

The Knight of the Burning Pestle

by Francis Beaumont

(Edited by Rose de Le Mans)

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The Speakers (or Players)

The Prologue

George (A Citizen)

Nell (George's Wife)

Rafe (her man, sitting below amidst the spectators)

Venturewell (A rich Merchant)

Jasper (Venturewell's Apprentice)

Master Humphrey (Friend to the Merchant)

Luce (The Merchant's daughter)

Mistress Merrythought (Jasper's Mother)

Michael (Second son of Mistress Merrythought)

Old Master Merrythought

Tim (A squire) [Apprentice]

George (A dwarf) [Apprentice]

A Tapster

A Boy (that danceth and singeth)

An Host

A Barber

Two Knights [Prisoners of the Barber]

Man [Prisoners of the Barber]

Woman [Prisoners of the Barber]

Pompiona (A Lady)

Servant

Induction *(Enter Prologue)*

Prologue: From all that's near the court¹, from all that's great
Within the compass of the city walls²,
We now have brought our scene --

(Enter Citizen [climbing onto the stage])

Citizen: Hold your peace, goodman boy.

Prologue: What do you mean, sir?

¹ *the court*] at Westminster.

² *the city walls*] the medieval walls of the old city of London.

- Citizen: That you have no good meaning. This seven years there hath been plays at this house, I have observed it, you have still girds at citizens. And now you call your play *The London Merchant*. Down with your title³, boy; down with your title!
- Prologue: Are you a member of the noble city?
- Citizen: I am.
- Prologue: And a freeman?
- Citizen: Yea, and a grocer.
- Prologue: So, grocer, then by your sweet favor, we intend no abuse to the city.
- Citizen: No, sir? Yes, Sir! If you were not resolv'd to play the jacks, what need you study for new subjects purposely to abuse your betters? Why could not you be contented, as well as others, with *The Legend of Whittington*; or *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Gresham, with the Building of the Royal Exchange*; or *The Story of Queen Elenor, with the Rearing of London Bridge upon Woolsacks*?⁴
- Prologue: You seem to be an understanding man. What would you have us do, sir?
- Citizen: Why, present something notably in honor of the commons⁵ of the city.
- Prologue: Why, what do you say to *The Life and Death of Fat Drake* or *The Repairing of Fleetprivies*?⁶
- Citizen: I do not like that; but I will have a citizen, and he shall be of my own trade.
- Prologue: O, you should have told us your mind a month since. Our play is ready to begin now.
- Citizen: 'Tis all one for that. I will have a grocer, and he shall do admirable things.
- Prologue: What will you have him do?
- Citizen: Marry, I will have him --
- Wife: (*From the audience*) Husband, husband!
- Rafe: (*Also, from the audience*) Peace, Mistress.
- Wife: Hold thy peace, Rafe. I know what I do, I warrant'ee. -- Husband, husband!

³ *Down ... title*] The title of a play was often displayed on the stage.

⁴ *The Story ... Woolsacks*] The rebuilding of London Bridge was partially financed by a duty on wool.

⁵ *the commons*] "the body of free citizens, bearing common burdens and exercising common rights" (OED)

⁶ *Fleetprivies*] Fleet Lane ran from Old Bailey to the Fleet Ditch, a stream which had in the sixteenth century become a "common sewer" (Sugden).

Citizen: What say'st thou, cony?

Wife: Let him kill a lion with a pestle, husband; let him kill a lion with a pestle.⁷

Citizen: So he shall. I'll have him kill a lion with a pestle.

Wife: Husband, shall I come up, husband?

Citizen: Ay, cony. -- Rafe, help your mistress this way. -- Pray, gentlemen, make her a little room. I pray you, sir, lend me your hand to help up my wife. I thank you, sir. -- So.

(Wife comes up on the stage.)

Wife: By your leave, gentlemen all, I'm something troublesome. I'm a stranger here. I was ne'er at one of these plays, as they say, before; but I should have seen *Jane Shore* once; and my husband hath promised me any time this twelve-month to carry me to the *Bold Beauchamps*, but, in truth, he did not. I pray you, bear with me.

Citizen: Boy, let my wife and I have a couple of stools, and then begin, and let the grocer do rare things.

Prologue: But, sir, we have never a boy to play him. Everyone hath a part already.

Wife: Husband, husband, for God's sake, let Rafe play him. Beshrew me if I do not think he will go beyond them all.

Citizen: Well remember'd wife. -- Come up, Rafe. -- I'll tell you, gentlemen, let them but lend him a suit of reparel⁸ and necessaries, and, by Gad, if any of them all blow wind in the tail on him, I'll be hang'd.

(Rafe comes up on the stage.)

Wife: I pray you, youth, let him have a suit of reparel. -- I'll be sworn, gentlemen, my husband tells you true. He will act you sometimes at our house that all the neighbors cry out on him. He will fetch you up a couraging part so in the garret that we are all as fear'd, I warrant you, that we quake again. We'll fear our children with him if they be never so unruly. Do but cry, "Rafe comes, Rafe comes," to them, and they'll be as quiet as lambs. -- Hold up thy head, Rafe. Show the gentlemen what thou canst do. Speak a huffing part. I warrant you, the gentlemen will accept of it.

Citizen: Do, Rafe, do.

Rafe: By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap
To pluck bright honor from the pale-fac'd moon,

⁷ *kill ... pestle*] The encounter of chivalric heroes with lions is commonplace to romance. The pestle was emblematic of the grocers' trade because grocers were also the preparers of drugs.

⁸ *reparel*] apparel.

Or dive into the bottom of the sea,
Where never fathom line touch'd any ground,
And pluck up drowned honor from the lake of hell.

Citizen: How say you, gentlemen? Is it not as I told you?

Wife: Nay, gentlemen; he hath play'd before, my husband says, Mucedorus, before the wardens of our company.

Citizen: Ay, and he should have play'd Jeronimo with a shoemaker for a wager.

Prologue: He shall have a suit of apparel if he will go in⁹.

Citizen: In, Rafe; in, Rafe; and set out the grocery in their kind, if thou lov'st me. (*Exit Rafe*)

Wife: I warrant our Rafe will look finely when he's dress'd.

Prologue: But what will you have it call'd?

Citizen: *The Grocer's Honor.*

Prologue: Methinks *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* were better.

Wife: I'll be sworn, husband, that's as good a name as can be.

Citizen: Let it be so. Begin, begin; my wife and I will sit down.

Prologue: I pray you, do.

(To audience)

From all that's near the court, from all that's great
Within the compass of the city walls,
We now have brought our scene. Fly far from hence
All private taxes¹⁰, immodest phrases,
Whate'er may but show like vicious:
For wicked mirth never true pleasure brings,
But honest minds are pleas'd with honest things.
-- Thus much for that we do, but for Rafe's part you must cope.
(Exit Prologue)

Citizen: *(From the audience)* Take you no care for Rafe. He'll discharge himself, I warrant you.

Wife: *(From the audience)* I'faith gentlemen, I'll give my word for Rafe.

⁹ *go in*] to the "tiring house," or dressing room, located directly behind the stage.

¹⁰ *private taxes*] personal ridicule.

ACT I

(Enter Merchant and Jasper, his prentice)

Merchant: Sirrah, I'll make you know you are my prentice,
And whom my charitable love redeem'd
Even from the fall of fortune; gave thee heat
And growth¹¹, to be what now thou art; new cast thee.
As I remember, you had never charge
To love your master's daughter, and even then
When I had found a wealthy husband for her.

Jasper: For your daughter,
If there be any love to my deservings
Borne by her virtuous self, I cannot stop it,
Nor am I able to refrain her wishes.
She's private to herself and best of knowledge¹²
Whom she'll make so happy as to sigh for.
Besides, I cannot think you mean to match her
Unto a fellow of so lame a presence,
One that hath little left of nature in him.

Merchant: 'Tis very well, sir. I can tell your wisdom
How all this shall be cur'd.

Jasper: Your care becomes you.

Merchant: And thus it must be, sir. I here discharge you
My house and service. Take your liberty,
And when I want a son I'll send for you. *(Exit)*

(Enter Luce)

Luce: Why, how now, friend, struck with my father's thunder?

Jasper: Struck and struck dead unless the remedy
Be full of speed and virtue. I am now
What I expected long, no more your father's.

Luce: But mine.

¹¹ *heat And growth*] shelter and food.

¹² *She's ... knowledge*] She knows her own mind best.

Jasper: But yours and only yours I am;
That's all I have to keep me from the statute¹³.
You dare be constant still?

Luce: O, fear me not,
In this I dare be better than a woman,
Nor shall his anger nor his offers move me,
Were they both equal to a prince's power.

Jasper: You know my rival?

Luce: Yes, and love him dearly,
Even as I love an ague or foul weather.
I prithee, Jasper, fear him not.

Jasper: O, no,
I do not mean to do him so much kindness.
But to our own desires; you know the plot
We both agreed on.

Luce: Yes, and will perform
My part exactly.

Jasper: I desire no more.
Farewell, and keep my heart; 'tis yours.

Luce: I take it;
He must do miracles makes me forsake it.

(Exeunt.)

Citizen: Fie upon 'em, little infidels. What a matter's here now? Well, I'll be hang'd for a halfpenny if there be not some abomination knavery in this play. Well, let 'em look to't. Rafe must come, and if there be any tricks abrewing ---

Wife: Let 'em brew and bake too, husband, a God's name. Rafe will find all out, I warrant you, and they were older than they are.

(Enter Merchant and Master Humphrey)

¹³ *statute*] against rogues and masterless men.

- Merchant: Come, sir, she's yours. Upon my faith, she's yours;
You have my hand. For other idle lets¹⁴
Between your hopes and her, thus with a wind
They are scattered and no more. My wanton prentice,
That like a bladder blew himself with love,
I have let out, and sent him to discover
New masters yet unknown.
- Humphrey: I thank you, sir.
Indeed, I thank you, sir; and ere I stir
It shall be known, however you do deem,
I am of gentle blood and gentle seem.
- Merchant: O, sir, I know it certain.
- Humphrey: Sir, my friend,
Although, as writers say, all things have end,
And that we call a pudding¹⁵ hath his two,
O, let it not seem strange, I pray to you,
If in this bloody simile I put
My love, more endless than frail things or gut¹⁶.
- Wife: Husband, I prithee, sweet lamb, tell me one thing, but tell me truly. -- Stay, youths, I beseech you, till I question my husband.
- Citizen: What is it, mouse?
- Wife: Sirrah, didst thou ever see a prettier child? How it behaves itself, I warrant ye, and speaks, and looks, and pearts up the head! -- I pray you, brother, with your favor, were you never none of Master Monkester's scholars?
- Citizen: Chicken, I prithee heartily, contain thyself. The childer¹⁷ are pretty childer, but when Rafe comes, lamb --
- Wife: Ay, when Rafe comes, cony. -- Well, my youth, you may proceed.
- Merchant: Well, sir, you know my love, and rest, I hope,
Assur'd of my consent. Get but my daughter's,
And wed her when you please. You must be bold
And clap in close unto her. Come, I know
You have language good enough to win a wench.

¹⁴ *lets*] obstacles.

¹⁵ *pudding*] an obsolete term for a sausage.

¹⁶ *gut*] recalling the skin of the sausage.

¹⁷ *childer*] children.

Wife: A whoreson tyrant, h'as been an old stringer¹⁸ in's days, I warrant him.

Humphrey: I take your gentle offer and withal
Yield love again for love reciprocal.

Merchant: What, Luce, within there?

(Enter Luce)

Luce: Call'd you, sir?

Merchant: I did.
Give entertainment to this gentleman
And see you be not froward¹⁹. -- To her, sir;
My presence will but be an eyesore to you.

(Exit Merchant)

Humphrey: Fair Mistress Luce, how do you? Are you well?
Give me your hand, and then I pray you tell,
How doth your little sister and your brother,
And whether you love me or any other?

Luce: Sir, these are quickly answered.

Humphrey: So they are,
Where women are not cruel. But how far
Is it now distant from this place we are in
Unto that blessed place, your father's warren²⁰?

Luce: What makes you think of that, sir?

Humphrey: Even that face;
For, stealing rabbits whilom in that place,
God Cupid, or the keeper, I know not whether²¹,
Unto my cost and charges brought you thither,
And there began --

Luce: Your game, sir?

¹⁸ *stringer*] fornicator.

¹⁹ *froward*] perverse.

²⁰ *warren*] piece of ground used for the breeding of rabbits.

²¹ *whether*] which.

- Humphrey: Let no game,
Or anything that tendeth to the same,
Be evermore remember'd, thou fair killer,
For whom I sat me down and brake my tiller²².
- Wife: There's a kind gentleman, I warrant you. When will you do as much for me, George?
- Luce: Beshrew me, sir, I am sorry for your losses
But, as the proverb says, I cannot cry.
I would you had not seen me.
- Humphrey: So would I,
Unless you had more maw²³ to do me good.
- Luce: Why, cannot this strange passion be withstood?
Send for a constable and raise the town.
- Humphrey: O, no, my valiant love will batter down
Millions of constable's and put to flight
Even that great watch of Midsummer Day at night.
- Luce: Beshrew me, sir, 'twere good I yielded then;
Weak women cannot hope, where valient men
Have no resistance.
- Humphrey: Yield, then. I am full
Of pity, though I say it, and can pull
Out of my pocket, thus, a pair of gloves²⁴.
Look, Lucy, look; the dog's tooth nor the dove's
Are not so white as these, and sweet they be,
And whipp'ed about with silk, as you may see.
If you desire the price, shoot from your eye
A beam to this place, and you shall espy
*F.S.*²⁵, which is to say, my sweetest honey,
They cost me three and twopence, or no money.
- Luce: Well, sir, I take them kindly, and I thank you.
What would you more?
- Humphrey: Nothing.

²² *tiller*] The double meaning relies on the use of the term to describe the handle of a crossbow.

²³ *maw*] literally "stomach," in this figurative instance "inclination."

²⁴ *a pair of gloves*] "Betrothal gloves ... were obligatory" as a gift from the man to the woman.

²⁵ *F.S.*] the price in tradesman's code.

Luce: Why, then, farewell.

Humphrey: Nor so, nor so; for, lady, I must tell,
Before we part, for what we met together.
God grant me time, and patience, and fair weather.

Luce: Speak, and declare your mind in terms so brief.

Humphrey: I shall. Then, first and foremost, for relief
I call to you, if that you can afford it,
I care not at what price; for, on my word, it
Shall be repaid again, although it cost me
More than I'll speak of now. For love hath toss'd me
In furious blanket, like a tennis ball,
And now I rise aloft, and now I fall.

Luce: Alas, good gentleman, alas the day.

Humphrey: I thank you heartily, and, as I say,
Thus do I still continue without rest,
I'th'morning like a man, at night a beast,
Roaring and bellowing mine own disquiet,
That much I fear, forsaking of my diet
Will bring me presently to that quandry,
I shall bid all adieu.

Luce: Now, by Saint Mary,
That were great pity.

Humphrey: So it were, beshrew me.
Then ease me, lusty Luce, and pity show me.

Luce: Why, sir, you know my will is nothing worth
Without my father's grant. Get his consent,
And then you may with assurance try me.

Humphrey: The worshipful your sire will not deny me.
For I have ask'd him, and he hath replied,
"Sweet Master Humphrey, Luce shall be thy bride."

Luce: Sweet Master Humphrey, then I am content.

Humphrey: And so am I, in truth.

Luce: Yet take me with you,
There is another clause must be annex'd,

And this it is (I swore and will perform it):
No man shall ever joy me as his wife
But he that stole me hence. If you dare venture,
I am yours (you need not fear; my father loves you);
If not, farewell forever.

Humphrey: Stay, nymph, stay;
I have a double gelding, colored bay,
Sprung by his father from Barbarian kind;
Another for myself, though somewhat blind,
Yet true as trusty tree.

Luce: I am satisfied,
And so I give my hand. Our course must lie
Through Waltham Forest, where I have a friend
Will entertain us. So, farewell, Sir Humphrey,
And think upon your business.

(Exit Luce)

Humphrey: Though I die,
I am resolv'd to venture life and limb
For one so young, so fair, so kind, so trim.

(Exit Humphrey)

Wife: By my faith and troth, George, and, as I am virtuous, it is e'en the kindest young man that ever trod on shoe leather. -- Well, go thy ways. If thou hast her not, 'tis not thy fault, 'faith.

Citizen: I prithee, mouse, be patient; 'a shall have her, or I'll make some of 'em smoke for't.

Wife: That's my good lamb, George. Fie, this stinking tobacco kills men. Would there were none in England. -- Now, I pray, gentlemen, what good does this stinking tobacco do you? Nothing, I warrant you: make chimneys o' your faces. -- O, husband, husband, now, now, there's Rafe; there's Rafe.

(Enter Rafe, like a grocer in's shop, with two prentices [Tim and George], reading Palmerin of England)

Citizen: Peace, fool. Let Rafe alone. -- Hark you, Rafe, do not strain yourself too much at the first. -- Peace! -- Begin, Rafe.

Rafe: *(Reads)* "Then Palmerin and Trineus, snatching their lances from their dwarfs and clasping their helmets, gallop'd amain after the giant; and Palmerin, having gotten a sight of him, came posting amain, saying, 'Stay, traitorous thief, for thou may'st not so carry away her that is worth the greatest lord in the world,' and with these words gave him a blow on the shoulder, that he struck him besides his elephant²⁶; and Trineus, coming to the knight that had Agricola behind him, set him soon besides his horse, with his neck broken in the fall, so that the princess, getting out of the throng, between joy and grief, said 'All happy knight, the mirror of all such as follow arms, now may I be well assured of the love thou bearest me.'" I wonder why the kings do not raise an army of fourteen or fifteen hundred thousand men, as big as the army that the

²⁶ *elephant*] a horse in the original passage.

Prince of Portigo²⁷ brought against Rosicleer, and destroy these giants. They do much hurt to wand'ring damels that go in quest of their knights.

Wife: Faith, husband, and Rafe says true; for they say the King of Portugal cannot sit at his meat, but the giants and the ettins will come and snatch it from him.

Citizen: Hold thy tongue. -- On, Rafe.

Rafe: And certainly those knights are much to be commended, who, neglecting their possessions, wander with a squire and a dwarf through the deserts to relieve poor ladies.

Wife: Ay, by my faith, are they, Rafe. Let 'em say what they will, they are indeed. Our knights neglect their possessions well enough, but they do not the rest.

Rafe: There are no such courteous and fair well-spoken knights in this age. They will call one the son of a whore that Palmerin of England would have call'd "fair sir"; and one that Rosicleer would have call'd "right beauteous damsel," they will call "damn'd bitch."

Wife: I'll be sworn will they, Rafe; they have call'd me so an hundred times about a scurvy pipe of tobacco.

Rafe: But what brave spirit could be content to sit in his shop, with a flappet of wood and a blue²⁸ apron before him, selling mithridatum²⁹ and dragon's water to visited houses, that might pursue feats of arms, and through his noble achievements procure such a famous history to be written of his heroic prowess?

Citizen: Well said, Rafe; some more of those words, Rafe.

Wife: They go finely, by my troth.

Rafe: Why should not then pursue this course, both for the credit of myself and our company? For amongst all the worthy books of achievements, I do not call to mind that I yet read of a grocer errant. I will be the said knight. Have you heard of any that hath wander'd unfurnished of his squire and dwarf? My elder prentice, Tim, shall be my trusty squire, and little George my dwarf. Hence my blue apron. Yet in remembrance of my former trade, upon my shield shall be portray'd a burning pestle, and I will be call'd the Knight o'th' Burning Pestle.

Wife: Nay, I dare swear thou wilt not forget thy old trade. Thou wert ever meek.

Rafe: Tim.

Tim: Anon.

²⁷ *Portigo*] Portugal.

²⁸ *blue*] the conventional color of a tradesman's clothing.

²⁹ *mithridatum ... water*] popular cures for the plague, which regularly "visited" seventeenth-century London.

Rafe: My beloved squire, and George, my dwarf, I charge you that from henceforth you never call me by any other name but the "Right Courteous and Valiant Knight of the Burning Pestle"; and that you never call any female by the name of a woman or wench, but "fair lady," if she have her desires, if not, "distressed damsel"; that you call all forests and heaths "deserts," and all horses "palfreys."

Wife: This is very fine, faith. Do the gentlemen like Rafe, think you, husband?

Citizen: Ay, I warrant thee; the players would give all the shoes in their shop for him.

Rafe: My beloved squire Tim, stand out. Admit this were a desert, and over it a knight errant pricking, and I should bid you inquire of his intents, what would you say?

Tim: Sir, my master sent me to know whither you are riding?

Rafe: No, thus: "Fair, sir, the Right Courteous and Valiant Knight of the Burning Pestle commanded me to inquire upon what adventure you are bound, whether to relieve some distressed damsels, or otherwise."

Citizen: Whoreson blockhead, cannot remember!

Wife: I'faith, and Rafe told him on't before. All the gentlemen heard him. -- Did he not, gentlemen? Did not Rafe tell him on't?

George: Right Courteous and Valiant Knight of the Burning Pestle, here is a distressed damsel to have a halfpenny-worth of pepper.

Wife: That's a good boy. -- See, the little boy can hit it. By my troth, it's a fine child.

Rafe: Relieve her with all courteous language. Now shut up shop; no more my prentice, but my trusty squire and dwarf. I must bespeak my shield and arming³⁰ pestle.

(Exeunt Tim and George)

Citizen: Go thy ways, Rafe. As I'm a true man, thou art the best on 'em all.

Wife: Rafe, Rafe.

Rafe: What say you, mistress?

Wife: I prithee, come again quickly, sweet Rafe.

Rafe: By and by.

(Exit Rafe)

³⁰ *arming*] appropriate to a coat of arms.

(Enter Jasper and his mother, Mistress Merrythought.)

Msts Merrythought:

Give thee my blessing? No, I'll ne'er give thee my blessing. I'll see thee hang'd first. It shall ne'er be said I gave thee my blessing. Th'art thy father's own son, of the right blood of the Merrythoughts. I may curse the time that e'er I knew thy father. He hath spent all his own, and mine too, and when I tell him of it, he laughs and dances, and sings, and cries, "A merry heart lives long-a." And thou art a wastethrift, and art run away from thy master, that lov'd thee well, and art come to me; and I have laid up a little for my younger son, Michael, and thou think'st to bezzle that; but thou shalt never be able to do it.

(Enter Michael)

-- Come hither, Michael; come, Michael; down on thy knees. Thou shalt have my blessing.

Michael: I pray you, mother, pray to God to bless me.

Msts Merrythought:

God bless thee. But Jasper shall never have my blessing. He shall be hang'd first; shall he not, Michael? How says't thou?

Michael: Yes, forsooth, mother, and grace of God.

Msts Merrythought: That's a good boy.

Wife: I'faith, it's a fine spoken child.

Jasper: Mother, though you forget a parent's love,
I must preserve the duty of a child.
I ran not from my master, nor return
To have your stock maintain my idleness.

Msts Merrythought:

I'faith, I had sorrow enough for thee, God knows; but I'll hamper thee well enough. Get thee in, thou vagabond; get thee in, and learn of thy brother Michael.

(Exeunt Jasper and Michael)

Old Merrythought: *(Sings within)*

*Nose, nose, jolly red nose,
And who gave thee this jolly red nose?*

Msts Merrythought:

Hark, my husband; he's singing and hoiting³¹, and I'm fain to cark³² and care, and all little enough. --
Husband, Charles, Charles Merrythought.

(Enter Old Merrythought)

Old Merrythought: *(Sings)*
Nutmegs and ginger, cinnamon and cloves,
And they gave me this jolly red nose.

Msts Merrythought:
If you would consider your state, you would have little list to sing iwis.

Old Merrythought:
It should never be considered while it were an estate, if I thought it would spoil my singing.

Msts Merrythought:
But how wilt thou do, Charles? Thou art an old man, and thou canst not work, and thou hast not forty shillings left, and thou eatest good meat, and drinkest good drink, and laughest?

Old Merrythought:
And will do.

Msts Merrythought:
But how wilt thou come by it, Charles?

Old Merrythought:
How? Why, how have I done hitherto this forty years? I never came into my dining room, but at eleven and six o'clock I found excellent meat and drink o'th' table; my clothes were never worn out, but next morning a tailor brought me a new suit; and without question it will be so ever; use makes perfectness. If all should fail, it is but a little straining myself extraordinary, and laugh myself to death.

Wife: It's a foolish old man, this: is not he, George?

Citizen: Yes, cony.

Wife: Give me a penny i'th' purse while I live, George.

Citizen: Ay, by Lady, cony. Hold thee there.

Msts Merrythought:

³¹ *hoiting*] indulging in wild mirth.

³² *cark*] virtually synonymous with "care."

Well, Charles, you promis'd to provide for Jasper, and I have laid up for Michael. I pray you, pay Jasper his portion. He's come home, and he shall not consume Michael's stock. He says his master turn'd him away, but I promise you truly, I think he ran away.

Wife: No, indeed, Mistress Merrythought, though he be a notable gallows³³, yet I'll assure you his master did turn him away; even in this place 'twas, i'faith, within this half hour, about his daughter; my husband was by.

Citizen: Hang him, rogue. He serv'd him well enough. Love his master's daughter! By my troth, cony, if there were a thousand boys, thou would'st spoil them all with taking their parts. Let his mother alone with him.

Wife: Ay, George, but yet truth is truth.

Old Merrythought:

Where is Jasper? He's welcome however. Call him in. He shall have his portion. Is he merry?

Msts Merrythought:

Ay, foul chive him³⁴, he is too merry. -- Jasper! -- Michael!

(Enter Jasper and Michael)

Old Merrythought:

Welcome Jasper, though thou run'st away, welcome; God bless thee. 'Tis thy mother's mind thou should'st receive thy portion. Thou has been abroad, and I hope hast learn'd experience enough to govern it. Thou art of sufficient years. Hold they hand: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, there's ten shillings for thee. Thrust thyself into the world with that, and take some settled course. If fortune cross thee, thou has a retiring place. Come home to me; I have twenty shillings left. Be a good husband, that is, wear ordinary clothes, eat the best meat, and drink the best drink; be merry and give to the poor, and believe me, thou has no end of thy goods.

Jasper: Long may you live free from all thought of ill,
And long have cause to be thus merry still.
But, father --

Old Merrythought:

No more words, Jasper. Get thee gone; thou hast my blessing. Thy father's spirit upon thee. Farewell, Jasper. *(Sings)*

But yet, or ere you part (oh, cruel),

Kiss me, kiss me, sweeting mine own dear jewel.

So, now begone; no words.

(Exit Jasper)

³³ *gallows*] gallows bird, a person who deserves to be hanged.

³⁴ *foul chive him*] bad luck await him.

Msts Merrythought:

So, Michael, now get thee gone, too.

Michael: Yes, forsooth, mother, but I'll have my father's blessing first.

Msts Merrythought:

No, Michael, 'tis no matter for his blessing; thou hast my blessing; begone. I'll fetch my money and jewels, and follow thee. I'll stay no longer with him, I warrant thee.

(Exit Michael)

-- Truly, Charles, I'll be gone, too.

Old Merrythought:

What! You will not?

Msts Merrythought:

Yes, indeed will I.

Old Merrythought:

(sings)

Hey-ho, farewell, Nan.

I'll never trust wench more again, if I can.

Msts Merrythought:

You shall not think, when all your own is gone, to spend that I have been scraping up for Michael.

Old Merrythought:

Farewell, good wife; I expect it not. All I have to do in this world is to be merry, which I shall if the ground be not taken from me, and if it be, *(sings)*

When earth and seas from me are reft,

The skies aloft for me are left.

(Exeunt)

Finis Actus Primi.

ACT II

(Enter Merchant and Humphrey)

Merchant: And how, faith, how goes it now, son Humphrey?

Humphrey: Right worshipful, and my beloved friend
And father dear, this matter's at an end.

Wife: George, dost thou think in thy conscience now 'twill be a match? Tell me but what thou think'st, sweet rogue. Thou see'st the poor gentleman, dear heart, how it labors and throbs, I warrant you, to be at rest. I'll go move the father for't.

Citizen: No, no, I prithee, sit still, honeysuckle. Thou'lt spoil all. If he deny him, I'll bring half a dozen good fellows myself, and in the shutting of an evening knock't³⁵ up, and there's an end.

Merchant: How was it, son? You told me that tomorrow
Before daybreak you must convey her hence.

Humphrey: I must, I must, and thus it is agreed:
Your daughter rides upon a brown-bay steed,
I on a sorrel, which I bought of Brian,
The honest host of the Red roaring Lion,
In Waltham situate. Then, if you may,
Consent in seemly sort, lest by delay
The fatal sisters³⁶ come and do the office,
And then you'll sing another song.

Merchant: Alas, why should you be thus full of grief to me,
That do as willing as yourself agree
To anything, so it be good and fair?
Then steal her when you will, if such a pleasure
Content you both. I'll sleep and never see it,
To make your joys more full. But tell me why
You may not here perform your marriage?

Wife: God's blessing o' thy soul, old man. I'faith, thou art loath to part true hearts, I see. - 'A has her, George, and I'm as glad on't -- Well, go thy ways, Humphrey, for a fair-spoken man; I believe thou hast not thy fellow within the walls of London; and I should say the suburbs too I should not lie. -- Why dost not rejoice with me, George?

Citizen: If I could but see Rafe again, I were as merry as mine host, i'faith.

³⁵ *knock't up*] conclude it.

³⁶ *The fatal sisters*] the Three Fates.

Humphrey: The cause you seem to ask, I thus declare
 (Help me, O Muses Nine): your daughter sware
 A foolish oath, the more it was the pity;
 Yet none but myself within this city
 Shall dare to say so, but a bold defiance
 Shall meet him, were he of the noble science³⁷.
 And yet she sware, and yet why did she swear?
 Truly, I cannot tell, unless it were
 For her own ease; for sure sometimes an oath,
 Being sworn, thereafter is like cordial broth.
 And this it was she swore: never to marry
 But such a one whose mighty arm could carry
 (As meaning me, for I am such a one)
 Her bodily away through stick and stone,
 Till both of us arrive, at her request,
 Some ten miles off in the wild Waltham Forest.

Merchant: If this be all, you shall not need to fear
 Any denial in your love. Proceed;
 I'll neither follow nor repent the deed.

Humphrey: Good night, twenty good nights, and twenty more,
 And twenty more good nights. That makes threescore.

(Exeunt)

(Enter Mistress Merrythought [With jewel casket and purse], and her son Michael)

Msts Merrythought:
 Come, Michael, art thou not weary, boy?

Michael: No, forsooth, mother, not I.

Msts Merrythought:
 Where be we now, child?

Michael: Indeed, forsooth, mother, I cannot tell, unless we be at Mile-end.
 Is not all the world Mile-End, mother?

Msts Merrythought:
 No, Michael, not all the world, boy; but I can assure thee, Michael, Mile-End is a goodly matter. There
 has been a pitchfield³⁸, my child, between the naughty Spaniels and the Englishmen, and the Spaniels ran

³⁷ *the noble science*] fencing.

³⁸ *a pitchfield*] perhaps a mock battle, part of citizen military training, in which the opponents were "Englishmen" and "Spaniards" (Weber)

away, Michael, and the Englishmen followed. My neighbor Coxstone was there, boy, and kill'd them all with a birding piece.

Michael: Mother, forsooth --

Msts Merrythought:

What says my white boy³⁹?

Michael: Shall not my father go with us too?

Msts Merrythought:

No, Michael, let thy father go snick-up⁴⁰. He shall never come between a pair of sheets with me again while he lives. Let him stay at home and sing for his supper, boy. Come, child, sit down, and I'll show my boy fine knacks indeed. Look here, Michael, here's a ring, and here's a brooch, and here's a bracelet, and here's two rings more, and here's money and gold by th' eye, my boy.

Michael: Shall I have all this, mother?

Msts Merrythought:

Ay, Michael, thou shalt have all, Michael.

(Enter Rafe, Squire [Tim], and Dwarf [George])

Citizen: Here's Rafe; here's Rafe.

Wife: How do you, Rafe? You are welcome, Rafe, as I may say. It's a good boy. Hold up thy head, and be not afraid. We are thy friends, Rafe. The gentlemen will praise thee, Rafe, if thou play'st thy part with audacity. Begin, Rafe, o' God's name.

Rafe: My trusty squire, unlace my helm. Give me my hat. Where are we, or what desert may this be?

George: Mirror of knighthood, this is, as I take it, the perilous Waltham Down, in whose bottom stands the enchanted valley.

Msts Merrythought:

O, Michael, we are betrayed; we are betrayed. Here be giants. Fly, boy; fly, boy; fly!

(Exuent Mother and Michael [dropping purse and casket])

Rafe: Lace on my helm again. What noise is this?
A gentle lady flying the embrace
Of some uncourteous knight? I will relieve her.

³⁹ *white boy*] favorite son.

⁴⁰ *go snick-up*] be hanged.

Go, squire, and say, the knight that wears the pestle
In honor of all ladies, swears revenge
Upon that recreant coward that pursues her.
Go comfort her, and that same gentle squire
That bears her company.

Tim: I go, brave knight.

(Tim Exits)

Rafe: My trusty dwarf and friend, reach me my shield,
And hold it while I swear. First by my knighthood;
Then by the soul of Amadis de Gaul,
My famous ancestor; then by my sword
The beauteous Brionella girt about me;
By this bright burning pestle, of mine honor
The living trophy; and by all respect
Due to distressed damsels: here I vow
Never to end the quest of this fair lady
And that forsaken squire till by my valor I gain their liberty.

George: Heaven bless the knight
That thus relieves poor errant gentlewomen.

(Exeunt)

Wife: Ay, marry, Rafe, this has some savor in't. -- I would see the proudest of them all offer to carry his books after him⁴¹. But, George, I will not have him go away so soon. I shall be sick if he go away again, that I shall. Call Rafe again, George, call Rafe again. I prithee sweetheart, let him come fight before me, and let's ha' some drums and some trumpets, and let him kill all that comes near him, and thou lov'st me, George.

Citizen: Peace a little, bird; he shall kill them all, and they were twenty more on 'em than there are.

(Enter Jasper)

Jasper: Now, Fortune, if thou be'st not only ill,
Show me thy better face, and bring about
Thy desperate wheel, that I may climb at length
And stand. This is our place of meeting,
If love have any constancy. O age,
Where only wealthy men are counted happy.
How shall I please thee, how deserve thy smiles,
When I am only rich in misery?

⁴¹ carry ... him] "Not worthy to carry his books after him" was an expression of contempt. (Tilley)

My father's blessing, and this little coin
 Is my inheritance, a strong revenue.
 From earth thou art, and to the earth I give thee.
(Throws away the money.)
 There grow and multiply whilst fresher air
 Breeds me a fresher fortune. -- How, illusion! *(Spies the casket)*
 What, hath the devil coin'd himself before me?
 'Tis metal good; it rings well. I am waking,
 And taking too, I hope. Now God's dear blessing
 Upon his heart that left it here. 'Tis mine.
 These pearls, I take it, were not left for swine.

(Exit Jasper)

Wife: I do not like that this unthrifty youth should embezzle away the money. The poor gentlewoman, his mother, will have a heavy heart for it, God knows.

Citizen: And reason good, sweetheart.

Wife: But let him go. I'll tell Rafe a tale in's ear shall fetch him again with a wanion⁴², I warrant him, if he be above ground; and besides, George, here are a number of sufficient gentlemen can witness, and myself, and yourself, and the musicians, if we be call'd in question. But here comes Rafe, George. Thou shalt hear him speak an he⁴³ were an emperall⁴⁴.

(Enter Rafe and Dwarf [George])

Rafe: Comes not sir squire again?

George: Right courteous knight,
 Your squire doth come and with him comes the lady,
(Enter Mistress Merrythought, and Michael, and Squire [Tim])
 For and⁴⁵ the Squire of Damsels, as I take it.

Rafe: Madam, if any service or devoir
 Of a poor errant knight may right your wrongs,
 Command it. I am press'd to give you succor,
 For to that holy end I bear my armor.

Msts Merrythought:

⁴² *with a wanion*] with a vengeance.

⁴³ *an he*] as if he.

⁴⁴ *emperall*] obsolete form of "imperial"

⁴⁵ *For and*] And also

Out, alas! I left a thousand pound, a thousand pound, e'en all the money I had laid up for this youth, upon the sight of your mastership, you look'd so grim, and, as I may say it, saving your presence, more like a giant than a mortal man.

Rafe: I am as you are, lady; so are they,
All mortal. But why weeps this gentle squire?

Msts Merrythought:
Has he not cause to weep, do you think, when he hath lost his inheritance?

Rafe: Young hope of valor, weep not. I am here
That will confound thy foe and pay it dear
Upon his coward head, that dares deny
Distressed squires and ladies equity.
I have but one horse, on which shall ride
This lady fair behind me, and before
This courteous squire. Fortune will give us more
Upon our next adventure. Fairly speed
Beside us, squire and dwarf, to do us need.

(Exeunt)

Citizen: Did not I tell you, Nell, what your man would do? By the faith of my body, wench, for clean action and good delivery, they may all cast their caps⁴⁶ at him.

Wife: And so they may, i'faith, for I dare speak it boldly, the twelve companies of London cannot match him, timber for timber⁴⁷. Well, George, and he be not inveigled⁴⁸ by some of these paltry players, I ha' much marvel; but, George, we ha' done our parts, if the boy have any grace to be thankful.

Citizen: Yes, I warrant thee, duckling.

(Enter Humphrey and Luce)

Humphrey: Good Mistress Luce, however I in fault am
For your lame horse, you're welcome unto Waltham.
But which way now to go or what to say
I know not truly, till it be broad day.

Luce: O, fear not, Master Humphrey, I am guide
For this place good enough.

Humphrey: Then up and ride,
Or, if it please you, walk for your repose,
Or sit, or, if you will, go pluck a rose⁴⁹;
Either of which shall be indifferent
To your good friend and Humphrey, whose consent
Is so entangled ever to your will
As the poor harmless horse is to the mill.

Luce: Faith, and you say the word, we'll e'en sit down

⁴⁶ *cast ... him*] throw their caps up in salute.

⁴⁷ *timber for timber*] limb for limb, man for man.

⁴⁸ *inveigled*] into acting as a career.

⁴⁹ *pluck a rose*] defecate.

And take a nap.

(Enter Jasper)

Jasper: Luce, dear friend Luce.

Luce: Here, Jasper.

Jasper: You are mine.

Humprey: If it be so, my friend, you use me fine.
What do you think I am?

Jasper: An arrant noddy⁵⁰.

Humprey: A word of obloquy! Now, by God's body,
I'll tell thy master, for I know thee well.

(Jasper beats Humphrey)

Jasper: Nay, and you be so forward for to tell,
Take that, and that, and tell him, sir, I gave it,
And say I paid you well.

Humphrey: O, sir, I have it,
And do confess the payment. Pray be quiet.

Jasper: Go, get to your nightcap⁵¹ and the diet
To cure your beaten bones.

Luce: Alas, poor Humphrey,
Get thee some wholesome broth with sage and comfrey⁵²;
A little oil of roses and a feather
To 'noint thy back withall.

Humphrey: When I came hither,
Would I had gone to Paris with John Dory⁵³.

Luce: Farewell, my pretty nump⁵⁴. I am very sorry

⁵⁰ *noddy*] fool.

⁵¹ *nightcap*] "sometimes worn by old men on the street, but a 'day-worn night-cap' usually indicated that the wearer was in ill health"

⁵² *comfrey*] a herb used to cure coughs.

⁵³ *John Dory*] In a song of this name the hero is captured while taking a crew of English seamen to the King of France.

⁵⁴ *nump*] fool.

I cannot bear thee company.

Humphrey: Farewell,
The devil's dam was ne'er so bang'd in hell.

(Exeunt, except Humphrey)

Wife: This young Jasper will prove me another things, o' my conscience, and he may be suffered. George, dost not see, George, how 'a swaggers and flies at the very heads o' folks as he were a dragon? Well, if I do not do his lesson for wronging the poor gentleman, I am no true woman. His friends that brought him up might have been better occupied, i'wis, then ha' taught him these fegaries. He's e'en in the highway to the gallows, God bless him.

Citizen: You're too bitter, cony; the young man may do well enough for all this.

Wife: Come hither, Master Humphrey. Has he hurt you? Now beshrew his fingers for't. Here, sweetheart, here's some green ginger for thee. --- Now beshrew my heart, but 'a has peppernel⁵⁵ in's head, as big as a pullet's egg. -- Alas, sweet lamb, how thy temples beat. Take the peace on him⁵⁶, sweetheart; take the peace on him.

(Enter a Boy)

Citizen: No, no, you talk like a foolish woman. I'll ha' Rafe fight with him, and swinge⁵⁷ him up well-favoredly. --- Sirrah boy, come hither. Let Rafe come in and fight with Jasper.

Wife: Ay, and beat him well; he's an unhappy⁵⁸ boy.

Boy: Sir, you must pardon us. The plot of our play lies contrary, and 'twill hazard the spoiling of our play.

Citizen: Plot me no plots. I'll ha' Rafe come out. I'll make your house too hot for you else.

Boy: Why, sir, he shall; but if anything fall out of order, the gentlemen must pardon us.

Citizen: Go your ways, goodman boy.

(Exit Boy)

--- I'll hold him a penny he shall have his bellyful of fighting now. Ho, here comes Rafe; no more.

(Enter Rafe, Mistress Merrythought, Michael, Squire [Tim], and Dwarf [George])

⁵⁵ *peppernel*] a lump or swelling.

⁵⁶ *Take ... him*] set the law on him.

⁵⁷ *swinge*] beat.

⁵⁸ *unhappy*] good-for-nothing.

Rafe: What knight is that, squire? Ask him if he keep
 The passage, bound by love of lady fair,
 Or else but prickant⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ *prickant*] traveling in quest of knightly adventure, pricking.

Humphrey: Sir, I am no knight,
 But a poor gentleman, that this same night
 Had stol'n from me on yonder green
 My lovely wife, and suffered (to be seen
 Yet extant on my shoulders) such a greeting
 That whilst I live I shall think of that meeting.

Wife: Ay, Rafe, he beat him unmercifully, Rafe; and thou spar'st him, Rafe, I would thou wert hang'd.

Citizen: No more, wife, no more.

Rafe: Where is the caitiff⁶⁰ wretch hath done this deed?
 Lady, your pardon, that I may proceed
 Upon the quest of this injurious knight.
 And thou, fair squire, repute me not the worse,
 In leaving the great venture of the purse
 And the rich casket till some better leisure.

(Enter Jasper and Luce)

Humphrey: Here comes the broker⁶¹ hath purloin'd my treasure.

Rafe: Go, squire, and tell him I am here,
 An errant knight-at-arms, to crave delivery
 Of that fair lady to her own knight's arms.
 If he deny, bid him take the choice of ground⁶²,
 And so defy him.

Tim: From the knight that bears
 The golden pestle, I defy thee, knight,
 Unless thou make fair restitution
 Of that bright lady.

Jasper: Tell the knight that sent thee
 He is an ass, and I will keep the wench
 And knock his head-piece.

Rafe: Knight, thou art but dead,
 If thou recall not thy uncourteous terms.

Wife: Break's pate, Rafe; break's pate, Rafe, soundly.

⁶⁰ *caitiff*] base, ignoble.

⁶¹ *broker*] pander, a pun

⁶² *take ... ground*] select a place for battle.

Truly, Master Knight of the Burning Pestle, I am weary.

Michael: Indeed, la, mother, and I am very hungry.

Rafe: Take comfort, gentle dame, and you, fair squire,
For in this desert there must needs be plac'd
Many strong castles held by courteous knights;
And till I bring you safe to one of those,
I swear by this my order ne'er to leave you.

Wife: Well said, Rafe. -- George, Rafe was ever comfortable, was he not?

Citizen: Yes, duck.

Wife: I shall ne'er forget him, when we had lost our child (you know it was stray'd almost, alone, to Puddlewharf⁶⁸, and the criers were abroad for it, and there it had drown'd itself but for a sculler); Rafe was the most comfortablest to me. "Peace, mistress," says he, "let it go; I'll get you another as good." Did he not, George; did he not say so?

Citizen: Yes, indeed, did he, mouse.

George: I would we had a mess of pottage and a pot of drink, squire and were going to bed.

Tim: Why, we are at Waltham town's end, and that's the Bell Inn.

George: Take courage, valiant knight, damsel, and squire.
I have discovered, not a stone's cast off,
An ancient castle, held by the old knight
Of the most holy order of the Bell,
Who gives to all knights errant entertain⁶⁹.
There plenty is of food, and all prepar'd
By the white hands of his own lady dear.
He hath three squires that welcome all his guests.
The first hight⁷⁰ Chamberlino, who will see
Our beds prepar'd, and bring us snowy sheets,
Where never footman stretch'd his butter'd hams⁷¹.
The second hight Tapstero, who will see
Our pots full filled and hath no froth therein.
The third, a gentle squire, Ostlero hight,
Who will our paltreys slick with wisps of straw,

⁶⁸ *Puddlewharf*] "A landing-place on the N. bank of the Thames at the foot of St. Andrew's Hill."

⁶⁹ *entertain*] entertainment.

⁷⁰ *hight*] is named.

⁷¹ *never ... hams*] "This alludes to the running footman ... like the jockies, they are put upon a particular diet; and, in order to prevent cramps, the calves of their legs are greased."

And in the manger put them oats enough,
And never grease their teeth with candle snuff⁷².

Wife: That same dwarf's a pretty boy, but the squire's a groutno!⁷³

Rafe: Knock at the gates, my squire, with stately lance.

(Enter Tapster)

Tapster: Who's there? --- You're welcome, gentlemen. Will you see a room?

George: Right courteous and valiant Knight of the Burning Pestle, this is the squire Tapstero.

Rafe: Fair squire Tapstero, I a wand'ring knight,
Hight of the Burning Pestle, in the quest
Of this fair lady's casket and wrought purse,
Losing myself in this vast wilderness
Am to this castle well by fortune brought,
Where, hearing of the goodly entertain
Your knight of holy order of the Bell
Gives to all damsels and all errant knights,
I thought to knock, and now am bold to enter.

Tapster: An't please you see a chamber, you are very welcome.

(Exeunt)

(Enter Humphrey and Merchant.)

Wife: O, George, here's Master Humphrey again now, that lost Mistress Luce and Mistress Luce's father.
Master Humphrey will do somebody's errand, I warrant him.

Humphrey: Father, it's true in arms I ne'er shall clasp her,
For she is stol'n away by your man Jasper.

Wife: I thought he would tell him.

Merchant: Unhappy that I am to lose my child!
Now I begin to think on Jasper's words,
Who oft hath urg'd to me thy foolishness.
Why didst thou let her go? Thou lov'st her not,
That wouldst bring home thy life, and not bring her.

⁷² *grease ... snuff*] "A common trick of the ostlers at the time to prevent the horses from eating the hay"

⁷³ *groutno!*] blockhead.

Humphrey: Father, forgive me. Shall I tell you true?
 Look on my shoulders. They are black and blue.
 Whilst to and fro fair Luce and I were winding,
 He came and basted⁷⁴ me with a hedge-binding⁷⁵.

Merchant: Get men and horses straight. We will be there
 Within this hour. You know the place again?

Humphrey: I know the place where he my loins did swaddle⁷⁶.
 I'll get six horses, and to each a saddle.

Merchant: Meantime I'll go talk with Jasper's father.

(Exeunt)

Wife: George, what wilt thou lay⁷⁷ with me now that Master Humphrey has not Mistress Luce yet? Speak,
 George, what wilt thou lay with me?

Citizen: No, Nell, I warrant thee Jasper is at Puckeridge⁷⁸ with her by this.

Wife: Nay, George, you must consider Mistress Luce's feet are tender, and besides 'tis dark; and I promise you
 truly, I do not see how he should get out of Waltham Forest with her yet.

Citizen: Nay, cony, what wilt thou lay with me that Rafe has her not yet?

Wife: I will not lay against Rafe, honey, because I have not spoken with him. But look, George, peace; here
 comes the merry old gentleman again.

(Enter Old Merrythought)

(Enter Merchant)

Citizen: Peace, cony; thou shalt see him taken down too, I warrant thee. Here's Luce's father come now.

Old Merrythought:

(Sings)

As you come from Walsingham⁷⁹,

From that holy land,

⁷⁴ *basted*] hit.

⁷⁵ *hedge-binding*] "something used to bind together the bushes composing a hedge"

⁷⁶ *swaddle*] beat.

⁷⁷ *lay*] wager.

⁷⁸ *Puckeridge*] a village twenty-three miles north of London, and sixteen miles north of Waltham Forest.

⁷⁹ *Walsingham*] in Norfolk, "The famous shrine of the Virgin Mary, which was more frequented by pilgrims than any other in England, or perhaps in Europe" (Sugden)

*There met you not with my true love
By the way as you came?*

Merchant: O, Master Merrythought, my daughter's gone.
This mirth becomes you not; my daughter's gone.

Old Merrythought:
(Sings)
Why, an if she be, what care I?
Or let her come, or go, or tarry?

Merchant: Mock not my misery. It is your son,
Whom I have made my own, when all forsook him,
Has stol'n my only joy, my child, away.

Old Merrythought:
(Sings)
He set her on a milk-white steed,
And himself upon a gray.
He never turn'd his face again,
But he bore her quite away.

Merchant: Unworthy of the kindness I have shown
To thee and thine! Too late I well perceive
Thou art consenting to my daughter's loss.

Old Merrythought:
Your daughter! what a stir's here wi' yer daughter. Let her go. Think no more on her, but sing loud. If both
my sons were on the gallows, I would sing,
Down, down, down, they fall
Down; and arise they never shall.

Merchant: O, might I behold her once again,
And she once more embrace her aged sire.

Old Merrythought:
Fie, how scurvily this goes! "And she once more embrace her aged sire?" You'll make a dog on her, will
ye? She cares much for her aged sire, I warrant you.
(Sings)
She cares not for her daddy, nor
She cares not for her mommy;
For she is, she is, she is, she is,
My Lord of Lowgave's lassy.

Merchant: For this thy scorn, I will pursue that son
Of thine to death.

Old Merrythought:

Do, and when you ha' kill'd him. (*Sings*)
Give him flowers enow⁸⁰, palmer; give him flowers enow.
Give him red, and white, and blue, green, and yellow.

Merchant: I'll go fetch my daughter.

Old Merrythought:

I'll hear no more o' your daughter. It spoils my mirth.

Merchant: I say, I'll fetch my daughter.

Old Merrythought:

(*Sings*)
Was never man for lady's sake,
Down, down,
Tormented as I poor Sir Guy⁸¹,
De derry down,
For Lucy's sake, that lady bright,
Down, down,
As ever men beheld with eye,
De derry down.

Merchant: I'll be reveng'd by Heaven.

(*Exeunt*)

Finis Actus Secundi

Wife: How dost thou like this, George?

Citizen: Why, this is well, cony. But if Rafe were hot once, thou shouldst see more.

Wife: The fiddlers go again, husband.

Citizen: Ay, Nell, but this is scurvy music. I gave the whoreson gallows⁸² money, and I think he has not got me the waits of Southwark. If I hear him not anon, I'll twinge him by the ears. -- You musicians, play *Baloo*.

Wife: No, good George, let's ha' *Lachrymae*.

Citizen: Why, this is it, cony.

⁸⁰ *enow*] enough.

⁸¹ *Sir Guy*] Guy of Warwick, the chivalric hero of a crude metrical romance long popular in England and the subject of many ballads.

⁸² *gallows*] gallows-bird.

Wife: It's all the better, George, Now, sweet lamb, what story is that painted upon the cloth⁸³? The confutation of Saint Paul⁸⁴?

Citizen: No, lamb, that's Rafe and Lucrece⁸⁵.

Wife: Rafe and Lucrece? Which Rafe? Our Rafe?

Citizen: No, mouse, that was a Tartarian.

Wife: A Tartarian? Well, I would the **fiddlers had done**, that we might see our Rafe again. (Hirsch note: "players would return"? Since we have no "fiddlers ...")

⁸³ *cloth*] tapestry, often painted with a famous scene and used as a backdrop or curtain.

⁸⁴ *The ... Paul*] "The wife undoubtedly means *The Conversion of St. Paul*"

⁸⁵ *Rafe and Lucrece*] Another blunder, this time for The Rape of Lucrece, raped by Sextus Tarquinius, a Tarquin, not by Rafe, a "Tartarian".

ACT III

(Enter Jasper and Luce)

Jasper: Come, my dear dear; though we have lost our way,
We have not lost ourselves. Are you not weary
With this night's wand'ring, broken from your rest,
And frighted with the terror that attends
The darkness of this wild, unpeopled place?

Luce: No, my best friend, I cannot either fear
Or entertain a weary thought, whilst you
(The end of all my full desires) stand by me.
Let them that lose their hopes, and live to languish
Amongst the number of forsaken lovers,
Tell⁸⁶ the long weary steps, and number time,
Start at a shadow, and shrink up their blood,
Whilst I (possess'd with all content and quiet)
Thus take my pretty love, and thus embrace him.

Jasper: You have caught me, Luce, so fast, that whilst I live
I shall become your faithful prisoner,
And wear these chains forever! Come, sit down,
And rest your body, too, too delicate.
For these disturbances. So, will you sleep?
Come, do not be more able than you are.
I know you are not skillful in these watches,
For women are no soldiers. Be not nice⁸⁷,
But take it. Sleep, I say.

Luce: I cannot sleep.
Indeed, I cannot, friend.

⁸⁶ *Tell*] count.

⁸⁷ *nice*] fastidious.

Jasper: Sleep, sleep, and quiet rest crown thy sweet thoughts.
 Keep from her fair blood distempers, startings,
 Horrors, and fearful shapes. Let all her dreams
 Be joys and chaste delights, embraces, wishes,
 And such new pleasures as the ravish'd soul
 Gives to the senses. So, my charms have took.
 Keep her, you powers divine, whilst I contemplate
 Upon the wealth and beauty of her mind.
 She is only fair and constant, only kind,
 And only to thee, Jasper. O my joys,
 Whither will you transport me? Let not fulness
 Of my poor buried hopes come up together
 And overcharge my spirits. I am weak.
 Some say (however ill) the sea and women
 Are govern'd by the moon: both ebb and flow,
 Both full of changes. Yet to them that know
 And truly judge, these but opinions are,
 And heresies to bring on pleasing war
 Between our tempers, that without these were
 Both void of after-love⁸⁸ and present fear,
 Which are the best of Cupid. O thou child⁸⁹
 Bred from despair, I dare not entertain thee,
 Having a love without the faults of women,
 And greater in her perfect goods than men;
 Which to make good, and please myself the stronger,
 Though certainly I am certain of her love,
 I'll try her, that the world and memory
 May sing to aftertimes her constancy.
 --- Luce, Luce, awake.

Luce: Why do you fright me, friend,
 With those distempered looks? What makes your sword
 Drawn in your hand? Who hath offended you?
 I prithee, Jasper, sleep; thou art wild with watching.

Jasper: Come, make your way to heaven, and bid the world
 (With all the villainies that stick upon it)
 Farewell. You're for another life.

Luce: O, Jasper,
 How have my tender years committed evil
 (Especially against the man I love),

⁸⁸ *after-love*] the love that follows reconciliation.

⁸⁹ *thou child*] Cupid

Thus to be cropp'd untimely?

Jasper: Foolish girl,
 Canst thou imagine I could love his daughter
 That flung me from my fortune into nothing,
 Discharged me his service, shut the doors
 Upon my poverty, and scorn'd my prayers,
 Sending me, like a boat without a mast,
 To sink or swim? Come, by this hand you die.
 I must have life and blood to satisfy
 Your father's wrongs.

Wife: Away, George, away, raise the watch at Ludgate, and bring a mittimus⁹⁰ from the justice for this desperate villain. -- Now, I charge you, gentlemen, see the king's peace kept! -- O, my heart, what a varlet's this to offer manslaughter upon the harmless gentlewoman!

Citizen: I warrant thee, sweetheart, we'll have him hampered.

Luce: O, Jasper, be not cruel.
 If thou wilt kill me, smile and do it quickly,
 And let not many deaths appear before me.
 I am a woman, made of fear and love,
 A weak, weak woman. Kill not with thy eyes.
 They shoot me through and through. Strike; I am ready,
 And, dying, still I love thee.

(Enter Merchant, Humphrey, and his men)

Merchant: Whereabouts?

Jasper: [*aside*] No more of this; now to myself again.

Humphrey: There, there he stands, with sword, like martial knight,
 Drawn in his hand; therefore, beware the fight,
 You that be wise. For were I good Sir Bevis⁹¹
 I would not stay his coming, by your leaves.

Merchant: Sirrah, restore my daughter.

Jasper: Sirrah, no.

Merchant: Upon him, then.

Wife: So, down with him; down with him; down with him. Cut him i'th'leg, boys; cut him i'th'leg!

⁹⁰ *mittimus*] warrant for arrest.

⁹¹ *Sir Bevis*] Like Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Hampton is the hero of a crude metrical romance long popular in England, especially among the middle class ...

Merchant: Come your ways, minion. I'll provide a cage
For you, you're grown so tame. -- Horse her away.

Humphrey: Truly I'm glad your forces have the day.

(Exeunt all but Jasper)

Jasper: They are gone, and I am hurt; my love is lost,
Never to get again. O, me unhappy!
Bleed, bleed, and die, I cannot. O my folly,
Thou hast betray'd me. Hope, where art thou fled?
Tell me if thou be'st anywhere remaining.
Shall I but see my love again? O, no!
She will not deign to look upon her butcher,
Nor is it fit she should; yet I must venture.
O Chance, or Fortune, or whate'er thou art
That men adore for powerful, hear my cry,
And let me loving, live; or losing, die.

(Exit)

Wife: Is 'a gone, George?

Citizen: Ay, cony.

Wife: Marry, and let him go sweetheart. By the faith o' my body, 'a has put me into such a fright that I tremble,
as they say, as 'twere an aspen leaf. Look o' my little finger, George, how it shakes. Now, i'truth, every
member of my body is the worse for't.

Citizen: Come, hug in mine arms, sweet mouse. He shall not fright thee any more. Alas, mine own dear heart, how
it quivers.

(Enter Mistress Merrythought, Rafe, Michael, Squire [Tim], Dwarf [George], Host, and a Tapster.)

Wife: O, Rafe, how dost thou, Rafe? How hast thou slept tonight⁹²? Has the knight us'd thee well?

Citizen: Peace, Nell; let Rafe alone.

Tapster: Master, the reckoning is not paid.

Rafe: Right courteous knight, who, for the order's sake
Which thou hast ta'en hang'st out the holy bell,
As I this flaming pestle bear about,

⁹² *tonight*] last night.

We render thanks to your puissant self,
Your beauteous lady, and your gentle squires,
For thus refreshing of our wearied limbs,
Stiffen'd with hard achievements in wild desert.

Tapster: Sir, there is twelve shillings to pay.

Rafe: Thou merry squire, Tapstero, thanks to thee
For comforting our souls with double jug;
And if advent'rous fortune prick thee forth,
Thou jovial squire, to follow feats of arms,
Take heed thou tender every lady's cause,
Every true knight and every damsel fair;
But spill the blood of treacherous Sarazens
And false enchanter, that with magic spells
Have done to death full many a noble knight.

Host: Thou valiant Knight of the Burning Pestle, give ear to me; there is twelve shillings to pay, and, as I am a true knight, I will not bate⁹³ a penny.

Wife: George, I pray thee, tell me, must Rafe pay twelve shillings now?

Citizen: No, Nell, no; nothing but the old knight is merry with Rafe.

Wife: O, is't nothing else? Rafe will be as merry as he.

Rafe: Sir knight, this mirth of yours becomes you well;
But, to require this liberal courtesy,
If any of your squires will follow arms,
He shall receive from my heroic hand
A knighthood, by the virtue of the pestle.

Host: Fair knight, I thank you for your noble offer.
Therefore, gentle knight,
Twelve shillings you must pay, or I must cap⁹⁴ you.

Wife: Look, George, did not I tell thee as much; the Knight of the Bell is in earnest. Rafe shall not be beholding to him. Give him his money, George, and let him go snick-up.

Citizen: Cap Rafe? No. -- Hold your hand, Sir Knight of the Bell; there's your money. Have you anything to say to Rafe now? Cap Rafe!

⁹³ *bate*] rebate.

⁹⁴ *cap*] arrest.

Wife: I would you should know it, Rafe has friends that will not suffer him to be capp'd for ten times so much, and ten times to the end of that. -- Now take thy course, Rafe.

Msts Merrythought:

Come, Michael, thou and I will go home to thy father. He hath enough left to keep us a day or two, and we'll set fellows abroad to cry our purse and our casket. Shall we, Michael?

Michael: Ay, I pray, mother. In truth my feet are full of chilblains with traveling.

Wife: Faith, and those chilblains are a foul trouble. Mistress Merrythought, when your youth comes home, let him rub all the soles of his feet and the heels and his ankles with a mouse skin, or if none of your people can catch a mouse, when he goes to bed let him roll his feet in the warm embers, and I warrant you he shall be well; and you may make him put his fingers between his toes and smell to them. It's very sovereign for his head if he be costive.

Msts Merrythought:

Master Knight of the Burning Pestle, my son Michael and I bid you farewell. I thank your worship heartily for your kindness.

Rafe: Farewell, fair lady, and your tender squire.
If pricking through these deserts I do hear
Of any traitorous knight who through his guile
Hath light upon your casket and your purse,
I will despoil him of them and restore them.

Msts Merrythought:

I thank your worship.

(Exit with Michael)

Rafe: Dwarf, bear my shield; squire, elevate my lance.
And now farewell, you Knight of the holy Bell.

Citizen: Ay, ay, Rafe, all is paid.

Rafe: But yet before I go, speak, worthy knight,
If aught you do of sad adventures know,
Where errant knight may through his prowess win
Eternal fame and free some gentle souls
From endless bonds of still and ling'ring pain.

Host: Sirrah, go to Nick the Barber and bid him prepare himself, as I told you before, quickly.

Tapster: I am gone, sir.

(Exit Tapster)

Host: Sir knight, this wilderness affordeth none
 But the great venture, where full many a knight
 Hath tried his prowess and come off with shame,
 And where I would not have you lose your life
 Against no man but furious fiend of hell.

Rafe: Speak on, sir knight; tell what he is and where;
 For here I vow, upon my blazing badge,
 Never to blaze a day in quietness;
 But bread and water will I only eat,
 And the green herb and rock shall be my couch,
 Till I have quell'd that man or beast or fiend
 That works such damage to all errant knights.

Host: Not far from hence, near to a craggy cliff,
 At the north end of this distressed town,
 There doth stand a lowly house
 Ruggedly builded, and in it a cave
 In which an ugly giant now doth won⁹⁵,
 Yeleped⁹⁶ Barbaroso. In his hand
 He shakes a naked lance of purest steel,
 With sleeves turn'd up, and him before he wears
 A motley garment to preserve his clothes
 From blood of those knights which he massacres,
 And ladies gent⁹⁷. Without his door doth hang
 A copper basin on a prickant spear⁹⁸,
 At which no sooner gentle knights can knock
 But the shrill sound fierce Barbaroso hears,
 And rushing forth, brings in the errant knight
 And sets him down in an enchanted chair.
 Then with an engine which he hath prepar'd
 With forty teeth, he claws his courtly crown;
 Next makes him wink, and underneath his chin
 He plants a brazen piece⁹⁹ of mighty bord¹⁰⁰,
 And knocks his bullets¹⁰¹ round about his cheeks,
 Whilst with his fingers and an instrument

⁹⁵ *won*] live.

⁹⁶ *Yeleped*] named.

⁹⁷ *gent*] gentle.

⁹⁸ *copper ... spear.*] the signpost of a barber-surgeon (*prickant* - pointing upward). The basin indicated bloodletting and the spear is the Host's romantic description of the barber's pole.

⁹⁹ *piece*] barber's bowl.

¹⁰⁰ *bord*] rim.

¹⁰¹ *bullets*] pellets of soap.

With which he snaps his hair off he doth fill
 The wretch's ears with a most hideous noise.
 Thus every knight adventurer he doth trim,
 And now no creature dares encounter him.

Rafe: In God's name, I will fight him, kind sir.
 Go but before me to this dismal cave
 Where this huge giant, Barbaroso, dwells,
 And, by that virtue that brave Rosicleer
 That damned brood of ugly giants¹⁰² slew,
 And Palmerin Frannarco¹⁰³ overthrow,
 I doubt not but to curb this traitor foul,
 And to the devil send his guilty soul.

Host: Brave spirited knight, thus far I will perform
 This your request: I'll bring you within sight
 Of this most loathsome place, inhabited
 By a more loathsome man; but dare not stay,
 For his main force swoops all he sees away.

Rafe: Saint George, set on before!¹⁰⁴ March, squire and page.

(Exeunt)

Wife: George, dost think Rafe will confound the giant?

Citizen: I hold my cap to a farthing he does. Why, Nell, I saw him wrastle with the great Dutchman¹⁰⁵ and hurl him.

Wife: Faith, and that Dutchman was a goodly man, if all things were answerable to his bigness; and yet they say there was a Scotchman higher than he, and that they two and a knight met and saw one another for nothing; but of all the sights that ever were in London since I was married, methinks the little child that was so fair grown about the members was the prettiest, that and the hermaphrodite.

Citizen: Nay, by your leave, Nell, Ninivie¹⁰⁶ was better.

Wife: Ninivie? O, that was the story of Joan and the wall¹⁰⁷, was it not, George?

¹⁰² *giants*] Brandageleon and his thirty knights, overthrown by Rosicleer in Book One, Chapter XXXVI of *The Mirror of Knighthood* (Murch).

¹⁰³ *Frannarco*] the giant of act I, in the passage from *Palmerin de Lovia* read by Rafe.

¹⁰⁴ *Saint ... before!*] a battle cry.

¹⁰⁵ *Dutchman*] probably reference to a freak show character ...

¹⁰⁶ *Ninivie*] Nineveh, with Jonah and the Whale, was a popular puppet play in the tradition of the medieval mystery plays.

¹⁰⁷ *Joan ... wall*] blunder for Jonah and the whale. The name "Joan" had bawdy implications, as the proverb "Joan is as good as my lady in the dark" indicates, and the Wife's blunder may allude to a familiar story or joke.

Citizen: Yes, lamb.

(Enter Mistress Merrythought)

Wife: Look, George, here comes Mistress Merrythought again, and I would have Rafe come and fight with the giant. I tell you true, I long to see't.

Citizen: Good Mistress Merrythought, be gone, I pray you, for my sake. I pray you, forbear a little. You shall have audience presently. I have a little business.

Wife: Mistress Merrythought, if it please you to refrain your passion a little, till Rafe have dispatch'd the giant out of the way, we shall think ourselves much bound to you. I thank you, good Mistress Merrythought.

(Exit Mistress Merrythought)

(Enter Rafe, Host, Squire [Tim], and Dwarf [George])

Host: Puissant knight, yonder his mansion is.
Lo, where the spear and copper basin are.
Behold that string on which hangs many a tooth¹⁰⁸
Drawn from the gentle jaw of wand'ring knights.
I dare not stay to sound; he will appear.

(Exit Host)

Rafe: O faint not, heart. Susan, my lady dear,
The cobbler's maid in Milk Street¹⁰⁹, for whose sake
I take these arms, O let the thought of thee
Carry thy knight through all adventurous deeds;
And in the honor of thy beauteous self
May I destroy this monster, Barbaroso.
Knock, squire, upon the basin, till it break
With the shrill strokes, or till the giant speak.

(Enter Barber)

Wife: O George, the giant, the giant! -- Now, Rafe, for thy life.

Barber: What fond unknowing wight is this, that dares
So rudely knock at Barbaroso's cell,
Where no man comes but leaves his fleece¹¹⁰ behind?

¹⁰⁸ *tooth*] The barber-surgeons were also tooth drawers.

¹⁰⁹ *Milk Street*] ran north from Cheapside to Gresham Street. "It was originally the part of the market where milk and butter were sold."

¹¹⁰ *fleece*] beard.

Rafe: I, traitorous caitliff, who am sent by fate
To punish all the sad enormities
Thou hast committed against ladies gent
And errant knights. Traitor to God and men,
Prepare thyself! This is the dismal hour
Appointed for thee to give strict account
Of all thy beastly treacherous villainies.

- Barber: Foolhardy knight, full soon thou shalt aby
This fond¹¹¹ reproach. Thy body will I bang,
(*He takes down his pole*)
And, lo, upon that string thy teeth shall hang.
Prepare thyself, for dead soon shalt thou be.
- Rafe: Saint George for me!
- (*They fight*)
- Barber: Gargantua¹¹² for me!
- Wife: To him, Rafe; to him. Hold up the giant. Set out thy leg before, Rafe.
- Citizen: Falsify a blow, Rafe; falsify a blow. The giant lies open on the left side.
- Wife: Bear't off¹¹³; bear't off still. There, boy. -- O, Rafe's almost down; Rafe's almost down.
- Rafe: Susan, inspire me. -- Now have up again.
- Wife: Up, up, up, up, up! So, Rafe, down with him; down with him, Rafe.
- Citizen: Fetch him o'er the hip, boy.
- Wife: There, boy. Kill, kill, kill, kill, Rafe.
- Citizen: No, Rafe, get all out of him first.
- Rafe: Presumptuous man, see to what desperate end
Thy treachery hath brought thee. The just gods,
Who never prosper those that do despise them,
For all the villainies which thou hast done
To knights and ladies, now have paid thee home
By my stiff arm, a knight adventurous.
But say, vile wretch, before I send thy soul
To sad Avernus¹¹⁴, whither it must go,
What captives holdst thou in thy sable cave.
- Barber: Go in and free them all; thou hast the day.

¹¹¹ *fond*] foolish.

¹¹² *Gargantua*] the giant king in Rabelais' satirical romance, published in 1535.

¹¹³ *Bear't off*] Resist the blow.

¹¹⁴ *Avernus*] a lake in southern Italy traditionally regarded as an entrance to hell.

Rafe: Go, squire and dwarf, search in this dreadful cave
And free the wretched prisoners from their bonds.

(Exit Squire [Tim] and Dwarf [George])

Barber: I crave for mercy, as thou art a knight,
And scorn'st to spill the blood of those that beg.

Rafe: Thou show'd'st no mercy, nor shalt thou have any.
Prepare thyself, for thou shalt surely die.

(Enter Squire [Tim], leading one [First Knight] winking, with a basin¹¹⁵ under his chin.)

Tim: Behold, brave knight, here is one prisoner,
Whom this wild man hath used as you see.

Wife: This is the first wise word I heard the squire speak.

Rafe: Speak what thou art and how thou hast been us'd,
That I may give condign¹¹⁶ punishment.

First Knight: I am a knight that took my journey post
Northward from London, and in coureous wise
This giant train'd¹¹⁷ me to his loathsome den
Under pretense of killing of the itch,
And all my body with a powder strew'd,
That smarts and stings, and cut away my beard
And my curl'd locks wherein were ribands¹¹⁸ tied,
And with a water wash'd my tender eyes
(Whilst up and down about me still he skipp'd),
Whose virtue is that till mine eyes be wip'd
With a dry cloth, for this my foul disgrace
I shall not dare to look a dog i'th' face.

Wife: Alas, poor knight. -- Relieve him, Rafe; relieve poor knights whilst you live.

Rafe: My trusty squire, convey him to the town,
Where he may find relief. Adieu, fair knight.

¹¹⁵ *basin*] used to catch the lather and bristles in shaving and the blood in bloodletting.

¹¹⁶ *condign*] well deserved.

¹¹⁷ *train'd*] lured.

¹¹⁸ *ribands*] ribbons. Foppish knights wore them in their hair.

(Exit Knight. Enter Dwarf [George], leading one [Second Knight] with a patch o'er his nose¹¹⁹.)

¹¹⁹ *with ... nose*] The main is suffering from an advanced stage of syphilis, often called the French pox and one of the many diseases treated by barbers.

George: Puissant knight of the Burning Pestle hight,
See here another wretch, whom this foul beast
Hath scorch'd and scor'd¹²⁰ in this inhuman wise.

Rafe: Speak me thy name and eke thy place of birth,
And what hath been thy usage in this cave.

Second Knight: I am a knight, Sir Pockhole is my name,
And by my birth I am a Londoner,
Free by my copy¹²¹; but my ancestors
Were Frenchmen all; and riding hard this way
Upon a trotting horse, my bones did ache¹²²;
And I, faint knight, to ease my weary limbs,
Light at this cave, when straight this furious fiend,
With sharpest instrument of purest steel,
Did cut the gristle of my nose away,
And in the place this velvet plaster stands.
Relieve me, gentle knight, out of his hands.

Wife: Good Rafe, relieve Sir Pockhole and send him away, for in truth, his breath stinks.

Rafe: Convey him straight after the other knight.
Sir Pockhole, fare you well.

Second Knight: Kind sir, good night.

(Exit Second Knight)

Citizen: Coney, I can tell thee the gentlemen like Rafe.

Wife: Ay, George, I see it well enough. -- Gentlemen, I thank you all heartily for gracing my man Rafe, and I promise you you shall see him oft'ner.

Barber: Mercy, great knight, I do recant my ill.
And henceforth never gentle blood will spill.

Rafe: I give thee mercy, but yet shalt thou swear
Upon my burning pestle to perform
Thy promise utter'd.

Barber: I swear and kiss.

¹²⁰ *scorch'd and scor'd*] both mean "cut".

¹²¹ *copy*] official document admitting one to the freedom of the city.

¹²² *my ... ache*] indicating an advanced stage of syphilis.

Rafe: Depart then, and amend. --
Come, squire and dwarf, the sun grows towards his set,
And we have many more adventure yet.

(Exeunt)

Citizen: Now Rafe is in this humor, I know he would ha' beaten all the boys in the house if they had been set on him.

Wife: Ay, George, but it is well as it is. I warrant you the gentlemen do consider what it is to overthrow a giant. But look, George, here comes Mistress Merrythought and her son Michael. -- Now you are welcome, Mistress Merrythought. Now Rafe has done, you may go on.

(Enter Mistress Merrythought and Michael)

Msts Merrythought:
Mick, my boy.

Michael: Ay, forsooth, mother?

Msts Merrythought:
Be merry, Mick; we are at home now, where, I warrant you, you shall find the house flung out at the windows. *[Music within]* Hark, hey, dogs, hey, this is the old world, i'faith, with my husband. If I get in among 'em, I'll play 'em such a lesson that they shall have little list to come scraping hither again. -- Why, Master Merrythought, husband, Charles Merrythought.

Old Merrythought:
(Sings within)
If you will sing and dance and laugh
And hollo and laugh again,
And then cry, "There, boys, there," why, then,
One, two, three, and four,
We shall be merry within this hour.

Msts Merrythought:
Why, Charles, do you not know your own natural wife? I say, open the door and turn me out those mangy companions. 'Tis more than time that they were fellow and fellow-like with you. You are a gentleman, Charles, and an old man, and father of two children; and I myself (though I say it) by my mother's side niece to a worshipful gentleman, and a conductor¹²³. He has been three times in his majesty's service at Chester, and is now the fourth time, God bless him and his charge, upon his journey.

¹²³ *conductor*] naval or military officer.

Old Merrythought:

(Sings at the window)

Go from my window, love, go;

Go from my window, my dear.

The wind and the rain

Will drive you back again.

You cannot be lodged here.

Hark you, Mistress Merrythought, you that walk upon adventures and forsake your husband because he sings with never a penny in his purse. What, shall I think myself the worse? Faith, no, I'll be merry. You come not here. Here's none but lads of mettle, lives of a hundred years and upwards. Care never drunk their bloods, nor want made 'em warble, *(sings)*

Heigh-ho, my heart is heavy.

(Exit from the window.)

Msts Merrythought:

Why, Master Merrythought, what am I that you should laugh me to scorn thus abruptly? Am I not your fellow-feeler, as we may say, in all our miseries, your comforter in health and sickness? Have I not brought you children? Are they not like you, Charles? Look upon thine own image, hard-hearted man. And yet for all this --

Old Merrythought:

(Sings within)

Begone, begone, my juggy, my puggy,

Begone, my love, my dear.

The weather is warm;

'Twill do thee no harm.

Thou canst not be lodged here.

Be merry, boys; some light music and more wine.

Wife: He's not in earnest, I hope, George, is he?

Citizen: What if he be, sweetheart?

Wife: Marry, if he be, George, I'll make bold to tell him he's an ingrant¹²⁴ old man to use his bedfellow so scurvily.

Citizen: What, how does he use her, honey?

Wife: Marry, come up, Sir Saucebox, I think you'll take his part, will you not? Lord, how hot you are grown. You are a fine man, an' you had a fine dog. It becomes you sweetly.

¹²⁴ *ingrant*] obsolete form of "ignorant."

Citizen: Nay, prithee, Nell, chide not; for, as I am an honest man and a true Christian grocer, I do not like his doings.

Wife: I cry you mercy, then, George. You know we are all frail and full of infirmities. -- D'ee hear, Master Merrythought; may I crave a word with you?

Old Merrythought:

Strike up lively, lads.

Wife: I had not thought, in truth, Master Merrythought, that a man of your age and discretion, as I may say, being a gentleman, and therefore known by your gentle conditions, could have used so little respect to the weakness of his wife. For your wife is your own flesh, the staff of your age, your yoke-fellow, with whose help you draw through the mire of this transitory world. Nay, she's your own rib. And again --

Old Merrythought:

(Sings at the window)

I come not hither for thee to teach;

I have no pulpit for thee to preach;

I would thou hadst kiss'd me under the breech,

As thou art a lady gay.

Wife: Marry, with a vengeance! I am heartily sorry for the poor gentlewoman, but if I were thy wife, i'faith, graybeard, i'faith --

Citizen: I prithee, sweet honeysuckle, be content.

Wife: Give me such words that am a gentlewoman born! Hang him, hoary rascal! Get me some drink, George. I am almost molten with fretting: now beshrew his knave's heart for it!

(Exit Citizen)

Old Merrythought:

Play me a light lavolta¹²⁵. Come, be frolic. Fill the good fellows wine.

Msts Merrythought:

Why, Master Merrythought, are you disposed to make me wait here? You'll open, I hope. I'll fetch them that shall open else.

Old Merrythought:

Good woman, if you will sing I'll give you something: if not,

You are no love for me, Marg'ret.

I am no love for you.

-- Come aloft, boys, aloft.

(Exit from window)

¹²⁵ *lavolta*] a French dance with high leaps, for two people.

Msts Merrythought:

Now a churl's fart in your teeth, sir. -- Come, Mick, we'll not trouble him. 'A shall not ding us i'th' teeth with his bread and his broth, that he shall not. Come, boy, I'll provide for thee, I warrant thee. We'll go to Master Venturewell's, the merchant. I'll get his letter to mine host of the Bell in Waltham. There I'll place thee with the tapster. Will not that do well for thee, Mick? And let me alone for that old cuckoldly knave, your father. I'll use him in his kind, I warrant ye.

(Exeunt)

Finis Actus Tertii

(Enter Citizen)

Wife: Come, George, where's the beer?

Citizen: Here, love.

Wife: This old fornicating fellow will not out of my mind yet. -- Gentlemen, I'll begin to you all, and I desire more of your acquaintance, with all my heart. *(Drinks)* -- Fill the gentlemen some beer, George.

(Boy danceth)

Look, George, the little boy's come again. Methinks he looks like the Prince of Orange¹²⁶ in his long stocking, if he had a little harness¹²⁷ about his neck. George, I will have him dance fading¹²⁸. -- Fading is a fine jig, I'll assure you, gentlemen. -- Begin, brother. -- Now 'a capers, sweetheart. -- Now a turn o'th' toe, and then tumble. Cannot you tumble, youth?

Boy: No, indeed, forsooth.

Wife: Nor eat fire?

Boy: Neither.

Wife: Why then, I thank you heartily. There's twopence to buy you points¹²⁹ withal.

¹²⁶ *the Prince of Orange*] at that time, Philip William, eldest son of William the Silent.

¹²⁷ *harness*] armor.

¹²⁸ *fading*] both the name of an Irish dance, and a term meaning sexual organ.

¹²⁹ *points*] laces to secure the hose to the doublet.

ACT IV

(Enter Jasper and Boy)

Jasper: There, boy, deliver this, but do it well.
(Gives a letter.)
 Hast thou provided me four lusty fellows
 Able to carry me? And art thou perfect
 In all thy business?

Boy: Sir, you need not fear.
 I have my lesson here and cannot miss it.
 The men are ready for you, and what else
 Pertains to this employment.

Jasper: There, my boy,
(Gives money)
 Take it, but buy no land.

Boy: Faith, sir, 'twere rare.
 To see so young a purchaser. I fly,
 And on my wings carry your destiny.

(Exit)

Jasper: Go, and be happy. -- Now, my latest hope,
 Forsake me not, but fling thy anchor¹³⁰ out
 And let it hold. Stand fix'd, thou rolling stone,
 Till I enjoy my dearest. Hear me all,
 You powers that rule in men celestial.

(Exit)

Wife: Go thy ways; thou art as crooked a sprig as ever grew in London. I warrant him he'll come to some naughty end or other, for his looks say no less. Besides, his father (you know, George) is none of the best. You heard him take me up like a flirt-gill¹³¹, and sing bawdy songs upon me; but, i' faith, if I live, George --

Citizen: Let me alone, sweetheart. I have a trick in my head shall lodge him in the Arches¹³² for one year, and make him sing *peccavi*¹³³ ere I leave him, and yet he shall never know who hurt him neither.

¹³⁰ *anchor*] the emblem of hope.

¹³¹ *flirt-gill*] loose woman.

¹³² *the Arches*] The London court of the Archbishop of Canterbury was held at the church of St. Mary le Bow, built on arches, thus the name. The passage seems to indicate that a prison was connected with the court.

¹³³ *peccavi*] "I have sinned"

- Wife: Do, my good George, do.
- Citizen: What shall we have Rafe do now, boy?
- Boy: You shall have what you will, sir.
- Citizen: Why, so, sir, go and fetch me him then, and let the Sophy of Persia come and christen him a child¹³⁴.
- Boy: Believe me, sir, that will not do so well. 'Tis stale. It has been had before at the Red Bull¹³⁵.
- Wife: George, let Rafe travel over great hills, and let him be very weary, and come to the King of Cracovia's house¹³⁶, covered with velvet, and there let the king's daughter stand in her window, all in beaten gold, combing her golden locks with a comb of ivory, and let her spy Rafe and fall in love with him, and come down to him and carry him into her father's house, and then let Rafe talk with her.
- Citizen: Well said, Nell; it shall be so. -- Boy, let's ha't done quickly.
- Boy: Sir, if you will imagine all this to be done already, you shall hear them talk together. But we cannot present a house covered with black velvet, and a lady in beaten gold.
- Citizen: Sir boy, let's ha't as you can, then.
- Boy: Besides, it will show ill-favoredly to have a grocer's prentice to court a king's daughter.
- Citizen: Will it so, sir? You are well read in histories! I pray you, what was Sir Dragonet¹³⁷? Was not he prentice to a grocer in London? Read the play of *The Four Prentices of London*¹³⁸, where they toss their pikes so. I pray you, fetch him in, sir; fetch him in.
- Boy: It shall be done. -- It is not our fault, gentlemen.
- (Exit)
- Wife: Now we shall see fine doings, I warrant'ee, George.
- (Enter Rafe and the Lady, Squire [Tim], and Dwarf [George])

¹³⁴ *let ... child*] the climactic scene from *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (printed in 1607), by Day, Rowly, and Wilkins. The infidel Sophy is godfather at the baptism of his niece's illegitimate child by Sir Robert Shirely, one of the three brothers.

¹³⁵ *the Red Bull*] a public theater known for plays appealing to the crudest popular taste.

¹³⁶ *King ... house*] Cracow was the capital of Poland until about 1609 and thus the Wife is referring to the palace of the King of Poland.

¹³⁷ *Sir Dragonet*] "Sir Dragonet, whom the Citizen mistakes for a grocer's prentice, is a character in the celebrated romance *Morte d'Arthur*, where he is described as 'Kynge Arthurs foole'".

¹³⁸ *The ... London*] Thomas Heywood's middle-class romantic play, not published until 1615, but probably performed at least five or ten years earlier. Pikes are thrown on many occasions throughout the play, and one of the characters, Eustace, is an apprentice to a grocer.

O, here they come. How prettily the King of Cracovia's daughter is dress'd.

Citizen: Ay, Nell, it is the fashion of that country, I warrant'ee.

- Lady: Welcome, sir knight, unto my father's court,
King of Moldavia¹³⁹; unto me, Pompiona,
His daughter dear. But sure you do not like
Your entertainment, that will stay with us
No longer but a night.
- Rafe: Damsel right fair,
I am on many sad adventures bound,
That call me forth into the wilderness.
Besides, my horse's back is something gall'd,
Which will enforce me ride a sober pace.
But many thanks, fair lady, be to you,
For using errant knight with courtesy.
- Lady: But say, brave knight, what is your name and birth?
- Rafe: My name is Rafe. I am an Englishman,
As true as steel, a hearty Englishman,
And prentice to a grocer in the Strand¹⁴⁰
By deed indent¹⁴¹, of which I have one part.
But Fortune calling me to follow arms,
On me this holy order I did take
Of Burning Pestle, which in all men's eyes
I bear, confounding ladies' enemies.
- Lady: Oft have I heard of your brave countrymen
And fertile soil and store of wholesome food.
My father oft will tell me of a drink
In England found, and nipitato¹⁴² call'd,
Which driveth all the sorrow from your hearts.
- Rafe: Lady, 'tis true; you need not lay your lips
To better nipitato than there is.
- Lady: And of a wild fowl he will often speak,
Which powder'd¹⁴³ beef and mustard called is;
For there have been great wars 'twixt us and you,
But truly, Rafe, it was not 'long of¹⁴⁴ me.

¹³⁹ *Moldavia* [once independent, now part of Russia, and easily confused in the Renaissance mind with Poland. The Prince of Moldavia made a state visit to the English court in 1607.

¹⁴⁰ *Strand*] one of the great business streets in London.

¹⁴¹ *deed indent*] an article of agreement between apprentice and employer, drawn up in duplicate.

¹⁴² *nipitato*] strong ale.

¹⁴³ *powder'd*] salted.

¹⁴⁴ *'long of*] on account of.

Tell me then, Rafe, could you contented be
To wear a lady's favor in your shield?

Rafe: I am a knight of religious order
And will not wear a favor of a lady's
That trusts in Antichrist and false traditions.

Citizen: Well said, Rafe; convert her if thou canst.

Rafe: Besides, I have a lady of my own
In merry England, for whose virtuous sake
I took these arms; and Susan is her name,
A cobbler's maid in Milk Street, whom I vow
Ne'er to forsake whilst life and pestle last.

Lady: Happy that cobbling dame, who'er she be,
That for her own, dear Rafe, hath gotten thee;
Unhappy I, that ne'er shall see the day
To see thee more, that bear'st my heart away.

Rafe: Lady, farewell, I needs must take my leave.

Lady: Hard-hearted Rafe, that ladies dost deceive.

Citizen: Hark thee, Rafe, there's money for thee. Give something in the King of Cracovia's house. Be not beholding to him.

Rafe: Lady, before I go, I must remember
Your father's officers, who, truth to tell,
Have been about me very diligent.
Hold up thy snowy hand, thou princely maid.
There's twelve pence for your father's chamberlain;
And another shilling for his cook,
For, by my troth, the goose was roasted well;
And twelve pence for your father's horsekeeper,
For 'nointing my horse back; and for his butter,
There is another shilling. To the maid
That wash'd my boot-hose, there's an English groat;
And twopence to the boy that wip'd my boots;
And last, fair lady, there is for yourself
Threepence to buy you pins at Bumbo Fair¹⁴⁵.

Lady: Full many thanks, and I will keep them safe

¹⁴⁵ *Bumbo Fair*] probably a comic generic name for a fair, possibly suggesting bumbo (a drink made of rum, water, and nutmeg), or the bumpkins in attendance, or both.

Till all the heads be off, for thy sake, Rafe.

Rafe: Advance, my squire and dwarf; I cannot stay.

Lady: Thou kill'st my heart in parting thus away.

(Exeunt)

Wife: I commend Rafe yet that he will not stoop to a Cracovian. There's properer women in London than any are there, iwis. But here comes Master Humphrey and his love again now, George.

Citizen: Ay, cony, peace.

(Enter Merchant, Humphrey, Luce, and a Boy)

Merchant: Go, get you up¹⁴⁶. I will not be entreated.
And, gossip mine, I'll keep you sure hereafter
From gadding out again with boys and unthrifths.
Come, they are women's tears. I know your fasion. --
Go, sirrah, lock her in and keep the key
Safe as you love your life.

(Exeunt Luce and Boy)

You may both rest assured of my love
In this, and reap your own desire.

Humphrey: I see this love you speak of, through your daughter,
Although the hole be little; and hereafter
Will yield the like in all I may or can,
Fitting a Christian and a gentleman.

Merchant: I do believe you, my good son, and thank you;
For 'twere an impudence to think you flattered.

Humphrey: It were indeed, but shall I tell you why?
I have been beaten twice about the lie¹⁴⁷.

Merchant: Well, son, no more of compliment; my daughter
Is yours again. Appoint the time and take her.
We'll have no stealing for it. I myself
And some few of our friends will see you married.

Humphrey: I would you would, i'faith, for be it known,
I ever was afraid to lie alone.

¹⁴⁶ *up*] It is not clear whether the merchant means up off her knees or up to her chamber.

¹⁴⁷ *lie*] challenge to fight.

Merchant: Some three days hence, then.

Humphrey: Three days, let me see,
'Tis somewhat of the most; yet I agree,
Because I mean against the appointed day
To visit all my friends in new array.

(Enter a Boy with a letter)

Boy: Sir, I take it you are the master of this house.

Merchant: How then, boy?

Boy: Then to yourself, sir, comes this letter.

Merchant: From whom, my pretty boy?

Boy: From him that was your servant, but no more
Shall that name ever be, for he is dead.
Grief of your purchas'd anger broke his heart.
I saw him die, and from his hand receiv'd
This paper, with a charge to bring it hither;
Read it, and satisfy yourself in all.

Merchant: *(Reads letter)*

"Sir,

That I have wronged your love, I must confess, in which I have purchas'd to myself, besides mine own undoing, the ill opinion of my friends. Let not your anger, good sir, outlive me, but suffer me to rest in peace with your forgiveness. Let my body (if a dying man may so much prevail with you) be brought to your daughter, that she may truly know my hot flames are now buried, and, withal, receive a testimony of the zeal I bore her virtue. Farewell forever, and be ever happy.

Jasper"

God's hand is great in this. I do forgive him;
Yet I am glad he's quiet, where I hope
He will not bite again. -- Boy, bring the body
And let him have his will, if that be all.

Boy: 'Tis here without, sir.

Merchant: So, sir, if you please,
You may conduct it in; I do not fear it.

Humphrey: I'll be your usher, boy; for, though I say it,
He ow'd me something once and well did pay it.

(Exeunt)

(Enter Luce, alone)

(Enter Servant)

Servant; By your leave,
Young mistress, here's a boy hath brought a coffin.
What 'a would say, I know not, but your father
Charg'd me to give you notice. Here they come.

(Enter two (Boy and another) bearing a coffin, Jasper in it)

Luce: For me I hope 'tis come, and 'tis most welcome.

Boy: Fair mistress, let me not add greater grief
To that great store you have already. Jasper,
That whilst he liv'd was yours, now dead
And here enclos'd, commanded me to bring
His body hither, and to crave a tear
From those fair eyes, though he deserv'd not pity,
To deck his funeral, for so he bid me
Tell her for whom he died.

Luce: He shall have many.
Good friends, depart a little, whilst I take
My leave of this dead man, that once I lov'd.

(Exeunt coffin-carrier and Boy)

Hold yet a little, life, and then I give thee
To thy first heavenly being. O, my friend,
Hast thou deceiv'd me thus, and got before me?
I shall not long be after, but, believe me,
Thou wert too cruel, Jasper, 'gainst thyself
In punishing the fault I could have pardoned
With so untimely death. Thou didst not wrong me
But ever wert most kind, most true, most loving;
And I the most unkind, most false, most cruel.
Didst thou but ask a tear? I'll give thee all,
Even all my eyes can pour down, all my sighs,
And all myself, before thou goest from me.
These are but sparing rites. But if thy soul
Be yet about this place and can behold
And see what I prepare to deck thee with,
It shall go up, borne on the wings of peace,
And satisfied. First will I kiss thy pale lips,
And then die myself,

And fill one coffin and one grave together.
Thou sable cloth, sad cover of my joys,
I lift thee up, and thus I meet with death.

Jasper: *(Rising out of the coffin)*
And thus you meet the living.

Luce: Save me, heaven!

Jasper: Nay, do not fly me, fair. I am no spirit;
Look better on me. Do you know me yet?

Luce: O thou dear shadow of my friend.

Jasper: Dear substance;
I swear I am no shadow. Feel my hand;
It is the same it was. I am your Jasper,
Your Jasper, that's yet living and yet loving.
Pardon my rash attempt, my foolish proof
I put in practice of your constancy.
For sooner should my sword have drunk my blood
And set my soul at liberty, then drawn
The least drop from that body; for which boldness
Doom me to anything. If death, I take it,
And willingly.

Luce: This death, I'll give you for it.
(Kisses him)
So, now I am satisfied. You are no spirit,
But my own truest, truest, truest friend.
Why do you come thus to me?

Jasper: First to see you,
Then to convey you hence.

Luce: It cannot be,
For I am lock'd up here, and watch'd at all hours,
That 'tis impossible for me to 'scape.

Jasper: Nothing more possible. Within this coffin
Do you convey yourself. Let me alone;
I have the wits of twenty men about me.
Only I crave the shelter of your closet
A little, and then fear me not. Creep in
That they may presently convey you hence.
Fear nothing, dearest love; I'll be your second.

(Luce lies down in the coffin and Jasper covers her with the cloth)

Lie close. So. All goes well yet. -- Boy!

(Enter Coffin-carrier and Boy)

Boy: At hand, sir.

Jasper: Convey away the coffin and be wary.

Boy: 'Tis done already.

Jasper: Now must I go conjure.

(Exit)

(Enter Merchant)

Merchant: Boy, boy.

Boy: Your servant, sir.

Merchant: Do me this kindness, boy (hold, here's a crown): before thou bury the body of this fellow, carry it to his old merry father and salute him from me, and bid him sing. He hath cause.

Boy: I will, sir.

Merchant: And then bring me word what tune he is in, and have another crown; but do it truly. I have fitted him a bargain now will vex him.

Boy: God bless your worship's health, sir.

Merchant: Farewell, boy.

(Exeunt)

(Enter Master Merrythought)

Wife: Ah, old Merrythought, art thou there again? Let's hear some of thy songs.

Old Merrythought:

(sings)

Who can sing a merrier note

Than he that cannot change a groat?

Not a denier¹⁴⁸ left, and yet my heart leaps. I do wonder yet, as old as I am, that any man will follow a trade, or serve, that may sing, and laugh, and walk the streets. My wife and both my sons are I know not where. I have nothing left, nor know how to come by meat to supper, yet am I merry still; for I know I shall find it upon the table at six o'clock. Therefore, hang thought:

(Sings)

I would not be a serving man

To carry the cloak bag still,

Nor would I be a falconer

The greedy hawks to fill.

But I would be in a good house,

And have a good master too.

But I would eat and drink of the best,

And no work would I do.

This is it that keeps life and soul together: mirth. This is the philosopher's stone that they write so much on, that keeps a man ever young.

(Exeunt)

Finis Act IV

Wife: Let him go, George. 'A shall not have any countenance from us, nor a good word from any i'th' company, if I may strike stroke in't.

¹⁴⁸ *denier*] a French coin worth the twelfth of a sou and thus proverbial for the smallest of sums.

ACT V

(Enter Merchant, solus)

Merchant: I will have no great store of company at the wedding, a couple of neighbors and their wives, and we will have a capon in stewed broth, with marrow, and a good piece of beef, stuck with rosemary¹⁴⁹.

(Enter Jasper, his face mealed.¹⁵⁰)

Jasper: Forbear thy pains, fond man; it is too late.

Merchant: Heaven bless me! Jasper?

Jasper: Ay, I am his ghost,
Whom thou hast injur'd for his constant love.
Fond worldly wretch, who dost not understand
In death that true hearts cannot be parted be.
First, know thy daughter is quite borne away
On wings of angels, through the liquid air,
To far out of thy reach, and nevermore
Shalt thou behold her face. But she and I
Will in another world enjoy our loves,
Where neither father's anger, poverty,
Nor any cross that troubles earthly men
Shall make us sever our united hearts.
And never shalt thou sit or be alone
In any place, but I will visit thee
With ghastly looks, and put into thy mind
The great offences which thou didst to me.
When thou art at thy table with thy friends,
Merry in heart, and fill'd with swelling wine,
I'll come in midst of all thy pride and mirth,
Invisible to all men but thyself,
And whisper such a sad tale in thine ear
Shall make thee let the cup fall from thy hand,
And stand as mute and pale as Death itself.

Merchant: Forgive me, Jasper. O, what might I do,
Tell me, to satisfy thy troubled ghost?

Jasper: There is no means. Too late thou thinkst of this.

Merchant: But tell me what were best for me to do?

¹⁴⁹ *rosemary*] for remembrance, popular with meat served at weddings and funerals.

¹⁵⁰ *mealed*] whitened with flour.

Jasper: Repent thy deed, and satisfy my father,
And beat fond Humphrey out of thy doors.

(Exit Jasper)

(Enter Humphrey)

Wife: Look, George, his very ghost would have folks beaten.

Humphrey: Father, my bride is gone, fair Mistress Luce.
My soul's the fount of vengeance, mischief's sluice.

Merchant: Hence, fool, out of my sight with thy fond passion!
Thou hast undone me.

(Beats him)

Humphrey: Hold, my father dear,
For Luce, thy daughter's sake, that had no peer.

Merchant: Thy father, fool? There's some blows more. Begone.
Jasper, I hope thy ghost be well appeas'd,
To see thy will perform'd. Now will I go
To satisfy thy father for thy wrongs.

(Exit)

Humphrey: What shall I do? I have been beaten twice,
And Mistress Luce is gone. Help me, device!
Since my true love is gone, I nevermore,
Whilst I do live, upon the sky will pore,
But in the dark will wear out my shoe-soles
In passion¹⁵¹ in Saint Faith's Church under Paul's¹⁵².

(Exit)

Old Merrythought:

Yet, I thank God, I break not a wrinkle more than I had. Not a stoup¹⁵³, boys? Care, live with cats¹⁵⁴; I
defy thee. My heart is as sound as an oak; and though I want drink to wet my whistle, I can sing:
Come no more there, boys, come no more there;

¹⁵¹ *passion*] grief.

¹⁵² *Saint ... Paul's*] "A church in the crypt of old S. Paul's Cathedral, London, under the choir."

¹⁵³ *stoup*] a drinking vessel.

¹⁵⁴ *Care ... cats*] "Care will kill a cat" was a familiar expression.

For we shall never whilst we live come any more there.

(Enter a Boy [and Coffin-carrier] with a coffin.)

Boy: God save you, sir.

Old Merrythought:
It's a brave boy. Canst thou sing?

Boy: Yes, sir, I can sing, but 'tis not so necessary at this time.

Old Merrythought:
(Sings)
Sing we and chant it,
Whilst love doth grant it.

Boy: Sir, sir, if you knew what I have brought you, you would have little list to sing.

Old Merrythought:
(Sings)
O, the minion round,
Full long I have thee sought,
And now I have thee found,
And what hast thou here brought?

Boy: A coffin, sir, and your dead son Jasper in it.

Old Merrythought:
Dead?
(Sings)
Why, farewell he.
Thou wast a bonny boy,
And I did love thee.

(Enter Jasper)

Jasper: Then, I pray you, sir, do so still.

Old Merrythought:
Jasper's ghost?
(Sings)
Thou art welcome from Stygian lake¹⁵⁵ so soon;
Declare to me what wond'rous things in Pluto's court are done.

¹⁵⁵ *Sytgian Lake*] actually a river, the principal one of the underworld, which had to be crossed to reach the land of the dead.

Jasper: By my troth, sir, I ne'er came there. 'Tis too hot for me, sir.

Old Merrythought:

A merry ghost, a very merry ghost.

(Sings)

And where is your true love? O, where is yours?

Jasper: Marry, look you, sir.

(Heaves up the coffin (lid))

Old Merrythought:

Ah, ha! Art thou good at that, i' faith?

(Sings)

With hey, trixy, terlery-whiskin,

The world it runs on wheels.

When the young man's -----,

Up goes the maiden's heels.

(Mistress Merrythought and Michael within)

Msts Merrythought:

What, Master Merrythought, will you not let's in? What do you think shall become of us?

Old Merrythought:

What voice is that that calleth at our door?

Msts Merrythought:

You know me well enough. I am sure I have not been such a stranger to you.

Old Merrythought:

(Sings)

And some they whistled, and some they sung,

Hey, down, down!

And some did loudly say,

Ever as the Lord Barnet's horn blew,

Away, Musgrave, away!

Msts Merrythought:

You will not have us starve here, will you, Master Merrythought?

Jasper:

Nay, good sir, be persuaded; she is my mother.

If her offences have been great against you,

Let your own love remember she is yours,

And so forgive her.

Luce: Good Master Merrythought,
 Let me entreat you. I will not be denied.

Msts Merrythought:
 Why, Master Merrythought, will you be a vex'd thing still?

Old Merrythought:
 Woman, I take you to my love again, but you shall sing before you enter; therefore, dispatch your song and so come in.

Msts Merrythought:
 Well, you must have your will, when all's done. -- Mick, what song canst thou sing, boy?

Michael: I can sing none, forsooth, but "A lady's daughter, of Paris properly¹⁵⁶."

Msts Merrythought:
 (Sings)
 It was a lady's daughter, &c.

 (Old Merrythought admits Mistress Merrythought and Michael.)

Old Merrythought:
 Come, you're welcome home again.
 (Sings)
 If such danger be in playing,
 And jest must to earnest turn,
 You shall go no more a-maying.

Merchant: Are you within, sir? Master Merrythought?

Jasper: It is my master's voice. Good sir, go hold him in talk, whilst we convey ourselves into some inward room.

 (Exit with Luce)

Old Merrythought:
 What are you? Are you merry? You must be very merry if you enter.

Merchant: I am, sir.

Old Merrythought:
 Sing, then.

¹⁵⁶ *A lady's ... properly*] The full title of the ballad is "A Rare Example of a Virtuous Maid in Paris, who was by her own Mother procured to be put in Prison, thinking thereby to compel her to Popery; but she continued to the end, and finished her life in the fire." The first stanza runs thus: "It was a Ladies Daughter / of Paris properly, / Her mother her commanded / to Mass that she should hie: / 'O pardon me, dear mother', / her daughter dear did say, / 'Unto that filthy Idol / I never can obey.'" The complete ballad is printed in *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. Wm. Chappell.

Merchant: Nay, good sir, open to me.

Old Merrythought:
Sing, I say, or, by the merry heart, you come not in.

Merchant: Well, sir, I'll sing:
Fortune my foe, &c.

(Old Merrythought admits Merchant)

Old Merrythought:
You are welcome, sir, you are welcome. You see your entertainment. Pray you, be merry.

Merchant: O Master Merrythought, I am come to ask you
Forgiveness for the wrongs I offered you
And your most virtuous son. They're infinite.
Yet my contrition shall be more than they.
I do confess my hardness broke his heart,
For which just heaven hath given me punishment
More than my age can carry. His wand'ring spirit,
Not yet at rest, pursues me everywhere,
Crying, "I'll haunt thee for thy cruelty."
My daughter, she is gone, I know not how,
Taken invisible, and whether living
Or in grave, 'tis yet uncertain to me.
O Master Merrythought, these are the weights
Will sink me to my grave. Forgive me, sir.

Old Merrythought:
Why, sir, I do forgive you, and be merry.
And if the wag in's lifetime play'd the knave,
Can you forgive him too?

Merchant: With all my heart, sir.

Old Merrythought:
Speak it again, and heartily.

Merchant: I do, sir.
Now, by my soul, I do.

(Enter Luce and Jasper)

Old Merrythought:
(Sings)
With that came out his paramour.

She was as white as the lily flower.

Hey troll, trollie, lollie.

With that came out her own dear knight.

He was as true as ever did fight. &c.

Sir, if you will forgive 'em, clap their hands together. There's no more to be said i'th' matter.

Merchant: I do, I do.

Citizen: I do not like this. Peace, boys! Hear me, one of you. Everbody's part is come to an end but Rafe's, and he's left out.

Boy: 'Tis 'long of yourself, sir. We have nothing to do with his part.

Citizen: Rafe, come away. -- Make on him, as you have done of the rest, boys; come.

Wife: Now, good husband, let him come out and die.

Citizen: He shall, Nell. -- Rafe, come away quickly and die, boy.

Boy: 'Twill be very unfit he should die, sir, upon no occasion, and in a comedy too.

Citizen: Take you no care of that, sir boy. Is not his part at an end, think you, when he's dead? -- Come away, Rafe.

(Enter Rafe, with a forked¹⁵⁷ arrow through his head.)

Rafe: When I was mortal, this my costive corpse
 Did lap up his figs and raisins in the Strand,
 Where sitting, I espi'd a lovely dame,
 Whose master wrought with lingel¹⁵⁸ and with awl,
 And under ground he vampied many a boot.
 Straight did her love prick forth me, tender sprig,
 To follow feats of arms in warlike wise,
 Through Waltham Desert, where I did perform
 Many achievements, and did lay on ground
 Huge Barbaroso, that insulting giant,
 And all his captives soon set at liberty.
 Then honor prick'd me from my native soil
 Into Moldavia, where I gain'd the love
 Of Pompiona, his beloved daughter,
 But yet prov'd constant to the black-thumb'd maid,
 Susan, and scorn'd Pompiona's love.

¹⁵⁷ *forked*] barbed.

¹⁵⁸ *lingel*] thread used in the sewing of leather.

Yet liberal I was, and gave her pins,
 And money for her father's officers.
 I then returned home, and thrust myself
 In action, and by all men chosen was
 Lord of the May, where I did flourish it,
 With scarfs and rings, and posy in my hand.
 After this action, I preferred was
 And chosen city captain at Mile-End,
 With hat and feather, and with leading staff,
 And train'd my men, and brought them all off clear,
 Save one man that beray'd him¹⁵⁹ with the noise.
 But all these things I, Rafe, did undertake
 Only for my beloved Susan's sake.
 Then coming home, and sitting in my shop
 With apron blue, Death came unto my stall
 To cheapen¹⁶⁰ aqua vitae; but ere I
 Could take the bottle down and fill a taste,
 Death caught a pound of pepper in his hand
 And sprinkled all my face and body o'er,
 And in an instant vanished away.

Citizen: 'Tis a pretty fiction, i'faith.

Rafe: Then took I up my bow and shaft in hand,
 And walk'd into Moorfields¹⁶¹ to cool myself;
 But there grim cruel Death met me again,
 And shot this forked arrow through my head,
 And now I faint. Therefore be warn'd by me,
 My fellows every one, of forked heads¹⁶².
 Farewell, all you good boys in merry London.
 Ne'er shall we more upon Shrove Tuesday¹⁶³ meet
 And pluck down houses of iniquity.
 My pain increaseth. -- I shall never more
 Hold open, whilst another pumps both legs,
 Nor daub a satin gown with rotten eggs;
 Set up a stake, O, never more I shall.
 I die; fly, fly, my soul to Grocer's Hall.
 O, O, O, &c.

¹⁵⁹ *beray'd him*] befouled himself.

¹⁶⁰ *cheapen*] bargain for.

¹⁶¹ *Moorfields*] marshy piece of ground north of London. "In 1606 it was laid out in walks and became a popular summer resort for the citizens ...; duels were frequently fought there."

¹⁶² *forked heads*] cuckolds.

¹⁶³ *Shrove Tuesday*] Originally a day of confession, it became the special holiday of apprentices, who celebrated it by attacking brothels.

Wife: Well said, Rafe. Do your obeisance to the gentlemen and go your ways. Well said, Rafe.

(Exit Rafe)

Old Merrythought:

Methinks all we, thus kindly and unexpectedly reconciled, should not depart without a song.

Merchant: A good motion.

Old Merrythought:

Strike up, then:

(Song)

*Better music ne'er was known
Then a choir of hearts in one.
Let each other that hath been
Troubled with the gall or spleen,
Learn of us to keep his brow
Smooth and plain as ours are now.
Sing, though before the hour of dying;
He shall rise, and then be crying,
"Hey, ho, 'tis nought but mirth
That keeps the body from the earth."*

(Exeunt omnes)

Epilogus

Citizen: Come, Nell, shall we go? The play's done.

Wife: Nay, by my faith, George, I have more manners than so. I'll speak to these gentlemen first. -- I thank you all, gentlemen, for your patience and countenance to Rafe, a poor fatherless child; and if I might see you at my house, it should go hard but I would have a pottle¹⁶⁴ of wine and a pipe of tobacco for you; for truly I hope you do like the youth, but I would be glad to know the truth. I refer it to your own discretions whether you will applaud him or no; for I will wink, and whilst you shall do what you will. I thank you with all my heart. God give you good night. -- Come, George.

(Exeunt)

FINIS

¹⁶⁴ *pottle*] a liquid measure of two quarts.