

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

Thomas Middleton

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The Actors' Names

SIR OLIVER Twilight, a rich old knight
PHILIP, his son, servant to Mistress Grace
SANDFIELD, friend to Philip, servant to Mistress Jane
Master SUNSET, true father of Mistress Grace
Master LOW-WATER, a decayed gentleman
SIR GILBERT Lambston }
Master WEATHERWISE } suitors to the Lady Goldenfleece
Master PEPPERDON }
Master OVERDON }
Master BEVERIL, brother to Mistress Low-water
DUTCH MERCHANT
DUTCH BOY
SAVORWIT, Sir Oliver's man
FOOTMAN
PICKADILLE, Lady Goldenfleece's fool
[SERVANTS to Sir Oliver, Weatherwise, Lady Goldenfleece]
[Six TENANTS of Weatherwise]
LADY TWILIGHT
LADY [Elizabeth] GOLDENFLEECE, a rich widow
MISTRESS [Kate] LOW-WATER
Mistress GRACE, Sunset's daughter, but supposed Twilight's
Mistress JANE, Twilight's daughter, but supposed Sunset's

The Scene: London

Prologue

How is't possible to suffice
So many ears, so many eyes?
Some in wit, some in shows
Take delight, and some in clothes:
Some for mirth they chiefly come,
Some for passion, for both some;
Some for lascivious meetings, that's their arrant;
Some to detract, and ignorance their warrant.
How is't possible to please
Opinion toss'd in such wild seas?
Yet I doubt it not, if attention
Seize you above, and apprehension

You below, to take things quickly,
We shall both make you sad and tickle ye.

I.[i. A street]

Enter Philip, Sir Oliver Twilight's son, with Savorwit, his father's man.

PHILIP

I am at my wit's end, Savorwit.

SAVORWIT

And I am ev'n following after you as fast as I can, sir.

PHILIP

My wife will be forc'd from me, my pleasure!

SAVORWIT

Talk no more on't, sir. How can there be any
Hope i' th' middle when we're both at our
Wit's end in the beginning? My invention
Was ne'er so gravel'd since I first set out upon't.

PHILIP

Nor does my stop stick only in this wheel,
Though it be a main vexation, but I'm grated
In a dear absolute friend, young Master Sandfield—

SAVORWIT

Ay, there's another rub too.

PHILIP

Who supposes
That I make love to his affected mistress,
When 'tis my father works against the peace
Of both our spirits, and woos unknown to me.
He strikes out sparks of undeserved anger
['Twixt] old steel friendship and new stony hate,
As much forgetful of the merry hours
The circuits of our youth hath spent and worn
As if they had not been or we not born.

Enter Sandfield.

SAVORWIT

See where he comes.

SANDFIELD

Unmerciful in torment!
Will this disease never forsake mine eye?

I.[i. A street]

PHILIP

It must be kill'd first if it grow so painful.
Work it out strongly at one time that th' anguish
May never more come near thy precious sight.
If my eternal sleep will give thee rest,
Close up mine eyes with opening of my breast.

SANDFIELD

I feel thy wrongs at midnight and the weight
Of thy close treacheries. Thou hast a friendship
As dangerous as a strumpet's, that will kiss
Men into poverty, distress, and ruin;
And to make clear the face of thy foul deeds,
Thou work'st by seconds.

[Draws his sword.]

PHILIP

Then may the sharp point of an inward horror
Strike me to earth, and save thy weapon guiltless!

SANDFIELD

Not in thy father?

PHILIP

How much is truth abus'd
When 'tis kept silent!

[SANDFIELD]

Oh, defend me friendship!

SAVORWIT

True, your anger's in an error all this while, sir,
But that a lover's weapon [ne'er] hears reason;
'Tis out still like a mad man's. Hear but me, sir:
'Tis my young master's injury, not yours,
That you quarrel with him for, and this shows
As if y' would challenge a lame man the field
And cut off's head because he has lost his legs.
His grief makes him dead flesh, as it appear'd
By off'ring up his breast to you; for believe it, sir,
Had he not greater crosses of his own,
Your hilts could not cross him.

SANDFIELD

How?

SAVORWIT

Not your hilts, sir.
Come, I must have you friends; a pox of weapons!

I.[i. A street]

There's a whore gapes for't; put it up i' th' scabbard.

SANDFIELD

[Putting up his sword] Thou'rt a mad slave.

SAVORWIT

Come, give me both your hands.
Y'are in a quagmire both: should I release you now,
Your wits would both come home in a stinking pickle;
Your father's old nose would smell you out presently.

PHILIP

Tell him the secret, which no mortal knows
But thou and I, and then he will confess
How much he wrong'd the patience of his friend.

SAVORWIT

Then thus the marigold opens at the splendour
Of a hot constant friendship 'twixt you both.
'Tis not unknown to your ear some ten years since
My mistress, his good mother, with a daughter
About the age of six, crossing to [Jersey],
Was taken by the Dunkirks, sold both, and separated,
As the last news brings hot the first and last
So much discover'd; for in nine years' space
No certain tidings of their life or death
Or what place held 'em, earth, the sea, or heaven,
Came to the old man's ears, the knight my master,
Till about five months since, a letter came,
Sent from the mother, which related all
Their taking, selling, separation,
And never meeting; and withal required
Six hundred crowns for ransom, which my old master
No sooner heard the sound but told the sum,
Gave him the gold, and sent us both aboard.
We landing by the way, having a care
To lighten us of our carriage because gold
Is such a heavy metal, eas'd our pockets
In wenches' aprons. Women were made to bear,
But for us gentlemen, 'tis most unkindly.

SANDFIELD

Well, sir?

PHILIP

A pure rogue still!

SAVORWIT

Amongst the rest, sir,
'Twas my young master's chance there to dote finely
Upon a sweet young gentlewoman, but one

I.[i. A street]

That would not sell her honour for the Indies,
Till a priest struck the bargain, and then half a crown dispatch'd it.
To be brief, wedded her and bedded her,
Brought her home hither to his father's house,
And with a fair tale of mine own bringing up,
She passes for his sister that was sold.

SANDFIELD

Let me not lose myself in wond'ring at thee.
But how made you your score even for the mother?

SAVORWIT

Pish, easily: we told him how her fortunes
Mock'd us as they mock'd her. When we were o' th' sea,
She was o' th' land, and as report was given,
When we were landed, she was gone to heaven.
So he believes two lies one error bred:
The daughter ransom'd and the mother dead.

SANDFIELD

Let me admire thee and withal confess
My injuries to friendship.

PHILIP

They're all pardon'd.
[Embracing him] These are the arms I bore against my friend.

SAVORWIT

But what's all this to th' present? This discourse
Leaves you i' th' bog still.

PHILIP

On, good Savorwit!

SAVORWIT

For yet our policy has cross'd ourselves;
For the old knave, my master, little thinking her
Wife to his son, but his own daughter still,
Seeks out a match for her—

PHILIP

Here I feel the surgeon
At second dressing.

SAVORWIT

And h'as entertain'd
Ev'n for pure need, for fear the glass should crack
That is already broken, but well solder'd,
A mere sot for her suitor, a rank fox,
One Weatherwise, that woos by the almanac,
Observes the full and change, an errant moon—calf.

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

And yet, because the fool demands no portion
But the bare down of her smock, the old fellow,
Worn to the bone with a dry [covetous] itch,
To save his purse and yet bestow his child,
Consents to waste [her on] lumps of almanac stuff
Kned with May-butter. Now as I have thought on't
I'll spoil him in the baking.

SANDFIELD

Prithee, as how, sirrah?

SAVORWIT

I'll give him such a crack in one o' th' sides
He shall quite run out of my master's favour.

PHILIP

I should but too much love thee for that.

SAVORWIT

Thus, then,
To help you both at once, and so good night to you.
After my wit has shipp'd away the fool,
As he shall part, I'll buzz into the ear
Of my old master that you, sir, Master Sandfield,
Dearly affect his daughter and will take her
With little or no portion. Well stood out in't!
Methinks I see him caper at that news
And in the full cry, oh! This brought about
And wittily dissembled on both parts,
You to affect his love, he to love yours,
I'll so beguile the father at the marriage
That each shall have his own, and both being welcom'd
And chamber'd in one house, as 'tis his pride
To have his children's children got successively
On his forefathers' feather beds, in the day times,
To please the old man's eyesight, you may dally
And set a kiss on the wrong lip; no sin in't:
Brothers and sisters do't, cousins do more,
But pray take heed you be not kin to them.
So in the night time nothing can deceive you,
Let each know his own work, and there I leave you.

SANDFIELD

Let me applaud thee.

PHILIP

Bless'd be all thy ends
That mak'st arm'd enemies embracing friends.
About it speedily.

Exit [with Sandfield].

I.[i. A street]

SAVORWIT

I need no pricking.
I'm of that mettle, so well-pac'd and free,
There's no good riders that use spur to me.

Enter Grace Twilight.

Oh, are you come?

GRACE

Are any comforts coming?

SAVORWIT

I never go without 'em.

GRACE

Thou sport'st joys that utterance cannot perfect.

SAVORWIT

Hark, are they risen?

GRACE

Yes, long before I left 'em.
And all intend to bring the widow homeward.

SAVORWIT

Depart then, mistress, to avoid suspect:
Our good shall arrive time enough at your heart.

[Exit Grace.]

Poor fools that ever more take a green surfeit
Of the first fruits of joys. Let a man but shake the tree,
How soon they'll hold up their laps to receive comfort!
The music that I struck made her soul dance.
Peace!

Enter the Lady Widow Goldenfleece with Sir Gilbert Lambston, Master Pepperton, Master Overdon, suitors.
After them, the two old men, Sir Oliver Twilight and Master Sunset, with their daughters, Grace Twilight
[and] Jane Sunset.

[Aside] Here comes the Lady Widow, the late wife
To the deceas'd Sir Avarice Goldenfleece,
Second to none for usury and extortion,
As too well it appears on a poor gentleman,
One Master Low-water, from whose estate
He pull'd that fleece that makes his widow weight.
Those are her suitors now, Sir Gilbert Lambston,
Master Pepperton, Master Overdon.

I.[i. A street]

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Nay, good Sir Oliver Twilight, Master Sunset,
We'll trouble you no farther.

SUNSET, SIR OLIVER

No trouble, sweet madam.

SIR GILBERT

We'll see the widow at home; it shall be
Our charge, that.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

It shall be so indeed.
Thanks, good Sir Oliver, and to you both
I am indebted for those courtesies
That will ask me a long time to requite.

SIR OLIVER

Ah, 'tis but your pleasant condition to give it out so, madam.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Mistress Grace and Mistress Jane, I wish you both
A fair contented fortune in your choices,
And that you happen right.

[GRACE, JANE]

Thanks to you, good madam.

[LADY GOLDENFLEECE]

[Aside] There's more in that word "right" than you imagine.—
I now repent, girls, a rash oath I took
When you were both infants, to conceal a secret.

GRACE

What does't concern, good madam?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

No, no.
Since you are both so well, 'tis well enough.
It must not be reveal'd; 'tis now no more
Than like mistaking of one hand for t'other.
A happy time to you both.

[GRACE, JANE]

The like to you, madam.

GRACE

[Aside] I shall long much to have this riddle open'd.

JANE

I.[i. A street]

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[Aside] I would you were so kind to my poor kinswoman
And the distressed gentleman her husband,
Poor Master Low-water, who on ruin leans.
You keep this secret as you keep his means.

[LADY GOLDENFLEECE]

Thanks, good Sir Oliver Twilight. Welcome, sweet
Master Pepperton; Master Overdon, welcome.

Exeunt. Manet Sir Oliver with Savorwit.

SIR OLIVER

And goes the business well 'twixt those young lovers?

SAVORWIT

Betwixt your son and Master Sunset's daughter,
The line goes even, sir.

SIR OLIVER

Good lad, I like thee.

SAVORWIT

But sir, there's no proportion, height, or evenness
Betwixt that equinoctial and your daughter.

SIR OLIVER

'Tis true, and I'm right glad on't.

SAVORWIT

Are you glad, sir?
There's no proportion in't.

SIR OLIVER

Ay, marry, am I, sir.
I can abide no word that ends in portion;
I'll give her nothing.

SAVORWIT

Say you should not, sir,
As I'll ne'er urge your worship 'gainst your nature,
Is there no gentleman, think you, of worth and credit
Will open's bed to warm a naked maid?
A hundred gallant fellows, and be glad
To be so set a-work! Virginitie
Is no such cheap ware as you make account on
That it had need with portion be set off,
For that sets off a portion in these days.

SIR OLIVER

Play on, sweet boy!
Oh, I could hear this music all day long,

I.[i. A street]

When there's no money to be parted from!
Strike on, good lad!

SAVORWIT

Do not wise men and great often bestow
Ten thousand pound in jewels that lie by 'em?
If so, what jewel can lie by a man
More precious than a virgin? If none more precious,
Why should the pillow of a fool be grac'd
With that brave spirits with dearness have embrac'd?
And then, perhaps, ere the third spring come on,
Sends home your diamond crack'd, the beauty gone;
And more to know her, 'cause you shall not doubt her,
A number of poor sparks twinkling about her.

SIR OLIVER

Now thou play'st Dowland's Lachrymae to thy master.

SAVORWIT

But shall I dry your eyes with a merry jig now
And make you look like sunshine in a shower?

SIR OLIVER

How, how, my honest boy, sweet Savorwit?

SAVORWIT

Young Master Sandfield, gallant Master Sandfield—

SIR OLIVER

Ha! What of him?

SAVORWIT

Affects your daughter strangely.

SIR OLIVER

Brave Master Sandfield! Let me hug thy zeal
Unto thy master's house. Ha, Master Sandfield!
But he'll expect a portion.

SAVORWIT

Not a whit, sir,
As you may use the matter.

SIR OLIVER

Nay, and the matter fall into my using
The devil a penny that he gets of me.

SAVORWIT

He lies at the mercy of your lock and key, sir;
You may use him as you list.

SIR OLIVER

Say'st thou me so?
Is he so far in doing?

SAVORWIT

Quite over head and ears, sir.
Nay, more: he means to run mad and break his neck
Off some high steeple if he have her not.

SIR OLIVER

Now bless the young gentleman's gristles; I hope
To be a grandfather yet by 'em.

SAVORWIT

That may you, sir,
To, marry, a chopping girl with a plump buttock
Will hoist a farthingale at five years old,
And call a man between eleven and twelve
To take part of a piece of mutton with her.

SIR OLIVER

Ha, precious wag! Hook him in finely, do.

SAVORWIT

Make clear the way for him first; set the gull going.

SIR OLIVER

An ass, an ass! I'll quickly dash his wooing.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Why now the clocks
Go right again. It must be a strange wit
That makes the wheels of youth and age so hit;
The one are dry, worn, rusty, furr'd, and soiled;
Love's wheels are glib, ever kept clean and oil'd.

Exit.

SIR OLIVER

I cannot choose but think of this good fortune:
That gallant Master Sandfield!

Enter Weatherwise.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] Stay, stay, stay.
What comfort gives my almanac today?
Luck, I beseech thee! [Consulting his almanac] Good days, evil days, June, July; speak a good word for me
now, and I have her. Let me see: "the fifth day, 'twixt hawk and buzzard; the sixth day, backward and
forward." That was beastly to me, I remember. "The seventh day, on a slippery pin; the eighth day, fire and
tow; the ninth day, the market is marr'd." That's long of the hucksters, I warrant you; but now "the tenth day."

I.[i. A street]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

Luck, I beseech thee now before I look into't! "The eleventh day, against the hair." A pox on't! Would that hair had been left out! "Against the hair!" That hair will go nigh to choke me; had it been against anything but that, 'twould not have troubled me because it lies cross i' th' way. Well, I'll try the fortune of a good face yet, though my almanac leave me i' th' sands.

SIR OLIVER

[Aside] Such a match, too. I could not wish a better.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] Mass, here he walks.—Save you, sweet Sir Oliver! Sir Oliver Twilight!

SIR OLIVER

Oh, pray come to me a quarter of a year hence; I have a little business now.

WEATHERWISE

How, a quarter of a year hence? What, shall I come to you in September?

SIR OLIVER

Nor in November neither, good my friend.

WEATHERWISE

Y'are not a mad knight; you will not let your daughter hang past August, will you? She'll drop down under tree then. She's no winter fruit, I assure you, if you think to put her in crust after Christmas.

SIR OLIVER

Sir, in a word, depart: my girl's not for you;
I gave you a drowsy promise in a dream,
But broad awake now, I call't in again.
Have me commended to your wit; farewell, sir.

[Exit.]

WEATHERWISE.

Now the devil run away with you, and some lousy fiddler with your daughter! May Clerkenwell have the first cut of her and Hound's Ditch pick the bones! I'll never leave the love of an open-hearted widow for a narrow-ey'd maid again, go out of the roadway like an ass to leap over hedge and ditch: I'll fall into the beaten path again and invite the widow home to a banquet. Let who list seek out new ways, I'll be at my journey's end before him.

My almanac told me true how I should fare;
Let no man think to speed against the hair.

Exit.

[I.ii. Low-water's house]

Enter Mistress Low-water.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Is there no saving means? No help religious
For a distressed gentlewoman to live by?
Has virtue no revenue? Who has all then?

I.[i. A street]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

Is the world's lease from hell, the devil head-landlord?
Oh, how was conscience, the right heir, put by?
Law would not do such an unrighteous deed,
Though with the fall of angels 't had been fee'd.
Where are our hopes in banks? Was honesty
A younger sister without portion left?
No dowry in the Chamber beside wantonness?
O miserable orphan!
'Twixt two extremes runs there no blessed mean,
No comfortable strain that I may kiss it?
Must I to whoredom or to beggary lean,
My mind being sound? Is there no way to miss it?
Is't not injustice that a widow laughs
And lays her mourning part upon a wife?
That she should have the garment, I the heart;
My wealth her uncle left her, and me her grief?
Yet, stood all miseries in their loathed'st forms
On this hand of me, thick like a foul mist,
And here the bright enticements of the world
In clearest colours, flattery, and advancement,
And all the bastard glories this frame jets in,
Horror nor splendour, shadows fair nor foul
Should force me shame my husband, wound my soul.

Enter Mistress Jane, Sunset's daughter.

Cousin, y'are welcome. This is kindly done of you
To visit the despis'd.

JANE

I hope not so, coz.
The want of means cannot make you despis'd;
Love not by wealth but by desert is priz'd.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Y'are pleas'd to help it well, coz.

JANE

I am come to you,
Beside my visitation, to request you
To lay your wit to mine, which is but simple,
And help me to untie a few dark words
Made up in knots—they're of the widow's knitting,
That ties all sure—for my wit has not strength
Nor cunning to unloose 'em.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Good, what are they,
Though there be little comfort of my help?

JANE

I.[i. A street]

She wish'd Sir Oliver's daughter and myself
Good fortune in our choices and repented her
Of a rash oath she took when we were both infants,
A secret to conceal; but since all's well,
She holds it best to keep it unreveal'd.
Now what this is, heaven knows.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Nor can I guess.
The course of her whole life and her dead husband's
Was ever full of such dishonest riddles
To keep right heirs from knowledge of their own.
And now I'm put i' th' mind on't, I believe
It was some [piece] of land or money given
By some departing friend upon their deathbed,
Perhaps to yourself, and Sir Oliver's daughter
May wrongfully enjoy it, and she hired,
For she was but an hireling in those days,
To keep the injury secret.

JANE

The most likeliest
That ever you could think on.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Is it not?

JANE

Sure, coz. I think you have untied the knot;
My thoughts lie at more ease. As in all other things,
In this I thank your help, and may you live
To conquer your own troubles and cross ends,
As you are ready to supply your friends.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I thank you for the kind truth of your heart,
In which I flourish when all means depart.
[Aside] Sure in that oath of hers there sleeps some wrong
Done to my kinswoman.

Enter Footman.

JANE

Who'd you speak withal?

FOOTMAN

The gentlewoman of this house, forsooth.

JANE

Whose footman are you?

FOOTMAN

One Sir Gilbert Lambston's.

JANE

Sir Gilbert Lambston's? There my cousin walks.

FOOTMAN

Thank your good worship.

[Exit Jane.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

How now, whence are you?

FOOTMAN

[Handing her a letter] This letter will make known.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Whence comes it, sir?

FOOTMAN

From the knight, my master, Sir Gilbert Lambston.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Throwing the letter at him] Return't; I'll receive none on't!

FOOTMAN

[Aside] There it must lie then;
I were as good run to Tyburn afoot and hang myself
At mine own charges as carry it back again.

Exit.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Life, had he not his answer? What strange impudence
Governs in man when lust is lord of him?
Thinks he me mad, 'cause I have no moneys on earth,
That I'll go forfeit my estate in heaven
And live eternal beggar? He shall pardon me,
That's my soul's jointure; I'll starve ere I sell that.
Oh, is he gone, and left the letter here?
Yet I will read it, more to hate the writer.
[Reading] "Mistress Low-water, if you desire to understand your own comfort, hear me out ere you refuse me. I'm in the way now to double the yearly means that first I offered you; and to stir you more to me, I'll empty your enemy's bags to maintain you, for the rich widow, the Lady Goldenfleece, to whom I have been a longer suitor than you [an] adversary, hath given me so much encouragement lately, insomuch that I am perfectly assured the next meeting strikes the bargain. The happiness that follows this 'twere idle to inform you of; only consent to my desires, and the widow's notch shall lie open to you. Thus much to your heart; I know y'are wise. Farewell. Thy friend to his power, and another's, Gilbert Lambston."
In this poor brief, what volumes has he thrust
Of treacherous perjury and adulterous lust!

I.[i. A street]

So foul a monster does this wrong appear
That I give pity to mine enemy here.
What a most fearful love reigns in some hearts
That dare oppose all judgment to get means,
And wed rich widows only to keep queans.
What a strange path he takes to my affection,
And thinks 't the near'st way, 'twill never be,
Goes through mine enemy's ground to come to me.
This letter is most welcome; I repent now
That my last anger threw thee at my feet:
My bosom shall receive thee.

Enter Sir Gilbert Lambston.

SIR GILBERT

[Aside] 'Tis good policy too,
To keep one that so mortally hates the widow;
She'll have more care to keep it close herself.
And look what wind her revenge goes withal:
The self-same gale whisks up the sails of love.
I shall [loose] much good sport by that.—
Now, my sweet mistress!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Sir Gilbert, you change [suits] oft;
You were here in black but lately.

SIR GILBERT

My mind ne'er shifts though.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] A foul mind the whilst—
But sure, sir, this is but a dissembling glass
You sent before you; 'tis not possible
Your heart should follow your hand.

SIR GILBERT

Then may both perish!

MISTRESS [LOW-WATER]

Do not wish that so soon, sir. Can you make
A three-months' love to a rich widow's bed,
And lay her pillow under a quean's head?
I know you can't, howe'er you may dissemble 't;
You have a heart brought up better.

SIR GILBERT

Faith, you wrong me in't;
You shall not find it so. I do protest to thee,
I will be lord of all my promises,
And ere't be long, thou shalt but turn a key

I.[i. A street]

And find 'em in thy coffer; for my love,
In matching with the widow, is but policy
To strengthen my estate and make me able
To set off all thy kisses with rewards:
That the worst weather our delights behold,
It may hail pearl and shower the widow's gold.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

You talk of a brave world, sir.

SIR GILBERT

'Twill seem better
When golden happiness breaks forth itself
Out of the [east port] of the widow's chamber.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

And here it sets.

SIR GILBERT

Here shall the downfall be;
Her wealth shall rise from her and set in thee.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

You men have th' art to overcome poor women.
Pray give my thoughts the freedom of one day,
And all the rest take you.

SIR GILBERT

I straight obey.
[Aside] This bird's my own.

Exit Sir Gilbert Lambston.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

There is no happiness but has her season:
Herein the brightness of her virtue shines.
The husk falls off in time that long shuts up
The fruit in a dark prison; so sweeps by
The cloud of miseries from wretches' eyes
That yet, though fall'n, at length they see to rise:
The secret powers work wondrously and duly.

Enter Master Low-water.

LOW-WATER

Why, how now, Kate?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Oh, are you come, sir? Husband,
Wake, wake, and let not patience keep thee poor;
Rouse up thy spirit from this falling slumber.

I.[i. A street]

Make thy distress seem but a weeping dream
And this the opening morning of thy comforts.
Wipe the salt dew off from thy careful eyes,
And drink a draught of gladness next thy heart
T' expel the infection of all poisonous sorrows.

LOW-WATER

You turn me past my senses.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Will you but second
The purpose I intend, I'll be first forward.
I crave no more of thee but a following spirit;
Will you but grant me that?

LOW-WATER

Why, what's the business
That should transport thee thus?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Hope of much good,
No fear of the least ill: take that to comfort thee.

LOW-WATER

Yea?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Sleep not on't; this is no slumbering business.
'Tis like the sweating sickness: I must keep
Your eyes still wake; y'are gone if once you sleep.

LOW-WATER

I will not rest then till thou hast thy wishes.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Peruse this love paper as you go.

LOW-WATER

A letter?

Exeunt.

[I.iii. Sir Oliver's house]

Enter Sir Oliver Twilight, with Master Sandfield, Philip, and Savorwit.

SIR OLIVER

Good Master Sandfield, for the great affection
You bear toward my girl, I am well pleas'd
You should enjoy her beauty. Heaven forbid, sir,
That I should cast away a proper gentleman

I.[i. A street]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

So far in love with a sour mood or so.
No, no,
I'll not die guilty of a lover's neck-cracking.
Marry, as for portion, there I leave you, sir,
To the mercy of your destiny again;
I'll have no hand in that.

SANDFIELD

Faith, something, sir;
Be 't but t' express your love.

SIR OLIVER

I have no desire, sir,
To express my love that way, and so rest satisfied.
I pray take heed in urging that too much
You draw not my love from me.

SANDFIELD

Fates foresee, sir.

SIR OLIVER

Faith, then you may go; seek out a high steeple
Or a deep water: there's no saving of you.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] How naturally he plays upon himself!

SIR OLIVER

Marry, if a wedding dinner, as I told you,
And three years' board, well lodg'd in mine house,
And eating, drinking, and a sleeping portion
May give you satisfaction, I am your man, sir;
Seek out no other.

SANDFIELD

I am content to embrace it, sir,
Rather than hazard languishment or ruin.

SIR OLIVER

I love thee for thy wisdom; such a son-in-law
Will cheer a father's heart. Welcome, sweet Master Sandfield.

[Philip and Savorwit begin to leave with Sandfield.]

Whither away, boys? Philip?

PHILIP

To visit my love, sir,
Old Master Sunset's daughter.

SIR OLIVER

I.[i. A street]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

That's my Philip.
Ply 't hard, my good boys both, put 'em to't finely.
One day, one dinner and one house shall join you.

PHILIP, SANDFIELD

That's our desire, sir.

Exeunt.

SIR OLIVER

Pish! Come hither, Savorwit.
Observe my son and bring me word, sweet boy,
Whether h'as a speeding wit or no in wooing.

SAVORWIT

That will I, sir. [Aside] That your own eyes might tell you.
I think it speedy: your girl has a round belly.

Exit Savorwit.

SIR OLIVER

How soon the comfortable shine of joy
Breaks through a cloud of grief!
The tears that I let fall for my dead wife
Are dried up with the beams of my girl's fortunes.
Her life, her death, and her ten years' distress
Are ev'n forgot with me; the love and care
That I ought her, her daughter [sh' owes] it all:
It can but be bestow'd, and there 'tis well.

Enter Servant.

SIR OLIVER

How now, what news?

SERVANT

There's a Dutch merchant, sir,
That's now come over desires some conference with you.

SIR OLIVER

How? A Dutch merchant? Pray send him in to me.

[Exit Servant.]

What news with him, trow?

Enter Dutch Merchant with a little Dutch Boy in great slops.

DUTCH MERCHANT

Sir Oliver Twilight?

I.[i. A street]

SIR OLIVER

That's my name indeed, sir.
I pray be covered, sir; y'are very welcome.

DUTCH MERCHANT

This is my business, sir. I took into my charge
A few words to deliver to yourself
From a dear friend of yours that wonders strangely
At your unkind neglect.

SIR OLIVER

Indeed! What might
He be, sir?

DUTCH MERCHANT

Nay, y'are i' th' wrong gender now;
'Tis that distressed lady, your good wife, sir.

SIR OLIVER

What say you, sir? My wife?

DUTCH MERCHANT

Yes, sir, your wife!
This strangeness now of yours seems more to harden
Th' uncharitable neglect she tax'd you for.

SIR OLIVER

Pray give me leave, sir. Is my wife alive?

DUTCH MERCHANT

Came any news to you, sir, to th' contrary?

SIR OLIVER

Yes, by my faith, did there.

DUTCH MERCHANT

Pray, how long since, sir?

SIR OLIVER

'Tis now some ten weeks.

DUTCH MERCHANT

Faith, within this month, sir,
I saw her talk and eat; and those in our calendar
Are signs of life and health.

SIR OLIVER

Mass, so they are in ours.

DUTCH MERCHANT

And these were the last words her passion threw me:

l.[i. A street]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

"No grief," quoth she, "sits to my heart so close
As his unkindness and my daughter's loss."

SIR OLIVER

You make me weep and wonder, for I swear
I sent her ransom, and that daughter's here.

DUTCH MERCHANT

Here! That will come well to lighten her of one grief.
I long to see her for the piteous moan
Her mother made for her.

SIR OLIVER

That shall you, sir. Within there!

[Enter Servant.]

SERVANT

Sir?

SIR OLIVER

Call down my daughter.

SERVANT

Yes, sir.

[Exit.]

Here's strange budgelling! I tell you, sir,
Those that I put in trust were near me, too;
A man would think they should not juggle with me:
My own son, and my servant, no worse people, sir.

DUTCH MERCHANT

And yet, oftentimes, sir, what worse knave to a man
Than he that eats his meat?

SIR OLIVER

Troth, you say true, sir.
I sent 'em simply, and that news they brought,
My wife had left the world; and with that [sum]
I sent to her, this brought his sister home.

Enter Grace.

Look you, sir, this is she.

DUTCH MERCHANT

If my eye sin not, sir,
Or misty error falsify the glass,
I saw that face at Antwerp in an inn

I.[i. A street]

When I set forth first to fetch home this boy.

SIR OLIVER

How? In an inn?

GRACE

[Aside] Oh, I am betray'd, I fear!

DUTCH MERCHANT

How do you, young mistress?

GRACE

Your eyes wrong your tongue, sir,
And makes you sin in both; I am not she.

DUTCH MERCHANT

No? Then I never saw face twice. Sir Oliver Twilight,
I tell you my free thoughts: I fear y'are blinded.
I do not like this story; I doubt much
The sister is as false as the dead mother.

SIR OLIVER

Yea! Say you so, sir? I see nothing lets me,
But to doubt so too then.
So, to your chamber; we have done with you.

GRACE

[Aside] I would be glad you had. Here's a strange storm.—
Sift it out well, sir; till anon I leave you, sir.

[Exit.]

DUTCH MERCHANT

Business commands me hence, but as a pledge
Of my return, I'll leave my little son with you,
Who yet takes little pleasure in this country
'Cause he can speak no English, all Dutch he.

SIR OLIVER

A fine boy; he's welcome, sir, to me.

DUTCH MERCHANT

Where's your leg and your thanks to the gentleman?
War es you neighgen an you thonkes you?

DUTCH BOY

[Bowing] Ick donck you, ver ew edermon vrendly kite.

SIR OLIVER

What says he, sir?

DUTCH MERCHANT

He thanks you for your kindness.

SIR OLIVER

Pretty knave!

DUTCH MERCHANT

Had not some business held me by the way,
This news had come to your ear ten days ago.

SIR OLIVER

It comes too soon now, methinks; I'm your debtor.

DUTCH MERCHANT.

But I could wish it, sir, for better ware.

Exit.

SIR OLIVER

We must not be our own choosers in our fortunes.
Here's a cold pie to breakfast: wife alive,
The daughter doubtful, and the money spent!
How am I juggled withal!

Enter Savorwit.

SAVORWIT

It hits i'faith, sir;
The work goes even.

SIR OLIVER

Oh, come, come, come, are you come, sir?

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Life, what's the matter now?

SIR OLIVER

There's a new reckoning
Come in since.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Pox on't! I thought all had been paid;
I can't abide these after-reckonings.

SIR OLIVER

I pray come near, sir; let's be acquainted with you.
You're bold enough abroad with my purse, sir.

SAVORWIT

No more than beseems manners and good use, sir.

SIR OLIVER

Did not you bring me word some ten weeks since
My wife was dead?

SAVORWIT

Yes, true, sir, very true, sir.

SIR OLIVER

Pray stay! And take my horse along with you,
And with the ransom that I sent for her
That you redeem'd my daughter?

SAVORWIT

Right as can be, sir;
I never found your worship in a false tale yet.

SIR OLIVER

I thank you for your good word, sir, but I'm like
To find your worship now in two at once.

SAVORWIT

I should be sorry to hear that.

SIR OLIVER

I believe you, sir.
Within this month my wife was sure alive—
There's six weeks bated of your ten-weeks' lie—
As has been credibly reported to me
By a Dutch merchant, father to that boy,
But now come over, and the words scarce cold.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Oh, strange!—"Tis a most rank untruth; where is he, sir?

SIR OLIVER

He will not be long absent.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] All's confounded.—
If he were here, I'll tell him to his face, sir;
He wears a double tongue: that's Dutch and English.
Will the boy say't?

SIR OLIVER

'Las, he can speak no English.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] All the better; I'll gabble something to him.—
Hoyste kaloiste, kalooskin ee vou, dar sune, alla gaskin?

DUTCH BOY

I.[i. A street]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

Ick wet neat watt hey zackt; ick unverstun ewe neat.

SAVORWIT

Why la, I thought as much.

SIR OLIVER

What says the boy?

SAVORWIT

He says his father is troubled with an imperfection at one time of the moon and talks like a madman.

SIR OLIVER

What? Does the boy say so?

SAVORWIT

I knew there was somewhat in't.

Your wife alive! Will you believe all tales, sir?

SIR OLIVER

Nay, more, sir: he told me he saw this wench
Which you brought home at Antwerp in an inn,
Tell[s] me I'm plainly cozen'd of all hands,
'Tis not my daughter neither.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] All's broke out.—

How? Not your daughter, sir? I must to't again.

Quisquinikin sadlamare, alla pisse kickin sows-clows, hoff tofte le cumber shaw, bouns bus boxsceno.

DUTCH BOY

Ick an sawth no int hein clapon de heeke, I dinke ute zein zennon.

SAVORWIT

Oh, zein zennon! Ah ha! I thought how 'twould prove i' th' end. The boy says they never came near Antwerp: a quite contrary way, round about by Parma.

SIR OLIVER

What's the same zein zennon?

SAVORWIT

That is, he saw no such wench in an inn. 'Tis well I came in such happy time to get it out of the boy before his father returned again. Pray be wary, sir; the world's subtle: come and pretend a charitable business in policy, and work out a piece of money on you.

SIR OLIVER

Mass, art advis'd of that?

SAVORWIT

The age is cunning, sir; beside, a Dutchman will live upon any ground and work butter out of a thistle.

SIR OLIVER

I.[i. A street]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

Troth, thou say'st true in that: they're the best thrivers in turnips, hartichalks, and cabishes; our English are not like them.

SAVORWIT

Oh, fie, no, sir!

SIR OLIVER

Ask him from whence they came, when they came hither.

SAVORWIT

That I will sir. Culluaron lagooso, lageen, lagan, rufft, punkatee.

DUTCH BOY

Nimd aweigh de cack.

SAVORWIT

What, what? I cannot blame him then.

SIR OLIVER

What says he to thee?

SAVORWIT

The poor boy blushes for him; he tells me his father came from making merry with certain of his countrymen and he's a little steep'd in English beer. There's no heed to be taken of his tongue now.

SIR OLIVER

Hoyda! How com'st thou by all this? I heard him speak but three words to thee.

SAVORWIT

Oh, sir, the Dutch is a very wide language. You shall have ten English words even for one, as for example, Gullder—goose; there's a word for you, master.

SIR OLIVER

Why, what's that same Gullder—goose?

SAVORWIT

How do you and all your generation.

SIR OLIVER

Why, 'tis impossible! How prove you that, sir?

SAVORWIT

'Tis thus distinguish'd, sir: Gull, how do you, der, and, goose, your generation.

SIR OLIVER

'Tis a most saucy language; how cam'st thou by't?

SAVORWIT

I was brought up to London in an eelship;
There was the place I caught it first by th' [tail].
[Aside] I shall be tripp'd anon; pox, would I were gone!—

I.[i. A street]

I'll go seek out your son, sir; you shall hear
What thunder he'll bring with him.

SIR OLIVER

Do, do, Savorwit;
I'll have you all face to face.

SAVORWIT

Cuds me! What else, sir?
[Aside] And you take me so near the net again,
I'll give you leave to squat me! I have 'scap'd fairly.
We are undone in Dutch; all our three-months' roguery
Is now come over in a butter firkin.

Exit Savorwit.

SIR OLIVER

Never was man so toss'd between two tales!
I know not which to take, not which to trust.
The boy here is the likeliest to tell truth,
Because the world's corruption is not yet
At full years in him; sure he cannot know
What deceit means: 'tis English yet to him.
And when I think again, why should the father
Dissemble for no profit? He gets none,
Whate'er he hopes for, and I think he hopes not.
The man's in a good case: being old and weary,
He dares not lean his arm on his son's shoulder
For fear he lie i' th' dirt, but must be rather
Beholding to a stranger for his prop.

Enter Dutchman [Dutch Merchant].

DUTCH MERCHANT.

I make bold once again, sir, for a boy here.

SIR OLIVER

Oh, sir, y'are welcome. Pray resolve me one thing, sir:
Did you within this month, with your own eyes,
See my wife living?

DUTCH MERCHANT

I ne'er borrowed any.
Why should you move that question, sir? Dissembling
Is no part of my living.

SIR OLIVER

I have reason
To urge it so far, sir, pray be not angry though,
Because my man was here since your departure,
Withstands all stiffly, and to make it clearer,

I.[i. A street]

Question'd your boy in Dutch, who, as he told me,
Return'd this answer first to him: that you
Had imperfection at one time o' th' moon
Which made you talk so strangely.

DUTCH MERCHANT

How, how's this? Zeicke yongon, ick ben ick quelt medien dullek heght, ee untoit van the mon, an koot uram'd?

DUTCH BOY

Wee ek, heigh lieght in ze bokkas, dee't site.

DUTCH MERCHANT

Why, la you, sir! Here's no such thing;
He says he lies in's throat that says it.

SIR OLIVER

Then the rogue lies in's throat, for he told me so,
And that the boy should answer at next question
That you ne'er saw this wench nor came near Antwerp.

DUTCH MERCHANT

Ten thousand devils! Zeicke hee ewe ek kneeght, yongon, dat wee neeky by Antwarpon ne don cammen no seene de doughter dor?

DUTCH BOY

Ick hub ham hean sulka dongon he zaut, hei es an skallom an rubbout.

DUTCH MERCHANT

He says he told him no such matter; he's a knave and a rascal.

SIR OLIVER

Why, how am I abus'd? Pray tell me one thing:
What's Gullder–goose in Dutch?

DUTCH MERCHANT

How? Gullder–goose?
There's no such thing in Dutch; it may be an ass
In English.

SIR OLIVER

Hoyda! Then am I that ass
In plain English: I am grossly cozen'd, most
Inconsiderately! Pray let my house receive you
For one night that I may quit these rascals,
I beseech you, sir.

DUTCH MERCHANT

If that may stead you, sir,
I'll not refuse you.

SIR OLIVER

A thousand thanks, and welcome.
On whom can fortune more spit out her foam:
Work'd on abroad and play'd upon at home!

Exeunt.

II.[i. Weatherwise's house]

Enter Weatherwise, the gull, meeting [Pickadille and] two or three [servants] bringing out a table.

WEATHERWISE

So, set the table ready. The widow's i' th' next room, looking upon my clock with the days and the months and the change of the moon; I'll fetch her in presently.

[Exit.]

PICKADILLE

She's not so mad to be fetch'd in with the moon, I warrant you. A man must go roundlier to work with a widow than to woo her with the hand of a dial, or stir up her blood with the striking part of a clock; I should ne'er stand to show her such things in chamber.

Exeunt [Servants]. Enter Weatherwise with the widow [Lady Goldenfleece], Sir Gilbert Lambston, Master Pepperton, Master Overdon.

WEATHERWISE

Welcome, sweet widow, to a bachelor's house here; a single man I, but for two or three maids that I keep.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Why, are you double with them then?

WEATHERWISE

An exceeding good mourning wit! Women are wiser than ever they were since they wore doublets. You must think, sweet widow, if a man keep maids, they're under his subjection.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

That's most true, sir.

WEATHERWISE

They have no reason to have a lock but the master must have a key to't.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

To him, Sir Gilbert. He fights with me at a wrong weapon now.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] Nay, and Sir Gilbert strike, my weapon falls;
I fear no thrust but his. Here are more shooters,
But they have shot two arrows without heads;
They cannot stick i' th' butt yet. Hold out, knight,

And I'll cleave the black pin i' th' midst o' th' white.

Exit.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Nay, and he led me into a closet, sir, where he showed me diet drinks for several months, as scurvigrass for April, clarified whey for June, and the like.

SIR GILBERT

Oh, madam, he is a most necessary property, an't be but to save our credit, ten pound in a banquet.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Go, y'are a wag, Sir Gilbert.

SIR GILBERT

How many there be in the world of his fortunes that prick their own calves with briars to make an easy passage for others, or like a toiling usurer sets his son a—horseback in cloth—of—gold breeches while he himself goes t' th' devil afoot in a pair of old strossers.

But shall I give a more familiar sign?

His are the sweetmeats, but the kisses mine. [Kisses her.]

OVERDON

Excellent. [Aside] A pox o' your fortune!

PEPPERTON

[Taking Overdon aside] Saucy courting has brought all modest wooing clean out of fashion. You shall have few maids nowadays got without rough handling; all the town's so us'd to't, and most commonly too they're join'd before they're married because they'll be sure to be fast enough.

OVERDON

Sir, since he strives t' oppose himself against us,

Let's so combine our friendships in our straits

By all means graceful to assist each other.

For I protest it shall as much glad me

To see your happiness and his disgrace,

As if the wealth were mine, the love, the place.

PEPPERTON

And with the like faith I reward your friendship.

I'll break the bawdy ranks of his discourse

And scatter his libidinous whispers straight.—

Madam.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

How cheer you, gentlemen?

SIR GILBERT

[Aside] Pox on 'em!

They wak'd me out of a fine sleep; three minutes

Had fasten'd all the treasure in mine arms.

PEPPER-TON

[Showing her the trenchers] You took no note of this conceit, it seems, madam.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Twelve trenchers, upon every one a month.
January, February, March, April—

PEPPER-TON

Ay, and their posies under 'em.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Pray, what says May? She's the spring lady.

[PEPPER-TON]

"Now gallant May in her array,
Doth make the field pleasant and gay."

OVERDON

"This month of June use clarified whey,
Boil'd with cold herbs, and drink alway."

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Drink't all away, he should say.

PEPPER-TON

'Twere much better indeed, and wholesomer for his liver.

SIR GILBERT

September's a good one here, madam.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Oh, have you chose your month? Let's hear't, Sir Gilbert.

SIR GILBERT

"Now mayst thou physics safely take,
And bleed, and bathe for thy health's sake.
Eat figs and grapes and spicery
For to refresh thy members dry."

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Thus it is still when a man's simple meaning lights among wantons. How many honest words have suffered corruption since Chaucer's days? A virgin would speak those words then that a very midwife would blush to hear now, if she have but so much blood left to make up an ounce of grace. And who is this long on but such wags as you that use your words like your wenches? You cannot let 'em pass honestly by you, but you must still have a flirt at 'em.

PEPPER-TON

You have paid some of us home, madam.

Enter Weatherwise.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] If conceit will strike this stroke, have at the widow's plumtree. I'll put 'em down all for a banquet.—Widow and gentlemen, my friends and servants, I make you wait long here for a bachelor's pittance.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Oh, sir, y'are pleas'd to be modest.

WEATHERWISE

No, by my troth, widow. You shall find it otherwise.

Strike music. Enter banquet and six of his tenants with the twelve signs made like banqueting—stuff: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What, the twelve signs?

WEATHERWISE

These are the signs of my love, widow.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Worse meat would have serv'd us, sir. By my faith,
I'm sorry you should be at such charges, sir,
To feast us a whole month together here.

WEATHERWISE

Widow, thou'rt welcome a whole month, and ever.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

And what be those, sir, that brought in the banquet?

WEATHERWISE

Those are my tenants; they stand for fasting days.

SIR GILBERT

Or the six weeks in Lent.

WEATHERWISE

Y'are i' th' right, Sir Gilbert.
Sweet widow, take your place at Aries here;
That's the head sign. A widow is the head
Till she be married.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What is she then?

WEATHERWISE

The middle.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[Sitting] 'Tis happy she's no worse.

WEATHERWISE

Taurus, Sir Gilbert Lambston, that's for you.
They say you're a good town–bull.

SIR GILBERT

[Sitting] Oh, spare your friends, sir.

WEATHERWISE

And Gemini for Master Pepperton.
He had two boys at once by his last wife.

PEPPERTON

[Sitting] I hear the widow[s] find no fault with that, sir.

WEATHERWISE

Cancer the Crab for Master Overdon,
For when a thing's past fifty, it grows crooked.

[Overdon sits.]

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Now for yourself, sir.

WEATHERWISE

Take no care for me,
Widow: I can be anywhere. Here's Leo,
Heart and back; Virgo, guts and belly.
I can go lower yet, and yet fare better,
Since Sagittarius fits me the thighs;
[Sitting] I care not if I be about the thighs,
I shall find meat enough.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

But under pardon, sir.
Though you be lord o' th' feast and the conceit both,
Methinks it had been proper for the banquet
To have had the signs all fill'd and no one idle.

WEATHERWISE

I know it had, but whose fault's that, widow?
You should have got you more suitors to have stopp'd
The gaps.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Nay, sure, they should get us, and not
We them. There be your tenants, sir; we are
Not proud; you may bid them sit down.

WEATHERWISE

By th' mass,

Il.[i. Weatherwise's house]

It's true too. Then sit down, tenants,
Once with your hats on, but spare the meat, I charge you,
As you hope for new leases. I must make
My signs draw out a month yet, with a bit
Every morning to breakfast, and at
Full moon with a whole one; that's restorative.
Sit round, sit round, and do not speak, sweet tenants.
You may be bold enough, so you eat but little.

[Tenants sit.]

How like you this now, widow?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

It shows well, sir;
And like the good old hospitable fashion.

PICKADILLE

[Aside] How! Like a good old hospital! My mistress makes an arrant gull on him.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

But yet methinks there wants clothes for the feet.

WEATHERWISE

That part's uncovered yet. Push, no matter for the feet.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Yes, if the feet catch cold, the head will feel it.

WEATHERWISE

Why then you may draw up your legs, and lie
Rounder together.

SIR GILBERT

H'as answered you well, madam.

WEATHERWISE

And you draw up your legs too, widow, my tenant
Will feel you there, for he's one of the calves.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Better and better, sir; your wit fattens as he feeds.

PICKADILLE

[Aside] Sh'as took the calf from his tenant and put it upon his ground now.

[Enter Servant.]

WEATHERWISE

How now, my lady's man, what's the news, sir?

SERVANT

Madam, there's a young gentleman below;
H'as earnest business to your ladyship.

WEATHERWISE

Another suitor, I hold my life, widow.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What is he, sir?

SERVANT

He seems a gentleman,
That's the least of him, and yet more I know not.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Under the leave o' th' master of the house here,
I would he were admitted.

WEATHERWISE

With all my heart, widow; I fear him not.
Come cut and long tail!

SIR GILBERT

[Aside] I have the least fear
And the most firmness; nothing can shake me.

[Exit Servant.]

WEATHERWISE

If he be a gentleman, he's welcome;
There's a sign does nothing, and that's fit
For a gentleman. The feet will be kept warm
Enough now for you, widow, for if he be
A right gentleman, he has his stockings warm'd
And he wears socks beside, partly for warmth,
Partly for cleanliness; and if he observe
Fridays too, he comes excellent well.
Pisces will be a fine fish dinner for him.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Why then you mean, sir, he shall sit as he comes?

WEATHERWISE

Ay, and he were a lord, he shall not sit
Above my tenants. I'll not have two lords
To them, so I may go look my rent
In another man's breeches. I was
Not brought up to be so unmannerly.

Enter Mistress Low-water as a gallant gentleman, her husband [Low-water] like a serving-man after her.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] I have pick'd out a bold time.—Much good do you, Gentlemen.

WEATHERWISE

Y'are welcome as I may say, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Pardon my rudeness, madam.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

No such fault, sir;
You're too severe to yourself; our judgment quits you.
Please you to do as we do.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Thanks, good madam.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Make room, gentlemen.

WEATHERWISE

Sit still, tenants.
I'll call in all your old leases and rack you else.

ALL TENANTS

Oh, sweet landlord!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Take my cloak, sirrah.

[She gives her cloak to Low-water.]

If any be disturb'd, I'll not sit, gentlemen.
I see my place.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] A proper woman turn'd gallant!
If the widow refuse me, I care not
If I be a suitor to him. I have known
Those who have been as mad, and given half
Their living for a male companion.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

How, Pisces! Is that mine? [Sitting] 'Tis a conceited banquet.

WEATHERWISE

If you love any fish, pray fall to, sir.
If you had come sooner, you might have happened
Among some of the flesh signs, but now they're all taken up;
Virgo had been a good dish for you, had not

II.[i. Weatherwise's house]

One of my tenants been somewhat busy with her.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Pray let him keep her, sir; give me meat fresh:
I'd rather have whole fish than broken flesh.

SIR GILBERT

What say you to a bit of Taurus?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

No, I thank you, sir;
The bull's too rank for me.

SIR GILBERT

How, sir?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Too rank, sir.

SIR GILBERT

Fie, I shall strike you dumb like all your fellows.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

What, with your heels or horns?

SIR GILBERT

Perhaps with both.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

It must be at dead [low water], when I'm dead then.

LOW-WATER

[Aside] 'Tis brave, Kate, and nobly spoke of thee.

WEATHERWISE

This quarrel must be drown'd. Pickadille, my lady's fool!

PICKADILLE

You're your own man, sir.

WEATHERWISE

Prithee, step in to one o' th' maids.

PICKADILLE

That I will, sir, and thank you, too.

WEATHERWISE

Nay, hark you, sir: call for my sun-cup presently; I'd forgot it.

PICKADILLE

How, your sun-cup? [Aside] Some cup, I warrant, that he stole out o' th' Sun Tavern.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[Aside] The more I look on him, the more I thirst for't.
Methinks his beauty does so far transcend,
Turns the signs back, makes that the upper end.

WEATHERWISE

How cheer you, widow? Gentlemen, how cheer you?
Fair weather in all quarters!
The sun will peep anon; I have sent one for him.
In the meantime I'll tell you a tale of these.
This Libra here that keeps the scale so even
Was i' th' old time an honest chandler's widow
And had one daughter which was called Virgo,
Which now my hungry tenant has deflower'd.
This Virgo, passing for a maid, was sued to
By Sagittarius there, a gallant shooter,
And Aries, his head rival; but her old crabbed
Uncle Cancer here, dwelling in Crooked Lane,
Still cross'd the marriage, minding to bestow her
Upon one Scorpio, a rich usurer.
The girl, loathing that match, fell into folly
With one Taurus, a gentleman in Townbull Street,
By whom she had two twins, those Gemini there,
Of which two brats she was brought abed in Leo
At the Red Lion about Tower Hill.
Being in this distress, one Capricorn,
An honest citizen, pitied her case and married her
To Aquarius, an old water-bearer,
And Pisces was her living ever after;
At Standard she sold fish where he drew water.

ALL

It shall be yours, sir.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Meat and mirth too! Y'are lavish;
Your purse and tongue has been at cost today, sir.

SIR GILBERT

You may challenge all comers at these twelve weapons, I warrant you.

Enter clown [Pickadille with the sun-cup, wearing a veil but no doublet].

PICKADILLE

Your sun-cup call you it! 'Tis a simple voyage that I have made here. I have left my doublet within for fear I should sweat through my jerkin, and thrown a cypress over my face for fear of sun burning.

WEATHERWISE

How now, [who's] this? Why, sirrah!

PICKADILLE

Can you endure it, mistress?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Endure what, fool?

WEATHERWISE

Fill the cup, coxcomb.

PICKADILLE.

Nay, an't be no hotter, I'll go put on my doublet again.

Exit.

WEATHERWISE

What a whoreson sot is this! [Giving the cup to Low-water] Prithee, fill the cup, fellow, and give't the widow.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Sirrah, how stand you? Bestow your service there
Upon her ladyship.

[He gives the cup to Lady Goldenfleece.]

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What's here? A sun?

WEATHERWISE

It does betoken, madam, a cheerful day
To somebody.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[Aside] It rises full in the face of [yon]
Fair sign, and yet by course he is the last
Must feel the heat.—Here, gentlemen, to you all,
For you know the sun must go through the twelve signs.

[Drinks.]

WEATHERWISE

Most wittily, widow: you jump with my conceit right;
There's not a hair between us.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Give it Sir Gilbert.

SIR GILBERT

I am the next through whom the golden flame
Shines when 'tis spent in thy celestial ram;
The poor feet there must wait and cool a while.

[Drinks.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

We have our time, sir; joy and we shall meet:
I have known the proud neck lie between the feet.

WEATHERWISE

So round it goes.

[Each drinks in turn.] Enter clown [Pickadille].

PICKADILLE

I like this drinking world well.

WEATHERWISE

So fill't him again.

PEPPERTON

Fill't me? Why, I drunk last, sir.

WEATHERWISE

I know you did, but Gemini must drink twice,
Unless you mean that one of them shall be chok'd.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[Aside] Fly from my heart all variable thoughts!
She that's entic'd by every pleasing object
Shall find small pleasure, and as little rest.
This knave hath lov'd me long; he's best and worthiest,
I cannot but in honour see him requited.—
Sir Gilbert Lambston!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

How! Pardon me, sweet lady,
That with a bold tongue I strike by your words:
Sir Gilbert Lambston?

SIR GILBERT

Yes, sir, that's my name.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

There should be a rank villain of that name;
Came you out of that house?

SIR GILBERT

How, sir slave!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Fall to your bull; leave roaring till anon.

WEATHERWISE

Il.[i. Weatherwise's house]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

Yet again! And you love me, gentlemen,
Let's have no roaring here. If I had thought that,
I'd have sent my bull to the bear garden.

PEPPER-TON

Why, so you should have wanted one of your signs.

WEATHERWISE

But I may chance want two now, and they fall
Together by the ears.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What's the strange fire
That works in these two creatures? Cold signs both,
Yet more hot than all their fellows.

WEATHERWISE

Ho, Sol in Pisces!
The sun's in New Fish Street. Here's an end of this course.

PICKADILLE

Madam, I am bold to remember your worship for a year's wages and an livery cloak.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

How, will you shame me? Had you not both last week, fool?

PICKADILLE

Ay, but there's another year past since that.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Would all your wit could make that good, sir.

PICKADILLE

I am sure the sun has run through all the twelve signs since, and that's a year; [these] gentlemen can witness.

WEATHERWISE

The fool will live, madam.

PICKADILLE

[Aside] Ay, as long as your eyes are open, I warrant him.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Sirrah!

LOW-WATER

Does your worship call?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Giving him a letter] Commend my love and service to the widow;
Desire her ladyship to taste that morsel.

LOW-WATER

[Aside] This is the bit I watch'd for all this while,
But it comes duly.

SIR GILBERT

And wherein has this name of mine offended,
That y'are so liberal of your infamous titles,
I, but a stranger to thee? It must be known, sir,
Ere we two part.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Marry, and reason, good sir.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Oh, strike me cold! This should be your hand, Sir Gilbert?

SIR GILBERT

Why, make you question of that, madam? 'Tis one of the letters I sent you.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[Rising to leave] Much good do you, gentlemen.

ALL

How now? What's the matter?

WEATHERWISE

Look to the widow; she paints white! Some aqua coelistis for my lady! Run, villain!

PICKADILLE

Aqua solister! Can nobody help her case but a lawyer, and so many suitors here?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Oh, treachery unmatch'd, unheard of!

SIR GILBERT

How do you, madam?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Oh, impudence as foul! Does my disease
Ask how I do? Can it torment my heart
And look with a fresh colour in my face?

SIR GILBERT

What's this? What's this?

WEATHERWISE

I am sorry for this qualm, widow.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

He that would know a villain when he meets him,
Let him ne'er go to a conjurer: here's a glass

Il.[i. Weatherwise's house]

Will show him without money, and far truer!
Preserver of my state, pray tell me, sir,
That I may pay you all my thanks together,
What bless'd hap brought that letter to your hand
From me, so fast lock'd in mine enemy's power?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I will resolve you, madam. I have a kinsman
Somewhat infected with that wanton pity
Which men bestow on the distress of women,
Especially if they be fair and poor;
With such hot charity, which indeed is lust,
He sought t' entice, as his repentance told me,
Her whom you call your enemy, the wife
To a poor gentleman, one Low-water—

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Right, right, the same.

LOW-WATER

[Aside] Had it been right, 't 'ad now been.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

And, according to the common rate of sinners,
Offer'd large maintenance, which with her seem'd nothing:
For if she would consent, she told him roundly,
There was a knight had bid more at one minute
Than all his wealth could compass, and withal
Pluck'd out that letter as it were in scorn;
Which, by good fortune, he put up in jest
With promise that the writ should be returnable
The next hour of his meeting. But, sweet madam,
Out of my love and zeal, I did so practice
The part upon him of an urgent wooer
That neither he nor that return'd more to her.

SIR GILBERT

[Aside] Plague o' that kinsman!

WEATHERWISE

Here's a gallant rascal!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Sir, you have appear'd so noble in this action,
So full of worth and goodness, that my thanks
Will rather shame the bounty of my mind
Than do it honour. Oh, thou treacherous villain!
Does thy faith bear such fruit?
Are these the blossoms of a hundred oaths
Shot from thy bosom? Was thy love so spiteful
It could not be content to mock my heart,

II.[i. Weatherwise's house]

Which is in love a misery too much,
But must extend so far to the quick ruin
Of what was painfully got, carefully left me;
And, 'mongst a world of yielding, needy women,
Choose no one to make merry with my sorrows
And spend my wealth on in adulterous surfeits
But my most mortal enemy? Oh, spiteful!
Is this thy practice? Follow it, 'twill advance thee!
Go, beguile on! Have I so happily found
What many a widow has with sorrow tasted,
Even when my lip touch'd the contracting cup,
Even then to see the spider? 'Twas miraculous!
Crawl with thy poisons hence, and for thy sake
I'll never covet titles and more riches,
To fall into a gulf of hate and laughter.
I'll marry love hereafter; I've enough,
And wanting that, I have nothing. There's thy way.

OVERDON

Do you hear, sir? You must walk.

PEPPERTON

Hear't! Thrust him down stairs!

WEATHERWISE

Out of my house, you treacherous, lecherous rascal!

SIR GILBERT

All curses scatter you!

WEATHERWISE

Life, do you thunder here? If you had stayed a little longer, I'd have ripp'd out some of my bull out of your belly again.

PEPPERTON

'Twas a most noble discovery; we must love you forever for't.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Sir, for your banquet and your mirth, we thank you;
You, gentlemen, for your kind company;
But, you, for all my merry days to come,
Or this had been the last else.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Love and fortune
Had more care of your safety, peace, and state, madam.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] Now will I thrust in for't.

PEPPERTON

Il.[i. Weatherwise's house]

[Aside] I'm for myself now.

OVERDON

[Aside] What's fifty years? 'Tis man's best time and season.
Now the [knight's] gone, the widow will hear reason.

LOW-WATER

[Aside] Now, now! The suitors flatter; hold on, Kate:
The hen may pick the meat while the cocks prate.

Exeunt.

[II.ii. A street outside Sir Oliver's house]
Enter Master Sandfield; Philip, Sir Oliver Twilight's son; with Savorwit.

PHILIP

If thou talk'st longer, I shall turn to marble,
And death will stop my hearing.

SANDFIELD

Horrible fortune!

SAVORWIT

Nay, sir, our building is so far defac'd
There is no stuff left to raise up a hope.

PHILIP

Oh, with more patience could my flesh endure
A score of wounds and all their several searchings
Than this that thou hast told me!

SAVORWIT

Would that Flemish ram
Had ne'er come near our house! There's no going home
As long as he has a nest there, and his young one,
A little Flanders' egg new fledg'd; they gape
For pork, and I shall be made meat for 'em.

PHILIP

'Tis not the bare news of my mother's life,
May she live long and happy, that afflicts me
With half the violence that the latter draws,
Though in that news I have my share of grief,
As I had share of sin and a foul neglect:
It is my love's betraying; that's the sting
That strikes through flesh and spirit, and sense nor wit
From thee, in whom I ne'er saw ebb till now,
Nor comforts from a faithful friend can ease me.
I'll try the goodness of a third companion,
What he'll do for me.

II.[i. Weatherwise's house]

[Draws his sword.]

SANDFIELD

Hold! Why, friend?

SAVORWIT

Why, master, is this all your kindness, sir? Offer to steal into another country and ne'er take your leave on's? Troth, I take it unkindly at your hands, sir; but I'll put it up for once. [Puts up the sword.] Faith, there was no conscience in this, sir: leave me here to endure all weathers, whilst you make your soul dance like a juggler's egg upon the point of a rapier! By my troth, sir, y'are too blame in't. You might have given us an inkling of your journey; perhaps others would as fain have gone as you.

PHILIP

Burns this clay lamp of miserable life
When joy, the oil that feeds it, is dried up?

Enter his mother [Lady Twilight] new landed; with a gentleman, a scholar [Beveril]; and others.

LADY TWILIGHT

He has remov'd his house.

BEVERIL

So it seems, madam.

LADY TWILIGHT

I'll ask that gentleman. Pray, can you tell me, sir,
Which is Sir Oliver Twilight's?

PHILIP

Few can better, gentlewoman.
It is the next fair house your eye can fix on.

LADY TWILIGHT

I thank you, sir. [To the others, who then leave] Go on.
He had a son about some ten years since.

PHILIP

That son still lives.

LADY TWILIGHT

I pray, how does he, sir?

PHILIP

Faith, much about my health; that's never worse.
If you have any business to him, gentlewoman,
I can cut short your journey to the house.
I'm all that ever was of the same kind.

LADY TWILIGHT

Oh, my sweet son! Never fell fresher joy

ll.[i. Weatherwise's house]

Upon the heart of mother! This is he, sir!

BEVERIL

My seven years' travel has ev'n worn him out
Of my remembrance.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Oh, this gear's worse and worse!

PHILIP

[Kneeling] I am so wonderstruck at your bless'd presence
That through amaz'd joy, I neglect my duty.

LADY TWILIGHT

Rise, and a thousand blessings spring up with thee.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] I would we had but one in the meantime;
Let the rest glow at leisure.

LADY TWILIGHT

But know you not this gentleman yet, son?

PHILIP

I take it's Master Beveril.

BEVERIL

My name's Beveril, sir.

PHILIP

[Embracing him] Right welcome to my bosom!

LADY TWILIGHT

You'd not think, son,
How much I am beholding to this gentleman
As far as freedom; he laid out the ransom,
Finding me so distress'd.

PHILIP

'Twas worthily done, sir,
And I shall ever rest your servant for't.

BEVERIL

You quite forget your worth. 'Twas my good hap, sir,
To return home that way after some travels
Where finding your good mother so distress'd,
I could not but in pity see her releas'd.

PHILIP

It was a noble charity, sir; heaven quit you.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] It comes at last.

BEVERIL

I left a sister here,
New married when I last took leave of England.

PHILIP

Oh, Mistress Low-water.

BEVERIL

Pray, sir, how does she?

PHILIP

So little comfort I can give you, sir,
That I would fain excuse myself for silence.

BEVERIL

Why, what's the worst, sir?

PHILIP

Wrongs has made her poor.

BEVERIL

You strike my heart! Alas, good gentlewoman!

PHILIP

Here's a gentleman; you know him: Master Sandfield.

BEVERIL

I crave pardon, sir.

PHILIP

He can resolve you from her kinswoman.

SANDFIELD

Welcome to England, madam.

LADY TWILIGHT

Thanks, good sir.

PHILIP

[Taking Savorwit aside] Now there's no way to 'scape: I'm compass'd round;
My shame is like a prisoner set with halberds.

SAVORWIT

Pish, master, master! 'Tis young flood again,
And you can take your time now; away quick!

PHILIP

Push, thou'st a swimming head.

Il.[i. Weatherwise's house]

SAVORWIT

Will you but hear me?
When did you lose your tide when I set forth with you?

PHILIP

That's true.

SAVORWIT

Regard me then; though you have no feeling,
I would not hang by th' thumbs with a good will.

PHILIP

I hang by th' heart, sir, and would fain have ease.

SAVORWIT

Then this or none. Fly to your mother's pity,
For that's the court must help you: y'are quite gone
At common law; no counselor can hear you.
Confess your follies and ask pardon for 'em,
Tell her the state of all things; stand not nicely:
The meat's too hard to be minc'd now;
She breeds young bones by this time.
Deal plainly: heaven will bless thee; turn out all,
And shake your pockets after it. Beg, weep,
Kneel, anything; 'twill break no bones, man.
Let her not rest, take breathing time, nor leave thee
Till thou hast got her help.

PHILIP

Lad, I conceive thee.

SAVORWIT

About it then; it requires haste. Do't well:
There's but a short street between us and hell.

BEVERIL

Ah, my poor sister!

LADY TWILIGHT

'Las, good gentlewoman
My heart ev'n weeps for her.

[Philip] shogs his mother.

Nay, son, we'll go now.

PHILIP

May I crave one word, madam?

LADY TWILIGHT

ll.[i. Weatherwise's house]

With me, son?
The more, the better welcome.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Now, now luck!
I pray not often: the last prayer I made
Was nine-year-old last Bartholomew-tide; 'twould have been
A jolly chopper, and 't 'ad liv'd till this time.

LADY TWILIGHT

Why do your words start back? Are they afraid
Of her that ever lov'd them?

PHILIP

I have a suit to you, madam.

LADY TWILIGHT

You have told me that already; pray what is't?
If't be so great my present state refuse it,
I shall be abler, then command and use it;
Whate'er 't be, let me have warning to provide for't.

PHILIP

[Kneeling] Provide forgiveness then, for that's the want
My conscience feels. Oh, my wild youth has led me
Into unnatural wrongs against your freedom once.
I spent the ransom which my father sent
To set my pleasures free, while you lay captive.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] He does it finely, faith.

LADY TWILIGHT

And is this all now?
You use me like a stranger; pray stand up.

PHILIP

Rather fall flat; I shall deserve yet worse.

LADY TWILIGHT

[Raising him] Whate'er your faults are, esteem me still a friend,
Or else you wrong me more in asking pardon
Than when you did the wrong you ask'd it for,
And since you have prepar'd me to forgive you,
Pray let me know for what; the first fault's nothing.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] 'Tis a sweet lady, every inch of her.

PHILIP

Here comes the wrong then that drives home the rest.

I saw a face at Antwerp that quite drew me
From conscience and obedience; in that fray
I lost my heart, I must needs lose my way:
There went the ransom, to redeem my mind;
'Stead of the money, I brought over her,
And to cast mists before my father's eyes,
Told him it was my sister, lost so long,
And that yourself was dead. You see the wrong?

LADY TWILIGHT

This is but youthful still. Oh, that word "sister"
Afflicts me when I think on't. I forgive thee
As freely as thou didst it. For, alas,
This may be call'd good dealing to some parts,
That love and youth plays daily among sons.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] She helps our knavery well; that's one good comfort.

PHILIP

But such is the hard plight my state lives in
That 'twixt forgiveness I must sin again,
And seek my help where I bestow'd my wrongs.
Oh, mother, pity once, though against reason,
'Cause I can merit none; though my wrongs grieve you,
Yet let it be your glory to relieve me.

LADY TWILIGHT

Wherein have I given cause yet of mistrust,
That you should doubt my succour and my love?
Show me but in what kind I may bestow 'em.

PHILIP

There came a Dutchman with report this day
That you were living.

LADY TWILIGHT

Came he so lately?

PHILIP

Yes, madam.
Which news so struck my father on the sudden
That he grows jealous of my faith in both.
These five hours have I kept me from his sight
And wish'd myself eternally so hid;
And surely, had not your bless'd presence quicken'd
The flame of life in me, all had gone out.
Now to confirm me to his trust again
And settle much aright in his opinion,
Say but she is my sister, and all's well.

LADY TWILIGHT

You ask devotion like a bashful beggar
That pure need urges and not lazy impudence;
And to express how glad I am to pity you,
My bounty shall flow over your demand.
I will not only with a constant breath
Approve that, but excuse thee for my death.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Why, here's a woman made as a man would wish to have her.

PHILIP

Oh, I am plac'd higher in happiness
Than whence I fell before!

SAVORWIT

[Aside] We're brave fellows once again, and we can keep our own. Now, hofte toffte, our pipes play as loftily!

BEVERIL

My sister fled!

SANDFIELD

Both fled; that's the news now. Want must obey;
Oppressions came so thick, they could not stay.

BEVERIL

Mean are my fortunes, yet had I been nigh,
Distress nor wrong should have made virtue fly.

LADY TWILIGHT

Spoke like a brother, worthy such a sister.

BEVERIL

Grief's like a new wound; heat beguiles the sense,
For I shall feel this smart more three days hence.
Come, madam, sorrow's rude and forgets manners.

[Exeunt all except Savorwit].

SAVORWIT

Our knavery is for all the world like a shifting bankrupt; it breaks in one place, and sets up in another: he tries all trades, from a goldsmith to a tobacco seller, we try all shifts, from an outlaw to a flatterer; he cozens the husband, and compounds with the widow, we cozen my master, and compound with my mistress. Only here I turn o' th' right hand from him: he is known to live like a rascal, when I am thought to live like a gentleman.

[Exit.]

[II.iii. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

Enter Kate [Mistress Low-water] with her man-husband [Low-water, both still disguised].

II.[i. Weatherwise's house]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I have sent in one to th' widow.

LOW-WATER

Well said, Kate,
Thou ply'st thy business close. The coast is clear yet.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Let me but have warning,
I shall make pretty shift with them.

LOW-WATER

That thou shalt, wench.

[Enter Lady Goldenfleece's Servant.]

SERVANT

My lady, sir, commends her kindly to you,
And for the third part of an hour, sir,
Desires your patience.
Two or three of her tenants out of Kent
Will hold her so long busied.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Thank you, sir.
'Tis fit I should attend her time and leisure.

[Exit Servant.]

Those were my tenants once, but what relief
Is there in what hath been or what I was?
'Tis now that makes the man. A last year's feast
Yields little comfort for the present humour;
He starves that feeds his hopes with what is past.

[Enter Low-water.]

How now?

LOW-WATER

They're come, newly alighted.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Peace, peace!
I'll have a trick for 'em; look you second me well now.

LOW-WATER

I warrant thee.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Il.[i. Weatherwise's house]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

I must seem very imperious, I can tell you;
Therefore, if I should chance to use you roughly,
Pray forgive me beforehand.

LOW-WATER

With all my heart, Kate.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

You must look for no obedience in [these] clothes;
That lies in the pocket of my gown.

LOW-WATER

Well, well, I will not then.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I hear 'em coming; step back a little, sir.

Enter Master Weatherwise, Master Pepperton, and Master Overdon, suitors.

Where be those fellows? Who looks out there? Is there ne'er a knave i' th' house to take those gentlemen's horses? Where wait you today? How stand you like a dreaming goose in a corner? The gentlemen's horses, forsooth!

LOW-WATER

Yes, an't like your worship.

[Exit.]

PEPPERTON

[Aside to fellow suitors] What's here? A strange alteration!

WEATHERWISE

[Aside to fellow suitors] A new lord? Would I were upon my mare's back again then.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Pray, gentlemen, pardon the rudeness of these grooms;
I hope they will be brought to better fashion.
In the meantime, y'are welcome, gentlemen.

ALL

We thank you, sir.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside to fellow suitors] Life, here's quick work! [Taking out his almanac] I'll hold my life h'as struck the widow i' th' right planet. Venus in cauda! I thought 'twas a lecherous planet that goes to't with a caudle.

[Enter Low-water.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

How now, sir?

LOW-WATER

The gentlemen's horses are set up, sir.

PEPPER-TON

No, no, no, we'll away!

WEATHERWISE

We'll away.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

How! By my faith, but you shall not yet, by your leave. Where's Bess? Call your mistress, sir, to welcome these kind gentlemen, my friends.

[Exit Low-water.]

PEPPER-TON

[Aside to fellow suitors] How! Bess?

OVERDON

[Aside to fellow suitors] Peg?

WEATHERWISE

[Aside to fellow suitors] Plain Bess! I know how the world goes then; he has been abed with Bess, i'faith: there's no trust to these widows; a young horsing gentleman carries 'em away clear.

[Enter Low-water.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Now, where's your mistress, sir; how chance she comes not?

LOW-WATER

Sir, she requests you to excuse her for a while; she's busy with a milliner about gloves.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Gloves?

WEATHERWISE

[Aside to fellow suitors] Hoyda! Gloves, too!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Could she find no other time to choose gloves but now when my friends are here?

PEPPER-TON

No, sir, 'tis no matter; we thank you for your good will, sir. To say truth, we have no business with her at all at this time, i'faith, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Oh, that's another matter; yet, stay, stay, gentlemen, and taste a cup of wine ere you go.

OVERDON

No, thank you, sir.

II.[i. Weatherwise's house]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Master Pepperton, Master Weatherwise, will you, sir?

WEATHERWISE

[Aside to fellow suitors] I'll see the wine in a drunkard's shoes first, and drink't after he has brew'd it! But let her go; she's fitted, i'faith. A proud, surly sir here, he domineers already, one that will shake her bones and go to dice with her money, or I have no skill in a calendar. Life! He that can be so saucy to call her Bess already will call her prating quean a month hence.

Exeunt [suitors].

LOW-WATER

They have given thee all the slip.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

So, a fair riddance.

There's three rubs gone; I've a clear way to th' mistress.

LOW-WATER

You'd need have a clear way because y'are a bad pricker.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Yet if my bowl take bank, I shall go nigh
To make myself a saver;
Here's alley room enough: I'll try my fortune.
I am to begin the world like a younger brother;
I know that a bold face and a good spirit
Is all the jointure he can make [a] widow.
An't shall go hard, but I'll be as rich as he,
Or at least seem so, and that's wealth enough;
For nothing kills a widow's heart so much
As a faint, bashful wooer: though he have thousands
And come with a poor water-gruel spirit
And a fish-market face, he shall ne'er speed.
I would not have himself left a poor widower.

LOW-WATER

Faith, I'm glad I'm alive to commend thee, Kate. I shall be sure now to see my commendations delivered.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I'll put her to't, i'faith.

LOW-WATER

But soft ye, Kate.

How and she should accept of your bold kindness?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

A chief point to be thought on, by my faith.
Marry, therefore, sir, be you sure to step in,
For fear I should shame myself and spoil all.

LOW-WATER

Well, I'll save your credit then for once,
But look you come there no more.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Away, I hear her coming.

LOW-WATER

I am vanish d.

Exit. Enter Widow [Lady Goldenfleece].

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

How does my life, my soul, my dear sweet madam?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

I have wrong'd your patience, made you stand too long here.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

There's no such thing, i'faith, madam; y'are pleas'd to say so.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Yes, I confess I was too slow, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Why, you shall make me amends for that then with a quickness in your bed.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

That were a speedy mends, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Why, then you are out of my debt; I'll cross the book and turn over a new leaf with you.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

So with paying a small debt, I may chance run into a greater.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

My faith, your credit will be the better then. There's many a brave gallant would be glad of such fortune, and pay use for't.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Some of them have nothing else to do; they would be idle and 'twere not for interest.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I promise you, widow, were I a setter-up, such is my opinion of your payment, I durst trust you with all the ware in my shop.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

I thank you for your good will; I can have no more.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] Not of me, i'faith, nor that neither, and you know all.—Come, make but short service, widow: a kiss and to bed; I'm very hungry, i'faith, wench.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What are you, sir?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Oh, a younger brother has an excellent stomach, madam, worth a hundred of your sons and heirs that stay their wedding stomachs with a hot bit of a common mistress, and then come to a widow's bed like a flash of lightning. Y'are sure of the first of me, not of the five hundredth of them. I never took physic yet in my life; you shall have the doctor continually with them, or some bottle for his deputy: out flies your moneys for restoratives and strength'nings. In me 'tis sav'd in your purse and found in your children: they'll get peevish pothecaries' stuff, you may weigh 'em by th' ounces; I, boys of war, brave commanders, that shall bear a breadth in their shoulders and a weight in their hips, and run over a whole country with a pound o' beef and a biscuit in their belly. Ho, widow, my kisses are virgins, my embraces perfect, my strength solid, my love constant, my heat comfortable; but to come to the point, inutterable—

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

But soft ye, soft ye; because you stand so strictly
Upon your purity, I'll put you to't, sir.
Will you swear here you never yet knew woman?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Never, as man e'er knew her, by this light, widow.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What, what, sir? [Aside] 'Shrew my heart, he moves me much.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Nay, since you love to bring a man on's knees,
I take into the same oath thus much more,
That y'are the first widow, or maid, or wife
That ever I in suit of love did court
Or honestly did woo. How say you to that, widow?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Marry, I say, sir, you had a good portion of chastity left you, though ill fortune run away with the rest.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

That I kept for thee, widow: she's of fortune and all her strait-bodied daughters; thou shalt have't, widow.
[Kisses her.]

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Push, what do you mean?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I cannot bestow 't better.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

I'll call my servants.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

By my troth, you shall not, madam.

Enter Master Low-water.

LOW-WATER

Does your worship call, sir?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Ha, pox! Are you peeping?

Throws somewhat at him. [Exit Low-water.]

[Aside] He came in a good time; I thank him for't.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What do you think of me? You're very forward, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Extremity of love.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

You say y'are ignorant;
It should not seem so surely by your play:
For aught I see, you may make one yourself;
You need not hold the cards to any gamester.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

That love should teach men ways to wrong itself!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Are these the first fruits of your boldness, sir?
If all take after these, you may boast on 'em.
There comes few such to market among women;
Time you were taken down, sir. Within there!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] I've lost my way again.
There's but two paths that lead to widows' beds,
That's wealth or forwardness, and I've took the wrong one.

Enter [Lady Goldenfleece's] Servant with the suitors [Weatherwise, Pepperton, and Overdon].

SERVANT

[Aside] He marry my lady? Why, there's no such thought yet.

[Exit.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] Oh, here they are all again too!

II.[i. Weatherwise's house]

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Are you come, gentlemen? I wish no better men.

WEATHERWISE

Oh, the moon's chang'd now!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

See you that gentleman yonder?

PEPPER-TON

Yes, sweet madam.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Then pray be witness all of you; with this kiss
I choose him for my husband—

[Kisses Mistress Low-water.]

ALL SUITORS

A pox on't!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

And with this parted gold that two hearts join.

[Breaks a piece of gold and gives half to Mistress Low-water.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Never with chaster love than this of mine.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

And those that have the hearts to come to th' wedding,
They shall be welcome for their former loves.

Exit.

PEPPER-TON

No, I thank you; y'ave chok'd me already.

WEATHERWISE

I never suspected mine almanac 'till now. I believe he plays cogging John with me: I bought it at his shop; it may learn the more knavery by that.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Now indeed, gentlemen, I can bid you welcome;
Before 'twas but a flourish.

WEATHERWISE

Nay, so my almanac told me there should be an eclipse, but not visible in our horizon, but about the western inhabitants of Mexicana and California.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Well, we have no business there, sir.

WEATHERWISE

Nor we have none here, sir, and so fare you well.

[Exeunt Suitors.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

You save the house a good labour, gentlemen; the fool carries them away in a voider. Where be these fellows?

Enter [Low-water, Pickadille, and Lady Goldenfleece's] Servant.

SERVANT

Sir?

PICKADILLE

Here, sir.

SERVANT

What['s] your worship['s] pleasure?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Oh, this is something like. [Aside to Low-water] Take you your ease, sir; Here are those now more fit to be commanded.

LOW-WATER

[Aside] How few women are of thy mind! She thinks it too much to keep me in subjection for one day, whereas some wives would be glad to keep their husbands in awe all days of their lives and think it the best bargain that e'er they made.

[Exit.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[To Servant] I'll spare no cost for th' wedding, some device too, To show our thankfulness to wit and fortune; It shall be so. Run straight for one o' th' wits.

PICKADILLE

How, one o' th' wits? I care not if I run on that account; are they in town think you? [Starts to leave.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Whither runn'st thou now?

PICKADILLE

To an ordinary for one of the wits.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Why to an ordinary, above a tavern?

PICKADILLE

No, I hold your best wits to be at ordinary, nothing so good in a tavern.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

And why I pray, sir?

PICKADILLE

Because those that go to an ordinary dine better for twelve pence than he that goes to a tavern for his five shillings, and I think those have the best wits that can save four shillings, and fare better too.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

So, sir, all your wit then runs upon victuals.

PICKADILLE

'Tis a sign 'twill hold out the longer then.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

What were you saying to me?

SERVANT

Please your worship,
I heard there came a scholar over lately
With old Sir Oliver's lady.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] Is she come?—
What is that lady?

SERVANT

A good gentlewoman,
Has been long prisoner with the enemy.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] I know't too well, and joy in her release.—
Go to that house then straight, and in one labour
You may bid them, and entreat home that scholar.

SERVANT

It shall be done with speed, sir.

[Exit.]

PICKADILLE

I'll along with you,
And see what face that scholar has brought over;
A thin pair of [parbreaking], sea-water green chops,
I warrant you.

[Exit.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

II.[i. Weatherwise's house]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

Since wit has pleasur'd me,
I'll pleasure wit; scholars shall fare the better.
Oh, my blessing! I feel a hand of mercy
Lift me up out of a world of waters,
And now sets me upon a mountain, where
The sun plays most, to cheer my heart ev'n as
It dries my limbs. What deeps I see beneath me,
In whose falls many a nimble mortal toils
And scarce can feed himself! The streams of fortune
'Gainst which he tugs in vain still beat him down,
And will not suffer him, past hand to mouth,
To lift his arm to his posterity's blessing.
I see a careful sweat run in a ring
About his temples, but all will not do,
For till some happy means relieve his state,
There he must stick and bide the wrath of fate.
I see this wrath upon an uphill land;
Oh, bless'd are they can see their falls and stand!

Enter [Servant with] Beveril.

How now?

SERVANT

With much entreating, sir; he's come.

[Exit.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Sir, y'are [aside] my brother! Joys come thick together!—

[Embraces him.] Sir, when I see a scholar, pardon me,

I am so taken with [affection] for him
That I must run into his arms and clasp him.

BEVERIL

Art stands in need, sir, of such cherishers;
I meet too few: 'twere a brave world for scholars
If half a kingdom were but of your mind, sir;
Let ignorance and hell confound the rest.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Let it [suffice], sweet sir; you cannot think
How dearly you are welcome.

BEVERIL

May I live
To show you service for't.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Il.[i. Weatherwise's house]

Your love, your love, sir:
We go no higher, nor shall you go lower.
Sir, I'm bold to send for you, to request
A kindness from your wit, for some device
To grace our wedding. It shall be worth your pains,
And something more t' express my love to art;
You shall not receive all in bare embracements.

BEVERIL

Your love I thank; but pray, sir, pardon me,
I've a heart says I must not grant you that.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

No? What's your reason, sir?

BEVERIL

I'm not at peace
With the lady of this house; now you'll excuse me:
Sh'as wrong'd my sister, and I may not do't.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

The widow knows you not.

BEVERIL

I never saw her face to my remembrance.
Oh, that my heart should feel her wrongs so much,
And yet live ignorant of the injurer!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Let me persuade thee since she knows you not:
Make clear the weather; let not griefs betray you.
I'll tell her y'are a worthy friend of mine,
And so I tell her true, thou art indeed.
Sir, here she comes.

Enter Widow [Lady Goldenfleece].

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What, are you busy, sir?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Nothing less, lady; here's a gentleman
Of noble parts, beside his friendship to me.
Pray, give him liberal welcome.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

He's most welcome.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

The virtues of his mind will deserve largely.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[Aside] Methinks his outward parts deserve as much then;
A proper gentleman it is.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Come, worthy sir.

BEVERIL

I follow.

[Exeunt all but Beveril.]

Check thy blood
For fear it prove too bold to wrong thy goodness!
A wise man makes affections but his slaves;
Break 'em in time, let 'em not master thee!
Oh, 'tis my sister's enemy, think of that
Some speedy grief fall down upon the fire
Before it take my heart; let it not rise
'Gainst brotherly nature, judgment, and these wrongs!
Make clear the weather!
Oh, who could look upon her face in storms!
Yet pains may work it out: griefs do but strive
To will this spark; I'll keep it still alive.

[Exit.]

III.[i. A street outside Lady Goldenfleece's house]

Enter the three late suitors, Weatherwise, Pepperton, and Overdon, join'd with Sir Gilbert Lambston.

WEATHERWISE

Faith, Sir Gilbert, forget and forgive;
There's all our hands to a new bargain of friendship.

PEPPERTON

Ay, and all our hearts to boot, Sir Gilbert.

[Sir Gilbert refuses their hands.]

WEATHERWISE

Why, la, you! There's but four suitors left on's in all th' world, and the fifth has the widow; if we should not be kind to one another, and so few on's, i'faith, I would we were all rak'd up in some hole or other.

SIR GILBERT

Pardon me, gentlemen, I cannot but remember
Your late disgraceful words before the widow,
In time of my oppression.

WEATHERWISE

Puh, Saturn reign'd then, a melancholy, grumbling planet! He was in the third house of privy enemies, and would have bewray'd all our plots; beside there was a fiery conjunction in the dragon's [tail] that spoil'd all that e'er we went about.

SIR GILBERT

Dragon or devil, somewhat 'twas I am sure.

WEATHERWISE

Why, I tell you, Sir Gilbert, we were all out of our wits in't; I was so mad at that time myself, I could have wish'd an hind-quarter of my bull out of your belly again, whereas now I care not if you had eat tail and all. I am no niggard in the way of friendship; I was ever yet at full moon in good fellowship, and so you shall find if you look into the almanac of my true nature.

SIR GILBERT

Well, all's forgiven for once; hands apace, gentlemen.

WEATHERWISE

Ye shall have two of mine to do you a kindness; yet when they're both abroad, who shall look to th' house here?

PEPPER-TON, OVERDON

Not only a new friendship, but a friend.

[They shake hands.]

SIR GILBERT

But upon this condition, gentlemen,
You shall hear now a thing worth your revenge.

WEATHERWISE

And you doubt that,
You shall have mine beforehand; I've one ready:
I never go without a black oath about me.

SIR GILBERT

I know the least touch of a spur in this
Will now put your desires to a false gallop,
By all means sland'rous in every place,
And in all companies, to disgrace the widow,
No matter in what rank, so it be spiteful
And worthy your revenges; so now I.
It shall be all my study, care, and pains,
And we can lose no labour; all her foes
Will make such use on't that they'll snatch it from us
Faster than we can forge it, though we keep
Four tongues at work upon't and never cease.
Then for the indifferent world, faith, they're apter
To bid a [slander] welcome than a truth.
We have the odds of our side; this in time

May grow so general as disgrace will spread
That wild dissension may divide the bed.

WEATHERWISE, PEPPER-TON
Excellent!

OVERDON
A pure revenge; I see no dregs in't.

SIR GILBERT
Let each man look to his part now, and not feed
Upon one dish all four on's, like plain maltmen;
For at this feast we must have several kickshaws
And delicate made dishes, that the world
May see it is a banquet finely furnish'd.

WEATHERWISE
Why, then let me alone for one of your kickshaws;
I have thought on that already.

SIR GILBERT
Prithee, how, sir?

WEATHERWISE
Marry, sir, I'll give it out abroad that I have lain with the widow myself, as 'tis the fashion of many a gallant to disgrace his new mistress when he cannot have his will of her, and lie with her name in every tavern, though he ne'er came within a yard of her person; so I, being a gentleman, may say as much in that kind as a gallant: I am as free by my father's copy.

SIR GILBERT
This will do excellent, sir.

WEATHERWISE
And moreover, I'll give the world thus much to understand beside, that if I had not lain with the widow in the wane of the moon, at one of my seven stars' houses, when Venus was about business of her own and could give no attendance, she had been brought abed with two roaring boys by this time, and the Gemini being infants, I'd have made away with them like a stepmother, and put mine own boys in their places.

SIR GILBERT
Why, this is beyond talk; you out-run your master.

Enter clown [Pickadille].

PICKADILLE
[Aside] Whoop! Draw home next time; here are all the old shooters that have lost the game at pricks! What a fair mark had Sir Gilbert on't if he had shot home before the last arrow came in. Methinks these show to me now for all the world like so many lousy beggars turn'd out of my lady's barn, and have ne'er a hole to put their heads in.

WEATHERWISE
Mass, here's her ladyship's ass; he tells us anything.

III.[i. A street outside Lady Goldenfleece's house]

SIR GILBERT

Ho, Pickadille!

PICKADILLE

What, Sir Gilbert Lambston!
Gentlemen, outlaws all, how do you do?

SIR GILBERT

How! What, dost call us? How goes the world at home, lad?
What strange news?

PICKADILLE

This is the state of prodigals as right as can be;
When they have spent all their means on brave feasts,
[They're] glad to scrape to a serving-man for a meal's meat;
So you that whilom, like four prodigal rivals,
Could goose or capon, crane or woodcock choose,
Now're glad to make up a poor meal with news.
A lamentable hearing!

WEATHERWISE

He's in passion, up to the eyebrows for us.

PICKADILLE

Oh, Master Weatherwise, I blame none but you.
You are a gentleman deeply read in Pond's Almanac;
Methinks you should not be such a shallow fellow.
You knew this day, the twelfth of June, would come
When the sun enters into the Crab's room,
And all your hopes would go aside, aside.

WEATHERWISE

The fool says true, i'faith, gentlemen. I knew
'Twould come all to this pass; I'll show't you presently.

[Takes out his almanac.]

PICKADILLE

If you had spar'd but four of your twelve signs now,
You might have gone to a tavern and made merry with 'em.

WEATHERWISE

H'as the best moral meaning of an ass that e'er I heard speak with tongue! Look you here, gentlemen.
[Reading] "Fifth day, neither fish nor flesh."

PICKADILLE

No, nor good red herring, and you look again.

WEATHERWISE

[Reading] "Sixth day, privily prevented."

III.[i. A street outside Lady Goldenfleece's house]

PICKADILLE

Marry, faugh!

WEATHERWISE

[Reading] "Seventh day, shrunk in the wetting."

PICKADILLE

Nay, so will the best ware bought for love or money.

WEATHERWISE

[Reading] "The eighth day, over head and ears."

PICKADILLE

By my faith, he come home in a sweet pickle then.

WEATHERWISE

[Reading] "The ninth day, scarce sound at heart."

PICKADILLE

What o' pox ail'd it?

WEATHERWISE

[Reading] "The tenth day, a courtier's welcome."

PICKADILLE

That's a cup of beer, and you can get it.

WEATHERWISE

[Reading] "The eleventh day, stones against the wind."

PICKADILLE

Pox of an ass! He might have thrown 'em better.

WEATHERWISE

Now the twelfth day, gentlemen, that was our day. [Reading] "Past all redemption."

PICKADILLE

Then the devil go with't.

WEATHERWISE

Now you see plainly, gentlemen, how we're us'd:
The calendar will not lie for no man's pleasure.

SIR GILBERT

Push, y'are too confident in almanac posies.

PEPPERTON

Faith, so said we.

SIR GILBERT

III.[i. A street outside Lady Goldenfleece's house]

They're mere delusions.

WEATHERWISE

How! You see how knavishly they happen, sir.

SIR GILBERT

Ay, that's because they're foolishly [believ'd], sir.

WEATHERWISE

Well, take your courses, gentlemen, without 'em, and see what will come on't: you may wander like masterless men; there's ne'er a planet will care a half-penny for you. If they look after you, I'll be hang'd, when you scorn to bestow two pence to look after them.

SIR GILBERT

How! A device at the wedding say'st thou?

PICKADILLE

Why, have none of you heard of that yet?

SIR GILBERT

'Tis the first news, i'faith, lad.

PICKADILLE

Oh, there's a brave traveling scholar entertain'd into the house o' purpose, one that has been all the world over, and some part of Jerusalem; h'as his chamber, his diet, and three candles allow'd him after supper.

WEATHERWISE

By my faith, he need not complain for victuals then, whate'er he be.

PICKADILLE

He lies in one of the best chambers i' th' house, bravely matted; and to warm his wits as much, a cup of sack and an aqua vitae bottle stands just at his elbow.

WEATHERWISE

He's shrewdly hurt, by my faith, if he catch an ague of that fashion, I'll be hang'd.

PICKADILLE

He'll come abroad anon.

SIR GILBERT

Art sure on't?

PICKADILLE

Why, he ne'er stays a quarter of an hour in the home together.

SIR GILBERT

No? How can he study then?

PICKADILLE

Pha, best of all, he talks as he goes, and writes as he runs; besides, you know 'tis death to a traveler to stand long in one place.

SIR GILBERT

It may hit right, boys! Honest Pickadille,
Thou wast wont to love me.

PICKADILLE

I'd good cause, sir, then.

SIR GILBERT

[Giving him money] Thou shalt have the same still; take that.

PICKADILLE

Will you believe me now: I ne'er lov'd you better in my life than I do at this present.

SIR GILBERT

Tell me now truly; who are the presenters?
What parsons are employed in the device?

PICKADILLE

Parsons? Not any, sir. My mistress will not be at the charge; she keeps none but an old Welsh vicar.

SIR GILBERT

Prithee, I mean, who be the speakers?

PICKADILLE

Troth, I know none, but those that open their mouths. Here he comes now himself; you may ask him.

Enter Master Beveril.

WEATHERWISE

Is this he? By my faith, one may pick a gentleman out of his calves, and a scholar out on's cheeks; one may see by his looks what's in him. I warrant you there has ne'er a new almanac come out these dozen years but he has studied it over and over.

SIR GILBERT

Do not reveal us now.

PICKADILLE

Because you shall be sure on't, you have given me a nine-pence here, and I'll give you the slip for't.

Exit.

SIR GILBERT

Well said; now the fool's pleas'd, we may be bold.

BEVERIL

[Aside] Love is as great an enemy to wit
As ignorance to art; I find my powers
So much employ'd in business of my heart
That all the time's too little to dispatch
Affairs within me. Fortune, too remiss,

I suffer for thy slowness: had I come
Before a vow had chain'd their souls together,
There might have been some hope, though ne'er so little;
Now there's no spark at all, nor e'er can be,
But dreadful ones struck from adultery.
And if my lust were smothered with her will,
Oh, who could wrong a gentleman so kind,
A stranger made up with a brother's mind?

SIR GILBERT

[Aside to the others] Peace, peace, enough, let me alone to manage it.—
A quick invention, and a happy one,
Reward your study, sir.

BEVERIL

Gentlemen, I thank you.

SIR GILBERT

We understand your wits are in employment, sir,
In honour of this wedding.

BEVERIL

Sir, the gentleman
To whom that worthy lady is betroth'd
Vouchsafes t' accept the power of my good will in't.

SIR GILBERT

I pray resolve us then, sir,
For we're friends that love and honour her,
Whether your number be yet full or no,
Of those which you make choice of for presenters.

BEVERIL

First, 'tis so brief, because the time is so,
We shall not trouble many; and for those
We shall employ, the house will yield in servants.

SIR GILBERT

Nay, then, under your leave and favour, sir,
Since all your pains will be so weakly grac'd,
And wanting due performance lose their lustre,
Here are four of us gentlemen, her friends,
Both lovers of her honour and your art,
That would be glad so to express ourselves,
And think our service well and worthily plac'd.

BEVERIL

My thanks do me no grace for this large kindness;
You make my labours proud of such presenters.

SIR GILBERT

III.[i. A street outside Lady Goldenfleece's house]

She shall not think, sir, she's so ill belov'd,
But friends can quickly make that number perfect.

BEVERIL

She's bound t' acknowledge it.

SIR GILBERT

Only thus much, sir,
Which will amaze her most: I'd have't so carried,
As you can do't, that neither she nor none
Should know what friends we were till all were done.

WEATHERWISE

Ay, that would make the sport.

BEVERIL

I like it well, sir.
My hand and faith amongst you gentlemen;
It shall be so disposed of.

SIR GILBERT

We are the men then.

BEVERIL

Then look you, gentlemen: the device is single,
Naked, and plain because the time's so short,
And gives no freedom to a wealthier sport;
'Tis only, gentlemen, the four elements
In liveliest forms: earth, water, air, and fire.

WEATHERWISE

Mass, and here's four of us, too!

BEVERIL

It fits well, sir.
This the effect: that whereas all those four
Maintain a natural opposition
And untruc'd war, the one against the other,
To shame their ancient envies, they should see
How well in two breasts all these do agree.

WEATHERWISE

That's in the bride and bridegroom; I am quick, sir.

SIR GILBERT

In faith, it's pretty, sir; I approve it well.

BEVERIL

But see how soon my happiness and your kindness
Is cross'd together.

SIR GILBERT

Cross'd? I hope not so, sir.

BEVERIL

I can employ but two of you.

PEPPERTON

How comes that, sir?

BEVERIL

Air and the fire should be by [men] presented,
But the two other in the forms of women.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] Nay, then we're gone again; I think these women
Were made to vex and trouble us in all shapes!

SIR GILBERT

Faith, sir, you stand too nicely.

WEATHERWISE

So think I, sir.

BEVERIL

Yet when we tax ourselves, it may the better
Set off our errors, when the fine eyes judge 'em;
But water certainly should be a woman.

WEATHERWISE

By my faith, then he is gelded since I saw him last; he was thought to be a man once, when he got his wife
with child before he was married.

BEVERIL

Fie, you are fishing in another stream, sir.

WEATHERWISE

But now I come to yours and you go to that, sir; I see no reason then but fire and water should change shapes
and genders.

BEVERIL

How prove you that, sir?

WEATHERWISE

Why, there's no reason but water should be a man, because fire is commonly known to be a quean.

BEVERIL

So, sir, you argue well.

WEATHERWISE

Nay, more, sir: water will break in at a little crevice, so will a man if he be not kept out; water will
undermine, so will an informer; water will ebb and flow, so will a gentleman; water will search any place,

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

and so will a constable, as lately he did at my seven stars for a young wench that was stole; water will quench fire, and so will Wat the barber; ergo, let water wear a codpiece—point.

BEVERIL

Faith, gentlemen, I like your company well.

WEATHERWISE

Let's see who'll dispute with me at the full o' th' moon.

BEVERIL

No, sir; and you be vainglorious of your talent, I'll put you to't once more.

WEATHERWISE

I'm for you, sir, as long as the moon keeps in this quarter.

BEVERIL

Well, how answer you this then? Earth and water are both bearers, therefore they should be women.

WEATHERWISE

Why, so are porters and peddlers, and yet they are known to be men.

BEVERIL

I'll give you over in time, sir; I shall repent the bestowing on't else.

WEATHERWISE

If I that have proceeded in five and twenty such books of astronomy should not be able to put down a scholar now in one thousand six hundred thirty and eight, the dominical letter being G, I stood for a goose.

SIR GILBERT

Then this will satisfy you though that be a woman;
Oceanus, the sea, that's chief of waters,
He wears the form of a man, and so may you.

BEVERIL

Now I hear reason, and I may consent.

SIR GILBERT

And so, though earth challenge a feminine face,
The matter of which earth consists, that's dust,
The general soul of earth is of both kinds.

BEVERIL

Fit yourselves, gentlemen, I've enough for me.
Earth, water, air, and fire, part 'em amongst you.

WEATHERWISE

Let me play air; I was my father's eldest son.

BEVERIL

Ay, but this air never possess'd the lands.

III.[i. A street outside Lady Goldenfleece's house]

WEATHERWISE

I'm but dispos'd to jest with you, sir; 'tis the same my almanac speaks on, is't not?

BEVERIL

That 'tis, sir.

WEATHERWISE

Then leave it to my discretion to fit both the part and the person.

BEVERIL

You shall have your desire, sir.

SIR GILBERT

We'll agree
Without your trouble now, sir. We're not factious
Or envy one another for best parts,
Like quarrelling actors that have passionate fits;
We submit always to the writer's wits.

BEVERIL

He that commends you may do't liberally,
For you deserve as much as praise can show.

SIR GILBERT

We'll send to you privately.

BEVERIL

I'll dispatch you.

SIR GILBERT

[Aside] We'll poison your device!

PEPPERTON

[Aside] She must have pleasures,
Shows, and conceits, and we disgraceful doom.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] We'll make your elements come limping home.

Exeunt [suitors].

BEVERIL

How happy am I in this unlook'd-for grace,
This voluntary kindness from these gentlemen!

Enter Mistress Low-water and her man-husband [Low-water; they remain hidden from Beveril].

'Twill set off all my labours far more pleasing
Before the widow, whom my heart calls mistress,
But my tongue dares not second it.

III.[i. A street outside Lady Goldenfleece's house]

LOW-WATER

How say you now, Kate?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I like this music well, sir.

BEVERIL

Oh, unfortunate!

Yet though a tree be guarded from my touch,
There's none can hinder me to love the fruit.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Nay, now we know your mind, brother, we'll provide for you.

[Exeunt the Low-waters.]

BEVERIL

Oh, were it but as free as late times knew it,
I would deserve, if all life's wealth could do it.

Exit.

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

Enter at Sir Oliver's house, himself; old Sunset; his redeemed lady [Lady Twilight]; Master Sandfield; the Dutch Merchant; Philip, Sir Oliver's son; and Savorwit, aloof off; and Servants.

SIR OLIVER

Oh my reviving joy! Thy quick'ning presence
Makes the sad night of threescore and ten years
Sit like a youthful spring upon my blood.
I cannot make thy welcome rich enough
With all the wealth of words.

LADY TWILIGHT

It is express'd, sir,
With more than can be equall'd; the ill store
Lies only on my side, my thanks are poor.

SIR OLIVER

Bless'd be the goodness of his mind forever
That did redeem thy life; may it return
Upon his fortunes double! That worthy gentleman,
Kind Master Beveril, shower upon him, heaven,
Some unexpected happiness to requite him
For that my joy unlook'd for! Oh, more kind
And juster far is a mere stranger's goodness
Than the sophistic faith of natural sons

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

Here's one could juggle with me, take up the ransom,
He and his loose companion.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Say you me so, sir?
I'll eat hard eggs for that trick.

SIR OLIVER

Spend the money,
And bring me home false news, and empty pockets!
In that young gallant's tongue there you were dead
Ten weeks before this day, had not this merchant
Brought first the truth in words, yourself in substance.

LADY TWILIGHT

Pray let me stay you here ere you proceed, sir.
Did he report me dead, say you?

SIR OLIVER

Else you live not.

LADY TWILIGHT

See now, sir, you may lay your blame too rashly
When nobody look'd after it; let me tell you, sir,
A father's anger should take great advice
Ere it condemn flesh of so dear a price.
He's no way guilty yet, for that report
The general tongue of all the country spread,
For being remov'd far off, I was thought dead.

PHILIP

Can my faith now be taken into favour, sir?
Is't worthy to be trusted?

SAVORWIT

[Aside] No, by my troth, is't not;
'Twould make shift to spend another ransom yet.

SIR OLIVER

Well sir, I must confess y'ave here dealt well with me;
And what is good in you, I love again.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Now am I half ways in, just to the girdle,
But the worst part's behind.

SIR OLIVER

Marry, I fear me, sir,
This weather is too glorious to hold long.

LADY TWILIGHT

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

I see no cloud to interpose it, sir,
If you place confidence in what I have told you.

SIR OLIVER

Nay, 'tis clear sky on that side; would 'twere so
All over his obedience. I see that,
And so does this good gentleman.

LADY TWILIGHT

Do you, sir?

SIR OLIVER

That makes his honesty doubtful.

LADY TWILIGHT

I pray, speak, sir.
The truth of your last kindness makes me bold with you.

DUTCH MERCHANT

The knight, your husband, madam, can best speak;
He truliest can show griefs whose heart they break.

LADY TWILIGHT

I'm sorry yet for more; pray let me know't, sir,
That I may help to chide him, though 'twould grieve me.

SIR OLIVER

Why, then prepare for't. You came over now
In the best time to do't you could pick out;
Not only spent my money, but to blind me,
He and his wicked instrument—

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Now he fiddles me!

SIR OLIVER

Brings home a minion here, by great chance known,
Told me she was his sister; she proves none.

LADY TWILIGHT

This was unkindly done, sir. Now I'm sorry
My good opinion lost itself upon you;
You are not the same son I left behind me;
More grace took him. Oh, let me end in time
For fear I should forget myself and chide him!
Where is [she], sir? Though he beguil'd your eyes,
He cannot deceive mine; we're now too hard for him.
For since our first unfortunate separation,
I've often seen the girl—[aside] would that were true—
By many a happy accident, many a one,
But never durst acknowledge her for mine own,

And therein stood my joys distress'd again.

SIR OLIVER

You rehearse miseries, wife. Call the maid down.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] She's been too often down to be now called so;
She'll lie down shortly and call somebody up.

LADY TWILIGHT

He's now to deal with one, sir, that knows truth:
He must be sham'd or quit; there's no mean saves him.

SIR OLIVER

I hear her come.

LADY TWILIGHT

[To Philip] You see how hard 'tis now
To redeem good opinion being once gone;
Be careful then, and keep it when 'tis won.
Now see me take a poison with great joy,
Which but for thy sake, I should swoon to touch.

Enter Grace.

GRACE

[Aside] What new affliction? Am I set to sale
For any one that bids most shame for me?

SIR OLIVER

Look you! Do you see what stuff they've brought me home here?

LADY TWILIGHT

Oh, bless her, eternal powers! My life, my comforts,
My nine-years' grief, but everlasting joy now!
[Embracing Grace] Thrice welcome to my heart; 'tis she indeed.

SIR OLIVER

What, is it?

PHILIP

I'm unfit to carry a ransom!

SAVORWIT

[To Grace] Down on your knees to save your belly harmless;
Ask blessing, though you never mean to use it,
But give't away presently to a beggar-wench.

[Grace kneels.]

PHILIP

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

My faith is blemish'd; I'm no man of trust, sir.

LADY TWILIGHT

[Raising her] Rise with a mother's blessing.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] All this while
Sh'as rise with a son's.

SIR OLIVER

But soft ye, soft ye, wife:
I pray take heed you place your blessing right now.
This honest Dutchman here told me he saw her
At Antwerp in an inn.

LADY TWILIGHT

True, she was so, sir.

DUTCH MERCHANT

Sir, 'tis my quality what I speak once
I affirm ever: in that inn I saw her;
That lets her not to be your daughter now.

SIR OLIVER

Oh, sir, is't come to that?

SUNSET

Here's joys ne'er dream'd on!

SIR OLIVER

Oh, Master Sunset, I am at the rising
Of my refulgent happiness! Now, son Sandfield,
Once more and ever!

SANDFIELD

I am proud on't, sir.

SIR OLIVER

Pardon me, boy, I have wrong'd thy faith too much.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Now may I leave my shell and peep my head forth.

SIR OLIVER

Where is this Savorwit, that honest whoreson,
That I may take my curse from his knave's shoulders?

SAVORWIT

Oh, sir, I feel you at my very blade here;
Your curse is ten stone weight and a pound over.

SIR OLIVER

Come, thou'rt a witty varlet and a trusty.

SAVORWIT

You shall still find me a poor, faithful fellow, sir,
If you have another ransom to send over
Or daughter to find out.

SIR OLIVER

I'll do thee right, boy.
I ne'er yet knew thee but speak honest English;
Marry, in Dutch I found thee a knave lately.

SAVORWIT

That was to hold you but in play a little
Till hither truths came over and I strong.
You shall ne'er find me a knave in mine own tongue;
I have more grace in me: I go out of England
Still when I take such courses; that shows modesty, sir.

SIR OLIVER

Anything full of wit and void of harm
I give thee pardon for, so was that now.

SAVORWIT

Faith, now I'm quit, I find myself the nimbler
To serve you so again, and my will's good
[Aside] Like one that lately shook off his old irons,
And cuts a purse at bench to deserve new ones.

SIR OLIVER

Since it holds all the way so fortunate still,
And strikes so even with my first belief,
This is the gentleman, wife, young Master Sandfield here,
A man of worthy parts, beside his lands,
Whom I make choice of for my daughter's bed.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] But he'll make choice there of another bedfellow.

LADY TWILIGHT

I wish 'em both the happiness of love, sir.

SIR OLIVER

'Twas spoke like a good lady! And your memory
Can reach it, wife, but 'tis so long ago too,
Old Master Sunset he had a young daughter
When you unluckily left England so,
And much about the age of our girl there,
For both were nurs'd together.

LADY TWILIGHT

'Tis so fresh
In my remembrance now y'have waken'd it,
As if twelve years were but a twelve-hours' dream.

SIR OLIVER

That girl is now a proper gentlewoman,
As fine a body, wife, as e'er was measured
With an indenture cut in farthing steaks.

SUNSET

Oh, say not so, Sir Oliver; you shall pardon me, sir.
I'faith, sir, you are too blame.

SIR OLIVER

Sings, dances, plays,
Touches an instrument with a motherly grace.

SUNSET

'Tis your own daughter that you mean that by.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] There's open Dutch indeed, and he could take it!

SIR OLIVER

This wench, under your leave—

SUNSET

You have my love in't.

SIR OLIVER

Is my son's wife that shall be.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Thus I'd hold with't;
Is your son's wife that should be Master Sandfield's.

LADY TWILIGHT

I come in happy time to a feast of marriages.

SIR OLIVER

And now you put's i' th' mind, the hour draws on
At the new-married widow's; there we're look'd for.
There will be entertainments, sports, and banquets;
There these young lovers shall clap hands together:
The seed of one feast shall bring forth another.

SUNSET

Well said, Sir Oliver.

SIR OLIVER

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

Y'are a stranger, sir,
Your welcome will be best.

DUTCH MERCHANT

Good sir, excuse me.

SIR OLIVER

You shall along, i'faith; you must not refuse me.

[Exeunt.] Manent Mother [Lady Twilight], Sister [Grace], Philip, and Savorwit.

PHILIP

Oh, mother, these new joys that sets my soul up,
Which had no means nor any hope of any,
Has brought me now so far in debt to you,
I know not which way to begin to thank you.
I am so lost in all, I cannot guess
Which of the two my service most constrains,
Your last kind goodness or your first dear pains.

LADY TWILIGHT

Love is a mother's duty to a son,
As a son's duty is both love and fear.

SAVORWIT

I owe you a poor life, madam, that's all:
Pray call for't when you please; it shall be ready for you.

LADY TWILIGHT

Make much on't, sir, till then.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] If butter'd sack will.

LADY TWILIGHT

Methinks the more I look upon her, son,
The more thy sister's face runs in my mind.

PHILIP

Belike she's somewhat like her; it makes the better, madam.

LADY TWILIGHT

Was Antwerp, say you, the first place you found her in?

PHILIP

Yes, madam. Why do you ask?

LADY TWILIGHT

Whose daughter were you?

GRACE

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

I know not rightly whose, to speak truth, madam.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] The mother of her was a good twigger the whilst.

LADY TWILIGHT

No? With whom were you brought up then?

GRACE

With those, madam,
To whom, I've often heard, the enemy sold me.

LADY TWILIGHT

What's that?
Too often have I heard this piteous story
Of a distressed mother I had once,
Whose comfortable sight I lost at sea;
But then the years of childhood took from me
Both the remembrance of her and the sorrows.

LADY TWILIGHT

[Aside] Oh, I begin to feel her in my blood!
My heart leaps to be at her. What was that mother?

GRACE

Some said an English lady, but I know not.

LADY TWILIGHT

What's thy name?

GRACE

Grace.

LADY TWILIGHT

May it be so in heaven,
For thou art mine on earth. [Embracing her] Welcome, dear child,
Unto thy father's house, thy mother's arms,
After thy foreign sorrows.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] 'Twill prove gallant.

LADY TWILIGHT

What, son! Such earnest work; I bring thee joy now
Will make the rest show nothing, 'tis so glorious.

PHILIP

Why, 'tis not possible, madam, that man's happiness
Should take a greater height than mine aspires.

LADY TWILIGHT

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

No, now you shall confess it; this shall quit thee
From all fears present or hereafter doubts
About this business.

PHILIP

Give me that, sweet mother.

LADY TWILIGHT

Here, take her then, and set thine arms a-work;
There needs no 'fection, 'tis indeed thy sister.

PHILIP

My sister!

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Cuds me, I feel the razor!

LADY TWILIGHT

Why, how now, son? How comes a change so soon?

PHILIP

Oh, I beseech you, mother, wound me anywhere
But where you pointed last. That's present death!
Devise some other miserable torment,
Though ne'er so pitiless, and I'll run and meet it.
Some way more merciful let your goodness think on
May steal away my joys, but save my soul!
I'll willingly restore back every one
Upon that mild condition; anything
But what you spake last will be comfortable.

LADY TWILIGHT

Y'are troubled with strange fits in England here.
Your first suit to me did entreat me hardly
To say 'twas she, to have old wrath appeas'd,
And now 'tis known your sister, y'are not pleas'd.
How should I show myself?

PHILIP

Say 'tis not she.

LADY TWILIGHT

Shall I deny my daughter?

PHILIP

Oh, you kill me
Beyond all tortures!

LADY TWILIGHT

Why do you deal thus with me?

PHILIP

She is my wife! I married her at Antwerp;
I have known the way unto her bed these three months.

SAVORWIT

[Aside] And that's too much by twelve weeks for a sister.

LADY TWILIGHT

I understand you now, too soon, too plain.

PHILIP

Oh, mother, if you love my peace forever,
Examine her again, find me not guilty.

LADY TWILIGHT

'Tis now too late, her words make that too true.

PHILIP

Her words? Shall bare words overthrow a soul?
A body is not cast away so lightly.
How can you know 'tis she? Let sense decide it;
She then so young, and both so long divided.

LADY TWILIGHT

She tells me the sad story.

PHILIP

Does that throw me?
Many a distress may have the face of yours
That never was kin to you.

LADY TWILIGHT

But, however, sir,
I trust you are not married.

PHILIP

Here's the witness,
And all the wealth I had with her; this ring
That join'd our hearts together.

LADY TWILIGHT

Oh, too clear now!
Thou'st brought in evidence to o'erthrow thyself;
Had no one word been spoke, only this shown,
'T had been enough to approv'd her for mine own.
See here, two letters that begun my name
Before I knew thy father; this I gave her,
And, as a jewel, fasten'd to her ear.

GRACE

Pardon me, mother, that you find it stray;

I kept it till I gave my heart away.

PHILIP

Oh, to what mountain shall I take my flight
To hide the monster of my sin from sight?

SAVORWIT

[Aside] I'll to Wales presently; there's the best hills
To hide a poor knave in.

LADY TWILIGHT

Oh, heap not desperation upon guilt!
Repent yet and all's sav'd; 'twas but hard chance:
Amongst all sins, heaven pities ignorance.
She's still the first that has her pardon sign'd;
All sins else see their faults, she's only blind.
Go to thy chamber, pray, leave off, and win;
One hour's repentance cures a twelve-month's sin.

GRACE

Oh, my distressed husband, my dear brother!
[Lady Twilight] exit cum filia [Grace].

PHILIP

Oh, Savorwit! Never came sorrow yet
To mankind like it; I'm so far distress'd,
I've no time left to give my heart attendance,
Too little all to wait upon my soul!
Before this tempest came, how well I stood,
Full in the beams of blessedness and joy!
The memory of man could never say
So black a storm fell in so bright a day.
I am that man that ev'n life surfeits of;
Or if to live, unworthy to be seen
By the savage eyesight! Give's thy hand;
Commend me to thy prayers.

SAVORWIT

Next time I say 'em.

PHILIP

Farewell, my honest breast, that cravest no more
Than possible kindness; that I've found thee large in,
And I must ask no more: there wit must stay;
It cannot pass where fate stops up the way.
Joy thrive with thee; I'll never see thee more.

SAVORWIT

What's that, sir?
Pray come back, and bring those words with you;
You shall not carry 'em so out of my company.

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

There's no last refuge when your father knows it;
There's no such need on't yet: stay but till then,
And take one with you that will imitate you
In all the desperate onsets man dare think on.
Were it to challenge all the wolves in France
To meet at one set battle, I'd be your half in't;
All beasts of venom, what you had a mind to,
Your part should be took still. For such a day
Let's keep ourselves in heart, then am I for you.
In the meantime, to beat off all suspicion,
Let's to the bridehouse too; here's my petition.

PHILIP

Thou hast a learning art when all hopes fly.
Let one night waste; there's time enough left to die.

SAVORWIT

A minute's as good as a thousand year, sir,
To pink a man's heart like a summer suit.

Exeunt.

[IV.ii. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

Enter two or three Servants placing things in order, with Pickadille, the clown, like an overseer.

PICKADILLE

Bestir your bones nimbly, you ponderous, beef-buttock'd knaves; what a number of lazy hinds do I keep company withal! Where's the flesh-colour, velvet cushion now for my lady's pease-porridge-tawny-satin bum? You attendants upon revels!

FIRST SERVANT

You can prate and domineer well because you have a privilege[d] place, but I'd fain see you set your hand to't!

PICKADILLE

Oh, base bone-pickers, I set my hand to't! When did you e'er see a gentleman set his hand to anything unless it were to a sheepskin and receive a hundred pound for his pains?

SECOND SERVANT

And afterward lie in the Counter for his pleasure.

PICKADILLE

Why, true, sir; 'tis for his pleasure indeed, for, spite of all their teeth, he may lie i' th' hole when he list.

FIRST SERVANT

Marry, and should for me.

PICKADILLE

Ay, thou wouldst make as good a bawd as the best jailor of them all; I know that.

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

FIRST SERVANT

How, fool!

PICKADILLE

Hark! I must call you knave within; 'tis but staying somewhat the longer for't.

Exeunt. Loud music. Enter the new-married widow [Lady Goldenfleece], and Kate [Mistress Low-water], her husband, both changed in apparel, [but Mistress Low-water still disguised,] arm in arm together; after them Sir Oliver Twilight, Master Sunset, and the Dutch Merchant; after them the mother [Lady Twilight]; Grace, the daughter sad; with Jane Sunset; after these, melancholy Philip, Savorwit, and Master Sandfield [and Low-water, still disguised].

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

This fair assembly is most freely welcome.

ALL

Thanks to you, good sir.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[To Lady Twilight] Come, my long-wish'd-for madam,
You and this worthy stranger take best welcome;
Your freedom is a second feast to me.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Taking Low-water aside] How is't with my brother?

LOW-WATER

The fit holds him still;
Nay, love's more violent.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

'Las, poor gentleman!
I would he had my office without money;
If he should offer any, I'd refuse it

LOW-WATER

I have the letter ready; he's worthy
Of a place that knows how to use it.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

That's well said.—
Come ladies, gentlemen; Sir Oliver, good:
Seat yourselves; shall we be found unready?
What is yon gentleman with the funeral face there?
Methinks that look does ill become a bride-house.

SIR OLIVER

Who does your worship mean, sir? My son Philip?
I am sure he had ne'er less reason to be sad.
Why are you sad, son Philip?

PHILIP

How, sir, sad?
You shall not find it so, sir.

SAVORWIT

[Aside to Philip] Take heed he do not then.
You must beware how you carry your face in this company; as far as I can see, that young bridegroom has hawk's eyes: he'll go nigh to spell sister in your face; if your nose were but crooked enough to serve for an S, he'd find an eye presently, and then he has more light for the rest.

PHILIP

I'll learn then to dissemble.

SAVORWIT

Nay, and you be to learn that now, you'll ne'er sit in a branch'd-velvet gown as long as you live! You should have took that at nurse before your mother wean'd you; so do all those that prove great children and batten well.

Enter Master Beveril with a pasteboard.

Peace, here comes a scholar indeed; he has learn'd it, I warrant you.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Kind sir, you're welcome; you take all the pains, sir.

BEVERIL

I wish they were but worthy of the grace
Of your fair presence and this choice assembly.
Here is an abstract, madam, of what's shown,
Which I commend to your favour.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Thank you for't, sir.

BEVERIL

[Aside] I would I durst present my love as boldly.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] My honest brother!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Look thee here, sweetheart.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

What's there, sweet madam?

BEVERIL

Music, and we're ready.

Loud music a while. A thing like a globe opens of one side o' th' stage and flashes out Fire, then Sir Gilbert, that presents the part, issues forth with yellow hair and beard intermingled with [streaks] like wild flames, a

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

three-fork'd fire in's hand; and, at the same time, Air [Weatherwise] comes down hanging by a cloud, with a coat made like an almanac, all the twelve moons set in it, and the four quarters—winter, spring, summer, and autumn—with change of weathers—rain, lightning, and tempest, etc. And from under the stage at both ends arises Water [Overdon] and Earth [Pepperton], two persons: Water with green flags upon his head standing up instead of hair, and a beard of the same, with a chain of pearl; Earth with a number of little things like trees, like a thick grove, upon his head, and a wedge of gold in his hand, his garment of a clay colour. The Fire speaking first, the scholar [Beveril] stands behind, gives him the first word, which he now follows.

BEVERIL

[Whispering his cue] The flame of zeal—

SIR GILBERT [as Fire]

The wicked fire of lust,
Does now spread heat through water, air, and dust.

BEVERIL

[Aside] How! He's out in the beginning! [To Sir Gilbert] The wheel of time—

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] The devil set fire o' th' distaff.

SIR GILBERT

I that was wont in elder times to pass
For a bright angel, so they call'd me then,
Now so corrupted with the upstart fires
Of avarice, luxury, and inconstant heats,
Struck from the bloods of cunning, clap-fall'n daughters,
Night-walking wives, but, most, libidinous widows,
That I, that purify ev'n gold itself,
Have the contemptible dross thrown in my face,
And my bright name walk common in disgrace.
How am I us'd o' late that I am so handled,
Thrust into alleys, hospitals, and tubs!
I was once a name of comfort, warm'd great houses
When charity was landlord; I have given welcome
To forty russet yeomen at a time
In a fair Christmas-hall. How am I chang'd!
The chimneys are swept up, the hearth as cold
As the forefathers' charity in the [son].
All the good hospitable heat now turns
To my young landlord's lust, and there it burns.
Rich widows, that were wont to choose by gravity
Their second husbands, not by tricks of blood,
Are now so taken with loose Aretine flames
Of nimble wantonness and high-fed pride
They marry now but the third part of husbands,
Boys, smooth-fac'd catamites, to fulfill their bed,
As if a woman should a woman wed.
These are the fires o' late: my brightness darks
And fills the world so full of beggarly sparks.

BEVERIL

[Aside] [Heart]! How am I disgrac'd! What rogue should this be?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

By my faith, Monsieur Fire, y'are a hot whoreson!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] I fear my brother is beside his wits;
He would not be so senseless to rail thus else.

WEATHERWISE as Air

After this heat, you madams fat and fair,
Open your casements wide and take in air;
But not that air false women make up oaths with,
No, nor that air gallants perfume their clothes with:
I am that air that keeps about the clouds.
None of my kindred was smelt out in crowds;
Not any of our house was ever tainted
When many a thousand of our foes have fainted.
Yet some there are that be my chief polluters,
Widows that falsify their faith to suitors
And will give fair words when the sign's in Cancer,
But, at the next remove, a scurvy answer;
Come to the poor men's houses, eat their banquet,
And at night with a boy toss'd in a blanket.
Nay, shall I come more near? Perhaps at noon,
For here I find a spot full in the moon.
I know youth's trick; what's she that can withstand it
When Mercury reigns, my lady's chamber planet?
He that believes a widow's words shall fail
When Venus' gown-skirts sweeps the Dragon's tail.
Fair weather the first day she makes to any,
The second cloudy, and the third day rainy;
The fourth day a great storm, lightning and thunder:
A bolt strikes the suitor, a boy keeps her under.

BEVERIL

[Aside] Life! These are some counterfeit slaves crept in their rooms,
A' purpose for disgrace; they shall all share with me.
Heart! Who the devil should these be?

Exit Beveril.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

My faith, gentlemen,
Air has perfum'd the room well!

SIR OLIVER

So methinks, madam.

SAVORWIT

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

[Aside] A man may smell her meaning two rooms off,
Though his nose wanted reparations
And the bridge left at Shoreditch as a pledge
For rosa solis, in a bleaking-house.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Life! What should be his meaning in't?

LOW-WATER

I wonder.

OVERDON as Water

Methinks this room should yet retain such heat
Struck out from the first ardour and so glow yet,
You should desire my company, wish for water,
That offers here to serve your several pipes
Without constraint of mill or death of water house.
What if I sprinkled on the widow's cheeks
A few cool drops to lay the guilty heat
That flashes from her conscience to her face;
Would't not refresh her shame? From such as she
I first took weakness and inconstancy;
I sometimes swell above my banks and spread.
They're commonly with child before they're wed;
In me the sirens sing before they play,
In her more witchcraft, for her smiles betray.
Where I'm least seen, there my most danger lies,
So in those parts hid most from a man's eyes:
Her heart, her love, or what may be more close.
I know no mercy, she thinks that no loss.
In her, poor gallants! Pirates thrive in me;
I help to cast away, and so does she.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Nay, and you can hold nothing, sweet sir Water,
I'll wash my hands a' you ever hereafter.

PEPPER-TON as Earth

Earth stands for a full point: me you should hire
To stop the gaps of water, air, and fire.
I love muck well, but your first husband better:
Above his soul he lov'd it, as his end
Did fearfully witness it; at his last gasp
His spirit flam'd, as it forsook his breast,
And left the sparkles quarreling 'bout his lips.
Now of such metal the devil makes him whips;
He shall have gold enough to glut his soul:
And as for earth, I'll stop his crane's throat full.
The wealth he left behind him, most men know,
He wrung inconstionably from the rights
Of poor men's livings; he drunk dry their brows.

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

That liquor has a curse, yet nothing sweeter;
When your posterity drinks, then 'twill taste bitter.

SIR GILBERT

And now to vex, 'gainst nature, form, rule, place,
See once four [warring] elements all embrace.

[They embrace.] Enter four [including Beveril] at several corners, address'd like the four winds, with wings, etc., and dance all to the drum and fife. The four Elements seem to give back and stand in amaze. The South Wind has a great red face, the North Wind a pale bleach one, the Western Wind one cheek red and another white, and so the Eastern Wind. At the end of the dance, the Winds shove off the disguises of the other four [the Elements], which seem to yield and almost fall of themselves at the coming of the Winds; so all the four old suitors are discovered. Exeunt all the Winds but one, which is the scholar [Beveril] in that disguise; so shows all.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

How! Sir Gilbert Lambston, Master Overdon!
All our old suitors! You have took pains, my masters.

SIR GILBERT

We made a vow we'd speak our minds to you.

WEATHERWISE

And I think we're as good as our words, though it cost some of our purses: I owe money for the clouds yet, I care not who knows it; the planets are sufficient enough to pay the painter, and I were dead.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Who are you, sir?

BEVERIL

[Removing his disguise] Your most unworthy servant.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Pardon me, is't you, sir?

BEVERIL

My disgrace urg'd my wit to take some form
Wherein I might both best and properliest
Discover my abusers and your own,
And show you some content before y' had none.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Sir, I owe much both to your care and love,
And you shall find your full requital worthy.
[To suitors] Was this the plot now your poor envy works out?
I do revenge myself with pitying on you.
[To Low-water] Take Fire into the buttery, he has most need on't;
Give Water some small beer, too good for him;
Air, you may walk abroad like a fortune-teller;
But take down Earth and make him drink i' th' cellar.

[Exeunt Low–water with suitors.]

MISTRESS LOW–WATER

The best revenge that could be.

LADY TWILIGHT

I commend you, madam.

SIR OLIVER

I thought they were some such sneakers.

SAVORWIT

The four suitors! And here was a mess of mad elements!

MISTRESS LOW–WATER

Lights, more lights there! Where be these blue–coats?

[Enter servants with lights.]

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

You know your lodgings, gentlemen, tonight.

SIR OLIVER

'Tis bounty makes bold guests, madam.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[To Lady Twilight] Good rest, lady.

SIR OLIVER

A most contentful night begin a health, madam,
To your long joys, and may the years go round with't.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

As many thanks as you have wish'd 'em hours, sir,
Take to your lodging with you.

MISTRESS LOW–WATER

A general rest to all.

Exeunt [all the guests save Philip and Savorwit].

PHILIP

[Aside to Savorwit] I'm excepted.

SAVORWIT

[Aside to Philip] Take in another to you then; there's room enough
In that exception, faith, to serve us both.
The dial of my sleep goes by your eyes.

[Exeunt.] Manent Widow [Lady Goldenfleece] and Mistress Low–water.

IV.[i. Sir Oliver's house]

V.[i. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Now, like a greedy usurer alone,
I sum up all the wealth this day has brought me,
And thus I hug it.

[Embraces her.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Prithee!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Thus, I kiss it. [Kisses her.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I can't abide these kissings.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

How, sir? Not?
I'll try that sure; I'll kiss you out of that humour.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Push, by my troth, I cannot.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What cannot you, sir?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Not toy, nor bill and imitate house pigeons;
A married man must think of other matters.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

How, other matters, sir? What other matters?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Why, are there no other matters that belong to't?
Do you think y'have married only a cock-sparrow
And fit but for one business like a fool?
You shall not find it so.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

You can talk strangely, sir.
Come, will you to bed?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

No, faith, will not I.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What, not to bed, sir?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

And I do, hang me! Not to bed with you!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

How, not to bed with me! Sir, with whom else?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Why, am not I enough to lie with myself?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Is that the end of marriage?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

No, by my faith,
'Tis but the beginning, yet death is the end on't,
Unless some trick come i' th' middle and dash all.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Were you so forward lately and so youthful
That scarce my modest strength could save me from you,
And are you now so cold?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I've thought on't since.
It was but a rude part in me, i'faith,
To offer such bold tricks to any woman,
And by degrees I shall well break myself from't;
I feel myself well chasten'd since that time,
And not the third part now so loosely minded.
Oh, when one sees their follies, 'tis a comfort!
My very thoughts take more staid years upon 'em.
Oh, marriage is such a serious divine thing!
It makes youth grave and sweetly nips the spring.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

If I had chose a gentleman for care
And worldly business, I had ne'er took you;
I had the offers of enough more fit
For such employment: I chose you for love,
Youth, and content of heart, and not for troubles;
You are not ripe for them. After y'have spent
Some twenty years in dalliance, youth's affairs,
Then take a book in your hand and sum up cares;
As for wealth now, you know that's got to your hands.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

But had I known 't had been so wrongfully got,

As I heard since, you should have had free leave
To have made choice of another master for't.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Why, can that trouble you?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

It may too soon. But go;
My sleeps are sound: I love not to be started
With an ill conscience at the fall of midnight,
And have mine eyes torn ope with poor men's curses.
I do not like the fate on't: 'tis still apt
To breed unrest, dissension, wild debate,
And I'm the worst at quarrels upon earth,
Unless a mighty injury should provoke me.
Get you to bed, go.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Not without you, in troth, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

If you could think how much you wrong yourself
In my opinion of you, you would leave me now
With all the speed you might; I like you worse
For this fond heat, and drink in more suspicion of you.
You high-fed widows are too cuing people
For a poor gentleman to come simply to.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What's that, sir?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

You may make a youth on him;
'Tis at your courtesy, and that's ill trusted.
You could not want a friend beside a suitor
To sit in your husband's gown and look over your writings.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What's this?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I say there is a time when women
Can do too much and understand too little.
Once more, to bed; I'd willingly be a father
To no more noses than I got myself,
And so good night to you.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[Aside] Now I see the infection.
A yellow poison runs through the sweet spring
Of his fair youth already; 'tis distracted,

Jealous of that which thought yet never acted.—
[Kneeling] Oh, dear sir! On my knees, I swear to thee—

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I prithee use them in thy private chamber
As a good lady should; spare 'em not there,
'Twill do thee good. Faith, none 'twill do thee here.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[Rising, aside] Have I yet married poverty and [miss'd] love?
What fortune has my heart? That's all I crav'd,
And that lies now a-dying; it has took
A speeding poison, and I'm ignorant how:
I never knew what beggary was till now.
My wealth yields me no comfort in this plight;
Had want but brought me love, I'd happen'd right.

Exit Widow [Lady Goldenfleece].

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

So, this will serve now for a preparative
To ope the [pores] of some dislike at first;
The physic will pay't home.

Enter Low-water.

How dost thou, sir?
How goes the work?

LOW-WATER

Your brother has the letter.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I find no stop in't then; it moves well hitherto.
Did you convey it closely?

LOW-WATER

He ne'er set eye of me.

[Enter Beveril with a letter] above.

BEVERIL

I cannot read too often.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[To Low-water] Peace, to your office.

BEVERIL

What blessed fate took pity of my heart,
But with her presence to relieve me thus?
All the large volumes that my time hath master'd

V.[i. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

Are not so precious to adorn my spirit
As these few lines are to enrich my mind.
I thirst again to drink of the same fountain.

[Reading] "Kind Sir, I found your care and love so much in the performance of a little, wherein your wit and art had late employment, that I dare now trust your bosom with business of more weight and eminence. Little thought the world that since the wedding dinner all my mirth was but dissembled, and seeming joys but counterfeit. The truth to you, sir, is, I find so little signs of content in the bargain I made i' th' morning that I began to repent before evening prayer, and to show some fruits of his willful neglect and wild disposition, more than the day could bring forth to me, h'as now forsook my bed; I know no cause for't."

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] But I'll be sworn I do.

BEVERIL

[Reading] "Being thus distress'd, sir, I desire your comfortable presence and counsel, whom I know to be of worth and judgment, that a lady may safely impart her griefs to you, and commit 'em to the virtues of commiseration and secrecy. Your unfortunate friend, The Widow-wife. I have took order for your private admittance with a trusty servant of mine own, whom I have plac'd at my chamber door to attend your coming."

He shall not wait too long and curse my slowness!

LOW-WATER

[Aside] I would you'd come away then.

BEVERIL

How much am I beguil'd in that young gentleman!
I would have sworn had been the perfect abstract
Of honesty and mildness; 'tis not so.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

[Aside] I pardon you, sweet brother; there's no hold
Of what you speak now: you're in Cupid's pound.

BEVERIL

Bless'd be the secret hand that brought thee hither;
But the dear hand that writ it, ten times bless'd!

[Exit above.]

LOW-WATER

That's I still; h'as bless'd me now ten times at twice.
Away; I hear him coming.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Strike it sure now.

Exit.

LOW-WATER

I warrant thee, sweet Kate; choose your best---

Enter Master Beveril.

BEVERIL

Who's there?

LOW-WATER

Oh sir, is't you? Y'are welcome then;
My lady still expects you, sir.

BEVERIL

Who's with her?

LOW-WATER

Not any creature living, sir.

BEVERIL

[Giving him money] Drink that;
I've made thee wait too long.

LOW-WATER

It does not seem so now, sir.
Sir, if a man tread warily as any
Wise man will, how often may he come
To a lady's chamber and be welcome to her!

BEVERIL

Thou giv'st me learned counsel for a closet.

LOW-WATER

Make use on't, sir, and you shall find no loss in't.

[Exit Beveril.]

So, you are surely in, and you must under.

Enter Kate [Mistress Low-water] with all the guests: Sir Oliver, Master Sunset, Wife [Lady Twilight],
Daughter [Grace], Philip, Sandfield, [Jane, Dutch Merchant,] and Savorwit.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Pardon my rude disturbance, my wrongs urge it;
I did but try the plainness of her mind,
Suspecting she dealt cunningly with my youth,
And told her the first night I would not know her;
But minding to return, I found the door
Warded suspiciously, and I heard a noise,
Such as fear makes, and guiltiness at th' approaching
Of an unlook'd-for husband.

ALL

This is strange, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Behold, it's barr'd; I must not be kept out!

SIR OLIVER

There is no reason, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I'll be resolv'd in't.

If you be sons of honour, follow me!

Break open door; rush in.

SAVORWIT

Then must I stay behind, for I think I was begot i' th' woodyard, and that makes everything go so hard with me.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER within

That's he! Be sure on him!

Enter confusedly [Mistress Low-water] with the widow [Lady Goldenfleece], and her brother [Beveril] the scholar [and the others].

SIR OLIVER

Be not so furious, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

She whispered to him to slip into her closet.

What, have I taken you? Is not my dream true now?

Unmerciful adulteress, the first night!

SIR OLIVER

Nay, good sir, patience!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Give me the villain's heart,

That I may throw 't into her bosom quick;

There let the lecher pant!

LADY TWILIGHT

Nay, sweet sir!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Pardon me; his life's too little for me.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

How am I wrongfully sham'd! Speak your intent, sir,

Before this company; I pursue no pity.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

This is a fine, thievish juggling, gentlemen.

She asks her mate that shares in guilt with her.

Too gross, too gross!

BEVERIL

[Aside] Rash mischief!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Treacherous sir,
Did I for this cast a friend's arm about thee,
Gave thee the welcome of a worthy spirit,
And lodg'd thee in my house, nay, entertain'd thee
More like a natural brother than a stranger,
And have I this reward? Perhaps the pride
Of thy good parts did lift thee to this impudence.
Let her make much on 'em; she gets none of me.
Because thou'rt deeply read in most books else,
Thou wouldst be so in mine; (indicating Lady Goldenfleece) there it stands for thee:
Turn o'er the leaves, and where you left, go forward;
To me, it shall be like the book of fate,
Ever clasp'd up.

SIR OLIVER

Oh, dear sir, say not so.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Nay, I'll swear more: forever I refuse her;
I'll never set a foot into her bed,
Never perform the duty of man to her
So long as I have breath.

SIR OLIVER

What an oath was there, sir! Call't again.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I knew by amorous sparks struck from their eyes
The fire would appear shortly in a blaze,
And now it flames indeed. Out of my house,
And take your gentleman of good parts along with you!
That shall be all your substance; he can live
In any emperor's court in Christendom!
You know what you did, wench, when you chose him
To thrust out me; you have no politic love!
You are to learn to make your market, you!
You can choose wit, a burden light and free,
And leave the grosser element with me,
Wealth, foolish trash, I thank you. Out of my doors!

SIR OLIVER

Nay, good sir, hear her.

LADY TWILIGHT, SUNSET

Sweet sir!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Pray, to your chambers, gentlemen; I should be here
Master of what is mine.

SIR OLIVER

Hear her but speak, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

What can she speak but woman's common language?
She's sorry and asham'd for't; that helps nothing.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Sir, since it is the hard hap of my life
To receive injury where I plac'd my love--

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Why, la, I told you what escapes she'd have!

SIR OLIVER

Nay, pray, sir, hear her forward.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Let our parting
Be full as charitable as our meeting was,
That the pale, envious world, glad of the food
Of others' miseries, civil dissensions,
And nuptial strifes, may not feed fat with ours;
But since you are resolv'd so willfully
To leave my bed and ever to refuse me,
As by your rage I find it your desire,
Though all my actions deserve nothing less,
Here are our friends, men both of worth and wisdom,
Place so much power in them to make an evenness
Between my peace and yours. All my wealth within doors
In gold and jewels lie in those two caskets
I lately led you to, the value of which
Amounts to some five thousand apiece;
Exchange a charitable hand with me,
And take one casket freely. Fare thee well, sir.

SIR OLIVER

How say you to that now?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Troth, I thank her, sir.
Are not both mine already? You shall wrong me
And then make satisfaction with mine own?
I cannot blame you, a good course for you.

LADY TWILIGHT

V.[i. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

I know 'twas not my luck to be so happy;
My miseries are no starters: when they come,
Stick longer by me.

SIR OLIVER

Nay, but give me leave, sir;
The wealth comes all by her.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

So does the shame,
Yet that's most mine; why should not that be too?

SIR OLIVER

Sweet sir, let us rule so much with you:
Since you intend an obstinate separation,
Both from her bed and board, give your consent
To some agreement reasonable and honest.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Must I deal honestly with her lust?

LADY TWILIGHT

Nay, good sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Why, I tell you, all the wealth her husband left her
Is not of power to purchase the dear peace
My heart has lost in these adulterous seas;
Yet, let her works be base, mine shall be noble.

SIR OLIVER

That's the best word of comfort I heard yet.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Friends may do much. Go, bring those caskets forth.

[Exit servants.]

I hate her sight; I'll leave her, though I lose by't.

SIR OLIVER

Spoke like a noble gentleman, i'faith!
I'll honour thee for this.

BEVERIL

[Aside] Oh, cursed man!
Must thy rash heat force this division?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

You shall have free leave now, without all fear;

V.[i. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

You shall not need oil'd hinges, privy passages,
Watchings, and whisperings: take him boldly to you.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Oh, that I had that freedom, since my shame
Puts by all other fortunes, and owns him
A worthy gentleman. If this cloud were past him,
I'd marry him, were 't but to spite thee only,
So much I hate thee now.

Enter servants with two caskets, and the suitors [Sir Gilbert, Weatherwise, Pepperton, and Overdon].

SIR OLIVER

Here come the caskets, sir; hold your good mind now,
And we shall make a virtuous end between you.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Though nothing less she merit but a curse,
That might still hang upon her and consume her still,
As 't has been many a better woman's fortune
That has deserv'd less vengeance and felt more,
Yet my mind scorns to leave her shame so poor.

SIR OLIVER

Nobly spoke still.

SIR GILBERT

This strikes me into music; ha, ha!

PEPPER-TON

Parting of goods before the bodies join?

WEATHERWISE

This 'tis to marry beardless, domineering boys! I knew 'twould come to this pass. Well fare a just almanac yet, for now is Mercury going into the second house near unto Ursa Major, that great hunks, the Bear at the bridge-foot in heaven, which shows horrible bear baitings in wedlock; and the sun near ent'ring into th' Dog sets 'em all together by th' ears.

SIR OLIVER

[Opening the caskets] You see what's in't?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I think 'tis as I left it.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Then do but gage your faith to this assembly
That you will ne'er return more to molest me,
But rest in all revenges full appeas'd
And amply satisfied with that half my wealth,
And take 't as freely as life wishes health.

SIR OLIVER

La, you, sir; come, come, faith, you shall swear that.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Nay, gentlemen, for your sakes, now I'll deal fairly with her.

SIR OLIVER

I would we might see that, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I could set her free,
But now I think on't, she deserves it not.

SUNSET

Nay, do not check your goodness; pray, sir, on with't.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I could release her ere I parted with her,
But 'twere a courtesy ill plac'd, and set her
At as free liberty to marry again,
As you all know she was before I knew her.

SIR OLIVER

What, couldst thou, sir?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

But 'tis too good a blessing for her.
Up with the casket, sirrah!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Oh, sir, stay!

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I have nothing to say to you.

SIR OLIVER

Do you hear, sir?
Pray, let's have one word more with you for our money.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Since y'have expos'd me to all shame and sorrow
And made me fit but for one hope and fortune
Bearing my former comforts away with you,
Show me a parting charity but in this:
For all my losses, pay me with that freedom,
And I shall think this treasure as well given
As ever 'twas ill got.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I might afford it you
Because I never mean to be more troubled with you;

But how shall I be sure of the honest use on't,
How you'll employ that liberty? Perhaps sinfully,
In wantonness unlawful, and I answer for't;
So I may live a bawd to your loose works still
In giving 'em first vent. Not I, shall pardon me;
I'll see you honestly join'd ere I release you.
I will not trust you for the last trick you play'd me;
Here's your old suitors.

PEPPER TON

Now we thank you, sir.

WEATHERWISE

My almanac warns me from all cuckoldy conjunctions.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Be but commander of your word now, sir,
And before all these gentlemen, our friends,
I'll make a worthy choice.

SUNSET

Fly not ye back now.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I'll try thee once. I am married to another;
There's thy release!

SIR OLIVER

Hoyda! There's a release with a witness!
Thou'rt free, sweet wench.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Married to another!
Then in revenge to thee,
To vex thine eyes, cause thou hast mock'd my heart,
And with such treachery repaid my love,
This is the gentleman I embrace and choose.

[Embraces Beveril.]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Oh, torment to my blood, mine enemy!
None else to make thy choice of but the man
From whence my shame took head?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

'Tis done to quit thee.
Thou that wrong'st woman's love, her hate can fit thee.

SIR OLIVER

Brave wench, i'faith! Now thou hast an honest gentleman,

V.[i. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

Rid of a swaggering knave, and there's an end on't.
A man of good parts, this t'other had nothing.
Life, married to another!

SIR GILBERT

Oh, brave rascal with two wives!

WEATHERWISE

Nay, and our women be such subtle animals, I'll lay wait at the carrier's for a country chambermaid and live still a bachelor. When wives are like almanacs, we may have every year a new one, then I'll bestow my money on 'em; in the meantime, I'll give 'em over and ne'er trouble my almanac about 'em.

SIR GILBERT

I come in a good time to see you hang'd, sir,
And that's my comfort. Now, I'll tickle you, sir.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

You make me laugh indeed.

SIR GILBERT

Sir, you remember
How cunningly you chok'd me at the banquet
With a fine bawdy letter?

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Your own fist, sir.

SIR GILBERT

I'll read the statute book to you now for't.
Turn to the act in Anno Jac. primo:
There lies a halter for your windpipe.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

Fie, no!

SIR OLIVER

Faith, but you'll find it so, sir, an't be followed.

WEATHERWISE

So says my almanac, and he's a true man.
Look you: [reading] "The thirteenth day, work for the hangman."

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

The fourteenth day, make haste; 'tis time you were there then!

WEATHERWISE

How, is the book so saucy to tell me so?

BEVERIL

Sir, I must tell you now, but without gall,
The law would hang you if married to another.

V.[i. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

You can but put me to my book, sweet brother,
And I've my neck-verse perfect, here and here.

[She removes her disguise, revealing her bosom.]

Heaven give thee eternal joy, my dear, sweet brother!

[Embraces Beveril; Low-water removes his disguise.]

ALL

Who's here?

SIR GILBERT

[Aside] Oh, devil! Herself! Did she betray me?
A pox of shame, nine coaches shall not stay me!

Exit Sir Gilbert.

BEVERIL

I've two such deep healths in two joys to pledge,
Heaven keep me from a surfeit!

SIR OLIVER

Mistress Low-water!
Is she the jealous cuckold all this coil's about?
And my right worshipful serving-man, is it you, sir?

LOW-WATER

A poor, wrong'd gentleman, glad to serve for his own, sir.

SIR OLIVER

By my faith, y'have serv'd the widow a fine trick between you.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

No more my enemy now, my brother's wife,
And my kind sister.

SIR OLIVER

There's no starting now from't;
'Tis her own brother, did not you know that?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

'Twas never told me yet.

SIR OLIVER

I thought you'd known't.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

V.[i. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

What matter is't? 'Tis the same man was chose still,
No worse now than he was. I'm bound to love you;
Y'have [exercis'd] in this a double charity,
Which, to your praise, shall to all times be known,
Advanc'd my brother and restor'd mine own.
Nay, somewhat for my wrongs, like a good sister,
For well you know the tedious suit did cost
Much pains and fees; I thank you, 'tis not lost.
You wish'd for love, and, faith, I have bestow'd you
Upon a gentleman that does dearly love you;
That recompense I've made you. And you must think, madam,
I lov'd you well, though I could never ease you,
When I fetch'd in my brother thus to please you.

SIR OLIVER

Here's unity forever strangely wrought!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

I see too late there is a heavy judgment
Keeps company with extortion and foul deeds,
And like a wind which vengeance has in chase,
Drives back the wrongs into the injurer's face.
My punishment is gentle, and to show
My thankful mind for't, thus I'll revenge this
With an embracement here, and here a kiss.

[Embraces Mistress Low-water and kisses Beveril.]

SIR OLIVER

Why, now the bells they go trim, they go trimly!
[To Beveril] I wish'd thee, sir, some unexpected blessing
For my wife's ransom, and 'tis fall'n upon thee.

WEATHERWISE

[Aside] A pox of this! My almanac ne'er gull'd me till this hour. "The thirteenth day, work for the hangman," and there's nothing toward it; I'd been a fine ass, if I'd given twelve pence for a horse to have rid to Tyburn tomorrow. But now I see the error, 'tis false figured; it should be "thirteen days and a half, work for the hangman," for he ne'er works under thirteen pence half-penny. Beside, Venus being a spot in the sun's garment shows there should be a woman found in hose and doublet.

SIR OLIVER

Nay, faith, sweet wife, we'll make no more hours on't now; 'tis as fine a contracting time as ever came amongst gentlefolks. Son Philip, Master Sandfield, come to the book here!

PHILIP

[Aside to Savorwit] Now I'm waked into a thousand miseries and their torments.

SAVORWIT

[To Philip] And I come after you, sir, drawn with wild horses; there will be a brave show on's anon if this weather continue.

SIR OLIVER

Come, wenches, where be these young [gentlemen's] hands now?

LADY TWILIGHT

[Aside] Poor gentleman, my son!—
Some other time, sir.

SIR OLIVER

I'll have 't now, i'faith, wife.

[Puts Philip's hand into Jane's and Sandfield's into Grace's.]

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

What are you making here?

SIR OLIVER

I have sworn, sweet madam,
My son shall marry Master Sunset's daughter,
And Master Sandfield, mine.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

So you go well, sir;
[Gesturing to Jane] But what make you this way then?

SIR OLIVER

This? For my son.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Oh, back, sir, back! This is no way for him.

SUNSET, SIR OLIVER

How?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Oh, let me break an oath to save two souls,
Lest I should wake another judgment greater!
You come not here for him, sir.

SIR OLIVER

What's the matter?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Either give me free leave to make this match
Or I'll forbid the banes.

SIR OLIVER

Good madam, take it.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

[Giving Jane to Sandfield] Here, Master Sandfield, then—

SIR OLIVER

Cuds bodkins!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Take you this maid.

SANDFIELD

You could not please me better, madam.

SIR OLIVER

Hoyda! Is this your hot love to my daughter, sir?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Come hither, Philip; here's a wife for you.

[Gives Grace to Philip.]

SIR OLIVER

Zunes, he shall ne'er do that! Marry his sister?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Had he been rul'd by you, he had married her,
But now he marries Master Sunset's daughter,
And Master Sandfield, yours; I've sav'd your oath, sir.

PHILIP

Oh, may this blessing hold!

SAVORWIT

[Aside] Or else all the liquor runs out.

SIR OLIVER

What riddle's this, madam?

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

A riddle of some fourteen years of age now.
You can remember, madam, that your daughter
Was put to nurse to Master Sunset's wife.

LADY TWILIGHT

True, that we talk'd on lately.

SIR OLIVER

I grant that, madam.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Then you shall grant what follows. At that time
You likewise know old Master Sunset here
Grew backward in the world, till his last fortunes
Rais'd him to this estate.

SIR OLIVER

Still this we know too.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

His wife, then nurse both to her own and yours,
And both so young, of equal years, and daughters,
Fearing the extremity of her fortunes then
Should fall upon her infant, to prevent it,
She chang'd the children, kept your daughter with her,
And sent her own to you for better fortunes.
So long, enjoin'd by solemn oath unto't
Upon her death bed, I have conceal'd this;
But now so urg'd, here's yours, and this is his.

SAVORWIT

[Whoop], the joy is come of our side!

WEATHERWISE

Hay, I'll cast mine almanac to the moon too, and strike out a new one for next year!

PHILIP

It wants expression, this miraculous blessing!

SAVORWIT

Methinks I could spring up and knock my head
Against yon silver ceiling now for joy!

WEATHERWISE

By my faith, but I do not mean to follow you there, so I may dash out my brains against Charles' Wain and come down as wise as a carman.

SIR OLIVER

I never wonder'd yet with greater pleasure.

LADY TWILIGHT

What tears have I bestow'd on a lost daughter
And left her behind me!

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

This is Grace,
This Jane; now each has her right name and place.

SUNSET

I never heard of this.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

I'll swear you did not, sir.

SIR OLIVER

How well I have kept mine oath against my will!
Clap hands, and joy go with you. Well said, boys!

PHILIP

[To Grace] How art thou bless'd from shame and I from ruin!

SAVORWIT

I, from the baker's ditch, if I'd seen you in.

PHILIP

Not possible the whole world to match again
Such grief, such joy, in minutes lost and won.

BEVERIL

Whoever knew more happiness in less compass?
Ne'er was poor gentleman so bound to a sister
As I am for the [wittiness] of thy mind;
Not only that thy due, but all our wealth
Shall lie as open as the sun to man
For thy employments, so the charity
Of this dear bosom bids me tell thee now.

MISTRESS LOW-WATER

I am her servant for't.

LADY GOLDENFLEECE

Hah, worthy sister!
The government of all I bless thee with.

BEVERIL

Come, gentlemen, on all perpetual friendship.
Heaven still relieves what misery would destroy;
Never was night yet of more general joy.

[Exeunt.]

Epilogue

[WEATHERWISE]

Now let me see what weather shall we have now.

[Takes out his almanac.]

Hold fair now, and I care not. Mass, full moon, too,
Just between five and six this afternoon!

This happens right: [reading] "The sky for the best part clear,
Save here and there a cloud or two dispers'd."

That's some dozen of panders and half a score
Pickpockets; you may know them by their whistle,
And they do well to use that while they may,
For Tyburn cracks the pipe and spoils the music.

What says the destiny of the hour this evening?

Hah! [Reading] "Fear no colours!" By my troth, agreed then:

The red and white looks cheerfully. For know ye all,
The planet's Jupiter: you should be jovial;

V.[i. Lady Goldenfleece's house]

No Wit, No Help like a Woman's

There's nothing lets it but the sun i' th' Dog:
Some bark in corners that will fawn and cog,
Glad of my fragments for their ember week.
The sign's in Gemini too: both hands should meet;
There should be noise i' th' air if all things hap,
Though I love thunder when you make the clap.
Some faults perhaps have slipp'd, I am to answer;
And if in anything your revenge appears,
Send me in with all your fists about mine ears.

Finis.