lawyer’s cap; your brain is breaking loose and falling out of the one you are now wearing.”

Voltore said, “Well, sir.”

Mosca exited.

The disguised Volpone asked Voltore, “Do you want me to beat the insolent slave and throw dirt upon his first good clothes?”

Voltore, who knew he was being mocked, looked at the disguised Volpone and said to himself, “This man is doubtless some familiar.”

He meant that the disguised Volpone was a familiar friend of Mosca, or a member of Mosca’s household, or a familiar spirit of a witch.

The disguised Volpone said, “Sir, the court truly is waiting for you. I am mad that a mule that never read Justinian should get up and ride an advocate.”

Lawyers often rode mules to the court. Volpone meant that Mosca, who never had read the codified law that the Roman Emperor Justinian had ordered to be made, had gotten the better of Voltore. It was as if a mule were riding the lawyer, rather than the lawyer riding the mule.

The disguised Volpone continued, “Had you no lawyerly trick to avoid being made a fool, sir, by such a creature? I hope that you are only jesting; he has not done it. It is just a confederacy between you and Mosca so that you can blind the rest to the true fact that you are the heir.”

Voltore said, “You are a strange, officious, troublesome knave! You torment me.”

The disguised Volpone said, “I know ... that it cannot be, sir, that you should be cheated. It is not within the wit of man to do it. You are so wise and so prudent, and it is fit that wealth and wisdom should always go together.”

Voltore exited with the disguised Volpone following and tormenting him.

### — 5.10 —

The Judges, the Notary, Bonario, Celia, Corbaccio, Corvino, police officers, etc. were in the Scrutineo.

The First Judge asked, “Are all the parties here?”

The Notary answered, “All except the advocate Voltore.”

The Second Judge said, “And here he comes.”

Voltore and the disguised Volpone arrived.

The First Judge ordered, “Now bring Bonario and Celia forth to be sentenced.”

Putting on an act of suffering great emotional turmoil, Voltore said, “Oh, my most honored fathers, let your mercy



for once win out over your justice, to forgive — I am distracted, greatly troubled, divided —”

The disguised Volpone thought, *What is he doing?*

What Voltore was doing was trying to get revenge on Mosca, who had been tormenting him.

Voltore said, “Oh, I don’t know who to address myself to first — whether your Fatherhoods, or these innocents, Bonario and Celia —”

*Will he betray himself?* Corvino thought.

Voltore continued, “— whom equally I have abused, out of most covetous motivations —”

Corvino said out loud, “The man is insane!”

Corbaccio asked, “What’s that? What did you say?”

“Voltore is possessed by the devil,” Corvino said.

Voltore continued, “— for which, now struck in conscience, here I prostrate myself at your offended feet, and I ask for pardon.”

He knelt.

The First and Second Judges said, “Arise.”

Voltore stood up.

Celia said, “Oh, Heaven, how just you are!”

Volpone thought, *I am caught in my own noose.*

By pretending to be dead and to have made Mosca his heir, and by having Mosca torment Voltore, he had given Voltore a reason to speak up in court.

Corvino said to Corbaccio, “Be constant, sir. Don’t change the story you told in court earlier. Nothing now can help, except for impudence.”

He wanted Corbaccio and himself to continue to maintain as true the lies they had testified to in court earlier that day.

The First Judge said, “Continue speaking.”

A police officer ordered the people in the courtroom, “Silence!”

Voltore said, “It is not madness in me, reverend fathers, but only conscience, conscience, my good sires, that makes me now tell the truth. That parasite, that knave, has been the instrument of all. He is the party responsible for what is wrong.”

The First Judge said, “Where is that knave? Fetch him.”

Volpone, still disguised as a police officer, said, “I will go and fetch him.”

He exited.

Worried about being found guilty of committing perjury in the earlier trial, Corvino said, “Grave fathers, this man — Voltore — is distracted and out of his wits. He confessed it just now. For, hoping to be the heir of old Volpone, who now is dead —”

“What!” the Third Judge said.

“Is Volpone dead?” the Second Judge asked.

Corvino answered, “He has died since you last saw him, grave Fathers —”

Bonario said, “Oh, this is surely vengeance!”

He believed that God had punished Volpone because Volpone had tried to rape Celia.

The First Judge said, “Wait, then Volpone was no deceiver?”

If Volpone had been a deceiver, he would have been in good health and only pretending to be sick. His death showed that he was no deceiver.

Voltore replied, “Oh, no, he was not a deceiver.”

As far as Voltore knew, Volpone was not a deceiver. Volpone believed that Volpone had really been ill for three years and had really just died, and therefore he must have been too ill to attempt to rape Celia.

Voltore continued, “But as for the parasite, grave Fathers —”

Corvino said, “Voltore is speaking only out of complete envy because Volpone’s servant has gotten the thing Voltore hoped to swallow. If it please your Fatherhoods, this is the truth, though I’ll not exonerate the parasite, for he may be somewhat at fault.”

Corvino would be happy to get Mosca in trouble.

Voltore said, “Yes, the parasite is responsible for dashing your hopes, as well as mine, Corvino, but I’ll use modesty, moderation, and restraint as I talk.”

Voltore was trying to tell Corvino that Corvino’s perjury need not come out. Voltore wanted to get Mosca in trouble, and if he could do that without getting Corvino in trouble, that would be OK. But that was a deliberate deception. His papers would inform the Judges that Celia had been forcibly brought to Volpone’s house by Corvino, her husband, and left there. Voltore’s papers would also say that Mosca had lied about Bonario and about Celia. Mosca had said that Bonario had wanted to kill Corbaccio, his own father. He had

also testified that Celia had come to Volpone's house of her own free will.

Voltore gave the Judges some papers and said, "If it pleases your wisdoms to view these certain, reliable notes, and simply confer about them, as I hope you will favor me, they shall speak the clear truth."

Still worried, Corvino said, "The devil has entered him!"

Bonario said, "Or bides in you."

The Fourth Judge said, "We have done ill by sending a public police officer for him, if he really is the heir."

The Second Judge asked, "For whom?"

The Fourth Judge said, "The man whom they call the parasite; he is apparently Volpone's heir and a rich man now."

So far, Mosca's name had not been mentioned during the trials; he had always been referred to as a parasite and a knave.

The Third Judge said, "That is true. He is a man of great estate now that he is Volpone's heir and Volpone has died."

The Fourth Judge said to the Notary, "Go and learn his name, and say to him that the court requests his presence here only for the clearing up of a few questions."

Because Mosca was thought to be a rich man now, the Judges wanted to treat him with respect and definitely not call him a parasite.

The Notary exited.

The Second Judge, who had been reading Volpone's notes, said, "This is a labyrinth!"

Volpone's notes contradicted some of what had been said at the previous trial.

The First Judge asked Corvino, "Do you stand by your testimony in the first trial? Is that testimony true?"

Corvino said, "My estate, my life, my reputation —"

Bonario said sarcastically, "What reputation!"

Corvino continued, "— are at the stake."

His words were ambiguous. One meaning was that he was staking his estate, life, and reputation on the truth of his earlier testimony. Another meaning was that his estate, life, and reputation were tied to a stake like a bear at a bear-baiting. In the "sport" of bear-baiting, a bear would be tied to a stake and then dogs would be set to torment it.

The First Judge asked Corbaccio, "Do you also stand by your testimony in the first trial? Is that testimony true?"

Corbaccio answered, "The advocate — Voltore — is a knave, and he has a forked tongue —"

The Second Judge said, "Speak to the point. Answer the question."

Corbaccio saying that Voltore is a knave is not the same thing as Corbaccio saying that his earlier testimony had been true.

Corbaccio added, "So is the parasite. He is a knave, too."

The First Judge said, "This is all confusion."

Voltore said, "I beseech your Fatherhoods just to read those papers I gave you."

Corvino said to the Judges, "Give no credit to anything that the false spirit has written. Nothing else is possible except that Voltore is possessed by a devil, grave fathers."

— 5.11 —

Volpone walked on a street, alone.

He said to himself, "I have made a snare — a noose — for my own neck by pretending to have died! I have run my head into the snare and noose of my own free will! And I did it while I was laughing at and tormenting the legacy-hunters! Plus, I did it when I had just escaped from the first trial and was free and clear. I did it — got myself into new trouble — out of mere wantonness! Oh, the dull devil of stupidity and alcohol was in this brain of mine when I devised my plan, and Mosca seconded it. He must now help me to sear up — cauterize — this vein, or we will bleed out and die."

Nano the dwarf, Androgyno the hermaphrodite, and Castrone the eunuch came walking down the street and met Volpone.

Volpone asked, "What is going on? Who let you loose out of the house? Where are you going now? To buy gingerbread? Or to drown kittens?"

Nano the dwarf said, "Sir, master Mosca called us out of doors and told us all to go and have a day off, and he took the keys."

Androgyno the hermaphrodite said, "Yes, what Nano said is the truth."

Volpone said, "Did master Mosca take the keys? Well! I'm in deeper trouble than I thought."

He was immediately suspicious of Mosca. If Mosca had the keys, he could prevent Volpone from entering his own house.

He continued, “These are my fine schemes! I must be merry, and the result is evil to me! What a vile wretch was I, who could not bear my fortune soberly! I had to have my fancies and my whims!

“Well, all of you go and seek Mosca. His reason for taking my keys may be more loyal to me than I fear it is. Tell him that he must immediately come to me in the court. Thither I will go, and if it is possible, I will unscrew my advocate, Voltore, who is wound tight, by giving him new hopes of inheriting my property. When I provoked him, then I lost myself.”

— 5.12 —

In the Scrutineo, the Judges had been examining Voltore’s papers.

The First Judge said, “Voltore here in these papers states that the gentleman Bonario was wronged and that the gentlewoman Celia was forcibly brought to Volpone’s house by her husband, and left there.”

Voltore said, “That is very true.”

Celia said, “How ready is Heaven to help those who pray!”

The First Judge said, “But that Volpone attempted to rape her, he holds to be utterly false. He says that he knows that Volpone was impotent.”

Voltore certainly believed that to have been the truth.

Corvino, desperate to stay out of trouble, said, “Grave Fathers, Voltore is possessed. Again, I say that a devil has possessed his body. Indeed, if it is possible for possession and obsession to exist together, he has both.”

In possession, a devil enters the person’s body and controls it. If lust for gold is a demon, Voltore was possessed. In

obsession, a devil controls the person from outside the body. The disguised Volpone would show up almost immediately and would control Voltore.

The Third Judge said, “Here comes our police officer.”

Volpone, still disguised as a police officer, entered the courtroom.

He said, “The parasite will immediately be here, grave Fathers.”

The Fourth Judge said severely, “You might invent some name other than ‘parasite’ for him, Sir Varlet.”

The use of “Sir” was sarcastic.

The Third Judge asked, “Didn’t the Notary meet him?”

“Him” referred to Mosca.

“Not that I know,” the disguised Volpone said.

The Fourth Judge said, “His [Mosca’s] testimony will clear up everything.”

“So far,” the Second Judge said, “everything is misty.”

Voltore said, “May it please your Fatherhoods —”

The disguised Volpone whispered to him, “Sir, the parasite wanted me to tell you that his master is still alive, you are still the heir, your hopes are the same as they were before his supposed death, and this was only a jest —”

“How is this possible?” Voltore asked.

The disguised Volpone said, “Sir, he wanted to test if you were loyal to him, and how you were disposed toward him.”

“Are you sure he is alive?” Voltore asked.



“Do I live, sir?” the disguised Volpone asked. “I am as sure he is alive as I am sure I am alive.”

“Oh, me!” Voltore said. “I have been too violent, aggressive, and bold.”

“Sir, you may redeem it,” the disguised Volpone said. “They said you were possessed by a devil. Fall down, and seem to be possessed. I’ll help you to pull this trick off.”

Voltore fell to the floor as if he were having a fit.

The disguised Volpone said loudly, “God bless the man!”

He whispered to Voltore, “Breathe deeply, hold your breath, and swell your cheeks.”

He said loudly, “Look! Look! Look! Look! He vomits crooked pins! His eyes are staring like a dead hare’s hung in a poulterer’s shop! His mouth’s awry!”

He said to Corvino, “Do you see, signior?”

Voltore pretended that a devil was moving around in his body. He moved different muscles to simulate the devil’s movements.

The disguised Volpone said, “Now it is in his belly!”

Corvino, recognizing an opportunity to discount Voltore’s previous testimony, said, “Yes, it’s the devil!”

Voltore made swallowing movements.

The disguised Volpone said, “Now it’s in his throat!”

Corvino said, “Yes, I perceive it plainly.”

The disguised Volpone said, “The devil is coming out! It’s leaving the body! Stand clear. See, where it flies, in the shape of a blue toad, with a bat’s wings!”

This society believed in demonic possessions and in exorcisms. Demonic possessions and exorcisms were sometimes faked.

Sulphur, which is associated with devils, burns with a blue color. In this society, toads and bats were also associated with devils.

The disguised Volpone asked, “Corbaccio, don’t you also see it, sir?”

“What?” Corbaccio said. “I think I do.”

Corvino said, “It is very evident. I definitely saw it.”

The disguised Volpone said, “Look! Voltore is coming to himself! He is regaining consciousness!”

“Where am I?” Voltore asked.

“Take good heart, the worst is past, sir,” the disguised Volpone said. “You are dispossessed.”

“What a strange turn of events this is!” the First Judge said.

“It is sudden, and full of wonder!” the Second Judge said.

“If Voltore were possessed, as it appears he was, all this he has said is nothing,” the Third Judge said. “We can’t believe his papers or his testimony.”

“He has been often subject to these fits,” Corvino said.

The First Judge said, “Show him that writing.”

Voltore’s papers were handed to him.

The First Judge asked, “Do you know these papers, sir?”

Volpone whispered to Voltore, “Deny them, sir. Forswear them. Don’t admit you know them.”

“Yes, I know them well,” Voltore said to the Judges. “This is my handwriting, but everything written in these papers is false.”

“Oh, this is deceit!” Bonario said.

“What a maze this is!” the Second Judge said.

“Is he not guilty then?” the First Judge said. “I mean the man you call the parasite in your papers.”

“Grave fathers,” Voltore said, “He is no more guilty than his good patron, old Volpone.”

“Why, he is dead,” the Fourth Judge said.

“Oh no, my honored fathers,” Voltore said. “Volpone still lives.”

“What!” the First Judge said. “Is he still alive?”

“Yes,” Voltore said. “He is still alive.”

“This is getting even more complicated!” the Second Judge said.

“You said he was dead,” the Third Judge said.

“Never,” Voltore said.

“You said so,” the Third Judge said.

“I heard you say it,” Corvino said.

Mosca, dressed like a gentleman, walked into the courtroom.

The Fourth Judge said, “Here comes the gentleman; make way for him.”

The Third Judge said, “Get him a stool to sit on.”

The Fourth Judge thought about Mosca, *He is a handsome man, and if Volpone were dead, he would be a fit husband for my daughter.*

“Give him room,” the Third Judge said.

The disguised Volpone whispered, “Mosca, I was almost lost. Voltore the advocate had revealed everything, but now it is all recovered. All’s on the hinge and moving smoothly again. Tell the Judges that I am living.”

Mosca said loudly about the disguised Volpone, “What interfering, meddling knave is this man?”

He then said to the Judges, “Most reverend Fathers, I would have arrived sooner to wait on your grave pleasures except that my order for the funeral of my dear patron required me —”

The disguised Volpone whispered, “Mosca!”

Mosca said, “— whom I intend to bury like a gentleman.”

The words “like a gentleman” were ambiguous. They could refer to Volpone or to Mosca, or both. Like a gentleman, Mosca could bury Volpone like a gentleman.

Also, the words “bury like a gentleman” were ambiguous. Did he mean to bury Volpone like a gentleman, or at some later date have a gentleman’s burial for himself?

Volpone thought, *Yes, you would like to bury me like a gentleman — so quickly that I am still alive — and cheat me out of everything.*

“This is even stranger!” the Second Judge said. “It is very intricate!”

“And come about again!” the First Judge said.

Volpone had been declared dead by Corvino and then alive by Voltore and now was declared dead again by Mosca.

The Fourth Judge thought, *Volpone is dead. I have a husband for my daughter. She shall marry this man who has been called a parasite but who is now a gentleman.*

Mosca whispered to the disguised Volpone, “Will you give me half of all your wealth?”

“First, I’ll be hanged,” the disguised Volpone said.

“I know,” Mosca whispered. “I heard you, your voice is good, cry out not so loudly.”

“Let us question the advocate,” the First Judge said.

He then asked Voltore, “Sir, didn’t you affirm that Volpone was alive?”

Instead of Voltore, the disguised Volpone answered the question, “Yes, and he is.”

He pointed to Mosca and said, “This gentleman told me so.”

He whispered to Mosca, “You shall have half of my wealth.”

Mosca said loudly about Volpone, “Whose drunkard is this man? Speak, someone who knows him. I have never seen his face before now.”

He whispered to Volpone, “I cannot now afford to help you so cheaply.”

Even if Mosca were to get Volpone’s promise to give Mosca half his wealth, what would prevent Volpone from renegeing on his promise later?

“No!” the disguised Volpone said.

The First Judge said to Voltore, “Answer the question. What do you say in answer to it?”

Voltore pointed to Volpone, who was still disguised as a police officer, and said, "This officer told me that Volpone is still alive."

"I did, grave Fathers," the disguised Volpone said, "and I will maintain he lives with my own life."

He pointed to Mosca and said, "And I maintain that this creature told me that Volpone is still alive."

He thought, *I was born with all good stars as my enemies.*

"Most grave Fathers," Mosca said, "if such insolence as this is allowed to be inflicted upon me, I am silent. I hope that this is not the reason for which you sent for me."

Referring to the disguised Volpone, the Second Judge said, "Take him away."

The disguised Volpone shouted, "Mosca!"

Referring to the disguised Volpone, the Second Judge said, "Let him be whipped."

The disguised Volpone said to Mosca, "Will you betray me? Cheat me?"

The Third Judge said, "And let him learn how to bear himself toward a person of a gentleman's rank."

"Take him away," the Fourth Judge ordered.

Some police officers seized the disguised Volpone.

Mosca said, "I humbly thank your Fatherhoods."

The disguised Volpone thought, *Hold on! Wait! Whipped! And lose all that I have! If I confess, I cannot be punished much more harshly.*

In hopes of getting his daughter wed to a wealthy man, the Fourth Judge asked Mosca, "Sir, are you married?"

The disguised Volpone thought, *Mosca and the Fourth Judge's family will be allied soon through Mosca's engagement to the Fourth Judge's daughter. I must be resolute. The Fox shall here and now remove his disguise.*

He took off his disguise and revealed himself to all present.

“Patron!” Mosca said.

Volpone said to him, “Now my ruin shall not come alone. Your wedding match I’ll certainly hinder. My wealth shall not allow you to attach yourself to a family or worm yourself into one.”

“Why, patron!” Mosca said.

“I am Volpone, and this is my knave,” Volpone said, pointing to Mosca.

He pointed to Voltore and said, “This man is his own knave.”

He pointed to Corbaccio and said, “This man is avarice’s fool.”

He pointed to Corvino and said, “This man is a chimera of wittol, fool, and knave.”

A wittol is a contented cuckold.

A chimera is a mythological monster that has the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a snake.

Volpone continued, “And, reverend Fathers, since all we can hope for is nothing but a sentence, let’s not now despair of receiving it. You hear me ... brief.”

A brief is a begging petition. Volpone was not begging; this was as close to a begging petition as the Judges would get from him. He was also speaking only briefly so the Judges could get on with their sentencing.

Corvino, who was willing to beg, began, “May it please your Fatherhoods —”

A police officer ordered, “Silence!”

The First Judge said, “The knot is now undone by a miracle. All is clear.”

“Nothing can be more clear,” the Second Judge said.

The Judges could see that Volpone, who had been reputed to be dying for the last three years, was a vigorous, healthy man. The Judges were also aware of the many gifts that Volpone had received from the legacy-hunters. Intelligent people, the Judges could figure out what had happened.

“Nothing can more prove these two — Bonario and Celia — innocent,” the Third Judge said.

Volpone was certainly healthy enough to attempt to rape Celia.

“Give them their liberty,” the First Judge ordered.

“Heaven could not long let such gross crimes be hidden,” Bonario said.

The Second Judge said, “If this is held to be the highway to riches, I hope I may be poor!”

“This is not gain, but torment,” the Third Judge said.

“These possess wealth, as sick men possess fevers, which more truly may be said to possess them,” the First Judge said.

The Second Judge said, “That parasite is dressed like a gentleman. Take that clothing off him.”

Police officers stripped Mosca of his gentleman’s robe.

Corvino and Mosca said together, “Most honored Fathers!”



The First Judge asked, “Can you plead anything to stop or pause the course of justice? If you can, speak.”

Corvino and Voltore said, “We beg favor.”

Celia, who was very forgiving, added, “And mercy.”

The Judges were not forgiving.

The First Judge said to Celia, “You hurt your innocence by begging for the guilty. Stand back.”

He then said, “First we will judge the parasite.”

He said to Mosca, “You appear to have been the chief agent, if not plotter, in all these wicked impostures, and now, finally, you have with your impudence abused the court and worn the clothing of a gentleman of Venice, although you are a fellow of no noble birth and no noble blood.”

For a non-gentleman to wear the clothing of a gentleman was a serious crime in Venice.

The First Judge continued talking to Mosca, “For which our sentence is that first you will be whipped and then you will live as a perpetual prisoner in our galleys — our Venetian ships.”

“I thank you for him,” Voltore said.

Just minutes previously, Mosca had seemed to be a very wealthy gentleman.

Mosca snarled at Volpone, “Bane to your wolvish nature!”

Wolfbane is a poison.

The First Judge ordered, “Deliver him to the police officers.”

A bailiff took Mosca over to some police officers who escorted him out of the courtroom.

The First Judge said, “Thou, Volpone, who are by blood and rank a gentleman, cannot fall under a similar censure.”

The First Judge’s use of the word “thou” — and his use soon of the word “thee” — was that of a superior talking to someone much lower on the social scale. It was an insult.

He continued, “But our judgment on thee is that all your wealth be immediately confiscated and forfeited to the Hospital of the Incurabili — the Hospital of the Incurables.

“And since the most of your wealth was gotten by imposture, by feigning lame, gout, palsy, and such diseases, you are to lie in prison, cramped with irons, until you are sick and lame for real.”

He ordered, “Remove him.”

Volpone said, “This is called mortifying a Fox.”

Even in these circumstances, he was capable of wit. “Mortifying” was a multiple pun that meant these things:

- Humiliating. Volpone was publicly humiliated.
- Subjecting the body to discipline intended to subjugate bodily desires so that spiritual desires would be dominate.
- Giving wealth to charitable causes, aka disposing of wealth by mortification. Volpone’s wealth would go to the Hospital of the Incurables.
- Hanging up a dead game animal to let it become tender. Volpone would at least metaphorically be hung up in chains.
- Wasting away. Volpone would waste away in prison.
- Becoming gangrenous. Volpone’s chains in prison could very well cause gangrene.
- Causing death. Volpone would die in prison.

Volpone was taken over to some police officers, who escorted him out of the courtroom.

The First Judge said to the advocate, “Thou, Voltore, to take away the scandal thou has given all worthy men of your profession, are banished from their fellowship and from our state.”

He then said, “Corbaccio!”

He ordered the bailiff, “Bring him near to me so he can hear me!”

He then said to Corbaccio, “We here give thy son possession of all your estate, and we confine thee to the monastery of San Spirito, where, since you didn’t know how to live well here, thou shall be taught how to die well there.”

Corbaccio said, “Ah! What did he say?”

A police officer said, “You shall know soon, sir.”

The First Judge said, “Thou, Corvino, shall be immediately embarked from your own house, and rowed round about Venice, through the miles-long Canal Grande, wearing a cap with very long asses’ ears instead of horns.”

The asses’ ears would show that he is a fool. The cap had no horns because the court had determined that Celia was innocent of committing adultery.

The First Judge continued, “And then you will climb, with a paper describing your crimes pinned on your breast, to the pillory —”

The pillory was a wooden device that restrained a criminal’s hands and head. Often, people would torment the criminal while he was in the pillory.

“Yes,” Corvino said, “and I will have my eyes beaten out by all the things people will throw at me — stinking fish,

bruised fruit, and rotten eggs. This punishment is good. I am glad that I shall be blind and shall not see my shame.”

The First Judge said, “And to expiate thy wrongs done to your wife, you are to send her home to her father, with her dowry trebled.”

He said to Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino, “And for your crimes, these are all your sentences —”

Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino pleaded, “Honored Fathers —”

The First Judge continued, “— which may not be revoked.

“Now you begin, when your crimes are done and past, and when you are to be punished, to think what your crimes are.”

He said to the police officers, “Take them away! Let all who see these vices thus rewarded, take them to heart and love to study them! Evil deeds feed like beasts, until they are fat, and then they bleed.”

## EPILOGUE (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

Volpone says this to you the readers:

*The seasoning of a play — and a book — is the applause.*

*Now, although the Fox is punished by the laws,*

*He yet does hope, there is no suffering due,*

*For any crime that he has done against you.*

*If there is, censure him; here he full of fears stands.*

*If not, fare jovially, and Jovially, and clap your hands.*

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In astrology, the planet Jupiter is associated with mirth and humor.

## NOTES (*Volpone, or the Fox*)

### Cast: ANDROGYNO, a Hermaphrodite

True hermaphrodites exist.

Here is the beginning of the Wikipedia article on “True Hermaphroditism”:

*True hermaphroditism, now clinically known as ovotesticular disorder of sex development, is a medical term for an [intersex](#) condition in which an individual is born with [ovarian](#) and [testicular](#) tissue. More commonly one or both gonads is an [ovotestis](#) containing both types of tissue.*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True\\_hermaphroditism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True_hermaphroditism)

Here is the beginning of a first-person account of a true hermaphrodite:

*I Am a True Hermaphrodite*

*We Do Exist*

*People say that true hermaphroditism does not exist in humans; I can tell you for definite that it does. It's true that you cannot have a fully functional and complete set of both genitals together, but I was born with one ovary and one testicle, and that makes me a hermaphrodite.*

<http://www.experienceproject.com/stories/Am-A-True-Hermaphrodite/2663037>

### Fast and Loose (1.2)

This con game can be performed in various ways. Here is a YouTube video explaining one way to perform it:

*Scam School: Fast and Loose!*

*Brian deconstructs one of the classic well-known street cons — how to set it up fairly, and unfairly.*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-zL3\\_F0IHw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-zL3_F0IHw)

### **“unprepared antimony” (2.2)**

This is a quotation from John Man’s *The Gutenberg Revolution: How Printing Changed the Course of History* (2010), p. 130:

*Antimony deserves respect. The silvery ore was much used in antiquity for make-up and as a means of chemical purification. It was said that monks, impressed by its chemical effects, swallowed it to purify their bodies. Unfortunately, antimony is deadly poisonous, so the only things they purified, if anything, were their souls. Almost certainly this is a piece of nonsense based on a false etymology that derives the metal’s name from anti/monos — ‘anti-monk’. In popular parlance it was ‘monks bane’.*

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/y7anl882>

### **Four Humors and Four Elements (2.2)**

The society of *Volpone* believed in the theory of elements, which are earth, air, water, and fire, and the theory of humors, which are blood, phlegm, choler, and black choler.

Every physical thing, including the bodies of human beings, is made up of the four elements, each of which has associated qualities.

Earth is cold, heavy, and dry.

Air is hot, light, and wet.

Water is cold, heavy, and wet.

Fire is hot, light, and dry.

Doctors in this society believed that each of the human body's four humors, or vital fluids, made a contribution to the personality, and for a human being to be sane and healthy, the four humors had to be present in the right amounts. If a man had too much of a certain humor, it would harm his personality and health.

Blood was the sanguine humor. A sanguine man was optimistic.

Phlegm was the phlegmatic humor. A phlegmatic man was calm.

Yellow bile was the choleric humor. A choleric man was angry.

Black bile was the melancholic humor. A melancholic man was gloomy.

When a man was ill, doctors would try to get the four humors back into balance by purging him, often through bloodletting or through the use of laxatives. Mountebanks sold "medicines" that were supposed to bring the four humors into the correct balance.

**"He shall come home, and minister unto you / The fricace for the mother" (2.5)**

The "mother" is "hysteria." Doctors (mountebanks were quack doctors) would give women genital massages to make them orgasm as a treatment for hysteria.

The below is an excerpt from a *New York Times* review of this book: Rachel P. Mains, *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction*. The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1999. Revised Ed. 2001.

*In 1653 Pieter van Foreest, called Alemarianus Petrus Forestus, published a medical compendium*



*titled Observationem et Curationem Medicinalium ac Chirurgicarum Opera Omnia, with a chapter on the diseases of women. For the affliction commonly called hysteria (literally, “womb disease”) and known in his volume as praefocatio matricis or “suffocation of the mother,” the physician advised as follows:*

*“When these symptoms indicate, we think it necessary to ask a midwife to assist, so that she can massage the genitalia with one finger inside, using oil of lilies, musk root, crocus, or [something] similar. And in this way the afflicted woman can be aroused to the paroxysm. This kind of stimulation with the finger is recommended by Galen and Avicenna, among others, most especially for widows, those who live chaste lives, and female religious, as Gradus [Ferrari da Gradi] proposes; it is less often recommended for very young women, public women, or married women, for whom it is a better remedy to engage in intercourse with their spouses.”*

*As Forestus suggests here, in the Western medical tradition genital massage to orgasm by a physician or midwife was a standard treatment for hysteria, an ailment considered common and chronic in women.*

This is the review:

Sarah Boxer, “Batteries Not Included: A social history of the vibrator.” *New York Times*. 21 March 1999

<http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/03/21/reviews/990321.21boxert.html>

Note: Doctors hated doing this, largely because of the time it took, and so they often had midwives do this. In the 1880s, the vibrator was invented so that doctors wouldn’t have to perform genital massages on females.

### **“pull the pillow from his head” (2.6)**

When people were dying, their pillows were taken away from under their heads to make it easier to die. The sixteenth-century *Shiltei Hagiborim* by R. Joshua Boaz argued against what he regarded as a form of what we would probably call euthanasia:

*“There would appear to be grounds for forbidding the custom, practiced by some, in the case of someone who is dying and his soul cannot depart, of removing the pillow from underneath the gose [someone who is expected to die within 72 hours] so that he will die quickly. For they say that the bird feathers in the bedding prevent the soul from leaving the body.”*

### **Horned Flood (3.7)**

The below is from Sophocles’ *Trachiniae* (*Women of Trachis*):

*My suitor was the river Achelóüs, who took three forms to ask me of my father: a rambling bull once — then a writhing snake of gleaming colors — then again a man with ox-like face: and from his beard’s dark shadows stream upon stream of water tumbled down. Such was my suitor.*

Source: *The Women of Trachis and Philoctetes*. A new translation in verse by Robert Torrance. Houghton Mifflin. 1966.

<https://tinyurl.com/yb92zash>

### **Pearls — Lollia Paulini and Cleopatra (3.7)**

The below is from Pliny’s *Natural History*:

Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*. John Bostock, M.D., F.R.S., H.T. Riley, Esq., B.A., Ed.

*I once saw Lollia Paulina, the wife of the Emperor Caius — it was not at any public festival, or any solemn ceremonial, but only at an ordinary wedding entertainment — covered with emeralds and pearls, which shone in alternate layers upon her head, in her hair, in her wreaths, in her ears, upon her neck, in her bracelets, and on her fingers, and the value of which amounted in all to forty millions of sesterces; indeed she was prepared at once to prove the fact, by showing the receipts and acquittances. Nor were these any presents made by a prodigal potentate, but treasures which had descended to her from her grandfather, and obtained by the spoliation of the provinces. Such are the fruits of plunder and extortion! It was for this reason that M. Lollius was held so infamous all over the East for the presents which he extorted from the kings; the result of which was, that he was denied the friendship of Caius Cæsar, and took poison; and all this was done, I say, that his grand-daughter might be seen, by the glare of lamps, covered all over with jewels to the amount of forty millions of sesterces! Now let a person only picture to himself, on the one hand, what was the value of the habits worn by Curius or Fabricius in their triumphs, let him picture to himself the objects displayed to the public on their triumphal litters, and then, on the other hand, let him think upon this Lollia, this one bit of a woman, the head of an empire, taking her place at table, thus attired; would he not much rather that the conquerors had been torn from their very chariots, than that they had conquered for such a result as this?*

*Nor, indeed, are these the most supreme evidences of luxury. There were formerly two pearls, the largest that had been ever seen in the whole world: Cleopatra, the last of the queens of Egypt, was in possession of them both, they having come to her by descent from the kings of the East. When Antony had been sated by her, day after day, with the most exquisite banquets, this queenly courtesan, inflated with vanity and disdainful arrogance, affected to treat all this sumptuousness and all these vast preparations with the greatest contempt; upon which Antony enquired what there was that could possibly be added to such extraordinary magnificence. To this she made answer, that on a single entertainment she would expend ten millions of sesterces. Antony was extremely desirous to learn how that could be done, but looked upon it as a thing quite impossible; and a wager was the result. On the following day, upon which the matter was to be decided, in order that she might not lose the wager, she had an entertainment set before Antony, magnificent in every respect, though no better than his usual repast. Upon this, Antony joked her, and enquired what was the amount expended upon it; to which she made answer that the banquet which he then beheld was only a trifling appendage to the real banquet, and that she alone would consume at the meal to the ascertained value of that amount, she herself would swallow the ten millions of sesterces; and so ordered the second course to be served. In obedience to her instructions, the servants placed before her a single vessel, which was filled with vinegar, a liquid, the sharpness and strength of which is able to dissolve pearls. At this moment she was wearing in her ears those choicest and most rare and unique productions of Nature; and while Antony was waiting to see what she was going*

*to do, taking one of them from out of her ear, she threw it into the vinegar, and directly it was melted, swallowed it. Lucius Plancus, who had been named umpire in the wager, placed his hand upon the other at the very instant that she was making preparations to dissolve it in a similar manner, and declared that Antony had lost — an omen which, in the result, was fully confirmed. The fame of the second pearl is equal to that which attends its fellow. After the queen, who had thus come off victorious on so important a question, had been seized, it was cut asunder, in order that this, the other half of the entertainment, might serve as pendants for the ears of Venus, in the Pantheon at Rome.*

Source: *The Natural History*. Pliny the Elder. John Bostock, M.D., F.R.S. H.T. Riley, Esq., B.A. London. Taylor and Francis, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street. 1855.

<http://tinyurl.com/yavx8otp>

### **Panthers' Breath (3.7)**

The below is from Pliny's *Natural History*:

#### *CHAP. 23.—PANTHERS.*

*The panther and the tiger are nearly the only animals that are remarkable for a skin distinguished by the variety of its spots;<sup>1</sup> whereas others have them of a single colour, appropriate to each species. The lions of Syria alone are black. The spots of the panther are like small eyes, upon a white ground. It is said that all quadrupeds are attracted in a most wonderful manner by their odour,<sup>2</sup> while they are terrified by the fierceness of their aspect; for which reason the creature conceals its head, and then seizes upon the animals that are attracted to it by the sweetness of the odour. It is said by some, that the panther has, on*

*the shoulder, a spot which bears the form of the moon; and that, like it, it regularly increases to full, and then diminishes to a crescent. At present, we apply the general names of varia<sup>3</sup> and pard, (which last belongs to the males), to all the numerous species of this animal, which is very common in Africa and Syria.<sup>4</sup> Some writers distinguish the panther, as being remarkable for its whiteness: but as yet I have not observed any other difference between them.*

*1 Pliny, in B. xiii. c. 15, speaks of “tables of tiger and panther pattern,” as articles of ornamental furniture among the Romans, named from the peculiar patterns of the veins in the citrus wood, of which they were formed. — B.*

*2 This, though mentioned by Aristotle, Hist. Anim. B. ix. c. 8, is probably incorrect; and still more the addition made by Ælian, Anim. Nat. B. v. c. 40, that this odour is grateful to man. It has, however, induced some to conjecture, that the animal here described might be the civet but the description given is inapplicable to that animal; nor, indeed, does the civet appear to have been known to the ancients. For further information, see the remarks of Cuvier, Ajasson, vol. vi. p. 420, and Lemaire, vol. iii. p. 386. Pliny, in B. xxi. c. 18, says that no animal, except the panther, has any odour.—B.*

*3 Meaning the “spotted” or “parti-coloured” female.*

*4 Xenophon, in his Cynegeticon, says, that the pard is found on Mount Pangæus, in Macedonia; the truth of which is denied by Aristotle, who says that it is not to be found in Europe.*

Source: Pliny the Elder. *The Natural History*. John Bostock, M.D., F.R.S. H.T. Riley, Esq., B.A. London. Taylor and Francis, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street. 1855.

<https://tinyurl.com/y7sunuct>

#### **Mummmia (4.4)**

This is an excerpt from the Wikipedia article on MUMMMIA:

*Mummmia, mumia, or originally mummy referred to several different preparations in the [history of medicine](#), from “mineral [pitch](#)” to “powdered human [mummies](#)”. It originated from [Arabic mūmiyā](#) “a type of resinous [bitumen](#) found in [Western Asia](#) and used curatively” in [traditional Islamic medicine](#), which was translated as *pissasphaltus* (from “pitch” and “asphalt”) in [ancient Greek medicine](#). In [medieval European medicine](#), mūmiyā “bitumen” was [transliterated](#) into Latin as *mumia* meaning both “a bituminous medicine from Persia” and “mummy”. Merchants in [apothecaries](#) dispensed expensive *mummmia bitumen*, which was thought to be an effective [cure-all](#) for many ailments. Beginning around the 12th century when supplies of imported natural bitumen ran short, *mummmia* was misinterpreted as “mummy”, and the word’s meaning expanded to “a black resinous [exudate](#) scraped out from embalmed Egyptian mummies”. This began a period of lucrative trade between Egypt and Europe, and suppliers substituted rare *mummmia exudate* with entire mummies, either [embalmed](#) or [desiccated](#). After Egypt banned the shipment of *mummmia* in the 16th century, unscrupulous European apothecaries began to sell fraudulent *mummmia* prepared by embalming and desiccating fresh corpses. During the [Renaissance](#), scholars proved that translating bituminous *mummmia**

*as mummy was a mistake, and physicians stopped prescribing the ineffective drug. Lastly, artists in the 17th and 18th centuries used ground up mummies to tint a popular oil-paint called [mummy brown](#).*

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mummia>

### **Tortoise (5.4)**

John S. Weld wrote this about the tortoise scene:

*The meaning of this scene is emphasized and perhaps Jonson's choice of symbol is explained by Erasmus's interpretation of the proverbial *quam curat testudino muscas*: "the mind fortified with virtue and philosophy fears the assaults of Fortune no more than a tortoise fears flies." — Opera, II. 662.*

Source: John S. Weld, "Christian Comedy: 'Volpone.'" *Studies in Philology*. Volume 51. 1954. P. 183. Footnote 17.

### **"vomits crooked pins" (5.12)**

Witches were said to make people do this.

The below is an excerpt from a late seventeenth century account of witchcraft:

*In the Town of Beckenton, in Somersetshire, liveth one William Spicer, a young Man about eighteen Years of Age. As he was wont to pass by the Alms-house (where lived an Old Woman, about Four score) he would call her Witch, and tell her of her Buns; which did so enrage the Old Woman, that she threatened him with a Warrant; and accordingly did fetch one from a Neighbouring Justice of the Peace. At which he was so frightened, that he humbled himself to her, and promised never to call her so again. Within a few days after, this Young Man fell into the strangest Fits that held him about a*



*Fortnight. When the Fits were upon him, he would often say that he did see this Old Woman against the Wall in the same Room of the House where he was, and that sometimes she did knock her Fist at him; sometimes grin her Teeth, and sometimes laugh at him in his Fits. He was so strong, that three or four Men could scarce hold him; and when he did call for Small Beer to drink, he would be sure to bring up some Crooked Pins to the Number of Thirty, and upwards.*

*In the same Town liveth one Mary Hill, about the same Age of this Young Man; who meeting with this Old Woman, demanded the Ring she borrowed of her, with a threatening from the Old Woman that she had been better to have let her kept it longer. About a Week before the said Mary was taken with Fits, she met this Old Woman in the Street; who taking her by the hand, desired her to go with her to Froom, to look after some Spinning Work. The said Mary being afraid, refused to go with her. About four days after she met the Old Woman again, who begged an Apple of her, which she refused to give her.*

*The Sunday following, she complained of a pricking in her Stomack; but on Monday, as she was Eating her Dinner, something arose in her Throat, which was like to have Choaked her; and at the same time she fell into Violent Fits, which held her till Nine or Ten a Clock at Night. The Fits were so strong and violent, that Four or Five Persons were scarce able to hold her, and in the midst of them, she would tell how she saw this old Woman against the Wall, grinning at her, and that she was the Person that had bewitcht her.*

*The Wednesday following, she began to throw up Crooked Pins, and so continued for the space of a Fortnight. After this, she began to throw up Nails and Pins. And then she began to throw up Nails again, and Handles of Spoons, several pieces of Iron, Lead, and Tin, with several clusters of Crooked Pins; some tied with Yarn, and some with Thread, with abundance of Blood. She threw up in all, above Two Hundred Crooked Pins.*

*The People of the Town seeing the sad and deplorable Condition of the said Mary, did cause this old Woman to be brought near the House where the Mary Lived, and being gathered together above an Hundred People, the said Mary was brought forth into the open Air, who immediately fell into such strong Fits, that two or three men were scarce able to hold her, and being brought upon the Hill by the Church, and the old Woman brought near her (notwithstanding there were four men to hold the said Mary in a Chair) she mounted up over their Heads into the Air; but the men, and others standing by, caught hold of her Legs, and pulled her down again.*

*This old Woman was ordered to be searched by a Jury of Women, who found about her several purple Spots, which they prickt with a sharp Needle, but she felt no pain. She had about her other Marks and Tokens of a Witch, and she was sent to the County Jayle.*

*This old Woman was had to a great River near the Town, to see whether she could sink under Water. Her Legs being tied, she was put in, and though she did endeavour to the uttermost by her Hands, yet she could not, but would lie upon her Back, and did Swim*

*like a piece of Cork. There were present above Twenty Persons to Attest the Truth of this. She was had to the Water a second time, and being put in, she swam as at first; and though there were present above Two Hundred People to see this Sight, yet it could not be believed by many. At the same time, also, there was put into the Water, a Lusty young Woman, who sunk immediately, and had been drowned, had it not been for the help that was at hand. To satisfy the World, and to leave no Room for doubting, the old Woman was had down to the Water the third time, and being put in as before, she did still Swim. At this Swimming of her, were present, such a Company of People of the Town and Country, and many of them, Persons of Quality, as could not well be Numbered; so that now, there is scarce one Person that doubts of the Truth of this thing.*

*It is full Ten Weeks ago that this young Woman was first seized with these Terrible Fits, yet she continues to be often seized with terrible Fits, and to bring up both Nails and Handles of Spoons, and is still remaining an Object of great Pity.*

Source: "She threw up crooked pins." *Shakespeare's England: Everyday Life in Seventeenth Century England*. Accessed 16 August 2017

<http://www.shakespearesengland.co.uk/2012/09/17/she-threw-up-crooked-pins/>

The website notes that the old woman — the "witch" — died in prison.

## APPENDIX A: FAIR USE

§ 107. Limitations on exclusive rights: Fair use

Release date: 2004-04-30

Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 106 and 106A, the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright. In determining whether the use made of a work in any particular case is a fair use the factors to be considered shall include —

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Source of Fair Use information:

<<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.html>>.

## APPENDIX B: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine's brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka "The Joker," decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn't been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don't often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for "sounds like" and "two words," then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn't let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor's degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

## APPENDIX C: SOME BOOKS BY DAVID BRUCE

### Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

Arden of Faversham: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Arraignment, or Poetaster: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Epicene: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humor: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The New Inn, or The Light Heart: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Sejanus' Fall: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's A Tale of a Tub: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: *Retellings*

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: *Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text*

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: *A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling*

*Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings*

*Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose*

*Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose*

*Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose*

*Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose*

*The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling*

*From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica*

*George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's Eastward Ho! A Retelling*

*George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling*

*George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling*

*George's Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling*

*George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling*

*George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling*

*George-a-Greene: A Retelling*

*The History of King Leir: A Retelling*

*Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*

*Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose*

*J.W. Gent.'s The Valiant Scot: A Retelling*

*Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica*

*John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English*

*John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling*

*John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling*

*John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling*  
*John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling*  
*John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling*  
*John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling*  
*John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling*  
*John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling*  
*John Lyly's Campaspe: A Retelling*  
*John Lyly's Endymion, The Man in the Moon: A Retelling*  
*John Lyly's Galatea: A Retelling*  
*John Lyly's Love's Metamorphosis: A Retelling*  
*John Lyly's Midas: A Retelling*  
*John Lyly's Mother Bombie: A Retelling*  
*John Lyly's Sappho and Phao: A Retelling*  
*John Lyly's The Woman in the Moon: A Retelling*  
*John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling*  
*King Edward III: A Retelling*  
*Mankind: A Medieval Morality Play (A Retelling)*  
*Margaret Cavendish's The Unnatural Tragedy: A Retelling*  
*The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling*  
*The Summoning of Everyman: A Medieval Morality Play (A Retelling)*  
*Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling*  
*The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling*  
*Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling*  
*Thomas Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside: A Retelling*  
*Thomas Middleton's Women Beware Women: A Retelling*  
*Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's The Roaring Girl: A Retelling*



*Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's The Changeling: A Retelling*

*The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems*

*Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Henry V: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Richard II: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Richard III: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Tempest: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen: A Retelling in Prose*

*William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: A Retelling in Prose*

