

William Shakespeare's
11 Tragedies:
Retellings in Prose

David Bruce

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Educate Yourself
Read Like A Wolf Eats
Be Excellent to Each Other
Books Then, Books Now, Books Forever

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

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Dedicated to Carl Eugene Bruce and Josephine Saturday Bruce

My father, Carl Eugene Bruce, died on 24 October 2013. He used to work for Ohio Power, and at one time, his job was to shut off the electricity of people who had not paid their bills. He sometimes would find a home with an impoverished mother and some children. Instead of shutting off their electricity, he would tell the mother that she needed to pay her bill or soon her electricity would be shut off. He would write on a form that no one was home when he stopped by because if no one was home he did not have to shut off their electricity.

The best good deed that anyone ever did for my father occurred after a storm that knocked down many power lines. He and other linemen worked long hours and got wet and cold. Their feet were freezing because water got into their boots and soaked their socks. Fortunately, a kind woman gave my father and the other linemen dry socks to wear.

My mother, Josephine Saturday Bruce, died on 14 June 2003. She used to work at a store that sold clothing. One day, an impoverished mother with a baby clothed in rags walked into the store and started shoplifting in an interesting way: The mother took the rags off her baby and dressed the infant in new clothing. My mother knew that this mother could not afford to buy the clothing, but she helped the mother dress her baby and then she watched as the mother walked out of the store without paying.

The doing of good deeds is important. As a free person, you can choose to live your life as a good person or as a bad person. To be a good person, do good deeds. To be a bad person, do bad deeds. If you do good deeds, you will become good. If you do bad deeds, you will become bad. To become the person you want to be, act as if you already are that kind of person. Each of us chooses what kind of person we will become. To become a good person, do the things a good person does. To become a bad person, do the things a bad person does. The opportunity to take action to become the kind of person you want to be is yours.

Human beings have free will. According to the Babylonian Niddah 16b, whenever a baby is to be conceived, the Lailah (angel in charge of contraception) takes the drop of semen that will result in the conception and asks God, "Sovereign of the Universe, what is going

to be the fate of this drop? Will it develop into a robust or into a weak person? An intelligent or a stupid person? A wealthy or a poor person?" The Lailah asks all these questions, but it does not ask, "Will it develop into a righteous or a wicked person?" The answer to that question lies in the decisions to be freely made by the human being that is the result of the conception.

A Buddhist monk visiting a class wrote this on the chalkboard: "EVERYONE WANTS TO SAVE THE WORLD, BUT NO ONE WANTS TO HELP MOM DO THE DISHES." The students laughed, but the monk then said, "Statistically, it's highly unlikely that any of you will ever have the opportunity to run into a burning orphanage and rescue an infant. But, in the smallest gesture of kindness — a warm smile, holding the door for the person behind you, shoveling the driveway of the elderly person next door — you have committed an act of immeasurable profundity, because to each of us, our life is our universe."

In her book titled *I Have Chosen to Stay and Fight*, comedian Margaret Cho writes, "I believe that we get complimentary snack-size portions of the afterlife, and we all receive them in a different way." For Ms. Cho, many of her snack-size portions of the afterlife come in hip hop music. Other people get different snack-size portions of the afterlife, and we all must be on the lookout for them when they come our way. And perhaps doing good deeds and experiencing good deeds are snack-size portions of the afterlife.

The Zen master Gisan was taking a bath. The water was too hot, so he asked a student to add some cold water to the bath. The student brought a bucket of cold water, added some cold water to the bath, and then threw the rest of the water on a rocky path. Gisan scolded the student: "Everything can be used. Why did you waste the rest of the water by pouring it on the path? There are some plants nearby which could have used the water. What right do you have to waste even a drop of water?" The student became enlightened and changed his name to Tekisui, which means "Drop of Water."

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Chapter I: ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MALE CHARACTERS

MARK ANTONY, OCTAVIUS CAESAR, and MARCUS AEMILIUS LEPIDUS: Triumvirs.

SEXTUS POMPEY, son of Pompey the Great.

DOMITIUS ENOBARBUS, VENTIDIUS, EROS, SCARUS, DERCETUS, DEMETRIUS, and PHILO: Friends to Mark Antony.

MAECENAS, AGRIPPA, DOLABELLA, PROCULEIUS, THIDIAS, and GALLUS: Friends to Octavius Caesar.

MENAS, MENEKRATES, and VARRIUS: Friends to Sextus Pompey.

TAURUS, Lieutenant General to Octavius Caesar.

CANIDIUS, Lieutenant General to Mark Antony.

SILIUS, an Officer under Ventidius.

EUPHRONIUS, Ambassador from Mark Antony to Octavius Caesar.

ALEXAS, MARDIAN, SELEUCUS, and DIOMEDES: Attendants on Cleopatra.

A Soothsayer.

A Farmer: a comic character.

FEMALE CHARACTERS

CLEOPATRA, Queen of Egypt.

OCTAVIA, sister to Octavius Caesar, and wife to Mark Antony.

CHARMIAN and IRAS, Attendants on Cleopatra.

MINOR CHARACTORS

Officers, Soldiers, Messengers, and other Attendants.

SCENE

In several parts of the Roman Empire.

TIME

The play begins in 40 B.C.E. (Fulvia died that year) when Octavius Caesar is 23 years old, Mark Antony is 43 years old, and Cleopatra is 29 years old. The play ends in 30 B.C.E.

CHAPTER 1

— 1.1 —

In a room in Cleopatra's palace in Alexandria, Egypt, Demetrius and Philo, two followers of Mark Antony, were speaking.

Philo said in response to a comment by Demetrius, "No, but this dotage of Mark Antony, our general, is out of control. His excellent eyes, that over the assembled files and musters of the war have glowed like armed Mars, the god of war, now bend and turn the service and devotion of their view upon a tawny front: the brown face of Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. His leader's heart, which in the scuffles of great fights has burst the buckles on his breastplate, abandons all restraint, and it has become the bellows and the fan to cool a gypsy's lust."

Gypsies were thought to have come from Egypt.

Trumpets sounded, and Mark Antony and Cleopatra entered. Cleopatra's ladies and servants accompanied her, and eunuchs fanned her. A eunuch is a castrated man — one whose testicles have been removed.

Philo added, quietly, "Look, here they come. Watch Mark Antony carefully, and you shall see in him that the triple pillar of the world has been transformed into a whore's fool. As one of the three Roman triumvirs, Mark Antony rules a third of the world. But despite Mark Antony's power, he has allowed himself to become the fool of Cleopatra. Watch him, and you shall see."

"If it is indeed love that you feel for me, tell me how much," Cleopatra said to Mark Antony.

He replied, "There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned. If I could tell you how much I love you, I would

not love you enough.”

“I want to know the extent of how far you love me,” Cleopatra said.

“Then you must discover a new Heaven and a new Earth,” Mark Antony said. “My love for you is infinite and cannot be limited by this Heaven and this Earth.”

An attendant entered the room and said to Mark Antony, “News, my good lord, has arrived from Rome.”

“This irritates me,” Mark Antony said to the attendant.

He then resumed telling Cleopatra how much he loved her: “The sum —.”

“No, hear what the ambassadors bringing the message have to say,” Cleopatra advised. “Your Roman wife, Fulvia, perhaps is angry at you, or, who knows, perhaps the very young and scarcely bearded Octavius Caesar has used the royal plural and sent his powerful orders to you: ‘Do this, or this; conquer that Kingdom, and free this one; perform what we order you to do, or else we damn you.’”

“What, my love!” Mark Antony said.

“Perhaps! Or almost certainly. You must not stay here in Egypt any longer; your dismissal from service in Egypt has come from Octavius Caesar, so therefore hear his orders, Antony. Where are Fulvia’s orders for you to return to Rome? Or should I say Caesar’s? Both? Call in the Roman ambassadors.”

She looked at Mark Antony, whose face was reddening, and said, “As I am Egypt’s Queen, you are blushing, Antony; and that blood of yours pays homage to Octavius Caesar and acknowledges that you are his servant, or else your red cheeks show your shame when shrill-tongued Fulvia scolds you. Listen to the ambassadors!”

“Let Rome melt and flow into the Tiber River,” Mark Antony said, “and let the well-ordered and vast Roman Empire that arches over the world fall! Here is my space; this is where I belong! Kingdoms are only clay: Our dungy earth feeds beasts as well as men. The nobleness of life is to do thus —”

Mark Antony embraced Cleopatra and then continued, “— when such a mutual pair and couple as we are can do it. I command the world — and I will punish the world if it disobeys — to know that we and our love are without peer.”

“This is an excellent falsehood!” Cleopatra said. “Why did he — Mark Antony — marry Fulvia, if he did not love her? I’ll pretend to be the fool that I am not; Antony will be himself.”

Cleopatra’s comment was ambiguous. It could mean that Mark Antony would live up to his reputation of himself as a noble Roman, or it could mean that he would continue to be the fool that he is.

Mark Antony said, “But I will be stirred by Cleopatra.”

Mark Antony’s comment was ambiguous. It could mean that Cleopatra would stir him to do noble deeds, or that she would move him to do foolish deeds, or that she would stir him to do sexual deeds.

He continued, “Now, for the love of Love — Venus, goddess of sexual passion — and her soft attendants who are called the Hours, let’s not waste the time with harsh arguments. There’s not a minute of our lives that should pass without some pleasure now. What entertainment shall we have tonight?”

“Listen to what the Roman ambassadors have to say to you,” Cleopatra said.

“Damn, wrangling Queen! Everything becomes you and makes you beautiful: chiding, laughing, weeping. Every emotion fully strives to make itself, when you express it, beautiful and admired! I will listen to no messenger but yours, and all alone tonight we’ll wander through the streets and watch people. Come, my Queen; you wanted us to do that last night.”

He ordered the attendants, “Don’t speak to us.”

Mark Antony and Cleopatra and their attendants left, leaving Demetrius and Philo alone.

Demetrius asked Philo, “Does Mark Antony regard Octavius Caesar with so little respect that he can ignore his ambassadors?”

“Sir, sometimes Mark Antony is not Mark Antony. He fails to live up to the best parts of what Mark Antony should always be.”

“I am very sorry that he proves that common liars, who in Rome spread malicious gossip about him, are speaking the truth, but I will hope for better deeds from him tomorrow. Farewell, and have a good night.”

— 1.2 —

In another room in Cleopatra’s palace stood Charmian and Iras, two of Cleopatra’s female attendants, and Alexas, one of Cleopatra’s male attendants. A soothsayer who predicted fortunes was a short distance away. Charmian, Iras, and Alexas were in a playful mood.

Charmian said, “Lord Alexas, sweet Alexas, most anything Alexas, almost most absolute Alexas, where’s the soothsayer whom you praised so highly to the Queen? Oh, I wish that I knew who will be this husband, who, you say, must decorate his cuckold’s horns with bridal garlands!”

Alexas had told Charmian that the soothsayer would tell her about her future husband, whoever he would be. He had joked that she would cuckold — be unfaithful to — her husband even before they were married.

Alexas called, “Soothsayer!”

The soothsayer came closer and asked, “What do you want?”

“Is this the man?” Charmian asked Alexas. She then asked the soothsayer, “Is it you, sir, who know things?”

The soothsayer replied, “I can read a little in Nature’s infinite book of secrecy.”

Alexas said to Charmian, “Show him your hand so that he can read your palm.”

Domitius Enobarbus, who served Mark Antony, entered the room and said to some servants, “Bring in the banquet of fruit and sweets quickly; be sure that we have enough wine to drink to Cleopatra’s health.”

Charmian asked the soothsayer, “Good sir, give me a good fortune.”

“I do not make the future; I only foresee it.”

“Please, then, foresee my future.”

“You shall be yet far fairer — more beautiful — than you are.”

Charmian joked, “He means that I will gain a fair amount of flesh and grow fat. Some men like fat women; they are chubby chasers.”

Iras joked, “No, he means that you shall use cosmetics when you are old.”

“May my wrinkles forbid that! I would rather be wrinkled

than use cosmetics!”

Alexas advised them, “Don’t vex his prescience the soothsayer; be attentive.”

“Hush!” Charmian said.

The soothsayer said to her, “You shall be more loving than beloved.”

“I much prefer to heat my body by drinking alcohol than by loving,” Charmian said.

“Listen to him,” Alexas said.

Charmian said to the soothsayer, “Now predict some excellent future for me! Let me be married to three Kings before noon, and widow all of them. Let me have a child when I am fifty years old to whom King Herod will do homage. Let me marry Octavius Caesar so that I am the equal of my mistress, Queen Cleopatra.”

In a few years, King Herod would order many newborn Jewish boys to be killed in an attempt to murder Jesus of Nazareth.

The soothsayer said, “You shall outlive the lady whom you serve.”

“Oh, excellent!” Charmian said. “I love long life better than figs.”

“You have seen and experienced a fairer former fortune than that which is yet to come.”

“Then it is likely that my children shall not have the names of their fathers because my children will be bastards,” Charmian joked. “Please tell me how many boys and girls I will have.”

“If all of your wishes had a womb, and if all of your wishes

were fertile, you would have a million.”

The soothsayer was able to joke: He was saying that Charmian had wished to have sex a million times.

“Get out, fool!” Charmian said. “I forgive you for being a witch.”

She may have meant that soothsayers, like fools and jesters, have a license to speak freely. Or she may have meant that the soothsayer’s skill in forecasting was so poor that no one could ever believe that he was a witch. Or she may have been pretending to be shocked at the soothsayer’s comment.

Alexas said to her, “You think only your sheets are privy to your private wishes.”

Charmian said to the soothsayer, “Now tell Iras her fortune.”

“We all want to know our fortunes,” Alexas said.

Enobarbus said, “My fortune and most of our fortunes tonight shall be to go to bed drunk.”

Iras showed her palm to the soothsayer and said, “There’s a palm that foretells chastity, if nothing else.”

Charmian joked, “Even as the overflowing Nile River foretells famine.”

An overflowing Nile River actually foretold feast, not famine. The Nile overflowed its banks and irrigated the dry land around it, leading to plentiful crops. Charmian was saying that Iras’ palm was moist — this was thought to be a sign of a lecherous person.

Iras replied, “Ha! You wild bedfellow, you cannot soothsay.”

“If an oily palm is not a fruitful foretelling of a fruitful womb,” Charmian said, “then I cannot scratch my ear.”

Charmian then said to the soothsayer, “Please, tell Iras an ordinary, common, workaday fortune.”

The soothsayer said, “Your fortunes are alike.”

“How are they alike?” Iras said. “Give me some particulars.”

“I have already foretold Charmian’s future,” the soothsayer said. “Your future is the same as hers.”

Iras asked, “Am I not an inch of fortune better than she?”

“Well, if you were an inch of fortune better than I, where would you choose it?” Charmian asked.

“Not in my husband’s nose.”

Iras meant that she would want the extra inch to be in a different spot of her husband’s body.

“May the Heavens amend our worser — bawdier — thoughts!” Charmian said.

She then said, “Alexas — come here.”

She said to the soothsayer, “Tell his fortune, his fortune!”

She added, “Oh, let him marry a woman who cannot go, sweet Isis, I beseech you!”

Isis is the Egyptian goddess of fertility. A woman who cannot go is a woman who cannot orgasm.

Charmian continued, “And let her die, too, and then give him a worse wife! And let a worse wife follow a worse wife, until the worst of all follows him laughing to his grave, after he has been made a cuckold by fifty wives! Good Isis, hear and positively answer this prayer of mine, even though you deny me something of more seriousness, good Isis, I beseech you!”

“Amen,” Iras said. “Dear goddess, hear that prayer of the

people! Just as it is heartbreaking to see a handsome man with an unfaithful wife, so it is a deadly sorrow to behold a foul and ugly knave uncuckolded; therefore, dear Isis, act properly and with decorum, and give him an appropriate fortune!”

“Amen,” Charmian said.

Alexas said, “I see now that if it lay in their hands to make me a cuckold, they would do it, even if they would have to make themselves whores!”

Enobarbus said, “Hush! Here comes Mark Antony.”

Charmian looked up and said, “It is not he; it is the Queen.”

Cleopatra entered the room and asked, “Have you seen my lord, Mark Antony?”

Enobarbus replied, “No, lady.”

“Has he been here?”

Charmian replied, “No, madam.”

“He was disposed to be merry,” Cleopatra said, “but suddenly a Roman thought struck him. He thought seriously about matters in Rome. Enobarbus!”

“Madam?” he replied.

“Seek him, and bring him here,” Cleopatra ordered.

Enobarbus left, and then Cleopatra asked, “Where’s Alexas?”

“Here, at your service,” he replied. “My lord, Mark Antony, is approaching.”

Cleopatra changed her mind about seeing him. Using the royal plural, she said, “We will not look upon him. Go with us.”

Everyone left the room as Mark Antony, a messenger, and some attendants entered it.

The messenger said, “Fulvia, your wife, first came into the battlefield.”

“Was she fighting against Lucius, my brother?” Mark Antony asked.

“Yes,” the messenger replied, “but as soon as that war had ended, the situation at the time made them friends and allies. They joined their forces against Octavius Caesar. He had better success and after winning the first battle drove them out of Italy.”

“Well, what is the worst news you have brought to me?”

“The nature of bad news infects the teller,” the messenger said. “The bearer of bad news is blamed for the bad news he bears.”

“That is true when the bad news is given to a fool or a coward,” Mark Antony said. “Go on. Things that are past are done with me: What’s done is done. This is the way that it is with me: Whoever tells me the truth, although in his tale lies death, I hear him the same way I would if he flattered me.”

The messenger replied, “Quintus Labienus — this is stiff news — has, with his Parthian army, conquered parts of Asia around the Euphrates River.”

Labienus had supported Marcus Brutus and Caius Cassius, who had assassinated Julius Caesar. He had fought for Brutus and Cassius against Mark Antony and Octavius Caesar in the following civil war. After Mark Antony and Octavius Caesar had defeated Brutus and Cassius, Labienus had gone to Parthia, raised troops, and conquered territory in the Middle East.

The messenger continued, “His conquering banner flies from

Syria to Lydia and to Ionia. While —”

The messenger hesitated and Mark Antony said, “While Antony, you would say.”

The messenger said, “Oh, my lord!” He was worried about criticizing Mark Antony, who was a powerful man who could have him whipped. Labienus had accomplished all this while Mark Antony had done nothing except party with Cleopatra in Egypt.

“Speak to me straightforwardly,” Mark Antony said, “and don’t tone down what everyone is saying about me. Call Cleopatra by the names that people in Rome call her. Use the words that Fulvia, my wife, used when she railed against me, and taunt my faults with such full and complete license as both truth and malice have power to utter. Tell me the truth even though you think the truth will make me angry. When our quick minds lie still, then our minds bring forth weeds; but when we tell our faults, then it is as if a field is being plowed in preparation for a future bountiful harvest. When we know our faults, then we can correct them. Fare you well, and leave us for a while.”

“I serve you at your noble pleasure,” the messenger said and then exited.

Mark Antony called for another messenger, “What is the news from Sicyon — the news? Speak!”

Sicyon, a city in the north of the Peloponnesus in Greece, is where Antony had left his wife, Fulvia.

An attendant asked at the door, “The messenger from Sicyon — is he here?”

Another attendant said to Mark Antony, “He is waiting for your orders.”

“Let him appear before me,” Mark Antony said.

He then said to himself, "I must break these strong Egyptian fetters, or lose myself in dotage."

Another messenger entered the room.

Mark Antony asked him, "Who are you?"

The messenger replied, "Fulvia, your wife, is dead."

"Where did she die?"

"In Sicyon," the messenger replied. "The length of her sickness, with what else more serious you need to know, is recounted in this document."

He handed Mark Antony a letter.

"Leave me," Mark Antony ordered.

The messenger exited.

Mark Antony said to himself about his late wife, "There's a great spirit gone! Her death is something I desired. What our contempt often hurls from us, later we often wish it were ours again; what is at present a pleasure becomes with the passage of time the opposite of itself. Now that my wife is gone, I value her — she's good. I shoved her away with my hand, but now that hand would like to pluck her back to me. I must break away from this enchanting Queen of Egypt. Ten thousand harms more than the ills I already know about have come into existence because of my idleness."

He then shouted, "Enobarbus!"

Enobarbus, who had stayed nearby in case he was needed, entered the room and said, "What's your pleasure, sir?"

"I must with haste go from here."

"Why, in such circumstances we kill all our women," Enobarbus said. "We see how deadly an unkindness is to

them. If they must suffer our departure, then death's the word for them."

"I must be gone."

"Under a compelling occasion, let women die; it would be a pity to cast them away for nothing, although if we must choose between women and a great cause, women should be esteemed as nothing. Cleopatra, if she catches only the least rumor of this departure, will die instantly; I have seen her die twenty times for far poorer reasons. I think there is some life-giving spirit in death — it must commit some loving act upon her since she has such an enthusiastic quickness in dying."

Enobarbus was in part punning. One meaning of the phrase "to die" in this society was "to orgasm." He was saying that Cleopatra had orgasms quickly and often and enthusiastically.

Mark Antony said, "She is cunning past man's thought."

"Alas, sir, no," Enobarbus replied. "Her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love; they are not faked. We cannot call her winds and waters mere sighs and tears; they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report. This cannot be cunning in her; if it is, she can make a shower of rain as well as Jupiter, the god who controls thunder and lightning."

"I wish that I had never seen her," Mark Antony said.

"Oh, sir," Enobarbus said, "then you would have left unseen a wonderful piece of work, which not to have been blessed with would have discredited your travel. Travelers are known for bringing back fanciful tales, and many a fanciful tale can be said about Cleopatra."

"Fulvia is dead."

“Sir?”

“Fulvia is dead.”

“Fulvia!”

“Dead.”

“Why, sir, give the gods a thankful sacrifice,” Enobarbus said. “When the deities take the wife of a man from him, they show to the man the tailors of the earth so that they can be comforted. When old garments are worn out, there are members of the tailoring art to make new garments.”

Enobarbus was punning again. “Members” could mean members of the tailoring profession, or it could mean male members, aka penises. Old garments wear out, but members of the tailoring profession make new garments. Wives die, but male members create daughters who grow up to become wives. In this society, tailors had a reputation for bawdiness.

Enobarbus continued, “If there were no more women but Fulvia, then you had indeed a cut, and the case to be lamented.”

More puns. The word “cut” could refer to the cut of castration. If there were no women other than Fulvia, then with Fulvia’s death it would be as if Mark Antony were castrated. The word “case” could refer to a vagina. If there were no women other than Fulvia, then with Fulvia’s death Mark Antony would lament the lack of a case.

Enobarbus continued, “This grief is crowned with consolation; your old smock brings forth a new petticoat. Indeed the tears live in an onion that should water this sorrow. Of course, women other than Fulvia exist in the world, and you can replace an old smock with a new petticoat. If tears must be shed over the loss of Fulvia, the tears might as well come from chopping an onion.”

“The business Fulvia has broached in the state makes necessary my presence in Rome,” Mark Antony said.

Enobarbus replied, “And the business you have broached here cannot be done without you — especially that of Cleopatra’s, which wholly depends on your residence here.”

Again, Enobarbus was punning. Mark Antony had used “broached” with the meaning “started,” but Enobarbus was using it with the meaning “pierced.” Mark Antony had pierced Cleopatra in bed.

“No more light and bawdy answers,” Mark Antony, who well understood the meaning of Enobarbus’ puns, said.

Using the royal plural, Mark Antony said, “Let our officers have notice of what we purpose to do. I shall announce the reason of our quick departure to the Queen and get her permission for us to depart. Not only the death of Fulvia, with other more urgent and important business, strongly urge us to go to Rome, but the letters also of many of our collaborating friends in Rome urge us to return home to Rome. Sextus Pompey, son of the late Pompey the Great, has challenged Octavius Caesar, and Sextus commands the empire of the sea. He controls Sicily, and he has the power to disrupt the importation of grain to Rome and Italy. Our slippery, unreliable, and fickle people, whose love is never given to the people who deserve their love until after the reasons to love those people have passed, begin to give the title of ‘Pompey the Great’ and all of Pompey the Great’s dignities to his son, who, high in name and power, higher than both in blood and spirit and life and energy, presents himself as the greatest soldier. If Sextus Pompey continues the way he is going, he may endanger the whole world.”

Mark Antony then referred to a belief of his unscientific age. People had observed that a horsehair placed in stagnant water would seem to move on its own. They believed that

the horsehair had become a live worm that would grow into a poisonous snake. Today, we know that the horsehair attracts bacteria that then cause the horsehair to move.

He continued, “Much trouble is breeding, which, like a horsehair placed in stagnant water, has life, but has not yet grown into a poisonous serpent. Tell our men that we must quickly leave Egypt.”

“I shall do it,” Enobarbus said, and then he exited.

— 1.3 —

In another room of the palace, Cleopatra, Charmian, Iras, and Alexas were talking.

“Where is Mark Antony?” Cleopatra asked.

“I have not seen him recently,” Charmian said.

“See where he is, who is with him, and what he is doing,” Cleopatra ordered Alexas. “Do not tell him that I sent you. If you find him serious, say I am dancing; if you find him mirthful, tell him that I have suddenly become ill. Do this quickly, and return.”

Alexas exited.

“Madam,” Charmian said to Cleopatra, “it seems to me that if you love Mark Antony dearly, you are not doing what you ought to make him love you.”

“What should I do that I am not doing?” Cleopatra asked.

“In everything give him his way,” Charmian replied. “Cross him in nothing.”

“That is the advice of a fool,” Cleopatra said. “You are teaching me the way to lose him.”

“Don’t provoke him so much,” Charmian said. “I wish that

you would be more patient. Remember: In time we hate that which controls us. But here comes Antony.”

Mark Antony entered the room.

“I am sick and depressed,” Cleopatra said.

“I am sorry to tell you my reason for coming here —” Mark Antony began.

Cleopatra interrupted, “Help me away, dear Charmian; I shall fall. I can’t stand this. My body cannot take it.”

“Now, my dearest Queen —” Mark Antony said.

“Please, stand further away from me,” she replied.

“What’s the matter?”

“I know, by the way you are looking at me, that there’s some good news. What does the married woman — Fulvia, your wife — say? You may go and return to her. I wish that she had never given you permission to come to Egypt! Let her not say it is I who keep you here. I have no power over you; you belong to her.”

“The gods best know —”

“Oh, never has there been a Queen as mightily betrayed as I have been! Yet from the beginning I saw the treasons planted. I knew this day would come.”

“Cleopatra —”

“Why should I think you can be mine and true, even though you in swearing shake the throned gods, when you have been false to Fulvia?” Cleopatra complained.

She was referring to oaths made by Jupiter, King of the gods. When he swore an oath, the abode of the gods shook. Even if Mark Antony were to out-swear Jupiter, his oaths were not

to be believed — so said Cleopatra.

Cleopatra continued, “It is riotous and extravagant madness to be entangled with those mouth-made vows, which break themselves in the swearing! You make vows with your mouth with no intention to keep them — you break them even as they are leaving your mouth!”

“Most sweet Queen —”

“No, please seek to give me no excuse for your leaving me. Just tell me goodbye, and go. When you begged me to be allowed to stay here, that was the time for words. You did not think of going then.”

Using the royal plural, she continued, “Eternity was in our lips and eyes, bliss was in the arch of our eyebrows, none of our body parts was so poor that it was not Heavenly in its origin. Our body parts are Heavenly still, or you, the greatest soldier of the world, have turned into the greatest liar.”

“Please, lady!” Mark Antony said.

“I wish I had your inches,” Cleopatra said. “Then you would learn that there is courage here.”

By “inches,” Cleopatra could have meant the inches of Mark Antony’s height, or the inches of his penis, or both. She was metaphorically referring to masculine courage.

“Listen to me, Queen,” Mark Antony said. “The strong necessity of time commands my services in Rome for a while; but my entire heart will remain here in Egypt with you. Shining swords raised in civil war are besetting Italy. Sextus Pompey approaches the port of Rome. His power is equal to the power of the triumvirs, and when two domestic powers are equal, then quarrels break out over trivial matters.

“People who have been hated, once they have acquired

strength, newly acquire love. The condemned Sextus Pompey, rich in his father's honor, creeps quickly into the hearts of people who have not thrived under the present government. The numbers of these discontents threaten the government. Quietness has led to discontent, which having grown sick of rest, wants to purge itself with any desperate change — these discontents want to exchange peace for war.

“My more particular reason for wanting to go to Rome, and that reason for which you should most grant my going, is the death of Fulvia, my wife.”

“Although age cannot give me freedom from folly, it does give me freedom from childishness,” Cleopatra said. “Can Fulvia be dead?”

“She's dead, my Queen. Look here at this letter, and at your sovereign leisure read about the quarrels she awaked. At the last of the letter, best, you can read about when and where she died.”

Mark Antony's use of the word “best” was deliberately ambiguous. He used it to refer to Cleopatra, whom he regarded as the dearest and best — he thought that in some ways she was better than all other women. But he realized that Cleopatra would regard the news of his wife's death as being the best news in the letter.

“Oh, your love for her has been most false! Where are the sacred vials you should fill with sorrowful water? You should fill vials with your tears of mourning so that they can be placed in your late wife's tomb. Now I see, by how you react to Fulvia's death, how you shall react to my death.”

“Quarrel no more with me,” Mark Antony said, “but be prepared to know the things I intend to do, which I will pursue, or cease to pursue, as you shall tell me. By the fire — the Sun — that dries the mud deposited on the land by the Nile River and makes it ready for planting, I will leave here

and act as your soldier-servant; I will make peace or war, whichever you prefer.”

Pretending to be about to faint, Cleopatra said, “Cut the laces of my clothing, Charmian, so I can breathe. Come; but no, don’t cut the laces. I am quickly ill, and quickly well, depending on whether Antony loves or does not love me.”

Mark Antony said, “My precious Queen, stop this. Look at the true evidence of Antony’s love for you. It has been honorably tested.”

“So Fulvia told me,” Cleopatra said sarcastically. She had not literally talked to Fulvia, but was simply saying that she had learned from Fulvia whether Mark Antony could stay true to one woman.

She continued, “Please, turn aside and weep for her, then bid *adieu* to me, and say the tears you shed are shed for me. Be a good actor now, and play one scene of excellent dissembling. Act as if you have perfect honor.”

Mark Antony replied, “You’ll heat my blood and make me angry. Let me hear no more of this.”

“You can act better than this, but this acting of yours is not bad.”

“Now, I swear by my sword —”

“And small shield,” Cleopatra said.

She said to her servants, “Mark Antony’s acting is improving, but this is not his best performance. Look, please, Charmian, at how this Herculean Roman acts in his performance of anger.”

Mark Antony claimed to be descended from the Greek hero Hercules, who was super-strong, but who also was a buffoon in old comedies. Some plays were about Hercules’ madness

that the goddess Juno, who hated him because his father was her cheating husband, caused.

“I’ll leave you, lady,” Mark Antony said.

“Courteous lord, one word more,” Cleopatra said. “Sir, you and I must part, but that’s not the word I meant. Sir, you and I have loved, but that’s also not the word. I wish I could remember what the word is, but it is obliterated from my memory, and soon I will be obliterated from Antony’s memory.”

He replied, “If I didn’t already know that you are an idle Drama Queen, I would think that you are the personification of idle drama itself.”

“It is sweating labor to bear such drama so near the heart as I, Cleopatra, bear this. The pain of separation from you is like the pain of childbirth. But, sir, forgive me; when my attractive features do not appeal to you, they kill me. Your honor calls you away from Egypt; therefore, be deaf to my unpitied folly. And may all the gods go with you! Be the conquering hero! May a laurel wreath of victory sit upon your sword! And may smooth success be strewn before your feet in the form of rushes!”

“Let us go,” Mark Antony said. “Come. Our separation so abides, and flies, that you, residing here, go yet with me, and I, hence fleeting, here remain with you. Although we will be separated, a part of you goes with me, and a part of me remains here with you. Away!”

He left.

— 1.4 —

In a room of Octavius Caesar’s house, two of the triumvirs — Octavius and Lepidus — were meeting in the presence of some servants. Octavius Caesar was reading a letter.

He said to Lepidus, "Now you may see, Lepidus, and hereafter know, that it is not Caesar's — my — natural vice to hate our great competitor: Mark Antony. From Alexandria this letter brings the latest news. He fishes, drinks, and wastes the lamps of night in revelry and merry-making. He is not more man-like than Cleopatra; nor is the widowed Queen of Ptolemy more womanly than he. He hardly gave audience to my messengers, preferring almost to ignore them. He has barely remembered that he has partners in the other two triumvirs: us. You shall find in this letter a man who is the epitome of all vices that all men follow."

"I cannot think that enough evils exist to darken all of Mark Antony's goodness," Lepidus replied. "The faults in him seem like the spots — the stars — of Heaven, which are made more fiery by night's blackness. In these troubled times, his faults stand out and are noticed. His faults must be hereditary, rather than acquired. His faults must be what he cannot change, rather than what he chooses."

"You are too indulgent and forgiving," Octavius Caesar said. "Let us grant, for the sake of argument, it is not amiss to tumble on the bed of Ptolemy and commit adultery with Cleopatra; to give a Kingdom in exchange for a joke; to sit and take turns drinking with a slave; to reel and stagger in the streets at noon; and to brawl with knaves who smell of sweat. Let us say that this is suitable for him — although his character must be rare indeed if these things cannot blemish it — yet Antony is guilty of other things. He cannot excuse his failings, not when we bear such a heavy weight of work and responsibility because he plays so delightfully and shirks his duty. If at a different time he filled his idle hours with his riotous living, then he would suffer the illnesses of gluttony and the venereal diseases of lechery and those would be enough punishment — no need for a lecture. But he wastes time that he should gain by ceasing his entertainments — we called him to come to Rome because of our positions as

triumvirs. We should chide him as we berate boys, who, although they know better, use their time to pursue immediate pleasure, thereby rebelling against mature judgment.”

Seeing a messenger coming toward them, Lepidus said, “Here’s more news.”

The messenger addressed Octavius Caesar: “Your orders have been carried out; and every hour, most noble Caesar, you will receive news of developments abroad. Sextus Pompey is strong at sea and has many ships, and it appears that those men who have feared but not loved you, Caesar, love him. To the ports these discontented men go, and men say about Pompey that he has been much wronged.”

“I expected no less,” Octavius Caesar said. “Ever since the first government, we have learned that the man in power was wished-for until he achieved power, and the man who loses power, who was not loved when he had power, is loved after he loses power. The common people are like a drifting reed upon the stream. It goes forward and backward, following the varying ebb and flow of the tide the way a page follows the heels of his master. The reed rots while following the movement of the tide, and the general public wastes its approval by frequently changing the person whom it approves.”

The messenger said, “Octavius Caesar, I bring you word that Menecrates and Menas, famous pirates, have taken command of the sea, which serves them, and which they plow and wound with the keels of their ships of every kind. They make many destructive raids on Italy. The people living on the shore turn pale with fear when they think about the pirates, and hotheaded young men revolt and serve them. Each vessel that sails forth is captured as soon as it is seen. The very name of Sextus Pompey causes more destruction than we would have suffered if we had declared war and

fought against him.”

Octavius Caesar addressed the man whom he wished were present: “Antony, leave your lascivious and lecherous orgies and revelries. In the past, you fought an army led by the consuls Hirtius and Pansa. You killed the consuls, but their army defeated your army, and you and your army were forced away from the city of Modena. At that time, famine followed at your heels. Although you enjoyed an upper-class upbringing, you fought the famine — which not even savages could endure — with patient self-control. You drank the urine of horses, and you drank water from a puddle gilded with iridescent scum — water that beasts would not drink. Your palate then condescended to eat the roughest berry on the rudest hedge. Indeed, like the stag, when snow covers the pasture, you ate bark from the trees. It is reported that on the Alps you ate strange flesh that some people preferred to die rather than eat. All this — your honor now cannot live up to your honor then — you bore so like a soldier that your cheeks did not even get thin.”

“It is a pity that Mark Antony is not like that now,” Lepidus said.

“Let his shames quickly drive him to Rome,” Octavius Caesar said. “It is time we two showed ourselves in the battlefield; and to that end we immediately assemble a council of war. Pompey is thriving while we are idle.”

“Tomorrow, Octavius Caesar, I shall be able to inform you correctly which forces by sea and land I am able to assemble to fight this war.”

“Until we meet tomorrow, I will be doing the same thing. Farewell.”

“Farewell, my lord,” Lepidus said. “Whatever you should learn in the meantime of events abroad, please inform me, sir.”

“Don’t doubt that I will,” Octavius Caesar said. “I know that it is my duty.”

— 1.5 —

In Cleopatra’s palace in Alexandria, Cleopatra, Charmian, Iras, and the eunuch Mardian were speaking.

Cleopatra said, “Charmian!”

“Madam?”

Cleopatra yawned from boredom and said, “Give me mandragora — a narcotic — to drink.”

“Why, madam?”

“So that I might sleep out this great gap of time during which my Antony is away.”

“You think about him too much,” Charmian said.

“That is treason!” Cleopatra said.

“Madam, I trust that it is not so.”

Cleopatra called, “Eunuch! Mardian!”

“What’s your Highness’ pleasure?” Mardian asked.

“Not now to hear you sing. I take no pleasure in anything a eunuch has. It is well for you that, having been castrated, your thoughts do not fly forth from Egypt as mine do when I think about Antony. Do you have desires?”

“Yes, gracious madam.”

“Indeed!”

“Not in deed, madam; for I can do nothing but what indeed is chaste, yet I have strong desires, and I think about what Venus did with Mars.”

Venus, goddess of sexual desire, had an affair with Mars, god of war.

Cleopatra said, “Oh, Charmian, where do you think Mark Antony is now? Does he stand, or is he sitting? Or does he walk? Or is he on his horse? Oh, happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!”

Cleopatra was thinking that she would like to bear the weight of Antony and be ridden by him in bed.

“Do splendidly, horse! Do you know who is riding you? He is half-Atlas of this Earth; he and Octavius Caesar rule the Earth the way that the Titan Atlas holds up the sky. He is the supporting arm and protective helmet of men. He’s speaking now, or murmuring, ‘Where’s my serpent of old Nile?’ For that is what he calls me. Now I feed myself with most delicious poison. I am thinking about something I cannot at this moment have.

“Think about me, Antony, who am with Phoebus’ amorous pinches black, and wrinkled deep with time. The Sun-god Phoebus Apollo tans me and darkens my skin the way that pinches cause bruises to darken skin, and as I grow older, I acquire wrinkles.

“Julius Caesar with the broad forehead, when you were here above the ground, I was a morsel — a delightful dish — for a monarch, and great Gnaeus Pompey used to stand and anchor his aspect — that is, stare — at my face until he died while looking at that for which he lived.”

Gnaeus Pompey was one of the sons of Pompey the Great and the older brother of Sextus Pompey.

Cleopatra’s words had an additional sexual meaning. Part of Gnaeus Pompey used to stand up and be anchored in Cleopatra until he “died” — that is, achieved an orgasm.

Returning from Mark Antony, Alexas entered the room.

He said, "Sovereign of Egypt, hail!"

"How much are you unlike Mark Antony!" Cleopatra said. "Yet, because you have come from him, the great medicine has gilded you with its tincture."

The "great medicine" was the philosopher's stone, which was supposed to turn metals of little monetary value into gold and which was supposed to cure disease and prolong life. By associating with Antony, Alexas had acquired a golden tint, according to Cleopatra.

She asked him, "How goes it with my splendid Mark Antony?"

"The last thing he did, dear Queen," Alexas said, "was to kiss — the last of many doubled kisses — this pearl from the orient. His speech sticks in my heart."

"My ear must pluck it from your heart," Cleopatra said.

"'Good friend,' said he, 'say, the firm Roman to the great Queen of Egypt sends this treasure from an oyster. At the Queen's foot, to mend the petty gift, I will add Kingdoms to her opulent throne. Tell her that all the East shall call her mistress.' So he nodded, and soberly did mount a hungry-for-battle steed that neighed so loudly that what I would have spoken was drowned out by the beast."

"Was Antony somber or merry?"

"He was similar to the time of the year between the extremes of hot and cold; he was neither somber nor merry."

"Oh, he has a well-divided disposition! Take notice, good Charmian, it is just like the man, but take notice of him. He was not somber because that would negatively affect the troops who take their mood from his, and for the benefit of

those troops he wishes to shine. He was not merry, which seemed to tell them that he remembered his joy that remained in Egypt. Instead, his mood was in between somber and merry — oh, Heavenly mixture! Whether he is somber or merry, either is becoming to him.”

She then asked Alexas, “Did you meet my messengers?”

“Yes, madam, I met twenty different messengers. Why do you send so many so quickly?”

“Whoever is born on that day I forget to send a letter to Antony shall die a beggar. Only an event that will cause devastation for many future years can make me forget to write Antony.”

She then requested, “Bring me ink and paper, Charmian.”

Then she said, “You are welcome here, my good Alexas.”

Then she asked, “Charmian, did I ever love Julius Caesar the way that I love Mark Antony?”

“Oh, that splendid Julius Caesar!”

“Be choked if you say another such emphatic sentence! Say, instead, the splendid Antony.”

“The valiant Julius Caesar!” Charmian said.

“By Isis, I will give you bloody teeth, if you compare again my man of men with Julius Caesar.”

“By your most gracious pardon, I am singing Julius Caesar’s praises exactly as you used to sing them.”

“I said those things when I was in my salad days, back when I was green in judgment, and cold in blood and sexually immature. But, come, let’s go; get me ink and paper. Antony shall have from me every day a different greeting, or I’ll unpeople Egypt. I will send Antony a letter each day until

Egypt has no more people to carry my letters.”

CHAPTER 2

— 2.1 —

Sextus Pompey was meeting with the famous pirates Menecrates and Menas in a room of his house in Sicily.

Sextus Pompey said, “If the great gods are just, they shall assist the deeds of the justest men.”

Menecrates said, “Know, worthy Pompey, that although the gods may delay aid, that does not necessarily mean that they are denying aid.”

“While we pray to the gods for their aid, the thing that we are praying for is wasting away.”

Menecrates replied, “We, who are ignorant, often pray for things that would harm us. The wise powers deny us these things for our good; and so it is a good thing then that they do not grant our prayers.”

“I shall do well,” Sextus Pompey said. “The people love me, and the sea is mine. My powers are crescent and growing, and my prophetic hope says that my powers will come to the full. Mark Antony in Egypt sits at dinner, and he will make no wars outdoors — all of the ‘wars’ he fights will be in bed. Octavius Caesar gets money where he loses hearts — his high taxes turn people against him. Lepidus flatters both Octavius Caesar and Mark Antony, and he is flattered by both; but he loves neither of them, and neither of them cares for him.”

Menas said, “Octavius Caesar and Lepidus are already engaged in military operations; they rule a mighty strength.”

“From whom have you heard this?” Sextus Pompey asked. “It is false.”

“From Silvius, sir.”

“He is dreaming. I know Octavius Caesar and Lepidus are in Rome together, hoping for Antony. But may all the charms of love, spicy Cleopatra, soften your pale lips! Let witchcraft join with beauty, and let lust join with both! Tie up Mark Antony the libertine in a field of feasts, keep his brain befuddled with alcoholic fumes; may Epicurean cooks sharpen with unsatiating sauce his appetite, so that sleep and feeding may make him forget his honor as if he had drunk from Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in the Underworld!”

Varrius entered the room.

“How are you, Varrius?” Sextus Pompey asked.

“This news that I shall deliver is most certainly true. Mark Antony is expected to be in Rome at any hour. He may be there now because the time since he left Egypt has been long enough for him to make a longer journey.”

“I would have been happy to hear less important news,” Sextus Pompey replied.

He then said, “Menas, I did not think that this amorous surfeiter would have put on his helmet for such a petty war. His military expertise is twice that of the other two, but let us raise our opinion of ourselves because our actions have plucked the never-lust-wearied Mark Antony from the lap of the widowed Queen of Egypt.”

Menas said, “I cannot expect that Octavius Caesar and Mark Antony shall get on well. Antony’s late wife committed offences against Caesar, and Antony’s brother warred upon Caesar, although, I think, Antony did not encourage him to do so.”

“I don’t know, Menas, how lesser enmities may give way to greater,” Sextus Pompey said. “Were it not that we are opposed to and stand up against them all, it is obvious that they would fight among themselves. They have reasons

enough to draw their swords against each other. But how their fear of us may cement and mend their divisions and bind up their petty differences, we do not yet know. Be it as our gods will have it! Now we must fight with our strongest forces to save our lives. Come, Menas.”

— 2.2 —

Enobarbus talked with Lepidus in a room of Lepidus’ house in Rome.

Lepidus, who wanted peace between Octavius Caesar and Mark Antony, said, “Good Enobarbus, it will be a worthy deed and shall become you well if you entreat your captain, Mark Antony, to use soft and gentle speech when he meets with Octavius Caesar.”

“I shall entreat him to answer like himself,” Enobarbus replied. “If Octavius Caesar angers him, let Antony, the taller man, look over Caesar’s head and speak as loudly as Mars, god of war. By Jupiter, were I the wearer of Mark Antony’s beard, I would not shave it today. I would have it available to be pulled as an act of insult by Octavius Caesar so that I could fight him.”

“This is not a time for private and personal quarrels.”

“Every time serves for the matter that is then born in it,” Enobarbus said. “Every time is suitable for whatever matters arise during that time.”

Lepidus said, “Small matters must be set aside for big matters.”

“Not if the small come first,” Enobarbus replied.

“Your speech is passionate, but please stir no embers up. Here comes the noble Antony.”

Mark Antony and Ventidius, engaged in conversation,

entered the room.

Enobarbus said, "And over there is Octavius Caesar."

Caesar and his colleagues Maecenas and Agrippa entered the room.

Mark Antony said, "If we settle our disagreements and come to suitable arrangements here, then we can campaign in Parthia. Look, Ventidius."

Octavius Caesar was engaged in conversation: "I do not know, Maecenas; ask Agrippa."

Lepidus, the peacemaker, said, "Noble friends, that which combined us and made us allies was most great and important, and let not a less important action rend us. What's amiss, let's hope that it can be gently heard. When we debate our trivial differences loudly, we commit murder in trying to heal wounds. So then, noble partners, I am asking you earnestly to talk about the sourest points while using the sweetest terms, and I am asking you not to allow bad temper to add to the problems you will talk about."

"You have spoken well," Mark Antony said to Lepidus. "If we were in front of our armies, and ready to fight, I would seek to be reconciled with Octavius Caesar."

Caesar greeted Antony: "Welcome to Rome."

"Thank you."

"Sit," Octavius Caesar said.

"Sit, sir."

"Well, then."

They sat.

"I have learned," Mark Antony said, "that you are taking

things ill that are not ill, or if they are, they do not concern you.”

“I must be laughed at,” Caesar replied, “if, either for nothing or for something unimportant, I should say that I am most offended by you out of everyone in the world. I would be even more of a fool if I should disparage you when I have no reason even to speak about you.”

“My being in Egypt, Octavius Caesar, what was that to you?” Mark Antony asked.

“No more than my residing here at Rome might be to you in Egypt; yet, if while you were there, you plotted against my state, your being in Egypt might be my concern.”

“What do you mean by plotted against your state?”

“You will understand what I mean when I tell you what befell me here. Your wife and brother made wars against me, and their wars were on your account; you were the reason for the wars.”

“You are mistaken,” Mark Antony said. “My brother never used my name to justify his war against you. I made inquiries into this, and I have acquired knowledge from some trustworthy sources who drew their swords with you and fought for you. Did my brother not rather flout my authority along with yours, and fight the wars against my wishes? After all, you and I have the same goals and wishes. I have written letters about this to you; previously, my letters satisfied you. If you want to create a quarrel out of bits and pieces, instead of addressing a more serious concern, you must not create a quarrel out of this.”

“You praise yourself by laying defects of judgment on me, but you are making your excuses out of bits and pieces.”

“That is not so,” Mark Antony said. “I know you could not

fail to understand — I am certain of it — this necessary thought: I, your partner in the cause against which my brother fought, could not with grateful eyes look favorably upon those wars that threatened my own peace. As for my wife, I wish you had her spirit in a wife of your own. You rule a third of the world, and you control it easily with a light hand, but you could not control such a wife.”

Enobarbus said, “I wish that we all had such wives, so that the men might go to wars with the women!”

“My wife was very uncontrollable,” Mark Antony said. “The disturbances were caused by her own impatience, but they did not lack some political shrewdness. Grieving, I grant that she caused you too much disquiet. But you must admit I could not stop her.”

Octavius Caesar said, “I wrote to you while you were riotously living in Alexandria; you put my letters in your pocket without reading them, and with taunts you forced my messenger to leave your presence.”

“Sir, your messenger came into my presence before I gave orders to have him admitted. At that time, I had newly feasted three Kings, and I was not the man that I was in the morning. After the feasting I was drunk, while that morning I was sober. The next day I told him why I had done what I had done, which was as much as to have asked him to pardon me. Let your messenger not be a reason for us to quarrel; if we must quarrel, let’s leave him out of it.”

Octavius Caesar now began to bring up his most important reason to be angry with Mark Antony: “You have broken the article of your oath; that is something you shall never have tongue to charge me with. When I make an oath, I keep it.”

“Go easy, Caesar!” Lepidus said.

“No, Lepidus, let him speak,” Mark Antony said. “The honor

is sacred that he talks about now — he supposes that I lack honor. But, go on, Caesar; explain the article of my oath.”

“To lend me soldiers and aid when I required them, both of which you denied me.”

“I neglected to send them to you, rather than denied them to you,” Mark Antony said. “That happened when poisoned hours had so incapacitated me that I did not even know who I was or what I was doing.”

Caesar thought, *I can guess that the poisoned hours were blind-drunk hours that led to blackouts and incapacitating hangovers.*

Mark Antony continued, “As much as I can, I’ll play the penitent to you, but my honesty in playing the penitent shall not make poor my greatness, and my authority shall not be used without honesty.”

Caesar thought, *This is an half-assed apology, but it is an admission that he did not send the soldiers and aid that he had sworn to send to me.*

Mark Antony continued, “The truth is that Fulvia, to get me out of Egypt, made wars here. I am indirectly the cause of those wars, and for that I so far ask your pardon as befits my honor to stoop in such a case.”

Caesar thought, *This is an half-assed apology, but it is an apology.*

Lepidus said, “Mark Antony has spoken nobly.”

Maecenas said, “If it might please both of you to press no further the grievances between you, then you might remember that this present crisis requires that you two work together.”

“Worthily spoken, Maecenas,” Lepidus said.

Enobarbus said, “Or, if you borrow one another’s friendship for the present but not for the future, you may, when you hear no more words about Sextus Pompey, return it again. You shall have time to wrangle with each other when you have nothing else to do. Pretend to be friends until Pompey is defeated, and then return to hating each other.”

“You are only a soldier and not a statesman: Speak no more,” Mark Antony ordered.

“I had almost forgotten that truth should be silent,” Enobarbus replied.

“You wrong this assembly of distinguished people; therefore, speak no more,” Mark Antony said.

“So be it,” Enobarbus said. “I will be a stone that can think but will not speak.”

“I do not much dislike the content, but I do dislike the manner of Enobarbus’ speech,” Octavius Caesar said, “for it cannot be Mark Antony and I shall remain friends — our characters differ as much as do our actions. Yet if I knew what barrel-hoop should hold us staunchly together, I would pursue it from one edge to the other edge of the world.”

Agrippa, one of Octavius Caesar’s closest associates, said, “Give me permission to speak, Caesar —”

“Speak, Agrippa.”

“You have a sister whom your mother gave birth to. She is the much-admired Octavia,” Agrippa said. “And great Mark Antony is a widower now that his wife, Fulvia, is dead.”

“Don’t say that Mark Antony is a widower,” Octavius Caesar said. “If Cleopatra — who most likely considers Antony to be her husband — heard you, she would deservedly reprove your rashness in speaking.”

“I am not married, Caesar,” Mark Antony said, denying that he was married to Cleopatra. “Let me hear what Agrippa has to say.”

“Here is a way for you two triumvirs to be in perpetual amity, to be brothers, and to join your hearts together with an unslipping knot. Let Antony take Octavia to be his wife. Her beauty claims no worse a husband than the best of men; her virtue and general graces reveal qualities that no other woman possesses. With this marriage, all small suspicions, which now seem great, and all great fears, which now carry with them dangers, would then be nothing. Truths would be then regarded as tales, whereas now half-tales are regarded as truths: Unpleasant facts would then be regarded as tall tales, whereas now malicious gossip is regarded as truths. She would love both of you, and this love would make each of you love the other as well as love her. Please pardon what I have said because it is an idea that I have thought seriously about and is not a sudden and impulsive idea. My duty has caused me to think about a solution to your enmity.”

Mark Antony asked, “What do you say about this, Caesar?”

Octavius Caesar replied, “Caesar will not speak until he hears what Antony thinks about what has already been spoken.”

Mark Antony asked him, “If I would say, ‘Agrippa, I agree to marry Octavia,’ would Agrippa have the power to bring about the marriage?”

Octavius Caesar replied, “He would have the power of Caesar, and of Caesar’s power and influence over Octavia.”

Mark Antony said, “The purpose of the marriage is good and fair, and I hope that I may never dream of putting an impediment in the marriage’s path.”

He said to Octavius Caesar, “Let me have thy hand. Promote

this marriage — this act of grace — and from this hour may the hearts of brothers govern our friendship for each other and positively affect our great plans!”

“There is my hand,” Octavius Caesar said.

They shook hands.

He continued, “I bequeath to you a sister whom no brother ever loved so dearly as I love her. May she live to join our Kingdoms and our hearts; and may our friendship for each other never again desert us!”

Octavius Caesar was still suspicious of Mark Antony. In this society, people used the words “thee,” “thou,” and “thy” among intimates. The words “you” and “your” were more formal. Mark Antony had used the intimate “thy” when talking to Caesar, but Caesar had used the formal “you” when talking to Mark Antony.

Lepidus said, “Good! Amen!”

Mark Antony said, “I did not think to draw my sword against Sextus Pompey because he has done unusually great favors for me recently.”

When Mark Antony’s mother had fled from Italy, Pompey had been a good and considerate host to her in Sicily.

Mark Antony said, “I must thank Sextus Pompey, lest I acquire a reputation for not acknowledging good deeds; once that is done, I can defy him.”

Lepidus pointed out that there was no time for that: “Time calls upon us. We must seek and fight Pompey immediately, or else he will seek and fight us.”

“Where is he?” Mark Antony asked.

“Near the mountain Misena in the Bay of Naples,” Octavius Caesar replied.

“What is his strength by land?”

“Great and increasing,” Caesar said, “but he is the absolute master of the sea.”

“So it is reported,” Mark Antony said. “I wish that we had spoken together earlier! We could have gotten a better start on opposing him and perhaps prevented him from gaining so much power! Now we must make haste. Still, before we put ourselves in arms, we need to dispatch the business — the marriage — we have talked about.”

“Very gladly,” Octavius Caesar said. “I invite you to visit and see my sister. Immediately, I will lead you there.”

“Let us, Lepidus, not lack your company,” Mark Antony said.

“Noble Antony, not even sickness would stop me from going with you.”

Everyone left except for Enobarbus and Caesar’s friends Maecenas and Agrippa. These men were able to speak to each other less formally than the triumvirs had.

“Welcome from Egypt, sir,” Maecenas said to Enobarbus.

“You are half the heart of Caesar, worthy Maecenas!” Enobarbus said, implying that Agrippa — the second of Caesar’s two great friends, was the other half.

He added, “My honorable friend, Agrippa!”

“Enobarbus, you are a good man!” Agrippa said.

“We have reason to be glad that the problems between Octavius Caesar and Mark Antony are so well resolved,” Maecenas said, adding, “You had a good time in Egypt.”

“Yes, sir,” Enobarbus said. “We shamed the day by sleeping through it, and we made the night light with drinking. We lit

lamps to light the night, and the alcohol we drank at night made us light-headed.”

Maecenas said, “I have heard that eight wild boars were roasted whole for just one breakfast, and only twelve persons were there. Is this true?”

“This was but as a fly in comparison with an eagle,” Enobarbus said. “We had much more monstrous feasts, which worthily deserve to be noted.”

“Cleopatra is a very remarkable lady, if the reports about her are true.”

“When she first met Mark Antony, she pursed up — pocketed — his heart, upon the river of Cydnus,” Enobarbus said.

His words could have had another meaning: When Cleopatra first met Mark Antony on the Cydnus River, she put his “heart” in her “pocket.”

“At the Cydnus River she appeared indeed,” Agrippa said, “or the person who told me that invented interesting lies about her.”

“Let me tell you about that,” Enobarbus said. “The barge that Cleopatra sat in was like a polished throne: It seemed to burn on the water because of the reflections of the barge in the water. The poop deck was decorated with sheets of beaten gold. The sails were purple, and they were so perfumed that the winds were lovesick with them. The oars were made of silver, and they stroked the water in rhythm to the tune of flutes, and they made the water that they beat follow faster, as if the water were amorous of their strokes.

“As for Cleopatra’s own person, it beggared all description. She lay in her pavilion, which was made of a rich fabric that contained threads of gold. Imagine a work of art depicting

Venus, goddess of beauty. Imagine further that the artist's depiction surpasses the real goddess of beauty. Cleopatra was more beautiful than that work of art.

“On each side of her stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids, with different-colored fans, whose wind seemed to make glow the delicate cheeks that they cooled, and undid what they had done. The wind from the fans seemed to heat up her cheeks as they cooled her cheeks.”

“How excellent for Antony!” Agrippa said.

“Cleopatra's gentlewomen, like the sea-nymphs called the Nereides, like so many mermaids, tended her in the bows and took care of the tackle and ropes, and the knots they made in the ropes were ornaments. At the helm a gentlewoman who resembled a mermaid steered: The silken tackle swelled with the touches of those flower-soft hands that efficiently performed their duty. From the barge a strange invisible perfume hit the senses of the adjacent riverbanks. The city cast her people out so that they could see her; and Antony, enthroned in the marketplace, sat alone, whistling to the air — air that, except that it would cause a vacuum, would have gone to gaze upon Cleopatra, too, and made a gap in nature.”

“Cleopatra is an extraordinary Egyptian!” Agrippa said.

“Upon her landing, Antony sent to her and invited her to supper,” Enobarbus continued. “She replied that it would be better if he became her guest, and she invited him to supper. Our courteous Antony, who has never said the word ‘no’ to a woman, after having his hair arranged ten times, went to the feast, and for his ‘ordinary’ meal pays his heart for what only his eyes eat.”

“She is a royal wench!” Agrippa said. “She made great Julius Caesar turn his sword into a plowshare and go to bed. He plowed her, and she bore him a crop: She gave birth to Caesarion, his son.”

Enobarbus said, “I saw her once hop forty paces through the public street; having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted. She made what should have been a defect a perfection; her lack of breath spoke for her.”

“Now Antony must leave her utterly,” Maecenas said.

“Never; he will not,” Enobarbus said. “Age cannot wither her, nor custom make stale her infinite variety: other women cloy — sicken with excessive sweetness — the appetites they feed, but she makes hungry where she most satisfies because the vilest things seem becoming in her — the holy priests bless her when she is lecherous.”

Maecenas said, “If beauty, wisdom, and modesty can settle the restless heart of Antony, Octavia will be a blessed prize to him.”

“Let us go,” Agrippa said. “Good Enobarbus, make yourself my guest while you abide here.”

“Sir, I humbly thank you,” Enobarbus replied.

— 2.3 —

Standing in a room in Octavius Caesar’s house were Mark Antony and Octavius Caesar; Octavia was standing in between them. Some attendants were also present.

Mark Antony said to Octavia, “The world and my great position will sometimes separate me from your bosom.”

“All the time that we are separated, I will bow my knees before the gods and pray to them for you.”

“Good night, sir,” Mark Antony said to Octavius Caesar.

He added, “My Octavia, don’t believe what the world reports about my blemishes. I have not kept to the straight and narrow road, but in the future I shall do so. I shall keep to the straight and narrow road as if I had the benefits of a

carpenter's square and ruler. Good night, dear lady."

He said again, "Good night, sir."

Octavius Caesar said, "Good night."

Octavius Caesar and Octavia left the room, and a soothsayer entered it.

Mark Antony said to the soothsayer, "I understand that you wish you were in Egypt?"

"I wish that I had never left Egypt and that you had never come to Egypt!"

"If you can, tell me your reason."

"I feel it intuitively, but I do not have the words to describe it; however, you should hurry back to Egypt."

"Tell me," Mark Antony said, "whose fortunes shall rise higher: Octavius Caesar's or mine?"

"Caesar's," the soothsayer said. "Therefore, Antony, do not stay by his side. Your guardian spirit — the spirit that looks after you — is noble, very courageous, and unmatched, while Caesar's is not; however, when near Caesar, your guardian angel becomes afraid, as if it were overpowered. Therefore, keep space between yourself and Caesar."

"Speak about this no more."

"I will speak about it to none but you; I will say no more, except when I speak to you. If you play with Caesar at any game, you are sure to lose. Because of his natural luck, he beats you even when the odds are against him. Your luster diminishes when he shines nearby you. I say again, your guardian spirit is entirely afraid to govern you while you are near Caesar, but when Caesar is away from you, your guardian spirit is noble."

“Go now,” Mark Antony said. “Say to Ventidius that I want to speak to him.”

The soothsayer departed.

“Ventidius shall go to Parthia,” Mark Antony said. “Whether the soothsayer has occult knowledge or just luck, he is speaking the truth. Even the dice obey Octavius Caesar, and in our sports and entertainments my better ability comes in second to his luck. If we draw lots, Caesar wins. His cocks always win the battle against mine, even when the odds favor my cocks 100 percent to none. His little fighting birds always beat mine in the fighting ring, although the odds are in my favor.

“I will go to Egypt. Although I am making this marriage to Octavia to make peace with Octavius Caesar, my pleasure lies with Cleopatra in the East.”

Ventidius entered the room.

Mark Antony said, “Come, Ventidius, you must go to Parthia. Your commission to lead an army there is ready. Follow me, and receive it.”

— 2.4 —

In Rome, Lepidus, Maecenas, and Agrippa were speaking about traveling to meet with and fight — if no peace treaty could be made — Sextus Pompey.

Lepidus said to Maecenas and Agrippa, “Trouble yourselves no further. Please, encourage your generals to make haste.”

“Sir, Mark Antony will kiss Octavia, and then we’ll leave,” Agrippa said.

“Until I shall see you in your soldier’s clothing, which will become you both, farewell,” Lepidus said.

Maecenas said, “I calculate that we will be at Mount Misena

in the Bay of Naples before you get there.”

“Your road is shorter,” Lepidus said. “My plan is to take a longer road. You will reach Mount Misena two days before I do.”

“Sir, may you have good success!” Maecenas and Agrippa said.

“Farewell,” Lepidus replied.

— 2.5 —

In a room of Cleopatra’s palace in Alexandria, Egypt, Cleopatra, Charmian, Iras, and Alexas were speaking. Some attendants were also present.

Cleopatra, who was moody because she was thinking of the absent Mark Antony, ordered, “Give me some music; music is the moody food of us who engage in love.”

The attendants called for music.

Mardian the eunuch entered the room. As a eunuch who had been trained to sing, he had a high but strong voice.

“No, no music,” Cleopatra said. “Let’s play billiards. Come, Charmian.”

“My arm is sore,” Charmian said. “You had better play with Mardian.”

“A woman can play with a eunuch as well as she can play with a woman,” Cleopatra replied.

She asked Mardian, “Come, you’ll play with me, sir?”

“As well as I can, madam.”

Both Cleopatra and Mardian were giving the word “play” a sexual meaning.

Cleopatra said, “And when good will is shown, though it comes too short, the actor may plead pardon.”

Again, some words had sexual meanings. “Will” included the meaning “sexual desire.” “Come” included the meaning “orgasm.” “Short” included a reference to the size of Mardian’s penis. He had been castrated and lost his testicles. He may also have been emasculated and lost his penis.

Cleopatra said, “I’ll not play billiards now. Give me my fishing rod; we’ll go to the river. There, while music plays in the distance for me, I will catch tawny-finned fishes; my bent hook shall pierce their slimy jaws; and, as I draw them up, I’ll think each of them is an Antony, and say, ‘Ah, ha! you’re caught.’”

Charmian said, “It was funny when you and Antony wagered over who could catch the most fish. You sent a diver into the water to attach a dead, dried, salted fish to Antony’s hook, which he fervently drew up.”

“That was a funny and good time — one of many we had. I would laugh at him until he lost his patience, and that night I would laugh with him until he regained his patience, and the next morning, before it had reached nine o’clock, I would drink with him until he went to his bed, and then I would put my clothing on him, while I wore the sword he used at the Battle of Philippi where he defeated Brutus and Cassius.”

A messenger entered the room.

“I see that you have come from Italy,” Cleopatra said to him. “Stuff your fruitful tidings in my ears that for a long time have been barren of news.”

“Madam, madam —” the messenger began.

Sensing that the messenger had bad news for her, Cleopatra interrupted, “— Antony is dead! If you say so, villain, you

will kill your mistress, but you will receive gold if you tell me that he is well and free, and here you will be able to kiss my bluest veins — a hand that Kings have kissed, and have trembled while kissing.”

“First, madam, he is well,” the messenger said.

“Why, there’s more gold for you,” Cleopatra said, “but, sirrah, note that we are accustomed to say that the dead are well. If that is what you mean, the gold I give you I will melt and pour down your ill-uttering throat.”

“Good madam, listen to me,” the messenger replied.

“Well, go on, I will listen,” Cleopatra said. “But there’s no goodness in your face. If you are going to tell me that Antony is free and healthy — you have an oddly sour face to trumpet such good tidings! And if Antony is not well, you should come like a Fury crowned with snakes, not like a normal man.”

“Will it please you to listen to me?” the messenger asked.

“I have a mind to strike you before you speak,” Cleopatra replied. “Yet if you say that Antony lives, is well, and is either friends with Caesar or not captive to him, I’ll set you in a shower of gold, and rain rich pearls upon you.”

“Madam, he’s well.”

“Well said.”

“And friends with Caesar.”

“You are an honest man.”

“Caesar and he are greater friends than ever.”

“I will make you a rich man.”

“But yet, madam —” the messenger said.

Cleopatra said, “I do not like ‘But yet.’ It takes away from all the good things I previously heard. Damn ‘But yet’! ‘But yet’ is like a jailer who brings forth some monstrous malefactor. Please, friend, pour into my ear all the information you have, the good and bad together: He’s friends with Caesar, he is in a state of health, you say; and you say that he is free.”

“Free, madam! No. I made no such report. He’s bound unto Octavia.”

“For what good turn?”

“For the best turn in the bed.”

The messenger had used the word “bound” to mean “married,” but Cleopatra understood the word to mean “indebted.”

“I am pale, Charmian,” Cleopatra said.

The messenger said, “Madam, he’s married to Octavia, the sister of Octavius Caesar.”

“May you contract the most infectious pestilential disease!”

She hit the messenger and knocked him to the floor.

“Good madam, control yourself,” the messenger said.

“What did you say to me!” Cleopatra shouted. “Get out of here!”

She hit him again and said, “You are a horrible villain! Get out, or I’ll kick your eyes like balls before me; I’ll pull out all your hair.”

She grabbed his hair and dragged him on the floor while saying, “You shall be whipped with wire, and stewed in a salty brine. Your wounds shall sting in an acidic brine used for pickling.”

“Gracious madam,” the messenger said, “I who am bringing you the news did not make the match between Antony and Octavia.”

“If you say that Antony and Octavia are not married, I will give you a province and make your fortune. The blow that I have already given to you shall make up for your moving me to anger, and I will reward you with whatever gift in addition thy modesty can beg.”

“He’s married, madam,” the messenger said, telling her the truth rather than what she wanted to hear.

“Rogue, you have lived too long,” Cleopatra said as she drew a knife.

“I’ll run away,” the messenger said, looking at the knife. “What do you mean by this, madam? I have done nothing wrong.”

He ran from the room and Cleopatra’s presence.

“Good madam, keep control of yourself,” Charmian said. “The man is innocent.”

“Some innocents do not escape the thunderbolt,” Cleopatra said. “Let Egypt melt into the Nile River! Let kindly creatures all turn into serpents! Call the slave back here again. Although I am mad, I will not bite him. Call him back here.”

“He is afraid to come back,” Charmian said.

“I will not hurt him,” Cleopatra said.

Charmian exited the room.

Cleopatra looked at her hands and said, “These hands lack nobility because they strike at a man who is lower in status than I am, especially since I myself am the cause of my being so upset. If I did not love Antony so much, I would not be so

upset.”

Charmian and the messenger came back into the room.

Cleopatra said to the messenger, “Come here, sir. Although it is honest to do so, it is never good to bring bad news. You should give a host of tongues to a gracious message; but let ill tidings tell themselves to the person whom the bad tidings hurt.”

“I have done my duty,” the messenger replied.

“Is he married?” Cleopatra asked. “I cannot hate you worse than I already do, if you again say, ‘Yes.’”

“He’s married, madam,” the messenger said about Mark Antony.

“May the gods damn you! Do you still say that Antony is married?”

“Should I lie, madam?”

“Oh, I wish you did lie even if half of my Egypt were submerged and made a cistern for scaly snakes! Go, and leave here. Even if you had the face of the very handsome Narcissus, to me you would appear to be very ugly. Is Antony married?”

“I crave your Highness’ pardon,” the messenger said.

“Is he married?”

“Take no offense against a person who does not wish to offend you,” the messenger said. “To punish me for what you make me do seems very unfair. Antony is married to Octavia.”

“It’s a shame that Antony’s fault should make a knave of you,” Cleopatra said. “You did not commit the act that you are sure that Antony committed. Get out of here. The

‘merchandise’ that you have brought from Rome is all too expensive for me. May you be unable to sell it, and in this way may you go bankrupt.”

The messenger exited.

Charmian said to Cleopatra, “Your good Highness, have patience.”

“In praising Mark Antony, I have dispraised Julius Caesar,” Cleopatra said.

“Many times, madam.”

“I have paid the price for it now,” Cleopatra said. “Lead me from hence. I am ready to faint. Oh, Iras! Charmian! It does not matter.”

She ordered, “Go to the messenger, good Alexas. Have him report on the face and figure of Octavia, how old she is, and her personality and character. Don’t let him leave out the color of her hair. Come quickly to me and tell me what he says.”

Alexas exited.

“Let Antony go out of my life forever — no, let him not go forever. Charmian, although Antony is painted one way like a Gorgon with snakes for hair, painted the other way he is like Mars, the god of war.”

She ordered Mardian the eunuch, “Go and tell Alexas to bring me word of how tall Octavia is.”

She added, “Pity me, Charmian, but do not speak to me. Lead me to my chamber.”

— 2.6 —

In a house near Mount Misena in the Bay of Naples, Sextus Pompey and Menas met with Octavius Caesar, Mark

Antony, Lepidus, Enobarbus, and Maecenas. Soldiers on both sides were present.

Pompey said, "I have your hostages, and you have mine, and we shall talk before we fight."

As was customary, the two sides had exchanged important hostages before meeting. After the meeting, both sides would release their hostages at the same time. The hostages ensured the safety of the people in the meeting. Should a person at the meeting be assassinated, the hostages held by that person's side could be killed in retaliation.

Octavius Caesar said, "It is very fitting that first we come to words before we come to blows. Therefore, we have earlier sent to you our written proposal for peace between us. If you have considered our written proposal, let us know if it will restrain your discontented sword. If it will, then you can carry back to Sicily many brave youths who otherwise must perish here."

Sextus Pompey replied, "The three of you alone are the senators who rule this great world, and you three alone are the chief agents for the gods."

One reason for Pompey to oppose the triumvirs was that so much power was concentrated in their hands. Rome had a Senate, but much of the power that used to belong to the Senate now belonged to the triumvirs.

Sextus Pompey continued, "I do not know why my father, Pompey the Great, should lack revengers, since he has a son and friends; after all Julius Caesar, who at Philippi haunted the good Marcus Brutus, saw you there laboring to avenge his death."

Brutus and Cassius, among other Romans, had assassinated Julius Caesar because they believed that he wanted to be crowned King of the Romans. At the Battle of Philippi, the

armies of Octavius Caesar and Mark Antony had defeated the armies of Marcus Brutus and Caius Cassius, both of whom committed suicide.

Sextus Pompey's father, Pompey the Great, fought and lost a war to Julius Caesar. Seeking refuge in Egypt, Pompey the Great was assassinated.

Sextus Pompey continued, "What was it that moved pale-faced Caius Cassius to conspire against Julius Caesar; and what made the all-honored, honest Roman Marcus Brutus, with other armed men, who were the courtiers of beautiful freedom, to drench the Capitol with the blood of Julius Caesar, but that they would have one man stay a man and not become a King? And that is what has made me rig my navy, at whose burden the angered ocean foams. With my navy I have intended to scourge the ingratitude that spiteful Rome cast on my noble father."

Pompey was becoming emotionally overwrought, so Octavius Caesar told him, "Take your time."

"You can't make us afraid, Pompey, with your sails," Mark Antony said. "We'll fight against you at sea; on land, you know how much we outnumber you."

Sextus Pompey replied, "On land, you have played funny games with numbers as you did when you bought my father's house for a set sum but did not pay for it. But, since the cuckoo builds not for himself, remain in my father's house as long as you can."

The cuckoo does not build a nest in which to lay its eggs, preferring to lay its eggs in the nests of other birds. Sextus' words to Mark Antony contained a veiled threat: Antony could remain in Sextus' father's house until Sextus forced him to leave.

Lepidus said, "Please tell us — for what you are talking

about now is off the subject we should be talking about — how you take the offer we have sent you.”

“That’s the point we should be talking about,” Octavius Caesar said.

“Don’t think that we are begging you for peace,” Mark Antony said, “but do consider the benefits that you will receive if you make peace with us and accept our proposal.”

Octavius Caesar added, “And think about what may follow, if you were to try to get a larger fortune.”

One way for Sextus Pompey to try to get a larger fortune than what was offered to him would be to fight the armies of the triumvirs, but of course he might lose. Another possibility for a larger fortune would be to join forces with the triumvirs. He would get now what was promised to him and in the future he might get more.

Sextus Pompey said, “You have offered to give me the islands of Sicily and Sardinia; and in return I must rid all the sea of pirates and send measures of wheat to Rome. If I agree to this, then we can part with the edges of our swords unhacked and with our shields undented.”

The triumvirs replied, “That’s our offer.”

“Know, then,” Pompey said, “that I came before you here as a man prepared to take this offer, but Mark Antony made me somewhat angry.”

He then explained a reason why he was angry at Antony.

Speaking to Mark Antony, he said, “Although I lose praise of my good deed by telling you about it, you should know that when Octavius Caesar and your brother were at war, your mother came to Sicily and did find her welcome by me friendly.”

“I have heard it, Pompey,” Mark Antony said, “and I am well prepared to give you the liberal thanks that I owe you.”

“Let me have your hand,” Pompey said.

They shook hands.

Pompey then said to Antony, “I did not think, sir, to have met you here.”

“The beds in the East are soft,” Antony said, “and I give thanks to you, who made me return to Rome sooner than I intended, because I have gained by it.”

Octavius Caesar said to Sextus Pompey, “Since I saw you last, you have changed.”

“Well, I don’t know what lines harsh fortune has cast upon my face, but I never let harsh fortune enter my heart and take away my courage.”

“This meeting has been fruitful,” Lepidus said. “We are well met here.”

“I hope so, Lepidus,” Sextus Pompey said. “Thus we are agreed. Now I want our agreement to be written and sealed among us.”

“That’s the next thing to do,” Octavius Caesar said.

“We’ll feast each other before we part, and let’s draw lots to see who shall host the first feast.”

“I will host the first feast, Sextus Pompey,” Mark Antony said.

“No, Antony, we will draw lots,” Sextus Pompey said, “but whether you host the first or the last feast, your fine Egyptian cookery shall receive fame. I have heard that Julius Caesar grew fat with feasting in Egypt.”

Julius Caesar had had an affair with Cleopatra — something that Mark Antony was touchy about.

A little angrily, Antony replied, “You have heard much.”

“I don’t mean anything negative,” Pompey said. “I have fair meanings, sir.”

“And fair words to them,” Mark Antony replied.

Antony may have been sarcastic. In using the phrase “fair words,” he may have been thinking about this proverb: “Fair words make me look to my purse.”

Pompey said, “Then so much have I heard. And I have heard that Apollodorus carried —”

Enobarbus interrupted, “— say no more about that, but yes, it is true.”

“What is true?” Sextus Pompey said.

“Apollodorus carried a certain Queen to Julius Caesar in a mattress,” Enobarbus said.

Enobarbus had interrupted because he knew that this was a touchy subject for Mark Antony. Cleopatra had started her affair with Julius Caesar after her loyal follower Apollodorus had smuggled her, wrapped in bedding, into Julius Caesar’s presence. Much later, she started her affair with Mark Antony. Enobarbus, however, was plainspoken, and so he had acknowledged the truth of what Pompey had said.

“I recognize you now,” Sextus Pompey said to Enobarbus. “How are you, soldier?”

“I am well, and I am likely to continue to do well,” Enobarbus replied, “for I see that four feasts are coming.”

“Let me shake your hand,” Sextus Pompey said. “I have never hated you. I have seen you fight, and I have envied

your behavior in battle.”

“Sir, I have never personally cared for you much, but I have praised you when you have deserved ten times as much praise as I have given you.”

“Enjoy your plainspokenness,” Sextus Pompey said. “It becomes you.”

He added, “Aboard my galley I invite you all. Will you lead, lords?”

The triumvirs replied, “Show us the way, sir.”

“Come,” Sextus Pompey said.

Everyone departed except for Menas and Enobarbus.

Menas said to himself, “Sextus Pompey, your father would never have made this treaty.”

He then said to Enobarbus, “You and I have known each other, sir. We have met.”

“At sea, I think.”

“We have met at sea, sir.”

“You have done well by water,” Enobarbus said.

Menas replied, “And you by land.”

“I will praise any man who will praise me, although what I have done by land cannot be denied.”

“Nor what I have done by water.”

“Yes, there is something you can deny for your own safety,” Enobarbus said. “You have been a great thief by sea. You have been a pirate.”

“And you have been a great thief by land.”

“That I deny,” Enobarbus replied, “but give me your hand, Menas.”

As they shook hands, Enobarbus joked, “If our eyes had the authority to arrest people, here they might take into custody two thieves whose hands are kissing.”

“All men’s faces are true, whatever their hands are doing,” Menas said.

This is a cynical sentence. It means that all men try to appear to look honest, whether or not they are honest.

The word “true” has more than one meaning. One meaning is “honest”; another meaning is “without makeup.”

Enobarbus joked, “But there was never a fair woman who had a true face.”

He meant that beautiful women wear makeup, but in order to make a joke Menas understood “true” to mean “honest.”

“This is no slander,” Menas replied. “Beautiful women steal hearts.”

“We came here to fight you,” Enobarbus said.

“For my part, I am sorry it has turned into a drinking bout,” Menas replied. “Today Sextus Pompey laughs away his fortune.”

“If he does, I am sure that he cannot get it back again by weeping.”

“You’ve said the truth, sir,” Menas said. “We did not expect to see Mark Antony here. Tell me: Is he married to Cleopatra?”

“Octavius Caesar’s sister is named Octavia.”

“True, sir; she was the wife of Caius Marcellus.”

“But she is now the wife of Mark Antony.”

“Really, sir?”

“It is true.”

“Then Mark Antony and Octavius Caesar will forever be friends,” Menas said.

“If I had to prophesy about this unity between Caesar and Antony, I would not prophesy that they will forever be friends.”

Menas said, “I think that this marriage of Antony and Octavia was made more for political reasons than for reasons of love.”

“I think so, too,” Enobarbus said. “But you shall find that the band that seems to tie Caesar and Antony together as friends will be the very strangler of their friendship: Octavia is of a holy, cold-rather-than-hot, and gentle disposition.”

“Who wouldn’t want his wife to be like that?” Menas asked.

“A man who does not have that disposition, and that man is Mark Antony. He will go to his Egyptian dish again, and then the sighs of Octavia shall blow the fire up in Octavius Caesar, and as I said before, that which is the strength of their friendship shall prove to be the immediate author of their disunity. Antony will satisfy his lust back in Egypt. He married Octavia only because of political necessity.”

“All that you have said is probably correct,” Menas said. “Come, sir, will you go aboard Sextus Pompey’s vessel? I have a health for you. I want to toast you.”

“I shall take the drink you offer, sir,” Enobarbus said. “We have used our throats to drink in Egypt.”

“Come, let’s go.”

— 2.7 —

Music was playing on Sextus Pompey's vessel. Two servants whose job was to serve food talked to each other. They had brought into the room wine, fruit, and desserts. Music was playing.

The first servant said, "Here they'll be, man — on the floor. Some of their plants — the soles of their feet — are ill rooted already: The least wind in the world will blow them down. They are drunk, and they are staggering."

"Lepidus is high-colored," the second servant said. "His face is flushed from drinking too much alcohol."

"They have made him drink alms-drink."

"Whenever their differing dispositions irritate each other, Lepidus cries out, 'No more arguing.' He reconciles them to his entreaty, and then he reconciles himself to drinking all the toasts they propose."

"But it raises the greater war between him and his sobriety."

"Why, this is what it means to have a name in great men's fellowship. Lepidus is by far the weakest of the three triumvirs. I prefer to have a reed that will do me no service as a weapon than to have a two-edged spear I cannot throw."

"To be called into a huge sphere of influence, and not to be seen to have influence in it is similar to a blind man's eye sockets that are empty where the eyes should be. This pitifully ruins the cheeks."

Octavius Caesar, Mark Antony, Lepidus, Sextus Pompey, Agrippa, Maecenas, Enobarbus, Menas, and others entered the room.

In a middle of a conversation, Mark Antony said to Octavius Caesar, "Thus do they, sir: they measure the flow of the Nile

River by certain markings on an obelisk; they know, by the height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth or foison — famine or feast — follow. The higher the Nile swells and floods, the better it is for agriculture. As the flood ebbs, the farmer scatters his grain upon the slime and ooze, and shortly afterward reaps the harvest.”

“You’ve strange serpents there,” Lepidus said.

“Yes, Lepidus,” Mark Antony replied.

“Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the operation of your Sun,” Lepidus said. “So is your crocodile.”

Lepidus was referring to an outdated and unscientific belief that the Sun’s shining on the mud causes the creation of living snakes. He extended this belief to also apply to crocodiles.

“That is true,” Mark Antony replied.

“Sit — and drink some wine!” Sextus Pompey said. “Drink a toast to Lepidus!”

“I am not as well as I should be, but I’ll never drop out of drinking a toast,” Lepidus said.

“Not until you go to sleep,” Enobarbus said. “I am afraid that you’ll be deep in drink until then.”

“Certainly, I have heard the Ptolemies’ pyramises are very goodly things,” Lepidus said, trying to pronounce the word “pyramids.” He added, “Without contradiction, I have heard that.”

Menas said quietly to Sextus Pompey, “May I have a word with you?”

Sextus Pompey replied, “Whisper in my ear and tell me.”

Menas said quietly, “Leave your seat and let’s talk alone,

please.”

“Not now,” Sextus Pompey replied. “Leave me alone for a while.”

He said loudly, “Drink this wine in honor of Lepidus!”

Lepidus asked, “What manner of thing is your crocodile?”

Making fun of Lepidus, Mark Antony replied, “It is shaped, sir, like itself; and it is as broad as it has breadth. It is just as high as it is, and it moves with its own organs. It lives by eating that which nourishes it, and once the elements of life are out of it, its soul transmigrates into another animal.”

“What color is it?” Lepidus asked.

“It is of its own color, too.”

“It is a strange serpent.”

“True, it is. And its tears are wet.”

Octavius Caesar asked, “Will this description satisfy Lepidus?”

Mark Antony replied, “It will, because of all of the alcohol that Sextus Pompey gave him. If this description does not satisfy Lepidus, he is a complete epicure.”

The word “epicure” had two meanings. An epicure is a person who takes pleasure in eating and drinking. Applied to Lepidus in this situation, it meant “glutton for drinking.”

Also, the word “epicure” was a play on “Epicurean.” The philosopher Epicurus and his followers did not believe in an afterlife and so would not believe in the transmigration of souls.

Menas whispered to Sextus Pompey, who responded, “Damn, sir! Damn! You want to talk to me now! Go away!”

Do as I order you!”

Sextus Pompey said out loud, “Where’s the cup of wine I called for?”

Menas said quietly to Sextus Pompey, “If for the sake of my merit you will listen to me, rise from your stool.”

“I think you are mad,” Sextus Pompey replied. “What is the matter?”

Sextus Pompey stood up, and he and Menas walked to a place where they could talk privately.

“I have always been a good follower of yours,” Menas said. “I have always held my cap off to your fortunes.”

In this society, servants and attendants were bareheaded when in the company of those they served.

“You have served me with much faith,” Sextus Pompey acknowledged. “What else do you have to say?”

Sextus Pompey said out loud, “Be jolly, lords.”

Mark Antony said to Lepidus, who was staggering, “Watch out for the quicksands, Lepidus. Keep off them, for you are sinking.”

Menas said to Sextus Pompey, “Would you like to be lord of all the world?”

“What are you saying?”

“Would you like to be lord of all the world? That’s the second time I said it.”

“How can that ever happen?”

“Entertain the thought in your mind,” Menas said, “and although you think that I am poor, I am the man who will give you all the world.”

“Have you drunk well tonight?” Sextus Pompey asked.

“No, Sextus Pompey, I have kept myself away from the cup. You are, if you dare to be, the Earthly Jove. The god Jove is the ruler of the sky; you can be the ruler of the Earth. Whatever the ocean fences in, or the sky embraces, is yours, if you will have it.”

“Show me the way this is possible,” Sextus Pompey said.

“These three world-sharers, these competitors and associates, these triumvirs are in your vessel. Let me cut the anchor cable, and when we are away from shore, I will cut their throats. Everything then is yours.”

“All this you should have done, and not have spoken to me about it ahead of time!” Sextus Pompey said. “For me to do that would be villainous. For you to have done that would have been good service. You must know that it is not my profit that leads my honor; rather, my honor leads my profit. To me, honor is more important than profit. Repent that your tongue has so betrayed your act. If you had done this without my knowing about it, I would afterwards have thought it well done, but now I must condemn it. Think no more about doing this, and drink.”

Sextus Pompey returned to the others.

Alone, Menas said to himself, “Because of this, I’ll never follow your weakened fortunes any more. Whoever seeks something, and will not take it when once it is offered, shall never find it again.”

Sextus Pompey said loudly, “Drink to the health of Lepidus!”

“He is unconscious. Carry him ashore,” Mark Antony said. “I’ll drink it for him, Sextus Pompey.”

Whenever someone was toasted, that person was obligated

to drink a full cup of wine. Because Lepidus was incapacitated, Antony drank the wine for him.

Enobarbus said, "Here's to you, Menas!"

"Enobarbus, welcome!" Menas replied.

Sextus Pompey said, "Fill the cup until it overflows."

Enobarbus pointed to the attendant who was carrying off Lepidus and said, "There's a strong fellow, Menas."

"Why do you think so?"

"He is carrying the third part of the world, man. Do you see it? He is carrying off a triumvir who rules a third of the world."

"The third part, then, is drunk. I wish that all of the world were drunk so that it might go on wheels and spin quickly!"

"Drink up," Enobarbus said. "By drinking, you can increase your own giddiness and spinning."

"Come, let's drink," Menas said.

"This is not yet an Alexandrian feast," Sextus Pompey said.

He was referring to Cleopatra's feasts in Alexandria, Egypt.

"It ripens towards it," Mark Antony said. "Clink the cups against each other. Here's to Caesar!"

"I could well do without another toast," Octavius Caesar said. "This is an unnatural labor. I wash my brain with alcohol, and it grows fouler."

"Be a child of the time," Mark Antony said. "Enjoy the party."

"Drink your cup," Caesar said. "I'll answer by drinking mine. But I had rather fast from everything for four days than

drink so much in one day.”

Enobarbus said to Mark Antony, “My brave Emperor, shall we dance now the Egyptian Bacchanals, and celebrate our wine?”

“Let’s do it, good soldier,” Sextus Pompey said.

“Come, let’s all take hands and dance until the conquering wine has steeped our senses in the soft and delicate Lethe, the river of forgetfulness.”

“Everybody, take hands,” Enobarbus said. “Make an assault against our ears with the loud music. I will put you where you will stand for dancing, and then the boys shall sing. The refrain every man shall sing as loud as his strong sides can volley.”

Music played, and Enobarbus made sure that everyone was in the proper position.

A boy sang this song:

“Come, you monarch of the vine,

“Plump Bacchus with pink, half-closed eyes!

“In your vats our cares be drowned,

“With your grapes our hair be crowned.”

Everybody sang the chorus:

“Fill our cups, until the world spins round,

“Fill our cups, until the world spins round!”

“What more can anyone wish for tonight?” Octavius Caesar said. “Sextus Pompey, good night. Mark Antony, you good brother-in-law, let me request that we leave the vessel and go on shore. Our graver and more serious business frowns at this levity. Gentle lords, let’s part. You see that we have

burnt our cheeks — our faces are flushed from the alcohol we have drunk. Strong Enobarbus is weaker than the wine; and my own tongue slurs what it speaks. This wild and disorderly performance has almost made fools of us all. I don't need to say anything more. Good night. Good Antony, give me your hand."

They shook hands.

Sextus Pompey said to Mark Antony, "We'll have a drinking match on shore."

"We shall, sir," Mark Antony replied. "Give me your hand."

"Antony, you have my father's house, but so what? We are friends," the drunk Sextus Pompey said, adding, "Come, everyone, I will show you the way down into the boat."

Enobarbus advised, "Be careful that you don't fall."

Everyone departed except for Enobarbus and Menas.

Enobarbus said, "Menas, I won't go on shore."

"No," Menas said. "Go to my cabin."

He ordered the musicians, "These drums! These trumpets! Flutes! Let Neptune hear us bid a loud farewell to these great fellows who are leaving. Make music and be hanged — make your music loud!"

The music played loudly.

Enobarbus tossed his cap into the air and yelled, "Yahoo! There's my cap."

"Yahoo!" Menas yelled, and then he said, "Noble captain, come with me."

CHAPTER 3

— 3.1 —

On a plain in Syria, Ventidius stood. He had triumphed in carrying out the orders that Mark Antony had given him and had won the battle against the Parthians. He had killed Pacorus, an important enemy, and his soldiers were carrying the dead body. Many soldiers were present as Ventidius spoke with Silius, an officer who served him.

Ventidius said, “Now, darting Parthia, you are struck; and now Fortune has been pleased to make me the revenger of Marcus Crassus’ death. Bear the King’s son’s body before our army. King Orodes, Pacorus, who is your son, pays with his death for the death of Marcus Crassus.”

The Parthians’ cavalry was feared. The Parthian warriors would throw spears at the enemy, and then ride away, seemingly in retreat, but they were able to shoot arrows at the enemy as they rode away. The Parthians could dart on their horses, and their spears and arrows were called darts.

The Romans had borne a grudge against the Parthians because the Parthians had succeeded in defeating and killing Marcus Crassus, one of the members of the First Triumvirate; the other members were Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar. Ventidius had avenged that death by killing in battle Pacorus, the son of Orodes, the King of the Parthians.

Silius, an officer who served Ventidius, said to him, “Noble Ventidius, while your sword is still warm with Parthian blood, pursue the fugitive Parthians; spur your horses through Media, Mesopotamia, and the shelters where the routed Parthians fly. That way, your grand captain Antony shall set you on triumphant chariots and put garlands on your head.”

“Oh, Silius, Silius,” Ventidius replied, “I have done enough;

a person of a lower rank, note well, may do too great an act: Such a person can be too successful. Learn this, Silius: It is better to leave something undone, than by our deed acquire too much fame when the man we serve is away. Both Octavius Caesar and Mark Antony have always won more in their officers than in their own person: Their officers earn most of the victories of the men they serve. Sossius, who was one of my rank who served in Syria, and who was Mark Antony's lieutenant, because he quickly accumulated renown, which he achieved by the minute, lost Antony's favor. Who does in the wars more than his captain can becomes his captain's captain, and ambition, the soldier's virtue, chooses to lose rather than gain that which darkens him. It is better to lose a battle than to gain a victory that will harm one's career. I could do more to do Antony good, but my success would offend him, and because my success would offend him, I would get no benefit from my success."

Ventidius was afraid that if he accomplished more than Mark Antony in war, then Mark Antony would hurt Ventidius' military career. Mark Antony would not want Ventidius to become Mark Antony's captain.

Silius said, "You have, Ventidius, that quality of discretion without which a soldier, and his sword, can scarcely be distinguished. What will you write to Antony?"

"I'll humbly tell him what we have accomplished in his name, that magical word of war. I will tell him how, with his banners and his well-paid soldiers, we have jaded out of the battlefield the never-before-beaten cavalry of Parthia."

Ventidius was punning with the word "jade." A jade was a broken-down horse, and "to jade" meant "to exhaust."

"Where is Mark Antony now?"

"He intends to go to Athens, Greece, where, with what haste the weight — the supply train — we must convey with us

will permit, we shall appear before him. Let's go! Pass the word to the soldiers!"

— 3.2 —

Agrippa, who served Octavius Caesar, and Enobarbus, who served Mark Antony, talked together in an antechamber in the house where Octavius Caesar was staying.

Agrippa asked, "What, are the brothers parted?"

He was referring to Sextus Pompey and the three triumvirs — Caesar, Antony, and Lepidus — who had been celebrating the peace treaty with feasts and drunkenness.

Enobarbus replied, "They have finished their business with Sextus Pompey. He has gone; the other three are sealing their copies of the peace treaty. Octavia weeps because she must leave Rome. Caesar is sad and serious; and Lepidus, since Sextus Pompey's feast, as Menas says, is troubled with the greensickness."

The greensickness was an anemic condition suffered by young teenaged girls, and people thought that lovesickness caused it. Enobarbus was calling Lepidus' hangover the greensickness because Lepidus was known for very highly praising his fellow triumvirs.

"It is a noble Lepidus," Agrippa said.

"A very fine and elegant one," Enobarbus said.

He was engaging in wordplay. In Latin, *lepidus* meant *fine* and *elegant*.

He added, "Oh, how he loves Caesar!"

"How dearly he adores Mark Antony!" Agrippa said.

"Caesar? Why, he's the Jupiter of men!"

“What’s Antony? The god of Jupiter!”

“Did you speak of Caesar? Wow! The nonpareil! He has no equal!” Enobarbus said.

“Oh, Antony! Oh, you Arabian bird!”

The Arabian bird was the mythological Phoenix. Only one existed at a time, and when it grew old, it burned and then a young bird arose out of the ashes.

“If you want to praise Caesar, say ‘Caesar,’” Enobarbus said. “You need say nothing more. No praise is higher than that!”

“Indeed, Lepidus plied them both with excellent praises,” Agrippa said.

“But he loves Caesar best; yet he loves Antony,” Enobarbus said. “Hearts cannot think, tongues cannot speak, numbers cannot calculate, scribes cannot write, bards cannot sing, poets cannot make verses that will adequately describe Lepidus’ love for Antony. But as for Lepidus’ love for Caesar, kneel down, kneel down, and wonder.”

“Lepidus loves Caesar and Antony.”

“They are his wings, and he is their beetle,” Enobarbus said.

Trumpets sounded, and he added, “This is the sign that soon we must mount our horses and leave. *Adieu*, noble Agrippa.”

“May you have good fortune, worthy soldier; and farewell.”

Octavius Caesar, Mark Antony, Lepidus, and Octavia entered the room.

“You need make that point no further, sir,” Mark Antony said to Octavius Caesar.

“You take from me a great part of myself,” Caesar replied, referring to Octavia, his sister, whom Antony had married.

“Treat me well by treating my sister well.”

He added, “Sister, prove to be such a wife as I think you are — I would give my utmost bond that you will be a good and honorable wife.”

He then said, “Most noble Antony, let not this masterpiece of virtue, who is set between us as the cement of our friendship to keep it strong, be the ram to batter at its fortress, for we might better have been friendly without this means of forming an alliance, if on both parts Octavia is not cherished.”

“Don’t offend me by your mistrust,” Mark Antony replied.

“I mean what I said,” Octavius Caesar said.

“You shall not find, even if you search for it, the least cause for what you seem to fear, so may the gods keep you safe, and make the hearts of Romans serve your ends! We will here part.”

“Farewell, my dearest sister; may you fare well,” Caesar said to Octavia. “May the elements be kind to you, and your spirits be all of comfort! Fare you well.”

“My noble brother!” Octavia said.

She wept.

“The April is in her eyes: It is love’s spring, and these showers of tears bring it on,” Mark Antony said. “Be cheerful.”

Octavia said to her brother, “Sir, look well after my husband’s house; and ...”

She hesitated.

“What, Octavia?” Caesar asked.

“I’ll whisper it to you.”

Octavia had been previously married, but she had been widowed, and she wanted her brother to look after the house of her first husband.

Antony said to himself, “Her tongue will not obey her heart, nor can her heart inform her tongue. Her tongue is like a feather of a swan’s down that stands still upon the swell at full tide. The tide neither ebbs nor flows, and so the feather stands still. Octavia’s loyalties are divided between her brother and her husband, and neither is stronger than the other.”

Enobarbus and Agrippa spoke together quietly.

Enobarbus said, “Is Caesar going to cry?”

“It looks like it. He has a cloud in his face.”

“He would be the worse for that, if he were a horse: A dark spot on the face of a horse lowers the value of the horse. Caesar being a man, the cloud lowers his value: Men ought not to cry.”

Agrippa replied, “Why, Enobarbus, when Antony found Julius Caesar dead, he cried almost to roaring; and he wept when at Philippi he found Brutus slain.”

“That year, indeed, he was troubled with a rheum that made his eyes water. What he killed willingly in wartime, he wailed — believe it — until I wept, too.”

Caesar said, “No, sweet Octavia. You shall hear from me continually. The time shall not outrace my thinking about you — I will always be thinking about you.”

“Come, sir, come; I’ll wrestle with you in my strength of friendship for you,” Antony said.

He embraced Caesar and said, “Look, here I have you; now

I let you go, and I give you to the gods.”

Caesar said, “*Adieu*; be happy!”

Lepidus said, “Let all the numerous stars light your fair way!”

“Farewell, farewell!” Caesar said.

He kissed his sister.

“Farewell!” Mark Antony said.

— 3.3 —

In a room in Cleopatra’s palace in Alexandria, Egypt, Cleopatra, Charmian, Iras, and Alexas were speaking.

“Where is the fellow — the messenger I beat?” Cleopatra asked.

“Half afraid to come,” Alexas replied.

“Nonsense,” Cleopatra said. “Nonsense.”

The messenger whom Cleopatra had previously beaten entered the room.

“Come here, sir,” she said to him.

Alexas said, “Good majesty, King Herod of Judea dare not look upon you except when you are well pleased.”

“I’ll have that Herod’s head, but how can I get it, when Antony is gone? If Antony were here, I could have him get me Herod’s head,” Cleopatra said.

She ordered the messenger, “Come near me.”

“Most gracious majesty —” the messenger began.

“Did you see Octavia?” Cleopatra asked.

“Yes, dread Queen.”

“Where?”

“Madam, in Rome. I looked her in the face, and saw her led between her brother and Mark Antony.”

“Is she as tall as me?”

“She is not, madam.”

“Did you hear her speak? Is she shrill-tongued or low-voiced?”

“Madam, I heard her speak; she is low-voiced.”

“That’s not so good for her; Mark Antony cannot like her long.”

“Like her!” Charmian, who was loyal to Cleopatra, said.

“Oh, Isis! That is impossible.”

“I think so, too, Charmian,” Cleopatra said. “Octavia is dull of tongue, and dwarfish!”

She asked the messenger, “What majesty is in her gait? Remember, if ever you looked on majesty. You know what a majestic walk is!”

“She creeps,” the messenger said. “Her motion and her standing still are similar. She shows a body rather than a life; she seems to be more dead than alive; she seems to be a statue more than a living, breathing person.”

“Is this true?”

“If it isn’t, then I have no powers of observation.”

Charmian said, “Not three people in Egypt have better powers of observation than this messenger.”

Cleopatra said, “He’s very knowledgeable; I do perceive it. There’s nothing for me to be worried about in Octavia yet. The fellow has good judgment.”

“He has excellent judgment,” Charmian said.

“Guess how old she is, please,” Cleopatra said to the messenger.

“Madam, she was a widow —”

“Widow! Charmian, do you hear that!”

“And I do think she’s thirty,” the messenger said.

Antony married Octavia in 40 B.C.E., when Cleopatra was twenty-nine years old. The pact of Misenum between Sextus Pompey and the three triumvirs occurred in 39 B.C.E., when Cleopatra was thirty years old. Both Octavia and Cleopatra were possibly born in the same year: 69 B.C.E. Historians think that Octavia was born between 69 and 66 B.C.E.

“Do you remember her face? Is it long or round?” Cleopatra asked.

“Round even to faultiness.”

“For the most part, too, people who have round faces are foolish,” Cleopatra said. “Her hair, what is its color?”

“Brown, madam: and her forehead is as low as she would wish it.”

This was a way of saying that she had a low forehead and would not wish it to be lower. In this society, high foreheads were valued.

“There’s gold for you,” Cleopatra said, giving the messenger money. “You must not take my former sharpness with you ill. I will employ you to go back to Antony again. I find you very suitable for that business. Go and prepare to travel; our letters are prepared for you to deliver them.”

The messenger exited.

“He is a proper and excellent man,” Charmian said.

“Indeed, he is,” Cleopatra said. “I much repent that I so harried him. Why, I think, based on what he said, this creature Octavia is nothing for me to worry about.”

“She is nothing, madam,” Charmian said.

“The man has seen some majesty, and he should know.”

“Has he seen majesty?” Charmian said. “Isis forbid that he should say otherwise! He has served you so long!”

“I have one thing more to ask him yet, good Charmian,” Cleopatra said, “but it is not important. You shall bring him to me where I will write. All may be well enough.”

“I assure you that all will be well, madam,” Charmian said.

— 3.4 —

In a room in Mark Antony’s house in Athens, Greece, Antony and Octavia were speaking.

Mark Antony complained, “No, no, Octavia, not only that — that is excusable, that, and thousands more of similar importance — but Octavius Caesar has waged new wars against Sextus Pompey. Caesar also made his will, and read it aloud to the public, no doubt to gain the public’s favor by leaving the citizens good things. He has spoken only scantily of me. When he could not avoid praising me, he spoke his praise coldly and sickly. He has given me very little praise and credit. When he had the opportunity to praise me publicly, he spoke that praise only grudgingly.”

Octavia replied, “Oh, my good lord, don’t believe all you hear, or if you must believe it, don’t resent all you hear. If you and my brother should quarrel, an unhappier lady has never stood between two parties, praying for both. The good gods will mock and laugh at me when I pray, ‘Oh, bless my

lord and husband!’ and undo that prayer by crying out as loudly, ‘Oh, bless my brother!’ When I pray that my husband wins, and I pray that my brother wins, I destroy my prayers because my prayers are contradictory. There is no middle ground at all between these opposing prayers.”

“Gentle Octavia, let your best love support the side that seeks best to preserve your love and support you,” Mark Antony said. “If I lose my honor, I lose myself. It would be better if I were not yours than to be yours so branchless — so pruned of honor. But, as you requested, you shall go and try to make peace between your brother and me. In the meantime, lady, I’ll raise the preparation of an army that shall eclipse that of your brother. Make your soonest haste; this is something you want to do.”

“Thank you, my lord,” Octavia said. “May the Jove of power make me, who am most weak, the reconciler of my brother and you! A war between you two would be as if the world should be split in two and slain men thrown into the rift to fill it up.”

“When you learn who is responsible for this rift, turn your displeasure that way — be angry at that person,” Mark Antony said. “My faults and your brother’s faults can never be so equal that your love can equally move with them. You must be angry at one of us. Provide for your journey. Choose your own company, and spend whatever amount of money you want to.”

— 3.5 —

In a room of Mark Antony’s house in Athens, Greece, Enobarbus and Eros, one of Mark Antony’s friends, spoke.

“How are you, friend Eros?”

“There’s strange news come, sir.”

“What news, man?”

“Octavius Caesar and Lepidus have made war upon Sextus Pompey.”

“That is old news. What is the outcome? Who won?”

“Octavius Caesar, having made use of Lepidus in the war against Sextus Pompey, immediately denied him partnership and equality; Caesar would not let Lepidus partake in the glory of the action. Not satisfied with that insult, Caesar accused Lepidus of treachery in letters that Lepidus had formerly written to Sextus Pompey. Upon Caesar’s own charge and with no other evidence, Caesar arrested Lepidus. The weakest triumvir is shut up in prison until death frees him.”

Enobarbus replied, “Then, world, you have a pair of jaws, and no more. And if you throw between them all the food you have, they’ll grind the one against the other. Caesar and Antony will come to blows; they will make war against each other. Where’s Antony?”

“He’s walking in the garden, and he kicks the rushes that lie before him, like this” — Eros imitated an angry Antony. “He cries, ‘Lepidus, you are a fool!’ — and he threatens to cut the throat of his officer who murdered Sextus Pompey.”

“Our great navy’s rigged and ready to sail,” Domitius Enobarbus said.

“To Italy and Caesar,” Eros said. “I have more to say, Domitius, but Antony, my lord, wants to see you immediately. I should have told you my news later.”

“My being a minute late won’t matter. So be it. Take me to Antony.”

“Come, sir.”

— 3.6 —

In a room in Octavius Caesar's house in Rome, Caesar, Agrippa, and Maecenas were speaking.

“Contemtuously of Rome, Mark Antony has done all this, and more, in Alexandria, Egypt. Here's what he did. In the marketplace, on a silvered platform, Cleopatra and Antony were publicly enthroned in chairs of gold. At their feet sat Caesarion, whom they call my father's son.”

Octavius Caesar was the great-nephew of Julius Caesar, but Julius had adopted Octavius as his son. Caesarion was reputed to be Julius Caesar's son by Cleopatra.

Octavius added, “Also sitting at their feet were all the illegitimate children that the lust of Antony and Cleopatra has made between them. To her he gave the confirmed possession of Egypt; he also made her absolute Queen of lower Syria, Cyprus, and Lydia.”

“He did all this in the public eye?” Maecenas asked.

“In the public ground for shows,” Octavius Caesar replied. “His sons he there proclaimed the Kings of Kings. He gave to Alexander great Media, Parthia, and Armenia. To Ptolemy he assigned Syria, Cilicia, and Phoenicia. Cleopatra that day appeared wearing the attire of the goddess Isis. She has often appeared dressed that way when she gives audience — so it is reported.”

“Let Rome be thus informed,” Maecenas said. “The Romans should know about this.”

“The Roman people, who are already sick of Antony's insolence, will cease to think well of him,” Agrippa said.

“The Roman people already know about his actions; and they have now received Antony's accusations.”

“Whom does he accuse?”

“Me, Caesar. He charges that, once we defeated Sextus Pompey and took Sicily as our spoils, we did not give him his part of the island of Sicily. He also says that he lent me some ships that I did not return to him. Lastly, he frets that Lepidus has been deposed from the triumvirate and that we keep all of Lepidus’ revenue.”

“Sir, these charges should be answered,” Agrippa advised.

“My reply has already been written,” Octavius Caesar said, “and the messenger has gone to deliver it to Mark Antony. I have told him that Lepidus had grown too cruel and had abused his high authority, and therefore he deserved his change of fortune from triumvir to prisoner. As for what I have conquered, I am willing to grant him part, but in turn I demand part of Armenia and the other Kingdoms he has conquered.”

“He’ll never agree to that,” Maecenas said.

“Then we will not agree to give him part of Sicily,” Caesar replied.

Octavia and a train of attendants entered the room.

She said to her brother, “Hail, Caesar, and my lord! Hail, most dear Caesar!”

“It’s a pity that I should ever call you cast away — rejected and discarded!” Octavius Caesar said.

“You have never called me that before, nor do you have cause to call me that now.”

“Why have you stolen upon us like this!” Octavius Caesar said. “We did not expect you! You came here not like Caesar’s sister should. The wife of Mark Antony should have an army for an escort, and the neighs of horses should

give notice of her approach long before she appears. The trees by the road should have been full of men waiting to see you. People should grow faint as they wait and long to see you. Indeed, the dust raised by the many troops escorting you should have ascended to the roof of Heaven, but instead you have come to Rome like a maiden going to the marketplace. You have forestalled us from showing you our love for you with a great public display. Without such a public display, people may think that I do not love you. If we had known you were coming, we would have met you by sea and by land. At each stage of your journey to Rome, we would have given you a greater greeting.”

“My good lord,” Octavia said. “I was not forced to come to Rome so quietly. I did it of my own free will. My lord, Mark Antony, hearing that you were preparing for war, acquainted my grieving ear with the news. Whereupon, I begged his permission for me to return to Rome to try to make peace between you two.”

“A return that he quickly granted because you are an obstacle between his lust and him,” Octavius Caesar said.

“Do not say that, my lord.”

“I have eyes spying on him, and news of his affairs come to me on the wind,” Caesar said. “Where do you think he is now?”

“My lord, he is in Athens, Greece.”

“No, my most wronged sister,” Octavius Caesar said. “Cleopatra nodded at him, and he went to her. He has given his empire up to a whore; and they are now levying the Kings of the earth for war. Antony has assembled to fight for them Bocchus, King of Libya; Archelaus, King of Cappadocia; Philadelphos, King of Paphlagonia; the Thracian King, Adallas; King Malchus of Arabia; the King of Pont; Herod of Judea; Mithridates, King of Comagene; Polemon and

Amyntas, the Kings of Mede and Lycaonia, with a longer list of those who wield scepters.”

“I am very wretched,” Octavia said. “I have divided my heart between two friends who afflict each other!”

“You are welcome here,” her brother said.

Using the royal plural, he said, “Your letters delayed the break between Antony and me until we perceived both how you were wrongly led and how we were in danger through neglecting to prepare for war. Cheer your heart.

“Do not be troubled by the times, which drive these strong necessities over your happiness. Instead, let things that are fated to happen occur without crying over them. Welcome to Rome; nothing is dearer to me than you are. Antony has abused you beyond what can be thought, and the high gods, to give you justice, make us who love you their agents. Be comforted as best you can; we always welcome you.”

“Welcome, lady,” Agrippa said.

“Welcome, dear madam,” Maecenas said. “Each heart in Rome loves and pities you. Only the adulterous Antony, most unrestrained in his abominations, turns you away and gives his mighty authority to a whore who clamors against us and turns Antony’s mighty authority against us.”

“Is this true, sir?” Octavia asked her brother.

“It is most certainly true,” Octavius Caesar replied. “Sister, welcome. Please, be patient and calm. You are my dear sister!”

— 3.7 —

Near Mark Antony’s camp in Actium, Cleopatra and Enobarbus were speaking.

“I will talk straight with you — don’t doubt it,” Cleopatra

said.

“But why, why, why?”

“You have spoken against my being in these wars, and say it is not fitting.”

“Well, is it? Is it?”

Using the royal plural, Cleopatra replied, “The war has been declared against us, so why shouldn’t we be there in person?”

“Well, I could reply with this: If we should serve with stallions and mares together, the stallions would be utterly lost; the mares would bear a soldier and a stallion. Both a soldier and a stallion would ride the mare.”

“What do you mean?”

“Your presence in the battle necessarily must confuse and distract Antony; your presence would take from his heart, take from his brain, and take from his time what should not then be spared. You will fluster his heart and his head, and he will have to devote time to you. He is already criticized for levity; and it is said in Rome that Photinus, the eunuch Mardian, and your maidens are in charge of managing this war.”

“May Rome sink and may the Romans’ tongues that speak against us rot!” Cleopatra said, using the royal plural. “We bear the expense of the war, and, as the ruler of my Kingdom, we will appear there just like a man. Don’t speak against it. I will not stay behind.”

“I won’t bring this up again,” Enobarbus said. “I have finished. Here comes the Emperor.”

Mark Antony and Canidius, a Lieutenant General, entered the room.

Antony said, “Isn’t it strange, Canidius, that Octavius Caesar could cross so quickly the Ionian Sea from Tarentum and Brundisium and capture the city of Toryne in Greece?”

He then asked Cleopatra, “Have you heard this news, sweet?”

“Celerity is never more wondered at than by the negligent,” she replied.

“This is a good rebuke, and it can remind even the best of men to taunt slackness,” Antony said, adding, “Canidius, we will fight Caesar by sea.”

“By sea,” Cleopatra said. “Of course!”

“Why will my lord do that?” Canidius asked.

“Because Octavius Caesar dares us to do it.”

“But my lord has dared Caesar to fight him in single combat,” Enobarbus said.

“True, and to wage this battle at Pharsalia, where Julius Caesar fought Pompey the Great,” Canidius said, “but these challenges, which do not give Caesar the advantage, he shakes off and ignores. Like Caesar, you should ignore challenges that do not give you an advantage.”

Enobarbus said, “Your ships are not well manned; your mariners are mule drivers, reapers of harvests, people who have been quickly gotten together through being drafted. In Caesar’s fleet are those who have often fought against Sextus Pompey. Their ships are nimble; yours are heavy. You will suffer no disgrace for refusing to fight Octavius Caesar at sea because you are prepared to fight him on land.”

“I will fight him by sea — by sea,” Mark Antony replied.

“Most worthy sir,” Enobarbus said, “you thereby throw away the excellent military force you have on land. You split

up your army, which mostly consists of war-scarred infantry. You leave unused your own renowned military knowledge. You quite forego the way that promises assurance of victory, and from firm security you give yourself over entirely to chance and hazard.”

“I’ll fight at sea,” Antony said.

“I have sixty ships,” Cleopatra said. “Caesar has none better.”

“Our surplus of ships we will burn,” Antony said, “and, with the rest fully manned, from the head of Actium we will beat the approaching Caesar. But if we fail, we then can beat him back by land.”

A messenger entered the room.

Mark Antony asked him, “What is your business here?”

The messenger said, “The news is true, my lord; Octavius Caesar has been sighted. Caesar has conquered Toryne.”

“Can Caesar be there in person?” Mark Antony asked. “It is impossible; it is strange that his army should be there.”

He then said, “Canidius, our nineteen legions you shall hold by land, and our twelve thousand cavalry. We will go to our ship.”

To Cleopatra, he said, “Let’s leave, my Thetis!”

Thetis was a sea-goddess and the mother of the Greek hero Achilles, who fought and died in the Trojan War.

A soldier entered the room.

Mark Antony asked him, “How are you, worthy soldier?”

“Oh, noble Emperor, do not fight by sea,” the soldier said. “Trust not to rotten planks. Do you mistrust this sword and

these my wounds? Let the Egyptians and the Phoenicians go swimming in the sea; we are used to conquer while standing on the earth, and fighting foot to foot.”

Mark Antony said merely, “Well, well,” and then he said, “Let’s go!”

Antony, Cleopatra, and Enobarbus departed.

“By Hercules, I think I am in the right,” the soldier said.

“Soldier, you are in the right,” Canidius said, “but Antony’s whole plan of military action is not based on his strengths. Our leader is led by a woman, and we are the servingmen of women.”

“You keep by land the legions and the cavalry undivided, don’t you?” the soldier asked.

“Marcus Octavius, Marcus Justeius, Publicola, and Caelius will fight at sea, but we keep ourselves whole and undivided by land,” Canidius replied.

He added, “This speed of Caesar’s shoots him forward beyond belief.”

“While he was still in Rome, his military forces went out in such bits and pieces that all spies were fooled.”

“Do you know who is Caesar’s Lieutenant General?”

“They say, one Taurus.”

“I know the man well,” Canidius said.

A messenger entered the room and said, “The Emperor is calling for Canidius to come to him.”

“The times are pregnant with news and give birth, each minute, to something new.”

On a plain near Actium on 2 September 31 B.C.E., Octavius Caesar talked with Taurus, his Lieutenant General.

“Taurus!”

“My lord?”

“Strike not by land; keep the land forces whole and undivided. Do not provoke a land battle until the sea battle is completed.”

He gave Taurus a scroll and said, “Do not exceed the orders given to you in this scroll. Our fortune lies upon this gamble.”

— 3.9 —

On another part of the plain, Mark Antony was talking to Enobarbus.

Antony said, “We are setting our squadrons on the other side of the hill, in sight of Caesar’s battle line of ships; from which place we can count the number of his ships, and proceed accordingly.”

— 3.10 —

Later, after the sea battle was nearly over and Octavius Caesar had triumphed over Mark Antony and Cleopatra, Enobarbus mourned.

“Ruined,” Enobarbus mourned. “All is ruined — ruined! I can’t bear to look any longer! The *Antoniad*, the Egyptian flagship, with all of Egypt’s sixty ships, fled and turned the rudder. Seeing it has blighted my eyes.”

A soldier named Scarus walked over to Enobarbus and cursed, “Gods and goddesses, the whole assembly of them!”

“What’s the matter with you?”

“The greater part of the world has been lost through utter stupidity,” Scarus said. “We have kissed away Kingdoms and provinces.”

“How does the battle look like now?”

“On our side it looks like the signs of a plague where death is sure to follow. Yonder ribald and debauched nag of Egypt — I hope the much-ridden Cleopatra catches leprosy! — in the midst of the fight at sea, when the two sides appeared equally matched like twins, with no advantage on either side, or perhaps we appeared to be the elder twin and so had a slight advantage, she hoisted her sails and fled as if she were a cow in June that had been bitten by a gadfly.”

“I witnessed that,” Enobarbus said. “My eyes sickened at the sight, and they could not endure a further view.”

“Cleopatra once being sailed into the wind and having put distance between herself and Caesar’s ships, the noble ruin of her magic, Mark Antony, clapped on his sea-wings — his sails — and, like a doting duck, leaving the fight at its height, fled after her. I never saw such a shameful action; experience, manhood, and honor have never before so violated themselves.”

“Damn! Damn!” Enobarbus said.

Canidius walked over to the two men.

“Our fortune on the sea is out of breath, and sinks most lamentably,” Canidius said. “Had our general been what he knew himself to be, the battle would have gone well, but he has given us an example for our own flight, most grossly and blatantly, by his own flight!”

“Are you thinking about fleeing and deserting?” Enobarbus asked. “Why, then, good night to our hopes indeed.”

“Mark Antony and Cleopatra have fled toward the

Peloponnesus in Greece,” Canidius said.

“It is easy to get to,” Scarus said, “and there I will await what happens next.”

“To Caesar will I surrender my legions and my cavalry,” Canidius said. “Six Kings already have surrendered and through their example show me how to yield to Octavius Caesar.”

Enobarbus said, “I’ll continue to follow the wounded fortunes of Antony, although my reason tells me not to. My reason sits in the wind against me. My scent blows toward it, and it tracks and hunts me. I should go in the opposite direction — away from Mark Antony.”

— 3.11 —

In a room of Cleopatra’s palace in Alexandria, Mark Antony, accompanied by some attendants, was mourning the lost sea battle at Actium.

“Listen!” he said. “The land orders me to tread no more upon it — it is ashamed to bear me! Friends, come here. I am so belated in the world — I am like a traveler who has failed to reach shelter before dark — that I have lost my way forever: I have a ship that is laden with gold; take that, divide it; flee, and make your peace with Octavius Caesar.”

His attendants replied, “Flee? We won’t flee!”

“I myself have fled,” Antony said, “and I have instructed cowards to run and show to the enemy the backs of their shoulders. Friends, leave me. I have myself resolved upon a course of action that has no need of you, so be gone.”

Was Antony contemplating committing suicide?

He said, “My treasure is in the harbor, take it. Oh, I followed that woman whom I blush to look upon. My very hairs

mutiny: My white hairs reprove my brown hairs for rashness, and my brown hairs reprove my white hairs for fear and doting. Friends, be gone. You shall receive letters from me to some friends who will sweep your way for you so that you can make peace with Caesar. Please, do not look sad, nor make replies of reluctance. Take the opportunity that my despair provides for you. Let that be left that leaves itself — abandon me who has already abandoned himself. Go to the seaside immediately. I will give you possession of that ship and treasure. Leave me, please, for a little while, I ask you now. Leave. I, indeed, have lost the right to command you to leave; therefore, I ask you to leave. I'll see you soon."

The attendants left him, and he sat down.

Cleopatra entered the room. With her were her attendants Charmian and Iras, and Mark Antony's friend Eros.

Eros said, "Gentle madam, go to him, comfort him."

"Do, most dear Queen," Iras said.

"Do!" Charmian said. "Why, what else should you do?"

"Let me sit down," Cleopatra said. "Oh, Juno, Queen of the Roman gods!"

She sat down.

"No, no, no, no, no," Mark Antony mourned to himself.

"Do you see Cleopatra here, sir?" Eros asked.

"Oh, damn, damn, damn!" Antony said, ignoring Eros.

"Madam!" Charmian said.

"Madam!" Iras said. "Oh, good Empress!"

"Sir, sir —" Eros said.

"Yes, my lord, yes," Antony said.

Normally, Mark Antony would not call Eros ‘my lord.’ He was so discouraged that he was not even looking at Eros and therefore did not know to whom he was speaking.

Talking to himself, Mark Antony said, “Octavius Caesar at the Battle of Philippi kept his sword in his sheath as if he were a dancer and his sword was only an ornament, while I struck the lean and wrinkled Cassius; and it was I who defeated the mad Brutus. Caesar alone relied on his lieutenants to do the fighting for him, and he acquired no experience in the brave and splendid battalions of soldiers. But now — it does not matter.”

Cleopatra said to Charmian and Iras, “Stand by me. I feel faint.”

“The Queen, my lord, the Queen,” Eros said to Antony.

“Go to him, madam, speak to him,” Iras said to Cleopatra. “He is unqualified with very shame. He has lost the qualities that made him Antony.”

“Well then, sustain me,” Cleopatra said. “Help me stand up.”

She stood up.

“Most noble sir, arise,” Eros said. “The Queen approaches. Her head is bowed, and death will seize her, unless you comfort her and by so doing save her life.”

“I have offended reputation and honor,” Mark Antony said. “I have committed a very ignoble swerving away from nobility and honor.”

Eros said, “Sir, the Queen.”

Mark Antony stood up and said to Cleopatra, “Oh, where have you led me, Queen of Egypt? See how I convey my shame out of your eyes and into my eyes? Men ought not to cry, but tears are trickling down my cheeks. I cry when I look

back on what I have left behind and destroyed with my dishonor.”

“Oh, my lord, my lord, forgive my fearful sails and my fearful flight!” Cleopatra said. “I little thought that you would have followed me.”

“Queen of Egypt, you knew too well that my heart was tied by the strings to your rudder, and you should tow me after you wherever you might go,” Antony said. “You knew that you had full supremacy over my spirit, and that your beck would turn me away from doing even the bidding of the gods.”

“Oh, give me pardon!” Cleopatra said.

“Now I must send my humble entreaties to the young man — Octavius Caesar,” Mark Antony said. “I must engage in low dodges and shifty dealings of the kind lowly people must employ. I must do this — I who once played as I pleased with half the bulk of the world, making and marring fortunes. You knew how much you were my conqueror; and you knew that my sword, made weak by my infatuation for you, would always obey my infatuation for you.”

“Give me pardon, pardon!” Cleopatra said.

“Let fall not a single tear, I say,” Antony replied. “One of your tears is worth all that is won and lost. Give me a kiss; a single kiss repays me for what I have lost. We sent Euphronius, our schoolmaster, to Octavius Caesar. Has he come back? Love, I am full of lead — sorrow is heavy on my heart. Bring some wine, within there, and bring some food! Fortune knows that we scorn her most when most she offers us blows.”

— 3.12 —

In Octavius Caesar’s camp in Egypt, Caesar was speaking

with his friend Dolabella. Caesar's friend Thidias was also present, along with some attendants.

Octavius Caesar ordered, "Let the messenger sent by Mark Antony appear before us."

An attendant left to carry out the order.

Caesar asked, "Dolabella, do you know him?"

"Caesar, the messenger is the schoolmaster to Antony and Cleopatra's children. This is evidence that Antony's feathers have been plucked; otherwise, he would not have sent so poor a feather from off his wing — not so many months ago, Antony had so many Kings following him that he could send a superfluous King as his messenger."

Euphronius, Mark Antony's messenger, entered the room.

"Approach, and speak," Octavius Caesar ordered.

"Such as I am, I come from Mark Antony," Euphronius said. "I was just recently as petty to his ends as is the morning dew on the myrtle leaf to the grand sea."

"I understand," Caesar said. "State your business."

"Mark Antony salutes you, who are the lord of his fortunes, and he requests that he be allowed to live in Egypt. If you will not allow that, he lessens his request, and he asks you to let him live and breathe between the Heavens and Earth as a private citizen in Athens. This is what Mark Antony requests.

"Now for Cleopatra. Cleopatra acknowledges your greatness; she submits herself to your might; and from you she asks that you allow her heirs to wear the crown of the Ptolemies and rule Egypt — she knows that the crown has been forfeited as if it were a stake in a game of dice and that you are the person who will decide who will wear that

crown.”

“As for Antony, I have no ears to his request,” Octavius Caesar said. “I will not grant him what he requests. The Queen shall not fail to have me listen to her and grant her request, provided that she either drives Antony, her entirely disgraced friend, out of Egypt, or take his life there. If Cleopatra does this, I will grant her request. Take this message to both of them.”

“May Fortune pursue you!” Euphronius said.

“Take him safely through the troops,” Caesar ordered.

Euphronius and some attendants left.

Octavius Caesar said to Thidias, “Separate Antony and Cleopatra, and get Cleopatra on our side. Promise her, in our name, whatever she wants; promise additional benefits to her as needed. Women are not strong even when they have good fortune, and destitution will cause even a vestal virgin to break her vows. Use your cunning, Thidias. Decide how you will be rewarded for doing this, and we will give it to you as if we were obeying a contract.”

“Caesar, I go now,” Thidias said.

“Observe how Antony is reacting to his misfortune,” Octavius Caesar said. “Tell me what you think his every movement tells about his state of mind.”

“Caesar, I shall.”

— 3.13 —

In a room of Cleopatra’s palace in Alexandria, Egypt, Cleopatra was speaking to Enobarbus. Charmian and Iras were also present.

Cleopatra asked, “What shall we do, Enobarbus?”

“Think, despair, and die.”

Using the royal plural, Cleopatra asked, “Is Antony or we at fault for this?”

“Only Antony is at fault because he made his sexual passion the lord of his reason. So what if you fled from that great front of war, whose opposing ranges of ships frightened each other? Why should he follow after you? The itch of his sexual passion should not then have cut short his captainship; at such a point, when half of the world opposed the other half of the world, with him being the sole cause of dispute, it was no less shameful for him than was his loss of the battle to follow after your fleeing flags, and leave his navy gazing after him in dismay.”

“Be silent. Be silent,” Cleopatra said.

Mark Antony entered the room with Euphronius, the messenger whom he had sent to Octavius Caesar.

“Is that his answer to me?” Antony asked.

“Yes, my lord.”

“The Queen shall then be courteously received by him, as long as she will yield us — me — up.”

“So he says,” Euphronius replied.

“Let Cleopatra know what Caesar says,” Antony said.

To Cleopatra, Antony said, “If you send this grizzled head to the boy Caesar, he will fill your wishes to the brim with principalities.”

“That head, my lord?” Cleopatra asked.

Mark Antony said to Euphronius, “Go back to Caesar. Tell him that he wears the rose of youth upon him, and from him the world should note something special. His coin, ships, and

legions may belong to a coward, and his agents may be as successful if they were serving a child rather than serving Caesar — Caesar is taking credit for the accomplishments of his agents. I dare Caesar therefore to lay aside his gay comparisons and splendid trappings, and answer me, declined as I am in years and fortune, sword against sword, ourselves alone. I'll write my challenge to him to fight me in single combat. Follow me.”

Mark Antony and Euphronius left the room.

Enobarbus thought to himself, *sarcastically, Yes, likely enough, Caesar, who commands huge armies, will divest himself of his huge advantages, and allow himself to participate in a public spectacle and fight against a gladiator! I see that men's judgments are part and parcel of their fortunes; I see that external circumstances and fortune draw the inner man after them so that both suffer together. I can't believe that Mark Antony, who has experienced all measures of fortune from great to poor, can dream that Caesar, riding at the top of Fortune's wheel, will fight in single combat Antony, who is riding at the bottom of Fortune's wheel! Caesar, you have subdued Antony's judgment, too.*

An attendant entered the room and announced, “A messenger has come from Octavius Caesar.”

“What! He has come with no more ceremony than that?” Cleopatra said. “See, my women! Against the fading rose, they stop their nose although previously they knelt before the rose's bud.”

She ordered, “Admit him, sir.”

An attendant left to bring in Caesar's messenger.

Enobarbus thought to himself, *My honor and I begin to quarrel. Loyalty that stays faithful to fools makes our faith*

mere folly, yet he who can endure to follow with allegiance a fallen lord conquers the person who conquered his master and by doing so earns a place in history.

Thidias, Caesar's messenger, entered the room.

"What is Caesar's will?" Cleopatra asked.

"Hear it in private," Thidias replied.

"No one is here but friends," Cleopatra said. "Say boldly what you have to say."

"Perhaps they are friends to Mark Antony," Thidias said.

Enobarbus said, "Antony needs as many friends, sir, as Caesar has. If he does not have that many, his case is hopeless, and he does not need us to be his friends. If Caesar will allow it, our master will leap to be his friend. As for us, you know, whose Antony is we are, and Antony is Caesar's."

"So be it," Thidias said. "Most renowned Cleopatra, Caesar asks you to not worry about the situation you are in, but to remember that he is Caesar."

Thidias' words were ambiguous. He wanted Cleopatra to remember that Octavius Caesar was capable of generosity. Cleopatra knew that, but she also knew that Caesar was capable of ruthlessness.

"Go on," Cleopatra said. "Caesar is right royal."

Thidias said, "Caesar knows that you embraced Antony not because you loved him, but because you feared him."

"Oh!" Cleopatra said.

"The scars upon your honor, therefore, Caesar pities and regards as blemishes forced upon you and not as blemishes you deserve."

Cleopatra replied, “Caesar is a god, and he knows where the truth lies. My honor was not freely yielded — it was utterly conquered.”

Cleopatra’s words were ambiguous. She could mean that she gave in to Antony out of fear, or that she fell completely in love with him when he conquered her heart.

Enobarbus, who was not sure which meaning Cleopatra meant, said to himself, “To be sure of the truth of that, I will ask Antony. Sir, sir, you are so leaky, that we must leave you to your sinking, for even those dearest to you quit you.”

Thinking of rats leaving a sinking ship, he left the room.

Thidias said, “Shall I tell Caesar what you request from him? He almost begs you to ask him to give you what you want. It would much please him if you were to make a staff of his fortunes that you would lean upon, but it would warm his spirits to hear from me that you had left Antony, and put yourself under the protection of Caesar, who is the universal landlord — he now rules the world.”

“What’s your name?” Cleopatra asked.

“My name is Thidias.”

“Most kind messenger, say to great Caesar this: With you as my deputy, I kiss his conquering hand. Tell him that I am prompt to lay my crown at his feet, and at his feet to kneel. Tell him that from his breath — that all must obey — I will hear the sentence that he gives to me, the Queen of Egypt.”

“This is your noblest course,” Thidias said. “When a wise person meets with bad fortune, if the wise person accepts the bad fortune, nothing can shake the person’s wisdom — it is wise to accept what must occur. Give me permission to lay my lips on your hand and kiss it.”

Cleopatra offered him her hand and said, “Julius Caesar, the

father of Octavius Caesar, often, when he was thinking about conquering Kingdoms, bestowed his lips on that unworthy place, as if it rained kisses.”

Thidias kissed Cleopatra’s hand just as Mark Antony and Enobarbus entered the room.

Seeing the kiss, Antony was immediately angry.

Seeing the kiss, Enobarbus thought, *This messenger will be whipped. A mere messenger ought not to kiss the hand of a Queen.*

“You are giving favors to lackeys, by Jove who thunders!” Antony said to Cleopatra.

He said contemptuously to Thidias, “Who are you, fellow?”

“One who obeys the orders of the greatest man, and the worthiest to have his commands obeyed.”

Mark Antony called for attendants: “Come here!”

He then said, “Ah, you kite!”

A kite is a hawk that feeds on disgusting things. Was Antony insulting Cleopatra for allowing a lackey to kiss her hand? Or was he insulting Thidias for using a position of power to make Cleopatra allow him to kiss her hand?

The attendants were slow in responding to Antony’s call.

Antony cursed, “Gods and devils! Authority now melts from me. Just recently, I would cry ‘Ho!’ and Kings would start forth like boys scrambling to pick up desired trinkets strewn on the ground before them and they would ask me, ‘What is your will?’”

He called to his attendants, “Have you no ears? I am still Antony.”

Some attendants entered the room, and Antony ordered, “Take away from here this rascal, and whip him.”

Enobarbus thought, *It is better to play with a lion’s cub than with an old lion that is dying.*

Mark Antony cursed, “Moon and stars! Whip him. I would order the same even if I were to find twenty of the greatest tribute-paying rulers who acknowledge Caesar so saucy with the hand of this woman here — what’s her name? What is the name of this woman who used to be Cleopatra? Whip him, fellows, until, like a boy, you see him cringe his face in pain, and whine aloud for mercy. Take him away from here.”

“Mark Antony!” Thidias said.

He may have wanted Antony to know that as a messenger of Octavius Caesar, he was under the protection of Caesar and so whipping him would be a direct insult to Caesar.

“Tug him away,” Antony said. “Once he has been whipped, bring him here again. This rascal of Caesar’s shall run an errand and take a message from us to him.”

The attendants took Thidias away.

Mark Antony said to Cleopatra, “You were half blighted before I knew you! Have I left my pillow unused in Rome, forgone the begetting of legitimate children by Octavia, a gem of women, just so I can be abused by a woman who looks favorably on servants such as this messenger from Caesar?”

“My good lord —” Cleopatra began.

“You have always been a boggler,” Antony said.

In falconry, a boggler is a falcon that does not chase just one bird, but instead chases one and then another and then another.

He continued, “But when we become hardened to our depravity — a misery! — the wise gods sew shut and blind our eyes. The gods make our clear judgments drop in our own filth. The gods make us adore our errors. The gods laugh at us while we strut to our destruction.”

“Has it come to this?” Cleopatra asked.

“I found you as a cold crumb on dead Julius Caesar’s platter. You were a leftover of Gnaeus Pompey’s. In addition, you have enjoyed hotter lecherous hours that have not been gossiped about. I am sure that although you can guess what temperance should be, you have not experienced it.”

“Why are you saying these things?” Cleopatra asked.

“You have let a fellow who will take a tip and say, ‘May God reward you!’ be familiar with my playfellow, your hand — which has signed Kingly documents and sealed the pledges of noble lovers!” Mark Antony said. “Oh, if I were upon the hill of Basan, I would outroar the horned herd!”

Herds of horned bulls were on the hill of Basan. Horns are the symbol of a cuckold, and so Antony was saying that because of the actions of Cleopatra, he would be the biggest and loudest cuckold in that horned herd.

He continued, “I have savage cause to bellow, and to protest in a civilized manner would be like a neck with a noose around it thanking the hangman for being efficient in doing his job.”

The attendants returned with Thidias.

“Has he been whipped?” Mark Antony asked.

“Soundly, my lord,” the first attendant replied.

“Did he cry? Did he ask for mercy?”

“He did ask for mercy,” the first attendant replied.

Mark Antony said to Thidias, “If your father is still alive, let him regret that you were not born his daughter, and as for you, be sorry to follow Caesar in his triumphal procession, since you have been whipped for following him. And henceforth may seeing the white hand of a lady give you a fever and make you shiver when you look at it. Go back to Octavius Caesar and tell him about your treatment here. Be sure that you say that he makes me angry with him; for he seems proud and disdainful, harping on what I am and not what he knew I was. He makes me angry, and at this time it is very easy to do it, now that my good stars, which were my former guides, have left their orbits and shot their fires into the abyss of Hell. If Caesar dislikes my speech and what has been done to you, tell him that he has Hipparchus, my freed slave, whom he may at his pleasure whip, or hang, or torture, as he shall like, to pay me back. Tell him these things. Leave and take with you your stripes — go!”

Thidias left.

“Have you finished yet?” Cleopatra asked Mark Antony.

Antony said, “Alas, our Earthly moon — Cleopatra — is now eclipsed; and it portends the fall of Antony!”

Cleopatra, an Earthly Queen, was often associated with the Moon goddess Isis. In this society, an eclipse of the Moon was thought to be a portent of imminent disaster.

“I must wait until he is finished,” Cleopatra said.

“To flatter Caesar, would you mingle eyes and flirt with a servant who helps him get dressed?” Antony asked.

“Don’t you know me yet?” Cleopatra asked.

“Are you cold-hearted toward me?”

“Ah, dear, if I am, from my cold heart let Heaven engender hail, and poison it in the source; and let the first stone drop

on my neck. As the poisoned hailstone melts, so let it dissolve my life! Let the next hailstone smite my son Caesarion! By degrees let the hailstones kill all the children who have come from my womb and kill all my brave Egyptians. Let the melting of the hailstones from this storm kill them all, and let them lie without graves until the flies and gnats of the Nile River eat them and so give them burial!”

“I am satisfied,” Mark Antony said. He ceased to be jealous of and angry at Cleopatra.

He added, “Octavius Caesar has made his camp at and is besieging Alexandria, where I will oppose his fate and destiny. Our army by land has nobly held together; our divided navy has knit together again, and it sails — it is as threatening as the sea. Where have you been, my heart? Do you hear me, lady? If from the battlefield I shall return once more to kiss these lips of yours, I will appear bloody and full of vigor; my sword and I will earn our place in history. There’s hope in battle yet.”

“That’s my brave lord!”

“I will be treble-sinewed, -hearted, and -breathed — I will have the strength, courage, and endurance of three men — and I will fight ferociously. When my fortune was prosperous and happy, I allowed men to ransom their lives for jests and trifles, but now I’ll set my teeth, and send to darkness and Hell all who oppose me. Come, let’s have one more festive night. Call to me all my sad and serious captains; fill our bowls with wine once more; let’s mock the midnight bell.”

“It is my birthday,” Cleopatra said. “I had thought to have observed it poorly, but since my lord is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra. We will be festive.”

“We will yet do well.”

Cleopatra ordered, “Call all of Antony’s noble captains to my lord.”

Mark Antony said, “Do so. We’ll speak to them. Tonight I’ll force the wine to peep through their scars — their white scars will appear to be red from the wine they have drunk. Come on, my Queen; there’s sap — life — in it yet. The next time I fight, I’ll make Death love me. I will compete with Death’s pestilential scythe and kill as many as the plague kills.”

Everyone left except for Enobarbus, who said to himself, “Now Antony will outstare the lightning. To be furious is to be frightened out of fear. He is so angry that he is unable to feel fear, and in that mood a dove will peck a hawk. I have always seen that a diminution in our captain’s brain restores his heart. When his reason grows weaker, his bravery grows stronger. But when valor preys on reason, it eats the sword it fights with. Courage in battle requires a good brain if it is to be effective. I will seek some way to leave Antony and stop serving him.”

CHAPTER 4**— 4.1 —**

In Octavius Caesar's camp before Alexandria, Egypt, Caesar was discussing with his friends Maecenas and Agrippa the message that Thidias had brought from Mark Antony.

Caesar said, "He calls me 'boy,' and he chides me as if he had the power to beat me out of Egypt. He has whipped my messenger with rods. He dares me to personal combat: Caesar against Antony. Let the old ruffian know I have many other ways to die; in the meantime, I laugh at his challenge."

"Caesar must think," Maecenas said, "that when one so great begins to rage, he's hunted to exhaustion, even to falling. Give him no time to breathe, but now take advantage of his distracting anger. Never has anger protected angry people well."

"Let our top commanders know that tomorrow we intend to fight the last of many battles," Caesar said. "Within our ranks of soldiers we have enough of those who served Mark Antony just recently to capture him. See that this is done, and give the army a feast. We have enough provisions to do it, and they have earned the expense. Poor Antony!"

— 4.2 —

In a room of Cleopatra's palace at Alexandria, Mark Antony, Cleopatra, Domitius Enobarbus, Charmian, Iras, Alexas, and others were assembled.

"Caesar will not fight with me, Domitius," Mark Antony said.

"No, he won't."

"Why won't he fight with me?"

"He thinks, since his fortunes are twenty times better than

yours, his army against yours is twenty men to one,” Enobarbus replied.

“Tomorrow, soldier, by sea and land I’ll fight,” Mark Antony said. “Either I will live, or by bathing my dying honor in blood I will make my honor live again. Will you fight well?”

“I’ll strike, and cry, ‘Take all.’”

Enobarbus’ words were ambiguous. They could mean that he would strike fiercely at the enemy in battle, or that he would strike sail and surrender. The words “Take all” were those of a desperate gambler betting all he had left.

“Well said,” Mark Antony replied. “Come on. Call forth my household servants. Let’s feast tonight and be bounteous at our meal.”

A few male servants entered the room and Antony said to them, “Give me your hand. You have been truly honest ... so have you ... you ... and you ... and you ... you have served me well, and Kings have also served me.”

Cleopatra asked Enobarbus quietly, “What is Antony doing?”

Enobarbus quietly replied, “He has one of those odd moods that sorrow shoots out of the mind.”

Antony continued speaking to the servants: “And you are honest, too. I wish I could be made as many men as you are, and all of you were rolled up together in one Antony, so that I could do you service as good as you have done for me.”

The servants were horrified: “The gods forbid!”

“Well, my good fellows,” Antony said, “wait on me tonight. Do not scant when filling my cup with wine, and make as much of me as when my empire was your fellow — my

servant — and obeyed my commands.”

“What does he mean?” Cleopatra quietly asked Enobarbus.

“He means to make his followers weep,” he quietly replied.

“Serve me tonight,” Antony said. “Maybe it is the end of your duty to me. Perhaps you shall not see me any more; or if you do, you will see a mangled ghost. Perhaps tomorrow you’ll serve another master. I look on you as one who takes his leave of you. My honest friends, I am not firing you and turning you away, but like a master who is married to your good service, I stay with you until death. Serve me tonight for two hours — I ask no more, and may the gods reward you for it!”

“What do you mean, sir, by giving your servants this discomfort?” Enobarbus said to Antony. “Look, they are crying, and I, an ass, am onion-eyed — tears are trickling from my eyes. For shame! Do not transform us into women.”

Mark Antony said, “May a witch enchant me if I meant to turn all of you into women! May grace grow where those teardrops fall! My hearty friends, you take me in too melancholy a sense — I spoke to you to comfort you. I want you to burn this night with torches and make it brilliant. Know, my hearts, I have high hope for tomorrow; and I will lead you where I expect to find victorious life instead of an honorable death. Let’s go to supper. Come, and we will drown our serious thoughts with wine.”

— 4.3 —

In Alexandria, in front of Cleopatra’s palace, Mark Antony’s soldiers were preparing for guard duty.

Two soldiers arrived.

The first soldier said, “Brother, good night. Tomorrow is the day of the battle.”

“It will bring matters to an end, one way or the other,” the second soldier said. “Fare you well. Heard you about anything strange in the streets?”

“Nothing. What is the news?”

“Probably it is only a rumor. Good night to you.”

“Well, sir, good night,” the first soldier said.

Two more soldiers arrived.

The second soldier said to them, “Soldiers, have an attentive watch.”

“You, too,” the third soldier said. “Good night.”

The two groups of soldiers moved away from each other and started their guard duty.

The second soldier said, “Here we are, in the correct positions for guard duty. If our navy thrives tomorrow, I have an absolute hope that our army will stand up on land and be victorious.”

“It is a brave army,” the first soldier said, “and very resolute.”

The sound of oboes came from underground.

“Silence!” the second soldier said. “What is that noise?”

The first soldier said, “Listen! Listen!”

“Hark!” the second soldier said.

“Music is in the air,” the first soldier said.

At the other guard post, the third soldier said, “It is coming from under the ground.”

“This is a good sign, isn’t it?” the fourth soldier said.

“No,” the third soldier replied.

At the first guard post, the first soldier said to the second soldier, “Quiet, I say! What does this mean?”

The second soldier said, “It means that the god Hercules, whom Antony loved, is now leaving him.”

“Let’s walk and see if the other guards hear what we do,” the first soldier said.

They walked to the second guard post, and the second soldier asked, “How are you, sirs?”

They all began to speak at the same time: “How are you! How are you? Do you hear this music?”

The first soldier said, “Yes, I hear the music. Isn’t it strange?”

“Do you hear the music, sirs? Do you hear it?” the third soldier asked.

“Let’s follow the noise as far as we can and still keep our guard,” the first soldier said. “Let’s see how the music finishes.”

“Agreed,” the other soldiers said. “This music is strange.”

— 4.4 —

In a room of Cleopatra’s palace were Mark Antony and Cleopatra. Attending them were Charmian and others.

Mark Antony called, “Bring me my armor, Eros!”

“Sleep a little,” Cleopatra said.

“No, my darling,” Antony replied.

He called again, “Eros, come here! Bring me my armor, Eros!”

Eros arrived, carrying Antony's armor.

"Come good fellow, put my iron armor on me," Mark Antony said to Eros. "If good fortune is not ours today, it is because we will deny her. Come on."

"I'll help, too," Cleopatra said. She picked up a piece of armor and asked, "What's this for? Where does it go?"

"Ah, let it be, let it alone!" Antony said. "You are the armorer of my heart — you give me courage."

Cleopatra tried to put a piece of armor on Mark Antony, but he told her, "That is the wrong way. It goes like this."

She replied, "I'll help. Yes, indeed, it must go like this."

"That's right," Antony said. "We shall thrive now."

He said to Eros, "Do you see how Cleopatra is helping me, my good fellow? Go and put on your armor."

"In a little while, sir," Eros replied.

"Is not this buckled well?" Cleopatra said, referring to a piece of Antony's armor.

"It is very excellently done," Antony replied. "He who unbuckles this before I am pleased to take it off and rest shall hear a storm of blows against his armor."

Both Eros and Cleopatra continued to help put on Antony's armor.

Antony said, "You are fumbling, Eros. My Queen is a squire and armor-bearer who is more skilled at this than you are. Hurry."

He said to Cleopatra, "Oh, love, I wish that you could see me in the battle today. If you could, you would see and know war — the royal occupation! You would see a true craftsman

at work in the battle!”

A soldier wearing armor entered the room, and Mark Antony said to him, “Good morning to you, and welcome. You look like a man who knows a warlike charge. We rise early to go to the business that we love, and we go to it with delight.”

The soldier replied, “A thousand soldiers, sir, early though it is, have put on their riveted armor, and they are waiting for you at the gate.”

The shouts of soldiers and the sound of trumpets came from outside the palace.

Some captains and soldiers entered the room.

“The morning is fair,” a captain said. “Good morning, general.”

All said, “Good morning, general.”

“The trumpet was well blown, lads,” Antony said. “This morning, like the spirit of a youth who intends to do something noteworthy in his life, begins early.”

He said to Cleopatra, who was still helping him put on his armor, “So. Come. Give me that. It goes this way; well done. May you fare well, dame, whatever becomes of me. This is a soldier’s kiss.”

He kissed Cleopatra and then said, “I would deserve shameful rebuke and reproach if I were to insist on a formal leave-taking. I’ll leave you now, like a man of steel.”

He said to his captains and soldiers, “You who will fight, follow me closely. I’ll take you to the battle,” and then he said to Cleopatra, “*Adieu.*”

Mark Antony, Eros, and the captains and soldiers exited.

“Please, retire to your chamber,” Charmian said to

Cleopatra.

“Lead me there,” Cleopatra said. “Mark Antony goes forth gallantly. I wish that Octavius Caesar and he could determine the outcome of this great war in single combat! Then Antony ... but now ... well, let’s go.”

— 4.5 —

In Mark Antony’s camp at Alexandria, a soldier met Antony and Eros. This soldier had advised Antony to fight a land battle and not a sea battle at Actium.

The soldier said, “May the gods make this a happy day for Antony!”

“I wish that you and those scars of yours had earlier prevailed to make me fight on land!” Antony replied.

“If you had done so, the Kings who have revolted against you, and the soldier who has this morning left you, would still be following at your heels.”

“Who has left me this morning?”

“Who!” the soldier said, surprised that Antony did not already know. “One always close to you. If you call for Enobarbus, he shall not hear you; or if he does, from Caesar’s camp he will say, ‘I am not one of your soldiers.’”

“What are you saying?” Mark Antony asked.

“Sir, Enobarbus deserted. He is with Caesar.”

Eros said, “Sir, Enobarbus left behind his chests and treasure.”

“Is he gone?” Antony asked.

“Most certainly,” the soldier replied.

“Go, Eros, and send his treasure after him,” Antony ordered.

“Do it. Detain no jot, I order you. Write to him — I will sign the letter — and give him gentle *adieux* and greetings. Say that I hope that he never finds another reason to change his master. Oh, my bad fortune has corrupted honest men! Hurry. Oh, Enobarbus!”

— 4.6 —

At Octavius Caesar’s camp at Alexandria were Caesar, Agrippa, Enobarbus, and others.

Caesar said, “Go forth, Agrippa, and begin the battle. Our will is that Antony be taken alive. Make sure that everyone knows that.”

“Caesar, I shall.”

He departed to carry out the order.

Octavius Caesar said, “The time of universal peace is near. If this proves to be a prosperous day, the three corners of the world — Europe, Asia, and Africa — shall bear the olive freely and enjoy peace.”

A messenger arrived and said, “Antony has come onto the battlefield.”

Caesar said, “Go order Agrippa to place those who have revolted against and deserted Antony in the front lines, so that Antony may seem to spend his fury upon himself and his own forces.”

Everyone exited except Enobarbus, who said to himself, “Alexas revolted against Mark Antony, and he went to Judea seemingly to carry out Antony’s orders. In Judea, Alexas persuaded great Herod to support Caesar and cease to support Antony. In return for Alexas’ pains, Caesar has hanged him. Canidius and the rest who fell away from Mark Antony have employment, but no positions of honorable trust. I have done something evil, for which I accuse myself

so sorely that I will never be happy again.”

A soldier of Caesar’s walked up to him and said, “Enobarbus, Antony has sent all your treasure to you, along with a gift. Antony’s messenger came while I was on guard duty, and he is now unloading his mules at your tent.”

“I give my treasure to you,” Enobarbus said.

“Stop joking, Enobarbus,” the soldier replied. “I am telling you the truth. It is best that you escort the bringer of your treasure safely out of the camp. I must attend to my duty, or I would do it myself. Your Emperor continues to act generously, like a Jove.”

The soldier left.

“I am the worst villain on the earth,” Enobarbus said to himself, “and I feel it the most. Oh, Antony, you fount of generosity, how well would you have paid me for good service, when you crown my depravity and wickedness with gold! This explodes my heart. If swift thought does not break my heart, a swifter means of breaking it shall out-strike my thought and do more damage, but guilty thoughts will break my heart, I feel. Will I fight against you? No! I will go and find some ditch in which I can die; the foulest ditch and fate best suit the latter part of my life.”

— 4.7 —

On the battlefield, Agrippa said to some of Octavius Caesar’s soldiers, “Retreat, we have advanced too far. Caesar himself is hard pressed, and the forces against us exceed what we expected.”

In another part of the battlefield, Mark Antony and a wounded soldier named Scarus talked.

“Oh, my brave Emperor,” Scarus said, “this battle is well fought indeed! Had we fought like this in our earlier battle,

we would have driven them home with blows and bandages on their heads.”

“You are bleeding a lot,” Mark Antony said.

“I had a wound here that was like a T,” Scarus said, pointing to the wound, “but now it has been made into an H.” He pronounced “H” like “aitch,” which sounded similar to “ache.” Even wounded, he was able to joke.

“The enemy soldiers are retreating,” Antony said.

“We’ll beat them so badly that they will hide in latrines,” Scarus said. “I still have room for six more wounds.”

Eros came over to them and said to Antony, “They are beaten, sir, and our superiority shows that we have won a clear victory over them.”

“Let us wound their backs, and snatch them up, as we take hares, from behind,” Scarus said. “It is good entertainment to maul a fleeing enemy soldier.”

“I will reward you once for your good humor, and ten-fold for your good bravery,” Antony replied to Scarus. “Come with me.”

Scarus replied, “I’ll limp and follow you.”

— 4.8 —

Later, Mark Antony, Scarus, and others stood under the walls of Alexandria.

Antony said, “We have beaten Octavius Caesar back to his camp. Let someone run ahead of us and let Queen Cleopatra know of our deeds in battle.”

An attendant departed to carry out the order.

Antony continued, “Tomorrow, before the Sun dawns and

sees us, we'll spill the blood that has today escaped from us. I thank you all because all of you are valiant in battle, and you have fought not as if you served my cause, but as if my cause had been your own cause. All of you have fought like the great Trojan War hero Hector."

Hector was the greatest Trojan warrior, but he died in combat and the Trojans lost the war.

Antony continued, "Enter the city, embrace your wives and your friends, and tell them your feats in battle today while they with joyful tears wash the congealed blood from your wounds, and kiss the honored gashes and make them whole."

He said to Scarus, "Give me your hand."

They shook hands.

Cleopatra arrived with her attendants.

Antony said to Scarus, "To this great enchantress I'll commend your acts and have her thank and bless you."

Antony said to Cleopatra, "Oh, you light of the world, hug my armored neck as if you were a necklace. Leap with all your fine clothing through my armor that has withstood the enemy and enter my heart and enjoy this triumph in my panting breast."

"Lord of lords!" Cleopatra said. "Oh, infinite virtue, have you come smiling uncaught from the world's great snare? Have you really survived this great battle?"

"My nightingale, we have beaten them to their beds," Antony replied.

Using the royal plural, he said, "What, girl! Although grey hairs somewhat mingle with our younger brown hairs, yet we have a brain that nourishes our nerves, sinews, and muscles and we can compete with younger men and match

them goal for goal.”

Pointing to Scarus, Antony said, “Behold this man. Commend to his lips your hand and show him your favor.”

Cleopatra held her hand out to Scarus.

“Kiss it, my warrior,” Antony said.

Scarus kissed her hand.

Antony said to Cleopatra, “He has fought today as if he were a god who hated Mankind and actively sought to destroy it.”

“I’ll give you, friend,” Cleopatra said to Scarus, “a suit of armor made of gold; it belonged to a King.”

“He has deserved it, and he would deserve it even if it were decorated with valuable jewels like the chariot of the Sun-god: Phoebus Apollo,” Antony said.

He shook hands again with Scarus and said to his soldiers, “Through Alexandria make a jolly march. Let us carry our hacked shields with pride, such as becomes the men who own them. If our great palace had the capacity to hold all this host of soldiers, we all would eat together, and drink toasts to the next day’s fate, which promises royal peril and the greatest danger. Trumpeters, with a brazen din blast the city’s ears; mingle your sound with that of rattling drums. Let the noise echo from the sky so that Heaven and Earth may strike their sounds together, applauding our entry into Alexandria.”

— 4.9 —

Some sentinels stood at the guard post in Octavius Caesar’s camp outside Alexandria.

The first soldier said, “If we are not relieved within this hour, we must return to the guardhouse. The night is bright and shiny with moonlight, and they say we shall begin getting

ready for battle by the second hour of the morning.”

“Yesterday’s battle was cruel to us,” the second soldier said.

Enobarbus came near the soldiers, but he did not see them.

Thinking that he was alone, he said to himself, “Oh, bear witness, night —”

“Who is this man?” the third soldier asked quietly.

“Stay hidden, and listen to him,” the second soldier replied.

“Be witness to me, oh, you blessed Moon,” Enobarbus said. “When men who revolt against their masters are recorded with disgrace in the history books, remember that poor Enobarbus repented his disgraceful actions before your face!”

“Enobarbus!” the first soldier said.

“Quiet!” the third soldier said.

Enobarbus continued, “Oh, sovereign mistress of true melancholy, discharge upon me the poisonous damp of night as if you were wringing out a sponge.”

In this society, people believed that breathing night air was unhealthy.

“I wish that my life, which is a complete rebel to my will that prefers that I be dead, may hang no longer on me. Throw my heart against the hard flintiness of my sin. Let my heart dry out with grief and break up into powder, and finish all my foul thoughts. Antony, you are nobler than my revolt against you is infamous. May you personally forgive me, but let the world remember me in its records as a master-leaver and a fugitive. Oh, Antony! Oh, Antony!”

Enobarbus died from excessive grief.

The second soldier said, "Let's speak to him."

"Let's listen to him," the first soldier said, "because the things he says may concern Caesar."

"Let's do so," the third soldier said. "But he is sleeping."

"No, he has fainted," the first soldier said. "So bad a prayer as his has never been a prelude to sleep."

"Let's go to him," the second soldier said.

They went to him, and the third soldier said, "Wake up, sir, wake up; speak to us."

The second soldier said, "Do you hear us, sir?"

"The hand of death has caught him," the first soldier said.

Drums quietly sounded.

"Listen!" the first soldier said. "The drums quietly wake up the sleepers. Let us carry him to the guardhouse. He is an important person. Our guard duty has ended."

The third soldier said, "Come on, then. He may yet recover."

They carried away the corpse of Enobarbus.

— 4.10 —

Mark Antony said to Scarus, "Octavius Caesar is preparing today for a sea battle. He does not want to fight us on land."

"He does not want to fight us by land or sea," Scarus said. "We are prepared to fight him in both kinds of battles."

"I wish that they would fight in the fire or in the air," Antony said. "We would fight there, too. But these are my orders. Our infantry shall stay with us upon the hills next to the city. I have given orders for a sea battle. Our ships have left the harbor. From here, we can best see their position and watch

the battle.”

— 4.11 —

Octavius Caesar said to his soldiers, “Unless we are attacked, we will not fight on land. I don’t think that we will be attacked because Antony is using his best soldiers to man his galleys. Let’s go to the valleys, and hold the best positions we can.”

— 4.12 —

Mark Antony said to Scarus, “The ships are still not joined in battle. Where that pine tree stands yonder, I will go and see what is happening. I’ll bring you word soon of how the battle is likely to go.”

He walked to the pine tree.

Scarus said to himself, “Swallows have built their nests in Cleopatra’s ships. The augurs say that they do not know and cannot tell what this means, but they look grim and dare not say what they know. Antony is valiant, and he is dejected; and, by turns, his varying fortunes give him hope, and then they give him fear, about what he has and what he has not.”

Sounds of many ships at sea were heard, and soon Mark Antony returned and said, “All is lost; this foul Egyptian — Cleopatra — has betrayed me. My fleet has surrendered to the foe, and yonder they cast their caps up high in the air and drink together like long-lost friends. Cleopatra is a triple-turned whore! She turned from Gnaeus Pompey to Julius Caesar, from Julius Caesar to me, and from me to Octavius Caesar! Cleopatra has sold me to this novice named Octavius Caesar, and my heart makes wars only on her.”

He ordered Scarus, “Order all my soldiers to flee. For when I am revenged upon Cleopatra, my enchantress, I have done all that I will do in this life. Order them all to flee — go!”

Scarus left.

Antony said to himself, “Oh, Sun, your dawn I shall see no more. Good fortune and Antony part here; even now do we shake hands in parting. Has all come to this? The soldiers who followed me at my heels like a cocker spaniel, to whom I gave what they wished, now melt away from me and give their loyalty to blossoming Caesar. I am like a pine tree that has been stripped of its bark, although I overtopped everyone else. I have been betrayed! Oh, this false soul of Egypt! This grave enchantress — her eye summoned forth my wars, and called them home; her bosom was my crown, my chief desire in life — like a typical Egyptian whore, has, as if she were playing a game with the intention of cheating me, beguiled me and caused me total defeat.”

Antony called, “Eros! Where are you, Eros?”

Cleopatra walked over to Mark Antony.

Seeing her, he said, “You enchantress! Avaunt! Get away from me!”

“Why is my lord enraged against his love?” Cleopatra asked.

“Vanish, or I shall give you what you deserve, and thereby blemish Caesar’s triumph,” Antony said.

He meant that he was tempted to kill Cleopatra. It would give him a feeling of revenge, and it would also diminish the triumphal procession that Octavius Caesar would hold in Rome because Caesar would like to capture Cleopatra so that he could exhibit her to the Romans in his triumphal procession.

Antony said to Cleopatra, “Let Caesar capture you, and hoist you up to the shouting Roman commoners. You will walk behind his chariot, like the greatest stain of all your sex; most monster-like, you will be shown to the poorest of the poor

diminutives, to idiots and cretins; and patient Octavia will rake your face up and down with her long and sharp fingernails.”

Cleopatra exited.

“It is well you have gone,” Antony said to himself, “if it is well to live, but it would be better if you died as a result of my fury because one death now might prevent many more. If you die now, your life is ended. But if you stay alive now, you will worry about being killed later and you will suffer many deaths in your imagination.”

Antony called, “Eros!”

He said to himself, “The shirt of Nessus is upon me. Teach me your rage, Alcides, you who are my ancestor and are better known as Hercules. Let me lodge Lichas on the horns of the Moon, and with those hands that grasped the heaviest club, subdue my worthiest self.”

Antony was thinking of emulating the death of club-wielding Hercules, strongman of the ancient world. A Centaur named Nessus had attempted to rape Hercules’ wife, Deianira, so Hercules had shot him with an arrow and killed him. Nessus told Deianira to take his shirt, which was stained with his blood, and keep it because if Hercules ever ceased to love her, the shirt would cast a magical spell over him and make him love her again. Eventually, Deianira thought that Hercules had fallen out of love with her, so she gave Hercules’ servant Lichas Nessus’ bloodstained shirt to take to Hercules, but when Hercules put on the shirt, Nessus’ blood burned him and melted his flesh, causing him agonizing pain. He was in so much pain that he grabbed Lichas and hurled him high into the air — Lichas fell into the sea. Hercules then committed suicide by climbing onto a funeral pyre and setting it on fire.

Antony said about Cleopatra, “The witch shall die. To the

young Roman boy — Octavius Caesar — she has sold me, and I have been utterly defeated because of her plot — she dies for it.”

He called again, “Eros!”

— 4.13 —

In her palace in Alexandria, Cleopatra worried about what Mark Antony might do to her. With her were Charmian, Iras, and Mardian.

“Help me, my women!” Cleopatra said. “Oh, Antony is more mad than Great Ajax, son of Telamon, was for his shield; the boar of Thessaly was never so foaming at the mouth.”

After Achilles died in the Trojan War, the Greeks decided to award his armor, including his shield, which had been created by the blacksmith god, Vulcan, to a great Greek warrior. The two contestants for the armor were Great Ajax and Ulysses. The armor was awarded to Ulysses, and Great Ajax became insane as a result. He tortured sheep, thinking that they were Ulysses and Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks in the Trojan War. After regaining his sanity, Great Ajax committed suicide.

The goddess Diana once sent a huge boar to ravage Thessaly because the people of Thessaly had neglected to sacrifice to her.

Charmian advised Cleopatra, “Go to the monument that will be your tomb after you die! There lock yourself, and send Antony word that you are dead. The soul and body tear not more in parting than the departure of greatness.”

Losing one’s greatness is as painful as the separation of soul from body at the time of death. Mark Antony was in pain because he had lost his greatness.

Cleopatra said, “Let’s go to the monument! Mardian, go and

tell Antony that I have slain myself. Tell him that the last word I spoke was ‘Antony,’ and when you tell this tale, please make him feel pity for me. Go, Mardian, and tell me how he takes the news of my death. To the monument!”

— 4.14 —

Mark Antony and Eros spoke together in a room of Cleopatra’s palace.

Antony asked, “Eros, can you still see me?”

Antony was so discouraged by the loss of his greatness that he worried about being so diminished that he could not be seen.

“Yes, noble lord.”

“Sometimes we see a cloud that looks like a dragon,” Antony said. “A cloud sometimes looks like a bear or lion, a towering citadel, an overhanging rock, a mountain with two peaks, or a blue promontory with trees upon it that nod to the world and fool our eyes with air. You have seen such signs; they are the sights that we see in the twilight of the evening.”

“Yes, my lord.”

“We see that which appears now to be a horse, but as quickly as thought the cloud disperses and makes the image indistinct, as water is when it enters a larger mass of water.”

“That is true, my lord.”

“My good servant Eros, your captain is now such a body of cloud. I am Antony now, but I cannot hold this visible shape, my lad. I made these wars for the Queen of Egypt — whose heart I thought I had, for she had mine; while my heart belonged to me, it had joined to it the hearts of a million followers, who are now lost. Eros, Cleopatra has stacked the deck in favor of Octavius Caesar, and she has played the

cards in such a way as to allow him to trump my high card and triumph over me.”

Using the royal plural, Antony added, “No, do not weep, gentle Eros; there is something left to us — we ourselves can end ourselves. I can commit suicide.”

Mardian the eunuch arrived, bearing Cleopatra’s message.

Seeing him, Antony said, “Your vile lady has robbed me of my sword and my masculinity!”

“No, Antony,” Mardian said. “My mistress loved you, and her fortunes were mingled entirely with yours. She did not betray you.”

“Go away from here, saucy eunuch; shut up!” Antony said. “She has betrayed me, and she shall die the death of a traitor.”

“The death of one person can be paid only once,” Mardian said, “and that is a debt that she has already paid. What you want to do has already been done for you. The last words she spoke were ‘Antony! Most noble Antony!’ In the midst of a tearing groan, the name of Antony broke in two. She spoke part of your name and died without speaking the other part. She gave up her life, but your name is buried in her.”

“Is she dead, then?” Mark Antony asked.

“Yes, she is dead.”

“Take my armor off me, Eros,” Antony ordered. “The long day’s task is done, and we must sleep.”

He said to Mardian, “Your being allowed to leave here safely pays you richly for your labor. Such a message deserves much worse. Go.”

Mardian exited.

Antony ordered Eros, "Take my armor off, pluck it off me."

He added, "Great Ajax's shield with its seven layers of leather cannot keep this battery of blows from my heart. Oh, split apart, my sides! Heart, for once be stronger than your container — crack the frail body that holds you!

"Hurry, Eros, hurry! I am no longer a soldier. Battered pieces of armor, leave me. You have been nobly borne."

He ordered Eros, "Leave me and let me alone for a while."

Eros exited.

Antony said to himself, "I will come after you and overtake you, Cleopatra, and weep for you to pardon me. So it must be, because now all further life is torture. Since the torch of my love and my life is out, I will lie down and stray no farther. Now all labor mars what it does. Yes, it is as if I were in a trap in which the more I struggle the more firmly I am trapped. Let me finish my life and seal it, and all is finished."

Antony called, "Eros!"

He said to himself, "I am coming to you, my Queen."

He called again, "Eros!"

He said to himself, "Wait for me, Cleopatra. In the Heavenly fields where souls lie on flowers, we'll go hand in hand, and with our lively conduct we will make the ghosts gaze at us. Dido and her Aeneas shall lack followers, and all the field will be ours."

Aeneas had had an affair with Dido, the Queen of Carthage, a great city in Africa, but Aeneas had obeyed the will of the gods and deserted Dido in order to go to Italy and fulfill his destiny of becoming an important ancestor of the Romans. While he was still alive, Aeneas had visited Dido, who had committed suicide, in the Land of the Dead, but she had

refused to even talk to him.

Antony called, "Come, Eros! Eros!"

Eros returned and asked, "What does my lord want?"

"Since Cleopatra died, I have lived in such dishonor that the gods detest my baseness. I, who with my sword divided the world into quarters, and over the back of the ocean, the domain of the god Neptune, made cities with my numerous ships, condemn myself because I lack the courage of a woman; I have a less noble mind than she, who by her death told Caesar, 'I am conqueror of myself.' By killing herself, she — not Caesar — conquered herself. You have sworn, Eros, that when the decisive moment should come, which indeed has now come — that time when I should look behind me and see disgrace and horror inevitably overtaking me — that, on my command, you then would kill me. Do what you promised to do; the time has come. You will strike me, but it is Caesar whom you defeat. Put color in your cheeks and gather the courage to do this."

"The gods forbid!" Eros said. "Shall I do that which all the Parthian darts, although hostile to you, could not do? None of the Parthian spears and arrows struck you."

"Eros, do you want to be located at a window in great Rome and see your master like this?" Antony demonstrated what he meant when he said, "Do you want to see your master with bent and tied arms, bending down his submissive neck, his face subdued and displaying the redness of shame, while the wheeled chariot of fortunate Caesar, drawn before him, marks like a brand the humiliation of me, who follows behind him?"

"I do not want to see that," Eros replied.

"Come, then; for with a wound I must be cured," Antony said. "Draw your honest sword, which you have worn most

usefully for your country.”

“Oh, sir, pardon me!”

“When I made you a free man, didn’t you swear then to do this when I ordered you? Do it now, at once; or all your preceding services are only things that you did accidentally without intending to serve me. Draw your sword, and come and strike me.”

“Turn away from me, then, your noble countenance to which the whole world pays homage.”

“As you wish,” Antony said, turning so that his back faced Eros.

“My sword is drawn,” Eros said.

“Then do at once the thing for which you have drawn it.”

“My dear master, my captain, and my Emperor, let me say, before I strike this bloody stroke, farewell.”

“You have said it, man,” Antony said. “And I say farewell to you.”

“Farewell, great chief. Shall I strike now?” Eros asked.

“Now, Eros.”

“Why, there then,” Eros said, stabbing himself. “Thus I do escape the sorrow of Antony’s death!”

Eros died.

Mark Antony said to himself, “Eros, you are thrice nobler than myself! You teach me, valiant Eros, to do what I should do, and what you could not — kill me. My Queen and Eros have by their brave example got before myself a noble spot in the history books, but I will be a bridegroom in my death, and run to death as if I were running to a lover’s bed. Come,

then; and, Eros, your master dies your scholar. I have learned from you how to do this.”

Antony fell upon his sword. He gave himself a mortal wound, but he did not die immediately from it.

He said, “What! I am not dead? Not dead?”

He called, “Guards, come here! Oh, finish killing me!”

Dercetus, who was one of Mark Antony’s followers, and some guards entered the room.

“What’s that noise?” the first guard said.

Antony said, “I have done my work badly, friends. Oh, make an end of what I have begun.”

“The Sun that lit our world has fallen,” the second guard said.

“And his time is at its end,” the first guard said.

The guards mourned.

“Let him who loves me strike me dead,” Antony requested.

“Not I,” the first guard said.

“Nor I,” the second guard said.

“Nor anyone,” the third guard said.

The guards left the room.

Dercetus said, “Your death and bad fortune are reasons for your followers to flee away from you.”

He picked up Antony’s sword and said, “If I show this sword to Octavius Caesar and bring him news of your death, Caesar will treat me well.”

Diomedes, one of Cleopatra’s servants, entered the room and

asked Dercetus, “Where’s Antony?”

“There he is, Diomedes,” Dercetus replied, pointing. “There he is.”

“Is he alive?” Diomedes asked.

Dercetus ignored him and left.

“Won’t you answer me, man?” Diomedes asked.

Antony asked, “Is that you, Diomedes? Draw your sword, and give me sword strokes that will result in my death.”

“Most absolute lord, my mistress — Cleopatra — sent me to you.”

“When did she send you?”

“Just now, my lord.”

“Where is she?”

“Locked in her monument,” Diomedes replied. “She had a prophesying fear of what has come to pass. For when she saw that you suspected that she had made an agreement with Caesar — which shall never happen — and that your rage would not abate, she sent you a message that she was dead, but fearing what might result from that message, has sent me to proclaim the truth, but I have come, I fear, too late.”

“Yes, you are too late, good Diomedes,” Mark Antony said.

“Call my guards, please.”

“Guards! The Emperor’s guards! The guards! Come here. Your lord wants you!”

Some of Antony’s guards entered the room.

“Carry me, good friends, to where Cleopatra is staying; it is the last service that I shall command you to do for me.”

“We grieve, sir,” the first guard said, “that you will not outlive all your loyal followers.”

“We grieve on this mournful day,” the other guards said.

“No, my good fellows,” Antony said. “Do not please sharp fate by gracing it with your sorrows; instead, welcome whatever comes to punish us — we punish it by seeming to bear it lightly. Pick me up. I have led you often. Carry me now, good friends, and I give my thanks for all you have done for me.”

They carried Mark Antony away.

— 4.15 —

Cleopatra, Charmian, and Iras were at Cleopatra’s monument. They were on a second-floor balcony.

“Oh, Charmian, I will never leave here,” Cleopatra mourned.

“Be comforted, dear madam,” Charmian replied.

“No, I will not,” Cleopatra said. Using the royal plural, she added, “All strange and terrible events are welcome, but comforts we despise; the size of our sorrow must be in proportion to its cause — our sorrow must be as great as that which causes it.”

Below the balcony appeared Diomedes.

Seeing him, Cleopatra asked, “What has happened? Is Antony dead?”

“He will die soon, but he is not dead yet,” Diomedes replied.

“Look over there. His guards have carried him here.”

Cleopatra looked and saw Mark Antony being carried to her by his guards.

She said, “Oh, Sun, burn the great sphere that you move in!

Escape from the sphere and leave and let the world with its days and nights and its tides be always dark.”

According to Ptolemaic astronomy, the Sun and the planets were fixed in spheres that moved around the Earth, which was the center of the universe.

Cleopatra continued, “Oh, Antony, Antony, Antony! Help, Charmian! Help, Iras, help! Help, friends below! Let’s draw him up here!”

“Quiet,” Antony said. “Caesar’s valor has not overthrown Antony, but Antony’s valor has triumphed on itself. Caesar has not killed me; I have killed myself.”

“That is as it should be,” Cleopatra said. “No one but Antony should conquer Antony, but I still mourn that this happened!”

“I am dying, Queen of Egypt, dying,” Mark Antony said, “but I ask death to wait awhile, until I lay on your lips the poor last of many thousand kisses.”

“I dare not come down to you, dear — my dear lord, pardon me — I dare not, lest I be captured,” Cleopatra said. “The imperious show of the good-fortuned Caesar never shall be decorated with me — I will not take an ignoble role in his triumphal procession in Rome. As long as knife, drugs, and serpents have edge, effect, or sting, I am safe. Your wife, Octavia, with her modest eyes and impassive judgment shall acquire no honor by looking smugly at me. But come to me, come, Antony — help me, my women — we must draw you up here. Help, good friends.”

“Be quick; soon I will be dead.”

Cleopatra and her female servants began to pull Antony up to the balcony.

“Here’s work indeed!” Cleopatra said. “How heavy is my

lord! Our strength has all disappeared because of the heaviness of sorrow. If I had the great goddess Juno's power, the strong-winged Mercury should fetch you up to Heaven, and set you by the side of Jove, King of the gods. We must lift you a little higher — mere wishing is foolish — oh, come, come, come."

They succeeded in raising Antony to the balcony.

"Welcome, welcome!" Cleopatra said. "Die where you have lived. Come to life with my kisses. If my lips had that power, I would wear them out like this."

She kissed Mark Antony several times.

This is a heavy and sad sight, the people around her thought.

"I am dying, Queen of Egypt, dying," Mark Antony said. "Give me some wine, and let me speak a little."

"No, let me speak; and let me curse so vehemently that the false hussy Fortune will break her wheel because she is so angered by my curses."

"One word, sweet Queen," Antony said. "From Caesar seek your honor, along with your safety."

"My honor and my safety do not go together," Cleopatra replied.

"Noble lady, listen to me," Antony said. "Trust none of Caesar's men except Proculeius."

"I will trust my resolution and my hands, but I will trust none of Caesar's men."

"The miserable change of fortune I suffer now at the end of my life neither lament nor sorrow at, but please your thoughts by remembering my former good fortune when I lived as the greatest Prince of the world, and the noblest. Also know that I do not now basely die. I have not cowardly

taken off my helmet and submitted myself to Caesar, my countryman. Instead, I am a Roman who by a Roman — myself — is valiantly vanquished. By committing suicide, I have conquered myself. Now my spirit is going; I can say no more.”

“Noblest of men, will you die?” Cleopatra asked. “Don’t you care about me! Shall I live in this dull world, which in your absence is no better than a pigsty? Oh, look, my women!”

Mark Antony died.

“The crown of the Earth melts,” Cleopatra said. “My lord! Oh, withered is the garland of the war. The soldier’s standard has fallen; young boys and girls are equal now with men; the marks of distinction are gone, and nothing remarkable is left beneath the visiting moon.”

Cleopatra fainted.

“Oh, be calm, lady!” Charmian said.

“Our Queen has died, too,” Iras said.

“Lady!” Charmian said.

“Madam!” Iras said.

“Oh, madam, madam, madam!” Charmian said.

“Royal Queen of Egypt!” Iras said. “Empress!”

Cleopatra regained consciousness.

“Quiet! Quiet, Iras!” Charmian said.

Cleopatra said, “I am no more than just a woman, and I am ruled by such poor passion as rules the maid who milks and does the meanest chores. It would be fitting for me to throw my scepter at the injurious and harm-doing gods and tell them that this world was the equal of theirs until they stole

Mark Antony, our jewel. Nothing matters anymore. Staying calm is foolish, and being angry is fitting for a mad dog. Is it then a sin to hurry into the secret house of Death before Death dares come to us? How are you, women? Tell me! Be of good cheer! Why, how are you now, Charmian! My noble girls! Ah, women, women, look, our lamp is spent — it's out!

“Good ladies, take heart: We'll bury him; and then, what's brave, what's noble, let's do it after the high Roman fashion, and make Death proud to take us.”

She was thinking of committing suicide.

She added, “Come, let's go away. This corpse that contained that huge spirit is now cold. Ah, women, women! Come; we have no friend but resolution, and the quickest possible end of life.”

CHAPTER 5**— 5.1 —**

In Octavius Caesar's camp before Alexandria, Caesar was meeting with Agrippa, Dolabella, Maecenas, Gallus, Proculius, and others in a council of war.

Caesar ordered, "Go to Mark Antony, Dolabella, and order him to surrender. Tell him that since he has been so badly defeated, he is embarrassing himself by delaying his surrender."

"Caesar, I shall," Dolabella said and then exited.

Dercetus, carrying Mark Antony's bloody sword, now walked over to Caesar.

Caesar said, "What is the meaning of this? Who are you who dares to appear before me while you are carrying an unsheathed sword?"

"I am named Dercetus. I served Mark Antony, who was most worthy to be best served. While he stood up and spoke, he was my master; and I was willing to lose my life fighting his haters. I was willing to die for him. If you please to take me into your service, I will be to Caesar what I was to him. If you do not want to take me into your service, then I surrender my life to you."

"What are you saying?" Caesar asked.

"I say, Caesar, that Antony is dead."

"The breaking of so great a thing should make a greater noise," Caesar said. "Thunder and an earthquake should occur. The round world should have shaken lions into city streets, and citizens should have been shaken into the lions' dens. The death of Antony is not a single fate; Antony controlled half of the world."

“He is dead, Caesar,” Dercetus said, “not by a public minister of justice, nor by a hired knife; but he has, by that selfsame hand that wrote his honor in the acts it did and with the courage that his heart lent it, split his heart. This is Antony’s sword — I robbed his wound of it. Look, his sword is stained with Antony’s most noble blood.”

“Look, sad friends,” Caesar said, pointing to the sword. “The gods may rebuke me for mourning, but these are tidings to wash with tears the eyes of Kings.”

“How strange it is,” Agrippa said, “that our human nature compels us to lament the result of actions we pursued most persistently.”

Maecenas said, “Antony’s bad and good points were equally matched.”

“A rarer spirit never steered humanity,” Agrippa said, “but the gods always give us some faults that make us fallible men. Caesar is touched by Antony’s death.”

Maecenas said, “When such a spacious mirror as Antony is set before him, Caesar must necessarily see himself in the mirror.”

“Oh, Antony!” Octavius Caesar said. “I have pursued you to this catastrophe, but we lance diseases in our bodies to cure them. I was forced to either show you my own such catastrophe or look on yours. You and I could not live together in this world, but still let me lament you, with tears as sovereign as the blood of hearts, my brother, my partner and competitor in the most exalted enterprises, my mate in empire, my friend and companion in the front lines of war, the arm of my own body, and the heart where my heart kindles its thoughts of courage — let me lament that our stars, which could not be reconciled, should divide us and bring us to this conclusion. Hear me, good friends —”

Caesar saw an Egyptian messenger arriving, so he said, “But I will tell you at some more suitable time. This man has obviously come on important business. We will hear what he says.”

Caesar asked, “Where have you come from?”

“I have come from one who is still a poor Egyptian,” the messenger replied.

He was aware that soon Egypt would become a Roman province and would be no longer a sovereign nation.

He continued, “Queen Cleopatra is shut up in the only thing she has left: her monument, which is her tomb. She wishes to know what you intend to do so that she may prepare herself to bend the way she is forced to.”

“Tell her to have courage,” Caesar said. “She soon shall know, by some messengers of ours, how honorably and how kindly we will treat her; Caesar cannot live as an ignoble person.”

“May the gods preserve you!” the Egyptian messenger replied, and then he exited.

Using the royal plural, Caesar said, “Come here, Proculeius. Go to Cleopatra and say that we intend to give her no shame. Give to her whatever comforts and comforting words are necessary to keep her, in her grief, from defeating us by giving herself mortal wounds and committing suicide. If we can keep her alive and have her appear in our triumphal procession in Rome, the memory of my triumph will be eternal. Go, and as quickly as you can come back and tell us what she says and what you can learn about her.”

“Caesar, I shall,” Proculeius said, and then he exited.

“Gallus, go with him,” Caesar ordered.

Gallus exited.

Caesar asked, “Where’s Dolabella? He should assist Proculeius.”

“Dolabella!” the others called.

“Let him alone,” Caesar said. “I remember now that he is elsewhere employed. He shall return in time to be ready for this job.”

He added, “Go with me to my tent, where you shall see how reluctantly I was drawn into this war. I always proceeded calmly and gently in all my letters to Antony. Come with me, and see the letters I will show to you.”

— 5.2 —

Cleopatra, Charmian, and Iras were in a room in Cleopatra’s monument.

Cleopatra said, “My desolation begins to make a better life. It is paltry to be Caesar; he is not Fortune, but only Fortune’s servant: a minister of her will.”

She added, “It is great to do that thing that ends all other deeds. That thing stops accidents and changes from happening, that thing sleeps, and that thing never again tastes food from the earth — food that feeds both the beggar’s nurse and Caesar’s nurse.”

Proculeius arrived.

Proculeius said, “Caesar sends greetings to the Queen of Egypt, and he asks you to think about what fair requests you want to have him grant you.”

“What’s your name?” Cleopatra asked.

“My name is Proculeius.”

“Antony told me about you. He told me to trust you, but I have little risk of being deceived, since I will not trust anyone. If your master wants a Queen to be his beggar, you must tell him that majesty, to keep up appearances, must beg for no less than a Kingdom. If he will give me conquered Egypt so I can give it to my son, he gives me so much of what is my own that I will kneel to him with thanks.”

“Be of good cheer,” Proculeius said. “You’ve fallen into a Princely hand. Fear nothing. Give your fate freely to my lord, who is so full of grace that it flows over onto all who are in need. Let me report to him that you are willingly dependent on him and you shall find that he is a conqueror who will ask you how he can be kind to those who kneel before him and ask him for grace.”

“Please tell him that I am a vassal to his good fortune, and I send to him the greatness that he has earned. Each hour I learn how to be obedient, and I would gladly meet with him.”

“This I’ll report, dear lady,” Proculeius replied. “Have comfort because I know that your plight is pitied by him who caused it.”

Gallus and some Roman soldiers entered the room.

Gallus said, “You see how easily Cleopatra may be surprised and captured.”

He said to the soldiers, “Guard her until Caesar comes.”

“Royal Queen!” Iras said.

“Oh, Cleopatra!” Charmian said. “You have been captured, Queen.”

“Be quick, quick, my good hands,” Cleopatra said, drawing a dagger and intending to kill herself.

“Stop, worthy lady, stop,” Proculeius said, taking the dagger

forcefully away from her. “Don’t do yourself such wrong. In this you are rescued, not betrayed.”

“Rescued from death?” Cleopatra said. “Rescued from the thing that keeps our dogs from suffering a lingering illness?”

“Cleopatra,” Proculeius said, “do not abuse my master’s bounty by killing yourself. Let the world see Caesar displaying his nobleness and generosity to you. If you die, he will not be able to display those qualities to you.”

“Where are you, Death?” Cleopatra asked. “Come here, come! Come, come, and take a Queen who is worth many babes and beggars — your easiest conquests!”

“Control yourself, lady,” Proculeius said.

“Sir, I will eat no food,” Cleopatra said. “I will not drink, sir. If idle talk will once be necessary, I will not talk. I will not sleep, either. This mortal house — my body — I’ll ruin, no matter what Caesar does to try to stop me. Know, sir, that I will not wait, bound, at your master’s court, nor ever be chastised by the sober eye of dull Octavia. Shall they hoist me up in a triumphal procession and display me to the shouting commoners of censuring Rome? I prefer that a ditch in Egypt be my gentle grave! I prefer to lie stark naked on the mud of the Nile River and let the water-flies lay their eggs in or on my skin, causing my body to swell up and become abhorrent! I prefer to make my country’s high obelisks my gibbet, where I will be hanged up in chains!”

“Your thoughts of horror go way beyond anything that Caesar shall give you cause to think,” Proculeius said.

Dolabella entered the room and said, “Proculeius, your master, Caesar, knows what you have done, and he has sent for you. As for the Queen, I will guard her.”

“This is good, Dolabella,” Proculeius said. “Be gentle to

her.”

Proculeius said to Cleopatra, “I will tell Caesar whatever message you want to give him, if you want me to serve as your messenger.”

“Tell him that I want to die.”

Proculeius and the Roman soldiers exited, leaving behind Dolabella, Cleopatra, Charmian, and Iras.

“Most noble Empress, have you heard of me?” Dolabella asked.

“I cannot tell.”

“I am sure that you know about me.”

“It does not matter, sir, what I have heard or known,” Cleopatra replied. “You laugh when boys or women tell their dreams — isn’t that your custom?”

“I don’t understand, madam,” Dolabella replied.

“I dreamed that an Emperor Antony existed,” Cleopatra said. “Oh, I wish that I could sleep another such sleep, so that I might see another such man!”

“If it might please you —” Dolabella began.

Cleopatra interrupted, “His face was like the Heavens; and in his face were a Sun and a Moon, which kept their course, and lighted the little O — the Earth.”

“Most sovereign creature —” Dolabella began.

Cleopatra continued: “His legs bestrode the ocean. His reared arm dominated the world. His voice had the properties of all the tuned spheres, and he sounded like the music of the spheres when he talked to friends, but when he meant to make the world quail and shake, his voice was like rattling

thunder. As for his bounty, it had no winter; his bounty was like an autumn with a bountiful harvest — autumn is the season of plenty. His delights were dolphin-like; they showed his back above the element they lived in — he was like a dolphin whose enjoyment of the sea it lives in causes it to swim energetically and raise its back above the surface of the sea. Among his servants were Kings and Princes. Realms and islands were like coins that dropped from his pocket.”

“Cleopatra!” Dolabella said.

“Do you think there was, or might be, such a man as this man I dreamed about?”

“Gentle madam, no.”

“You lie, and the gods hear you lie,” Cleopatra said. “But, if there is, or ever were, a man such as he, his greatness would be too much to dream about. Nature lacks the material to create strange forms that can compete with those made by our imagination. Yet, if Nature could make an image of an Antony, it would be Nature’s masterpiece and it would surpass imagination — it would quite surpass imaginary beings.”

“Listen to me, good madam,” Dolabella said. “Your loss is like yourself — great — and you bear it appropriately for its greatness. I wish that I might never achieve the success I pursue unless I feel, in empathy for your grief, a grief that smites my very heart at its root.”

“I thank you, sir,” Cleopatra said. “Do you know what Caesar means to do with me?”

“I am loath to tell you what I wish you knew,” Dolabella said.

“Please tell me, sir.”

“Although Caesar is honorable —”

“— he’ll lead me, then, in triumph?”

“Madam, he will,” Dolabella said. “I know he will.”

The sound of a trumpet was heard, and Octavius Caesar, Gallus, Proculeius, Maecenas, and other followers of Caesar entered the room.

“Which is the Queen of Egypt?” Caesar asked.

Dolabella said to Cleopatra, “This is the Emperor, madam.”

This was a way for Dolabella to show respect to Cleopatra. Caesar had stated that he did not know which woman was Cleopatra. Dolabella had therefore pretended that Cleopatra did not know this man is Caesar.

Cleopatra knelt before Caesar.

“Arise, you shall not kneel,” Caesar said. “Please, rise; rise, Queen of Egypt.”

“Sir, the gods will have it thus,” Cleopatra replied. “I must obey my master and my lord.”

She stood up.

“Think no hard thoughts,” Caesar said to her. “The record of those injuries you did to us, although they are written as scars in our flesh, we shall remember as injuries done by accident and chance.”

“Sole ruler of the world,” Cleopatra said. “I cannot state my own case so well as to make it clear and innocent, but I do confess that I have the frailties that often have previously shamed women.”

Caesar said, using the royal plural, “Cleopatra, know that we will forgive rather than punish if you do what we ask of you.

Our intentions towards you are most gentle, and you shall find it to your benefit to conform with our will, but if you seek to give me a reason to be cruel by your taking Antony's course and committing suicide, you shall bereave yourself of my good intentions, and bring destruction to your children — destruction from which I'll guard them if you will rely on me. I'll take my leave."

Caesar wanted to leave, but Cleopatra kept talking.

"You may take your leave — and do whatever you want — throughout the world," Cleopatra said. "The world is yours; and we are your signs of conquest. We are like the shields of enemy warriors that you hang in whatever place you please."

The word "hang" referred both to the shields and to the enemy warriors.

She handed him a document and said, "Here, my good lord."

"You shall advise me in everything that concerns Cleopatra," Caesar said to her.

"This document is a list of the money, plate, and jewels that I possess. It is exactly valued, except that it does not list petty things. Where's Seleucus?"

He entered the room and said, "Here I am, madam."

"This is my treasurer," Cleopatra said to Caesar. "Let him testify, my lord, upon his peril, that I have reserved nothing for myself. Speak the truth, Seleucus."

"Madam," he said to Cleopatra, "I would rather seal my lips, than, to my peril, speak that which is not true."

"What have I kept back for myself? What of value does not appear in this list?" Cleopatra asked.

"Enough to purchase what appears on that list."

Caesar was amused. He also felt that this was a sign that Cleopatra wished to continue to live.

“Don’t blush, Cleopatra,” he said. “I approve of your wisdom in holding back some valuables for yourself.”

“See, Caesar!” Cleopatra complained. “See how pomp is followed! My followers will now be yours; and, if we should change positions, your followers would be mine. The ingratitude of this Seleucus makes me completely wild.”

She said to Seleucus, “Oh, slave. You can be no more trusted than a love who’s hired — a prostitute! What, are you fleeing from me? You have reason to flee from me, I promise you, but I’ll scratch your eyes even if they have wings to flee from me, you slave, you soulless villain, you dog! You are an exceptionally base man!”

“Good Queen, let us entreat you —” Caesar began.

Cleopatra interrupted, “Oh, Caesar, what a wounding shame is this. You condescended to visit me here, you gave the honor of your lordliness to me, one who is so meek, and my own envious servant increased the sum of my disgraces. Let us say, good Caesar, that I have reserved some feminine trifles, unimportant toys, things of such dignity as we give to everyday friends; and let us say that a few nobler tokens I have kept off the list of my possessions so that I can give them to your wife, Livia, and to Octavia to induce them to help me. Let us say these things. Does it follow that a servant of my own household must reveal to you my actions? The gods! I have already fallen so far, and this causes me to fall further.”

She said to Seleucus, “Please, go away from here. If you don’t, I shall show the cinders of my spirits through the ashes of my fortune. Despite my misfortunes, I still have a little spirit left. If you were a man, you would have had mercy on me.”

“Leave us, Seleucus,” Caesar ordered.

Seleucus exited.

“People need to realize that we, the greatest, are thought, mistakenly, to be responsible for things that other people do, and, when we fall in fortune, we answer for that. Therefore, people should feel pity for us when other people, such as Seleucus, try to get credit at the expense of the good names of the greatest.”

“Cleopatra, neither what you have reserved for yourself, nor what you have acknowledged in your list of possessions, will be part of our spoils of war. These possessions still belong to you; do with them whatever you wish. Believe that I, Caesar, am not a merchant who will haggle with you about the things that merchants sell. Therefore, be cheerful. Do not let gloomy thoughts imprison you. No, dear Queen; we intend to treat you as you yourself shall advise us. Eat, and sleep. We care for you and pity you very much, and we remain your friend, and so, *adieu*.”

“My master, and my lord!” Cleopatra said.

“I am neither,” Caesar replied. “*Adieu*.”

Octavius Caesar, Gallus, Proculeius, Maecenas, Dolabella, and the other followers of Caesar exited, leaving behind Cleopatra, Charmian, and Iras.

“Caesar words me, girls, he words me,” Cleopatra said. “He is saying these things so that I will not be noble to myself and commit suicide.”

She said, “Listen, Charmian,” and whispered in her ear.

“End your life, good lady,” Iras said. “The bright day is done, and we are going into the dark.”

“Hurry once more,” Cleopatra said to Charmian. “I have

given my orders already, and what I need has been acquired. Run this errand quickly.”

“Madam, I will,” Charmian said.

Dolabella came back into the room and asked, “Where is the Queen?”

“There she is, sir,” Charmian said, pointing to Cleopatra, and then she exited.

“Dolabella!” Cleopatra said.

“As I promised you,” Dolabella said, “something that my respect for you made me do, I have found out the information you wanted. Caesar intends to journey through Syria, and within three days he will send you and your children ahead of him. Make the best use you can of this information. I have done what you wanted and what I promised to do.”

“Dolabella, I shall remain your debtor,” Cleopatra said.

“I am your servant,” Dolabella replied. “*Adieu*, good Queen; I must attend on Caesar.”

“Farewell, and thanks.”

Dolabella exited.

“Now, Iras,” Cleopatra said. “What do you think? You, as if you were an Egyptian puppet, shall be shown in a triumphal procession in Rome, as well as I. Rude workmen with greasy aprons, rulers, and hammers shall lift us up so that we can be seen. Their thick breaths, which stink because of their poor diet, will make clouds around us, and we will be forced to breathe the vapor inside us.”

“The gods forbid!” Iras said.

“This is most certain to occur, Iras,” Cleopatra said. “Lecherous bailiffs will grab at us as if we were prostitutes;

and scabby rhymers will ballad us out of tune. The quick-witted comedians will perform us in impromptu plays and present our Alexandrian revels; they will act the role of Antony as if he were a drunken alcoholic, and I shall see some squeaking boy act the role of the great Cleopatra as if she were a whore.”

“Oh, the good gods!” Iras said.

“These things are sure to happen,” Cleopatra said.

“I’ll never see them because I am sure that my fingernails are stronger than my eyes,” Iras said.

“Why, that’s the way to foil their scheming plans, and to conquer their most absurd intentions,” Cleopatra said.

Charmian entered the room.

“Charmian!” Cleopatra said. “My women, make me look like a Queen. Go and fetch my best clothing. I am once again — metaphorically — going to the Cydnus River to meet Mark Antony. Iras, go and fetch my clothing.”

Iras exited.

“Now, noble Charmian,” Cleopatra said, “we’ll get things over and done with, indeed. And, when you have done this chore, I’ll give you leave to play until Doomsday — the Day of Judgment.”

Using the royal plural, she said, “Bring to us our crown and all that goes with it.”

Hearing something, she asked, “What is that noise?”

A guard entered the room and said, “A rural fellow who will not be kept from your Highness’ presence insists on seeing you. He brings you figs.”

“Let him come in,” Cleopatra said.

The guard exited to carry out the request.

“How poor an instrument may do a noble deed!” Cleopatra said. “He brings me liberty. My resolution’s fixed, and I have nothing of woman in me — I am not weak. Now from head to foot I am as unchanging as marble; now the fleeting and changing Moon is no planet of mine.”

The guard entered the room, leading a farmer who carried a basket.

“This is the man,” the guard said.

“Go, and leave him here,” Cleopatra said.

The guard exited.

“Have you the pretty snake of the Nile there, the snake that kills without causing pain?” Cleopatra asked.

The pretty snake of the Nile was an asp. Its poison caused the victim to feel sleepy and then die.

“Yes, I have it,” the farmer said, “but I would not be the party who should desire you to touch it, for its bite is immortal; those who die of it seldom or never recover.”

The farmer often misused words. He had said “immortal,” but he had meant “mortal.”

“Do you remember anyone who has died from its bite?”

“Very many, both men and women,” the farmer replied. “I heard about one of them no longer ago than yesterday. She was a very honest woman, but somewhat given to lie, as a woman should not do, except in the way of honesty.”

The farmer’s words had an additional meaning. “Lie” could be understood as “lie with a man,” and “honest” could mean “chaste,” so the farmer was saying, “She was a very honest woman, but somewhat given to lie with a man, as a woman

should not do, except with her husband.”

The farmer continued: “I heard how she died of the snake’s bite and what pain she felt; truly, she made a very good report concerning the snake, but he who will believe all that women say shall never be saved by half that women do, but this is most fallible, this snake’s an odd snake.”

The farmer had misused another word. He had said “fallible,” but he had meant “infallible.”

“Go now,” Cleopatra said. “Farewell.”

“I hope that you will satisfied with the snake,” the farmer replied.

He set down his basket but did not leave.

“Farewell,” Cleopatra said.

“You must know something,” the farmer said. “You must understand that the snake will do what a snake does — it will bite.”

“Yes, yes,” Cleopatra said. “Farewell.”

“Know that the snake is not to be trusted except in the keeping of people who know how to deal with snakes because, indeed, there is no goodness in a snake.”

“Don’t worry about that,” Cleopatra said. “I will be careful.”

“Very good. Give it nothing to eat, please, because it is not worth the feeding.”

“Will it eat me?” Cleopatra asked. She wanted the snake to bite her.

“You must not think I am so simple that I don’t know the Devil himself will not eat a woman,” the farmer said. “I know that a woman is a dish for the gods, if the Devil does

not dress her for the table. But, truly, these same whoreson Devils do the gods great harm when it comes to women; for out of every ten women that the gods make, the Devils mar five.”

“Well, leave now,” Cleopatra said. “Farewell.”

“Yes, indeed,” the farmer said. “I hope that you are pleased with the snake.”

The farmer exited as Iras returned, carrying Cleopatra’s royal robe, crown, and other items.

“Give me my robe, and put my crown on me,” Cleopatra said. “I have longings in me to be immortal. I shall never again drink the wine of Egypt.”

Charmian and Iras began to dress her.

“Smartly, smartly, good Iras; be quick,” Cleopatra said. “I think I hear Antony calling me. I see him rouse himself to praise my noble act. I hear him mock the luck of Caesar, which the gods give men to excuse their wrath to come. Those whom the gods would destroy, they first make fortunate. Husband, I am coming. Let my courage prove that I deserve the title of Antony’s wife! I am fire and air; my other elements — earth and water — I give to baser life. Are you done dressing me? Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips. Farewell, kind Charmian; Iras, farewell for a long time.”

Cleopatra kissed both of them, and Iras dropped dead from grief.

Cleopatra said, “Have I the poison of the asp on my lips? Have you fallen? If you and Nature can so gently part, the stroke of death is like a lover’s pinch, which hurts, and which is desired. Do you lie still? If you vanish like this from the earth, you tell the world it is not worth saying farewell to.”

Charmian said, “Dissolve, thick cloud, and rain, so that I may say that the gods themselves are weeping!”

“This thought I have proves that I am base,” Cleopatra said. “If Iras meets Antony with his curled hair before I do, he will demand a kiss from her and spend that kiss that is my Heaven to have.”

She withdrew an asp from the basket and held it to her breast and said, “Come, you mortal wretch, with your sharp teeth immediately untie this intricate knot of life. You poor venomous fool, be angry and dispatch me. Oh, I wish that you could speak so that I could hear you call great Caesar a politically outmaneuvered ass!”

By killing herself, Cleopatra was frustrating Octavius Caesar’s plans to force her to be in his triumphal procession in Rome.

“Oh, Eastern star!” Charmian said. She was calling Cleopatra Venus.

“Silence! Silence!” Cleopatra said. “Do you not see my baby at my breast, sucking the nurse so that she will fall asleep?”

“Oh, my heart, break!” Charmian said.

“As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle — oh, Antony!” Cleopatra said.

She took another snake from the basket and held it to her arm, saying, “I will take you, too. Why should I stay —”

Cleopatra died.

Charmian finished the sentence for her: “— in this vile world? So, fare you well. Now, Death, boast. In your possession lies an unparalleled lass.”

She closed Cleopatra’s eyelids and said, “Soft eyes, close. Golden Phoebus — the Sun — will never be beheld again by

eyes so royal! Your crown's awry. I'll straighten it, and then play."

Some guards rushed into the room.

The first guard said, "Where is the Queen?"

"Speak softly," Charmian replied. "Don't wake her."

The first guard said, "Caesar has sent —"

Charmian finished the sentence: "— too slow a messenger."

She held an asp to her arm and said, "Oh, Death. Come quickly; hurry! I partly feel you."

The first guard called, "Come here! All's not well! Caesar's been fooled."

The second guard said, "Dolabella was sent here from Caesar; call him."

"What deed is this!" the first guard said. "Charmian, is this well done?"

"It is well done," she replied, "and this deed is fitting for a Princess descended from so many royal Kings. Ah, soldier!"

Charmian died.

Dolabella came into the room and asked, "What is going on here?"

The second guard replied, "Everyone is dead."

Dolabella said, "Caesar, your suspicions have come true in this room. You yourself are coming to see performed the dreaded act that you so sought to stop."

Outside the room came cries: "Make way for Caesar! Make a path for Caesar!"

Octavius Caesar and others entered the room.

Dolabella said to Caesar, “Oh, sir, you are too accurate an augur; that which you feared would happen has happened.”

“Bravest at the end, Cleopatra guessed at our purposes, and, being royal, she took her own way,” Caesar said. “How did they die? I do not see them bleed.”

“Who was the last person to be with them?” Dolabella asked.

“A simple farmer, who brought her figs,” the first guard said. He pointed and added, “This was his basket.”

“They were poisoned, then,” Caesar said.

“Oh, Caesar,” the first guard said. “Charmian was alive just now; she stood and spoke. I found her straightening the diadem on her dead mistress. Tremblingly, Charmian stood and then suddenly dropped to the floor.”

“Women are weak, but these women were noble,” Caesar said. “If they had swallowed poison, we would know it because their bodies would be swollen, but Cleopatra looks like she is sleeping. She looks as if she would catch another Antony in her strong net of grace.”

Dolabella said, “Here, on her breast, there are small holes and a trickling of blood. The same is true of her arm.”

“This is an asp’s trail,” the first guard said, “and these fig-leaves have slime upon them, such as the asp leaves in the caves of the Nile.”

“Most probably Cleopatra died from the asp’s bite,” Caesar said, “for her physician tells me she had pursued innumerable experiments to find easy ways to die. Pick up her bed; and carry her dead women servants from the monument. She shall be buried by her Antony. No grave upon the earth shall embrace in it a pair of lovers as famous as these two. Tragic catastrophes such as these distress those who cause them; and their story is no less in pity than is the

glory of the man who caused them to be lamented. Our army shall in solemn show attend this funeral, and then we shall go to Rome. Dolabella, ensure that this great ceremony is conducted with dignified splendor.”

Chapter II: CORIOLANUS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Male Characters

Caius Martius, *later named Coriolanus; Coriolanus means "Conqueror of the City of Corioli"*

Cominius, Titus Lartius, *Roman Generals against the Volscians*

Menenius Agrippa, *friend to Coriolanus; Menenius is an elderly man who is like a father to Coriolanus*

Sicinius Velutus, Junius Brutus, *old men who are Tribunes of the people*

Young Martius, *son to Coriolanus*

A Roman Herald

Tullus Aufidius, *General of the Volscians*

Lieutenant to Aufidius

Conspirators with Aufidius

A Roman named Nicanor

A Volscian named Adrian

A Citizen of Antium

Two Volscian Guards

Female Characters

Volumnia, *mother to Coriolanus*

Virgilia, *wife to Coriolanus*

Valeria, *a noble lady of Rome, friend to Volumnia and Virgilia*

Gentlewoman, *attendant of Virgilia*

Minor Characters

Roman and Volscian Senators, Patricians, Aediles, Lictors, Soldiers, Citizens, Messengers, Servants to Aufidius, and other Attendants

Scene

Rome and the Volscian country to the south, with the Volscian towns of Corioli and Antium.

Time

Very early Roman Republic. As a young man, Coriolanus helped depose the last King of Rome: Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (flourished 6th century BCE; died 495 BCE). After being deposed, Tarquin fought a number of battles as he tried unsuccessfully to return to Rome and become King again. Coriolanus fought in the last of those battles. Tarquin is traditionally the seventh and last king of Rome, and some scholars believe him to be a historical figure. His reign is dated from 534 to 509 BCE. Rome at this time is far from being an empire.

Note

The patricians are the aristocracy.

The plebeians are the common people.

CHAPTER 1**— 1.1 —**

A gang of mutinous citizens, armed with staves, clubs, and other weapons, stood on a street in Rome. These impoverished citizens were plebeians, or common people; the wealthy citizens of Rome were patricians. The Senators of Rome were patricians.

The first citizen said, “Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.”

The other citizens replied, “Speak, speak.”

“You are all resolved to die rather than to starve?” the first citizen asked.

“We are resolved,” most of the other citizens replied.

“First, you know that Caius Martius is chief enemy to the people,” the first citizen said.

“We know it,” most of the other citizens replied. “We know it.”

“Let us kill him,” the first citizen said, “and we’ll have grain at our own price. Is it a verdict? Are we agreed that we shall kill Caius Martius?”

“No more talking about it,” most of the other citizens replied. “Let it be done. Let’s go! Let’s go!”

The second citizen said, “One word, good citizens.”

The first citizen said, “We are accounted poor — both impoverished and bad — citizens. In contrast, the patricians are accounted good citizens. The food that those in authority feast on to excess on would relieve our hunger. If they would give us just the leftovers, as long as they are wholesome and haven’t yet gone bad, we might think that they had relieved

us humanely, but they think we are too dear — they think that relieving our hunger would be too expensive. The leanness that afflicts us, the spectacle of our misery, is like an item on a balance sheet that shows their abundant net wealth; our suffering is a gain to them. As long as we don't have enough, the patricians will have more than enough.

“Let us revenge this with our pitchforks before we become as lean as rakes, for the gods know I speak this out of my hunger for bread, not out of thirst for revenge.”

The second citizen asked, “Would you proceed especially against Caius Martius?”

The other citizens replied, “Against him first: He's a very dog — a ruthless enemy — to the common people.”

“Have you considered what service he has done for his country?” the second citizen asked.

“Yes, very much,” the first citizen said, “and we could be happy to give him a good reputation for it, except that he pays himself with being proud.”

“Don't speak maliciously,” the second citizen requested.

“I say to you that what Martius has done that has made him famous, he did it to that end: He did it in order to become famous. Though soft-hearted men can be content to say he did it for his country, he did it to please his mother and in part because of his pride — and he is proud, even up to the altitude of his virtue.”

Roman virtue consisted largely of being valiant. The Romans highly valued courage, and no one denied that Martius was courageous.

“What Martius cannot help in his nature, you account a vice in him,” the second citizen said. “You must in no way say he is covetous.”

“If I must not say he is covetous, I need not be barren of accusations,” the first citizen said. “Martius has enough faults, and more, to tire whoever tries to state them all. If I were to list all his faults, I would grow weary before I had named them all.”

Shouts were heard coming from where the Roman Senators had been meeting. Other groups of plebeians were rebelling out of hunger, and the Senators had met to discuss the crisis.

“What shouts are these?” the first citizen asked. “The plebeians on the other side of the city have risen in mutiny. Why are we staying here prating in idle conversation? To the Capitol!”

“Let’s go!” the other citizens said.

Menenius Agrippa, one of the patricians in Rome, walked over to the common citizens.

“Wait!” the first citizen said. “Who is coming here?”

“It is worthy Menenius Agrippa,” the second citizen said. “He is one who has always loved the people.”

“He’s one who is honest enough,” the first citizen said. “I wish all the rest were honest like him!”

Actually, Menenius could be outspoken in his criticism of the plebeians, but he was willing to talk to them. A patrician didn’t have to do much to get the approval of many plebeians.

“What work, my countrymen, is in hand?” Menenius asked. “Where are you going with your cudgels and clubs? What is the matter? Tell me, please.”

“Our business is not unknown to the Senate,” the first citizen said. “The Senators have had knowledge for a fortnight of what we intend to do, which now we’ll show them in deeds.”

They say poor petitioners have strong breaths; they shall know we have strong arms, too.”

The strong breaths meant bad breaths, and also strong language.

“Why, masters, my good friends, my honest neighbors,” Menenius said, “will you ruin yourselves?”

“We cannot, sir, because we are ruined already,” the first citizen said. “We are starving.”

“I tell you, friends, the patricians take most charitable care of you,” Menenius said. “As for your needs, your suffering in this famine, you may as well strike at the Heavens with your staves as lift them against the Roman state, whose course will continue on the way it takes, cracking asunder ten thousand curbs of stronger link than can ever appear in your impediment against Rome. The Roman government will continue, no matter how many common citizens mutiny against it. The Roman government is far stronger than you.

“As for the dearth of food, the gods, not the patricians, cause the famine, and bowing your knees in prayer to them, and not using your arms to lift weapons against the Senate, must help.

“Alas, you are carried away by calamity to the point of mutiny against the Senate, where more care is given to you than you know, and you slander the helmsmen who guide the state and who care for you like fathers, when you curse them as enemies.”

“Care for us! That is true, indeed!” the first citizen said, sarcastically. “They have never cared for us yet. They allow us to starve, while their storehouses are crammed with grain. They make edicts for usury, to support usurers. They repeal daily any wholesome act of law established against the rich, and they provide more piercing, oppressive statutes daily, to

chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars don't eat us up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us."

Menenius replied, "Either you citizens must confess that you yourselves are wondrously malicious, or be accused of folly. I shall tell you a pretty tale. It may be that you have heard it so much that it is stale to you, but since it serves my purpose, I will venture to make it a little staler by telling it to you once more."

"Well, I'll hear it, sir," the first citizen said, "yet you must not think to fob off our degrading misfortune with a tale. But since it pleases you to tell the tale, deliver it."

Menenius said, "There was a time when all the body's members rebelled against the belly, accusing it like this: They said that like a gulf or pit the belly remained in the midst of the body, idle and inactive, always stowing away in cupboards the food, never bearing any labor with the rest of the body's parts, doing nothing while the other parts did such instrumental tasks as seeing and hearing, devising, instructing, walking, feeling, and mutually working together in order to minister to the appetites and desires common to the whole body. The belly answered —"

Menenius paused, and the first citizen asked, "Well, sir, what answer did the belly make?"

"Sir, I shall tell you," Menenius replied.

He twisted his belly fat into a smile, and said, "The belly answered with a kind of smile, which never came from the lungs."

A belly smile that comes from the lungs is a belly laugh.

Menenius repeated, "The belly answered with a kind of smile, which never came from the lungs but just like this — for, you see, I may make the belly smile as well as speak —"

”

Menenius farted and then said, “— it tauntingly replied to the discontented members, the mutinous parts that envied what the belly possessed.

“The belly’s response was exactly as fitting and suitable as the way you malign our Senators because they are not like you.”

Should the belly mock the complaining members of the belly? Should the citizens malign the Senators?

If the answer to both questions is no, then the Senators ought not to be mocked because the famine was not caused by them. Also, the belly ought not to mock the other members of the body because in fact those members are starving.

If the answer to both questions is yes, then the Senators ought to be mocked because they are holding back food from the citizens. Also, the belly ought to mock the citizens because that accurately expresses the attitude of the belly — the Senators — toward the other parts of the body — the citizens.

“That is your belly’s answer!” the first citizen said. “Why, the head crowns our body like a King, the eye is vigilant, the heart provides counsel, the arm acts as our soldier, the leg acts as our steed, the tongue acts as our trumpeter, and other furnishings and petty helps make up this fabric of our body, and if they —”

“What then?” Menenius interrupted. “By God, this fellow speaks and speaks! What then? What then?”

“— and if they should be restrained by the cormorant — greedy — belly, the belly that is the sink and sewer of the body —”

“Well, what then?” Menenius interrupted.

“The former agents — the parts of the body I just mentioned — if they did complain, what could the belly answer?” the first citizen asked.

“I will tell you,” Menenius replied. “If you’ll bestow a small part — of what you have little — of your patience awhile, you’ll hear the belly’s answer.”

“You’re taking your sweet time telling us,” the first citizen complained.

“Note this, good friend,” Menenius said. “Your most grave belly was deliberate, and took thought, and was not rash like his accusers, and thus answered: ‘It is true, my incorporate, joined-in-one-body friends,’ said he, ‘that I receive first all the food that you live upon, and that is fitting because I am the storehouse and the workshop of the whole body, but, if you remember, I send it through the rivers of your blood, even to the court of the heart and to the throne of the brain, and, through the channels and various parts of man. The strongest muscles and the smallest and least important veins receive from me that natural competency — sufficient supply — whereby they live. And although all at once, you, my good friends’ — this said the belly, listen to me carefully —”

“Yes, sir,” the first citizen said. “We are listening carefully.”

“The belly said, ‘Although all at once you cannot see the big picture and you cannot see what I deliver out to each member, yet I can compile records for an auditor that will show that all of you from me receive the flour — the best part of the food — and leave me only the bran.’”

“What do you say to this?”

One answer could have been that the citizens’ bellies were lean, and Menenius’ belly was not.

The first citizen said, “It was an answer. How do you apply this parable to our situation?”

Menenius replied, “The Senators of Rome are this good belly, and you are the mutinous members. If you examine the Senators’ counsels and their cares, and if you digest and understand things rightly that concern the welfare of the common people, you shall find no public benefit that you receive unless it proceeds — comes — from the Senators to you and in no way from yourselves.

“What do you think, you, the big toe of this assembly?”

One answer could have been that the citizens worked and were productive and so provided some things for themselves — and for the patricians.

The first citizen said, “Am I the big toe? Why am I the big toe?”

“Because, being one of the lowest, basest, poorest, of this most ‘wise’ rebellion, you go foremost, like a big toe.

“You rascal, who are worst in blood to run, lead first to win some advantage.”

A rascal is a poor hunting dog. Menenius was insulting the first citizen by calling him a dog that is poorly bred and poor at hunting, but that leads the pack of dogs when there is some reward to be gotten.

Menenius then said to the citizens, “But make ready your stout bats and clubs: Rome and her rats are at the point of battle. One side must suffer pain.”

Caius Martius, whom the plebeian citizens had earlier talked about killing, walked over to Menenius and the group of citizens.

Menenius greeted him: “Hail, noble Martius!”

Martius replied, "Thanks."

Then he turned to the plebeians and said, "What's the matter, you dissentious rogues, you who, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion, make yourselves scabs?"

The first citizen said sarcastically, "We always have your good words about us."

Martius replied, "He who will give good words to you will flatter those who are beneath abhorring. What would you have, you curs, who like neither peace nor war? War frightens you, and peace makes you proud and rebellious.

"He who trusts to you, where he ought to find that you are lions, finds that you are hares. Where there are foxes, you are geese."

In this society, one kind of sword was known as a fox.

Martius continued, "You are no surer, no, than is the coal of fire upon the ice, or an icy hailstone in the hot sun. Your virtue is to respect as a worthy man a criminal who is punished; your virtue is also to curse the just man who punished the criminal.

"Whoever deserves greatness deserves your hatred because your desires are the appetite of a sick man who desires most that which would increase his evil illness.

"He who depends upon your favors swims with fins of lead and hews down oaks with flimsy rushes. Hang all of you! Should I trust any of you?

"With every minute you change your mind, and call a man noble who was just now the object of your hatred, and you call a man vile who was just now a hero wearing a garland of honor.

"What's the matter that in several places in the city you cry

out against the noble Senators, who, under the gods, keep you in awe, you who otherwise would feed on one another?"

Rather than engage in dialogue with a plebeian, Martius asked Menenius, "What's their seeking? What do they want?"

"They want grain at prices they themselves set," Menenius replied. "They say that the city has large stockpiles of grain."

"Hang them! They say!" Martius said. "They'll sit by the fire, and presume to know what's done in the Capitol; who's likely to rise, who thrives and who declines; side with or against factions; and give out conjectural marriages, making some parties strong and making those parties that stand not in their liking feeble below their cobbled shoes."

"They say there's grain enough! I wish that the nobility would lay aside their pity and let me use my sword. I'll make a quarry of heaps of dead bodies with thousands of these hacked-into-pieces slaves; I'll make a quarry as high as I can throw my lance."

In this society, the word "quarry" was used to refer to a heap of dead animals; for example, a heap of deer that had been killed in a hunt.

Menenius said, "No need, these plebeians are almost thoroughly persuaded not to rebel because although they abundantly lack discretion, the better part of valor, yet they are surpassingly cowardly. But I ask you, what does the other troop of rebelling plebeians have to say?"

"That troop has dissolved, hang them!" Martius said. "They said they were an-hungry."

"An-hungry" was a nonstandard way of saying "hungry." By saying the plebeians used the word "an-hungry," Martius was saying that they were hicks.

Martius continued, “They sighed forth proverbs — that hunger broke stone walls, that dogs must eat, that food was made for mouths, that the gods did not send grain for the rich men only. With these shreds of clichés, they vented their complaints.”

In this society, the word “vented” meant “expressed” — and “farted.”

Martius continued, “Their complaints were answered, and a petition was granted them, a strange one — to break the heart of generosity, and make bold power look pale.”

In this society, the word “generosity,” in addition to its usual meaning, referred to the patricians. The Latin word “*generosus*” means “of noble birth.”

Martius felt that the patricians had been overly generous in meeting the demands of the plebeians, and the patricians would pay for their generosity. In this society, “to break the heart of generosity” could mean “to crush the nobility.” “To break the heart” could mean either “to crush the spirit” or “to take the life.”

Martius continued, “They threw their hats into the air as if they wanted to hang them on the horns of the Moon, shouting their emulation.”

In this society, “emulation” meant “envy.” The plebeians envied — and hated — the patricians, according to Martius.

Menenius asked, “What has been granted to the plebeians?”

“Five Tribunes of their own choice to defend their vulgar wisdoms,” Martius replied. “One of the Tribunes they elected is Junius Brutus, another is Sicinius Velutus, and I don’t know the others — damn!

“The rabble would have first unroofed the city before it so prevailed with me. The rabble will in time overthrow the

patricians' power and bring forth greater reasons that argue in favor of insurrection."

Menenius said, "This is strange."

Menenius, like Martius, was against the plebeians having Tribunes.

Martius ordered the plebeians, "Go, get you home, you fragments!"

In this society, "fragments" were bits and pieces of leftover food.

A messenger arrived; he had been rushing to find Martius.

The plebeians stayed to find out what the messenger wanted.

The messenger asked, "Where's Caius Martius?"

"Here I am. What's the matter?"

"The news is, sir, the enemy Volscians have taken up arms against us."

"I am glad of it," Martius said. "Now we shall have means to vent — get rid of — our musty superfluity."

Literally, "musty superfluity" meant "moldy excess food." Martius used it metaphorically to mean "bad-tempered excess plebeians."

Martius said, "Look, our best elders are coming."

The patricians Cominius, Titus Lartius, and some Senators walked over to them, as did the plebeians Junius Brutus and Sicinius Velutus, two of the newly chosen Tribunes.

The first Senator said, "Martius, what you recently told us is true: The Volscians are up in arms."

Martius said, "They have a leader, Tullus Aufidius, who will

put you to it. He is a military leader who will put you to the test. I sin in envying his nobility, and if I were anything but what I am, I would wish that I were only he.”

Cominius said, “You have fought against each other.”

“If one half of the world fought the other half in a war, and he was on my side, I would revolt and go to the other side — I would fight all my wars only against him. He is a lion that I am proud to hunt.”

“Then, worthy Martius,” the first Senator said, “fight under the command of Cominius in these wars.”

“So you have formerly promised,” Cominius said.

“Sir, so I have,” Martius replied, “and I will do what I have promised.”

He then said, “Titus Lartius, you shall see me once more strike at Tullus Aufidius’ face.”

Seeing that Titus Lartius was wounded, he said, “Are you stiff and sore from your wound? Will you not fight in this war?”

“Caius Martius,” Titus Lartius said, “if I have to, I’ll lean upon one crutch and fight with the other before I stay behind and not fight in this war.”

“You are a true-bred man!” Martius said.

The first Senator said to Martius, “I request your company at the Capitol, where, I know, our greatest and most powerful friends are waiting for us.”

Titus Lartius said to Cominius, “You lead us.”

He then said to Martius, “You follow Cominius. We will follow you. It is right and worthy that you have priority before us.”

Cominius approved: “Noble Martius!”

The first Senator said to the group of plebeians, “Go from hence to your homes; be gone!”

Martius said, “No, let them follow us. The Volscians have much grain; take these rats thither to gnaw in their granaries.”

He said sarcastically to the group of plebeians, “Worshipful mutineers, your valor well puts forth shoots — it is very promising. Please, follow us.”

The patricians departed to go to the Capitol. The group of plebeians did not follow them, but stole away to their homes.

Sicinius and Brutus, the two plebeian Tribunes, stayed behind and talked.

“Was any man ever as proud as is this Martius?” Sicinius asked.

“He has no equal.”

“When we were chosen Tribunes for the people —”

Brutus interrupted: “Did you notice his sneering lips and eyes?”

“No, but I did notice his taunts.”

“Once moved to anger, Martius will not refrain from scoffing at and criticizing the gods,” Brutus said.

“He will mock the modest Moon,” Sicinius said.

The Moon is modest because the Moon-goddess is Diana, a virgin.

Brutus said, “May the present wars devour him. He is grown too proud to be so valiant. He takes too much pride in his courage, and his pride, taken together with his courage,

makes him dangerous to us.”

Sicinius said, “Such a nature, tickled and gratified by good success, disdains the shadow that he treads on at noon.”

At noon, shadows are underfoot, but during the afternoon, the shadows lengthen.

Sicinius continued, “But I wonder whether his insolence will allow him to endure being given orders by Cominius.”

“Fame, at which Martius aims, and whose goddess has already well graced him, cannot be better held nor more attained than by a place below the first,” Brutus said, “for what miscarries shall be General Cominius’ fault, even though he performs to the utmost of a man. If Cominius fails, people will with giddy censure then cry out, ‘Oh, if only Martius had been in charge of the war!’”

Sicinius said, “Besides, if things go well, Martius shall get much of the credit. People have such a good opinion of Martius that they will rob Cominius of the praise that he deserves.”

“Yes,” Brutus said, “half of all Cominius’ honors will go to Martius, even though Martius does not earn them, and all of Cominius’ faults in the war shall lead to people giving honor to Martius, even though Martius indeed does not deserve any honor for anything he does.”

“Let’s go from here, and hear how the orders for war are made, and see in what fashion, more than his self-importance, Martius acts during this present situation,” Sicinius said.

Brutus replied, “Let’s go.”

— 1.2 —

Tullus Aufidius and some Volscian Senators met in the city

of Corioli.

The first Senator said, “So, your opinion is, Aufidius, that the Romans know about our plans and know how we are proceeding.”

“Isn’t this also your opinion?” Aufidius said. “What plans have ever been thought of in this state that could be brought to bodily act before Rome had the means to circumvent them? The Romans always know what we plan to do.

“Four days have not passed since I received a letter from Rome. Let me read the words. I think I have the letter here; yes, here it is.”

He read the letter out loud:

“They have drafted soldiers for an army, but it is not known whether the army will head east or west. The famine in Rome is great, the people are rebellious, and it is rumored that three people — Cominius; your old enemy Martius, who is in Rome worse hated than you hate him; and Titus Lartius, a very valiant Roman — lead these forces prepared for war to wherever it is bent. Most likely it is headed for you. Consider this information carefully.”

The Volscian territory lay southeast and southwest of Rome.

The first Senator said, “Our army’s in the field. We have never yet doubted Rome was ready to fight us.”

“Nor did you think it folly to keep your great plans veiled until when they necessarily must reveal themselves,” Aufidius said. “It seems that in the hatching — the planning stages — our plot became visible and known in Rome.

“Because of the discovery by the Romans of our plot, we shall fall short of our aim, which was to capture many towns almost before Rome would know what we were up to.”

The second Senator said, “Noble Aufidius, take your commission. Hurry to your bands of warriors. Let us stay here alone to guard Corioli. If the Romans lay siege to us, bring your army here to remove the Romans, but I think you’ll find that the Romans will not be prepared for us.”

“Oh, don’t think that the Romans will not be prepared,” Aufidius replied. “I speak from certain knowledge and experience that they will be prepared. What’s more, some parcels of their army are in the field already, and they are coming only toward us.

“I now leave your honors. If we — my army and me — and Caius Martius chance to meet, it is sworn between us that we shall continue to strike blows at each other until one of us can do so no more.”

The Senators said, “May the gods assist you!”

“And keep your honors safe!” Aufidius said.

“Farewell,” the first Senator said.

“Farewell,” the second Senator said.

Everyone said, “Farewell.”

— 1.3 —

In a room in Martius’ house, Volumnia and Virgilia sat on low stools and sewed. Volumnia was Coriolanus’ mother, and Virgilia was his wife and the mother of his son.

Volumnia said, “Please, daughter-in-law, sing, or express yourself in a more cheerful way. If my son were my husband, I would more freely rejoice in that absence wherein he won honor than in the sexual embraces in his bed where he would show most love. When he was still only tender-bodied and the only son of my womb, when youth with its beauty drew all eyes his way, when a mother would not allow him to be

even an hour out of her sight even if Kings would beg her for an entire day to do so, I, considering how honor would befit such a person, and considering that a person's attractiveness was no better than something picture-like to hang by the wall, if the desire for renown made the person not stir and take action, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was likely to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brows bound with an oaken wreath as a reward for saving the life of a Roman soldier. I tell you, daughter-in-law, my heart sprang not more in joy at first hearing I had given birth to a boy than when I first saw that he had proven himself to be a man."

Virgilia said, "But what if he had died in the war, madam, what then?"

"Then his good reputation would have become my son," Volumnia replied. "I would have found my child in his good reputation. Hear me profess what I sincerely believe: If I had a dozen sons, each in my love alike and none less dear than your and my good Martius, I had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously indulge himself out of combat."

A gentlewoman entered the room and said to Volumnia, "Madam, the lady Valeria has come to visit you."

Virgilia said to Volumnia, "Please, give me permission to retire and be by myself."

"Indeed, you shall not," Volumnia replied. "I think I hear coming toward us the sound of your husband's drum, I think I see him pluck Aufidius down by the hair. I think I see the Volscians shunning Martius, running away from him as children run away from a bear. I think I see him stamp his feet like this" — she stamped her feet — "and call like this: 'Come on, you cowards! You were begot in fear, although you were born in Rome.' I think I see him wipe his bloody

brow with his mailed, aka armored, hand, and then he goes forth, as if he were a harvestman who has been tasked to mow either all the tops of wheat or all the heads of enemy soldiers, or else lose his wages.”

Virgilia said, “His bloody brow! Oh, Jupiter, King of the gods, let there be no blood!”

“Go away, you fool!” Volumnia said. “Blood becomes a man more than gilt becomes his trophy. The breasts of Hecuba, Queen of Troy, when she suckled her son Hector, who was the greatest soldier of Troy in the Trojan War, did not look lovelier than Hector’s forehead when it spit blood at the Grecian sword, scorning what had wounded it.”

She then said to the gentlewoman, “Tell Valeria that we are fit and ready to bid her welcome.”

The gentlewoman exited in order to carry out the order.

Virgilia said, “May the Heavens bless my lord and protect him from the deadly enemy warrior Aufidius!”

Volumnia said, “Martius will beat Aufidius’ head below his knee and tread upon his neck.”

The gentlewoman returned with Valeria. With them was a male usher.

Valeria said, “My ladies both, good day to you.”

“Sweet madam,” Volumnia said.

“I am glad to see your ladyship,” Virgilia said.

“How are you both?” Valeria asked. “You are obviously housekeepers. You stay at home and do housework.”

She asked Virgilia, “What are you sewing here? A fine spot of embroidery, indeed! How is your little son?”

“I thank your ladyship,” Virgilia said. “My son is well, good madam.”

Volumnia said, “He had rather see the swords, and hear a drum, than look upon his schoolmaster.”

“On my word, he is his father’s son,” Valeria said. “I’ll swear, he is a very good-looking boy. Truly, I looked at him for an entire half an hour on Wednesday. He has such a resolute bearing. I saw him run after a colorful butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go again; and he chased after it again; and he fell down and rolled over and over, and again he chased and caught it, and whether his fall enraged him, or for whatever reason, he clenched his teeth together and tore it. I swear to you that he mamocked it! — he tore the butterfly to pieces!”

Volumnia said, “He had one of his father’s moods.”

“Indeed, he is a noble child,” Valeria said.

Virgilia, the child’s mother, said, “Madam, he is a crack — a young rascal.”

“Come, lay aside your stitchery,” Valeria said. “I must have you play the idle housewife with me this afternoon.”

Good Roman wives stayed at home while their husbands were away.

“No, good madam,” Virgilia said, “I will not go out of doors.”

“Not go out of doors!” Valeria said.

“She shall, she shall,” Volumnia said.

“Indeed, no, if you please,” Virgilia said. “I’ll not go over the threshold until my lord — my husband — returns from the wars.”

“Bah, you confine yourself at home most unreasonably,” Valeria said. “Come, you must go and visit the good lady who lies in — you must visit the good lady who is soon to give birth.”

“I will wish her a speedy recovery for after she gives birth,” Virgilia replied, “and I will visit her with my prayers, but I cannot go there physically to visit her.”

“Why, I ask you?” Volumnia said.

“It is not to save labor, nor is it that I lack charity,” Virgilia replied.

“You want to be another Penelope,” Valeria said, “yet, they say, all the yarn she spun in Ulysses’ absence only filled Ithaca full of moths.”

Penelope was the wife of Ulysses, who spent ten years fighting at Troy, and then, because of misfortunes such as captivity, spent another ten years getting back to his home island of Ithaca. He was away so long that people thought he had died, and young men courted his wife, Penelope, who remained faithful to him. Pressed to marry one of the suitors, she said that she would choose one to marry after she had finished weaving a shroud for Ulysses’ father. Each day she wove, and each night she unwound the work she had done. Moths are parasites. Moths ate the yarn, and young suitors ate Ulysses’ cattle and drank his wine.

Valeria continued, “Come; I wish the cambric cloth you are embroidering were as sensitive to pain as your finger, so that out of pity you might stop pricking it with your needle. Come, you shall go with us.”

“No, good madam, pardon me,” Virgilia said. “Indeed, I will not go out of doors.”

“In truth, if you go with me I’ll tell you excellent news about

your husband.”

“Oh, good madam, there can’t be any news yet. Not enough time has passed.”

“Truly, I am not jesting with you,” Valeria said. “News from him came last night.”

“Indeed, madam?” Virgilia asked.

“I am earnest, it is true. I heard a Senator speaking about it. This is the news: The Volscians have an army in the field; against that enemy army, General Cominius has gone to fight, with one part of our Roman army. Your husband and Titus Lartius are camped before the enemy city of Corioli; they have no doubt that they will prevail and make this a brief war. This is true, on my honor; and so, I ask you, go with us.”

“Please excuse me, good madam,” Virgilia said. “I will obey you in everything hereafter.”

“Let her alone, lady,” Volumnia said. “As she is now, she will only make uneasy our mirth, which will be better without her.”

“Truly, I think she would make our mirth uneasy,” Valeria said.

She said to Virgilia, “Fare you well, then.”

She then said to Volumnia, “Come, good sweet lady.”

She tried once more to persuade Virgilia to go with them: “Please, Virgilia, turn your solemnity out of doors, and go along with us.”

“No, at a word, madam; indeed, I must not,” Virgilia said. “I wish you much mirth and enjoyment.”

“Well, then, farewell,” Valeria said.

— 1.4 —

Martius and Titus Lartius stood in front of the enemy city of Corioli. With them were some Roman Captains and soldiers.

A messenger rode up on horseback to them.

“Yonder comes news,” Martius said. “I bet that the two armies — ours and theirs — have met in battle.”

“I bet my horse against yours that they have not,” Lartius replied.

“Done,” Martius said.

“Agreed,” Lartius replied.

Martius asked the messenger, “Tell us, has our General met the enemy?”

“They lie within sight of each other,” the messenger said, “but they have not spoken — fought — as of now.”

“So, the good horse is mine,” Lartius said.

“I’ll buy him from you,” Martius said.

“No, I’ll neither sell him nor give him to you, but I will lend him to you for half a hundred years,” Lartius said.

He ordered the trumpeter, “Summon the townspeople to a parley.”

Martius asked the messenger, “How far off lie these two armies?”

“Within a mile and a half.”

“Then we shall hear their alarum — their call to arms — and they will hear ours. Now, Mars, god of war, I pray to you, make us quick in our work, so that we with swords steaming with our enemies’ hot blood may march from this city in

order to help our friends on the battlefield!”

He ordered the trumpeter, who had stayed quiet until Martius had finished speaking, “Come, blow your blast.”

The trumpet sounded, and on the city wall appeared two Senators of Corioli.

Martius asked, “Is Tullus Aufidius within your walls?”

A Senator of Corioli replied, “No, nor is there a man who fears you less than he. How much is the amount that we other men fear you? That’s lesser than a little.”

In other words, Aufidius feared Martius even lesser than a little.

Drums sounded from the battlefield.

The Coriolian Senator said, “Listen! Our drums are calling forth our youth to fight. We’ll break down our walls rather than allow them to impound us like animals. Our gates, which now seem to be securely shut, we have bolted with thin, hollow rushes. They’ll open by themselves.”

A call to arms sounded.

The Coriolian Senator said, “Listen, you. That call to arms came from far away. That is where Aufidius is. Listen, he is doing notable work among your army, which you have cloven and divided in two.”

Martius said, “They are at it! They are fighting!”

“Let their noise be our instructions,” Lartius said. “Let the noise call us to arms, too! Ladders, ho!”

Some Volscian soldiers marched out of the city gates.

Martius said, “They don’t fear us; instead, they issue out of their city to fight us. Now put your shields before your

hearts, and fight with hearts more impervious and better tested than shields.

“Advance, brave Titus. The Volscians disdain us much more than we had imagined, and that makes me sweat with wrath.

“Come on, my fellows. Any man who retreats I’ll take for a Volscian, and he shall feel the edge of my sword.”

The two sides fought, and the Romans were beaten back to their trenches.

Enraged by his soldiers being beaten back, Martius cursed and said, “May all the contagion of the south light on you, you shames of Rome!”

In this society, people believed that a warm wind from the south carried contagious plague northward.

Martius continued, “You herd of — may boils and plagues plaster you all over, so that your stench may make you abhorred further than you can be seen and one of you be able to infect another although the plague germs must travel against the wind for a mile! You souls of geese that bear the shapes of men, how you have run from slaves whom apes would beat! Infernal Pluto, god of the Underworld! Hell!

“All of you have your wounds in the back, which is suitable for the cowards you are. Your backs are red because of your flight, and your faces are pale because of your fear that makes you shake!

“Mend yourselves and charge home to the hearts of the enemy soldiers, or, by the lightning fires of Heaven, I’ll leave the foe in peace and make my wars against you.

“Look to it! Come on! If you’ll stand fast and stop fleeing, we’ll beat the enemy back and follow them to their wives, just like they followed us to our trenches.”

The Romans regrouped, and the trumpets sounded. The Volscians fled, and Martius followed them to the gates of Corioli.

Martius shouted, “So, now the gates are open. Now prove to be good seconds and supporters. It is for the followers — we who chase the fleeing Volscians — that Lady Fortune widens and opens the gates, not for the fliers. Watch me, and do as I do.”

Martius went through the gates and into the enemy city.

The first soldier said, “That is foolhardy. I won’t do that.”

The second soldier said, “Nor will I.”

The gates closed, and Martius was shut inside the enemy city, alone.

The first soldier said, “See, they have shut him in.”

“He is shut in the cooking pot, I am sure. His goose is cooked,” the second Roman soldier said.

Titus Lartius, who had been fighting elsewhere, arrived and asked, “What has become of Martius?”

“He has without a doubt been slain, sir,” the second Roman soldier said.

“Following the fliers at their very heels,” the first Roman soldier said, “with them he entered their city, and suddenly they clapped their gates shut. He is alone in their city, and he alone must fight all the soldiers in the city.”

“Oh, noble fellow!” Lartius said. “He is able to feel fear and pain, which his sword cannot, and yet he is more courageous than his sword, and, even when his sword bends, he stands firm.

“You are lost, Martius. A perfect precious red jewel — a

carbuncle — even if it were as big as you are, would not be as rich a jewel. You were a soldier even as Cato the Censor wished for, not fierce and terrible only in the strokes of your sword, but also with your grim looks and the thunder-like percussion of your voice, fear of both of which made your enemies shake, as if the world were feverous and trembled.”

Lartius’ praise of Martius as being a soldier of the kind that Cato the Censor wished for was remarkable, both because that kind of soldier is remarkable and because Cato the Censor lived over three hundred years in the future.

The reign of the last Roman King — whom Coriolanus fought against — ended in 509 BCE. Cato the Censor lived from 224-149 BCE.

The gates of the city opened, revealing Martius, bleeding and still fighting the enemy soldiers.

“Look, sir,” the first Roman soldier said.

“It is Martius!” Lartius said. “Let’s rescue him and take him away, or else let’s fight beside him.”

The Roman soldiers entered the city, fighting.

— 1.5 —

Some plebeian Roman soldiers held spoils they had looted from Corioli.

A plebeian Roman said about his haul, “I will carry this to Rome.”

“And I this,” a second plebeian Roman said.

“A murrain on it! I thought this was silver,” a third plebeian Roman said.

A murrain is a plague that afflicts cattle.

Martius and Lartius, accompanied by a trumpeter, arrived.

Looking at the plebeian Romans who were looting although Cominius was still fighting outside the city, Martius said, “Look here at these movers and shakers who price their honors at a cracked coin! Cushions, lead spoons, products made of iron valued at a coin of little worth, jackets that hangmen would not take but would instead bury with those who wore them, these base slaves, before the fight is not done, loot and pack up. Down with them!

“Listen, what noise Cominius, the General, is making as he and his troops fight! Let’s go to him!

“Over there on the battlefield is the man whom my soul most hates, Aufidius, piercing our Romans, so then, valiant Titus Lartius, take enough numbers of soldiers to hold securely the city while I, with those who have the spirit, hasten to help Cominius.”

“Worthy sir, you are bleeding,” Lartius said. “Your exertion in battle has been too violent for a second course of fighting.”

“Sir, don’t praise me,” Martius said. “I’m not even warmed up. Fare you well. The blood I drop is rather medicinal than dangerous to me. To Aufidius I will appear like I look now, bloody, and I will fight him.”

In this society, physicians treated some patients, such as those suffering from too much cholera, by bleeding them. By removing some of the patients’ blood, physicians hoped to cure the patients.

Lartius said, “May now the fair goddess, Lady Fortune, fall deeply in love with you, and may her great spells misguide your opponents’ swords! Bold gentleman, may prosperity be your servant!”

“May she be your friend no less than those she places highest! May she regard you as one of her best friends!” Martius said. “So, farewell.”

“You are the worthiest, Martius!” Lartius said.

Martius exited.

Lartius ordered, “Go, sound your trumpet in the marketplace. Call there all the officers of the town, where they shall learn what I will order them to do. Let’s go!”

— 1.6 —

Near the camp of the Roman General Cominius stood Cominius and several Roman soldiers. They had just finished a strategic retreat from the enemy Volscians.

Cominius said, “Catch your breath, my friends. You have fought well. We have come off the battlefield like Romans. We were neither foolish nor foolhardy while standing up to and opposing the enemy, nor were we cowardly as we retired from the battlefield. Believe me, sirs, we shall be charged again. We will fight again. While we have been fighting, we have heard conveyed by gusts of wind at intervals the charges of our friends against the enemy. You Roman gods, make the outcome of their battle as we wish our own, so that both our Roman armies, with smiling faces in the front lines as we meet each other, may give you thankful sacrifice.”

A messenger arrived, and Cominius asked, “What news do you bring?”

The messenger said, “The citizens of Corioli have issued out of the city and met Lartius and Martius in battle. I saw our army driven back to their trenches, and then I went away to carry this news to you.”

“Although you speak truth, I think you speak not well. This is bad news,” Cominius said. “How long is it since this

happened?”

“More than an hour, my lord,” the messenger answered.

“They are not even a mile distant,” Cominius said. “A short time ago, we heard their drums. How could you in traveling a mile consume an hour, and bring your news so late to me?”

“Volscian spies saw me and chased me, so I was forced to wheel three or four miles out of my way to escape from them, else I would have, sir, brought my report to you half an hour ago.”

Seeing someone coming, Cominius said, “Who’s yonder? Who’s that man who is so bloody that it seems as if he has been skinned? Oh, gods, he has the form and bearing of Martius, and I have at previous times seen him looking like this.”

Martius shouted to him, “Have I come too late to fight?”

“The shepherd does not know how the sound of thunder differs from the sound of a small tabor drum more than I know the sound of Martius’ tongue from the sound of the tongues of every lesser man.”

Martius walked over to him and asked, “Have I come too late to fight?”

Cominius said, “Yes, if you are not covered with the blood of enemy soldiers, but are instead wearing your own blood as if you were wearing a cloak.”

Martius said, “Oh, let me hug you in arms as sound as when I wooed, and with a heart as merry as when my bride’s and my wedding day was done, and candles burned and showed us the way to our bed!”

Cominius said, “Flower of warriors, how is Titus Lartius?”

“He is a man who is busy making decrees, condemning some

to death and some to exile, ransoming this man, pitying that man, and threatening another man. He holds Corioli in the name of Rome as if Corioli were like a fawning greyhound on a leash that can be loosed at will. Lartius commands Corioli, which respects his command; Lartius can treat Corioli as well or as badly as he pleases.”

Cominius said, “Where is that slave who told me the warriors of Corioli had beaten you back to your trenches? Where is he? Call him here before me.”

“Let him alone,” Martius said. “He did inform you of the truth, but as for our ‘gentlemen,’ aka the common rank and file — a plague on them! Tribunes for them! — the mouse never shunned the cat as they flinched away from rascals worse than they.”

“How were you able to prevail over the enemy?” Cominius asked.

“Do I have time enough now to tell you?” Martius asked. “I don’t think so. Where is the enemy? Are you lords and masters of the battlefield? If not, why have you ceased to fight until you are victorious?”

“Martius, we have been fighting at a disadvantage and have strategically retired from the battlefield.”

“How are their soldiers grouped?” Martius asked. “Do you know on which side they have placed their best and most trusted soldiers?”

“My best guess, Martius,” Cominius said, “is that the bands of the best men in the front lines are the Antiates, soldiers from their main city of Antium, and over them Aufidius, their very heart of hope, has the command.”

“I ask you,” Martius said, “by all the battles in which we have fought, by the blood we have shed together, by the

vows we have made to endure as friends, that you directly set me against Aufidius and his Antiates, and that you do not delay now, but instead, filling the air with swords raised high and with arrows and spears, we put ourselves to the test and try our best to defeat the enemy this very hour.”

“Though I could wish that you were conducted to a gentle bath and balms applied to your wounds, yet I can never dare to deny you what you ask for,” Cominius said. “Take your choice of those soldiers who best can aid your action.”

“The soldiers who best can aid my action are those who are the most willing. If any such are here — it would be a sin to believe that they are not — who love this paint, this blood, with which you see that I am smeared, and if any soldiers fear less for their own personal safety than they fear a bad reputation — a reputation for cowardice — and if any think that a brave death outweighs a bad life and that his country is dearer than himself, then that sole soldier or as many who are so minded wave their swords like this” — he waved his sword in the air — “to express his disposition, and follow Martius.”

The Roman soldiers all shouted and waved their swords, and they lifted Martius up in their arms and threw their hats in the air.

Exulting, Martius said, “Oh, me alone! Do you regard me as the best soldier? Do you want to make me the point of your sword? If these shows are not just outward appearances, but reveal what you have inside you, which of you is not able to defeat four Volscians? All of you are able to hold your own against the great Aufidius and bear a shield as hard as his. A certain number, although I give thanks to you all, I must select from all of you. The rest shall bear the business in some other fight, as occasion will demand. Let’s march. I shall quickly choose the troops I will command; I will choose those men who are best suited to fight the enemy.”

“March on, my fellows,” Cominius said. “Match this impressive display with your actions in battle, and you shall have a share in all the loot with us.”

— 1.7 —

Titus Lartius had stationed guards inside Corioli, and now he was marching with a Lieutenant, other soldiers, and a scout to the sound of drums and trumpets toward Cominius and Caius Martius.

Lartius ordered the Lieutenant, “Let the gates be guarded. Perform your duties, as I have given them to you. If I send for them, dispatch those centuries — battalions of a hundred soldiers each — to come to our aid. The rest of the soldiers will serve to hold the town for at least a short time. If we lose the battle in the field, we cannot keep the town.”

“Don’t worry about us, sir,” the Lieutenant said.

“Go now, and shut your gates upon us,” Lartius ordered.

He then said to his guide, “Come; take us to the Roman camp.”

— 1.8 —

Trumpets sounded on the battlefield as Martius and Aufidius met.

Martius said, “I’ll fight with none but you because I hate you worse than I hate a promise-breaker.”

“We hate alike,” Aufidius said. “In all Africa there is not a serpent I abhor more than your fame and envy.”

By “fame and envy,” Aufidius meant 1) envied fame, 2) fame that I envy, and 3) fame and malice.

People in this society sometimes used hendiadys (hen·di·a·dys), in which one idea is expressed by two words

joined with “and.” Other societies often prefer to have one word modify the other. For example, “nice and warm” equals “nicely warm,” and “sound and fury” equals “furious sound,” and “fame and envy” equals “envied fame.”

In this society, one meaning of “envy” was “malice.”

Aufidius said, “Find steady footing and prepare to fight.”

“Let the first one who flinches die as the other’s slave, and may the gods doom him afterward!” Martius said.

“If I flee from you, Martius, cry ‘holloa’ and hunt me as if I were a hare.”

“Within these past three hours, Tullus Aufidius, I fought by myself, alone, within the walls of your Corioli, and I did whatever work I pleased to do. This is not my blood that you see covering my face like a mask. If you want revenge for your soldiers whose blood I have shed, force your strength to reach its highest point.”

“Even if you were the Hector who was the whip of your bragged-about ancestors, you would not escape me here,” Aufidius replied.

The Trojans’ best warrior, Hector, was the whip that scourged the Greek warriors during the Trojan War. After Troy fell to the Greeks, Aeneas and other Trojans journeyed to Italy and became important ancestors of the Romans.

Martius and Aufidius fought, and some Volscians came to Aufidius’ aid. Martius fought fiercely and drove them back, and the Volscians carried Aufidius away with them.

Aufidius said to the Volscians who had come to his aid, “Your actions have been meddlesome, and not valiant, and you have shamed me with your damned assistance.”

Trumpets sounded a retreat. The battle was over, and the Romans had won. Accompanied by Roman soldiers, Cominius talked to Martius, whose left arm was in a sling.

Cominius said to Martius, "If I were to tell you about the work that you did this day, you would not believe your own deeds, but I'll report what you have done where Senators shall mingle tears with smiles; where great patricians shall listen and shudder out of fear, and in the end admire what you have accomplished; where ladies shall be frightened, and, gladly thrilled, hear more; and where the dull Tribunes, who, with the musty, stinking plebeians, hate your honors, shall say this, which is against what is in their hearts, 'We thank the gods our Rome has such a soldier.'

"Yet you came to only a morsel of this feast, having fully dined before. At Corioli you had a feast of fighting, and here you came in only near the end of the meal."

Titus Lartius, with his soldiers, returned after pursuing enemy soldiers.

Lartius said, "General Cominius, Martius here is the steed; we are only the caparison — the cloth spread over the saddle. Had you beheld —"

"Please, now, say no more," Martius said. "My mother, who has a charter — the right — to extol and praise those who share her blood, grieves me when she praises me. I have done as you have done; that is, I have done what I can do. I have been induced to fight for the same reasons as you have been; that is, I have fought for my country.

"That man who has only effected his good will has rivaled my act. Any man who has carried out his resolution to fight well for his country has done what I have done."

"You shall not be the grave of your deserving," Cominius said. You shall not bury the praise that you deserve. Rome

must know the value of her own hero. It would be a concealment worse than a theft of your honor, no less than a slander, to hide your accomplishments in battle and to be silent about them. Your vouched-for accomplishments deserve more than the spire and top of praises — such praises as we give to you seem modest in comparison to the praises you deserve. Therefore, I ask you, in token of what you are, and not to reward what you have done — to hear me praise you before our army.”

“I have some wounds upon my body,” Martius said, “and they smart to hear themselves remembered.”

“If your wounds would not be remembered,” Cominius said, “they well might fester because of infection from ingratitude, and they well might treat themselves with death rather than getting proper medical attention.

“Of all the horses — we have taken a good number of good horses — and of all the treasure we have acquired on this battlefield and in the city of Corioli, we render to you a tenth. Before the treasure is distributed to the army in common, you shall have your choice of treasure and carry it away.”

“I thank you, General,” Martius said, “but I cannot make my heart consent to take a bribe to pay my sword. I refuse to take a tenth of the horses and treasure, and I will take only my share of what is distributed to the army in common. I will take only an equal share with those who have beheld the doing of my deeds.”

Drums and trumpets sounded, and the soldiers cried, “Martius! Martius!” They also threw their hats and lances in exultation. Cominius and Lartius took off their hats and stood bareheaded to show their respect for Martius.

Martius said, “May these same military instruments, drums and trumpets, which you profane by playing them to honor me, never sound again! When drums and trumpets shall on

the battlefield prove themselves to be flatterers, then let all the people in courts and cities be composed entirely of false-faced flatterers! When steel grows as soft as the flattering parasite's silk, let the parasite be given an ovation for his 'deeds' in the wars!

"No more, I say! Because I have not washed my nose that bled, or because I have foiled and defeated some debilitated wretch — deeds that without being noticed were done by many others here — you shout out for me hyperbolic acclamations as if I loved for my small accomplishments to be fed with praises seasoned with lies."

"You are too modest," Cominius said. "You are crueler to your good reputation than you are grateful to us who portray you truly. With your forbearance, if you are incensed against yourself, we will put you, like one who intends to harm himself, in manacles, and then we will reason safely with you."

"Therefore, be it known, as it is known to us, to all the world that Caius Martius wears this war's garland — he has won the most honor in battle. In token of this, my noble steed, which is known to the camp, I give to him, with all his trim equipment; and from this time, for what he did at Corioli, call him, with all the applause and clamor of the host, MARTIUS CAIUS CORIOLANUS! Bear the addition nobly forever!"

The additional name "Coriolanus" meant "conqueror of Corioli."

Usually, the Romans put names in this order: personal name, family name, and addition — Caius Martius Coriolanus. Cominius presumably put the family name Martius first because it derived from the name of Mars, god of war.

The trumpets and drums sounded.

Everyone present shouted, “Martius Caius Coriolanus!”

From now on, and especially after the honor of the additional name was announced in Rome, Martius would be known as Coriolanus.

“I will go and wash,” Coriolanus said to Cominius, “and when my face is clean and fair, you shall see whether I blush or not. However it be, I thank you. I mean to sit upon your steed, and at all times to undercrest your good addition to the fairness of my power. I will treat the name ‘Coriolanus’ as it were an additional mark of honor on my coat of arms, and I will do my best and use all my power to live up to that name.”

A heraldic achievement fully displays all the heraldic components that the bearer of a coat of arms is entitled to. The coat of arms appears on the escutcheon, or shield. Above the shield appears the helmet. Above the helmet appears the crest, which is a symbol or device. A crest may be a sculpture of an animal. The motto appears at either the bottom or the top of the heraldic achievement.

An addition is a mark of honor added to a coat of arms. It is also an additional name given to a Roman as a mark of honor. For example, Publius Cornelius Scipio became Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus after defeating the Carthaginians in North Africa. His name contained these elements: personal name, family name, and addition. His family name consisted of two names: Cornelius Scipio. Scipio indicated a branch of the Corneli family.

Coriolanus said that he would “undercrest your good addition.” He meant that he would protect and defend the additional name that he had been given. Under the crest are the helmet and the shield, which are defensive armor. The crest itself is ornamental.

Cominius said, “So, let’s now go to our tent, where, before

we sleep, we will write to Rome about our success.

“You, Titus Lartius, must go back to Corioli. Send to us in Rome the best citizens of Corioli, with whom we may negotiate for their own good and ours.”

“I shall, my lord,” Lartius said.

Coriolanus said, “The gods begin to mock me. I, who just now refused very Princely gifts, am bound to beg for something from my lord General.”

“Take it; it is yours,” Cominius said. “What is it?”

“I once stayed here in Corioli at a poor man’s house,” Coriolanus said. “He treated me kindly. During the battle, he cried out to me. I saw him taken prisoner. But then Aufidius came within my view, and wrath overwhelmed my pity. I request you to give my poor host freedom.”

“Well begged!” Cominius said. “Even if he had butchered my son, he would be as free as is the wind. Set him free, Titus Lartius.”

Lartius asked Coriolanus, “Martius, what is his name?”

“By Jupiter! I have forgotten it,” Coriolanus said. “I am weary; yes, my memory is tired. Have we no wine here?”

“Let’s go to our tent,” Cominius said. The blood upon your face dries; it is time that your wounds should be looked after. Come.”

Did Coriolanus remember the name of his poor host in Corioli later? Was the poor host set free?

There is no indication that these things happened.

— 1.10 —

Tullus Aufidius, bloody, stood in the camp of the Volscians

with some soldiers.

“The town of Corioli has been taken!” he said.

“It will be delivered back on good condition,” the first soldier said.

By “on good condition,” he meant “on good and favorable terms”; the peace treaty that the Volscians and the Romans would make would be fair.

In his answer, Aufidius used “condition” to mean “state.” “Good condition” meant “satisfactory state.”

“Condition!” he said. “I wish I were a Roman; for I cannot, being a Volscian, be what I am — I can’t continue to live as a defeated Volscian. Condition! What good condition can a treaty find in the defeated party who is at the mercy of the winning party?”

“Five times, Martius, I have fought against you, and every time you have beaten me, and you would continue to defeat me every time, I think, if we were to fight each other as often as we eat.

“By all the natural elements, I swear that if I ever again meet Martius beard to beard, he’s mine, or I am his. My emulation of him — my desire to surpass him — has not that honor in it that it had. I used to think that I would crush him in an equal fight, true sword to true sword, but now I am willing to potch — stab — at him in whatever way wrath or treachery will give me the opportunity to kill him.”

“He’s the devil,” the first soldier said.

“He’s bolder, though not so subtle,” Aufidius said. “My valor’s poisoned because I suffer stain only by him; he is the only one who surpasses me and hurts my reputation in battle. In order to get back at him, my valor shall betray its own honorable nature.

“I want so much to kill Martius that even if he were asleep or in a sanctuary, even if he were not wearing armor or holding weapons, even if he were in a temple or the Capitol where people are guaranteed their safety, even if he were in a temple while priests are praying or making sacrifices to the gods, even if he were in places and during times when all fury is prohibited, I would ignore all these rotten, decayed-with-age privileges and customs and give in to my hatred of Martius. Wherever I find him, even if it were at my home, with my brother guarding and protecting him, even there, against the laws of hospitality that protect guests, I would wash my fierce hand in the blood of Martius’ heart.

“Go to the city and learn how it is guarded and who are the people who must be hostages for Rome.”

“Won’t you go to the city?” the first soldier asked.

“People are waiting for me at the cypress grove south of the city mills,” Aufidius said. “Please bring me word there how the world goes so that in accordance with its pace I may spur on my journey.”

“I shall, sir,” the first soldier said.

CHAPTER 2

— 2.1 —

In Rome, Menenius was talking with Sicinius and Brutus, two Tribunes of the plebeians.

“The augur tells me we shall have news tonight,” Menenius said.

Augurs interpreted omens and forecast the future.

“Good or bad?” Brutus asked.

“Not according to the prayer of the people, for they do not love Martius,” Menenius replied.

“Nature teaches beasts to know their friends,” Sicinius said.

“Please, tell me whom does the wolf love?” Menenius asked.

“The lamb,” Sicinius answered.

“Yes, to devour him,” Menenius said, “as the hungry plebeians would love to devour the noble Martius.”

“He is indeed a lamb that baas like a bear,” Brutus said.

“He’s a bear indeed, and he lives like a lamb,” Menenius said.

In other words, they disagreed in their evaluations of Martius. Brutus believed that Martius was a bear and not a lamb — Martius was dangerous to the plebeians. Menenius believed that Martius was a dangerous bear on the battlefield but a lamb — at least to the patricians — off it.

Menenius continued, “You two are old men. Tell me one thing that I shall ask you.”

Menenius was saying that since the Tribunes were old men, they *ought* to be wise men. He was implying that they were

not wise men.

“We will, sir,” they replied.

“What extreme wickedness makes Martius morally deficient that you two don’t have in abundance?” Menenius asked.

Brutus replied, “He’s poor in no one fault, but well stocked with all of them. He lacks no fault, for he has them all.”

“He especially has pride,” Sicinius said.

“And he tops all others in boasting,” Brutus said.

“This is strange now,” Menenius said. “Do you two know how you are thought of here in the city, I mean by us on the right-hand file? Do you?”

The best soldiers were on the right-hand file. By “us,” Menenius meant those whom he considered the best citizens of Rome: the patricians.

Sicinius and Brutus asked, “How are we thought of?”

“Because you talked about pride just now,” Menenius said, “I need to ask you whether you will be angry if I tell you.”

The two Tribunes replied, “Well, well, sir, well. How are we regarded?”

“Why, it is no great matter,” Menenius said, “for a very small pretext will rob you of a great deal of patience. Give your dispositions the reins and let them run freely, and be angry at your pleasures, at least if you take it as pleasurable to you in being so. You blame Martius for being proud?”

“We are not the only ones who do, sir,” Brutus replied.

“I know you can do very little alone,” Menenius said, “for your helps are many, or else your actions would grow wondrously feeble: your abilities are too much like those of

an infant for you two to do much alone. You talk of pride: I wish that you could turn your eyes toward the napes of your necks, so you could look at yourselves and make an interior survey of your good selves! I wish that you could!”

“Suppose that we could see ourselves. What then, sir?” Brutus asked.

“Why, if you could see yourselves, then you would discover a pair of undeserving, proud, violent, testy magistrates, alias fools, as any in Rome.”

A wisdom story stated that men carry two bags: one in front, and one in back. In the front bag, men carry knowledge of their neighbors’ faults. In the back bag, men carry knowledge of their own faults.

“Menenius, you are well enough known, too,” Sicinius said.

Sicinius meant that Menenius’ faults were also well known.

“I am known to be a whimsical and moody patrician, and one who loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying, diluting Tiber River water in it,” Menenius said. “I am said to be somewhat imperfect because I tend to favor the complainant, who speaks first, in a case of law. I am said to be hasty and tinder-like — quick-to-anger — upon too trivial a reason. I am said to be one who converses more with the buttock of the night than with the forehead of the morning: I stay up late and get up late. I am said to be a man who utters what I think, and I expend my malice in my breath and words.

“Meeting two such wealsmen as you are — I cannot call you Lycurguses — if the drink you give me touch my palate adversely, I make a crooked face at it. I express in my face what I think.”

Wealsmen are public servants who are supposed to be

devoted to the weal — the well-being — of the state. “Weal” sounds like “well,” and the two Tribunes said “well” frequently.

Lycurgus was a statesman who created the constitution of Sparta in Greece. Lycurgus was given credit for wisdom, something that Menenius felt the two Tribunes lacked.

Menenius continued, “I can’t say your ‘worships’ have reported the matter well, when I find the ass in compound with the major part of your syllables.”

He meant that much of what they said was asinine, especially when it came to their opinion of Martius. He may also have been saying that as Tribunes they used many words such as “whereas.”

Menenius continued, “And although I must be content to endure those who say you are reverend grave men, yet they lie deadly when they tell you that you have good faces.”

Lies may be intrinsically sinful, but not all sins are deadly sins. Menenius was saying that the two Tribunes’ faces revealed that they were bad men, and that anyone who looked at their faces and told them that they were good men was committing a deadly sin.

Sins can be venial, or they can be mortal: deadly. A deadly sin leads to damnation. Mortal sins deprive the soul of the grace — mercy — of God. Venial sins are less serious and do not damn the soul.

Menenius continued, “If you see my character as I have described it in this map of my microcosm — my face that reveals my little world — it follows that I am known well enough, too! As you have said, people know my character. Therefore, what harm can your bisson conspectuities — your bleary or almost-blind sight — glean out of this character of mine, if — or since — I am known well enough, too?”

Menenius was saying that one of his well-known faults was a kind of honesty. If he disliked something, it showed on his face. For example, if he disliked wine that someone had given him, his dislike showed on his face. His honesty also appeared in his words. Other people might flatter the two Tribunes by saying that the two Tribunes were good men, and Menenius might be forced to tolerate these people's use of flattery, but Menenius himself would tell — and just now had told — the two Tribunes that they were bad men. So what can the two Tribunes learn by looking at Menenius' honest face — a face that everyone knew revealed what he was thinking? They would learn harm — what Menenius really thought about them.

“Come, sir, come, we know you well enough,” Brutus said.

Brutus was trying to get along with Menenius, but Menenius did not want that.

Menenius replied, “You don't know me, yourselves, or anything. You are ambitious for poor knaves' hats and legs. You want them to doff their hats and bend their legs as they show respect to you.

“You wear out a good wholesome forenoon in hearing a case between a woman who sells oranges and a man who sells wine taps, and then you adjourn the case, which concerns three pence, to a second day of hearing.

“When you are hearing a matter between one side and another side, if you happen to become sick with the colic, you make faces like over-expressive actors, you set up the blood-red flag and declare war against all patience, and as you roar for a chamber pot, you dismiss the controversy bleeding the more entangled by your hearing.”

The court case was bleeding because it was unfinished and unhealed and because the two Tribunes had made the case worse through their hearings into the case. In addition,

whatever was excreted into the chamber pot was mixed with blood.

Menenius continued, “All the peace you make in their cause is calling both the parties knaves. You are a pair of strange ones.”

Brutus said, “Come, come, you are well understood to be a much better joker for the dinner table than a necessary statesman in the Capitol.”

“Our very priests must become mockers,” Menenius said, “if they shall encounter such ridiculous subjects as you are. When you speak best to the purpose, it is not worth the wagging of your beards; and your beards deserve not so honorable a grave as to stuff the pincushion of a person who repairs old clothes, or to be entombed in an ass’ pack-saddle.

“Always you must be saying that Martius is proud, but Martius, even regarded at a low estimate of his true worth, is worth all your predecessors since Deucalion, the Greek Noah, although it is very likely that some of the best of your predecessors were people who inherited their jobs as hangmen.”

Being a hereditary hangman was a lowly occupation.

Menenius continued, “Good day to your ‘worships.’ More conversation with you two would infect my brain, since you are the herdsmen of the beastly plebeians. I will be bold and take my leave of you.”

Menenius moved a short distance away, but he saw Volumnia, Virgilia, and Valeria coming toward him.

Menenius said, “How are you now, my as fair as you are noble ladies — the Moon-goddess, if she were Earthly, would be no nobler than you. Where do you follow your eyes so quickly?”

Volumnia replied, “Honorable Menenius, my boy — Martius — is approaching. For the love of Juno, let’s go.”

Juno was the goddess who was the wife of Jupiter, King of the gods.

“Ha! Martius is coming home!” Menenius said.

“Yes, worthy Menenius,” Volumnia said, “and he is coming home with the most prosperous approbation. Everyone is acclaiming his military success.”

Menenius threw his hat in the air and said, “Take my hat, Jupiter, and I thank you. Hooray! Martius is coming home!”

Volumnia and Virgilia said, “It is true.”

“Look, here’s a letter from him,” Volumnia said. “The state has received another letter, his wife another one, and, I think, there’s one at home for you.”

Menenius said, “I will make my house reel with my happiness tonight: a letter for me!”

“Yes, certainly there’s a letter for you,” Virgilia said. “I saw it.”

“A letter for me!” Menenius said. “It gives me another seven years of health, during which time I will curl my lip at the physician. The most sovereign prescription in the medical textbook of Galen is but quackery, and compared to this preservative of a letter bearing good news about Martius, Galen’s most sovereign prescription has no more reputation than that of a dose of medicine for a horse. Isn’t Martius wounded? He has been accustomed to come home wounded.”

“Oh, no, no, no,” Virgilia said.

“Oh, he is wounded,” Volumnia said. “I thank the gods for it.”

“So do I, too, if the wound is not too serious,” Menenius said. “As long as he brings a victory home in his pocket, the wounds become him.”

Wounds acquired in a victory are better regarded than wounds acquired in a defeat.

“On his brows, Menenius, he comes the third time home with the oak garland,” Volumnia said.

Martius was coming home crowned in glory, wearing a garland of honor on his head.

Menenius asked, “Has he disciplined — beaten — Aufidius soundly?”

“Titus Lartius writes that they fought together, but Aufidius got away alive,” Volumnia replied.

“And it was time for him to run away, too, I’ll warrant him that,” Menenius said. “If Aufidius had stayed by Martius, I would not have been so fidiused for all the chests in Corioli, and all the gold that’s in them.”

Menenius had used the name of Aufidius to create a new word, “fidiused,” which meant “treated like Martius would treat Aufidius.” Fittingly, the word “fidiused” had decapitated the name of Aufidius.

Menenius asked, “Is the Senate possessed of this information? Has it been informed?”

“Good ladies, let’s go,” Volumnia said.

She then said to Menenius, “Yes, yes, yes; the Senate has letters from the General, wherein he gives my son the whole credit for the victory of the war. Martius has in his actions in this war outdone his former deeds doubly.”

“Truly, there are wondrous things spoken about him,” Virgilia said.

“Wondrous things!” Menenius said. “Yes, there are, I promise you, and he truly deserves the wondrous things said about him.”

“May the gods grant that all these wondrous things said about him are true!” Virgilia said.

“True!” Volumnia said. “Of course, they are true!”

“True!” Menenius said. “I’ll be sworn they are true. Where is he wounded?”

He said to the two Tribunes, who were nearby and listening, “God save your good worships! Martius is coming home, and he has even more cause to be proud than before.”

He asked again, “Where is Martius wounded?”

Volumnia replied, “In the shoulder and in the left arm there will be large scars to show the people, when he shall stand for his place — when he shall campaign to be elected Consul. He received seven hurts in his body in the final battle in which the tyrant Tarquinius Superbus was repulsed.”

Menenius began counting, “One in the neck, and two in the thigh.” He calculated mentally and said, “There’s nine wounds that I know of.”

Volumnia said, “He had, before this most recent military expedition, twenty-five wounds on his body.”

“Now it is twenty-seven wounds,” Menenius said. “Every gash was an enemy’s grave.”

The sounds of Martius’ entry into Rome filled the air.

Menenius said, “Listen! The trumpets!”

Volumnia said, “These are the ushers of Martius. Before him Martius carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears. Death, that dark spirit, lies in Martius’ muscular arm, which, being

advanced, declines, and then men die. Martius' arm, holding a sword, is raised, and then it falls and an enemy soldier dies."

Trumpets sounded. Cominius the General and Titus Lartius appeared. In between them was Martius, the newly named Coriolanus, crowned with an oaken garland. Also present were Captains and soldiers, and a herald.

The herald announced, "Know, Romans, that all alone Martius fought within the gates of Corioli, where he has won, along with fame, a name added to Caius Martius; following these names is this name of honor: Coriolanus."

The herald said to Caius Martius Coriolanus, "Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!"

Trumpets sounded.

The crowd shouted, "Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!"

Coriolanus said, "No more of this shouting; it offends my heart. Please, no more."

Cominius said to him, "Look, sir, your mother!"

Coriolanus said to Volumnia, his mother, "You have, I know, prayed to and pleaded with all the gods for my prosperity!"

He knelt before his mother. In this society, it was proper for a child to kneel before his parents to show respect; it would be highly improper for a parent to kneel before a child.

"No, my good soldier, get up," Volumnia said to him. "My gentle Martius, worthy Caius, and newly named because of your deeds in battle — what is your new name? Is it Coriolanus I must call you? But, oh, remember your wife!"

Coriolanus had remembered his wife, who was much less

outspoken than his mother.

He gently teased Virgilia, his wife, who was crying from happiness, “My gracious silence, I greet you! Would you have laughed if I had come home in a coffin, you who weep to see me in my triumph? My dear, such weeping eyes as you have, the widows in Corioli wear, and the mothers who now lack sons.”

Menenius said, “Now, may the gods crown you!”

Coriolanus replied, “And may they continue to keep you alive.”

To Valeria, he said, “Oh, my sweet lady, pardon me for not speaking to you earlier.”

“I don’t know where to turn,” Volumnia said. “Oh, welcome home. And welcome, General, and welcome to all of you.”

“A hundred thousand welcomes,” Menenius said. “I could weep and I could laugh. I am both light and heavy, both happy and sad. Welcome.”

Looking at the two Tribunes, Menenius said, “May a curse gnaw at the very root of the heart of anyone who is not glad to see you three: Coriolanus, Cominius, and Lartius! You are three whom Rome should dote on, yet, by the faith of men, we have some old crabapple trees here at home that will not be grafted to your relish — they will not be altered so that they like you.”

He continued, “Yet welcome, warriors. We call a nettle but a nettle, and we call the faults of fools simply folly. We must call things what they are; some things we cannot change.”

Cominius said, “That is always true; it is always right.”

Coriolanus said, “Menenius is always right — always.”

The herald shouted for the crowd to step aside and give the

procession room to move forward, “Give way there, and let’s go on!”

To Volumnia and Virgilia, Coriolanus said, “Give me your hand, and give me yours. Before I shade my head in our own house, the good patricians must be visited, from whom I have received not only greetings, but along with those greetings new honors.”

Volumnia said, “I have lived to see you inherit exactly what I wished for and all the buildings of my fancy; the castles I built in the air have become real. There’s only one thing lacking, which I don’t doubt that our Romans will give to you.”

Coriolanus knew what she meant: a Consulship. The position of Consul was the highest political position in the Roman Republic.

“Know, good mother,” Coriolanus said, “I had rather be the Romans’ servant in my own way than sway with them and rule them in their own way.”

Cominius said, “Let’s go on — to the Capitol!”

Cornets sounded, and everyone left except the two Tribunes: Brutus and Sicinius.

“All tongues speak about Coriolanus, and the people who have bleared eyesight put on spectacles in order to see him,” Brutus said. “A prattling nursemaid who has been sent into a rapture lets her baby cry while she chats about Coriolanus. The untidy kitchen wench pins her richest lockram around her dirty neck and clambers up the walls to eye him.”

Lockram was an inexpensive Breton linen cloth. The “richest” lockram fabric would not be very rich.

Brutus continued, “Benches in front of shops, frameworks projecting from storefronts, and windows are smothered

with people, leaden roofs are filled with people, and the roof ridges are filled with people of all kinds sitting astride the ridges as if they were horses. All these people are alike in wanting to see Coriolanus.

“Seldom-seen flamens — priests devoted to a particular god — press among the popular throngs and puff and breathe hard in order to win a vulgar station: one among the common crowd.

“Also, veiled dames commit the war of white and damask-pink — their complexion — in their nicely made-up cheeks to the wanton spoil of Phoebus’ burning kisses. They expose their cheeks to the Sun and risk getting a sunburn — something regarded as unattractive in our society.

“Such a pother and fuss are being made over Coriolanus that it is as if whatsoever god is leading him had slyly crept into his human physical faculties and given him the graceful posture and bearing of that god.”

“I am sure that he will quickly be made Consul,” Sicinius said.

“Then our political positions as Tribune may as well, during his powerful time as Consul, go and sleep,” Brutus said. “While he is Consul, he won’t allow us to have any influence.”

“He cannot temperately transport his honors from where he should begin and where he should end; instead, he will lose those honors he has won,” Sicinius said. “He cannot behave in such a way as a politician must behave in order to be popular and to stay in office.”

“In that there’s comfort,” Brutus said.

Sicinius said, “Don’t doubt that the commoners, for whom we stand, will because of their long-standing hostility toward

Coriolanus forget for the least cause and reason these new honors of his. That Coriolanus will give them that cause or reason I have little doubt — he will be proud to do it.”

“I heard him swear that if he were to run for Consul, he would never appear in the marketplace or wear the threadbare garment of humility,” Brutus said.

People running for the political office of Consul customarily wore a toga with no tunic underneath. This both showed humility and also made it easy to display wounds that the candidate had acquired while fighting in battles for Rome.

Brutus continued, “He also swore that he would not show, as the custom is, his wounds to the people — he would not beg for anything from people with stinking breaths.”

“That’s true,” Sicinius said.

“It is what he said; these are his words,” Brutus said. “He would prefer to miss out on being Consul rather than to carry his election with anything except the petition of the gentry to him, and the desire of the nobles.”

“I can wish for nothing better than for him to continue to hold that intention and to put it into execution.”

“It is very likely that he will,” Brutus said.

“If that happens, the end result for him will be what we want: a sure destruction,” Sicinius said.

“A sure destruction is sure to be the end result, whether for him or for our political authorities. To achieve the end we desire, we must remind the common people that Coriolanus has always hated them. We can tell the common people that Coriolanus always would have made them mules to serve his army, he always would have silenced those who pleaded on their behalf, and he always would have taken away their freedoms. He has always held them, in human action and

capacity, to have no more soul or fitness for the world than camels in the war, which receive only their provender for bearing burdens, and only sore blows when they sink under their burdens.”

“As you say, if we remind the common people of these things at some time when Coriolanus’ soaring insolence shall stir and move and vex the people — which time shall not be wanting, if Coriolanus were to be provoked and incited to act that way, and that’s as easy to do as to sic dogs on sheep — that will be his fire to kindle their dry stubble, and their blaze shall darken him forever.”

A messenger walked over to them.

Brutus asked, “What’s the matter?”

“You have been sent for to go to the Capitol,” the messenger said. “It is thought that Martius shall be elected Consul. I have seen the dumb — incapable of speaking — men throng to see him and the blind to hear him speak. Matrons have flung gloves, and ladies and maidens have flung their scarfs and handkerchiefs, upon him as he passed. The nobles have bent their knees as if they were before the statue of Jupiter, King of the gods, and the commoners have made a shower and thunder with their hats and shouts. I never saw anything like this.”

Brutus said to Sicinius, “Let’s go to the Capitol. We will carry with us ears and eyes that seem appropriate for what is going on at this time, but we will also carry with us hearts for the outcome that we are looking forward to.”

That event was the downfall of Coriolanus’ Consulship.

“I am with you,” Sicinius replied.

— 2.2 —

Two officers — civil servants — spoke together at the

Capital, where the Roman Senators would meet. They were laying down cushions on which the Senators would sit.

The first officer said, "Come, come, they are almost here. How many are running to become Consuls?"

"Three, they say," the second officer said, "but everyone thinks that Coriolanus will be elected."

"He's a brave fellow," the first officer said, "but he's proud with a vengeance, and he is not a friend to the common people. He does not love them — he is not a friend to them."

"Truly, there have been many great men who have flattered the common people, but who never were friends to them, and there are many whom the common people have loved, although the common people don't know why. If the common people love without knowing why, they hate upon no better grounds. Therefore, for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him manifests the true knowledge he has about their dispositions and inclinations, and owing to his noble carelessness and aristocratic indifference he lets them plainly see it."

"If he did not care whether he had their love or not," the first officer said, "he would have wavered impartially between doing them neither good nor harm, but he seeks their hate with greater devotion than they can render it to him, and he leaves nothing undone that may fully reveal that he is their enemy. Now, to seem to cultivate the malice and displeasure of the people is as bad as that which he dislikes, which is to flatter them in order to get their love."

"Because of his deeds in battle, Coriolanus has deserved worthily of his country," the second officer said, "and his ascent is not by such easy degrees as those who, having been accommodating and courteous to the people, and having uncovered their heads and held their hats in their hands as a mark of respect to the common people, without any further

deed to recommend them at all to the common people and win their estimation and good report, but he has so planted his honors in their eyes, and his actions in their hearts, that for their tongues to be silent, and not confess so much, would be a kind of ungrateful and ingrate-ful injury. To report anything other than respect for Coriolanus would be an act of malice, that, being obviously undeserved by Coriolanus, would pluck reproof and rebuke from every ear that heard it.”

“Let’s speak no more about Coriolanus,” the first officer said. “He is a worthy man. Let’s move out of the way; they are coming.”

Trumpets sounded.

Cominius the Consul arrived with Menenius, Coriolanus, Roman Senators, and others, including the Tribunes Sicinius and Brutus as well as some lictors. Lictors were magistrates’ assistants, and they carried fasces, the magistrates’ symbols of power. The fasces consisted of rods bound together around an ax; they were a symbol of strength in unity.

Coriolanus stood as the Senators took their places and sat on the cushions.

Menenius said, “Having decided what to do about the Volscians and to send for Titus Lartius, it remains, as the main point of this our after-meeting, to reward and repay the noble service of Coriolanus, who has thus defended and upheld his country; therefore, may it please you, most reverend and grave elders, to request the present Consul, who is also the most recent General in our fortunate and valued successes, to report a little of that worthy work performed by Caius Martius Coriolanus, whom we are met here both to thank and to commemorate with honors appropriate to him.”

Coriolanus sat.

“Speak, good Cominius,” the first Senator said. “Leave nothing out despite the speech’s length, and make us think that Rome is lacking in resources to reward Coriolanus rather than that we are unwilling to stretch our resources so that we can reward him properly.”

The first Senator then said to the Tribunes, “Masters of the common people, we request that your ears listen very kindly to what is said here and afterward, we request that you use your friendly influence and mediation with the common people to report and grant what is said and transacted here.”

Sicinius replied, “We are convened here to consider a pleasing matter, and we have hearts that are favorably inclined to honor and advance the theme of our assembly.”

Brutus added, “And we will sooner be happy to do that if Coriolanus bears in his mind a higher value for the common people than he has hitherto prized them at.”

“That’s off topic,” Menenius said. “That’s definitely off-topic. I wish that you had remained silent rather than bring that up. Will it please you to hear Cominius speak?”

“Very willingly,” Brutus said, “but yet my cautionary remark is more pertinent than the rebuke you give it.”

“Cominius loves your people,” Menenius replied, “but don’t try to make him their bedfellow.”

He then said, “Worthy Cominius, speak.”

Coriolanus stood up and attempted to leave so that he would not hear the speech praising him.

Menenius said to him, “No, keep your place. Stay here.”

The first Senator said, “Sit, Coriolanus; never be ashamed to hear what you have nobly done.”

“I beg your honors’ pardon,” Coriolanus said. “I would

prefer to have my wounds heal again than to hear told how I got them.”

Brutus said, “Sir, I hope that my words did not cause you to attempt to leave.”

“No, sir,” Coriolanus replied. “Yet often, when blows have made me stay, I have fled from words. You did not flatter me, and therefore you did not hurt me, but I love your people as they weigh. I love them according to their worth.”

This was dangerous dialogue for someone who did not think the plebeians were worth much and who would run for Consul, and so Menenius said to Coriolanus, “Please now, sit down.”

Coriolanus replied, “I would rather have someone scratch my head in the sun when the alarum — the call to battle — were sounding than to idly sit and hear my nothing-much deeds monstrously exaggerated.”

Then Coriolanus exited.

Menenius said to the Tribunes, “Masters of the people, how can Coriolanus flatter your multiplying spawn — in which there are a thousand bad ones to one good one — when you see now that he would rather risk all his limbs in warfare to gain honor than to use one of his ears to hear about the honor he gained?”

He then said, “Proceed, Cominius.”

Cominius said, “I shall lack the voice needed to speak adequately; the deeds of Coriolanus should not be uttered feebly.

“We Romans believe that valor is the most important virtue, and the virtue that most dignifies the person who has it. If this is true, no one individual in this world can match the man I speak of — Coriolanus.

“When Coriolanus was sixteen years old and the deposed King Tarquin had assembled an army to reestablish himself in Rome, he fought beyond the mark of other warriors. Our then military leader with absolute power temporarily granted to him because of the emergency, whom with all praise I point at” — he pointed to Titus Lartius — “saw Coriolanus fight. He saw when Coriolanus with his Amazonian chin — beardless like the chins of the warrior women known as the Amazons — drove the bristled, bearded lips of the enemy soldiers before him. He stood over and defended an overpowered Roman soldier and in the Consul’s view slew three opposing soldiers. He met Tarquin himself and struck him so hard that he fell on his knee. In that day’s feats, when Coriolanus might have acted like a woman in the scene and cried and ran away, he proved to be best man on the battlefield, and for his reward his brow was bound with an oaken garland of honor.

“Having entered his manhood on that battlefield, he waxed and grew like a sea, and in the brunt of seventeen battles since that first battle he easily surpassed all other warriors to win the honor of wearing the garland.

“As for this last battle, in front of and in Corioli, let me say that I cannot speak too much in his praise. He stopped the soldiers who were fleeing and by his rare example made the coward soldiers turn terror into entertainment. Just like weeds fall before a vessel under sail in a river, so men obeyed him and fell below his prow. His sword was death’s stamp; whenever and wherever his sword marked a man, it took that man’s life. From his face to his foot, he was a thing that seemed made of blood, and his every motion was regularly accompanied by the cries of the dying. Alone he entered the mortal — deadly — gate of the city of Corioli, which he painted red with the blood of those who met their unavoidable destiny. Without the aid of other soldiers, he came out of the city, and with a sudden reinforcement of

troops he struck Corioli like a malignant planet astrologically inflicting plague on a part of the Earth. Now the city was all his.

“When, by and by, the din of war on the battlefield began to pierce his ready and vigilant sense of hearing, then immediately his spirit, redoubled in strength, re-quickened what in flesh was fatigued, and to the battlefield outside the city he came, where he ran steaming with blood over the lives of men, as if it were a perpetual slaughter, and until we called both battlefield and the city ours, he never stood still to ease his breast and catch his breath with panting.”

“What a worthy man!” Menenius said.

The first Senator said, “He surely will measure up to and befit the honors that we confer on him.”

“Our spoils of war he kicked at and scorned and rejected,” Cominius said, “and he looked upon precious things as if they were the common muck of the world. He covets less than poverty itself would give; he rewards his deeds with the doing of them, and he is content that time well spent is an end in itself. Coriolanus is not a man who fights in order to be rewarded with plunder.”

“Coriolanus is very noble,” Menenius said. “Let him be called for to appear here.”

The first Senator said, “Call Coriolanus.”

An officer said, “Here he is.”

Coriolanus stepped forward.

Menenius said to him, “The Senators, Coriolanus, are well pleased to make you Consul.”

“I owe them always my life and my services,” Coriolanus said.

“All that remains for you to be elected Consul is that you speak to the common people,” Menenius said.

“I ask you to allow me to overleap and not do that customary action, for I cannot put on the gown of humility, stand without a tunic underneath my gown, and entreat the common people, for the sake of my wounds, to give me their votes. I hope that it may please you to allow me to not do that customary action.”

Sicinius said, “Sir, the people must have their votes in the election; neither will they abate one jot of ceremony. The common people want all the customary actions to be performed.”

Menenius said to Coriolanus, “Do not challenge the Tribunes or the common people. Please, accommodate the custom and take to yourself, as your predecessors have, your honor with your observance of the formality. You can keep your honor although you observe the custom.”

Many patricians were willing to pretend to be friends to the common people in order to get their votes and become Consul, but with no intention of helping the common people after being elected. Coriolanus was unwilling to be hypocritical. He disliked most common people, and he felt that he deserved to be Consul without any votes from the common people, and he did not care who knew it.

“It is a part that I shall blush in acting, and this custom might well be taken from the people,” Coriolanus said.

He did not believe that the common people ought to have votes in electing a Consul.

Brutus said to Sicinius, “Did you hear that?”

Coriolanus said, “Must I brag to the common people that thus I acted, and thus I did? Must I show them the no-longer-

aching scars of healed wounds that I prefer to hide from them? Must I show them the scars as if I had received the scars only so that I could get their votes!”

“Do not insist on not observing the custom,” Menenius said to Coriolanus.

He then said, “We commit to you, Tribunes of the people, our intentions toward the common people, and to our noble Consul we wish all joy and honor.”

Menenius wanted the two Tribunes to speak positively to the common people they represented about electing Coriolanus Consul.

The Senators shouted, “To Coriolanus may all joy and honor come!”

Cornets sounded. Everyone except Sicinius and Brutus exited.

Brutus said, “You see how Coriolanus intends to treat the common people.”

“May they perceive his intent!” Sicinius said. “He will request their votes from them, as if he were contemptuous that what he requested from them should be theirs to give.”

“Come, we’ll inform them of our proceedings here,” Brutus said. “I know that they are waiting for us at the marketplace.”

— 2.3 —

Seven or eight citizens stood talking together in the forum — an open-air plaza and marketplace.

The first citizen said, “Once and for all, if Coriolanus requires and asks for our voices of approval and our votes, we ought not to deny them to him.”

“We may, sir, if we will,” the second citizen said.

The third citizen said, “We have legal power in ourselves to deny him our votes, but it is a legal power that we have no permission and no moral power to use because if Coriolanus shows us his wounds and tell us his deeds, we need to metaphorically put our tongues into those wounds and speak for them; so, if he tells us about his noble deeds, we must also tell him our noble acceptance and appreciation of them.”

The common people had received instructions from the two Tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus, to support Coriolanus. They had also received instructions to talk to Coriolanus in small groups rather than one big group. That way, Coriolanus would have to ask many times for votes rather than ask just once.

The third citizen continued, “Ingratitude is monstrous, and for the multitude to be ungrateful and ingrate-ful would be to make a monster of the multitude. Since we are members of the multitude, we would be making ourselves out to be monstrous members.”

The first citizen said, “It won’t take much help to make the patricians think less of us than they already do. Remember, when we stood up for ourselves about the grain famine, Coriolanus himself did not refrain from calling us the many-headed multitude.”

“We have been called that by many people,” the third citizen said. “It’s not that some of our heads are brown, some black, some auburn, some bald, but that our minds are so diversely colored, and I truly think that if all our wits were to issue out of one skull, they would fly east, west, north, south, and their agreement about one single route to fly would be to immediately fly to all the points of the compass.”

“Do you think so?” the second citizen asked. “Which way do you think my wit would fly?”

“Your wit will not as quickly go out as another man’s will,”

the third citizen said. “Your wit is strongly wedged up in a blockhead, but if it were at liberty, it would surely go southward.”

Southward was thought to be a place of illness-causing vapors.

“Why that way?” the second citizen asked.

The third citizen replied, “To lose itself in a fog, where being three parts melted away with rotten dews, the fourth part would return for conscience’s sake, to help to get you a wife. You are such a blockhead that you need a wife to take care of you.”

“You are never without your jokes,” the second citizen said. “It’s OK — have your little joke.”

“Are you all resolved to give Coriolanus your votes?” the third citizen asked. “But that doesn’t matter, for the majority carries the election even if a few people don’t give him their vote. I say that if Coriolanus would favor and support the common people, there was never a worthier man.”

Coriolanus arrived, wearing the customary clothing used to get votes. With him was Menenius.

The third citizen said, “Here comes Coriolanus, and he is wearing the gown of humility. Closely observe his behavior. We are not to stay all together, but to go to where he is standing, by ones, by twos, and by threes. He’s to make his requests to individual citizens. Each of us will receive an individual honor in giving him our own votes with our own tongues: He will thank each of us individually for giving him our vote. Therefore follow me, and I will give you instructions about how you shall go to him.”

“We will obey you,” the common citizens said.

The common citizens exited.

In the middle of a conversation, Menenius said to Coriolanus, “Oh, sir, you are not right. Don’t you know that the worthiest men have done this?”

“What must I say to the common citizens?” Coriolanus asked. “I beg you, sir? A plague upon it! I cannot bring my tongue to say such sentences as that or these: ‘Look, sir, at my wounds! I got them in my country’s service, when a certain number of your brethren roared in fright and ran away from the noise of our own drums rather than stay and fight.’ My tongue is not a horse that has been trained to obey. My tongue will not speak at the pace a trainer wants it to speak.”

“Oh, me! Oh, the gods!” Menenius said. “You must not speak about that. You must ask the common citizens to think kindly about you.”

“Think kindly about me!” Coriolanus said. “Hang them! I wish that they would forget me, like they forget the moral precepts that our clergymen throw away by casting them to the common citizens.”

“You’ll ruin everything,” Menenius said. “I’ll leave you now. Please, speak to them, I beg you, in a wholesome manner.”

He exited.

By “wholesome,” Menenius meant “decent,” but Coriolanus pretended that he had meant “clean.”

Coriolanus said, “I will ask them to wash their faces and to keep their teeth clean.”

Two citizens walked over to him, and Coriolanus said, “So, here comes a brace — a pair — of citizens.”

A third citizen then walked over to him.

Coriolanus said to the third citizen, "You know the cause, sir, of my standing here."

The third citizen said, "We do, sir; tell us what has brought you to it."

"My own desert."

Coriolanus believed that he deserved to be Consul.

"Your own desert?"

"Yes, but not my own desire."

"Why not your own desire?" the third citizen asked.

"Sir, it was never my desire to trouble the poor with begging," Coriolanus replied.

"You must know that if we give you anything, we hope to gain something from you," the third citizen said.

"Well, then, please tell me your price for the Consulship," Coriolanus said.

The first citizen replied, "The price is to ask for it kindly."

The word "kindly" meant "courteously," and also "with a recognition of kinship between you and us plebeians."

"Kindly!" Coriolanus said. "Sir, I ask you to let me have it. I have wounds to show you, which you shall be permitted to see in private."

He then said to the second citizen, "I want your good vote, sir; what do you say?"

"You shall have it, worthy sir," the second citizen said.

"It's a deal, sir," Coriolanus said. "There's in all two worthy votes I have begged. I have your alms. Adieu."

Now that he had their votes, he wanted no more to do with

them.

The third citizen said, "This is somewhat odd."

The second citizen said, "If we had our votes back again — but it doesn't matter."

The citizens might have withheld their votes from Coriolanus if they had them back again, or they might have made him grovel a little or a lot more.

The three citizens exited, and two new citizens arrived.

Coriolanus said to them, "Please tell me now, if it may agree with the tune of your voices that I may become Consul. I have here the customary gown."

"You have deserved nobly of your country," the fourth citizen said, "and you have not deserved nobly."

"What is the answer to your riddle?" Coriolanus asked.

"You have been a scourge to her enemies, and you have been a rod to her friends," the fourth citizen said. "You have not indeed loved the common people."

"You should judge me as being all the more virtuous because I have not been common in my love," Coriolanus said. "I will, sir, flatter my sworn brother, the people, as if they were my comrades-in-arms, in order to earn a dearer estimation of myself from them; it is a form of behavior they account gentle and noble, and since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practice the insinuating nod and take off my hat to them most hypocritically and counterfeitly; that is, sir, I will counterfeit the bewitchment of some popular man and give it bountifully to the desirers. Therefore, I ask you to vote for me so I may become Consul."

Coriolanus was wrong about the common citizens. They

wanted a friend in high office, not just someone who would treat them politely during the campaign and then ignore them after being elected to high office.

The fifth citizen said, “We hope to find that you are our friend, and therefore we give you our votes heartily.”

“You have received many wounds for your country,” the fourth citizen said.

“I will not authenticate your knowledge by showing them to you,” Coriolanus said. “I will make much of your votes for they are important to me, and so I will trouble you no further.”

Both citizens said, “May the gods give you joy, sir, heartily!”

The two citizens exited.

“Very sweet votes!” Coriolanus said sarcastically, disliking having to ask the common citizens for their votes, which he wanted given to him without his having to ask for them. “Better it is to die, better it is to starve, than to beg for the reward that already we have deserved. Why should I stand here in this woolvish — like a wolf wearing sheep’s wool — toga, to beg their needless votes from every Tom, Dick, and Harry who appears? The Senators want me to be Consul, and that should be an end to the election — I should not need the votes of the plebeians! But custom calls for me to be here and to wear this woolen toga and to beg for votes. If we should do in all things whatever custom calls for, then the dust on ancient traditions would lie unswept, and mountainous error would be too highly heaped up for truth to see over it.”

To some extent, Coriolanus was correct. If Rome always followed ancient tradition, then it would still have a King. But by tradition the patricians had always had the power in Rome, and the plebeians felt that that ought not to be the

case.

Coriolanus said to himself, "Rather than to fool it here in the forum like I am, let the high office and the honor go to a man who would willingly do this. But I am halfway through. I have endured the first half, and so the second half I will do."

Three more citizens walked over to him.

Coriolanus said to himself, "Here come more votes."

He said loudly, "I want your votes. For your votes I have fought; I have stayed up at night and guarded you in return for your votes. For your votes I bear two dozen or so wounds. I have seen the sights and heard the sounds of thirty-six battles. For your votes I have done many things, some less, some more. I want your votes. Indeed, I want to be Consul."

The sixth citizen said, "Coriolanus has acted nobly, and he must not go without any honest man's vote."

"Therefore, let him be Consul," the seventh citizen said. "May the gods give him joy, and make him a good friend to the common people!"

The citizens said, "Amen, amen. May God save you, noble Consul!"

They exited.

"Worthy votes!" Coriolanus said.

Menenius arrived, accompanied by Sicinius and Brutus.

Menenius said to Coriolanus, "You have stood in the forum for your allotted time, and the Tribunes endow you with the people's voices of approval and votes. It remains that, wearing the official regalia, you at once meet the Senators."

"Is this done?" Coriolanus asked.

Sicinius replied, "You have discharged the custom of requesting votes. The people admit you to the office of Consul, and you are summoned to meet the Senators at once to ratify your election."

"Where?" Coriolanus asked. "At the Senate House?"

"Yes, there, Coriolanus," Sicinius replied.

"May I change these garments?"

"You may, sir," Sicinius replied.

"That I'll do immediately; and, knowing myself again, I will go to the Senate House," Coriolanus said.

"I'll keep you company," Menenius said to Coriolanus.

He then asked the two Tribunes, "Will you go along with us?"

"We will stay here and meet the common people," Brutus replied.

Sicinius said, "Fare you well."

Coriolanus and Menenius exited.

Sicinius said to Brutus, "He has the Consulship now, and by his looks I think it is dear to his heart."

"Coriolanus wore his humble clothing with a proud heart," Brutus said. "Will you dismiss the common people?"

Some citizens walked over to the two Tribunes.

"Hello, my masters!" Sicinius said. "Have you chosen to vote for Coriolanus?"

"He has our votes, sir," the first citizen said.

"We pray to the gods that he may deserve your love and respect," Brutus said.

“Amen, sir,” the second citizen said. “To my poor unworthy notice, he mocked us when he begged for our votes.”

“Certainly he jeered at us downright,” the third citizen said.

“No, it is his way of speaking,” the first citizen said. “He did not mock us.”

The second citizen said, “There is no one among us, except yourself, who doesn’t say that Coriolanus used us scornfully. He should have showed us his marks of merit, his wounds that he received for his country.”

“Why, so he did, I am sure,” Sicinius said.

“No, no,” the citizens replied. “No man saw them.”

“He said he had wounds,” the third citizen said, “which he could show in private; and with his hat, thus waving it in scorn, ‘I want to be Consul,’ says he. ‘Ancient custom, except by your votes, will not so permit me; give me your votes therefore.’ When we granted him our votes, he said, ‘I thank you for your votes — your most sweet votes. Now that you have left your votes with me, I have no further use for you.’ Was not this mockery?”

Sicinius asked, “Were you too ignorant to see it, or seeing it, were you of such childish friendliness that you gave your votes to him?”

Brutus asked, “Couldn’t you have told Coriolanus — as you were instructed to say — that when he had no power, but was only a petty servant to the state, he was your enemy and always spoke against your liberties and the rights that you bear in the body of the commonwealth, and now, arriving to a position of power and state authority, if he should still malignantly remain a steadfast foe to you the plebeians, your votes might be curses to yourselves?”

“You should have said that as his worthy deeds claim no less

than what he stood for, so his gracious nature ought to have consideration for you in return for your votes and his gracious nature ought to transform his malice towards you into love and respect, speaking out for you as your patron.”

Sicinius said, “If you had said this, as you were previously advised to say, you would have tested his spirit and found out which way he was inclined — for you or against you. From him you would have plucked his gracious promise, which you might, as occasions had warranted, have held him to. Or else what you said would have galled his surly, arrogant nature, which does not easily endure any conditions tying him to anything. By so putting him in a rage, you would have been able to take advantage of his anger and passed by him, leaving him unelected.”

Brutus said, “Did you perceive that he solicited you in frank and open contempt when he needed your love and respect, and do you think that his contempt shall not be bruising to you, when he has power to crush you? Why didn’t your bodies have any heart among you? Or did you have tongues that cried out against the rule of reason and good sense?”

“Have you before now denied your votes to the asker?” Sicinius said. “And now again you have bestowed your voices of approval and votes — which candidates are supposed to plead for — to a person who did not ask for them, but instead mocked you.”

“Coriolanus has not been confirmed as Consul,” the third citizen said. “We may still deny him office.”

“And we will deny him office,” the second citizen said. “I’ll get five hundred voices to protest against him taking office.”

The first citizen said, “I will get twice five hundred citizens and their friends to add to your five hundred.”

Brutus said, “Go immediately, and tell those friends that they

have chosen a Consul who will take from them their liberties and rights. This Consul will make them of no more voices — or votes — than dogs that are as often beaten for barking as they are kept to do that barking.”

Brutus was saying that Coriolanus would expect the citizens to “bark” at the enemy during wartime, but if the citizens “barked” for civil rights, the new Consul would have them beaten.

“Let the citizens assemble,” Sicinius said, “and on a sounder judgment let all of them revoke your simple-minded election of Coriolanus as Consul. Emphasize Coriolanus’ pride, and his old hatred for you plebeians; in addition, don’t forget with what contempt he wore the humble suit of clothing and how in his suit of clothing he scorned you. But the respect you have for him, as you thought upon his services he had rendered to Rome, took away from you the apprehension of his present and proud carriage, which very sarcastically and without the gravitas a Consul needs, he fashioned after the inveterate hate he bears you. You respected him so much because of his military prowess that you did not see at first his haughty bearing that disqualifies him to be a Consul.”

Brutus said, “Lay the fault on us, your Tribunes; say that we urged that no obstruction should cause you not to support him, but that you must cast your votes for him.”

Sicinius said, “Say that you chose him more because we commanded you to than because you were guided by your own true emotions, and say that your minds, preoccupied with what you must do rather than with what you should do, made you go against the grain of your own desires to vote him in as Consul: Lay the fault on us.”

“Yes, don’t spare us,” Brutus said. “Say that we lectured to you. We told you how young he was when he began to serve his country, how long he continued to serve his country, and

what stock he springs from — the noble family of Martius, from which family came Ancus Martius, Numa’s daughter’s son, who, after great Hostilius, here in Rome was King. From the same noble family came Publius and Quintus, who had conduits constructed that brought our best water here. And the nobly named Censorinus, who was twice chosen Censor by the people, was his great ancestor.”

Numa Pompilius was King of Rome from 715-673 B.C.E., Tullus Hostilius was King of Rome from 673-642 B.C.E., and Ancus Martius was King of Rome from 642-617 B.C.E. They were Rome’s second, third, and fourth Kings.

Brutus and Sicinius knew that some of the people they had mentioned as being among Coriolanus’ ancestors would worry the citizens. Some of his ancestors were Kings, and the common people would worry that Coriolanus, who was aristocratic and proud and who looked down upon the plebeians, would want to be King.

The job of a Censor in Rome was to keep the official list of all the citizens; the Censor also supervised public morals. Running afoul of the Censor would cause major problems for any plebeian unlucky enough to be in that position.

Brutus, however, wanted to protect his and Sicinius’ butts. Despite bringing up things that they knew would worry the plebeians against Coriolanus and his ancestors, they did mention one good thing that two people Coriolanus was related to had done: the construction of the aqueducts to bring water to Rome.

A Consul can be a friend to the plebeians and do good things for them, but Coriolanus was not a friend to the plebeians.

Sicinius said, “One thus descended, who has in addition worked hard in his own right to achieve high office, we Tribunes commended to your remembrances and asked you to vote for, but you have found, metaphorically weighing in

a set of scales his present proud bearing with his past, that he's your fixed enemy, and therefore you revoke your sudden and hasty approbation."

Brutus said, "Say that you would never have elected Coriolanus as Consul — harp continually on that — except because of us Tribunes urging you to vote for him. Quickly, when you have gathered a good number of your fellow citizens who regret Coriolanus' election, go to the Capitol."

"We will do so," the citizens said. "Almost all repent the way they voted in this election."

The citizens exited.

Brutus said, "Let them go on. It is better to risk this mutiny than to wait for a greater mutiny — and a greater risk — that would, no doubt, occur later.

"If, as Coriolanus' nature is, he falls into a rage with their refusal to give him their votes, we will both observe and take advantage of his anger."

"Let's go to the Capitol," Sicinius said. "We will be there before the stream of the common people, and this mutiny shall seem, as partly it is, their own, although we have goaded them on to rebel."

Brutus and Sicinius had done a good job of covering their butts. The citizens would make clear to the patricians that the two Tribunes had urged them to vote for Coriolanus.

CHAPTER 3**— 3.1 —**

On a street in Rome walked Coriolanus, dressed as a Consul. With him were Menenius, many patricians, Cominius, Titus Lartius, and many other Senators. They were walking to the forum.

Coriolanus said, “So Tullus Aufidius has raised a new army?”

“He has, my lord,” Lartius said, “and it was that which caused our coming to terms swifter than we had expected to.”

“So then the Volscians stand as they did at first, before the most recent battle, ready, when time and occasion shall prompt them, to make inroads and raids upon Rome again,” Coriolanus said.

“They are worn out and exhausted, lord Consul,” Cominius said, “and so it is hardly likely that in our lifetimes we shall see their battle banners wave again.”

“Did you see Aufidius?” Coriolanus asked.

“On a guarantee of safe conduct, he came to me,” Lartius said, “and he cursed the Volscians because he said that they had so vilely yielded the town of Corioli to us. He has retired to Antium, the capital city of the Volscians.”

“Did he speak about me?” Coriolanus asked.

“He did, my lord,” Lartius said.

“What did he say?” Coriolanus asked.

“He spoke about how often he had met you in battle, sword to sword. He said that of all things upon the Earth he hated you the most. He said that he would pawn his fortunes and

possessions with no hope of ever recovering them provided that he might be called your vanquisher.”

“And he is living at Antium?” Coriolanus asked.

“Yes, at Antium,” Lartius replied.

“I wish I had a reason to seek him there, so I could oppose his hatred fully,” Coriolanus said.

He then said to Lartius, “Welcome home.”

The two Tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus, walked toward them.

Seeing them, Coriolanus said, “Look, these are the Tribunes of the people. They are the tongues of the common mouth; they are the advocates of the common people. I despise them because they dress themselves in authority, against all noble endurance. We patricians find them disgusting.”

“Go no further,” Sicinius said.

“What are you saying?” Coriolanus asked.

“It will be dangerous for you to go on,” Brutus said, “Go no further.”

“What is the reason for this change?” Coriolanus asked.

“What is the matter?” Menenius asked.

“Hasn’t Coriolanus been approved by both the nobles and the common people?” Cominius asked.

“Cominius, he has not,” Brutus said.

Coriolanus knew that the nobles had approved of his being elected Consul, so the common people must have changed their minds and votes, like children would. He asked, “Have I had children’s voices of approval and their votes?”

“Tribunes, give way,” the first Senator said. “Coriolanus

shall go to the marketplace.”

“The people are incensed against him,” Brutus said.

“Stop,” Sicinius said, “or all will fall into turmoil.”

“Are these your herding animals?” Coriolanus asked the two Tribunes. “Must these common people have votes, these common people who can give their votes and immediately take them back again? What are your offices? What are your duties? Since you are their mouths, why can’t you rule their teeth? Have you not set them on against me?”

Coriolanus was comparing the common people to animals. First, he compared them to a herd, and then he compared them to dogs that had been set on against a man — they had been ordered to attack a man the way that dogs attacked bears in bear-baitings.

“Be calm, be calm,” Menenius advised him.

“This is a planned, premeditated thing, and it grows by plot. Its purpose is to curb the will of the nobility. If we suffer it, we will live with people who cannot rule and will not ever be ruled.”

“Don’t call it a plot,” Brutus said. “The people cry that you mocked them, and recently, when grain was given them gratis, you complained; you scorned the suppliants for the people, and you called them time-servers, flatterers, foes to nobleness.”

“Why, this was known before the election,” Coriolanus said.

“Not to them all,” Brutus said.

“Have you informed them since then?” Coriolanus asked.

“What!” Brutus said, pretending to be shocked by such a question. “I inform them!”

“You are likely to do such business,” Coriolanus said.

“I am not unlikely, in every way, to do your business better than you do,” Brutus said.

“Why then should I be Consul?” Coriolanus said. “By yonder clouds, let me deserve so ill as you, and make me your fellow Tribune.”

Sicinius said to Coriolanus, “You show too much of that characteristic about which the people rise in revolt. If you will pass to where you are bound — the marketplace and the Consulship — you must inquire your way, which you are out of, with a gentler, more courteous spirit, or never be so noble as a Consul, nor join and cooperate with Brutus as a Tribune. To become Consul, you must treat the common people much better.”

“Let’s be calm,” Menenius advised.

“The common people have been deceived and misled,” Cominius said. “Proceed. This petty bickering is not suitable for Rome, nor has Coriolanus deserved this so dishonorable obstacle that has been laid treacherously in the plain way of his merit. Coriolanus deserves to be Consul.”

“You tell me about grain!” Coriolanus said to Brutus. “This was my speech, this is what I said, and I will speak it again —”

“Not now, not now,” Menenius said.

“Not in this heat, sir, now,” the first Senator said.

A hot day can make tempers rise, and so can a hot argument.

“Now, as I live, I will speak it again,” Coriolanus said. “As for my nobler friends, I beg their pardons. As for the mutable, rank-scented many, let them know that I do not flatter, and therefore they can use me to behold themselves.

For them, I am a mirror, and I will let them know what they really are. I say again, in soothing and flattering the common people, we nourish against our Senate the cockle — the weeds — of rebellion, insolence, sedition, which we ourselves have plowed, sowed, and scattered, by mingling them with us, the honored number, who do not lack virtue, no, nor power, except that which they — the patricians — have given to beggars.”

“Say no more,” Menenius said.

“Say no more words, we beg you,” the first Senator said.

“What! No more!” Coriolanus said. “I have shed my blood for my country, not fearing outward force, and so my lungs shall coin words until their decay against these scabs, these common people, which we disdain should afflict us, yet we patricians as a group sought the precise way to catch them.”

“You speak of the common people as if you were a god able to punish them, and as if you were not a man of their infirmity,” Brutus said. “You speak as if you were a god, not a mortal.”

“It would be well that we let the people know it,” Sicinius said.

“Know what?” Menenius asked. “Coriolanus’ words spoken in anger?”

“Anger!” Coriolanus said. “Even if I were as patient as the midnight sleep, by Jove, everything I said would still be what I think in my mind!”

“It is a mind that shall remain a poison where it is, and not poison any further,” Sicinius said.

He meant that Coriolanus would not be allowed to become Consul, and therefore would not have the influence that would allow him to spread what the two Tribunes considered

to be the poison of his mind. Sicinius spoke as if he had the power to ensure that that happened.

“Shall remain!” Coriolanus said. “Do you hear this Triton of the minnows? Do you hear this big shot of the little people? Do you hear his absolute ‘shall’?”

Triton is a minor sea-god.

The absolute “shall” was Sicinius saying — or at least implying — that Coriolanus absolutely shall not be allowed to become Consul.

Cominius said, “What Sicinius said goes beyond the power of the Tribunes. He was out of order.”

Coriolanus said, “‘Shall’! Oh, good but very unwise patricians! Why, you grave but reckless Senators, have you thus allowed the many-headed monster Hydra — the plebeians — here to choose an officer, who with his peremptory ‘shall,’ being but the monster’s noisy horn, does not lack the spirit to say he’ll turn your current in a ditch, and make your channel his? He intends to use your power and your resources for his own purposes. If he has power, then bow down to him in your ignorance; if he has no power, then awaken and snap out of your dangerous lenity to the common people. If you are wise, then don’t be like common fools; if you are not wise, let the plebeians have cushions and sit by you as fellow Senators.

“You are plebeians, if they are Senators — and they are no less than Senators, when, with the voices of the plebeians and the patricians blended together, the greatest taste most palates theirs. The taste of the legislation passed will be most pleasing to the plebeians; in other words, you will see that the plebeians have more power than the patricians. The plebeians choose their magistrate, this Tribune, and he is such a one as puts his ‘shall,’ his popular ‘shall’ of the plebeians against a graver bench — the Senate — than ever

frowned in Greece. By Jove himself, it makes the Consuls base and of lower rank, and my soul aches to know, when two authorities are roused up, and neither is supreme, how soon destruction and chaos may enter between the gap of both and use the one to destroy the other.”

Cominius said, “Well, let’s go on to the marketplace.”

Coriolanus said, “Whoever gave that advice to give the plebeians the grain of the storehouse gratis, as it used to happen sometimes in Greece —”

Menenius said, “Well, well, no more of that.”

“— though there in Greece the people had more absolute power,” Coriolanus said, “I say that they nourished disobedience and fed the ruin of the state.”

“Why, shall the people give one who speaks like this their vote?” Brutus said. “Should the common people vote for someone like Coriolanus?”

“I’ll give my reasons for my belief, reasons that are much worthier than their votes,” Coriolanus said. “They know the grain was not our recompense to them for good service rendered. They are well assured that they never did service for the grain. After being drafted into the war, even when the navel — the vital center — of the state was threatened, they would not thread — go through — the gates and fight. This kind of ‘service’ did not deserve grain gratis. During the war, their mutinies and revolts, wherein they showed the most valor — certainly more valor than they showed in actual battles against the enemy — did not speak well for them. The accusation that they have often made against the Senate, that the patricians hoarded grain, has no basis in fact, and this accusation could never be the motive of our so generous donation. Well, what then? How shall this monster of many stomachs digest and understand the Senate’s courtesy? Let deeds express what’s likely to be their words: ‘We requested

the grain, we plebeians outnumber the patricians, and because the patricians truly feared us, they gave us what we demanded.' Thus we debase the nature of our seats and make the rabble call our cares fears, and this will in time break open the locks of the Senate and bring in the crows to peck the eagles."

"Come, that's enough," Menenius said.

"It's more than enough, with over-measure," Brutus said.

"No, take more," Coriolanus said. "What may be sworn by, both divine and human, seal and confirm what I end with! This double worship, this divided authority of patrician and plebeian, where with reason the patricians disdain the plebeians, where without any reason the plebeians insult the patricians, where gentry, title, wisdom, cannot reach an agreement except by the yea and nay of the ignorance of common people — this divided authority of patrician and plebeian must neglect real necessities, and give way the while to unstable trivialities.

"When planning is barred like this, it follows that nothing is done according to plan. Therefore, I beg you — you who wish to be less fearful than discerning, you who love the constitution of the government more than you fear a violent change that is necessary to preserve it, you who prefer a noble life to a long life, and you who wish to risk curing a sick body with a dangerous medicine when the body is sure to die without it — I beg you to at once pluck out the multitudinous tongue and deprive the common people of a say in the government. Don't let the common people lick the sweet that is their poison. Your dishonor in granting power to the plebeians mangles true judgment and bereaves the state of that integrity and unity that should become and dignify it because since the plebeians have power, the Senate does not have the power to do the good it would do for the evil common people who now control it."

Brutus said, “Coriolanus has now said enough.”

“He has spoken like a traitor, and he shall be held accountable for it as traitors are,” Sicinius said.

“You wretch, may despite overwhelm you!” Coriolanus said. “What should the common people do with these bald — devoid of hair and of intelligence — Tribunes? The common people lean and depend on the Tribunes, and they fail in their obedience to the greater bench — the Senate. In a rebellion, when what is not right but could not be avoided became law, the Tribunes were elected. In a better hour, let it be said that what was the right thing to do was in fact done, and now let us throw the Tribunes’ power in the dust.”

“This is manifest treason!” Brutus shouted.

“Make this man a Consul!” Sicinius said. “No!”

“Aediles, come here!” Brutus shouted.

Aediles could make arrests.

An Aedile appeared.

Brutus pointed at Coriolanus and said, “That man needs to be arrested!”

Knowing that one Aedile could not accomplish that task, Sicinius ordered him, “Go, call the common people.”

Sicinius then said to Coriolanus, “In the name of the common people, I myself arrest you because you are a traitorous rebel, an enemy to the public commonwealth. Obey me, I order you, and follow me to your trial.”

“Get away from me, you old goat!” Coriolanus said.

The Senators said, “We’ll be the surety for him. We’ll guarantee that he shows up in court.”

“Aged sir, keep your hands off him,” Cominius said.

“Get away from me, you rotten thing,” Coriolanus said, “or I shall shake your bones out of your garments!”

“Help, citizens!” Sicinius shouted.

A rabble of plebeian citizens arrived with the Aediles.

“On both sides we need more respect,” Menenius said.

Sicinius pointed to Coriolanus and said to the Aediles and the common people, “Here’s the man who would take from you all your power.”

“Seize him, Aediles!” Brutus ordered.

“Down with him! Down with him!” the plebeians shouted.

The Senators shouted, “We need weapons! Weapons! We need weapons!”

All was a mass of confusion, with everyone shouting.

“Tribunes!”

“Patricians!”

“Citizens!”

“What!”

“Sicinius!”

“Brutus!”

“Coriolanus!”

“Citizens!”

‘Peace! Peace! Peace!’

“Stay! Wait! Peace!”

“What is going to happen?” Menenius said. “I am out of breath; ruin and destruction are near; I cannot speak. You Tribunes, talk to the people! Coriolanus, be calm! Speak, good Sicinius.”

“Hear me, people,” Sicinius shouted. “Peace!”

“Let’s hear our Tribune,” the plebeians shouted. “Peace! Speak! Speak! Speak!”

“You are on the point of losing your liberties,” Sicinius said to the plebeians. “Martius would take them all from you — Martius, whom recently you have voted for Consul.”

This was not what Menenius had wanted Sicinius to say.

Menenius said, “Damn! Damn! Damn! This is the way to kindle a fire, not to quench one.”

The first Senator said, “This is the way to unbuild the city and to lay all flat.”

“What is the city but the people?” Sicinius asked.

“True,” the plebeians shouted. “The people are the city.”

“By the consent of all,” Brutus said, “we were established the people’s magistrates. We were elected Tribunes.”

“You so remain,” the plebeians said.

“And so you are likely to remain,” Menenius said.

“That is the way to lay the city flat,” Coriolanus said. “That is the way to bring the roof to the foundation, and take that which is still orderly laid out and turn it into heaps and piles of ruin.”

“This talk deserves death,” Sicinius said.

“Either let us maintain and uphold our authority, or let us lose it,” Brutus said. “We do here pronounce, upon the part

of the common people, by whose power we were elected to wield power on their behalf, that Martius deserves immediate death.”

Brutus did not refer to Martius by his honorable new name: Coriolanus.

“Therefore lay hold of him,” Sicinius ordered the Aediles. “Carry him to the Tarpeian rock, and from that cliff throw him down to his destruction.”

“Aediles, seize him!” Brutus ordered.

“Surrender, Martius, surrender!” the plebeians shouted.

“Listen to me speak one word,” Menenius said. “I beg you, Tribunes, hear me speak a single word.”

“Quiet! Quiet!” the Aediles shouted.

Menenius said to Brutus, “Be that which you seem to be, truly your country’s friend, and temperately proceed to what you would thus violently redress.”

Brutus replied, “Sir, those cold ways, which seem like prudent helps, are very poisonous where the disease is violent.”

Brutus ordered the Aediles, “Lay hands upon him, and carry him to the rock.”

“No, I’ll die here,” Coriolanus said. He drew his sword and said, “Some among you have seen me fight. Come, try upon yourselves what you have seen me do to others. Fight me if you dare.”

“Down with that sword!” Menenius said to Coriolanus.

Menenius then said, “Tribunes, withdraw for awhile.”

Brutus ordered, “Lay hands upon him.”

Cominius shouted, "Help Martius! Help him, all of you who are noble! Help him, young and old!"

"Down with him! Down with him!" the plebeians shouted.

The two sides fought, and the Tribunes, Aediles, and plebeians were beaten back. They retreated.

Menenius said to Coriolanus, "Go, get you to your house! Be gone! Leave! All will be lost and ruined, if you don't leave!"

"Get you gone," the second Senator said.

"Stand fast," Cominius said. "Let's make a stand. We have as many friends as enemies."

"Shall it come to that?" Menenius asked.

"May the gods forbid!" the first Senator said. "Please, noble friend, Coriolanus, go home to your house; leave it to us to cure this disease."

"Because this is a sore upon us," Menenius said, "you cannot treat yourself. Leave, I beg you."

Cominius said to Coriolanus, "Come, sir, come along with us."

Coriolanus said about the plebeians, "I wish that they were barbarians — as they are, although they were littered in Rome. I wish that they were not Romans — as they are not, although they were calved in the porch of the Capitol building —"

"Leave," Menenius said. "Don't express your worthy rage with your tongue. One time will owe another — another time will come that will make up for this time."

Coriolanus said, "On fair ground I could beat forty of them."

Cominius said, “I myself could take on a brace — a pair — of the best of them. Yes, I myself could take on the two Tribunes. But now the odds are against us — they are beyond calculation, and manhood is called foolery when it stands against a falling building. Will you leave from here before the ragtag crowd returns? Their rage rends like obstructed waters that flow over the banks that normally hold them in.”

“Please, be gone,” Menenius said to Coriolanus. “I’ll try whether my old intelligent, good judgment is in fashion with those who have but little. This quarrel must be patched with cloth of any color. I need to find a way — any way that works — to talk us out of this mess.”

“Let’s leave,” Cominius said to Coriolanus.

Coriolanus and Cominius exited.

The first patrician said, “This man, Coriolanus, has marred his fortune.”

“His nature is too noble for the world,” Menenius said. “He would not flatter Neptune even if it would get him possession of Neptune’s trident, and he would not flatter Jove even if it got him Jove’s power to thunder.”

Neptune was the god of the sea; a symbol of his power was his trident — his three-pronged spear.

Jove was Jupiter, King of the gods. His weapon of choice was the thunderbolt.

Menenius continued, “His heart’s his mouth. He expresses in words whatever he feels and holds nothing back.”

A proverb of the time stated, “What the heart thinks the tongue expresses.”

According to Ecclesiasticus 21:26, “*The heart of fools is in their mouth: but the mouth of the wise is in their heart*” (King

James Version).

Menenius continued, “Whatever his breast forges, that is what his tongue must vent and express. And, when he is angry, he forgets that he ever heard the name of death.”

He heard some noises; the plebeians were returning.

He said, “Here’s goodly work!”

The second patrician said, “I wish they were in bed!”

“I wish they were in the Tiber River!” Menenius said. “What the Hell! Why couldn’t Coriolanus speak civilly to them?”

Brutus and Sicinius returned, along with the rabble of plebeian citizens.

Sicinius said, referring to Coriolanus, “Where is this viper who would depopulate the city and be every man himself?”

“You worthy Tribunes —” Menenius began.

Sicinius interrupted, “He shall be thrown down from the Tarpeian rock with rigorous, pitiless hands. He has resisted the law, and therefore the law shall scorn him by denying him any trial other than the severity of the public power that he so sets at naught.”

The first citizen said, “He shall well know that the noble Tribunes are the people’s mouths, and we the people are the Tribunes’ hands.”

The citizens said, “He shall, that’s certain.”

“Sir, sir —” Menenius began.

“Be quiet!” Sicinius ordered.

Menenius said, “Do not cry havoc, where you should hunt only with modest warrant.”

To cry havoc is to give the command to kill indiscriminately, not sparing the rich nobles. Menenius was saying that the Tribunes did not have the authority to cry havoc; their authority was much less.

Sicinius said, “Sir, how comes it that you have helped to make this rescue?”

He was using “rescue” in a legal sense — Menenius had helped Coriolanus to escape the legal authorities who had arrested him. Of course, force had been used in this escape.

“Hear me speak,” Menenius said. “I know the Consul’s worthiness, and I can also name his faults —”

“Consul!” Sicinius said. “What Consul?”

“The Consul Coriolanus,” Menenius replied.

“He a Consul!” Brutus said.

“No! No! No! No! No!” the citizens shouted.

“If, with the Tribunes’ permission, and yours, good people, I may be heard, I would like to say a word or two,” Menenius said. “Listening a moment to me shall cause you no further harm than a little loss of time.”

“Speak briefly then,” Sicinius said, “for we are determined to execute this viperous traitor.”

People in this society believed that vipers were born by eating their way out of their mother’s body. Vipers were symbols of treachery.

Sicinius continued, “To banish him from Rome would be but one danger, and to keep him here in Rome would mean our certain death; therefore, it is decreed that he dies tonight.”

The “one danger” of banishment that Sicinius was thinking of was a bad relationship between Coriolanus’ family and

the plebeians.

Menenius said, “Now may the good gods forbid that our renowned Rome, whose gratitude towards her deserving children is enrolled in Jove’s own book, should now, like an unnatural dam, eat up her own!”

A dam is an animal mother.

“He’s a disease that must be cut away,” Sicinius said.

“Oh, he’s a limb that has only a disease,” Menenius said. “It would be mortal to cut it off and amputate it; to cure it is easy. What has he done to Rome that deserves death? He has killed our enemies, and he has lost blood — the blood he has lost, I dare to say, is more by many an ounce than the blood that he has in his body now — he dropped his blood for his country. And if he were to lose what blood he has left because his country took it from him, then all of us — all who do it and all who allow it to be done — would bear a brand, a mark of infamy, until the end of the world.”

Genesis 4:15 states about Cain, who murdered Abel, his brother, “*And the LORD said unto him [Cain], Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him*” (King James Version).

The sign for Cain was a mark of infamy, although it protected him. Exodus 20:13 states, “*Thou shalt not kill*” (King James Version). Modern translations often state, “*You shall not murder.*” Murder is morally wrong, and although Cain had sinned by murdering Abel, God did not want the violence to be perpetuated, and so God protected Cain’s life.

Sicinius said, “What you said is clean *kam*. It is completely crooked.”

“*Kam*” is a Welsh word for “crooked.”

Brutus said, "It is completely awry. When he loved his country, it honored him."

Menenius said, "The service of the foot, after it has become infected with gangrene, is not at that time respected for what it was before it was infected."

"We'll listen no more to you," Brutus said. "Pursue him to his house, and pluck him out of it, lest his infection, being of a catching nature, spreads further."

"One word more, one word," Menenius said. "This tiger-footed rage, when it shall find the harm of unthinking swiftness, will too late tie leaden weights to its heels. Swift rage, unaccompanied by thought, leads to bad consequences. Proceed by the process of law, lest factions break out — because Coriolanus is beloved by many — and Romans sack great Rome."

Brutus began, "If that were true —"

"What are you saying?" Sicinius said. "Have we not had a taste of Martius' 'obedience'? Our Aediles smote? Ourselves resisted? Come on!"

"Consider this," Menenius said. "He has been bred in the wars ever since he could draw a sword, and he is ill schooled in refined language; he throws good flour and bad bran — good words and bad words — together without distinction. Give me permission, and I'll go to him, and undertake to bring him to where he shall peacefully answer the charges against him in a lawful courtroom, even if the outcome means the utmost peril to him — even if the outcome is being sentenced to death."

"Noble Tribunes," the first Senator said, "it is the humane way: The other course of action will prove too bloody, and the end of it is unknown to the beginning. You don't know how it will end."

“Noble Menenius,” Sicinius said, “you then act as the people’s officer. You bring Martius to the court to stand trial.”

Sicinius then ordered, “Masters, lay down your weapons.”

Brutus said to Sicinius, “Don’t go home. This needs to be done quickly.”

Sicinius said to Menenius, “Meet us in the marketplace. We’ll wait for you there, where, if you don’t bring Martius, we’ll proceed in our first way: We will find him and execute him.”

“I’ll bring him to you,” Menenius replied.

He said to the Senators, “Let me ask for your company. Coriolanus must come to the marketplace, or the worst will follow.”

The first Senator said, “Please, let’s go to him.”

— 3.2 —

Coriolanus talked with other patricians in a room of his house.

Coriolanus said, “Let them pull all Rome down about my ears, give me death on the wheel or at wild horses’ heels, or pile ten hills on the Tarpeian rock, so that the precipice stretches down beyond the range of sight, yet I will always be like this to them. I will continue to act as I always have.”

He was unwilling to change even if it meant that Rome must lie in ruins or that he would be executed either by being tied to a wheel and being beaten to death or by having his limbs tied to four horses that then rode away in different directions.

“You do the nobler act by doing this,” a patrician said. “It is better to act like the patrician you are than to bow down to the plebeians.”

Coriolanus said, "I wonder that my mother does not approve more of my actions, for she has been accustomed to call the plebeians woolen vassals — poor people who wear coarse clothing made of wool. She also called the plebeians things created to buy and sell with coins of little value, to show bare heads in assemblies after taking off their hats to show respect to their betters, to yawn, to be still and to wonder, when one of my rank stood up to speak about peace or war."

While he was talking, his mother, Volumnia, entered the room.

Seeing her, Coriolanus said, "I am talking about you. Why did you wish me to be milder when talking to the plebeians' Tribunes? Would you have me be false to my nature? You should rather say that I should play the man I am. It is better for you to advise me to be myself."

"Oh, sir, sir, sir," Volumnia said. "I wish that you had put your power well on, before you had worn it out," metaphorically comparing the Consulship to clothing.

She continued, "It would have been better for you to have officially been declared Consul before you began to act like yourself. Now your Consulship is gone."

"Let it go," Coriolanus said.

"You might have been enough the man you are, with striving less to be so," Volumnia said. "You could have been the man you are without showing so openly your contempt for the two Tribunes. Lesser had been the thwartings of your purposes and inclinations, if you had not shown the plebeians how you were disposed before they lacked the power to cross and thwart you. If you had been officially declared Consul, the two Tribunes would not have been able to stop you from being yourself."

"Let them hang," Coriolanus said.

“Yes, and burn, too,” Volumnia said.

Menenius and some Senators entered the room.

“Come, come,” Menenius said to Coriolanus. “You have been too rough, somewhat too rough. You must return and mend things.”

“There’s no remedy,” the first Senator said. “You must do that, for if you don’t, our good city will be cloven in the middle, divide into hostile factions, and perish.”

“Please,” Volumnia said to Coriolanus, “listen to him. I have a heart as little yielding and submissive as yours, but I have still a brain that leads my use of anger to better advantage. My brain lets me know the right time to show my anger.”

“Well said, noble woman,” Menenius said. “Before he should thus stoop to the herd, except that the violent feverous seizure of the time craves it as medicine for the whole state, I would put on my armor, which because of my old age I can scarcely wear. But because of the times we live in, he must do what he does not want to do.”

“What must I do?” Coriolanus asked.

“Return to the Tribunes,” Menenius replied.

“Well, what then?” Coriolanus asked. “What then?”

“Repent what you have spoken,” Menenius replied.

“Repent for them!” Coriolanus said. “I cannot do it for the gods, so must I then do it for the plebeians?”

“You are too uncompromising,” Volumnia said, “though therein you can never be too noble, except when crises declare themselves. I have heard you say that honor and craftiness, like inseparable friends, grow together in wartime. Grant that, and then tell me what each of them loses by the other that makes it impossible for the two to be

inseparable friends in peacetime.”

“Bah! Bah!” Coriolanus said.

“On the contrary, she asked a good question,” Menenius said.

“If it is honorable in your wars to be deceitful in order to achieve your most important goals, how is it less or worse to use deceitfulness in peacetime since the use of deceit is necessary both in war and in peace?” Volumnia asked.

“Why are you urging this?” Coriolanus asked. “Why are you urging me to be deceitful?”

“Because now it is incumbent on you to speak to the common people,” Volumnia said. “You must not say what your own feelings make you want to say, and you must not say those things that your heart prompts you to say; instead, you must use such words that are only learned by rote in your tongue, although such words are only bastard syllables that have nothing whatsoever to do with what you are truly thinking.

“Now, this use of deceit no more dishonors you at all than to capture a town with gentle words, a town whose capture otherwise would make you trust to the fortune of war and to hazard much blood.

“I would be deceitful and appear to be what I am not if my honor required the use of deceit to protect my fortunes and my friends. In saying this, I am the representative of your wife, your son, these Senators, and the nobles. But you prefer to show the louts of Rome how you can frown than to spend a fawning look and a fawning word upon them so that you can get their friendship and safeguard that which the lack of their friendship might ruin. You prefer to frown at the plebeians rather than to act civilly to them so that you get their support and safeguard both your life and your

Consulship.”

“Noble lady!” Menenius said. “Come, go with us; speak civilly to the Tribunes. You may heal not only what is dangerous now, but also the loss of what is past. You may not only protect Coriolanus’ life now, but also get back for him his Consulship.”

Volumnia acted out what she wanted her son to do as she described the actions: “I beg you now, my son, go to them, with this hat in your hand, and thus far having held it out ... play along with them ... with your knee kissing the stones ... for in such business action is eloquence, gestures speak more persuasively than words, and the eyes of the ignorant are more learned than their ears ... nodding your head and often bowing in all directions, thus correcting your proud heart, and making it as humble as the ripest mulberry that will not endure the handling.”

Mulberries are so soft when ripe that they are crushed when they are picked. Because of this, they became a symbol for submissiveness.

Volumnia continued, “Then say to them that you are their soldier, and because you were bred in broils and raised in wars, you do not have the soft way of acting that, you confess, it would be suitable for you to use — just as they claim — when you ask them for their good friendship, but you will adapt yourself, truly, and be hereafter their friend, so far as you have power and person.”

“If you do this, just as she said,” Menenius said, “why, the plebeians’ hearts would be yours, for they give pardons as freely as they speak words to little purpose.”

“Please,” Volumnia said, “go now, and be ruled by my advice, although I know you would rather follow your enemy into a fiery gulf than flatter him in a ladies’ chamber.”

She looked up and said, "Here comes Cominius."

Cominius walked over to them and said, "I have been in the marketplace; and, sir, it is fitting that you get yourself a strong party of armed supporters, or that you defend yourself by calmness of words and actions, or that you defend yourself by absence. You need bodyguards, you need to placate the plebeians with your words and actions, or you need to keep away from the marketplace. Everything is in upheaval; all the plebeians are angry."

"Only fair speech will work," Menenius said. "Coriolanus must speak civilly to the plebeians."

"I think that will work, if Coriolanus can restrain his spirit enough to do that," Cominius said.

"He must, and he will," Volumnia said.

She said to Coriolanus, "Please, say now that you will, and then go and do it."

"Must I go show the plebeians my unbarbed scone — my uncovered head?" Coriolanus asked. "Must I take off my hat and show them respect? Must I with base tongue give my noble heart a lie that it must bear? Well, I will do it. Yet, if there were but only this body to lose — this body that will fill a single plot of earth when I die, this clay that is Martius, the plebeians should grind it to dust and throw it against the wind."

Something that Coriolanus valued more than his life was at stake: the approval of his mother.

Coriolanus continued, "Go to the marketplace! You have now given me such a part to play that I can never perform convincingly."

"Come, come, we'll prompt you," Cominius said.

Volumnia said, "Please, sweet son, you have said that my praises made you first a soldier, so in order to have my praise for this, perform a part you have not played before. Do this for me."

"Well, I must do it," Coriolanus said. "Go away, my natural temperament, and let some harlot's spirit possess me! Let my throat of war, which harmonized with my drum, be turned into a piping voice as small in volume and as high in pitch as that of a eunuch or the virgin voice that lulls babies asleep! Let the smiles of knaves camp in my cheeks, and let schoolboys' tears obstruct my eyes! Let a beggar's tongue make motion through my lips, and let my armed knees, which bowed and bent only while in my stirrups, bend like the knees of a beggar who has received an alms!"

As he spoke, he grew angrier and angrier, and now he said, "I will *not* do it, lest I cease to honor my own truth and by my body's action teach my mind a most irremovable and base degradation."

"Do as you choose, then," Volumnia said. "For me, your parent, to beg for anything from you is more to my dishonor than it would be for you to beg for anything from the plebeians.

"Let all go to ruin. Let your mother rather feel your pride than fear your dangerous obstinacy, for I mock at death with as big a heart as yours. Do as you wish. Your valiantness comes from me, for you sucked it from my breasts, but your excessive pride comes from yourself."

"Please, be calm," Coriolanus said. "Mother, I am going to the marketplace. Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves, I'll climb on a platform and lie and cheat their hearts from them, and I will come home beloved by all the tradesmen in Rome. Look, I am going. Give my kind regards to my wife. I'll return as Consul, or never again trust what

my tongue can do in the way of flattery.”

“Do as you will,” Volumnia said.

She exited.

“Let’s go!” Cominius said. “The Tribunes are waiting for you. Prepare yourself to answer them mildly, for they are prepared with accusations that I hear are stronger than those already charged against you.”

“The word is ‘mildly,’” Coriolanus said. “Please, let’s go. Let them invent accusations against me. I will answer in accordance with my honor.”

“Yes, but also mildly,” Menenius said.

“Well, mildly let be it then,” Coriolanus replied. “Mildly!”

— 3.3 —

Sicinius and Brutus spoke together in the marketplace.

Brutus said, “We will attack him with all the force we can on this point: Coriolanus seeks tyrannical power. If he evades us there, we will emphasize his malice toward the common people, and that the plunder gotten when he invaded the territory of the Antiates was never distributed among the soldiers.”

An Aedile walked over to them.

Brutus asked the Aedile, “Will Coriolanus come?”

“He’s coming,” the Aedile replied.

“Who is accompanying him?” Brutus asked.

“Old Menenius, and those Senators who have always favored him.”

Sicinius asked the Aedile, “Do you have a catalogue of all

the votes that we have procured set down by majority vote?”

The two Tribunes were rigging things in the plebeians' favor. There were two ways of voting. Voting by tribes involved majority rule. Each tribe would vote according to what the majority in that tribe wanted. Since the plebeians outnumbered the patricians, this method of voting favored the plebeians. Another method of voting gave more weight to wealthy voters than impoverished voters and so favored the patricians.

“I have it,” the Aedile replied. “It is ready.”

“Have you collected the voters by tribes?” Sicinius asked.

“I have,” the Aedile replied.

“Bring the people here to the marketplace immediately,” Sicinius said, “and when they hear me say, ‘It shall be so in the right and strength of the common people,’ whether it be for death, for fine, or for banishment, then if I say ‘Fine’ let them cry ‘Fine,’ and if I say ‘Death’ let them cry ‘Death.’ The common people must insist on their long-established rights and prerogatives and on the exercise of power in the truth of their cause.”

“I shall inform them,” the Aedile said.

Brutus said, “And when at such time they have begun to cry out what we have ordered them to cry out, let them not cease, but with a confused din force the immediate execution of whatever punishment we happen to sentence Coriolanus to.”

“Very well,” the Aedile said.

Sicinius said, “Make them be strong, and make them be ready for this cue whenever we happen to give it to them.”

“Go and do these things,” Brutus said.

The Aedile exited.

Brutus said, “Let’s immediately make him angry. He has been used always to conquer, and to have his pennyworth of answering back. Once he is angry, he cannot be reined again and returned to temperance. Once he is angry, he speaks what’s in his heart; and what is in his heart seems likely — with our help — to break his neck.”

Sicinius looked up and said, “Well, here he comes.”

Coriolanus, Menenius, and Cominius, along with Senators and other patricians, walked into the marketplace.

“Speak calmly, I beg you,” Menenius said to Coriolanus.

“Yes, like an hostler, a stableman, who for the poorest coin will endure being called a knave so many times that it would fill up the pages of a book,” Coriolanus replied to Menenius.

He then said loudly so all could hear him, “May the honored gods keep Rome safe, and may they keep the chairs of justice occupied by worthy men! May they plant love among us! May they fill our large temples with the ceremonies of peace, and may they not fill our streets with war!”

“Amen, amen,” the first Senator said.

“That is a noble wish,” Menenius said.

The Aedile returned, leading the plebeians.

Sicinius ordered, “Draw near, you common people.”

“Listen to your Tribunes,” the Aedile ordered. “Listen to them. Be quiet, I say!”

“First, hear me speak,” Coriolanus said.

The two Tribunes replied, “Well, speak. Quiet, everyone!”

“Shall I be charged any further than this present time?” Coriolanus asked. “Will everything be determined here?”

“I ask you,” Sicinius said, “whether you submit yourself to the people’s voices. Do you recognize the authority of their officers and are you willing to suffer lawful censure for such crimes as shall be proved upon you?”

Coriolanus paused and then said, “I am willing. I agree to all of those things.”

“Citizens,” Menenius said, “Coriolanus says that he is willing. Consider the military service he has done in war, and think upon the wounds his body bears, which show like graves in the holy churchyard.”

“It is as if I were scratched by briars,” Coriolanus said. “They are scars that will make people laugh, not cry.”

Menenius said, “Consider further, that when he speaks not like a citizen, you find him like a soldier: Do not take his rougher accents for malicious sounds, but as I say, take them as being such as become a soldier, rather than as showing malice toward you.”

“Well, well, say no more,” Cominius said.

Coriolanus asked, “Why is it that having been elected Consul with all your votes, I am so dishonored that the very same hour I was made Consul you take the Consulship away from me?”

“You answer to us,” Sicinius said. “We do not answer to you. We will ask the questions. You are the one on trial.”

“Speak, then,” Coriolanus replied. “It is true that I ought to answer the charges. That is why I am here.”

Sicinius said, “We charge that you have contrived to take from Rome all established political offices and you have contrived to insinuate yourself into possession of a tyrannical power. On account of these actions, you are a traitor to the people.”

Instantly angry, Coriolanus said, “What! Traitor!”

“Speak temperately,” Menenius said. “Remember your promise.”

“May the fires in the lowest Hell enfold the common people!” Coriolanus said to Sicinius. “You call me their traitor, you insulting Tribune! If twenty thousand deaths sat within your eyes, and if your hand clutched as many millions of deaths, and if in your lying tongue were both numbers of deaths, I would say ‘You lie’ to you with a voice as freely, openly, and frankly as I pray to the gods.”

“Do you hear this, people?” Sicinius asked.

“To the rock, to the rock with him!” the plebeians shouted.

They wanted the death penalty for Coriolanus.

“Quiet!” Sicinius ordered. “We do not need to add new charges against him. What you have seen him do and heard him speak — beating your officers, cursing yourselves, opposing laws with strokes of his sword, and here defying those whose great power must try him — even this, which is so criminal that it is worthy of the death penalty, deserves the most extreme death.”

Brutus said, “But since he has served Rome well —”

“What are you babbling about service?” Coriolanus asked.

“I am talking about something that I know,” Brutus said.

“You?” Coriolanus asked.

Brutus was saying that he knew something about civil service, but Coriolanus believed that military service was much more valuable and much more worthy of respect.

“Is this how you keep the promise that you made your mother?” Menenius asked Coriolanus.

“Know, please —” Cominius said.

Coriolanus interrupted, “I’ll know no further. Let them pronounce against me the sentence of the steep Tarpeian death, vagabond exile, flaying, being imprisoned and starving to death with only one grain of wheat to eat per day. I would not buy their mercy at the price of one fair word nor check my courage for what they can give, even if I could have it by saying ‘Good morning’ to them.”

Sicinius said, “Inasmuch as he has, as much as in him lies, from time to time shown malice against the people, seeking means to pluck away their power, and he has now at last given hostile strokes of his sword, not only in the presence of dreaded justice, but also on the ministers who distribute that justice, we immediately banish him in the name of the people and in the power of us the Tribunes from our city. He must never again enter our gates of Rome or he will be thrown down from the Tarpeian cliff. In the people’s name, I say it shall be so.”

The plebeians shouted, “It shall be so! It shall be so! Let him leave Rome! He’s banished, and it shall be so!”

Cominius said, “Hear me, my masters, and my common friends —”

“Coriolanus has been sentenced; there’s nothing more to be heard,” Sicinius said.

“Let me speak,” Cominius said. “I have been Consul, and I can show for Rome her enemies’ marks upon me. I love my country’s good with a respect more tender, more holy and profound, than my own life, my dear wife’s reputation, her womb’s increase and treasure of my loins — our children. Then if I would speak that —”

“We know your drift,” Sicinius said. “Speak what?”

“There’s no more to be said, except that Coriolanus is banished,” Brutus said, “as an enemy to the people and his country. It shall be so: He shall leave Rome.”

“It shall be so!” the plebeians shouted. “It shall be so!”

“You common cry — pack — of curs!” Coriolanus shouted. “I hate your breath as I hate the reeking vapor of the rotten swamps! I prize your friendship as I prize the dead carcasses of unburied men that corrupt my air! I BANISH YOU! I allow you to remain here with your uncertainty! Let every feeble rumor shake your hearts! Let your enemies, with the nodding of the plumes on their helmets fan you into despair! Continue to have the power to banish your defenders until the only ones left are you, who are enemies to yourselves! Eventually, your ignorance, which you won’t know you have until you experience its effects, will deliver you as very abject and humbled captives to some nation that won you without a battle — without blows!

“Despising, because of you, this city of Rome, thus I turn my back. There is a world elsewhere.”

Coriolanus exited. With him went Cominius, Menenius, the Senators, and the other patricians.

The Aedile shouted, “The common people’s enemy is gone! He is gone!”

“Our enemy is banished!” the plebeians shouted. “He is gone! Yea! Yea!”

They threw their hats into the air.

Sicinius said, “Go, see him exit through the city gates, and follow him, as he has followed you, with all disdain and scorn. Give him deserved vexation and torment. Let a guard go with us through the city to protect us if need be from the patricians.”

“Come on! Come on!” the plebeians shouted. “Let’s see him exit through the city gates. Come on! May the gods preserve our noble Tribunes! Come on!”

CHAPTER 4**— 4.1 —**

Coriolanus, Volumnia, Virgilia, Menenius, Cominius, and the young nobles of Rome stood in front of the city gates. The young, as opposed to the old, nobles of Rome especially supported Coriolanus.

Coriolanus said to his family and friends, “Come, set aside your tears. Let’s have a brief farewell: The beast with many heads — the plebeians — butts me away. Mother, where is your long-established courage? You were always accustomed to say that a crisis was the trier of spirits, that common men could bear common chances, that when the sea was calm all boats alike showed mastership in floating. You were always accustomed to say that after suffering a grievous wound, acting as if one were gently wounded required a noble cunning. You were always accustomed to load me with precepts that would make invincible the heart that memorized and learned them.”

“Oh, Heavens! Oh, Heavens!” his wife, Virgilia, cried.

“No, please, woman —” Coriolanus began to say.

Volumnia interrupted, “Now may the red pestilence — typhus — strike all tradesmen in Rome, and may all occupations perish!”

“What! What! What!” Coriolanus said. “I shall be loved when I am missed. No, mother, resume that spirit you had when you were accustomed to say that if you had been the wife of Hercules, you would have done six of his twelve labors and saved your husband so much sweat.

“Cominius, do not droop. Adieu.

“Farewell, my wife, and my mother. I’ll do well yet.

“You old and true Menenius, your tears are saltier than a younger man’s, and the salt is venomous to your eyes.

“My sometime General, I have seen you stern, and you have often beheld heart-hardening spectacles. Tell these sad women that it is as foolish to bewail strokes that cannot be avoided as it is to laugh at them.

“My mother, you know well my hazards have always been your solace; you have always enjoyed the risks I have faced. Believe this and don’t take it lightly: Although I go alone, like a lonely dragon that makes his swamp feared and talked about more than seen — your son will either exceed the commonplace and do something remarkable or else he will be caught with cautelous — crafty and deceitful — baits and plots.”

“My first son,” Volumnia said, “where will you go? Take good Cominius with you for a while. Determine on some course of action to follow rather than expose yourself to each chance event that arises in the way before you.”

“Oh, the gods!” Coriolanus said, exasperated because his mother was worrying excessively about him.

“I’ll go with you for a month and plan with you where you shall rest and reside so that you may hear from us and we may hear from you,” Cominius said. “That way, if the time thrusts forth an occasion when your exile is repealed, we shall not send over the vast world to seek a single man, and lose the opportunity to bring you home. Otherwise, the opportunity will cool in the absence of the person who needs the opportunity, and Rome may decide not to allow you to return from exile.”

“Fare you well,” Coriolanus said to Cominius. “You have too many years upon you and you are too full of the wars’ excesses to go roving with one who is yet unbruised. Accompany me only to the gate.”

Coriolanus was, of course, “bruised.” He had many scars from his war wounds.

Coriolanus continued, “Come, my sweet wife, my dearest mother, and my friends who have been tested and have been found noble. When I am outside the gate, bid me farewell, and smile. Please, come with me to the gate.

“While I remain above the ground, you shall always hear from me, and you shall never hear of me anything but what is like me formerly. I shall not change.”

“What you have said is worthy, as any ear can hear,” Menenius said. “Let’s not weep. If I could shake off just seven years from my old arms and legs, I swear by the good gods that I would accompany you every foot of your exile.”

“Give me your hand,” Coriolanus said. “Come.”

— 4.2 —

Sicinius, Brutus, and an Aedile met on a street in Rome.

Sicinius ordered the Aedile, “Tell the plebeians all to go home; Coriolanus has gone, and we’ll go no further. The nobility are vexed; they have sided with Coriolanus.”

“Now that we have shown our power,” Brutus said, “let us seem humbler after it is done than when it was happening. We have gotten what we wanted, and so there is no need for us to make more enemies and to make our enemies more bitter by flaunting our power.”

“Tell the plebeians to go home,” Sicinius said. “Say that their great enemy is gone, and they have stood strong with their earlier strength.”

“Dismiss them and tell them to go home,” Brutus said.

The Aedile exited.

Brutus looked up and said, “Here comes Coriolanus’ mother.”

“Let’s not meet her,” Sicinius said.

“Why?” Brutus asked,

“They say she’s so mad that she’s insane.”

“They have seen us,” Brutus said. “Keep walking.”

It was too late for them to escape. Volumnia, Virgilia, and Menenius quickly walked over to the two Tribunes.

Volumnia said, “Oh, you’re well met. May the plague that the gods hoard until it is time to punish evildoers be your recompense for the ‘friendship’ you have shown to Coriolanus!”

“Quiet! Quiet!” Menenius said. “Don’t be so loud.”

Volumnia said, “If I could speak despite my weeping, you should hear — actually, you shall hear some of what I have to say to you.”

Brutus attempted to leave, but Volumnia blocked his way and said, “Do you want to be gone? That is not going to happen.”

Sicinius attempted to leave, but Virgilia blocked his way and said, “You shall stay, too. I wish I had the power to say the same thing to my husband.”

“Are you acting like men?” Sicinius asked.

Volumnia replied, “Yes, fool; is that a shame? Listen, fool. Wasn’t a man my father? Did you have foxship — cunning ingratitude — enough to banish Coriolanus, who struck more blows for Rome than you have spoken words? Each of us has his or her own heritage.”

“Oh, blessed Heavens!” Sicinius said.

“Coriolanus had more noble blows than you ever had wise words, and those blows were for Rome’s good,” Volumnia said. “I’ll tell you what — but I will let you go. ... No, I won’t — you shall stay, after all, and listen to me. I wish my son were in Arabia, and your tribe were before him as he held his good sword in his hand.”

“What about it?” Sicinius asked.

“What about it!” Virgilia said. “He would make an end of your posterity. In Arabia, he would not have to obey Roman law, and he would kill all your descendants.”

“Bastards and all,” Volumnia said. “Coriolanus is a good man — consider the wounds that he bears because he fought for Rome!”

“Come, come, peace,” Menenius said.

Sicinius said, “I wish that Coriolanus had continued to serve his country as he began, and that he had not unknot by himself the noble knot he made.”

The knot was a bond between Coriolanus and Rome.

“I wish he had,” Brutus said

“You wish he had!” Volumnia said. “It was you two Tribunes who incensed the rabble against him. You cats! You can judge as fitly of his worth as I can of those mysteries that Heaven will not allow the Earth to know.”

“Please, let us go,” Brutus said.

“Now, please, sir, get you gone,” Volumnia said. “You have done a ‘brave’ deed. Before you go, hear this: As far as the Capitol exceeds the meanest house in Rome, so far my son — this lady’s husband here, this lady, do you see — whom you have banished, exceeds you all.”

“Well, well, we’ll leave you,” Brutus said.

“Why are we staying here to be tormented by someone who lacks her wits?” Sicinius said.

“Take my ‘prayers’ with you,” Volumnia said.

The Tribunes exited.

Volumnia said, “I wish that the gods had nothing else to do but to confirm my curses and bring them about! If I could see my curses being carried out once a day, it would unclog my heart of what lies heavy in it.”

Clogs were heavy pieces of wood attached to prisoners to keep them from running away.

“You have told them home truths,” Menenius said, “and indeed you have cause to curse them. You’ll dine with me?”

“Anger is my food,” Volumnia said. “I dine on myself, and so I shall starve with feeding.”

In this culture, “to starve” meant 1) “to die” as well as 2) “to be very hungry.” Therefore:

1) “I dine on myself, and so I shall die with feeding” meant “I shall consume myself with anger until I die.”

2) “I dine on myself, and so I shall be very hungry with feeding” meant “I consume myself with anger, and if I eat food, I will feel better and starve my anger by no longer feeling angry.” The implication was that she would not eat food in order to prevent the possibility that eating food would lessen her anger.

“Come, let’s go,” Volumnia said. “Leave behind this faint whimpering. Instead, lament as I do; I am like Juno in my anger.”

Juno was the wife of Jupiter, King of the gods. Her anger

was implacable. In mythology, a contest was held to determine which goddess — Juno, Venus, or Minerva — was the most beautiful; Paris, Prince of Troy, judged that beauty contest. Juno lost the contest, and thereafter she hated the Trojans. Her anger was so implacable that she also hated the Romans because Aeneas, a Trojan who had survived the fall of Troy, made his way to Italy and became an important ancestor of the Roman people.

Volumnia said, “Come, come, come.”

Menenius said, “Damn! Damn! Damn!”

— 4.3 —

A Roman and a Volscian met on a road between Rome and Antium.

“I know you well, sir,” the Roman said, “and you know me. Your name, I think, is Adrian.”

“That is right, sir,” the Volscian replied. “Truly, I have forgotten you.”

“I am a Roman; and my services are, as your services are, employed against the Romans. Do you know me now?”

“Are you Nicanor?” the Volscian asked.

“Yes, I am he, sir,” the Roman replied.

“You had a bigger beard when I last saw you, but your face is well corroborated by your tongue. What’s the news in Rome? I have a note from the Volscian state telling me to seek you out there. Our meeting now has saved me a day’s journey.”

“There have been in Rome strange insurrections,” the Roman said. “The common people have opposed themselves against the Senators, patricians, and nobles.”

“You say ‘has been’! Is it ended, then? Our government does not think so. The Volscians are preparing for war, and they hope to come upon the Romans in the heat of their division.”

“The main blaze of it is past, but a small thing would make it flame again,” the Roman said. “The nobles are so taking to heart the banishment of that worthy Coriolanus that they are in a ripe readiness to take all power from the people and to pluck from them their Tribunes forever. This lies glowing, I can tell you, and is almost mature for the violent breaking out. The insurrection can break out in violence again at any time.”

“Coriolanus has been banished!” the Volscian said.

“Yes, he has been banished, sir.”

“You will be welcome in Antium with this intelligence, Nicanor.”

“The day serves well for the Volscians now,” the Roman said. “I have heard it said that the fittest time to corrupt a man’s wife is when she’s fallen out with her husband. Your noble Tullus Aufidius will appear well in these wars because his great opponent, Coriolanus, is now no longer wanted by his country.”

“Aufidius cannot choose other than to appear well in these wars,” the Volscian said. “With Coriolanus gone, Aufidius will certainly triumph. I am very fortunate that I have accidentally encountered you. You have ended my business, and I will merrily accompany you home.”

“I shall, between this time and suppertime, tell you very strange things that are going on in Rome, all tending to the good of the Romans’ adversaries. Did you say that your government has an army ready?”

“It is a very royal army,” the Volscian said. “The military

centurions and their soldiers, individually enrolled, already taken into service and on the payroll, are ready to be on foot and marching at an hour's warning."

"I am filled with joy to hear of their readiness, and I am the man, I think, who shall set them on to immediate action," the Roman said. "So, sir, we are heartily well met, and I am very glad to have your company."

"You take my words from me, sir," the Volscian said. "I have the most cause to be glad of your company."

"Well, let us go together," the Roman said.

— 4.4 —

Wearing ragged clothing, in disguise, and with his face partially hidden, Coriolanus stood in front of Aufidius' house in Antium. He did not know he was standing in front of Aufidius' house.

He said to himself, "A good-looking city is this Antium. City, it is I who made your widows. I have heard many an heir of these beautiful buildings groan and drop in the face of my onslaughts. I hope that no one recognizes me, lest your widowed wives with kitchen spits and boys with stones slay me in petty battle."

A citizen of Antium appeared.

Coriolanus said to him, "May God save you, sir."

"And you," the citizen replied.

"Direct me, if you will, to where great Aufidius resides. Is he in Antium?"

"He is, and he is feasting the nobles of the state at his house this night," the citizen replied.

"Which is his house, please?"

“This one here in front of you.”

“Thank you, sir,” Coriolanus said. “Farewell.”

The citizen exited.

Coriolanus said to himself, “Oh, world, you have slippery, fickle turns of fortune! People who are firmly sworn friends now, whose double — both two and duplicitous — chests seem to wear one heart, whose house, whose bed, whose meal, and whose exercise, are always together, who twin, as it were, in inseparable friendship, shall within this hour, because of a quarrel over an eighth of a penny, break out into bitterest enmity.

“And people who are the fellest — mightiest — foes, whose passions and whose plots have broken their sleep and made them stay awake, each of them thinking how to take the other, will by some chance or some trifle not worth an egg become dear friends and both will join their interests together and have their children unite the two families through marriage.

“So it is with me. I hate my birthplace, which is Rome, and now I love this enemy town, which is Antium. I’ll enter this house and talk to Aufidius. If he slays me, he does what is fair and just. But if he gives me the opportunity, I’ll do his country service.”

— 4.5 —

Inside Aufidius’ house, servants were serving the feast for Aufidius’ guests.

The first servant called out, “Wine, wine, wine! What service is here! I think our fellow servants are asleep!”

The second servant called out, “Where’s Cotus? My master is calling for him. Cotus!”

Coriolanus walked into the room and said, "This is a good house. The feast smells good, but I don't look like a guest."

In fact, he looked like a beggar because of his disguise and the ragged clothing he was wearing.

The first servant saw Coriolanus and said to him, "What do you want, friend? Where have you come from? This is no place for you. Please, go to the door and wait with the other beggars for handouts."

Coriolanus said to himself, "I have deserved no better reception than this because I am Coriolanus."

Noticing Coriolanus, who was still present, the second servant said to him, "Where have you come from? Is the porter blind? He must be if he allows such fellows as you to enter the house. Please, go outside."

"Go away!" Coriolanus, whose bearing was that of a proud noble, not of a humble beggar, said.

"Me go away!" the second servant said. "You go away!"

"Now you are being troublesome to me," Coriolanus said.

"Are you so brave?" the second servant replied. "I'll have you talked with immediately."

A third servant entered. Seeing Coriolanus, he asked the first servant, "What fellow's this? Who is he?"

"As strange a fellow as I ever looked on," the first servant said. "I cannot get him out of the house. Please, call my master to come and speak to him."

The third servant said to Coriolanus, "What business have you to do here, fellow? Please, leave the house."

"Let me just stand here," Coriolanus said. "I will not hurt your hearth."

“Who are you?” the third servant asked.

“A gentleman,” Coriolanus said.

Looking at Coriolanus’ ragged clothing, the third servant said, “You are a marvelously poor gentleman.”

“That is true,” Coriolanus said. “I am.”

“Please, poor gentleman,” the third servant said, “take up some other station; here’s no place for you. Please, leave this house.”

“Do what work you have to do,” Coriolanus said. “Go, and get fat on cold leftovers.”

He pushed the third servant away.

“Won’t you leave?” the third servant asked.

He said to the second servant, “Please, tell my master what a strange guest he has here.”

“I shall,” the second servant said.

He exited to go speak to Aufidius.

The third servant asked Coriolanus, “Where do you dwell?”

“Under the canopy,” Coriolanus replied, referring to the canopy of stars at night.

“Under the canopy!” the third servant said.

“Yes.”

“Where’s that?” the third servant asked. Canopies can be also be ornamental cloths that are hung over beds, so the third servant was not sure what Coriolanus meant by “under the canopy.”

Coriolanus replied, “The city of kites and crows.”

Kites and crows are predatory birds. Coriolanus may have been referring to the wilderness where he slept, or he may have been referring to Rome, which now he hated because of the predatory Tribunes, or he may have been referring to both.

“In the city of kites and crows!” the third servant said. “What an ass it is — what an ass you are! Then you dwell with proverbially stupid jackdaws, too?”

Coriolanus said, “No, I don’t serve your master.”

Coriolanus meant that the jackdaws, aka fools, were the servants, but the third servant thought that he meant that the master — Aufidius — was a jackdaw, aka fool.

The third servant said, “What, sir! Do you meddle with my master?”

The third servant used “meddle” in the sense of “have anything to do with,” but a slang meaning of “meddle” was “have sex with.” Coriolanus used the word in that sense in his next sentence.

Coriolanus said, “Yes, it is a more honest service than to meddle with your lady boss, Aufidius’ wife. You babble, and you babble. Go and serve food with your serving platter, and get out of here!”

Coriolanus hit him, and the third servant ran out of the room.

The second servant returned with Aufidius. The third servant exited to perform a task.

Aufidius said, “Where is this fellow?”

“Here, he is, sir,” the second servant replied, pointing to Coriolanus. “I would have beaten him like a dog, except that it would have disturbed the lords within.”

Although they had fought each other face to face in battle,

Aufidius did not recognize Coriolanus. In battle, they had worn helmets.

“Where have you come from?” Aufidius asked the disguised Coriolanus. “What do you want? What is your name? Why don’t you speak? Speak, man. Tell me your name.”

In his answer, Coriolanus called Aufidius by his praenomen — his first, personal name: Tullus. This is remarkably familiar. Usually, only intimate friends and family would use the praenomen.

Coriolanus revealed his face, which had been partially covered up, and said, “If, Tullus, you still do not know who I am, and, seeing me, do not think that I am the man I am, necessity commands me to tell you my name.”

Not recognizing him, Aufidius asked, “What is your name?”

“It is a name that is unmusical to the Volscians’ ears, and it is harsh in sound to your ears.”

“Tell me, what’s your name?” Aufidius asked again. “You have a grim appearance, and your face is commanding. Although your tackle’s torn, you show that you are a noble vessel.”

Aufidius was speaking metaphorically. Tackle is a ship’s rigging, and a vessel is both a ship and the container of a soul. Aufidius was saying that although Coriolanus’ clothing was torn, he was obviously a fine man.

Aufidius asked again, “What’s your name?”

“Prepare your eyebrows to frown,” Coriolanus said. “Don’t you know yet who I am?”

“I don’t know who you are. What is your name?”

“My name is Caius Martius, who has done to you in particular and to all the Volscians in general great hurt and

mischievous; evidence of that can be seen in my surname, which is Coriolanus: the conqueror of Corioli. The painful and painstaking service, the extreme dangers and the drops of blood I have shed for my thankless country are requited only with that surname; my surname is a good memorial, and it is evidence for the malice and displeasure that you should bear me.

“Only that name remains to me. Rome’s dastardly nobles permitted the common people to indulge their cruelty and envy. All of Rome’s nobles have forsaken me, and they have devoured the rest of what I had. They allowed the voices of slaves to whoop me out of Rome. I was tormented as I left Rome to enter exile; it was as if the common people were hunting me.

“Now this crisis has brought me to your hearth, not out of hope — don’t mistake my intention — to save my life, for if I had feared death, of all the men in the world I would have avoided you; instead, I have come here out of absolute spite. I want to fully repay those people who banished me, and that is why I stand here before you.

“If you have a vengeful heart within you, a vengeful heart that will revenge the wrongs committed against you and will stop those shameful injuries seen throughout your country, then immediately take action and make my misery serve your purposes. Use my misery so that my revengeful services may prove to be benefits to you, for I will fight against my corrupted country with the temper and passion of all the devils in Hell.

“But if it happens that you dare not do this and you are too tired to try any more your fortunes in war, then in a word I say that I am too weary to love being any longer in this world, and so I present my throat to you and to your long-established hatred of me. In this case, if you don’t cut my throat, you would show that you are just a fool, since I with

hatred have always sought to meet you on the battlefield, have drawn barrels of blood out of your countrymen's chests, and I cannot live but to your shame, unless I live to do you service."

"Oh, Martius, Martius!" Aufidius replied. "Each word you have spoken has weeded from my heart a root of long-established malice.

"Even if Jupiter should speak divine things from yonder cloud, thundering to say that all you have said is true, I would not believe his thunder more than I would believe you, all-noble Martius.

"Let me twine my arms about your body, against which my grainy ash-wood spear a hundred times has broken against your armor and scarred the Moon with splinters."

At this point, two former enemies became allies. A man who had loved Rome now hated Rome, and a man who had hated Coriolanus now loved Coriolanus. Such things are unusual, as is scarring the Moon, whose goddess is the virgin Diana, with splinters, which are phallic symbols.

Aufidius continued, "Here and now I hug the anvil of my sword — I have swung my sword against your armored body so many times that it is as if I were a blacksmith hammering a sword on an anvil.

"I will contend as hotly and as nobly with your love and friendship as ever in ambitious strength I contended against your valor.

"You should know first, you first of all men, that I loved the maiden I married; never did a man sigh truer breath. But I see you here, you noble thing, and my rapt heart dances more than when I first saw my wedded wife step across my threshold.

“Why, you Mars, you god of war! I tell you that we have an army on foot; and I had intended once more to hew your shield from your brawny arm or lose my arm in attempting to do it.

“You have thoroughly beaten me in battle twelve separate times, and I have each night since dreamed of encounters between yourself and me. In my sleep, we have been down on the ground wrestling together, unbuckling helmets, grabbing each other’s throat with our fists, and I have awakened half dead with nothing.

“Worthy Martius, if we had no quarrel with Rome, except that you have been banished from it, we would muster into our army all our males from age twelve to age seventy, and like a bold flood overwhelming its banks we would pour war into the bowels of ungrateful Rome.

“Oh, come with me, go inside the great hall, and take our friendly Senators by the hands. They now are here, taking their leaves of me; I am prepared to march against your territories, although not to march against Rome itself.”

Coriolanus said, “You bless me, gods!”

Aufidius said, “Therefore, most perfect sir, if you will have the leading of your own revenge, take one half of my commission and my soldiers, and set down — as best as your experience tells you, since you know your country’s strength and weakness — your plan in your own way. Decide whether to knock against the gates of Rome, or violently visit them in their remote territories in order to frighten them before you destroy them. But come to the dining hall. Let me present and commend you first to those who shall say yes to your desires. A thousand welcomes! And you are more a friend now than you ever were an enemy, although, Martius, you were quite an enemy. Give me your hand. You are very welcome!”

Coriolanus and Aufidius exited.

The first servant said, “Here’s a strange alteration in their relationship!”

“By my hand,” the second servant said, “I had thought to have struck Coriolanus with a cudgel, and yet my mind warned me that his clothes were making a false report of him. My mind warned me that he was not a beggar, although he was dressed in rags.”

“What an arm he has!” the first servant said, “He turned me around with his finger and his thumb, just like someone would set a top spinning.”

The second servant said, “I knew by his face that there was something in him: He had, sir, a kind of face, I thought — I don’t know how to describe it.”

“He did have such a face,” the first servant said. “He looked as it were — I wish I would be hanged if I didn’t think there was more in him than I could think.”

“So thought I, I’ll be sworn,” the second servant said. “He is simply the rarest man in the world.”

“I think he is,” the first servant said, “but a greater soldier than he you know of.”

“Who, my master?” the second servant said.

The servants were starting to compare Coriolanus and their master: Aufidius. Coriolanus was the better soldier, but the servants were reluctant to admit that, lest they get in trouble, so they praised Aufidius as well. They discussed the two men cautiously, using “he” and “him” rather than names in case they were overheard. Such use of pronouns leads to ambiguity. “Our General,” however, is not ambiguous; it refers to Aufidius.

“It’s not important,” the first servant said. “It doesn’t matter.”

“He is worth six of him,” the second servant said.

“That’s not true,” the first servant said, “but I take him to be the greater soldier.”

“Truly, one cannot tell how to say that,” the second servant said. “For the defense of a town, our General is excellent.”

“Yes, and for an assault, too,” the first servant said.

The third servant arrived and said, “Oh, slaves, I can tell you news — news, you rascals!”

The other servants said, “What is it? Tell us.”

“I would not be a Roman, of all nations,” the third servant said. “I would just as soon be a man condemned to die.”

“Why?” the other two servants asked.

“Why, here is the man who was accustomed to thwack — beat — our General.”

“Why do you say ‘thwack our General?’” the first servant said.

The third servant, worried about getting into trouble for dispraising Aufidius, said, “I do not say ‘thwack our General,’ but he was always good enough for him.”

The second servant said, “Come, we are fellows and friends: We can talk openly.”

Although the second servant felt that the servants could speak openly to each other about the respective merits of Coriolanus and Aufidius, he continued to use the pronouns “he” and “him,” rather than names: “He was always too hard for him; I have heard him say so himself.”

The first servant said, “He was too hard for him, to say the plain truth. Before Corioli he slashed him and notched him like a piece of meat about to be cooked.”

The second servant said, “If he had been a cannibal, he could have broiled and eaten him, too.”

“What other news do you bring?” the first servant asked.

The third servant said, “Why, he is made so much of here within, it is as if he were the son and heir to Mars, the god of war. He sits at the upper end of the table in a place of honor. The Senators don’t ask him a question without first taking off their hats as a mark of respect. Our General himself treats him as if he were a mistress. Our General himself sanctifies himself by touching his guest’s hand — it’s as if his guest were sacred. Our General himself also rolls his eyes in admiration of his guest’s conversation.

“But the bottom — the conclusion — of the news is that our General is cut in the middle and is now only one half of what he was yesterday because now his guest has the other half, by the entreaty and grant of the whole table. He’ll go, he says, and drag the porter of the gate of Rome by the ears. He will mow all down before him, and leave the ground over which he passes stripped bare.”

The second servant said, “And he’s as likely to do it as any man I can imagine.”

“Do it!” the third servant said. “He will do it because, you see, sir, he has as many friends as enemies. These friends, sir, as it were, dare not, you see, sir, show themselves, as we term it, his friends while he’s in directitude.”

The third servant had perhaps meant to say “dis-rectitude,” which would mean “a state of unrighteousness.” Certainly, in Rome Coriolanus was in a state of disgrace.

“Directitude!” the first servant said, “What’s that?”

The third servant ignored the question and said, “But when they shall see, sir, his crest up again, and the man in blood, they will run out of their burrows, like rabbits after a rain, and all will revel with him.”

Coriolanus’ crest would be up like that of a fighting cock; he would not be crestfallen. “In blood” was a hunting term meaning “in full vigor and cry.”

“When will this happen?” the first servant asked.

“Tomorrow, today, immediately,” the third servant said. “The war drum will be struck up this afternoon: It is, as it were, a part of their feast, and it will be done before they wipe their lips.”

The second servant said, “Why, then we shall have a stirring world again. This peace is good for nothing except to rust iron, increase tailors, and breed ballad-makers.”

Tailors had the reputation of being cowardly and effeminate. The second servant was saying that peace tended to breed such men.

The first servant said, “Let me have war, say I. War exceeds peace as much as day exceeds night; it is full of spritely walking — military marching — and it is audible with military music, and it is full of vent.”

One meaning of “to vent” was “to get rid of.” Earlier, Martius had spoken of venting “musty superfluity.” Literally, “musty superfluity” meant “moldy excess food.” Metaphorically, it meant “excess people.” If the fittest survive, the people who die are not the most fit. For Martius, those people would be the plebeians.

The first servant continued, “Peace is a total paralysis; it is lethargy. Peace is mulled, deaf, sleepy, insensible.”

By “mulled,” he meant like “like mulled wine.” Peace stupefies people.

The first servant continued, “Peace is a begetter of more bastard children than war is a destroyer of men.”

The second servant said, “That’s true. As war, in some way, may be said to be a plunderer and a rapist, so it cannot be denied that peace is a great maker of cuckolds and unfaithful wives.”

“Yes,” the first servant said, “and it makes men hate one another.”

The third servant said, “The reason that peace makes men hate each other is because in peaceful times they need one another less. For my money, I prefer the wars. I hope to see the lives of Romans regarded as cheap as the lives of Volscians. Lots of us died in the last war; here’s hoping lots of them die in this war.”

The third servant heard some noise and said, “They are rising from the table; they are rising.”

The servants said, “Let’s get to work.”

— 4.6 —

Sicinius and Brutus talked together in a public place in Rome.

Sicinius said, “We have not heard anything about Coriolanus, and we need not fear him. The remedy for the disease he caused Rome was the common people, who are now tame and quiet in the present peace of Rome; previously, while Coriolanus was in Rome, the common people were wildly disturbed. Here and now we make his friends blush because the world goes well and peacefully; his friends would rather, even if they themselves suffered by it, behold dissentious numbers of people crowding streets

than see our tradesmen working within their shops and going about their proper occupations in a friendly and peaceful fashion.”

“We stood up to him at a good time,” Brutus said.

He looked up and asked, “Is that Menenius coming toward us?”

“It is he, it is he,” Sicinius replied. “Oh, he has grown very friendly to us lately.”

“Hail, sir!” the Tribunes said.

“Hail to you both!” Menenius replied.

“Your Coriolanus is not much missed, except by his friends,” Sicinius said. “The commonwealth stands, and it would continue to stand even if he were angrier at it.”

“All is well,” Menenius replied, “and it might have been much better, if Coriolanus could have compromised and become amenable.”

“Where is he?” Sicinius asked. “Have you heard?”

“No, I have heard nothing,” Menenius replied. “His mother and his wife have also heard nothing from him.”

A few citizens walked over to them and said to the two Tribunes, “May the gods preserve you both!”

“Good evening, our neighbors,” Sicinius said.

In this culture, evening was anytime after noon.

“Good evening to you all,” Brutus said. “Good evening to you all.”

The first citizen said, “We ourselves, our wives, and our children, on our knees, are bound to pray for you both.”

“Live, and thrive!” Sicinius said to the citizens.

“Farewell, kind neighbors,” Brutus said. “We wish that Coriolanus had loved you as we do.”

“Now may the gods keep you!” the citizens said.

“Farewell, farewell,” the two Tribunes said.

The citizens exited.

“This is a happier and more comely, more graceful time than when these fellows ran about the streets, crying out in confusion,” Sicinius said.

“Caius Martius was a worthy officer in the war,” Brutus said, “but he was insolent, overcome with pride, ambitious past all thinking, self-loving —”

“And desiring one solitary throne, from which he could rule without assistance or assistants,” Sicinius said.

“I don’t think that is true,” Menenius said.

“We should by this time, to all our lamentations, if Coriolanus had become Consul, found it to be true,” Sicinius said.

“The gods have well prevented it, and Rome sits safe and still and quiet without him,” Brutus said.

An Aedile walked over to them and said, “Worthy Tribunes, there is a slave, whom we have put in prison, who reports that the Volscians with two separate armies have entered the Roman territories, and with the deepest malice of the war are destroying what lies before them.”

“It is Aufidius,” Menenius said. “Having heard of our Martius’ banishment, he thrusts forth his horns again into the world. When Martius stood up for Rome, Aufidius kept his horns hidden and did not allow them to be seen.”

“Why are you talking about Martius?” Sicinius asked.

“Go see to it that this spreader of rumors is whipped,” Brutus said. “It cannot be true that the Volscians dare to break the peace treaty they made with us.”

“Cannot be true!” Menenius said. “We have it on historical record that it very well can be true, and three times in my lifetime the Volscians have dared to break the peace treaty they made with us.

“But question the fellow rationally before you punish him. Ask him where he heard this, lest you shall chance to whip your source of good information and beat the messenger who bids us to beware of what is in fact to be dreaded.”

“Don’t tell us that,” Sicinius replied. “I know this gossip cannot be true.”

“It isn’t possible,” Brutus said.

A messenger arrived and said to them, “The nobles in great earnestness are all going to the Senate House. Some news has come that changes their countenances.”

“It is this slave,” Sicinius said. “Go whip him in front of the people’s eyes. Nothing but his report is causing this distress.”

“Worthy sir,” the messenger said, “The slave’s report has been corroborated, and more news, more fearsome than the slave’s, has been delivered.”

“What more fearsome news?” Sicinius asked.

The messenger replied, “It is spoken freely out of many mouths — how probable the news is I do not know — that Martius, who has allied himself with Aufidius, leads an army against Rome, and he vows revenge as spacious as the gulf between the youngest thing and the oldest thing.”

“This is most likely!” Sicinius said sarcastically.

“This rumor has been spread only so that the weaker sort may wish good Martius home again,” Brutus said.

“That is the trick behind the spreading of this rumor,” Brutus said.

“This rumor is unlikely to be true,” Menenius said. “Coriolanus and Aufidius can no more be reconciled and be united than can the most violent extremes.”

A second messenger arrived and said, “You are sent for to go to the Senate. A fearsome army, led by Caius Martius joined with Aufidius, rages upon our territories, and their soldiers have already overpowered everything in their path, consumed it with fire, and taken what lay before them.”

Cominius arrived and said to the two Tribunes, “Oh, you have made ‘good’ work!”

“What is the news?” Menenius asked. “What is the news?”

Cominius said to the two Tribunes, “You have helped to rape your own daughters, to melt the city leaden roofs upon your heads, to see your wives raped and dishonored in front of your eyes —”

Menenius interrupted, “What is the news? What is the news?”

Cominius continued, “— your temples burned to their foundations, and your rights and liberties, on which you insisted, confined into the tiny hole made by an auger.”

An auger is a drilling tool.

“Please, tell us now your news,” Menenius said. “You Tribunes have made ‘fair’ work, I am afraid. Please, Cominius, what is your news? If Martius should have joined with the Volscians —”

Cominius interrupted, "If! Martius is their god: He leads them like a thing made by some deity other than nature, some deity that shapes man better; and the Volscians follow him, against us brats, with no less confidence than boys pursuing summer butterflies or butchers killing flies."

Menenius said to the two Tribunes, "You have made 'good' work, you and your apron-men; you who stood up so much for the votes of workers and the breath of garlic-eaters!"

"Apron-men" were men who worked while wearing aprons; for example, a sword maker would sometimes wear a protective apron. Members of the working class often ate garlic as a spice and because of its medicinal qualities.

Cominius said, "Like an earthquake, he will shake your Rome about your ears."

"Just like Hercules shook down mellow fruit when he retrieved golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides as one of his famous labors," Menenius said. "You Tribunes have made 'fair' work!"

"But is this true, sir?" Brutus asked.

"Yes, it is true," Cominius replied, "and you'll look pale with fear before you find it other than true. All the regions smilingly and joyfully revolt, and all who resist are mocked for valiant ignorance, and they perish as faithful and loyal fools. Who is it can blame Martius? Your enemies and his find something worthwhile and admirable in him."

"We are all ruined and destroyed, unless the noble man has mercy on us," Menenius said.

"Who shall ask for mercy?" Cominius asked. "The Tribunes cannot do it for shame; the people deserve the same kind of 'pity' from him as the wolf deserves from the shepherds. As for his best friends, if they should say now to him, 'Be good

to Rome,' they would exhort him even as would those who had deserved his hate, and they therein would show themselves to be like his enemies. Previously, his best friends had not done enough to defend him."

"That is true," Menenius said. "If he were putting to my house the brand of fire that would consume it, I would not have the audacity to say, 'Please, stop.' You two Tribunes have done a 'fine' job, you and your craftsmen! You craftiness has worked out 'well'!"

Cominius said, "You two Tribunes have brought fear and trembling upon Rome, which has never been so incapable of helping itself."

"Don't say that we brought this fear and trembling upon Rome," the two Tribunes said.

"Why not?" Menenius asked. "Did we patricians do this? We loved Martius, but like beasts and cowardly nobles, we gave way to your mobs of people who hooted him out of the city."

"But I fear they'll roar — in fear — him in again," Cominius said. "Tullus Aufidius, second in fame among men, obeys Coriolanus' every command as if he were his second-in-command. Desperation is all the policy, strength, and defense that Rome can make against them and their armies."

A troop of citizens arrived.

Menenius said, "Here come the mobs. And is Aufidius with Coriolanus? You are the ones who made the air unwholesome, when you threw your stinking greasy hats in the air while hooting at Coriolanus' exile. Now he's coming; and there is not a hair upon one of his soldiers' heads that will not prove to be a whip. As many heads as you threw coxcombs — fools' hats — up in the air will he tumble down and pay you for your votes. It doesn't matter; if he burns us all into one piece of charcoal, we have deserved it."

The citizens said, "Indeed, we hear fearsome news."

The first citizen said, "As for my own part, when I said, 'Banish him,' I said it was a pity."

"And so did I," the second citizen said.

"And so did I," the third citizen said, "and, to say the truth, so did very many of us. What we did, we did for the best, and although we willingly consented to his banishment, yet it was against our will."

"You are 'good' things, you voters!" Cominius said.

"You Tribunes have made 'good' work, you and your cry — pack — of dogs!" Menenius said. "Shall we go to the Capitol?"

"Yes, what else can we do?" Cominius said.

Cominius and Menenius exited. So did the messengers.

Sicinius said to the citizens, "Go, masters, go home. Don't be dismayed. Cominius and Menenius are part of a faction that would be glad to have this news be true that they so pretend to fear. Go home, and show no sign of fear."

"May the gods be good to us!" the first citizen said. "Come, masters, let's go home. I always said that we were in the wrong when we banished Coriolanus."

"So did we all," the second citizen said. "But, come, let's go home."

The citizens exited.

"I do not like this news," Brutus said.

"Nor do I," Sicinius said.

"Let's go to the Capitol," Brutus said. "I would give half my wealth to have this news be a lie!"

“Please, let’s go,” Sicinius said.

— 4.7 —

Aufidius and his Lieutenant talked together in their military camp, which was a short distance from Rome.

“Do my soldiers still fly to Coriolanus the Roman?” Aufidius asked.

His Lieutenant answered, “I do not know what witchcraft’s in him, but your soldiers use him as the grace before their meal, their talk while sitting at the dining table, and their thanks at the end of the meal. And you are darkened and eclipsed in this military campaign, sir, even by your own soldiers.”

“I cannot help it now,” Aufidius said, “unless I use means by which I would lame the foot of our design against Rome. He bears himself more prouder, even to my own person, than I thought he would when I first embraced him, yet his nature in being proud is no changeling: His nature is proud, and he is true to his nature. I must excuse what cannot be amended.”

“Yet I wish, sir — I mean as far as you are concerned — that you had not shared your commission with him, but either had led the army by yourself, or else had let him lead the army by himself.”

“I understand you well,” Aufidius said, “and you may be sure that when Coriolanus comes to his reckoning, he does not know what I can charge against him. Although it seems, and so he thinks it is, and it is no less apparent to the vulgar eye, that he bears all things fairly and shows good management for the Volscian state, fights like a dragon, and achieves victory as soon as he draws his sword, yet he has left undone something that shall break his neck or put at hazard my neck, whenever we come to our reckoning.”

The Lieutenant said, “Sir, I ask you, do you think he’ll conquer Rome?”

“All places yield to him before he begins a siege, and the young nobility of Rome are on his side. The Senators and older patricians support him, too. The Tribunes are no soldiers, and the Tribunes’ people will be as rash in the repeal of his exile as they were hasty to expel him from Rome. I think he’ll be to Rome as is the osprey — the fish hawk — to the fish. The fish hawk takes its prey by sovereignty of nature; it is so majestic that fish surrender to it.

“At first Coriolanus was a noble servant to the Romans, but he could not carry his honors equably. Whether it was pride, which always corrupts the fortunate man who enjoys uninterrupted success; whether it was defect of judgment, causing him to fail in the management of those opportunities that he was lord of; or whether it was his nature, which is not to be other than one thing, causing him not to be able to move from the military helmet to the Senatorial cushion, but commanding peace always with the same austere demeanor as he controlled the war ... it is one of these faults — Coriolanus has touches of all these faults ... just a touch, not the entire vice, for I dare to absolve him of that accusation — but it is one of these faults that made him feared, and therefore hated, and therefore banished. But he also has a merit — valor — that makes one choke while pointing out his faults.

“Our virtues lie in the interpretation of the time; how they are regarded depends on how they are interpreted at a particular time. What is a virtue in war may not be a virtue in peace.

“And power, which is in itself most commendable, has not a tomb as obvious and evident as a speaking platform to extol what it has done; extolling one’s virtue is a certain way to

have that virtue lightly regarded.

“A person who reaches the top of the Wheel of Fortune will soon decline. A powerful person who spends time boasting about his accomplishments instead of accomplishing new things will cease to be powerful. A person who writes his autobiography is likely to die soon. After a powerful person dies, people speak good things about him.

“One fire drives out one fire; one nail drives out one nail; Rights by rights falter; strengths by strengths fail. One force can be overpowered by a stronger force of the same kind. The strong man meets a stronger man.

“Come, let’s go.

“When, Caius, Rome is yours, then you will be at your poorest, for then you shortly will be mine.”

CHAPTER 5**— 5.1 —**

Menenius, Cominius, Sicinius, and Brutus talked together in a public place in Rome. Others were present. Previously, Cominius had pleaded with Coriolanus to spare Rome, but he had gotten nowhere.

“No, I’ll not go plead to Coriolanus,” Menenius said. “You heard what he said to Cominius, who was formerly his General, and who loved him with close personal affection. Coriolanus has called me his father, but what of that?”

“Go, you who banished him. A mile before you reach his tent, fall down and walk on your knees to him — that is the way to reach his mercy.

“Since he was reluctant to hear Cominius speak, I’ll stay at home.”

“He pretended not to know me,” Cominius said.

“Do you hear this?” Menenius asked.

“Yet at one time he called me by my name,” Cominius said. “I brought up our old friendship, and the drops of blood that we have bled together. He would not answer to the name ‘Coriolanus.’ He forbade all names. He was a kind of nothing; he seemed to want to be without a title until he had forged for himself a new title out of the fire of burning Rome.”

Menenius said to the two Tribunes, “Why, you have done ‘good’ work! You are a pair of Tribunes who have wrecked Rome in order to make charcoal cheap. People won’t need to buy charcoal because they can warm themselves at their own hearth as their house burns down — that is a ‘noble accomplishment’ you will be remembered for!”

Cominius said, “I reminded Coriolanus how royal it is to pardon someone when a pardon is not expected. He replied that my implied request for him to spare Rome was a barefaced, shameless, paltry petition of a state to one whom the state had punished.”

“Very well,” Menenius said. “Could he say less?”

“I attempted to awaken his regard for his personal friends,” Cominius said. “His answer to me was that he could not take the time to pick them out of a pile of stinky musty chaff. He said that it was folly, for one poor kernel of grain or two, to leave the offensive chaff unburned and so always have to smell it.”

Mathew 3:12 speaks of God, Who is good and will gather the kernels of grain: “*Whose fan is in his hand, and he will th[oroughly] purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire*” (King James Version).

Menenius said, “For one poor kernel of grain or two! I am one of those; his mother, his wife, his child, and this worthy fellow Cominius, too — we are the grains.

“You Tribunes are the musty chaff; and your stink is smelled above the Moon and to the high Heavens. We will be burned because of you.”

“Please, be calm,” Sicinius said. “Even if you refuse to give us your aid in this crisis in which help was never so greatly needed, yet do not upbraid us with our distress. But, surely, if you would be your country’s pleader, your good tongue, more than the army we can raise on such short notice, might stop our countryman Coriolanus from attacking Rome.”

“No, I’ll not meddle in this,” Menenius said.

“Please,” Sicinius said. “Go to Coriolanus, and plead to him

to spare Rome.”

“What should I do if I go to him?” Menenius asked.

“Just try and see what your friendship with Martius can do for Rome,” Brutus replied.

Menenius said, “Well, let’s say that Martius makes me return to Rome, just as he made Cominius return, without having listened to me, what then? I will return to Rome only as an unhappy friend, grief-stricken because of his unkindness. What if this comes to be true?”

“You will still receive thanks from Rome in the full measure of what your good will intended to do,” Sicinius said.

“I’ll undertake this embassy,” Menenius said. “I think he’ll hear me out. Still, his biting his lip and rejecting good Cominius much disheartens me.”

He thought a moment and then said, “Coriolanus was not approached at the right time; he had not dined. When our veins are unfilled, our blood is cold, and then we pout upon the morning and we are unlikely to give or to forgive, but when we have stuffed the digestive tract and these conveyances of our blood with wine and food, we have suppler, more flexible souls than we have during our priest-like fasts; therefore, I’ll watch and wait until he has dined well and so will be amenable to our request, and then I’ll talk to him.”

“You know the road that leads directly to his kindness, and you cannot lose your way,” Brutus said.

“Indeed,” Menenius said, “I’ll test him, and let the result be what it may. I shall before long have knowledge of the outcome of my going to him.”

Menenius exited.

Cominius said, "Coriolanus will never listen to Menenius."

"He won't?" Sicinius asked.

Cominius replied, "I tell you that it's as if Coriolanus sat on a throne of gold, his eyes red and inflamed as if they would burn Rome; and his sense of the injury done to him is the jailer to his sense of pity. I kneeled before him; very faintly he said 'Rise,' and he dismissed me like this" — he demonstrated — "with a wave of his speechless hand. He sent after me a written note detailing what he would do, and what he would not do, what he would concede, and what he would not concede. He has sworn an oath that we must yield to his conditions.

"So now all hope is vain ... unless his noble mother and his wife can revive hope. I hear that they intend to solicit him to give mercy to his country. Therefore, let's leave here, and with our fair entreaties hasten them on to visit Coriolanus."

— 5.2 —

Two guards were stationed at the entrance of the Volscian military camp before Rome. Menenius walked up to them.

"Stop! From where have you come?" the first guard said.

"Stop, and go back where you came from," the second guard ordered.

Menenius said, "You guard like men should; you do well. But with your permission, let me say that I am an officer of state, and I have come to speak with Coriolanus."

"From where have you come?" the first guard asked again.

"From Rome."

"You may not pass, you must return to Rome," the first guard said. Our General will listen no more to anyone who comes from Rome."

“You’ll see your Rome embraced with fire before you’ll speak with Coriolanus,” the second guard said.

“My good friends,” Menenius said, “if you have heard your General talk about Rome and about his friends there, it is more than likely that the sound of my name has touched your ears. My name is Menenius.”

“Even if that is your name, you must go back to Rome,” the first guard said. “The virtue of your name is not here passable and sufficient to get you entry into our camp. Your name is not a password that will gain you entry into our camp.”

“I tell you, fellow, the General is my loving friend. I have been the book of his good acts, and in me men have read about his unparalleled name, perhaps amplified and exaggerated, for I have always bolstered my friends, of whom he’s the chief, with all the size that truth would allow without collapsing. Indeed, sometimes, like a ball being bowled on a tricky, deceptive green, I have tumbled past the mark, and in his praise I have almost endorsed a falsehood; therefore, fellow, I must have leave to pass.”

“Indeed, sir, if you had told as many lies in his behalf as you have uttered words in your own, you would not pass here; no, even if it were as virtuous to lie as to live chastely,” the first guard said. “Therefore, go back to Rome.”

“Please, fellow, remember that my name is Menenius, and I have always sided with the faction of your General.”

“Even if you have lied in his behalf, as you say you have,” the second guard said, “I am one who, telling the truth under his command, must say that you cannot pass. Therefore, go back to Rome.”

“Has he dined, can you tell me?” Menenius asked. “For I would not speak with him until after dinner.”

“You are a Roman, are you?” the first guard asked.

“I am, as your General is,” Menenius replied.

“Then you should hate Rome, as he does,” the first guard said. “Can you, when you have pushed out your gates the very defender of them, and, in a violent popular ignorance, given your enemy your shield, think to confront his revenges with the easy groans of old women, the virginal, supplicating palms of your daughters, or with the palsied intercession of such a decayed dotant — dotard, dullard, and one who dotes on Coriolanus — as you seem to be? Can you think to blow out the intended fire your city is ready to flame in, with such weak breath as this? No, you are deceived; therefore, go back to Rome, and prepare for your execution. You are condemned: Our General has sworn not to give you reprieve and pardon.”

“Sirrah, if your Captain knew I were here, he would treat me with respect,” Menenius said.

“Sirrah” was a title used to address someone of a social rank inferior to the speaker.

“Come on, my Captain does not know you,” the first guard said.

His Captain was Aufidius.

“I mean, your General,” Menenius said.

“My General does not care for you,” the first guard said. “Go back to Rome, I say, go. Lest I let make you bleed the last remaining half-pint of blood an old man like you has, go back. That’s all that you will get from us guards — the command to go back to Rome.”

“But, fellow, fellow —”

Coriolanus and Aufidius arrived; they had heard loud voices.

Coriolanus asked, “What’s the matter?”

Menenius said to the first guard, “Now, you rogue, I have news for you. You shall know now that I am held in respect; you shall perceive that a Jack guardant — a rascal guard — cannot use his office to keep me from my son Coriolanus. Judge, after seeing how he receives me, whether you risk being hanged or suffering some other death that will take longer and involve crueler suffering. Look at what happens now, and faint in fear of what’s going to happen to you.”

Menenius then said to Coriolanus, “May the glorious gods sit in hourly synod about your particular prosperity, and may they love you no worse than your old father Menenius does!

“Oh, my son, my son! You are preparing fire for us. Look at my tears — here’s water to quench the fire. I was only with great difficulty persuaded to come to you, but being assured none but myself could move you, I have been blown out of your Roman gates with sighs; and solemnly and earnestly appeal to you to pardon Rome and your imploring countrymen. May the good gods assuage your wrath, and turn the dregs of it upon this varlet guard here — this guard, who, like a blockhead and an obstacle, has denied my access to you.”

“Go away!” Coriolanus ordered.

“What! Go away?” Menenius said.

“Wife, mother, child, I know none of them,” Coriolanus said. “My affairs are made subservient to the affairs of others. Although I am personally responsible for my revenge, my ability to grant remissions belongs to the Volscians.

“That we have been familiar friends, ungrateful forgetfulness — at first Rome’s and now mine — shall poison our friendship, rather than pity shall note and remember how much we have been friends. Therefore, be

gone. My ears against your petitions to me are stronger than your Roman gates are against my army. Yet, because I was your friend, take this letter along with you. I wrote it for your sake.”

Coriolanus gave Menenius a letter and then continued, “I would have sent it to Rome. I will not hear you speak another word, Menenius.”

He then said, “Aufidius, this man was my beloved friend in Rome, yet you see how I treat him now!”

“You have a resolute mind,” Aufidius said.

Coriolanus and Aufidius exited.

“Now, sir, is your name Menenius?” the first guard asked.

“It is a spell, you see, of much power,” the second guard said, sarcastically. “You know the way back to Rome.”

“Did you hear how we are scolded for keeping your greatness away from Coriolanus?” the first guard asked.

“What reason, do you think, I have to faint out of fear?” the second guard asked.

Menenius replied, “I care neither for the world nor for your General. As for such things as you, I can scarcely think there are any since you are so slight. He who has a will to commit suicide and die by his own hand does not fear death from the hands of another person. Let your General do his worst. As for you, be what you are, live for a long time, and may your misery increase with your age! I tell you, as I was told, go away!”

Menenius exited.

The first guard said, “He was a noble fellow, I’ll give him that.”

“The worthy fellow is our General,” the second guard said. “He’s the rock, the oak that is not to be shaken by the wind.”

One of Aesop’s fables taught the lesson that pride can lead to a fall: “The humble reed that bends in the wind is stronger than the proud oak that breaks in a storm.”

— 5.3 —

Coriolanus, Aufidius, and others met in the Volscian military camp.

Coriolanus said, “Tomorrow we will encamp our army before the walls of Rome. Aufidius, as you are my partner in this action, you must report to the Volscian lords how plainly and openly I have borne this business.”

Aufidius acknowledged, “You have respected only the Volscian ends and purposes; you have stopped your ears against the petition of the Roman people; you have never allowed any Roman to make to you a private whisper — no, not even by such friends who thought that you surely would allow them to speak to you.”

Coriolanus said, “This last old man, whom with a cracked and broken heart I have sent to Rome, loved me more than a father loves his son; indeed, he made a god of me. The Romans’ last resort was to send him, for whose old love I have, although I showed a sour disposition to him, once more offered the conditions I first sent to the Romans, which they refused and cannot now accept as a point of honor. I did that only to show grace to him, who thought he could do more. A very little I have yielded to, but hereafter I will not listen to fresh embassies and suits, neither from the state nor private friends.”

He heard a noise and asked, “What shouting is this?”

He guessed the cause of the noise and said to himself, “Shall

I be tempted to infringe my vow at the same time it is made?
I will not.”

Wearing mourning clothing, Virgilia, Volumnia, Valeria, and some attendants arrived. With them was Martius’ son, young Martius.

Coriolanus said to himself, “My wife comes foremost; then my mother — the honored mold wherein this trunk of mine was framed — and holding her hand is the grandchild to her blood. But leave me, all affection and emotion! All bond and privilege of human nature, break and get away from me! Let it be virtuous to be obstinate and unyielding.

“What is that curtsy worth? Or those doves’ eyes, which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and I am not made of stronger earth than other men. My mother bows to me, as if Olympus, the home of the gods, would nod in supplication to a molehill, and my young boy has a look of intercession, to which great human nature cries, ‘Deny it not.’

“Let the Volscians plow Rome and harrow Italy. I’ll never be such a gosling as to obey natural instinct, but I will stand firm, as if a man were author and parent of himself and knew no other kin.”

Virgilia said, “My lord and husband!”

“These eyes are not the same as those I wore in Rome,” Coriolanus replied.

He meant that he had changed and no longer looked at her the same way that he had looked at her previously to being exiled from Rome.

His wife replied, “The sorrow that shows us thus changed makes you think so. Our sorrow has changed us so much that you think you have new eyes.”

Coriolanus said to himself, “Like a dull, unintelligent actor

now, I have forgotten my part, I am at a loss for words, and I am completely disgraced.”

He recovered enough to say, “Best of my flesh, forgive my cruelty, but do not, because I have asked you for your forgiveness, say to me, ‘Forgive our Romans.’”

His wife kissed him.

Coriolanus said, “Oh, when I was exiled, you gave me a kiss that has lasted as long as my exile and that is as sweet as my revenge! Now, by the jealous Queen of Heaven, Juno, goddess of marriage and punisher of the unfaithful, I swear that when I left Rome, I carried away that kiss from you, dear; and my true lips have virgined it — been chaste — ever since.

“You gods! I prate, and I leave unsaluted and ungreeted the noblest mother of the world. Sink, my knee, in the earth.”

He knelt and said to Volumnia, his mother, “Let my knee do its duty and make a deeper impression in the earth than other sons make so that I can acknowledge my respect for you more than common sons acknowledge their mothers.”

His mother replied, “Oh, stand up, blessed one, while with no softer cushion than the flint, I kneel before you and improperly show my maternal respect to you, as I have been ‘mistaken’ all this while about the respect owed between the child and parent. Previously, I thought that you ought to kneel to show me respect, but now I ‘know’ that I ought to kneel to show you respect.”

This was shocking: A child ought to kneel to show respect to his parent; it is wrong for a parent to kneel to show respect to her child.

“What is this?” a shocked Coriolanus said. “You are on your knees to me! This is a rebuke to me!”

“Let the pebbles on the barren beach rise up and strike the stars!

“Let the mutinous winds blow the proud cedars so that they strike against the fiery Sun!

“Let impossibility be murdered, in order to make what is impossible only slight work. Let the laws of nature be destroyed so that impossible things happen!”

Coriolanus valued valor and honor. Suicide can be honorable in some situations. A parent kneeling humbly to her son is not an honorable situation. He stood up and raised his mother.

“You are my warrior,” his mother said. “I helped to frame — shape and train — you.”

She then asked him, “Do you know this lady?”

The lady was her friend Valeria.

Coriolanus replied, “She is the noble sister of Publicola, an important Roman patrician. She is Rome’s Moon, whose goddess is the virgin Diana. She is as chaste as the icicle that’s crystalized by the frost from purest snow and hangs on Diana’s temple. She is dear Valeria!”

Moving Coriolanus’ son forward, Volumnia said, “This boy is a poor miniature of yourself, but with the execution of enough time he may show that he is completely like yourself.”

Coriolanus said to his son, “May Mars, the god of soldiers, with the consent of supreme Jove, King of the gods, infuse your thoughts with nobleness so that you may prove to be incapable of dishonor and so that you may prove to stand out in the wars like a great sea-beacon, withstanding every gust of wind, and saving those who see you!”

Volumnia said to Coriolanus' son, "Get on your knee, young sir."

He knelt.

"That's my brave and splendid boy!" Coriolanus said.

"Even he, as well as your wife, this lady, and myself, are petitioners to you," Volumnia said.

"Please, be quiet," Coriolanus said. "Or, if you must ask, remember this before you ask: The thing I have forsworn to grant may never be regarded by you as denials to all of you. I cannot grant what I have sworn not to grant. Do not ask me to dismiss my soldiers, or to bargain and come to terms with Rome's working class.

"Don't tell me in which ways I seem unnatural. Don't try to alleviate my rages and revenges with your colder reasons."

"Oh, say no more, no more!" Volumnia said. "You have said you will not grant us anything, for we have nothing else to ask, except that which you already deny us. Yet we will ask it, so that, if you fail to give us our request, the blame may hang upon your hardness; therefore, hear us out."

Coriolanus said, "Aufidius, and you Volscians, listen, for we'll hear nothing from Rome in private."

He sat down and then asked his mother, "What is your request?"

"Even if we would be silent and not speak, our mourning clothing and the state of our mourning bodies would betray what kind of life we have led since your exile. Think to yourself how much more unfortunate than all living women are we who have come here, since the sight of you, which should make our eyes flow with joy and our hearts dance with comforts, constrains them instead to weep and shake with fear and sorrow because the mother, the wife, and the

child see the son, the husband, and the father tearing his country's bowels out.

“And your enmity's most deadly to poor us. You ban us from praying to the gods, which is a comfort that all but we can enjoy. How can we pray for the safety of our country, to which we are bound, and at the same time pray for victory for you, to whom we are also bound? Either we must lose our country, which is our dear nurse, or else we must lose you, who is our comfort in our country. We must find an inevitable calamity, even though we have our wish, whichever side should win: For either you must, as a traitor who helps a foreign power, be led with manacles through our streets, or else you must triumphantly tread on your country's ruin, and bear the palm of victory for having 'bravely' shed the blood of your wife and children.

“As for myself, son, I do not intend to wait on fortune; I will not wait until these wars determine who is victorious. If I cannot persuade you rather to show a noble grace to both countries — that of the Romans and that of the Volscians — than to seek the end of one of those countries, you shall no sooner march to assault your country than you will tread — believe that what I say is true — on your mother's womb that brought you into this world.”

She was threatening to commit suicide if he continued to march on Rome.

“Yes, and on my womb, too,” Coriolanus' wife said. “My womb that brought forth for you this boy to keep your name living in time.”

Coriolanus' young son said, “He shall not tread on me; I'll run away until I am bigger, but then I'll fight.”

Coriolanus said, “He who does not want to feel a woman's tenderness must not see a child or a woman's face. I have sat too long.”

He stood up.

“No, do not go from us like this,” his mother said. “If it were the case that our request did tend to save the Romans, and by so doing destroy the Volscians whom you serve, you might condemn us as being poisonous to your honor. But that is not the case; our suit is that you reconcile the two sides: the Romans and the Volscians. While the Volscians may say, ‘This mercy we have shown,’ the Romans may say, ‘This mercy we have received.’ And each person on either side will give the all-hail to you and cry, ‘May you be blest for creating this peace!’

“You know, great son, that how a war will end is uncertain, but this is certain: If you conquer Rome, the benefit that you shall thereby reap is such a name whose repetition will be dogged with curses. The history books will have this written in them: ‘The man was noble, but with his last attempt at doing a great deed he wiped his nobility out; he destroyed his country, and his name remains abhorred to the ensuing age.’

“Speak to me, son.

“You have sought the fine strains of honor in order to imitate the graces of the gods. You wanted to tear with thunder the wide cheeks of the blowing air.”

In maps of the time, illustrations showed wind issuing from the puffed-out cheeks and open mouth of Aeolus, god of the winds.

Volumnia continued, “And you wanted to load your sulphur into a thunderbolt that would split only an oak tree.”

In saying that the thunderbolt split an oak tree — rather than a man — she was leading up to an important point: An important grace of the gods is mercy, and that is the grace that her son ought to seek.

Volumnia continued, “Why don’t you speak? Do you think it is honorable for a noble man always to remember wrongs?”

“Daughter, speak: He does not care that you are weeping.

“Speak, boy. Perhaps your childishness will move him more than can our reasons and arguments.

“There’s no man in the world more bound to his mother; yet here he lets me prattle like one publicly humiliated in the stocks.”

The stocks were pieces of wood with half-circles carved out of one edge; when two pieces of wood were put together, the half-circles would form circles. A person would be restrained by having his or her feet, hands, and/or head put in the circles. The person being punished might plead, but the people punishing him would ignore his or her pleas.

Volumnia continued, “You have never in your life showed your dear mother any courtesy when she, poor hen, fond of no second brood, has clucked you to the wars and safely back home, loaded with honor. Say my request’s unjust, and kick me away, but if my request is just, then you are not honest and honorable, and the gods will plague you because you keep back from me the respect that a child ought to give to a mother.”

Coriolanus started to leave.

Volumnia said, “He turns away. Get down on your knees, ladies; let us shame him with our knees. To his surname ‘Coriolanus’ belongs more pride than pity to our prayers. He is a man of Corioli, not the conqueror of Corioli. Get down, ladies.”

The three ladies and Coriolanus’ son knelt.

Volumnia continued, “Let’s make an end of it. This is the last appeal we will make. And so we will go home to Rome,

and die among our neighbors.

“Coriolanus, look at us. This boy, who cannot tell what he wants to have, but who kneels and holds up his hands because we ladies do, argues for our petition with more strength than you have to deny it.”

She paused; Coriolanus remained silent.

She then said, “Come, let us go, ladies. This fellow — Coriolanus — had a Volscian for his mother. His wife is in Corioli and his ‘child’ who is beside me resembles him simply by chance.

“Yet give us our dismissal, Coriolanus. I am hushed until our city is set on fire, and then I’ll speak a little.”

The little she would speak would be to curse her son as she died.

Coriolanus held her hand; he was silent for a short time.

Then he said, “Oh, mother, mother! What have you done? Behold, the Heavens open, the gods look down, and they laugh at this unnatural scene.”

The scene was unnatural because the mother’s successful pleading put her son’s life at risk.

Coriolanus continued, “My mother! Mother! You have won a happy victory for Rome, but as for your son — believe it, oh, believe it, you have prevailed with him in a way that is very dangerous and perhaps mortal to him. But, let it come.

“Aufidius, although I cannot make true wars, wars that are true to my promise, yet I’ll frame a suitable peace. Now, good Aufidius, if you were in my place, would you have heard a mother less? Or granted less, Aufidius?”

Aufidius replied, “I was moved by it.”

“I dare to swear that you were,” Coriolanus said, “and, sir, it is no little thing to make my eyes sweat compassion.”

He was crying.

Coriolanus continued, “But, good sir, advise me what peace treaty you would like to make. As for me, I’ll not return to Rome; instead, I’ll go back with you. Please, stand by me in this affair.

“Oh, mother! Oh, wife!”

As Coriolanus talked with his wife and his mother, Aufidius said to himself, “I am glad you have set your mercy and your honor at war inside yourself. Out of that I’ll manipulate things so that I regain my former fortune.”

Coriolanus said to his mother and his wife, “Yes, and soon. But we will drink together, and you shall bear a better witness back to and in Rome in your own person than words. We will give Rome a new peace treaty, which will have fair terms as did the old peace treaty, and which will be counter-signed and sanctioned.

“Come, go inside the tent with us. Ladies, you deserve to have a temple built to you. All the swords in Italy and all her military allies could not have made this peace.”

— 5.4 —

Menenius and Sicinius talked together in a public place in Rome.

Menenius said, “Do you see yonder the corner of the Capitol? Do you see yonder cornerstone?”

“Why, what about it?” Sicinius asked.

“If it is possible for you to move the huge cornerstone with your little finger, then there is some hope that the ladies of Rome, especially his mother, may prevail with Coriolanus.

But I say there is no hope for this happening. Our throats are sentenced and wait for execution.”

“Is it possible that so short a time can alter the character of a man!” Sicinius asked.

“There is a difference between a grub and a butterfly, yet the butterfly was a grub. This Martius has grown from a man to a dragon. He has wings; he’s more than a creeping thing.”

“He loved his mother dearly.”

“So did he love me,” Menenius said, “and he no more remembers his mother now than an eight-year-old horse remembers its dam. The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes. When he walks, he moves like a war machine, and the ground shrinks before his treading. He is able to pierce body armor with his eye. He talks like a death knell, and his expression of disapproval is an assault. He sits in his chair of state as if he were a statue of the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great. What he orders to be done is finished at the same time he finishes commanding it to be done. He lacks nothing that a god has except eternity and a Heaven to be enthroned in.”

“He also lacks the mercy of a god, if your report about him is true,” Sicinius said.

“I paint his character as it really is. Note what mercy his mother shall bring from him: There is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger. Our poor city shall find that to be true, and all this is due to you.”

“May the gods be good to us!” Sicinius said.

“In such a case the gods will not be good to us,” Menenius said. “When we banished Coriolanus, we did not respect the gods, and now that he is returning to break our necks, the gods do not respect us.”

A messenger arrived and said to Sicinius, "Sir, if you want to save your life, flee to your house. The plebeians have got Brutus, your fellow Tribune, and they are dragging him up and down, all while swearing that if the Roman ladies do not bring good news home, they'll give him death, killing him slowly, inch by inch."

A second messenger arrived.

Sicinius asked, "What's the news?"

"Good news, good news," the messenger replied. "The ladies have prevailed, the Volscians have left their military camp, and Martius has gone. A merrier day has never yet greeted Rome. No, not even the day when the Tarquins were expelled."

"Friend," Sicinius asked, "are you certain this is true? Is it most certainly true?"

"I am as certain I know this news is true as I am certain I know the Sun is fire," the messenger said, "Where have you been lurking that you doubt this news? The swelling, wind-blown tide never hurried through the arch of a bridge as the relieved people hurry through the gates of Rome to greet the returning ladies. Why, listen!"

Musical instruments could be heard playing loudly in celebration. Romans shouted in joy.

The messenger continued, "The trumpets, sackbuts, psalteries, fifes, tabors, and cymbals and the shouting Romans make the Sun dance. Listen!"

The crowd of people shouted loudly.

"This is good news," Menenius said. "I will go and meet the ladies. This Volumnia is worth a city full of Consuls, Senators, and patricians. She is worth a sea and land full of Tribunes such as you. You have prayed well today. This

morning I'd not have given a small coin for ten thousand of your throats."

The music and the shouting continued.

Sicinius said to the second messenger, "First, may the gods bless you for your tidings; next, accept my thankfulness."

The second messenger replied, "Sir, we all have great cause to give great thanks."

"Are the ladies near the city?" Sicinius asked.

"They are almost at the gates," the second messenger replied.

"We will meet them and join in the joy."

— 5.5 —

Two Senators escorted Volumnia, Virgilia, and Valeria on a street near the gate of Rome. Many other people were present.

The first Senator shouted, "Behold our patroness, the life of Rome! Call all your tribes together, praise the gods, and make triumphant fires; strew flowers before the ladies. Unshout the noise that banished Martius, and recall him to Rome with the welcome of his mother. All cry, 'Welcome, ladies, welcome!'"

All cried, "Welcome, ladies, welcome!"

— 5.6 —

Tullus Aufidius and some attendants were in a public place in the Volscian city of Antium.

Aufidius said, "Go and tell the lords of the city that I am here. Deliver this paper to them. After they have read it, tell them to go to the marketplace, where I in their hearing and

in the hearing of the commoners will vouch for the truth of what I have written. Martius, whom I accuse, by this time has entered the city gates and intends to appear before the people, hoping to establish his innocence with words. Hurry and complete your task.”

He gave the paper to an attendant, who exited along with the other attendants.

Some people who were conspiring with Aufidius against Coriolanus arrived.

Aufidius greeted them, “You are very welcome here!”

The first conspirator asked, “How is it with our General?”

Was he referring to Aufidius, or to Coriolanus?

Aufidius replied, “Just as it is with a man who has been poisoned by his own alms and slain as a result of his own charity.”

Aufidius’ alms had been to treat Coriolanus well when he first arrived in Antium as an exile; Coriolanus’ alms had been to make a peace treaty with Rome. Either man could end up slain on this day. The common people of Antium would refer to Coriolanus as their General, but Aufidius’ co-conspirators could very well refer to Aufidius as their General.

“Most noble sir,” the second conspirator said, “if you still have the same intent wherein you wished us to be your accessories, we’ll deliver you from your great danger.”

“Sir, I cannot tell right now what I will do,” Aufidius said. “We must proceed according to what we find out about the common people. We will find out how the common people feel, and we will proceed accordingly.”

The third conspirator said, “The common people will remain

uncertain while there's rivalry between you and Martius, but the fall of either of you will make the survivor the heir and winner of all."

"I know it," Aufidius said, "and my pretext to strike at him can be interpreted favorably. I raised Martius to a high position in our society, and I pawned my honor for his loyalty. Being so heightened and raised to a position of power, he watered his new plants — those men on whom he conferred honors — with dews of flattery, thereby seducing my friends. To achieve this end, he bowed his nature, which was never before known to be other than rough, unswayable, frank, and uncontrollable."

The third conspirator said, "Sir, his obstinacy when he ran to be elected Consul, which he lost by lack of stooping and lack of showing humility —"

"I was going to mention that," Aufidius said. "Being banished because of his lack of humility, he came to my hearth and presented his throat to my knife. I took him in, made him my equal partner in serving the Volscian state, and gave way to him in all his own desires. Indeed, I let him choose my best and freshest men from out of my files of soldiers, so he could accomplish his projects. I served his undertakings in my own person. I helped to reap the fame that he harvested as only his own. I took some pride in doing myself this wrong, until, at the end, I seemed to be his follower and not his partner, and he patronized me with a look of approval as if I had been no more than a mercenary — a hired soldier."

"So he did, my lord," the first conspirator said. "The army marveled at it, and, at the end, when he had conquered Rome and we looked for spoil no less than we looked for glory —"

"That was the thing for which my muscles shall be strained

to the utmost against him,” Aufidius said. “For a few drops of women’s tears, which are as cheap as lies, he sold the blood and labor of our great military action; therefore, he shall die, and in his fall I’ll regain my old position of honor. But, listen!”

Drums and trumpets sounded, and the common people shouted as they escorted Coriolanus.

The first conspirator said to Aufidius, “Your native town you entered like a messenger, and you were given no welcomes home, but now when he returns, the air is split with noise.”

The second conspirator said, “And long-suffering fools, whose children he has slain, tear their base throats by shouting and giving him glory.”

The third conspirator said, “Therefore, while you have your opportunity, before he expresses himself and moves the common people with his words, let him feel your sword. We will back you up with our swords. When he lies prostrate, dead, you can tell his story in a way that favors you, and we shall bury his explanations with his body.”

“Say no more,” Aufidius said. “Here come the lords.”

The lords of the city walked over to Aufidius and his fellow conspirators.

“You are very welcome home,” the lords said to Aufidius.

“I have not deserved it,” Aufidius said. “But, worthy lords, have you carefully read the paper I wrote?”

“We have,” the lords said.

“And we grieve to read it,” the first lord said. “What faults he made before the most recent fault, I think might have been given light, easy-to-bear punishment. But he ended the war where things stood at the war’s beginning; he gave away the

benefit of our levies of soldiers.

“He answers us with our own charge: He returns to us only money for the expenses we laid out for the war, and he says that he acted under the authority we gave him.

“We should have conquered Rome and made great profit, but we get only a peace treaty, which we had before the war started, although Rome had yielded to our soldiers — this admits no excuse.”

“He is approaching,” Aufidius said. “You shall hear what he has to say.”

Coriolanus arrived, marching with a drum and flying colors; the common people accompanied him.

“Hail, lords!” Coriolanus said. “I have returned as your soldier. I am no more infected with my country’s love than when I departed from here, and I still remain under your great command. You need to know that my endeavors on your behalf have been prosperous; with bloody passage I led your wars even to the gates of Rome. Our spoils we have brought home more than counterpoise a full and a third part the expenses of the military action: The spoils amount to the cost of the war plus one third more. We have made peace with no less honor to the Antiates than shame to the Romans, and we here deliver, subscribed by the Roman Consuls and patricians, together with the seal of the Roman Senate, the peace terms we have settled on.”

He offered the lords a scroll.

“Don’t read it, noble lords,” Aufidius said, “but tell the traitor that in the highest degree he has abused the powers you gave him.”

“‘Traitor’!” Coriolanus said. “What are you saying?”

“Yes! Traitor, Martius!” Aufidius said, not using the

honorary title “Coriolanus.”

“‘Martius’!” Coriolanus said.

“Yes, Martius, Caius Martius,” Aufidius said. “Do you think I’ll honor you with that robbery — the name ‘Coriolanus’ you stole in Corioli?”

“You lords and heads of the state, he has perfidiously betrayed your business, and given up, for certain drops of salty tears, Rome — which I say is your city — to his wife and mother. He has broken his oath and resolution as if they were a thread of rotten silk, never counseling other officers of the war, but at his nurse’s — his mother’s — tears he whined and howled away your victory, with the result that pages blushed because they were embarrassed for him and men of courage looked wondering at each other in astonishment.”

“Do you hear this, Mars, god of war!” Coriolanus said.

“Don’t name that god, you boy of tears, any more!” Aufidius said.

Coriolanus snorted and said, “Infinite liar, you have made my heart swell and grow too big for my chest. You call me ‘boy’! You slave!

“Pardon me, lords, it is the first time that I was ever forced to scold and use violent language.”

Coriolanus may have meant that it was the first time he did this in this city.

He continued, “Your judgments, my grave lords, must accuse this cur — this dog — of lying. His own understanding — the understanding of a man who wears striped scars made by my sword upon his body, stripes that he will bear to his grave — shall also show that he is lying.”

The first lord said, “Both of you, be quiet, and hear me speak.”

Angry, Coriolanus said, “Cut me to pieces, Volscians; men and lads, stain — discolor and dishonor — the edges of all your swords with my blood.

“‘Boy’! You false hound!

“If you Volscians have written your histories correctly, you can read in them that, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I fluttered your Volscians in Corioli.

“Alone I did it. ‘Boy’!”

Aufidius said, “Why, noble lords, will you be reminded of his blind luck, which was your shame, by this unholy braggart, before your own eyes and ears?”

All the conspirators shouted, “Let him die for it!”

The common people began to shout:

“Tear him to pieces!”

“Do it immediately!”

“He killed my son.”

“He killed my daughter.”

“He killed my cousin Marcus.”

“He killed my father.”

The second lord shouted, “Peace! Be quiet! Let there be no outrage! Peace!

“The man is noble and his fame is spread across the earth. His recent offences against us shall have a judicious and judicial hearing.

“Stand back, Aufidius, and do not trouble the peace.”

Coriolanus said, “Oh, I wish that I had him, with six Aufidiuses, or better, his entire tribe of relatives, in a place where I could use my sword lawfully!”

“Insolent villain!” Aufidius shouted.

The conspirators shouted, “Kill him! Kill him! Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!”

The conspirators drew their swords and killed Coriolanus.

Aufidius stood on Coriolanus’ body.

The lords cried, “Stop, stop, stop, stop!”

“My noble masters, hear me speak,” Aufidius said.

The first lord said, “Oh, Tullus —”

The second lord said, “You have done a deed that will make valor weep.”

“Don’t tread on him,” the third lord said. “Masters, be quiet; sheathe your swords.”

Aufidius said, “My lords, when you shall know — as in this rage, which was provoked by him, you cannot — the great danger that this man’s life put you in, you’ll rejoice that he is dead. If it pleases your honors to call me before your Senate, I’ll show that I am your loyal servant, or else I will endure your heaviest punishment.”

The first lord said, “Bear away from here Coriolanus’ body, and mourn for him. Let him be regarded as the most noble corpse that a herald ever followed to his tomb.”

In this society, a herald would follow the corpse of an important person in a funeral and declaim the dead man’s titles and accomplishments.

The second lord said, “Coriolanus’ own anger takes away

from Aufidius a great part of the blame. Let's make the best of it."

"My rage is gone," Aufidius said, "and I am struck with sorrow. Take his corpse up. Help, three of the chiefest soldiers; I'll be one of the people carrying the corpse. Beat the drum so that it sounds mournfully. Let your steel pikes trail on the ground. Though in this city he widowed and made childless many people who to this hour bewail the injury, yet he shall have a noble memorial and be nobly remembered. Assist me."

They lifted the corpse and carried it away, accompanied by all. A dead march — solemn music played at a funeral — sounded as they walked away.

Chapter III: HAMLET
CAST OF CHARACTERS

MALE CHARACTERS

GHOST of Hamlet's father.

CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark.

HAMLET, Prince, son to the late King Hamlet, and nephew to the present King Claudius. Queen Gertrude is his mother.

POLONIUS, counselor to the King. Polonius is old, and his children are Ophelia and Laertes.

HORATIO, friend to Hamlet. Attended University of Wittenberg with Hamlet.

LAERTES, son to Polonius.

VOLTEMAND, CORNELIUS, Danish ambassadors sent to Norway.

ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, childhood friends to Hamlet.

OSRIC, a foolish courtier.

A Gentleman.

A Priest.

MARCELLUS, BARNARDO, officers.

FRANCISCO, a soldier.

REYNALDO, servant to Polonius.

Players (actors).

First Player, acts the part of the King.

Second Player, acts the part of the Queen.

Third Player, acts the part of the King's nephew,
Lucianus.

Fourth Player, speaks the Prologue.

Two Clowns, gravediggers.

FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway.

A Captain.

English Ambassadors.

FEMALE CHARACTERS

GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark, and mother to Hamlet.

OPHELIA, daughter to Polonius.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors, Messengers, and
other Attendants.

SCENE

Elsinore in Denmark, the royal castle and its surroundings.

CHAPTER 1

— 1.1 —

At a guard post of the King of Denmark's castle at Elsinore, Francisco stood guard. The time was midnight, and the weather was cold.

Barnardo walked over to Francisco and asked, "Who's there?"

Francisco replied, "No, *you* answer *me*. I am the sentinel. Stand still, and identify yourself."

"Long live the King!" Barnardo replied. This was enough to show that he was a friend and not an enemy.

"Are you Barnardo?" Francisco asked.

"I am he."

"You have come very promptly at your appointed time to relieve me."

"The bell just now struck twelve," Barnardo said. "Go to bed, Francisco."

"For this relief, much thanks. It is bitterly cold, and I am sick at heart."

"Have you had a quiet guard?"

"Not even a mouse is stirring."

"Well, good night. If you meet Horatio and Marcellus, the partners of my watch, tell them to come quickly."

"I think I hear them," Francisco said. "Stop! Who's there?"

Horatio and Marcellus walked over to the two guards.

Horatio, who was a friend to Prince Hamlet, answered Francisco's question: "Friends to this country."

Marcellus added, "And loyal liegemen to the King of Denmark."

"May God give you a good night," Francisco said.

"Farewell, honest soldier," Marcellus said, and then he asked, "Who has relieved you?"

"Barnardo is taking my place. May God give you a good night."

Francisco departed.

Marcellus called, "Hey! Barnardo!"

Barnardo replied, "Hello. Is Horatio there?"

Horatio replied, "Here is a piece of him," and then he stuck out his hand to shake hands with Barnardo.

"Welcome, Horatio," Barnardo said. "Welcome, good Marcellus."

"Has this thing appeared again tonight?" Marcellus asked.

"I have seen nothing."

"Horatio says it is only our fantasy," Marcellus said. "He will not believe that this dreaded sight, which we have seen twice, is real. Therefore, I have entreated him to come along with us to watch all through this night. That way, if this apparition comes again, he may see it with his own eyes and speak to it."

"Tush, tush," Horatio said. "It will not appear."

"Sit down awhile," Barnardo replied, "and let us once again assail your ears, which are so fortified against and disbelieving of our story about what we have seen during two nights."

"Well, let us sit down," Horatio said, "and let us hear

Barnardo tell his story.”

“Last night, when the yonder same star that’s west of the Pole Star had made its course to illuminate that part of the night sky where now it burns, Marcellus and I, the bell then striking one — ”

The ghost walked onto the scene.

“Quiet! Stop talking!” Marcellus said. “Look there! Here it comes again!”

“The ghost has the same shape it had,” Barnardo said. “It looks exactly like King Hamlet, the King who is dead.”

“You are a scholar,” Marcellus said. “Speak to it, Horatio.”

As a scholar, Horatio knew the proper Latin words to use to ward off the ghost if it turned out to be malevolent.

“Doesn’t it look like the late King?” Barnardo asked. “Look at it closely, Horatio.”

“It looks very much like the late King,” Horatio said. “This sight harrows me with fear and wonder. It is as if my skin were being raked with a harrow.”

“The ghost wants to be spoken to,” Barnardo said.

Ghosts cannot speak until after they are spoken to.

“Question it, Horatio,” Marcellus said.

Horatio asked the ghost, “What are you that is usurping this time of night, and is usurping that fair and warlike form in which the majesty of the buried King of Denmark did sometimes march? By Heaven, I order you to speak!”

Marcellus said, “The ghost is offended and does not speak.”

“Look!” Barnardo said. “It is stalking away!”

“Stay!” Horatio shouted. “Speak, speak! I order you to speak!”

The ghost stalked out of sight.

“It is gone,” Marcellus said, “and it will not answer you.”

“What now, Horatio!” Barnardo said. “You tremble and look pale. Isn’t this something more than fantasy? What do you think about it?”

“Before my God, I would not believe this without my having seen it with the sensible and true evidence of my own eyes,” Horatio said.

“Didn’t it resemble the late King Hamlet?” Marcellus asked.

“It resembles the late King just as much as you resemble yourself,” Horatio replied. “The ghost was wearing the very same armor that the late King was wearing when he combatted the ambitious King of Norway. The ghost frowned exactly the same way the late King frowned when once, in an angry and physical argument, he smote the Polish soldiers who were crossing the ice on their sleds. It is strange.”

“Twice before, and exactly at this dead, dark, and dreary hour,” Marcellus said, “the ghost has walked with a martial stride during our watch.”

“I do not know what exactly to think,” Horatio said, “but in general my opinion is that this ghost is a sign of some strange and violent disturbance coming to our state.”

“Please, sit down, and tell me, he who knows,” Marcellus said, “why each night the citizens of our country toil in a strict and most observant watch. Also tell me why bronze cannon are cast each day and why implements of war are being purchased in foreign marketplaces. Why have shipwrights been drafted to do their work every day with no

Sabbath as a day of rest? What is the meaning of all this? What is so important that this sweaty haste results in such work being done both during the night and during the day? Who can tell me this?"

"I can," Horatio replied. "Our last King, the late King Hamlet, whose image just now appeared to us, was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway and his competitive pride challenged to a combat. Our valiant King Hamlet — this side of our known world knew him to be valiant — slew this Fortinbras in that combat.

"By a sealed and legal agreement, well ratified by law and the code of heraldry, Fortinbras forfeited, with his life, all the lands that he personally possessed to the conqueror.

"Our King Hamlet had likewise risked some of his personally owned lands, enough to equal the amount of land waged by Fortinbras. If Fortinbras had defeated and killed King Hamlet, Fortinbras would have acquired those lands. Instead, King Hamlet defeated and killed Fortinbras, thereby acquiring the lands that Fortinbras had wagered. All of this was in accordance to the legal contract that the two men had made.

"King Hamlet died and left those lands he had won to his son, Prince Hamlet. Old Fortinbras had wagered all his lands, and so he had no lands to leave to his son, young Fortinbras.

"Now, sir, young Fortinbras, who is hot and full of undisciplined and unrestrained mettle, has in the outskirts of Norway here and there sharked up a list of lawless reprobates, indiscriminately adding them to his army the way that a shark indiscriminately adds fish to its belly. These landless and lawless reprobates will serve as the food that propels some enterprise that has a stomach in it — the enterprise needs these soldiers the way that a stomach needs

food.

“That enterprise is no other than — as is well evident to our country — to take from us, by force and compulsion, those lands lost by his father, the elder Fortinbras.

“This, I take it, is the main reason for our preparations, the cause of this our watch and the fountainhead of this furious activity and turmoil in the land.”

“I think that what you have said is correct,” Barnardo said. “It is appropriate that this portentous figure — this ghost — comes armed during our watch; the ghost is very much like the late King who was and is the cause of these wars.”

“This sight of the ghost troubles the mind’s eye,” Horatio said. “In the most high and flourishing state of Rome, a little before the very mighty Julius Caesar fell, the graves stood open without their tenants and the dead, wrapped in sheets, squeaked and gibbered in the Roman streets. They were deadly portents just like meteors that trail trains of fire, dews of blood, and threatening signs in the Sun. In addition, the Moon, that moist planet that has power over the empire of Neptune, Roman King of the Seas, because it controls the tides, was almost completely blotted out because of an eclipse — it seemed as if it were the Day of Judgment.

“These same portents that foretold the assassination of Julius Caesar, these same portents that are precursors of fierce events, these same portents that are harbingers that always precede calamities and are prologue to a coming disaster — Heaven and Earth have joined together to show these same portents to Denmark and to the Danes.”

Horatio looked up and said, “But wait — look! Look, the ghost is coming here again!”

The ghost stalked closer to the three men.

“I’ll cross its path even though it blasts and destroys me,” Horatio said.

He said to the ghost, “Stay, illusion! If you can make any sound, if you can use your voice, speak to me. If I can do any good thing that will bring ease to you and honor to me, speak to me.”

The ghost opened its mouth, but a rooster — aka a cock — crowed.

Horatio continued, “If you have knowledge about evil coming to your country, which, perhaps, foreknowing may allow us to avoid, ghost, speak! Or if you have buried during your life ill-begotten treasure in the womb of the Earth, for which, they say, you spirits often walk in death, tell us about it.”

The ghost moved away, and Horatio called, “Stay, and speak!”

The ghost ignored Horatio, who then said, “Stop it, Marcellus.”

“Shall I strike at it with my pike?” Marcellus asked.

“Yes, if it will not stand still.”

Looking in one direction, Barnardo said, “It is here!”

Looking in another direction, Horatio said, “It is here!”

Marcellus said, “It is gone!”

The ghost could not be seen.

Marcellus added, “We do it wrong when we act so majestically and imperiously and threaten it with a show of violence. After all, the ghost is as invulnerable as the air and when we strike at it with our pikes we do it no harm. The ghost mocks our vain blows and maliciousness.”

“It was about to speak, but the cock crowed,” Barnardo said.

“And then it started like a guilty thing hearing a fearful summons,” Horatio said. “I have heard that the cock, which is the trumpeter to the morning, does with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat awaken Phoebus Apollo, the god of day. Hearing the cock’s warning, any spirit that is wandering out of its boundary hurries back to its place of confinement, whether in sea or fire, or in earth or air. What we have just witnessed is evidence that what I have heard is true.”

“The ghost faded when the cock crowed,” Marcellus said. “Some say that when that season comes in which the birth of our Savior is celebrated, the bird of dawning — the cock — sings, aka crows, all night long. And then, they say, no spirit dares to stir abroad. The nights are wholesome. No planets exert an evil influence, no fairy casts a spell, and no witch has the power to charm — because Christmas is so sanctified and gracious a time.”

“So I have heard and I do in part believe it,” Horatio said. “But, look, the morning, clad in a russet-colored mantle, walks over the dew of yonder high hill in the East. Let us end our watch. I advise that we tell what we have seen tonight to young Prince Hamlet. I believe, upon my life, that this spirit, which will not speak to us, will speak to him.

“What do you think? Do you agree that we should inform him about it? Do you agree that our friendship to Hamlet and our duty make it necessary for us to tell Hamlet what we have seen?”

“You are right,” Marcellus said. “Let us tell Hamlet what we have seen, please. I know where we can easily find him this morning.”

— 1.2 —

In a room of state in the castle were King Claudius, Queen

Gertrude, Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes (Polonius' son), Voltmand, and Cornelius. Also present were other lords and some servants. Hamlet was dressed in black, the color of mourning.

Using the royal plural, King Claudius said, "Although the memory of the death of King Hamlet, our dear brother, is still green and fresh, and although it was fitting for us to bear our hearts in grief and for our whole Kingdom to be knit together in one brow of woe, yet discretion has so far fought with nature that we with wisest sorrow think about the late King Hamlet and at the same time remember our own position in the living world. Therefore, our former sister-in-law have we, as if with a defeated joy — with one eye smiling and the other eye dripping tears of sadness, with mirth at a funeral and with dirge at a marriage, with delight and dole weighing equally — married and taken as our wife, and no one has objected to our marriage. Our former sister-in-law is now our Queen, the imperial female sharer of the crown of this nation preparing for war. We have not gone against your very mature wisdom, which has freely approved this marriage all along. To all of you, we give our thanks.

"Now we must talk about young Fortinbras, who holds our worth in little regard, or who thinks that because of the death of our dear brother, the late King Hamlet, our nation is disturbed and is in disorder. These mistaken thoughts of his are allied with his dream of gaining personal advantages by threatening Denmark. Young Fortinbras has not failed to pester us with messages that demand the surrender of those lands that were lost by his father, in accordance with the law, to our most valiant brother. So much for what he is demanding: All this you know.

"Now for new information concerning what we ourself have decided — that is the main purpose and business of this meeting. We have here written a letter to the King of

Norway, who is the uncle of young Fortinbras. His uncle became King of Norway after his father, the elder Fortinbras, died. Powerless and bedridden, the current King of Norway scarcely hears about his nephew's intentions and actions — I have written him to ask that he stop young Fortinbras from proceeding further in this business. The King of Norway has the power to do that because the levies of soldiers — everyone who has joined young Fortinbras — are citizens of Norway and therefore subject to his rule. We now send you, good Cornelius, and you, Voltmand, as bearers of this greeting and as ambassadors to the aged King of Norway; we give to you no further personal power to do business with the King of Norway. You can do no more than the scope that these detailed documents allow. Farewell, and show your duty to me in your speed in accomplishing this task. We need not hear a long and flowery address of etiquette.”

“In delivering these documents and in all other things, we will show our duty,” Cornelius and Voltmand said together.

“We do not doubt it,” King Claudius said. “Heartily we say farewell to you.”

Cornelius and Voltmand departed.

King Claudius continued, “And now, Laertes, what's the news with you? You told us that you had some request to make of us; what is it, Laertes? You cannot speak of anything reasonable to the King of Denmark, and waste your words. What can you reasonably request, Laertes, that shall not be my gift rather than your request? The head is not more closely related to the heart, the hand is not more instrumental to the mouth, than is the throne of Denmark to your father. We — the entire monarchy and ourself — value your father highly. What would you like to have, Laertes?”

“My dread lord,” Laertes said, “I request your leave and permission for me to return to France. From there willingly

I came to Denmark to do my duty and be present at your coronation, yet now that this duty is done, I must confess that my thoughts and wishes bend again toward France and I hope that you will grant me permission to return there.”

“Have you your father’s permission?” King Claudius asked.

He then asked, “Polonius, what do you say about this?”

“He has, my lord, made laborious petitions to wring from me my slow permission for him to return to France. Finally, I gave him my consent. I stamped my seal of approval upon his request. I ask you, therefore, to allow him to go.”

“Take your fair hour, Laertes,” King Claudius said. “Let your time of youth be yours to spend as you will in accordance with your best qualities. You have our permission to return to France.”

He then said, “But now, my nephew Hamlet, who is also my son —”

Hamlet thought, *A little more than kin, and less than kind. In other words: The nearer in kin, the less in kindness. And in yet other words: The closer the relationship, the greater the dislike. Am I your son? I say no. To call me your son is more than our actual relationship will allow. I do not accept you as my father. I also do not regard you as kind in the sense of being benevolent. The word “kind” also refers to the natural quality of family members; they should be united in a community of love toward each other. You and I do not have that. You married my mother, who is your brother’s widow; I do not consider such a marriage natural — it is incestuous.*

“How is it that the clouds still hang on you?” King Claudius asked Hamlet.

“That is not true,” Hamlet replied. “I am too much in the Sun.”

He thought, *And I do not like being called your son.*

Queen Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, said, "Good Hamlet, take off and put away your night-colored clothing, and let your eye look like a friend on the King of Denmark. Do not forever with your downcast eyes seek for your noble father in the dust. You know that everything that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity."

"Yes, that is a universal truth," Hamlet said.

"If you know that, why does it seem that you are having such a hard time accepting your father's death?"

"Madam, 'seem'?" Hamlet replied. "I really am having such a hard time accepting my father's death. The word 'seem' does not apply to me. It is not alone my inky-black cloak, good mother, nor the customary and conventional suits of solemn black, nor the windy sighs of forced breath, no, nor the fruitful river of tears flowing from the eyes, nor the dejected expression of the visage, together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief, that can denote me truly. All of these indeed seem; they can be appearances of something that is not truly felt. They are actions that a man might act out hypocritically, but I have that within myself that surpasses show and goes beyond appearances. These other things are only the trappings and the suits of woe."

"It is sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet, to give these mourning duties to your father," King Claudius said. "But you must know that your father lost his father. That father also lost his father. With the loss of each father, the survivor is bound in filial obligation to do as the funeral services demand and to grieve for some time. However, to persevere in obstinate sorrow is a course of impious stubbornness; it is unmanly grief. It shows a will most incorrect and in opposition to Heaven, a heart unsupported by religious belief, a mind lacking the virtue of patience, an

understanding ignorant and uneducated. When we know that something must occur and is in fact as common as the most ordinary thing that we can sense, why should we in our peevish opposition take it to heart and mourn it excessively? Ha! It is a transgression and sin against Heaven, a transgression and sin against the dead, a transgression and sin against nature, and a most absurd and sinful transgression against reason, whose common theme is the death of fathers. Everyone who has witnessed death in the first corpse to the corpse of the person who died today has cried, ‘This must be so.’”

The first corpse was a murder victim. Cain killed Abel, his brother. This story is recounted in Genesis 4:8.

King Claudius continued, “We ask you to please throw to earth this unprevailing sorrow — it can gain nothing — and think of us as of a father. Let the world take note that you are the most immediate to our throne. Denmark is an elective monarchy, but we now use our voice to say that we want you to succeed us on the throne. I feel the love for you that a biological father bears his son.

“We know that you want to go back to school in Wittenberg, but that is in opposition to what we desire. And so we beseech you to change your mind and remain here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye. You are our most important courtier, our kinsman, and our son.”

Queen Gertrude said, “Please do what I want you to do, Hamlet. Please stay here and do not return to Wittenberg.”

“I shall to the best of my ability obey you, madam,” Hamlet replied.

“Why, that is a loving and a fair reply,” King Claudius said. “Be a member of the royal family and stay here in Denmark.”

He said to Queen Gertrude, “Madam, come. This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet to our wishes sits smiling in my heart. To celebrate this, each time that we, the King of Denmark, will take a drink today, the great cannon will fire into the clouds, and the Heavens will all bruit and spread the King’s toast again, re-speaking it with Earthly thunder. Come, let’s go now.”

Everyone except Hamlet left the room.

Hamlet said to himself, “Oh, I wish that this too, too solid flesh would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into a dew! Would that my body would waste away on its own! Or I wish that the Everlasting had not fixed His canon — his eternal law — against self-slaughter! Exodus 20:13 states, ‘*Thou shalt not kill,*’ and that includes a prohibition against killing oneself. Oh, God! God! How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seems to me the entire business of this world! Ha! This world is an unweeded garden, which goes to seed; things rank and gross in nature entirely possess it. That it should come to this!

“My father is only two months dead — no, not so much, not even two months. My father was so excellent a King; he was, compared to this King Claudius, Hyperion the god of the Sun compared to a lustful half-man, half-goat satyr. My father was so loving to my mother that he would not allow the winds of Heaven to blow against her face too roughly. Heaven and Earth, must I remember! Why, my mother would hang on my father, as if increase of affection had grown by what it fed on: and yet, within a month — let me not think about it! Frailty, your name is woman! She wore new shoes when she followed my father’s body as it went to the tomb. She cried like Niobe, who wept after all of her sons and all of her daughters died in a single day. A little, short month later, before those shoes were old, she married my uncle — oh, God, even a beast that lacks the ability to reason

would have mourned longer!

“My mother married my uncle. He is my father’s brother, but he is no more like my father than I am like the super-strong Hercules. She married my uncle within a month of my father’s death. Even before the salt of very unrighteous tears had left the red flush of her bitter eyes, she married him. Oh, most wicked speed, to hasten with such dexterity and jump into incestuous sheets! It is not good, and it cannot come to be good. But break, my heart, because I must hold my tongue.”

Horatio, Marcellus, and Barnardo walked over to Hamlet.

Horatio greeted Hamlet: “Hail to your lordship!”

“I am glad to see you well,” Hamlet said. “You are Horatio, if I am not mistaken.”

“I am Horatio, my lord, and I am your poor servant ever.”

“Sir, my good friend, I’ll change that name with you,” Hamlet said.

He meant that he would change the name “servant” to the name “friend.” John 15:15 states, “*Henceforth call I you not servants: for the servant knoweth not what his master doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father, have I made known to you.*”

Or, possibly, he meant that he would exchange names with Horatio — he would be Horatio’s servant.

Either way, Hamlet and Horatio were friends.

Hamlet added, “And what brings you here from Wittenberg, Horatio?”

He then noticed Marcellus and greeted him, “Marcellus!”

Marcellus replied, “My good lord.”

Hamlet said, "I am very glad to see you. Good day, sir."

He then again asked Horatio, "What brings you here from Wittenberg?"

"A truant disposition, my good lord," Horatio replied.

"I would not hear your enemy say that about you," Hamlet said, "and I will not allow you to do my ear the violence that would make it trust your own report against yourself. I know that you are no truant. But what is your business here in Elsinore? We'll teach you to drink deep before you depart. Danes are famous for their deep drinking."

"My lord, I came to see your father's funeral," Horatio replied.

"Please, do not mock me, fellow student," Hamlet said. "I think your purpose in coming here was to see my mother's wedding."

"Indeed, my lord, the marriage quickly followed the funeral."

"Thrift, thrift, Horatio!" Hamlet said. "The hot baked meat pies for the funeral feast were set down cold on the tables for the marriage feast. I would prefer to have seen my worst enemy in Heaven before I had seen that day, Horatio! My father! I think I see my father!"

Startled, and thinking of the ghost, Horatio said, "Where, my lord?"

"In my mind's eye, Horatio."

"I saw him some time ago," Horatio said. "He was a good-looking King."

"He was a man — the ideal of man; he was perfect in every way," Hamlet said. "I shall not look upon his like again."

“My lord, I think I saw him last night,” Horatio said.

“Saw? Whom?”

“My lord, I think I saw the King your father.”

“The King my father!”

“Control your wonderment for a while,” Horatio said. “Listen with attentive ears until I can tell you what a marvelous thing I have seen with these gentlemen as witnesses.”

“For God’s love, let me hear,” Hamlet said.

“These gentlemen, Marcellus and Barnardo, had twice on their watch, in the dead vast and middle of the night, encountered something strange. A figure like your father, armed exactly like him from top to toe, appeared before them, and with solemn march stalked slowly and stately by them. Three times he walked by their troubled and fear-surprised eyes, as close as the length of his truncheon. They, melted almost to jelly because of their fear, stood silently and did not dare to speak to him. This they fearfully and secretly told me, and I kept the watch with them the third night. Exactly as they had said, at the time they had stated and dressed the way that they had described, the apparition appeared. Each word they had spoken proved to be true and good. I was acquainted with your father. My hands are not more similar than was the apparition to your father.”

“But where did this happen?” Hamlet asked.

“My lord, this happened upon the platform — the platform where the guns of the fort are mounted. That is where we kept our watch,” Marcellus replied.

“Didn’t you speak to the ghost?” Hamlet asked.

“My lord, I did,” Horatio replied, “but it did not answer me.

Once I thought that it lifted its head up and looked as if it were about to speak, but just then the cock crew loudly to announce the morning, and at the sound of the cock it shrunk hastily away and vanished from our sight.”

“It is very strange.”

“As I live, my honored lord, it is true, and we thought that it was our duty to let you know about it,” Horatio said.

“Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me,” Hamlet replied.

He asked Marcellus and Barnardo, “Do you have the watch tonight?”

“We do, my lord,” they replied.

“Was the ghost armed?” Hamlet asked.

“It was armed, my lord,” they replied. “It was wearing armor.”

“From top to toe?”

“My lord, from head to foot,” they replied.

“Then you did not see his face?”

“My lord, we did see the ghost’s face,” Horatio said. “The face guard of its helmet was up.”

“How did he look?” Hamlet asked. “Did he frown and look fierce, like a warrior?”

“His countenance was more sorrowful than angry,” Horatio replied.

“Was his face pale or a healthy red?”

“Very pale.”

“And he fixed his eyes upon you?” Hamlet asked.

“Most constantly,” Horatio said.

“I wish I had been there.”

“It would have much amazed you.”

“Very likely, very likely,” Hamlet said. “Did it stay long?”

“As long as someone with moderate haste might count to a hundred,” Horatio replied.

“Longer, longer,” Marcellus and Barnardo objected.

“Not when I saw it,” Horatio said.

“His beard was grizzled, wasn’t it?” Hamlet asked.

“It was, as I have seen it in his life,” Horatio said, “a sable silvered. His beard was black but streaked with white.”

“I will watch with you tonight,” Hamlet said. “Perhaps it will walk again.”

“I predict it will,” Horatio said.

“If it assumes my noble father’s person, I’ll speak to it, even if Hell itself should gape and order me to be silent,” Hamlet said. “Please, if you have not already told someone what you saw, continue to keep what you saw secret. Whatever you see happen tonight, look at it closely but do not talk about it. I will reward your friendship. And so, farewell. Upon the guard platform, between eleven and twelve tonight, I’ll visit you.”

“We will do our duty to your honor,” they replied.

“Give me your friendship, as I give you mine,” Hamlet said. “Farewell.”

Everyone except Hamlet departed.

Hamlet said to himself, “My father’s spirit dressed in armor!

All is not well; I suspect some foul play that the ghost wishes to inform me about. I wish that it were night! Until then, my soul, sit still. Foul deeds will rise, although all the Earth overwhelm them, to men's eyes. No matter how people try to hide foul deeds, they will become unhidden."

— 1.3 —

Laertes and Ophelia were in a room of Polonius' house. Laertes was preparing to return to France, and they were saying their goodbyes to each other.

"My luggage is on board ship," Laertes said. "Farewell. And, sister, if the winds are blowing in the right direction and a ship is ready to sail to France, do not sleep but instead write and send a letter to me."

"Can you doubt that I will write to you?" Ophelia asked.

"As for Hamlet and his trifling flirting with you, know that it is a temporary liking and a passing fancy and a youthful amorous sport. It is a violet in the springtime of youthful nature. It is an early flowering; it is not permanent. It is sweet, but it is not lasting. It is the perfume and pastime of a minute. Hamlet's feeling for you is no more than that."

"No more than that?" Ophelia asked.

"Think that it is no more than that," Laertes said. "As we grow, we do not grow only in physical size and strength of our temple the body, but we also grow in our mind and soul — our inward nature also grows and expands. Perhaps he loves you now, and now no stain or deceit does besmirch the honorableness of his will, but you must be aware and fear that because he is a great and important person his will is not his own. He himself is subject to his birth and rank, and so he cannot do as other, lesser people do. He may not, as unvalued and unimportant persons do, choose for himself whom to marry because the safety and health of this whole

state of Denmark depend on his choice, and therefore his choice must be circumscribed — his choice must meet the approval of that body of citizens of whom he is the head.

“Therefore, if he says he loves you, you will be wise to believe it only to the extent that a man in his particular position can act on what he says, which is only as far as the general approval of the important citizens of Denmark will allow him to act.

“So weigh what loss your honor may sustain, if you listen to his songs of love with too credulous and believing ears. Weigh what loss your honor may sustain if you lose your heart to him, or if you open your chaste treasure — your virginity — to his uncontrolled demands.

“Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister, and keep yourself in the rear of your affection, out of the shot and danger of desire. Don’t display your affection, and so keep yourself safe. The most modest maiden is prodigal enough, if she unmask her beauty to the Moon; she ought not to unmask her beauty to someone who will take advantage of her.

“The mere fact of virtue itself is not enough to escape malicious and destructive gossip. The cankerworm injures the young flowers of the spring very often before their buds have been disclosed, and in the morning and liquid dew of youth contagious infections are most imminent. Youth is a time of great promise — and great danger.

“Be wary therefore. The best safety lies in fear of danger. If you are not afraid of danger, you are not wary of danger, and so you can fall into danger. Youth often acts contrary to its better nature even when no temptation is near.”

“I shall keep the content of this good lesson in and as a watchman for my heart,” Ophelia replied, “but, my good brother, do not do as some pastors who lack grace do: They show me the steep and thorny way to Heaven, while like

reckless libertines puffed up with pride, they tread the primrose path of wanton amusement — they do not take their own advice.”

“Don’t worry about me,” Laertes said, adding, “I have stayed too long.”

He heard a noise, looked up, and said, “Our father is coming.”

Polonius entered the room, and Laertes said, “A double blessing is a double grace; occasion smiles upon a second leave. I get to have two farewells from my father.”

“Are you still here, Laertes?” Polonius said. “For shame! The wind is blowing in the sails of your ship, and everyone is waiting for you!

“Well, take my blessing and my advice with you. Listen to what I have to say to you and engrave my words in your heart.

“Do not needlessly broadcast your thoughts, and do not act on any reckless thought.

“Be friendly, but do not be overly friendly. You need not be familiar with everybody.

“When you have friends who have proven themselves to be true throughout trials, keep them close to your soul with hoops of steel, but do not shake hands with every new and untested young man you meet.

“Beware of being involved in a quarrel, but once you are in the quarrel, act in such a way that the person arguing with you regrets it.

“Listen to every man, but give few men your recommendation.

“Listen to every man’s opinion, but reserve your judgment

and form your own opinions carefully.

“Buy as good clothing as you can afford, but do not buy clothing with fancy trimmings. You need to buy rich — not gaudy — clothing. What a man wears often reveals what a man is. In France, people of the best rank and station know and practice this wisdom — they have good taste in clothing.

“Neither a borrower nor a lender be, because when you make a loan, you often lose both your money and your friend, and if you borrow money you do not practice the virtue of thrift.

“Practice this above all: To your own self be true. If you do this, it must follow, as the night follows the day, that you cannot then be false to any man.

“Farewell, and may my blessing help you to practice what I have said!”

“Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord,” Laertes said to his father.

“It is time for you to go,” Polonius said. “Your servants are waiting for you.”

“Farewell, Ophelia,” Laertes said, “and remember well what I have said to you.”

“Your words are locked in my memory, and you have the key. I will remember your words until you give me permission to forget them.”

“Farewell,” Laertes said, and then he departed.

“What is it, Ophelia, that Laertes has said to you?” Polonius asked.

“If it pleases you, he told me something concerning Lord Hamlet.”

“This makes me remember something,” Polonius said. “I

have been told that Hamlet has very often recently spent private time with you, and that you yourself have been most free and bounteous of your time and have spent it with Hamlet. If what I have heard is true, and I have been told these things as a warning to be careful and protective of you, I must tell you that you are not acting in such a way that my daughter ought to act — you must protect your honor. What is going on between you and Hamlet? Tell me the truth.”

“He has, my lord, of late made many tenders of his affection to me. He has let me know that he is fond of me.”

The word “tender” means “offer.” The word can mean “an offer of love,” which is how Ophelia is using it, or it can mean “an offer of money,” which is one of the ways Polonius will use it. The word “tender” can also refer to offers of other things.

“Affection! Ha! You speak like a green and inexperienced girl who is untried in such perilous circumstances. Do you believe his tenders of affection, as you call them?”

“I do not know, my lord, what I should think.”

“By the Virgin Mary, I’ll teach you what to think. Think of yourself as a baby who has mistaken these tenders for true pay, but these tenders are counterfeit — they are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly — take better care of yourself. If you do not — and here I think I am overusing the word ‘tender’ — you’ll tender me a fool.”

By “tender me a fool,” Polonius meant three things: 1) Ophelia will make a fool of herself, 2) Ophelia will make Polonius look like a fool, and 3) Ophelia will present Polonius with a fool — a bastard grandchild.

“My lord, he has made me his tenders of love in an honorable fashion.”

“Aye, ‘fashion’ you may call it,” Polonius said. “Ha!”

“And Hamlet has given confirmation of his tenders of love to me, my lord, with almost all the holy vows of Heaven.”

“Hamlet’s words are traps to catch woodcocks, which are very stupid birds. I know how the soul, when the blood burns, gives with careless generosity such vows of love to the tongue. These flares, daughter, give more light than heat, but both light and heat are as quickly extinguished as they are made. You must not mistake these quickly ending flares for real fire and real love.

“From this time on, do not spend so much time with Hamlet. Keep your maidenly presence away from him. You are the protectress of a treasure — your virginity — and you need not enter into negotiations for it just because a besieger wants you to.

“As for Lord Hamlet, remember that he is young and he has much more freedom to do what he wants than you do. In short, Ophelia, do not believe the vows that Hamlet makes to you. His vows of love are brokers who dress in holy vestments but who act as panderers to entice you into unholy acts of sin.

“This is all I have to say. From this time forth, I do not want you, in plain words, to misuse any of your free time by spending it in conversation with Lord Hamlet. Make sure that you do what I am telling you to do. Come along with me now.”

“I shall obey you, my lord,” Ophelia said to her father.

— 1.4 —

On the platform where the guards performed their duty, Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus stood.

“The air bites sharply,” Hamlet said. “It is very cold.”

“It is a nipping and sharp air,” Horatio agreed.

“What time is it now?” Hamlet asked.

“I think that it is not yet midnight,” Horatio replied.

“No, the bell struck twelve,” Marcellus said.

“Really?” Horatio said. “I did not hear it. It is drawing near the time that the ghost is accustomed to walk.”

Trumpets sounded, and cannons fired.

“What does this noise mean, my lord?” Horatio asked Hamlet.

“King Claudius stays awake tonight in order to carouse. He drinks many toasts, and he dances swaggering dances. As he drains his draughts of Rhine wine, the kettledrum and trumpet thus bray out the triumph of his pledge. The kettledrum and trumpet are signals to fire the cannon.”

“Is this a Danish custom?” Horatio asked.

“Yes, indeed it is,” Hamlet said, “but in my opinion, although I am a native of Denmark and to the manner born, it is a custom that would be more honorable in being breached than in being observed. This heavy-headed reveling with its drunken practitioners makes other nations both in the East and in the West criticize and censure us. They call us drunkards, and they stain our names and titles by calling us swine. These drunken revels take away from our achievements, even those that are worthiest of the greatest praise. They cause us to lose the best and most valuable part of our national character.

“It often happens in particular men that they have some vicious defect of nature. This defect may, for example, be present from their birth because of their heredity — wherein they are not guilty, since no one can choose his origin. They

are born with an unbalanced personality that often breaks down the fences and forts of reason. Or they may develop a personality flaw or a bad habit that excessively influences and perverts what would be their decent behavior.

“As I say, these certain men are contaminated by one flaw of the personality, whether it comes from nature or from nurture or from the workings of fate. Although in everything else they are completely virtuous and completely pure in grace — as complete as it is possible for a living man to be — yet the general opinion of everybody focuses on that one fault. A very small amount of evil can throw a shadow over all his many good qualities and hurt his reputation.”

Horatio said suddenly, “Look, my lord! Here comes the ghost!”

The ghost approached the men.

“May angels and ministers of grace defend us!” Hamlet said.

He said to the ghost, “You may be a spirit of health, an angel — or a damned goblin, a demon. You may bring with you airs from Heaven or blasts from Hell. Your intentions may be wicked or they may be charitable. But you have come here in such a shape as invites questioning, and so I shall speak to you. Because of the shape you have assumed, I will call you names that I hope will inspire you to speak to me. I will call you Hamlet, King, father, royal Dane. Oh, answer me! Let me not burst in ignorance; instead, tell me why your canonized bones — your bones that have been properly buried in a Christian graveyard and coffined in your death — have burst their funeral shroud. Tell me why the sepulcher, in which we saw you quietly buried, has opened its ponderous and marble jaws, and vomited you into the world of the living again. What is the meaning of this? Why are you, dead corpse, who is dressed again in a full suit of steel armor, revisiting the fitful gleams of flickering

moonlight and making the night hideous? Why do you make we fools of nature so horridly tremble as we think about things that lie beyond the reaches of our souls? Why are you walking in the night? Why? What do you want us to do?"

The ghost motioned to Hamlet to follow him.

Horatio said, "It is beckoning you to follow and go away with it as if it had something important to tell you and you alone."

"Look," Marcellus said. "With a courteous motion, it waves at you to go to a more private place away from here. But do not go with it."

"No, by no means," Horatio said.

They were afraid for Hamlet. An evil spirit could tempt him to commit suicide.

"It will not speak to me here," Hamlet said, "and so I will follow it."

"Do not, my lord," Horatio said.

"Why, what should I be afraid of?" Hamlet asked. "I do not value my life as much as I do a pin. As for my soul, what can the ghost do to that — my soul is as immortal as the ghost is. It is again motioning to me to go with it. I will follow it."

"What if it tempts you toward the sea, my lord," Horatio asked, "or to the dreadful summit of the cliff that juts out over the sea? Suppose that it then assumes some other horrible form that might deprive you of your reason and make you insane? Think about this. Such a scene — you looking down many fathoms to the sea and hearing it roar — puts thoughts of desperation into every brain that sees and hears it."

"The ghost is still waving at me to follow it," Hamlet said.

He said to the ghost, "Lead on. I will follow you."

"You shall not go, my lord," Marcellus said.

Marcellus and Horatio physically restrained Hamlet, who told them, "Take away your hands."

"Listen to us," Horatio said. "You shall not follow the ghost."

"My fate cries out," Hamlet replied, "My destiny is calling to me. Every petty artery in my body is now as hardy as the Nemean lion's sinews. The Nemean lion was invulnerable, and so Hercules was unable to pierce its skin. He had to kill the lion by strangling it. The ghost still motions for me to come with it. Get your hands off me, gentlemen, or by Heaven, I'll make a ghost of whoever hinders me! I say, stay away from me!"

Marcellus and Horatio let go of Hamlet, who said to the ghost, "Go on; I'll follow you."

Hamlet and the ghost departed.

Horatio said, "Hamlet grows desperate and reckless with imagination and delusions."

"Let's follow him," Marcellus said. "We ought not to obey his orders to stay away from him. Obeying those orders would not be right."

"Yes, let's follow him," Horatio said. "What will be the result of this?"

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," Marcellus said.

"Heaven will take care of it," Horatio replied.

"Let's follow him," Marcellus said.

They went in the direction that Hamlet and the ghost had taken.

— 1.5 —

Hamlet stopped walking and asked the ghost, “Where are you leading me? I’ll go no further.”

“Listen to me carefully,” the ghost said.

“I will.”

“The hour has almost come when I must return to the sulfurous and tormenting flames of Purgatory.”

“Alas, poor ghost!”

“Do not pity me,” the ghost said. “Instead, listen carefully to what I shall tell you.”

“Speak; I am bound by filial duty to hear you.”

“When you hear what I have to say, you will be bound to seek revenge.”

“What?”

“I am your father’s spirit. I am doomed for a certain time to walk during the night, and during the day I am confined to fast in fires, until the foul sins I committed in my days of life are burnt and purged away. If I were not forbidden to tell the secrets of my prison-house, I could tell you things whose lightest word would harrow your soul, freeze your young blood, and make your two eyes, like falling stars, start from their sockets, and part your carefully arranged locks of hair and make each individual hair stand on end like the quills of the bad-tempered porcupine. But this revelation of the mysteries of Purgatory must not be made to ears of flesh and blood. Listen, listen, listen to me if you ever have loved your dear father —”

“Oh, God!”

“— revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.”

“Murder!”

“Murder most foul,” the ghost said. “Murder is foul at best, but my murder was very foul, strange, and unnatural. My murder is unnatural because it goes against the natural bonds of kinship.”

“Quickly tell me what happened,” Hamlet said, “so that I, with wings as swift as thinking or the thoughts of love, may sweep to my revenge.”

“I find you apt and eager,” the ghost said. “You would have to be duller than the overgrown weeds that root themselves in ease on the banks of the Lethe River, whose water souls drink to forget past events, not to be moved by what I have to say.

“Now, Hamlet, listen. It was reported that as I was sleeping in my garden, a serpent bit me. The whole ear of Denmark is by a false account of my death rankly abused. Know, you noble youth, that the serpent that stung your father’s life now wears his crown.”

“Oh, my prophetic soul! I suspected this! My uncle!”

“Yes, your uncle is the cause of my death. He is an incestuous and adulterous beast. He used his knowledge of witchcraft, and he used traitorous gifts — wicked wit and gifts have the power to seduce! — to win to his shameful lust the will of my most seemingly virtuous Queen Gertrude, your mother.

“Oh, Hamlet, how she fell! She took her love from me, whose love was of such quality that it kept the vow I had made to her when I married her, and she gave it to a wretch whose natural gifts were poor in comparison to those of

mine. True virtue can never be seduced even if lust dresses itself up with a Heavenly appearance, but lust, even if it has a Heavenly appearance, can first gorge itself in a celestial bed, and then gorge itself with garbage.

“But wait! I think that I smell the morning air, so I must be brief. As I was sleeping — I thought safely — within my garden, as was my habit each afternoon, your uncle stole into my garden, carrying a vial of the poisonous juice of the cursed hebenon plant, and he poured the leprous poison into the shells of my ears. This poison so hates the blood of man that as quickly as it courses through the veins of the body, it makes the healthy and wholesome blood curdle like acid when dropped into milk. Quickly, my skin became like the bark of a tree. My skin became leprous; a vile and loathsome crust covered all my smooth body.

“That is how I, while sleeping, lost my life, my crown, and my queen, all because of a brother’s hand. My life was cut short even in the blossom of my sin. I died without receiving the sacrament of holy communion, without confessing and being absolved from my sins, and without being anointed with holy oil. I was not given my last rites. I was not able to make a reckoning of my sins before I died, but instead I was sent to give an account of my sins with all my imperfections on my head. Oh, horrible! Oh, horrible! Most horrible!

“If you have any natural feeling in you, do not tolerate this. Do not allow the royal bed of Denmark to be a couch for lustfulness and damned incest. But, whatever you do, do not allow your mind to be corrupted by contact with your uncle, and do not plot to harm your mother. Leave her to Heaven and to her conscience — allow those thorns that lodge in her bosom to prick and sting her.

“Farewell now! The glowworm shows that the morning is near — the glowworm’s ineffectual fire begins to pale.

“*Adieu, adieu!* Hamlet, remember me.”

The ghost departed.

Hamlet said to himself, “Oh, all you host of Heaven — you angels! Oh, Earth! What else shall I call on? Shall I call on Hell? Damn! Do not break, my heart. And you, my sinews, do not grow instantly old, but instead keep me standing upright.

“Shall I remember you! Yes, you poor ghost, I will remember you for as long as memory holds a seat in this distracted globe — this head — of mine. Remember you! Yes, from the tablet of my memory I’ll wipe away all trivial and foolish records, all quotations from books, all ideas, all past impressions and observations that I have copied and written there in my youth. The only thing that shall live on in the book and volume of my brain will be your commandment. It will not be mixed with baser matter. Yes, by Heaven!

“Oh, most pernicious woman! Oh, villain, villain, smiling, damned villain! My tablet — it is fitting that I write down that a person may smile, and smile, and still be a villain. At least I’m sure it may be so in Denmark.”

Hamlet wrote on a tablet, and then he said, “So, uncle, there you are. Now to my watchword, aka motto — the words that I will live by. The ghost said, ‘*Adieu, adieu!* Remember me.’ I have sworn to remember it.”

Horatio called, “My lord! My lord!”

Marcellus called, “Lord Hamlet!”

“May Heaven protect Hamlet!” Horatio said.

Hamlet said to himself, “So be it.”

Horatio called, “Hillo, ho, ho, my lord!”

A falconer uses the words “Hillo, ho, ho” to call his falcon to return to him.

Hamlet called back, “Hillo, ho, ho, boy! Come, bird, come.”

Horatio and Marcellus walked over to Hamlet.

“How are you, my noble lord?” Marcellus asked.

“What happened, my lord?” Horatio asked.

“Something to be wondered at,” Hamlet replied.

“My good lord, tell us what happened,” Horatio requested.

“No; you’ll reveal it.”

“Not I, my lord,” Horatio said. “I swear it by Heaven.”

“I also swear that I will not reveal it,” Marcellus said.

“What do you say then to this?” Hamlet said. “Would anyone ever think —”

He stopped and then asked, “But you will keep this secret?”

Horatio and Marcellus replied, “Yes, we will. We swear it by Heaven, my lord.”

Hamlet thought about revealing to them what the ghost had said, but in the midst of speaking he changed his mind and said something obvious: “All complete and total villains dwelling in Denmark are ... complete and total knaves.”

“No ghost, my lord, needs to come from the grave to tell us this,” Horatio said. “We already know it.”

“Why, you are right,” Hamlet said. “You are in the right, and so, without any more explanation at all, I think it fitting that we shake hands and part. You shall do as your business and desire shall point you; every man has business and desire, such as it is. As for me, I will go and pray.”

“These are wild and excited words, my lord,” Horatio said.

“I’m sorry that they offend you,” Hamlet said. “I am heartily sorry — yes, heartily.”

“I am not offended,” Horatio replied.

“By Saint Patrick you say that you are not offended,” Hamlet said, “but my words are about offense — and a lot of offense. Regarding this vision here, it is an honest and genuine ghost — I can tell you that. As for your desire to know what happened between the ghost and me, stifle that desire as much as you are able to. And now, good friends, as you are friends, scholars, and soldiers, grant me one poor thing I request.”

“What is it, my lord?” Horatio said. “We will grant it.”

“Never make known what you have seen tonight,” Hamlet said.

“My lord, we will not,” both Horatio and Marcellus said.

“Swear it,” Hamlet said.

“Truly, my lord, I will not reveal what I have seen tonight,” Horatio said.

“Neither will I, truly,” Marcellus said.

“Swear it upon the cross made by the hilt of my sword,” Hamlet said.

Hamlet drew his sword.

“We have sworn, my lord, already,” Marcellus said.

“Swear upon the cross made by the hilt of my sword,” Hamlet repeated.

The ghost’s voice came from under the ground: “Swear!”

“Ah, ha, boy!” Hamlet said, excitedly. “Do you say so? Are you there, truepenny — true and honest fellow?”

He said to Horatio and Marcellus, “Come on — you hear this fellow in the cellars — swear.”

“Propose the oath you want us to swear to, my lord,” Horatio said.

“Swear by my sword that you will never speak of this that you have seen.”

The ghost’s voice came from under the ground, but from a different spot than before: “Swear!”

Hamlet said about the ghost’s voice, “*Hic et ubique?* [Latin for ‘Here and everywhere?’] Then we’ll shift our ground and move to a different spot. Come over here, gentlemen, and lay your hands again upon my sword. Swear by my sword that you will never tell what you have heard.”

The ghost’s voice came from under the ground, and again it came from a different spot than before: “Swear by his sword!”

“Well said, old mole!” Hamlet said. “Can you dig and work in the earth so fast? You are a worthy miner! Once more, let us move, good friends.”

“Oh, day and night,” Horatio said, “but this is wondrously strange!”

“Since the ghost is a stranger, welcome it,” Hamlet said. “There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of by philosophers.”

He then said to both Horatio and Marcellus, “But come; swear here, as you have sworn oaths before, never, so help you God, no matter how strange or odd I act, as I perhaps hereafter shall think fitting to act in an antic and insane

manner, that you, seeing me at such times, never shall do or say anything that reveals that you know that I am putting on an act. Swear that you will not fold your arms like this [Hamlet folded his arms], or shake your heads like this [Hamlet shook his head], or say some mysterious phrase such as ‘Well, well, we know,’ or ‘We could, if we would,’ or ‘If we wanted to speak,’ or ‘There are people who could say more if they wanted to,’ or such other ambiguous hint. In short, you will do nothing and you will say nothing that hints that you know that I am putting on an act. Swear this upon the grace and mercy that you will need on the Day of Judgment.”

The ghost’s voice came from under the ground: “Swear!”

Horatio and Marcellus put their hands on Hamlet’s sword and swore not to tell what they had seen, not to tell what they had heard, and not to reveal that Hamlet was faking it when he acted as if he were insane.

“Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!” Hamlet said.

Hamlet then said to Horatio and Marcellus, “With all my love, I commend myself to you. Whatever so poor a man as Hamlet may do to express his love and friendship to you, God willing, he shall not stint to do. Let us go in together. Keep your fingers always on your lips, I ask you.”

Hamlet made a ‘shh!’ sign with his finger on his lips, and then he added, “The time is disordered. Oh, cursed spirit, I regret that I was ever born to set it right!”

Horatio and Marcellus wanted Hamlet to enter the castle first, but Hamlet said to them, “No, let’s go in together.”

CHAPTER 2

— 2.1 —

In a room of his house, old Polonius was talking to Reynaldo, who was one of his servants. Laertes was now living in Paris, and Polonius was sending Reynaldo to him.

“Give him this money and these letters, Reynaldo,” Polonius said.

“I will, my lord.”

“You shall do a marvelous and wise thing, good Reynaldo, if, before you visit him, you inquire about his behavior in Paris.”

“My lord, I intend to do that.”

“Well said; very well said,” Polonius said. “Look, sir, first inquire for me and find out which Danes are in Paris. Find out how they came to be there, who they are, how much money they have, and where they are living, what company they keep, and what are their expenses. If you find out that they know my son, you will learn more about him by using roundabout and vague questioning than if you were to question them directly about him. Pretend that you do not know him well, but that you have heard of him. You can say, ‘I know his father and his friends, and I know him a little.’ Do you understand me, Reynaldo?”

“Yes, very well, my lord.”

“— and I know him a little, but —’ you may say ‘— not well, but if this person is the man I mean, he’s very wild. He is addicted to so and so.’ You can then charge him with whatever false accusations you please, but be careful not to charge him with any rank and disgraceful accusations that would dishonor him. Be careful not to do that. But, sir, you may charge him with such wanton, wild, and usual slips and

faults that are commonly made by young men who are enjoying their first taste of liberty.”

“Such as gambling, my lord?” Reynaldo asked.

“Yes, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling and fighting, visiting prostitutes — you may go so far as these things.”

“My lord, that would dishonor him.”

“In faith, no,” Polonius said, “as long as you moderate the faults. You must not charge him with a major scandal, such as that he visits prostitutes every night — that is not what I want you to do. Instead, I want you to lightly talk about the slips and faults that come when a young man is first given his freedom — they are the flash and outbreak of a fiery mind, the wildness of an untamed young man, the things that happen to most young men.”

“But, my good lord —”

“You want to know why I want you to do this?”

“Yes, my lord. I would like to know that.”

“This is my scheme, and I believe that it is a legitimate scheme. You will charge my son in conversation with these slight sullies, as if they were like some spots of dirt that have soiled embroidery as it was being made. Young men often acquire slight sullies in the process of maturing. Listen to me. The person to whom you are talking, the person from whom you are seeking information about my son’s conduct, if he has ever seen my son commit any of the sins that we have mentioned, he will confirm my son’s fault, and he will call you ‘good sir,’ or something similar, or ‘friend,’ or ‘gentleman,’ according to the form of address used by his social class and his country.”

“Very good, my lord.”

“And then, sir, he will do this — he will do — what was I about to say? By the Mass, I was about to say something. Where did I leave off?”

“You said that the person I was speaking to would confirm your son’s fault, if he is guilty, and would call me ‘good sir,’ or something similar, or ‘friend,’ or ‘gentleman.’”

“Yes,” Polonius said. “He will confirm my son’s fault by saying something like this: ‘I know the gentleman. I saw him yesterday, or the other day, or this day, or that day. And as you said, he was gambling, or drinking to excess, or playing court tennis.’ Or perhaps he will say, ‘I saw him enter such a house of sale.’ *Videlicet* [Latin for ‘That is to say’], a brothel. And so forth.

“Do you see? Your bait of falsehood will capture the prize of truth. We men of wisdom and of foresight use roundabout courses and devious tests to find out information and truth. If you follow this lecture and my advice, you shall learn the truth about my son. You understand me, don’t you?”

“I do, my lord,” Reynaldo replied.

“May God be with you,” Polonius said. “Farewell.”

“Goodbye, my lord.”

“Use your eyes when you are with my son. Go along with whatever he wants to do.”

“I shall, my lord.”

“And let him ply his music, whatever his music might be.”

“That is good advice, my lord.”

“Farewell!”

Reynaldo left the room just as Ophelia, Polonius’ daughter, entered it. Ophelia looked distressed.

“How are you, Ophelia! What’s the matter?”

“Oh, my lord, my lord, I have been so frightened!”

“Frightened by what, in the name of God?”

“My lord, as I was sewing in my private chamber, Lord Hamlet — with his jacket all unbuttoned, no hat on his head, wearing dirty stockings without garters so that his stockings had fallen down and were like fetters around his ankles, pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, and with a look so piteous that it seemed as if he had been released from Hell so that he could speak of his horrors — came to me.”

“Is he insane because he loves you?” Polonius asked.

“My father, I do not know,” Ophelia replied, “but truly, I am afraid that that is true.”

“What did he say?”

“He took me by the wrist and held me hard, and then he backed up until he was at his arm’s length, and holding his other hand over his brow, he stared at my face as if he were going to draw it. He stayed like that a long time, but at last, shaking my arm a little, and waving his head up and down three times, he sighed so piteously and profoundly that it seemed to shatter his entire body and end his life. Having finished that, he let me go, and turning his head over his shoulder, he left my private chamber without the use of his eyes. He went out of doors without looking where he was going — he kept staring at me as he left.”

“Come with me,” Polonius said. “I will go and seek the King. Hamlet is in the very ecstasy and madness of love, whose violent nature destroys itself and leads the will to desperate undertakings as often as any passion under Heaven that does afflict our natures. This madness has enough violence that it can cause self-destruction. I am sorry that Hamlet is insane.

Have you spoken to him any hard words recently?"

"No, my good lord," Ophelia replied. "I have done only what you commanded me to do. I returned his letters, and I have declined to let him visit me."

"That has made him insane," Polonius said. "I am sorry that I have not observed him with better heed and judgment. I was afraid that he was trifling with you and that he wanted to ruin you. Curse my suspicious nature! By Heaven, old people are just as likely to be overly suspicious as young people are to be indiscreet."

"Come, let's go to the King. We must give him this information. He will not want to hear it, but it might cause more harm to keep it secret than to reveal it."

— 2.2 —

In a room in the castle, King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern were speaking. Also present were various attendants.

"Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!" King Claudius said. "We have much wanted to see you, but in addition, we need you to do something for us and so we sent a message to you to come quickly to us. You must have heard something about a change in Hamlet. We can say that he has been transformed since he is different both outside and inside. Neither the exterior nor the inward man resembles what it was."

"What the cause of this transformation, other than his father's death, can be, I cannot dream. Therefore, I ask you both, since from childhood you have been brought up with him, and since you know his youth and behavior so well, to agree to stay here in our court for a little while. That way, you two can encourage Hamlet to engage in pleasurable activities, and we hope that you can learn whether there is

something, unknown to us, that is afflicting him — something that, once we know what it is, we can set to rights.”

“Good gentlemen,” Queen Gertrude said, “Hamlet has talked a lot about you, and I am sure that there are not two men living with whom he is friendlier. If it will please you to show us so much gentlemanly courtesy and good will as to spend time with us for a while, and to help us, we will reward your visit with such thanks as only a King can give.”

Rosencrantz replied, “Both your majesties can, by the sovereign power you have over us, simply command rather than request us to do something.”

“But we will both obey you,” Guildenstern said, “and here we give up ourselves, and we fully and freely lay our service at your feet. Command us as you will.”

“Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern,” King Claudius said.

“Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz,” Queen Gertrude said, adding, “I ask you to immediately visit my too-much-changed son.”

She said to the attendants, “Go, some of you. Take these gentlemen to where Hamlet is.”

“May the Heavens make our presence and our actions pleasant and helpful to him!” Guildenstern replied.

“Amen!” Queen Gertrude said.

Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and some attendants departed.

Polonius entered the room and said, “The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord, have returned. They are joyful.”

“You have always been the father of good news,” King Claudius said.

“Have I, my lord?” Polonius replied. “I assure my good liege that I perform my duty to both my God and my King as carefully as I guard my soul.”

He added, “I think, or else this brain of mine is not as able as it used to be to follow a track or scent that requires a knowledge of men and political affairs, that I have found the cause of Hamlet’s lunacy.”

“Tell us the cause,” King Claudius said. “I very much want to know that.”

“First allow the ambassadors to come here and give you their news,” Polonius said. “My news shall be the fruit — the dessert — to that great feast.”

“You may do the honors of welcoming the ambassadors and bringing them in here,” King Claudius replied.

Polonius left to do his duty.

King Claudius said to Queen Gertrude, “He tells me, my dear Gertrude, that he has found the head and source — the cause — of your son’s illness.”

“I doubt that it is anything but what we most suspect it is: his father’s death and our very quick marriage.”

“Well, we shall question Polonius thoroughly.”

Polonius returned, bringing with him King Claudius’ ambassadors to Norway: Voltemand and Cornelius.

King Claudius said, “Welcome, my good friends! Tell me, Voltemand, what news do you bring us from our fellow ruler the King of Norway?”

“I bring very fair greetings from him to you, and I bring a very fair answer to your requests of him. Immediately after our first meeting with him, he sent out men to stop his nephew from drafting men into an army. The King of

Norway had thought that his nephew was raising an army to attack Poland, but after an investigation, he found that the army was actually being raised to attack your highness. Once he learned that, he was aggrieved and angry that he had been deceived in his sickness, old age, and lack of strength. He sent orders to young Fortinbras to stop preparing for war and to appear before him. Fortinbras came to the castle, received a rebuke from the King of Norway, and in the end vowed to his uncle the King that he would never again plan to make war against your majesty. Hearing this, the old King of Norway, overcome with joy, gave him an annuity of three thousand crowns, and he gave him permission to use his soldiers to make war against Poland. With that in mind, he gave us a document that entreats you for permission for Fortinbras' army to cross Denmark so the soldiers can make war against Poland."

Voltemand handed King Claudius a document and said, "The King of Norway hopes that you will give your permission to this enterprise. This document lays down guarantees for the safety of Denmark if you allow the Norwegian army to cross it."

"We like this well," King Claudius said, using the royal plural. He added, "And when we have more time to consider this matter, we will read this document carefully, send an answer to the King of Norway, and think about the far-reaching consequences that can follow what we decide."

"In the meantime, we thank you for your successfully undertaken labor. Go and rest now; at night we'll feast together. Most welcome home!"

Voltemand and Cornelius departed.

Polonius said, "This business is well ended. My liege, and madam, to make a speech about what a King should be, what duty is, why day is day, night is night, and time is time,

would accomplish nothing but to waste night, day, and time. Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit, and tediousness is the limbs and outward flourishes, I will be brief. Your noble son is mad; he is insane. Mad call I it; because, to define true madness, what is true madness except to be nothing else but mad? But let that go.”

Queen Gertrude said, “More matter, with less art. More content, with fewer rhetorical flourishes.”

Polonius replied, “Madam, I swear I use no rhetorical flourishes at all. That Hamlet is mad, it is true. It is true that his madness is a pity, and it is a pity that it is true. But these are rhetorical flourishes, so I will stop using them, because I do not want to use rhetorical flourishes.

“Let us grant that Hamlet is mad, then. What now remains is to discover the cause of this effect, or I should better say, to discover the cause of this defect, because this defective effect has a cause. Thus it remains, and that is the remainder. Perpend. Listen carefully. I have a daughter — I have her while she is mine, which is until she marries — who, in her duty and obedience to me, you see, has given me this. Now gather, and think about this.”

He began to read a letter — written by Hamlet to Ophelia — out loud:

“To the celestial, and my soul’s idol, the most beautified Ophelia,

“That’s an ill word, a vile word; ‘beautified’ is a vile word: but you shall hear the rest of the letter. Here it is:

“In her excellent white bosom, this letter, & etc.”

Queen Gertrude asked, “Did Hamlet write this letter to her?”

“Good madam, wait awhile,” Polonius said. “As I said that I would do, I will read the rest of the letter:

“Doubt that the stars are fire;

“Doubt that the Sun does move;

“Suspect truth to be a liar;

“But never doubt I love.

“Oh, dear Ophelia, I am bad at writing poetry like this. I do not have the art to count my groans — or to make them scan as poetry. However, believe that I love you best — oh, most best — believe it. Adieu.

“Yours evermore, most dear lady, while this complex body belongs to him, HAMLET.

“This letter, in obedience to me, my daughter has shown me. Hamlet also wrote other letters to her. My daughter has told me about his courting of her and at what times and places these acts of courtship occurred.”

“How has she reacted to his courtship of her?” King Claudius asked.

“What do you think about me?”

“I think that you are a faithful and honorable man,” King Claudius said.

“I hope to prove to be that,” Polonius replied. “But what would you have thought if, after I had seen this hot love on the wing — and I perceived it, I must tell you, before my daughter told me — what would you, or my dear majesty your Queen here, have thought if I had been like a notebook and simply recorded the information in my brain and kept silent about it? What if I had closed my eyes to it and kept mute and dumb, or if I had looked upon this love and done nothing? What would you have thought? No, I did not keep quiet. Instead, I took action and I said to my daughter, ‘Lord Hamlet is a Prince, and he is out of your league. This must

not be.’ I then gave her orders to lock herself away from his presence, to admit no messengers from him, to receive no tokens of love. She did all these things. Hamlet, repelled by her — a short tale to say — fell into a sadness and depression, then into a fast because of loss of appetite, from thence into insomnia, from thence into a debility, from thence into a delirium, and, by this decline after decline, he finally fell into the madness wherein now he raves, and all of us mourn for him.”

King Claudius asked Queen Gertrude, “Do you think that this is true?”

“It very likely is.”

“Has there ever been a time — I’d like to know — that I have positively said, ‘It is so,’ and it turned out not to be so?” Polonius asked.

“Not that I know of,” King Claudius replied.

Polonius said, “Take my staff of office from my hand, if what I have said turns out not to be true. If I have relevant evidence, I will follow it and will find where the truth is hidden even if it were hidden in the center of the Earth.”

“How may we test whether this is true?” King Claudius asked.

“You know that sometimes Hamlet walks for four or so hours together here in the lobby,” Polonius said.

“So he does indeed,” Queen Gertrude said.

“At one of those times, I’ll loose my daughter so she can go to him.”

Polonius was unaware of the implications of the word “loose.” On a farm, an animal can be loosed so that it will have sex.

He continued, “King Claudius, you and I will be hidden behind an arras — a wall hanging — and we will witness their encounter. If we find out that Hamlet does not love my daughter and that his love for her is not the reason why he is mad, then let me be no longer a minister of state in your court; instead, I will take care of a farm and wagons.”

“We will try your plan,” King Claudius said.

“Look,” Queen Gertrude said. “Hamlet, the poor wretch, is coming here while reading.”

“Leave now,” Polonius said to King Claudius and Queen Gertrude. “Please leave now. I will talk to him alone. Please allow me to do that.”

King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, and the remaining servants left the room, leaving behind Polonius and Hamlet.

Polonius asked, “How is my good Lord Hamlet?”

“I am well. May God have mercy on you.”

“Do you know who I am, my lord?”

“I know you very well,” Hamlet replied. “You are a fishmonger — a seller of fish.”

“I am not, my lord,” Polonius said.

“In that case, I wish that you were as honest as a fishmonger.”

“Honest, my lord?”

“Yes, sir,” Hamlet said. “To be an honest man, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.”

“That’s very true, my lord.”

Hamlet read out loud from his book, “*For if the Sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion —*”

People in Hamlet's time and society believed that the Sun shining on — kissing — a corpse causes maggots to come into existence — they did not realize that flies laid eggs on the corpse and maggots hatched out of those eggs.

Hamlet then asked, "Do you have a daughter?"

"I have, my lord."

"Do not allow her to walk in the Sun. Conception is a blessing, but it would not be a blessing if your daughter were to conceive. Friend, be careful concerning your daughter."

Hamlet was punning — and speaking inappropriately — about Polonius' daughter: Ophelia. "Walk in the Sun" can mean "walk in public" or "be made pregnant by the Sun" — if the Sun can bring to life maggots, why can't it bring to life a human infant? "Conception" can mean "(the ability) to form ideas" or "(the ability) to become pregnant." "Conceive" can mean "form ideas" or "become pregnant." Also, Hamlet transitioned from saying the term "kissing carrion" to talking about Ophelia. "Carrion" is a contemptuous term for flesh available for sexual pleasure.

Polonius thought, How about that! He is still thinking and talking about my daughter. But he did not recognize me at first; he said that I was a fishmonger. He is far gone, far gone in his madness. Truly in my youth I suffered very deep distress because I was in love; my distress was very close to this distress that Hamlet is feeling. I'll speak to him again.

Polonius asked, "What are you reading, my lord?"

"Words, words, words."

"What is the matter, my lord?"

"Between whom?"

"I mean the subject matter that you are reading, my lord."

Hamlet replied, “I am reading about slanders, sir. The satirical rogue — the author — says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes discharge thick amber sap and plum-tree gum, and they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with very weak legs. Although I most powerfully and potently believe all of these things, sir, yet I do not think that it is courteous to have it thus written down. You yourself, sir, should be as old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.”

Polonius thought, *Though these words are mad, yet there is some sort of meaning in them. Hamlet is ill; he should not be in this cold air.*

Polonius asked, “Will you walk out of this air, my lord?”

“Into my grave,” Hamlet replied.

“Indeed, your grave is out of this air,” Polonius said.

He thought, *How pregnant with meaning his replies sometimes are! Madness often hits on a happiness of meaning, although reason and sanity could not so quickly and happily come up with that meaning. I will leave Hamlet, and I will quickly contrive a meeting between my daughter and him.*

He said to Hamlet, “My honorable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you. Goodbye.”

“You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part with — except my life, except my life, except my life.”

“Fare you well, my lord.”

Hamlet said as Polonius walked away, “These tedious old fools!”

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern entered the room.

Polonius said to them, “You must be seeking the Lord Hamlet; there he is.”

Rosencrantz replied, “May God save you, sir!”

Polonius departed.

Guildenstern said to Hamlet, “My honored lord!”

Rosencrantz said to Hamlet, “My most dear lord!”

Hamlet replied, “My excellent good friends! How are you, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how are you two?”

Rosencrantz replied, “We are ordinary children of the Earth.”

“We are happy in that we are not too happy,” Guildenstern said. “We are not on the button at the very top of Fortune’s cap. We are not riding high on Fortune’s wheel.”

“Are you down so low that you sit at the soles of her shoes?” Hamlet asked.

“We live neither high nor low, my lord,” Rosencrantz said.

“Then do you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?” Hamlet asked.

“Indeed, we are the privates of her army. We are ordinary.”

“If you are her privates, you must live in the vicinity of her private and secret parts. This is not a surprise. Lady Fortune is a strumpet,” Hamlet said.

Many people regarded Lady Fortune as being a strumpet — a whore or promiscuous woman. She both gave and withheld good things indiscriminately. She was a fickle goddess — she was faithful to no man.

Hamlet asked them, “What’s the news?”

“There is no news, my lord, except that the world’s grown honest,” Rosencrantz said.

“Then Doomsday — the Day of Judgment — must be near,” Hamlet said. “That is the only thing that could make all the people of the world turn honest. But your news is not true. Let me make my question more specific: What have you, my good friends, done to be sent by Lady Fortune to this prison here?”

“Prison, my lord!” Guildenstern said.

“Denmark’s a prison,” Hamlet said.

“In that case, the world is a prison,” Rosencrantz said.

“The world is a spacious and fine prison,” Hamlet said. “In this world are many places of confinement, prison wards, and dungeons — and Denmark is one of the worst.”

“We think that that is not so, my lord,” Rosencrantz said.

“Why, then, it is not a prison to you,” Hamlet said, “because there is nothing either good or bad, except that thinking makes it so. To me, Denmark is a prison.”

Hamlet thought, *There is nothing either good or bad, except that thinking makes it so. How much truth, if any, does that statement have? One’s attitude can affect how we regard something. If I feel that Denmark is a prison to me, then it is a prison to me. But is it true that no objective right and no objective wrong exist?*

“Why, then your ambition makes Denmark a prison; it is too narrow for your mind,” Rosencrantz said.

“Oh, God, I could be confined in a nutshell and consider myself a King of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams,” Hamlet replied.

“Such dreams indeed are ambition, for the very substance of

the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream,” Guildenstern said.

“A dream itself is but a shadow,” Hamlet replied.

“Truly, and I think that ambition is of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow’s shadow,” Rosencrantz said.

“If that is correct, then only beggars have solid bodies because beggars have no ambition,” Hamlet said. “Our Kings and heroes are then the shadows of the beggars because Kings and heroes are ambitious and therefore shadows, and they must be the shadows of something. The shadows of the heroes are stretched out like shadows early in the morning or late in the afternoon. But perhaps we should go inside the court because my reasoning powers are going wacky.”

“We’ll attend you and be your servants,” Rosencrantz and Guildenstern said.

“No,” Hamlet said. “I will not class you with the rest of my servants because, to tell you honestly, I am most dreadfully attended to. But in the direct way that friends talk to one another, let me ask you this: Why are you here at Elsinore?”

“To visit you, my lord,” Rosencrantz said. “No other reason.”

“I am poor even in thanks, but I thank you,” Hamlet said. “But surely, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny.”

Did Hamlet mean that his thanks were not worth a halfpenny because he lacked power in Denmark — his uncle, not Hamlet, had become King after Hamlet’s father died? Or did Hamlet mean that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern did not deserve even his poor thanks, which were worth only a halfpenny? If so, Hamlet was already suspecting that King

Claudius was using Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on him. If Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were spying on Hamlet, then the two men deserved no thanks from Hamlet.

Hamlet then asked, “Weren’t you sent for and asked to come to the court? Did you come here of your own free will? Did you come here voluntarily or were you asked to come here? Come, deal justly with me. Come, come; speak up.”

Guildenstern asked, “What should we say, my lord?”

Hamlet replied, “Why, anything except something that is to the purpose.”

Hamlet did not expect a straight answer — a true answer — from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

He then said, “You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks that your modesties have not craft enough to color. You cannot hide the truth. I know the good King and Queen have sent for you.”

“For what purpose, my lord?” Rosencrantz asked.

“That you must teach me,” Hamlet replied. “But let me ask you solemnly, by the rights of our fellowship, by the harmonious friendship of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved friendship, and by whatever is more dear than a better proposer than I could mention to you, be even and direct with me. Answer me truthfully: Did someone send for you, or not?”

Rosencrantz whispered to Guildenstern, “What do you think we should say?”

Hamlet thought, *I will keep my eyes on you two.*

He said out loud, “If you regard me as a friend, answer me truthfully.”

“My lord, we were sent for,” Guildenstern said.

“I will tell you why,” Hamlet said. “No doubt you have promised not to speak honestly to me, and if I tell you why you were sent for, then you do not have to tell me why, and so you can keep your promise to the King and Queen.

“I have recently — but I do not know why — lost all my mirth, neglected my usual occupations; and indeed my mood is so depressed that this good structure, the Earth, seems to me a sterile promontory. I am so depressed that this very excellent canopy, the air — listen to me — this splendid overhanging firmament, this majestic roof decorated with the golden fire we call the Sun — why, it appears as no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.

“What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and movement, how expressive and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension and understanding, how like a god! Man is the beauty of the world! Man is the paragon — the pattern of excellence — of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?”

Hamlet thought, *Genesis 3:19 states, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth: for out of it wast thou taken, because thou art dust, and to dust shalt thou return.”*

He continued, “Man does not delight me — no — nor does woman, although by your smiling I judge that you seem to think so.”

“My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts,” Rosencrantz said.

“Why did you laugh, then, when I said, ‘Man does not delight me’?”

“I was thinking, my lord, that if you do not delight in man, then some actors who are coming here will receive a Lenten entertainment from you,” Rosencrantz replied. “Lent is a

time of fasting and a time when the theaters are closed, and so a Lenten entertainment is a poor entertainment. On our way here, we passed a troupe of actors who are coming here to offer you their service.”

“He who plays the King shall be welcome; his majesty shall receive tribute from me,” Hamlet said. “The adventurous knight shall use his rapier and small shield. The lover shall not sigh for free but shall be paid. The eccentric man shall perform his part and end it in peace. The clown shall make laugh audience members who laugh easily when their lungs are tickled. The boy actor playing the lady shall speak the part freely and well, or else the blank verse of the part shall limp because it is badly spoken.

“Which actors are they?”

“You have seen them before,” Rosencrantz replied. “You used to enjoy seeing them — they are the tragedians of the city.”

“Why are they traveling on tour?” Hamlet asked. “Their performing in their home city is better both for their reputation and for their profit.”

“I think that they have been banned from performing in their home city because of some recent political unrest and disturbances.”

“Do they have the same reputation that they had when I was in the city?” Hamlet asked. “Are they as popular now as they were then?”

“No, indeed, they are not,” Rosencrantz said.

“Why not? Have they grown rusty?”

“No, they are as good as they have ever been, but there is, sir, a nest of children, little baby hawks, who squawk louder than anyone else, and who are most excessively applauded

for it. These child actors are now the fashion, and they so abuse the common stages — so people call the public theaters — that many fashionable gentlemen wearing rapiers scarcely dare to attend the theaters featuring adult actors because of the goose-quills wielded by poets writing plays for the child actors. In short, the fashionable gentlemen are afraid to attend the theaters featuring adult actors because the poets writing plays for the child actors will satirize them.”

“What? These rival actors are children?” Hamlet asked. “Who takes care of them? How are they maintained financially? Will they pursue the profession of acting no longer than they can sing? Will they stop acting once their voice breaks? Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow up and become adult actors — as is very likely, if their means of financial support are no better than they are now — their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own future profession?”

“Truly, both sides have been doing a lot of arguing,” Rosencrantz said, “and the nation holds it to be no sin to incite them to quarrel. There was, for a while, no money bid for a new play unless the plot led to a fight between the adult actors and the playwrights who write for the child actors.”

“Is this possible?” Hamlet asked.

“Oh, there has been much throwing about of brains,” Guildenstern said. “Much mental activity has been expended in this quarrel.”

“Do the child actors triumph?”

“Yes, they do, my lord,” Rosencrantz said. “They carry the victor’s crown the way that Hercules once carried the entire world when he took the burden off Atlas.”

“This change in popularity is not very strange,” Hamlet said. “My uncle is now King of Denmark, and those people who

would make faces at him while my father still lived and ruled as King, now give twenty, forty, fifty, or a hundred ducats apiece for miniatures of his portrait.

“Such things commonly happen, but why? By God’s blood, there is something in this that is more than natural, if philosophy could find it out. Scientific inquiry may be able to find the cause.”

Trumpets sounded. The troupe of actors blew trumpets in towns and before castles to advertise their presence.

Guildenstern said, “There are the actors.”

Hamlet said to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Let us shake hands. Come on. The proper accompaniment of welcome is fashion and ceremony. Let me comply with all of that by shaking your hands. I will greet the actors with a friendly welcome, and I do not want you to think that I welcome them more than I welcome you. You are welcome, but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.”

“In what, my dear lord?” Guildenstern asked.

“I am not insane all the time,” Hamlet said. “I am only mad when the wind is blowing from the north-north-west. When the wind is blowing from the south, I know a hawk from a handsaw.”

Such words could only make Rosencrantz and Guildenstern suspect that Hamlet was mad, or on the verge of madness, all the time, but Hamlet may have given the two men a hidden warning. He knew the difference between two dissimilar things such as a hawk and a handsaw, and so he also knew the difference between two dissimilar things such as an enemy and a friend.

Polonius walked over to the three men.

“May you gentlemen be well,” Polonius said.

“Listen, Guildenstern — and you, too, Rosencrantz,” Hamlet said. “I want a hearer at each of my ears. That great big baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clothes.”

“Perhaps this is the second time of his life that he has to wear them,” Rosencrantz said, “because they say that an old man becomes a child for the second time.”

“I will prophesy that he has come here to tell me of the arrival of the actors,” Hamlet said. “Wait and see.”

He then pretended to be in the middle of a conversation: “You are correct, sir. On Monday morning — that was the time indeed.”

“My lord, I have news to tell you,” Polonius said to Hamlet.

“My lord, I have news to tell you,” Hamlet replied. “When Roscius was an actor in Rome —”

The famous Roman actor Roscius died in 62 B.C.E.

“A troupe of actors have come here, my lord,” Polonius said.

“Buzz, buzz! Yawn! This is old news!” Hamlet said.

“On my honor —” Polonius began to say.

“— then came each actor on his ass,” Hamlet said.

“— they are the best actors in the world,” Polonius said, “whether for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral plays, pastoral-comical plays, historical-pastoral plays, tragical-historical plays, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral plays, plays that observe the unities of action and time and place, or plays that do not. Seneca’s tragedies are not too heavy and serious for them, and Plautus’ comedies are not too light for them. For the law of writ and for the liberty, these are the only men — these actors perform well whether they are

strictly following prescribed rules or performing more freely and loosely.”

“Oh, Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure you had!” Hamlet said.

“What a treasure he had, my lord?” Polonius asked.

“Why,” Hamlet said, and then he sang these lines:

“One fair daughter he had and no more,

“Whom he loved surpassingly well.”

Polonius thought, *He is still thinking about my daughter.*

“Am I not right, old Jephthah?” Hamlet asked Polonius.

Jephthah was a King of Israel who made a rash vow. When he went off to fight the Ammonites, he vowed to God that if he were victorious that he would then sacrifice to God the first thing that he saw coming out of the door of his house when he returned from battle. The first thing that he saw coming of the door of his house was his daughter, and he sacrificed her.

“If you call me Jephthah, my lord,” Polonius said, “I have a daughter whom I love surpassingly well.”

“No, that does not follow,” Hamlet said.

One can wonder whether Jephthah should have kept his vow and just how much he loved his daughter.

“What follows, then, my lord?”

“Why,” Hamlet said, and then he sang this line:

“As by lot God wot [knows].”

Hamlet added, “And then, you know,” and he sang this line:

“It came to pass most like it was —”

He added, “The first row of the pious chanson will show you more.”

This is the beginning of the pious chanson, aka religious ballad:

*I read that many years ago,
 When Jepha Judge of Israel.
 Had one fair daughter and no more,
 Whom he loved so passing [surpassingly] well.
 And as by lot God wot
 It came to pass most like it was
 Great wars there should be,
 And who should be the chief, but he, but he.*

The ballad then told the rest of the story. In the story were many rows, aka conflicts. The first conflict was that between nations: Israel versus Ammon. Other conflicts were between duty to God and duty to kin — in this case, a daughter.

In Dante’s *Paradise*, Dante the Pilgrim travels throughout the universe until he reaches the Mystic Empyrean, the dwelling place of God. On the Moon, he speaks to Piccarda Donati, who tells him that Jephthah’s vow was blind and rash, and he did evil by keeping it. Far better would have been for him to say, “My vow was wrong,” and not keep it. Such a vow as Jephthah’s is not the kind that God approves. Piccarda’s main advice to Dante, and to Christians, is to not make rash vows.

Like Jephthah, Hamlet must decide where his duty lies. What is his duty to his father? What is his duty to God? Do these duties conflict? If they conflict, what ought he to do?

When Hamlet said, “The first row of the pious chanson will show you more,” the word “row” could mean “line” or even “stanza.” Reading the first line or stanza of the religious ballad will provide more information, but it will not tell the entire story. Of course, “row” can also mean “quarrel” or “conflict.”

We can predict the consequences of our actions, but often we do not know what the consequences — even the serious consequences — will be. Jephthah probably thought that a dog, not his daughter, would be the first thing he saw coming out of the door of his house after he returned from war. Often, we do not know the consequences of our actions until we do the actions. Hamlet must choose to act — or choose not to act — with incomplete information.

Hamlet added, “Look, my abridgement is coming.”

Hamlet’s conversation was being shortened by the arrival of the actors, who also abridge, or shorten, time by putting on entertaining plays that make time pass quickly.

The actors walked up to the group of men.

“You are welcome, masters; welcome, all,” Hamlet greeted them. He recognized each of them. “I am glad to see that you are well. Welcome, good friends. Oh, my old friend! your face is valenced — fringed — with a beard since I saw you last. Have you come here to beard me in Denmark?”

This was a joke. To beard someone was a major insult — someone would pull out a few hairs from the beard of someone and throw them in his face.

Hamlet said to a boy who played female characters, “What, my young lady and mistress! By Our Lady the Virgin Mary, your ladyship is nearer to Heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a heel on a shoe. You have grown taller. Pray to God that your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold,

be not cracked within the ring.”

This was another joke by Hamlet. Gold coins of the time bore the face of a King enclosed in a circle. Dishonest people would sometimes trim gold from the edges of coins. If they trimmed too much gold off the edge, so that the trimming — or crack — went inside the circle, then the coin became uncurrent — no longer legal tender. When the boy reached puberty and his voice began to crack, he would no longer be able to play the parts of female characters.

Hamlet’s joke included a bawdy aspect. The ring is an O, which is a symbol for a vagina. If the O is cracked, aka entered, the woman loses her virginity.

Hamlet continued, “Masters, you are all welcome. We’ll even have a go at it — the recitation of a speech — like French falconers, whose falcons fly at anything, including the first thing they see. We won’t wait; instead, we’ll have the recitation of a speech right now. Come, give us a taste of the quality of your acting; come, give us a passionate speech.”

The first actor asked, “What speech do you want to hear, my lord?”

“I heard you recite a speech once,” Hamlet replied, “but it was never acted; or, if it was, it was acted only once because the play, I remember, pleased not the millions. It was like caviar to the general public — too refined a taste for them to be able to enjoy. But it was — as I regarded it, and others, whose judgments in such matters are better than mine — an excellent play, well organized in the scenes, set down with as much modest restraint as cunning skill. I remember that one critic said that there were no sharp flavors, aka bawdy bits, in the lines to make them spicy, and there was nothing in the lines that might make the author guilty of affectation. The critic called the play unpretentious, as wholesome as

sweet, and with much more natural grace than affectation and showiness.

“One speech in it I chiefly loved: It was Aeneas’ tale to Dido. I especially liked the part where he speaks about the slaughter of Priam.”

Hamlet was referring to the end of the Trojan War, which had started when Paris, a Prince from Troy, had run away with Helen, the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta in Greece. For ten years a Greek army besieged Troy but was unable to conquer it. Finally, Odysseus came up with the idea of the Trojan Horse. A Greek named Epeus built a huge, hollow horse that the Trojans thought was an offering to the goddess Athena. Inside the hollow horse Greek soldiers hid. The Trojans pulled the Trojan Horse inside the city, and at night the Greek soldiers came out of the horse and went to the city gates and let in the rest of the Greek army, which had pretended to sail back to Greece. One of the Greeks inside the Trojan Horse was Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles. After Achilles died at Troy, Pyrrhus went to fight in the Trojan War to avenge the death of his father. During the fall of Troy, its King, Priam, wore ancient armor and carried a weapon although he was much too old to fight. Pyrrhus found and killed the aged King Priam, whose son Paris had run away with Helen and started the war.

Hamlet said, “If you remember the speech, begin at this line — let me see, let me see,

“The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast —”

Hyrcania was famous for its ferocious tigers.

Hamlet said, “Wait, that’s not right, but it does begin with ‘Pyrrhus’ —

“The rugged and terrifying Pyrrhus, he whose sable armor,

*“Black as his purpose, resembled the night
 “When he lay hidden in the ominous horse,
 “Has now this dread and black complexion smeared
 “With a color more calamitous; from head to foot
 “Now is he totally red; he is horridly covered
 “With the blood of Trojan fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
 “Baked and crusted from the fires in Trojan streets,
 “Fires that lend a tyrannous and damned light
 “To their King’s murder. Roasted in wrath and fire,
 “And glazed with coagulated gore,
 “With eyes like carbuncles that glow in the dark, the Hellish
 Pyrrhus
 “Old grandfather Priam seeks.”*

Hamlet said to the first actor, “Continue from where I left off.”

Polonius said to Hamlet, “Before God, my lord, I say that your recitation was well spoken, with both good delivery and good taste.”

The first player recited this speech:

*“Quickly Pyrrhus finds Priam
 “Striking at Greeks with blows that fall short; his antique
 sword,
 “Which will not obey his arm, lies where it falls,
 “Refusing to obey his will. Unequally matched,
 “Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage he strikes and misses;*

*“But with the whiff and wind of his deadly sword
 “The enfeebled father Priam falls. Then the senseless citadel
 of Ilium — Troy —
 “Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
 “Falls to its base, and with a hideous crash
 “Deafens the ears of Pyrrhus. Look! His sword,
 “Which was falling on the milky-white head
 “Of revered Priam, seemed in the air to stick.
 “So, like a painted portrait of a tyrant, motionless, Pyrrhus
 stood,
 “And as if he had lost interest in what he was doing,
 “Did nothing.
 “But, as we often see, predicting some storm,
 “A silence in the Heavens, the high clouds stand still,
 “The bold winds are without speech and the orb below is
 “As quiet as death, as soon as the dreadful thunder
 “Rends the air, likewise, after Pyrrhus’ pause,
 “Aroused vengeance sets him back to work.
 “Never did the Cyclopes’ hammers fall as they created
 “The armor of Mars, god of war, that they forged for eternal
 strength
 “With less remorse than Pyrrhus’ bleeding sword
 “Now falls on Priam.
 “Get out, you strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,*

“In general council ought to take away Fortune’s power;

“You ought to break away all the spokes and the rim from her wheel,

“And bowl the wheel’s round hub down the hill of Heaven,

“As low as to the fiends!”

Polonius said, “This is too long.”

Hamlet replied, “It shall go to the barber’s to be cut, along with your beard.”

Hamlet then said to the first actor, “Please, continue. This critic here prefers dancing and singing or a bawdy tale, or else he falls asleep. Continue. Recite the part about Hecuba.”

Hecuba was Priam’s wife, the Queen of Troy. She had bore many sons to him, including Hector, the Crown Prince of Troy, whom she had witnessed Achilles killing. Following the fall of Troy, she was made a slave woman, and according to some accounts, she went insane.

The first actor recited this line:

“But who, oh, who had seen the mobled Queen —”

Hamlet asked, “The mobled Queen?”

The word “mobled,” which was little used, meant “muffled.” Hecuba’s face was muffled.

“That’s a good word,” Polonius said. “‘Mobled Queen’ is good.”

The first actor continued,

“Runs barefoot up and down, threatening the flames

“With blinding tears; a rag upon that head

“Where recently a crown had stood, and for a robe,

“About her thin and totally exhausted-by-excessive-childbirth loins,

“A blanket, which she in the alarm of fear had caught up.

“Any person who had seen Hecuba in this state, with bitter words

“Would have railed treasonously against Lady Fortune’s rule.

“But if the gods themselves had seen her

“When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport

“By chopping with his sword her husband’s limbs,

“The instant burst of clamor that she made,

“Unless mortal troubles move them not at all,

“Would have made tearful the burning eyes — the stars — of Heaven,

“And would have brought sympathetic suffering to the gods.”

Polonius said to Hamlet, “Look, the actor’s face has changed color — it is pale — and he has tears in his eyes. Please, let us hear no more.”

“Very good,” Hamlet said to the first actor. “I’ll have you speak the rest of the speech soon.”

Hamlet then said to Polonius, “My good lord, will you see that the actors are well accommodated? Listen to me. Let them be well treated because they are the summary and brief chronicles of the time. It would be better for you to have a bad epitaph after you die than their ill will while you live.”

“My lord, I will treat them according to their desert.”

“By God, man, treat them better than that!” Hamlet said. “If you treat people according to what they deserve, who would escape being whipped? Treat them according to your own honor and dignity. The less they deserve, the more merit is in your generosity to them. Take them to their quarters.”

Hamlet’s “insanity” involved his being very rude to others, but he wanted the actors to be well taken of.

“Come, sirs,” Polonius said to the actors.

“Follow him, friends,” Hamlet said. “We’ll have a play tomorrow.”

Polonius and all the actors began to leave, but Hamlet began to speak to the first actor, so Polonius and all the other actors stopped at the door.

Hamlet said to the first actor, “Listen to me, old friend. Can you and the other actors play the *Murder of Gonzago*?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“We’ll have that tomorrow night,” Hamlet said. “You could, if I asked you to, memorize a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would write and insert in the play, couldn’t you?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Very good,” Hamlet said. “Follow that lord, whose name is Polonius, and don’t make fun of him.”

Polonius and the actors departed.

Hamlet said to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who had quietly listened to the recitation of the poetry, “My good friends, I’ll leave you until tonight. You are welcome to Elsinore.”

“Thank you, my good lord,” Rosencrantz said.

“May God be with you,” Hamlet replied.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern departed.

“Now I am alone,” Hamlet said to himself. “Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! Is it not monstrous that this actor here, performing what is only a fiction, a dream, and a pretense — not the reality — of suffering, could force his inner being to be so in harmony with his acting that he could make his face turn pale, bring tears to his eyes, make his entire body seem to be suffering with grief, make his voice broken, and use his whole being to serve his acting. And all for nothing that actually affects him! He did all this for Hecuba! What is Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her? What would he do, if he had the motive and the cue for suffering that I have? My uncle, who has married my mother, has murdered my father! This actor would drown the stage with tears and burst everyone’s ears with horrifying speeches. He would make the guilty insane, horrify the innocent, astonish the ignorant, and bewilder everyone’s eyes and ears.

“Yet I, who am a dull and muddy-spirited rascal, mope, like John the daydreamer, not stirred to action by my cause and unable to say anything. I can do or speak nothing, no, not for a King, upon whose property and most dear life damned destruction was made.

“Am I a coward? Who calls me villain? Who breaks my head? Who plucks hairs from my beard, and blows them in my face? Who tweaks me by the nose? Who tells me that I lie in my throat as deep as to the lungs? Who does these things to me? Ha!

“By God, I should swallow these insults. I must have the anger of a pigeon, and I must lack the courage that would make me resent such bitter oppression, or else by now I would have fed the slave’s offal to the kites — birds of prey

— and made them fat. The slave I mean is King Claudius — that bloody, bawdy villain! He is a remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, unnatural villain! Oh, vengeance!

“Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave, that I, the son of a dear father who has been murdered, prompted by Heaven and Hell to seek my revenge, must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words, and curse, exactly like a prostitute or a lowly kitchen scullion! Damn!

“Get busy, my brain, and think of a plan!

“I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play have by the artistry of the scene been so struck to the soul that they have immediately confessed their evil deeds and crimes. Murder, although it has no tongue, will speak very miraculously — murder will out! I’ll have these actors perform a play with a plot something like the murder of my father with my uncle as a member of the audience. I’ll observe his looks; I’ll probe him deeply — to the quick. If he flinches, I will know my course of action. I will know what I should do.

“The spirit — the ghost that claims to be my father — that I have seen may be the Devil in disguise. The Devil has the power to assume a pleasing shape. Perhaps, because my spirit is weak and melancholy — and the Devil can powerfully influence people who have such moods — he is deluding me so that I will do something that will make me damned.

“I need more substantial evidence than what I have received from the ghost. I can get such evidence by watching my uncle as he watches the play. The play is the thing whereby I’ll learn the conscience of the King.”

CHAPTER 3**— 3.1 —**

In a room of the castle, King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern were meeting the following day.

King Claudius asked Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “Can’t you, by having conversations with Hamlet, learn from him why he is putting on and assuming this mental confusion and grating so harshly all his days of quiet with turbulent and dangerous lunacy?”

King Claudius was growing suspicious that perhaps Hamlet’s insanity was not real, but just an act.

“He confesses that he feels mentally confused,” Rosencrantz said, “but he will not say from what cause.”

“Also, we do not find that he is willing to be questioned,” Guildenstern said. “Instead, with a crafty madness, he keeps himself aloof and will not answer our questions when we try to have him make some confession about how he truly feels.”

“Did he receive and welcome you well?” Queen Gertrude asked.

“He was exactly like a gentleman,” Rosencrantz said.

“But he had to force himself to be welcoming,” Guildenstern said.

“He did not ask questions, but he freely answered our questions,” Rosencrantz said.

Rosencrantz was contradicting what Guildenstern had said just a little earlier. He was hoping not to have to reveal that Hamlet had found out that the King and Queen had sent for Guildenstern and him. He did not want the King and Queen

to ask what questions Hamlet had asked Guildenstern and him.

“Did you persuade him to engage in any entertainment?” Queen Gertrude asked.

“Madam, it so happened that we overtook and passed certain actors as we traveled here. We told him about these actors, and he seemed joyful to hear about them. They are here in the castle, and I believe that they already have his orders to perform a play for him tonight.”

“That is true,” Polonius said. “Hamlet asked me to entreat your majesties to hear and see the play.”

“I will with all my heart,” King Claudius said, “and I am happy to hear that Hamlet wants to see a play. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, you good gentlemen, give him further encouragement and stimulate his desire to engage in such entertainments.”

“We shall, my lord,” Rosencrantz said.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern left the room.

“Sweet Gertrude, leave us, also,” King Claudius said. “We have privately sent for Hamlet to come here so that, as if it were by accident, he may here come face to face with Ophelia. Her father and I, lawful spies, will hide ourselves so that, seeing them while we ourselves are unseen, we may frankly judge their encounter and learn from Hamlet’s behavior whether the affliction of his love for her is or is not the cause of his mental disturbance.”

“I shall obey you,” Queen Gertrude said to King Claudius.

She added, “Ophelia, I hope and wish that your beauty and charms are the happy cause of Hamlet’s wildness. I also hope that your virtues will bring him around to his usual self again, to both his and your benefit.”

“Madam, I hope that Hamlet returns to his usual self,” Ophelia replied.

Queen Gertrude left the room.

Ophelia’s father, Polonius, said, “Ophelia, walk over here.”

He then said to King Claudius, “Gracious majesty, if it so please you, we will hide ourselves.”

He gave a book to Ophelia and said, “Take this religious book and read it so that you have an excuse for being alone. We are often to blame in this — it has been found to be true — that with the appearance of devotion and pious behavior we do sugar over — hide — the work of the Devil himself.”

Polonius meant that they were using a religious book in an act of deception; the book would assist Polonius and King Claudius in spying on Hamlet when he thought that he was talking privately to Ophelia.

King Claudius heard Polonius’ words and thought, *His words are too true! How painful a whipping that speech gives my conscience! The harlot’s cheek, beautified with plastered-on cosmetics, is not uglier to the thing that beautifies it than is my deed to my most painted — hypocritical — words. This is a heavy burden! The whore disguises her ugliness with makeup, and I disguise my ugly sin with pretty but hypocritical words. My conscience is guilty.*

Polonius said, “I hear Hamlet coming. Let us hide ourselves, my lord.”

They hid behind an arras: a wall hanging.

Of course, Hamlet could not hear King Claudius’ thoughts, but they helped confirm what the ghost had told Hamlet.

Ophelia remained in the room, but Hamlet did not see her at first.

Hamlet entered the room and said, “To be, or not to be: That is the question. To exist or not to exist. Is it nobler in the mind to suffer the missiles and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing them end them?”

To take up arms — weapons — to fight a sea is futile. Using weapons to fight a sea of troubles may be useless — unless the weapons are used to end one’s own life, thereby ending one’s troubles.

Hamlet was asking which course was better to take: Is it better to commit suicide or to endure a life of troubles?

“To die is to sleep; it is no more than that. If by sleeping we could end the heartache and the thousand natural shocks such as pain and illness that flesh is heir to, then that would be a consummation — an end — that we could devoutly wish for.

“To die is to sleep. To sleep is perhaps to dream. This is an obstacle because in that sleep of death what dreams may come to us after we have shuffled off and gotten free from this mortal coil, this business of humanity? Those dreams must make us hesitate and think before ending this life. Those dreams are why we endure unhappiness during a long life. Who would bear the whips and scorns of time, the wrongs inflicted on us by an oppressor, insulting treatment by proud men, the pangs of unrequited love, the delay and ineffectiveness of the law, the insolence of those who hold office, and the spurns given to those of patient merit by those who are unworthy? Who would bear these insults when he could secure his release from life with a mere dagger? Who would bear burdens, and grunt and sweat under a weary life, except that the dread of something after death, the unknown

country from whose bourn no traveller returns to live his life, confounds and bewilders our will and makes us prefer to bear those ills we have instead of flying to others that we know not of?

“Thus conscience makes cowards of us all, and thus the natural color of resolution is covered over with the sickly and pale cast of thought about the evil things that may come to us after we die. And so enterprises of great gravity and importance turn awry because of these thoughts and so these enterprises of great gravity are never carried out.”

Hamlet saw Ophelia and said to himself, “But I must stop my private reflections now.”

He said out loud, “The fair and beautiful Ophelia! Nymph, in your prayers be sure to remember all my sins.”

“My good lord, how have you been for all this long time?”

“I humbly thank you for asking,” Hamlet said. “I have been well, well, well.”

“My lord, I have remembrances of yours that I have longed for a long time to give back to you. Please, take them back now.”

“No, not I,” Hamlet replied, “I never gave you anything.”

He thought, *I am much different from the man who gave you those remembrances.*

“My honored lord, you know very well you gave me these remembrances, and when you gave them to me you spoke perfumed words of such sweet breath that they made the things richer. Now that their perfume is lost, take these remembrances back because to the noble mind rich gifts grow poor when givers prove unkind.”

Certainly, Hamlet in his “madness” had been unkind

recently, especially to Ophelia's father.

Ophelia handed Hamlet some letters and said, "There, my lord."

Hamlet asked, "Do you mean that? Are you honest? And are you chaste?"

"My lord!"

"Are you fair and beautiful?"

"What does your lordship mean?"

"I mean that if you are chaste and beautiful, your chastity should permit no approach to your beauty. Your chastity should protect your beauty. Women are vulnerable because of their beauty."

"Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce — a better relationship or association — than with chastity?"

"Yes, it can," Hamlet said. "The power of beauty can transform honesty from what it is to a bawd — a prostitute. This power of beauty is stronger than the power of chastity to make beauty chaste. At one time, this was a paradox, but now our times have shown that it is true. Beauty is likely to make a chaste woman a whore. Virtue by itself is unlikely to keep a beautiful woman chaste."

Hamlet hesitated. He may have thought about his mother.

He then said, "I loved you once."

"Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so."

"You should not have believed me. Virtue, grafted onto our nature — which comes from that old sinner named Adam — cannot change our nature so much that we do not relish sin."

He hesitated again and then said, "I did not really love you."

“I was all the more deceived,” Ophelia replied.

“Get you to a nunnery,” Hamlet said. “Why would you want to be a breeder of sinners?”

Hamlet wanted Ophelia to become a nun and never to bear children. In his present mood, he wanted Humankind to die out, and one way for it to die out was for women to stop giving birth. The word “nunnery” was slang for brothel, but Hamlet was not using the word in that sense — he did not want Ophelia to do anything that could result in the continuation of the human species.

Hamlet continued, “I am myself decent enough, but yet I could accuse myself of such things that it would have been better if my mother had not given birth to me. I am very proud, revengeful, and ambitious. I have more sins ready for me to commit than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I am do while crawling between Earth and Heaven? We are arrant knaves, all of us; believe none of us. Go and live in a nunnery.”

He stopped and then asked, “Where’s your father?”

“At home, my lord.”

“Let the doors stay shut against him, so that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house. Farewell.”

Ophelia prayed for Hamlet: “Oh, help him, you sweet Heavens!”

Hamlet said to her, “If you do marry, I’ll give you this curse for your dowry. Even if you are as chaste as ice and as pure as snow, you shall not escape gossip and slander. You shall have a bad reputation. Get you to a nunnery, go. Farewell.

“Or, if you must marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters — horned cuckolds — you make

of them. To a nunnery, go, and quickly, too. Farewell.”

Ophelia prayed, “Heavenly powers, restore him to sanity!”

“I have heard much about your paintings, too,” Hamlet said.

He was referring to the use of cosmetics that women “painted” on their faces.

“God has given you women one face, and you make yourselves another. You jig, you amble, and you lisp, and you call God’s creatures by the wrong name — a chaste woman becomes a whore, and a husband becomes a cuckold — and you pretend that you do wanton acts out of ignorance.

“Whatever. I’ll speak no more about it; it has made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages. Those who are married already — all but one couple — shall live and continue to be married couples. The rest shall stay as they are and remain single. To a nunnery, go.”

The one couple was King Claudius and Queen Gertrude.

Hamlet stormed off.

Ophelia said, “Oh, what a noble mind is here overthrown by madness! The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s eye, tongue, sword are overthrown. The expectancy and rose — our finest hope and the apparent heir to the throne — of our fair state are overthrown. The mirror of attractiveness and the pattern of perfect behavior are overthrown. The observed of all observers — the honored and respected object of every courtier — is quite, quite overthrown!

“And I, of ladies most dejected and wretched, who sucked the honey of his musical vows, see that noble and most sovereign reason that used to formerly jangle like sweet bells is now out of tune and harsh. I see that his unmatched form and feature in the full flower of his youth has been blasted by madness.

“I am filled with sorrow because I have seen what I have seen, and because I see what I see!”

King Claudius and Polonius came out of hiding.

“Love?” King Claudius said. “Hamlet’s emotions do not incline that way. In addition, the things that he said, although they lacked form a little, did not sound mad. There is something in Hamlet’s soul, over which his melancholy sits on brood the way a bird sits on eggs, and I suspect that what will hatch and be disclosed will be something dangerous. To prevent that danger, I have just now decided to send Hamlet to England. There he shall demand the tribute that England has not sent to Denmark. Perhaps the seas and different countries with various sights will expel this thing, whatever it is, that is in his heart and has bothered his brain so much that it makes him unlike his usual self.”

King Claudius asked Polonius, “What is your opinion? What do you think?”

“Your plan is good,” Polonius replied, “but I still believe that the origin and commencement of his grief has sprung from rejected love.”

Polonius said to his daughter, “How are you, Ophelia? You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said: We heard everything.”

He then said to King Claudius, “My lord, do as you please; however, if you think it fit, after the play let the Queen his mother be alone with him to entreat him to reveal his grief. Let her be outspoken with him, and I’ll be hidden, if it pleases you, where I can hear their conversation. If she does not find out what is the matter with him, then send him to England, or confine him wherever your wisdom shall think best.”

“We will do as you suggest,” King Claudius said. “It shall

be so. Madness in great ones must not unwatched go.”

— 3.2 —

Hamlet talked with the actors in a hall in the castle and gave them advice on how to perform their roles. First, he talked about speaking the lines he had specially written for the play, but quickly he talked about acting in general.

“Speak the speech, please, as I recited it to you, trippingly on the tongue,” he said. “If you speak it in a pompous oratorical style as so many actors do, I prefer that the town-crier speak my lines.

“Also, do not saw the air too much with your hand, like this,” he said, making an overly dramatic gesture. “Instead, do everything moderately. In the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.

“I am offended to my soul when I hear a robust wig-wearing fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, those audience members who buy the cheapest tickets and watch the play while standing up rather than while seated. For the most part, the groundlings are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for overacting the role of the blustery character Termagant; such performances out-Herod Herod — that ranting and raving tyrant of old-fashioned plays. Please, avoid such overacting.”

“Yes, your honor,” the first actor replied.

“Do not be too tame either, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Use your own judgment. Suit the action to the words, and suit the words to the action. Remember this especially: Do not overstep the moderation of nature. Anything overdone goes against the purpose of acting, whose end, both at the beginning and now, was and is, to

hold, as it were, a mirror up to nature. Acting should be a mirror to virtue and to vice, and acting should show things as they really are at the time. Acting should be a mirror to our aging world. A realistic statue will show the wrinkles of an aged man, and a play should show the wrinkles of an aged world.

“If acting is overdone, or if it falls short, even if it makes the ignorant and undiscerning laugh, it cannot but make the judicious grieve. The censure of one judicious man must in your allowance outweigh a whole theater filled with ignorant and undiscerning audience members.

“There are actors whom I have seen and have heard others praise, and that highly, not to say blasphemously, who, neither having the accent of Christians — ordinary decent people — nor the gait of Christian, pagan, or any other man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought that some of Nature’s journeymen — not God — had made men and had not made them well. That is how abominably these bad actors imitated humanity.”

“Sir, I hope that we have corrected that failing moderately well,” the first actor said.

“Correct that fault entirely,” Hamlet replied. “And let those who play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them — no ad-libbing. Some clowns will laugh in order to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh, too. These bad clowns do this even though, when they ad-lib, some necessary issue in the play needs to be addressed. Such behavior is villainous, and it shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool who does such things.”

He then said to the actors, “Go and get yourselves ready to perform.”

The actors left the room as Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern entered it.

Hamlet asked Polonius, “How are you, my lord? Will the King watch this play?”

“Yes, and the Queen, too. They are ready to see it right away.”

“Tell the actors to get ready quickly.”

Polonius left to carry out his errand.

Hamlet asked Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “Will you two help to hasten the actors?”

“We will, my lord,” Rosencrantz said.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern left the room.

Hamlet called, “Horatio!”

Horatio walked into the room and said, “Here, sweet lord. I am at your service.”

“Horatio, you are as well-adjusted a man as I have talked to and dealt with.”

“Oh, my dear lord!”

“No, do not think that I am flattering you,” Hamlet said, “for what advancement may I hope to receive from you, who have no revenue but your good spirits to feed and clothe you?”

“Why should anyone flatter the poor? No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp the way that a fawning dog licks its master’s hand or face. Let people bend the ready hinges of their knees to rich and powerful people so that profit may follow fawning. Do you understand me?”

“Ever since my dear soul has been able to make choices and to distinguish between and evaluate men, she has chosen to be friends with you. You have been a person who has suffered — experienced — everything, and yet you have

suffered — been harmed by — nothing. You are a man who has taken Lady Fortune's buffets and rewards with equal thanks. Blessed are those whose blood and judgment are so well commingled. Such people are not a pipe for Lady Fortune's finger to sound what note she please. You are not at her mercy; she cannot make you exuberant or miserable; you keep a steady head no matter what because you are not the slave of our emotions. Such men I hold in my heart of hearts — I hold you in my heart of hearts. But I am rambling on about this.

“King Claudius will see a play tonight. One scene of it depicts almost exactly the circumstances that I have told you of my father's death.

“Please, when that scene is being acted, use your senses to closely examine my uncle. We will get that fox out of his kennel. If his hidden guilt does not reveal itself when the actors recite a speech that I have written, then it is a damned ghost from Hell that we have seen, and those things I have imagined are as foul as the workshop of the blacksmith god: Vulcan.

“Observe him very carefully, and I will rivet my own eyes on his face. Afterward, we will compare what we have seen and concluded. We will decide whether he is guilty or innocent of the murder of my father.”

“I will, my lord,” Horatio said. “If he gets away with anything while this play is playing, I will answer for it.”

Hamlet heard people approaching, so he said, “They are coming to the play; I must be empty-headed and play the fool now. Find yourself a place where you can observe my uncle's face.”

King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and others entered the hall. Some members of the King's Guard were carrying torches to

provide light.

“How fares our kinsman Hamlet?” King Claudius asked.

By “fares,” King Claudius meant “does,” but “fare” can mean “food” and Hamlet deliberately misinterpreted “fares” as “dines.”

“Excellently, truly,” Hamlet replied. “My fare is the fare of the chameleon, which is thought to live on air. I eat the air, which is crammed with promises. You cannot feed capons — castrated cocks that are fattened to serve as food — with air and promises.”

Hamlet was saying that he was being fed with promises; Hamlet was not King of Denmark — all he had was King Claudius’ recommendation that Hamlet become King after Claudius died.

“This answer does not answer my question, Hamlet,” King Claudius said. “These words are not for me — they are not mine.”

“No, nor mine now,” Hamlet said.

He meant that since he had released the words into the air, they no longer belonged to him.

Hamlet asked Polonius, “My lord, you acted once in the university, didn’t you say?”

“That I did, my lord; and I was thought to be a good actor.”

“What role did you play?”

“I played the role of Julius Caesar. I was killed in the Capitol; Brutus killed me.”

“It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.”

As usual, Hamlet was insulting Polonius. A “calf” was a

fool.

Hamlet asked, "Are the actors ready?"

"Yes, my lord," Rosencrantz said. "They are ready when you are."

"Come here, my dear Hamlet, and sit by me," Queen Gertrude said.

"No, good mother, here's metal more attractive," Hamlet said, referring to Ophelia.

He was referring to Ophelia as if she were a magnet that was attracting him.

Polonius said to King Claudius, "Did you hear that?"

Hamlet did not want to sit by his mother because he wanted a clear view of King Claudius' face during the play. If he had sat by his mother, she would have been between him and the King.

Hamlet said to Ophelia, "Lady, shall I lie in your lap?"

As usual, the "mad" Hamlet was rude to Ophelia. "Lie in your lap" could be understood as "have sex with you in the missionary position."

Ophelia understood that meaning of Hamlet's words, and she replied, "No, my lord."

Hamlet said, "I mean, may I lie with my head upon your lap?"

Ophelia replied, "Yes, my lord."

Hamlet asked her, "Did you think I meant country matters?"

The phrase "country matters" refers to sex. Sex is common among animals on a farm. When Hamlet said "country matters," he stressed the first syllable of "country."

“I thought nothing, my lord.”

“That’s a fair thought to lie between maidens’ legs,” Hamlet said.

“What is, my lord?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing” is “no thing.” A penis is a thing, and a maiden has no thing between her legs. Nothing is also a zero, and a zero is an O, and an “O” is a symbol for what lies between a maiden’s legs.

Ophelia, who understood what Hamlet was saying, said to him, “You are merry, my lord.”

“Who, I?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Oh, God, I am your only joke-maker. What should a man do but be merry? Look at how cheerful my mother looks, and my father died not even two hours ago.”

“Your father died four months ago, my lord.”

“As long ago as that?” Hamlet said. “Let the Devil wear black, and I will have a suit of sables.”

According to Hamlet’s society, the Devil is black. Hamlet was joking again. Hamlet would give the Devil his black mourning clothes because Hamlet’s father had died four months ago, which Hamlet was pretending to be a long time and so Hamlet would no longer need black mourning clothes. Hamlet would replace the black mourning clothes with sable furs — but since “sable” as a heraldic term means “black,” he would still be wearing the color of mourning.

Hamlet continued, “Oh, Heavens! My father died two months ago, and he has not been forgotten yet? Then there

is hope that the memory of a great man may outlive his life by half a year, but, by the Virgin Mary, he must build churches to keep his memory alive, or else he shall be forgotten just like the hobby-horse, about which this lyric is sung: ‘*For, oh, for, oh, the hobby-horse is forgotten.*’”

Trumpets sounded, and the actors performed a dumbshow — they pantomimed part of the play that was to follow:

An Actor-King and an Actor-Queen who were very loving walked to the acting area. The Queen embraced the King, and he embraced her. She knelt and made a show of protestations of love to him. He helped her stand up, and he rested his head on her neck. He then lay down upon a bank of flowers and fell asleep. She, seeing him asleep, left him. Immediately came in a fellow who took off the King’s crown, kissed it, and then poured poison in the King’s ears. The fellow exited. The Queen returned and found the King dead. She grieved passionately. The Poisoner, with some two or three others, came in again and pretended to lament with her. The dead body was carried away. The Poisoner wooed the Queen with gifts: She seemed loath and unwilling for awhile, but in the end she accepted his love.

The actors then exited.

“What is the meaning of this dumbshow, my lord?” Ophelia asked Hamlet.

“By the Virgin Mary, this is sneaking *mallecho*; *mallecho* means mischief,” Hamlet replied.

Malhecho is Spanish for “mischief.”

“Probably this dumbshow depicts the plot of the play,” Ophelia said.

The Prologue — an actor who recited the prologue to the play, often telling the audience members its meaning —

entered.

“We shall learn the plot of the play from this fellow,” Hamlet said. “The actors cannot keep a secret; they’ll tell everything.”

“Will he tell us the meaning of this dumbshow we just saw?” Ophelia asked.

“Yes, or any show that you’ll show him. If you are not ashamed to show him, he is not ashamed to tell you what it means.”

Ophelia, who understood that Hamlet was talking about showing private parts, said to him, “You are wicked. You are wicked. I’ll watch the play.”

The Prologue said these few words:

“For us, and for our tragedy,

“Here stooping to your clemency,

“We beg your hearing patiently.”

Usually, play prologues are longer and more informative.

Hamlet asked, “Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?”

The posy of a ring is the words written on the inside of a finger ring. Here is an example: “Love me, and leave me not.”

Ophelia said, “This prologue is brief, my lord.”

“It is as brief as a woman’s love,” Hamlet said.

Two actors walked into the acting area. One actor played the “King,” and the other actor played the “Queen.”

The Actor-King recited these lines:

“Full thirty times has Phoebus’ cart — the Sun — gone

round

“Neptune’s salt wash — the Ocean — and Tellus’ orb’d ground — the Earth,

“And thirty dozen moons with borrowed light from the Sun

“About the world have times twelve thirties been,

“Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands

“Unite mutually in most sacred bonds.”

Hamlet thought, *This is an old-fashioned play. It has many references to mythology. Neptune is the Roman god of the sea, Tellus is a Roman Earth goddess, and Hymen is the Roman god of marriage.*

This play uses an elevated style of language. All the playwright is trying to say here is that this King and Queen have been married for thirty years. However, the playwright does not use elevated language well. Attempts to use elevated and fancy language sometimes result in bad writing.

The Actor-Queen recited these lines:

“So many journeys may the Sun and Moon

“Make us again count over before our love is done!

“Let us live our married life for another thirty years!

“But, woe is me, you are so sick lately,

“So far from cheerfulness and from your former state,

“That I distrust your health. Yet, though I distrust it,

“Do not let that discomfort you, my lord,

“For women’s fear and love holds quantity;

“In neither aught, or in extremity.

“Either there is none of either, or too much of both.

“Now, what my love is, experience has made you know;

“And as my love is measured, my fear is so.

“I love you much, so I worry much about your health.

“Where love is great, the littlest doubts become fear;

“Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

“The more I love you, the more I fear for you.”

The Actor-King recited these lines:

“Truly, I must leave you, love, and soon, too;

“My vital organs their functions cease to do:

“And you shall live in this fair world after I am dead,

“Honored, beloved; and perhaps one as kind

“For your new husband shall you —”

The Actor-Queen interrupted by reciting these lines:

“Oh, confound the rest!

“Such love must necessarily be treason in my breast:

“In a second marriage let me be accurst!

“None wed the second husband except those who killed the first.”

Hamlet thought, *Wormwood, wormwood. This is bitter medicine. According to the Actor-Queen, when a widow remarries, it is as if she had killed her first husband.*

The Actor-Queen continued:

“The motives that lead to a second marriage

“Are mean considerations of worldly advantages, but none of love:

“A second time I kill my first husband dead,

“When a second husband kisses me in bed.”

The Actor-King recited these lines:

“I do believe you think those things that now you speak;

“But what we decide to do are vows we often break —

“People change their minds.

“What we decide to do is but the slave to memory,

“Of violent birth, but poor validity.

“We can forget our vows;

“We strongly mean to keep them at first but then we forget.

“Vows now, like unripe fruit, stick on the tree;

“But they fall, unshaken,

“When they become mellow and lose their passion.

“Most necessary it is that we forget

“To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.

“A vow to do something is a debt we owe to ourselves.

“What we vow to do we vow in the heat of passion.

“Once the passion is over, we forget the vow.

“The violent excess of either grief or joy

“Destroys the power to carry out the vow.

“Where joy most revels, grief does most lament.

“A person with the greatest capacity for joy also has the greatest capacity for grief.

“But grief turns to joy, and joy turns to grief, with little cause.

“This world is not for ever, nor is it strange

“That even our loves should with our fortunes change.

“For it is a question left us yet to prove,

“Whether love decides our fortune, or fortune decides our love.

“When the great man’s fortunes decline, you will see his best friend flee from him;

“When a poor man’s fortune improves, he makes friends out of former enemies.

“And therefore does friendship on fortune tend;

“For a man who does not need anything shall never lack a friend,

“But when a man who is in need seeks help from a hollow, insincere friend,

“The needy man turns his hollow, insincere friend into his enemy.

“But, to end orderly where I had begun,

“Our desires and destinies do so contrary run

“That our plans and designs always are overthrown;

“Our thoughts are ours, their ends are none of our own:

“So you think you will no second husband wed,

“But your thoughts will die when your first husband is dead.”

The Actor-Queen recited these lines:

“May Earth not give food to me, nor Heaven light!

“May entertainment and sleep stay away from me both day and night!

“May to desperation turn my trust and hope!

“May a hermit’s life in prison be all I ask for and receive!

“May everything that brings joy

“Meet an opponent who can these things destroy.

“May everything both here and hereafter — in this life and in the afterlife — bring me lasting strife,

“If, once I am a widow, I ever again become a wife!”

Hamlet thought, *How could she break her promise now, after saying these words?*

The Actor-King recited these lines:

“You have sworn deeply. Sweet, leave me here awhile.

“My spirits grow dull, and I would like to beguile

“The tedious day with sleep.”

He fell asleep.

The Actor-Queen recited these lines:

“May sleep rock gently and soothe your brain,

“And may ill fortune never come between us twain!”

The Actor-Queen exited.

Hamlet ask his mother, “Madam, how do you like this play?”

Queen Gertrude replied, “The lady protests too much, I think. Too much protesting makes the content of her words suspected.”

“Oh, but I am sure that she’ll keep her word,” Hamlet lied.

King Claudius asked Hamlet, “Do you know the plot of the play? Is there any offence in it?”

By “offense,” King Claudius meant “anything offensive,” but Hamlet deliberately misinterpreted the word “offense” to mean “crime.”

“No, no, the actors are only jesting; they are poisoning in jest — it is all make believe. There is no offence in the world.”

“What is the title of this play??”

“*The Mousetrap*,” Hamlet replied. “By the Virgin Mary, how did it get its name? Tropically.”

He thought, “*Tropically*” means “*figuratively*.” *A trope is a figure of speech, and the play is figuratively a trap that I have set for King Claudius. Perhaps I should have used this word: “Trapically.”*

Hamlet added, “This play depicts a real-life murder committed in Vienna. Gonzago is the Duke’s name; his wife’s name is Baptista. You shall see this soon enough. It is a knavish piece of work, but so what? As for your majesty and we who have free souls, this play is not about us. Let the guilty wince and kick like a horse whose saddle sore is stung; all of us are innocent.”

An actor playing the role of Lucianus entered.

Hamlet said, “This is Lucianus, the King’s nephew.”

Ophelia said to him, “You are as good as a chorus that

explains everything, my lord.”

“I could provide commentary on what happens between you and your lover,” Hamlet replied. “I could be like the guy who narrates a puppet show if I saw your puppet and your lover’s puppet having intercourse.”

“You are keen, my lord, you are keen,” Ophelia said.

By “keen,” she meant “sharp.”

Hamlet replied, “It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge.”

“Edge” could mean “sharp edge of a knife,” but Hamlet used “edge” with its meaning of “sharp sexual desire.”

If Ophelia were to take off Hamlet’s edge, she would groan during the pain of breaking her hymen and later she would groan as she gave birth.

Ophelia commented, “Always better, and worse.”

She meant that Hamlet’s responses to her were wittier — and more offensive — than her comments to him.

Having in mind that brides promised in the marriage ceremony to take their husbands for better or for worse, Hamlet replied, “So you women mis-take your husbands.”

Women mis-take their husbands when they do not keep their vows, and when they substitute one husband for another.

He then said to the actor, “Begin, murderer; stop making your damnable faces, and begin. Come: *The croaking raven does bellow for revenge.*”

Hamlet was misquoting — perhaps deliberately — two lines from the play *The True Tragedy of Richard III*: “The screeching raven sits croaking for revenge / Whole herds of beasts come bellowing for revenge.”

The actor playing Lucianus said these lines:

“Thoughts evil and black, hands apt, poison, and a time suitable;

“Opportunity perfect, with no creature seeing;

“You mixture rank and poisonous, made of weeds collected and combined at midnight,

“Three times blasted with the bane of the goddess of witchcraft, Hecate,

“Your natural magic and dire property

“Do usurp and kill wholesome life immediately.”

The actor playing Lucianus poured the poison into the ears of the Actor-King.

Hamlet said, “He is poisoning him in the garden for his estate. His name’s Gonzago. The story is popular, and it is written in good Italian. You shall see soon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago’s wife.”

Ophelia said, “The King rises. He is standing up.”

“What, is he frightened by false fire!” Hamlet asked. “Is he frightened by the firing of a gun loaded with blanks? Is he frightened by a mere play?”

“How are you, my lord?” Queen Gertrude asked.

“Stop the play!” Polonius ordered.

“Get me some light so I can leave!” King Claudius ordered.

People shouted, “Lights, lights, lights!”

Members of the King’s Guard stepped forward with their torches.

Everyone except Hamlet and Horatio left the hall.

Hamlet was in a giddy mood. He had watched King Claudius closely during the play and had reached a decision about whether the King was guilty of the murder of Hamlet's father.

Hamlet sang these verses to Horatio, who had also watched King Claudius closely during the play:

“Why, let the wounded deer go weep,

“The hart, unhurt, play;

“For some must stay awake, while some must sleep:

“So runs the world always.”

Hamlet then said, “Would not the success of this play, sir, and a forest of feathers — if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk and run against me — with two Provincial roses, aka large rosettes, on my razed, slashed-in-accordance-with-fashion, shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry — a pack — of players, sir? A successful play and the appropriate costume should get me a share of the profits in a company of actors.”

Actors of the time wore many feathers as part of their costumes. Rosettes were worn on the shoes; they hid the ties of the shoes. Razed shoes were fashionable shoes that had been slashed and inlaid with different colored silks and that were then stitched and perhaps embroidered.

“Those things might get you half a share,” Horatio said.

“A whole share is what I would get,” Hamlet replied.

He then sang these extempore — just now made up — verses:

“For you do know, this realm was deprived, oh, Damon dear,

“Of Jove himself, the King of gods and men past;

“And now reigns here

“A very, very — pajock.”

The song was about Hamlet’s father, whose murder had deprived Denmark of its rightful King. “Damon” was a traditional name in pastoral poetry for a shepherd. A “pajock” was an unusual word that meant “a base and contemptible fellow.”

Horatio said, “You might have rhymed.”

The rhyme would have been with “past”: ass.

“Oh, good Horatio,” Hamlet said. “I will bet a thousand pounds that the ghost spoke the truth. Did you notice King Claudius’ face?”

“Very well, my lord.”

“Did you see how he reacted to the talk about the poisoning?”

“I watched him very closely, my lord.”

“Ah, ha!” Hamlet, still giddy from the success of the trap, said.

He shouted, “Come, let’s have some music! Come, bring the flute-like recorders!”

He sang these verses:

“For if the King likes not the comedy,

“Why then, belike, he likes it not, perdy.”

The word “*perdy*” was colloquial for “*par dieu*,” which is French for “By God.”

Hamlet shouted, “Come, bring some music!”

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern entered the hall.

“My good lord, may I have a word with you?” Guildenstern asked.

“Sir, you may have as many words as would fill a whole history,” Hamlet replied.

“The King, sir —” Guildenstern began.

Hamlet interrupted: “Yes, sir, what about him?”

“— is in his private chamber now; he is very much not his usual self.”

“Is he drunk?” Hamlet asked.

“No, my lord,” Guildenstern said. “He is angry. He is filled with choler.”

“You should know to tell this to a doctor, not to me,” Hamlet said. “If I were to be his doctor, I would purge him, and his purgation might make him angrier.”

Hamlet’s society existed before the age of modern medicine. Doctors in Hamlet’s society believed that the human body had four humors, or vital fluids. Each humor made a contribution to the personality, and for a human being to be sane and healthy, the four humors had to be present in the right amounts. If a man had too much of a certain humor, it would harm his personality and health.

Blood was the sanguine humor. A sanguine man was optimistic.

Phlegm was the phlegmatic humor. A phlegmatic man was calm.

Yellow bile was the choleric humor. A choleric man was angry.

Black bile was the melancholic humor. A melancholic man was gloomy.

When a man was ill, doctors would try to get the four humors back into balance by purging him, often through bloodletting or through the use of laxatives.

When Hamlet talked about purging King Claudius, he meant using his sword to purge so much of the King's blood that the King would die.

Another type of purgation was purging one's sins through prayer and confession, but Hamlet wanted King Claudius to suffer for his sins, not be purged of them.

"My good lord," Guildenstern replied, "talk sense to me and do not wildly run away from the topic of discussion."

"I am tame, sir," Hamlet said. "Tell me what you have to tell me."

"The Queen, your mother, whose spirit is greatly afflicted, has sent me to you."

"You are welcome."

"My good lord," Guildenstern said, "your courteous words are not of the right kind. You need to listen to me and to make serious answers. If you are willing to give me a serious answer, then I will do your mother's errand and give you the message that she wanted me to give you. If you are not willing to give me a serious answer, then I will ask for your permission to leave and I will return to your mother, and you and I need not have any other conversation."

"Sir, I cannot."

"Cannot what, my lord?" Rosencrantz said.

"Make you a serious answer. My intelligence is diseased; however, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall get — or rather, as you say, my mother shall get. Therefore, let's have no longer delay, but instead let's get to the point. My mother,

you say —”

“This is what she says,” Rosencrantz replied. “She says that your behavior has amazed and astonished her.”

“Oh, what a wonderful son, who can so astonish a mother!” Hamlet said. “But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother’s admiration? What else did she say? Tell me.”

“She wants to speak with you in her private chamber, before you go to bed,” Rosencrantz replied.

“We shall obey even if she were ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?” Hamlet said.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had once been Hamlet’s friends, but he did not now regard them as his friends. Hamlet realized that they were loyal to King Claudius, not to him. Therefore, Hamlet used the royal plural to let them know that he no longer wished to continue this topic of conversation. He also contemptuously used the word “trade,” which meant “business.”

“My lord, you once were friends with me,” Rosencrantz said.

“And I still am,” Hamlet lied, “by these pickers and stealers.”

The “pickers and stealers” were his fingers. The Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer has this vow that the catechumen makes: “To keep my hands from picking and stealing.” The word “picking” in this context means “pilfering.”

“My good lord, what is your cause of distemper?” Rosencrantz asked. “You do, surely, bar the door upon your own liberty, if you will not tell your griefs to your friends. Your mind would be healthier and freer if only you would tell your troubles to your friends.”

“Sir, I lack advancement,” Hamlet replied.

Earlier, after Hamlet had called Denmark his prison, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had suggested that Hamlet’s ambition — to be King — had made him feel that way. Hamlet had denied it.

“How can that be, when you have the voice of the King himself for your succession in Denmark?” Rosencrantz said. “King Claudius has stated publicly that he wants you to be King after he dies.”

“Yes, but sir, ‘While the grass grows’ — the proverb is somewhat musty,” Hamlet replied.

Hamlet meant that the proverb — while the grass grows, the horse starves — was so well known that he need not state all of it.

The actors, carrying recorders — musical instruments resembling flutes — entered the hall.

“Oh, the recorders!” Hamlet said.

He requested of an actor, “Let me see one.”

He then said to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “Step over here so that I can have a few private words with you.”

They went a little distance from the actors, and Hamlet asked them, “Why do you go about to recover — to gain — the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?”

Hamlet was accusing them of trying to lead him into a trap. In doing so, he used hunting terminology. A hunter would recover the wind — that is, go upwind so that the animals being hunted would catch his scent and then move away from him toward the hunters who were waiting downwind and so could not be scented. The animals would walk into a toil — a trap — set by the hunters.

“Oh, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my friendship for you is too unmannerly,” Guildenstern said.

He meant that his friendship and concern for Hamlet were responsible if he had seemed to have bad manners.

“I do not well understand that,” Hamlet replied.

What he did not well understand was how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern could now say that they were his friends.

Hamlet asked Guildenstern, “Will you play upon this pipe — this recorder?”

“My lord, I cannot.”

“Please.”

“Believe me, I cannot.”

“I beg you to.”

“I do not know how to play it, my lord.”

“It is as easy as lying,” Hamlet said. “Cover these holes in the pipe with your fingers and thumb, and then give it breath with your mouth, and it will put forth most eloquent music. Look here, these are the holes.”

“But I cannot use them to make anything resembling harmony,” Guildenstern said. “I have not the skill.”

“Why, see here,” Hamlet said. “See how unworthily you are treating me! You want to play upon me; you seem to know my stops; you want to push my buttons and learn my secrets; you want to sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass or range.”

“Sound me” was a pun that meant both “play me and make me give forth sounds” and “probe or fathom me to find out what is hidden in my depths.”

Hamlet continued, “Much music — excellent voice — is in this little instrument called the recorder, yet you cannot make it speak. Do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, although you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me.”

Again Hamlet was punning. “To fret” means “to irritate,” and frets are the ridges on some stringed instruments that are used to produce notes.

Hamlet wanted Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to know that he would not allow their tricks to be successful with him.

Polonius entered the hall, and Hamlet said to him, “God bless you, sir!”

“My lord, the Queen wants to speak with you, and that immediately,” Polonius said.

Hamlet replied, “Do you see yonder cloud that’s almost in the shape of a camel?”

It was night, and they were inside the hall of the castle, but Polonius believed that Hamlet was insane and he did not want to upset him.

Polonius replied, “By the Mass, the cloud is like a camel, indeed.”

“I think that it is like a weasel,” Hamlet said.

“It has a back like a weasel,” Polonius said.

The back of a camel and the back of a weasel are not similar.

“Or like a whale?” Hamlet asked.

“Very like a whale,” Polonius replied.

“Then I will come to my mother by and by — soon.”

He thought, *They play along with my fooling — my acting*

like a madman — to the top of my bent.

The “top of a bent” is a term from archery. It means “the greatest extent that a bow can be bent.”

Hamlet repeated, “I will come by and by.”

“I will tell her that,” Polonius said.

“‘By and by’ is easily said,” Hamlet said.

Polonius left the hall.

Hamlet said to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “Leave me, friends.”

They departed, leaving Hamlet alone.

Hamlet said to himself, “Now is the very witching time — the time when witches appear — of night, when churchyards yawn and Hell itself breathes out contagion upon this world. Now I could catch the contagion and drink hot blood and be tempted to commit murder and do such bitter business as the day would quake to look on.

“Be careful, Hamlet!

“Now I will go to my mother. Oh, heart, do not lose your natural feeling of love for your mother. Do not ever let the soul of Nero enter this firm bosom. Nero, Emperor of Rome, committed matricide — he had his own mother put to death.

“Let me be cruel, but not unnatural. I will speak daggers to my mother, but I will not use any daggers. My tongue and soul in this will be hypocrites; let my soul pretend to be more savage than it is, and let my tongue pronounce the words that will make me seem more savage than I am.

“I will rebuke her mightily with words, but I will not put into deeds what I say in words.”

— 3.3 —

In a room in the castle, King Claudius talked with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

“I do not like the way that Hamlet is behaving,” King Claudius said. “It is not safe for us to allow his madness free range. Therefore prepare yourselves to perform a commission I will give to you. Speedily I will give you a commission to go to England, and Hamlet shall go to England with you. The terms of our estate may not endure a hazard so dangerous as does hourly grow out of his lunacies. Hamlet’s madness is a threat to me the King.”

“We will make the necessary preparations,” Guildenstern said. “It is a very holy and religious concern to want to keep safe the numerous subjects who depend upon your majesty. If something were to happen to you the King, it would have a bad effect upon your country and your subjects.”

“An individual with one life is bound by natural law to use all its strength and intelligence to keep itself from harm,” Rosencrantz said. “But much more bound is a spirit upon whose well-being the lives of many people depend and rest. A King does not die alone, but like a whirlpool, his death pulls with it what is near. It is like a massive wheel fixed on the summit of the highest mountain. To the wheel’s huge spokes are fastened ten thousand lesser things. When the wheel falls down the mountain, each of the ten thousand lesser and petty things is harmed in the boisterous catastrophe. The general public groans when a King sighs. Never does a King sigh alone.”

“Prepare yourselves to travel quickly,” King Claudius said. “We will put fetters upon this fear, which now goes too free-footed. We will not allow Hamlet to roam freely in Denmark.”

“We will hurry,” Rosencrantz and Guildenstern said.

They exited as Polonius entered the room.

“My lord,” Polonius said, “Hamlet is going to his mother’s private chamber. Behind the arras I’ll hide myself so I can hear their conversation. I am sure that she will berate him soundly.

“As you said, and wisely was it said, it is a good idea that someone other than a mother, since nature makes them partial to their sons, should listen to their conversation from a hidden spot.”

Actually, hiding and listening to the conversation of Queen Gertrude and Hamlet had been Polonius’ idea. He was flattering King Claudius by saying that the idea was the King’s and that it was a wise plan.

Polonius said, “Fare you well, my liege. I’ll call upon you before you go to bed and tell you what I learn.”

“Thanks, my dear lord,” King Claudius said.

Polonius exited, leaving King Claudius alone.

King Claudius said to himself, “My offence is so rank that it stinks to Heaven. It has the primal eldest curse upon it: a brother’s murder — the murder of Abel by Cain. I cannot pray, although my desire to pray is as strong as my will and determination.

“My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent. And, like a man who has two tasks to do, I stand and pause as I consider which I shall first begin, and as I pause I neglect both tasks. I can pray and ask forgiveness of my sins and do what I can to make things right, or I can continue to pursue the path I am on and enjoy the fruits of my sin.

“So what if this cursed hand of mine is thicker than itself because it is coated with my brother’s blood? Don’t the sweet Heavens have enough rain to wash it as white as

snow?”

King Claudius was thinking of part of Isaiah 1:18: *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”*

He continued, “What is the purpose of mercy except to confront the face of evil? Doesn’t mercy forgive committed sins? And what’s in prayer but this two-fold force: to pray for help to keep us from committing sins, and to pray for forgiveness of those sins we have committed.”

King Claudius was thinking of Mathew 6:13: *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*

He continued, “I can look up; I have hope. I have committed the sin, and so I know what kind of prayer I must make. But what form of prayer can serve my turn? ‘Forgive me my foul murder’? I cannot pray that because I still have the things for which I committed the murder: my crown, everything I was ambitious for, and my Queen. May one be pardoned and still keep the things that one acquired by committing the sin?

“In the corrupted currents of this world, a guilty hand that is coated with ill-gotten gold from committing a sin may shove aside justice. Often we see that parts of the spoils of a crime are used to bribe officials who ought to uphold the law, but it is not that way in Heaven. There, no one can avoid proper punishment. Here, no one can be forced to give evidence against himself. In Heaven, all evidence is revealed and we who are guilty are compelled to confess our sins and give the evidence that convicts us — we confess the bared teeth and frowning forehead of our faults.

“What then? What remains that I can do? I can see what repentance can do. What can repentance not do? But what can repentance do if one cannot repent?

“My state is wretched! My bosom is black as death! My soul has been caught, and as it struggles to be free, it is caught more firmly!

“Help me, angels!”

He hesitated and then said, “Let me make an effort with all my might! Bow, stubborn knees! Heart, which is held in place with strings of steel, be as soft as the sinews of a newborn babe!

“All may yet be well.”

King Claudius knelt and attempted to pray.

Hamlet entered the room and saw King Claudius on his knees.

Hamlet said to himself, “Now I can easily kill the King, now while he is praying, and so I will do it.”

He drew his sword and said to himself, “I will kill him, he will go to Heaven, and so I will have my revenge.

“Let me think about this. A villain murders my father, and in return for that murder, I, my father’s sole son, send this same villain to Heaven.

“The villain should pay me to do that! Being sent to Heaven is a reward; sending someone to Heaven is not revenge.

“He murdered my father when my father was unprepared for death and for being judged. My father was full of bread; he was not fasting in penitence for his sins. My father died when all his sins were in full flower and as flush as May.

“Who knows this villain’s spiritual account except Heaven? But according to our society and our way of thinking, he is heavy with sin.

“Would I be revenged if I were to kill him while he is

purging his sin? He would be in a state of grace, and he would be prepared for death and for being judged. My father would suffer, while this villain enjoys Paradise.

“No. That would not be revenge. Sword, I will put you away.”

He sheathed his sword, and then he said quietly, “Sword, a more horrid opportunity shall arise and I will use you then. I will use you when this villain is drunk and asleep, when he is furious, when he is enjoying incestuous pleasure in his bed, when he is gambling, when he is swearing, or when he is doing some act that has no taste of salvation in it. That is when I will trip him so that his heels will kick out at Heaven as he falls headfirst into Hell. When he dies, I want his soul to be as damned and black as Hell, to where it will go. I want his soul to be eternally damned.

“My mother is waiting for me.

“King Claudius, this physic, this medicine, merely prolongs your wretched life for a short while longer.”

Hamlet exited.

King Claudius, who was unaware that Hamlet had been in the room, rose from his kneeling position and said to himself, “My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: Words without thoughts never to Heaven go. Words without true repentance are useless and meaningless. Unless there is true repentance, there is no forgiveness.”

— 3.4 —

In the Queen’s private chamber, Queen Gertrude and Polonius were talking.

Polonius said, “Hamlet will be here very soon. Speak frankly to him: Tell him his rude behavior has been too outrageous to bear with, and tell him that your grace has screened him

from and stood between him and severe criticism.

“I will hide myself here behind this arras. I’ll be quiet now. Please, be forthright when you speak to him.”

Hamlet called from outside the room, “Mother, mother, mother!”

Queen Gertrude said to Polonius, “Don’t worry about me. Hide. I can hear him coming.”

Polonius hid behind the wall hanging.

Hamlet entered the room and asked, “Now, mother, what’s the matter?”

“Hamlet, you have your father much offended.”

She was referring to King Claudius.

“Mother, you have my father much offended.”

He was referring to the late King Hamlet.

“Come, come, you answer me with an idle tongue.”

“Go, go, you question me with a wicked tongue.”

“Why, what are you saying, Hamlet!”

“What’s the matter now?”

“Have you forgotten who I am?”

“No, by the cross on which Christ hung, I have not forgotten who you are. You are the Queen, you are your husband’s brother’s wife. And — I wish that it were not so! — you are my mother.”

According to the Book of Common Prayer, “*A woman may not marry with her [...] Husband’s Brother.*” Hamlet was accusing his mother of a forbidden marriage.

Queen Gertrude said, “I will not speak to you while you are like this. I will bring you some people to whom you can speak.”

She stood up, but Hamlet forced her to sit back down.

He said, “Come, come, and sit yourself down. You shall not budge from here. You may not leave until I set up a mirror in front of you that will make you see the inmost part of yourself.”

“What are you going to do?” Queen Gertrude asked. “Are you are going to murder me?”

She screamed, “Help! Help!”

Polonius screamed from behind the wall hanging, “Help! Help! Help!”

Hamlet drew his sword and said, “What is this! A rat? They get killed because they are always making noise and drawing attention to themselves. This rat is dead. I will bet a ducat that it will soon be dead; I will take a ducat for killing it.”

He thrust his sword through the wall hanging and stabbed Polonius.

Polonius moaned, “I have been killed!”

He fell and died.

“What have you done!” Queen Gertrude said.

“I am not sure,” Hamlet replied. “Is it the King?”

“What a rash and bloody deed this is!”

“A bloody deed!” Hamlet replied. “Almost as bad, good mother, as to kill a King, and marry his brother.”

“As kill a King!” a shocked Queen Gertrude said.

“Yes, lady, that is what I said.”

Hamlet was shocked that his mother had allowed someone to spy on what he thought was a private conversation with her. In his shock, he voiced his fear that his mother was complicit in Claudius’ murder of King Hamlet, although the ghost had not told him that. Witnessing his mother’s reaction to the accusation that she had helped kill her first husband, Hamlet became convinced that she was innocent of that sin.

Hamlet lifted the wall hanging and found Polonius.

He said to the corpse, “You wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! I mistook you for your better: I thought you were the King. Take your fortune. You have learned that to be too inquisitive is to put yourself in danger.”

He said to his shocked mother, “Stop wringing your hands. Be quiet! Sit down, and let me wring your heart. I will do that if your heart can be penetrated by feeling — if damned habitual sins have not hardened your heart like brass so that no feeling can penetrate it.”

“What have I done, that you dare wag your tongue so loudly and so rudely against me?”

“You have committed an act that blurs the grace and blush of modesty, calls virtue hypocritical, takes off the rose — female perfection — from the fair forehead of an innocent love and sets a blister — the branding of a prostitute — there, and makes marriage-vows as false as the oaths of people who gamble with dice,” Hamlet replied. “You have committed a deed that plucks the soul out of and makes void marriage vows and turns sweet religion into a confused and meaningless pile of words. Heaven’s hot face glows with shame above the Earth. Heaven is sorrowful, just as it will be on Judgment Day, because it is sickened by your act.”

“Tell me,” Queen Gertrude said, “what act have I committed

that roars so loud, and thunders in these, your words that introduce your accusation of my act?"

On a necklace, Hamlet wore a miniature portrait of his father: the late King Hamlet. On a necklace, Queen Gertrude wore a miniature portrait of her husband: the present King Claudius.

Hamlet took the miniature portraits and held them side-by-side.

He said, "Look here, upon this picture, and upon this one. They are counterfeits — mere pictures — of two brothers.

"See, what a grace was seated on this brow — the brow of my late father. He is like the ancient mythological gods. He has the curled hair of Hyperion, the Sun-god. He has the forehead of Jove himself, King of gods and men. He has eyes like those of Mars, the god of war — eyes that threaten and command. He has a stance like that of the herald Mercury, messenger to the other gods, newly alighted on a hill so high that it kisses Heaven. My late father had a group of features and a form indeed, on which every god did seem to set his seal, to give the world assurance that this was a model man.

"That man was your first husband.

"But look now at the other portrait. Here is your second and present husband. He is like a moldy ear of corn, infecting his wholesome brother.

"Have you eyes?

"Could you leave this fair mountain — my father — to feed and gorge yourself on this barren moor? Ha! Do you have eyes?

"You cannot call it love because at your age the heyday in the blood — the passionate sexual period of life — is tame. It's humble, and it waits upon reason. It obeys reason, and

what reason would step from this, my father, to this, your second husband?

“Sense, surely, you have, or else you would not have the power of motion; but surely, that sense is paralyzed.

“Madness would never err in this way, and never has reason been so enthralled to sexual passion but that it was still able to make a choice between two such different alternatives.

“Your senses, madness, and reason could never choose King Claudius over the late King Hamlet.

“What devil was it then that thus has tricked you while you were playing Blind Man’s Bluff?

“Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight, ears without hands or eyes, smelling without any of the other senses, or even just a sickly part of one true sense could not be so unaware as to choose King Claudius over the late King Hamlet.

“For shame! Where is your blush? Rebellious Hellish sexual desires, if you can mutiny in a matron’s bones, then to flaming youth let virtue be like wax, and melt in her own fire. Proclaim no shame when the compulsive ardor of sexual desire gives the impetus to perform sexual misdeeds since frosty old age itself actively burns just like youthful sexual desire and since reason becomes a panderer for the passion. If old people are ruled by their sexual passion, what hope do young people have to resist such passion?”

“Oh, Hamlet, speak no more,” Queen Gertrude said. “You made my eyes look deep into my soul, and there I see such black and engrained spots whose tincture — color — will not be washed away.”

What sin is Queen Gertrude speaking about? She is not complicit in the murder of her first husband. Is she speaking

only of her hasty second marriage or of something in addition to that? Adultery while her first husband was still alive, perhaps?

Hamlet replied, “No, it will not be washed away. And you are living in the rank sweat of a bed stained with the fluids of sex, stewed in corruption, honeying and making love over the nasty sty —”

Hamlet was punning again. The word “stewed” also referred to stewed prunes, which were served in brothels; as a result, “stews” became a slang word for brothels.

“Oh, speak to me no more,” Queen Gertrude said. “These words of yours, like daggers, enter my ears. No more, sweet Hamlet!”

“King Claudius is a murderer and a villain; he is a slave who is not worth one-twentieth of a tithe — one-twentieth of ten percent — of your first husband. He is an unscrupulous monster among Kings; he is a cutpurse of the empire and the throne. From a shelf he stole the precious crown and put it in his pocket!”

The word “tithe” has religious significance because a Christian is supposed to tithe — give ten percent of income to charity and/or the church. In addition, the number “ten” has religious significance because ten is composed of three threes and one one. Three is the number of the Trinity, and one is the number of the Unity that is the Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost become the one true God.

“No more!” Queen Gertrude pleaded.

“He is a King made of bits and pieces —”

The ghost entered the room.

Hamlet saw the ghost and prayed, “Save me, and hover over me with your wings, you Heavenly guards!”

He then said to the ghost, “What does your gracious figure want?”

Queen Gertrude could not see the ghost. To her, it seemed as if Hamlet were speaking to empty air.

She said, “Hamlet is mad! He is insane!”

Hamlet said to the ghost, “Have you come to reproach your tardy son, who, surprised by you in a time and while feeling the emotions that are important in fulfilling your dread command, is still not yet carrying out that command? Tell me!”

Hamlet was filled with emotion, but he was not doing what the ghost wanted him to do. The ghost wanted Hamlet to get revenge on King Claudius, and the ghost did not want Hamlet to hurt his mother. Hamlet had passed up an opportunity to kill King Claudius, and he was now emotionally hurting his mother.

The ghost said to Hamlet, “Do not forget what I told you. The purpose of this visitation is to whet your almost blunted purpose. But, look, your mother is bewildered. Step in between her and her soul as it fights frightening images. The imagination works strongest in the weakest bodies. Speak to her, Hamlet.”

The ghost wanted Hamlet to take care of his mother and then to turn his attention to killing King Claudius.

“How are you, lady?” Hamlet asked his mother.

“How are *you*, Hamlet?” Queen Gertrude replied. “Why are you looking at nothing and speaking to empty air? Your eyes look wild as they wildly look, and your hair, like sleeping soldiers suddenly awakened by an alarm, is shocked and stands on end. Oh, gentle son, sprinkle cool patience upon the heat and flame of your distemper and illness. What are

you looking at?”

“I am looking at him — at him!” Hamlet said as he pointed to the ghost. “Look, can’t you see how pale he is as he stares! If his appearance and his reason for appearing here could conjoin together and preach to stones, they would make them responsive to his words.”

He said to the ghost, “Do not look at me unless with piteous action you divert my stern deeds. If that happens, then what I have to do may lack the true color. Perhaps clear tears will flow instead of red blood.”

When Hamlet first saw the ghost, the ghost had told Hamlet not to pity him. The ghost wanted violent action and blood instead of pity and tears.

“To whom are you speaking?” Queen Gertrude asked.

“Do you see nothing there?”

“I see nothing at all; yet I see everything that there is to see.”

“Did you hear anything?”

“No, nothing but ourselves.”

“Why, look there! Look at how it is moving away! It is my father, wearing the clothing he used to wear when he was alive! Look, he is leaving now — he is going out the door!”

The ghost exited.

“This is only the invention of your brain,” Queen Gertrude said. “Madness is very cunning and skillful in creating things without bodies.”

“Madness!” Hamlet said. “My pulse, just like yours, temperately keeps time, and makes as healthful music. What I have said is not the result of madness. Put me to the test, and I will repeat everything that I have said — that is an act

that madness would run away from.

“Mother, for the love of Heaven, do not apply a soothing ointment to your soul by believing that it is my madness speaking and not your sin. The flattering ointment will only put a skin over the ulcerous place while rank corruption, undermining everything underneath the layer of skin, infects unseen.

“Confess your sins to Heaven. Repent what sins are past; avoid the temptations to come. And do not spread compost on the weeds to make them ranker.

“Forgive me this virtuous sermonizing of mine because in the fatness and grossness of these pury — corpulent and purse-proud — times virtue itself must beg pardon from vice. Yes, virtue must bow and woo for permission to do vice good.”

“Oh, Hamlet, you have broken my heart in two.”

“Throw the worse part of your heart away, and live all the purer with the other half,” Hamlet replied.

He added, “Good night, but do not go to my uncle’s bed. If you do not really have a particular virtue, act as if you have it. The monster custom eats up all understanding of evil when we habitually do evil deeds, but it is angelic in this: When one practices fair and good actions, they become habitual. Doing evil deeds can become a habit, but so can doing good deeds. We can put on good or bad habits the way that we put on good or bad clothing. It is our choice.

“Refrain from having sex with King Claudius tonight, and that shall lend a kind of easiness to the next abstinence. The abstinence after that will be even easier. Habit can almost change the stamp of nature — our inborn characteristics.

“Habit can either welcome the Devil, or powerfully throw

him out.

“Once more, good night. And when you are desirous to be blessed and ask for God’s blessing, I’ll beg a blessing from you like a dutiful son.”

Hamlet pointed to the corpse of Polonius and said, “I repent killing this lord, but Heaven has been pleased to punish me with this corpse and to punish this corpse with me. It has been the will of Heaven that I be punished and that I punish Polonius. I have acted as Heaven’s agent and minister of justice, and Heaven has punished me. I will dispose of him, and I will atone for the death I gave him.

“So, again, good night.

“I must be cruel only to be kind. Thus bad begins and worse remains behind. The death of Polonius is a bad beginning, and worse is still to come.

“One word more, good lady.”

“What shall I do?” Queen Gertrude asked.

Hamlet said, “Here are things that I tell you NOT to do, no matter what happens:

“Let the bloated King tempt you again to go to bed. Let him pinch your cheek wantonly. Let him call you his mouse. Let him, because he gave you a few filthy kisses or stroked your neck with his damned fingers, convince you to disentangle everything for him.”

She could disentangle her clothing and her hair dressing.

Hamlet continued with another thing NOT to tell Claudius: “Tell him that I am not mad essentially but am mad only in craft and cunning.”

He said sarcastically, “It would be good for you to let him know that I am faking my madness because who would hide

from a toad, from a bat, or from a tomcat such dear information concerning him? Who would do such a thing? A queen, fair, sober, and wise?"

With more sarcasm, he added, "No, to spite sense and secrecy, you ought to climb on top of a house with a basket of birds, open the basket and let the birds fly out. Then you ought to imitate the experimenting ape in the famous story and climb into the basket, jump out and try to fly like the birds, and break your neck when you fall to the ground."

"Be assured, Hamlet," Queen Gertrude said, "if words are made of breath, and breath is made of life, I have no life to breathe what you have said to me. I will not tell my husband what you have told me."

"I must go to England; do you know that?"

"Yes, I had forgotten, but it has been so decided."

"The letters are sealed, and my two schoolfellows, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, whom I will trust as I trust fanged venomous snakes, bear the mandate — King Claudius' letter to the English King. They must sweep my way clear and carry me off and lead me into some trap.

"So be it. It will be fun to have the engineer be hoist with his own petard — blown up with his own bomb. Things shall go badly for me unless I can outwit the enemy and use the enemy's own bomb to blow him at the Moon. Oh, it is very sweet when two plots — the King's and mine — meet head-on.

"This man — the dead Polonius — shall cause me to be sent to England in a hurry and shall cause me to begin my plotting. I'll lug the guts into the neighboring room.

"Mother, good night.

"Indeed, this counselor is now very still, very secret, and

very grave, although when he was alive he was a foolish prating knave.”

Hamlet said to the corpse, “Come, sir, I will draw toward an end with you.”

He added, “Good night, mother.”

Hamlet then began to drag away the corpse of Polonius.

CHAPTER 4**— 4.1 —**

In a room of the castle, King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern were meeting.

“There’s a reason for these sighs, these profound heaves,” King Claudius said to Queen Gertrude, who was upset by her encounter with Hamlet. “You must translate them into language we can understand; it is fitting that we understand the reason for these sighs.

“Where is your son?”

Queen Gertrude said to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “Leave us alone here for a little while.”

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern left the room.

“Ah, my good lord, what I have seen tonight!” Queen Gertrude said.

“What, Gertrude? How is Hamlet?”

“Hamlet is as mad as the sea and wind, when both contend in a storm to see which is the mightier. In his lawless and uncontrollable fit, Hamlet heard something stir behind the arras. He whipped out his rapier and cried, ‘A rat, a rat!’ Then, suffering from a delusion, he killed Polonius, the unseen good old man.”

“What a heavy and grievous deed!” King Claudius said. “I would have been killed, if I had been there. Hamlet’s liberty is full of threats to everyone: to you yourself, to us the King, to everyone.

“How shall this bloody deed be explained? Responsibility for it will be laid on us, whose providence should have kept this mad young man restrained and out of circulation, but we loved him so much that we would not understand what was

the best course of action. Instead, I acted like someone suffering from a foul disease, who rather than let knowledge of it become public, let it remain uncured with the result that eventually it fed even on the essential substance of life.

“Where has Hamlet gone?”

“He is removing the body he has killed,” Queen Gertrude said. “Even in his madness, he weeps over the corpse and feels remorse. This remorse is like some pure gold that shows itself in a mine of base metals.”

“Gertrude, come away!” King Claudius said. “The Sun no sooner shall touch the mountains and bring the morning than we will ship Hamlet away from here. We must, with all our majesty and skill, both accept responsibility for and excuse Hamlet’s vile deed.”

He called, “Guildenstern!”

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern returned to the room.

King Claudius said to them, “Friends, go and get some men to assist you. Hamlet in his madness has slain Polonius, and he has dragged him away from his mother’s private chamber.

“Go and find Hamlet. Speak politely and respectfully to him, and bring the body into the chapel. Please, hurry and do this.”

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern left the room to carry out their orders.

King Claudius said, “Come, Gertrude, we’ll call up our wisest friends, and we will let them know both what we mean to do and what has been unfortunately done. Oh, come away! My soul is full of discord and dismay.”

— 4.2 —

In another room of the castle, Hamlet said to himself, “The

corpse has been safely stowed away.”

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern called, “Hamlet! Hamlet! Hamlet!”

“What noise is that?” Hamlet said. “Who is calling for me? Oh, here they come.”

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern entered the room.

“What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?” Rosencrantz asked.

“I have mixed it with dust, to which it is kin,” Hamlet said.

He was thinking of Genesis 3:19: *“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”*

Hamlet had not buried the corpse; he had simply placed it in a dusty room.

“Tell us where it is, so that we may take it from there and carry it to the chapel,” Rosencrantz said.

“Do not believe it,” Hamlet said.

“Believe what?” Rosencrantz asked.

“That I will do what you want me to do and not do what I want to do,” Hamlet said. “When a sponge demands something, what reply should the son of a King make?”

“Do you think that I am a sponge, my lord?” Rosencrantz asked.

A sponge is a parasite who lives off other people. A sponge soaks up other people’s money and other good things.

“Yes, sir, you are a sponge who soaks up the King’s favor, his rewards, his powers. But such officers do the King best

service in the end. He keeps them, like an ape does an apple, in the corner of his jaw. The ape first puts them in his mouth and then later swallows them. When the King needs what you have gleaned, he will squeeze you, and, you, sponge, shall be dry again.”

Hamlet was warning Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that King Claudius was using them. Once King Claudius was done using them, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern would be discarded. Although Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were hoping for rewards from their master, serving a dangerous master would likely harm them.

“I do not understand you, my lord,” Rosencrantz said.

“I am glad that you do not,” Hamlet replied. “Fools are unable to understand irony.”

“My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the King,” Rosencrantz said.

“The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body,” Hamlet said.

Hamlet meant more than one thing here.

First, Polonius’ physical body was with King Claudius because it was in the King’s castle, but King Claudius was not with Polonius’ body because Polonius’ spiritual body was in Heaven.

Second, King Claudius’ physical body was with him, but the body politic — what makes a King a true King — was not with him.

Hamlet added, “The King is a thing —”

Guildenstern exclaimed, “A thing, my lord!”

Hamlet continued, “— of nothing. Take me to him.”

He then shouted, “Hide, fox, and all after!”

He ran off, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ran after him.

— 4.3 —

King Claudius said to some lords, “I have sent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to seek Hamlet, and to find the body of Polonius. How dangerous it is that this man goes loose! Yet we must not put the strong arm of law on him. Hamlet is beloved by the unreasoning multitude of people. They use their eyes, not their reason and judgment, to decide whom to like. In such cases, they focus on the punishment given to the offender and not on the offense that the offender committed.

“To make everything go smoothly and evenly, my suddenly sending Hamlet away must seem like the result of careful deliberation.

“Desperate diseases require desperate cures, or they are not cured.”

Rosencrantz entered the room. Guildenstern stayed with Hamlet, guarding him, outside.

“How are you?” King Claudius asked him. “What has happened?”

“Hamlet will not tell us where he stowed the corpse of Polonius.”

“Where is Hamlet?”

“Outside, my lord. He is being guarded. What do you want done with him?”

“Bring him here before us,” King Claudius said.

“Guildenstern!” Rosencrantz called. “Bring in my lord.”

Hamlet and Guildenstern entered the room.

“Now, Hamlet, where’s Polonius?” King Claudius asked.

“At supper.”

“At supper! Where?”

“Do not ask where he eats, but where he is eaten,” Hamlet said. “A certain convocation of politic — shrewd — worms is even now gnawing at him.”

Hamlet was punning on the Diet of Worms, which was held in the German city of Worms in 1521. The word “diet” means “council.” Holy Roman Emperor Charles V presided over the Diet of Worms.

Hamlet continued, “Your worm is your only Emperor for diet. We fatten all other creatures so that we can eat them and grow fat ourselves, and we ourselves grow fat so that we can feed maggots. A fat King and a lean beggar are only two different courses at a meal; they are two dishes on one table. That’s the end for us.”

“Alas! Alas!” King Claudius said.

“A man may fish with a worm that has eaten part of a King, and then he can eat the fish that has fed on that worm.”

“What do you mean by this?”

“Nothing except to show you how a King may progress through the guts of a beggar,” Hamlet replied.

“Where is Polonius?”

“In Heaven; send someone there to see,” Hamlet replied. “If your messenger does not find him there, then seek him in the other place yourself. But indeed, if you do not find him within this month, you shall smell him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.”

King Claudius said to some attendants, “Go seek the corpse

there.”

“He will stay until you come,” Hamlet said to the attendants as they were leaving the room.

“Hamlet, because of this deed, for your own personal safety — which we dearly care for, just as we dearly grieve for this deed that you have done — we must send you away from here with fiery quickness. Therefore prepare yourself to travel. The ship is ready, and the wind is blowing in the right direction, your companions are waiting for you, and everything is ready for you to go to England.”

“For England?”

“Yes, Hamlet.”

“Good.”

“So it is, as you would know if you knew our motives.”

“I see a cherub who sees them,” Hamlet replied.

He suspected King Claudius’ motives, and he was reminding King Claudius that God and the angels in Heaven know everything.

Hamlet continued, “Let’s go to England!”

He said to King Claudius, “Farewell, dear mother.”

King Claudius replied, “Your loving father, Hamlet.”

“You are my mother. Father and mother are man and wife; man and wife are one flesh; and so, you are my mother.

“Let’s go to England!”

Hamlet exited.

King Claudius ordered Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “Follow him closely; persuade him to board the ship quickly.

Do not delay. I'll have him leave here tonight. Away! Everything else needed for this journey to happen has been sealed and done. Please, hurry."

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern left the room.

King Claudius motioned with his hands, and everyone departed, leaving him alone.

King Claudius had written a letter to the King of England, a letter that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern would carry on board ship. Now he held an imaginary one-sided conversation with the English King:

"King of England, if you value at all my friendship — as you should, because of my great power ... your country can still feel the raw and red scar that it received from the Danish sword, and you are paying homage and tribute to us to keep our soldiers away — because of this, you cannot coldly set aside and ignore our royal command, which is described in full in a letter: the immediate death of Hamlet. Do it, King of England — kill Hamlet.

"Hamlet rages like a fever in my blood, and you must cure me. Until I know that Hamlet is dead, whatever else happens, I will never be happy."

— 4.4 —

On a plain in Denmark, young Fortinbras, one of his Captains, and an army of soldiers were marching.

Fortinbras ordered, "Go, Captain, and give the Danish King my greetings. Tell him that, in accordance with our agreement, Fortinbras craves safe conduct and an escort as he marches across Denmark. You know the rendezvous. If his majesty wants to see us, we will pay his respects to him in person. Tell him that."

"I will do so, my lord," the Captain replied.

Fortinbras ordered his army, “March onward. Do nothing to cause trouble.”

Fortinbras and his army marched onward, leaving the Captain behind.

Hamlet, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and others arrived.

Hamlet said to the Captain, “Good sir, whose soldiers are these?”

“They are Norwegian, sir,” the Captain replied.

“Please tell me where they are marching, sir.”

“They are marching to fight in a part of Poland.”

“Who commands them, sir?”

“Fortinbras, the nephew to the aged King of Norway.”

“Will his army fight the heartland of Poland, or will it fight some frontier?”

“To speak truly, and with no exaggeration, we go to fight to gain a little patch of ground that has in it no profit but the name. Whoever wins the battle will gain nothing but reputation — he will win the name of conqueror. I would not rent it for five — five! — ducats. It would not bring in more to either the King of Norway or the King of Poland if it were sold outright. It is a worthless piece of land.”

“Why, then the King of Poland will never defend it.”

“Yes, he will,” the Captain said. “He has already stationed soldiers there.”

“Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats will not settle this straw — this trivial matter,” Hamlet said. “This is the abscess that results from having too much wealth during peacetime. The abscess festers inside the body and the man

dies without other people knowing why.

“I humbly thank you, sir.”

The Captain replied, “May God be with you, sir,” and departed.

Rosencrantz asked Hamlet, “Will it please you to go, my lord?”

“I’ll be with you very quickly. Go ahead of me a little distance,” Hamlet replied.

Everyone started traveling again, leaving Hamlet alone.

Hamlet said to himself, “Everything denounces me and spurs me on to get my delayed revenge! What is a man, if his chief happiness and all he does with his time is simply to sleep and eat? He is a beast — no more than that. Surely, He Who made us with such a fine power of reasoning, which we can use to learn from the past and plan for the future, did not give us that capability and God-like reason to go unused by us and get moldy. Now, whether it be due to an animal’s forgetfulness or from some cowardice caused by thinking in too much detail on the outcome of our action — a thought that, divided into four parts, has but one part wisdom and three parts cowardice — I do not know why I yet live to say, ‘This thing is something I have to do.’ It should have been done already. After all, I have the reason — a cause — and the will and the strength and the means to do it.

“Examples as weighty as Earth exhort me to take action and get revenge. Witness this army of such size and expense that is being led by a delicate and tender Prince with a spirit that is puffed up with divine ambition and who makes a face at and scorns the unknown outcome of his war. He is exposing what is mortal and unsure to all that fortune, death, and danger dare. And for what? For an eggshell.

“Rightly to be great is not to stir without great argument, but greatly to find quarrel in a straw when honor is at stake.”

Hamlet thought, *It is true that the way to get a reputation is not by refraining from making war unless you have a good reason for making war, but by making war over a trifle — a straw — when honor is at stake.*

If Fortinbras had said that this trifle of land in Poland is not worth fighting for and so I will remain at home instead of going to war, he would gain no reputation. But since he is willing to go to war and get lots of soldiers killed and lots of money spent over a trifle, he will gain a reputation. But will it be a negative or a positive reputation?

Or perhaps the right way to be great is to not make war unless you have an excellent reason for making war, but people mistakenly think that the right way to be great is to make war over a trifle — a straw — when honor is at stake. But will it be negative or positive greatness?

Hamlet said, “But what about me? I am not concerned with trifles and straws. I have a father who has been murdered, a mother whose character has been stained, and incentives both in my mind and in my emotions to take action and get revenge, and what have I done? I have slept and done nothing. Meanwhile, to my shame, I see the imminent death of twenty thousand men, who, merely for Fortinbras’ fantasy and illusion of fame, go to their graves as if the graves were beds. They will die while fighting for a plot of land that is not big enough to contain all the soldiers fighting over it and which is not big enough to provide tombs and graves for all the soldiers who will die fighting over it.

“Oh, from this time forth, my thoughts will be bloody, or they will be worth nothing!”

In a room in the castle at Elsinore, Queen Gertrude was talking with Horatio and a gentleman about Ophelia.

“I will not speak with her,” Queen Gertrude said.

“She is insistent, indeed distraught,” the gentleman said. “Her state of mind ought to be pitied.”

“What does she want?”

“She speaks a lot about her father; she says that she hears there’s tricks in the world; and she makes sounds, and she beats her heart,” the gentleman said. “She takes offense at trifles and straws, and she speaks ambiguously and says things that are only half-sensible. Her speech is nonsense, but because it is nonsense her hearers attempt to make sense of it. They work hard at understanding it, and they interpret her words to fit what they think. Her winks, and her nods, and her gestures convince them that her words must have meaning. Although they are not sure what that meaning is, they think that it must be an unhappy meaning.”

Horatio advised Queen Gertrude, “It is a good idea to talk to her because she may cause ill-breeding minds to make dangerous conjectures.”

“Let her come in,” Queen Gertrude said.

The gentleman left to tell Ophelia to come into the room.

Queen Gertrude thought, *To my sick soul — sin’s true nature is sickness — each trifle seems to be the prologue to some great misfortune. So full of artless jealousy is guilt, it spills itself in fearing to be spilt. Guilt is so full of uncontrolled suspicion that it reveals itself because it so much fears to be revealed. The guilty act guilty because they are so afraid of being found out to be guilty.*

Ophelia entered the room.

“Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?” Ophelia asked.

“How are you, Ophelia?”

Ophelia sang, *“How should I your true love know*

“From another one?”

“By his cockle hat and staff,

“And his sandal shoon.”

Ophelia was singing about a lover who was dressed like a pilgrim. In his hat he wore a “cockle,” aka scallop shell, he carried a staff, and he wore sandals for his shoes. A pilgrim was someone who was going or had gone on a pilgrimage or journey to a religious site. Pilgrims who were returning from a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James in Compostela, Spain, wore a cockle shell in their hat. Lovers sometimes disguised themselves as religious pilgrims to get access to those whom they loved.

“Alas, sweet lady, what is the meaning of this song?” Queen Gertrude asked.

“What did you say?” Ophelia asked. “Please, listen.”

She sang, *“He is dead and gone, lady,*

“He is dead and gone;

“At his head a grass-green plot,

“At his heels a tombstone.”

“But, Ophelia —” Queen Gertrude started to say.

“Please, listen,” Ophelia replied.

She sang, *“White his shroud as the mountain snow —”*

King Claudius entered the room.

Queen Gertrude said to him, “Alas, look here, my lord.”

Ophelia sang, “*Sprinkled all over with sweet flowers*

“*Which bewept to the grave did go*

“*With true-love showers.*”

“How are you, pretty lady?” King Claudius asked.

“May God reward you,” Ophelia replied. “They say the owl was a baker’s daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but we do not know what we may become. May God be at your table!”

According to an old legend, Christ, who appeared to be a beggar, asked a baker for food. The baker was a charitable person who put a large piece of dough in an oven to bake, but his daughter criticized him for putting such a large piece of dough in the oven — she wanted the beggar to be given less food. Because the baker’s daughter was not charitable, she was turned into an owl.

“She is distressed about her father,” King Claudius said.

“Please, let’s have no words about this,” Ophelia said, “but when they ask you what it means, say this.”

She sang, “*Tomorrow is Saint Valentine’s Day,*

“*All in the morning early,*

“*And I a maiden at your window,*

“*To be your Valentine.*

“*Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,*

“*And opened up the chamber-door;*

“*Let in the maiden, that out a maiden*

“*Never departed more.*”

According to a folk belief, the first young person of the opposite sex that young men and young women would see on Saint Valentine's Day would be their one true love.

"Pretty Ophelia!" King Claudius said.

"Indeed, la, without an oath," she said, "I'll make an end of it."

She sang, "*By Gis and by Saint Charity,*

"Alack, and fie for shame!

"Young men will do it, if they come to it;

"By Cock, they are to blame.

"Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,

"'You promised me to wed.'

"He answers,

"So would I have done, by yonder Sun,

"If you had not come to my bed.'"

"Gis" meant "Jesus." "Do it" meant "to have sex." "Cock" meant "God" — and an obvious additional meaning. "Tumbled me" meant "to have sex with me"; in this context, it included the meaning of "took my virginity."

"How long has she been like this?" King Claudius asked.

"I hope all will be well," Ophelia said. "We must be patient, but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him in the cold ground. My brother shall know about it, and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night."

Ophelia exited from the room.

“Follow her closely; watch her closely, please,” King Claudius said to Horatio.

Horatio followed Ophelia, leaving the King and Queen alone.

“Oh, this is the poison of deep grief,” King Claudius said about Ophelia’s insanity. “It springs entirely from her father’s death. Oh, Gertrude, Gertrude, when sorrows come, they come not singly like spies sent separately ahead to scout the land, but in whole battalions. First, her father was slain. Next, Hamlet, your son, has gone, and he was the most violent author of his own just exile. The people are confused; their thoughts and whispers are muddled and troubled and unhealthy and suspicious about the death of good Polonius. We have acted foolishly by hurrying to secretly inter him. Poor Ophelia is insane, divorced from her rational judgment, without which we are pictures —mere images of human beings — or mere beasts. Finally, and just as serious as all of these other ills, Ophelia’s brother — Laertes — has in secret returned to Denmark from France. He broods over his bewilderment, he does not seek the truth but remains ignorant of it. He has gossip-mongers buzzing in his ears and telling him pestilential stories about his father’s death. Because Laertes does not know the truth, he must of necessity believe me to be guilty because he must blame someone. This is a supposition that he will tell others. Oh, my dear Gertrude, this multitude of troubles is killing me over and over just like a cannon fires and kills many soldiers with grapeshot — many small pieces of metal that are fired all at once and that scatter and kill.”

They heard a noise in the castle.

“What is that noise?” Queen Gertrude asked. She was alarmed.

“Where are my Swiss guards?” King Claudius asked. “Let

them guard the door!”

A messenger entered the room.

“What is the matter?” King Claudius asked.

“Save yourself, my lord,” the messenger said. “The ocean, rising above its limits, does not overwhelm the flat, low-lying coastal lands with more impetuous haste than young Laertes, advancing with an army of rebels, overwhelms your military officers. The rabble call him lord, and, as if the world were now going to begin again, with all traditions and established customs that ratify and prop up civilization having been forgotten, they cry, ‘We choose Laertes to be King.’ They throw their hats into the air, they applaud with their hands, and their tongues cry to the clouds, ‘Laertes shall be King! Laertes shall be King!’”

“How cheerfully they cry like hounds as they follow a false trail!” Queen Gertrude said. “These false Danish hounds are tracking counter — they are following the scent the wrong way! They trace the trail backwards!”

Laertes was looking for the person who had killed his father, but Hamlet’s trail led away from Elsinore and toward England. Laertes and his followers were heading toward Elsinore.

They heard noises, and King Claudius said, “The doors have been broken.”

Laertes and a number of his armed followers rushed into the room.

“Where is this King?” Laertes asked, contemptuously.

He said to his armed followers, “Sirs, all of you stand outside the room.”

His followers protested, “No, let us come in.”

Laertes replied, "Please, if you don't mind."

"We will obey," his armed followers said.

As they left the room, Laertes said to them, "I thank you. Guard the door."

He then said to King Claudius, "Oh, you vile King, give me my father!"

"Be calm, good Laertes," Queen Gertrude said, holding on to him.

"Any drop of my blood that is calm proclaims me to be a bastard," Laertes replied. "Any drop of my blood that is calm cries that my father is a cuckold and that my mother is a harlot with the brand of a whore on her forehead. If I am truly my father's son, and if my mother has been faithful to her husband, then every drop of my blood is outraged by his death."

"What is the reason, Laertes, that your rebellion looks so giant-like?" King Claudius asked. "This rebellion is like that of the giants Otus and Ephialtes, who tried to make war on the Olympian gods.

"Let him go, Gertrude. Do not fear for our person. Such divinity protects a King that treason can only peep at what it would like to do; it can act but little of what it wants to do."

And yet Claudius had succeeded in murdering his brother, King Hamlet.

King Claudius continued, "Tell me, Laertes, why you are so incensed and angry? Let him go, Gertrude."

She let go of Laertes.

"Speak, man," King Claudius said.

"Where is my father?" Laertes asked.

“Dead.”

“But your father was not killed by the King,” Queen Gertrude said.

“Let him ask whatever he wants to ask,” King Claudius said to her.

“What is the cause of his death?” Laertes asked. “I’ll not be trifled with and misled. To Hell with loyalty and allegiance! I will make vows to the blackest Devil! I will damn my conscience and grace to the profoundest pit! I dare to be damned for all eternity on Judgment Day. I am resolved: I do not care about this world or the next. Let come what will come, but I will be revenged most thoroughly for the murder of my father.”

“Who shall prevent you?” King Claudius asked.

“I swear that not all the world can stop me,” Laertes replied. “And as for my resources, I’ll manage them so well that although limited, they will go a long way.”

“Good Laertes, if you desire to know with certainty the cause of your dear father’s death, are you determined that in your revenge, like a gambler sweeping up all the money — including that belonging to winners as well as to losers — on a table, you will punish both friends and foes?”

“I will punish none but my father’s enemies,” Laertes replied.

“Would you like to know who are his friends and who are his enemies?”

“To my father’s friends, I will open wide my arms, and like the kind life-rendering pelican, I will feed them with my blood — I am willing to die for them.”

According to a folk tradition, the pelican fed its young with

its own blood.

“Why, now you are speaking like a good child and a true gentleman,” King Claudius said. “I will prove to you that I am guiltless of your father’s death and that I grieve most sincerely for it. I will show my innocence to you as clearly as your eyes see daylight.”

Laertes’ men outside the door shouted, “Let her come in!”

Laertes said, “What’s going on? What noise is that?”

Ophelia entered the room.

Immediately recognizing that Ophelia was insane, Laertes said, “Oh, heat, dry up and ruin my brains! Excessively salty tears, burn out the ability of my eyes to see! I would rather lose both my mind and my sight than to see Ophelia like this!

“By Heaven, Ophelia’s madness shall be avenged! I will put my revenge into one side of a set of scales until it outweighs the harm done to you! Oh, rose of May! Dear maiden, kind sister, sweet Ophelia! Oh, Heavens! Is it possible that a young maiden’s wits should be as mortal as an old man’s life?

“Nature is exquisite in love, and when love is exquisite, it sends some precious part of itself after the thing it loves.”

Laertes believed that Ophelia had gone mad because of the death of their father and that she had sent her sanity to join his spirit. This is a poetic way of saying that Ophelia’s grief over the death of her father had driven her insane.

Ophelia sang, “*They bore him barefaced on the bier;*

“*Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;*

“*And in his grave rained many a tear —*

“*Fare you well, my dove!*”

“If you had your wits and urged me to get revenge for the death of our father, you could not speak more persuasively,” Laertes said.

Ophelia said to the King and Queen, “You must sing, ‘*A-down a-down.*’”

Then she said to her brother, Laertes, “And you must sing, ‘*A-down-a.*’”

These words were the refrain to her song.

Ophelia then said, “Oh, how the wheel — the refrain — becomes it! It is the false steward, who stole his master’s daughter.”

Ophelia’s thoughts and songs were about the death of a loved one and about betrayal by a lover or “lover.”

“This nonsense has more meaning in it than sensible speech has,” Laertes said.

Ophelia said about the imaginary flowers she was “holding,” “There’s rosemary; that is for remembrance. Please, love, remember. And here are pansies; that is for thoughts.”

She “presented” the imaginary flowers signifying remembrance to Laertes.

“Here is a lesson in madness,” Laertes said. “She has fittingly linked thoughts and remembrance.”

Ophelia said, “There’s fennel for you, and columbines.”

She “presented” the imaginary flowers signifying deceit (fennel) and marital infidelity (columbine) to Queen Gertrude.

Ophelia said, “There’s rue for you.”

She “presented” the imaginary rue — an herb — signifying

sorrow and repentance to King Claudius.

Ophelia said, “And here’s some rue for me. We may call rue ‘herb-grace of Sundays.’ Oh, you must wear your rue for a different reason. There’s a daisy.

“I would give you some violets, but they all withered when my father died. They say that he made a good end —”

She sang, “*For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.*”

The themes of Bonny Robin songs include lovers and unfaithfulness.

“She turns sadness and affliction, suffering, and Hell itself to charm and to prettiness,” Laertes said.

Ophelia sang, “*And will he not come again?*”

“*And will he not come again?*”

“*No, no, he is dead:*

“*Go to your deathbed:*

“*He never will come again.*

“*His beard was as white as snow,*

“*All flaxen was his head:*

“*He is gone, he is gone,*

“*And we cast away moan:*

“*God have mercy on his soul!*”

She added, “And may God have mercy on all Christian souls, I pray. May God be with you.”

She exited from the room.

“Do you see this, God?” Laertes prayed.

“Laertes, I must share in your grief, or you deny me something that is my right,” King Claudius said. “Go and talk to your wisest friends. Let them judge the issue between you and me. If they find that I am implicated — whether directly or indirectly — in the death of your father, I will give you my Kingdom, my crown, my life, and all that I call mine, in recompense. But if they find me innocent, then be patient and let us work together to give your soul what it most wants: revenge.”

“Let this be so,” Laertes replied. “My father’s means of death and his obscure funeral — he had no trophy, sword, or painting of his coat of arms over his bones, and he had no noble rite or formal ostentation — all cry out, as if my father’s soul were shouting from Heaven to Earth, and so I demand an explanation of them.”

“And so you shall receive an explanation,” King Claudius said. “And where the offence is, let the great axe fall. Please, come with me.”

They departed together.

— 4.6 —

In another room in the castle, Horatio said to a servant, “Who are they who would speak with me?”

“Sailors, sir,” the servant replied. “They say they have letters for you.”

“Let them come in.”

The servant left to get the sailors.

Horatio said to himself, “I do not know from what part of the world I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.”

Some sailors entered the room.

The first sailor said, “God bless you, sir.”

“Let Him bless you, too,” Horatio replied.

“He shall, sir, if it pleases Him,” the first sailor said.

He handed Horatio a letter and said, “There’s a letter for you, sir; it comes from the ambassador who was bound for England. This letter is for you, assuming that your name is Horatio, as I am told it is.”

The letter was from Hamlet, who had told the sailors that he was an ambassador instead of telling them that he was a Prince and presumably the next in line to be King.

Horatio read the letter out loud.

“Horatio, when you shall have looked over this letter, give these fellows some way to have contact with the King: They have letters for him. Before we were two days out at sea, a pirate ship ready to do battle chased us. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we were forced to be brave and fight, and the pirates threw grappling irons to our ship. I crossed the lines to the pirate ship, and then the pirate ship and our ship separated with the result that I became the pirates’ only prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy — like merciful thieves — but they knew what they were doing. In return for their mercy, I am to do a good turn for them.

“Let the King have the letters I have sent and then come to me with as much speed as you would use to flee from death. I have words to speak in your ear that will make you speechless; yet they are much too light for the seriousness of the matter. These good fellows will bring you to where I am.

“Rosencrantz and Guildenstern still hold their course for England. Of them I have much to tell you.

“Farewell.

“He whom you know to be your friend,

“*HAMLET.*”

Horatio said to the sailors, “Come, I will give you help to deliver these letters of yours, and I will do that as quickly as possible so that you may take me to the man whose letters you brought.”

— 4.7 —

In another room of the castle, King Claudius and Laertes were talking together, alone.

King Claudius said, “Now you must agree that I am not guilty of the death of your father, and you must regard me as a friend since you have heard and learned that the man who has slain your noble father has tried to kill me.”

“It looks that way,” Laertes replied. “But tell me why you did not try to punish the man who committed these deeds that are so criminal and punishable by death. Regard for your own safety, as well as wisdom and everything else, ought to have provoked you and made you punish him.”

“I had two special reasons,” King Claudius said. “To you they may seem very weak, but to me they are strong.

“The first reason is that the Queen his mother dotes on him. As for me — my virtue or my plague, whichever it is — she is such a part of my life and soul that, just like a star moves only in its orbit-sphere, I must be with her and move with her.

“My other reason, explaining why I could not try him in a public court, is that the general public loves him. They dip his faults in their affection, and they are like a spring that turns wood to stone by petrifying it; they convert his metaphorical fetters — his faults — to graces. And so my arrows, which are too slight to be used in such a wind, would have returned again to my bow — they would not have hit

the target I aimed at.”

“And so I have lost a noble father, and my sister has been driven into a desperate condition,” Laertes said. “Her worth, if praises may go back again to what she used to be, offered a conspicuous challenge — as if she stood on a mountain — to others to equal her perfections. But my revenge will come.”

“Don’t toss and turn at night because of thinking about revenge,” King Claudius said. “Don’t think that I am made of stuff so flat and dull that I will let my beard be shook with danger and think that it is a joke and a game. You shortly shall hear more.”

By sending Hamlet to England, King Claudius was hoping that Hamlet would soon be killed. King Claudius thought that he could soon tell Laertes that the man who had killed his father was dead.

King Claudius continued, “I loved your father, and I love myself, and that, I hope, will teach you to imagine —”

A messenger entered the room, and King Claudius broke off what he was saying to Laertes and instead asked the messenger, “What is it? What is the news?”

“I bring letters, my lord, from Hamlet. This letter is to your majesty; this letter is to the Queen.”

“From Hamlet! Who brought them?”

“Sailors, my lord, they say,” the messenger replied. “I did not see them. These letters were given me by Claudio; he received them from the person who brought them.”

King Claudius said, “Laertes, you shall hear this letter.”

He ordered the messenger, “Leave us.”

The messenger exited.

King Claudius read out loud the letter that Hamlet had written to him:

“High and mighty one,

“You need to know that I have been set naked — without any possessions — on the land of your Kingdom. Tomorrow I shall beg for permission to see your Kingly eyes. At that time, I shall, after first asking your pardon to do so, recount the occasion of my sudden and very strange return to Denmark.

“HAMLET.”

King Claudius asked, “What does this mean? Have all the rest come back to Denmark, too? Or is this some trick, and Hamlet has not returned?”

“Do you know the handwriting?”

“It is Hamlet’s handwriting,” King Claudius said. “He writes, ‘Naked’! And in a postscript here, he writes that he is ‘alone.’ Do you know anything about this?”

“I know nothing about it, my lord,” Laertes replied. “But let Hamlet come. It warms the very sickness in my heart to know that I shall live and tell him to his teeth, ‘You did this: You killed my father. And now you die.’”

“If the contents of this letter are true, Laertes — as how could they be otherwise? — will you allow yourself to be ruled by me? Will you do what I tell you to do?”

“Yes, my lord,” Laertes said, “as long as you do not overrule my desires and order me to make peace with Hamlet.”

“I want you to be at peace with yourself,” King Claudius said. “If Hamlet has now returned to Denmark, rejecting his voyage to England and with no intention of undertaking it in the future, I will persuade him to undertake an exploit that will result in his death, and no one shall suspect ill play. Even

his mother will think that Hamlet died by accident.”

“My lord, I will do what you tell me to do,” Laertes said. “I will especially do it if you can arrange for me to be the cause of Hamlet’s death.”

“I have an idea,” King Claudius said. “You have been much talked about since your travels, and Hamlet has heard what people have said about you. They praise a skill in which you shine. None of your other good points made Hamlet as envious as that one skill, although in my opinion, that skill is not the best of those things in which you excel.”

“What skill is that, my lord?” Laertes asked.

“It is a mere ribbon in the cap of youth,” King Claudius said, “and yet it is a necessary skill, too. Light and careless clothing is as becoming to young people as is dark and serious clothing that denotes well being and seriousness to the old. Some things are suitable for young men, and other things are suitable for old men.

“Two months ago, a gentleman of Normandy visited here. I’ve seen and served against the French, and they can ride well on horseback, but this gallant Norman’s skill on horseback had witchcraft in it. He seemed to grow into his seat, and he made his horse do such wondrous things that it was if he and his horse were one being, like a Centaur. He performed better than I ever imagined that a man could perform on horseback. Whatever I was able to conceive in my imagination, he outperformed.”

“He was a Norman?”

“Yes, a Norman.”

“I bet my life that his name was Lamond.”

“The very same.”

“I know him well,” Laertes said. “He is the ornament and jewel indeed of all his nation.”

“He said that he knew you, and he praised highly your skill in the exercise of the defensive arts. He especially praised your skill with the rapier. He cried out that it would indeed be a sight if anyone could match you. The fencers of France, he swore, would lack motion, guard, and eye, if you opposed them.

“Sir, Lamond’s report about you inflamed Hamlet with such envy that he could do nothing but wish and beg that you would return to Denmark so that he could fence with you.

“Now, out of this ...” King Claudius started to say, and then he hesitated.

“What can come out of this, my lord?” Laertes asked.

“Laertes, was your father dear to you?” King Claudius asked. “Or are you like the painting of a sorrow — a mere face without a heart?”

“Why are you asking me this?”

“It is not the case that I think you did not love your father,” King Claudius said. “But I know that time causes love to come into being, and I see from well-attested examples that time diminishes the spark and fire of love. There lives within the very flame of love a kind of wick that will burn and diminish and so will abate and lessen love. Love burns out; nothing remains the same. Even goodness, growing to excess, can die from that excess. Love can die slowly over time, and love can burn out through over-intensity.

“When should we do those things we ought to do? We should do them when we ought to do them. What we want and ought to do is subjected to weakenings and delays; there are as many weakenings and delays as there are tongues, and

hands, and impediments.

“We have an awareness of what we ought to do and what we should do. Unless we take action and do those things, we are hurting ourselves. Taking the easy way out by not taking action may seem to be a kind of relief, but that is only appearance, not reality.

“But, to go to the quick — the most sensitive and painful part — of the ulcer, Hamlet is coming back to Elsinore.

“What are you willing to do that will show yourself to be your father’s son in deed and not just in words?”

“I am willing to cut Hamlet’s throat in the church,” Laertes replied.

“No place, indeed, should be a sanctuary for a murderer,” King Claudius said.

He meant that no place should be a sanctuary for Hamlet, but if Laertes were to murder Hamlet, then King Claudius’ sentence would apply also to Laertes.

King Claudius continued, “Revenge should have no bounds.

He meant that Laertes’ revenge should have no bounds, but his sentence could apply also to Hamlet’s revenge.

King Claudius continued, “But, good Laertes, will you do what I want you to do? Will you stay hidden within your chamber? When Hamlet returns, he will learn that you are here. I will have other people praise your excellence in fencing; their praise will be added to that of the Norman.

“We will then finally bring you two together, and place bets on the duel. Hamlet is carelessly trusting; he is very magnanimous and he does not engage in deceitful practices, and so he will not closely inspect the swords. Therefore, you can easily — or, if need be, use some trickery to — choose

a sword that has not been blunted. In the duel, you will kill him and avenge your father.”

“I will do it,” Laertes said. “And, to make sure I kill Hamlet, I’ll anoint my sword with poison. I bought an ointment from a mountebank — a travelling quack. The ointment is so poisonous and deadly that if a knife that has been dipped in it draws blood, there is no mixture of medicines so strong that it can save the person who has been scratched.

“I will touch the point of my sword with this contagion, with the result that, if I touch him even slightly, he will die.”

“Let me think further about this,” King Claudius said. “Let me figure out which time and which method are most likely to work. If this plot should fail, and if our part in it should become known, it would have been better for us not to have tried it. Therefore, we should have a backup plan to kill Hamlet, in case this plan fails to work.

“Think! Let me see. We’ll make a solemn wager on your respective skills — I have it!

“When in your duel you both are hot and dry — make the duel very active to achieve that end — and so Hamlet calls for something to drink, I’ll have prepared a chalice of poisoned drink for him for the occasion. If Hamlet merely sips from the chalice, he will die, even if he escapes being injured by your poisoned sword.”

Queen Gertrude entered the room.

King Claudius asked, “How are you, sweet Queen?”

“One woe treads upon another woe’s heel, so fast they follow,” she replied. “Ophelia, your sister, has drowned, Laertes.”

“Drowned! Where?”

“There is a willow that is growing slantingly over a brook,” Queen Gertrude replied. “The grey undersides of its leaves are reflected in the glassy waters of the stream. There Ophelia came with fantastic garlands of crow-flowers, non-stinging nettles, daisies, and long purple flowers that rudely speaking shepherds give a crude name, but that our chaste maidens call dead men’s fingers.

“There, as she clambered on the boughs to hang her coronet weeds, an envious branch broke, and she and her flowery trophies fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide, and for a while they bore her up like a mermaid, during which time she chanted snatches of old tunes, like one who is incapable of understanding the danger she was in, or like a creature born and equipped to live in water, but before long her clothing, heavy with their drink, pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay down to muddy death.”

“Alas, then, she is drowned!” Laertes exclaimed.

“Drowned! Drowned!” Queen Gertrude said.

“Too much water you have had, poor Ophelia,” Laertes said, “and therefore I forbid my tears to fall, but yet crying with grief is our way; nature must have her custom, let shame say what it will. When these tears are gone, the womanish part of me will be out of my body.”

He said to King Claudius, “*Adieu*, my lord. I have a speech of fire, which would like to blaze, except that this folly of tears puts it out.”

He exited from the room.

King Claudius said, “Let’s follow him, Gertrude. How much effort I had to make to calm Laertes’ rage! Now I fear this will start it up again. Therefore let’s follow him.”

CHAPTER 5

— 5.1 —

In a churchyard, two people — a gravedigger and his friend — talked about Ophelia’s death.

“Is she to be buried in Christian ground although she willfully sought her own salvation?” the gravedigger asked.

People who were known to have committed suicide were not given Christian burials; they were not buried on consecrated ground such as that of the churchyard.

The gravedigger had said that Ophelia had sought her own salvation, but perhaps he meant that she had sought her own damnation since suicide was thought to be a violation of the commandment “*Thou shalt not kill*” (Exodus 20:13, King James Version). Or perhaps he meant her own destruction.

“I tell you she is,” the friend said, “and therefore make her grave without delay. The coroner has sat on her, and he has ruled that she will get a Christian burial. He has ruled that she is not guilty of committing suicide.”

By “sat on her,” the friend meant “has held an inquest on her.”

“How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defense?”

“Why, the coroner has made the decision.”

“It must be *se offendendo*; it cannot be anything else,” the gravedigger said.

Se offendendo means “self-offense,” but perhaps the gravedigger meant *se defendendo*, which means “self-defense.”

The gravedigger continued, “For here lies the point: If I

drown myself wittingly, it argues an act, and an act has three branches. They are to act, to do, and to perform. *Argal*, she drowned herself wittingly.”

By *Argal*, the gravedigger meant *Ergo*, which is Latin for “therefore.”

“But listen, Mr. Gravedigger —”

“Allow me to explain. Here lies the water. Good. Here stands the man. Good. If the man goes to this water, and drowns himself, it is, whatever he may think about it, the end of him — note that.

“But if the water comes to him and drowns him, he does not drown himself; *argal*, he who is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.”

“But is this law?” the friend asked.

“Yes, truly, it is. It is the coroner’s inquest law.”

“Do you want to know the truth?” the friend asked. “If she had not been a gentlewoman, she would have been buried outside of consecrated ground.”

“Why, that’s right,” the gravedigger said. “It’s the more pity that great folk should have legal approval in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their fellow Christians. Come, give me my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers: They hold up Adam’s profession.”

“Was Adam a gentleman?”

“He was the first who ever bore arms,” the gravedigger said.

“Why, he had none. There is no way that Adam, the first man, ever had a coat of arms.”

“What, are you a heathen?” the gravedigger asked. “How do

you understand the Scripture? The Scripture says, ‘Adam digged.’ How could Adam dig without arms?

“I’ll put another question to you: If you cannot answer it correctly, confess —”

The usual expression was “Confess and be hanged.”

The friend interrupted, “— what is your question?”

“What man is he who builds stronger than the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?”

“The gallows-maker,” the friend answered, “because the gallows outlives a thousand tenants.”

“I like your wit well, truly,” the gravedigger said. “The gallows is a good answer. It does well, but how does it do well? It does well to those who do ill; now you do ill to say that the gallows is built stronger than the church. *Argal*, the gallows may do well to you.

“Come on, try again. Come on.”

“Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?”

“Yes, tell me the correct answer, and then you can knock off for the day.”

“That’s a good reward. I can tell you the answer now.”

“Tell me.”

“I don’t know the answer.”

Hamlet and Horatio arrived on the scene and listened to the gravedigger and his friend talk.

“Cudgel your brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating. Even if you hit its back with a stick, it will walk slowly,” the gravedigger said. “But when

you are asked this question next time, answer ‘a gravedigger.’ Why? Because the houses that he makes last until Doomsday. Go, get you to Yaughan the bartender. Fetch me a tankard of liquor.”

The gravedigger’s friend departed.

The gravedigger sang as he dug, punctuating the song with the grunts of working:

“In youth, when I did love, did love,

“I thought it was very sweet,

“To contract [grunt] the time, for [grunt] my advantage,

“Oh, I thought, there [grunt] was nothing [grunt] meet.”

“Has this fellow no respect for his occupation? Doesn’t he realize that he is singing while he digs a grave?” Hamlet asked Horatio.

“He has grown accustomed to graves, and so he is free and easy around them,” Horatio said.

“That is true,” Hamlet said. “The hand that does little work is more sensitive because it is not calloused. People who do not have to work for a living can afford to be sensitive.”

The Gravedigger sang these verses:

“But age, with his stealing steps,

“Has clawed me in his clutch,

“And has shipped me back into the land,

“As if I had never been born.”

The gravedigger threw a skull out of the grave he was digging.

Hamlet said, “That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing

once. Look at how the knave jowls — throws — it to the ground, as if it were Cain’s jawbone. Cain did the first murder: According to folk tradition, he used the jawbone of an ass to kill Abel, his brother.”

Hamlet thought, *Now an ass is wielding the jawbone of Cain.*

Hamlet continued, “This skull might be the head of a politician, a schemer, whom this ass now lords over as a benefit of his office. This skull may have belonged to a schemer who would have circumvented God, might it not?”

The first schemer was Cain, who in Genesis 4:9 would not give God a straight answer: “*And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?*”

“It might be, my lord,” Horatio replied to Hamlet.

“Or it might be the skull of a courtier, who could once say, ‘Good morning, sweet lord! How are you, good lord?’ This might be the skull of my Lord Such-a-one, who praised my Lord Such-another-one’s horse, when he meant to borrow it, might it not?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Why, that’s right,” Hamlet said. “And it might be the skull of my Lady Worm. It now lacks a lower jaw, and it is knocked about with a gravedigger’s spade.

“Here’s a fine alteration in fortune, a movement of the Wheel of Fortune, if we had the ability to see it. Was the cost of bringing these bones to full maturity so little that we are justified in using them in throwing games? My bones ache when I think about that.”

The gravedigger sang these lines:

“A pickaxe, and a spade, a spade,

“And furthermore a shrouding sheet:

“Oh, a pit of clay for to be made

“For such a guest is meet.”

He threw another skull out of the hole he was digging.

Hamlet said, “There’s another skull. That might be the skull of a lawyer. Why not? Where be his quiddities now, his quilletts — his subtleties and quibbles — his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he allow this rude knave now to knock him about the hole with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him that he is bringing a lawsuit against him for the crime of battering. Ha!

“The fellow whose skull this is might have been in his time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries — and his all that other legal mumbo-jumbo.

“Is this the fine, aka end, of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine, aka handsome, pate full of fine, aka finely ground, dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones, too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The documents for his lands will hardly lie in this box — his legal deeds will hardly fit in his grave, which is now his deed-box. He used to own all those properties, but now all he has is a grave.”

“A grave, and not a jot more, my lord,” Horatio said.

“Is not parchment made of sheepskins?” Hamlet asked.

“Yes, my lord, and of calfskins, too.”

“Those who seek assurance in parchment are sheep and calves — they are fools.”

He added, “I will speak to this fellow.”

He said to the gravedigger, “Whose grave is this?”

“Mine, sir,” the gravedigger answered.

He sang, “*Oh, a pit of clay for to be made*

“*For such a guest is meet.*”

“I think it is your grave, indeed,” Hamlet said, “because you lie in it.”

Hamlet and the gravedigger began to pun on two meanings of “lie” — “tell an untruth” versus “lie down.”

“You lie out of it, sir, and therefore it is not yours,” the gravedigger replied. “As for my part, I do not lie in it, and yet it is mine.”

The gravedigger would not lie down permanently in the grave, but it was his grave to dig.

“You do lie in it because you are in it and you say it is yours,” Hamlet said. “This grave is for the dead, not for the quick; therefore, you lie.”

“It is a quick and lively lie, sir,” the gravedigger said. “It will go away again — from me to you. If I am lying, then you are lying.”

The gravedigger was punning on two meanings of “quick” — “be fast” versus “be alive.”

“Who is the man for whom you are digging this grave?” Hamlet asked.

“I am digging it for no man, sir.”

“For which woman, then?”

“For no woman, either.”

“Who is to be buried in it?”

“One who was a woman, sir, but rest her soul, she’s dead.”

Hamlet said to Horatio, “How strict in his use of language this knave is! We must speak as carefully as if we were navigating at sea, or equivocation will undo and ruin us.

“By the Lord, Horatio, for the past three years I have taken a note of it; people nowadays have grown so refined and finicky and picky that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier that the peasant kicks the sore on the heel of the courtier.”

Hamlet asked the gravedigger, “How long have you been a grave-maker?”

“Of all the days in the year, I came to be a gravedigger on that day that our most recent King Hamlet fought and defeated old Fortinbras.”

“How long ago was that?”

“Don’t you know that?” the gravedigger asked. “Every fool knows that. It was the very day that young Hamlet was born — the young Hamlet who is mad, and who was sent to England.”

“Why was he sent to England?” Hamlet asked.

“Why, because he was mad: he shall recover his wits there, or if he does not, it’s no great matter there.”

“Why?”

“His madness will not even be noticed in England,” the gravedigger said. “The men of England are as mad as Hamlet.”

“How did he become mad?”

“Very strangely, they say.”

“How strangely?”

“By losing his wits.”

“For what reason? Upon what ground?”

“Upon what ground? Why, here in Denmark,” the gravedigger replied. “I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.”

“How long will a man lie in the earth before he rots?”

“Assuming that he is not rotting before he dies — we have many diseased corpses nowadays that will hardly keep together before they are buried — he will last you some eight or nine years. A tanner will last you nine years.”

“Why does he take longer to rot than another corpse?”

“Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade, that he will keep out water a great long while,” the gravedigger said. “Water is a grievous decayer of a nasty dead body.”

He picked up a skull and said, “Look at this skull now; this skull has lain in the earth twenty-three years.”

“Whose skull was it?” Hamlet asked.

“A whoreson mad fellow’s it was,” the gravedigger replied. “Whose do you think it was?”

“I don’t know.”

“May a pestilence fall on him because of his being a mad rogue!” the gravedigger said. “He poured a glass of Rhine wine on my head once. This same skull, sir, was the skull of Yorick, the King’s jester.”

“This skull?”

“Yes.”

“Let me see it,” Hamlet said.

The gravedigger gave Hamlet the skull.

Holding it, Hamlet said, “Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. He was a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent imagination. He carried me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorrent in my imagination it is to realize that this is his skull! I feel ready to vomit. Here used to be those lips that I kissed I don’t know how often. Where are your jokes now, Yorick? Where are your gambols? Where are your songs? Where are your flashes of merriment that used to make the people sitting at the table roar with laughter? No one is now ready to mock your own grinning? Are you quite down in the mouth?”

“Now go to a lady’s chamber, and tell her that although she paints on her makeup an inch thick, to this — a grinning skull — she must at last come; make her laugh at that.

“Please, Horatio, tell me something.”

“What, my lord?”

“Do you think that Alexander the Great, conqueror of all the world that was known to him, looked like this when he was in the earth?”

“Yes, I am sure that he did.”

“Did he smell like this? Ugh!”

Hamlet put down the skull.

“Yes, I am sure that he did, my lord.”

“To what base uses we may return when we die, Horatio!” Hamlet said. Why, can’t my reason trace the noble dust of Alexander from the time of his burial until it stops up a bung-hole — a hole from which liquid is poured from a cask or barrel?”

“To think that is to think too much about it.”

“No, indeed, not a jot,” Hamlet said. “We can trace his journey without excessive ingenuity; we can trace what is likely and reasonable. We are made of dust, and to dust we return. Alexander the Great died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returned to dust. The dust is earth; of earth we make loam, which we use to make bricks and stoppers; of that loam, whereof Alexander’s dust is an ingredient, might they not make a stopper for a beer-barrel?

“Imperious Julius Caesar, dead and turned to clay, might stop a hole in a wall to keep the wind away. Oh, that that earth, which stormed the world, should patch a wall to expel the winter storm!

“But let’s be quiet! Let’s be quiet! Let’s stand aside and out of the way. Here comes the King.”

A funeral procession entered the graveyard. The procession consisted of a priest, the corpse of Ophelia, Laertes, King Claudius and Queen Gertrude, a priest, and others.

Hamlet said, “I see the Queen, the courtiers, but whose corpse is this whom they follow? And with such truncated rites? This shows that the corpse they are following did with desperate hand take its own life. Because of the mourners, I can see that the corpse was highborn.

“Let us hide here for awhile, and watch.”

Hamlet and Horatio hid themselves.

Laertes asked, “What other funeral rites can be performed?”

Hamlet said to Horatio, “That is Laertes, a very noble youth. Look and listen.”

Again, Laertes asked, “What other funeral rites can be performed?”

The priest replied, "I have performed her obsequies as far as I am permitted. Her death was suspicious. If not for the King's command, she would have been buried in unsanctified ground and have stayed there until the sound of the last trumpet on the Day of Judgment. Instead of charitable prayers being said over her corpse, shards of pottery, flints, and pebbles would have been thrown on her. However, she has been allowed to have her virgin's garland, flowers strewn on her maiden's grave, the bell rung as she was carried to her grave, and a few other burial rites."

"Can't anything else be done for her?" Laertes asked.

"No more can be done," the priest said. "We would profane the service of the dead if for her we were to sing a solemn Mass and do other things we do for peacefully departed souls."

"Lay her in the earth," Laertes said, "and from her fair and unpolluted flesh may violets spring! I tell you, churlish priest, that my sister shall be a ministering angel while you lie howling in Hell."

Hamlet realized whose corpse was being buried: "What, the beautiful Ophelia!"

Queen Gertrude scattered flowers and said, "Sweets to the sweet. Farewell! I hoped that you would be my Hamlet's wife. I thought that I would strew your bride-bed and not your grave with flowers, sweet maiden."

"May treble woe fall ten times treble on that cursed head whose wicked deed deprived you of your most ingenious sense," Laertes said. "Don't throw earth on her corpse just yet. Wait until I have held her once more in my arms."

He jumped into the grave and said, "Now pile your dust upon the living and dead, until you have made a mountain on this flat area — a mountain higher than old Mount Pelion, or the

blue, sky-reaching head of Mount Olympus.”

Hamlet came forward and said, “Who is he whose grief bears such an emphasis? Who is he whose phrases of sorrow conjures the wandering planets, and makes them stand still like wonder-wounded hearers?”

“This is I: Hamlet the Dane.”

By calling himself “Hamlet the Dane,” Hamlet was asserting his right to the throne. “Hamlet the Dane” meant “Hamlet, rightful ruler of Denmark.”

Hamlet thought that Laertes was deliberately showing excessive grief, something that Hamlet considered to be the equivalent of a rhetorician’s trick.

Laertes climbed out of the grave and said to Hamlet, “May the Devil take your soul!”

Laertes began to grapple with Hamlet, who said, “You are not praying well. Please, take your fingers away from my throat. Although I am not irascible and rash, yet I have something dangerous in me that you in your wisdom ought to fear. Keep your hands off me.”

King Claudius ordered his attendants, “Separate them.”

Queen Gertrude said, “Hamlet, Hamlet!”

A number of people began to speak, “Gentlemen —”

Horatio said to Hamlet, “My good lord, be calm.”

The attendants separated Hamlet and Laertes.

“I will fight Laertes upon this theme until my eyelids can no longer move,” Hamlet said. “I will fight him until the least sign of life has left my body.”

“Oh, my son, what theme do you mean?” Queen Gertrude

asked.

“Love for Ophelia,” Hamlet replied. “I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up the sum of the love I felt for her.”

Hamlet then said, “Laertes, what will you do for her?”

King Claudius said, “Hamlet is mad, Laertes.”

“Laertes, for the love of God,” Queen Gertrude said, “have patience with Hamlet.”

“By God’s wounds,” Hamlet said to Laertes, “show me what you will do. Will you weep? Will you fight? Will you fast? Will you hurt yourself? Will you drink bitter vinegar? Will you eat a crocodile? Whatever you say that you will do, I will actually do it.

“Did you come here to whine? To outdo my love for Ophelia by leaping in her grave? If you will be buried alive with her, then so will I. And, if you prate about mountains, let them throw millions of acres on us, until our ground, singeing its top against the burning Sun, makes Mount Ossa look like a wart! If you rant with your mouth, I’ll rant as well as you.”

“This is a display of Hamlet’s madness,” Queen Gertrude said. “And thus for awhile the fit will work on him, but soon he will droop and be silent. He will be as patient as the female dove when her nestlings, covered with golden-yellow down, hatch out of their eggs.”

Hamlet said to Laertes, “Sir, listen to me. What is the reason that you are treating me this way? I have always respected you. But it does not matter. No matter how hard he tries, even Hercules can’t keep cats from meowing — and the dog will have its day.”

Hamlet exited.

King Claudius said, “Please, Horatio, go with him and look after him.”

Horatio followed Hamlet.

King Claudius said quietly to Laertes so that Queen Gertrude did not hear, “Strengthen your patience by remembering what we talked about last night. We will put our plan into action quickly. Ophelia’s grave shall have a long-lasting monument. We will have an hour of quiet, and then we will put our plan into action. Until then, be patient.”

— 5.2 —

Hamlet and Horatio talked together in a hall in the castle.

“So much for that,” Hamlet said. “Now let me tell you the other part of my story. Do you remember the background?”

“I remember, my lord,” Horatio replied.

“Sir, in my heart, while I was on the ship sailing to England, there was a kind of fighting that would not let me sleep. I thought that I lay more uncomfortably than failed mutineers in fetters. I then acted rashly — and let me praise rashness because rash actions sometimes serve us well when our carefully planned plots falter. That should teach us that a divinity shapes what happens to us although we ineffectually and roughly try to shape what happens to us.”

“That is most certain and true,” Horatio replied.

“Rashly, I got up from my cabin, with my long sea-coat wrapped about me. In the dark I groped to find Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. I found them, and I took the letter that King Claudius had given to them to give to the King of England. Finally, I withdrew to my own room again, where I made so bold — my fears making me forget my manners — to unseal the letter, which was their grand commission.

“Written in the letter I found, Horatio — oh, royal knavery! — an exact command, garnished with many different sorts of reasons about what is good for the King of Denmark and what is good for the King of England, too, with a description of the danger I would be if I remained alive, that the King of England, as soon as he had read this letter should without delay — even a delay to sharpen the axe — cut off my head.”

“Unbelievable!” Horatio said.

“Here’s the letter itself,” Hamlet replied, handing Horatio the document. “Read it when you have time. Do you want to know what I did?”

“Yes, please.”

“Being thus surrounded with villainies to ensnare me and before I could even begin to consciously think about it, my brain leapt into action — I sat down, thought up a new commission that would supposedly come from King Claudius, and wrote it in an official hand — bureaucrats have to have good handwriting. I used to think, as our statesmen do, that it was base and beneath me to have good handwriting. I even wanted to unlearn what I had learned. But, sir, good handwriting now did me good service. I also imitated the flowery language that King Claudius used in the letter. My forgery of an official letter was quite good. Do you want to know what I wrote?”

“Yes, my good lord.”

“I wrote an earnest command from King Claudius to the King of England. I wrote that as the King of England was his faithful tributary, as love and friendship ought to flourish between them like the palm tree, as peace ought to come with rural prosperity, and as peace ought to join them in friendship like a comma joins two parts of a sentence, and I wrote many other ‘as’es of great charge — or asses carrying a great burden. The commandment was that the bearers of

the letter ought to be put to death immediately — without first being given time to go to a priest for confession, penance, and absolution.”

“Official letters have official seals,” Horatio said. “How did you seal this letter?”

“Why, even in that was Heaven provident,” Hamlet replied. “I had my father’s signet ring in my possession; it was a replica of that Danish seal. I folded up the letter the same way as the original letter, signed it with the name of King Claudius, used my father’s signet ring to form an impression on the wax that sealed the letter, and replaced it safely. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern did not realize that the letter had been replaced.

“The following day, pirates attacked us, and you know what happened after that.”

“So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to their deaths,” Horatio said.

“Why, man, they made love to this employment given to them by King Claudius,” Hamlet said. “They were eager to serve him and carry out his orders. Their deaths will not disturb my conscience; their deaths will occur because of their own actions. It is dangerous for the baser sort of people to come in between the thrusts of dangerous rapiers wielded by angry and powerful enemies.”

“Why, what a King is this Claudius!” Horatio said.

“Claudius has killed my father the King and whored my mother, he came in between me and the circle of nobles who selected the next King and thus dashed my hope to be King, he has tried to get me killed with trickery despite our being kin. Don’t you think I have a right to take action? Wouldn’t it be perfect if I were to get revenge against him? Wouldn’t it be damnable to allow this canker — this cancer, this

malignant sore — of our human nature to commit further evil?”

“King Claudius will soon learn what has happened in England. He will learn that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead,” Horatio said.

“He will learn that soon, but I can act quickly,” Hamlet replied. “A man’s life’s is so short that he can do no more than to say ‘One’ before he dies. But I am very sorry, good Horatio, that I forgot myself when I saw Laertes. I should not have spoken to him the way I did. He and I are suffering the same kind of grief. By looking at the reflection of my cause, I see the portrait of his.”

Both Hamlet and Laertes were mourning the death of Ophelia, and both were mourning the death of their fathers. In Laertes’ case, however, it was Hamlet who had killed his father.

Hamlet continued, “I’ll court Laertes’ favor and try to be friends with him. But the passionate expression of his grief over Ophelia’s death certainly put me into a towering passion and anger.”

Horatio said, “I hear someone. Who is coming here?”

Osric, a foolish courtier, entered the room.

Osric took off his hat to show respect to Hamlet, who was higher in society than he was.

“Your lordship is very welcome back to Denmark,” Osric said to Hamlet.

“I humbly thank you, sir,” Hamlet replied.

Hamlet, who had little or no respect for Osric, asked Horatio, “Do you know this mosquito?”

“No, my good lord.”

“You are lucky, because it is unfortunate to know him,” Hamlet said. “He has much land, and it is fertile. Let a beast be the lord of beasts, and a plate for him shall be put on the King’s dining table. This man is a chatterer, but as I say, he enjoys the possession of a large quantity of dirt.”

“Sweet lord, if your lordship is at leisure, I would like to impart a thing to you from his majesty,” Osric said.

“I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit,” Hamlet said.

Osric was using fancy language, and so Hamlet was using fancy language as a form of mockery.

Hamlet added, “You have already shown courtesy to me by taking off your hat. That is enough courtesy. You may put your hat on your head again.”

Osric, who was a stickler for the rules of etiquette, replied, “I thank your lordship, but it is very hot.”

This was an excuse for him not to put on his hat in front of Prince Hamlet.

“No, believe me, it is very cold,” Hamlet said. “The wind is blowing from the north.”

“It is rather cold, my lord, indeed,” Osric said.

“But yet I think that it is very sultry and hot for my temperament,” Hamlet said.

“Exceedingly, my lord,” Osric replied. “It is very sultry, as it were — I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his majesty asked me to tell you that he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the message —”

“Please,” Hamlet said. He motioned for Osric to put on his hat.

“No, my good lord,” Osric said. “I am more comfortable like this, believe me.”

He added, “Sir, Laertes is newly come to court. Believe me, he is a perfect gentleman, full of most excellent distinguishing characteristics, of very pleasing manners and handsome appearance. Indeed, to speak justly of him, he is the model of gentlemanly behavior, for you shall find in him the container of whatever parts a gentleman would want to see in another gentleman.”

Hamlet continued to satirize Osric’s elevated language: “Sir, Laertes suffers no loss when you describe him, although, I know, to mention each item in his inventory of good qualities would dizzy the arithmetic of memory, and still lag behind because of his many excellences. But, in the truth of extolling his great qualities, I take him to be a soul of greatness. His infusion of such rare excellences is such that, to speak true diction of him, his only equal is the image in his mirror; and whoever would try to match him would be only his shadow, nothing more.”

“Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him,” Osric said.

“What is the concernancy, sir?” Hamlet said. “Why does this concern us? Why do we wrap the gentleman with our gasping breath — breath that gasps with admiration for him?”

“Sir?” Osric asked.

“Isn’t it possible to speak in another tongue?” Horatio asked. “Can’t you two use a simpler language? Not even Osric can understand this language. Eventually, you will have to use simpler language.”

Hamlet continued to use fancy language: “What imports the nomination — the naming — of this gentleman?”

“Of Laertes?”

“Osric’s purse is empty already,” Horatio said. “All his golden words are spent.”

“Yes, I mean him, sir,” Hamlet said.

“I know you are not ignorant —” Osric started to say.

“I wish you did know that I am not ignorant, sir,” Hamlet interrupted, “but yet, truly, if you did know that I am not ignorant, it still would not give me much credit. Well, sir?”

Osric tried to continue: “You are not ignorant of Laertes’ excellence —”

Hamlet interrupted, “I dare not confess that I know his excellence, lest I should be thought to be saying that I share his excellence. In order for me truly to understand his excellence, I would have to possess and demonstrate that I possess that excellence.”

“I mean, sir, Laertes’ excellence with his weapons,” Osric said. “In the opinion of people who are in his service, he is unequalled in excellence with them.”

“What’s his weapon?” Hamlet asked.

“Rapier and dagger,” Osric replied.

“That’s two of his weapons, but that is fine,” Hamlet said.

“King Claudius, sir, has wagered six Barbary horses that you can defeat Laertes, who has in turn impawned six French rapiers and daggers, with their accessories, including belts, straps attaching the sword to the belt, and so on. Three of the carriages, truly, are very well designed, very appropriate for the hilts, very finely wrought carriages, and very richly decorated.”

“What do you mean by the word ‘carriages’?” Hamlet asked.

“I knew that you would need explanatory notes in the margins — or footnotes or endnotes — before you were done talking to him,” Horatio said to Hamlet.

“The carriages, sir, are the hangers,” Osric said.

Osric was mistaken. Hangers were the straps attaching the sword to the belt. Carriages were wheeled structures used to transport cannon.

“The word would be more appropriate if we could carry cannon by our sides instead of swords,” Hamlet said. “Until then, I prefer that we continue to use the word ‘hangers.’”

“But let us move on. King Claudius has bet six Barbary horses, and Laertes has bet six French swords and their accessories, including three richly decorated ‘carriages.’ The things wagered show it is Denmark versus France.

“But what is this wager about? Why is this stuff — ‘impawned,’ you call it — being wagered?”

“King Claudius, sir, has bet that in a dozen bouts between yourself and Laertes, Laertes shall not defeat you by three bouts. Whoever touches the other with their blunted rapier will get a hit and win that bout. If Laertes wins eight bouts, he wins the bet; if you win five bouts, you win the bet for King Claudius. The bouts can begin right away if you vouchsafe — give me — your answer.”

“What if I answer ‘no’?” Hamlet asked.

“I mean, my lord, if you vouchsafe the opposition of your person in trial,” Osric said.

“Sir, I will walk here in the hall,” Hamlet replied. “If it pleases his majesty, it is the time of day for exercise with me. Let the foils — the rapiers — be brought, if the gentleman Laertes is willing, and if King Claudius wants the fencing match to proceed. I will win the fencing match for King

Claudius if I can; if I cannot, I will gain nothing but my shame and the hits that Laertes will give me.”

“Should I give this answer to the King?” Osric asked.

“Yes, sir,” Hamlet said. “Add to it whatever rhetorical flourishes you wish to add.”

“I commend my duty to your lordship,” Osric said.

The verb “commend” can mean either “present, aka offer” or “praise.” Osric meant he was presenting his duty to Hamlet — a fancy way of saying that he would run the errand for Hamlet.

“Yours,” Hamlet replied. This was a dismissal.

Osric put his hat on his head and left to run the errand.

Hamlet said to Horatio, “He does well to commend — to praise — his duty himself; no one else would praise it for him.”

“This young lapwing runs away with the eggshell on his head,” Horatio said.

Lapwings were proverbially young and stupid birds. They left the nest quickly after hatching from their eggs — so quickly that it was as if they still had a piece of the eggshell on top of their head.

Hamlet said about Osric’s excessive sense of etiquette and formality, “He used to bow courteously to his mother’s nipple, before he sucked it.

“This drossy age — this shoddy age with no sense of real nobility — dotes on Osric and many more of the same company, but they have only got the tune of the time and the outward habit of encounter. They look the part of a courtier, and they can make some of the sounds of a courtier, but they have no substance. They have a kind of yeasty collection of

rhetorical tricks that helps them mingle with — and impose on — men of very carefully considered and winnowed opinions. If all you do is blow on Osric and others like him, you blow away the bubbles and nothing remains.”

A lord entered the hall and said, “My lord, his majesty sent his compliments to you by young Osric, who brings back to him the news that you will attend him in the hall. He sent me to ask you if your pleasure is still to fence now with Laertes, or if you want to fence later.”

“I am constant to my purpose,” Hamlet said. “I will do whatever pleases the King. If he wants me to fence now, I am ready. If he wants me to fence later, I will fence later. Now or later are both fine, as long as I am as fit and ready to fence as I am now.”

“The King and Queen and all the others will come down to the hall now,” the lord said.

“In happy time,” Hamlet said. “Now is as good a time as any.”

“The Queen wants you to be courteous to Laertes before you begin to fence,” the lord said.

“She well instructs me,” Hamlet said. “I will do as she wishes.”

The Lord exited from the hall.

Horatio said, “You will lose this wager, my lord.”

“I do not think so,” Hamlet replied. “Ever since Laertes went to France, I have been continually practicing fencing. I shall win at the odds given — Laertes has been given a handicap. You cannot imagine how ill I feel here in my heart, but that does not matter.”

“My good lord —” Horatio began to say.

“It is only foolishness,” Hamlet interrupted. “It is such a kind of misgiving, such as would perhaps trouble a woman.”

“If your mind feels uneasy, listen to it,” Horatio replied. “I will stop them from coming here, and I will tell them that you are not ready to fence.”

“No,” Hamlet said. “We defy omens and the interpretation of omens. There’s a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.”

Hamlet was thinking of the Bible. Matthew 10:29-31 recounts the words of Jesus when he was reassuring his disciples, “*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*”

Hamlet continued, “If death comes now, death will not come later. If death does not come later, death will come now. If death does not come now, then death must come later. The readiness is all. Since no man knows anything about what he leaves, what does it matter if he dies now?”

Again, Hamlet was thinking of the Bible. Matthew 24:44 states, “*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*” We must always be ready for death. And since we do not know what we leave behind, we ought not to fear an early death. An early death may stop us from having a long and wretched life.

Hamlet heard a noise and said, “But let’s say no more.”

King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Laertes, some lords, Osric, and some attendants entered the hall. The attendants brought such items as rapiers.

“Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me,” King Claudius, who was holding Laertes’ hand, said.

King Claudius put Laertes' hand into Hamlet's hand.

Hamlet said politely to Laertes, "Give me your pardon, sir; I've done you wrong. But pardon it, as you are a gentleman. This presence — this assembly of people — knows, and you must have heard, how I am punished with sore distraction — severe mental distress. What I have done that might roughly awake your natural filial feelings, honor, and disapproval, I here proclaim was done due to my madness.

"Was it Hamlet who wronged Laertes? Never was it Hamlet. If Hamlet is taken away from himself, and when he is not himself he does wrong Laertes, then Hamlet does not do it — Hamlet denies doing it. Hamlet is not responsible for his action.

"Who does it, then? His madness. If this is true, then Hamlet is one of the people who are wronged. His own madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

"Sir, in front of this audience, I proclaim my innocence and I disavow all intended and intentional evil. Let this free me so far in your most generous thoughts — believe that I have shot my arrow over the house, and hurt my brother. I have not done anything with the intention to hurt you."

How are Hamlet and Laertes like brothers? They both loved Ophelia, and they both suffered the death of Ophelia and the killing of their father.

Laertes replied, "I am satisfied so far as natural feeling goes, although the deaths of my father and my sister ought to drive me to seek revenge — but I am not satisfied so far as my honor is concerned. I will not be reconciled with you until some elder masters, of known honor, give me a statement based on precedent that favors peace and reconciliation and will keep my name and reputation unsullied. But until that time, I accept your offered friendship as friendship, and I will not wrong or spurn it."

Despite his words, Laertes was still planning to kill Hamlet in the fencing contest.

“I am grateful that you accept my offered friendship,” Hamlet said. “And I will frankly and freely participate in this wager between brothers.”

He said to the attendants, “Give us the foils — the rapiers.”

“Give me a foil,” Laertes said.

“I’ll be your foil, Laertes,” Hamlet said. “Against the background of my ignorance of fencing, your skill shall, like a star in the darkest night, stick out as fiery indeed.”

Hamlet was punning on the word “foil.” One meaning of “foil” was “rapier”; another was “setting for a rich gem.” The foil was designed to show off the rich gem to best advantage.

“You mock me, sir,” Laertes said.

“No, I swear it by this hand,” Hamlet said, holding up a hand.

“Give them the foils, young Osric,” King Claudius said.

He added, “Kinsman Hamlet, do you know the wager?”

“Very well, my lord,” Hamlet said. “Your grace has wagered on the weaker side.”

“I do not fear betting on you to win,” King Claudius replied. “I have seen you both fence. But since Laertes is better, we therefore have odds. Laertes has a handicap.”

Laertes said, “This rapier is too heavy; let me see another.”

He was being careful to get the rapier whose point was not blunted and to whose point poison had been applied.

“I like this rapier well,” Hamlet said. “These foils are all the same length?”

“Yes, my good lord,” Osric answered.

A fencer with a longer rapier than the other fencer would have an unfair advantage.

“Set the flagons of wine upon that table,” King Claudius ordered. “If Hamlet gives the first or second hit, or after having lost the first two bouts wins the third bout, let all the battlements their cannon fire. The King shall drink to Hamlet’s better breath and enhanced vigor, and he will throw a union in the cup of wine. This union shall be richer than any that four successive Kings of Denmark have worn in their crown.”

A union is a very valuable pearl, one valuable enough to be worn in the crown of a King. The wine would dissolve the pearl, something that was supposed to honor Hamlet, who would drink the wine.

King Claudius continued, “Give me the cups. And let the kettledrum speak to the trumpet, and the trumpet speak to the cannoneers outside, and the cannons speak to the Heavens, and the Heavens speak to the Earth, and let them all say, ‘Now the King drinks to Hamlet.’”

“Come, begin the fencing contest. You judges, keep a close eye on the contest.”

“Come on, sir,” Hamlet said to Laertes.

“Come on, my lord,” Laertes replied.

They fenced.

“One,” Hamlet said. “I have hit you. I have touched you with the point of my rapier.”

“No,” Laertes said.

“Judgment,” Hamlet requested of the judges.

“A hit, a very palpable hit,” Osric said.

“Well, so be it,” Laertes said. “Let us fence again.”

“Wait,” King Claudius said. “Give me a drink. Hamlet, this pearl is yours. Here’s to your health.”

King Claudius drank, and kettledrums and trumpets sounded and the cannons fired.

King Claudius put the pearl and some poison in a cup of wine and said, “Give Hamlet the cup.”

“I’ll play this bout first,” Hamlet said. “Set the cup of wine aside for awhile.”

He said to Laertes, “Come on.”

They fenced, and Hamlet said, “Another hit; what do you say?”

“A touch, a touch, I do confess it,” Laertes replied.

“Our son shall win,” King Claudius said.

“He’s sweaty, and out of breath,” Queen Gertrude said. “Here, Hamlet, take my handkerchief and rub your brows. The Queen drinks to your fortune, Hamlet.”

She picked up the cup of poisoned wine.

“Good madam,” Hamlet saluted her.

“Gertrude, do not drink,” King Claudius said.

“I will, my lord,” Queen Gertrude said. “Please, pardon me.”

She drank.

King Claudius thought, *It is the poisoned cup: it is too late to save her life.*

Hamlet said to his mother, “I dare not drink yet, madam, but

I will by and by.”

“Come, let me wipe your face,” she said.

“My lord, I’ll get a hit against him now,” Laertes said.

“I do not think so,” the King replied.

Hamlet’s skill in fencing had impressed Laertes, who thought, *And yet it almost goes against my conscience to kill him.*

To use poison in what was supposed to be a friendly fencing contest was a violation of honor, as was using an unblunted rapier against an opponent who was using a blunt rapier.

“Come on, let us fight the third bout, Laertes,” Hamlet said. “You are only dallying, not fencing. Please, make your thrust with the utmost force that you can. I am afraid that you are treating me as if I were a child.”

“Do you think that?” Laertes said. “Come on and fence!”

They fenced.

“Nothing, either way,” Osric said. “No hits scored.”

“Have at you now!” Laertes said.

They fenced, and Laertes wounded Hamlet. They wrestled, dropped their rapiers, and picked up each other’s rapier. Hamlet now had the poisoned rapier.

“Part them; they are incensed,” King Claudius ordered.

“No,” Hamlet said.

He said to Laertes, “Come, let us fence again.”

They fenced, and Hamlet wounded Laertes.

Queen Gertrude fell.

“Look after the Queen!” Osric shouted. “Stop the fencing!”

“Both Hamlet and Laertes are bleeding,” Horatio said. “The points of their rapiers ought to have been blunted.”

He asked Hamlet, “How are you, my lord?”

Osric asked Laertes, “How are you, my lord?”

Laertes replied, “Why, I am like a famously foolish woodcock captured in my own trap, Osric. I am justly killed because of my own treachery.”

“How is the Queen?” Hamlet asked.

“She fainted when she saw them bleed,” King Claudius said.

“No, no, the drink, the drink — oh, my dear Hamlet — the drink, the drink! I am poisoned,” Queen Gertrude said.

She died.

“Villainy!” Hamlet shouted. “Lock the door! Treachery! Find the source of the treachery!”

“It is here, Hamlet,” Laertes said. “Hamlet, you are slain. No medicine in the world can do you any good. You have not half an hour of life left. The treacherous instrument is in your hand; its sharp point has been dipped in poison. The foul trickery has turned itself on me. Here I lie, never to rise again. Your mother has been poisoned. I will live no more. The King — the King’s to blame.”

“The sharp point of this rapier!” Hamlet said. “Dipped in poison, too! Then, venom, do your work.”

Hamlet stabbed King Claudius.

People shouted, “Treason! Treason!”

“Defend me, friends,” King Claudius pleaded. “I am only wounded.”

“Here, you incestuous, murderous, damned Dane, drink the rest of this poisoned potion.”

Hamlet forced King Claudius to drink the poison.

As King Claudius died, Hamlet said to him, “Is your union here? Follow my mother.”

Even now Hamlet was able to pun. “Union” meant both “valuable pearl” and “marriage between King Claudius and Queen Gertrude.”

“He is justly served,” Laertes said. “It is a poison he himself mixed. Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. My death and my father’s death will not fall upon you, and your death will not fall on me. We will forgive each other.”

“May Heaven absolve you of blame!” Hamlet said. “I follow you. I am dead, Horatio. Wretched Queen, *adieu!*”

“Those of you who look pale and tremble at this mischance, who are only mutes or audience to this act, if I only had time — this fell sergeant, death, is strict in his arrest and will not give me time — I could tell you ... but let it be.

“Horatio, I am dead, but you live. To those who do not know, tell them about me and my reasons for acting the way I have.”

“No,” Horatio said. “Don’t believe that I will do that. I am more an ancient Roman than a Dane. I am willing to commit suicide. There is still some poisoned wine left in the cup.”

Horatio picked up the cup, but Hamlet grabbed his arms and said, “As you are a man, give me the cup. Let go — by Heaven, I will have it.”

He wrestled the cup away from Horatio and said, “Good Horatio, I shall leave a badly wounded reputation behind me unless people understand why I acted the way I have acted.

If you have ever regarded me as a friend in your heart, absent you from happiness for awhile — stay out of Paradise for awhile — and in this harsh world draw your breath in pain. That way, you can tell other people my story.”

The sound of marching soldiers and the sound of firing cannons were heard.

Hamlet asked, “What warlike noise is this?”

Osric came back from the door and said, “Young Fortinbras, coming victorious from Poland, gives this warlike volley to salute the also newly arrived ambassadors from England.”

“I am dying, Horatio,” Hamlet said. “The potent poison quite conquers my spirit. I will not live to hear the news from England. But I do prophesy that the nobles will select Fortinbras to be the next King of Denmark. He has my dying voice and recommendation; I want him to succeed me. So tell him my story, as I have urged you, with all its occurrences, greater and lesser.”

He paused and then said, “The rest is silence.”

He gave a long sigh and died.

“Now stops a noble heart,” Horatio said. “Good night, sweet Prince, and may flights of angels sing you to your rest!”

Drums sounded, and Horatio asked, “Why are the drums coming toward us?”

Young Fortinbras, the English ambassadors, and others entered the hall.

“Where is what I have come to see?” Fortinbras said.

“What is it you want to see?” Horatio replied. “If you want to see sights of woe or wonder, sorrow or disaster, cease your search.”

Fortinbras looked at all the dead bodies and said, “This quarry cries on havoc.”

The word “quarry” was a hunting term that meant “a heap of slain animals.” “To cry on havoc” meant “to loudly proclaim great slaughter.”

Fortinbras continued, “Proud death, what feast is being prepared in your eternal cell, that you so many Princes at a shot so bloodily have struck down?”

An English ambassador said, “This sight is dismal; and our news from England has come too late. The ears — those of King Claudius — are senseless that should have listened to our news. We came here to tell him that his commandment has been fulfilled — Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. From whom should we now have our thanks?”

“Not from King Claudius’ mouth, even if he were alive to thank you,” Horatio said. “He never gave the order for their death.

“But since you, Fortinbras, who have come from the war in Poland, and you, ambassadors from England, have all here arrived opportunely at this bloody time, please give orders that these bodies be placed high on a platform so that people can view them, and let me speak to the yet unknowing world and say how these things came about.

“You shall hear about carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts, about divine justice administered by what seem to be accidents, about slaughters due to chance, about deaths instigated by cunning and foul means, and, in this upshot, about purposes mistook that fell back on their inventors’ heads.

“I can tell you about all of these things.”

“Let us make haste to hear what you have to say,” Fortinbras

said. “We will call the noblest people to be in the audience.

“As for me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune. I have some still-remembered rights in this Kingdom, and now circumstances allow me to claim my rights. I have some claim to be the King of Denmark.”

“Of that I shall also have cause to speak,” Horatio said. “And I will talk about the words that Hamlet said as he lay dying; he gave you his voice and recommendation, and those will encourage other nobles to make you King.

“But let what I have recommended be immediately done. Men’s minds are wild because they do not know Hamlet’s story. More misfortunes may happen unless we stop plots and correct errors.”

“Let four Captains bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the platform,” Fortinbras said. “Hamlet was likely, had he been put on the throne, to have proved to be most royal. To mark his passing, soldiers’ music and the rites of war — such as saluting him with a volley of shots — will speak loudly for him.

“Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this becomes a battlefield, but here it is much amiss.

“Go, order the soldiers to shoot a volley of shots to honor Hamlet.”

Marching music sounded. They carried away the bodies, and a salute of gunshots sounded.

AFTERWORD

A question: According to Hamlet's own beliefs, will he end up in Heaven or in Hell?

Chapter IV: JULIUS CAESAR**PREFACE**

For hundreds of years, the Romans had a republic rather than a kingdom. Many influential Romans, however, were afraid that Julius Caesar wanted to be King of the Romans, and they were determined to stop him. Shakespeare's play tells what happened to Caesar and to those people who conspired against him.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Male Characters

Julius Caesar

Octavius Caesar, Marcus Antonius, M. Aemilius Lepidus,
triumvirs after the death of Julius Caesar

Cicero, Publius, Popilius Lena, Senators

Marcus Brutus, Caius Cassius, Casca, Trebonius,
^L_{SEP}Ligarius, Decius Brutus, Metellus Cimber, Cinna,
conspirators against Julius Caesar

Flavius and Marullus, tribunes

Artemidorus, a sophist of Cnidos

A Soothsayer

Cinna, a poet

Another Poet

Lucilius, Titinius, Messala, Young Cato, Volumnius, friends
to Brutus and Cassius

Varro, Clitus, Claudius, Strato, Lucius, Dardanius, servants
to Brutus

Pindarus, servant to Cassius

Female Characters

Calpurnia, wife to Caesar

Portia, wife to Brutus

Minor Characters

Commoners, or Plebeians, of Rome; Senators, Guards,
Attendants, etc.

CHAPTER 1**— 1.1 —**

On a street in Rome, some skilled workers, including a carpenter and a cobbler, were celebrating the triumphal procession of Julius Caesar, who had defeated his political rival, Pompey, and Pompey's two sons, in a civil war. Now Julius Caesar held the power in Rome, and some Roman citizens worried that he wanted to be King. To be King, he would have to do away with the Roman Republic.

Two Roman tribunes named Flavius and Marullus arrived. They were angry at the commoners for celebrating Julius Caesar's victory.

Flavius said to the commoners, "Get away from here! Go home, you idle creatures, go home! Is this a holiday? Don't you mechanicals — you laborers — know that you ought not walk on these streets on a work day unless you are wearing work clothes and carrying the tools of your profession?"

He asked one of the laborers, "Tell me, what is your trade?"

"Why, sir, I am a carpenter."

Marullus said to him, "Where are your leather apron and your ruler? Why are you wearing your best clothing?"

He asked another laborer, "You, sir, what trade do you follow?"

"Truly, sir, compared to a fine workman, I am only, as you would say, a cobbler."

Marullus misheard him: "A bungler? No doubt. But what trade do you follow?"

The cobbler, who was in a joking mood, replied, "A trade, sir, that I hope I may practice with a safe conscience. I am indeed, sir, a mender of bad soles."

Marullus, understanding this to mean that the person repaired bad souls, asked again, "What trade do you follow, you knave? You worthless knave, what trade do you follow?"

The cobbler replied, "Sir, please do not be out with me, but if you are out, sir, I can mend you."

The cobbler smiled, thinking, *That was a good joke: "Sir, please do not be out of patience with me, but if you are out of shoes — that is, if your shoes are worn out — sir, I can mend you — that is, I can mend your shoes or I can improve your character."*

Marullus, who did not understand the joke, said, "What do you mean by that? What do you mean by 'mend me,' you saucy fellow!"

"Why, sir, I can cobble you."

Flavius interrupted, "So you are a cobbler, are you?"

"Truly, sir, I make my living by using the awl to pierce holes. I meddle with no tradesman's matters, nor women's matters, except with an awl to pierce holes."

The cobbler smiled, thinking, *That is another good joke. I use a tool like an awl to pierce a woman's hole.*

He added, "I am, indeed, sir, a surgeon to old shoes; when they are in great danger, I recover — that is, repair — them. As proper men as have ever trod upon cowhide have trod upon my handiwork — many men of standing have trod the ground while wearing my shoes."

Flavius asked, "But why aren't you working in your shop today? Why are you leading these men about the streets?"

The cobbler joked, "Truly, sir, I am trying to wear out their shoes, to get myself more work. But, indeed, sir, we are taking a holiday today so that we can see Julius Caesar and rejoice in his triumph."

Marullus said, "What is there to rejoice at? What conquest of foreign foes has he made? What captured enemies has he brought to Rome to be displayed in captive bonds beside his chariot-wheels? You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things! You hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome — don't you remember Pompey? You used to often climb up on walls and battlements, climb up towers and look out windows, and climb chimney-tops, with your

infants in your arms, and there you used to sit the entire day, with patient expectation, to see great Pompey pass through the streets of Rome. When you saw his chariot appear, you used to shout all together and make the Tiber River tremble underneath her banks as your shouts echoed along its overhanging riverbanks. And now you put on your best clothing? And now you call this a holiday? And now you strew flowers in the way of the man who comes in triumph over Pompey's blood? Caesar defeated and killed Pompey's two sons. You workmen, go away from here! Run to your houses, fall upon your knees, and pray to the gods to hold back the plague that ought to come to punish this ingratitude."

Flavius said, "Go, go, good countrymen, and, to expiate this fault of yours, assemble all the poor men of your sort, take them to the banks of the Tiber River, and weep your tears into the river until the lowest part of the stream rises up to the highest riverbanks."

The commoners departed.

Flavius said to Marullus, "The commoners seem to be moved in the right way — they vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness. You go down that way towards the Capitol — the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill — and I will go this way. If you see any statues decorated with Caesar's trophies, strip them."

Marullus asked, "May we do so? You know it is the Feast of Lupercal. Now is when we hold a feast day to honor the fertility god Lupercus. Won't it be sacrilegious to strip the statues?"

Flavius replied, "It doesn't matter. Let no statues be hung with Caesar's trophies — with decorations to honor Julius Caesar. I will go around and drive away the commoners from the streets. You do the same thing when you see many commoners gathered together. We need to restrain these early signs of enthusiasm for Caesar. That will keep him from flying so high above us that we will all feel servile and

fearful. If we can pluck some of his feathers now, we can keep him from flying high above us.”

— 1.2 —

In a public place in Rome were standing Julius Caesar, Calpurnia (Caesar’s wife), Brutus, Portia (Brutus’ wife), Mark Antony, Decius Brutus, Cicero, Caius Cassius, and Casca. A great crowd of people, among them a soothsayer (fortune teller), were around them. Trumpets occasionally sounded. Marullus and Flavius now came walking up to the group of people; they had arrived too late to keep the commoners from gathering around Caesar.

Caesar said, “Calpurnia!”

Casca ordered, “Everyone, be quiet. Caesar is speaking.”

Caesar said again, “Calpurnia!”

Calpurnia replied, “Here I am, my lord.”

“Mark Antony will be one of the young men running naked through the streets and touching spectators with leather thongs to celebrate the Feast of Lupercal,” Caesar said. “Make sure that you stand directly in Mark Antony’s way when he runs.”

He then called, “Antony!”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Do not forget when you are running naked through the streets to touch Calpurnia because our wise men say that barren women, when touched in this holy chase, will be cured of the curse of sterility.”

“I shall remember to do so,” Antony replied. “When Caesar says, ‘Do this,’ it will be done.”

“Let us proceed,” Caesar said. “We will observe all the rites.”

The soothsayer in the crowd called, “Caesar!”

“Who is calling me?” Caesar asked.

Casca ordered, “Let all noise stop. Again, be quiet!”

“Who in the press of people is calling my name? I hear a voice, shriller than all the music, crying, ‘Caesar!’ Speak to me. Caesar is ready to listen to you.”

The soothsayer called, “Beware the Ides of March — beware March 15.”

“Which man is saying that?” Caesar asked.

One of Caesar’s friends, Brutus, replied, “A soothsayer tells you to beware the Ides of March.”

“Set him before me; let me see his face.”

“Soothsayer, come from the crowd,” Cassius said. “Look at Caesar.”

“What have you to say to me now?” Caesar asked. “Speak once again.”

“Beware the Ides of March.”

“He is a dreamer,” Caesar said. “Let us leave him. Let us pass him.”

Everyone departed except for Brutus and Cassius. The two men were brothers-in-law. Cassius was married to one of Brutus’ three sisters.

Cassius asked Brutus, “Will you go and see the progress of the race?”

“No,” Brutus replied.

“Please, do so.”

“I am not a merry fellow who is fond of games,” Brutus said. “I lack the quick and lively spirit that Mark Antony has in abundance. But do not let me stop you from enjoying the race, Cassius.”

“Brutus, I have lately been observing you. You no longer look at me with that gentleness and show of friendship that you used to have for me. You are intent on having your own way, and you are treating me less than as a friend although I still love and respect you.”

“Cassius, do not be deceived. If I have veiled my face and not shown my true feelings, I do so because I turn my troubled looks only upon myself. Recently, I have been vexed with greatly conflicting emotions that concern only

myself. This perhaps has changed my behavior. But my good friends should not therefore grieve — and I count you, Cassius, among my good friends. Do not interpret my neglect of my friends as meaning anything more than that I am at war with myself and therefore I forget to show my friendship to my friends.”

“Then, Brutus, I have much misunderstood your feelings. Because of that, I have not told you certain important thoughts of great value — they are worthy cogitations. Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your own face?”

“No, Cassius, I cannot. The eye cannot see itself unless it is reflected by something such as a mirror or a calm surface of water.”

“That is true, and it is very much to be lamented, Brutus, that you have no such mirrors as will reflect your hidden worthiness to your eye, so that you might see your reflection. I have heard many people of the highest importance in Rome, except for immortal Caesar, speak about you and wish that noble Brutus could see what they see.”

“Into what dangers are you trying to lead me, Cassius, that you want me to seek within myself for qualities that are not in me?”

“Good Brutus, listen to me. Since you know that the best way to see yourself is by reflection, I will be your mirror and without exaggeration reveal to yourself things about yourself that you do not know. Do not be suspicious of me, noble Brutus. Regard me as dangerous if you know that I am a common laughingstock, or if you know that I am accustomed to cheapen my friendship by promising it with clichéd oaths to every new person who comes along, or if you know that I pretend to be friends with men and hug them hard and afterwards slander them, or if you know that I make professions of friendship to everyone after I have had a few drinks.”

A great shout arose in the distance.

“What does this shouting mean?” Brutus asked. “I am afraid that the Roman people have chosen Caesar to be their King.”

“Are you afraid of that?” Cassius asked. “Then I have to think that you do not want Julius Caesar to be King.”

“I do not want Caesar to be King, Cassius, although I love and respect Caesar. But why are you keeping me here so long? What is it that you want to say to me? If you want me to do something for the general good — the public welfare — then I would do it even if it meant that I would die. I pray that the gods help me only as long as I love the name of honor more than I fear death.”

“I know that virtue is in you, Brutus, as well as I know your outward appearance,” Cassius said. “Honor is what I want to talk to you about. I cannot tell what you and other men think about this life, but speaking for myself, I would rather be dead than live in awe of someone who is just a man like myself. I was born as free as Caesar; so were you. We both have eaten as well as Caesar, and we both can endure the winter’s cold as well as he. I remember that once, on a raw and gusty day, when the troubled Tiber River was raging against the restraint of her banks, Caesar said to me, ‘Do you dare, Cassius, to now leap in with me into this angry flood, and swim to that point over there?’ Hearing that, fully dressed as I was, I plunged in and bade him to follow me. He also jumped into the river. The torrent roared, and we fought against it with strong arms, throwing it aside and making progress and competing against each other and the river. But before we could arrive at the point that Caesar had proposed, he cried, ‘Help me, Cassius, or I will sink and drown!’ Aeneas, our great ancestor, had put his aged father upon his shoulder and carried him away from the flames of Troy. I did the same thing: I put the tired Caesar upon my shoulder and carried him out of the Tiber River. And this man — Caesar — has now become a god, and Cassius is only a wretched creature who must bend his body and bow

whenever Caesar carelessly nods at him. Caesar had a fever when he was in Spain, and when the fit was on him, I noticed how he shook. It is true: This god did shake. He went pale, color fled from his coward lips, and that same eye whose glance awes the world lost its luster. I heard him groan — indeed, I did — and that tongue of his that makes the Romans take notice of him and even copy his speeches into their books cried, ‘Give me something to drink, Titinius,’ as if he were a sick girl. By the gods, it amazes me that a man of such a feeble constitution has outraced the world and seized power and carried away the victor’s crown of palm leaves.”

The crowd of people around Caesar shouted again.

“I hear another great shout!” Brutus said. “I do believe that these shouts are for some new honors that are heaped on Caesar.”

“Caesar straddles the world like the Colossus of Rhodes — a huge statue that is said to have spanned the entrance to the harbor of the Greek island of Rhodes,” Cassius said. “We petty men walk under Caesar’s huge legs and peep about and find ourselves dishonorable graves. Men at some time are masters of their fates: The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, if we find that we are only underlings.

“Think of the names Brutus and Caesar. What is special about that ‘Caesar’? Why should that name be sounded more than yours? Write them together. Your name is as fair a name as his name. Say the two names. Your name fills the mouth as well as his name. Weigh the two names. Your name is as heavy as his name. Conjure up spirits with the two names. The name ‘Brutus’ will raise a spirit as quickly as will the name ‘Caesar.’

“Now, in the names of all the gods at once, what meat has this Caesar eaten that he is grown so great? Our era should be ashamed! Rome, you have lost the breed of noble-blooded men! You are not raising men of notable worth! Since the great flood that Zeus, King of gods and men, sent to punish Humankind — a great flood that only one man and

only one woman survived — when has there ever been an era in which only one man was considered great! When could people say until now, when they talked about Rome, that her wide walls contained only one man? Now Rome indeed has plenty of room, because only one man is in it.

“You and I have heard our fathers say that there was a Brutus once who would have allowed the eternal devil to rule Rome exactly as much as he would have allowed a King to rule Rome!”

Cassius was referring to an ancestor of Brutus — Lucius Junius Brutus — who had driven the last King out of Rome in the 6th century BCE and had founded the Roman Republic.

Brutus replied, “That you do love and respect me, I have no doubt. What you would persuade me to do, I have some idea. How I have thought of this and of these times, I shall tell you at a later time; at present, I will not, so respectfully I ask you not to try to persuade me to do anything. I will think about what you have said. What you have to say to me later, I will patiently listen to, and I will find a suitable time when we can meet and discuss such important matters.

“Until then, my noble friend, think about this: Brutus would prefer to be a villager than to be known as a son of Rome under the hard conditions that this time is likely to lay upon us.”

“I am glad that my weak words have struck even this much show of fire from Brutus,” Cassius said.

“The games are done and Caesar is returning,” Brutus said.

“As Caesar and the others walk by us, grab Casca’s sleeve,” Cassius said. “He will, after his sour fashion, tell you what has happened that is worthy of note today.”

Caesar and his band of followers walked toward Brutus and Cassius.

“I will do as you say,” Brutus said. “But, look, Cassius, an angry spot glows on Caesar’s brow, and all the rest look

like they have been scolded. Calpurnia's cheek is pale; and Cicero looks around with fiery and angry eyes like a ferret hunting rats. We have seen him look this way in the Capitol after some Senators have opposed him in debate."

"Casca will tell us what has happened."

Caesar said, "Antony!"

"Caesar?" Antony answered.

"Let me have men about me who are fat, who smoothly comb their hair, and who sleep throughout the night. Cassius over there has a lean and hungry look; he thinks too much. Such men are dangerous."

"Do not fear him," Antony said. "He is not dangerous. He is a noble Roman and has a good reputation."

"I wish that he were fatter!" Julius Caesar replied. "But I do not fear him. Yet if I had any tendency to be afraid, I do not know the man I would avoid as quickly as that lean Cassius. He reads much. He is a great observer, and he looks at the deeds of men and understands the men's motives. He does not love to watch plays the way that you do, Antony. He does not listen to music. He seldom smiles, and when he does smile, he smiles as if he is mocking himself because he is smiling at something. Such men as he are never comfortable when they see a greater man than themselves, and therefore they are very dangerous."

"I am telling you what ought to be feared rather than what I fear; for always I am Caesar and I am afraid of nothing."

"Come over to my right side because my left ear is deaf, and tell me truly what you think about Cassius."

Everybody left except for Brutus, Cassius, and Casca, who said to Brutus, "You pulled me by my cloak. Do you want to speak to me?"

"Yes, Casca. Tell us what happened just now. Why does Caesar look so serious?"

"Why, you were with him, weren't you?"

Brutus replied, "If I had been with him, I would not now be asking you what happened."

"Why, the crown of a King was offered to Caesar, who pushed it away with the back of his hand, and then people began to shout."

"What was the second shout we heard for?"

"Why, that was for the same reason. Caesar was offered the crown a second time."

Cassius said, "The people shouted three times. What was the last cry for?"

"Why, for that same reason, too."

Brutus asked, "Was the Kingly crown offered to Caesar three times?"

"Yes, it was," Casca answered. "Caesar pushed it away three times, each time gentler than the previous time. Each time he pushed it away, the crowd of respectable people around me shouted."

Cassius asked, "Who offered Caesar the crown?"

"Why, Antony," Casca replied.

"Tell us how everything happened, noble Casca," Brutus requested.

"I can as well be hanged as tell you how it happened," Casca said. "It was mere foolery, and so I did not pay attention to it. I saw Mark Antony offer Caesar a crown — and yet it was not a crown — it was one of these coronets. As I told you, Caesar pushed it away the first time Antony offered it to him — but, for all that, I think that Caesar wanted to have it. Then Antony offered it to him again, and again Caesar pushed it away — and again I think that he hated to let go of it. And then Antony offered it the third time, and Caesar pushed it away the third time. Each time he refused the crown, the rabble hooted and clapped their chapped hands and threw into the air their sweaty caps and breathed out a huge amount of stinking breath because Caesar refused the crown. Their stinking breath almost choked Caesar — he fainted and fell down at it. As for

myself, I dared not laugh for fear of opening my lips and breathing in the bad air.”

“Did you say that Caesar fainted?” Cassius asked.

“He fell down in the marketplace, and foamed at the mouth, and was speechless.”

“It is very likely that he has the falling sickness — epilepsy,” Brutus said.

Cassius said, “No, Caesar does not have the falling sickness, but you and I and honest Casca, we have the falling sickness. We have fallen.”

“I do not know what you mean by that, but I am sure that Caesar fell down,” Casca said. “If the rag-tag people did not applaud him and hiss him, accordingly as he pleased or displeased them, as they are accustomed to treat the actors in the theater, I am no true man.”

“What did Caesar say when he regained consciousness?” Brutus asked.

“Before he fell down, when he perceived that the common herd was glad that he refused the crown, he opened his jacket and offered them his throat to cut. If I had been a common laborer, I wish I would go to Hell among the rogues if I had not taken him at his word. If I had been a common laborer, I would have cut his throat. Caesar fell then. When he came to himself again, he said that if he had done or said anything amiss, he wanted the crowd of people to think it was because of his infirmity. Three or four young women who were standing near me cried, ‘Alas, good soul!’ and forgave him with all their hearts, but we do not need to pay any attention to them. If Caesar had stabbed their mothers, they would have done the same thing.”

“And after that, he went away, sad and serious?” Brutus asked.

“Yes.”

“Did Cicero say anything?” Cassius asked.

“Yes, he spoke Greek.”

“To what purpose? What was the content of what he said?”

“I don’t know. If I could tell you that, I would never look you again in the face; however, those who understood Greek smiled at one another and shook their heads. As for myself, it was Greek to me and I did not understand it. But I can tell you some news: Marullus and Flavius, because they pulled decorations off the statues of Caesar, have been deprived of their positions as Tribunes who speak for the people — they have been silenced. Farewell. There was more foolery, if I could remember it.”

“Will you eat with me tonight, Casca?” Cassius asked.

“No, I have promised to eat with someone else.”

“Will you dine with me tomorrow?”

“Yes, if I am still alive and you haven’t changed your mind and your dinner is worth eating.”

“Good. I will expect you tomorrow.”

“Do so. Farewell, both of you.”

He left.

“What a blunt fellow has Casca grown to be!” Brutus said. “He had a quick mind when he was going to school.”

“He still has a quick mind when it comes to taking action in any bold or noble enterprise,” Cassius said. “However, he pretends to be insensitive and careless. This rudeness of his is a sauce to his good intelligence; it gives men the stomach to digest his words with better appetite.”

“You know him well,” Brutus said. “At this time I will leave you. Tomorrow, if you want to speak with me, I will go to your house, or, if you prefer, you can come to my house. I will stay there until you come.”

“I will come to your house tomorrow,” Cassius said. “Until then, think of the state of the world.”

Brutus left.

Cassius said to himself, “Well, Brutus, you are noble, yet I see that your honorable metal and mettle may be bent into a new shape. Because such a thing can happen, it is fitting

that noble minds keep company always with other noble minds because who is so firm and incorruptible that he cannot be seduced and corrupted? Caesar has a grudge against me and barely tolerates my presence, but he loves and respects Brutus. If I were Brutus and he were Cassius, he would not be able to manipulate me. I will this night throw through his windows several letters, written in different kinds of handwriting so that they look like they have come from several citizens. The letters will testify to the great opinion that Roman citizens hold of you, Brutus, and your name. They will also hint at the ambition of Caesar. Soon, Caesar had better brace himself because we will shake him and undermine him or suffer the consequences of failure. If we do not stop Julius Caesar from becoming King, worse days will follow.”

— 1.3 —

On a street in Rome, Casca, with his sword drawn, met Cicero. Thunder sounded and lightning flashed.

Cicero recognized Casca and said, “Good evening, Casca. Did you escort Caesar home? Why are you breathless? And why do you stare in that way?”

“Are you not moved when all the realm of the Earth shakes like a thing unsteady and insecure? Cicero, I have seen tempests when the scolding winds have split knotty oaks, and I have seen the ocean swell and rage and foam as if it were ambitious and wanted to be exalted with the threatening storm clouds. But never until tonight, never until now, have I gone through a tempest that drops fire! Either a civil war is going on in Heaven, or else the world, too saucy and insolent toward the gods, has incited them to send destruction upon it!”

“Why, have you seen you anything more wonderful than lightning and thunderbolts?” Cicero asked.

“I have seen a common slave — you know him well by sight — hold up his left hand, which did flame and burn like twenty torches joined together, and yet his hand, not feeling the fire, remained unburned. In addition — I have not since sheathed my sword — near the Capitol I met a surly lion that glared at me, and went by me without annoying me. Also, a hundred women looking like ghosts huddled together in a group because of their fear — they swore that they saw men all enclosed in fire walk up and down the streets. And yesterday the bird of night — the owl, a bird of bad omens — sat even at noonday in the marketplace, hooting and shrieking. When these prodigies occur all together, let men not say, ‘These things have their reasons for occurring; they are natural.’ I believe that they are omens of things to come.”

“Indeed, it is a strange time,” Cicero, who was unimpressed, said. “But men tend to interpret things however it suits them and they miss the things’ true meaning.”

He paused, and then asked, “Will Caesar go to the Capitol tomorrow?”

“He will,” Casca replied. “He told Antony to send word to you that he will be there tomorrow.”

“Good night then, Casca,” Cicero said. “This disturbed and stormy sky is not good to walk in.”

“Farewell, Cicero.”

Cicero left, and Cassius walked up to Casca.

Cassius asked, “Who’s there?”

“A Roman,” Casca answered.

“Casca, by your voice.”

“Your ear is good,” Casca said. “Cassius, what a night is this!”

“It is a very pleasing night for honest men.”

“Who ever knew that the Heavens could be so menacing?”

“Those who have realized that the Earth is full of faults,” Cassius said. “For my part, I have walked about the streets,

submitting myself to the perilous night, and, with my jacket open, Casca, as you see, I have bared my chest to the thunderbolt. And when the zigzag blue lightning seemed to open the breast of Heaven, I presented myself as a target just where the flashing thunderbolt was aimed.”

“Why did you so much test the Heavens?” Casca asked. “It is the duty of men to fear and tremble when the mightiest gods send such dreadful signs and omens to terrify us.”

“You are dull and stupid, Casca, and those sparks of life that should be in a Roman you do not have, or else you do not make use of them. You look pale and gaze and are afraid and throw yourself in a state of wonder to see the strange impatience of the Heavens, but if you would consider the true cause for why we see all these fires, why we see all these gliding ghosts, why we see birds and beasts depart from their usual natures, why we see old men, fools, and children make predictions and prophesy, why we see all these things change from their ordained behavior, their natures, and preformed faculties with which they were born and turn instead to unnatural behavior — why, you shall find that Heaven has infused them with these spirits and given them these powers to make them instruments of fear and warning about some unnatural state of affairs. I could, Casca, name to you a man who is very much like this dreadful night — this night that thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars like the lion in the Capitol. He is a man no mightier than you or me in personal action, yet he has prodigiously grown and is as much to be afraid of as these strange events are.”

“You mean Caesar, don’t you, Cassius?” Casca asked.

“Let it be who it is. Romans today have the strong bodies of their ancestors, but unfortunately, we lack the minds of our fathers, and so the spirits of our mothers govern us instead. The yoke that has been placed on us and our endurance of this oppression show us to be like women.”

“Indeed, the rumor is that the Senators tomorrow intend to establish Caesar as King,” Casca said. “He shall wear his

crown at sea and on land, in every place, except here in Italy.”

“I know where I will wear this dagger then,” Cassius said, displaying his dagger to Casca. “I will wear it in my heart. Cassius will deliver Cassius from bondage by committing suicide. By giving us the ability to commit suicide, you gods, you make the weak the strongest. By giving us the ability to commit suicide, you gods, you defeat tyrants. Neither stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass, nor airless dungeons, nor strong links of iron can confine a strong mind. But if a man grows weary of these worldly bars to freedom, he never lacks the power to kill himself. If I know this, then let everyone else in the world know it, too: That part of tyranny that affects me I can shake off whenever I want. Suicide is a way of escaping oppression.”

Thunder sounded.

“I can also escape tyranny,” Casca said. “So can every slave or prisoner. Each person’s hand has the power to free that person from tyranny.”

“But why should Caesar be a tyrant?” Cassius asked. “Poor man! I know he would prefer not to be a wolf, but he sees that the Romans are acting like sheep. He would be no lion if the Romans were not acting like hinds — female deer or peasants. People who want to quickly make a big fire start the fire with little pieces of straw. What trash is Rome, what rubbish and what offal are its citizens, when it serves as kindling to illuminate so vile a thing as Caesar! But what has my grief made me do? I may be speaking too freely to a person who is willing to be one of Caesar’s slaves. In that case, news of what I have said will reach Caesar, and I will be punished. But I am armed, and I am indifferent to danger.”

“You are speaking to Casca, and I am a man who is not a flattering tattletale. Shake my hand.”

They shook hands, and Casca said, “If you are forming a faction against Caesar to set to rights all these wrongs, I will do as much as any of you.”

“We have a deal,” Cassius said. “Listen, Casca. I have already persuaded some of the noblest-minded Romans to undertake with me a dangerous enterprise whose outcome will be honorable. Right now, they are waiting for me at Pompey’s porch — the colonnade outside Pompey’s Theater. Because this night is filled with bad weather and things to be feared, no one is stirring or walking in the streets. This night is very bloody, fiery, and most terrible, just like the work we have in hand.”

Seeing a man walking toward them, Casca said, “Hide because someone is walking quickly toward us.”

Cassius looked and said, “It is Cinna. I recognize him by the way he walks. He is a friend.”

Cassius then asked, “Cinna, where are you so quickly going?”

“To find you. Who’s that? Metellus Cimber?”

Metellus Cimber’s grievance against Julius Caesar was that Caesar had sent into exile Metellus Cimber’s brother, Publius.

“No, it is Casca. He is now a part of our faction. Are the others waiting for me, Cinna?”

“I am glad that Casca is one of us,” Cinna said. “What a fearful night this is! Two or three of us have seen strange sights tonight.”

“Are the others waiting for me? Tell me that.”

“Yes, they are waiting for you,” Cinna replied. “Cassius, if only you could persuade the noble Brutus to join our faction —”

“Don’t worry,” Cassius said. “Good Cinna, take this letter and place it on the seat of the Praetor’s chair. Brutus holds the office of Praetor, and he will find it. Throw this letter through his window. Use wax to affix this letter to the statue of Brutus’ ancestor Lucius Junius Brutus. Once all of

that is done, go to Pompey's porch, where you shall find us. Are Decius Brutus and Trebonius there?"

"Everyone is there except for Metellus Cimber. He left to seek you at your house. Well, I will hurry and do with these letters what you have asked me to do."

"Once you are done, meet us at the porch of Pompey's Theater."

Cinna departed, and Cassius said, "Come, Casca, you and I will before daybreak visit Brutus at his house. Three parts of him are ours already, and the next time we meet him, he will be entirely on our side."

"Brutus sits high in all the people's hearts — they respect him," Casca said. "If we act without him, we will be thought to be criminals, but if he acts with us, what we do will change, like alchemy changes lead to gold, to virtue and to worthiness."

"You understand Brutus and his worth and why we so greatly need him to be our side," Cassius said. "Let us go now because it is after midnight. Before day we will awaken him and make sure that he is on our side."

CHAPTER 2**— 2.1 —**

Brutus was alone in his garden. He called for his young servant to come to him, “Lucius!”

He said to himself, “Tonight is stormy, so I cannot, by looking at the progress of the stars, tell how close to dawn it is.”

Again he called, “Lucius, I say!”

He said to himself, “I wish that I were able to sleep as soundly as he does.”

Again he called, “When are you coming, Lucius, when? Wake up, I say! Lucius!”

A sleepy Lucius went to Brutus and asked, “Did you call, my lord?”

“Get me a candle for my study, Lucius. When you have lit it, let me know.”

“I will, my lord.”

Lucius departed.

Brutus considered the reasons for assassinating Julius Caesar: “He will have to be killed. As for myself, I have no personal reason to kill him. I would kill him only for the general good. Caesar wants to be crowned as King. How that might change his nature, there’s the question. Adders come out of hiding and sun themselves on a sunny day — and then you must be careful where you walk. Crown him as King? If we do that, we give him power — we give him a sting that he may use to hurt people at his discretion. Power is abused when the powerful lack compassion. To speak the truth about Caesar, I have never known him to be swayed by his emotions more than by his reason. But it is well known that people change after they acquire power. When a man starts to climb and acquire power, he starts low on the ladder. When he reaches the top of the ladder, he turns his back on those who are lower than himself. He looks at the clouds, scorning the base degrees by which he did ascend. Caesar

may become like such men. To prevent that, we can kill him. We cannot justify killing him because of what he is now. We can justify killing him only because of what he may become later. Caesar, if he were given increased power, would begin to perform excesses of tyranny. We should think about Caesar the way we think about a serpent's egg. After the serpent is hatched, it will become dangerous, as is its nature. Therefore, it is best to kill the serpent while it is still in the eggshell."

Lucius came back and said, "The candle is burning in your study, sir. Searching the window for a flint to light the candle with, I found this letter, thus sealed up. I am sure that it did not lie there when I went to bed."

Lucius handed Brutus the letter.

"Go back to bed. It is not yet day. Isn't tomorrow, boy, the Ides of March — March 15?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Look at the calendar, and tell me the date."

"I will, sir."

Lucius left to consult the calendar.

Brutus said to himself, "The meteors whizzing in the air give off so much light that I may read by them."

He opened the letter and read out loud, "Brutus, you are sleeping. Wake up and see yourself. Shall Rome, et cetera. Speak, strike, and correct political abuses!"

He repeated some words from the letter: "Brutus, you are sleeping. Wake up!"

He said, "Such calls to action have been often dropped where I have picked them up. I must try to understand what is meant by 'Shall Rome, et cetera.' I need to fill in the gaps. Shall Rome submit to the power of one man? What, Rome? My ancestors did from the streets of Rome drive the last King of Rome out. 'Speak, strike, and correct political abuses!' Am I being entreated to speak and to strike? Rome, I make you a promise: If the correction of political wrongs

will follow the speaking and the striking, Brutus will do everything that is asked of him here.”

Lucius came back and said, “Sir, tomorrow is the Ides of March.”

Brutus said, “Good.”

Knocks sounded on the gate.

Brutus said, “Go to the gate; somebody is knocking.”

Lucius left to go to the gate and see who was knocking.

Brutus said to himself, “Since Cassius first did incite me to oppose Caesar, I have not slept. Between the acting of a dreadful thing and the first thought of doing it, the entire interim is like a hallucination or a hideous dream. The person is conflicted and debates within himself, and he is like a little Kingdom that suffers from civil war.”

Lucius came back and said, “Sir, your brother-in-law Cassius is at the gate, and he wants to see you.”

“Is he alone?”

“No, sir. Some men are with him.”

“Do you know them?”

“No, sir. Their hats are pulled down about their ears, and half of each man’s face is buried in his cloak, and so I was not able to recognize any of the men.”

“Let them in.”

Lucius left to let the men in to see Brutus.

Brutus said to himself, “They are the faction of conspirators. Conspiracy, are you ashamed to show your dangerous brow by night, when evils are most common and free to roam about? By day, where will you find a cavern dark enough to hide your monstrous face? You need not seek a cave, conspiracy. You can hide your monstrous faces behind smiles and friendliness. If you were to go on your way with your monstrous face revealed, not even the darkness of Erebus, a part of the Underworld, could hide you enough to keep your plot from being detected and stopped.”

The conspirators entered the garden: Cassius, Casca, Decius Brutus, Cinna, Metellus Cimber, and Trebonius.

Cassius said, "I am afraid that we have come too early and disturbed your rest. Good morning, Brutus. Do we trouble you?"

"I have been up for an hour; I have been awake all night," Brutus said. "Do I know these men who have come along with you?"

"Yes, you know all of them," Cassius said. "Every man here respects you, and everyone wishes that you had that opinion of yourself that every noble Roman has of you."

Cassius began to name the men who had come with him: "This is Trebonius."

"He is welcome here," Brutus said.

"This is Decius Brutus."

"He is welcome, too."

"This is Casca, this is Cinna, and this is Metellus Cimber."

"They are all welcome," Brutus said. "What cares have kept you awake all night?"

Cassius replied, "Can I speak to you privately?"

Cassius and Brutus moved away a little and whispered to each other.

Decius Brutus said to the conspirators with him, "This way lies the East. Isn't this the point where the Sun rises?"

"No," Casca said.

"Pardon me," Cinna said, "but the Sun does rise there. The gray lines that streak the clouds show that the Sun is rising there."

"You shall confess that you are both deceived," Casca said. "Here, where I am pointing my sword, the Sun rises. It is further to the South because we are still so early in the year. Two months from now, the Sun will rise at a point further North. Due East is here, where the Capitol stands."

An impartial observer might think that if the conspirators did not even know where the Sun rose that this might be an ominous omen of their future.

Brutus and Cassius had finished their private conversation.

Brutus said to the conspirators, "Let me shake your hands, each of you."

"And let us swear our commitment," Cassius said.

"No, let us not swear an oath," Brutus said. "We do not need to. We have the sad looks on citizens' faces, the suffering of our own souls, and the evil abuses of our times. If these are weak motives for what we are planning to do, then let us stop now and every man go home to his bed of idleness. If these are weak motives for what we are planning to do, then let the tyranny that looks down on us from a great height continue its reign until each man of us drops like men chosen to be punished at a tyrant's whim. But if we have good motives, as I am sure that we do, motives that bear enough fire to kindle cowards and to steel with valor the melting spirits of women, then, countrymen, what else do we need to spur us to action? We have good motives that lead us to correct the errors of our times. What other bond do we need than that of Romans who are capable of keeping secrets and have given their word and will not back down from what they have said that they will do? What other oath do we need than that of one honest man to another that we will do what we promised to do or die while trying to do it? Let priests swear and cowards and men who are overly cautious and old and feeble carcass-like men and such suffering souls as welcome wrongs. Let untrustworthy men swear oaths for bad causes. We ought not to stain the impartial virtue of our enterprise or our indomitable will with the belief that either our cause or our actions require an oath. All of us know that every drop of blood that a noble Roman has would be guilty of an act of baseness if the Roman would break the smallest particle of any promise that he had made."

"What about Cicero?" Cassius said. "Shall we talk to him and see if he wants to join our conspiracy? I think he will stand very strong with us."

“Let us not leave Cicero out,” Casca said.

“No, by no means,” Cinna said.

“Let us have him as a member of our conspiracy,” Metellus Cimber said, “for his silver hairs will buy for us a good reputation and persuade people to commend our deeds. People will say that he came up with the conspiracy and we followed his lead. Our youth and wildness shall in no way be mentioned; people will instead talk about Cicero’s maturity.”

“Don’t mention Cicero,” Brutus said. “Let us not tell him about our plot because he will never follow anything that other men begin.”

Brutus had much influence with the other conspirators.

“Then we will leave him out of our conspiracy,” Cassius said.

“Indeed, he is not fit to be in our conspiracy,” Casca said.

“Shall only Caesar be killed?” Decius Brutus asked.

“Decius, that is an important question,” Cassius said. “I don’t think it is wise to allow Mark Antony, who is so well beloved by Caesar, to outlive Caesar. We shall find that Antony is a dangerous plotter. He has resources, and if he adds to them, they may be great enough to hurt all of us. To prevent Antony from becoming a great enemy to us, we should kill both Caesar and Antony.”

“If we do that, our actions will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,” Brutus said. “To cut the head off and then hack the limbs will make it seem like we killed at first with anger and subsequently killed with envy. Antony is but a limb of Caesar. Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius. We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar. His spirit is tyrannous. In the spirit of men there is no blood, and I wish that we could kill Caesar’s spirit without dismembering Caesar’s body! Unfortunately, Caesar’s body must bleed! Gentle friends, let us kill Caesar’s body boldly, but not wrathfully. When we kill, it ought to be like we are making a sacrifice to the gods, not like we are butchering an animal and

throwing pieces of meat to the dogs. Let's carve Caesar as a sacrificial dish fit for the gods, not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds. And let our hearts, our subtle masters, stir up our limbs to an act of rage, and afterward be seen to chide them. This shall make our purpose appear to be necessary — and not envious. If the commoners understand that, we shall be called purgers of an evil, not murderers of a man. As for Mark Antony, let us not worry about him because he can do no more than Caesar's arm can do after Caesar's head is cut off."

"Still, I fear him," Cassius said. "For in the deeply rooted love that Antony bears to Caesar —"

"Good Cassius, do not worry about Antony," Brutus said. "If he loves Caesar, all that he can do is what he can do to himself. He can mourn Caesar and commit suicide. Even that is too much to ask him to do because he spends his time enjoying entertainments, wild pleasures, and too much company."

"We need not fear Antony," Trebonius said, "so we need not kill him. Let Antony live, and later he will laugh at what we do."

A clock struck.

"Quiet!" Brutus said. "Count the number of times the clock strikes."

They listened.

"The clock struck three times," Cassius said.

"It is time to go," Trebonius said.

"It is not certain whether Caesar will go to the Capitol today or not," Cassius said, "because he has grown superstitious lately. His opinion now is much different from what he formerly and strongly believed about visions, dreams, and omens. It may be the case that these apparent omens of disaster, the unusual terror of this night, and the persuasion of his fortune tellers may keep him from going to the Capitol today."

“Don’t worry about that,” Decius Brutus said. “If he decides not to go to the Capitol, I can persuade him to go. He loves to hear about tales of traps — how unicorns can be trapped by charging at a man who moves aside and lets the unicorn’s horn deeply penetrate a tree, how bears can be trapped by being fascinated with a mirror, how elephants can be trapped when they fall into holes, how lions can be trapped in nets, and how men can be trapped by flatterers. But when I tell Caesar that he hates flatterers, he agrees with me, and he is then most flattered. Let me work on him. I can persuade him to act the way we want him to act, and I will bring him with me to the Capitol.”

“No, not you alone,” Cassius said. “All of us will be there to bring him to the Capitol.”

“By eight o’clock?” Brutus said. “Is asked the hour we decided on?”

“That is the hour,” Cinna said. “Do not fail to be there by then.”

“Caius Ligarius bears a grudge against Caesar because Caesar berated him for speaking well of Pompey,” Metellus Cimber said. “I am surprised that none of you has thought of inviting him to join our conspiracy.”

“Metellus Cimber, go and visit him,” Brutus said. “He respects me, and I have done favors for him. Send him to visit me, and I will persuade him to join our conspiracy.”

“Morning is coming,” Cassius said. “We will leave now, Brutus. Friends, scatter yourselves; do not walk in a group. Everyone, remember what you have promised to do, and show yourselves true Romans.”

“Good gentlemen, look fresh and merry,” Brutus said. “Don’t let your faces reveal our plot. Instead, act as our Roman actors act. Act with unflagging spirits and your usual dignified behavior. Good night to each of you.”

The conspirators departed, leaving Brutus alone in his garden.

Brutus called, "Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It does not matter. Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber. You have no problems or fantasies of the imagination that worry the brains of men under stress and therefore you are able to sleep so soundly."

Portia, Brutus' wife, now walked up to him.

"Brutus, my lord!"

"Portia, is something wrong? Why are you up now? It is not good for your health to expose yourself to the raw and cold morning."

"It is not good for your health, either," Portia said. "You are acting strangely and ignoring me. You abruptly got out of our bed, Brutus, and yesterday, at supper, you suddenly arose, and walked about, musing and sighing, with your arms folded across your chest, and when I asked you what the matter was, you stared at me rudely. I asked you again, and then you scratched your head and very impatiently stamped your foot. Again I asked you, yet you would not answer my question. Instead, with an angry wave of your hand, you gave me a sign to leave you, and so I did. I was afraid to strengthen your impatience and anger that already seemed too much enflamed, and I hoped that you were simply in a bad mood, which sometimes happens to every man. But your bad mood will not let you eat, talk, or sleep. If your bad mood could change your face and body as much as it has changed your personality, I would not be able to recognize you, Brutus. My dear husband, tell me what is bothering you."

"I am ill. That is all," Brutus said.

"Brutus, you are wise, and if you were suffering from ill health, you would do something to restore yourself to good health."

"Why, so I do," Brutus said. "Good Portia, go to bed."

"Is my Brutus sick? Is it healthy to walk around uncovered and breathe the unhealthy vapors of a dank morning? What, is my Brutus sick, and therefore he steals

out of his wholesome bed to dare the vile contagion of the night and give the diseased and unpurified-by-the-Sun air a chance to add to his sickness? No, my Brutus. You do not normally act like that. You have some sickness inside your mind, which, by the right and virtue of my position as your wife, I ought to know about.”

Portia knelt before her husband and said, “Upon my knees, I urge you, by my once-commended beauty, by all your vows of love and that great vow that married us and made us one, that you tell me, who is yourself and your half, why you are burdened by trouble. I also urge you to tell me about the men tonight who came to talk to you — the some six or seven men who kept their faces hidden even from darkness.”

“Do not kneel before me, gentle Portia,” Brutus said.

“I would have no reason to kneel before you,” Portia, still kneeling, said, “if you still acted like the gentle Brutus whom I married. Tell me, Brutus, why aren’t you telling me your secrets? Shouldn’t a wife know them, or is there some exception to a marriage contract? Am I made one with you only partially — only when it comes to eating meals with you, to be a comfort to you in bed and sleep with you, and to talk to you sometimes? Do I dwell only in the suburbs of your good pleasure? The Roman suburbs are where the whorehouses are, and if I dwell only in the suburbs of your good pleasure, then I, Portia, am only Brutus’ harlot and not his wife.”

“You are my true and honorable wife, and you are as dear to me as are the ruddy drops of blood that visit my sad heart.”

“If what you are saying is true, then I ought to know your secrets. I grant I am a woman; but I am a woman whom Lord Brutus took to be his wife. I grant I am a woman, but I am a woman who is well reputed — I am the daughter of Marcus Porcius Cato, who fought for Pompey in the civil war and who chose to commit suicide rather than be captured by Julius Caesar. Can you think that I am no stronger than other

women when I have such a father and such a husband? Tell me your secrets; I will not reveal them. I have done something to prove my trustworthiness — I have given myself a voluntary wound here in my thigh. Can I bear that pain with patience, and yet not be able to keep my husband's secrets?"

"Oh, you gods, make me worthy of this noble wife!"

Knocks sounded on the gate.

Brutus said, "Listen! Someone is knocking! Portia, go inside for a while. Soon, I will tell you the secrets of my heart. Everything that I have promised to do I will tell you. I will tell you everything that has been affecting the way I look and act. For now, quickly leave me."

Portia exited.

Brutus asked, "Lucius, who was knocking?"

Lucius and Caius Ligarius, who held a handkerchief against his nose and mouth, walked up to Brutus.

Lucius said, "Here is a sick man who would speak with you."

Brutus said, "He is Caius Ligarius, whom Metellus Cimber spoke about."

He told Lucius, "Boy, go back inside."

Then he said, "Caius Ligarius! How are you?"

"Please accept my 'good morning' from my feeble and ill tongue," he replied.

"What a time have you chosen to be ill, brave Caius, and use a handkerchief as a protection against drafts!" Brutus said. "I wish that you were not sick!"

"I am not sick, if Brutus has in mind an exploit that is worthy of the name of honor."

"Such an exploit have I in mind, Ligarius, if you have a healthy ear to hear it."

"By all the gods that Romans bow before, I here discard my sickness!" Ligarius said. "Soul of Rome! Brave son, derived from honorable loins! You, like an exorcist, have raised my deadened spirit. Tell me what to do, and I will try

to do impossible things — and I will do them, too. What needs to be done?”

“A piece of work that will make sick men whole.”

“But are not some men whole whom we must make sick?”

“That must we also do,” Brutus said. “What must be done, Caius Ligarius, I shall tell you as we are walking to the person to whom it must be done.”

“Start walking,” Ligarius said, “and with a heart newly fired, I will follow you. I don’t know yet what needs to be done, but I am happy nevertheless because it is Brutus who is leading me.”

“Follow me, then,” Brutus said.

— 2.2 —

Julius Caesar was alone in a room in his house. Outside, the storm continued to thunder and lightning.

Caesar said to himself, “Neither Heaven nor Earth has been at peace tonight. Three times my wife, Calpurnia, has in her sleep cried out, ‘Help! They are murdering Caesar!’”

He heard a noise and asked, “Who is there?”

A servant entered the room and said, “My lord?”

Caesar ordered, “Go and tell the priests to perform a sacrifice immediately. After they are done, return and tell me what they have learned from the sacrifice.”

“I will, my lord.”

The servant departed, and Calpurnia entered the room.

She said to her husband, “What do you mean to do today, Caesar? Are you thinking of going to the Capitol? Today, you will not leave this house.”

“Caesar shall go forth today. The things that have threatened me have never looked anywhere but at my back. Whenever they see the face of Caesar, they vanish.”

“Caesar, I have never paid attention to omens, yet now they frighten me. Someone in our house — besides the

things that we have heard and seen — has told me the most horrid sights that the watchman has seen. A lioness has given birth in the streets. Graves have yawned and yielded up their dead. Fierce fiery warriors have fought upon the clouds in ranks and squadrons and square formations — these soldiers drizzled blood upon the Capitol, and the noise of battle hurtled in the air. Horses neighed, and dying men groaned, and ghosts shrieked and squealed in the streets. Caesar! These things are unnatural, and I fear them.”

“How it is possible to avoid something that the mighty gods have decreed? Today Caesar shall go forth. These predictions and omens apply to the world in general as well as to Caesar.”

“When beggars die, no comets are seen. The Heavens themselves blaze to announce the death of princes,” Calpurnia replied.

“Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once. Of all the wonders that I yet have heard, it seems to me the very strangest that men should fear death because death, a necessary end, will come when it will come.”

The servant returned, and Caesar asked him, “What do the augurers — the tellers of futures — say?”

“They would not have you go out of the house today,” the servant said. “Plucking the entrails of a sacrificial offering, they could not find a heart within the beast.”

“The gods do this to shame cowards — they dislike cowards,” Caesar said. “Caesar would be a beast without a heart, if he would stay at home today for fear. No, Caesar shall not stay home. Danger knows full well that Caesar is more dangerous than he is. We are two lions that littered in the same day. I am the elder and more terrible of us two, and Caesar shall go forth today.”

“Your wisdom is eaten up by overconfidence,” Calpurnia said. “Do not go forth today. Say that it is my fear that keeps you in the house, and you yourself are not afraid.

We will send Mark Antony to the Senate, and he shall say that you are not well today.”

She knelt and said, “Let me, upon my knee, prevail in this. Do what I want you to do. Stay at home today.”

Caesar raised her to her feet and said, “Mark Antony shall say that I am not well, and, because you want me to, I will stay at home.”

Decius Brutus entered the room.

Caesar said, “Here’s Decius Brutus — he shall tell the Senators the news.”

“Caesar, all hail!” Decius Brutus said. “Good morning, worthy Caesar. I have come to walk with you to the Senate House.”

“You have come at a good time,” Caesar said. “You can carry my greeting to the Senators and tell them that I will not come today. To say that I cannot come is false, and to say that I dare not come is falser. I will not come today. Tell the Senators that, Decius.”

“Say that he is sick,” Calpurnia said.

Julius Caesar immediately decided not to have this said about him, although he had just told Calpurnia that Mark Antony would tell the Senators that he — Caesar — was not well. He disliked appearing weak.

“Shall Caesar send a lie?” Julius Caesar said. “I have made extensive conquests in war — should I be afraid to tell gray-bearded Senators the truth? Decius, go tell them that Caesar will not come.”

“Most mighty Caesar, let me know the reason why you are not coming, lest I be laughed at when I tell them that you are not coming.”

“The cause is in my will: I will not come,” Caesar said. “That is enough to satisfy the Senators. But for your private satisfaction, because I respect you, I will let you know my reason. Calpurnia here, my wife, wants me to stay at home. She dreamt this night that she saw my statue, like a fountain with a hundred spouts, running with pure blood. Many

vigorous Romans came smiling, and bathed their hands in the blood. This she interprets as a warning and a portent. She believes that evils are imminent, and on her knee she has begged me to stay at home today.”

“This dream has been misinterpreted,” Decius Brutus said. “The vision is fair and fortunate — it foretells good fortune. Your statue spouting blood through many holes, blood in which so many smiling Romans bathed, signifies that from you great Rome shall suck reviving blood, and that great men shall strive to get honors from you and souvenirs to venerate, and that they will be your servants. This is the true meaning of Calpurnia’s dream.”

“You have well interpreted the dream,” Caesar said.

“Yes, I have, as you shall know when you have heard what I have to tell you now,” Decius Brutus said. “The Senators have decided to give this day a crown to mighty Caesar. If you send them word that you will not come to the Senate today, they may change their minds. Besides, if you do not come to the Senate today, someone is likely to joke, ‘We should adjourn the Senate until after Caesar’s wife has had better dreams.’ If Caesar stays at home, won’t the Senators and people whisper, ‘Caesar is afraid’? Pardon me, Caesar, but my high hopes for your advancement make me tell you this, and my respect for you has outweighed my manners.”

“How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia!” Caesar said. “I am ashamed I yielded to them. Give me my cloak, for I will go.”

Publius, an old Senator, entered the room.

Caesar said, “Look, Publius has come to fetch me.”

“Good morning, Caesar,” Publius said.

“Welcome, Publius,” Caesar said.

Brutus, Ligarius, Metellus, Casca, Trebonius, and Cinna entered the room.

“What, Brutus, are you up so early, too?” Caesar said, adding, “Good morning, Casca.”

Caesar then said, "Caius Ligarius, Caesar was never so much your enemy as that illness that has made you lean."

Ligarius had supported Pompey in the civil war, but Caesar had pardoned him.

Caesar asked, "What time is it?"

"Caesar, the clock has struck eight o'clock," Brutus answered.

"I thank you for your trouble and courtesy in coming here to accompany me to the Senate House," Caesar said.

Mark Antony entered the room.

"Look! Even Antony, who revels long into the nights, is up," Caesar said. "Good morning to you, Antony."

"And to you, most noble Caesar," Antony replied.

Caesar ordered a servant, "Set out some wine."

He said to his guests, "I am to blame for making you wait. Cinna, Metellus, and Trebonius, I want to talk with you for an hour today. Remember to talk to me later today. Stay near me so that I will remember."

"Caesar, I will," Trebonius said. He thought, *I will be so near to you that your best friends shall wish I had been further away.*

"Good friends, let us go in this other room, and you can drink some wine with me, and then we, like the friends we are, will leave together."

Brutus thought, *We are now only like friends — we are not really friends. Caesar, this makes my heart ache.*

— 2.3 —

On a Roman street on which Caesar would soon walk, Artemidorus read a letter that he had written:

"Caesar, beware of Brutus; take heed of Cassius; do not go near Casca; keep an eye on Cinna; do not trust Trebonius; pay attention to Metellus Cimber; Decius Brutus does not like you; you have wronged Caius Ligarius. All of these men are of the same mind, and that mind is opposed to Caesar.

Unless you are immortal, watch out for yourself. Your overconfidence gives conspiracy an opportunity. May the mighty gods defend you! Your good friend, Artemidorus.”

Artemidorus said to himself, “I will wait here until Caesar passes by, and I will give him this letter as if it were a petition — a request that a wrong be righted. My heart laments that good men cannot live safely out of the way of the teeth of jealous rivals. If you read this, Caesar, you may live. If you do not read this, the Fates are on the side of traitors.”

— 2.4 —

On a Roman street, Portia ordered Lucius, “Boy, run to the Senate House. Do not stay — go now! Why are you still here?”

“I need to know what errand you want me to do, madam,” Lucius said.

“If I could, I would have had you there and back again before I could tell you what you should do there,” Portia said.

She said to herself, “Firmness of mind, come to me and support me! Set a huge mountain — a barrier — in between my heart and my tongue! I have a man’s mind, but a woman’s might. How hard it is for women to keep secrets!”

She said to Lucius, “Are you still here?”

“Madam, what do you want to do? Run to the Capitol, and nothing else? And then return to you, and nothing else?”

“Yes, run there and back, boy. Tell me if Brutus looks well. When he left here, he looked ill. Also, see what Caesar is doing. See which petitioners crowd against him.”

She thought that she heard a noise and said, “Listen, boy! What is that noise?”

“I don’t hear anything, madam.”

“Please, listen carefully. I heard a sound like a fight or a battle, and the wind brought it from the Capitol.”

“Madam, I hear nothing.”

The soothsayer walked up to Portia and Lucius.

Portia said to him, “Come here, fellow. From which way have you come?”

“I have come from my own house, good lady,” the soothsayer replied.

“What time is it?”

“About nine o’clock, lady.”

“Has Caesar gone to the Capitol?”

“Madam, not yet. I am going to find a spot to stand to see him pass on his way to the Capitol.”

“You have some request to make to Caesar, haven’t you?”

“That I have, lady,” the soothsayer replied. “If it will please Caesar to be so good to Caesar as to hear me, I shall beg him to befriend himself.”

“Why, do you know of any harm that is intended towards him?”

“None that I know will happen, but much that I fear may happen,” the soothsayer replied. “Good morning to you. I must go. Here the street is narrow, and the throng of people who follow Caesar at the heels — Senators, Praetors, common people — will crowd a feeble man almost to death. I’ll go to a place with more room, and there I will speak to great Caesar as he comes along.”

Portia said, “I must go inside. How weak a thing is the heart of a woman! Brutus, may the Heavens help you in your enterprise!”

She had said that aloud. Afraid, she thought, *The boy Lucius must have heard me.*

She said out loud so that Lucius would hear her, “Brutus has a petition that Caesar will not grant.”

She added, “I am growing faint. Run, Lucius, and commend me to my lord. Say that I am cheerful, then return to me and tell me what he says to you.”

CHAPTER 3

— 3.1 —

In front of the Capitol, Julius Caesar and many others were standing. Among them were Artemidorus and the soothsayer, Brutus, Cassius, Casca, Decius Brutus, Metellus Cimber, Trebonius, Cinna, Mark Antony, Lepidus, Popilius Lena, Publius, and others.

Caesar said to the soothsayer, “The Ides of March have come.”

“Yes, Caesar, but they have not yet gone,” the soothsayer replied.

“Hail, Caesar!” Artemidorus said. “Read my petition.”

Eager to deflect Caesar’s attention away from Artemidorus, Decius Brutus, one of the conspirators, said to Caesar, “Trebonius asks you to read this humble petition at your leisure.”

“Caesar, read my petition first,” Artemidorus said. “My petition concerns you personally. Read it, great Caesar.”

“What concerns myself, I will read last,” Caesar said.

“Please do not wait,” Artemidorus said. “Read it now.”

“What! Is the fellow insane?” Caesar said.

Publius said to Artemidorus, “Fellow, get out of the way.”

Cassius said to Artemidorus, “Why are you urging Caesar to read your petition in the street? Go to the Capitol with your petition.”

Caesar and several other people went to the Senate House.

Popilius Lena, a Roman Senator, said to Cassius, who had stayed behind, “I hope that your enterprise today thrives.”

“What enterprise, Popilius?”

“Fare you well,” Popilius Lena said and then followed Caesar.

Brutus asked Cassius, “What did Popilius Lena say to you?”

“He said that he hopes our enterprise may thrive. I fear that our plot has been discovered.”

“Popilius is going up to Caesar,” Brutus said. “Let’s see what happens.”

Cassius said, “Casca, be quick of action. We fear that our plot has been revealed.”

He said to Brutus, “What shall we do? If our plot is known, either Cassius or Caesar will die. If we fail to kill Caesar, I will kill myself.”

“Cassius, be steady. Popilius Lena is not telling Caesar about our plot. Look, be steady and resolute,” Brutus replied. “Popilius is smiling, and Caesar’s expression has not changed.”

Cassius said, “Trebonius knows the right time to play his part in this plot. Look, Brutus, he is drawing Mark Antony out of the way.”

Trebonius and Mark Antony left.

Decius Brutus asked, “Where is Metellus Cimber? He needs to go and immediately make his petition to Caesar.”

“He is ready,” Brutus said. “Crowd near Metellus Cimber and second his petition.”

Cinna said, “Casca, you will be the first to raise your hand and stab Caesar.”

“Are we all ready?” Caesar asked. “What is now amiss that Caesar and his Senate must set to rights?”

Metellus Cimber said, “Most high, most mighty, and most powerful Caesar, Metellus Cimber kneels before you with a humble heart —”

He knelt, but Caesar said, “I must stop you, Metellus Cimber. This stooping and bowing might thrill the blood of ordinary men and influence them to turn aside ancient customs and laws and change them like the whims of children making up rules for a game. Do not be so foolish as to think that Caesar’s spirit can rebel against its true nature

because of these things that influence fools. I refer to sweet words, knee-bending bows, and cringing like a cocker spaniel. Your brother, Publius Cimber, has been banished from Rome by my decree. If you bow and pray and fawn for him, I will kick you out of my way as if you were a cur. Know that Caesar is not doing the wrong thing by keeping your brother in exile, and without good cause and reasons he will not be convinced to allow your brother to return from exile.”

Metellus Cimber replied, “Is there no voice more worthy than my own to speak more sweetly in great Caesar’s ear and urge the return of my banished brother?”

Brutus knelt and kissed Caesar’s hand and said, “I kiss your hand, but not in flattery, Caesar. I urge that Publius Cimber may immediately be recalled from exile.”

An impartial observer could think that Brutus was kissing Caesar’s hand in betrayal.

“What are you saying, Brutus!” Caesar said.

“Grant your pardon, Caesar,” Cassius said, falling to Caesar’s feet. “Caesar, grant your pardon. I, Cassius, fall to your feet and beg that Publius Cimber be allowed to return to Rome and to have all Roman rights restored to him.”

“If I were like you, I could be persuaded to change my mind,” Caesar said. “But I am as constant as the Northern star, the pole star that sailors use to navigate their ships. The Northern star’s fixed and permanent position has no equal in the Heavens. The skies are painted with innumerable sparks of stars. They are all fire and each of them shines, but of all the stars only one continually keeps his position. It is the same with people in the world. Many men live on Earth, and men are flesh and blood, and capable of understanding, yet in all the numbers of men I know of only one who — unassailable — keeps the same position, undisturbed by the motion of other men, and that man is me. Let me demonstrate this, here and now. I banished Publius Cimber, and I continue to banish him.”

Cinna said, "Caesar —"

Caesar said, "Stop! Would you try to lift Mount Olympus, the abode of the gods?"

Decius Brutus said, "Great Caesar —"

Caesar said, "Why are you pleading with me when even my good friend Brutus is kneeling before me and not swaying me?"

Casca said, "Speak, hands, for me!"

Casca would not speak with words, but with his sword.

Casca stabbed Caesar first, and then all of the other conspirators stabbed Caesar.

When Brutus stabbed Julius Caesar, Caesar looked him directly in the eyes and said, "*Et tu, Brute!* You, too, Brutus? Then let Caesar fall and die!"

He fell before a statue of Pompey.

Over Caesar's dead body, Cinna shouted, "Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead! Run around, proclaim Caesar's death, cry it about the streets."

Brutus said to the non-conspirators present, "People and Senators, do not be frightened. Don't run away. Stay here. Ambition's debt is paid. Caesar was ambitious, and he has died for it."

"Go to the speakers' platform, Brutus, and speak," Casca said.

Decius Brutus said, "Cassius should also speak from one of the speakers' platforms."

"Where is old Publius?" Brutus asked.

"He is here, stunned by this mutiny," Cinna said.

"Let us stand close together in case some friend of Caesar's should happen —" Metellus Cimber began to say.

"We have no need of defending ourselves," Brutus interrupted.

He added, "Publius, be of good cheer — don't worry. We mean you no harm. We will not hurt you or any other Roman. Tell the other Romans that, Publius."

“And leave us now, Publius,” Cassius said, “lest the people, rushing here, should hurt an elderly man such as you.”

“Do as Cassius tells you, Publius,” Brutus said. “No one should suffer from the consequences of this deed except we who committed it.”

Trebonius walked up to the conspirators.

“Where is Mark Antony?” Cassius asked.

“He has fled to his house, stupefied,” Trebonius replied. “Men, wives, and children stare, cry out, and run in the streets as if it were Doomsday — the Day of Judgment.”

“Fates, we will know your pleasures — we will know what you have in store for us,” Brutus said. “That we shall die, we know, but men are concerned about the time of their death and how to prolong their lives.”

“Why, he who cuts off twenty years of life cuts off so many years of fearing death,” Cassius said.

“If that is true, then death is a benefit,” Brutus said. “We are Caesar’s friends because we have shortened the time that he will fear death. Stoop, Romans, stoop, and let us bathe our hands in Caesar’s blood up to the elbows and smear our swords with his blood. Then we will walk forth, all the way to the Forum, and, waving our red and bloody weapons over our heads, let us all cry, ‘Peace, freedom, and liberty!’”

“Stoop, then, and wash your hands in Caesar’s blood,” Cassius said.

The conspirators bloodied their hands and swords with Caesar’s blood.

“For many ages hereafter, this our lofty scene will be acted in celebration in countries that do not yet exist and with languages not yet known!” Cassius said.

Brutus said, “How many times shall Caesar bleed again in plays, although he now lies — worthless as dust — at the base of this statue of Pompey!”

“As often as the plays are given,” Cassius said, “that often shall we conspirators be called the men who gave their country liberty!”

An impartial observer who knew future history would think that no, the conspirators’ attempt to keep Rome a republic would fail. Octavius Caesar would become Caesar Augustus, the first Roman Emperor. Now, he is better known as Caesar Augustus than as Octavius.

“Shall we leave now?” Decius Brutus asked.

“Yes,” Cassius said. “Let all of us go now. Brutus shall lead, and we will follow his heels with the very boldest and best hearts of Rome.”

A servant came toward the group of conspirators.

Brutus said, “Wait! Who is coming here? It is a friend of Mark Antony’s.”

The servant knelt and said, “Brutus, thus did my master order me to kneel before you. Thus Mark Antony ordered me to fall down; and, with me kneeling before you, he ordered me to say this to you: ‘Brutus is noble, wise, valiant, and honorable. Caesar was mighty, bold, royal, and loving. Say that I feared Caesar, honored him, and loved him. If Brutus will swear that Antony may safely come to him, and be convinced that Caesar deserved to die, then Mark Antony shall not love the dead Caesar as well as he loves the living Brutus. With all true faith, he will follow the fortunes and affairs of noble Brutus through the hazards of this unfamiliar state of affairs.’ So says my master Antony.”

“Your master is a wise and valiant Roman,” Brutus said. “I have never thought any less of him. Tell him that if it will please him to come here, we will explain everything to his satisfaction. I swear that he will depart from us untouched and unharmed.”

“I will bring him here immediately,” the servant said, and then exited.

“I know that Mark Antony will be a good friend to us,” Brutus said.

“I hope that he will,” Cassius said, “but yet I greatly fear him. My suspicions always are accurate.”

“Here comes Antony,” Brutus said.

Mark Antony went to the group of conspirators.

Brutus said, “Welcome, Mark Antony.”

Looking at Caesar’s bloody corpse, Mark Antony said, “Oh, mighty Caesar! Do you lie so low? Are all your conquests, glories, triumphs, and spoils shrunk to this little measure of ground that your body lies on? Farewell.”

Mark Antony then said to the conspirators, “I do not know, gentlemen, what you intend, who else must bleed and die, who else you consider to be rank. If you intend to kill me, this is the hour to kill me and these are the weapons to use to kill me: There is no hour as fit as the hour of Caesar’s death, nor no instruments of death half as worthy as your swords, made rich with the most noble blood of all this world. I do beg of you, if you have a grudge against me, now, while your reddened hands do reek and smoke with hot blood, to kill me and feel your pleasure. Even if I were to live a thousand years, I shall not find myself as ready to die as I am now. No place to die will please me as much as this place, no way to die will please me as much as here by Caesar to be cut down by you — the choice and master spirits of this age.”

“Antony, do not beg us to kill you,” Brutus said. “Though now we must appear bloody and cruel, as, by the blood on our hands and by the blood on the corpse of Caesar you see we do, yet all you can see is only our hands and this bleeding business they have done. You cannot see our hearts, which are full of pity for Caesar and full of a greater pity for the wrongs that Caesar committed against Rome. As fire drives out fire, so pity drives out pity. Our greater pity drove out our lesser pity, and we killed Caesar. As for you, do not be afraid — for you, Mark Antony, our swords are blunted. Our arms, which have the power to harm, and our hearts,

which are filled with brotherly love, embrace you with kind love, good thoughts, and respect.”

“Your voice and your opinion shall be as strong as any man’s when it comes to deciding how to distribute new political offices and awards,” Cassius said.

“Be patient until we have appeased and soothed the multitude of people, who are beside themselves with fear, and then we will explain to you the reasons why I, who loved Caesar when I struck him, have killed him,” Brutus said.

“I do not doubt your wisdom,” Mark Antony said.

He proceeded to shake the conspirators’ hands, saying, “Let each man give me his bloody hand to shake. First, Marcus Brutus, I will shake hands with you. Next, Caius Cassius, do I take your hand and shake it. Now, Decius Brutus, yours. Now yours, Metellus. Yours, Cinna; and, my valiant Casca, yours. Though I shake your hand last, you are not last in my respect, good Trebonius.”

He added, “Gentlemen — what shall I say? My reputation now stands on such slippery ground that you must consider me in one of two bad ways. You must consider me to be either a coward or a flatterer.”

He looked at the corpse of Caesar and said, “That I did love you, Caesar, is true. If your spirit looks upon us now, shall it not grieve you more than your death, to see your Antony making his peace, shaking the bloody fingers of your foes — your most noble foes — in the presence of your corpse? Had I as many eyes as you have wounds, weeping as fast as your wounds stream forth your blood, it would become me better than to close in terms of friendship with your enemies. It is much better that I cry than shake hands with your enemies. Pardon me, Julius! Here you were hunted down like a deer, brave heart. Here you fell, and here your hunters stand, marked by your slaughter and reddened by your life stream of blood. The world was the forest of this deer, and you were the dear of this world. The world was Caesar’s territory, and Caesar was the life stream of the

world. How like a deer, struck by many princes, do you lie here!”

“Mark Antony —” Cassius began to say.

“Pardon me, Caius Cassius,” Mark Antony said, “Even the enemies of Caesar shall say what I just said. So then, when a friend of Caesar says it, it is a cool and moderate assessment.”

“I do not blame you for praising Caesar in that way,” Cassius said, “but what agreement do you mean to have with us? Will you be one of our friends, or shall we proceed and not depend on you?”

“I shook your hands in friendship just now, but I was, indeed, distracted when I looked down at the corpse of Caesar. I am friends with you all and I respect you all, with the hope that you shall give me reasons why and in what way was Caesar dangerous.”

“If we cannot do that, then this corpse here would be a savage spectacle,” Brutus said. “Our reasons are so full of serious consideration that, Antony, even if you were the son of Caesar, you would be persuaded that we had justly killed Caesar.”

“That is all I seek,” Mark Antony said, “and I ask that I be allowed to take Caesar’s corpse to the Forum, and I ask that on the speakers’ platform, as becomes a friend, I be allowed to speak at Caesar’s funeral.”

“You shall, Mark Antony,” Brutus said.

Cassius said, “Brutus, may I have a word with you?”

Brutus and Cassius went a short distance away from Mark Antony, and Cassius said, “You do not know what you are doing. Do not allow Antony to speak at Caesar’s funeral. Don’t you realize how much the people may be moved by Antony’s speech?”

“I beg your pardon,” Brutus said. “I myself will speak first, and I will explain the reasons why Caesar had to die. Before Antony speaks, I will say that he speaks by our leave and with our permission, and that we want Caesar to have all

the proper funeral rites and lawful ceremonies. This shall do us more good than harm.”

“I am afraid of what may happen,” Cassius said. “I am against Antony’s speaking at Caesar’s funeral.”

Brutus said, “Mark Antony, here, take Caesar’s body. You shall not in your funeral speech blame us. Instead, speak all the good you can of Caesar, and say you do it with our permission, or else you shall not have any hand at all in his funeral. You shall speak on the same speakers’ platform where I am going now, and you shall speak after I have finished my speech.”

“So be it,” Mark Antony said. “I desire no more than that.”

“Prepare the body then, and follow us.”

Everyone, except for Mark Antony, left.

Kneeling by the corpse of Caesar, Mark Antony said, “Pardon me, you bleeding piece of earth, that I am meek and gentle with these butchers! You are the ruins of the noblest man who ever lived in the tide of times — the ebb and flow of history. Woe to the hands that shed this valuable blood! I now prophesy over your wounds, which, like speechless mouths, open their ruby lips, to ask my tongue to speak. I prophesy that a curse shall light upon the bodies of men. Domestic fury and fierce civil strife shall paralyze all the parts of Italy. Blood and destruction shall be so common and dreadful objects shall be so familiar that mothers shall only smile when they see their infants cut to pieces by the hands of war. All pity will disappear because people are so accustomed to witnessing deadly deeds. Caesar’s spirit, searching for revenge, with Ate — the Roman goddess of vengeance coming hot from Hell — by his side, shall in these territories with a monarch’s voice cry ‘Havoc,’ and let loose the dogs of war. This foul deed shall result in men becoming stinking carrion above the earth, groaning for burial.”

A servant came toward Mark Antony.

“You serve Octavius Caesar, don’t you?” Mark Antony asked.

Octavius Caesar was the grand-nephew and adopted heir of Julius Caesar, to whom Calpurnia had given no children.

“I do, Mark Antony.”

“Julius Caesar wrote for him to come to Rome.”

“Octavius Caesar received his letters, and he is coming. He told me to say to you by word of mouth —”

The servant saw the corpse of Julius Caesar and exclaimed, “Oh, Caesar!”

“Your heart is big,” Mark Antony said. “Go away a short distance and cry. Sorrow, I see, is catching. My eyes, seeing those tears of sorrow in your eyes, have started to cry. Is your master coming?”

“He will sleep tonight within 21 miles of Rome.”

“Go back to him quickly,” Mark Antony said, “and tell him what has happened. Here is a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome, not a Rome of safety for Octavius yet. Hurry now, and tell him. But wait. Stay here for a while. You shall not return to Octavius until I have carried this corpse into the Forum. In my speech, I shall see how the people take the assassination of Caesar by these bloody men. You shall report back to Octavius what happens.

“Now help me to carry Caesar’s body.”

The two men carried Caesar’s body to the Forum where the funeral orations would be given.

— 3.2 —

In the Forum were Brutus, Cassius, and many common citizens of Rome.

The citizens shouted, “We will be satisfied! Let us be given a satisfactory explanation!”

“Then follow me,” Brutus said, “and listen to what I have to say, friends.”

He added, "Cassius, you go to the other street. Let us divide the audience. Half will hear you speak, and half will hear me speak."

He said to the citizens, "Those who will hear me speak, let them stay here. Those who will follow Cassius, go with him. Here in public, we will tell you the reasons why Caesar had to die."

The first citizen said, "I will hear Brutus speak."

Another citizen said, "I will hear Cassius speak, and we will compare their reasons after we have heard both Brutus and Cassius speak."

Cassius left, and several citizens followed him to hear him speak.

Brutus went to the speakers' platform.

The third citizen said, "The noble Brutus has ascended to the speakers' platform. Silence!"

"Be patient until the end of my speech," Brutus said. "Romans, countrymen, and friends! Hear me explain my reasons for killing Caesar, and be silent so that you can hear me. Believe me because of my honor. Have respect for my honor so that you may believe me. Use your wisdom to critique what I say, and use your intelligence so that you may the better judge me.

"If there is in this assembly any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say that Brutus' love for Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demands why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. Would you prefer that Caesar were living and that you all die as slaves, or would you prefer that Caesar were dead so that you can all live as free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him. As he was successful in war, I rejoice at it. As he was valiant, I honor him. But as he was ambitious, I slew him. Caesar has received tears for his love, joy for his success in war, honor for his valor, and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that he wants to be a slave? If any of you are like that, speak up, because that man have

I offended. Who is here so barbarous that he would prefer not to be a Roman? If any of you are like that, speak up, because that man have I offended. Who is here so vile that he will not love his country? If any of you are like that, speak up, because that man have I offended. I pause for a reply.”

The citizens shouted, “None of us is like that, Brutus.”

“Then I have offended no one,” Brutus said, “I have done no more to Caesar than you would do to me if I were to become a tyrant. The reasons for Caesar’s death are recorded on a roll of parchment in the Capitol. Caesar’s glory is not belittled when he has earned it, and neither are his offenses, for which he suffered death, exaggerated.”

Mark Antony and others arrived, carrying Caesar’s body.

Brutus said, “Here comes his body, mourned by Mark Antony, who, though he had no hand in Caesar’s death, shall receive the benefit of Caesar’s dying: a place in the commonwealth, just as each of you has.

“With these final words, I depart: I slew my best friend for the good of Rome, and I still possess the dagger that killed him. I will use it to kill myself when my country needs my death.”

The Roman citizens shouted, “Live, Brutus! Live! Live!”

The first citizen shouted, “Let us carry Brutus in triumph home to his house.”

The second citizen shouted, “Let us create a statue of him and place it among the statues of his ancestors.”

The third citizen shouted, “Let him be Caesar and rule us.”

The fourth citizen shouted, “Caesar’s better qualities shall be crowned in Brutus!”

The first citizen shouted, “We’ll bring him to his house with shouts and clamors.”

Brutus began, “My countrymen —”

The second citizen shouted, “Peace, silence! Brutus speaks.”

The first citizen shouted, “Quiet!”

“Good countrymen, let me depart alone,” Brutus said. “And, for my sake, stay here with Antony. Honor Caesar’s corpse, and listen to Antony’s speech about Caesar’s glories. Mark Antony, by our permission, is allowed to make this funeral speech. I ask you to stay and listen to him. Not a man should depart, except for myself, until after Antony has spoken.”

Brutus left.

The first citizen said, “Let us stay and hear Mark Antony speak.”

The third citizen said, “Let him go up onto the speakers’ platform. We will listen to him. Noble Antony, go up and speak.”

Mary Antony said, “I am indebted to you, thanks to Brutus,” as he climbed onto the speakers’ platform.

The fourth citizen asked, “What did he say about Brutus?”

The third citizen said, “He said that he is indebted to all of us, thanks to Brutus.”

The fourth citizen said, “If he is wise, he will speak no harm of Brutus here.”

The first citizen said, “Julius Caesar was a tyrant.”

The third citizen said, “That’s for certain. We are blessed that Rome is rid of him.”

The second citizen said, “Quiet. Let us hear what Antony has to say.”

“You gentle Romans —” Mark Antony shouted above the noise.

The citizens shouted, “Quiet! Let us hear him!”

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears,” Mark Antony said. “I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them; the good is often buried with their bones. So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus has told you that Caesar was ambitious. If this is true, it was a grievous fault, and grievously has Caesar answered for it. Here, with the permission of Brutus and the rest of the

conspirators — for Brutus is an honorable man, and so are they all, all honorable men — I have come to speak at Caesar’s funeral. Caesar was my friend, faithful and just to me. But Brutus says he was ambitious, and Brutus is an honorable man. Caesar brought many captives home to Rome, and the money paid to ransom them filled the public treasury. Did this in Caesar seem ambitious? When the poor have cried, Caesar has wept. Ambition should be made of sterner stuff. Yet Brutus says he was ambitious, and Brutus is an honorable man. You all did see that on the Lupercal I three times presented Caesar with a Kingly crown, which he did three times refuse. Was this ambition? Yet Brutus says Caesar was ambitious, and, to be sure, Brutus is an honorable man. I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke, but I am here to speak what I do know. You all did love him once, not without cause. What cause then keeps you from mourning for him? Oh, Reason, you have fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason. Bear with me. My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar, and I must pause until it comes back to me.”

The first citizen said, “I think that there is much sense in what Antony says.”

“If you think correctly about this, Caesar has been done great wrong,” the second citizen said.

“Has he, friends?” the third citizen said. “Then I fear that a worse man will replace him.”

“Did you hear what Antony said?” the fourth citizen asked. “Caesar would not take the crown; therefore, we can be certain that he was not ambitious.”

“If Caesar was not ambitious, then some people are going to pay for his death,” the first citizen said.

“Poor soul!” the second citizen said. “Antony’s eyes are as red as fire from crying.”

“There’s not a nobler man in Rome than Antony,” the third citizen said.

“Now let us listen to him — he begins again to speak,” the fourth citizen said.

“Only yesterday the word of Caesar might have overcome the opposition of the world,” Antony said. “Now he lies there, and no one has the humility to show him respect. Friends, if I were disposed to stir your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage, I would do Brutus wrong and Cassius wrong, who, you all know, are honorable men. I will not do them wrong. I instead choose to wrong the dead, to wrong myself and you, rather than wrong such honorable men. But here’s a parchment document with the seal of Caesar that I found in his study. It is his will. If you could hear his will and testament — which, pardon me, I do not intend to read out loud — you would go and kiss dead Caesar’s wounds and dip your handkerchiefs in his sacred blood. Indeed, you would even beg for one of his hairs as a memento, and, dying, you would mention it in your wills, and bequeath it as a rich legacy to your children.”

“We will hear the will,” the fourth citizen shouted. “Read it out loud, Mark Antony!”

“The will, the will!” the citizens shouted. “We will hear Caesar’s will!”

“Have patience, gentle friends,” Antony said. “I must not read Caesar’s will out loud. It is not fitting that you know how much Caesar loved you. You are not wood, you are not stones, you are men. Being men, hearing the will of Caesar will inflame you — it will make you mad. It is good you do not know that you are his heirs, for, if you did, what would come of it!”

“Read the will!” the fourth citizen shouted. “We’ll hear it, Antony! You shall read us the will — Caesar’s will!”

“Will you be patient?” Antony asked. “Will you stay awhile? I said too much when I told you about Caesar’s will. I fear that I wrong the honorable men whose daggers have stabbed Caesar — I do fear it.”

“They were traitors!” the fourth citizen shouted, adding scornfully, “Honorable men!”

The citizens shouted, “The will! Caesar’s last will and testament!”

“The conspirators were villains, murderers!” the second citizen shouted. “The will! Read the will out loud!”

“You will compel me, then, to read the will?” Antony said. “Then make a ring about the corpse of Caesar, and let me show you him who made the will. Shall I descend from the speakers’ platform? Will you give me permission to descend?”

“Come down,” several citizens said.

“Descend,” the second citizen said.

“You have our permission,” the third citizen said.

Mark Antony came down from the speakers’ platform and stood over Caesar’s corpse.

“Make a ring around Caesar’s corpse,” the fourth citizen said. “Stand around the corpse.”

“Stand back from the bier,” the first citizen said. “Stand back from the body.”

“Give Antony, most noble Antony, room,” the second citizen said.

“Do not crowd me,” Antony said. “Stand farther away.”

“Stand back. Give him room. Fall back,” several citizens said.

“If you have tears, prepare to shed them now,” Antony said, touching Caesar’s cloak. “You all know this cloak. I remember the first time that Caesar put it on. It was on a summer’s evening, in his tent, that day he conquered the Nervii, enemies of Rome who lived in northern Gaul.

“Look! In this place ran Cassius’ dagger through. See what a rent the malicious Casca made. Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed, and as he plucked his cursed steel away, see how the blood of Caesar followed it, as if it were rushing out of doors to find out if it were Brutus who so unkindly knocked, because Brutus, as you know, was

Caesar's angel — Caesar trusted Brutus as if Brutus were his guardian angel. Judge, gods, how dearly Caesar loved Brutus! This was the cruelest and most unkindest cut of all because when the noble Caesar saw him stab, ingratitude, which is stronger than traitors' weapons, quite vanquished Caesar. That is when Caesar's mighty heart burst. Caesar covered his face with his cloak and at the base of Pompey's statue, on which was splashed Caesar's blood, great Caesar fell. What a fall was there, my countrymen! At that time, I, and you, and all of us fell down, while bloody treason triumphed over us."

The Roman citizens wept, and Antony said, "Oh, now you weep, and I see that you feel the blow of pity. These are gracious tears. Kind souls, you are crying when you see only the wounded cloak of Caesar. Look now!"

With a swift movement, Antony uncovered Caesar's corpse and said, "Here is Caesar himself, marred, as you see, with the wounds of traitors."

"Oh, pitiful sight!" the first citizen said.

"Oh, noble Caesar!" the second citizen said.

"Oh, woeful day!" the third citizen said.

"Oh, traitors, villains!" the fourth citizen said.

"Oh, most bloody sight!" the first citizen said.

"We will be revenged," the second citizen said.

"Revenge! Go! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live!" the citizens shouted.

"Wait, countrymen," Antony said.

"Quiet!" the first citizen shouted. "Let us hear the noble Antony!"

"We'll hear him, we'll follow him, we'll die with him," the second citizen shouted.

"Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up to such a sudden flood of mutiny," Antony said. "These men who have done this deed are honorable. I don't know what personal grievances they had against Caesar that made them kill him. These men are wise and honorable, and will, no

doubt, answer you with reasons for why they killed Caesar. I come not, friends, to steal away your hearts: I am not an orator, as Brutus is. As all of you know, I am a plain and blunt man, who loves my friend. These men who gave me permission to speak about Caesar know that I am no orator. I have neither intellectual cleverness, nor rhetorical skill, nor authority, nor rhetorical gestures, nor eloquence, nor the power of speech to stir up the blood of men. I only speak directly and to the point. I tell you that which you yourselves do know. I show you sweet Caesar's wounds — those poor dumb mouths — and I ask them to speak for me, but if I were Brutus, and Brutus were Antony, then Antony would have the rhetorical power to enrage your spirits and make every wound of Caesar speak so that even the stones of Rome would rise and mutiny and riot.”

“We'll riot,” the Roman citizens said.

“We'll burn the house of Brutus,” the first citizen said.

“Let's go!” the third citizen said. “Let's find the conspirators!”

“Wait, countrymen,” Antony said. “Listen to me.”

“Quiet!” the citizens shouted. “Hear what Antony, most noble Antony, has to say!”

“Why, friends, you go to do you not know what,” Antony said. “Why does Caesar deserve your love and respect? You do not know yet. Therefore, I must tell you. You have forgotten the will I told you of.”

“That's true,” the citizens said. “The will! Let's stay and hear the will!”

“Here is the will in my hand,” Antony said, “and it bears Caesar's seal. To every Roman citizen he gives — to each man — seventy-five drachmas.”

“Most noble Caesar!” the second citizen said. “We'll revenge his death!”

“Oh, royal Caesar!” the third citizen shouted.

“Hear me patiently,” Antony said.

“Quiet!” the citizens shouted.

“In addition, Caesar has left you all his gardens, his private summer houses, and newly planted orchards, on this side of the Tiber River,” Antony said. “He has left them to you and to your heirs forever. They will be public pleasure gardens in which you can walk and relax. Here was a Caesar! When will there come another like him!”

“Never, never!” the first citizen shouted. “Let’s go! We’ll cremate Caesar’s corpse in the holy place and then with the firebrands set fire to the traitors’ houses. Let’s carry Caesar’s corpse to the holy place!”

“Fetch fire!” the second citizen said.

“Tear apart benches for wood!” the third citizen said.

“Tear apart shutters and anything we can use for wood to burn,” the fourth citizen said.

The citizens departed, carrying Caesar’s corpse.

“Now let it work,” Antony said. “Troubles and riots, you have started. Take whatever course you will.”

A servant came up to Mark Antony, who asked, “What news do you have for me?”

“Sir, Octavius has already come to Rome.”

“Where is he?” Antony asked.

“He and the soldier Lepidus are at Julius Caesar’s house.”

“And there I will immediately go to visit him,” Antony said. “He comes just as I had wished. The goddess Fortune is merry, and in this mood she will give us anything.”

“I heard him say that Brutus and Cassius have ridden like madmen through the gates of Rome.”

“Probably they have heard that the people are rioting because I persuaded them to riot,” Antony said. “Take me to Octavius.”

— 3.3 —

Cinna the poet — not Cinna the conspirator — walked alone on a street in Rome. The poet was named Helvius Cinna; the conspirator was named Cornelius Cinna.

Cinna said to himself, “I dreamt last night that I feasted with Caesar, and bad omens now weigh on my imagination. I have no wish to wander out of doors, and yet something leads me forth.”

A mob of citizens arrived.

“What is your name?” the first citizen asked Cinna.

“Where are you going?” the second citizen asked.

“Where do you live?” the third citizen asked.

“Are you a married man or a bachelor?” the fourth citizen asked.

“Answer every man directly,” the second citizen said.

“Yes, and briefly,” the first citizen said.

“Yes, and wisely,” the fourth citizen said.

“Yes, and truly — you had better!” the third citizen said.

“What is my name?” Cinna the poet repeated. “Where am I going? Where do I live? Am I a married man or a bachelor? Then, to answer every man directly and briefly, wisely and truly — wisely I say, I am a bachelor.”

“That’s as much as to say that they who marry are fools — you’ll get a blow from me for saying that, I think,” the second citizen said. “Now answer us directly.”

“Directly, I am going to Caesar’s funeral,” Cinna the poet said.

“As a friend or as an enemy?” the first citizen said.

“As a friend,” Cinna the poet said.

“That matter is answered directly,” the second citizen said.

“Where do you live — briefly?” the fourth citizen asked.

“Briefly, I live by the Capitol,” Cinna the poet said.

“What is your name, sir, truly?” the third citizen asked.

“Truly, my name is Cinna.”

“Tear him to pieces! He’s a conspirator!” the first citizen shouted.

“I am Cinna the poet! I am Cinna the poet!”

“Tear him to pieces because of his bad verses!” the fourth citizen shouted.

“I am not Cinna the conspirator!”

“It does not matter — his name’s Cinna,” the fourth citizen said. “Pluck his name out of his heart, and let the rest of him go.”

“Tear him to pieces!” the third citizen cried.

The mob killed Cinna the poet.

“Let’s carry firebrands to Brutus’ house and to Cassius’ house and burn them down!” the third citizen shouted. “Some of us will go to Decius’ house, and some to Casca’s house and some to Ligarius’ house. Let’s go!”

CHAPTER 4**— 4.1 —**

In a house in Rome, Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus were seated at a table. They had joined together to seize power and to divide the Roman territory into three parts — Europe, Asia, and Africa — that they would rule separately. Currently, they were making a list of people in Rome who would die. By killing many men, and exiling others, they hoped to stop opposition.

Mark Antony had a wax tablet in his hands. In the wax were written many names. Whenever they decided that a man had to die, Antony made a mark by that person's name.

"These men, then, shall die," Antony said. "Their names are pricked."

Octavius said to Lepidus, "Your brother also must die. Do you consent, Lepidus?"

"I do consent —" Lepidus began.

"Make a mark by his name, Antony," Octavius said.

Lepidus continued, "— on the condition that Publius — your sister's son, Mark Antony — shall not live."

"He shall not live," Antony agreed. "Look, with a mark I damn him to die. But, Lepidus, go to Caesar's house. Bring his will here, and we shall alter it to reduce his legacies and keep money for ourselves."

"Will you two be here?" Lepidus asked.

"We will be either here or at the Capitol," Octavius said.

Lepidus left.

Antony said, "Lepidus is an insignificant and undeserving man who is fit only for running errands. Is it fitting that when we divide the Roman territory into three parts — Europe, Asia, and Africa — that he get one of those parts?"

"You have thought him worthy," Octavius said. "And you allowed him to vote on who should die in our harsh sentences of death and of exile."

“Octavius, I have seen more days than you. I am older and more experienced,” Antony said. “It is true that we are laying honors on Lepidus so that he can bear the burden of our unpopular actions that shall give us power. He — not us — will be blamed for them. He shall bear the load of honors we give him as the ass bears gold. He will groan and sweat under the load, he will be driven or led where we want him to go, and when he has brought our treasure where we want it to be, then we will unload the treasure and set him loose, like an ass without a burden, to shake his ears and to graze in a pasture.”

“You may do as you like,” Octavius said, “but he is a tried and valiant soldier.”

“So is my horse, Octavius, and because of that I do give him his feed. My horse is a creature that I teach to fight, to turn, to stop, to run directly on — I guide his bodily motion. And, to some extent, so is Lepidus. He must be taught and trained and bid to go forth. He is a barren-spirited fellow — he has no ideas of his own. He feeds on curiosities, artifices, and fashions or styles. He becomes interested in things only after they are out of date. So do not talk about Lepidus except as a tool whom we may use.

“But now, Octavius, listen to important matters. Brutus and Cassius are raising armies. We must immediately raise our own armies and march against them. Therefore, let our forces be combined into one army, and let us get support from our allies and friends, and make the most of our resources. We need to immediately go into council and decide how we can uncover secret plans and how we can best fight open dangers.”

“Let us do so,” Octavius said. “We are like a bear that is tied to a stake, and surrounded by baying enemies. And some people who smile at us, I fear, have in their hearts millions of mischiefs.”

— 4.2 —

In a camp near Sardis in western Turkey, in front of Brutus' tent, Brutus, Lucilius, Lucius, and some soldiers met Titinius and Pindarus. Titinius was a friend to Brutus and Cassius, and Pindarus was one of Cassius' slaves.

Brutus cried, "Halt!"

Lucilius cried, "Pass on the order to the troops to halt!"

"How are you, Lucilius?" Brutus asked. "Is Cassius near?"

"He is near," Lucilius replied. "Pindarus has come to bring you greetings from him."

"Cassius has sent a good man to greet me," Brutus said.

He said to Pindarus, "Your master, because of some change in himself, or because of the bad conduct of some of his officers, has given me some good reasons to wish that some things that have been done, had not been done. But, if he is near, he will be able to talk to me and explain things."

"I do not doubt but that my noble master will appear, as usual, deserving of respect and honor," Pindarus said.

"I do not doubt it," Brutus said.

He added, "Lucilius, tell me how Cassius greeted you."

"He received me with courtesy and with respect enough," Lucilius said, "but not with such evidence of close friendship nor with such free and friendly conversation as he has displayed in the past."

"You have described a hot friend cooling," Brutus said. "It is always the case, Lucilius, that when friendship begins to sicken and decay, the friend treats you with an unnatural politeness. Plain and simple friendship is not deceitful or phony. But hollow, insincere men, like horses eager to run before the race begins, make a big show and promise of their spirit, but when the race begins, they lose their spirit and like deceiving and worthless nags, they cease to run."

He added, "Is Cassius' army coming here?"

“His army intends to camp in Sardis tonight,” Lucilius answered. “The greater part — including all the cavalry — is coming with Cassius.”

“Look,” Brutus said. “Cassius has arrived. Let us march at a dignified pace and meet him.”

Cassius cried, “Halt!”

Brutus cried, “Halt! Pass the order down the line of soldiers.”

“Halt!” the first soldier cried.

“Halt!” the second soldier cried.

“Halt!” the third soldier cried.

Cassius was angry. He said to Brutus, “Most noble brother, you have done me wrong.”

“May the gods judge me,” Brutus replied. “Do I wrong my enemies? No! So how could I wrong a brother?”

“Brutus, this dignified manner of yours hides wrongs. And when you do them —”

Brutus interrupted, “Cassius, calm down. Speak about your grievances quietly. I know you well. The eyes of both our armies here should perceive nothing but friendship between us, so let us not argue in public. We will order the soldiers to move away a little, and then in my tent, Cassius, you can tell me about your grievances.”

“Pindarus, order our commanders to lead their soldiers a little distance away from here,” Cassius ordered.

“Lucilius, you do the same,” Brutus said. “Let no man come to our tent until Cassius and I have finished our conference. Order Lucius and Titinius to guard our door.”

— 4.3 —

Inside Brutus’ tent, Brutus and Cassius argued.

“Here is a way that you have wronged me,” Cassius said. “You have found guilty and publicly disgraced Lucius Pella for taking bribes here from the Sardians. I sent you letters on

behalf of Lucius Pella because I know the man, and you ignored my letters.”

“You wronged yourself to write letters in behalf of such a man,” Brutus said.

“In such a time as this, it is not suitable for every trivial offence to get its punishment,” Cassius said.

“Let me tell you, Cassius, you yourself are much condemned for having an itchy palm — for selling and trading official positions for gold to people who do not deserve such positions.”

“I have an itchy palm!” Cassius said. “You are Brutus who speaks this; if you were not Brutus, I swear by the gods, this speech would be your last.”

“Your name, Cassius, protects this corruption by giving it an appearance of respectability, and therefore it goes unpunished,” Brutus said.

“Unpunished!”

“Remember the Ides of March,” Brutus said. “Did not great Julius Caesar bleed for the sake of justice? Who among us stabbed Caesar except in the cause of justice? We struck the foremost man of the entire world because he allowed robbers to go free. Shall we now contaminate our fingers with base bribes? Shall we sell the vast capacity we have for being honorable so we can acquire the trash and money that may be grasped by taking bribes? I would prefer to be a dog, and howl at the Moon, than to be such a Roman.”

“Brutus, do not provoke me,” Cassius said. “I will not endure it. You forget yourself when you hedge me in with your rules and limit my freedom of action. I am a soldier. I am more experienced and abler than yourself to make treaties.”

“No, you are not, Cassius.”

“I am.”

“I say you are not.”

“Test my patience no more, or I shall forget myself,” Cassius said. “Be concerned about your health, and tempt me no further.”

“Go away, insignificant man!” Brutus said.

“Is it possible that you can say that to me?” Cassius asked.

“Listen to me, for I will speak,” Brutus said. “Am I required to give way to your rash anger? Shall I be frightened when a madman stares at me?”

“Gods, must I endure all this?”

“All this?” Brutus said. “Yes, and more. Rage until your proud heart breaks. Go and show your slaves how angry you are, and make your slaves tremble. Must I give in to you? Must I show respectful attention to you? Must I stand here and cringe because you are in a testy mood? By the gods, you shall digest the poison of your temper, even though it makes you burst. From this day on, I’ll use you for my entertainment — I will laugh at you when you are hotheaded.”

“Has it come to this?” Cassius said.

“You say you are a better soldier,” Brutus said. “Prove it. Make your boasting come true, and I shall be well pleased. For my own part, I shall be glad to learn from noble men.”

“You wrong me in every way,” Cassius said. “You wrong me, Brutus. I said, an elder soldier, not a better. Did I say ‘better’?”

“If you did, I don’t care,” Brutus said.

“When Julius Caesar was alive, he would not have dared to have angered me in this way.”

“Be quiet,” Brutus said. “You would not have dared to provoke his anger.”

“I would not have dared!” Cassius said.

“No.”

“What? Dared not to provoke him!”

“No, because you would fear for your life,” Brutus replied.

“Don’t take my friendship for you for granted. I may do something that I shall be sorry for.”

“You have already done something that you should be sorry for — you have taken bribes,” Brutus said. “There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats. I am not afraid of them because I am so secure in my honesty and integrity that your threats pass by me like the idle wind, which I do not fear or respect.

“I sent to you to tell you to send me certain sums of gold, which you denied me. I can raise no money by vile means.”

An impartial observer might think about these things: Brutus can raise no money by vile means. Is it OK for Cassius to raise money by vile means and then give the money to Brutus? Is it OK for Cassius to raise money by accepting bribes and then give the money to Brutus? What if the only way to raise money is through vile means?

“By Heaven,” Brutus continued, “I had rather turn my heart and the drops of my blood into money than to wring from the hard hands of peasants their vile coins by tricks and deceitful means. I sent to you for gold to pay my legions of soldiers, and you denied me that money. Was that done like Cassius? Would I have done that to you? When Marcus Brutus grows so greedy as to keep such wretched bits of metal from his friends, then be ready, gods, with all your thunderbolts — dash me to pieces!”

“I did not deny you the money.”

“You did.”

“I did not,” Cassius said. “He who brought my answer back to you was a fool. Brutus, you have broken my heart. A friend should put up with his friend’s weaknesses, but you make my weaknesses greater than they are.”

“I do not until you inflict your weaknesses on me.”

“You no longer like me.”

“I do not like your faults.”

“A friendly eye could never see such faults,” Cassius said.

“A flatterer’s eye would not, even if they should appear to be as huge as the high mountain that is Olympus.”

“Come to me, Antony and young Octavius, come,” Cassius said. “Revenge yourselves alone on Cassius because Cassius is weary of the world. He is hated by one he loves, defied by his brother, rebuked like a slave. All my faults are observed, written down in a notebook, learned by heart, and memorized so that they can be thrown in my teeth. I could weep my spirit from my eyes and die of grief! There is my dagger, and here is my naked breast. Within is a heart more precious than the mine of Plutus, the god of riches. My heart is richer than gold. If you are a Roman, cut my heart out. I, who denied you gold, will give you my heart. Strike me like you struck at Caesar because I know that when you hated him the worst, you loved him better than you ever loved Cassius.”

“Sheathe your dagger,” Brutus said. “Be angry whenever you will — your anger shall have free expression. Do what you will — I will take your abuse as a mere whim or bad mood. Cassius, you are yoked — partners — with a lamb that carries anger like the flint carries fire. When the flint is struck hard, it shows a hasty spark, and then immediately is cold again. So it is with anger and me.”

“Has Cassius lived to be only mirth and laughter — a joke — to Brutus, when grief and anger vex him?”

“When I said that, I was ill-tempered, too.”

“Do you admit it?” Cassius said. “Give me your hand.”

They shook hands.

“I give you my heart, too,” Brutus said.

“Oh, Brutus!”

“What’s the matter?”

“Aren’t you friendly enough to bear with me, when my bad temper, which I inherited from my mother, makes me forget how I should behave?”

“Yes, Cassius. From henceforth, whenever you are angry at Brutus, he will think your mother is angry, and leave it at that.”

Despite their precautions, gossip about their argument had spread among the soldiers, and now a poet came to Brutus’ tent and demanded to talk to Brutus and Cassius. The poet did not know that Brutus and Cassius had already patched up their quarrel.

The poet said, “Let me go in to see the generals. There is some argument between them, and they ought not to be alone together.”

Lucilius, one of the guards outside Brutus’ tent, said, “You shall not go to them.”

The poet replied, “Nothing but death shall stop me.”

The poet entered the tent, followed by Lucilius, Titinius, and Lucius.

“What is this!” Cassius said. “What is the matter?”

“For shame, you generals!” the poet said. “What do you mean? Love each other, and be friends, as two such men as you should be. I have seen more years, I’m sure, than either of ye.”

Brutus and Cassius made fun of the poet, although older men ought to be respected.

“Ha!” Cassius said. “How vilely does this rude man rhyme!”

“Get out of here,” Brutus said. “Saucy fellow, go!”

“Bear with him, Brutus,” Cassius said. “This is just the way he is.”

“I will allow him to be eccentric when he realizes that there is a proper time and place for it,” Brutus said. “What place has war for these idiot rhymesters?”

He said to the poet, “Get out!”

The poet left.

“Lucilius and Titinius, order the commanders to prepare to pitch camp for their companies tonight,” Brutus ordered.

Cassius ordered, “Then return immediately to us — and bring Messala with you.”

Lucilius and Titinius left to carry out their orders.

“Lucius, bring us a bowl of wine,” Brutus ordered.

Lucius left to carry out his errand.

“I did not think you could have been so angry,” Cassius said.

“Oh, Cassius, I am sick with many griefs.”

“If you surrender to the chance evils that befall us, you are not making use of your Stoic philosophy that ought to teach us to bear such evils patiently and without complaining.”

“No man bears sorrow better than I do,” Brutus said. “Portia is dead.”

“Portia?”

“She is dead.”

“How did I escape your killing me when I quarreled with you?” Cassius asked. “This is an unbearable loss of someone who touched and loved you! From which illness did she die?”

“Unable to endure my absence, and grieving because young Octavius and Mark Antony have made themselves so powerful — news of their power arrived with news of her death — she despaired and, while her servants were absent, she put hot coals in her mouth and swallowed fire.”

“That is how she died?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, you immortal gods!”

Lucius returned, carrying wine and a candle.

“Speak no more about her,” Brutus said to Cassius. “Give me a bowl of wine. With this drink, I bury all unkindness between us, Cassius.”

He drank.

“My heart is thirsty for peace between us,” Cassius said.

He added, “Fill the cup, Lucius, until the wine overfills it. I cannot drink too much of Brutus’ love.”

He drank.

Brutus heard approaching footsteps and said, "Come in, Titinius!"

Lucius left, and both Titinius and Messala entered Brutus' tent.

"Welcome, good Messala," Brutus said. "Now let us sit around this candle here, and discuss our needs."

"Portia, are you really gone?" Cassius said to himself.

"No more, please," Brutus said to Cassius.

He added, "Messala, I have here received letters that state that young Octavius and Mark Antony are marching against us with a mighty army. They are marching toward Philippi, a city in northeastern Greece."

"I have letters that say the same thing," Messala replied.

"Do they say anything else?" Brutus asked.

"That by proclamation of the death sentence and bills of outlawry, Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus have put to death a hundred Senators. They were declared outlaws and their property was seized."

"There our letters do not agree well," Brutus said. "My letters speak of seventy Senators who have died because of their proscriptions. Cicero is one of those who died."

"Cicero!" Cassius said.

"Cicero is dead by order of Octavius, Mark Antony, and Lepidus," Messala said.

He then asked Brutus, "Have you received any letters from your wife, my lord?"

"No, Messala."

"Have any of the letters you have received contained news about her?"

Brutus did not want to talk about his late wife. He replied again, "No, Messala."

"That is strange, I think," Messala said.

"Why are you asking about her? Have you heard anything about her in the letters you have received?" Brutus asked.

“No, my lord.”

Brutus decided that eventually he would have to talk about his late wife, so he might as well start now. He said to Messala, “Now, as you are a Roman, tell me the truth.”

“Then like a Roman bear the truth I tell you. It is certain that she is dead and that she died in a strange manner.”

To a close friend such as Cassius, Brutus could reveal his feelings. In front of other people, he would act like a Stoic philosopher. He said, “Why, farewell, Portia. We must die, Messala. I have known that she must die one day, and so I have the patience to endure her death now.”

“Just like you are doing now, great men should endure great losses,” Messala said.

“I also know Stoic philosophy,” Cassius said. “But yet I could not bear such a great loss as patiently as you are bearing it.”

“Well, let us return to the work we must do while we are alive,” Brutus said. “What do you think about marching to Philippi immediately?”

“I do not think it is a good idea,” Cassius said.

“Why not?” Brutus asked.

“It is better that the enemy come to us. That way, he will exhaust his supplies and weary his soldiers, doing himself harm, while we, staying here, will be full of rest, in a good defensive position, and fresh.”

“Good reasons must, of necessity, give way to better reasons,” Brutus said. “The people between Philippi and here have been forced to help us. They have only grudgingly given us supplies. Our enemy’s army, marching through them, shall increase as people join the army. They will march against us refreshed, with newly added soldiers, and encouraged by the people’s support. We can stop these advantages for their army if we march to and fight at Philippi. Those people who would support our enemy will be cut off from our enemy’s army.”

“Listen to me, good brother,” Cassius started to object.

“Pardon me,” Brutus said. “I am not finished. You must know that we have gotten all that our allies can give us. Our armies are large, and our cause is at its peak. The enemy armies grow larger every day; they have not yet peaked. We are at our peak and are ready to decline. There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Neglected, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures. Now is the time for us to take action and march against our enemies, not to sit back and let our enemies come to us.”

“Then, as you wish, march to meet them,” Cassius said. “My army and I will also march and meet them at Philippi.”

“The deepest part of night has crept upon our talk,” Brutus said. “We must obey natural necessity and get at least a little sleep. Is there anything else we should talk about?”

“No,” Cassius said. “Good night. Early tomorrow we will rise and march to Philippi.”

“Lucius!” Brutus called.

Lucius appeared.

“Bring me my robe.”

Brutus added, “Farewell, good Messala. Good night, Titinius. Noble, noble Cassius, good night to you, and sleep well.”

“My dear brother!” Cassius said. “This night began badly. May there never again come such division between our souls, Brutus!”

Lucius appeared, carrying Brutus’ robe.

“All is well,” Brutus said.

“Good night, my lord,” Cassius said.

“Good night, good brother,” Brutus said.

Titinius and Messala said, “Good night, Lord Brutus.”

“Farewell, everyone,” Brutus said.

Everyone except Brutus and Lucius left.

“Give me my robe,” Brutus said. “Where is your lute?”

“Here in the tent,” Lucius said.

“I can tell by the way you speak that you are sleepy,” Brutus said. “Poor boy, I don’t blame you. You are tired because you have been kept awake so long. Call Claudius and one other of my men. I’ll have them sleep on cushions in my tent in case I need them.”

“Varro and Claudius!” Lucius called.

Varro and Claudius entered Brutus’ tent.

Varro asked, “Does my lord need me?”

“Please, sirs, lie in my tent and sleep,” Brutus said. “It may happen that I shall wake you by and by to carry a message to my brother Cassius.”

“If it is OK with you, we will stand and wait here until you need us,” Varro said.

“No,” Brutus said. “Lie down and sleep, good sirs. Perhaps I shall not need you.”

Brutus put his hand in the pocket of the robe that Lucius had brought to him and said, “Look, Lucius, here’s the book I have been looking for. I put it in the pocket of my robe.”

Varro and Claudius lay down to sleep.

“I was sure your lordship did not give the book to me,” Lucius said.

“Bear with me, good boy,” Brutus said. “I am very forgetful. If you can stay awake a while, will you play a tune or two on your lute?”

“Yes, my lord, if you want me to,” Lucius said.

“I do, my boy. I trouble you too much, but I am grateful that you are willing to play for me.”

“It is my duty, sir.”

“I ought not to make you do more than you can do,” Brutus said. “I know that young boys need their rest.”

“I have slept for a while, my lord, already.”

“That was well done, and you shall sleep again. I will not hold you long,” Brutus said. “If I live through this, I will be good to you.”

Lucius played and sang a song. But he was tired and fell asleep.

“This is a sleepy tune,” Brutus said. “Oh, murderous slumber, you have arrested this boy’s playing and made him sleep although he was playing music. Gentle boy, good night. I will not do you wrong and wake you. You might break your lute, and so I will take it from you and put it here, where it will be safe, and so, good boy, good night.”

He looked at his book and said, “Let me see. Isn’t the corner of the page turned down where I stopped reading? Here it is, I think.”

The ghost of Julius Caesar entered Brutus’ tent, causing the candle’s flame to quiver.

“How badly this candle burns!” Brutus said. “Wait! Who comes here? I think it is the weakness of my eyes that shapes this monstrous apparition that comes toward me. Are you anything? Are you a god, an angel, or a devil, you who make my blood run cold and my hair stand up? Speak to me and tell me what or who you are.”

“I am your evil spirit, Brutus,” Caesar’s ghost said.

“Why have you come to me here?”

“To tell you that you shall see me at Philippi.”

“Then I shall see you again?”

“Yes, at Philippi.”

Recovering his courage, Brutus said, “Why, I will see you at Philippi, then.”

The ghost disappeared.

“Now that I have regained my courage, you have vanished,” Brutus said. “Evil spirit, I want to talk to you!”

Brutus called, “Boy, Lucius! Varro! Claudius! Sirs, awake! Claudius!” He wanted to know if they had seen the ghost.

Still asleep and dreaming, Lucius said, “The strings, my lord, are out of tune.”

“He thinks he is still playing his lute,” Brutus said. “Lucius, wake up!”

“My lord?”

“Were you dreaming, Lucius?” Brutus asked. “Is that why you cried out?”

“My lord, I do not think that I cried out.”

“Yes, you did,” Brutus said. “Did you see anything?”

“I saw nothing, my lord.”

“Go to sleep again, Lucius,” Brutus said.

Then he called, “Claudius!”

To Varro, he called, “Wake up!”

“My lord?” Varro and Claudius asked together.

“Why did you cry out, sirs, in your sleep?”

“Did we, my lord?” they asked.

“Yes. Did you see anything?”

“No, my lord, I saw nothing,” Varro said.

“Neither did I, my lord,” Claudius said.

“Go and present my compliments to my brother Cassius. Tell him to order his troops to advance early this morning. We will follow him and his troops.”

“It shall be done, my lord,” Varro and Claudius replied, and then they left to carry the message to Cassius.

CHAPTER 5**— 5.1 —**

On the plains of Philippi, Octavius was talking to Mark Antony. Their troops were camped on the plains.

“Now, Antony, our hopes are answered,” Octavius said. “The enemy forces have made a tactical mistake. You said that the enemy would not come down from their strong defensive position, but would instead stay on the hills and upper regions. They did not do that. Their armies are close to us. They mean to challenge us at Philippi here. They are responding to our challenge even before we have made it.”

“I can put myself in their place and know what they are thinking,” Antony said. “I know why they are doing this. They would like to approach us from different directions and make a surprise attack against us with a show of bravery, thinking to make us believe that they are courageous, but they are not brave.”

A messenger arrived and said, “Prepare yourselves, generals. The enemy marches toward us and makes a gallant show. They are wearing red vests — their bloody signs of battle — over their armor. Some action will have to be taken immediately.”

“Octavius, lead your army slowly to the left side of the level field,” Antony said.

“My army will take the right side of the battlefield. You and your army will take the left side,” Octavius replied.

“Why are you opposing me in this urgent matter?” Antony said.

“I am not opposing you, but my army and I will take the right side of the battlefield.”

Brutus, Cassius, Lucilius, Titinius, Messala, and others approached to talk to Mark Antony and Octavius before the battle began.

Brutus said, “They are willing to talk.”

“Stay here, Titinius,” Cassius said. “Brutus and I will talk to them.”

“Mark Antony, shall we give the order to attack?” Octavius Caesar asked.

“No, Caesar, we will respond when they attack. Let you and I go forward. Their generals would have some words with us.”

Octavius said to his officers, “Don’t move until we give the signal.”

“Words before blows,” Brutus said. “Is that the way it is, countrymen?”

“We do not love words better than battle, as you do,” Octavius said.

“Good words are better than bad strokes, Octavius,” Brutus replied.

“To accompany your bad strokes, Brutus, you gave good words,” Antony replied. “Your dagger put a hole in Caesar’s heart as you cried out, ‘Long live Caesar! Hail, Caesar!’”

“Antony, we do not yet know what kind of blows you will strike, but we do know that your words rob the bees around Hybla, a town in Sicily that is famous for its honey,” Cassius said. “Your words leave those bees honeyless.”

“But not stingless,” Antony said.

“Oh, yes, and soundless, too,” Brutus said. “For you have stolen their buzzing, Antony, and very wisely you threaten before you sting.”

“Villains, you gave no warning before your vile daggers crashed against each other in the body of Julius Caesar,” Antony replied. “You grinned like apes, and fawned like hounds, and bowed like slaves. You kissed Caesar’s feet, while damned Casca, like a dog, stood behind Caesar and stabbed him in the neck. You flattered Caesar as you murdered him!”

“We are flatterers!” Cassius said. “Now, Brutus, thank yourself. Antony’s tongue would not be insulting us in this

way today, if you had listened to me and let us kill Antony when we killed Julius Caesar.”

“Get to the point,” Octavius Caesar said. “If arguing makes us sweat, settling the argument in battle will make us drip redder drops — our blood! Look, I am drawing my sword against conspirators. When do you think that I will sheathe my sword again? Not until Julius Caesar’s three and thirty wounds are well avenged, or until another Caesar — me — has been killed by the swords of traitors.”

“Caesar, it is impossible for you to die at the hands of traitors unless you yourself bring traitors here. We are not traitors; we are loyal to Rome,” Brutus said.

“I hope that it is impossible for me to die at the hands of traitors,” Octavius Caesar said. “I was not born to die on Brutus’ sword.”

“Even if you were the noblest of your family, young man, you could not die more honorably than on my sword,” Brutus said.

“Octavius is a peevish schoolboy, unworthy of such honor,” Cassius said, knowing that Octavius was only 21 years old. “He is allied with Mark Antony, who is known for partying and reveling.”

“Cassius — you never change,” Antony said.

“Antony, let’s leave,” Octavius said.

To Brutus and Cassius, Octavius said, “We hurl defiance in your teeth. If you dare fight today, come to the battlefield. If not, come when you have stomachs for fighting.”

Octavius and Antony left.

Cassius said, “Why, now the wind is blowing, the swells are billowing, and the ships are floating. The storm has started, and everything is at stake.”

“Lucilius!” Brutus said.

“Yes, my lord?”

“I want to speak to you.”

Brutus and Lucilius talked privately.

Cassius said, “Messala!”

“Yes, my general?”

“Messala, this is my birthday; on this very day was Cassius born. Give me your hand, Messala. Be my witness that against my will, as Pompey was, am I compelled to risk everything in one battle. Pompey fought at Pharsalia against his better judgment — he was defeated. You know that I used to strongly believe in the Greek philosopher Epicurus and his teachings. He believed that omens were mere superstitions. Now I change my mind, and I partially believe in things that do presage the future. As we travelled here from Sardis, on our foremost standard — our foremost flag — two mighty eagles fell, and there they perched, gorging and feeding from our soldiers’ hands. From Sardis to Philippi, they accompanied us. This morning, they flew away and are gone. And in their steads do ravens, crows, and kites — all kinds of scavenger birds — fly over our heads and look down on us, as if our corpses will soon be food for them. Their shadows seem to be a deadly canopy, under which our army lies, ready to die.”

“Do not believe that this is an omen,” Messala said.

“I only partially believe it,” Cassius said. “I am of good spirits and resolved to face all dangers very courageously.”

“That is right, Lucilius,” Brutus said, ending their private conversation.

“Now, most noble Brutus,” Cassius said, “may the gods today be friendly to us, so that we, lovers of peace, may live on to reach old age! But since the affairs of men are always uncertain, let us consider the worst that may befall us. If we lose this battle, then this is the very last time we shall speak together. What are you determined to do if we lose the battle?”

“As a Stoic, I blame Marcus Porcius Cato for the death that he gave himself,” Brutus said. “He opposed Julius Caesar, and rather than surrender to him he committed suicide. I am not sure why, but I find it cowardly and vile to commit suicide out of fear of what may happen. I plan to be

patient and accept without complaining whatever the gods send to us.”

“Then, if we lose this battle, you will accept being led as a prisoner in triumph through the streets of Rome?” Cassius asked.

“No, Cassius, no,” Brutus said. “Do not think, noble Roman, that Brutus will allow himself to go bound to Rome. I bear too great a mind for that — I am too proud to allow that to happen. But this day must end that work the Ides of March began. Whether we shall meet again, I do not know. Therefore, let us make our final farewells. So, farewell forever, Cassius! If we meet again, then we shall smile. If we do not meet again, then this parting was well done.”

“Forever, and forever, farewell, Brutus!” Cassius said. “If we do meet again, we will smile indeed. If not, it is true that this parting was well done.”

“Why, then, lead on,” Brutus said. “I wish that a man might know how this day will end before it happens! But it is enough that the day will end, and then we will know the end. Let us go now.”

— 5.2 —

The battle had not yet started.

Brutus gave Messala some written orders and said, “Ride, Messala, ride, and give these orders to Cassius’ legions on the other side. Let them set on and fight at once because I see only faint courage in the soldiers in Octavius’ army. A sudden attack by my wing will defeat them. Ride, Messala. Let all our soldiers attack now.”

— 5.3 —

Later, in Cassius’ part of the battlefield, Cassius and Titinius were talking.

“Look, Titinius, some of our soldiers have turned cowards and are fleeing! I myself have turned enemy to my

own soldiers. This standard bearer here of mine was running away, and so I killed the coward, and took the flag from him.”

“Cassius, Brutus gave the orders to attack too early,” Titinius said. “Having some advantage over Octavius’ army, he took it too eagerly and his soldiers began to loot, while we are surrounded by Antony’s army.”

Pindarus came running and said, “Run further off, my lord, run further off. Mark Antony is at your tents, my lord. Run, therefore, noble Cassius, run further off. Retreat.”

“This hill is far enough away,” Cassius said. “Look, Titinius. Are those my tents where I see fire?”

“Yes, they are, my lord.”

“Titinius, if you are my friend, mount my horse, and ride quickly to the troops there and bring back news of whether those troops are our friends or our enemies.”

“I will be here again as quickly as thought.”

Titinius left.

“Go, Pindarus, get higher on that hill,” Cassius ordered. “My sight has always been poor. Watch Titinius, and tell me what happens.”

Pindarus climbed higher on the hill.

Cassius said to himself, “This day is the day I breathed first. This is the day that I was born. Time has come round, and where I began, there I shall end. My life has run its circle, and I will die today.”

He called to Pindarus, “What do you see?”

“My lord!”

“What is happening?”

“Titinius is surrounded by horsemen who quickly ride toward him. He is riding quickly toward them. Now they are almost on him. Titinius! Now some horsemen dismount. Now, he dismounts, too. He has been captured.”

Shouts rose in the air.

“Listen,” Pindarus said, “The enemy soldiers are shouting for joy.”

“Come down and don’t look any more,” Cassius said. “I am a coward because I have lived so long that I have seen my best friend captured before my eyes!”

Pindarus came down from higher on the hill.

“Come here,” Cassius said. “In Parthia I took you prisoner and then I made you swear that if I did not kill you that whatever I ordered you to do you would attempt to do it. Come now, and keep your oath. Now you can earn your freedom. Take this good sword that ran through Caesar’s bowels and helped to kill him — plunge this good sword into my chest. Don’t talk. Don’t hesitate. Here, take the hilt of the sword, and wait until I have covered my face.”

Cassius covered his face with some clothing.

“Now plunge the sword into my chest.”

Pindarus stabbed Cassius, who said, “Caesar, you are revenged with the sword that killed you.”

Cassius died.

Pindarus said to himself, “So, I am free, yet this is not the way I wanted to gain my freedom. Cassius, I will run far from this country. I will go where no Roman shall ever take note of me.”

He ran away.

Titinius, wearing a wreath of victory, and Messala rode toward Cassius’ corpse.

“The armies have simply changed their positions,” Messala said to Titinius. “Brutus’ army defeated Octavius’ army, and Antony’s army defeated Cassius’ army.”

“This news of Brutus’ victory will well comfort Cassius,” Titinius said.

“Where did you leave him?” Messala asked.

“He was disconsolate and in despair with Pindarus, his slave, on this hill,” Titinius said.

“Is not that he who is lying on the ground?”

“He does not lie like a living person,” Titinius said. “Oh, my heart!”

“Is that Cassius?”

“No, but he was Cassius,” Titinius said. “Messala, Cassius lives no more. Oh, setting Sun, just as in your red rays you will sink tonight, so in his red blood Cassius’ day has set. The Sun of Rome has set! Our day is over. Clouds, the dews of evening, and dangers come. Our deeds are done! Mistrust of my success has done this deed — Cassius mistook good news for bad news and so killed himself.”

“Mistrust of good success has done this deed,” Messala said. “Oh, hateful error, you are the child of melancholy. You make men think thoughts that are false. Error is quickly conceived, but it kills its mother and nothing good can come from it.”

“Pindarus! Where are you, Pindarus?” Titinius said.

“Seek him, Titinius,” Messala said, “while I go and meet the noble Brutus, and tell him what has happened here. I may as well say that I will thrust this report into his ears because piercing steel and poisoned darts shall be as welcome to the ears of Brutus as the news of the suicide of his friend.”

“Hurry, Messala,” Titinius said. “I will look for Pindarus while you are gone.”

Messala rode away.

“Why did you send me to your camp, brave Cassius?” Titinius said to Cassius’ corpse. “Didn’t I meet your friends? And didn’t they put on my brows this wreath of victory, and tell me to give it to you? Didn’t you hear their joyful shouts? You misunderstood everything! You mistook very good news for very bad news! But let me put this wreath of victory upon your brow. Brutus told me to give it to you, and I will do what he asked. Brutus, come quickly, and see how I respected Caius Cassius.”

He took Cassius’ sword and said, “Give me your permission to kill myself, gods — this is what is expected of a Roman. Come, Cassius’ sword, and find Titinius’ heart.”

Titinius killed himself with Cassius’ sword.

Messala returned with Brutus, young Cato, Strato, Volumnius, and Lucilius. Young Cato’s father was Marcus

Porcius Cato, who had supported Pompey and had killed himself rather than surrender to Julius Caesar. Young Cato's sister was Portia, Brutus' late wife.

"Where, Messala, does Cassius' body lie?" Brutus asked.

"Over there," Messala said. "Titinius was mourning the corpse."

"Titinius is facing upward," Brutus said.

"He is dead," young Cato said.

"Julius Caesar, you are powerful even now," Brutus said. "Your spirit walks abroad and turns our swords so that they pierce our own bodies."

"Look, noble Titinius has crowned the dead Cassius with a wreath of victory."

"Are there still two Romans living such as these?" Brutus asked. "The last of all the Romans, fare you well! It is impossible that Rome should ever breed your equals. Friends, I owe more tears to this dead man than you shall see me pay. I shall find time to mourn you properly. Cassius, I shall find time. Come, let us send his body to the nearby island of Thasos. We will not hold his funeral in our camps because it would dishearten and demoralize us. Lucilius, come, and come, young Cato, let us return to the battlefield."

He added, "Labeo and Flavius, set our troops in battle formation. It is three o'clock, and, Romans, before night falls we will try our fortunes in a second fight."

— 5.4 —

The armies were fighting each other. Brutus, Messala, Flavius, young Cato, and Lucilius and others were fighting.

"Keep fighting, countrymen," Brutus shouted. "Hold your heads up high!"

Brutus, Messala, and Flavius left to fight on another part of the battlefield.

“Who is of such bastard blood that he will not hold his head up high?” young Cato shouted. “Who will go with me? I will shout my name in the battlefield — I am the son of Marcus Cato! I am a foe to tyrants, and my country’s friend! I am the son of Marcus Cato!”

Cato fought fiercely, but an opposing soldier killed him.

“And I am Brutus, Marcus Junius Brutus! I am Brutus, my country’s friend!” Lucilius shouted. “Know that I am Brutus!”

Lucilius wanted Brutus to be safe. By saying that he was Brutus, he knew that the opposing soldiers who heard him would focus on him, not on the real Brutus.

He saw the corpse of young Cato and said, “Oh, young and noble Cato, are you down? Why, now you die as nobly as Titinius. And you, being Marcus Cato’s son, will be honored.”

One of Antony’s soldiers said to Lucilius, “Surrender, or die!”

“I prefer to die,” Lucilius said. “Here is some money. Take it, and kill me. I am Brutus. Kill me and win honor because you have killed me.”

“We must not kill you,” the soldier said. “You are nobly born.”

A second soldier of Antony’s shouted, “Make room for us! Get out of the way! Carry the news to Antony that Brutus has been captured.”

The first soldier said, “I will tell him. Here he comes now.”

Antony arrived, and the first soldier said, “Brutus has been captured, my lord.”

“Where is he?” Antony asked.

“He is somewhere safe,” Lucilius said. “I have been pretending to be him. Brutus is safe enough, and I assure you that no enemy shall ever take the noble Brutus alive — may the gods defend him from so great a shame! When you find him, whether he is alive or dead, he will be found to be noble

Brutus — he will behave in accordance with his own true and noble nature.”

“This man is not Brutus, friends,” Antony told his soldiers, “but he is, I assure you, a prize no less in worth. Keep this man safe and show him kindness. I prefer that such men be my friends than my enemies. Go and see whether Brutus is alive or dead and come to Octavius’ tent and tell us your news.”

— 5.5 —

Brutus, Dardanius, Clitus, Strato, and Volumnius knew that they had lost the battle. Strato was one of Brutus’ servants.

Brutus said, “Come here, poor friendly survivors of this battle, and last of my living friends, and rest on this rock.”

Clitus said, “Statilius showed the torchlight to us — a signal that all was going well in another part of the battle — but, my lord, he did not return to us. He must have been either captured or killed.”

“Sit down and rest, Clitus,” Brutus said. “‘Killed’ is the word most likely to be accurate. Today, killing has been fashionable. Clitus, let me speak privately to you.”

Brutus whispered to Clitus, who replied, “What, I, my lord? No, not for all the world.”

“Be quiet, then,” Brutus said. “Say no more.”

“I’ll rather kill myself than do what you asked me to do.”

Brutus went to Dardanius and said, “Listen to me.”

Brutus whispered to Dardanius, who said, “Shall I do such a deed?”

Clitus said, “Oh, Dardanius!”

Dardanius said, “Oh, Clitus!”

“What evil thing did Brutus ask you to do?”

“To kill him, Clitus. Look, he is meditating about what to do.”

“That noble vessel is so full of grief that it trickles out of his eyes,” Clitus said.

“Come here, good Volumnius,” Brutus said, “and listen to me.”

“What is it, my lord?”

“Why, this, Volumnius. The ghost of Caesar has appeared to me twice by night: once at Sardis, and, once last night here on the battlefield of Philippi. I know that my hour of death has come.”

“No, my lord,” Volumnius said.

“I am sure it has, Volumnius,” Brutus said. “You see how the world goes. Our enemies have beaten us back to the pit. It is much better for us to leap into the pit ourselves than to wait until they push us in. Good Volumnius, you know that we two went to school together. For the sake of our old friendship, I ask you to please hold my sword while I run on it and kill myself.”

“That’s not a job for a friend, my lord,” Volumnius said.

Noises made it clear that enemy soldiers were approaching.

“Run, run, my lord,” Clitus said to Brutus. “We can wait here no longer.”

“Farewell to you; and you; and you, Volumnius. Strato, you have been asleep all this while,” Brutus said. “Farewell to you, too, Strato. Countrymen, my heart rejoices that in all my life I have found only men who were true to me. I shall gain glory on this losing day — more glory than Octavius and Mark Antony shall gain with their dishonorable and vile victory. So farewell now. Brutus’ tongue has almost ended its life’s history. Night hangs upon my eyes, and my bones want to rest. My body has labored hard to bring me to this hour of death.”

The noise of enemy soldiers grew nearer. Some of Brutus’ soldiers shouted on the battlefield, “Run! Run for your lives!”

“Run, my lord, run!” Clitus pleaded.

“Go now! I will follow you,” Brutus said.

Clitus, Dardanius, and Volumnius fled.

“Please, Strato, stay here by me,” Brutus said. “You are a fellow with a good reputation. You have earned honor in your life. Hold then my sword, and turn away your face, while I run on my sword and kill myself. Will you do that for me, Strato?”

“Give me your hand first,” Strato said.

They shook hands, and Strato said, “Farewell, my lord.”

“Farewell, good Strato.”

Strato held the sword firmly and turned his face to the side.

Brutus ran on his sword, fell, and said, “Caesar, now be still. I did not kill you with half so good a will as that with which I kill myself.”

Brutus died.

Octavius and Mark Antony and some of their soldiers arrived with two bound prisoners: Messala and Lucilius.

“What man is that?” Octavius said, referring to Strato.

“My master’s servant,” Messala said. “Strato, where is Brutus, your master?”

“He is free from the bondage you are in, Messala,” Strato said. “The conquerors can but make a funeral fire for him because Brutus conquered himself, and no other man but himself has gained honor from his death.”

“It is fitting that Brutus should be found like this,” Lucilius said. “I thank you, Brutus, because you have proved what I said to be true. I said that when Antony found Brutus, whether he is alive or dead, he would be found to be noble Brutus — he would behave in accordance with his own true and noble nature.”

“Everyone who served Brutus, I will take into my service,” Octavius said.

He said to Strato, “Will you join with me?”

“Yes, if Messala will recommend me to you,” Strato replied.

“Recommend him, good Messala,” Octavius said.

First, Messala asked, “How did my master, Brutus, die, Strato?”

“I held the sword, and he ran on it,” Strato said.

“Octavius, take Strato into your service. He did the final service to my master.”

Mark Antony said over Brutus’ corpse, “This was the noblest Roman of them all. All the conspirators except only he did what they did out of envy of great Caesar. Brutus joined the conspirators only because he honestly believed that he was acting for the general good of all. His life was noble, and his character was such that Nature might stand up and say to all the world, ‘This was a man!’”

“Let us treat him according to his virtue and excellence,” Octavius said. “We will give him all respect and rites of burial. Within my tent his bones shall lie tonight with the honors due to a soldier. Order the fighting to stop, and let us return to our camp to enjoy the glories of this happy day.”

NOTE

In Shakespeare's plays based on history, he collapses time. The events of *Julius Caesar* appear to take place in six days, but in reality, they took place in three years. Here are some dates:

In 48 BCE, Julius Caesar defeated Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalia.

On 17 March 45 BCE Julius Caesar defeated Pompey's sons at the Battle of Munda.

In October 45 BCE, Julius Caesar celebrated his victory over Pompey's sons in a triumphal procession in Rome. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare had this triumphal procession occur on 15 February 44 BCE — the day of the Feast of Lupercal, a festival of fruitfulness and fertility.

In 44 BCE on the Ides of March (March 15), Julius Caesar was assassinated in Rome. His assassins included Caius Cassius and Marcus Junius Brutus.

In the first week of October 42 BCE, Caius Cassius committed suicide at Philippi after an engagement with the troops of Mark Antony and Octavian.

On 23 October 42 BCE, a second engagement occurred at Philippi, and Marcus Junius Brutus committed suicide.

Chapter V: KING LEAR
CAST OF CHARACTERS

Lear, King of Britain; King Lear is over 80 years old

King of France

Duke of Burgundy

Duke of Cornwall

Duke of Albany

Earl of Kent

Earl of Gloucester (pronounced Gloster)

Edgar, legitimate son to Gloucester

Edmund, bastard son to Gloucester

Curan, a courtier

Oswald, steward to Goneril

Old Man, tenant to Gloucester

Doctor

Fool

An Officer, employed by Edmund

A Gentleman, attendant on Cordelia

A Herald

Servants to Cornwall

Goneril, Lear's oldest daughter; married to the Duke of Albany

Regan, Lear's middle daughter; married to the Duke of Cornwall

Cordelia, Lear's youngest daughter; at the beginning of the play, she is unmarried

Knights of Lear's train, Officers, Messengers, Soldiers, and Attendants

Scene: Britain

Note: Duke is a title higher than Earl.

CHAPTER 1**— 1.1 —**

In King Lear's palace, the Earl of Kent, the Earl of Gloucester, and Edmund, who was Gloucester's bastard son, were talking together.

The Earl of Kent said to the Earl of Gloucester, "I thought the King had more preferred the Duke of Albany than the Duke of Cornwall."

The Duke of Albany had recently married King Lear's oldest daughter, Goneril, while the Duke of Cornwall had recently married King Lear's middle daughter, Regan.

The Earl of Gloucester replied, "It always seemed so to us, but now, in the division of the Kingdom, it is not apparent which of the two Dukes he values most. The shares of the Kingdom for the two Dukes are so equally divided that the closest examination of the two shares cannot make either Duke covet the other Duke's share."

"Isn't this your son, my lord?" the Earl of Kent asked the Earl of Gloucester, motioning toward Edmund.

"I have paid for his upbringing," the Earl of Gloucester replied. "I have so often blushed to acknowledge him as my son that now I am inured to it and can brazenly say that he is mine."

"I cannot conceive what you mean," the Earl of Kent replied.

"Sir, this young fellow's mother could very definitely conceive," the Earl of Gloucester punned. "In fact, upon conceiving she grew round-wombed with a pregnant belly, and had, indeed, sir, a son for her cradle before she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault from what I say? Edmund, my son, is illegitimate."

“I cannot wish the fault undone since the issue of it is so handsome,” the Earl of Kent diplomatically replied.

“But I also have, sir, a son by order of law — he is legitimate — about a year older than this son. My legitimate son is no dearer to me than my illegitimate son. Though this knave came somewhat saucily into the world before he was sent for, yet his mother was beautiful, there was good entertainment at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged.”

The Earl of Gloucester called his illegitimate son, Edmund, names such as “knave” and “whoreson,” but he used those names affectionately.

He asked his illegitimate son, “Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?”

“No, my lord.”

“He is my lord of Kent,” the Earl of Gloucester said. “Remember him hereafter as my honorable friend.”

“I am at your service, my lord,” Edmund said respectfully.

“I want to be your friend, and I will do what I can to know you better,” the Earl of Kent replied.

“Sir, I shall make every effort to deserve your respect and earn your high opinion.”

“Edmund has been out of the country for nine years, and he shall go away again,” the Earl of Gloucester said.

Hearing trumpets blow, he added, “The King is coming.”

King Lear, the Duke of Cornwall, and the Duke of Albany entered the room. With them were the King’s daughters — Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia — and some attendants. One attendant carried a coronet, which someone below the rank of King was meant to wear. Events would show that the

person intended to wear the coronet was Cordelia.

King Lear said, “Usher into the royal presence the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.”

“I shall, my liege,” Gloucester replied and then exited. Edmund went with him.

“In the meantime we shall express our darker purpose,” King Lear said, using the royal plural. “This purpose is dark because we have kept it secret from all of you; however, some of you already know part — but only part — of what I am going to do. Give me the map. Know that we have divided into three our Kingdom, and it is our firm intent to shake all cares and responsibilities from our age. As you know, I am over 80 years old. We will confer our cares and responsibilities on younger strengths, while we, unburdened, crawl toward death.”

King Lear had talked of his “darker purpose.” “Darker” meant “secret” or “hidden,” but many of the people listening to him, such as the Earl of Kent, believed that it was a bad idea to divide the Kingdom and that it would have dark and evil consequences.

King Lear continued, “Our son-in-law of Cornwall, and you, our no less loving son-in-law of Albany, pay attention. We have this hour a firm purpose to make known publicly our daughters’ individual dowries, so that future strife may be prevented now. Because you will receive your share of the Kingdom before I die, no one needs to fight over his share after I die.

“The King of France and the Duke of Burgundy are great rivals for the love of Cordelia, our youngest daughter, who is still unmarried. Long in our court they have made their amorous sojourn, courting Cordelia. Today, the decision about whom Cordelia will wed will be made.

“Tell me, my daughters — since now we will divest ourself of rule, possession of territory, and the cares of government — which of you shall we say loves us most? I will give the largest dowry to that daughter whose natural affection for her father merits the largest territory.

“Goneril, you are our eldest-born; you will speak first.”

“Sir, I love you more than words and language can make clear,” Goneril said. “To me you are dearer than eyesight, possession of land, and freedom of action. You are beyond what can be valued as rich or rare. I love you no less than I love life with grace, health, beauty, and honor. I love you as much as a child has ever loved, or a father has ever found himself to be loved. My love for you is a love that makes language poor, and speech inadequate to express how much I love you.”

Cordelia was disgusted by the fulsomeness of Goneril’s praise, and she expected to hear the same kind of praise from her other sister, Regan. By pouring on the praise, these two sisters hoped to benefit by receiving bigger dowries.

Cordelia also worried. She thought, *What should Cordelia do? Love, and be silent.*

Cordelia loved her father, but she loathed fulsome praise that was used to manipulate a father in order to gain wealth. It is better to show one’s love through one’s actions rather than fake it through one’s words.

King Lear pointed to the map and said to Goneril, “Of all these boundaries, even from this line to this, with shady forests and with enriched open plains with plenteous rivers and extensive meadows, we make you lady. This territory will perpetually belong to your and Albany’s descendants.”

He then said, “What does our second daughter, our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall, have to say? Speak.”

Regan replied, “Sir, I am made of the self-same mettle that my sister is. Prize me at her worth. Value me as you value her.”

“Mettle” meant “nature” or “character.” However, it is a homonym for “metal.” Subsequent events would show that both Goneril and Regan were hard-hearted.

Regan continued, “In my true heart I find that Goneril names what my love really is — only she comes too short. I profess that I am an enemy to all other joys that the most perfect part of me can enjoy, and I find that I am made happy only in your dear Highness’ love.”

Regan’s quest for a bigger dowry had caused her to be even more fulsome in her description of her love for her father than her older sister, Goneril. If Regan, as she had said, really is made happy only in the love of her father, then loving her husband and being loved by him brings her no happiness.

Cordelia thought, *Poor Cordelia! And yet I am not so, since I am sure that my love for my father is richer than my tongue. I love my father more than I can say.*

Pointing to the map, King Lear said to Regan, “To you and your descendants forever after will belong this ample third of our fair Kingdom. It is no less in space, value, and pleasure than that conferred on Goneril.”

He then turned to Cordelia and said, “Now, our joy, although you are the last of my daughters to be born and therefore the youngest, the King of France with its vineyards and the Duke of Burgundy with its dairy pastures strive for your love and wish to marry you. What can you say to draw a third of the Kingdom that is more opulent than your sisters’ shares?”

King Lear had planned from the beginning to give Cordelia a better part of the Kingdom than he would give to her sisters. Her sisters were already married, and an excellent

dowry would help Cordelia to get an excellent husband. Besides, Cordelia was his favorite daughter. One of several reasons to divide up the Kingdom now — before he died — was to give Cordelia the best share. If the Kingdom were divided after his death, Cordelia, being the youngest, would get the worst share, or no share.

Cordelia remained silent, so King Lear told her, “Speak. What can you say to draw a third of the Kingdom that is more opulent than your sisters’ shares?”

She gave an honest, not a fulsome, answer: “Nothing, my lord.”

Shocked, King Lear exclaimed, “Nothing!”

“Nothing,” Cordelia repeated.

“Nothing will come from nothing,” King Lear said. “Speak again.”

“Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth,” Cordelia said.

Ecclesiasticus 21:26 states, “*The heart of fools is in their mouth: but the mouth of the wise is in their heart.*”

Cordelia continued, “I love your majesty according to my filial duty — no more and no less. I love you as a daughter ought to love her father.”

“Cordelia! Mend your speech a little, or it may mar your fortunes.”

“My good lord,” Cordelia said, “you have begotten me, bred me, and loved me. I return those duties back to you as are rightly fit. I obey you, love you, and greatly honor you.

“Why do my sisters have husbands, if they say that all their love is for you? When I shall wed, that lord who takes my hand shall carry half my love with him, as well as half my

care and duty. Half of my love will be for you, and half will be for my husband. To be sure, I shall never marry like my sisters have; they give you all their love and none to their husband.”

“Do you say this from your heart?” King Lear asked.

“Yes, my good lord.”

“Can you be so young, and so untender? Are you really this hard-hearted?”

“I am so young, my lord, and I say the truth. I am honest.”

“Let it be so,” King Lear said. “Your truth, then, shall be your dowry. I swear by the sacred radiance of the Sun, the mysteries of the underworld goddess Hecate, and the night; by all the operations of the astrological orbs from whom we exist, and cease to be, that here I disclaim all my paternal care, kinship, and common blood with you. From here on, I regard you as a stranger to my heart and me, forever. The barbarous Scythian, or that person who cannibalizes his parents and children to feed his appetite, shall to my bosom be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved as you, my former daughter. I renounce you; you are no longer my daughter. You are no kin of mine.”

The Earl of Kent began to object: “My good liege —”

King Lear shouted, “Peace, Kent! Silence! Come not between the dragon and his wrath. I loved Cordelia the most, and I thought to give all the rest I had to her in return for her tender loving care. Leave, and avoid my sight!”

The Earl of Kent did not leave.

King Lear said, “Now it seems that I will find my peace in my grave, as here I take her father’s heart away from her and give it away to someone else!”

He ordered, “Call the King of France!”

Everyone was stunned; no one moved.

King Lear said, “Who will carry out my orders? Call the Duke of Burgundy, too.”

Some attendants left.

Pointing to the map, King Lear said, “Cornwall and Albany with my two daughters’ dowries digest this third dowry — the one that should have been Cordelia’s. Let pride, which Cordelia calls plain-speaking, be her dowry and get her a husband. I do invest you, Cornwall and Albany, jointly with my power, first position, and all the magnificent trappings that accompany majesty.

“We reserve for ourself a hundred Knights, by you to be paid. We shall also reside with you, by turn, one month at a time. We retain for ourself the title of King, and all the honors and prerogatives that are due to a King. You two shall have the power and authority, revenue, and execution of the royal duties and responsibilities. Beloved sons-in-law, they are yours. To confirm what I say, share this coronet between yourselves.”

The Earl of Kent said, “Royal Lear, whom I have ever honored as my King, loved as my father, followed as my master, and mentioned in my prayers as my great patron —”

King Lear warned the Earl of Kent, “The bow is bent and drawn; stay out of the way of the arrow.”

The Earl of Kent replied, “Let the arrow fly even though the forked arrowhead invades the region of my heart. Kent shall be without manners when Lear is mad. What will you do, old man? Do you think that I will ignore my duty and be afraid to speak up when a powerful man bows down before

flattery? An honorable man is bound by duty to speak out when majesty stoops to folly. Reverse your judgment; change your decision, and after you have thought things over carefully, stop this hideous rashness. I will stake my life that what I say is true: Your youngest daughter does not love you least, nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound reverbs no hollowness. Cordelia may not be able to fulsomely express how much she loves you, but she loves you nonetheless. My duty is to speak truth to power.”

“Kent, on your life, speak no more,” King Lear threatened.

“My life I have never valued except as a pawn to wage war against your enemies, nor am I afraid to lose it in an attempt to keep you safe.”

“Get out of my sight!” King Lear shouted.

“See better, Lear,” the Earl of Kent said, “and aim your sight at me. I will not lead you astray.”

King Lear started to speak: “Now, by Apollo —”

“Now, by Apollo, King,” the Earl of Kent interrupted, “you swear by your gods in vain.”

“Oh, vassal! Unbeliever!” King Lear shouted, laying his hand on his sword.

Both the Duke of Albany and the Duke of Cornwall said to King Lear, “Dear sir, don’t.”

The Earl of Kent said to King Lear, “Do. Kill your physician, and give the physician’s fee to your foul disease. Revoke your decision. Or, if you do not, as long as I can shout from my throat, I’ll tell you that you are making a mistake and are doing evil.”

“Hear me, traitor!” King Lear shouted. “On your allegiance, hear me! Since you have sought to make us break our vow,

something that we have never dared to do, and since with unnatural pride you have intervened between our order and its carrying out, something that neither our nature nor our high position as King can bear, I now demonstrate my power and give you your reward for your interference. We allow you five days to get provisions to shield yourself from the disasters and evils of the world. On the sixth day, you must turn your hatred back upon our Kingdom. If, on the tenth day following, your banished body is found in our dominions, that moment will be the moment you die. Get out! By Jupiter, we shall never revoke your exile!”

“Fare you well, King,” the Earl of Kent said. “Since thus you will appear, freedom lives out of your country, and banishment is here.”

He said to Cordelia, “The gods to their dear shelter take you, maiden, who justly think, and have most rightly said!”

He said to Regan and Goneril, “And I hope that your deeds may show that your large and generous speeches were true, so that good effects may spring from words of love.”

He said to the Duke of Albany and the Duke of Cornwall, “Thus Kent bids all you Princes *adieu*; he’ll shape his old course in a country new. I will stay true to myself — and speak the truth — in another country.”

The Earl of Kent exited.

The Earl of Gloucester returned to the presence of King Lear. With him were the King of France, the Duke of Burgundy, and some attendants.

The Earl of Gloucester said, “Here are the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy, my noble lord.”

“My lord of Burgundy,” King Lear said, “we first address ourself to you, who with this King of France have been

competing to marry Cordelia, our daughter. What is the least dowry that you would require to be paid immediately to marry my daughter, without which you would cease your quest of love?"

"Most royal majesty, I crave no more than what your Highness has already offered, and I am sure that you will not offer less."

"Right noble Burgundy, when Cordelia was dearly beloved by us, we did regard her as being dear and valuable, but now her price has fallen. Sir, there she stands. If you like anything within her, who seems to be worth little, or if you like all of her, she is there, and she is yours. But be aware that I am displeased with her, and I will not give her a dowry. If you want to marry her without a dowry, then marry her. If you must receive a dowry in order to marry her, then do not marry her."

"I don't know what to say," the Duke of Burgundy replied.

"Will you marry Cordelia although she possesses infirmities and imperfections, although she lacks friends, although she has recently earned our hatred, although her only dowry is our curse upon her head, and although I have sworn that she is no longer my daughter? Will you take her, or leave her?"

"Pardon me, royal sir," the Duke of Burgundy said. "No choice can be made when such conditions exist. A true choice involves two viable options to choose between. Here only one viable option exists to be chosen."

"Then leave her, sir," King Lear said. "You have good reason — by the power who made me, I have told you all her wealth."

King Lear then said, "As for you, great King of France, I have such friendship for you that I would not do anything to harm it such as have you marry a female I hate; therefore, I

advise you to cease loving Cordelia. Instead, avert your liking to a worthier maiden. Do not love a wretch whom Nature is almost ashamed to acknowledge hers. Cordelia is unnatural.”

“This is very strange,” the King of France said. “Cordelia very recently was the main object of your love, the subject of your praise, the balm of your age. How can the best and dearest Cordelia in a moment of time commit an action so monstrous that it dismantles so many layers of your favor? Surely, her offense must be so unnatural that it is monstrous, or else the affection you previously felt for her was undeserved — but it would take a miracle for me to believe either of these things.”

Cordelia said to King Lear, “I beg your Majesty — even though I lack the ability to do what the glib and oily do, which is to speak and promise to do something without meaning to do what they say and promise; in contrast, when I intend to do something, I do it before I speak — that you make known that it is no vicious blot such as murder or other foul immorality, no unchaste action or dishonorable action, that has deprived me of your grace and favor. What has done that is the lack of things that I am richer for not having: an always-begging eye and such a fulsome tongue as I am glad I do not have, although not to have it has deprived me of your like for me.”

Cordelia deliberately chose to use the word “like” instead of “love.”

King Lear replied, “It would have been better for you never to have been born than to have failed to please me better.”

The King of France asked, “Is Cordelia’s fault only this — a natural tendency not to announce publicly what she intends to do?”

He asked, “My lord of Burgundy, what do you say to the

lady? Love's not love when it is mingled with regards that stand aloof from the entire point. Love ought not to be affected by a dowry or the lack of a dowry. Will you have her? She is herself a dowry. Will you marry Cordelia?"

"Royal Lear," the Duke of Burgundy said, "if you give as her dowry that portion which you yourself proposed, then I will take Cordelia by the hand and make her Duchess of Burgundy."

"I will give nothing as her dowry," King Lear replied. "I have sworn that. I am firm in my decision and will do what I have sworn to do."

The Duke of Burgundy said to Cordelia, "I am sorry, then. You have lost a father, and now you must lose a husband."

Cordelia said, "May peace be with Burgundy! Since he loves status and money, I shall not be his wife."

The King of France said, "Fairest Cordelia, you are most rich, being poor; most choice, being forsaken; and most loved, being despised! Here and now I seize upon you and your virtues. It is lawful for me to take what has been cast away.

"Gods, gods! It is strange that from their cold neglect my love should kindle to inflamed respect. Although the gods neglect you, I even more strongly love you. Your dowerless daughter, King Lear, thrown to my lot, is to be Queen of us, of what is ours, and of our fair France. Not all the Dukes of waterish Burgundy can buy this unprized precious maiden away from me."

By "waterish Burgundy," the King of France meant that the Duke of Burgundy was weak. Blood did not flow in his veins — only weak water did.

The King of France added, "Bid them farewell, Cordelia,

although they have been unkind to you. What you lose here, you will find better elsewhere.”

“You have her, King of France,” King Lear said. “Let her be yours, for we have no such daughter, nor shall we ever see that face of hers again. Therefore, Cordelia, be gone without our grace, our love, or our benison and blessing. Come, noble Duke of Burgundy.”

Everyone left except the King of France, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia.

The King of France said to Cordelia, “Bid farewell to your sisters.”

Cordelia said, “With eyes washed by tears, Cordelia leaves you, the jewels of our father. I know you for what you really are, and like a sister I am very loath to call your faults by their actual names. Treat our father well. To your professed bosoms I commit him, but if I still were within his grace, I would recommend him to a better place. So, farewell to you both.”

Cordelia had committed her father to her sisters’ “professed bosoms” — the love that they had professed for him, aka the love that they had said that they had for him. She wanted them to treat him with all the love that they had publicly proclaimed that they had for him. She did not want them to treat him the way that they actually felt about him.

“Don’t tell us what our duty to our father is,” Regan said.

“Concern yourself with making your husband happy,” Goneril said. “He is the one who is marrying you as an act of charity. You have failed in your obedience as a daughter, and you well deserve to be treated by your husband with the same lack of love that you have shown to your father.”

“Time shall unfold what covered cunning hides,” Cordelia

said. "Time at first covers faults, but eventually it reveals and derides them. Well may you prosper!"

"Come, my fair Cordelia," the King of France said.

He and Cordelia exited.

Goneril said to Regan, "Sister, I have to talk to you about something that closely concerns us both. I think our father will depart from here tonight."

"That's very certain," Regan said. "He will leave and stay with you; next month he will stay with us."

"You see how full of changes he is in his old age," Goneril said. "We have seen much evidence of those changes. He always loved our sister most; it is grossly obvious that he used poor judgment when he cast her off."

"It is the infirmity of his old age," Regan said, "yet he has always known himself only but little."

"He was rash even when he was at his best and soundest," Goneril said. "What can we look forward to now that he is old? He will have the imperfections that he has always had, but added to them will be the unruly waywardness that unhealthy and angry old age bring with them."

"He is likely to continue to engage in such impulsive outbursts as that which led to Kent's banishment," Regan said. "That is the behavior that we are likely to see our father engaging in."

"There will be additional formalities before the King of France leaves here," Goneril said. "Please, let's sit and put our heads together. If our father continues to exert authority with his customary impulsiveness, then his recent abdication of his power to us will be in name only — he will be a problem to us."

“We shall think further about it,” Regan said.

“We must *do* something,” Goneril said. “A blacksmith must strike and shape iron while it is hot or he will lose his labor and opportunity. Like a blacksmith, we also must strike while the iron is hot.”

— 1.2 —

Holding a letter while alone in a room in the Earl of Gloucester’s castle, Edmund said to himself, “You, Nature, are my goddess; to your law my services are bound. The laws of Nature are better than the laws of Civilization. Why should I stand in the midst of pestilential customs and permit the finely and curiously detailed laws of nations to deprive me of what I want just because I am some twelve or fourteen months younger than Edgar, my brother.

“Why am I a bastard? Why am I therefore regarded as base? My proportions are as well put together, my mind as noble and refined, and my appearance as like my father’s as is Edgar’s, who is the son of my father’s wife. Why do they brand people like me with the words ‘base,’ ‘baseness,’ and ‘bastardy’? They call me base, but am I base?

“I am a person who, having been created as the result of lusty stolen natural pleasure, aka adultery, has acquired more beneficial qualities, which are both physical and mental as well as energetic, than a whole tribe of fools who were created in a dull, stale, tired bed — the result of a long marriage — in between bedtime and morning.

“Well, then, legitimate Edgar, I must have your land and other inheritance. Our father’s love is the same for the bastard Edmund and for the legitimate Edgar — that’s a fine word: ‘legitimate’!

“Well, my legitimate Edgar, if this letter I have forged succeeds, and if my plot thrives, Edmund the base shall

overtop and surpass Edgar the legitimate.

“I grow; I prosper. Now, gods, stand up for bastards!”

The Earl of Gloucester entered the room. Upset by recent events, he talked to himself.

“Kent has thus been banished! And the angry King of France has departed! And King Lear left last night! He has limited his power! He is now confined to an allowance! All this was done suddenly, as if he had been pricked by a gad — a spear!”

Seeing his illegitimate son and the letter his son was holding, he said, “Edmund, how are you? What is the news?”

“If it please your lordship, there is no news.”

He hastily put away the letter he had forged — and looked as if he had a secret reason for putting it out of sight.

“Why are you so eager to put away that letter?” the Earl of Gloucester asked.

“I know no news, my lord,” Edmund replied.

“What letter were you reading?”

“I was reading nothing, my lord.”

“No?” the Earl of Gloucester said. “Why then did you need to put it in your pocket with such a terrible display of haste? By definition, nothing has no need to hide itself. Let me see it. Come, if it really is nothing, I shall not need spectacles to read it because it is nothing rather than something.”

“Please, sir, pardon me,” Edmund said. “It is a letter from my brother, and I have not read it all, but judging from the part that I have read, I find it not fit for you to read.”

His curiosity aroused, the Earl of Gloucester said, “Give me

the letter, sir.”

“I shall offend, I see, whether I keep it or give it to you to read. The content of the letter, judging from the part I read, is offensive.”

“Let me see it! Let me see it!”

“I hope, for my brother’s sake, that he wrote this letter only as a trial or test of my virtue,” Edmund said.

The Earl of Gloucester read the letter out loud:

“This policy of reverence for old age makes bitter the best years of our lives, keeps our fortunes from us until our own old age cannot relish and enjoy our fortunes. I begin to find useless and foolish bondage in the oppression made by aged tyranny, which holds command over us, not because it has power, but because we allow it to. Come to me so that I may speak more about this. If our father would sleep until I waked him, you would enjoy half of his income forever, and live the beloved of your brother, EDGAR.”

The Earl of Gloucester said, “Ha! This is conspiracy! He wrote about my death: ‘*If our father would sleep until I waked him, you would enjoy half of his income.*’ My son Edgar! Did he write this? Does he have the heart and brain that this thought bred in?”

The Earl of Gloucester said to Edmund, “When did you get this letter? Who brought it to you?”

“It was not brought to me, my lord,” Edmund said. “There’s the cunning of it. I found this letter in my bedroom — it had been thrown through the window.”

“Do you know whether the handwriting is your brother’s?”

“If the content of the letter were good, my lord, I would swear that it was his handwriting, but because of the content,

I would prefer that the handwriting were not his.”

“It is his handwriting,” the Earl of Gloucester said.

“True, my lord,” Edmund said. “It is his handwriting, but I hope his heart is not in the content.”

“Has he ever before tried to find out what you think about this business of taking my income and making me a ward?”

“Never, my lord, but I have heard him often maintain that it is fitting that, when sons are at a mature age, and fathers are declining, the father should be a ward to the son, and the son should manage the father’s income.”

“Oh, he is a villain — a villain! This is the same opinion that he expressed in the letter! He is an abhorrent villain! He is an unnatural, detestable, brutish villain! He is worse than brutish! Go and find him. I’ll arrest him — that abominable villain! Where is he?”

“I do not know for certain, my lord,” Edmund said. “If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother until you can get from him better testimony and evidence of his intent, you shall run a safe course; whereas, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in your own honor, and shake into pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare bet my life that he wrote this letter to test my affection for you, and that he had no more dangerous intention than that.”

“Do you really think so?” the Earl of Gloucester asked.

“If your honor judges it fitting, I will place you where you shall hear us talk about this, and with your own ears you shall learn for yourself what his intention was in writing the letter. This can be done without any further delay — we can do it this evening.”

“He cannot be such a monster —”

“I am sure that he is not,” Edmund said.

“— to his father, who so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and Earth! Edmund, seek him out. Find him, and worm yourself into his confidence for me, please. Find a way — whatever way you think is best — to do this. I would give anything — including my own wealth and rank — to know the truth.”

“I will look for him, sir, immediately,” Edmund said. “I will carry out the business as I shall find means and let you know what I find out.”

“These recent eclipses of the Sun and Moon portend no good to us,” the Earl of Gloucester said. “Although human reason can explain these recent eclipses in various ways, yet all of Humankind finds itself scourged by the devastating consequences that follow the eclipses: Love cools, friendship falls off and declines, brothers divide, mutinies and riots occur in cities, discord occurs in countries; treason occurs in palaces, and the bond between son and father is cracked. This villain of mine — Edgar — comes under this prediction: the son goes against the father, the King falls away from his natural temperament, and the father goes against the child.

“We have already seen the best years. Now machinations, emptiness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly and disturbingly to our graves.

“Edmund, find this villain — Edgar! You shall lose nothing by it; do it carefully.

“And the noble and true-hearted Kent has been banished! What is his offense? It is honesty! Strange!”

The Earl of Gloucester exited.

Alone, Edmund said to himself, “This is the excellent

foolishness of the world, that, when bad things happen to us — which are often due to the excesses of our own behavior — we avoid taking responsibility. Instead, we regard the Sun, the Moon, and the stars as guilty of causing our disasters. We think that we were villains by necessity; fools by the compulsion of astrological stars; knaves, thieves, and traitors because of the predominance of astrological planets; drunkards, liars, and adulterers because of an enforced obedience to astrological planetary influence; and all that we are evil in we say was caused by supernatural astrological compulsion.

“What an admirable evasion of responsibility is made by a lecherous man when he says that a star caused his lusty disposition! My father had sexual intercourse with my mother under the Dragon’s Tail — the constellation called Drago. And my nativity took place under Ursa Major — the constellation called the Big Bear, in which Mars is predominant but in which Venus has influence. According to astrology, it follows that I am warlike and lecherous.”

He thrust his tongue between his lips and blew a raspberry, and then he added, “I would have been what I am even if the maidenliest star in the Heavens had twinkled on my bastardizing. Edgar —”

At this moment, Edgar entered the room.

“— and right on cue here he comes like the conclusion of an old comedy. Now I need to act with villainous melancholy, and heave a sigh like Tom o’Bedlam — an insane beggar — would.”

He said more loudly, so that Edgar would hear him, “Oh, these eclipses predict divisions and conflicts!”

Then he hummed to himself and pretended that he did not know that Edgar had entered the room.

“How are you, brother Edmund?” Edgar asked. “What serious contemplation are you engaged in?”

“I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read the other day about what will follow these eclipses.”

“Do you concern yourself about that? Is that really something you want to waste your time on?”

“I promise you that the astrologer writes of very bad consequences, such as unkindness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of friendships that have lasted a long time; divisions in state, as well as menaces and maledictions against King and nobles; needless suspicions and distrusts, banishment of friends, loss of supporters, breaking up of marriages, and I don’t know what else.”

“How long have you been a devotee of astrology?”

“Come, come; when did you last see my father?”

“Why, just last night.”

“Did you speak with him?” Edmund asked.

“Yes, for two hours.”

“Did you part on good terms? Did you notice any displeasure in him by his words or in his countenance?”

“None at all,” Edgar replied.

“Think about how you may have offended him, and at my entreaty please stay away from him until some time has passed and lessened the heat of his displeasure, which right now so rages in him that his doing physical harm to you would not stop his anger.”

“Some villain has done me wrong and has been spreading malicious lies about me,” Edgar said.

“I think that you are right,” Edmund said. “Please, stay away from him and keep your emotions under control until the intensity of his rage lessens. Also, I ask you to go with me to my quarters, from whence I will bring you at the appropriate time to hear my lord speak. Please, go now. Here’s my key. If you need to be outside my quarters, go armed.”

“Armed, brother!” Edgar said, astonished.

“Brother, I advise you the best I know how. Arm yourself. Carry weapons. I am not an honest man if I know of any good intention toward you right now. I have told you what I have seen and heard, but only faintly. I have told you nothing like the horrible reality of our father’s anger toward you. Please, go now.”

“Shall I hear from you soon?”

“I will do what I can to help you.”

Edgar exited, and Edmund said to himself, “I have a credulous father! And I have a noble brother, whose nature is so far from doing anyone harm that he thinks that no one would do him harm. On his foolish and honest nature my deceptions work well! I see the treachery ahead of me that I need to do. Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit. All with me is meet that I can fashion fit. If I cannot get lands through inheritance, I will get them through treachery. I am willing to do whatever it takes.”

— 1.3 —

King Lear was now staying with Goneril in the palace of her husband, the Duke of Albany. In a room of the palace, Goneril was talking to her steward, Oswald.

“Did my father strike my gentleman because he scolded his Fool — his court jester?” Goneril asked.

“Yes, madam.”

“By day and night he wrongs me; every hour he bursts out into one gross offense or other that sets us all at odds and throws us into tumult. I’ll not endure it. His Knights grow riotous, and he himself upbraids us about every trifle. When he returns from hunting, I will not speak with him; tell him that I am sick. If you slack off your former services to him, you shall do what I want you to do. I will take responsibility for your slothful service to him.”

“He’s coming, madam,” Oswald said. “I hear him.”

Horns sounded.

“Be as casually disobedient to him as you please — you and your fellow servants,” Goneril said. “I want this to come up for discussion. If he dislikes the servants’ behavior, let him go to my sister, whose mind and mine, I know, are in agreement that we will not be ruled by him. He is a foolish and idle old man, who still wants to exert the authority that he has given away! Now, by my life, old fools are babes again; and they must be treated with rebukes in place of flatteries — when they abuse those flatteries. Remember what I tell you.”

“I will, madam.”

“And let his Knights have colder looks from you and the other servants. The consequences that develop from it do not matter. Tell the other servants that. I want to cause a confrontation so that I can tell my father what I think. I’ll write immediately to my sister to tell her to do the same things that I am doing.

“Go, and prepare for dinner.”

— 1.4 —

In a hall in the castle of the Duke of Albany and his wife, Goneril, Kent stood. He was in disguise.

He said to himself, "If I can disguise my voice with an accent, I may succeed in that purpose for which I razed my likeness by, for example, taking a razor to my beard. Now, banished Kent, if you can serve where you stand condemned, it may happen that your master, whom you respect, shall find you working hard to help him."

Some horns sounded, announcing that King Lear had returned from his hunt. King Lear, his Knights, and some attendants entered the hall.

"Let me not wait even a moment for dinner; go and get it ready," King Lear ordered.

An attendant exited.

Seeing the disguised Kent, King Lear asked, "How are you? And what are you?"

"A man, sir."

"What do you profess? What do you want from us?" King Lear asked.

By "profess," King Lear meant "profession" or "special calling," but the disguised Kent interpreted it as meaning "claim."

He said, "I profess to be no less than I seem. I will serve the man truly who will put me in trust, I will respect a man who is honest, I will converse and keep company with a man who is wise and says little, I will fear the judgment of my god, I will fight when I cannot avoid fighting, and I will eat no fish."

By "eat no fish," the disguised Kent meant that he was a Protestant and so did not have to eat fish on Friday, that he was a meat-eater and so a hearty man, and that he did not consort with prostitutes, aka "fish."

“Who are you?” King Lear asked.

“A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the King,” the disguised Kent replied.

He took a chance in making that particular joke. King Lear had given his wealth to his two oldest daughters, and he was poor, especially for a King, but he took the joke well, replying, “If you are as poor for a subject as he is for a King, you are poor enough. What do you want?”

“Service,” the disguised Kent said. “I want a job.”

“Who would you serve?”

“You.”

“Do you know me, fellow?”

“No, sir, but you have something in your countenance that makes me want to call you my master.”

“What’s that?”

“Authority.”

“What services can you do?” King Lear asked.

“I can keep an ethical secret, ride, run, mar an excellent tale when I tell it, and deliver a plain message bluntly. I can speak plainly, but do not expect me to speak like a courtier. That which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and my best quality is diligence.”

“How old are you?”

“I am not so young, sir, as to love a woman for singing, nor so old as to dote on her for anything. The years on my back number forty-eight,” the disguised Kent said.

“Follow me; you shall serve me,” King Lear said. “If I like you no worse after dinner, I will not part from you yet. You

will stay in my employ for a while at least.”

He then called, “Dinner, ho, dinner! I ordered my dinner a while ago! Where’s my knave? My Fool? Go, one of you, and call my Fool hither.”

An attendant exited.

Oswald, who was loyal to Goneril, entered the hall.

King Lear said, “You, you, fellow, where’s my daughter?”

Oswald said, “Excuse me, sir,” and exited without answering King Lear’s question. This was no way to treat a King.

Perturbed, King Lear said, “What did the fellow there say to me? Call the blockhead back.”

A Knight left to get Oswald.

“Where’s my Fool?” King Lear shouted. “I think the world’s asleep.”

The Knight returned.

“Where’s that mongrel?” King Lear asked, referring to Oswald.

“He says, my lord, that your daughter is not well,” the Knight said.

“Why didn’t the slave come back to me when I called him?”

“Sir, he answered me in the rudest manner that he would not.”

“He would not!”

“My lord, I don’t know what the matter is, but in my opinion, your Highness is not being treated with that ceremonious affection that used to be shown to you,” the Knight said. “I have noticed that a great lessening of kindness appears in the

servants in general as well as in the Duke himself and your daughter.”

“Do you really think so?” King Lear asked.

The Knight replied, “Please, pardon me, my lord, if I am mistaken. My duty is to speak up when I think your Highness has been wronged.”

“You have simply reminded me of what I myself have thought. I have perceived a very faint neglect recently, which I have rather blamed on my own possible over-scrupulousness about how I am treated rather than a deliberate intent on their part to be unkind to me. I will look further into it. But where’s my Fool? I have not seen him these two days.”

“Since the young lady Cordelia has gone to France, sir, the Fool has much grieved.”

“Tell me no more about that,” King Lear said. “I have noted it well.”

He ordered an attendant, “Go and tell my daughter I want to speak to her.”

The attendant exited.

King Lear ordered another attendant, “Tell my Fool to come here.”

The attendant exited.

Oswald reentered the hall.

King Lear said to him angrily, “Come here, sir. Who am I, sir?”

“My lady’s father,” Oswald replied.

Wrong answer.

“‘My lady’s father’! That’s like calling me ‘my lord’s knave’! You misbegotten dog! You slave! You cur!”

“Begging your pardon, I am none of these things, my lord,” Oswald said, staring King Lear in the face.

He was treating King Lear as an equal.

“Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?” King Lear said, hitting him.

“I’ll not be hit, my lord,” Oswald said.

“Nor tripped neither, you base football player,” Kent said, tripping him.

In this society, members of the upper class played tennis and banded the ball back and forth, while members of the lower class played football, aka soccer.

“I thank you, fellow,” King Lear said to the disguised Kent. “You serve me well, and I’ll treat you well.”

The disguised Kent yelled at Oswald, “Come, sir, get up and go away! I’ll teach you to recognize differences in rank! Get out! Get out! If you want to be thrown on the floor again so you can measure your clumsy length again, stay for a moment, but it will go better for you if you leave! Wise up, and get out of here!”

The disguised Kent threw Oswald out of the hall.

King Lear said, “Now, my friendly fellow, I thank you. Here is a down payment on the money you will earn by being in my service.”

The Fool entered the hall as King Lear gave the disguised Kent some money.

A Fool is not a fool. Many Fools are quite wise.

The Fool said, “Let me hire him, too. Here’s my coxcomb.”

The Fool offered the disguised Kent his Fool’s hat, which was designed to look like the coxcomb of a rooster.

“How are you, my fine fellow?” King Lear asked his Fool.

The Fool said to the disguised Kent, “Sirrah, you had best take my coxcomb.”

“Sirrah” was a title used when addressing a person of inferior social status.

“Why, Fool?” the disguised Kent asked.

“Why, for taking the part of a person who is out of favor,” the Fool said. “If you can’t smile as the wind sits, you will catch cold shortly. If you can’t curry favor with the people in power, you will find yourself out in the cold. So there, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has banished two of his daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will; if you follow him, you had better wear my coxcomb because you will be a fool.”

King Lear had banished, in a way, his two older daughters. When he had possessions and power, they had shown respect to him. Now that they had his possessions and power, they no longer needed to show respect to him. King Lear had “banished” his two older daughters out of his intimate circle of family. He had also given Cordelia a blessing — although unintentionally — by disinheriting her and not giving the dowry to her husband that he had promised to give. Because of this, Cordelia had not married the materialistic Duke of Burgundy; instead, she was now Queen of France.

The Fool said to King Lear, “My uncle, I wish that I had two coxcombs and two daughters!”

“Why, my boy?” King Lear asked.

“If I gave my two daughters all my other possessions, I would keep my two coxcombs for myself. There’s my coxcomb; beg another one from your daughters.”

The Fool was calling King Lear twice the fool the Fool was.

“Take heed, sirrah,” King Lear said. “Remember the whip.”

Fools made jokes and entertained Kings; they had much leeway in what they could say, but if they went too far, they could be whipped. Right now, the Fool was calling the King a fool. The Fool was speaking truth to power — or former power — and King Lear did not like what he was hearing.

The Fool said to him, “Truth is a dog that must go to kennel outside; he must be whipped out of doors. In contrast, Lady the flattering bitch is allowed to stand by the fire and stink.”

“This pains me!” King Lear said. He was beginning to wonder whether what the Fool said was true.

“Sirrah, I’ll teach you a speech,” the Fool said.

“Go ahead.”

The Fool said, “Listen to it carefully, my uncle.”

He sang this song:

“Have more than you show,

“Speak less than you know,

“Lend less than you owe,

“Ride more than you walk,

“Learn more than you hear,

“Don’t stake all on a single throw.

“Leave your drink and your whore,

“And keep indoors,

“And you shall have more

“Than two tens to a score.”

The Fool gave wise advice in the beginning of the song, but the conclusion was nonsensical. The hearers expected the song to end up something like “And you shall have more / As your net worth becomes more.” However, sometimes we can do the right things and yet suffer a bad result. We can also do things for good reasons and yet suffer a bad result.

As an octogenarian, King Lear wanted to pass his power and possessions on to his daughters because he sincerely believed that they sincerely loved him. Much could be said in support of his decision, but the consequences of it were turning out not to be what he expected and he was beginning to suspect that he had acted wrongly, both in giving away all his wealth and power and in treating Cordelia badly. In many cases, as when an elderly parent is beginning to show signs of senile dementia, the elderly parent ought to become the ward of his or her children, but King Lear, although he was an octogenarian, was vigorous enough to go hunting with his Knights.

“This song is nothing, Fool,” King Lear said.

“Then it is like the breath of a lawyer who has not received a fee,” the Fool said. “Lawyers will not do good work until they are paid, and you have paid me nothing for my song. Can you make any use of nothing, my uncle?”

“Why, no, boy,” King Lear said. “Nothing can be made out of nothing.”

The Fool said to the disguised Kent, “Please, tell him that nothing is the amount the rent of his land comes to. He will not believe a Fool.”

King Lear had given away all his land — and all the income that his land had formerly brought him. Now he had no income; he had only the allowance his two older daughters were supposed to give him — an allowance that was supposed to include the pay of a hundred Knights to attend him.

“This is a bitter and sarcastic Fool!” King Lear said.

“Do you know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?” the Fool asked.

“No, lad,” King Lear replied. “Teach me.”

“That lord who counseled you to give away all your land, place him here by me,” the Fool said. “You can stand for him. The sweet fool and the bitter fool will immediately appear.”

He pointed to himself and said, “The sweet one is the one in motley here.”

He pointed to King Lear and said, “The bitter one is the one found there.”

No lord had counseled King Lear to give away all his land; it had been the King’s own idea.

“Do you call me fool, boy?” King Lear asked.

Speaking truth to former power, the Fool said, “All your other titles you have given away; the title of ‘fool’ is the one you were born with. You cannot give it away.”

The disguised Kent, who was another man who had spoken truth to power, said to King Lear, “This is not altogether fool, my lord.” He meant that what the Fool was saying was not altogether foolish, but instead included much sense.

The Fool deliberately misunderstood the sentence as saying that the Fool did not have all the foolishness of the world.

He said, “No, truly, for the lords and great men will not let me have all the foolishness. Even if I had a monopoly on foolishness, they would have part of it. And this is true of ladies, too — they will not let me have all the foolishness to myself; they’ll be snatching foolishness away from me.”

The Fool paused, and then he added, “Give me an egg, my uncle, and I’ll give you two crowns.”

Crowns are coins, and they are the headwear of a King, and they are the tops of heads.

“What two crowns shall they be?” King Lear asked.

“Why, after I have cut the egg in the middle, and eaten up the egg, what will remain will be the two halves of the eggshell — the two crowns of the egg.”

King Lear had given away his valuables: his land and his income. He had kept the title of King, but that was getting him little respect now.

The Fool continued, “When you split your crown in the middle, and gave away both parts, you behaved as foolishly as if you carried your donkey on your back as you trod over the dirt — you had as little wit in your bald crown when you gave your golden crown away. If I speak like myself — a Fool — in saying this, then let the person who first finds it true be whipped. Such a person is a Fool, and Fools are whipped, and such a person tells the truth, and people who tell the truth in this society are whipped.”

The Fool sang this song:

“Fools had never less wit in a year;

“For wise men are grown foolish,

“They know not how their wits to wear,

“Their manners are so apish.”

The Fool's song stated that fools were not much needed now because wise men were acting like fools — the wise men were imitating, aka aping, fools.

King Lear asked, "Since when have you been so full of songs, sirrah?"

"I have made a habit of singing, my uncle, ever since you made your daughters your mothers, for when you gave them the whip, and pulled down your own pants —"

The Fool sang this song:

"Then they for sudden joy did weep,

"And I for sorrow sung,

"That such a King should act like a child,

"And go among the fools."

The Fool added, "Please, my uncle, keep a schoolmaster who can teach your Fool to lie: I would like to learn to lie."

"If you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped," King Lear said, using the royal plural.

"I wonder how you and your daughters are related," the Fool said. "They'll have me whipped for speaking the truth, you will have me whipped for lying, and sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace and saying nothing. I had rather be any kind of thing than a Fool, and yet I would not be you, my uncle — you have pared your wit on both sides, and left nothing in the middle."

A Fool is supposed to be a half-wit, but King Lear had given away all of his wits along with everything else.

The Fool looked at the door and said, "Here comes one of the parings."

Frowning, Goneril entered the hall.

“How are you, daughter!” King Lear said. “Your frown looks like a frontlet — a band going across your forehead. I think that you have been frowning too much lately.”

The Fool said to King Lear, “You were a fine fellow when you had no need to care about her frowning; now you are a zero without a number in front of it to give it value. I am better than you are now; I am a Fool, but you are nothing.”

Angry, Goneril frowned at the Fool.

The Fool said to Goneril, “Yes, indeed, I will hold my tongue; so your face orders me to, although you say nothing. Mum, mum.”

He sang this song:

“He who keeps neither crust nor crumb,

“Tired of everything, shall want some.”

Crust and crumb referred specifically to a loaf of bread, but metaphorically to everything. The Fool was saying that King Lear had given away all he had, and that he would find himself wanting to have some of his wealth and power back.

The Fool pointed to King Lear and said, “That’s a shelled peapod.”

A shelled peapod is empty of peas, the valued part of the peapod; the shelled peapod itself is worth nothing.

Goneril said to King Lear, her father, “Not only, sir, this your all-licensed Fool, who is permitted to make fun of everyone and everything, but others of your insolent retinue hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth in rank and gross and not-to-be-endured riots. Sir, I had thought, by making this well known to you, to have found a sure remedy; but now I grow fearful, because of what you yourself have spoken and done

only recently, that you protect this kind of behavior and encourage it by being permissive. If this is true, you are committing a fault that will not escape censure. Remedies for this misbehavior must be found, although in order to get a wholesome and healthy society, these remedies might be thought to be an offence to you and cause me shame, except that the necessity for such remedies will silence such criticism and instead be praised as a sensible course of action.”

The Fool said to King Lear, “For, you know, my uncle, the hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long that it had its head bit off by its young. So, out went the candle, and we were left in the dark.”

The cuckoo bird lays its eggs in the nests of other birds such as the hedge-sparrow, which rears the cuckoo’s young, which grow larger than the hedge-sparrow and become a danger to it. The Fool’s point in telling this story was that King Lear was in danger from his ungrateful daughter — who might not even be his biological daughter. At the very least, Goneril was not treating King Lear with the devotion that a biological daughter ought to feel for her father.

Shocked at this treatment from his daughter, King Lear asked, “Are you our daughter?”

He was pointing out that Goneril ought to treat him with the respect due a father.

“Come, sir,” Goneril said, “I wish that you would make use of that good wisdom, of which I know that you have plenty, and put away these moods that recently have transformed you from what you rightly are.”

The Fool said, “May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?”

The Fool was pointing out that things were backwards here.

The father can criticize a daughter, but the daughter ought not to criticize the father.

He sang, "*Whoop, Jug! I love you.*"

"Jug" was a nickname for "Joan," and "Joan" was a generic term for "whore."

King Lear asked sarcastically, "Does anyone here know me? This is not Lear. Does Lear walk like this? Does he speak like this? Where are his eyes? Either his mind weakens, or his faculties are paralyzed — am I awake? It is not so. Who is it who can tell me who I am?"

The Fool answered, "Lear's shadow — you are the shadow of King Lear."

"I would like to know who I am because by the signs of sovereignty, knowledge, and reason, I should be falsely persuaded I had daughters."

The Fool added, "— who will make you an obedient father."

King Lear asked Goneril sarcastically, "What is your name, fair gentlewoman?"

"This pretense of amazement, sir, is much of the savor of your other new pranks," Goneril said. "I ask you to understand my purposes correctly. As you are old and reverend, you should be wise. Here you are keeping a hundred Knights and squires; these men are so disordered, so debauched and bold, that our court, infected with their manners, looks like a riotous inn. Their pursuit of pleasure and lust makes our court more like a tavern or a brothel than a palace graced with the royal presence. This shame requires an immediate remedy; therefore, I ask that you — and if need be, I will forcefully take the thing I ask for — a little to reduce in number your train of followers. And let the remaining Knights, who shall still serve you, be such men as

are suitable for your age, and know their own place and yours.”

“Darkness and devils!” King Lear shouted. “Saddle my horses; call my train of followers together!”

He shouted at Goneril, “Degenerate bastard! I’ll not trouble you any longer. I still have a daughter left.”

Goneril said, “You physically strike my servants, and the members of your disordered rabble make servants of their betters.”

The Duke of Albany, Goneril’s husband, entered the hall.

King Lear said, “Woe to the person who repents too late.”

He then said to the Duke of Albany, “Oh, sir, have you come? Is it your will? Speak, sir.”

He ordered his followers, who were shocked and were still standing still, “Prepare my horses.”

He then said to Goneril, “Ingratitude, you marble-hearted fiend, you are more hideous than a sea-monster when you show yourself in a child!”

“Please, sir, be patient,” the Duke of Albany said to King Lear. “Control yourself.”

King Lear said to Goneril, “Detested kite — you bird of prey! You lie! My train of followers are men of choice and rarest abilities who know all the particulars of their duty and exactly what they are to do, and they are very careful to live up to their excellent reputations.”

He then said to himself, “Oh, very small fault, how ugly did you seem to be in Cordelia! That very small fault, like an engine, wrenched the frame of my nature from its fixed foundations like a building being pried up — it drew from my heart all love for Cordelia and added to my bitterness.”

He hit himself in the head and shouted, "Oh Lear, Lear, Lear! Beat at this gate that let your folly and foolishness in and let your dear and considered judgment out!"

He said to his train of followers, "Let's go; go, my people."

The disguised Kent and the Knights left. The Fool remained.

The Duke of Albany said, "My lord, I am as guiltless as I am ignorant of what has upset you."

"That may be true, my lord," King Lear said.

He then cursed his daughter: "Hear, Nature, hear; dear goddess, hear! Suspend your purpose, if you intended to make this creature fruitful! Into her womb convey sterility! Dry up in her the organs of increase and birth and from her dishonored body never allow a babe to spring and honor her! If she must teem with an infant, create her child of spleen, so that it may live and be a perverse and unnatural torment to her! Let it stamp wrinkles in her youthful brow. Let it fret channels of falling tears in her cheeks. Let it turn all her mother's pains and beneficial care of her child to mocking laughter and contempt so that she may feel how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless and ungrateful child!"

He shouted, "Away! Away! Let's leave!"

He exited.

The Duke of Albany asked his wife, Goneril, "Now, by the gods whom we adore, what is the cause of this?"

She replied, "Never afflict yourself by knowing the cause; instead, let his disposition have the scope that dotage gives it."

King Lear returned; he was crying with anger.

He shouted, "What! Fifty of my followers released in a

single moment! Within a fortnight of my giving you wealth and power!”

“What’s the matter, sir?” the Duke of Albany asked.

King Lear replied, “I’ll tell you.”

He said to Goneril, “Life and death! I am ashamed that you have the power to shake my manhood like this. I am ashamed that you can cause these hot tears, which break from me involuntarily. I am ashamed that you are worth the tears of a King. May pestilential gusts and fogs of unhealthy air fall upon you! May the very deep wounds — too deep to be probed and cleansed — of a father’s curse pierce every sense you have and cause you pain!”

He shouted, “Old foolish eyes, if you weep because of this cause again, I’ll pluck you out, and cast you, with the tears that you shed, on the ground to mix with clay.

“Has it come to this? Let it be so. I still have a daughter left who, I am sure, is kind and will offer comfort to her father. When she shall hear this about you, she’ll flay your wolfish visage with her fingernails. You shall find that I’ll resume the Kingly appearance that you think I have cast off forever. You shall — that I promise you!”

King Lear exited again. The Fool remained again.

Goneril said to her husband, “Did you see that, my lord?”

Preparatory to criticizing her, he said, “I cannot be so partial, Goneril, to the great love I bear you —”

“Be quiet, please,” Goneril said.

She called, “Oswald, come here!”

She said to the Fool, “You, sir, are more knave than Fool. Follow your master.”

The Fool called, “My uncle Lear, my uncle Lear, tarry and take the Fool with you.”

He sang this song:

“A fox, when one has caught her,

“And such a daughter,

“Should surely be sent to the slaughter,

“If my Fool’s cap would buy a halter, aka a noose,

“And so the Fool follows after his master.”

The Fool exited.

Goneril said sarcastically, “This man has had ‘good’ counsel.”

She meant that this man — her father — had NOT received good counsel from the Fool.

She added, “A hundred Knights!”

She said sarcastically, “It is ‘politic’ and ‘safe’ to let him keep armed and ready a hundred Knights. Yes, that way on every dream, each rumor, each fancy, each complaint, and each dislike, he may protect his dotage with their powers, and hold our lives at his mercy.”

She shouted, “Oswald, I say!”

The Duke of Albany said, “Well, you may be fearing something that will not happen.”

“That is safer than being too trustful,” she replied. “Let me always take away the harms I fear; that is better than always fearing to be taken by harms. I know my father’s heart. What he has uttered, I have ordered to be written to my sister. If she should sustain him and his hundred Knights after I have showed their unfitness —”

Oswald entered the hall.

“How is it going now, Oswald?” Goneril asked. “Have you written that letter to my sister?”

“Yes, madam.”

“Take with you some company, and ride away on horseback and deliver the letter to my sister. Inform her in full of my particular fears, and add to them such reasons of your own as may strengthen it more. Go now, and quickly return.”

Oswald exited.

Her husband was looking at her. He was not pleased.

Goneril said to him, “No, no, my lord, your mild and gentle way of acting — although I myself do not condemn it — yet, begging your pardon, other people much more criticize you for lacking wisdom than praise you for your harmful mildness. Your leniency can result in danger.”

He replied, “How far your eyes may pierce the future I cannot tell; however, when we strive to make something better, often we mar what’s already well.”

Goneril started to speak: “No, because —”

He cut her off: “Well, we will see what the result of your actions will be.”

— 1.5 —

In the courtyard of the Duke of Albany’s palace stood King Lear, the disguised Kent, and the Fool.

King Lear said to the disguised Kent, “Go ahead of us to Gloucester with this letter. Acquaint my daughter no further with anything you know than comes from her questions about the letter. Do not volunteer information. Be diligent in your journey; otherwise, I shall be there before you.”

“I will not sleep, my lord, until I have delivered your letter,” the disguised Kent said.

He exited.

The Fool said, “If a man’s brains were in his heels, wouldn’t it be in danger of suffering from chilblains?”

A chilblain is a painful and itchy swelling on skin that has been exposed to cold and then rapidly warmed up.

King Lear replied, “Yes, boy.”

“Then you ought to be merry because your wit and intelligence shall never go slipshod.”

King Lear laughed at the joke. He would not have to wear slippers — be slipper-shod — because he would not have chilblains on his brains. And it was good news that his brains would not be slipshod — characterized by disorganization and a lack of thought.

But why wouldn’t his brains be in his heels? One possible answer that was consistent with other things that the Fool had said was that King Lear had no brains. He had lost his brains — his wits — when he gave away his wealth and power.

The Fool said, “You shall see that your other daughter will treat you kindly because although she’s as like this daughter — Goneril — as a crab is like an apple, yet I can tell what I can tell. I know what I know.”

The Fool did not think that Regan would treat King Lear better than Goneril had treated him — he was punning. Regan would treat her father “kindly” — after her “kind.” Unfortunately, her kind was not good.

The Fool also thought about King Lear’s daughters Goneril and Regan that one daughter was as like the other daughter

as a crab is to an apple. That may sound like the two daughters are very different, but the “crab” that the Fool was referring to was a crabapple.

“Why, what do you know, my boy?” King Lear asked.

“She will taste as like this daughter as a crab tastes like a crab.”

In other words, the two daughters are exactly alike. Unfortunately, crabapples are small and sour.

The Fool then asked, “Do you know why one’s nose stands in the middle of one’s face?”

“No.”

“Why, to keep one’s eyes on either side of his nose so that what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into.”

In other words, the Fool was advising King Lear to stay alert and learn something. He did not yet know the true nature of his daughter Regan.

Thinking about Cordelia, King Lear said, “I did her wrong ___”

The Fool asked him, “Do you know how an oyster makes its shell?”

“No.”

“Neither do I, but I know why a snail has a house.”

“Why?”

“Why, to put his head in it; that way, he will not give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case.”

This was in part an indecent joke. Readers should already know what a man’s “horn” is, and the word “case” in this society could refer to a vagina. The Fool could also have

been referring to a cuckold's horns — a man with an unfaithful wife was depicted in pictures as having horns. Again, the Fool was hinting that Goneril and Regan were not legitimate — the assumption being that a legitimate daughter would love and respect and honor her father.

“I will forget my paternal nature,” King Lear said. “Fathers are supposed to have a kindly nature when it comes to a daughter. I have been so kind a father! Are my horses ready?”

“Your asses have gone to get them ready,” the Fool said.

He added, “The reason why the seven stars — the Pleiades — are no more than seven is a pretty fine reason.”

“Because they are not eight?” King Lear said.

“Yes, indeed,” the Fool said. “You would make a good Fool.”

A good Fool should know what is obvious, even when it is not obvious to other people.

King Lear said to himself, thinking about Goneril, “Maybe I should take my Kingdom back by force! She has shown monstrous ingratitude to me!”

“If you were my Fool, my uncle, I would have you beaten because you are old before your time,” the Fool said.

“How's that?”

“You should not have become old until you had become wise.”

A gentleman walked over to them and King Lear asked him, “Are the horses ready?”

“They are ready, my lord.”

“Come, boy,” King Lear said to the Fool.

The Fool said, “She who’s a virgin now, and laughs at my departure, shall not be a maiden long, unless things be cut shorter.”

A young virgin who laughed at the Fool’s departure was very foolish, in the Fool’s opinion, because the Fool knew — based on his knowledge of Regan — that bad things were going to happen very soon. Such a virgin was too foolish to remain a virgin for very long unless men’s things — the dangly longish sexual part under the front of their waist — should be cut very short.

CHAPTER 2

— 2.1 —

Edmund and the courtier Curan met in a room of the Earl of Gloucester's castle. They were close to where Edmund had hidden Edgar.

Edmund said, "May God save you, Curan."

"And you, sir. I have been with your father and have informed him that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan, his Duchess, will be here with him tonight."

"Why are they coming here?"

"I don't know. Have you heard of the news going around — I mean the whispered news, for it is so far only ear-kissing gossip?"

"No, I haven't heard it yet. What are people whispering?"

"Have you heard anything about a probable war between the Duke of Cornwall and the Duke of Albany?"

"Not a word," Edmund replied.

"You may hear something, then, soon. Fare you well, sir."

Curan exited.

Edmund said to himself, "The Duke of Cornwall is coming here tonight? This is better than I could imagine! This is the best thing that could possibly happen! His coming here weaves itself necessarily into my plot — I can take advantage of this! My father is ready to accuse and arrest my brother, and I have one thing, of a queasy question, aka sensitive nature, that I must do. May speed and good fortune be on my side and help me!"

He called, "Brother, may I have a word with you? Descend,

brother, I say!”

Edgar entered the room.

“My father is still awake and watchful. Oh, sir, flee from this place; my father has been given information about where you are hiding. You have now the good advantage of the night so you can escape unseen. Haven’t you spoken against the Duke of Cornwall? He’s coming here, now, in the night, hastily, and Regan is with him. Have you said nothing about supporting his side against the Duke of Albany? Think.”

“I am sure that I have not said a word,” Edgar replied.

“I hear my father coming,” Edmund said. “Pardon me. As part of a deception, I must draw my sword upon you. Draw your sword; seem to defend yourself; now act as if you were fighting me fiercely.”

Edmund said loudly so that his father would hear, “Surrender! Appear before my father. Light! Bring light here!”

He said softly, “Flee from here, brother.”

Then he shouted, “Torches! Bring torches!”

He said softly to Edgar, “And so, farewell.”

Edgar exited.

Edmund said softly to himself, “Some blood drawn from me would help create the opinion that Edgar and I have really been fiercely fighting.”

He used his sword to lightly wound and bloody his arm.

He said softly, “I have seen drunkards do more than this in sport.”

Young men of the time would sometimes wound themselves

so that they could drink a toast of blood and wine to their beloved.

He shouted, “Father! Father! Stop! Stop! Won’t anyone help me?”

The Earl of Gloucester entered the room, along with some servants who were carrying torches.

“Now, Edmund, where’s the villain?” the Earl of Gloucester asked.

Edmund, who wanted Edgar to get away lest their father’s questions reveal the truth about what had happened, delayed answering the question. He said, “Here he stood in the dark, his sharp sword out, mumbling wicked charms, conjuring the Moon to be his auspicious mistress and help him —”

“But where is he?” the Earl of Gloucester asked.

Still playing for time, Edmund said, “Look, sir, I am bleeding.”

“Where is the villain, Edmund?”

Pointing in the wrong direction, Edmund replied, “He fled this way, sir. When by no means he could —”

The Earl of Gloucester ordered, “Pursue him! Go after him!”

Some servants exited in pursuit of Edgar.

He asked Edmund, “By no means what?”

“Persuade me to murder your lordship,” Edmund replied. “I told him that the avenging gods aim all their lightning and thunder against parricides — people who murder their own father. I spoke about the manifold and strong bonds that bind the child to the father. Sir, at last Edgar, seeing how I loathed and opposed his unnatural purpose, in one deadly motion thrust his drawn and ready sword at me and attacked my

unprotected body and cut my arm. But when he saw my courage aroused as if in response to a battle cry — I was brave because I knew that I was in the right — and saw that I was ready to fight back, or perhaps because he was frightened by the noise I made, quite suddenly he fled.”

“Let him fly far,” the Earl of Gloucester said. “If he stays in this land, he shall be caught, and when he is found, he will be killed. The noble Duke of Cornwall, who is my master, my worthy and honorable overlord and patron, comes here tonight. By his authority I will proclaim that whoever finds Edgar shall deserve our thanks for bringing the murderous coward to the place of execution; the penalty for whoever conceals Edgar shall be death.”

Edmund said, “When I tried to convince him not to try to have you killed and found him completely determined to do it, with angry speech I threatened to reveal his plot. He replied, ‘You beggarly bastard who is legally prevented from inheriting his property, do you think, if I would oppose you, that any trust, virtue, or worth in you would make your words believed? No! I would deny everything even if you were to produce evidence in the form of a letter written in my own handwriting — I would say that everything was your suggestion, plot, and damned practice. You must think that everyone in the world is a dullard if they would not realize that you, Edmund, would greatly profit if I, Edgar, were to die: You would inherit our father’s property. That is an understandable and powerful motive for you to seek my death!’”

“He is an unnatural and hardened villain!” the Earl of Gloucester said. “Would he deny having written his letter? I never fathered him — he is no son of mine!”

Some trumpets sounded the distinctive notes that announced the arrival of the Duke of Cornwall.

The Earl of Gloucester said, “Listen, the Duke’s trumpets! I don’t know why he is coming here.”

He then said, “I’ll close all the seaports; the villain Edgar shall not escape; the Duke of Cornwall must grant me that privilege. In addition, I will send Edgar’s picture far and near, so that everyone in the Kingdom may have the information they need about him.

“And, Edmund, you loyal and loving boy, I’ll work the legal means that will make you capable of inheriting my land.”

The Duke of Cornwall, Regan, and some attendants entered the room.

The Duke of Cornwall said, “How are you now, my noble friend! Ever since I came here, which was just now, I have heard strange news.”

“If it is true,” Regan said, “all punishments are inadequate for the offender. How are you, my lord?”

“Oh, madam, my old heart is cracked! It’s cracked!” the Earl of Gloucester cried.

“What! Did my father’s godson really seek your life? He whom my father named? Your Edgar?”

“Oh, lady, lady, my shame would like this to be hidden and not known!”

“Wasn’t he the companion of the riotous Knights who serve my father?” Regan asked.

“I don’t know, madam,” the Earl of Gloucester said. “This situation is very bad — very bad!”

Taking advantage of an opportunity to further slime Edgar, Edmund said, “Yes, madam, he was one of that group.”

Regan replied, “It is no wonder this happened, then, even if

Edgar were disloyal. It is those riotous Knights who have invited him to kill the old man — his father — so that they can spend and waste his income. I have this evening received a letter from my sister, Goneril, who has well informed me about these riotous Knights. She gave such warnings that I decided that if they come to stay at my house, I will not be there.”

“Nor I, I assure you, Regan,” the Duke of Cornwall said.

He added, “Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father the loyalty that a child owes a father.”

“It was my duty, sir,” Edmund replied.

“Edmund revealed Edgar’s plot, and he received this injury you see on his arm while striving to apprehend him,” the Earl of Gloucester said.

“Is Edgar being pursued?” the Duke of Cornwall asked.

“Yes, my good lord,” the Earl of Gloucester replied.

“If he is captured, you shall never again fear that he will do harm — he will be killed,” the Duke of Cornwall said. “Use my resources to do what you think needs to be done.”

Using the royal plural, he added, “As for you, Edmund, whose virtue and obedience that you have shown just now do so much to commend you, you shall serve us. Natures of such deep trust and loyalty we shall much need. We choose you to enter our service.”

“I shall serve you, sir, truly and loyally, above all else,” Edmund replied.

“For him I thank your Grace,” the Earl of Gloucester said.

The Duke of Cornwall began to say, “You don’t know why we came to visit you —”

Regan interrupted, “— thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night as we avoided obstacles as we traveled through the darkness. Matters, noble Gloucester, of some importance have arisen about which we must have your advice. Our father has written to us, and so has our sister, about quarrels between them. I thought it fitting and best to answer our father’s letter while we are away from our home. Several messengers are waiting to be sent back with our reply. Our good old friend, console yourself about Edgar’s disloyalty to you, and give us the advice we need about this matter, which needs to be taken care of immediately.”

The Earl of Gloucester replied, “I will help you, madam. Your graces are very welcome.”

— 2.2 —

The disguised Kent and the undisguised Oswald, Goneril’s steward, met in front of the Earl of Gloucester’s castle. The time was a little before dawn.

Oswald said, “Good dawning to you, friend. Are you a servant in this castle?”

The disguised Kent replied, “Yes.”

This was a lie. He recognized Oswald, whom he had tripped in the Duke of Albany’s castle because Oswald had treated King Lear badly, and he wanted to start a fight with him. Oswald did not recognize Kent.

“Where may we stable our horses?” Oswald asked.

“In the mud and mire,” the disguised Kent replied.

“Please, if you respect me, tell me.”

“If you respect me” meant “if you would be so kind,” but the disguised Kent deliberately mistook it as being literal.

“I don’t respect you.”

“Why, then, I don’t care for you,” an angry Oswald replied.

“If I had you in Lipsbury pinfold, I would make you care for me.”

A pinfold is a pen for stray cattle, and “Lipsbury” has the meaning of “Lipstown.” The disguised Kent was saying that if he had Oswald in his power — between his teeth — he would make him care for — be wary of — him.

“Why are you talking to and treating me this way?” Oswald complained. “I don’t know you.”

“Fellow, I know you,” the disguised Kent said.

“Who do you think I am?”

“You are a knave. You are a rascal. You are a servant who dines on broken foods — leftovers. You are a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, lightweight, filthy, worsted-stocking knave. You have only the three suits of clothing given annually to servants, and you wear the low-value worsted stockings that a servant wears rather than the silk stockings of an upper-class person. You are a lily-livered, legal-action-taking knave who is too cowardly to fight and so prefers to file a lawsuit. You are a whoreson, mirror-gazing and vain, super-serviceable and over-officious as well as finical and fussy rogue. You are a one-trunk-inheriting slave — all you inherited will fit into one trunk. You are a person who will be a bawd by way of providing good service to your master. You are nothing but the compound of a knave, beggar, coward, and panderer. You are the son and heir of a mongrel bitch; not only are you a son of a mongrel bitch, but you also inherited all the qualities of the mongrel bitch. You are a person whom I will beat into clamorous whining if you deny even the smallest syllable of the names that I have called you.”

Oswald complained, “Why, what a monstrous fellow you

are, thus to rail against a person whom you do not know and who does not know you!”

“What a brazen-faced varlet you are to deny that you know me!” the disguised Kent said. “Is it two days since I tripped up your heels, and beat you in front of the King? Draw your sword, you rogue, for although it is night, yet the Moon shines. I’ll make a sop of the moonlight out of you: I will fill you full of holes that soak up the moonlight. Draw your sword, you whoreson, despicable barber-monger, draw.”

Kent was a master of invective. A whoremonger is a person who drums up business for whores. Kent was calling Oswald a barber-monger, a person who drummed up business for barbers. In other words, he was saying that Oswald made himself useful to men who were very concerned about their appearance.

Kent drew his sword.

Oswald said, “Stay away from me! I have nothing to do with you.”

“Draw, you rascal. You have come with letters against the King, and you take the part of Vanity the Puppet — Goneril — against the royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I’ll slice your shanks. Draw your sword, you rascal, and fight me!”

Oswald shouted, “Help! Murder! Help!”

“Fight, you slave! Stand up and fight, rogue! Stand! You fancy slave, fight!”

The disguised Kent used the flat of his sword to hit Oswald.

Oswald shouted again, “Help! Murder! Help!”

Edmund, who had drawn his rapier, arrived on the scene, as did Regan, the Earl of Gloucester, and some servants.

Edmund asked, "What's the matter?"

The disguised Kent replied, "Let us fight, impudent boy, if you please. Come, I'll wound your flesh and initiate you into the world of adults. Come on, young master."

The Earl of Gloucester said, "Weapons! Arms! What's the matter here?"

The Duke of Cornwall ordered, "Stop fighting. Keep the peace. Your lives depend upon it. Whoever strikes again with his weapon will die. What is the matter?"

Regan said, "These are the messengers from our sister and from the King."

"What is your argument about?" the Duke of Cornwall asked. "Speak!"

"I am out of breath, my lord," Oswald replied.

"That is not a surprise since you have 'fought' so 'courageously,'" the disguised Kent said sarcastically to him. "You cowardly rascal, Nature refuses to admit that you are natural. In fact, a tailor made you."

"You are a strange fellow," the Duke of Cornwall said. "Can a tailor make a man?"

"Yes, a tailor did, sir," the disguised Kent said. "A stone-cutter or painter could not have made him so badly, even if he had been only two hours at the job. The man the tailor made is not a man; he is a tailor's dummy."

"Speak," the Duke of Cornwall ordered Oswald. "How did your quarrel begin?"

"This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared because of his gray beard —"

Insulted, the disguised Kent said. "You whoreson zed! You

unnecessary letter!”

The letter Z did not appear in dictionaries of the time. People felt that the letter Z was unnecessary because it could be replaced by the letter S and because Latin did not have a letter Z.

The disguised Kent said to the Duke of Cornwall, “My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and daub the wall of a privy with him. Spare my gray beard, you wagtail?”

The disguised Kent’s insults continued. “Unbolted” had the meaning of “unsifted”; Kent would have to step continually on Oswald in order to get the lumps out of the mortar. Of course, if Oswald were unbolted, he was not locked up in a jail. Also, if Oswald were “unbolted,” he lacked a man’s “bolt.” In addition, a wagtail is a bird that bobs its tail up and down. Kent was suggesting that Oswald was an obsequious courtier who was constantly bowing. He may also have meant that Oswald was excitedly hopping and unable to keep still.

The Duke of Cornwall ordered, “Shut up, sirrah! You beastly knave, know you no reverence and respect?”

“Yes, sir, I do, but anger has a privilege,” the disguised Kent said.

“Why are you angry?” the Duke of Cornwall asked.

“I am angry that such a slave as this should wear a sword, which is a privilege given to gentlemen, not to a man such as this who has no honesty and no virtue. Such smiling rogues as this Oswald, like rats, often bite the holy cords of marriage in two that are too intricately and closely knotted to be untied.”

The disguised Kent was making a major insinuation that

Oswald was helping his boss, Goneril, sin against her husband, the Duke of Cornwall. Previously, he had called Oswald a panderer — a go-between between two illicit lovers.

He added, “Such smiling rogues smooth the path of their lords’ passions that rebel against reason — they help their lords satisfy their unreasonable desires. They bring oil to fire, and they bring snow to their masters’ colder moods.

“They deny, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks with every varying gale of their masters. They say no when their masters want to hear no, and they say yes when their masters want to hear yes. They are like a dead kingfisher that has been hung up by its neck; whichever way the wind blows the dead kingfisher will turn so that its beak acts like a weathervane.

“They know nothing, like dogs, except how to follow their masters.”

Seeing Oswald looking with contempt at him, the disguised Kent shouted at him, “A plague upon your epileptic visage! Are you smiling at what I have to say, as if I were a fool? Goose, if I had you upon Salisbury plain, I would drive you cackling home to Camelot.”

“What? Are you insane, old fellow?” the Duke of Cornwall asked.

“How did you two fall out?” the Earl of Gloucester asked. “Why did you two grow angry at each other? Tell us that.”

“No two opposites hate each other more than I and this knave,” the disguised Kent said.

“Why do you call him a knave? What’s his offense?” the Duke of Cornwall asked.

“His face does not please me.”

“And, perhaps, neither does mine, nor the Earl of Gloucester’s, nor my Duchess’.”

“Sir, it is my particular pastime to be plain,” the disguised Kent said. “I have seen better faces in my time than stand on any shoulders that I see before me at this instant.”

The Duke of Cornwall said, “This is some fellow who, having been praised for bluntness, puts on a saucy roughness, and forces plain-speaking away from its true nature. He uses it not for honest candor but for crafty trickery. This man cannot flatter — not he! He has an honest and plain mind — he must speak the truth! If they will endure his talk, he has won a victory over them; if they will not, he says that he is plain-spoken. These kinds of knaves I know; in this plain-spokenness they hide more craft and trickery and corrupter ends than twenty silly ducking attendants who constantly make silly and obsequious bows.”

The disguised Kent mocked the Duke of Cornwall by using elevated, not plain, language: “Sir, in good sooth, in sincere verity, under the allowance of your great aspect, whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire on flickering Phoebus Apollo’s forehead —”

The Duke of Cornwall asked, “What do you mean by this?”

“I mean to go out of my usual style of speaking, which you criticize so much. I know, sir, that I am no flatterer: Whoever he was who deceived you with plain talk was a plain knave, which for my part I will not be, even though I may be so plain-spoken that you think that I am a plain knave.”

The Duke of Cornwall said to Oswald, “What was the offense you committed against him?”

“I never did him any offense,” Oswald replied. “It pleased the King his master very recently to strike at me because he misunderstood something. At that time, this man, in league

with and wanting to encourage the King in his displeasure, tripped me from behind. Once I was down on the floor, he insulted me and railed against me. He acted in such a macho manner that the King thought that he was a hero and praised him although all he had done was to attack someone who was willing to walk away from a fight. Because of his success in attacking a man who would not fight back, he drew his sword against me here and attacked me again.”

The disguised Kent said, “None of these rogues and cowards but Ajax is their Fool.”

This meant: *Rogues and cowards surround me, and Ajax is their Fool.* Not surprisingly, this was another major insult. Great Ajax was a warrior hero in Homer’s *Iliad*, but later his reputation declined and he gained a reputation for great stupidity. Kent was saying that among these rogues and cowards, Ajax would be the Fool. As shown by King Lear’s Fool, Fools are not foolish although fools are foolish. In fact, Fools are often wise. Kent was saying that Ajax, as foolish as he was, would be the wise man in this group of people around him.

Instantly angry, the Duke of Cornwall ordered, “Bring the stocks here!”

He wanted to punish the disguised Kent by putting him in the stocks, which would restrain his legs so that he could not move. The stocks were used to punish lower-class people who had committed misdemeanors.

The Duke of Cornwall said to the disguised Kent, “You stubborn old knave, you reverend braggart, we’ll teach you —”

The disguised Kent, as plain-spoken as ever, interrupted, “Sir, I am too old to learn. Call not your stocks for me. I serve the King, on whose employment I was sent to you. You shall do small respect and show too bold malice against the

grace and person of my master if you stock his messenger.”

The disguised Kent was correct. Because he served King Lear, he ought to be respected because of the King. If the Duke of Cornwall were to put him in the stocks, he would be gravely insulting Lear both as a King and as a man.

The Duke of Cornwall ordered, “Bring the stocks here! As I have life and honor, there shall he sit until noon.”

Regan said, “Until noon? Until night, my lord — and all night, too!”

“Why, madam, even if I were your father’s dog, you should not treat me so.”

“Sir, you are my father’s knave, and so I will treat you so.”

The Duke of Cornwall said, “This is a fellow who matches the description of the people our sister-in-law Goneril warned us against. Come, bring the stocks!”

The stocks were brought out.

The Earl of Gloucester said, “Let me beg your grace not to do this. His fault is great, and the good King his master will rebuke him for it. Your purposed low correction — the stocks — is such as is used to punish the basest and most contemptible wretches for such things as small thefts and other common crimes. The King must take it ill that he’s so slightly valued that his messenger is thus restrained.”

“I’ll answer that,” the Duke of Cornwall said. “I’ll take responsibility for this.”

Regan said, “My sister may take it much more worse to have her gentleman — Oswald — abused and assaulted for following her orders. Put his legs in the stocks.”

The disguised Kent was put in the stocks.

Regan said, "Come, my good lord, let's leave."

Everyone left except the Earl of Gloucester and the disguised Earl of Kent, who was undergoing a humiliating punishment that ought never to be inflicted on an Earl.

"I am sorry for you, friend," the Earl of Gloucester said. "This is the Duke's pleasure, whose disposition, all the world well knows, will not be hindered or stopped. I'll entreat him to release you."

"Please do not, sir," the disguised Kent said. "I have been awake a long time and travelled hard; some of the time I spend in the stocks I shall sleep, and the rest of the time I'll whistle. A good man's fortune may poke out at heels."

A good man's fortune may wear away until it becomes bad fortune, just like a good stocking becomes a bad stocking when it wears out and one's heel pokes out of it.

The disguised Kent then said, "May God give you a good morrow!"

"The Duke's to blame in this; it will be ill taken," the Earl of Gloucester said, and then he exited.

Kent said to himself, "Good King Lear, you must prove this common proverb to be true: You out of Heaven's benediction come to the warm Sun, aka a place of no shelter! Yes, you must go from better to worse, from a place like Heaven to a place that is this Earth. You have been King, but here you will not be treated like a King. When you arrive here, bad things will happen."

He took out a letter and said softly, "Approach, you beacon — the Sun — to this under globe — the Earth — so that by your comfortable beams I may read this letter! Nothing almost sees miracles but misery; in other words, no one but the truly miserable almost sees miracles. When one is truly

miserable, one hopes for a miracle!

“I know this letter is from Cordelia, who has most fortunately been informed of my obscured course of action — of what I am doing while I am in disguise.

“Cordelia is in France, away from this enormous and broken state of affairs, and she is finding time to seek a way to give losses their remedies. She wishes to right all these wrongs.

“My eyes are completely weary from being awake too long, so take advantage, heavy eyes, of this opportunity to sleep and not look at these stocks — this shameful lodging.

“Fortune, good night. Smile once more on me, and turn your wheel! Right now, I am at the bottom of the Wheel of Fortune, and a turn of the wheel will bring me higher.”

He slept.

— 2.3 —

Edgar thought out loud in a wooded area: “I heard myself proclaimed to be an outlaw, and I was lucky and happy to find and hide in a hollow of a tree and so escape the hunt.

“No seaport is free and open to me; everyplace has guards who watch with very unusual vigilance and hope to capture me. As long as I can escape capture, I will preserve myself. I have formed the plan to take the basest and poorest shape that ever poverty, in contempt of man, has brought a man closest to being a beast.

“I’ll grime my face with filth, cover only my loins and leave the rest naked, neglect my hair until it is matted and knotted, and exposed and naked I will confront the winds and persecutions of the sky.

“The countryside gives me examples and precedents of Bedlam beggars — former inmates of the Bethlehem

Hospital for the insane who, released and with a license to beg, with roaring voices, stick in their numbed and pain-insensitive bare arms pins, wooden skewers, nails, and sprigs of rosemary, and with this horrible spectacle, they force people from humble farms, poor and paltry villages, sheep-cotes, and mills, sometimes with the use of lunatic curses, sometimes with prayers, to give them charity.”

Edgar practiced the cries of a Bedlam beggar: “Poor Turlygod! Poor Tom!”

He then said, “There is some good in this for me. I will look nothing like Edgar.”

— 2.4 —

King Lear, the Fool, and a gentleman who served King Lear arrived at the courtyard of the Earl of Gloucester’s castle. They were close to the disguised Kent, King Lear’s messenger, who was still in the stocks.

King Lear said, “It is strange that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan should depart in this way from their home, and not send back to me my messenger.”

The gentleman said, “I learned that the night before they moved they had no plan to move.”

They had not seen the disguised Kent, but now he said, “Hail to you, noble master!”

Seeing that the disguised Kent was in stocks, King Lear asked him, “Are you doing this for your own amusement? Is this a joke?”

“No, my lord.”

The Fool said, “He is wearing cruel garters.”

The Fool was punning on “crewel,” which was a thin worsted yarn that was used to make stockings.

The Fool continued, “Horses are tied by the heads, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the waist, and men by the legs. When a man’s over-lusty at legs — a vagabond — then he wears wooden stockings.”

King Lear asked the disguised Kent, “Who is the man who has so misunderstood your position as my messenger that he has placed you here in the stocks?”

“It is both he and she: your son-in-law and daughter.”

Horrified, King Lear said, “No!” To deliberately stock his messenger — knowing that he was his messenger — was a major insult to him as a King and as a man and as a father and father-in-law.

“Yes.”

“No, I say.”

“I say, yes.”

“No, no, they would not.”

“Yes, they have.”

“By Jupiter, I swear, no.”

“By Juno, I swear, yes.”

King Lear said, “They would not dare to do it. They could not, would not do it; it is worse than murder to do such violent outrage to a person whom they ought to respect because of whom he serves. Tell me, as quickly as you can tell me clearly, in which way you might deserve, or they might legitimately impose, this treatment on you, knowing that you are my messenger.”

“My lord, when at their home I delivered your Highness’ letter to them, before I rose from the place I was kneeling to show them respect, there came a steaming messenger,

soaked in sweat because of his haste, half breathless, panting forth the salutations that came from Goneril. He delivered a letter, although he was interrupting me, which they read immediately. Because of the contents of that letter, the Duke of Cornwall and Regan summoned up their retinue of servants, immediately took to horse, and then commanded me to follow them and wait until they had leisure to answer your letter. They gave me cold looks.

“Meeting here in this place the other messenger, whose welcome, I perceived, had poisoned mine — he was Oswald, the very fellow who had recently been so saucy to your Highness — and having more courage than intelligence about me, I drew my sword.

“He aroused the people in the house with his loud and cowardly cries. Your son and daughter found this trespass worth the shame that here it suffers in the stocks.”

The Fool said, “Winter’s not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that way.”

He meant that bad times were going to continue. If the wild geese were still flying south, winter was coming. Regan was acting the way that Goneril had acted.

The Fool then sang this song:

“Fathers who wear rags

“Do make their children blind;

“But fathers who bear moneybags

“Shall see their children kind.

“Fortune, that arrant whore,

“Never turns the key to the poor.”

When a father is poor, his children will be blind to his needs

because providing for his needs will cost them money. But when a father is rich, his children will be kind to him in hopes of receiving a good inheritance. Fortune, aka luck, is a whore who will not open her door to a poor man who cannot afford to pay her for her services.

The Fool added, “But, for all this, you shall have as many dolors — by which I mean griefs, not dollars — on account of your daughters as you can speak of or count in a year.”

Feeling ill, King Lear said, “Oh, how this mother swells up toward my heart! *Hysterica passio*, go back down, you climbing sorrow. Your element’s below!”

The illness *hysterica passio* was also called “the mother.” The affliction involved a sense of choking and suffocation that began low and then went higher in the throat. It was thought to begin in the womb for women and in the abdomen for men.

King Lear asked, “Where is my daughter?”

The disguised Kent replied, “With the Earl of Gloucester, sir. She is within.”

King Lear said to the gentleman and the Fool, “Don’t follow me. Stay here.”

He exited.

The gentleman asked the disguised Kent, “Did you commit any offense other than the one you spoke of?”

“None,” Kent replied. “How is it that the King comes with so small a train of followers?”

The Fool said, “If you had been set in the stocks for asking that question, you would have well deserved it.”

“Why, Fool?”

The Fool gave a cynical answer: “We’ll send you to be educated by an ant, to teach you there’s no laboring in the winter.”

The Fool was saying that men do not work when they receive no profit. Ants work hard in the summer because food can be collected then, but they do not work in the winter. Similarly, many people were willing to serve King Lear when he had wealth and power, but many people were not willing to serve him now.

The Fool continued, “All who follow their noses are led by their eyes except blind men; and there’s not a nose among twenty but can smell a man who is stinking.”

The Fool was saying that it was obvious that King Lear lacked wealth and power. A sighted man could readily see his poverty, and a blind man could readily smell his poverty, which stank.

The Fool continued, “Let go your hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break your neck as you follow it, but when a great wheel goes up the hill, let it draw you upward.”

In other words, hitch your wagon to a rising star, but when a star falls abandon it. Watch how your master’s Wheel of Fortune is turning: Is it bringing him higher or lower?

The advice was cynical, but the Fool did not think that good people would, or should, follow it.

The Fool continued, “When a wise man gives you better advice than I have just given you, give my advice back to me. I want no one but knaves to follow this advice, since a fool gives it.”

The Fool sang this song:

“That sir who serves and seeks for gain,

“And follows but for form,

“Will pack when it begins to rain,

“And leave you in the storm.”

The word “form” meant “appearance.” The Fool was saying that many men abandon the person they serve when the going gets rough.

He continued to sing this song:

“But I will tarry; the Fool will stay,

“And let the wise man fly:

“The knave turns fool who runs away;

“The Fool is no knave, by God.”

The Fool was saying that he would continue to serve King Lear. Abandoning him would be a knavish thing to do, the kind of thing a fool would do, and the Fool was no knave and no fool.

The disguised Kent asked the Fool, “Where did you learn this, Fool?”

The Fool replied, “Not in the stocks, Fool.”

This was a compliment. The Fool was saying that the disguised Kent was a faithful follower of King Lear and that the disguised Kent would not abandon him — the disguised Kent was no knave. If the disguised Kent had abandoned King Lear, he would not now be in the stocks.

King Lear returned with the Earl of Gloucester.

King Lear said, “They refuse to speak with me? They are sick? They are weary? They have travelled all night? These are mere excuses, tricks, and pretenses. These are signs of revolt and desertions. Go back to them and bring me a better

answer.”

The Earl of Gloucester replied, “My dear lord, you know the fiery quality of Duke Cornwall and how stubborn and fixed he is in his own course. He wants to have things his own way.”

Angry, King Lear shouted, “Vengeance! Plague! Death! Destruction!”

He then shouted, “Fiery? What quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester, I wish to speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.”

“Well, my good lord, I have informed them so.”

“Informed them!” King Lear said. “Do you understand me, man?”

“Yes, my good lord.”

“The King wishes to speak with the Duke of Cornwall; the dear father wishes to speak with his daughter, and he commands her service and is waiting for her. Have they been informed of this? My breath and blood! Fiery? The fiery Duke? Tell the hot Duke that — no, do not tell him yet. Maybe he is not well. Illness always makes us neglect our duties that we would do if we were well and healthy. We are not ourselves when we are afflicted by illness that commands the mind to suffer with the body. I’ll restrain myself, and I am angry that my headstrong impulse makes me mistake an indisposed and sickly man for a sound and healthy man.”

His eyes happened to fall on the disguised Kent, who was still in the stocks, and he immediately grew angry again: “Death on my state! Why should he sit here? This act persuades me that this move of the Duke of Cornwall and Regan from their palace to here and their refusal to speak to

me is a deliberate scheme and insult. Set my servant free. Go tell the Duke and his wife that I will speak with them now — immediately. Tell them to come here and listen to me, or at their chamber-door I'll beat a drum and kill their sleep.”

“I would have all well between you,” the Earl of Gloucester said as he left to carry out the errand.

Suffering another attack of *hysterica passio*, King Lear said, “Oh, me! My heart, my rising heart! Down!”

The Fool said, “Cry, my uncle, as the cockney cook did to the eels when she put them alive in the cooking dish; she rapped them on the heads with a stick, and cried, ‘Down, playful creatures, down!’”

If the cockney cook had killed the eels before putting them in the cooking dish, she would not have had this problem.

If King Lear’s heart had stopped and he had died before his wealth and power were distributed, he would not now be having this problem. And if Goneril and Regan had died earlier, King Lear would not now be having this problem.

The Fool added, “It was her brother who, in pure kindness to his horse, buttered its hay.”

Her brother had wanted to be kind, but horses do not eat grease. The brother’s kindness had a bad result: It rendered the hay inedible.

King Lear had wanted to be kind when he gave away his wealth and power as dowries for his daughters, but his kindness was having bad results.

The Duke of Cornwall, Regan, the Earl of Gloucester, and some servants arrived.

“Good morrow to you both,” King Lear said to the Duke of Cornwall and Regan.

“Hail to your grace!” the Duke of Cornwall replied.

The servants set the disguised Kent free.

Regan said to her father, “I am glad to see your Highness.”

“Regan, I think you are,” King Lear said. “I know what reason I have to think so. If you should not be glad to see me, I would divorce your mother, who is in a tomb, because the tomb would be sepulchering an adulteress.”

A biological daughter ought to be glad to see her father.

King Lear looked at the disguised Kent and said to him, “Oh, are you free? Some other time we will address that.”

He then said, “Beloved Regan, your sister’s evil. Oh, Regan, her sharp-toothed unkindness has stabbed me, like a vulture tied to me, here.”

Overcome with emotion, he pointed to his heart, and then he said, “I can scarcely speak; you will not believe with how depraved a manner — oh, Regan!”

“Please, control yourself,” Regan said. “I hope that you are mistaken. I hope that you are undervaluing Goneril’s good qualities rather than that she is failing in her duties as a daughter to you.”

“What do you mean?”

Regan replied, “I cannot think my sister in the least would fail in her obligations to you. If, sir, perhaps she has restrained the riotous behavior of your followers, it is on such grounds, and for such a wholesome end, as would clear her of all blame.”

King Lear shouted, “My curses on her!”

Regan replied, “Oh, sir, you are old. Nature in you stands on the very verge of her limit — you have nearly reached the

end of your life. You should be ruled and led by some discreet person who discerns your state of mind — and your social position — better than you yourself do. Therefore, I ask you to please return to our sister and say that you have wronged her, sir.”

“Ask her for her forgiveness?” King Lear said. “Do you think that this would suit my position as King and father?”

He knelt and said, “Dear daughter, I confess that I am old. Old people are useless. On my knees I beg that you’ll give me clothing, bed and shelter, and food.”

Regan said, “Good sir, no more of this. This is an unsightly trick. Return to my sister.”

King Lear stood up and said, “Never, Regan. She has deprived me of half of my train of followers. She has looked black upon me, and she struck me with her tongue, very like a serpent, upon the very heart. May all the stored vengeance of Heaven fall on her ungrateful head! Strike her young bones, you infecting airs, with lameness!”

“Sir!” the Duke of Cornwall said.

King Lear shouted, “You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty, you swampland fogs, drawn by the powerful Sun; fall upon her and blast her pride!”

Regan said, “Oh, the blest gods! You will wish the same things on me when you are in another rash mood.”

“No, Regan, you shall never have my curse,” King Lear said. “Your tender-hearted nature that is set in a woman’s body shall not give you over to harshness. Goneril’s eyes are fierce; but your eyes comfort and do not burn. It is not in you to begrudge me my pleasures, to reduce in size my train of followers, to exchange hasty words with me, to scant my

allowance, and in conclusion to draw the bolt and lock the door to prevent me from coming in. You know better than Goneril the duties of natural affection, the bond of childhood, the good manners of courtesy, and the dues of gratitude — you have not forgotten the half of the Kingdom that I gave you.”

“Good sir, get to the point,” Regan said.

“Who put my servant in the stocks?” King Lear asked.

A trumpet sounded some distinctive notes.

“What trumpet is that?” the Duke of Cornwall asked.

“I know it,” Regan said. “It is my sister’s. In her letter to me, she wrote that she would come here.”

Oswald, Goneril’s courtier, entered the courtyard.

“Has your lady come?” Regan asked.

King Lear said about Oswald, “This is a slave, whose easy-borrowed pride dwells in the fickle grace of the woman he serves. He has done nothing to deserve pride; he has no rightful pride.”

He said to Oswald, “Out, varlet; get out of my sight!”

Oswald stayed in the courtyard.

“What does your grace mean?” the Duke of Cornwall asked.

“Who put my servant in the stocks?” King Lear asked.
“Regan, I hope that you did not know about it.”

Goneril entered the courtyard.

King Lear said, “Who comes here? Oh, Heavens, if you love old men, if your sweet rule approves of obedience — the obedience daughters owe to their fathers — if you yourselves are old, make my cause your cause; send down

the stored vengeance of Heaven, and take my part!”

He said to Goneril, “Aren’t you ashamed to look upon this beard?”

His white beard was a sign of old age and the respect that ought to be accorded to old age.

Regan and Goneril held hands.

King Lear said, “Oh, Regan, will you take her by the hand?”

Goneril replied, “Why shouldn’t she take me by the hand, sir? How have I offended you? Not everything is offensive that poor judgment and senility believe to be offensive.”

“Oh, sides, you are too tough,” King Lear said. “Will you continue to hold my breaking heart inside my chest? How came my servant to be put in the stocks?”

The Duke of Cornwall said, “I set him there, sir, but his disorderly conduct deserved much less good treatment. He should have been punished much more harshly.”

“You!” King Lear said. “Did you?”

Regan said, “Please, father, you are weak, and I wish that you would act that way. Return with and stay with my sister until the expiration of your month, and then, after dismissing half your train of followers, come and stay with me. I am now away from home, and I do not have what is needed to take care of and entertain you.”

“Return with her to her home, with fifty of my men already dismissed?” King Lear said. “No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose to wage war against the enmity of the air; to be a comrade with the wolf and owl — to endure the sharp pinch of necessity! Return with her to her home?”

“Why, think about the hot-blooded King of France, who took as a wife Cordelia, our youngest born, even without a dowry.

I could as well be brought to kneel before his throne, and, like a humble servant, beg for a pension to keep base life afoot. Return with her? Persuade me instead to be a slave and packhorse to this detested servant.”

King Lear pointed at Oswald.

“As you choose, sir,” Goneril said.

“Please, daughter, do not make me mad,” King Lear said. “I will not trouble you, my child. Farewell. We’ll meet no more, see one another no more. But yet you are my flesh, my blood, my daughter — or rather you are a disease that’s in my flesh, which I must call mine: You are a boil, a plague-sore, a swollen carbuncle, in my disease-corrupted blood. But I’ll not criticize you; let shame come to you when it will, I do not call it upon you. I do not bid Jupiter, the thunder-bearer, to shoot bolts of lightning at you, nor do I tell tales of you to Jupiter the highest judge. Mend when you can; be better at your leisure. I can be patient; I can stay with Regan, I and my hundred Knights.”

King Lear’s Knights had already been reduced to fifty, but he hoped that Regan would honor the agreement made when he gave her dowry to her and allow him to have once more a hundred Knights.

Regan said, “Not so fast. I had not expected you to visit me yet, nor am I prepared with what is necessary to give you a fit welcome. Listen, sir, to my sister. Rational people who listen to your passionate complaints must come to the conclusion that you are old, and so —”

She hesitated and then said, “But she knows what she is doing.”

“Is this well spoken?” King Lear asked. “Do you really mean to say this?”

“I dare to say that it is true, sir,” Regan replied. “What, fifty followers? Isn’t that a good number? Why should you need more? Yes, or so many, since both expense and danger speak against so great a number? To maintain fifty Knights costs much money. And how, in one house, should so many people, under two commands, stay friendly? It is hard, almost impossible, to maintain the peace under such conditions.”

Goneril asked, “Why can’t you, my lord, be served by those whom she calls her servants or by my own servants?”

“Why not, my lord?” Regan asked. “If then they chanced to slack off while serving you, we could control them. If you will come to me — but now I see danger in you having so many Knights serving you — I entreat you to bring only twenty-five Knights. To no more than that will I give place or recognition.”

King Lear said, “I gave you everything —”

“And about time, too,” Regan said.

“I made you my guardians and my trustees,” King Lear said, “but I reserved some rights. We made an agreement that I would be allowed to have a hundred Knights serving me. What! Must I come to you with only twenty-five Knights, Regan? Don’t you remember?”

King Lear had reserved the right to have a hundred Knights serve him as a symbol of his social status. He was a King, not a servant or a beggar.

“If you say that again, my lord, you will have nothing more to do with me,” Regan said.

King Lear said, “Wicked creatures look good when they are compared to other creatures that are even more wicked. Not being the worst deserves some praise.”

He said to Goneril, “I will go with you. You allow me fifty Knights, and that is double the twenty-five Knights that Regan will allow me to have; therefore, you must love me twice as much as she does.”

Goneril said, “Listen to me, my lord. Why do you need twenty-five, ten, or five Knights to serve you in a house where twice so many are commanded to take care of you?”

Regan asked, “Why do you need one Knight?”

King Lear replied, “Oh, reason not the need. Don’t ask why they are needed. Even our basest beggars have something more than is absolutely needed. If you were to allow a man no more than what a man absolutely needs, that man’s life would be as cheap as a beast’s.

“You are a lady, and you wear gorgeous clothing. The purpose of clothing is to keep you warm, and if you have only the clothing that is needed to keep you warm, you would not need the gorgeous clothing you are wearing, which barely keep you warm. You can keep warmer with a plain cloak.

“But, for true need —”

Some things cannot be quantified. King Lear had tried to quantify love by the number of Knights his daughters would allow him, and he had tried to quantify love earlier when before he gave his daughters their dowries he asked them to tell him how much they loved him.

Also, some needs are social. They may not be necessary to keep one alive, but they are nonetheless needs. Such needs include gorgeous clothing and the services of a hundred Knights. They also include love and respect.

King Lear said, “You Heavens, give me patience — the ability to endure pain — that’s what I need! You see me here,

you gods, a poor old man, as full of grief as of age, and wretched in both!”

He then changed his mind about what he needed: “If you gods are the ones who are stirring these daughters’ hearts against their father, don’t make me so much a fool that I endure it meekly. Touch me with noble anger, and don’t let women’s weapons — drops of water, aka tears — stain my man’s cheeks!”

He said to Goneril and Regan, “No, you unnatural hags, I will have such revenges on you both, that all the world shall — I will do such things — I don’t know what they are yet, but they shall be the terrors of the Earth! You think I’ll weep. No, I’ll not weep. I have full cause to weep, but this heart shall break into a hundred thousand pieces before I’ll weep.”

Thunder sounded.

He then said to one of his few supporters, “Oh, Fool, I shall go mad!”

King Lear, the Earl of Gloucester, the disguised Kent, and the Fool left.

The storm started in earnest.

“Let us go inside,” the Duke of Cornwall said. “There will be a storm.”

Regan said, “This house is little. The old man and his people cannot be well accommodated here.”

“It is his own fault,” Goneril said. “He has put himself out in the storm and away from shelter, and he has made his mind unrestful and disturbed. He needs to suffer from his folly.”

“I’ll receive him and take care of him gladly,” Regan said, “but not even one of his followers.”

“I am resolved to do the same thing,” Goneril said. “Where

is my lord of Gloucester?"

"He followed the old man," the Duke of Cornwall said.
"Here he comes."

The Earl of Gloucester entered the courtyard and said, "The King is in a high rage."

"Where is he going?" the Duke of Cornwall asked.

"He is calling for his horses, but I don't know where he is going."

The Duke of Cornwall said, "It is best to give him his way and let him go. He insists on having his own way."

"My lord, do not ask him to stay," Goneril said.

"The night is coming, and the bleak winds are getting very strong," the Earl of Gloucester said. "There is scarcely even a bush for many miles around here."

Regan said, "Oh, sir, willful men such as my father must learn from the injuries that they inflict on themselves. Shut and lock your doors. My father is served by a desperate train of followers, and since he allows himself to be manipulated by them, wisdom tells us to be afraid of what they may incite him to do."

The Duke of Cornwall, who outranked the Earl of Gloucester, said, "Shut and lock your doors, my lord; it is a wild night. My Regan has given you good advice; come out of the storm."

The Earl of Gloucester did as he was ordered.

CHAPTER 3**— 3.1 —**

The storm raged on the heath. The disguised Kent and the gentleman, who was another of King Lear's followers, met. The disguised Kent had been separated from King Lear by the storm.

"Who's there, besides foul weather?" the disguised Kent asked.

"One whose mind is like the weather — very unquiet."

"I know who you are," the disguised Kent said. "Where's the King?"

"Struggling against and competing with the raging elements of the storm. He orders the winds to blow the land into the sea or to swell the curled waves above the mainland so that the entire world might change or cease to exist. He tears his white hair, which the impetuous blasts, with blind rage, catch in their fury and show no respect for. He strives in this little world of man to out-scorn the to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain. In this night, in which the she-bear, whose milk has been emptied by her cubs, would lie in a cave, and in which the lion and the belly-pinched and starving wolf keep their fur dry, he stays outside without a hat and cries out with desperate defiance like a gambler who is betting all he has left."

"But who is with him?" the disguised Kent asked.

"None but the Fool, who labors to outdo the King's heart-struck injuries with extravagant wit."

"Sir, I know your good character, and I dare, because I know that you are a good man, to entrust an important task to you. There is disagreement, although the two are cunning enough to conceal it, between the Duke of Albany and the Duke of

Cornwall. They have — and which enthroned great men do not? — servants, who seem to be no other than servants, but who are spies who send to the King of France information about our state. This information includes the quarrels and plots of the two Dukes, or the harsh treatment both Dukes have borne against old and kind King Lear, or something deeper than these things, of which perhaps these other things conceal the truth of what is really going on.

“But it is true that from France an army comes into this divided Kingdom. This army, taking advantage of our negligence, has already gained a secret stronghold in some of our best ports, and the French soldiers are ready to openly show their military banners.

“Now let me tell you what I want you to do. If you trust me enough to dare to speed to Dover, you shall find men there who will thank you for giving an honest report of the unnatural and maddening sorrow that afflicts the King.

“I am a gentleman by birth and education, and because of some reliable information and confidence, I offer you the opportunity to do this service.”

The gentleman knew the disguised Kent only as a servant, and so he was skeptical and wanted further information before undertaking this task.

He said, “I will talk further with you.”

The disguised Kent knew that the gentleman was skeptical, but he needed the gentleman to quickly go to Dover, and so he needed to quickly give the gentleman enough assurance so the gentleman would quickly leave and do the task.

He said, “No, do not. But for confirmation that I am much more than my outward appearance of a servant suggests, open this wallet, and take the money and ring it contains. If you shall see Cordelia — as you will, don’t worry — show

her this ring, and she will tell you who your servant — me — is. whom you yet do not know.

“Damn this storm! I will go seek the King.”

The gentleman was convinced that the disguised Kent was of a good and high-ranking family. He was willing to undertake the mission.

The gentleman said, “Let’s shake hands. Do you have anything else to say to me?”

“Only a few words, but they are more important than all the other words. We need to find the King. You go that way, and I’ll go this way. Whoever first finds the King will shout to the other that the King has been found.”

— 3.2 —

In another part of the heath, with the storm still raging, stood King Lear and the Fool.

King Lear shouted into the storm, “Blow, winds! Puff up your cheeks and blow! Rage! Blow! You cataracts — you flood gates of Heaven — and hurricanes, spout water until you have drenched our steeples and drowned the weathercocks! You sulfurous lightning that flashes as quickly as thought, forerunners of thunderbolts that split mighty oaks, singe my white head! And you, all-shaking thunder, smite flat the thick rotundity of the world! Crack Nature’s molds and spill all seeds that make ungrateful Humankind!”

The Fool said, “Oh, my uncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rainwater out of doors.”

Court holy-water was flattery, something that many courts are known for.

The Fool continued, “My good uncle, go inside, and ask for

your daughters' blessing. Here is a night that pities neither wise man nor fool."

The Fool was concerned about the King and wanted him to be somewhere dry and safe, even if it meant apologizing to his daughters.

Ignoring the Fool, King Lear shouted into the storm, "Rumble your bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain! Not rain, nor wind, nor thunder, nor fiery lightning are my daughters. I do not charge you, you elements, with unkindness toward me. I never gave you a Kingdom, and I never called you my children. You owe me no allegiance, and so let fall on me your horrible pleasure. Here I stand, your slave: a poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man. But yet I call you servile agents that have with two pernicious daughters joined your Heavenly armies against a head as old and white as this. Oh! Oh! It is foul!"

The Fool said, "He who has a house to put his head in has a good head-piece."

The compound word "head-piece" meant both a helmet and a brain.

The Fool sang this song:

"The cod-piece that will house

"Before the head has any,

"The head and he shall louse;

"So beggars marry many."

The compound word "cod-piece" meant "penis" in this context.

The Fool was saying that a penis that sought a home — vagina — before the head had a home would suffer. Both the head hair and the pubic hair would be infested with lice.

Someone who was impudent and sought sex rather than love would end up a beggar and would “marry” — be joined with — many lice.

The Fool then sang this song:

“The man who makes his toe

“What he his heart should make

“Shall of a corn, aka bunion on a toe, cry woe,

“And turn his sleep to wake.”

This meant that the man who treasures something trivial such as a toe rather than something precious such as his heart would end up hurting and unable to sleep at night.

King Lear had done this. He had valued Goneril and Regan more than he had valued Cordelia.

The Fool was not trying to cheer up King Lear. Instead of being funny, the Fool’s words were wise. King Lear was in the process of learning from his mistakes, but he had not learned all that he needed to learn. He had learned that Goneril and Regan were bad daughters, but he still needed to learn to value Cordelia, although he had started the process of doing that.

The Fool then said, “For there was never yet a beautiful woman who did not make mouths when she looked in a mirror.”

The phrase “make mouths” meant to “make faces.” A beautiful woman could smile when she looked in a mirror to make herself more beautiful, but to “make a mouth” could also mean to make a contemptuous smile, such as the one that Oswald gave the disguised Kent before the disguised Kent was put in the stocks.

Cordelia might smile pleasantly when she looked in a mirror,

but Goneril and Regan were very capable of making contemptuous smiles when looking into a mirror — looking at the face of a close relative can be like looking into a mirror. In fact, they smiled when they recently took their father's Knights away from him. It is possible to infuriate an old father by saying hurtful words in a soothing voice.

King Lear calmed down and said, "No, I will be the pattern of all patience and self-control. I will say nothing."

The disguised Kent came out of the darkness and asked, "Who's there?"

The Fool replied, "Here's grace and a cod-piece; that's a wise man and a fool."

The Fool did not say who was the wise man and who was the fool.

The disguised Kent said to King Lear, "Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night do not love such nights as these; the wrathful skies frighten the very wanderers of the dark and make them stay in their caves. Ever since I became a man, I cannot remember ever experiencing such a storm as this: such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrible thunder, such groans of roaring wind and rain. Man's nature cannot endure the affliction of the storm or the fear it inspires."

King Lear said, "Let the great gods, who keep this dreadful tumult over our heads, find out who are their enemies now. Tremble, you wretches, who have within you secret crimes, unpunished by justice. Hide yourselves, you bloody murderers, you perjurers, and you incestuous men who pretend to be virtuous. Tremble, wretches who under secret and convenient appearances have plotted against the lives of men. Well-concealed criminals, burst out of your concealing hiding places, and cry for mercy from these dreadful summoners who wish to see you punished."

A summoner was a man who took an accused person to an ecclesiastical court to be tried.

King Lear paused and then added, “I am a man who is more sinned against than sinning.”

The disguised Kent said, “I am sorry to see you bare-headed in this storm! My gracious lord, nearby here is a hovel; it will lend you some friendship and protection against the tempest. Rest there while I go to this hard house, the inhabitants of which — your daughters — are harder than the stones of which the house is made. Just now, your daughters, when I was asking about you and your whereabouts, refused to let me in. Let me return there and force them to show some courtesy to you, their father.”

King Lear said, “My wits begin to turn.”

His mind was changing; he was growing and beginning to be empathetic. Just a while ago, he had been calling for the extinction of Humankind, but now he began to be concerned about the man — or perhaps boy — who was his Fool. He wanted shelter for the Fool.

He said to the Fool, “Come on, my boy. How are you doing, my boy? Are you cold? I am cold myself.”

He said to the disguised Kent, “Where is this straw, my servant? Necessity has strange powers and can make vile things — such as warm straw in a hovel — precious. Come, take us to the hovel you have found.”

He said to his Fool, “Poor Fool and knave, I still have one part in my heart that is alive and feels empathy for you.”

The Fool sang this song:

“He who has a little tiny wit —

“With hey, ho, the wind and the rain —

“Must make happiness with his fortunes fit,

“For the rain it rains every day.”

This song meant that a person who is not very intelligent — a description that applies to all of us — must find a way to be happy with life despite the rain, aka evil, that falls upon each of us continually.

King Lear said to the Fool, “True, my good boy.”

He then said to the disguised Kent, “Come, take us to this hovel.”

King Lear and the disguised Kent departed, and the Fool said this to you, the reader:

“This is a splendid night to cool the lust of a courtesan — on such a night she won’t be horny.”

He paused and then added, “I’ll tell you a prophecy before I go:

“When priests are more in word than matter,

“In other words, when priests talk more about sin than actually commit sin,

“Or perhaps, in other words, when priests talk more about leading an ethical life than actually try to lead an ethical life,

“When brewers mar their malt with water,

“In other words, when brewers water their beer and make it healthier and decrease alcoholism,

“Or perhaps, in other words, when brewers ruin their beer by watering it down,

“When nobles are their tailors’ tutors,

“In other words, when nobles know how to do the work of

the common people,

“Or perhaps, in other words, when nobles think they know more than the real experts know,

“When no heretics are burned, except wenches’ suitors,

“In other words, when no heretics are burned, except women’s suitors, who are properly punished as they burn from venereal disease because they did not obey the word of God,

“When every case in law is right,

“In other words, when no innocent people are convicted and no guilty people remain unpunished,

“When no squire is in debt, nor no poor Knight,

“In other words, when people stay out of debt,

“When slanders do not live in tongues,

“In other words, when people do not spread malicious gossip,

“Nor cutpurses come not to throngs,

“In other words, when pickpockets do not go among crowds of people and steal,

“When usurers tell their gold in the field,

“In other words, when moneylenders count their money in the open,

“And bawds and whores do churches build,

“In other words, when panderers and whores turn to God and build churches,

“Then shall the realm of Albion

“In other words, then shall the realm of England

“Come to great confusion,

“In other words, England shall be troubled,

“And then comes the time, who lives to see it,

“In other words, and then comes the time, whoever lives to see it,

“That going shall be used with feet.

“In other words, then walking shall be done with feet.”

This prophecy stated that England would always be troubled — even if it were a utopia.

Of course, a utopia will never happen in the real world, and because it will never happen (and even if it did happen), England will continue to be troubled.

What is a sure way to tell that England is troubled? If men walk with their feet, then you know that England is troubled.

It does not matter whether you are an optimist or a pessimist, England is troubled.

The Fool then said, “This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his time.”

The Fool and King Lear lived centuries before the time of Merlin and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, but the prophecy was true at the time that King Lear lived, and it was true at the time that Merlin lived.

It is still true today.

It will always be true until Humankind becomes extinct.

What the prophecy says about England is true of the world as a whole.

— 3.3 —

The Earl of Gloucester and his illegitimate son, Edmund, spoke together in a room in his castle.

“It’s sad, Edmund. I do not like this unnatural treatment of fathers. When I asked for permission from the Duke of Cornwall, Regan, and Goneril to show pity to and help King Lear, they took from me the use of my own house and they ordered me, on pain of their perpetual displeasure with me, not to speak of him, entreat for him, or in any way sustain and help him.”

“This is very savage and unnatural!” Edmund said.

“Quiet!” the Earl of Gloucester said. “You must say nothing about that; it’s dangerous. In addition, there’s a division between the Dukes, and a worse matter than that. I have received a letter tonight; it is dangerous to speak about that, too. I have locked the letter in my private room. These injuries the King now bears will be fully revenged. Part of an army has already landed; we must be on the side of the King. I will leave and seek him, and secretly help him. You go and talk with the Duke of Cornwall to keep him occupied so that he does not learn about my charity. If he asks for me, tell him that I am ill and have gone to bed.

“Even if I die because of it — and they have threatened to do no less to me — the King my old master must be helped.

“Strange things are happening, Edmund; please be careful.”

He exited.

Alone, Edmund said to himself, “This act of charity, which you have been forbidden to do, I shall immediately tell the Duke of Cornwall about, and I will tell him about that letter, too.

“These acts will deserve a reward from the Duke of

Cornwall, and I will win what my father loses — that will be everything. The younger rises when the old does fall.”

— 3.4 —

On the heath in front of the hovel stood King Lear, the disguised Kent, and the Fool. The storm continued to rage.

The disguised Kent said, “Here is the place, my lord. My good lord, enter the hovel. The tyranny of the night in the open air is too rough for human nature to endure.”

King Lear replied, “Let me alone.”

The disguised Kent repeated, “My good lord, enter the hovel.”

“Do you want to break my heart?”

“I had rather break my own,” Kent replied. “My good lord, enter the hovel.”

“You think it is much that this contentious storm invades us to the skin with wind and water,” King Lear said. “So it is much to you, but wherever the greater malady is fixed, the lesser is scarcely felt. You would prefer to run away from a bear, but if your flight lay toward the raging sea, you would face the bear head-on. When the mind is free and unburdened, the body’s delicate. The tempest in my mind takes all feeling from my senses — except the tempest beating there. Because of the mental pain I feel for my daughters’ ingratitude, I cannot feel any physical pain brought by this storm. Filial ingratitude! Isn’t it as if this mouth should bite this hand because it lifts food to it? But I will punish them thoroughly.”

He hesitated and said, “No, I will weep no more. On such a night they shut me out of doors! Pour on the pain and the rain; I will endure them. On such a night as this! Oh, Regan, Goneril! Your old kind father, whose generous heart gave

you everything — oh, that way madness lies, so let me not think of that. No more of that.”

Worried about King Lear, the disguised Kent again said, “My good lord, enter the hovel.”

“Please, go in yourself,” King Lear replied. “Seek your own comfort. My being outside in this tempest will not allow me to think about things that would hurt me more. But I’ll go in.”

He said to the Fool, “In, boy; you go in first.”

He thought about other poor people outside on this night and said, “You homeless poor —”

Then he said to the Fool, who was waiting for him, “No, you go in first. I’ll pray, and then I’ll sleep.”

The Fool went inside the hovel. The disguised Kent stayed outside with King Lear.

King Lear said, “Poor naked wretches, wherever you are, who endure the pelting of this pitiless storm, how shall your homeless heads and unfed bellies, and your ragged clothing filled with holes defend you from weather such as this?”

He then blamed himself for not caring more about the poor when he had wealth and power: “Oh, I have been too little concerned about this! Take this medicine, pompous people: Expose yourself so that you feel what poor wretches feel, and you will learn to give the excess of your wealth to them, and show the Heavens how wealth can be more fairly distributed.”

Edgar, now disguised as a Tom o’Bedlam, said in a disguised voice from inside the hovel, where he had taken shelter, “Fathom and a half! Fathom and a half! Poor Tom!”

A fathom is six feet of water. The disguised Edgar was

speaking as if he were a sailor taking soundings — measuring the depth of water — in a sinking ship.

The Fool ran out of the hovel.

“Don’t go in there, my uncle,” he cried. “There’s a supernatural spirit inside. Help me! Help me!”

The disguised Kent said, “Give me your hand. Who’s there?”

The Fool replied, “A spirit — a supernatural spirit. He says his name’s poor Tom.”

The disguised Kent yelled, “Who are you who mumbles there in the straw? Come outside.”

Edgar, disguised as a mad man, came outside. He was naked except for Don’t ask me a blanket around his waist. He was dirty and his hair was matted, and he had pushed thorns into his arms.

The disguised Edgar, pretending to believe that the Devil tormented him, said, “Stay away! The foul fiend follows me! Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind. You are cold — go to your beds, and warm yourselves.”

King Lear asked him, “Have you given everything to your two daughters? Is that why you have come to this?”

The disguised Edgar replied, “Who gives anything to poor Tom? He is the man whom the foul fiend has led through fire and through flame, and through ford and whirlpool and over bog and quagmire. The foul fiend has tempted poor Tom to commit suicide. He has laid knives under his pillow, and put hangman’s ropes in his church pew, and set rat poison by his soup. The foul fiend has made him proud of heart, and the foul fiend has made him ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inch-wide bridges in order to chase his own shadow as if it were a traitor. May God bless your five wits! Tom’s a-

cold.”

The disguised Edgar shivered and said, “May God bless and protect you from whirlwinds, the influences of evil stars, and infection! Do poor Tom some charity — poor Tom whom the foul fiend vexes.”

The disguised Edgar pretended to fight an invisible demon, saying, “There could I have him now — and there — and there again, and there.”

The storm continued to rage.

King Lear asked, “What, have his daughters brought him to this distress?”

He asked the disguised Edgar, “Couldn’t you save anything and keep it for yourself? Did you give them everything?”

The Fool said, “No, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all embarrassed at seeing his bare butt.”

King Lear had reserved for himself the services of a hundred Knights.

In this society, people believed that diseases hung in the air, waiting until they were poured out to inflict pain on human beings.

King Lear said, “Now, may all the plagues that in the pendulous air hang fated over men’s faults fall and alight on your daughters!”

The disguised Kent said, “He has no daughters, sir.”

“Death to you, traitor!” King Lear shouted. “Nothing could have brought this human to such lowness but his unkind daughters. Is it the fashion that discarded and cast-off fathers should have thus little mercy on their flesh?”

He was looking at the thorns in the disguised Edgar’s arms,

but he could also have been thinking of the thorns in his own mind.

He said, “Judicious punishment! It was this flesh that begot those pelican daughters.”

In this society, people believed that the young of pelicans would bite the breast of their parents and feed on the blood that flowed from the wound.

Hearing the word “pelican,” the disguised Edgar said, “Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill.”

A ‘Pillicock’ was a cutesy name for a penis, and a ‘Pillicock-hill’ was a cutesy name for a vulva.

The disguised Edgar then sang, “Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!”

The Fool said seriously, “This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.”

The disguised Edgar said, “Take heed of the foul fiend. Obey your parents. Keep true to your word. Do not swear. Do not commit adultery with a man’s sworn spouse. Do not set your sweet heart on fancy clothing. Tom’s a-cold.”

King Lear asked him, “What have you been?”

The disguised Edgar replied, “A serving-man, proud in heart and mind. I was a courier. I curled my hair. I wore gloves — favors from my mistress — in my cap. I served the lust of my mistress’ heart, and I did the act of darkness with her. I swore as many oaths as I spoke words, and I broke them openly in the sweet face of Heaven. I was a man who dreamed of lustful acts as he slept and then woke up and did them. Wine I loved deeply, dice and gambling I loved dearly, and when it came to women I had more mistresses than the Turkish Sultan. I was false of heart, light of ear and ready to believe malicious gossip, and bloody of hand. I was like a hog when it came to sloth, a fox when it came to stealth, a

wolf when it came to greediness, a dog when it came to madness, and a lion when it came to hunting of prey.

“You may be tempted by the creaking of fashionable shoes and the rustling of the silk clothing of a woman as she meets a lover in a secret assignation, but do not betray your poor heart to that woman. Keep your feet out of brothels, keep your hands out of the openings of petticoats, keep your signature away from contracts in which you borrow money, and defy the foul fiend.”

The disguised Edgar then sang these words:

“Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind:

“Says suum, mun, ha, no, nonny.

“Dauphin, my boy, my boy, sessa! Be quiet! Let him trot by.”

The Dauphin was the son of a King of France, and Edgar was singing a combination of an old ballad and nonsense syllables. In the old ballad, the King of France wanted the Dauphin to be safe and not gain a reputation for valor by combating a notable opponent during wartime. Every time a notable opponent rode by, the King of France would tell his son, the Dauphin, “Be quiet! Let him trot by.” In Edgar’s version of the ballad, the Dauphin was not even allowed to combat the cold wind because it was too dangerous.

The storm continued to rage.

King Lear said to the disguised Edgar, “Why, you would be better off in your grave than to confront with your naked and uncovered body this extreme severity of the skies.”

He then said to the disguised Kent and to the Fool, “Is man no more than this? Look carefully at him.”

He said to the disguised Edgar, “You owe the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume.”

The disguised Edgar was naked. He did not wear silk or leather or woolen clothing. He also did not wear perfume made from the musk of the civet cat.

King Lear continued, “Ha! The three of us — my servant, the Fool, and me — are wearing clothing. We have disguised our nakedness. You are the natural man himself: a man without the trappings of civilization is no more than such a poor bare, forked-legged animal as you are.”

He started to tear off his clothing, saying, “Off, off, you trappings of civilization! Come! I will unbutton my clothing here.”

The Fool said, “Please, my uncle, control yourself; it is an evil night to go swimming in. Now a little fire in a wild field would be like an old lecher’s heart: a small spark — all the rest of his body would be cold. Look, here comes a walking fire.”

The Earl of Gloucester, carrying a torch, walked up to them.

The disguised Edgar said, “This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet: he begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock; from dusk to dawn he walks. He gives the web and the pin, aka eye cataracts. He makes the eye squint, and he makes the harelip. He mildews the white wheat that is almost ready for harvest, and he hurts the poor creatures of Earth.”

He then sang this song as protection against the “evil spirit”:

“Saint Withold footed thrice the wold,

“In other words, Saint Withold went three times around the upland plains,

“He met the nightmare, and her nine-fold,

“In other words, he met the demon called the nightmare, which sits on the chests of sleeping people and makes it hard

for them to breathe, and he met her nine followers,

“Bid her alight,

“In other words, he ordered her to get off the chest of the sleeper,

“And her troth plight,

“In other words, and swear to do no more harm,

“And, ‘Aroint you, witch, aroint you!’”

“In other words, and said, ‘Leave, witch, leave!’”

The disguised Kent said to King Lear, “How is your grace?”

King Lear asked about the man with the torch, “Who is he?”

“Who’s there?” the disguised Kent said. “What is it you want?”

The Earl of Gloucester asked, “Who are you there? What are your names?”

The disguised Edgar replied, “Poor Tom, who eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-lizard, and the water-newt. Poor Tom, who in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for salads, swallows the old rat and the dead dog in the ditch, drinks the green scum of the stagnant pond. Poor Tom, who is whipped from parish to parish, who is put in stocks, and who is imprisoned. Poor Tom, who used to have three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, a horse to ride, and a weapon to wear. But mice and rats, and such small animals, have been Tom’s food for seven long years. Beware the demon who follows me. Peace, Smulkin; peace, you fiend!”

“What, has your grace no better company?” the Earl of Gloucester asked King Lear.

The disguised Edgar said, “The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. Modo he’s called, and Mahu.”

The Earl of Gloucester said, “Our flesh and blood, aka children, are grown so vile, my lord, that it hates what begets it.”

The disguised Edgar said, “Poor Tom’s a-cold.”

The Earl of Gloucester said to King Lear, “Go inside one of my buildings with me. I must do my duty; I cannot endure to obey all of your daughters’ hard commands. Although they have ordered me to bar my doors and let this tyrannous night take hold upon you, yet I have ventured to find you and bring you where both fire and food are ready.”

King Lear said to the Earl of Gloucester about the disguised Edgar, whom the Earl of Gloucester did not recognize as being his own son, “First let me talk with this natural philosopher.”

He asked the disguised Edgar, “What is the cause of thunder?”

In his madness, King Lear thought that the disguised Edgar was an educated man and a natural philosopher, aka a person who investigated Nature.

The disguised Kent said, “My good lord, take his offer; go into the house.”

King Lear replied, “I’ll talk a word with this same learned Theban.”

The ancient Greeks, including those from Thebes and Athens, were thought to be wise.

King Lear asked the disguised Edgar, “What is your main area of study?”

The disguised Edgar replied, “How to thwart the fiend, and

to kill vermin.”

King Lear said, “Let me ask you one word in private.”

The disguised Kent said to the Earl of Gloucester, “Importune him once more to go, my lord. His mind has begun to become unsettled.”

“Can you blame him?” the Earl of Gloucester replied.

The storm continued to rage.

The Earl of Gloucester continued, “King Lear’s daughters seek his death. Ah, I remember the Earl of Kent! He was a good man. He, poor banished man, predicted it would be like this! You say the King grows mad; I’ll tell you, friend, I am almost mad myself. I had a son, who is now an outlaw whom I have disinherited. He sought my life just recently — very recently. I loved him, friend; no father ever loved his son dearer. I tell you the truth: The grief has crazed my wits. What a night’s this!”

He said to King Lear, “I do beg your grace —”

King Lear interrupted and said, “I beg your pardon,” and then he went back to talking to the disguised Edgar, “Noble philosopher, I desire your company.”

The disguised Edgar replied, “Tom’s a-cold.”

The Earl of Gloucester, who did not intend to help the Tom o’Bedlam, said to him, “Go in, fellow, there, into the hovel. Keep yourself warm there.”

King Lear said, “Come, let’s all go in.”

The disguised Kent said, “This way, my lord.”

He wanted King Lear to go away from the hovel and to the building that the Earl of Gloucester had offered as shelter.

King Lear put an arm around the disguised Edgar's shoulders and said, "I will go with him. I will stay always with my philosopher."

The disguised Kent said, "My good lord, humor the King; let him take the fellow with him."

"You accompany the fellow," the Earl of Gloucester said.

The disguised Kent said to the disguised Edgar, "Sirrah, come on; you can go along with us."

King Lear said to the disguised Edgar, "Come, good Athenian."

The ancient Athenians included many philosophers.

The Earl of Gloucester said to King Lear, "No words, no words. Hush."

Edgar sang these words:

"Child Roland to the dark tower came,

"His motto was always this — Fie, foh, and fum,

"I smell the blood of a British man."

A "child" was a candidate for Knighthood, and child Roland was the nephew of Charlemagne and the hero of the epic poem *The Song of Roland*. The disguised Edgar was pretending to confuse Roland with the giant in the fairy tale "Jack and the Beanstalk." Much real confusion was happening in Britain.

— 3.5 —

In the Earl of Gloucester's castle, the Duke of Cornwall and Edmund, the Earl of Gloucester's deceitful and illegitimate son, were talking. As Edmund had promised himself he would do, he had informed the Duke of Cornwall that the

Earl of Gloucester, Edmund's father, had — against orders — gone to help King Lear. Edmund had also searched for and found the letter that his father had received about the invasion of the French army.

The Duke of Cornwall said, "I will have my revenge before I leave his house."

Edmund replied, "My lord, I am afraid to think of how I may be criticized because my natural affection for my father is thus giving way to my loyalty to you, my lord."

The Duke of Cornwall said, "I now realize that it was not altogether your brother Edgar's evil disposition that made him seek your father's death. Also a factor was the Earl of Gloucester's own evil disposition that deserved to be punished with death. That and your brother's evil disposition made your brother want to kill your father."

Edmund said, "How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent my being just! I did the right thing when I informed you about my father's evil, but I feel bad because I informed against my own father. This is the letter he spoke about, which proves that he was a spy who sent information to France. Oh, Heavens! I wish that this treason had never occurred, or that I was not the person who detected it!"

"Go with me to the Duchess Regan," the Duke of Cornwall said.

Edmund replied, "If the content of this paper is true, you have mighty business at hand."

"True or false, it has made you the new Earl of Gloucester. You now take your father's title. Find out where your father is, so that he can be arrested."

Edmund thought, *If I find him comforting the King, it will make the Duke of Cornwall even more suspicious.*

He said out loud to the Duke of Cornwall, “I will persevere in my course of loyalty, although the conflict between my loyalty to you and my loyalty to my father is sharp.”

“I will trust in you, and you will find me to be a dearer father than your biological father in my love for you.”

— 3.6 —

In a room in a farmhouse near the castle were the old Earl of Gloucester, King Lear, the disguised Kent, the Fool, and Edgar, who was still disguised as a Tom o’Bedlam. The old Earl of Gloucester did not yet know that his illegitimate son, Edmund, had become the new Earl of Gloucester.

“This place here is better than the open air,” the old Earl of Gloucester said. “Take it thankfully. I will supplement the comfort with what additions I can. I will do what I can to make this place more comfortable for you. I will not be long away from you.”

The disguised Kent replied quietly, “All the power of King Lear’s wits have given way to his suffering and his anger. He is insane.”

He then said loudly to the old Earl of Gloucester, “May the gods reward your kindness!”

The old Earl of Gloucester departed.

The disguised Edgar said, “Frateretto calls to me, and he tells me that the Roman Emperor Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness.”

He then said to the Fool, “Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.”

The Fool said to King Lear, “Please, my uncle, tell me whether a madman is a gentleman or a yeoman.”

A gentleman has a higher social status than a yeoman. A

gentleman has a coat of arms; a yeoman owns land but has no coat of arms.

King Lear replied, “A King! A King!”

The Fool replied, “No, a madman is a yeoman who has a gentleman as his son because he’s a mad yeoman who sees his son become a gentleman before he does.”

This was a cynical view. Loving fathers are happy to see their sons do better than they themselves did and advance in society and in life, but in the Fool’s joke this father was not happy to see his son do better than he did.

Of course, in loving families, family members are happy to see other family members do well, but Goneril and Regan were happy to see their aged father combat the storm although they could easily shelter him.

King Lear thought about the punishment his two daughters deserved, and he said out loud, “To have a thousand with red burning spits come hissing in upon them —”

The thousand could be devils if the two daughters were punished in Hell.

The disguised Edgar said, “The foul fiend bites my back.”

The Fool said, “He’s a madman who trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse’s health, a boy’s love, or a whore’s oath.”

This was more cynicism from the Fool. Yes, a “tame” wolf may bite, a horse’s health may decline or be lied about, and a whore may lie. But is a father a madman if he believes that his son loves him? Are all sons like Edmund?

King Lear, still lost in a fantasy world, came up with the idea of putting Goneril and Regan on trial.

He said, “It shall be done; I will immediately bring them to trial.”

He said to the disguised Edgar, “Come, you sit here, most learned justice.”

He said to the Fool, “You, wise sir, sit here.”

He then said to the air, “Now, you she-foxes!”

The disguised Edgar said about King Lear, “Look, where he stands and glares!”

He then said to the air, “Do you want eyes looking at you at your trial, madam?”

He sang, “*Come over the bourn, Bessie, to me —*”

The word “bourn” meant “stream.”

The Fool sang these words:

“Her boat has a leak,

“And she must not speak

“Why she dares not come over to you.”

The Fool’s words had a double meaning. The woman’s period had started, and she did not want to tell her lover why she would not cross the stream to be with him.

The Fool’s jokes, if you can call them jokes, were now usually about breakdowns or difficulties in personal relationships. This time, the difficulty was not nearly as serious as two daughters wishing their father to be killed. However, the Fool’s song did involve sex between unmarried partners. A husband tends to know when his wife is on her period.

When things go wrong at the top — when a King is badly treated — things go wrong at other levels of society.

The disguised Edgar said, “The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale.”

The disguised Edgar was pretending that the foul fiend was the Fool, who had a good singing voice.

He continued, “Hopdance cries in Tom’s belly for two white unsmoked herring. Croak and rumble not, black angel. I have no food for you.”

His belly was growling from hunger.

The disguised Kent was more concerned about King Lear than about the disguised Edgar’s hunger, and he said to King Lear, “How are you, sir? Don’t stand there looking so dumbfounded. Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?”

King Lear said, “I’ll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence.”

He said to the disguised Edgar, “You robed man of justice, take your place.”

To King Lear, the disguised Edgar’s blanket was now a judicial robe.

King Lear then said to the Fool, “And you, his partner in justice, sit on the bench by his side.”

He said to the disguised Kent, “You are on the judicial commission, so you sit down, too.”

The disguised Edgar said, “Let us be just.”

He sang this song:

“Are you asleep or awake, jolly shepherd?

“Your sheep are in the corn;

“And if you give just one blast of your delicate mouth,

“Your sheep shall take no harm.”

Enterotoxemia is a severe and sometimes fatal disease of sheep that is caused by a sudden increase of grain in the sheep's diet. Grain is good for sheep when eaten in the right amount, but too much grain can kill sheep.

In Edgar's song, the shepherd needs to take care of his sheep and not allow them to eat too much grain. If the shepherd blows on his horn, help will arrive to get the sheep out of the field of grain. This is good for the sheep and good for the owner of the grain. Moderation is important.

King Lear had given his older daughters too much power and wealth too quickly. It had changed and harmed them. He had been a bad shepherd.

The disguised Edgar then said, "Purr! The cat is gray."

He may have been referring to a demon in the form of a grey cat that he pretended to see.

King Lear said, "Arraign her first; bring Goneril here before the court to answer a criminal charge."

He then said, "I here take my oath before this honorable assembly and say that she kicked the poor King her father."

The Fool said, "Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?"

King Lear said, "She cannot deny it."

The Fool said, "I beg your pardon. I mistook you for a stool."

Of course, Goneril was not present — just the stool that she would have been sitting on.

King Lear then said about Regan, "And here's another, whose warped and distorted looks proclaim what kind of material her heart is made of. Stop her there! She is trying to escape! Arms! Arms! Sword! Fire! Corruption is in the place! She bribed someone to allow her to escape!"

He said to the disguised Edgar, “False justice, why have you let her escape?”

Shocked, the disguised Edgar replied, “Bless your five wits!”

The disguised Kent said, “I feel pity.”

He said to King Lear, “Sir, where are your patience and self-control now, which you so often have boasted to possess?”

The disguised Edgar thought, *My tears begin to trickle because I pity King Lear so much — they will ruin my disguise.*

King Lear said about imaginary dogs, “The little dogs and all — their names are Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart — see, they bark at me.”

He imagined that even small pet dogs had turned against him.

The disguised Edgar said, “Tom will throw his head back like a howling dog and yell at them:

“Avaunt, you curs! Get out!

“Whether your mouth be black or white,

“Tooth that poisons if it bite;

“Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,

“Hound or spaniel, brach-bitch or him,

“Whether bobtail short or very long tail,

“Tom will make them weep and wail:

“For, with throwing back thus my head and howling,

“Dogs leap over the bottom piece of a two-piece door, and all are fled.”

He yelled and then said, “*Sessa!* Quiet! Come, march to wakes and fairs and market towns. These are good places for begging. Poor Tom, your begging horn is empty.”

The disguised Edgar was hungry, but everyone was concerned about King Lear, not Tom o’Bedlam. King Lear was insane and unable to recognize that the disguised Edgar was hungry.

King Lear said, “Then let them dissect Regan to see what grows about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?”

He said to the disguised Edgar, “You, sir, I employ as one of my hundred Knights; however, I do not like the fashion of your garments. You will say that they are luxurious Persian attire, but let them be changed for something more to my liking.”

The disguised Kent said to King Lear, “Now, my good lord, lie here and rest awhile.”

King Lear, thinking that he was in a four-post bed with curtains, said, “Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains. So, so, so. We’ll eat our evening meal in the morning. So, so, so.”

He needed rest more than he needed food.

The Fool said, “And I’ll go to bed at noon.”

The old Earl of Gloucester entered the room and said to the disguised Kent, “Come here, friend. Where is my master the King?”

“Here, sir, but do not bother him; his wits are gone and he is insane.”

“Good friend, I beg you, take the King in your arms. I have overheard a plot of death against him. A vehicle and a

stretcher are ready; lay him in the vehicle, and drive him to Dover, friend, where you will find both welcome and protection. Pick up your master, put him in the stretcher, and carry him to the vehicle. If you should delay even half an hour, his life, and your life, and the lives of all who offer to defend him, will certainly be lost. Pick him up! Pick him up and follow me. I will quickly take you to the vehicle, which has provisions for your journey.”

The disguised Kent said, “The King’s oppressed brain sleeps.”

He then spoke as if he were speaking to the sleeping King, “This much-needed rest might yet have healed your broken senses, which, if circumstances will not allow you to continue to rest, it will be difficult to cure.”

The disguised Kent said to the Fool, “Come, help to carry your master. You must not stay behind.”

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “Hurry! Hurry!”

Everyone left the disguised Edgar, who would not go with King Lear to Dover.

Alone, the disguised Edgar said, “When we see our betters bearing the same kind of woes we have, we scarcely think our miseries are our foes. A person who suffers by himself suffers most in the mind, leaving carefree things and happy scenes behind. But when grief has fellow sufferers, it skips over much suffering. How light and bearable my pain seems now, when that which makes me bend makes the King bow — he suffers much more than I do. He suffers unjustly because of his children; I suffer unjustly because of my father. Tom o’Bedlam — that is, me — let’s go away! Listen to the rumors of differences between those in power. Tom o’Bedlam can reveal himself to be Edgar when misconceptions, which now greatly defile you, are proven to be wrong. At that time, your status as an outlaw will be

repealed and you will be reconciled to your father. Whatever else will happen tonight, may King Lear escape safely! In the meanwhile, I must stay hidden.”

— 3.7 —

The Duke of Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, and Edmund, along with some servants, were in a room in the Earl of Gloucester’s castle.

The Duke of Cornwall said to Goneril, “Ride quickly to the Duke of Albany, your husband. Show him this letter that was sent to the old Earl of Gloucester; it states that the army of France has landed here in Britain.”

He then ordered, “Find the old Earl of Gloucester, who is a villain.”

Some of the servants exited.

Regan said about the old Earl of Gloucester, “Hang him immediately.”

Goneril said, “Pluck out his eyes.”

The Duke of Cornwall said, “Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, you keep our sister-in-law company during your journey; go with Goneril because the revenges we are determined to take against your traitorous father are not fit for you to see.”

He then said to Goneril, “Advise the Duke of Albany, when you see him, to quickly prepare for war. We will do the same. Our posts back and forth between us shall be swift and full of information. Farewell, dear sister-in-law; farewell, my new Earl of Gloucester.”

Oswald entered the room.

The Duke of Cornwall asked, “Where is King Lear?”

Oswald replied, "My old Earl of Gloucester has conveyed him away from here. Some thirty-five or -six of the King's Knights, who were urgently seeking for him, met him at the gate. These Knights, along with some other lords who serve King Lear, have gone with him toward Dover, where they claim to have well-armed friends."

The Duke of Cornwall ordered, "Get horses for your mistress."

Goneril said to the Duke of Cornwall and Regan, "Farewell, sweet lord, and sister."

The Duke of Cornwall said, "Edmund, farewell."

Goneril, Edmund, and Oswald exited.

The Duke of Cornwall ordered, "Go seek the traitor: the old Earl of Gloucester. Tie him up like a thief, and bring him before us."

Some servants exited.

The Duke of Cornwall said, "Although we may not execute him without a trial, yet our power shall do a favor for our wrath. Men may criticize what we do, but they cannot stop me from doing it."

He heard a noise and said, "Who's there? The traitor?"

The old Earl of Gloucester entered the room, under guard.

Regan said, "Ungrateful fox! It is he."

The servants had not obeyed all of the Duke of Cornwall's orders; they had not tied up the old Earl of Gloucester.

The Duke of Cornwall ordered, "Bind fast his old and withered arms."

The servants did not act immediately.

“What do your graces intend to do to me?” the old Earl of Gloucester asked. “My good friends, remember that you are my guests; do no foul play to me, friends.”

The castle belonged to the Earl of Gloucester. He was the host, and the Duke of Cornwall and Regan were his guests. Ever since ancient times, to harm a host has been acknowledged to be an evil deed. An important theme of Homer’s *Odyssey* is the relationship between hosts and guests, and the Trojan War was fought over a violation of that relationship: Paris, a Prince of Troy who was the guest of King Menelaus of Sparta, ran away with Helen, Menelaus’ wife. Helen became known as Helen of Troy. In Dante’s *Inferno*, guests who harmed hosts, and hosts who harmed guests, are punished in the lowest circle of hell; this shows how serious a sin these violations of trust are.

The Duke of Cornwall said, “Bind him, I say.”

Some servants bound the old Earl of Gloucester.

Regan said, “Bind him tightly — tightly. Oh, filthy traitor!”

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “Unmerciful lady as you are, I am not a traitor.”

The Duke of Cornwall ordered, “Bind him to this chair. Villain, you shall find —”

Regan plucked some hairs from the old Earl of Gloucester’s beard. This was a serious insult.

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “By the kind gods, to pluck some hairs out of my beard is a very ignoble act.”

Regan said, “Your beard is so white! You ought to be wise! How can you be such a traitor!”

“Evil lady, these hairs that you pull from my chin will come to life and accuse you of sin: I am your host, and you ought

not to do violence to your host's face with your robbers' hands. What will you do with me?"

The Duke of Cornwall asked, "Sir, what letters have you recently received from France?"

"Give a straight answer," Regan said, "because we know the truth."

The Duke of Cornwall asked, "And what conspiracy have you formed with the traitors who have recently landed in the Kingdom?"

Regan asked, "To whom have you sent the lunatic King? Speak."

The old Earl of Gloucester said, "I have a letter that contains guesses, not certain information. The letter came from a person who is neutral; that person is not opposed to you."

The Duke of Cornwall said, "Cunning."

Regan added, "And false."

The Duke of Cornwall asked, "Where have you sent the King?"

"To Dover."

Regan asked, "Why to Dover? Were you not charged at peril of your life —"

The Duke of Cornwall interrupted, "Let him first tell us why he sent him to Dover."

The old Earl of Gloucester said, "I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course. I am like a bear that has been tied to a stake and is being attacked by dogs."

Regan asked, "Why did you send King Lear to Dover?"

"Because I did not want to see your cruel fingernails pluck

out his poor old eyes, nor your fierce sister stick boarish fangs in his anointed flesh.

“The sea, if it had endured such a storm as his bare head in Hell-black night, would have buoyed upward and quenched the bright lights of the stars and made the night even blacker. Yet, poor old heart, he helped the Heavens to rage and to rain by dripping his tears to the ground.

“If wolves had howled at your gate during that stern time, you would have said, ‘Good porter, turn the key.’ You would have ordered the gates to be opened to let the wolves in so that they could find shelter.

“During that stern time, you would not allow your poor old father to enter the gate and find shelter. Go ahead and commit all other cruel deeds, but I shall see winged vengeance overtake such children as you and your sister. Of all the evil deeds you and your sister have committed, the one that I want to see punished is your treatment of your father. The Furies punish parricides and other such sinners.”

The Duke of Cornwall said, “See it you never shall.”

He ordered, “Servants, hold the chair steady.”

He said to the old Earl of Gloucester, “Upon these eyes of yours I’ll set my foot.”

The old Earl of Gloucester begged for help: “He who wants to live until he is old, give me some help! Oh, cruel man! Oh, you gods!”

The Duke of Cornwall pulled out one of the old Earl of Gloucester’s eyes, dropped it on the floor, and stepped on it.

“One side of his face will mock the other side,” Regan said. “Pull out the other eye, too.”

The Duke of Cornwall said to the old Earl of Gloucester, “If

you see vengeance —”

One of the Duke of Cornwall’s servants said, “Don’t move your hand, my lord. I have served you ever since I was a child, but I have never done you better service than now, when I tell you to stop.”

This act took much courage on the part of the servant, and it took a strong sense of right and wrong.

Angry, Regan said, “What are you doing, you dog!”

The servant said to Regan, “If you wore a beard upon your chin, I would insult you by shaking it.”

The Duke put his hand on the hilt of his sword, and the servant asked him, “What? Do you mean to fight?”

The Duke of Cornwall said, “You are my servant, and you are a villain.”

The Duke of Cornwall and the servant drew swords and began to fight. The servant was a gentleman who served the Duke, and he wore a sword.

The servant wounded the Duke of Cornwall and then said, “Come on, and take the chance of fighting me while you are angry.”

Regan said to another servant, “Give me your sword. I can’t believe that this peasant is standing up against his master like this!”

She took the sword and ran to the servant and stabbed him in the back, inflicting a mortal wound.

The servant fell and said, “Oh, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left to see that I have inflicted a wound on the Duke of Cornwall, who pulled out your eye.”

The servant died.

The wounded Duke of Cornwall said to the old Earl of Gloucester, “Lest your remaining eye see more, I will prevent it. Out, vile jelly!”

He pulled out the remaining eye, dropped it, stepped on it, and asked, “Where is your luster now?”

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “All is dark and comfortless. Where’s my son Edmund? Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of a son’s love, and get revenge for this horrible act.”

“Ha, treacherous villain!” Regan said. “You are calling on a person who hates you. It was Edmund who informed us about your treasons to us. Edmund is too good a person to pity you.”

“I have been a fool!” the old Earl of Gloucester said. “I have wronged my son Edgar. Kind gods, forgive me for that, and help him prosper!”

Regan ordered some servants, “Go and thrust him out of the gates, and let him smell his way to Dover since he can no longer see the way.”

A servant exited with the old Earl of Gloucester.

Regan asked the Duke of Cornwall, “How are you, my lord? How are you feeling, my husband?”

“I have been wounded. Come with me, lady. Turn out that eyeless villain; throw this slave — the dead servant — upon the dunghill. Regan, I am bleeding a lot. This is a bad time for me to be wounded. Give me your arm.”

The Duke of Cornwall, assisted by Regan, exited.

A couple of servants remained behind.

The first servant said, “I’ll never care what wickedness I do, if this man the Duke of Cornwall comes to good after he dies. I will know that no one is punished after death for the evils

that they committed while they were alive.”

The second servant said, “If Regan lives long, and in the end dies naturally of old age, all women will become monsters because they will know that they will not be punished for their sins.”

The first servant said, “Let’s go and follow the old Earl, and get the Tom o’Bedlam to lead him wherever the Earl wants to go. The Tom o’Bedlam’s roguish madness allows him to do whatever he wants.”

The second servant replied, “Go to the old Earl of Gloucester. I’ll fetch some flax bandages and egg whites to apply to his bleeding face. Now, I pray that Heaven will help him!”

CHAPTER 4**— 4.1 —**

The disguised Edgar was alone on the heath.

He said to himself, “It is better to be like this and know that I am despised than to be still despised and yet have people flatter me. To be the worst, the lowest, and the most rejected by Fortune means to always live in hope and not in fear. Since the worst has already happened, any change will be for the better. It is the people who are at the top of the Wheel of Fortune who will suffer a lamentable change. Welcome, then, you insubstantial air that I embrace! Let you winds blow against me! The wretch that you have blown unto the worst owes nothing to your blasts. Everything has been taken from me, and so I owe you winds of ill fortune nothing.”

He saw someone coming toward him and asked himself, “But who comes here?”

An old man was leading Edgar’s father, the blinded old Earl of Gloucester.

Edgar said to himself, “My father, with bloody eyes and led by a poor man? World! World! Oh, world! Except that your strange changes make us hate you, life would not accept old age. Because of the hateful changes we suffer in life, we accept old age and death.”

The old man said to the old Earl of Gloucester, “Oh, my good lord, I have been your tenant, and your father’s tenant, these fourscore — eighty — years.”

The old Earl of Gloucester replied, “Away, get away from me, good friend. Be gone. Your comforts can do me no good at all; you may be severely punished for trying to help me.”

“Alas, sir,” the old man said, “you cannot see to make your way anywhere.”

“I have nowhere to go, and therefore I need no eyes,” the old Earl of Gloucester replied. “I stumbled when I saw. When I could see, I did not see that my legitimate son Edgar was loyal to me, and I did not see that my illegitimate son, Edmund, was disloyal to me. Very often it is seen that our possessions make us overconfident, and all of our disadvantages prove to be advantages.

“Oh, my dear son Edgar, you were the object of your deceived father’s wrath! If I could only touch you again and know that you are my son, I would say I had eyes again!”

The old man saw the disguised Edgar and asked, “Hey! Who’s there?”

The disguised Edgar thought, *Oh, gods! Who is it can truly say, “I am at the worst”? I just said it, but seeing my father like this makes me worse than ever I was.*

The old man looked closely and then said, “It is poor mad Tom.”

The disguised Edgar thought, *And worse I may yet be: The worst has not happened as long as we can say, “This is the worst.” As long as we are alive, something worse can happen to us.*

The old man asked the disguised Edgar, “Fellow, where are you going?”

The old Earl of Gloucester asked, “Is he a beggar?”

“He is a madman and a beggar, too.”

“He has some reason left; otherwise, he could not beg. In last night’s storm, I saw such a fellow who made me think that a man is a worm, the lowest of creatures. I remembered my son although I thought badly of him at that time. I have heard more about my son since then. As flies are to cruel boys, so are we to the gods. They torment and kill us for their

entertainment.”

The disguised Edgar thought, *How can this be? How did my father come to be blinded and in such circumstances that he thinks that the gods are out to torture us? But I must play Tom o'Bedlam in front of my father. Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow, angering itself and others. The person playing a fool resents it, as well as the sorrowful man and the bystanders.*

He said out loud, “Bless you, master!”

The old Earl of Gloucester asked the old man, “Is that the naked fellow?”

The disguised Edgar was still wearing only a blanket.

“Yes, my lord.”

“Then please leave. If, for my sake, you will catch up with us, a mile or two from here, on the road toward Dover, do it out of the love and respect that you have had for me, and bring some covering for this naked soul, whom I'll entreat to lead me.”

“Alas, sir, he is insane.”

“It is the plague of the times, when madmen lead the blind,” the old Earl of Gloucester replied. “Our leaders are insane, and they lead their blind and ignorant subjects. Do as I order you, or rather, do what you please since I cannot order anyone anymore to do anything. Most important of all, leave. You ought not to be seen with me.”

The old man said, “I'll bring him the best apparel that I have, no matter what happens as a result.”

The old man exited.

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “Sirrah, naked fellow —”

The disguised Edgar replied, "Poor Tom's a-cold."

He thought, *I can't do this any longer* —

"Come here, fellow."

— *and yet I must.*

The disguised Edgar said, "Bless your sweet eyes, they bleed."

"Do you know the way to Dover?"

"Both stile and gate, bridle-path and foot-path. Poor Tom has been scared out of his good wits. May the gods bless you, good man's son, and protect you from the foul fiend! Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once: Obidicut, fiend of lust; Hobbididence, fiend of dumbness; Mahu, fiend of stealing; Modo, fiend of murder; and Flibbertigibbet, fiend of grimacing and making faces, who has since possessed chambermaids and waiting-women. So, bless you, master!"

The old Earl of Gloucester said, "Here, take this wallet, you whom the Heavens' plagues have humbled so that you endure all strokes. My wretchedness makes the Heavens happy. Heavens, continue to afflict the well-off! Let the man with excess wealth who eats excess food, who treats what gods' decrees have given him as his just due, who will not see the needs of the poor because he does not feel the needs of the poor, use your power quickly — make him suffer the needs of the poor. If you do that, those who have too much shall give to those who lack enough, and each man shall have enough.

"Do you know Dover?"

The disguised Edgar replied, "Yes, master."

"At Dover is a cliff, whose high and bending head looks fearfully at the sea it overhangs and holds back. Bring me to

the very brim of it, and I'll repair the misery you endure by giving you something costly that I have with me. You shall not need to lead me away from that place."

"Give me your arm. Poor Tom shall lead you."

— 4.2 —

Having finished their journey, Goneril and Edmund stood in front of the Duke of Albany's castle.

Using the royal plural, Goneril said to Edmund, "Welcome, my lord. I marvel that our mild husband did not meet us on the way."

Oswald walked up to them.

Goneril asked him, "Now, where's your master?"

Oswald replied, "Madam, he is within the castle, but I have never seen a man so changed. I told him about the French army that has landed, and he smiled. I told him that you were coming, and his answer was 'So much the worse.' I told him about the old Earl of Gloucester's treachery and about the loyal service of his son Edmund. After I informed him, he called me a fool, and he told me that I had turned the wrong side out. What he should most dislike seems pleasant to him; what he should most like seems offensive to him."

The Duke of Albany was able to see the true character of people. He knew that the old Earl of Gloucester was a good man and that the Earl's illegitimate son, Edmund, was a bad man. He also had learned and was angry about the treatment and insanity of King Lear.

Goneril said to Edmund, "Then you shall go no further. You shall not enter the castle. My husband's spirit is like a cow's; he is cowardly. He will not undertake any great endeavor. He will ignore insults that require him to retaliate. The things we talked about and hoped for on our journey may come

true.”

Goneril had fallen in love with Edmund.

She continued, “Go back, Edmund, to my brother-in-law; make him call up his troops quickly and then escort his armies to the place of battle. I must change arms at home, and give the woman’s distaff into my husband’s hands. I will be the man and wear the sword, and he shall be the woman and do the spinning and weaving. This trustworthy servant shall pass messages between us. Before long you are likely to hear, if you dare to risk action in your own behalf, a mistress’ command.”

She was hinting that she would ask him to kill her husband so she could be his wife.

She took off a necklace and gave it to him, saying, “Wear this; don’t speak. Bow your head.”

She kissed him and said, “This kiss, if it dared to speak, would raise your spirits up into the air. Conceive — understand what I mean — and fare you well.”

Her words had a sexual undertone. She meant that something other than spirits would also rise into the air. This could result in the conception of a child.

Edmund, the new Earl of Gloucester, replied, “Yours in the ranks of death. I am yours until I die.”

His words also had a sexual undertone. In this society, the phrase “to die” was a euphemism for “to have an orgasm.”

Goneril pretended to be shocked: “My very dear Gloucester!”

Edmund exited.

Goneril said to herself, “Oh, the difference between one man and another man! Edmund, a woman’s services are your due.

My fool of a husband usurps my body.”

Although Goneril had said that her husband would not react to insults, she had not wanted her husband to see Edmund wearing her necklace; therefore, she had sent Edmund away as soon as they arrived at her husband’s castle.

Oswald said, “Madam, here comes my lord.”

He exited.

The Duke of Albany, Goneril’s husband, walked over to her.

Goneril said, “I have been worth the whistle.”

She was alluding to the proverb “It is a poor dog that is not worth whistling for.” She was saying that at one time her husband would have ridden his horse to meet her as she journeyed back to their castle.

The Duke of Albany had once loved Goneril, but he did not like the way that she had treated her father. He had not been present during King Lear’s treatment at the Earl of Gloucester’s castle, but he had since been informed about it.

“Oh, Goneril! You are not worth the dust that the rough and rude wind blows in your face. I fear your character. That nature, which condemns its own origins and father, cannot be trusted to stay within the bounds of morality and of good behavior. By cutting yourself away from your father, you are like a branch that has cut itself away from its tree. You, like the branch, have cut yourself off from the nourishing source and must necessarily wither and come to a bad end.”

“Say no more; the text of your sermon is foolish.”

“Wisdom and goodness seem vile to vile people. To filthy people, everything seems filthy. What have you done? You and your sister are tigers, not daughters. What have you done? You have made insane a father, a gracious man whose

age and reverence even a captive bear enraged by being worried by dogs would lick. You are very barbarous and degenerate! Could my good brother-in-law permit you to do it? The Duke of Cornwall was a man, a Prince, whom King Lear has much benefited! If the Heavens do not quickly send down their spirits in visible form to tame these vile offenses, it will necessarily happen that Humanity prey on itself and become cannibals like monsters of the deep sea.”

“You are a milk-livered man!” Goneril replied. “You are a coward! You turn your cheek so it can be hit with blows, and your head is filled with wrong ideas.”

In Matthew 5:39 Jesus said, “*But I say unto you, Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*” (1599 Geneva Bible). This was one “wrong idea” that Goneril had accused her husband of having.

Goneril continued, “You do not have in your brows an eye that can tell the difference between the wrong to your honor against which you must retaliate and the lesser wrong that you can endure. You do not know that only fools pity criminals who are punished before they have done their crimes. Where’s your military drum? Why aren’t you out raising troops? The King of France spreads his military banners in our quiet and peaceful land where no British military drums can be heard. With a plumed helmet your slayer begins to threaten you, and all you, a moralizing fool, do is to sit still, and cry, ‘Oh, no, why is he acting like this?’”

“Look at yourself, Devil! Your evil shows in your appearance. Such deformity is proper for the fiend, but it is horrible in a woman.”

“Oh, you vain fool!” Goneril replied.

“You have changed and that change shows in your appearance. You should be ashamed,” the Duke of Albany

said.

“Be-monster not your appearance,” he continued. “Do not look like a monster. If it were appropriate to me to allow these hands to obey my anger, they would be ready to dislocate and tear your flesh and bones.

“Although you are a fiend, your woman’s shape shields you from my anger. Continue to appear in the shape of a woman, or I will hurt you, you fiend.”

“By God, you mention your manliness!” Goneril replied. “You compared to a real man are like a kitten compared to a tiger!”

A messenger arrived.

The Duke of Albany asked, “What is the news?”

“Oh, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall’s dead,” the messenger replied. “He was slain by his servant as he was about to put out the other eye of the Earl of Gloucester.”

“Gloucester’s eye!”

“A servant that the Duke of Cornwall bred, stirred to action by pity, opposed the act, turning his sword against his great master, who, enraged by this, flew at him, and among the other people present struck him dead, but first he received that harmful stroke that a little later killed him — he followed the servant in death.”

The Duke of Albany said, “This shows you are above, you Heavenly judges, who so speedily can avenge the crimes people commit on Earth! But, poor Gloucester! Did he lose his other eye?”

The messenger replied, “He lost both eyes — both, my lord.”

The messenger then handed Goneril a letter and said, “This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer; it is from your

sister.”

Goneril thought, *In one way I like this news well. However, now that my sister Regan is a widow, and my Edmund, the new Earl of Gloucester, is with her, all the things that I have been daydreaming about — all the castles that I have built on the clouds — may crash to the ground and leave me only the hateful life I now lead. But in another way, the news is not so sour — Edmund may yet be mine and we will not have to worry about the Duke of Cornwall as a rival to our controlling all of my father’s kingdom.*

She said out loud, “I’ll read the letter, and answer it.”

She exited.

The Duke of Albany asked the messenger, “When they blinded his eyes, where was his son Edmund?”

“He was coming here with my lady, your wife.”

“He is not here.”

“No, my good lord; I met him on his way back to Regan’s castle again.”

“Does Edmund know about this wicked act?”

“Yes, my good lord; it was he who informed against his father,” the messenger said. “He left his father’s castle on purpose, so that they could freely inflict their punishment on his father.”

Referring to the old Earl of Gloucester, the Duke of Albany said, “Gloucester, I live so that I can thank you for the love you showed to the King, and to revenge the loss of your eyes. Come with me, friend. Tell me what else you know.”

— 4.3 —

At the French camp near Dover, the disguised Kent talked to

a gentleman, the same one whom he had asked to go to Dover and give a just and truthful report of how King Lear was being treated.

Kent asked, “Why has the King of France so suddenly gone back to France? Do you know the reason?”

“He left some state business unfinished, business that has become urgent since he came here; since neglecting it could put French citizens in danger and make them fearful, his personal return was required and necessary.”

“Who has he left behind him as General of his army?”

“The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.”

“Did the letter you wrote and gave to Cordelia, the Queen of France, move her to any demonstration of grief?”

“Yes, sir,” the gentleman replied. “She took the letter and read it in my presence, and now and then a large tear trickled down her delicate cheek. It seemed like she was a Queen over her emotions — emotions that, most rebel-like, sought to be King over her.”

“Oh, then the letter moved her,” the disguised Kent said.

“She was moved, but she maintained control of her emotions. She did not allow herself to be enraged; self-control and sorrow strove to see which could make her lovelier. You have seen sunshine and rain at the same time. Her smiles and tears were like that, but better. Those happy little smiles that played on her ripe lips seemed not to know what guests — tears — were in her eyes. Her tears parted from her eyes, as if pearls were dropping from diamonds. In brief, sorrow would be a rarity most beloved, if it made everyone as lovely as Cordelia.”

“Did she ask any questions or say anything?”

“Once or twice she cried with difficulty the name of ‘father,’ panting as if the word weighed heavily on her heart. She cried, ‘Sisters! Sisters! Shame of ladies! Sisters! Kent! Father! Sisters! What, in the storm? In the night? Let pity not be believed!’ There she shook the holy water from her Heavenly eyes, and she mourned without making a sound and then went away to deal with her grief alone.”

The disguised Kent said, “It is the stars, the stars above us, that govern our characters; otherwise, one man and one woman could not beget daughters as different as Cordelia and her sisters. Have you spoken with her since then?”

“No.”

“Was this before the King returned?”

“No, it was since the King returned.”

“Well, sir, the poor distressed King Lear is in the town. Sometimes, in his better and more lucid moments, when he is less jangled and more in tune, he remembers why we are here, and he by no means will agree to see his daughter.”

“Why, good sir?”

“An overbearing shame makes him remember what he would like to have never happened: his own unkindness to Cordelia that stripped from her his blessing, turned her out to find a life in a foreign land, and gave what was valuable and rightfully hers to his dog-hearted daughters. These things sting his mind so venomously that his burning shame keeps him from seeing Cordelia.”

“That poor man!” the gentleman said.

“Have you heard anything about the armies of the Duke of Albany and the Duke of Cornwall?”

“Yes, they are marching toward us.”

“Well, sir, I’ll bring you to our master Lear, and leave you to attend him. Some important reason causes me to stay in disguise for a while. When I reveal my identity, you shall not have reason to regret being my friend. Please, come with me.”

— 4.4 —

In a tent, Cordelia and a doctor were talking in the presence of some soldiers.

“Alas, my father has been seen, and he is in a bad way,” Cordelia said. “Why, he was met just now. He is as mad as the vexed sea. He was singing aloud, crowned with the weed known as fumitory or earth-smoke and with the rank weeds that grow among the crops in plowed land. He wore as a crown burdocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers, darnel, and all the useless weeds that grow in the plowed fields along with the crops that nourish us. Send a hundred soldiers out to find him. They can search every acre in the high-grown field, and bring him before our eyes.”

An officer departed to carry out the order.

She asked the doctor, “What can man’s wisdom do to restore his bereaved sense? He who cures him can have all my material possessions.”

“There is a way, madam,” the doctor said. “The foster-nurse of Nature is sleep, which King Lear is lacking. Many herbal medicines will close his eyes of anguish and make him sleep.”

“All blessed secrets, all you little-known virtuous powerful herbs of the Earth, spring up — be watered with my tears!” Cordelia cried as she prayed aloud. “Be a helpful remedy for the good man’s distress.”

She added, “Seek, seek for him, lest his uncontrolled rage

dissolve the life that lacks the means — reason — to lead it. He is likely to commit suicide because he lacks the reason needed to control himself.”

A messenger entered the tent.

“I have news, madam. The British armies are marching here.”

“That is something that we already knew,” she replied. “Our armed troops are prepared to fight them. Oh, dear father, it is your business that I go about.”

In Luke 2:49 Jesus said, “*Then said he unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Knew ye not that I must go about my Father’s business?*” (1599 Geneva Bible).

Cordelia continued, “My husband, the great King of France, has pitied my mourning and importunate tears and allowed me to help my father. We are not taking up arms because of any puffed-up ambition to gain territory for ourselves, but love, dear love, makes us fight for our aged father’s rights. I hope that soon I may hear and see him!”

— 4.5 —

Regan and Oswald, Goneril’s steward, were talking together in the castle of the Earl of Gloucester.

Regan asked, “Have the armies of my brother-in-law, the Duke of Albany, set forth?”

“Yes, madam.”

“Is the Duke of Albany, himself, leading them in person?”

“Yes, madam, but it took much persuading. Your sister is the better soldier.”

The Duke of Albany had thought hard about where his loyalties should lie: Should he fight for Cordelia and King

Lear, or should he resist the armies of France?

“Did Lord Edmund speak with your lord, the Duke of Albany, at home?”

“No, madam.”

“My sister has written a letter to Edmund. What does she write in that letter?”

Regan was jealous. She wanted Edmund.

“I don’t know, lady.”

“Truly, Edmund rode away in a hurry on important business,” Regan said. “It was political folly to allow the old Earl of Gloucester to remain alive after we put out his eyes. Wherever he goes, he moves all hearts against us. They pity him, and hate us. Edmund, I think, has gone, out of pity for his father’s misery, to kill him and end his benighted life. Also, he left in order to determine the strength of the enemy.”

“I must go after him, madam, with my lady’s letter,” Oswald said.

“Our troops set forth tomorrow. Stay and travel with us. The roads are dangerous.”

“I may not do so, madam. My lady was very insistent that I do my duty and deliver this letter.”

“Why should she write to Edmund? Why couldn’t you have simply communicated verbally her message to him? Perhaps, she wanted to say ... I don’t know what. I’ll greatly appreciate it if you will let me unseal the letter and read it.”

“Madam, I had rather —”

Regan said, “I know your lady, Goneril, does not love her husband. I am sure of that. When she was here recently, she looked at noble Edmund strangely and admiringly and very

meaningfully. I know that she confides in you — you are close to her bosom.”

“I, madam?”

“I know what I know,” Regan said. “You are; I know it. Therefore, I advise you, take careful note of what I now say to you. My lord and husband is dead; Edmund and I have talked and reached an understanding. It is more convenient and suitable for him to marry me than to marry your lady. From what I have said, you may guess the rest. If you find Edmund, please give him this ring. And when you tell your mistress all that has happened here, tell her to come to her senses — I and not she will have Edmund. So, fare you well. If you happen to hear of that blind traitor Gloucester, know that whoever kills him will be rewarded.”

Oswald said, “I wish that I could meet him, madam! I would show whose side I am on!”

“Fare you well.”

— 4.6 —

In a field near Dover, Edgar, who was now dressed like a peasant, was leading his blinded father, the old Earl of Gloucester, who wanted to be taken to a cliff near Dover so that he could commit suicide. Edgar, however, did not want his father to die, and he had not led him to the cliff.

The old Earl of Gloucester asked, “When shall we come to the top of the hill at Dover?”

“You are climbing up it now,” Edgar lied. “See how hard it is to climb this hill.”

“I think that the ground is even.”

“It is horribly steep. Listen, do you hear the sea?”

“No, truly I don’t.”

“Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect now that your eyes are blind.”

“That may be true, indeed,” the old Earl of Gloucester said. “I think that your voice has changed and that you speak more articulately and with better content than you did.”

“You’re much deceived,” the disguised Edgar lied. “I am changed in nothing except that I am wearing different clothing.”

“I think that you are better spoken now.”

“Come on, sir; here’s the place,” the disguised Edgar said. “Stand still. How dreadful and dizzy it is to cast one’s eyes so low! The crows and jackdaws that wing the midway air seem scarcely as large as beetles. Halfway down the cliff hangs a man gathering samphire, an herb used in pickling — his is a dreadful line of work! I think that from here he seems to be no bigger than his head. The fishermen, whom I see walking upon the beach, appear to be the size of mice; and yonder I see a tall ship at anchor that seems to be the size of its small rowboat; the small rowboat itself seems to be the size of a buoy — it is almost too small to be seen from here. The murmuring waves that chafe innumerable useless pebbles cannot be heard so high. I’ll look no more lest my brain grow giddy, and my deficient sight cause me to topple headlong from the cliff!”

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “Set me where you are standing.”

“Give me your hand,” the disguised Edgar said, moving his father into position. “You are now within a foot of the edge. I would not jump up and down for all that lies beneath the Moon because of fear of falling.”

“Let go of my hand. Here, friend, is another wallet; in it is a jewel well worth a poor man’s taking. May fairies and gods

help you to prosper with it! Go farther away, tell me farewell, and let me hear you going.”

“Now fare you well, good sir.”

“With all my heart.”

The disguised Edgar thought, *I seem to be trifling with my father's despair, but I am doing this to cure it. My father now thinks that the gods are like cruel boys who tear the wings off flies; he thinks that the gods torment and kill us for their entertainment.*

The old Earl of Gloucester knelt and prayed, “Oh, you mighty gods! This world I renounce, and, in your sights, I shake off my great affliction patiently. If I could bear my great affliction longer, and not fall and quarrel with your great wills that cannot be opposed, my last remaining and loathed part of life should burn itself out naturally. If Edgar is still alive, gods, bless him!”

He then said to the disguised Edgar, who was far enough away not to stop him from jumping, “Now, fellow, fare you well.”

He fell forward. He was not at the cliffs of Dover, so he did not die.

The disguised Edgar said out loud, “Gone, sir. Farewell.”

He thought, *And yet, although I do not know how, imagination may rob the treasure of life, when life itself consents to the theft. He may be dead simply because he wants to be dead, although he did not fall from a great height. Had he been where he thought he was, on the cliffs of Dover, he would have been past thought by this time — he would be dead. Is he alive or is he dead?*

Edgar changed his voice and said, “Ho, you sir! Friend! Can you hear me, sir! Speak!”

He thought, *My father might very well be dead indeed, yet he revives.*

He asked out loud, "Who are you, sir?"

His father said, "Go away, and let me die."

The disguised Edgar said, "Had you been anything but gossamer, feathers, air, falling precipitously so many fathoms down, you would have smashed into pieces like an egg, but you are breathing, have a heavy body, are not bleeding, speak, and are sound and healthy. Ten masts stacked vertically end to end would not reach the altitude from which you have perpendicularly fallen. Your being alive is a miracle. Speak once more."

"But have I fallen, or not?"

"You fell from the dread summit of this chalky cliff that forms a boundary of the sea. Look up at the height; the shrill-voiced lark cannot be seen or heard so far from here. Look up."

"I grieve because I have no eyes. Is wretchedness deprived of that benefit: to end itself by suicide? It was yet some comfort when a miserable man could cheat the tyrant's rage and frustrate his proud will by committing suicide rather than bending to his will."

"Give me your arm. Let me help you up. Good. How are you? Can you feel your legs? You are standing."

"Too well, too well," the old Earl of Gloucester said.

"This is the strangest thing that I have ever seen. Upon the crown of the cliff, what thing was that which parted from you?"

"A poor unfortunate beggar."

"As I stood here below, I thought his eyes were two full

Moons; he had a thousand noses, his horns were curved and waved like the furrowed sea. It was some fiend; therefore, you fortunate old man, think that the gods who are most clearly known by men to be gods, who get honor for themselves by performing miracles that are impossible for men to perform, have preserved you and saved your life with a miracle.”

In this society, people who committed suicide were thought to end up in Hell. Demons were thought to tempt discouraged men to commit suicide so that they would be eternally damned.

“I remember the correct way to think about the gods now; henceforth, I’ll bear affliction until it itself cries, ‘Enough, enough,’ and then I will die. That thing you speak of, I took it for a man; often it would say, ‘The fiend, the fiend.’ He led me to that place.”

“Think correctly. Do not engage in self-despair. Be patient and engage in self-control,” the disguised Edgar said. “But I see someone coming here. Who is it?”

King Lear, still insane, was dressed in odd, fantastic clothing, and he was wearing a crown of weeds.

The disguised Edgar thought, *No one in his right mind would dress like that and wear a crown like that.*

King Lear said, “No, they cannot arrest me for counterfeiting coins; I am the King himself and I have the right to coin money.”

“What a pitiful and heart-rending sight!” the disguised Edgar said.

“Nature’s above art in that respect,” King Lear said. “You can see more pitiful and heart-rending sights in real life than you do in art.”

Thinking about money made King Lear think about soldiers and paying them.

To an imaginary soldier, he said, “There’s your money for being impressed into the army.”

About another imaginary soldier, he said, “That fellow handles his bow like a scarecrow. Draw the arrow back as far as it will go.”

Military combat on a grand scale made him think of another combat on a small scale: “Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will tempt the mouse so that I can kill it.”

Combat with a mouse made him think of a grander combat: “There’s my gauntlet; I have thrown it on the ground as a challenge. I’ll defend my case and prove myself in the right even if I have to defeat a giant.”

He thought about other kinds of soldiers: those who carried pikes and those who were archers: “Bring up the brown bills — those who carry pikes painted brown to prevent rust. Oh, well flown, bird and arrow! In the bull’s-eye! In the bull’s-eye! Thud!”

Seeing Edgar, he said, “Give me the password.”

The disguised Edgar replied, “Sweet marjoram.”

This was an herb used to treat insanity.

“Correct!” King Lear said.

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “I recognize that voice.”

Seeing Gloucester’s white beard, King Lear thought that he was seeing one of his daughters in disguise: “Ha! Goneril, wearing a white beard! They flattered me as if they were fawning dogs, and they told me I had white hairs in my beard before the black ones were there — they said I was wise even

before I grew a beard. They said ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to everything that I said ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to — this was bad theology.”

These verses are II Corinthians 18-19 (King James Version):

“18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

“19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.”

King Lear remembered the storm that he had endured: “When the rain came to wet me on one occasion, and the wind came to make my teeth chatter; when the thunder would not stop at my order; there I discovered that these people were flatterers — I smelled them out. Believe me, they are not men of their words: they told me I was everything and all-powerful; it is a lie, for I am not fever-proof.”

“I well remember that distinctive voice,” the old Earl of Gloucester said. “Isn’t it the King?”

King Lear replied, “Yes, I am every inch a King. When I stare at a subject, see how the subject quakes.”

Looking at the old Earl of Gloucester, he said, “I pardon that man’s life. What was your crime? Adultery? You shall not die. Die for adultery! No. The wren goes to it and fornicates, and the small gilded fly fornicates in my sight. Let copulation thrive. Why? Because Gloucester’s bastard son, Edmund, was kinder to his father than my daughters have been to me even though I fathered my daughters between lawful sheets with my properly married wife. Go to it, lechery, go to it hot and heavy! I lack soldiers, and fornication will bring me many soldiers.”

King Lear then stated his current opinion of women:

“Behold yonder simpering dame, whose face between her hair-combs seems to be a sign of snowy chastity and who seems to be fastidiously virtuous. She shakes her head if she merely hears the name of pleasure, but neither the polecat-like whores, nor the frisky and lecherous horses go at it with a more riotous appetite. Down from the waist women are lustful Centaurs, although they are women all above the waist. What is above the waist belongs to the gods, but what is beneath belongs to the foul fiends. There’s Hell, there’s darkness, there’s the sulfurous pit, burning, scalding, stench, consumption. Wham! Bam!”

Hell was a word sometimes used in this culture to refer to the vagina.

King Lear then spoke to the old Earl of Gloucester as if the Earl were a pharmacist: “Give me an ounce of perfume, good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination. Here’s some money for you.”

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “Oh, let me kiss that hand!”

King Lear replied, “Let me wipe it first; it smells of death and human mortals.”

The old Earl of Gloucester said, referring to King Lear, “Oh, ruined piece of human nature! This great world shall likewise wear out to nothing. Do you know me?”

King Lear replied, “I remember your eyes well enough. Are you squinting at me? No, do your worst, blind Cupid! I’ll not love.”

In this society, brothels used a depiction of a blind Cupid as their sign.

King Lear said, holding an imaginary document, “Read this challenge; see the way that it is written.”

“Even if all the letters were Suns, I could not see even one.”

The disguised Edgar thought, *I would not believe this if someone told me this, but it is real, and my heart breaks because of it.*

King Lear said, “Read this document.”

The old Earl of Gloucester replied, “How? With my eye sockets?”

King Lear said, “Oh, ho, are you there with me? Are we similar? Are we both blind? No eyes in your head, and no money in your wallet? Your eyes are in a heavy and serious situation because your eye sockets are empty. Your wallet is in a light and serious situation because it is empty. Yet you can still see how this world goes.”

“I see the world feelingly. I see the world keenly through my sense of touch.”

King Lear replied, “What, are you insane? A man with no eyes may see how this world goes. Look with your ears. See yonder how a judge scolds a common thief. Pay attention with your ears. Let the judge and the common thief change places, and — make a guess — which is the justice and which is the thief? Have you seen a farmer’s dog bark at a beggar?”

The old Earl of Gloucester replied, “Yes, sir.”

“And have you seen the creature run away from the cur?” King Lear asked. “There you can behold the great image of authority: a dog is obeyed when it is in office.”

Imagining that he saw a parish constable punishing a prostitute by whipping her, King Lear said, “You rascal constable, hold your bloody hand! Why do you lash that whore? Strip your own back and stripe it with lashes. You hotly lust to use her in that kind of sin for which you are whipping her.”

He then said, “The usurer hangs the cozener. The big thief hangs the small thief. Through tattered clothes small vices can be seen; the robes and furred gowns of the great hide all their sins. Cover the sinner with gold-plated armor, and the strong lance of justice breaks against it without causing hurt to the sinner. But if the sinner’s armor consists of rags, a pigmy’s straw is able to pierce it.

“No one offends and commits sins — no one, I say, no one. I’ll vouch for them and give them immunity from prosecution. Take it from me, my friend — I have the power to close the accuser’s lips. Get yourself glass eyes, and then, like a scurvy schemer, pretend that you see the things you do not.”

He then said to the old Earl of Gloucester as if he were his valet: “Now, now, now. Pull off my boots. Pull harder, harder. Good.”

The disguised Edgar said, “Oh, the King’s speech is a mixture of sense and nonsense! Reason in the midst of madness!”

King Lear said to the old Earl of Gloucester, “If you will weep over my fortunes, take my eyes. I know you well enough; your name is Gloucester. You must be patient and have self-control; we came crying hither. You know that the first time that we smell and breathe the air — when we are born — we wail and cry. I will preach to you. Listen.”

“This is too sad,” the old Earl of Gloucester said.

King Lear stood on a stump and said, “When we are born, we cry because we have come to this great stage of fools. This stump is a good mounting-block to stand on to mount a horse. It is a neat stratagem to shoe military horses with felt to deaden the noise their hooves make. I’ll give it a try, and when I have stolen upon these sons-in-law of mine, then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill! No quarter!”

A gentleman arrived, accompanied by some attendants.

He said, "Oh, here he is. Lay your hands upon him."

He said to King Lear, "Sir, your most dear daughter —"

King Lear, who had just thought about attacking his sons-in-law, now thought that he had been captured. He said, "No rescue? What, am I a prisoner? I was born to be the plaything of Fortune. Treat me well; I am a King, and you shall receive much ransom for me. Let me have surgeons to treat my injury; I am cut to the brains."

King Lear's brains were vexed; the physical head wound he thought that he had received was imaginary.

The gentleman said, "You shall have anything you need."

"No supporters? I am all by myself?" King Lear said. "Why, this would make a man a man of salt tears — he could use his eyes for watering pots to tend the garden and to wet the streets so that the dust of autumn would not rise in the air."

The gentleman said to King Lear, "Good sir —"

"I will die bravely, like a bridegroom," King Lear said. "What! I will be jovial."

He was punning. One meaning of "die" was "to have an orgasm." "Bravely" could mean "courageously" or "finely dressed."

He added, "I am a King, my masters; you need to know that."

"You are a royal one, and we obey you," the gentleman said.

"Then there is still hope," King Lear said. "If you get your prize — take me captive — you shall get it with running."

He ran away. As he did so, he cried, "Sa! Sa! Sa! Sa!"

These were words used by hunters to encourage their dogs

to track their prey.

The attendants of the gentleman ran after him, but the gentleman stayed with the disguised Edgar and the old Earl of Gloucester.

The gentleman said, “This sight would be extremely pitiful if the meanest wretch were acting this way, but to see a King acting this way is past speaking of! You, King Lear, have one daughter who redeems human nature from the universal curse that two — Goneril and Regan, and maybe even Adam and Eve — have brought her to.”

“Hello, gentle sir,” the disguised Edgar said.

“Sir, may God make you prosper,” the gentleman replied.
“What do you want?”

“Have you heard anything, sir, of an upcoming battle?”

“The battle, as is commonly known, will surely take place. Everyone who can understand sound and words has heard that.”

“Please tell me how near the other army is.”

“It is near and marching quickly. We think that the main part of the army will arrive any hour now.”

“I thank you, sir. That’s all I have to ask you.”

“Although Cordelia, the Queen of France, is here for a special reason, her army has moved on.”

“I thank you, sir.”

The gentleman departed.

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “You ever-gentle gods, take my breath away from me. Let not my worse spirit, aka bad angel, tempt me again to die — by suicide! — before you

gods please!”

The old Earl of Gloucester still wanted to die, but he did not want to commit suicide.

“That is a good prayer, father,” the disguised Edgar said.

In this society, “father” could mean “biological father,” or it could simply mean “old man.” Edgar had not yet revealed his identity to his father, so he was using the word “father” to mean “old man.”

“Now, good sir, who are you?” the old Earl of Gloucester asked.

“I am a very poor man, made submissive by Fortune’s blows. Because I have both known and felt sorrows, I am capable of feeling pity. Give me your hand, and I’ll lead you to some resting place.”

“I give hearty thanks to you. May you receive the bounty and the blessing of Heaven in addition to my thanks.”

Oswald arrived. Seeing the old Earl of Gloucester, he said, “There is a bounty on his head that has been proclaimed throughout the land! This is very fortunate for me!”

He said to the old Earl of Gloucester, “That eyeless head of yours was first made flesh in order to raise my fortunes and make money for me. You old unhappy traitor, briefly remember your sins and pray for forgiveness. The sword that must destroy you is out of its scabbard.”

The old Earl of Gloucester replied, “Now let your friendly hand put strength enough in the thrust of your sword to accomplish your goal.”

Because he wanted to die, he called Oswald’s hand friendly.

The disguised Edgar stood in between his father and Oswald.

“Why, bold peasant,” Oswald asked, “do you dare to support a man who has been proclaimed to be a traitor? Get out of here lest the infection of his fortune take a similar hold on you. Let go of his arm.”

Edgar was disguised as a peasant, and so Oswald was not afraid of him because peasants were unlikely to know how to fight against a man who was trained in swordsmanship. In addition, peasants did not carry swords. The disguised Edgar was armed with a cudgel.

Oswald had called him a peasant, and so the disguised Edgar adopted a peasant’s rustic language.

“Ch’ill not let go, zir, without vurther ’casion.”

[“I will not go, sir, without further reason.”]

“Let go of his arm, slave, or you die!” Oswald shouted.

“Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass. An chud ha’ bin zwaggered out of my life, ’twould not ha’ bin zo long as it is by a vortnight. Nay, come not near th’ old man. Keep out, che vor ye, or ise try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder. Ch’ill be plain with you.”

[“Good gentleman, go on your way, and let poor folk pass. If I could have been bullied out of my life, I would not have lived as long as I have by a fortnight. No, do not come near the old man. Keep away, or, I promise you, I will find out whether your head or my cudgel is harder. I am telling you the plain truth.”]

Oswald shouted, “Go away, you dunghill!”

“Ch’ill pick your teeth, zir. Come; no matter vor your foins.”

[“I’ll use your sword to pick your teeth, sir. Come on and fight; I am not afraid of your fencing thrusts.”]

They fought, and the disguised Edgar gave Oswald a mortal

wound.

Oswald fell. Dying, he said, "Slave, you have slain me. Villain, take my wallet and money. If you want to thrive, bury my body and give the letter that you will find on me to Edmund, the Earl of Gloucester. Seek him. He is on the British side. Oh, untimely and early death!"

He died.

The disguised Edgar said, "I know you well. You are a villain who helps your mistress do evil deeds; you are as duteous to the vices of your mistress as badness would desire."

"What, is he dead?" the old Earl of Gloucester said.

"Sit down, old man, and rest. Let's see what's in this fellow's pockets. The letter that he spoke about may have useful information. He's dead; I am only sorry that he had no other executioner than myself. Let us see. I beg your pardon, gentle wax that seals this letter. Manners and etiquette, do not blame us. To know our enemies' minds, we would rip their hearts; to rip their letters open is more lawful."

He read the letter out loud: "*Remember the vows we made to each other. In the battle, you will have many opportunities to cut down his life; if your will is not lacking, the time and place for committing murder will be plentifully offered. If he returns as the conqueror of the battle, then I am his prisoner, and his bed is my jail; from the loathed warmth of his bed deliver me, and in return for your labor take his place in my bed. Your — I would like to say wife, but I have to say for now — affectionate servant, GONERIL.*"

The disguised Edgar said to himself, "Oh, how vast and without limits is the lust of a woman! This is a plot upon her virtuous husband's life; she wanted to exchange her virtuous husband for Edmund, my illegitimate half-brother!"

He said to Oswald's corpse, "Here, in the sands, I'll bury you, the unholy messenger of murderous lechers, and at the right time I will show this ungracious letter to the Duke of Albany, whose death his wife plotted. For him it is a good thing that I can tell him about your death and the errand you were running."

The old Earl of Gloucester said, "The King is insane. How obstinate is my vile sense that remains sane and will not allow me to escape from my sorrows by lapsing into madness. Instead, I stand up, and I have conscious feeling of my huge sorrows! It would be better if I were insane. That way, my thoughts would be severed and divorced from my griefs, and my woes would lose the knowledge of themselves because I would see delusions."

"Give me your hand," the disguised Edgar said.

Military drums sounded.

He said, "From far away, I think, I hear the beaten drum. Come, father, I'll leave you with a friend."

— 4.7 —

In a tent in the French camp were Cordelia, the disguised Kent, the gentleman, and a doctor. Some servants were also present. Music was playing softly.

Cordelia said, "Oh, Kent, you good man, how shall I live and work to match your goodness? My life will be too short, and everything I do to try to match your goodness will fail. How can I ever repay you?"

"For you to thank me, madam, is more than enough reward. Everything that I have reported is the modest truth — no more or less, but just the truth."

"Put on a better suit of clothing," Cordelia requested. "These clothes you are wearing are reminders of those very bad

hours you have told me about. Please, take them off and put on better clothing.”

“Pardon me, dear madam,” the disguised Kent said, “to be recognized by others now would harm the plan that I have formed. I ask for a boon from you: Pretend in public that you do not know me until I think that the time is right.”

Kent’s plan may have been to reveal his identity to King Lear at a time when the King would recognize him.

“Then so be it, my good lord,” Cordelia replied.

She said to the doctor, “How is the King doing?”

“Madam, he is still sleeping.”

Cordelia prayed, “Oh, you kind gods, cure this great illness in his abused human nature! His senses are untuned and jarring; tune them and make them harmonious. Make this man sane, this man who has been harmed by his children and who has turned back into a child in his dotage.”

The doctor said, “If it pleases your majesty, we will wake the King. He has slept for a long time.”

“Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed as you think best,” Cordelia said. “Is he dressed?”

The gentleman said, “Yes, he is, Madam. While he was deeply asleep, we put fresh, clean garments on him.”

The doctor said to Cordelia, “Be close by, good madam, when we awake him. I am sure that he will be sane.”

“Very well,” she replied.

Some attendants carried in King Lear.

The doctor said to the attendant, “Please, bring him close.”

The doctor then ordered, “Play the music louder!” He

wanted the music to wake up King Lear.

Cordelia said, “Oh, my dear father! May the god of restoration hang your medicine on my lips; and let this kiss repair those violent harms that my two sisters have made against your reverence!”

She kissed him.

The disguised Kent said, “Kind and dear Princess!”

Cordelia said to the sleeping King Lear, “Even if you had not been their father, these white strands of hair should have made Goneril and Regan pity you. Was this a face to be out in the storm and opposed against the warring winds? Was this a face to stand against the loud and dreadful thunderbolt? Was this a face to be amidst the most terrible and nimble strokes of quick, zigzag lightning? Was this a face to be in bad weather like a guard at a dangerous post — when the face had only a few strands of hair as a helmet? My enemy’s dog, even if it had bitten me, would have stood that night near my fireplace — were you forced, poor father, to shelter yourself with swine, and forlorn rogues, on broken and musty straw? Alas! Alas! It is a wonder that your life and wits did not end immediately.”

She said to the doctor, “He is awakening. Speak to him.”

The musicians now played softly.

“Madam, you should be the one to first speak to him; it is fittest.”

Cordelia said to her father, “How is my royal lord? How fares your majesty?”

King Lear said, “You do me wrong to take me out of my grave. You are a soul in bliss in Heaven, but I am bound upon a Wheel of Fire and my own tears scald me as if they were molten lead.”

“Sir, do you know me?” Cordelia asked.

“You are a spirit, I know. When did you die?”

Mourning, Cordelia said to the doctor, “His wits are still far wide of the mark.”

“He is barely awake,” the doctor said. “Let him alone for awhile.”

King Lear asked, “Where have I been? Where am I? Is this beautiful daylight and not Hell? I am mightily confused. I would die of pity if I were to see someone as confused as I am. I don’t know what to say. I will not swear these are my hands. Let’s see if they are.”

He took the pin of a brooch and stuck one of his fingers with it.

He said, “I feel this pinprick. I wish I could be assured that I am all right and not in Hell!”

Cordelia knelt and said, “Oh, look upon me, sir, and hold your hands in benediction over me. No, sir, you must not kneel.”

“Please, do not mock me,” King Lear said. “I am a very foolish and senile old man. My age is fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less, and, to speak plainly, I fear that I am not in my right mind. I think that I should know who you are, and I should know who this man is.”

He motioned toward the disguised Kent.

He continued, “Yet I am doubtful because I am entirely ignorant what place this is; and using all the skill and knowledge I have, I cannot remember these garments I am wearing, nor do I know where I lodged last night. Do not laugh at me. As I am a man, I think this lady is my child Cordelia.”

“And so I am, I am,” Cordelia said, crying because she was happy that her father recognized her.

King Lear said, “Are your tears wet? Yes, truly they are. Please, do not cry. If you have poison for me, I will drink it. I know that you do not love me because your sisters have, I remember, done me wrong. You have some reason to hate me; they have not.”

“I have no reason to hate you — no reason,” Cordelia said.

“Am I in France?” King Lear asked.

He remembered that Cordelia was the Queen of France.

The disguised Kent said, “You are in your own Kingdom, sir.”

“Do not make fun of me,” King Lear said.

He remembered that he had given his Kingdom away.

The doctor said to Cordelia, “Be comforted, good madam. The great rage of madness, you see, is killed in him, and yet it is dangerous to make him try to remember the time that he has lost due to madness. Ask him to go into his own tent; trouble him no more until after he has had more time for his mind to settle and be calm.”

“Will it please your Highness to walk to your tent?” Cordelia asked her father.

“You must be patient with me,” King Lear replied. “Please, forget and forgive. I am old and foolish.”

Everyone left the tent except the disguised Kent and the gentleman.

The gentleman asked, “Do people still believe, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was slain in the way that we have heard?”

“Most certainly, sir.”

“Who is the general of his army?”

“We have heard that it is Edmund, the bastard son of the Earl of Gloucester.”

“They say that Edgar, his banished son, is with the Earl of Kent in Germany.”

The gentleman had been in the tent when the disguised Kent had revealed his identity to Cordelia. He knew who Kent was; he was simply making a point about rumors. The gentleman found it difficult to believe that the Duke of Cornwall had died as reported and that Edmund was leading the Duke’s forces.

“Rumors change,” the disguised Kent said, acknowledging the gentleman’s point.

Then he said, “It is time to take action; the armies of the British Kingdom approach quickly.”

“The final outcome is likely to be bloody. Fare you well, sir,” the gentleman said as he exited.

The disguised Kent said, “My point and period will be thoroughly wrought, either well or ill, as this day’s battle is fought.”

He meant that the end of his life would be either good or bad, depending on how the battle ended.

CHAPTER 5**— 5.1 —**

In the British camp, near Dover, Edmund and Regan were talking. Also present were some gentlemen and some soldiers.

Edmund said to a gentleman, “Find out from the Duke of Albany if he is still planning to follow his most recent plan — to fight against King Lear’s forces — or whether he has been induced by anything to change his course of action. He is full of indecision and self-reproach. Bring me his final decision.”

The gentleman left to carry out the action.

Regan said, “Oswald, the courtier of Goneril, my sister, has certainly met with misfortune.”

Edmund replied, “I fear that is correct, madam.”

“Now, sweet lord, you know the good things that I am planning for you. Tell me — and speak the truth. Don’t you love my sister?”

“With an honorable love.”

“But have you ever found my brother-in-law’s way to the forbidden place? Have you ever slept with her?”

“That thought is not worthy of you.”

“I am afraid that you have been joined bosom to bosom with her, in the most intimate way.”

“No, by my honor, madam,” Edmund said.

“I can’t stand her,” Regan said. “My dear lord, do not be friendly with her.”

“Trust me.” He heard a sound, looked up, and said, “Here

she comes with the Duke of Albany, her husband.”

The Duke of Albany, Goneril, and some soldiers walked over to them.

Goneril thought, *I had rather lose the battle than endure my sister coming in between Edmund and me.*

The Duke of Albany said, “Regan, our very loving sister-in-law, we are well met. Edmund, sir, I hear that King Lear has come to Cordelia, his daughter, with others whom the tyranny of our government has forced to cry out and rebel. I have never fought for a cause in which I did not believe. As for this business, it concerns me because it is an invasion of my country. I will fight for that reason, but not because the invasion emboldens the King and others who, I fear, oppose us for very just and serious reasons.”

“Sir, you speak nobly,” Edmund replied.

Regan asked, “Why are you telling us these reasons?”

Goneril said, “Let us join together against the enemy; these personal and private squabbles are not the issue here.”

The Duke of Albany said, “Let’s decide with the Chief of Staff how to proceed.”

“I shall attend you immediately at your tent,” Edmund said.

The Duke of Albany, Edmund, and the Chief of Staff would meet in a council of war.

Regan started to leave, but she noticed Goneril staying behind and suspected that she was planning to attend the council of war and be with Edmund.

Regan asked Goneril, “Sister, will you come with us?”

“No.”

“It is very convenient; please, come with us.”

Goneril thought, *I see what you want — you want to keep me away from Edmund.*

She said, “I will go with you.”

Edgar, still disguised as a peasant, arrived as everyone was leaving. He said to the Duke of Albany, “If your grace has ever had speech with a man as poor as I am, listen briefly to what I have to say.”

The Duke of Albany said to the others, “Go ahead of me. I will be with you soon.”

He said to the disguised Edgar, “Speak.”

Edgar gave him a letter — the letter that he had taken from the pocket of the dead Oswald. This was the letter in which Goneril, the Duke of Albany’s wife, urged Edmund to kill her husband so that they could be married.

The disguised Edgar said, “Before you fight the battle, open this letter and read it. If you win the battle, let the trumpet sound for the man — me — who brought it. Wretched though I seem to be, I can produce a champion who will prove in a trial by combat what is avouched there. If you lose the battle, your business in the world will come to an end, and plots won’t matter to you. May the goddess Fortune love you.”

“Stay here until I have read the letter,” the Duke of Albany requested.

“I was forbidden to stay. When time shall serve, let the herald cry and the trumpet blow, and I’ll appear again.”

“Why, fare you well. I will look over the letter you have brought to me.”

The disguised Edgar left, and Edmund appeared.

Edmund said to the Duke of Albany, “The enemy’s in view; draw up your armies.”

He gave the Duke of Albany a paper and said, “Here is the estimate of the enemy’s true strength and forces by our diligent scouts. Now, haste is needed.”

“We will greet the time,” the Duke of Albany said. “We are prepared.”

He exited.

Now alone, Edmund said to himself, “To both these sisters — Goneril and Regan — I have sworn my love. Each is suspicious of the other, as those who have been bitten are suspicious of the adder. Which of them shall I take? Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoyed, if both remain alive. If I were to take the widow, Regan, her sister Goneril would be exasperated and mad, and I cannot achieve my ambition if Goneril’s husband, the Duke of Albany, remains alive.

“Right now we’ll use him to fight for our side in the battle. After the battle, let her who would be rid of him — Goneril, who wants to marry me, or Regan, who wants to be Queen of all Britain — devise his speedy death. As for the mercy that he intends to show to Lear and to Cordelia, once the battle is done, and they are within our power, they shall never see his pardon. My situation requires that I take action, not engage in debate about how to treat the royal prisoners.”

For Edmund to become King of Britain, several people would have to die: King Lear, Cordelia, the Duke of Albany, and either Goneril or Regan. He would marry the surviving sister.

— 5.2 —

Edgar led his father, the blinded old Earl of Gloucester, to a

tree and said, “Here, father, take the shadow of this tree as your good host; pray that the right side may thrive. If I ever return to you again, I’ll bring you comfort.”

He still had not told his father his real identity; he planned to do that after the battle, if he survived.

“May grace go with you, sir!”

Edgar left.

The battle was fought, and trumpets called for retreat.

Edgar came back to his father and said, “We need to get away, old man; give me your hand. We need to get away! King Lear has lost the battle; he and his daughter have been captured. Give me your hand; come on.”

“No farther, sir; a man may rot even here.”

“What, are you in ill thoughts again? Men must endure their going hence, even as they endured their coming hither. We are born, and we must die. Ripeness is all; it is everything. An apple grows ripe and falls from the tree and dies. The gods decide when a death is ripe; we do not. We must endure, and we must not commit suicide. We must take death when the gods give it to us.”

The old Earl of Gloucester said, “That’s true.”

— 5.3 —

In the British camp, Edmund stood with King Lear and Cordelia as his prisoners. Also present were a captain and some soldiers, some of whom were guarding King Lear and Cordelia.

Edmund ordered, “Some officers take the prisoners away under good guard until we know what the higher-ups who are to judge the prisoners tell us what to do.”

Cordelia said to King Lear, “We are not the first who, with the best intentions, have suffered the worst. The goddess Fortune has cast me down because I wanted to help you, oppressed King, my father. I am sorry that I could not help you, father; otherwise, I would out-frown false Fortune’s frown.”

She then asked Edmund, “Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?”

King Lear said, “No! No! No! No! Come, let’s go away to prison. We two alone will sing like birds in the cage. When you ask me for my blessing, I’ll kneel down and ask you to forgive me. In this way we’ll live, and pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh at gilded butterflies and hear poor rogues — fancily dressed courtiers and such other people — talk about court news; and we’ll talk with them, too, about who loses and who wins, and who’s in and who’s out of the King’s favor. We will act as if we are God’s spies and can understand the mystery of things, and we’ll wear out, in a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones, who ebb and flow by the moon. They will come and go, but we will be together.”

Edmund ordered, “Take them away.”

King Lear said, “Upon such sacrifices as our renunciation of the world, my Cordelia, the gods themselves throw incense — they approve. Have I caught you? Are you really here with me? He who parts us shall bring a brand from Heaven, and use fire and smoke to drive us out of jail like they drive foxes out of kennels. Since no one is able to bring a brand from Heaven, we will stay together. Heaven will not assist them in separating us again. Wipe your eyes. The devils shall devour our enemies, flesh and skin together, before they shall make us weep. We’ll see them starve first. Come with me.”

King Lear and Cordelia left, heavily guarded.

Edmund said, “Come here, captain, and listen to me.”

He gave the captain a note and said, “Take this note, and go and follow them to prison. One step I have already promoted you; if you do as this note instructs you to do, then you will have made your way to noble fortunes. You should know that men are as the times are: When times are hard, men are hard. To be tender-minded does not become a soldier. This task I want you to do will not bear discussion — you are not to question it. Either say you will do it, or find another way to thrive.”

“I’ll do it, my lord.”

“Go about it and know that you will be a happy man when you have finished. Remember, I say, to follow your instructions immediately, and follow your instructions exactly as I have written them.”

The captain said, “I am not a horse. I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats. If it is man’s work, I’ll do it.”

He left.

The Duke of Albany, Goneril, Regan, a different captain, and some soldiers arrived.

Using the royal plural, the Duke of Albany said to Edmund, “Sir, you have shown today your valiant lineage and disposition, and the goddess Fortune led you well. You have the captives who were our enemies during this day’s strife. We command you to hand them over to us so that we can treat them as we shall find that their merits and our safety may equally determine.”

Playing for time in which the captain could accomplish his task, Edmund replied, “Sir, I thought it fit to send the old and miserable King Lear to some confinement under appointed

guard. The King's age has charms in it, and his title has more charms, that will make the common people take his side and make the lance-equipped soldiers we drafted to turn against us who command them. With him I sent Cordelia, the Queen of France, for the same reason. They are ready tomorrow, or at a further time, to appear wherever you shall hold your session and judge them. At this time we sweat and bleed. In the battle, the friend has lost his friend. And the best causes, in the heat of battle, are cursed by those who feel their sharpness. The question of Cordelia and her father requires a fitter place."

Edmund was implying that King Lear and Cordelia would not get a fair trial although he already knew that the Duke of Albany was planning to pardon them.

The Duke of Albany said to him, "Sir, if you don't mind, I regard you only as a subordinate in this war, not as my equal."

Using the royal plural, Regan said, "We please to regard him as your equal. I think that you could have asked what we thought before you spoke so rudely to Edmund. He led our armies; he bore the authority of my Kingdom and represented me personally. His direct connection to me may well stand up so that he — my deputy — can call himself your equal."

"Not so fast," Goneril said. "Edmund exalts himself because of his own abilities and accomplishments — those mean more than any titles or status you can give him."

"Because he has been invested with my rights," Regan said, "he equals the best."

Goneril said, "The investment of your rights in him would be most complete if he should become your husband."

"Jesters often prove to be prophets," Regan said. "Words

said in jest sometimes turn out to be true.”

“Stop!” Goneril said. “That eye that told you he would be your husband can’t see straight.”

“Lady, I am not well,” Regan said, “or else I would answer with very many and very angry words. General Edmund, take my soldiers, prisoners, inheritance. They are yours, as am I. The walls around my heart have fallen, and my heart is yours. The world will now witness that I make you here my lord and master.”

“Do you mean to marry and enjoy him?” Goneril asked.

The Duke of Albany said to his wife, Goneril, “You don’t want to let them alone so they can get married, but the lack of your good will is not enough to prevent them from being married.”

He added, “You don’t have the power to stop their marriage.”

“Neither do you, lord,” Edmund said.

“Half-blooded fellow — bastard — yes, I do have the power to stop your marriage to Regan,” the Duke of Albany said.

Regan said to Edmund, “Let the drum strike up, and prove that my title is your title. Fight and defeat the Duke of Albany, and then marry me.”

She wanted to be Queen of all Britain. For that to happen, the Duke of Albany needed to be dead.

“Wait,” the Duke of Albany said. “Listen to my reason for stopping the marriage.”

He had read the letter that the disguised Edgar had given to him, and he knew that Goneril wanted Edmund to kill him and marry her.

He said to Edmund, "I arrest you on the charge of capital treason, and I arrest in addition to you this gilded serpent who has been your accomplice and has — unwittingly — given me evidence with which to justify your arrest."

He then said to Regan, "As for your claim on Edmund as your fiancé, fair sister-in-law, I bar it in the interest of my wife, Goneril. She is sub-contracted to this lord. She is under contract to me, her husband, but she has made a sub-contract with Edmund for him to be her new husband. I, her husband, dissolve your engagement to Edmund. If you want to marry someone, marry me. My lady is bespoken for; she is engaged to marry Edmund."

"What a farce!" Goneril said. "What a performance!"

The Duke of Albany said, "You are armed, Edmund, Earl of Gloucester. You have a sword. Let the trumpet sound. If no one appears to prove upon your head in a trial by combat your heinous, manifest, and many treasons, there is my pledge."

He threw down his glove as a formal challenge to fight Edmund.

He added, "I'll prove it on your heart, before I taste bread, that you are nothing less than the traitor that I have here proclaimed you to be."

Regan said, "I am sick! Oh, I am sick!"

Goneril, who had poisoned her sister, thought, *If you don't feel sick, then I will never trust poison again.*

Edmund said, "There's my glove."

He threw down his glove to show that he accepted the Duke of Albany's challenge.

He said, "Anyone in the world who calls me a traitor lies like

the villain he is. That is a direct lie, and I am bound by honor to fight him. Call that man with your trumpet. Against anyone who dares approach — him, you, anyone else — I will fight to firmly defend my truth and honor.”

The Duke of Albany called, “We need a herald!”

Edmund called, “A herald! A herald!”

The Duke of Albany said to Edmund, “Trust only in your own strength and courage. Your soldiers, all of whom were levied in my name, have in my name taken their discharge.”

Regan said, “My sickness grows worse.”

The Duke of Albany ordered an attendant, “She is not well; take her to my tent.

Regan left, aided by an attendant.

A herald arrived.

The Duke of Albany said, “Come here, herald.”

He gave the herald a piece of paper and said, “Let the trumpet sound, and read this out loud.”

The captain said, “Sound, trumpet!”

The trumpet sounded.

The herald read out loud, “*If any man of quality or degree within the lists of the army maintains that Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, is a manifest traitor, let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet. Edmund will fight boldly in his own defense.*”

Edmund shouted, “Sound!”

The trumpet sounded for the first time after the reading of the proclamation.

The herald shouted, "Again!"

The trumpet sounded for the second time.

The herald shouted, "Again!"

The trumpet sounded for the third time.

Another trumpet sounded in answer.

Preceded by a trumpeter, Edgar arrived. He was wearing armor, and his helmet obscured his face so that he could not be recognized.

The Duke of Albany ordered the herald, "Ask him his reason why he appears upon this call of the trumpet."

The herald asked, "Who are you? What are your name and your social rank? And why do you answer this present summons?"

Edgar replied, "Know that my name is lost; it has been gnawed bare by the tooth of treason as if worms had devoured it. Yet I am as noble as the adversary whom I have come to fight."

The Duke of Albany asked, "Who is that adversary?"

Edgar asked, "Who speaks for Edmund, Earl of Gloucester?"

Edmund answered, "I speak for myself. What do you have to say to me?"

"Draw your sword," Edgar replied, "so that, if my speech offends a noble heart, your arm and sword may do you justice. Here is my sword. Behold, the right to trial by combat is the privilege of my honors and Knighthood, my oath and loyalty, and my profession and religion. I am a Knight, and I have the right to challenge you and to have my challenge accepted. Despite your strength, youth, position, and eminence, despite your victorious sword and newly

forged fortune, your valor and your heart, you are a traitor. You are false to your gods, your brother, and your father. You have conspired against this highly illustrious Prince, the Duke of Albany. And, from the extreme top of your head to the dust below your foot, you are a traitor — you are spotted like a venomous toad. If you deny these charges, then this sword, this arm, and my best spirits are determined to prove upon your heart that you lie.”

“I have the right to refuse to fight anyone who is beneath me in social rank, so it would be prudent for me to ask you your name and confirm that you are a Knight,” Edmund said, “but since your appearance looks so fair and warlike, and since your tongue shows some sign of education, I spurn and disdain to do what would safely and properly by the code of Knightly conduct delay this combat. I toss the charge of treason back to your head. The charge of treason you made against me is a lie, and I hate it like I hate Hell. That charge does not stick to me; it glances off and scarcely bruises me. But I will use my sword to open a passageway to your heart so the charge of treason can enter immediately and rest in your heart forever.”

He then ordered, “Trumpets, speak!”

The trumpets sounded to announce the combat.

Edgar and Edmund fought, and Edgar mortally wounded Edmund, who fell to the ground.

The Duke of Albany sounded, “Spare him! Spare his life!”

He wanted Edmund to confess his sins and crimes.

Goneril said to Edmund, “This is treachery, Earl of Gloucester. By the law of arms, you were not bound to answer an unknown opponent. You have not been vanquished; you have been cheated and deceived.”

The Duke of Albany said to her, "Shut your mouth, dame, or with this paper I shall stop it."

The paper was the letter that Goneril had written to Edmund asking that he murder the Duke of Albany so that they could be married. The letter mentioned vows that she and Edmund had made to each other.

The Duke of Albany said to Edmund, "Just a moment, sir."

He then showed the letter to Goneril and said, "You who are worse than any name I could call you, read your own evil letter."

She attempted to snatch the letter from his hand and tear it up but failed.

He said to her, "No tearing, lady. I perceive you recognize this letter."

He then gave the letter to Edmund. It had not been delivered because Edgar had killed the messenger, Oswald, so this was the first time Edmund was seeing the letter.

Goneril said to her husband, the Duke of Albany, "Suppose that I do recognize the letter, the laws are mine, not yours. Who can arraign me for it?"

She was reminding him that she was Queen and he was merely her consort. She could not be put on trial in a court because as Queen she had no peers.

"You are most monstrous!" the Duke of Albany said.

She had not admitted that she recognized the letter, so he asked her, "Do you recognize this letter?"

She replied, "Don't ask me what I know."

She exited.

The Duke of Albany ordered an attendant, "Go after her. She's desperate. Restrain her."

Edmund, having read the letter, said, "What you have charged me with, that I admit I have done, and more, much more. Time will reveal all that I have done. My evil deeds are in the past, and I am passing into the afterlife."

He then asked Edgar, who had not yet revealed his identity, "But who are you who have placed this fortune on me? If you are noble, I forgive you."

Edgar replied, "Let's exchange charity. If you forgive me for killing you, then I will forgive you for the evils you have done to me. I am no less in blood than you are, Edmund. If I am more, then the more you have wronged me."

He took off his helmet and said, "My name is Edgar, and I am your father's legitimate son. The gods are just, and of our vices that bring us pleasure the gods make instruments to plague us. My father begat you in a dark and vicious adulterous bed, and his adultery cost him his eyes."

Edmund said, "You have spoken rightly. What you have said is true. The Wheel of Fortune has come full circle. I started low on the Wheel of Fortune, then I was on top, and now I am here, lying in the dust."

The Duke of Albany said to Edgar, "I thought that your manner of walking did prophesy a worthy nobleness. I must embrace you. Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I hated you or your father! I have never hated either of you."

"Worthy Prince, I know it," Edgar replied.

"Where have you been hiding?" the Duke of Albany asked. "How have you learned about the miseries of your father?"

"By taking care of my father, my lord," Edgar replied. "Listen to a brief tale, and when it is told — oh, I wish that

my heart would burst! I wanted to escape the proclamation of my death that closely followed me — we value our lives so sweetly that we are willing to suffer deathly pains every hour rather than die at once! — and so I changed into a madman’s rags. I assumed a semblance that even the dogs hated, and in this disguise I met my father with his bleeding rings whose precious stones had been recently lost — he had been recently blinded. I became his guide, led him, begged for him, and saved him from despair. I never — this was a grievous fault! — revealed myself to him and told him that I was his son until approximately a half-hour ago, when I was armed to meet Edmund in combat. I was not sure of, though I was hoping for, this good and successful outcome. I asked his blessing, and from first to last told him about my pilgrimage, but his flawed and overstrained heart was sadly too weak to support his life as he felt great emotions! His heart stopped beating as he felt two extremes of passion: joy because he had found me, and grief because I had suffered. He welcomed death: He died smiling.”

Edmund said, “This speech of yours has moved me, and shall perhaps do good, but speak on. You look as if you had something more to say.”

People in this society believed that it was necessary to confess their sins before dying in order to go to Heaven. Edmund had admitted that he was a traitor, but now was a good time to tell the others about the note that he had given the captain after the battle. Edmund did not do that; perhaps he was trying to scam God with a fake repentance.

The Duke of Albany said to Edgar, “If what you have left to tell is more woeful than what you have already told, hold it inside yourself because I am almost ready to dissolve in tears after hearing what you have said so far.”

Edgar said, “What I have said so far would have seemed the pinnacle of sadness to those who are not used to sorrow, but

an additional sorrow I will mention will amplify by much more and exceed that pinnacle of sadness I have already mentioned.

“While I was loudly lamenting the death of my father, a man came over to us. He had seen me when I was in my disguise as a wretched man, and he had then shunned my abhorrent society, but finding out who it was who was enduring such grief, he threw his strong arms around my neck, and bellowed out his grief as if he would burst the Heavens. He threw himself on the body of my father. He told me the most piteous tale about King Lear and himself that any ear has ever heard. While he told this tale, his grief grew powerful and the strings of life began to crack. Then the trumpets sounded twice, and I left him there unconscious.”

“Who was he?” the Duke of Albany asked.

“He was the Earl of Kent, sir, the banished Kent, who in disguise followed his King who was hostile to him, and he did his King service that was not fit to be done by a slave.”

Carrying a bloody knife, a gentleman arrived and shouted, “Help! Help! Oh, help!”

Edgar asked, “What kind of help?”

“Speak, man,” the Duke of Albany ordered.

Edgar asked, “Why are you carrying that bloody knife?”

The gentleman said, “It is hot! It is steaming! It came just now from the heart of — oh, she’s dead!”

“Who is dead?” the Duke of Albany asked. “Speak, man!”

“Your lady, sir, your lady,” the gentleman said. “Your wife, Goneril, is dead, and she has confessed that she poisoned her sister Regan.”

Edmund said, “I was engaged to marry them both. All three

of us now marry — join in death — in an instant.”

Edgar looked up and said, “Here comes Kent.”

The Duke of Albany ordered, “Produce the bodies of Goneril and Regan, whether they are alive or dead. This judgment of the Heavens, that makes us tremble, touches us not with pity. We tremble because of the justice of the gods, but because of the evilness of Goneril and Regan, we cannot pity either of their deaths.”

A gentleman left to carry out the order.

Kent slowly and painfully walked over to them.

The Duke of Albany said, “Is this he? The time will not allow the complimentary formalities that good manners urge.”

Kent said, “I am dying, and I have come to bid my King and master good night forever. Isn’t King Lear here?”

“We have forgotten the great matter of the King’s whereabouts!” the Duke of Albany said. “Speak, Edmund, where’s the King? And where’s Cordelia?”

Some attendants carried in the bodies of Goneril and Regan.

The Duke of Albany asked, “Do you see this sad spectacle, Kent?”

Kent asked, “Why has this sad thing happened?”

Edmund said, “I was beloved. One sister poisoned the other sister for my sake, and afterward she slew herself.”

“That is true,” the Duke of Albany said. “Cover their faces.” An attendant covered the faces of the corpses.

Edmund said, “I pant for breath and life. I mean to do some good in my remaining moments, despite my own evil nature. Quickly send — don’t waste time — someone to the castle

because I wrote an order for the execution of King Lear and Cordelia. Hurry. Send someone in time to stop the execution.”

The Duke of Albany ordered, “Run! Run! Oh, run!”

“Run to whom, my lord?” Edgar asked. “Who has the order to execute them? We must send a token of reprieve.”

Edmund said, “Well thought out. Take my sword as that token and give it to the captain.”

The Duke of Albany said, “Make haste, for your life.”

Edgar took Edmund’s sword and ran.

Edmund said, “The captain has a commission from your wife and me to hang Cordelia in the prison, and to lay the blame upon her own despair, and say that she destroyed herself and committed suicide.”

The Duke of Albany said, “May the gods defend her!”

He then ordered, “Carry Edmund hence for awhile.”

Two attendants carried Edmund away.

Now King Lear, carrying Cordelia, walked over to the Duke of Albany. Edgar and an officer followed King Lear.

King Lear cried, “Howl! Howl! Howl! Howl! Oh, you are men made of stones! Had I your tongues and eyes, I would use them so that Heaven’s vault — the sky — would crack from the intensity of the sounds of mourning! She’s gone forever! I know when one is dead, and when one lives. She’s dead as earth. Lend me a looking glass. If her breath will mist or stain the mirror, why then she lives.”

Kent asked, “Is this the promised end of the world? Is this Judgment Day?”

Edgar asked, “Or an image of that horror?”

The Duke of Albany said, “May the Heavens fall, and the Earth cease to exist!”

No mirror was immediately forthcoming, so King Lear held an imaginary feather under Cordelia’s nose. He said, “This feather stirs; she lives! If that is true, it redeems all the sorrows that I have ever felt. Her being alive will make up for all the misfortunes that I have suffered.”

The Earl of Kent knelt before King Lear and said, “Oh, my good master!”

King Lear, concerned only about Cordelia, replied, “Please, go away and leave me alone.”

Edgar said, “He is noble Kent, your friend.”

King Lear said, “A plague upon you — murderers, traitors all! I might have saved her; now she’s gone forever! Cordelia! Cordelia! Stay a little while in the land of the living!”

He bent over and positioned an ear over her mouth and said, “What is it you are saying? Her voice was always soft, gentle, and low, an excellent thing in a woman. I killed the slave who was hanging you.”

An officer who had been present said, “It is true, my lords. He did.”

King Lear said, “Didn’t I, fellow? I have seen the day when, with my good biting curved sword, I would have made them who oppressed her skip. I am old now, and the troubles of old age have ruined me as a swordsman.”

He looked at the Earl of Kent and asked, “Who are you? My eyes are not the best. I’ll recognize you soon.”

Kent said to King Lear, “If Lady Fortune were to brag about

two men whom she first loved and then hated, one of them each of us would behold.”

King Lear said, “This is a miserable spectacle around us. Aren’t you Kent?”

“I am him — your servant Kent,” he replied.

Wanting to test King Lear’s understanding, he asked, “Where is your servant Caius?”

Kent had used the name Caius when he was in disguise.

“Caius is a good fellow, I can tell you that,” King Lear said. “In a fight, he’ll strike, and quickly, too, but he’s dead and rotten.”

“No, my good lord. Caius is not dead,” Kent said. “I am the very man —”

King Lear, in a state of shock, said, “I’ll attend to you in a moment.”

“— who, from the very beginning of your change of status and decline into decay, have followed your sad steps.”

“You are welcome here,” King Lear said.

“I am that man,” Kent said. “No one else did that. Everything now is cheerless, dark, and deadly. Your eldest daughters have destroyed themselves, and in despair they are dead.”

“Yes, I think so,” King Lear replied in a distracted manner.

He still did not know that Kent was Caius.

The Duke of Albany said, “He does not know what he is saying, and it is in vain that we present ourselves to him.”

“It is very vain,” Edgar said.

A captain arrived and said, “Edmund is dead, my lord.”

“His death is only a trifle here,” the Duke of Albany replied.

He then said, “You lords and noble friends, know our intent. What comfort can come to this great decay of a man — King Lear — shall be given to him. As for us, for the duration of the life of this old majesty we will resign and give to him our absolute power.”

He said to Edgar and Kent, “You shall again have your rights with extra rewards and titles as your honors have more than merited and deserved. All friends shall receive the wages of their virtue, and all foes shall receive the cup of what they deserve.”

King Lear made a cry of mourning, and the Duke of Albany said, “Look at him!”

King Lear said, “And my poor fool — Cordelia — is hanged! No, no, no life! Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, and you have no breath at all? You will come no more — never, never, never, never, never!”

King Lear felt a sense of suffocation — *hysterica passio* — and said to an attendant, “Please, undo this button for me. Thank you, sir.”

He looked at Cordelia and said, “Do you see this? Look at her — look, her lips! Look there! Look there!”

He died, thinking that he saw Cordelia breathing.

She did not breathe.

Edgar cried, ‘He faints! My lord! My lord!’

Kent said, “Break, my heart. Please, break!”

Over King Lear’s body, Edgar said, “Look up, my lord.”

Kent said to him, “Vex not his ghost: Allow him to pass into the next world! He would much hate the man who would

keep him alive a while longer to suffer and endure the rack of this tough world.”

“He is gone, indeed,” Edgar said. “He is dead.”

“The wonder is that he endured so long,” Kent said. “He lived long after he should have died.”

The Duke of Albany said, “Carry the bodies away from here. Our immediate concern is public mourning for all.”

He said to Kent and Edgar, “Friends of my soul, you two shall rule in this realm, and the wounded Kingdom sustain.”

Kent replied, “I have a journey, sir, that I must soon take. My master calls me, and I must not say no to him.”

Edgar said, “The weight of this sad time we must obey. We must speak what we feel, not what we ought to say. The oldest has borne the most; we who are young shall never see so much, nor live so long.”

Chapter VI: MACBETH
CAST OF CHARACTERS

Duncan, King of Scotland

Malcolm, Donalbain, his sons

Macbeth, Banquo, generals of the King's army

Macduff, Lennox, Ross, Menteth, Angus, Cathness,
noblemen of Scotland

Fleance, son to Banquo

Siward, Earl of Northumberland, general of the English
forces

Young Siward, his son

Seyton, an officer attending on Macbeth

Boy, son to Macduff

An English Doctor

A Scotch Doctor

A Captain

A Porter

An Old Man

Lady Macbeth

Lady Macduff

Gentlewomen attending on Lady Macbeth

Hecate

Three Witches

Lords, Gentlemen, Officers, Soldiers, Murderers,

Attendants, and Messengers; the Ghost of Banquo, and other Apparitions

CHAPTER 1: THE TEMPTATION OF MACBETH**— 1.1 —**

In a deserted place above which thunder sounded and lightning flashed, Three Witches were ending their meeting. Nearby, a battle raged, and soldiers and horses screamed and died.

“When shall we three meet again? Shall we meet in thunder and lightning, or in rain?” asked the First Witch.

“We shall meet again after the battle is over. The battle shall have its conquerors, and it shall have its conquered,” answered the Second Witch.

“The battle will end before the Sun sets,” said the Third Witch.

“In which place shall we meet?” asked the First Witch.

“We shall meet upon the heath,” answered the Second Witch.

“There we shall meet Macbeth,” said the Third Witch.

With the Witches were their familiars. Graymalkin was a malevolent spirit in the form of a gray cat, and Paddock was a malevolent spirit in the form of a toad. The familiars were growing restless.

“I come, Graymalkin!” exclaimed the First Witch.

“Paddock calls,” said the Second Witch.

“It is time to go,” said the Third Witch.

All together, the Three Witches chanted, “Fair is foul, and foul is fair. Hover through the fog and filthy air.”

The Three Witches and their familiars vanished.

— 1.2 —

Duncan, King of Scotland, was too old to lead his soldiers in the battle, so he stood in a camp near the battle. Macbeth and Banquo were leading his soldiers. With King Duncan were his older son, Malcolm, and his younger son, Donalbain; Lennox, a nobleman; and many servants and soldiers. A soldier who was bloody from his wounds rode into the camp.

“Who is this bloody soldier?” King Duncan asked. “By the way he looks, he can provide news of how the battle is going.”

“This good and brave soldier fought hard to keep me from being captured,” Malcolm said. “Welcome, brave sergeant and friend! Tell the King news about the battle as it stood when you left it.”

“In the middle of the battle, no one could tell who would win. The two sides seemed to be equal,” the bloody soldier replied. “They were like two exhausted swimmers who cling to each other and prevent each other from swimming. The traitor Macdonwald — the rebel who is guilty of many evil deeds — commanded both lightly armed and heavily armed foot soldiers who had come from the Western Isles known as the Hebrides. Fortune seemed to smile at him like a whore, but brave Macbeth — and well does he deserve to be called brave — ignored Fortune, and with his sword, which steamed with hot blood, he cut his way through enemy soldiers until he faced the traitor. Macdonwald had no time to shake hands with him, or to say goodbye to him, because Macbeth immediately cut him open from his naval to his jawbone. Then he cut off the traitor’s head and exhibited it to all from the top of the walls of our fortifications.”

“Macbeth is both brave and worthy. He is a true gentleman,” King Duncan said.

“A calm morning at sea can later turn into a stormy day that

can wreck ships,” the bloody soldier said. “Something that seems good can lead to something bad. Immediately after your troops had defeated the rebel and forced his troops to flee, the King of Norway sensed an opportunity to conquer Scotland and sent armed soldiers to attack your troops.”

“Did not this dismay the captains of our army: Macbeth and Banquo?” King Duncan asked.

“Yes, it did,” the bloody soldier replied, “exactly as much as sparrows dismay eagles, or rabbits dismay lions. Macbeth and Banquo were truly like cannons loaded with extra explosives as they fiercely fought the enemy soldiers. It was as if they wanted to bathe in the blood of the enemy soldiers, or to make the battlefield as memorable as Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified. But I am growing faint. A physician needs to treat my wounds.”

“Your words and your wounds give you honor,” King Duncan said to the sergeant.

Then he said to an attendant, “Get him medical help.”

The attendant helped the bloody soldier walk away to a physician.

A man came into the camp, and King Duncan asked, “Who comes here?”

Malcolm recognized the man and identified him: “The worthy Thane of Ross.”

A Thane is a Scottish feudal lord.

Lennox, who was also a Thane, said, “Look at his eyes! He must have important news to tell!”

“God save the King!” Ross said.

“From where have you come, worthy Thane?” King Duncan asked him.

“From Fife, great King,” Ross replied. “That is the site of the battle that the King of Norway, assisted by a traitor, the Thane of Cawdor, has been fighting your troops led by Macbeth and Banquo. The Norwegian banners flew there as the King of Norway’s many troops began the battle. Despite the enemy’s many troops, Macbeth — wearing armor well tested in battle — fought as if he were the husband of Bellona, the goddess of war, and countered the enemy’s attacks with attacks of his own and broke both the enemy’s army and his spirit. Your troops have conquered the enemy and won the battle.”

“This is good news indeed!” King Duncan said.

“Sweno, the King of Norway, now wants a peace treaty,” Ross said. “We would not allow him to bury his dead soldiers until he gave us \$10,000 and retreated to Saint Colme’s island.”

“The Thane of Cawdor acted as a traitor to me,” King Duncan said. “That will not happen again: Proclaim that he has been sentenced to death. When you meet Macbeth, greet him and tell him that he is the new Thane of Cawdor.”

“I will do so,” Ross said.

“What the Thane of Cawdor has lost, noble Macbeth has won,” King Duncan said.

— 1.3 —

Thunder sounded as the Three Witches met in an uncultivated field.

“Where have you been, sister?” the First Witch said.

“Killing swine — to waste food for mortals,” the Second Witch replied.

The Third Witch then asked the First Witch, “Where have

you been, sister?”

The First Witch replied, “A sailor’s wife had chestnuts in her lap, and she munched, and munched, and munched. ‘Give me your chestnuts,’ I demanded. ‘Get lost, witch!’ the fat-bottomed, scabby sailor’s wife told me. Her husband is the master of the ship *Tiger*, and he is sailing to the Syrian city Aleppo. I will sail to his ship in a kitchen strainer, and like a rat without a tail, I will wreak havoc, and wreak havoc, and wreak havoc.”

“I’ll give thee a wind to cause a storm,” the Second Witch said.

“You are kind,” the First Witch said.

“And I will give you another wind,” the Third Witch said.

The First Witch said to the other Witches, “I myself have all the other winds, and I know all the ports and all the ships’ shelters from all the points of the compass. I will drain away the sailor’s energy. He shall not sleep, and he shall be a man accursed. For nine times nine weeks shall he decline, waste away, and long for land. Though his ship cannot be lost at sea because I lack that power, yet it shall be tempest-tossed. But, here, look what I have.”

“Show me, show me,” the Second Witch said.

“Here I have a pilot’s thumb, whose ship was wrecked as homeward he did come,” the First Witch said.

The Three Witches heard the sound of a drum.

“A drum, a drum! Macbeth does come,” the Third Witch said.

The Three Witches danced in a circle and chanted, “The Weird Sisters, hand in hand, travelers of the sea and land, thus do go about, about, thrice to thine and thrice to mine,

and thrice again, to make up nine. Stop! Our charm is coiled like a trap.”

Macbeth and Banquo rode toward the Three Witches without at first seeing them.

“So foul and fair a day I have not seen,” Macbeth said. “It is fair because we have won important battles, but foul because of the weather.”

Banquo, wondering about the distance that they had left to ride to Forres, the site of King Duncan’s castle, asked, “How far is it to Forres?”

Banquo then caught sight of the Three Witches and said, “Who are these creatures? They are so withered with age and wear clothing so odd that they do not seem to be creatures of the Earth, and yet here they are.

“Are you alive?” Banquo called to the Three Witches. “Are you creatures that men may talk to and ask questions of? You seem to understand me, since each of you has put a chapped finger to your skinny lips. But are you women? You seem to be women, but your beards make me question whether you are.”

“Speak, if you can,” Macbeth ordered. “What are you?”

The First Witch said, “All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!”

The Second Witch said, “All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!”

The Third Witch said, “All hail, Macbeth, you who shall be King hereafter!”

Many men would consider it good news to become King, but Macbeth did not react as if the words of the Third Witch had made him happy.

“Sir, why do you react in such a way to news that does seem to be extraordinarily good?” Banquo said to Macbeth. “At first, you were startled, and then you seemed to be afraid.”

Banquo then said to the Three Witches, “Are you illusions, or are you really what you seem to be? You have greeted Macbeth with honors that you say are real now and with the great honor that you say is coming to him. These honors of royalty and of hope to be King have made Macbeth silent as he contemplates your words. To me you have not spoken. If you are able to see into the future and can say who will prosper and who will not, tell me my future — the future of one who neither wants your love nor fears your hatred.”

The First Witch said, “Hail!”

The Second Witch said, “Hail!”

The Third Witch said, “Hail!”

The First Witch said, “You are lesser than Macbeth, and greater.”

The Second Witch said, “You are not so happy as Macbeth, yet much happier.”

The Third Witch said, “Your descendants will be Kings, although you yourself shall never be King. So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!”

The First Witch said, “Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!”

Macbeth said to the Three Witches, “Stay, and tell me the rest of the story. I am Thane of Glamis because my father, Sinel, died. But how can I be Thane of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor, a prosperous gentleman, is still alive. And to become King seems to be impossible, just like becoming Thane of Cawdor seems to be impossible. Tell me how you know these things. Tell me from where you learned these things. Tell me why you stopped Banquo and me on this

heath and greeted us with prophecies. I demand that you answer my questions.”

The Three Witches vanished.

“The Earth must have bubbles, just as the water has,” Banquo said. “These three beings must be the bubbles of the Earth. Bubbles burst, and they vanish. Did you see where the three beings went?”

“They vanished into the air,” Macbeth said. “What seemed to be solid melted away as breath melts into the wind. I wish that they had stayed!”

“Did we really see and hear what we think we saw and heard?” Banquo asked. “Or have we eaten a poisonous plant that produces insanity?”

“Your children shall be Kings,” Macbeth said.

Banquo said, “You shall be King.”

Wanting to hear seemingly good news again, Macbeth said, “And Thane of Cawdor, too. Isn’t that what they said?”

“That is exactly what they said,” Banquo replied.

Hearing a noise, Banquo said loudly, “Who is that?”

On horseback, Ross and Angus rode up to Macbeth and Banquo.

Ross said, “Macbeth, King Duncan is pleased with the news of your successes. He has heard of your personal exploits in the battle against the rebels. He is speechless with admiration at your deeds in that battle, and yet he wishes to praise you. And you did more besides. On the same day, you were fearless as you fought the soldiers from Norway. You did not fear death as you created much death for enemy soldiers. King Duncan received message after message bearing news of your bravery in battle as you defended Scotland.”

Angus added, “King Duncan has sent us to you to bring you to him. He will reward you for your service.”

Ross said, “King Duncan told me to inform you of one of the honors you will receive from him. You are now Thane of Cawdor. Hail, most worthy Thane!”

Amazed at hearing some of the words of the Three Witches come true, Banquo said to Macbeth, “What, can Satan speak the truth?”

Macbeth said to Ross, “The old Thane of Cawdor lives. How then can I be the new Thane of Cawdor?”

Angus answered Macbeth’s question: “He who was the Thane of Cawdor still lives, but he has deservedly been sentenced to death. I don’t know whether he allied himself with the King of Norway, or whether he allied himself with the rebels, or whether he allied himself with both, but I do know that he plotted against King Duncan and Scotland. I also know that the evidence of his treasons is overwhelming and that he has confessed his treasons. Thus he is sentenced to die.”

Macbeth thought, *Some of the words of the Three Witches have come true. I was already Thane of Glamis, and as the Three Witches predicted, I am now Thane of Cawdor. They also predicted that I would be King of Scotland. Perhaps that also will come true.*

Macbeth said to Ross and Angus, “Thank you for this news.”

Macbeth then said quietly so that only Banquo could hear him, “Do you not hope your children shall be Kings? The Three Witches who predicted that I would be the Thane of Cawdor also promised that your children shall be Kings.”

Banquo quietly replied, “The Three Witches predicted that you would be King of Scotland as well as Thane of Cawdor.”

But I am suspicious. The forces of evil often tell us partial truths. They win us over with trifles, only to betray us in serious matters.”

Banquo then said to Ross and Angus, “I need to speak to you.”

As Banquo, Ross, and Angus talked among themselves, Macbeth brooded, thinking, *I now have two of the titles that the Three Witches said I would have. I have the lesser titles, and the greatest title is yet to come.*

Macbeth, realizing that he needed to add something to the conversation, said, “Gentlemen, I thank you.”

Then he resumed brooding: *What the Three Witches told me cannot be ill, and it cannot be good. If what they said is ill, why has it started with a truth and with a valuable reward: the title of Thane of Cawdor? If what they said is good, why am I thinking things that make my hair stand on end and that make my heart beat unnaturally against my ribs? I felt less fear in the two battles I fought today than I do at the thoughts I am now having. I am thinking of a murder. The murder is still only imaginary, but it shakes me and I cannot perform any ordinary actions because my thoughts consume me. All I can think about is a murder.*

Banquo said to Ross and Angus, “Look at Macbeth. He is lost in his thoughts.”

Macbeth continued brooding: *If I am meant to be King of Scotland, then perhaps I will become King of Scotland without having to do anything to make that happen.*

Banquo said to Ross and Angus, “He is thinking about his new honor: He is now Thane of Cawdor. After a while, he will become accustomed to that honor and wear it well, just as we become accustomed to new clothes by wearing them until they adapt to our body.”

Macbeth continued brooding: *Whatever must come to pass will come to pass. I may be eager for what is to come, but if I am patient, it will eventually come.*

Banquo said, “Macbeth, we are ready to leave. Are you ready?”

“Pardon me,” Macbeth said. “I was distracted by things I have already forgotten. Gentlemen, I thank you for what you have done today. I will remember you whenever I think of this day. Let us go to King Duncan.”

Macbeth then said quietly to Banquo, “Think about the Three Witches, and later let us talk about them.”

Banquo quietly replied, “Very gladly.”

“Until later, then,” Macbeth said quietly to Banquo.

Then Macbeth said loudly to all, “Let us go.”

They rode on horseback to the King.

— 1.4 —

In the courtyard of King Duncan’s castle in Forres, the King talked to his sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, and to Lennox. Attendants were also present.

King Duncan asked, “Has the old Thane of Cawdor been executed yet? Have his executioners returned yet?”

“My liege, they have not yet returned,” Malcolm replied. “However, I have spoken with a person who saw the execution, and he reported that the old Thane of Cawdor confessed his treasons, implored that your Highness would forgive him, and repented his sins. In life, he did nothing so well as leaving it. He died as if he had studied how to die and how to throw away the dearest thing anyone can own as if it were nothing but an unwanted trifle.”

King Duncan said, “It is impossible to look at a man’s face and know what is in his mind. I absolutely trusted the old Thane of Cawdor.”

Macbeth, Banquo, Ross, and Angus rode into the courtyard of the King’s castle.

King Duncan said to Macbeth, “Worthiest kinsman, I was just now thinking that I have not shown you enough gratitude for your service to me. You have done such great service in so little time that the evidence of my gratitude is lagging behind. Only if you had done less service would I be able to give you adequate thanks and payment. You deserve more than all I have.”

“Serving you and being loyal to you are rewards in and of themselves,” Macbeth replied. “As our King, you should receive our service to you. We — your subjects — are your children and your servants. By doing everything we can to safeguard your love and your honor, we are doing only what we ought to do.”

King Duncan said to Macbeth, “I will do much for you. I have begun to plant you, and I will work to make you full of growing.”

He added, “Noble Banquo, like Macbeth you deserve reward for your deeds. I will hold you in my heart. I also will do good things for you.”

Banquo replied, “If you make me grow, I shall give you the harvest.”

“I have so many joys that my eyes are watery,” King Duncan said. “Sons, kinsmen, Thanes, and all of you who are closest to me, know that I am establishing the succession of the kingdom upon my oldest son, Malcolm, whom I name Prince of Cumberland. This is an honor for him, and more honors will be given to all who deserve them. Now let us go to

Macbeth's castle in Inverness."

King Duncan said to Macbeth, "I will become bound to you even further because I will enjoy your hospitality."

Macbeth replied, "When I am not working to serve you, leisure is labor. I will tell my wife the news of your coming to our castle and so make her happy. Therefore, I humbly take my leave."

King Duncan replied, "Farewell, my worthy Thane of Cawdor."

As he left, Macbeth thought, Malcolm is now Prince of Cumberland! He is now the heir to the throne! I must give up my ambition or else leap over Malcolm because he stands between me and my desire to become King. Stars, hide your fires; I do not want light to see my black and deep desires. May my eye not see what my hand will do; still, let the deed occur that the eye will fear to see when the deed is done.

After Macbeth left, King Duncan and Banquo talked to each other and praised Macbeth. Now King Duncan said, "You are correct, Banquo. Macbeth is very valiant, and I enjoy hearing him praised. Your praises of him are like a banquet to me. Let us leave and ride to his castle, where he has gone to prepare our welcome. He is a peerless kinsman."

— 1.5 —

In a room in Macbeth's castle in Inverness, Lady Macbeth was reading a letter that Macbeth had sent to her.

She read out loud, "The Three Witches met me after my successes in battle, and I have learned that they have more than merely mortal knowledge. I wanted to question them further, but they turned themselves into air and vanished. As I stood astonished, the King's messengers arrived and said that I am the new Thane of Cawdor — which is one of the

titles the Weird Sisters had hailed me by. They also referred to a title to come when they said to me, ‘All hail, Macbeth, you who shall be King hereafter!’ I wrote this letter to you, dear, so that you may be gladdened by the prediction, and not lose happiness through ignorance of your own future title: Queen. Keep this prediction secret. Farewell.”

Having finished reading the letter, Lady Macbeth thought, *You are the Thane of Glamis, and you are the Thane of Cawdor, and you will be the King of Scotland. Yet I am afraid that you do not have in you to do what it will take to make you King. Your nature is too full of the milk of human kindness to do what will most quickly make you King. You, Macbeth, would like to be a great and powerful man. You have ambition, but you lack the evil nature that so often accompanies and assists ambition. What you most want, you would like to have through honest means. You do not want to do evil, and yet you want something that belongs to someone else. Macbeth, what you need to have is a nature that tells you, “This is what you need to do to achieve your ambition.” You also need a nature that allows you to do an evil act that you fear to do rather than a nature that wishes an evil act to remain undone. Come quickly to me, so that I can talk to you and persuade you to ignore the part of your nature that can keep you from wearing the crown of the King of Scotland. Both fate and supernatural beings seem to know that you will be King.*

A messenger entered the room Lady Macbeth was in.

Lady Macbeth asked, “What news do you bring me?”

The messenger replied, “The King comes here tonight.”

Lady Macbeth said, “You must be insane! Isn’t Macbeth with the King? If what you said is true, Macbeth would have sent me word to prepare the castle for the King’s arrival.”

The messenger replied, “So please you, it is true. Macbeth is

coming here. Another messenger traveled faster than Macbeth to bring you news. That messenger was so out of breath that he scarcely had enough to speak his news.”

“Take care of him,” Lady Macbeth said. “He has brought us important news.”

The messenger left.

Lady Macbeth thought, *The messenger is like a hoarse raven as he announces the fatal entrance of King Duncan into my castle.*

She then prayed silently to unHeavenly spirits: *Come, you spirits that tend on deadly thoughts. Unsex me, and make me not a woman. Fill me from top to bottom with the worst kind of cruelty. Make my blood thick, and stop my monthly periods. Make me incapable of feeling remorse. Make me a man so that nothing feminine can stop me from accomplishing the evil I plan to do. Come to my woman's breasts, and replace my milk with gall, you murdering spirits. Come to me from wherever you, invisible, assist in the doing of evil. Come, thick night, and enshroud yourself in the darkest smoke of Hell, so that no one can see the wound my keen knife makes and so that Heaven cannot see through the darkness and shout, “Stop! Stop!”*

Macbeth entered the room.

Lady Macbeth said to him, “Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor! You will have a title greater than both of these. I have read your letter, and it has taken me beyond this present time, which normally does not know the future. Now I know the future.”

Macbeth said, “My dearest love, King Duncan comes here tonight.”

“And when does he leave?” Lady Macbeth asked.

“He intends to leave tomorrow,” Macbeth replied.

“Never shall Sun rise on the day that King Duncan leaves here alive,” Lady Macbeth said. “Your face, Macbeth, is at present like a book on which people can read your thoughts, including your evil thoughts. To fool the people around you, look like the people around you. Your eye should welcome the King. Your hands and your tongue should welcome the King. You should look like an innocent flower, but in reality you must be the serpent under it. We must take care of the King, and I want you to let me plan how to take care of the King. What we do this night will give us during all the nights and days to come absolute power.”

Macbeth said, “We will speak further about this.”

Lady Macbeth said, “In public, look innocent. If you look anything but innocent, we have much to fear. Leave all the rest to me.”

— 1.6 —

King Duncan, Malcolm, Donalbain, Banquo, Lennox, Macduff, Ross, Angus, and some attendants entered the courtyard of Macbeth’s castle.

Looking around, King Duncan said, “This castle has a pleasant site; the air immediately and sweetly soothes my senses.”

Banquo said, “The guests of summer — the birds known as the martlets that are often seen around temples — provide evidence for what you say because their hanging nests are everywhere here. Every jetty, every frieze, and every corner has its nest. Where the martlets build nests and live, there I have observed that the air is delicate.”

Lady Macbeth came outside to the courtyard to greet the group.

“See, see, our honorable hostess,” King Duncan said. “Sometimes, people who love me inconvenience me with their attention, but I accept it because of the love they have for me. I hope that you will give me the same courtesy. By coming to your castle, I am inconveniencing you, but I have come here because of the love I have for you and your husband. I often ask God to give rewards to the people who inconvenience me, and I thank them for their attentions to me. Perhaps by my visit I can teach you to do the same for me.”

Lady Macbeth replied, “All the service we provide for you is poor and trivial even if it were done twice and then done twice more. All the service we provide for you does not come even close to matching the honor you do us by coming to our castle. Because of the honors you have given to us in the past, and because of the new honors you have recently given to us, we are your hermits and pray to God to bless you, our benefactor.”

“Where is the Thane of Cawdor?” King Duncan asked. “We rode close behind him — almost at his heels — and we even thought of arriving here before him to make preparations for his arrival, but he rode his horse well, and his great love for his King and for his country — a love as sharp as the spurs he wears — helped him to reach his castle before we did. Fair and noble hostess, I am your guest tonight.”

“We are your servants,” Lady Macbeth replied, “and all we have, including our lives, we have in trust from you. We are always ready to give an accounting of all we have, and we are always ready to give back to you what is yours.”

“Give me your hand,” King Duncan said, “Take me to my host. I love him highly, and I shall continue to show favor to him. Are you ready, hostess?”

Lady Macbeth led King Duncan and the other guests inside

the castle.

— 1.7 —

Inside Macbeth's castle, servants prepared a feast for King Duncan.

Macbeth, alone, thought to himself, *If it were over and done once it were done, then it would be good to do it quickly. If only I could assassinate King Duncan, and then like a net catch all the consequences that follow except for my becoming King of Scotland ... if this one blow — the assassination — by itself could make me King of Scotland with no bad consequences following in this life ... if that were the case, then in order to be King of Scotland now I would risk damnation in the life hereafter. But would no consequences follow? In this life and in this world, we have laws and courts and executions. Also, by committing bloody acts, we teach other people to commit bloody acts, and we can end up being the victim and not the victimizer in the next bloody act. Or we can end up being harmed in other ways. If we poison wine to offer to other people, sometimes that poisoned wine is justly offered to ourselves.*

What reasons do I have to murder King Duncan? What reasons do I have to not murder him? King Duncan is my kinsman, and I am his subject. These are reasons not to kill King Duncan. In addition, I am his host. As his host, I ought to protect him against murderers, not carry a knife with which to murder him. Also, as King of Scotland, Duncan has been a good King. He has great power, but he has used his power fairly and justly. He has been free of vice. His virtues plead against his murder. Should he be murdered, pity would spread quickly to his subjects as if the news of the murder were carried by a newborn babe riding the wind, or like winged angels riding on the winds of the Earth — the tears of King Duncan's sorrowing subjects will fall like rain and drown the wind. I have no good reason to murder King

Duncan. I have only my ambition to be King of Scotland. This ambition can vault over good reasons not to do something. This vaulting ambition is like a rider who tries to leap into a saddle but overleaps and falls to the ground on the other side of the horse.

Seeing his wife enter the room, Macbeth asked, “What is the news?”

Lady Macbeth replied, “King Duncan has almost finished eating. Why did you leave the dining chamber?”

Macbeth asked, “Has King Duncan asked for me?”

“Of course he has,” Lady Macbeth replied.

“We will proceed no further in this business we have been planning,” Macbeth said. “King Duncan has greatly honored me recently. I have earned golden opinions from all sorts of people. Because they are new, I should enjoy these golden opinions for a while, not throw them away as if they were old clothes.”

Lady Macbeth replied, “You were hopeful of quickly becoming King. Was your hope drunk? Did your hope sleep off its drunkenness? Has your hope woken up with a hangover? Does it now look sickly and pale at what it wanted to acquire? From this time on, I know how to value your love. You know what you want. Are you afraid to act to get it? Will you act to get the crown you desire, or will you live like a coward and know that you are a coward? Will you allow ‘I will get what I want’ to always be followed by ‘I dare not act to get what I want’? Will you be like the cat in this old proverb: ‘The cat wants to eat fish, but it will not wet its feet’?”

“Please shut up,” Macbeth said. “I dare do all that a man may do. Who dares do more than I do is not a man.”

“When you brought up the idea of murdering King Duncan to me, were you then a beast?” Lady Macbeth asked. “No. When you dared to murder King Duncan, then you were a man. And if you actually commit the murder, then you will be even more of a man. Before, the proper time and place of the murder was not known, and you dared to think of murder. Now, the time and place — this night, here in our castle — are known. Before, you thought to make a proper time and place for murder, but now that you have them, you are afraid to commit murder. I have breastfed an infant, and I know how it is to love the babe who feeds at my breast, but I would, while the babe was smiling in my sight, have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums, and dashed his brains out, had I sworn as you have sworn to commit murder.”

Macbeth asked, “What happens if we are caught?”

Lady Macbeth replied, “Why should we be caught? Call up your courage, and we will not be caught. When King Duncan is asleep — and after this day’s hard journey he will soon be asleep — I will get his two bodyguards drunk with wine. They will remember nothing, and their brains will be confused with alcohol and the drugs I will put in their wine. When they are asleep like drunken pigs, what cannot you and I do to the unguarded King Duncan? What can we do that we cannot put the blame upon his drunken bodyguards? They shall bear the blame of our great murder.”

Macbeth said, “Give birth to sons only, not to daughters, for your undaunted spirit should bring forth only sons. After we kill King Duncan, we can smear his blood on his bodyguards and on their daggers. Will that be enough to make other people think that King Duncan’s bodyguards have murdered him?”

Lady Macbeth replied, “What else will anyone be able to think? After all, you and I shall loudly grieve for the murdered King.”

Macbeth said, “I have made up my mind. I shall force every part of my body to do the terrible deed I have decided to do. Let us rejoin the feast and fool the others with our acting skills. False faces must hide what the false heart does know.”

CHAPTER 2: MACBETH TURNS EVIL**— 2.1 —**

In the darkness of night, Banquo and Fleance, his son, entered the courtyard of Macbeth's castle. To provide light, Fleance carried a burning torch.

Banquo asked, "Fleance, what time of night is it?"

Fleance replied, "The Moon has set. I have not heard the clock."

"I believe that the Moon sets at twelve."

"I am sure that it is later than that."

Banquo said, "Hold my sword for me."

He thought, *We are in Macbeth's castle, and we ought to fear nothing while we are here. I should have no need to carry a sword.*

He said out loud, "The Heavens tonight are practicing frugality. The candles that are the stars are not burning. I do not wish to carry anything tonight. I am so tired that I ought to go to bed, and yet, I do not want to sleep. I pray that God and the saints will keep from me the nightmares that come while men sleep."

Macbeth and a servant made a slight noise as they entered the courtyard.

Startled by the noise, Banquo ordered Fleance, "Give me my sword!" Then he called out, "Who's there?"

Macbeth replied, "A friend."

Banquo said, "I am surprised that you are not yet in bed. The King is at his rest. He is very pleased with your hospitality and with your recent heroism, and he has given to you and

your lady many gifts. Here is a diamond that he gave to me to give to you as a present for Lady Macbeth in gratitude for the hospitality he has received here. He called her ‘a most kind hostess,’ and when he went to bed he was most content with your reception of him here.”

Macbeth replied, “We were unprepared for King Duncan’s visit to our castle, and so although we greatly desired to entertain him well, we were unable to do all that we had wished.”

“All is well,” Banquo said, and then he changed the subject. “I dreamed last night of the three Weird Sisters. Some of what they said about you has proved to be true. You are now the Thane of Cawdor.”

“I have not been thinking about them,” Macbeth lied, and then he added, “And yet, if sometime you and I can spare an hour, we could meet and talk about the Weird Sisters, if you are willing.”

“I will be happy to do so whenever you like,” Banquo said.

“Sometime in the future, I will desire your support,” Macbeth said. “If you give me that support, you will benefit by so doing.”

“I will be happy to support your cause, as long as I do not lose honor by so doing,” Banquo said. Thinking of the Weird Sisters’ prophecy that Macbeth would in the future be King of Scotland, Banquo added, “I would hate to lose the honor I already have by attempting to gain more honor. I will be happy to support your cause as long as I can keep my conscience clean and my loyalty to King Duncan unspotted.”

“Sleep well,” Macbeth said.

“Thank you, sir,” Banquo said. “You do the same.”

Banquo and Fleance left the courtyard, leaving Macbeth and

the servant behind.

Macbeth ordered the servant, “Go to Lady Macbeth. Tell her that when she has finished mixing my drink to ring a bell. Then go to bed.”

The servant left, leaving Macbeth alone.

Macbeth then saw something that nobody else, if anyone had been present, would have seen.

Macbeth thought, *Is this a dagger that I see before me, the handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch it.*

He made a motion to grab the dagger, but his hand closed on nothing.

I do not have it in my hand, and yet I see it clearly. Is this fatal vision unable to be touched as well as to be seen? Is this dagger simply a creation of my mind? Is it a hallucination produced by my fevered brain? I see the dagger, and it appears to be as solid as the dagger that now I draw.

Macbeth drew a dagger from his belt.

The dagger I cannot touch leads me in the direction that I must go to kill the King. The dagger I cannot touch is like the dagger that I will use to kill the King. My eyes are not working correctly although my other senses do work, or perhaps my eyes work even better than my other senses. I see the dagger clearly. On it I now see splashes of blood that were not on it previously.

No bloody knife is here. My thinking of murdering King Duncan has caused me to hallucinate this knife. Half of the world is now asleep and lying as if they were dead, and nightmares prey upon them in their beds that are curtained in an attempt to keep out the cold. Now is the time that witches give offerings to their goddess: Hecate with her dark

and unsavory ways. Now is the time that the old man who is Murder, called to action by his guard the wolf, walks like the ancient Roman King Tarquin walked to rape Lucretia and cause her to commit suicide. Old man Murder walks like a ghost. Earth upon which I walk, I pray to you that you do not hear my steps. The stones I walk on ought not to reveal my presence with noise. The deed that I will do requires silence. I am thinking now, and as long as I keep thinking, King Duncan remains alive. The more I think, the more afraid I am.

A bell rang.

I go now to do the deed. The bell is my signal. Hear not the bell, King Duncan, for it is a knell that summons you to Heaven or to Hell.

Macbeth walked toward the King's bedchamber.

— 2.2 —

Lady Macbeth nervously paced and thought, *I gave the King's bodyguards wine to make them drunk; the same wine has made me bold. The wine that has put them to sleep has excited me and made me wide awake.*

A cry sounded in the night.

What was that! It was an owl, hooting while flying over a house in which a man will die. This owl is like a bellman whose job is to ring a bell to announce that a person is dying.

Macbeth is now committing the murder. I have unlocked the doors to the King's bedchamber, and the King's bodyguards are snoring, not protecting the King. Their performance of their job is laughable. I drugged their drinks so much that the bodyguards are poisoned — even if Macbeth does nothing to them, they have as much chance of dying as they do of living.

She heard Macbeth's voice calling from inside the castle, "Who's there? What's wrong?"

Lady Macbeth thought, *I am afraid that the bodyguards have woken up and stopped the murder. My husband and I will be ruined by what we have attempted and not by what we have done. Let me listen carefully. We may yet succeed. I put the daggers where my husband could not miss them. Had King Duncan not resembled my father as he slept, I would have killed him myself.*

Macbeth walked toward Lady Macbeth, who exclaimed, "My husband!"

Macbeth said, "I have done the deed. Did you hear a noise?"

Lady Macbeth replied, "I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry. Did not you speak?"

"When?"

"Just now."

"As I descended from the King's bedchamber?"

"Yes."

Macbeth, hearing an imaginary noise, said, "Listen!" Then he asked, "Who is sleeping in the bedchamber next to the King's?"

"Donalbain, King Duncan's younger son."

Macbeth looked down at his bloody hands and said, "This is a sorry sight."

Lady Macbeth replied, "A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight."

"As I descended from the King's bedchamber, I heard two people. One laughed in his sleep, and the other cried,

‘Murder!’ The two woke each other. I stood quietly and listened. They said their prayers and then went back to sleep.”

“Two people are sleeping in that bedchamber: Donalbain and his attendant,” Lady Macbeth said.

Macbeth said, “One cried, ‘God bless us!’ and the other cried, ‘Amen.’ It was as if they had seen me with these hands that look as if they belong to a hangman, bloody from chopping up the bodies of criminals after a public hanging. I listened to the two men’s fears, and I could not say ‘Amen’ when they cried, ‘God bless us!’”

“Don’t think about it,” Lady Macbeth said.

Macbeth asked, “But why couldn’t I say ‘Amen’? I had most need of blessing, and the word ‘Amen’ stuck in my throat.”

Lady Macbeth replied, “We must not think about our evil deeds in such a fashion. Thinking about them in that way will make us mad.”

“I heard a voice cry, ‘Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep’ — the innocent sleep, sleep that relieves the cares of life, sleep that ends the hard work of the day, sleep that bathes away the soreness of hard work, sleep that heals hurt minds, sleep that most substantially nourishes the body and the mind —”

“What do you mean? I can’t understand what you are saying!”

Macbeth said, “The voice cried, ‘Sleep no more!’ to everyone in the castle. It cried, ‘Glamis has murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more.’”

Lady Macbeth asked, “Who was it that thus cried? Husband, you weaken yourself when you think in such a cowardly

way. Go. Get some water so that you can wash away the blood from your hands.”

She looked at his hands and was startled by what she saw: “Why did you bring these daggers from the murder scene? They must lie there. They are evidence that will convict the King’s bodyguards of murder and treason. Carry them back and smear the sleepy bodyguards with blood.”

Macbeth replied, “I will not go back. I am afraid to think what I have done. Look on it again I dare not.”

Lady Macbeth exclaimed, “Coward! Give me the daggers! Sleeping people and dead people are as harmless as pictures. Only a child is afraid of a picture of a devil. If King Duncan still bleeds, I will paint the faces of the bodyguards with blood. The gilding I do to their faces will result in everyone assuming that they are guilty.”

She left.

A knocking sounded at the castle gate.

Macbeth thought, *Who is knocking? What is wrong with me? Every noise I hear scares me.*

He looked at his hands and said to himself, “What kind of hands are these? They seem to pluck out my eyes. Will all the water in Neptune’s ocean wash away this blood from my hands? No! Instead, the blood from my hands will turn the ocean red.”

Lady Macbeth overheard Macbeth’s final words as she returned. She said, “My hands are now the same color — red — as your hands, but I would be ashamed if my heart were as white — as cowardly — as your heart.”

A knocking sounded again at the castle gate.

She said, “I hear a knocking at the south entry. Let us go to

our bedchamber. We can wash the blood from our hands and so remove the evidence that would convict us: A little water clears us of this deed, making it easy to escape punishment. You would know this, if you could keep your firmness of purpose.”

More knocking sounded at the castle gate.

Lady Macbeth said, “Listen! More knocking! Let’s go to our bedchamber so you can put on your dressing gown and robe. We can’t be seen in these, our day clothes. People will know that we have been up and about, not sleeping. Pay attention! You are lost in your thoughts!”

Macbeth replied, “To know my deed, it were best not know myself — I had rather not know myself than to realize the full enormity of what I have done.”

More knocking sounded at the castle gate.

He added, “Wake Duncan with your knocking! I wish you could!”

The Macbeths went to their bedchamber.

— 2.3 —

More knocking sounded as a half-asleep, half-drunken gatekeeper came to open the gate.

The gatekeeper complained aloud to himself, “Here’s a knocking indeed! If a man were the keeper of Hell-gate, he would be kept busy turning the key.”

More knocking.

“I am kept so busy that I might as well be Hell’s gatekeeper, and this castle might as well be Hell. So be it. Who’s there, in the name of Beelzebub, Prince of demons? Ah, here is the first knocker: A farmer who hoarded crops in the expectation of making a killing with high prices when a famine arrived.

The famine never came; instead, crops were plentiful, and the farmer hanged himself because of low prices for his crops. I hope that he brought plenty of handkerchiefs with him because here in Hell he will sweat.”

More knocking sounded.

“Who’s there, in another devil’s name that I cannot remember? It is probably a liar who told one lie that resulted in treason and when caught he told another lie: He said that the first lie did not count because he had lied for the sake of God. This liar was talented, but he was not talented enough to lie his way into Heaven, and so he knocks at Hell’s gate, where he is welcomed in — and tortured.”

More knocking sounded.

“Knock, knock, knock! Who’s there? By my faith, here’s an English tailor. For years, he stole cloth from his customers by making the garments close fitting. But he tried that trick with French stockings, which are already close fitting, and so his thievery was discovered. I hope that the tailor brought a goose with him because surely his goose will be cooked here.”

More knocking sounded.

“Knock, knock, knock! Never any silence. But I will cease to be the gatekeeper of Hell — this place is too cold for Hell! But if I had been the gatekeeper of Hell just now, I would have let in a few more workers of different jobs who travel a broad and seemingly pleasant path to everlasting fire and torment.”

More knocking sounded.

“I’m coming! I’m coming!”

The gatekeeper opened the gate and said, “Don’t forget to tip.”

Macduff and Lennox, two Scottish noblemen, entered the courtyard.

Macduff said to the gatekeeper, “Was it so late, friend, before you went to bed, that you lay asleep so long?”

The gatekeeper replied, “Truly, sir, we were drinking and partying until about 3 a.m., and drinking, sir, is a great provoker of three things.”

“What three things does drink especially provoke?”

“Nose-painting, sleep, and urine. Much use of alcohol paints one’s nose red, it makes one sleep, and it makes one pee. Alcohol both provokes and unprovokes lechery. It makes a man feel horny, and it makes a man unable to produce a horn. When it comes to horniness, alcohol is a liar. Alcohol makes a man horny, but it makes him unable to do anything about it. Alcohol persuades a man to find a partner, but it makes him unable to do anything with that partner. Alcohol makes a man attempt to get an erection, but it makes the man unable to keep that erection if he gets one. In short, alcohol lies to a man, making him horny but unable to do anything but sleep. Furthermore, once the man is asleep, the alcohol leaves him — the man pees himself.”

Macduff said, “I believe that alcohol did these things to you last night.”

“Alcohol did indeed, sir. It got me right in the throat. But I fought him. It made my legs weak and staggery, but I was too strong and cast it out of my body with my vomit.”

Macduff asked, “Is your master awake?”

Macbeth entered the courtyard.

Seeing him, Macduff said, “Our knocking has awakened him; here he comes.”

Lennox greeted Macbeth, "Good morning, noble sir."

"Good morning to both of you," Macbeth replied.

"Is the King stirring, worthy Thane?" asked Macduff.

"Not yet."

"He did command me to call early on him. I am almost too late."

"I'll bring you to him," Macbeth said.

"I know that entertaining the King is a trouble to you, but one that you are happy to undertake."

"Work that we delight in is not work," Macbeth replied. He added, "This is the door."

"I'll be so bold to wake him, as that is my appointed duty."

Macduff walked through the door that led to the King's bedchamber.

Lennox asked, "Is the King leaving here today?"

"Yes," Macbeth said. "He did decide so."

"The night has been wild," Lennox said. "Last night, the chimneys were blown down in the place we slept. People are saying that they heard cries of mourning in the air, strange screams of death, and terrible voices making prophecies of dire tumult and chaotic events to come and make the world woeful. The bird of darkness, the owl, screamed all night. Some say that the Earth was fevered and did shake."

Macbeth replied, "It was a rough night."

For Macbeth, especially, it was.

"I am too young to remember a night as bad as this," Lennox said.

Macduff ran into the courtyard and shouted, "Raise the alarm! Something has happened that is beyond words and beyond belief!"

Macbeth and Lennox asked together, "What's the matter?"

Macduff shouted, "Evil has created a masterpiece! The King's body was a temple, but the temple has been broken into and the life inside stolen!"

"What are you saying?" Macbeth asked. "The life?"

"Are you saying that King Duncan is dead?" Lennox asked.

"Go into the King's bedchamber, and you will see a sight that is like a Gorgon that will make you blind and turn you into stone," Macduff answered. "This sight will destroy anyone who sees it. I can't speak of it. Go and see it, and speak for me."

Macbeth and Lennox went through the door that led to the King's bedchamber.

Macduff shouted, "Awake, awake, everyone! Ring the alarm bell. Murder and treason! Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! Wake up! Shake off your sleep, which resembles death, and see real death itself! Get up! See an image of the Last Judgment! Malcolm! Banquo! Rise from your beds as if you were rising from your graves, and walk like ghosts to come and see this horror! Ring the bell!"

The alarm bell rang.

Lady Macbeth entered the courtyard and said, "What's the matter? Why has the alarm sounded to wake up everyone in the castle? It sounds like a trumpet in time of war! Tell me!"

"Gentle lady," Macduff said, "it is not for you to hear what I can speak. Such words entering a woman's ear would kill the hearer."

Banquo arrived, and Macduff said to him, “Banquo, Banquo, our royal master is murdered!”

Lady Macbeth exclaimed, “What, in our castle!”

Banquo pointed out, “Too cruel anywhere,” and then he said, “Dear Macduff, I pray that you contradict yourself, and say that what you said is not so.”

Macbeth, Lennox, and Ross entered the courtyard.

Macbeth said, “Had I but died an hour before this murder, I would have lived a blessed life.”

Macbeth’s words were true.

He added, “From this moment, there is nothing worthwhile in mortal life. Everything is a sick joke; renown and grace are dead. The wine of life has been drunk, and all that is left are the dregs.”

For Macbeth, his words were true.

Malcolm and Donalbain, King Duncan’s two sons, entered the courtyard.

“What’s wrong?” Donalbain asked.

“You have suffered a tragedy and do not yet know it,” Macbeth answered. “The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood has been stopped.”

“Your royal father has been murdered,” Macduff said in plain language.

“By whom?” asked Malcolm, the oldest son.

“It seems that his bodyguards committed the murder,” Lennox replied. “Their hands and faces were bloodied; so were their unwiped daggers, which we found lying on their pillows. The bodyguards were disoriented and not in

possession of their senses. No man's life should be trusted with them."

"I am sorry that I killed them in my fury," Macbeth said.

"Why did you kill them?" Macduff asked.

"Who can be wise and amazed, temperate and furious, loyal and neutral, all in the same moment? No one. My love for King Duncan was stronger than my reason. I saw King Duncan dead. His silver skin was laced with his golden blood. The gashes that the knives made in his body were intrusions of evil. Near the King were his murderers, red with the color of their trade, their daggers bloody with gore. In that moment, what man who loves the King could refrain from killing the King's murderers?"

Realizing that Macduff suspected her husband, Lady Macbeth created a distraction. She shouted, "Help me hence!"

Macduff ordered, "Look after the lady."

Lady Macbeth pretended to faint.

Malcolm and Donalbain, who were at a distance from the others, conferred together. No one overheard them.

Malcolm asked Donalbain, "Why are we quiet? It is our father who has been murdered."

Donalbain replied, "Why should we speak — or even be present? Our father the King is dead; those who wanted him dead will want us dead as well. I don't believe that our father's murderer or murderers have been killed. Let us flee — our lives are in danger. We can mourn our father's death later — from a safe distance. If we stay here, we can be killed at any time."

Malcolm said, "It is not yet the time to mourn — or to take

action.”

Banquo said, “Look after the lady.”

Attendants came and carried Lady Macbeth away from the courtyard.

Banquo said, “Let us get out of our night clothing and put on warm clothing for the day, then let us meet and discuss this murder. Right now, we are shaken by our fears and suspicions. I will put my trust in God, and I will seek to find the reasons for this murder. I will fight whatever lies led to the secret plot that resulted in this murder.”

“So will I,” Macduff said.

“So will we all,” the others said.

“Let us quickly get dressed and arm ourselves and meet in the hall,” Macbeth said.

All left the courtyard except Malcolm and Donalbain.

Malcolm asked Donalbain, “What will you do? Let us not meet with them. I think the murderer is still alive and in the castle. I also think that anyone who is capable of committing a murder is also capable of pretending to be shocked and surprised at that murder. I will flee to England.”

Donalbain replied, “I will flee to Ireland. If we flee in different directions, both of us will be safer than if we flee together. If we stay here, a man who smiles at us may also hide a dagger that he hopes to use to kill us. Anyone who wants to be King knows that he must kill us. Men who are the closest to us in being blood relatives are also the likeliest to make us bloody.”

Malcolm said, “This treasonous plot has not yet run its course. It is as if an arrow is aimed at us. The best way for us not to be hit by the arrow is to get beyond the distance that

it can travel. Therefore, let us get horses, and let us not be squeamish about leaving immediately. Let us steal ourselves away. There is no criminality in such a theft when we will meet with no mercy if we stay here.”

They left the courtyard.

— 2.4 —

Outside Macbeth’s castle, Ross and an old man talked.

The old man said, “I can remember well seventy years. During those years I have seen dreadful hours and strange things, but what I have seen this dark night makes those hours and things seem like trifles.”

“Old man,” Ross said, “the Heavens seem to be troubled by the actions of Humankind and so threaten the world in which men live. Look at a clock, and you will know that it should be daylight now, yet night strangles the Sun. Is the night too strong, or is the day too ashamed, that the result is that darkness makes the Earth dark like a tomb at a time when sunshine should enlighten it?”

“This darkness is unnatural,” the old man said, “like the regicide that just occurred. Last Tuesday, an owl that normally kills mice instead attacked and killed a falcon — a bird of prey.”

Ross replied, “King Duncan’s horses did something that is strange. Beauteous and swift, the best of their race, these horses turned wild in nature, broke out of their stalls, and ran away. They refused to be obedient to their human masters, but instead seemed to war against them.”

The old man said, “It is said that the horses cannibalized each other.”

“They did,” Ross said. “I myself witnessed them eating each other’s flesh.”

He looked to the side and said, "Here comes a good man: Macduff."

Ross said to Macduff, "How goes the world, sir, now?"

"Don't you know?" Macduff replied.

"Is it known who did this bloody, terrible regicide?"

"The bodyguards whom Macbeth has slain."

"Such evil is difficult to believe," Ross said. "In what way would the bodyguards benefit by King Duncan's murder?"

"They were paid to commit the murder. Malcolm and Donalbain, the King's two sons, have fled, and so they are being blamed for bribing the bodyguards to kill their father the King."

"Patricide and regicide! Patricide is even more against nature than regicide! Ambition can be so strong that it causes the destruction of everything in its path, including one's own father. Most likely, I suppose, Macbeth will become King. He is a close kinsman of the late King."

"He has already been chosen King, and he has gone to Scone, where he will be crowned."

"Where is the body of King Duncan?"

"It has been carried to Colmekill, where is the tomb that protects the bones of his ancestors."

"Will you go to Scone?" Ross asked.

"No, I will return to Fife, my home," Macduff replied.

Ross thought, *Macbeth could take your absence as an insult to him*. He said aloud, "I will go to Scone to see Macbeth crowned."

"I hope that all goes well there. Let me say farewell to you

now. The old King was generous and merciful, and things may not go nearly as well under the new King.”

Ross said, “Farewell, old man.”

The old man replied, “Farewell, and may God’s blessing go with you, and with all who try to turn bad things into good things and evil people into good people.”

CHAPTER 3: EVIL AND MORE EVIL**— 3.1 —**

Banquo stood alone at King Duncan's castle, now occupied by the Macbeths, in Forres.

Banquo thought, *Macbeth, you have it all now. You are King of Scotland and now use the royal plural. You are also Thane of Cawdor and Thane of Glamis. You have everything that the Weird Sisters promised to you, and I fear that you have acted most foully to get everything that they promised to you. However, the Weird Sisters did not say that your descendants would be Kings. Instead, they said that I would be the root and ancestor of many Kings. Since the Weird Sisters have spoken the truth to you, Macbeth, why may not they have spoken the truth to me? But I had better be quiet and not talk about this.*

A trumpet call sounded to announce the King, and King Macbeth, Queen Macbeth, Lennox, Ross, and various lords and attendants entered the room in which Banquo stood.

Macbeth said, "Here is our chief guest for tonight's banquet."

"If Banquo were not at our feast," Lady Macbeth said, "then it would be incomplete and unfitting."

"Tonight we will hold a ceremonious feast, and I request that you attend," Macbeth said to Banquo.

"It is my duty to do whatever you command," Banquo replied.

"Will you ride on horseback this afternoon?" Macbeth asked Banquo.

"Yes, my good lord."

"We would otherwise have sought your advice, which has

always been serious and profitable, in today's council; however, we will hear your advice tomorrow. Will you be riding far?"

"I will ride long enough to fill the time between now and the feast. Unless my horse is faster than I expect, it will be dark for an hour or two before I return."

Macbeth ordered, "Fail not to attend our feast."

"My lord, I will not," Banquo promised.

"We hear that our blood-covered cousins — Malcolm and Donalbain — are in England and in Ireland. They deny that they cruelly murdered their father, King Duncan. Instead, they are telling their hosts strange lies. But we will talk of this tomorrow, as well as of other matters that concern us both. Go and mount your horse. Farewell, until you return. Is Fleance, your son, riding with you?"

"Yes, my good lord," Banquo replied. "And we ought to be going now."

"I hope that your horses are swift and sure of foot, and now I entrust you to their backs. Farewell."

Banquo departed, and Macbeth said to the others present, "Let everyone entertain himself until seven this evening, the time of the feast. To make company more enjoyable, we will stay by ourselves until the time of the banquet. Until then, God be with you."

All departed except for Macbeth and an attendant.

Macbeth said to the attendant, "Are the men I am expecting waiting for me?"

The attendant replied, "Yes, they are, my lord. They are outside the castle gate."

"Bring them to me."

The attendant departed, and Macbeth thought, *To be King is nothing unless I can be King without worrying about being deposed. I am deeply afraid of Banquo. His royal nature must be feared because of his many good qualities. He is courageous, and he is wise enough to tip the odds in his favor and then take action. I am afraid of no one but him. Even my guardian spirit is afraid of him, just as Mark Antony's guardian spirit was afraid of Octavian Caesar, who eventually defeated him in Rome's civil wars. Banquo rebuked the Weird Sisters when they said that I would be King, and he asked them to tell his future. They said that he would beget many Kings. To me they gave a fruitless crown and a barren scepter — according to the Weird Sisters, no son of mine will become King after me. I have defiled my mind. Why? For Banquo's descendants! I have murdered the gracious King Duncan. Why? For Banquo's descendants! I have put poisonous drugs into the cup — my conscience — from which I formerly drank only peace. Why? For Banquo's descendants! I have given my immortal soul to Satan. Why? For Banquo's descendants! I have done all these things so that Banquo's descendants may become Kings. I don't want that to happen, so I will challenge fate itself and fight it to the death.*

Hearing a noise, Macbeth asked, "Who's there?"

The attendant came again into the room, bringing with him two murderers.

"Leave us alone until I call for you," Macbeth said to the attendant.

He said to the two murderers, "Was it not yesterday we spoke together?"

The First Murderer replied, "It was, so please your Highness."

"Have you thought about what I said to you then?" Macbeth

asked. “I explained to you two that Banquo was your enemy and had plotted against you. Previously, you two had thought that it was I who was your enemy. I showed to both of you clear proof of these things the last time we met. I proved who deceived you, who thwarted you, who plotted against you, and other things that would convince even a half-wit and an insane person to believe ‘Banquo is my enemy.’”

The First Murderer replied, “You made these things known to us.”

“I did all that, and more,” Macbeth said. “And now let us get to the point of this, our second meeting. Is your nature such that you can let this man’s bad treatment of you two pass without your getting revenge? Are you made so meek by the Christian gospel that you will pray for this good man and for his children — this man whose heavy hand has brought you close to your grave and made beggars of your families?”

“We are men, my liege,” the First Murderer said, “and as we are men, we will seek revenge.”

“Yes, you are part of the many who are called men. Similarly, hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs, shaggy dogs, longhaired water dogs, and dog-wolf mixes are all called dogs. However, dogs are classified by their traits. Some dogs are swift, some are slow, some guard the household, some are used in hunting, and so on. Each kind of dog has its gift that nature has given it, and so it can be distinguished from the other kinds of dog. This kind of list is more informative than a list that simply contains the names of various kinds of dogs. Similarly, men are classified by their traits. Where in the list of men appear you two? Are you in the worst rank of Mankind, or above the worst rank? Should I entrust you two with a plan that will get rid of Banquo? Should I entrust you two with a plan that will make you my friends? As long as Banquo lives, I am ill at ease, but after Banquo dies, I shall be perfectly happy.”

The Second Murderer said, “I am a man who has been so badly treated by the world that in my anger I don’t much care what I do as long as I get some revenge for how I have been treated.”

The First Murderer said, “I am another such man. I am tired of the disasters I have suffered and I am tired of being the plaything of fate, and so I am willing to risk my life on the chance of improving my fortune. If I fail, I can but die.”

“Both of you know that Banquo is your enemy?” Macbeth asked.

“Yes, we do,” said the two murderers.

“Banquo is also my enemy,” Macbeth said. “Every moment that he is alive creates a pain in my heart. As King, I could easily and openly have him killed and be able to justify the killing, yet I must not, because he and I have certain friends in common whom I must keep as friends but who would mourn his death even if the King himself had ordered it. That is why I need you two. I must keep my part in Banquo’s death secret for various important reasons.”

“We shall, my lord, perform what you command us,” the Second Murderer said.

The First Murderer said, “Though our lives —”

Macbeth interrupted, “I can see that you are capable of doing what you promise to do. Within the next hour, I will tell you where you will hide in waiting for Banquo. I will give you the best information possible, including the best time to do what you have promised to do. This information comes from a man who well knows how to get information. This deed must be done tonight, and it must be done at some distance from the castle. Always remember that I must not be suspected of planning Banquo’s death. In addition, so that this deed is accomplished perfectly, you must kill Fleance,

Banquo's son. Fleance's death is as desired by me as is Banquo's death. Leave now, and make sure that you are resolved to carry out this plan. I will come to you soon."

Both murderers replied, "We are resolved to do what we have promised."

The two murderers left, and Macbeth said, "The plan is complete. Banquo, if your soul is going to go to Heaven, it must find its way there tonight."

— 3.2 —

Lady Macbeth asked a servant in the castle, "Has Banquo gone from court?"

The servant replied, "Yes, madam, but he returns again tonight."

"Tell the King that I would like to talk to him."

"Madam, I will."

The servant left the room.

Alone in the room, Lady Macbeth thought, *Nothing is gained; all is spent. We have gained nothing; we have spent all we had. We have gotten what we thought we desired, but it has brought us no happiness. We would have been better off if we had been murdered instead of us murdering King Duncan. We committed murder, seeking joy, but the result for us has not been joy.*

Seeing her husband enter the room, Lady Macbeth said, "Why do you reject company and stay alone by yourself? Your only companions are sad thoughts. These sad thoughts about the men you have murdered should die just like the murdered men. We can't fix what we have done; therefore, we ought not to think about it. What has been done will stay done."

“We have wounded the snake, but not killed it,” Macbeth said. “The snake will heal and be healthy again, and its fangs will threaten us, its feeble enemy. I wish that reality would disintegrate; I wish that Heaven and Earth would both perish. Destruction would be better than the reality of my shaking with fear as I eat and the reality of my shaking with fear from nightmares as I sleep. I would be better off dead. It is better for me to lie with the dead, whom I sent to their peace so that I could gain power, than to be tortured with this restless madness. King Duncan is in his grave. He experienced life’s fitful fever, but now he rests well. Treason has done its worst and killed him. Now, he is untouched by steel swords, deadly poison, Scottish traitors, and foreign armies — nothing can hurt him.”

“My noble lord,” Lady Macbeth said, “put on a happier face than the one you display now. Be lively and jovial among your guests tonight.”

“I will,” Macbeth replied, “and I hope that you will do the same. But let us talk a moment about Banquo. Honor him both with your eyes and your words. Show respect to him. We are still unsafe in our positions as King and Queen, and we must flatter him. We must wear a face that disguises what is in our hearts.”

“You must stop talking and thinking like this.”

“Dear wife,” Macbeth said, “my mind is full of scorpions — it is dangerous and it hurts. As you know, Banquo and his son, Fleance, are still alive.”

“Neither of them has been granted eternal life in this world.”

“I take comfort in that fact,” Macbeth said. “They can be killed. Be cheerful tonight. Before the bat takes its flight in the dark regions of our castle, before the winged beetle sounds the arrival of night for Hecate, goddess of witches, a deed of dreadful note shall be done.”

“What’s to be done?”

“I won’t tell you, dearest darling, until the deed is done. Then you may applaud it. Come, darkness, blindfold the eyes of daylight, and with your bloody and invisible hand, tear to pieces that life that makes me pale with fear. The light is fading, and the crow is flying to its home. The good beings who are active in the daytime are beginning to droop and drowse, while the black agents that are active in the nighttime are awakening. You, wife, don’t understand my words now, but wait a while longer. Evil beings can start out weak, but make themselves strong by doing more evil. Come with me now.”

They left the room.

— 3.3 —

Three murderers, including the two murderers Macbeth had talked to earlier, stood together.

The First Murderer asked, “Who told you to join with us?”

“Macbeth,” answered the Third Murderer.

“We need not mistrust him,” the Second Murderer said. “He knows exactly what Macbeth told us to do and how Macbeth told us to do it.”

“Then join with us,” said the Second Murderer to the Third Murderer. “The setting Sun still sends forth some rays of light. Now travelers urge their horses to go faster so that they may soon reach an inn to stay at, and soon the man we have been waiting for will appear.”

“I hear horses,” the Third Murderer said.

The Third Murderer heard the voice of Banquo saying to a servant, “Give us a torch to light our way.”

“This is the man we have been waiting for,” the Second

Murderer said. "Macbeth's other guests are already in the castle."

"They have dismounted from their horses," the First Murderer said.

"They are still about a mile from the castle," the Third Murderer said. "It is the custom for the servants to walk the horses by a longer route to the castle to cool them off, while the masters walk from here to the castle."

"I see a light!" the Second Murderer said.

Banquo and Fleance stood revealed by the light cast by the torch that Fleance carried.

"It is Banquo," the Third Murderer said.

"Get ready," the First Murderer said.

Banquo said, "It will rain tonight."

"Then let the rain come down," the First Murderer said.

The three murderers attacked, concentrating on Banquo, who was an older, experienced warrior and much more dangerous than his son. In the confusion, the First Murderer extinguished the torch and the darkness made seeing difficult.

"We are under attack!" Banquo shouted. A good father, he shouted, "Run, Fleance! Save yourself, and avenge me later!"

The three murderers succeeded in cutting down Banquo, but Fleance succeeded in escaping.

"Who put out the torch?" the Third Murderer asked.

"Wasn't that the right thing to do?" the First Murderer asked.

"We have killed Banquo only," the Third Murderer said.

“His son has escaped.”

“We have failed in half of our mission,” the Second Murderer said.

“Let’s leave,” the First Murderer said, “and tell Macbeth what has happened.”

— 3.4 —

In the great hall of the castle, a feast was set out on the long table. In the great hall were Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Ross, Lennox, various other members of nobility, and many servants.

“Please sit down according to your degree of nobility, and welcome, all,” Macbeth said.

“Thank you, your majesty,” all of the lords replied.

“I myself shall be the humble host and mingle with all,” Macbeth said. “For now my wife shall sit on her chair of state, and later we shall ask for her to mingle.”

“Welcome all our friends for me, sir,” Lady Macbeth said. “In my heart they are our friends and they are all welcome here.”

The First Murderer appeared at the door.

Macbeth said to his wife, “Our guests return your friendship in their hearts.”

Then he said to the guests, “Both sides — the Queen and the nobility — are equal in giving friendship. I will sit here in the midst of our guests. Be happy, all. Soon we will all drink a toast around the table.”

Seeing the First Murderer, Macbeth walked to the door and said quietly to him, “There’s blood on your face.”

The First Murderer replied, "It is Banquo's blood."

"I prefer it to be on your outside than in his inside," Macbeth said. "Is he dead?"

"My lord, his throat is cut — I cut it for him."

"You are the best of the cutthroats," Macbeth said. "The person who cut Fleance's throat is also good. If you did that, too, you have no equal."

"Most royal sir, Fleance escaped."

"Then I still have a problem that causes me fits," Macbeth said. "If Fleance had also been murdered, my problems would be over. I would be as solid as marble, as firmly based as a boulder, as freely and widely ranging as the air. Instead, I continue to be shut up in a claustrophobic place and assailed by doubts and fears. But is Banquo truly dead?"

"Yes, my good lord. His corpse lies in a ditch, and his head bears twenty gashes, each one of them fatal."

"Thank you for that," Macbeth said. "The grown serpent is dead. The young serpent that escaped will grow up and become poisonous. At present it is not dangerous. Leave now. Tomorrow we will speak together again."

The First Murderer left, and Macbeth went back to his guests and his wife.

Lady Macbeth quietly said to him, "My royal lord, you have not been making our guests feel welcome. Unless the host makes the guests feel welcome, it is as if they are paying customers rather than honored guests. If our guests merely wanted to satisfy their hunger, they could do that at their own homes. Etiquette and welcome provide the sauce to a feast. Without proper etiquette and without a proper welcoming of guests, a feast is lacking."

Macbeth said to Lady Macbeth, “Sweet remembrancer!”

Unseen by anyone, the bloody ghost of Banquo entered the great hall and sat down in the chair reserved for Macbeth at the long table.

Macbeth turned to his guests and said, “May everyone have good appetite, good digestion, and good health.”

He added, “Here under this roof we would have nearly all of Scotland’s nobility if only Banquo, who is endowed with grace, were present. I would prefer to criticize him for forgetting to show up on time rather than to pity him for any mishap that may have occurred to him.”

Ross said, “Banquo’s absence means that he has failed to keep his promise to be present. If it would please your highness, please sit down and favor us with your company.”

“All the seats are taken,” Macbeth said.

“Here is a seat that is reserved for you, sir,” Lennox said.

“Where?”

“Here, my good lord.”

Banquo’s ghost turned in the chair indicated and looked at Macbeth, who looked at the chair and saw seated on it the bloody ghost of Banquo. Startled, Macbeth drew back, his hand on his sword hilt.

“What is it that has startled your highness?” Lennox asked.

“Which of you have done this?” Macbeth shouted.

The nobles and Lady Macbeth could not see the ghost, and they did not know that Macbeth was referring to the wounds that had bloodied Banquo’s head — Macbeth was making a feeble attempt to have someone else blamed for the wounds.

“What, my good lord?” Lennox asked.

Macbeth said to the ghost that none but he could see, “You cannot say that I did it — don’t shake your gory locks of hair at me!”

Seeing Macbeth agitated, Ross said, “Gentlemen, stand up. His highness is not well.”

Lady Macbeth tried to bring order out of chaos by saying, “Sit, worthy friends. The King is often like this, and he has been this way since his youth. Please, stay seated. His illness will end quickly. He will be himself again in a moment. If you stare at him, you will make him worse and extend the length of time his fit lasts. Eat now, and ignore the King.”

To her husband, she said under her breath, “Are you a man?”

“Yes,” Macbeth said to her. “I am a bold man, but I am looking at something that might make even Satan afraid.”

“Stuff and nonsense,” Lady Macbeth replied. “This is something conjured by your fear. This is like the dagger you hallucinated that you told me led you to King Duncan’s bedchamber. These startled outbursts of yours would be suitable for a child sitting in front of a fireplace and listening to a woman tell a story that had been told to her by her grandmother. These startled outbursts of yours are not true fear. You should be ashamed of yourself. Why are you making such wild faces! You are looking at nothing but a chair!”

Macbeth looked again, and again he saw the bloody ghost of Banquo seated on the chair. He said to his wife, “Look! How can you say that nothing is there except a chair?”

Then he said to Banquo’s ghost, “Why should I care anything about you? I can see you moving your head. If you can do that, then speak to me. If tombs and graves are going

to eject their corpses instead of hiding them, then the corpses ought to be eaten by birds and hidden in their stomachs.”

The ghost of Banquo vanished.

“Has your fear turned you into a weak woman?” Lady Macbeth asked her husband.

“Just as surely as I am standing here, I saw a ghost.”

“You should be ashamed,” Lady Macbeth said.

“Blood has been spilled before now — back in the ancient times before we had laws to restrain people and make them gentler,” Macbeth said. “Even now, terrible murders are committed that are horrifying to hear about. But it used to be true that when a man’s brains were dashed out of his skull, the man would die and stay dead. That is no longer true. Now the dead man will rise and walk again despite twenty mortal wounds to his head. What I just saw is more abnormal than even murder.”

Macbeth had much recovered from seeing the ghost, and Lady Macbeth said to him, “My worthy lord, your noble friends lack your company.”

“I do forget,” Macbeth said. “Do not mind me, my most worthy friends. I have a strange infirmity, but people who know me well don’t fuss about it. I wish love and health to all of you. I will sit down. Give me some wine — fill the goblet full. I drink to the general joy of the whole table and to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss. All of us wish that he were here. To all, and to Banquo, let us drink.”

“Hear, hear,” said the nobles.

As Macbeth and the others drank a toast, the ghost of Banquo entered the great hall again.

Catching sight of the ghost, Macbeth shouted, “Go away!

Get out of my sight! Let the dirt cover you in your grave!
Your bones have no marrow! Your blood is cold! Your eyes
are blind although you glare at me!”

Lady Macbeth said to the nobles, “Think of this, good peers,
only as a common effect of my husband’s illness. It is not
dangerous, although it spoils the pleasure of the feast.”

Macbeth shouted at the ghost, “I am brave. What any man
dares, I dare. Approach me in the shape of a rugged Russian
bear, a thick-hided rhinoceros armed with a horn, or an Asian
tiger. Take any shape but the shape you have now, and I will
not tremble in fear. Or be alive again and challenge me to
fight you in a deserted place. If I stay home and tremble in
fear, then say that I have the courage of the doll of a girl. Get
away from me, horrible shadow! Leave now, unreal
mockery! Go!”

The ghost of Banquo vanished.

Macbeth said, “Now that the ghost has left, I am a man again.
Please, everyone, sit down.”

“Your actions have ruined the feast and made everyone
uncomfortable,” Lady Macbeth said to her husband.

“How is it possible that such visions can appear and come
over us like a cloud without everyone being amazed?”
Macbeth said to his wife. “I see such visions and am no
longer myself — my face turns white with fear. But you see
such visions and your cheeks stay red with their natural
color. When I see such visions, I feel like a stranger to my
true — that is, my brave — nature.”

Ross, who had overheard the conversation between Macbeth
and Lady Macbeth, said, “What visions, my lord?”

Lady Macbeth said to the nobles, “I beg you, don’t speak to
the King. He grows worse and worse, and question enrages

him. At once, please leave and good night. Do not take the time to leave in the order of your rank, but please leave at once.”

Lennox said, “Good night, and better health attend his majesty!”

“A kind good night to all!” Lady Macbeth said.

The nobles departed with much to talk about.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth stood alone in the great hall.

“Blood will have blood,” Macbeth said. “The murdered will have their revenge. Gravestones have been said to move and trees to speak, all to bring murderers to justice. Predictions and psychic evidence reveal murderers. Even the actions of magpies and jackdaws and crows have brought forth evidence to reveal a murderer. What time is it?”

“It is so close to morning that it is difficult to tell whether it is night or morning,” Lady Macbeth replied.

“Macduff declines to come to me when I send for him. What is your opinion of that?”

“Did you send to him, sir?”

“I am reporting to you what I have heard, but I will send for him. Actually, I have already sent for him once — he refused to come and attend our banquet. In every noble’s household I have at least one servant whom I pay to be a spy. Early tomorrow, I will seek the Weird Sisters. I want more information. I am resolved to know the worst even if I have to consult evil witches to know it. I will satisfy my curiosity — to me, nothing is more important than that I get the information I seek. I have waded into a river of blood. I have waded so far and so deep into the river that I might as well keep going rather than return to the bank from which I started. I have in mind strange plots, and I intend to act on

them before I think about them too much.”

“You need to get some sleep,” Lady Macbeth said.

“Let’s go to bed,” Macbeth agreed. “My vision of the ghost was simply the fear of a novice to the doing of evil. I need to be more evil and do more evil. I am still much too inexperienced in the doing of dirty deeds.”

— 3.5 —

On a heath below a lightning storm, the three Weird Sisters met Hecate, the goddess of witches. Hecate was not happy. Thunder sounded during their meeting.

“Greetings, Hecate,” the First Witch said. “You look angry.”

“Haven’t I just reason to be angry?” Hecate replied. “You hags don’t know your place. You are overly bold. How dare you tempt Macbeth with riddles to commit murder without my participation? I am your master, I am the secret plotter of all harms, and I *will* have a part in corrupting Macbeth’s soul. Macbeth is nothing but a wayward son. He is spiteful and angry, and he loves himself, not you. But now you can make amends to me for your wayward actions. In the morning, meet me at the pit that leads down to Acheron, one of the rivers of Hell. Macbeth will go there in the morning to seek you to learn about his future. Bring with you your cauldron and the ingredients for your spells and your charms. I will fly in the sky tonight, working on dismal and deadly business. An airy drop of heavy significance hangs from the Moon; I will catch it before it falls to Earth. Through the use of magic, I will use that drop to raise unnatural visions to mislead Macbeth further along the path of his ruin. After he sees my visions, Macbeth will spurn fate, scorn death, and value false hopes more than he values wisdom, gifts from Almighty God, and reasonable fears. As all of you know, overconfidence is the chief enemy of mortals. Death is coming soon for Macbeth, but he will not know it.”

Nearby, music played and the words “Come away ... come away” filled the air.

Hecate said, “My familiar spirit — a demon — is calling for me. It sits on a foggy cloud and waits for me to come.”

Hecate flew away, and the First Witch said, “Come, let’s make haste — Hecate will soon be back again.”

The three Weird Sisters left.

— 3.6 —

At Forres, the site of the late King Duncan’s castle, Lennox and another lord spoke together.

“Your opinions and mine are in agreement,” Lennox said. “Strange things have been occurring. The good King Duncan died, and Macbeth pitied him, so he says. The valiant Banquo walked at night, and Banquo died, and Macbeth pitied him, so he says. You can say, if you like, that Fleance killed his father, Banquo. How do we know that he did that? Because Fleance fled following the murder he had committed, so Macbeth says. It is monstrous for a son to kill a father, so Macbeth says. Fleance did kill his father, so Macbeth says. And Malcolm and Donalbain did kill their father, so Macbeth says. Damned deeds! Macbeth grieved, so he says. He grieved so much, he says, that he killed the King’s bodyguards, who were drunk and asleep. Wasn’t that a noble deed for Macbeth to do? He says so, and he also says that it was a good deed, too. To hear the bodyguards deny that they had murdered the King would have angered any man, so Macbeth says. Macbeth has handled all these matters well — so he says. You may believe Macbeth’s words if you like — but I know that you do not, and neither do I! I think that if Macbeth had power over Malcolm and Donalbain and power over Fleance, they would soon be murdered and so learn the consequences of murdering their fathers, as Macbeth would say. May Heaven never allow

Macbeth to have power over King Duncan's sons and over Banquo's son!

"By the way, I hear that Macduff is in Macbeth's disfavor because Macduff speaks too frankly and too openly. Can you tell me where Macduff is these days?"

The lord replied, "Macduff has gone to visit Malcolm, who — being the late King Duncan's oldest son — ought to be King. The tyrant Macbeth withholds from Malcolm what is his by birthright. Malcolm now lives in the court of the King of England: Edward the Confessor. This King graciously welcomed Malcolm and treats him with great respect despite Malcolm's misfortunes and the deprivation of the crown that is rightfully his. Macduff wants Edward the Confessor to call to arms the people in Northumberland, which borders Scotland, so that its governor the Earl Siward can lead them into battle against Macbeth. If an army is raised to fight against Macbeth, and if the great and good God is willing, as He must be, we will again have food on our tables, we will again be able to sleep easily at night, we will again be able to attend a King's feast without fear of being murdered, we will again be able to support a King with our own free will instead of supporting the King out of fear of what would happen if we did not support that King, and we will again be able to receive the honors due to patriotic men. Under the tyranny of Macbeth, we can no longer do or enjoy any of these things.

"Also, Macbeth has heard about Macduff. Macbeth knows that a rebellion is forming, and he is preparing for war."

"Did Macbeth order Macduff to come to his banquet?" Lennox asked.

"Yes," the lord answered, "and Macduff told Macbeth's messenger, 'Sir, I will not go to Macbeth's banquet.' The unhappy messenger turned his back on Macduff as if to say,

‘You will regret the time that you gave me this answer to take to Macbeth.’”

“The messenger’s action may well convince Macduff to be cautious in opposing Macbeth and to keep away from Scotland — the wrath of Macbeth is terrible and something to be feared,” Lennox said. “It is possible that Macduff could stay in exile and not advocate that an army oppose Macbeth. I wish that an angel would fly to Macduff and tell him that the quicker an army opposes Macbeth the better it will be for Scotland. The removal of the tyrant will be a blessing for our country.”

The lord replied, “I would like to send my own prayers with that angel.”

CHAPTER 4: PILED HIGHER AND DEEPER

— 4.1 —

The three Weird Sisters stood around a boiling cauldron in a cave. Outside a lightning storm raged.

“Three times the striped cat has mewed,” the First Witch said.

“Three times, and the hedgehog has whined once,” said the Second Witch.

“Harpier, my familiar, cries, ‘It is time ... it is time,’” the Third Witch said.

The First Witch said, “Round about the cauldron go; in the pot poisoned entrails throw. First to be boiled is a toad that sweated venom for thirty-one days as it sat under a cold rock.”

All the witches chanted together, “Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn, and cauldron bubble.”

The Second Witch said, “Slice of a swampland snake, in the cauldron boil and bake; eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog, adder’s forked tongue and blind-snake’s poisonous sting, lizard’s leg, and owl’s wing, for a charm of powerful trouble, like a Hell-broth boil and bubble.”

All the witches chanted together, “Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn, and cauldron bubble.”

The Third Witch said, “Scale of a dragon, tooth of a wolf, mummy of a witch, gullet and throat of a ravenous sea-shark, root of hemlock dug up in the dark, liver of a blaspheming Jew, gall of a goat, and twigs of the poisonous yew tree sliced off during the eclipse of the Moon, nose of a Turk and lips of a Tartar, and finger of a newborn babe who is damned

because its mother, a whore, gave birth to it in a ditch and strangled it before it was baptized. Throw these into the cauldron and make the gruel thick and viscous. Add the entrails of a tiger to the ingredients of our cauldron.”

All the witches chanted together, “Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn, and cauldron bubble.”

The Second Witch said, “Cool it with a baboon’s blood, and then the charm is firm and the opposite of good.”

Hecate entered the cave and examined the gruel in the cauldron. She said to the Weird Sisters, “Well done. I commend you for the pains that you have taken to brew this evil charm, and all of you will share in its gains. And now about the cauldron sing, like elves and fairies in a ring, enchanting all that you put in.”

All danced and sang around the cauldron, and the charm was ready for use when Macbeth arrived.

The Second Witch felt sudden pain — a harbinger of approaching evil — and said, “By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes.”

Her words were true now, but if she had spoken them before the Three Witches had tempted Macbeth, they would not have been true. Earlier, Macbeth had been a patriot and a hero, but now he was a regicide and a tyrant.

Hecate left, leaving the Three Witches in the cave awaiting Macbeth.

The Second Witch ordered, “Open, locks, to whoever knocks!”

Leaving Lennox outside, Macbeth entered the cave and said, “What are you doing, you secret, black, and midnight hags?”

The Three Witches replied, “A deed without a name. No

name exists for what we are doing.”

Macbeth said to the witches, “I order you in the name of Satan or whatever other powers you serve to answer my questions no matter by which means you acquire the necessary knowledge to reply. Even if you untie the winds and let them blow against the churches, even if you make the foamy waves batter and sink ships and drown sailors, even if you beat down crops of food and blow down trees, even if you topple palaces and steeples, even if you turn nature into chaos so that no seeds ever again bring forth life, even if you cause so much destruction that chaos itself is sickened, I demand that you tell me the answers to the questions I will ask you.”

The First Witch said, “Speak.”

The Second Witch said, “Demand.”

The Third Witch said, “We will answer.”

The First Witch asked, “Tell us whether you would rather hear the answers from our own mouths, or from the mouths of our masters?”

“Call your masters,” Macbeth ordered. “Let me see them.”

The First Witch chanted, “Pour into the flame the blood of a sow that has eaten her nine piglets. Pour into the flame the grease that has dripped from the skin-sores of the decomposed corpse of a murderer who has been hanging from a gibbet for days.”

All the witches chanted, “Come, high spirit or low spirit; yourself and your knowledge deftly show!”

Thunder sounded, and the first apparition — a male head wearing a helmet — rose from the cauldron.

Macbeth began to speak to the apparition, “Tell me,

unknown power —”

The First Witch told Macbeth, “He knows your thought. Hear his speech, but say nothing to him.”

The first apparition said, “Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff! Beware the Thane of Fife! Dismiss me. Enough.”

Macbeth replied, “Whatever you are, thank you for your warning. I have long been suspicious of Macduff. But one word more.”

The First Witch said, “He will not obey your orders.”

The first apparition disappeared into the cauldron, and the First Witch said, “Here’s another that is more powerful than the first.”

Thunder sounded, and the second apparition — a child covered with blood — rose from the cauldron.

The second apparition called, “Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!”

Macbeth replied, “Had I three ears, I would listen to your words with all three.”

The second apparition said, “Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn the power of man, for none of woman born shall harm Macbeth.”

The second apparition disappeared into the cauldron.

Macbeth said, “Then I can let Macduff live because why should I fear him? But nevertheless I will take steps to ensure that Macduff shall do me no harm. Macduff shall not live. Then I can tell my white-hearted fear that it has nothing to be afraid of, and I can sleep even when the sky thunders.”

Thunder sounded, and the third apparition — a child wearing

a crown and holding a tree branch in his hand — rose from the cauldron.

Macbeth asked, “Who is this who rises like the son of a King and wears upon his baby-brow the round and top — the crown — of sovereignty?”

The Three Witches said to Macbeth, “Listen to the apparition but do not speak to it.”

The third apparition said to Macbeth, “Have the courage of a lion, and be proud. Don’t concern yourself about those who resent you and your rule and suffer under it. Don’t concern yourself about conspirers. Macbeth shall never be conquered until the great Birnam Forest marches twelve miles to your castle on the high Dunsinane hill.”

The third apparition disappeared into the cauldron.

Macbeth said, “That will never happen. Who can make a forest uproot itself and march for twelve miles? These are good omens for me! Banquo, you rebelled against death by appearing to me as a ghost. Never rise again until Birnam Forest rises up and marches against me. I, the King, will live until I die of old age and natural causes. Yet I still want to know one thing more: Shall Banquo’s descendants ever reign in this kingdom?”

The Weird Sisters replied, “Seek to know no more.”

“I will know the answer to my question!” Macbeth said. “If you do not answer, may an eternal curse fall upon you! Tell me! Why is the cauldron sinking? What music am I hearing?”

The music of oboes sounded.

The First Witch ordered, “Show him!”

The Second Witch ordered, “Show him!”

The Third Witch ordered, “Show him!”

All three Weird Sisters ordered, “Show his eyes, and grieve his heart; come like shadows, then depart!”

Spirits showed themselves in the forms of eight Kings. The eighth King had a mirror in his hand. The ghost of Banquo also appeared.

Macbeth shouted, “You look like the ghost of Banquo! Go away!”

Macbeth then shouted at the first King, “Your crown sears my eyeballs.”

Then he shouted at the second King, “Your hair, your brow that is crowned with gold, resembles those of the first King! And the third King resembles you!”

Macbeth then shouted at the three Weird Sisters, “Why do you show me this! I see a fourth King! Eyes, jump out of your sockets! What, will the line of Kings stretch out to the crack of doom? I see another and another King! A seventh! I don’t want to see any more Kings, and yet an eighth King appears, holding a mirror in which I see many more Kings, some of whom are carrying coronation emblems that show that they are Kings of multiple countries! This is a horrible sight for me! Banquo — his head bloody — smiles at me and points to his descendants, all of them Kings!”

The apparitions vanished.

Macbeth asked, “Is all of this true?”

The First Witch answered, “Yes, all that you have seen is true. You are acting like a person in shock, but we Weird Sisters will cheer you up and entertain you. I will charm music out of the air and my sisters will dance. We want you, great King, to kindly say that we welcomed you.”

The witches danced until Hecate showed herself, and then they and Hecate vanished.

Macbeth listened a moment, heard only the galloping of horses, and said, "Where are the Weird Sisters? Gone? Let this evil day be forever a day of ill omen in the calendar! Lennox, come here!"

Lennox entered the cave and asked, "What are your orders for me?"

"Saw you the Weird Sisters?" Macbeth asked.

"No, my lord," Lennox replied.

"Didn't they pass by you?"

"No, indeed not, my lord."

Macbeth said, "The air that the three Weird Sisters ride upon is infected with corruption, and everyone who trusts them is damned. I heard horses galloping. Who was it who came here?"

"A few men came here to tell you that Macduff has fled to England."

"England!"

"Yes, my good lord."

"Macduff timely anticipated what I was going to do to him," Macbeth said. "Anyone who forms a plan ought to act immediately on it. From this moment on, I will do so: Whenever I form a plan in my heart, I will act on it and bring it to fruition. I will start to do that right now: I will attack Macduff's castle at Fife, and I will kill his wife, his children, and anyone unfortunate enough to be related to him. I won't boast of deeds not done; instead, I will ensure that this deed is done before I change my mind. I will also no longer seek to see the apparitions of the Weird Sisters! Where are the

messengers? Take me to them.”

— 4.2 —

At Macduff’s castle in Fife, Lady Macduff, her young son by her side, talked with Ross.

“What did my husband do to make him flee from Scotland?” asked Lady Macduff.

“You must have patience, madam,” Ross replied.

“My husband had no patience. His flight was madness. His actions did not make him a traitor, but his fearful flight makes him appear to be a traitor.”

“You don’t know whether it was his wisdom or his fear that made him flee,” Ross said.

“How could it be wisdom,” Lady Macduff said, “to leave his wife, his children, and his possessions in a place from which he himself flees in fear? He does not love us. He lacks the natural instincts that even animals have. The poor mother wren, the smallest of birds, will fight an owl to protect her young ones in her nest. Fear, not love, rules my husband’s actions. His flight is against all reason, and so it is not wise, either.”

“My dearest cousin, I advise you to control yourself. Your husband is noble, wise, and judicious, and he best knows the disorders present now in Scotland. I dare not speak much further, but cruel are the times when men are called traitors and do not know why they are called traitors. We are so fearful that we believe rumors, and yet we do not know what it is we fear. We seem to be floating upon a wild and violent sea that tosses us one way and then the other. I take my leave of you. Soon I shall return. When the times are at their worst, they cease becoming worse and may even improve to where they were before. My pretty cousin, God’s blessing be upon

you!”

“My son has a father, and yet he is fatherless because his father has forsaken him.”

Ross replied, “I am so much a fool that should I stay longer, I would cry, and that would be my disgrace and your discomfort; therefore, I take my leave at once.”

Ross departed.

Lady Macduff said to her young son, “Your father is dead. What will you do now? How will you live?” She expected bad news and hoped to prepare her son for it by talking to him now.

“As birds do, mother.”

“What, with worms and flies?”

“With what I get, mother. That is how birds live.”

“My son, you would make a poor bird,” Lady Macduff said. “You would not know enough to be afraid of the nets and snares used to catch birds.”

“Why should I, mother? If I am a poor bird, hunters will not want to catch me. And you are wrong about my father — he is not dead.”

“Yes, he is dead,” Lady Macbeth lied, hoping to prepare her son for whatever bad news would arrive. “What will you do to get a new father?”

“What will you do to get a new husband?”

“Why, I can buy twenty husbands at any market.”

“Then you will buy them to sell again at a profit.”

“You are speaking with all your wit. Truly, you have wit enough to suit you.”

“Was my father a traitor, mother?”

“Yes, he was.”

“What is a traitor?”

“Why, one who swears and lies — one who swears an oath of allegiance but does not keep his oath.”

“And be all traitors who do so?”

“Every one who does so is a traitor, and must be hanged.”

“And must they all be hanged who swear and lie?”

“Every one.”

“Who must hang them?”

“The honest men must hang them.”

“Then the liars and swearers are fools,” her son said, “for there are liars and swearers enough to beat the honest men and hang them.”

“That is all too true,” Lady Macduff said, “and all too cynical for a boy as young as you to believe. God help you, you poor monkey! How will you get a new father?”

“If my father were dead, you would weep for him unless you were going to marry someone new. Since you are not weeping, that is a good sign that either he is not dead or I will soon have a new father.”

“Poor prattler, how you talk!”

A messenger entered the room and said to Lady Macduff, “God bless you, fair lady! You do not know me, but I know your rank. I fear that some danger does quickly approach you. If you will take a simple, plain man’s advice, you will flee immediately. Do not stay here with your children. Flee! I am sorry to have to frighten you like this, but I do not want

something much more cruel to happen to you and your children. If you stay here, you will suffer much cruelty — it quickly approaches you! Heaven help you! I dare not stay here any longer!”

The messenger left in a hurry.

“Where should I flee to?” Lady Macduff said. “I have done no harm. But I am in this Earthly world where to do harm is often considered worthy of praise and where to do good is often considered the action of a fool. In such a world, what good does it do for a woman to say, ‘I have done no harm’?”

Murderers entered the room.

“Who are you?” Lady Macduff asked.

“Where is your husband?” a murderer asked.

“I hope that he is in no place so unsanctified that people like you can find him.”

“He’s a traitor,” a murderer said.

Lady Macduff’s young son shouted, “You’re lying, you shaggy-haired villain!”

“Runt!” the murderer shouted and stabbed the boy, who shouted, “He has killed me, mother. Run!”

Lady Macduff ran away from the murderers and screamed, “Murder!” She did not run fast enough.

— 4.3 —

Malcolm and Macduff were meeting outside the palace of the King of England. Malcolm’s bodyguards were near.

Malcolm said, “Let us find some shade and mourn for Scotland there.”

Macduff replied, “Let us instead wield deadly swords and

like good men defend Scotland and wrest it from the tyrant, who with each new day makes new widows howl with grief and new orphans cry. Each day, the tyrant creates new sorrows that slap Heaven in the face — the slaps make Heaven cry out in pain and in sympathy for Scotland.”

“I will mourn whatever evils I believe to have occurred,” Malcolm said. “I will believe what I learn to be the truth, and whatever evils I can avenge, I will avenge — at the right time. The things you have been telling me may very well be true. This tyrant, whose name blisters our tongues when we speak it, was once thought to be good. You used to think highly of him. He has done nothing to harm you that I am aware of. I am young, but I am old enough to realize that you may be seeking to earn favor with Macbeth by doing harm to me. Some think that it is wise to offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb to appease an angry god. You may think it wise to offer up me to appease an angry tyrant.”

“I am not treacherous,” Macduff replied.

“But Macbeth is. Even a good and virtuous man may think it wise to obey the orders of a cruel tyrant. But I may be wrong in my suspicions of you. I may suspect you, but yet you may be a good man. Angels are still bright, although the brightest angel — Lucifer — became evil and fell from Paradise. Evil men seek to have the appearance of good men. Good men have that appearance naturally. Therefore, an evil man and a good man may have the same appearance but not the same nature.”

“I wanted you to gather an army to fight Macbeth, but I have lost all hope of that ever happening,” Macduff said.

“You have your doubts about me,” Malcolm said, “and I have my doubts about you. Why did you leave your wife and children behind without defenses in the dangerous land of Scotland — you love them, don’t you? If you are an agent of

Macbeth, you could leave them behind without worry. I ask this because I want to protect myself, and by being cautious and fearing plots I can best defend myself. Despite my cautiousness, you may be a good and just man.”

“Bleed, poor Scotland, bleed!” Macduff mourned. “Tyrant, do your worst and do it openly because good people dare not oppose you. Enjoy the fruits of your evil, and boast about them. Farewell, lord Malcolm. I would not be the villain whom you think I am even if I were offered everything that the tyrant controls and all of the rich East as well.”

“Don’t be offended,” Malcolm said. “I am not entirely convinced that you are an agent of Macbeth. I believe that Scotland sinks exhausted beneath the yoke the tyrant has put on it. Scotland weeps, it bleeds, and each day a new gash is added to her wounds. I think that many hands would be uplifted to fight for me and give me my rightful throne of Scotland. The gracious Edward the Confessor has offered thousands of soldiers to me to lead against Macbeth. However, once I have the tyrant’s head under my boot or displayed at the end of my sword, Scotland will suffer worse and in more varied ways than it ever did under the tyrant.”

“Who would bring such woes to Scotland?” Macduff asked.

“I would,” Malcolm replied. “I know that in myself are all the many vices. Once I am in a position of power and able to enjoy my vices openly, black Macbeth will seem as pure as snow, and the citizens of Scotland will regard him as a lamb in comparison with me.”

“No one can ever be as evil as Macbeth — not even a devil damned in Hell.”

“I know that Macbeth is bloody, licentious, avaricious, false, deceitful, violent, malicious, and an enthusiastic participant of every sin that has a name. However, I have no limit to my lust. Scotland’s wives, daughters, matrons, and maidens

could not fill up the cistern of my lust. Anyone who tried to restrain the satisfaction of my lust I would strike down. It is better that Macbeth rule Scotland than that I do.”

“Boundless lust in a man’s nature is a kind of tyranny,” Macduff replied. “It has caused many Kings to be removed from their thrones. Nevertheless, return to Scotland, oust Macbeth, and become King. You can satisfy your great lust in secret and appear to be virtuous in public. You can fool the Scots. Scotland has many women who would be willing enough to satisfy your lust. You cannot be so lustful as to run out of women who will willingly sleep with a King if they find out you want them.”

“I also have in my character a greed without end for land and possessions. I would seize the land of the nobles. I would seize jewels and castles. The more land and possessions I seize, the more I would want. I would create false justifications to seize the land and possessions of good and loyal Scots — I would destroy them just so I can have their wealth.”

“The evil of avarice is worse than the evil of lust. Lust will be less prevalent as you grow old, but greed can stay with you all your life. Like lust, greed has caused subjects to rebel against and kill many Kings. However, this does not mean you should not return to Scotland and become King. The royal lands and wealth are so great that they ought to satisfy your greed. Scotland can endure your vices if you have virtues to go with them.”

“I have no virtues,” Malcolm said. “I care nothing about justice, truth, temperance, stableness, bounty, perseverance, mercy, humility, devotion, patience, courage, fortitude. The people of Scotland will find no trace of these virtues in me, but they will find an abundance of each kind of vice in me. If I had the power to act on all my wishes, I would pour virtues into Hell so that they would be extinguished, I would

turn universal peace into universal war, and I would take all unity on Earth and tear it to pieces.”

“I mourn for Scotland!” Macduff said.

“If such a one be fit to govern, speak up. I am as I have spoken.”

“Fit to govern!” Macduff said. “You are not fit to live! Our nation is miserable. A tyrant who lacks the true title to the throne and yet rules with a bloody scepter now governs Scotland. You are the rightful King of Scotland, and yet if your words are true you are unfit to rule and ought to be kept away from the throne. Your evil character would scandalize your ancestors. Your royal father was a most sainted King. The Queen who gave birth to you was oftener upon her knees praying than she was on her feet. Each day she lived, she prepared herself for residence in Paradise. Farewell to you! The evils that you say you are guilty of now make me an exile from my own country. I have no hope for Scotland. My hope ends here.”

“Macduff, this love you have for Scotland shows that you are noble and have integrity,” Malcolm said. “I have banished my suspicions about you. I know now that you are truthful and honorable. Many times has devil-like Macbeth tried to trick me and get me within his grasp. Because of this, I am not hasty to believe people. But now, let God witness that we shall work together. I will do as you wish and free Scotland. Know also that I take back my ‘confession’ of my ‘vices.’ I did not tell you the truth about the kind of person I am. The vices that I said are part of my character are in reality strangers to me. I am a virgin and have not sexually known a woman. I have never committed perjury. I scarcely value my own possessions, much less those of other people. I would not betray one devil to another devil. I love the truth as much as I love my life. My only lies are the ones I told you just now to test you and ensure that you were not an evil

man who obeys the orders of Macbeth. I am yours to guide and Scotland's to command. In fact, before you arrived here, Old Siward with ten thousand soldiers gathered into an army was already coming here to be led in war against Macbeth. Now you and I will march together. I pray that our chance of success will equal the justice of our cause."

Macduff said nothing.

Malcolm asked him, "Why are you silent?"

"To hear such welcome things immediately after hearing such unwelcome things makes it difficult to know what to say."

A doctor walked up to Malcolm and Macduff.

"We will speak together at more length soon," Malcolm said to Macduff. Then he said to the doctor, "Is Edward the Confessor coming out?"

"Yes, sir," the doctor said. "Many wretchedly ill people await his cure by touch. Their illness cannot be cured by medical science, but when the King touches them, his touch heals their illness — such is his gift from Heaven."

"I thank you, doctor," Malcolm said.

The doctor departed.

"What is the disease he means?" Macduff asked.

"It is called the King's evil by most people because the King can cure it by the laying on of hands," Malcolm said. Others call it scrofula. I have often seen the good King Edward the Confessor cure it with a most miraculous work. What prayers he makes to Heaven, he alone knows, but strangely afflicted people, swollen and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye, with no hope of being cured by doctors, he cures. He prays as he hangs a golden coin around their necks, and it is said that

when a King of England dies he passes on this gift to the next King. Along with this Heavenly gift, he has others, including the gift of prophecy. These gifts and other blessings show that he is full of grace and loved by God.”

Ross walked up to Malcolm and Macduff.

Macduff asked Malcolm, “Who is this man coming toward us?”

“Judging by his clothing, a Scotsman, but I don’t know him.”

Now recognizing Ross, Macduff said to him, “My noble cousin, welcome.”

Malcolm said, “I recognize him now. I pray to God that soon the circumstances that make us strangers will no longer exist. If I had not been exiled from Scotland for so long, I would have recognized Ross immediately.”

Overhearing Malcolm’s prayer, Ross said, “Sir, amen.”

“Is the situation in Scotland still the same?” Malcolm asked.

“Pity our poor country!” Ross said, “It is almost afraid to look at itself. It should not be called our mother at this time, but rather our grave. No one smiles except those who are too ignorant or too stupid to know what is happening. Sighs and groans and shrieks rend the air, but they are now so common that they are no longer noticed. Violent sorrow is now a common experience. Death is so common that no one asks any more for whom the death bell tolls — someone is always dying and it is impossible to keep up to date on who is dead. The life of a good man is so short that the man dies before the flower in his cap dies. Good men die before they grow ill; they do not die of sickness of body.”

“Your story is eloquently told, and it is true,” Macduff said.

Malcolm asked, “What’s the newest grief?”

“News of grief that is even an hour old is old news. Every minute a new cause for grieving pushes aside the old cause,” Ross said.

“How is my wife?” Macduff asked.

Ross knew that Lady Macduff had been murdered, but he was reluctant to convey such bad news to her husband, so he replied, “Why, well.”

“And all my children?”

“Well, too.”

“The tyrant Macbeth has not battered at their peace and attacked them?”

Ross replied, “No; they were at peace when I did leave them.” He thought, *That is partially true. It is false that Macbeth has not attacked them, but it is true that they were at peace when I left them — they were peacefully lying in their graves.*

Suspicious at Ross’ obvious reluctance at answering his questions, Macduff said, “Be not a niggard of your speech. How are they?”

Still not willing to tell Macduff the truth and wanting to be sure that Malcolm would attack Macbeth, Ross replied, “When I came here to give you the bad news about Scotland, news that saddens me, I heard a rumor that many men were arming themselves in order to fight against Macbeth. I personally saw Macbeth’s army on the march, and so I believe the rumor I heard. Now is the time for you, Malcolm, to help. Your presence in Scotland would create soldiers and would inspire even our women to fight to get rid of Macbeth and the distresses he inflicts upon them.”

“They shall be comforted,” Malcolm said. “We are going to Scotland. Edward the Confessor has given us the use of an

army led by Old Siward. The Christian nations do not have a more experienced or more successful soldier.”

“I wish that I could answer this comforting good news with news like it,” Ross said, “but I have words that should be howled out in the desert air, where no one can hear them.”

“Which person do such words concern?” Macduff asked. “Do they affect all Scots or just one Scot?”

“The news grieves all good Scots,” Ross said, “but it will especially grieve you.”

“If the grief be mine, keep it not from me. Quickly let me have it,” Macduff said.

“Let not your ears despise my tongue forever,” Ross said. “My tongue will speak words that will scar your ears.”

“I can guess what you are going to say,” Macduff said.

Ross told him what Macbeth had done: “Macbeth attacked your castle and savagely slaughtered your wife and children. If I were to give you specific details, your grief would cause your corpse to be added to the pile of dead bodies.”

Macduff was silent.

Shocked, Malcolm said, “Merciful Heaven! Don’t be silent. Give way to your grief and rail against its cause. Unless you express your grief, it will eat at you from inside and break your overburdened heart.”

Despite having already been told the answer, Macduff asked, “My children, too?”

“Wife, children, servants, all who could be found in the castle and on your land,” Ross said.

“And I was not there because I was seeking Malcolm,” Macduff said. “Macbeth killed my wife, too?”

“Yes,” Ross said. “I have told you that.”

“Be comforted,” Malcolm said. “Let revenge against Macbeth be your medicine to cure this deadly grief.”

Such words were not comforting to Macduff, who said to Ross about Malcolm, “He has no children.”

Macduff added, “All my pretty ones are dead? Did you say all? Hell! All? What, all my pretty chickens and their dam killed at one fell swoop?”

Malcolm said, “Fight it like a man.”

“I shall do so,” Macduff said, “but I must also feel it like a man. I cannot help remembering that of all people these were the most precious to me. Did Heaven witness their murders and would not help them? Sinful Macduff, Macbeth killed them because of you! They had done nothing wrong. Macbeth killed them because I came to England. Heaven rest them now!”

“Let this be the whetstone of your sword,” Malcolm said, “Let grief convert to anger. Do not blunt your heart; instead, enrage it.”

“I could act like a woman and cry,” Macduff said. “I could also brag about how I will avenge their deaths. But I pray that Heaven will not make me wait but instead quickly bring me face to face with this fiend of Scotland. If I get within sword’s length of him and he does not die — but he will die! — then let Heaven forgive him.”

“Now you are speaking like a man,” Malcolm said. “Let us go to Edward the Confessor. Our army is ready, and everything is ready for us to march against Macbeth, who is soon to fall from power. God will show us our way. Macbeth has made a long night for Scotland, but we will make it day.”

CHAPTER 5: THE FALL OF MACBETH**— 5.1 —**

In an anteroom in Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane, a doctor and a gentlewoman — a woman of high social standing — talked together.

The doctor said, "I have for two nights stayed up and watched with you, but I have seen nothing of what you have reported to me. When was it Lady Macbeth last sleepwalked?"

The gentlewoman replied, "Ever since Macbeth took his soldiers out to try to stop the rebellion of the nobles, I have often seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown upon her body, unlock her chest, take out paper, fold it, write upon it, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed. She has done all these things despite being in a deep sleep."

"This is a great perturbation in nature, to receive the benefit of sleep and yet at the same time to do many things that are normally done while awake. Have you ever heard her say anything while she is sleepwalking?"

"Yes, sir, I have heard her say things that I will not repeat to you."

"You may tell me," the doctor said. "It is the right thing for you to do."

"I will not tell you or anyone else — not until I have a witness to confirm what I would say," the gentlewoman said.

Holding a candle, Lady Macbeth, sleepwalking, entered the room.

The gentlewoman said, "Look! Here she comes! This is what she often does. She is asleep — watch her, but stay hidden."

"Where did she get the candle?"

“It was by her bed. She always has candles lit by her at night. She has ordered that this be done.”

“Her eyes are open,” the doctor said.

“Yes, but she does not see anything. She is still asleep.”

“What is she doing now?” the doctor asked. “Look how she rubs her hands.”

“Seeming to wash her hands is a habit of hers. I have seen her do this for a quarter of an hour.”

Lady Macbeth, thinking she saw King Duncan’s blood on her hands, said, “Yet here’s a spot.”

The doctor said, “I will write down what she says. It will help me to remember her words.”

Reliving the night that her husband and she murdered King Duncan, the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth said, “Out, damned spot! Out, I say!”

Reliving hearing the bell strike two the night of King Duncan’s murder, Lady Macbeth said, “One. Two. Why, then, it is time to do it. Hell is murky! My husband, are you a soldier and afraid? What need we fear who knows what we will have done, when none will have the power to bring us to justice?”

Reliving when she smeared King Duncan’s blood on the faces of his bodyguards, Lady Macbeth said, “Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.”

“Did you hear that?” the doctor said.

Remembering the murder of Lady Macduff, Lady Macbeth said, “The Thane of Fife had a wife — where is she now?”

Reliving trying to wash her hands after she had smeared

King Duncan's blood on the faces of his bodyguards, Lady Macbeth said, "What, will these hands never be clean?"

Reliving the banquet at which her husband had been startled when he thought he saw Banquo's ghost, Lady Macbeth said, "No more of that, my lord, no more of that — you will mar all unless you can appear to be innocent."

"For shame," the doctor said. "You have known what you should not."

"She has spoken something that she should not, I am sure of that," the gentlewoman said. "Heaven knows what she has known."

Lady Macbeth said, "Here's the smell of the blood still! All the perfumes of Arabia will not take away the smell of this blood!"

She sighed heavily.

"What a sigh she made!" the doctor said, "Her heart is gravely burdened."

The gentlewoman said, "I would not have such a heart in my bosom even if I were Queen."

The doctor said, "Well, well, well."

"Pray God all be well, sir," the gentlewoman said.

"This disease is beyond my medical knowledge, yet I have known some people who have walked in their sleep who have died holily and without guilt in their beds."

Lady Macbeth said, "Wash your hands, put on your nightgown, don't look so pale. ... I tell you yet again, Banquo is buried — he cannot come out of his grave."

"This is something new," the doctor said.

Lady Macbeth said, “To bed, to bed! There is knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What’s done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed!”

Still asleep, Lady Macbeth walked out of the room.

“Will she go now to bed?” the doctor asked.

“Yes. Immediately,” the gentlewoman said.

“Foul whisperings and evil rumors are abroad,” the doctor said. “Unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles such as sleepwalking and sleeptalking — guilty minds will tell their secrets to their deaf pillows. Lady Macbeth needs a priest more than she needs a physician. May God forgive us all!”

He ordered the gentlewoman, “Look after her. Take away from her anything she can use to hurt herself. Watch her carefully.”

He added, “Now, good night. She has baffled my mind and amazed my sight. I dare not tell anyone what I think.”

“Good night, good doctor,” the gentlewoman said.

— 5.2 —

The Scottish nobles Menteith, Caithness, Angus, and Lennox, as well as many Scottish soldiers, were in a field. These nobles — rebels against Macbeth — were planning to meet and join the soldiers led by Malcolm.

Menteith said, “The English army is near, led on by Malcolm, his uncle Old Siward and the good Macduff. They burn to get revenge against Macbeth. The causes they have for revenge would rouse even a dead man to the bloody and fierce call to arms against Macbeth.”

Angus said, “We will meet the English army near Birnam Forest. That is the way their soldiers are marching.”

Caithness asked, "Is Donalbain with his brother, Malcolm?"

"No, sir, he is not," Lennox replied. "I have a list of the gentry who are with Malcolm. Old Siward's son is with Malcolm, as are many beardless youths who are now declaring themselves to be men by marching against Macbeth."

"What is the tyrant Macbeth doing?" Menteith asked.

"He is fortifying his castle at Dunsinane," Caithness replied. "Some people say that he is insane. Other people, who hate him less, call it valiant fury. Either way, he lacks self-control, and he cannot control the soldiers who should be fighting for him. Because he lacks soldiers who are willing to fight for him in open battle, he is preparing for a siege."

"Now he can no longer blame his murders on other people, the way he blamed King Duncan's murder on the King's bodyguards and the King's sons," Angus said. "The blood of the people he has murdered now sticks to his hands. His subjects now continually rebel against him because of his many treacheries. He forces his soldiers to obey his orders — none of his soldiers obeys him out of respect. His crown is too large for him — he is not man enough to be King. His wearing the crown is like a dwarfish thief trying to wear a giant's robe."

"Everything that is inside Macbeth condemns his murders and other evils," Menteith said. "No wonder Macbeth's tormented senses and awareness of guilt cause him to recoil and startle and act in fits of irrational anger."

"Let us march forward," Caithness said. "We will obey the orders of Malcolm, the true King to whom we truly owe allegiance. He will be the doctor of our sickly country, and with our blood we will help him purge the evil that is Macbeth."

“We will use our blood to water the flower that is our rightful King and make it grow, and we will use our blood to drown the weed that is Macbeth,” Lennox said. “Now let us march to Birnam Forest.”

— 5.3 —

In a room in the castle at Dunsinane, Macbeth raged — the doctor and some servants witnessed his rage.

“Bring me no more reports,” Macbeth ordered. “I know that the Thanes are deserting me and going to support Malcolm, and I don’t care. Until Birnam Forest marches to Dunsinane, I shall fear nothing. What is the boy Malcolm to me? A danger? No! He was born of woman. Supernatural spirits that know the future of mortals have told me, ‘Fear not, Macbeth; no man who is born of woman shall ever have power over you.’ So desert me, disloyal Thanes, and support the effeminate and decadent English. My mind and my heart shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.”

A servant, pale with fear, entered the room.

Macbeth yelled at the servant, “May Satan turn you black, you cream-faced fool! Where did you get that foolish look of fear? You look like a frightened goose.”

His voice shaking with fear, the servant said, “There is ten thousand —”

Macbeth finished the sentence for him, “Geese, fool?”

“Soldiers, sir,” the servant said.

“Go prick your face and use the red blood to cover the whiteness of your frightened face, you lily-livered boy! What soldiers, fool? May your soul die! Your linen cheeks are witnesses of your fear. What soldiers, milk-face?”

“The English force, so please you.”

“Take your face away from here,” Macbeth ordered.

The servant left the room.

Macbeth began to call for an officer, whose name was Seyton.

“Seyton!” Macbeth called. “I am sick at heart, when I see such cowards. Seyton, come here!”

Macbeth thought, *This battle will either establish me permanently on the throne or take the throne away from me.*

He paused, then he thought, *I have lived long enough. My life is now like a withered, dry, yellow leaf of autumn, ready to fall and die as winter arrives. All those things that an old man who has lived well should have — honor, love, loyalty, and troops of friends — I will not have. Instead, I will have curses that are not loud but are deep, the signs of honor that I force my subjects to show to me, and flattery — flattery that my subjects will not like to engage in but will be too afraid not to.*

He yelled, “Seyton!”

Seyton entered the room and said, “What is your gracious pleasure?”

“Is there any more news?”

“All that was reported to you has been confirmed to be true.”

“I’ll fight until my flesh is hacked from my bones,” Macbeth said, “Give me my armor.”

“It is not needed yet,” Seyton said.

“I’ll put it on anyway,” Macbeth said. “Send out more people on horseback; let them scout the country around the castle and hang anyone who talks of fear. Give me my armor.”

Then Macbeth said, "How is your patient, doctor?"

"She is not so sick, lord," the doctor said, "as she is troubled with numerous illusions and hallucinations that keep her from sleeping."

"Cure her of that," Macbeth ordered, "if you can. Can you treat a diseased mind? Can you remove her sorrows from her memory? Can you give her a drug that will clean away everything that weighs upon her heart?"

"Only the patient can heal that kind of illness," the doctor said.

"In that case, let medical science go to the dogs," Macbeth thundered. "I don't want it."

He said to Seyton, "Come, put my armor on. Give me my lance."

He said to the doctor, "The Thanes fly from me."

He said to Seyton, "Faster."

He said to the doctor, "If you are able to, analyze the urine of my country, discover what disease it suffers from, and cure it so that Scotland has a sound and pristine health. If you can do that, I will applaud you until the echo of my applause returns to you."

Having finished putting on his armor, Macbeth said to Seyton, "Pull my armor off, I say."

Macbeth said to the doctor, "What rhubarb, senna, or purgative drug would purge Scotland of these English soldiers? Have you heard about the soldiers?"

"Yes, my good lord," the doctor said. "I know that you are preparing for war."

Macbeth said to Seyton, who was holding the armor he had

taken off Macbeth, “Carry the armor behind me. I will not be afraid of death and destruction and bane until Birnam Forest comes to Dunsinane.”

Macbeth and Seyton left, and the doctor thought, *Were I from Dunsinane away and clear, a large sum of money would not again draw me here.*

— 5.4 —

Malcolm, Old Siward and Young Siward, Macduff, Menteith, Caithness, Angus, Lennox, and Ross rode horses near Birnam Forest. Many soldiers marched near them.

“Kinsmen,” Malcolm said, “I hope the time is near at hand when Scots can again be safe in their own homes.”

Menteith said, “All of us believe that will happen soon.”

Old Siward asked, “What forest is this ahead of us?”

“Birnam Forest,” Menteith said.

Malcolm ordered the soldiers, “Let every soldier cut down a branch and carry it in front of him. That way, we can hide the number of soldiers in our army and Macbeth’s scouts will make false reports of our army’s strength.”

The soldiers replied, “We shall do it.”

Old Siward said, “According to our own scouts, the impudent Macbeth is fortifying Dunsinane and will not attack us in open battle. He is willing to endure our setting siege to the castle.”

“Dunsinane is his main fortress,” Malcolm said. “He is forced to stay there. Whoever is able to desert him does so, whether they are nobility or common people. The soldiers who stay with him are forced to stay. They do not respect Macbeth and do not want to die for him. If Macbeth were to take the field, his soldiers would desert him.”

Macduff said, “Let us do our judging of soldiers after the battle is over. For now, let us fight.”

Old Siward said, “Soon we will find out whether we win or lose the war. We can talk and we can hope, but it will be fighting that wins the war.”

— 5.5 —

In a room in the castle at Dunsinane stood Macbeth, Seyton, and some soldiers.

Macbeth ordered, “Hang our banners on the walls of the castle that face the enemy. The news is still, ‘They come!’ But the strength of our castle will laugh a siege to scorn. Let the enemy soldiers lay siege until famine and fever eat them up. If they were not reinforced with deserters from my army, we might have boldly met them in open battle, beard to beard, and beat them back to England.”

Some women in the castle screamed.

“What is that noise?” Macbeth asked.

“It is the cry of women, my good lord,” Seyton said. He left to investigate the cause of the screams.

I have almost forgotten what fear tastes like, Macbeth thought. At one time, my senses would have cooled if I had heard a scream at night and my hair would have risen and stood on end when I heard a scary story. But I have experienced so many murderous horrors that they are so familiar to me that a new horror cannot startle me.

Seyton entered the room.

“What is the cause of that screaming?” Macbeth asked.

“The Queen, my lord, is dead,” Seyton replied.

“She should have died at a later time,” Macbeth said. “Then

I would have had time to mourn her. But she would inevitably die sometime, so now is as good a time as any.”

He thought, *Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow creep along from day to day until the end of time. And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle of life! Life is only a walking shadow that passes quickly away. Life is only a poor actor who struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. Life is meaningless: It is a tale told by an idiot, it is full of sound and fury, and it means nothing.*

A messenger entered the room.

“You came here to tell me something,” Macbeth said. “Tell me quickly what you have to say.”

“My gracious lord,” the messenger said, “I need to report to you what I saw, but I do not know how to do it.”

“Just tell me,” Macbeth ordered.

“As I was doing guard duty on the hill, I looked toward Birnam Forest, and it seemed to me that the forest began to move.”

“Liar and slave!” Macbeth raged.

“If I am lying, punish me,” the messenger said. “Look for yourself and you will see the forest is now only three miles away and moving toward us.”

Macbeth said, “If you are lying, I will hang you alive from the nearest tree and let you die of hunger. If you are telling the truth, I will not mind if you do that to me.”

Macbeth thought, *My confidence is disappearing, and I suspect that the apparition the three Weird Sisters showed me was equivocating and deliberately misleading me, making me think that one thing is true when actually*

something different is true. The apparition told me, "Fear not, until Birnam Forest comes to Dunsinane."

Macbeth said, "Let us not wait to be besieged! Instead, let us arm for battle and go forth from the castle! If this messenger is telling the truth, it is no use for me either to try to run away or to stay here and endure a siege."

Macbeth thought, *I begin to grow weary of the Sun and of life itself. I wish that the universe were plunged into chaos.*

Macbeth said, "Ring the alarm bell! Blow, storm! Come, vengeance!"

Macbeth thought, *At least I'll die with armor on my back.*

He had decided that if he should die, so be it. Still, he had some confidence in the third apparition's prophecy: "No man born of woman shall harm Macbeth."

— 5.6 —

Malcolm, Old Siward, and Macduff, along with many soldiers holding tree branches in front of them, stood outside Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane.

Malcolm ordered, "We are close enough to the castle. Throw down the leafy tree branches and show yourselves to the enemy. Old Siward, you and your noble son, Young Siward, shall lead our first battalion. Macduff and I will do whatever else is needed to be done."

Old Siward replied, "Fare you well. We go to find the tyrant's army. If we cannot conquer the tyrant, we deserve to be beaten."

"Make all our trumpets speak," Malcolm said. "Blow all of them. Give them all breath, those noisy announcers of blood and death."

— 5.7 —

Macbeth had led his few forces out of the castle and onto the battlefield, where they were badly losing.

Macbeth thought, *I am like a bear that is tied to a stake for the night's bloody entertainment of a bear fighting dogs. I cannot run away, but I must fight the dogs that attack me. Who is the man, if anyone, who was not born of woman? I must fear that man, or no man.*

Young Siward saw Macbeth and asked him, "What is your name?"

"If I tell you my name, I will frighten you," Macbeth said.

"No, you won't," Young Siward said. "Not even if you have a name that is hotter than any name in Hell."

"My name is Macbeth."

"Satan himself could not pronounce a name that is more hateful to my ear."

"Or one that makes you more afraid."

"You lie, hated tyrant! With my sword I will show you that your name causes no fear in me!"

Macbeth and Young Siward fought, and Macbeth killed Young Siward.

Macbeth said over the corpse, "You were born of woman, but I smile at the swords and laugh at the other weapons of all men who were born of woman."

Macduff, who was seeking Macbeth elsewhere on the battlefield, shouted, "I seek the place where the most fighting is because that is where Macbeth will be. Tyrant, show your face! If you are already slain by no stroke of mine, my wife's and my children's ghosts will continue to haunt me. I will not strike at wretched foot soldiers, mercenaries who bear arms for money. Either I kill you, Macbeth, or I

sheathe my sword with an unbloodied and unbattered edge. The great clamor I hear must be announcing your presence. Let me find Macbeth, god of Fortune! I ask for nothing more.”

Elsewhere, Old Siward and Malcolm met and talked about the battle.

“This way, my lord,” Old Siward said to Malcolm. “The castle surrendered to us without a fight. Most of the tyrant’s soldiers have turned against him and are now on our side. The battle is almost won. Little is left to do.”

Malcolm said, “We have met with ‘enemy’ soldiers who join our cause and fight by our sides against a common enemy: Macbeth.”

“Sir, enter the castle,” Old Siward said.

— 5.8 —

Macbeth, knowing that he had lost the battle, thought, *Why should I play the Roman fool, and commit suicide by throwing myself on my own sword? Let Brutus or Cassius commit suicide when they see that their cause is lost. While I see enemy soldiers, gashes made by my sword look better on their bodies.*

Macduff saw Macbeth and ordered, “Turn around, Hell-hound, turn around!”

Recognizing Macduff, Macbeth said, “Of all men, I have been avoiding you. Don’t fight me. My soul is already too much burdened with the blood of your wife and children. I do not want to add your blood to my burden of guilt.”

“I will not talk,” Macduff said. “My sword will do the talking. You are a bloodier villain than words can express.”

Macduff attacked Macbeth, who fiercely fought back.

At a pause in the fight, Macbeth said to Macduff, “You are wasting your time trying to kill me. You can kill air with your sword as easily as you can kill me. Go and fight soldiers who can be killed. I lead a charmed life. No man born of woman can kill me.”

“Your charm is worthless,” Macduff replied. “The evil spirit whom you have served and still serve can tell you that I was from my mother’s womb prematurely ripped. I was not born through the birth canal but had to be cut out of her womb to save my life.”

“May you be damned to Hell for telling me this!” Macbeth shouted. “You have taken away my confidence. Let no one believe the Weird Sisters — those deceiving fiends who trick mortals with equivocating words that appear as if they are good but that are in reality evil. I will not fight you.”

“Then surrender, coward,” Macduff said. “We will exhibit you before the gaze of your former subjects. We will treat you the way we treat deformed animals and make you a freakshow. We will paint your portrait on a sign on a pole along with the words ‘Here may you see the tyrant!’”

“I will not surrender and kiss the ground before young Malcolm’s feet, and I will not be subjected to cruel treatment and abuse by my subjects,” Macbeth said. “Although Birnam Forest has marched to Dunsinane and although you are not of woman born, yet I will try to kill you. In front of my body, I hold my shield. Fight, Macduff, and damned be the first man who cries, ‘Stop! I have had enough!’”

They fought.

Elsewhere, Malcolm, Siward, Ross, and the other Thanes were meeting.

“Not all of our friends are accounted for,” Malcolm said. “I hope that they survived the battle.”

“Some soldiers die in every battle,” Old Siward said. “Judging by the number of corpses we see, we have won a great battle while losing very few lives.”

“Macduff is missing, and so is your noble son,” Malcolm said.

Ross said to Old Siward, “Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier’s debt on the battlefield. He lived only until he reached adulthood. As soon as he became an adult, he proved his manhood by valiantly fighting. He died courageously, as befits a man.”

“My son is dead?” Old Siward asked.

“Yes,” Ross replied. “His corpse has been carried off the battlefield. If you were to mourn him as much as he is worth, you would never stop mourning him.”

“Were his wounds in the front?” Old Siward asked, knowing that cowards who run away are wounded in the back.

“Yes, they were in the front,” Ross replied.

“Then he deserves to be — and is — a soldier of God,” Old Siward said. “Had I as many sons as I have hairs, none could have a more honorable death than that of Young Siward. And so the death bell tolls for my son.”

“He deserves to be mourned more greatly than this,” Malcolm said, “and I shall mourn him.”

“No greater mourning is needed,” said the stoical Old Siward. “He died well and honorably. He settled all of his accounts. Look! Here comes better news!”

Macduff, carrying the decapitated head of Macbeth, said to Malcolm, “You are now King. Hail, King! Look at the cursed head of the tyrant. Scotland is now free from tyranny. I see around you the nobles of Scotland, and I ask them to

join me in this cry: Hail, King of Scotland!”

Macduff and the nobles shouted, “Hail, King of Scotland!”

Malcolm said, “Not much time will pass before I reward you for your loyalty. I owe you now, and I will repay you. My Thanes and kinsmen, henceforth be Earls — the first Earls ever in Scotland. Much remains to be done with the dawn of this new era. We must call from abroad our friends in exile who fled from Macbeth’s tyranny. We must find the cruel supporters of this dead butcher and his fiend-like Queen, who is thought to have committed suicide. These and other things, God willing, we will do justly and at the right time and place. Thank you, all, and I invite you to see me crowned at Scone as the rightful King of Scotland.”

Chapter VII: OTHELLO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Male Characters

DUKE OF VENICE.

BRABANTIO, a Venetian senator, father to Desdemona.

GRATIANO, a noble Venetian and brother to Brabantio.

LODOVICO, a noble Venetian and kinsman to Brabantio.

OTHELLO, the Moor, in the military service of Venice.

CASSIO, an honorable lieutenant to Othello.

IAGO, an ensign, aka standard-bearer, aka ancient, to Othello; a villain.

RODERIGO, a Venetian gentleman.

MONTANO, governor of Cyprus, replaced by Othello.

Clown, servant to Othello.

Female Characters

DESDEMONA, wife to Othello.

EMILIA, wife to Iago.

BIANCA, a courtesan who is mistress to Cassio.

Other Characters

SENATORS, SAILORS, GENTLEMEN OF CYPRUS,
OFFICERS, MESSENGERS, MUSICIANS.

CHAPTER 1

— 1.1 —

Late at night on a street in Venice, Italy, Iago and Roderigo were in the middle of a conversation.

Roderigo said, “Bah! Don’t even try to make me believe that! I have trusted you, and I have let you spend my money as if it were your own. I can’t believe what I am hearing!”

“You are not listening to me,” Iago said. “I never dreamed that such a thing could happen. If I have, then hate me forever.”

“You told me that you hate him.”

“Indeed, I do,” Iago replied. “Hate me if I do not hate him. Three VIPs of Venice went to him to ask him to make me his lieutenant. They removed their hats as they stood in front of him to show their respect for him. By the faith of humanity, I know my worth, and I know that I deserve to be his lieutenant. But he, being proud and wanting to make his own decision, ignored them. Instead, he came up with a bombastic reason stuffed with military jargon to ignore their request and said, “Assuredly, I have already chosen my lieutenant.” And who was his new lieutenant? Indeed, he was a great theorist, a Florentine — a foreigner — named Michael Cassio, who is a dandy and ladies man who has avoided ruining his bachelor fun by avoiding marriage. He has no personal experience of warfare. He has never positioned a squadron in the field. He does not know how to methodically arrange troops on a battlefield any more than a spinster knows. All he knows is textbook theory; our inexperienced Venetian senators can talk as ‘masterly’ as he can. Cassio’s soldiership is all talk and no experience, and all his talk is mere prattle. But he, sir, was chosen to be lieutenant, while I, whose worth has been witnessed in battles at Rhodes, Cyprus, and other places — both Christian

places and heathen places in the crusading wars — have been stopped in my advancement. I am like a ship that is in the lee and becalmed — another ship stands between the wind and me and so keeps me from moving forward. This bookkeeper, this petty accountant, will be lieutenant, while I — God help me! — must continue to be his Moorship’s ancient — his standard-bearer, his ensign.”

Anyone in Venice hearing this conversation would realize that Iago and Roderigo were talking about Othello, a Moor — a black North African — who served Venice as a military commander. The word “Moorship” is a portmanteau term combining “Moor” and the respectful term “Worship,” but Iago was not using the word “Moorship” respectfully. As standard-bearer, Iago carried the distinctive flag identifying his unit, but he wanted a promotion to lieutenant — a promotion that Othello had denied to him and given to Michael Cassio instead. This was one of the reasons why Iago hated Othello.

“By Heaven, I would prefer to be his executioner than his standard-bearer,” Roderigo said.

“I know of no way to remedy this situation,” Iago said. “This is the curse of military service. Advancement and promotions come about because of influence and favoritism, and not by seniority, where the person second in line would eventually take over from the first person. Now, sir, judge for yourself whether I in any just way am required to respect and serve and be loyal to the Moor.”

“I would not follow him then,” Roderigo said.

“Oh, sir, know that I follow him only in order to use him for my own advantage. We cannot all be masters, and not all masters will be loyally followed. We see many a duteous and bowing servant knave, who, enjoying his own obsequious bondage, wears out his life, much like his master’s ass, for

nothing but provender, and when he's old, he's cashiered — he's fired and left to forage for himself. Let such honest and respectable knaves be whipped.

“Others there are who, showing outwardly all forms and visages of duty, keep yet their hearts intent on helping themselves. They give their lords shows of service and thrive at their lords' expense. When they have stuffed their coats with money, they do themselves homage and praise themselves.

“These fellows have some spirit, and I consider myself to be such a fellow. For, sir, it is as sure as you are Roderigo that, were I the Moor, I would not be Iago — if I were the Moor, I would not be fooled by an Iago because I would see through him and realize that he was putting on a show of loyalty to me. In seeming to follow him, I follow only myself; I am loyal to only myself and I work only to profit myself. As Heaven is my judge, I do not serve him out of love and duty, but only seem to. Why? So that I may profit by so doing.

“Right now, I do not act openly as I would like to act. Eventually, I will do so. Right now, I will wear my false heart upon my sleeve the way that a servant wears a badge that shows which family he serves. My false heart will falsely say that I truly serve Othello.

“Later, my actions will match what I truly think and feel. Then, I will allow jackdaws — foolish people — to wise up and peck at my false heart and tear it away, revealing my true character to all. Everyone will then know that I am not what I seem to be. I will reverse the moral of the fable of the bird in borrowed feathers — in the fable, a jackdaw dresses in the feathers of a peacock, but once the peacocks know what the jackdaw is doing, they rip the borrowed feathers (and the jackdaw's own feathers) away from the jackdaw's body. The moral of that fable is to not dress in borrowed feathers, but my dressing in borrowed feathers will help me achieve my

goals.”

“The thick-lips will have a full fortune if he can get away with this elopement!” Roderigo said.

“Call to and wake up her father. Rouse him out of bed, pester him, poison his delight, proclaim his business in the streets, and incense her kinsmen. Even though her father dwells in a fertile climate, plague him with flies. Even though his joy is real joy, yet throw such changes of vexation on his joy that it may lose some color and joyfulness.”

“Here is her father’s house,” Roderigo said. “I’ll call to him.”

“Do that,” Iago said. “Call to him with such a frightening and dire yell as is used when a fire in a populous city is started by negligence at night.”

“Brabantio, wake up! Signior Brabantio, get up!” Roderigo shouted.

“Wake up!” Iago shouted. “Brabantio! Thieves! Thieves! Thieves! Look after your house, your daughter, and your moneybags! Thieves! Thieves!”

Brabantio, a senator of Venice and the father of Desdemona, appeared at a second-story window and asked, “What is the reason for this terrible racket? What is the matter?”

Roderigo replied, “Signior, is all your family inside your house?”

Iago asked, “Are your doors locked?”

“Why are you asking me these questions?”

“Sir, you have been robbed,” Iago said. “Get dressed. Your heart has burst, and you have lost half your soul. Even now, right now, an old black ram is tugging your white ewe. Arise! Arise! Awake the snoring citizens with the bell, or

else the black devil will make a grandfather of you. Arise, I say.”

“What, have you lost your wits?” Brabantio asked.

“Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?” Roderigo asked.

“No. Who are you?”

“My name is Roderigo.”

“You are even less welcome now than you were before,” Brabantio said. “I have ordered you not to loiter around my doors. In honest plainness you have heard me say that my daughter is not for you, no matter how much you think you love her, but now you — full of supper and maddening alcoholic draughts that fill you with malicious bravery — have come to disrupt my quiet life.”

“Sir, sir, sir —” Roderigo started to speak.

Brabantio interrupted, “You will learn that my character and place as a senator of Venice give me the power to punish these actions of yours and make you regret them.”

“Patience, good sir!” Roderigo said.

“Why are you two talking to me about my house being robbed? This is Venice. My home is not an isolated house in the countryside.”

“Most grave and respected Brabantio, with sincere and disinterested motivation I come to you,” Roderigo lied.

Iago said to Brabantio, “Damn, sir, you are one of those people who will not serve God even when the devil — who is black — orders you to. You will not take good advice when it comes from a person whom you dislike. Although we come to do you good, you ignore us because you think we are ruffians. Because of that, you’ll have your daughter

covered sexually by a Barbary stallion. By Barbary, I mean Arabian, and by Arabian, I mean Moorish. Your grandchildren will neigh to you; you will have racehorses for kin and small Spanish horses for your blood relations.”

Brabantio, who did not recognize Iago’s voice, asked, “What profane wretch are you?”

“I am one, sir, who comes to tell you that your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs — they are having sex.”

“You are a villain.”

“You are —” Iago thought about using a cruelly insulting term, but instead finished his sentence with “— a senator.”

“You will have to pay for tonight’s outrage! I know your identity, Roderigo!”

“Sir, I will pay whatever you think I owe you,” Roderigo said. “If it be your pleasure and you have given most wise consent that your beautiful daughter, just after midnight this night, be transported, with no worse nor better guard than a knave of common hire, a gondolier, and given to the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor — if this is known to you and you have given your permission to your daughter to marry the Moor, as I partly suspect to be the case, judging by your words to us — then we have done you bold and insolent wrongs. But if you do not know what your daughter has done, my code of conduct tells me that you have wrongly rebuked us. Do not believe that I, contrary to all sense of civility, would play and trifle with the respect that is due to you. Your daughter, if you have not given her permission to marry the Moor, has made a disgusting revolt against your wishes. She has tied her duty, beauty, intelligence, and fortunes to an extravagant and wheeling stranger who wanders widely here and everywhere. Immediately look and see whether your daughter is in her bedchamber or elsewhere

in your house. If she is, then let us suffer the state's punishment for lying to and upsetting you."

Finally convinced that perhaps Roderigo was telling the truth when he said that his daughter was no longer in his house, Brabantio called out to his servants, "Strike a spark on the tinder! Give me a candle! Wake up all my relatives! This report by Roderigo is not unlike my dream. Belief in it oppresses me already. Light, I say! Bring me light!"

He disappeared from the second-story window.

Iago said to Roderigo, "Farewell; I must leave you. It is not wise — if I want to keep my job — for me to be made to give evidence against the Moor, as I will have to if I stay and am found here. The police will make me talk. What we have done may gall the Moor and cause him a little trouble, but it will do him no serious harm. He will not be fired from his position of military leader because he is needed to defend the island of Cyprus and keep Venice safe. Venice's war against the Turks is ongoing, and the Moor's competence makes him the right choice to be a military leader. To save their lives, the Venetian senators can find no one with the Moor's competence and experience to lead their military forces. Although I hate the Moor as much as I do the torments of Hell, yet because it is necessary to keep my job, I must pretend to respect him and put on a good show. You will find the Moor with me at the Sagittary Inn. Lead Brabantio and the men he wakes up there. Farewell."

Iago left, and Brabantio and some servants carrying torches came out of his house.

"It is too true an evil," Brabantio said. "My daughter is gone. The rest of my despised life will be spent in bitterness. Now, Roderigo, where did you see her? Oh, unhappy girl! She is with the Moor, did you say? Having experienced this, I have to ask why anyone would want to be a father! How did you

know it was she? She has deceived me past all comprehension! What did she say to you?"

He ordered his servants, "Get more candles and light some torches. Wake up all my relatives."

He then asked Roderigo, "Do you think that they are married?"

"Truly, I think they are."

"Oh, Heaven! How did she get out of my house? Her blood is treasonous! Fathers, from now on do not trust that your daughters will continue to be obedient because they have always acted that way — they can change."

He paused and then added, "Aren't there magical charms and love spells that can change the nature of youth and maidenhood? Have you read, Roderigo, of things like that?"

"Yes, sir, I have indeed."

Brabantio said to his servants, "Wake up my brother."

He said to Roderigo, "Now I wish that you had married my daughter."

He said to his servants, "Some of you go one way, some another."

He said to Roderigo, "Where can we apprehend my daughter and the Moor?"

"I think that I can lead you to him, if you want. Get some armed men and come along with me."

"Lead on. At every house I will call and wake up the sleepers. As a person of power and influence, I can demand and get help from almost every house."

He ordered his servants, "Get weapons, and get some special

officers of night — not the usual night watchmen — to go with us.”

He added, “Good Roderigo, I will reward your actions to me.”

— 1.2 —

On another street of Venice were standing Othello, Iago, and some servants holding torches. Iago was telling Othello a partial truth. He told him the truth about Brabantio’s anger toward him, but he lied about his conversation with Roderigo.

Iago said about his conversation with Roderigo, “Although in the trade of war I have slain men, yet I believe it to be immoral to commit cold-blooded murder. I lack sometimes the evil-mindedness to do what would help me. Nine or ten times I was tempted to stab him here under the ribs.”

“It is better that you did not,” Othello replied.

“But he chattered foolishly and called you such scurvy and provoking terms that, with the little godliness I have, I spared his life with great difficulty.”

Iago then began to speak about Brabantio: “But let me ask you, sir, are you securely married? Be assured that this magnifico is much beloved and that he has much power; indeed, his power approaches that of the Duke of Venice. If he can, he will make you get a divorce, or put upon you whatever restraint and hardship the law, with all his might to enforce it, will give him scope.”

“Let him act on his spite,” Othello said calmly. “The services that I have done for the Venetian government will outweigh his complaints — my services will speak louder than his complaints. People do not know, because I won’t boast until boasting is honorable, that I am descended from men of royal

rank, and my family, in all due modesty, is equal in social status to the family that I have married into. Know, Iago, that I love the gentle Desdemona. If I did not, I would not have married her and given up my freedom in the tents of military camps for the restrictions and confinements of marriage — even if marrying her would have given me all the treasures of sunken ships lying on the bottom of the sea. But look! What lights are coming toward us?”

“Those are the lights of Desdemona’s awoken father and his friends,” Iago replied. “It is best — and safer — for you to go inside.”

“No,” Othello said. “I must confront them. My good qualities, legal right, and blameless soul shall serve me well. Are you sure that these people are Desdemona’s father and his friends?”

Looking again, Iago said, “By Janus, I think they are not.”

Iago thought, *Janus is a literally two-faced Roman god. Since I am figuratively two-faced, Janus is an appropriate god for me to swear by.*

Michael Cassio and some other military officers carrying torches arrived.

Othello greeted them, “The servants of the Duke, and my lieutenant, welcome. May the goodness of the night be upon you, friends! What is the news?”

“The Duke greets you, general,” Cassio said. “And he urgently requires your immediate appearance.”

“What is the matter?”

“I think that it is a matter of some urgency that concerns the island of Cyprus. Our ships have sent a dozen messengers, one after the other, this night. Many of the consuls have already been awoken and are meeting at the Duke’s. You

have been urgently sent for. When you were not found at your lodging, the Venetian Senate sent three different groups of people to find you.”

“It is well that you have found me. I will leave a brief message at this inn and then go with you.”

Othello went inside the inn.

Cassio asked Iago, “Ancient, what is he doing here?”

“Tonight, he has boarded a treasure-ship on land,” Iago replied. “If he can keep the ship, he is a made man forever.”

Iago thought, *Yes, Desdemona comes from a wealthy family, and Othello has boarded her — or will board her — in a sexual sense.*

“I do not understand.”

“He’s married.”

“To whom?”

Iago started to answer, “To —” But Othello came out of the building and Iago asked him, “Come, captain, are you ready to go?”

“I’m ready.”

Cassio saw some people coming toward them and said, “Here comes another troop of people seeking you.”

“It is Brabantio,” Iago said. “General, be advised; he comes with bad intent toward you.”

Brabantio, Roderigo, and several officers carrying torches came toward Othello.

“Stop!” Othello shouted. “Stand there!”

They stopped, and Roderigo said to Brabantio, “Signior, it is

the Moor.”

“Arrest him!” Brabantio shouted. “He’s a thief!”

Several people, including Iago, drew their swords.

Iago immediately singled out the one person he knew would not hurt him and said, “You, Roderigo! Come, sir, I will fight you.”

Iago thought, *Roderigo and I can pretend to fight. That way, I will look as if I am defending the Moor.*

Othello said, “Put away your bright swords, or the dew will rust them.”

He thought, *If my sword were to rust, it would be because of blood. The swords that Brabantio and his followers are carrying are in the hands of amateurs.*

He added, “Good signior, you shall command more respect because of your many years than because of your weapons.”

“Oh, you foul thief, where have you hidden my daughter?” Brabantio said. “Damned as you are, you have enchanted and bewitched her. My common sense tells me that chains of magic must bind my daughter. Otherwise, a maiden so tender, beautiful, and happy, who is so opposed to marriage that she has shunned the wealthy and darling men of our nation with their curled hair, would never have — thereby incurring public ridicule — run away from her father and her home to the sooty bosom of such a thing as you, who inspires fear, not delight. Let the world judge whether it is obvious that you have used foul charms on her and abused her delicate youth with drugs or poisonous potions that weaken willpower. The court of law will agree that this is probable and easy to believe. I therefore seize and arrest you because you are a corrupter of the world, a magician who practices prohibited and illegal dark arts.”

He ordered his followers, “Lay hold of him. If he resists, overpower him at his peril.”

“Don’t move and don’t fight, whether you are on my side or against me,” Othello said. “If it were my cue to fight, I would have known it without a prompter.”

He then asked Brabantio, “Where do you want me to go so I can answer this charge of yours?”

“I want you to go to prison,” Brabantio said, “until a court of law will hear my case.”

“Suppose I do that,” Othello said, “Will the Duke be happy with that? His messengers are here by my side. They have orders to bring me to him because of some important and urgent business of the state.”

One of the Duke’s officers said to Brabantio, “That is true, most worthy signior. The Duke is holding a council and you, yourself, I am sure, have been sent for.”

“What! The Duke is holding a council! At this time of the night! Bring him away and take him to the Duke. Mine is not an idle cause. The Duke himself and all of my fellow senators cannot but feel this wrong as if it were their own, for if such actions as the Moor’s may be done freely, bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be.”

They left to see the Duke.

— 1.3 —

The Duke of Venice and the Venetian senators were sitting at a table in the council chamber. Some military officers were also in attendance.

The Duke said, “These reports lack the consistency that would give them credibility.”

“Indeed, they are inconsistent with each other,” the first

senator said. “My letters say that the Turks have a hundred and seven galleys.”

The Duke said, “My letters say a hundred and forty.”

The second senator said, “And mine, two hundred. However, although they do not agree on the number of ships — in such cases as this, where estimates are given, disagreement in numbers is common — yet all these letters confirm that a Turkish fleet is sailing to Cyprus.”

“That is certainly probable,” the Duke said. “The discrepancy in the number of ships does not make me so overconfident that the reports are wrong that I disbelieve the reports’ main point: A Turkish fleet is headed toward Cyprus to attack it and take it away from us. That is something that we must be concerned about.”

A sailor outside the council chamber called, “I have news!”

The first officer said, “Here is a messenger from the galleys.”

The sailor entered the council chamber and said, “The Turkish fleet is now sailing to the island of Rhodes. Signior Angelo ordered me to carry this news to this council.”

The Duke asked his advisors, “What do you think about this change in the Turkish fleet’s course?”

The first senator said, “That cannot be the truth: Reason shows that the Turks cannot be intending to attack Rhodes. This is a trick; its purpose is to make us concerned about the island of Rhodes and not the island of Cyprus, which must be the Turks’ real intended destination. When we consider how much more important Cyprus is to the Turks than Rhodes is, and when we consider that Cyprus is not as well militarily prepared to resist invasion as Rhodes is, then we must realize that the Turks intend to attack Cyprus and not Rhodes. The Turks are not incompetent; they will not leave

what is most important until last, and they will not attack a strongly defended island of lesser value to them when they can instead attack a weaker defended island of much greater value to them.”

“This is good reasoning based on the best evidence we have,” the Duke said. “We can be certain that the Turks do not intend to attack Rhodes.”

The first officer, seeing a messenger arriving, said, “Here comes more news.”

The messenger arrived and said, “The Turks from the Ottoman Empire, reverend and gracious senators, who have been sailing toward Rhodes, there joined another fleet that is following them.”

“I thought so,” the first senator said. “How many ships do you guess are in the new fleet?”

“Thirty,” the messenger said. “Now they have steered back to their original course and are openly sailing toward Cyprus. Signior Montano, the governor of Cyprus, your trusty and most valiant servant, with honorable respect for you, informs you thus and hopes that you believe him.”

“It is certain, now, that the Turks are heading toward Cyprus,” the Duke said. “Is Marcus Luccicos in town? He knows much about the Turks and the defense of islands. We should take advantage of the special knowledge that others have.”

“He’s now in Florence.”

“Write from us to him; do this as quickly as possible.”

The first senator, seeing more people coming, said, “Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.”

Brabantio, Othello, Iago, Roderigo, and some officers

arrived.

The Duke of Venice focused his attention on Othello, who was needed now, and said, “Valiant Othello, we must immediately employ you in military matters concerning our general enemy the Ottoman Turks.”

Seeing Brabantio, the Duke said, “I did not see you at first; welcome, gentle signior. We lacked your counsel and your help this night.”

“And I lacked yours,” Brabantio said. “Your good grace, pardon me. Neither my position as senator nor anything I heard of urgent business has raised me from my bed, nor have the ordinary affairs of government aroused me this night. My personal grief overwhelms me like an open flood-gate; its overbearing nature engulfs and swallows all other sorrows — it is not affected by other sorrows.”

“Why, what’s the matter?” the Duke asked.

“My daughter! Oh, my daughter!”

Some senators asked, “Dead?”

“Yes, to me,” Brabantio answered. “She is abused, stolen from me, and corrupted by spells and medicines bought from quack doctors. Human nature, if it is not deficient, blind, or lame of sense, cannot so preposterously err unless witchcraft is involved.”

The Duke said, “Whoever he is who in this foul proceeding has thus beguiled your daughter and taken away her senses, and has taken her away from you, the bloody book of law you shall yourself read and interpret in your own way. You will do this even if my own son is the person whom you accuse.”

“Humbly I thank your grace,” Brabantio said. “Here is the man I accuse: this Moor, whom now, it seems, your special

order has brought here on important state business.”

A senator said, “We are very sorry to hear it.”

The other senators nodded or murmured their agreement with what the senator had said.

The Duke said to Othello, “What, on your own behalf, do you say to this?”

“He can say nothing except to admit that I have spoken the truth,” Brabantio said.

“Most mighty, respected, and esteemed signiors,” Othello said, “my very noble and approved good masters, that I have taken away this old man’s daughter is most true. It is also true that I have married her. The height and breadth of my offense has this extent and no more. Plain am I in my speech, and little blessed with the soft phrase of peace. Ever since these arms of mine had the strength of a seven-year-old until some months ago, they have done their most important work in the tented fields where soldiers fight and sleep, and I can speak of little of this great world unless it pertains to feats of fighting and battle, and therefore little shall I help my cause by speaking for myself. Yet, with your gracious patience, I will tell a plain and unpolished tale describing my whole course of love. I will tell what drugs, what charms, what incantations, and what mighty magic I supposedly used — for such I am accused of using — to win his daughter.”

Brabantio said, “My daughter was a maiden who was never bold. She had a spirit so still and quiet that her own natural desires embarrassed her. Could she, in spite of her nature, of their difference in age, of their difference in country of origin, of the danger to her reputation, and of everything, fall in love with something she feared to look at! Only a defective and most imperfect person could think that perfection could so err against all rules of nature; to explain why my daughter eloped with this man, we must look at the

practices of cunning Hell. I therefore assert again that he used some drugs that had power over her blood and emotions, or that he gave her a magic love potion that had such an effect on her.”

“Suspicion is not proof,” the Duke said. “Accusation is not proof without fuller and manifest evidence than the implausible and flimsy evidence and weak probabilities that you are putting forward against him. You need more and better evidence than this if you are to be believed.”

The first senator said, “Othello, speak. Did you by cunning and force subdue and poison this young maiden’s affection? Or did her affection for you come from her consent and from honest face-to-face conversation with you?”

Othello replied, “Please, send for the lady to come here. She is at the Sagittary Inn. Let her speak about me in the presence of her father. If you find me wicked and guilty after hearing what she says about me, then not only take away the trust I have from you and the office I hold under you, but also sentence me to die.”

The Duke ordered, “Bring Desdemona here.”

Othello said to Iago, “Ancient, go with them. You best know the location of the inn, and you can lead the Duke’s men there.”

Iago and two of the Duke’s men left.

“Until she comes, I will tell you how she and I fell in love and decided to be married. I will tell you the truth just as if I were confessing my sins to Heaven,” Othello said.

The Duke replied, “Speak, Othello.”

“Desdemona’s father respected me. He often invited me to his home, and he often questioned me about the story of my life: the battles, sieges, and fortunes that I have experienced.

I told my story, even from my days of boyhood to the very moment that he bade me tell my story. I spoke about disastrous events, of exciting adventures at sea and on land, of narrow escapes when a gap appeared in the fortifications, of being captured by the insolent foe and sold into slavery, of my ransom out of slavery and my behavior in my travels. I took the opportunity to speak about vast caves and empty, sterile deserts, rough quarries, and rocks and hills whose heads touch Heaven. I also spoke about the cannibals — the Anthropophagi — who eat each other and about hunchbacked men whose heads grow beneath their shoulders. Desdemona intently listened to my story. Sometimes, she would have to leave to attend to household tasks, but she would try to finish these quickly and come to listen to me with a greedy ear. I noticed her interest and took an opportune hour to allow her to ask me to recount my story in full — she had heard bits and pieces of my personal history but not the entire story. I answered her questions, and often as I told her about some distressful event from my youth her eyes filled with tears. When my story was finished, she gave me for my pains a world of sighs. She swore, in faith, that my story was strange, very strange, and it was pitiful, wondrously pitiful. She said that she wished that she had not heard it, but yet she wished that Heaven had made her born not a female but instead such a man as I am. She thanked me, and she requested that if I had a friend who loved her I would teach him how to tell my story, and that story would woo her. Hearing this hint, I spoke my feelings to her. She loved me for the dangers I had experienced, and I loved her because she did pity them. This is the only witchcraft I have used to woo and wed Desdemona. Here comes the lady; let her be my witness that what I have said is true.”

Desdemona, Iago, and some attendants arrived.

The Duke said, “I think this tale would win my daughter, too.

Good Brabantio, make the best you can out of this mangled matter. Remember this proverb: Men would rather use their broken weapons than their bare hands.”

“Please, let my daughter speak,” Brabantio said. “If she confesses that she was half the wooer, then may destruction fall upon my head if I wrongly accuse this man.”

He said to his daughter, “Come hither, gentle mistress. Do you see in all this noble company the man to whom you most owe obedience?”

“My noble father,” Desdemona said, “I do perceive here a divided duty. To you I am bound for my life and education: You raised me. My life and education both have taught me to respect you; you are the lord of duty. I am your daughter, but here is my husband. As much duty as my mother showed to you, giving you preference before her father, so much I claim that I may profess due to the Moor, who is now my lord. To my husband, I most owe obedience, just as my mother did before me.”

“May God be with you!” Brabantio said to Desdemona.

He said to the Duke, “I withdraw my accusation against the Moor. Please, your grace, let us move on to the affairs of state.”

To himself, he said, “I would prefer to adopt a child than to beget it.”

He said to Othello, “Come hither, Moor. I here give you that with all my heart which, if you did not already have it, I would keep from you with all my heart.”

He said to his daughter, “Because of you, jewel, I am glad in my soul that I have no other children because your escape would make me a tyrant to them, and I would fasten fetters to their legs to keep them at home.”

He said to the Duke, “I have finished speaking, my lord.”

The Duke replied, “Let me give you some advice. Perhaps I can say some words that will help these lovers climb into your favor. Our griefs should be over after we see that we have no way to remedy them. We see the worst although we had hoped to avoid it. To continue to mourn a misfortune that is past and gone is the best way to draw new misfortune on. Patient endurance mocks misfortunes that cannot be prevented. The robbed man who smiles steals something from the thief; a man robs himself when he engages in useless grief.”

Brabantio replied, “If what you say is correct, then let the Turks cheat us and steal Cyprus from us — the Turks cannot hurt us as long as we smile. A man can hear your words and endure them well when he sits comfortably at home and hears of another’s misfortune, but a man who has suffered a misfortune so great that his patience is cruelly taxed must suffer both from the misfortune and from the cruelty of ‘comforting’ words. These sentences are sugar to a man who does not suffer, but they are gall to a man who does suffer — they are equivocal. But words are merely words; I never yet have heard of any bruised heart that was cured by words heard by the ear. Please, let us now discuss the affairs of the state.”

The Duke said, “The Turks with a mighty armed fleet are sailing toward Cyprus. Othello, you best know the fortifications of the place. We have on Cyprus a governor named Montano — he is very competent, yet our general opinion, which determines what we should do, states that you are the better person to hold power on Cyprus in this situation. Therefore, despite your recent marriage, we want you to sail to Cyprus and defend it.”

“Because of all my experience in warfare, most grave senators, I regard sleeping on the ground in full armor as

equivalent to sleeping on a bed made of the softest down,” Othello replied. “I confess that I find a natural and ready eagerness to engage in hardship, and I therefore will undertake to be your general in these present wars against the Turks of the Ottoman Empire.

“Most humbly, therefore, I ask you to make suitable arrangements for my wife. Give her an appropriate residence and financial support with such accommodations and companions as are suitable for someone with her social position.”

“If you please,” the Duke said, “she shall stay at her father’s.”

Brabantio said, “I will not have her stay with me.”

“Nor will I allow her to stay with her father,” Othello said.

“I decline to stay with my father,” Desdemona said. “I do not want to upset him, which would happen each time he looked at me. Most gracious Duke, listen with a favorable ear to my proposal and give me permission to do what my lack of sophistication asks from you.”

“What do you want, Desdemona?” the Duke asked.

“I love the Moor and want to live with him,” she replied. “My violation of normal standards of conduct and the disruption of my life provide unmistakable proof of that to the world. My heart is now completely in accord with my husband’s profession as soldier. I saw Othello’s true being in his mind, and I have dedicated my whole being and future to his honor and military virtues. This means, dear lords, that if I am left behind in Venice as a moth — an idler or parasite — of peace whose expenses are paid for by the state, and Othello goes to the war, the rites — both the rites of war and the rights of marriage that follow from the rite of marriage — for which I love him are bereft me. His absence will cause

me to be sorrowful until I see him again. Therefore, let me go with him to Cyprus.”

Othello said, “Let her have your permission. Vouch with me, Heaven, that I am not begging that she be allowed to go with me only to please the palate of my sexual appetite and to satisfy my lust — I am a mature man, and I do not allow youthful emotions to rule me, although I will of course have the distinct and proper satisfaction of sex within the marriage. I want to be generous and bountiful to — and enjoy — her mind. Heaven forbid that your good souls think that I will ignore your serious and great business while she is with me. No, if winged Cupid’s feathered arrows should ever blind me to my duty and make my powers of perception and intelligence dull from excessive sexual activity so that I no longer do the work you expect me to do, then let housewives take my helmet and use it as a cooking vessel and let all unworthy and base adversities form an army and make war against my reputation!”

“You may make the decision whether Desdemona stays here in Venice or goes with you to Cyprus,” the Duke said. “But this situation is urgent, and it requires haste. You must leave tonight.”

“Tonight, my lord?” Desdemona asked.

“This very night,” the Duke replied.

“I will leave tonight with all my heart,” Othello said.

The Duke said to the senators, “At nine in the morning we will meet again here. Othello, leave some officer behind so that he can bring our commission to you, along with such other important and relevant things that concern you.”

“So please your grace, my ancient, Iago, is a man of honesty and trust. I give him the duty to convey my wife to Cyprus. He can also bring whatever else your good grace shall think

is necessary to be sent to me.”

“Let it be so. Good night to everyone.”

The Duke then said to Brabantio, “Noble signior, if virtue no delightful beauty lacks, your son-in-law is far more fair than black.”

The first senator said, “*Adieu*, brave Moor. Treat Desdemona well.”

“Watch her carefully, Moor,” Brabantio said, “if you have eyes to use. She has deceived her father, and she may deceive you.”

As the Duke of Venice and the senators left, Othello called after Brabantio, “I swear upon my life that she will be faithful to me!”

Othello then said, “Honest Iago, I must leave my Desdemona with you. Please, let your wife, Emilia, be her attendant. Bring both of them to Cyprus at the best and most convenient time.”

He added, “Come, Desdemona. I have only an hour to spend with you and must devote it to love, worldly matters, and instructions. We must use the time well and do what is necessary.”

Othello and Desdemona departed, leaving Roderigo and Iago behind, alone.

Roderigo had been thinking and now he said, “Iago —”

“What have you got to say, noble heart?” Iago asked.

“What do you think I should do?”

“Why, go to bed, and sleep.”

“I will immediately drown myself.”

Iago joked, “If you do, I will stop being friends with you.”

He added, “Why would you drown yourself, you silly gentleman!”

“To live is silliness when to live is torment. When our physician is death, then we have a prescription to die.”

“This is villainous!” Iago said. “I have looked upon the world for four times seven years — I am twenty-eight years old — and ever since I acquired the ability to distinguish between a benefit and an injury, I have never found a man who knew how to love himself. Before I would say that I would drown myself because I loved some b*tch, I would exchange my body for the body of a lecherous baboon.”

“What should I do?” Roderigo asked. “I confess that it is shameful to be so much in love with Desdemona, but I don’t have the power to stop loving her.”

“Bullsh*t!” Iago said. “We do have power — we ourselves decide what we are and whether we are this way or that way. Remember that Galatians 6:7 says that *‘whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.’* Our bodies are our gardens, and our free will is our gardener. Whether we plant nettles or sow lettuce, whether we plant minty hyssop or throw away thyme as if it were a weed, whether we fill our garden with one kind of herb or with many kinds, whether we have a garden that is unproductive because we are too lazy to tend it or have a productive garden because we manure it and make it fertile through our hard work is up to us. We have the free will to do these things. We have the power to change. Our lives have a pair of scales. In one scale is reason and in the other scale is sensuality. Unless we had reason to counterbalance sensuality, the natural passions and baseness of our natures would lead us to do outrageous actions. Fortunately, we have reason to cool our raging emotions, our carnal stings, our unrestrained lusts — I consider what you

call love to be one of our unrestrained lusts.”

“Love is nothing but an unrestrained lust? That cannot be the truth!” Roderigo said.

“It is merely a lust of your body that your will has permitted. Come on, be a man! You want to drown yourself! Instead, drown cats and blind puppies. I have told you that I am your friend and I now tell you that I am determined to help you get what you deserve. We are bound together with cables of everlasting toughness. I could never better help you than now. Remember this proverb: Prepare yourself for success. Therefore, sell your land and put money in your wallet. You can use the money to buy gifts and give them to me to pass on to Desdemona.”

Yes, do that, Iago thought. I will keep the valuable gifts, not give them to Desdemona.

Iago continued, “Go to Cyprus, the battleground of the current war. Cover your handsome face with a fake beard.”

Yes, do that, Iago thought. You aren't man enough to grow a real beard.

Iago continued, “I say again, put money in your wallet. It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue to love the Moor — put money in your wallet — and it cannot be that the Moor should long continue to love Desdemona. Their love had a violent and sudden commencement, and you will see a sudden separation — put money in your wallet. These Moors are changeable in their nature — fill your wallet with money — the food that to him now is as luscious as sweet chocolate shall soon be to him like a bitter apple. Desdemona must soon change her love for a young man — the Moor is older than she is. When she has had enough of his body, she will see that she chose wrongly when she chose an older man. She will find that she must change her lover — therefore, put money in your wallet. If you must damn

yourself, find a better way of doing it than drowning. Raise all the money you can. If piety and a frail vow of marriage between a wandering barbarian and an over-sophisticated Venetian woman are not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of Hell, you will enjoy her body; therefore, raise money. F**k drowning yourself! It is absolutely the wrong thing to do. If you must die, it is better for you to sleep with her and be hanged than for you not to sleep with her and be drowned.”

“Can I count on you to completely support me as I pursue my goal of sleeping with Desdemona?”

“You can count on me — go and raise money. I have told you often, again and again, that I hate the Moor. My reason for hating him is deeply rooted in my heart — you hate him for no less reason than I do. Let us join together and get revenge against him. If you can make a cuckold out of him, you will feel pleasure and I will be entertained. Time is pregnant with many events to which it will give birth.”

Iago then gave Roderigo a military command: “About face!”

Roderigo was not a military man and did not understand or execute the order.

Iago added, “Go and provide yourself with money. We will talk more about this tomorrow. *Adieu.*”

“Where shall we meet in the morning?”

“At my lodging.”

“I will be there early.”

“Go now; farewell. But listen to me, Roderigo.”

“What?”

“Talk no more about drowning yourself.”

“I have changed my mind. Instead, I am going to go and sell all my land.”

Roderigo departed, leaving Iago alone.

Iago thought these things:

Just like I am doing now, I have always made my fool a major source of my income. I would be wasting my intelligence and experience if I were to spend time with a fool such as Roderigo and not gain entertainment and profit.

I hate the Moor. It is commonly thought that he has done what is my duty as a husband to do between my sheets — people think that he has slept with Emilia, my wife. I don't know if that is true, but I will assume that it is true. The Moor has a good opinion of me: That will help me to get revenge on him.

Cassio is a handsome man. Let me see now: How can I prepare to commit a double knavery against Othello and Cassio that will result in my taking Cassio's place as Othello's lieutenant? How, how?

Let's see. After a little time has passed, I can lie to Othello and tell him that Cassio is too familiar with Desdemona. Cassio has an agreeable appearance and a charming manner that can arouse suspicion. He seems designed to persuade women to be unfaithful to their husbands. The Moor is of a free and open nature; he thinks that men are honest who only seem to be honest. I can lead him as tenderly by the nose as jackasses are led.

I have it. I have formed a plan. Hell and night must bring my plan's monstrous birth to the world's light.

CHAPTER 2**— 2.1 —**

Montano, the governor of Cypress, was standing with two other gentlemen near a quay that was used for loading and unloading ships at a port in Cypress. One gentleman stood on a high structure and so was able to see farther out at sea than Montano, who asked, “What can you see out at sea?”

“Nothing at all,” the first gentleman said. “The sea is tempestuous and rough. I cannot see a sail.”

“The wind has been tempestuous on land, too,” Montano said. “A fuller blast of wind has never shaken our battlements. If the wind has been as tempestuous at sea, what ships’ ribs of oak, when mountainous waves of water melt on them, can hold the mortise and keep their joints together and not be wrecked? What do you think will be the outcome of this?”

The second gentleman said, “The outcome must be a scattering of the Turkish fleet. Stand on the foaming shore and you will see that the waves, rebuked by the shore, seem to pelt the clouds. The wind-shaken waves, which have a mane like some monster, seem to throw water on the stars that make up the burning bear — Ursa Minor — and put out the Guardians — Ursa Minor’s two brightest stars that serve as guards to the Pole Star, aka North Star. I have never seen a similar upheaval of the enraged sea.”

Montano said, “Unless the Turkish fleet reached shelter in a bay, their ships have sunk and their sailors have drowned. It is impossible that the Turkish fleet has ridden out this storm.”

A third gentleman arrived and said, “Good news, lads! The war is over before it started. This desperate tempest has so banged up the Turkish fleet that their plan to wage war

cannot be completed. Cassio, the Moor's lieutenant who was on a noble ship of Venice, has seen that most of the Turkish ships have been wrecked or damaged."

"Really! Is this true?" Montano asked.

"Cassio's ship has put in at this port," the third gentleman said. "It is a ship that was fitted out in Verona. Michael Cassio, the warlike Moor Othello's lieutenant, has come on shore. The Moor himself is still at sea and has been commissioned to come to Cyprus and govern it."

"I am glad of it," Montano said. "He will be a worthy governor."

"Cassio, although he is comforted by the wreck of the Turkish fleet, looks sad and prays that the Moor is safe; their ships were separated by the foul and violent tempest," the third gentleman said.

"I pray to Heaven that the Moor is safe," Montano said. "I have served under him, and the man commands like a perfect soldier. Let's go and see the noble ship of Venice that's come in and look for brave Othello until our eyes blur together the ocean and the blue sky."

"Let's go," the third gentleman said. "Every minute other Venetian ships are expected to appear."

Cassio appeared and said, "Thanks, you valiant people of this warlike isle, who so respect the Moor! May the Heavens give him defense against the tempestuous elements because I have been separated from him and left him on a dangerous sea."

"Is his ship seaworthy?" Montano asked.

"His ship is stoutly timbered, and his pilot is competent and has been tested by experience," Cassio said. "Therefore, my hope that he is safe is realistic and not excessively

optimistic.”

They heard people crying, “A sail! A sail! A sail!”

A fourth gentleman arrived, and Cassio asked him, “What is that noise?”

“The town is empty because everyone is on the edge of the cliff looking for ships at sea. They are crying ‘A sail!’ because they see a ship.”

“I hope that it is the ship of the Moor, who will be governor of Cyprus,” Cassio said.

Some soldiers of Cyprus fired guns.

The second gentleman said, “They are firing the guns as a courtesy to welcome friends.”

“Please, sir,” Cassio said, “go and see who has arrived and then come back and tell us who it is.”

“I will,” the second gentleman said.

He exited.

Montano asked Cassio, “Good lieutenant, is your general married?”

“Yes, and most fortunately. He has married a maiden who surpasses description and wild rumor. She surpasses the extravagances of written descriptions and in the perfect beauty of her being even transcends the imagination. No matter how well you think of her, she is better than you think.”

The second gentleman returned, and Cassio asked him, “Which ship has arrived?”

“The ship carrying Iago, who serves as ancient to the general.”

“His ship has had very favorable and happy speed,” Cassio said. “The tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds, the jagged rocks and sandbanks — underwater traitors that hope to damage the guiltless keel — have a sense of beauty and thereby restrain their dangerous nature so that the divine Desdemona may safely sail to her destination.”

“Who is this Desdemona?” Montano asked.

“She is the woman I spoke of, our great captain’s captain, the wife of Othello, left in the care of the bold Iago, whose arrival here is a week earlier than expected,” Cassio said, adding, “Great Jove, guard Othello and swell his sail with your own powerful breath so that he may bless this bay with his tall ship, make love’s quick pants in Desdemona’s arms, give renewed fire to our depressed spirits, and bring comfort to all Cyprus!”

Desdemona, Emilia, Iago, a newly bearded Roderigo, and some attendants arrived.

Cassio said, “Behold, the ship’s wealth — this woman — has come on shore! You men of Cyprus, bend your knees to this woman, whose name is Desdemona. Hail to you, lady! May the grace of Heaven, before you, behind you, and on every side, surround you!”

“Thank you, valiant Cassio,” Desdemona said. “What news can you tell me of my lord and husband, Othello?”

“He has not yet arrived,” Cassio said. “As far as I know, he is well and will be soon here.”

“I am afraid for him,” Desdemona said. “How were you separated from him?”

“The great storm of the sea and sky drove our ships apart from each other — but look, a sail!”

They heard people crying “A sail!” and guns firing.

The second gentleman said, “The ship has fired a salute to the citadel. This likewise is a friend.”

“Go and find out what you can about the ship,” Cassio said.

The second gentleman departed.

Cassio said to Iago, “Good ancient, you are welcome.”

He said to Emilia, “Welcome, lady.”

He then said to Iago, “Do not take this amiss, good Iago. I am merely observing the rules of etiquette. I was raised to be courteous to ladies. I am from Florence, where courtesy and etiquette are forms of art.”

He then gave Emilia, Iago’s wife, a brief, chaste kiss.

Cassio’s family had raised him to be extraordinarily gallant — kissing and handholding between friends of the opposite sex were socially acceptable.

Iago, who was lower in rank than Cassio and resented it, said, “Sir, if she would give you so much of her lips as she often bestows on me of her tongue, you would soon have enough. My wife often criticizes me.”

Desdemona said about Emilia, “You have embarrassed her. She says nothing.”

“She says nothing now,” Iago replied, “but she is very capable of speech — too capable, in fact. She criticizes me even when she allows me to sleep. But it is true that when she is around your ladyship, she somewhat keeps her tongue still, although she still scolds me in her mind.”

Emilia said, “You have little cause to say that.”

“Come on,” Iago said, “you women are models of virtue when you are out of doors, but you are as noisy as bells in your parlors, you are wildcats in your kitchens, you pretend

to be saints when you injure other people, you are devils when you are injured, and you are lazy when it comes to doing housework and enthusiastic while having sex in your beds.”

“You are slandering women!” Desdemona said.

“No, this is all true, or else I am a Turk — a non-Christian who is not to be believed. When you get out of bed, you play leisurely, and when you go to bed, you work enthusiastically.”

“Poets write praise about their loved ones. I do not want *you* to write ‘praise’ of me,” Emilia said.

“I will not praise you,” Iago replied.

Desdemona said, “What would you write about me, if you were to praise me?”

“Gentle lady,” Iago said, “do not ask me to praise you because I am nothing if not critical.”

“Come on,” Desdemona said. “Fulfill my request.”

She added, “Has someone gone to the harbor to seek news of incoming ships?”

“Yes, madam,” Iago replied.

Desdemona thought, *I am not merry, but I will disguise what I am — a wife who is worried about the safety of her husband — by pretending to be in a merry mood.*

She said, “Come on, how would you praise me?”

“I am thinking about my answer,” Iago said, “but indeed my ideas come out of my brain the way that sticky birdlime comes out of woolen fabric — with great difficulty. Still, my Muse is laboring — and now she delivers this idea: If a woman is fair and wise and has beauty and intelligence, she

intelligently uses her beauty to get what she wants.”

“Well praised! What praise can you give a woman if she is black and intelligent?” Desdemona said.

“If she is black, and also has a wit, she will find a white lover who shall her blackness fit.”

“This praise is worse,” Desdemona said.

“What praise can you give a woman if she is fair and foolish?” Emilia asked.

“She never yet was foolish who was fair; for even her folly helped her to give birth to an heir,” Iago said. “A pretty blonde may be foolish, but men find such foolishness in pretty blondes attractive and so pretty blondes marry and have babies.”

“These are old and silly jokes to make fools laugh in the alehouse,” Desdemona said. “What miserable praise do you have for a woman who is foul and foolish? What have you to say if the woman is ugly and foolish?”

“There is no woman so foul and foolish that she cannot use the same tricks that pretty and intelligent women use,” Iago said.

“This is heavy ignorance,” Desdemona said. “You give the best praise to the worst women. What praise would you give a deserving woman, one who, because she is so good, compels even malicious people to approve of her?”

“She who was always pretty and never proud, spoke well and yet was never loud, never lacked gold and yet never spent excessively on expensive clothing, did not indulge herself even when she could, when angry and able to get revenge nevertheless accepted her injury and rejected her hurt feelings, she who was wise enough never to ignore morality and take advantage of someone by giving them a nearly

worthless item such as a cod's head in exchange for a valuable item such as a salmon's tail, she who was wise enough and strong enough never to exchange a penis for a pudendum and become a lesbian, she who could think and yet keep her thoughts secret, she who knew that suitors were following her and yet did not look behind her, she was a person, if ever such person were, to —”

Iago paused, and Desdemona asked, “To do what?”

“— suckle fools and chronicle small beer.”

“That is a very lame and impotent conclusion!” Desdemona said. “Is that all that such an excellent woman could and should do! To raise babies and keep household accounts! Babies get either intelligence or foolishness from their mothers' milk. Would such an excellent woman make her babies foolish?”

She said to Emilia, “Do not let Iago be your teacher, although he is your husband.”

She added, “What do you think, Cassio? Isn't Iago a most coarse and licentious teacher?”

“He speaks plainly, madam,” Cassio said. “You may relish him more as a soldier than as a scholar.”

As Cassio spoke, he held Desdemona's hand, something that was acceptable in the society in which he was raised, just like giving a friendly kiss to a married woman he knew.

Iago watched Cassio and thought, *He is taking Desdemona by the hand. Good, Cassio. Now he is whispering to her. With as little a web as this, I will ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Go on. Smile at her. I will use your own courtly behavior to fetter you.*

He said out loud to Cassio, “You are saying the truth. It is exactly as you say.”

He thought, *If such courtly behavior as you are engaging in will strip your lieutenancy away from you, you will regret doing such things as holding and kissing Desdemona's hand, just as you are now doing. You are way too eager to act like a courtly gentleman. Very good, Cassio. You kiss so well! You show Desdemona an excellent courtesy, indeed! Yet again you kiss Desdemona's fingers — I wish that her fingers were the nozzles of enema bags!*

A trumpet sounded, and Iago said out loud, "It is the Moor! I know the distinctive call his trumpeter makes."

Cassio said, "You are right. It is Othello."

"Let's go and greet him," Desdemona said.

"Look, here he comes," Cassio said.

Othello and some attendants arrived.

Othello said to Desdemona, "My beautiful warrior!"

"My dear Othello!" she replied.

"I am extremely happy to see you here — as happy as I am surprised that you arrived on Cyprus before I did. You are the joy of my soul! If after every tempest would come such calms, I wish that the winds would blow until they have awakened death! Let the laboring ship climb hills of seas that are as high as Mount Olympus and then duck again as low as Hell is from Heaven! If it were my time now to die, I would die a very happy man because, I fear, my soul is so filled with such absolute happiness that I shall never again be this happy."

Desdemona replied, "May the Heavens grant that our loves and happiness should increase with each day we live!"

"Amen to that, sweet Heavenly powers!" Othello said. "I cannot speak well enough to describe my happiness — my

heart is too filled with joy.”

He kissed Desdemona twice and said, “I hope that these kisses are as close to fighting as we will ever come.”

Iago thought, *Desdemona and you are like a well-tuned musical instrument now, but I will loosen the pegs of the strings and turn your harmony into discord. You think that I am an honest man, and I honestly intend to ruin your marriage.*

Othello said, “Come, let us go to the castle. We have received good news, friends. The war is over; the Turks have been drowned.”

He said to Montano and the other gentlemen of Cyprus, “How are my old friends here on this isle?”

He said to Desdemona, “Honey, you shall be well liked here in Cyprus; I have found great friendship among the people here. Oh, my sweetheart, I am talking too much because I am so happy.”

He added, “Please, good Iago, go to the bay and take care of my belongings. Bring the captain of the ship to the citadel. He is a good man, and his worthiness commands much respect.”

He added, “Come, Desdemona, once more, we are well met here at Cyprus.”

Othello, Desdemona, and most of the others departed.

Iago said to one of the attendants who were leaving, “Meet me soon at the harbor.”

Now Iago and Roderigo were alone, and Iago said, “Come here, Roderigo. If you are bold and brave — people say that ordinary men who fall in love acquire a nobility of character that they were not born with — listen to me. Lieutenant

Cassio has guard duty tonight — but first let me tell you something important — Desdemona is clearly in love with him.”

“Desdemona is in love with Cassio!” Roderigo exclaimed. “That is not possible!”

Iago put his finger to his lips in a “Shush” gesture and said to Roderigo, “Place your finger like this and be quiet so that I can wise you up.”

He lowered his finger and said, “You remember how violently Desdemona first loved the Moor, although what she loved him for was his bragging to her and telling her fantastic lies. Will Desdemona continue to love him because he talks foolishly? Don’t even think that. Her eye must be fed; she must have someone handsome to look at and to love. The devil is black, and what delight shall Desdemona have when she looks at the Moor and sees the devil? After one has a lot of sex and becomes satiated, there must be, to reignite one’s sexual appetite, loveliness in appearance and similarity in age, manners, and virtues. The Moor is deficient in all of these. He is black, he is older than Desdemona, and because he is from another country and culture, he and she are different in other ways as well. Now, because she and the Moor are so dissimilar, Desdemona’s delicate tenderness will find itself abused, and she will begin to heave the gorge — that is, vomit. She will disrelish and abhor the Moor; her very nature will reject the Moor and compel her to love some second choice instead of the Moor. Now, sir, this granted — and it must be granted because it is very obvious and natural — who is more likely to be next in line for Desdemona’s love than Cassio? He is a knave who is very smooth-tongued. He is conscientious in seeming to be polite and courteous, but only so that he can achieve the fulfillment of his lecherous passions. No one is more likely than he to be the next object of Desdemona’s affections. He is a slippery

and subtle knave, a finder of opportunities, and a man who has an eye to create opportunities for himself, although true opportunities never present themselves naturally to him — he is a devilish knave. In addition, the knave is handsome, he is young, and he has all those attributes that foolish and immature minds look for. He is a pestilent and complete knave, and the woman has already found him.”

“I cannot believe that Desdemona is like that,” Roderigo said. “She is blessed and moral.”

“Bulls*t!” Iago said. “The wine she drinks is made of grapes. All wines have sediment; all women have faults. If Desdemona were blessed and moral, she would never have loved the Moor. Blessed! You may as well call entrails — where food is no longer food — blessed! Didn’t you see her holding hands with him? Didn’t you see that?”

“Yes, I did see that, but that was but nothing but courtesy and good etiquette,” Roderigo said. “He is from Florence, and Florentines do such things.”

“It was lechery — I swear it!” Iago said. “It was a preface and obscure prologue to an upcoming history of lust and foul thoughts. Their lips were so close that their breaths embraced. Villainous thoughts, Roderigo! When these intimacies so lead the way, soon comes the main exercise — the two bodies joined, making the beast with two backs. It’s obvious. But, sir, do what I tell you to do. I have brought you from Venice. Stay awake tonight and do what I tell you to do. Cassio, who has guard duty, does not know you. I will be close to you. Find an opportunity to anger Cassio, either by speaking too loud, or disparaging his job performance, or by doing something else that will anger him at the right time.”

“Huh,” Roderigo said.

“Sir, Cassio is rash and very easy to anger, and he is likely

to try to hit you. Provoke him, so that he will attempt violence against you. When that happens, I will cause these citizens of Cyprus to riot; they will not be appeased until Cassio is fired and someone — me — replaces him. That way, you will have a shorter journey to your desires — you will bed Desdemona more quickly — by the means I shall then have to promote your desires. Both you and I will benefit from the firing of Cassio; unless we get rid of him, we cannot be successful in achieving our goals.”

“I will do this, if I have the opportunity,” Roderigo said.

“You will have the opportunity — I promise,” Iago said. “Meet me soon at the citadel. I now must bring the Moor’s baggage ashore. Farewell.”

Roderigo replied, “*Adieu*,” and then he departed.

Alone, Iago thought these things:

That Cassio loves Desdemona, I well believe. That she loves him is plausible and very believable. Women are untrustworthy. I believe that the Moor, although I cannot stand him, is of a faithful, loving, noble nature, but I think that he will cost Desdemona dearly. Truly, I love her, too. I do not love her solely because of lust, although it is certainly possible that I am guilty of the sin of lusting for her. However, I want to sleep with her in part out of revenge. I suspect that the Moor has leapt into my seat — into that part of my wife’s body that only I ought to fill. This suspicion gnaws at my insides like a poisonous mineral. Nothing can or shall content my soul until I get even with him. I remember Exodus 21:1 and 21:23-4: ‘... these are the laws ... life for life, / eye for eye, tooth for tooth.’ To that I would add, ‘wife for wife.’ But if I cannot cuckold the Moor, I can make him so jealous of Desdemona and so certain that she has been unfaithful to him that his intelligence and his reason will not be able to convince him that she is faithful.

Roderigo is poor trash — a worthless person — from Venice. I manage — and restrain as needed, since I am not actually promoting his cause, although he thinks I am — his hunting of Desdemona, and if he does as I tell him to do, soon I will have Michael Cassio at my mercy, which is nonexistent. I will slander Cassio to the Moor and say that Cassio has a lascivious manner. Actually, Cassio does seem to have a lascivious manner — I can easily imagine him wearing my nightcap while he is in bed with my wife. I will make the Moor thank me, respect me, and reward me. For what? For making him egregiously an ass and plotting against his peace and quiet even so far as to make him insane.

My opportunity now is present, but the details are still confused. Knavery's plain face is never seen until it is used.

— 2.2 —

On a street of Cypress, a herald read a proclamation out loud:

“It is the pleasure of Othello, our noble and valiant general, since certain and reliable news has now arrived that the Turkish fleet has been entirely destroyed, that every person enjoy public festivity and revelry. Dance. Make bonfires. Enjoy whatever entertainment your inclination leads you to. In addition to celebrating the destruction of the Turkish fleet, celebrate also the marriage of Othello and Desdemona.”

The herald added, “This is the proclamation that Othello wanted to be read out loud. All kitchens and pantries are open, and everyone is invited to feast from now until the bells have tolled eleven. Heaven bless the isle of Cyprus and our noble general, Othello!”

— 2.3 —

In a hall in the castle, Othello said to Michael Cassio, “Good Michael, be in charge of and keep an eye on the guards tonight. Let us exercise self-control and not revel so much

that we are indiscrete.”

“Iago has his instructions for what to do, but nevertheless, I will keep my eye on things.”

“Iago is a very honest and very good man,” Othello said. “Michael, good night. Tomorrow at your earliest convenience meet with me.”

To Desdemona, Othello said, “Come, my dear love. We have made our purchase — we have gotten married. However, the fruits are to ensue. Our profit is yet to come between me and you — we have not yet consummated our marriage.”

He said to Cassio, “Good night.”

Othello, Desdemona, and their attendants departed, and Iago arrived.

Cassio said, “Welcome, Iago; we must go and stand watch.”

“Not yet, lieutenant,” Iago said. “It is not yet ten o’clock. Our general left us so early because of his love for Desdemona. We cannot blame him for that. He has not yet slept with her, and she would be good sport for Jove, the Roman god who enjoyed many affairs with immortal goddesses and with mortal women.”

“She’s a most exquisite lady,” Cassio replied.

“And I bet that she is vigorous in bed.”

“To be sure, she is a most fresh and delicate creature.”

“Her eyes are beautiful! I think that they give provocative invitations.”

“Her eyes are beautiful, but I think that they are modest, not lascivious.”

“When she speaks, doesn’t she cause men to feel passion?”

Iago asked.

“She is indeed perfection,” Cassio said.

“Well, happiness to their sheets!” Iago said.

He thought, *I have tried to tempt Cassio to try to seduce Desdemona, but he is having none of it, although he clearly admires her. Pity.*

Iago said, “Come, lieutenant, I have a jug of wine. Just outside are a couple of Cyprus gallants who would like to drink a toast to the health of black Othello.”

“Not tonight, good Iago. I do not have a good head for alcohol — I am easily intoxicated. I wish that society had a different and better — and yet polite — way of celebrating than drinking.”

“The men outside are our friends,” Iago said. “Have one cup of wine with them. I will do most of the drinking for you.”

“I have drunk only one cup of wine tonight, and that was secretly and carefully diluted with water, too, but I — and probably you — can tell that it has affected me. I am unfortunate in that I cannot tolerate alcohol, and I dare not drink any more wine.”

“What, man! This is a night of revels and parties — we are celebrating! The gallants I mentioned want you to celebrate with them.”

“Where are they?”

“Just outside the door; please, call them in.”

“I will do it, but I dislike it,” Cassio said.

He left to invite the people outside to come in.

Iago thought, *If I can persuade Cassio to drink one more cup*

of wine in addition to the cup that he has already drunk tonight, he will be as ready to fight and to take offense as a young lady's feisty pet dog. Already, that lovesick fool Roderigo, whom love has almost turned inside out, has drunk many toasts in honor of Desdemona. He is awake and watching for his opportunity to get Cassio in trouble. Three lads of Cyprus, noble swelling spirits, who are touchy about the respect that they think is due them and who are characteristic of the men on this warlike isle, are already drunk with the full and flowing cups of wine I have given them. They will be guards tonight, too, along with Montano, the former governor of Cyprus. I will put Cassio in the midst of this flock of drunkards and make him commit an action that will outrage the citizens of this isle. Here Cassio and the three young drunks come. Soon Roderigo will arrive. If my plot has the consequences it should, my boat will sail freely with a favorable wind and current — I will enjoy success.

Cassio returned. With him were the three young men whom Iago had already gotten drunk and Montano, the former governor of Cyprus. The three young men and Montano would serve as guards this night. Servants carrying wine also entered the room.

Cassio said, "By God, they have already given me some wine, which I have drunk."

Montano said, "Just a little wine, I swear — not more than a pint, as I am a soldier."

Iago called to a waiter, "Bring some wine!"

He then began to sing a song to which he and others clinked their tankards together:

"And let me the tankard clink, clink;

"And let me the tankard clink.

“A soldier’s a man;

“A life’s but a span;

“Why, then, let a soldier drink.”

He then said, “Some wine, boys!”

Cassio, made drunk by only two servings of wine, one of them diluted with water, said, “That is an excellent song.”

“I learned it in England,” Iago said, “where, indeed, they are most expert in drinking. Your Dane, your German, and your sagging-bellied Hollander — waiter, bring more wine! — are nothing compared to your English.”

“Is an Englishman so expert in his drinking?” Cassio asked.

“Why, he drinks, easily, until and after your Dane is dead drunk; he does not have to sweat to outdrink your German; your Hollander will vomit while the Englishman’s tankard is being refilled.”

Cassio cried, “To the health of our general!”

“Good toast,” Montano said. “I will drink to that.”

Iago sang again:

“Oh, sweet England!

“King Stephen was a worthy peer,

“His breeches cost him a crown;

“He held them sixpence all too dear,

“With that he called the tailor low-down.

“He was a man of high renown,

“And you are of low degree.

“It is extravagant clothing that pulls the country down,

“*So wrap your old cloak around you.*”

Iago called, “Bring more wine!”

Cassio said, “Why, this is a more exquisite song than the other one.”

“Will you hear it again?” Iago asked.

“No — because I hold a man to be unworthy of his position who does such things as drinking, singing, and carousing. Well, God’s above all; and some souls must be saved, and some souls must not be saved.”

“That’s true, good lieutenant,” Iago said.

“For my own part — no offence to the general, or to any man of rank — I hope to be saved,” Cassio said.

“And so do I, lieutenant.”

“Yes, but, by your leave, I hope that you are not saved before me,” Cassio said. “According to military protocol, the lieutenant must be saved before the ancient because he outranks him. But let’s have no more of this; let’s attend to our affairs. We have a job to do: guard duty. May God forgive us our sins! Gentlemen, let’s attend to our business. We have guard duty. Do not think, gentlemen, that I am drunk. I know what I ought to know. This is my ancient; this is my right hand, and this is my left hand. I am not drunk now; I can stand well enough, and I can speak well enough.”

An impartial observer might think, *Cassio, you are unsteady on your feet and you are slurring your words*, but the men with Cassio said, “You are excellent and well.”

“Why, so I am,” a drunken Cassio said. “I am also not drunk.”

He departed.

“Let us go to the ramparts, men, and start our guard duty,” Montano said.

The three young men of Cyprus followed after Cassius.

Montano would have gone, too, but Iago spoke to him, saying, “That drunken fellow who left before the three young men is a soldier fit to be Caesar’s right-hand man and give military commands, but he has a vice that is the equal of his virtue. They form a perfect equinox; his vice is as black as his virtue is fair. It is a pity. I fear the trust that Othello has in him. Sometime in the future, this fellow is likely to do something that will hurt this island.”

“Is he often drunk?” Montano asked.

“He gets drunk every night before he sleeps. If his drunkenness did not put him to sleep, he would stay awake a couple of days in a row.”

“This is something that the Moor, our general, should be made aware of,” Montano said. “Perhaps he does not know about it, or perhaps he so prizes the virtues that are in Cassio that he ignores his vice. That seems likely.”

Roderigo entered the room, and Iago whispered to him so that Montano could not hear, “You have come at a good time. Cassio just left; go after him. You know what to do.”

Montano continued, “It is a great pity — and a great danger — that the noble Moor should have as second in command someone with such a vice as drunkenness. It would be a good deed to tell the Moor that.”

“I won’t — not even for all of this island!” Iago said. “I respect Cassio, and I would do much to cure him of his vice —”

Noises sounded, and someone shouted, “Help! Help!”

Iago asked, “— but what is going on?”

Roderigo, chased by Cassio, ran into the room.

Cassio, drunk and angry, shouted at him, “You rogue! You rascal!”

Montano asked, “What’s the matter, lieutenant?”

“This knave is trying to teach me my duty! He is trying to tell me how to do my job! I’ll whip the knave until the marks on his skin resemble a bottle covered with wickerwork.”

“Will you whip me?” Roderigo shouted.

“Stop babbling, rogue,” Cassio ordered, hitting Roderigo.

Montano said, “Stop, good lieutenant.” He grabbed Cassio’s hand and added, “Please, sir, stop hitting this man.”

“Let me go, sir,” Cassio said, “or I’ll hit you on the head.”

“Come, come, you’re drunk,” Montano said.

“Drunk!” Cassio said.

He attacked Montano, who fought back.

Iago said quietly to Roderigo so that no one could hear, “Go out, and cry that there is a mutiny, an insurrection.”

Roderigo left to carry out Iago’s command.

Iago then pretended to be a peacemaker: “Good lieutenant ... for pity, gentlemen ... help! ... lieutenant, sir ... Montano, sir ... help! ... this is an excellent watch — not!”

An alarm bell rang.

Iago shouted, “Who is ringing the bell? ... Diablo — the devil! ... The townspeople will start a riot. ... For God’s sake, lieutenant, stop fighting! You will be disgraced forever.”

Othello and some attendants entered the room.

“What is the matter here?” Othello asked.

“Damn! I am bleeding! I am likely to die!” Montano said.

“Everyone, stop fighting, if you value your lives,” Othello ordered.

Iago said, “Everyone, stop fighting! ... Lieutenant Cassio, sir ... Montano ... gentlemen! Have all of you forgotten all sense of dignity and duty? Stop! The general is speaking to you! Stop! Stop, for the love of God!”

“What is going on here?” Othello said. “What is the cause of this disturbance? Have we all become Turks, and are we going to fight ourselves although Heaven sent a tempest to prevent the real Turks from fighting us? For Christian shame, stop this barbarous brawl! He who angrily moves next to attack someone values his own soul only lightly — he will die as soon as he makes a move! Silence that dreadful bell! It frightens the citizens of this isle and destroys its normal peace and quiet. What is the matter, people? Honest Iago, you who look as if you will die with grief, speak. Tell me who began this fight. Loyal soldier, I order you to tell me.”

“I do not know who started the fight,” Iago replied. “Everyone seemed to be friends until just now in their conduct. They were like a bride and a groom undressing in preparation for bed, and then, just now, as if some malignant planet of astrology had driven these men out of their minds, they took out their swords and made each other’s chests their targets in a bloody fight. I cannot identify any cause of this senseless quarrel, and I would prefer that I had lost my legs in a glorious battle than that they brought me to this quarrel.”

“How is it, Michael, that you have this night forgotten the right and honorable way to act?” Othello asked Cassio.

“Please, pardon me,” Cassio replied. “I cannot speak in my defense.”

“Worthy Montano, you are accustomed to be law-abiding,” Othello said. “Everyone has noticed the gravity and sober behavior of your youth, and people of the wisest judgment praise you greatly. What is the reason you are willing to act in such a way as to exchange your good reputation for the bad reputation of a night-brawler? You are spending the wealth of your reputation on trifles. Answer me.”

“Worthy Othello, I am seriously injured,” Montano said. “Iago, your officer, can inform you about this fight — I should not talk because talking causes me pain — and about my actions. I know of nothing that I have said or done wrong this night unless valuing one’s life is sometimes a vice, and defending ourselves is a sin when someone violently attacks us.”

“By Heaven, my anger begins to overwhelm my reason. My strong feelings, having shut down my best judgment, now begin to control me,” Othello said. “If I move in any way, or lift this arm, even the best and highest ranking of you shall feel my anger. Tell me how this foul rout began and who started it. Whoever is guilty of this offence, even if he were my twin brother, will lose my friendship. What a way to act! Here we are in a town that was a target of the Turkish enemy, the people are still riled up and afraid, and yet you are fighting in a private and domestic quarrel, at night, and while you are on guard duty! This behavior is monstrous! Iago, who began this fight?”

Montano put his hand on Iago’s arm and said, “If you deliver more or less than the truth, you are no soldier. Do not let your friendship with Cassio bias you.”

“Don’t touch me, but you do know me well,” Iago said. “I would rather have my tongue cut from my mouth than use it

to do offence to Michael Cassio. However, I persuade myself that to speak the truth will not harm him. This is what I know, general. While Montano and I were talking, a fellow came in this room crying out for help. Cassio was chasing him with his sword drawn, determined to use it. Sir, this gentleman, Montano, stepped in and spoke to Cassio, and entreated him to be calm. I myself pursued the fellow who was crying out for help because I was afraid that his cries — as in fact did happen — would frighten the citizens of this town. The fellow was swift of foot and outran me. I returned to this room rather than try to follow him because I heard the clink and fall of swords and Cassio swearing mightily — something I had never heard him do before this night. When I came back — I was away only a short time — I found them fighting together, trading blow and thrust. They were fighting exactly as you saw when you yourself separated them. More of this matter I do not know, but men are men; the best sometimes forget themselves. Though Cassio did some little wrong to Montano, as men in rage strike those who wish them best, yet surely Cassio, I believe, received from the man who fled some strange indignity or insult that a man could not honorably ignore.”

“I know, Iago, that your honesty and respect for Cassio affect the way you are telling your story,” Othello said. “You are deliberately minimizing Cassio’s fault.”

He said to Cassio, “I respect your virtues, but you will no longer be an officer of mine.”

Desdemona now arrived, accompanied by a few attendants.

Othello said, “Look! My gentle love has been awakened by this commotion.”

He said to Cassio, “I will make an example of you.”

“What’s the matter?” Desdemona said.

“All’s well now, sweetheart,” Othello said. “Go back to bed.”

He said to Montano, “Sir, I myself will pay a doctor to look after your injuries.”

Some people helped Montano leave the room and seek the services of a doctor.

Othello said, “Iago, go throughout the town and calm anyone whom this brawl has upset.”

He added, “Come, Desdemona. It is normal in the soldiers’ life to have their balmy slumbers waked with strife.”

Everyone departed except for Iago and Cassio.

Iago asked, “Are you hurt, lieutenant?”

“Yes, and a doctor cannot help me.”

“Heaven forbid!”

“Reputation, reputation, reputation!” Cassio cried. “Oh, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, I have lost my reputation!”

“As I am an honest man, I thought that you had received some bodily wound; that would hurt you more than a wounded reputation. Reputation is an idle and very false concept. It is often gotten without merit, and it is often lost without just cause. You have lost no reputation at all, unless you regard yourself as such a loser. Remember this proverb: A man is weal — happy — or woe — sorrowful — as he thinks himself so. What, man! There are ways to regain the general’s good opinion of you. You are cast aside now only because he is angry, and this punishment is in accordance more with policy than with malice. It is like someone beating his innocent dog in order to frighten an imperious lion.

Othello is making an example of you so that his troops and the citizens of Venice will respect his authority. If you plead to him to give you your job back, he will do so.”

“I would prefer to be despised than to deceive so good a commander with so slight, so drunken, and so indiscreet an officer as I have been tonight,” Cassio said. “Drunk? And speak nonsense like a parrot? And squabble? Swagger? Swear? And talk rubbish to my own shadow? Oh, you invisible spirit of wine, if you have no name that you are known by, let us call you devil!”

“Who was he whom you chased with your sword drawn?” Iago asked. “What had he done to you?”

“I don’t know.”

“How can that be possible?”

“I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly. I remember a quarrel, but not what the quarrel was about. Oh, God, how is it possible that men should put an enemy — wine — in their mouths that will steal away their brains! How is it possible that we should, with joy, pleasure, revel, and the desire for applause, transform ourselves into beasts!”

“Why, you are sober enough now,” Iago said. “How is it that you are now thus recovered?”

“It has pleased the devil drunkenness to give place to the devil wrath,” Cassio said. “My anger drove out my drunkenness. One imperfection gave way to another, and both make me frankly despise myself.”

“Come, you are too hard on yourself,” Iago said. “Considering the time, the place, and the condition of this country, I wish that this had not happened to you, but since it has, solve this problem and make things right again for yourself.”

“If I ask him to give me my job back, he shall tell me that I am a drunkard!” Cassio said. “Had I as many mouths as Hydra, the nine-headed serpent that Hercules killed, such an answer would stop them all. To be now a sensible and intelligent man, and then a fool, and then a beast! Oh, strange! Every cup of wine too much is cursed and the contents include a devil.”

“Come, come, good wine is a good familiar creature, if it be well used — exclaim no more against it,” Iago said.

He thought, *That is true, and it is also true that good wine is a bad familiar creature — a witch’s personal devil-servant, usually in the form of an animal — if it is badly used.*

Iago added, “Good lieutenant, I think that you know that I am your friend.”

“I know it well and have good evidence of it, sir,” Cassio said. “I can’t believe that I got drunk!”

“You or any other living man may at times be drunk,” Iago said. “I’ll advise you what you shall do. Our general’s wife, Desdemona, is now the general in this respect: The Moor has devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, observation, and noting of her qualities and graces. Confess freely to her what has happened and beg her to help you get your job again. Desdemona is of so generous, so kind, so helpful, and so blessed a disposition that she thinks that it is a sin not to do more than is requested of her. Ask her to mend this break between Othello and you. I will make a bet that she will help you. This break will be mended and your friendship with the Moor will be made stronger than before, just like a bone that has healed after being broken is stronger than it was before it was broken.”

“You advise me well,” Cassio said.

“I do so because of the sincere friendship I have for you and

the honest kindness I feel for you.”

“I well believe it,” Cassio said. “Early in the morning, I will beg the virtuous Desdemona to plead my case to her husband. My future is desperate if I don’t get my job back.”

“You are doing the right thing,” Iago said. “Good night, lieutenant. I must resume my guard duty.”

“Good night, honest Iago,” Cassio said.

He departed.

Iago thought, *How can anyone say that I am a villain when this advice I give is open and generous and honest, reasonable, and in fact exactly what is needed for Cassio to get in the good graces of the Moor again? It is very easy to persuade the generous and sympathetic Desdemona to take one’s side in a good cause. She is naturally as generous as the Earth that freely gives us oxygen and water. She can easily persuade the Moor to do what she wants him to do. Even if she wanted him to renounce his Christian religion and his baptism and all other seals and symbols of redeemed sin, his soul is so chained to her love that she may create, ruin, and do what she wishes. The Moor’s weak willpower will make his sexual appetite for her his god. Can I be considered a villain when I advise Cassio to do what I want him to do — when what I advise is something that will lead to something good for him? This is the divinity of Hell! When devils want to do the blackest sins, the devils mislead people by appearing Heavenly. That is what I am doing now. While this honest fool, Cassio, pleads for help from Desdemona to regain his job, and she pleads for him strongly to the Moor, I will pour poison into the Moor’s ear. I will tell him that Desdemona pleads for Cassio because she lusts for him. The more she strives to do Cassio good, the more she shall undo the Moor’s love for her. So will I turn her fair virtue into black pitch, and out of her own goodness will I make the net*

that shall enmesh them all.

Roderigo now entered the room.

“How are you, Roderigo?” Iago asked.

“I am like a dog that follows in a hunting chase,” Roderigo said. “I am not one of the dogs that sniffs out the prey, but merely one of the dogs who barks in the pack — I am an also-ran. I desire Desdemona, but I am not in the running for her affection. My money is almost spent, I have been tonight exceedingly well beaten by Cassio, and I think the conclusion will be that I shall have much experience and nothing else for my pains, and so, with no money at all and a little more sense, I shall return again to Venice.”

“How poor are they who lack patience!” Iago said. “What wound did ever heal but by degrees? You know that we work by intelligence and cunning wit, and not by witchcraft — cunning wit depends on dawdling time. To achieve your goal of sleeping with Desdemona will take time. Aren’t things going well? Cassio did beat you, but by that small hurt, you have gotten Cassio fired. Many plants grow well in the sunshine, but whatever blossoms first will ripen first. The firing of Cassio is the blossom, and the fruit you desire will follow. You will sleep with Desdemona, but for now be content and peaceful. Look, the sky is lightening; it is morning. Pleasure and action make the hours seem short and time pass quickly. Go to bed; go to your lodging. Go away, I say. We will talk later, but for now go to bed.”

Roderigo departed.

Iago thought, Two things are to be done. One: My wife, Emilia, must plead for Cassio to her mistress, Desdemona. I will tell her to do that. Two: Meanwhile, I must draw the Moor aside and then bring him back when he will see Cassio asking Desdemona for her help. Aye, that’s the way. Dull not an evil scheme by coldness and delay. I am willing and eager

to put my plot in action.

CHAPTER 3

— 3.1 —

Cassio and some musicians walked to a place in front of the castle.

Cassio said, “Musicians, play here; I will pay you. Play something that’s brief, and bid the Moor, ‘Good morning, general.’”

Although Cassio was no longer Othello’s lieutenant, he was doing something considerate for Othello and Desdemona: He was following the custom of awakening the newly married couple with music after their first night together.

A clown, aka Fool, aka comedian, arrived, and listened to the musicians.

The clown said, “Your musical instruments have a nasal sound; they sound as if they are making music in a nose. Have your instruments been in Naples?”

The clown thought, *That is a good joke, although I doubt if these musicians will get it. Naples is known for the venereal disease syphilis, which deforms the nose by collapsing the bridge.*

The first musician said, “What do you mean?”

The clown then asked, “Are these wind instruments?”

“Yes, sir, they are,” the first musician replied.

“Thereby hangs a tail,” the clown said.

“Whereby hangs a tale, sir?” the first musician asked.

“A tail hangs by many a wind instrument that I know,” the clown replied.

The clown thought, *That is true. One meaning of wind is a*

fart, and therefore an anus is a wind instrument. A tail — or penis — hangs by half of the human wind instruments on this Earth.

The clown added, “Musicians, here’s money for you. The general likes your music so well that he desires you, for love’s sake, to make no more noise with your instruments.”

“Well, sir, we will not,” the first musician said.

“If you have any music that cannot be heard, then play it, but the general does not care to actually hear music.”

“We have no music that cannot be heard, sir,” the first musician said.

“Then put your pipes in your bag and carry them away,” the clown said. “You need not carry me away; I will leave on my own. Vanish into air! Go away!”

The musicians departed, and Cassio asked the clown, “Do you hear, my honest friend?”

Because he was from Florence, Cassio’s language differed slightly from that of both Venice and Cyprus. He meant, *Will you listen to me, my honest friend?*

The clown ignored the comma in Cassio’s question and said, “No, I don’t hear your honest friend; I hear you.”

“Please, don’t engage in word play,” Cassio said. “Here is a small gold coin for you. If the gentlewoman — Emilia — who attends the general’s wife is stirring, tell her that a man named Cassio entreats her to listen to a few words. Will you do this for me?”

“She is stirring, sir,” the clown said.

He thought, *Yes, she is stirring — in more ways than one. She stirs up sexual desire in men, and she is awake and out of bed.*

He also thought, *This is a man who is a little too fancy with words: "entreats her to listen to a few words." Yech!*

Making fun of Cassio's speech, the clown added, "If she will stir hither, I shall seem to notify unto her."

"Do that, my good friend."

The clown departed.

Iago now arrived.

"You have come at a good time, Iago," Cassio said.

"Haven't you been to bed?" Iago asked.

"Why, no," Cassio replied. "The dawn had broken before we parted. I have made bold, Iago, to send a request in to your wife. I want to ask her if she will arrange for me to talk to Desdemona."

"I will send my wife to talk to you very soon," Iago said. "I will also find a way to draw the Moor out of the way so that you and my wife can talk more freely."

"I humbly thank you," Cassio replied.

Iago departed, and Cassio said, "Iago could not be kinder and more honest; he is as kind and honest as a Florentine — a person from my own city, which is known for its etiquette and courtesy."

An impartial observer might remember that Machiavelli, author of *The Prince*, had lived in Florence.

Emilia, Iago's wife, walked up to Cassio.

"Good morning, good lieutenant," she said. "I am sorry that you have incurred the Moor's displeasure, but all will surely be well. The general and his wife were talking about you, and she spoke up for you strongly. However, the Moor

replied that the man you hurt is well known in Cyprus and is a member of an important family. Therefore, the wisest thing for the Moor to do was to punish you, but the Moor said that he respects you and he needs nothing more than that respect to reinstate you as his lieutenant when he has a good opportunity to do so.”

“Still, I beg you,” Cassio replied, “if you think it fitting, and if it may be done, to allow me to speak briefly to Desdemona.”

“Please, come in,” Emilia replied. “I will put you in a place where you can speak freely to Desdemona.”

“I am much obliged to you,” Cassio said.

— 3.2 —

In a room of the castle, Othello, Iago, and some gentlemen were speaking about official business.

Othello said, “Iago, give these letters to the pilot of the ship sailing to Venice, and have him give my respects to the senate. Once that is done, come back to me. I will be walking on the fortifications.”

Iago replied, “My good lord, I will do what you say.”

“Shall we see this fortification, gentlemen?”

“We will go with you, your lordship,” a gentleman said.

— 3.3 —

In the garden of the castle, Desdemona, Cassio, and Emilia were talking. Emilia was serving as Desdemona’s chaperone.

Desdemona said, “Be assured, good Cassio, that I will do everything I can to help you regain your position as lieutenant.”

“Good madam, do so,” Emilia said. “I know that Cassio’s misfortune grieves my husband, Iago, as badly as if it had happened to him.”

“Iago is an honest man,” Desdemona said. “Do not doubt, Cassio, that I will soon have my husband and you together again as friendly to each other as you were before.”

“Generous madam,” Cassio said, “whatever shall become of Michael Cassio, he will never be anything but your true servant.”

“I know it,” Desdemona said. “I thank you. You do respect my husband. You have known him a long time. Be well assured that he shall be estranged from you no longer than is politically expedient. He needed to make an example of you.”

“Yes,” Cassio said, “but, lady, that political expediency may either continue so long, or continue because of weak and trivial reasons, or continue because of accidental, unrelated political events, that with myself absent and with someone else filling in as lieutenant, the general will forget his and my friendship and my service to him.”

“Don’t think that,” Desdemona said. “With Emilia as a witness, I promise you that you will regain your position as lieutenant. I assure you that if I promise to do something for a friend that I will do everything that I have promised.” She joked, “My husband will never rest: I’ll keep him awake just like I were taming a hawk. I will talk to him and nag him until he grows impatient. His bed shall seem like a school because of the lectures that I will give him, and when he eats his meals he will think that it is as if he were a priest hearing a long confession. Whatever he does, I will bring up Cassio’s petition to be reinstated as lieutenant. Therefore, be happy, Cassio. I will be the lawyer who pleads your case to Othello, and I would rather die than give up your cause.”

Emilia saw Othello and her husband, Iago, entering the garden, and said, “Madam, here comes my lord.”

Cassio said to Desdemona, “Madam, I’ll leave now.”

“Why, stay, and hear me speak to my husband about you,” she replied.

“Madam, not now,” Cassio said. “I am very ill at ease, and I am not prepared to plead to be reinstated.”

“Well, do what you think best,” Desdemona said.

Cassio departed.

Iago saw Cassio and said, quietly but deliberately loud enough for Othello to hear, “I don’t like that.”

“What did you say?” Othello asked.

“Nothing, my lord, but — I don’t know what I was saying.”

“Wasn’t that Cassio who just left my wife?” Othello asked.

“Cassio, my lord!” Iago said. “No, surely. I cannot think that it was he. Why would he steal away so guilty-like when he saw that you were coming?”

“I do believe that it was Cassio,” Othello said.

“How are you, my lord?” Desdemona greeted Othello. “I have been talking with a man here, a man who languishes because you are displeased with him.”

“Who is it you mean?”

“Why, your lieutenant, Cassio,” Desdemona replied. “My good lord, if I have any grace or power to move you, please be reconciled with him immediately. For if he is not someone who truly respects you, someone who has erred in ignorance and not on purpose, then I cannot judge who is honest. Please, call him back and be reconciled with him.”

“Was that Cassio who left just now?” Othello asked.

“Yes,” Desdemona replied. “He was so mournful that he left part of his grief with me, and I suffer with him. Good love, be reconciled with him.”

“Not now, sweet Desdemona. Some other time.”

“But shall it be shortly?”

“The sooner, sweetheart, for you.”

“Shall it be tonight at supper?”

“No, not tonight.”

“Tomorrow during the noon meal, then?”

“I shall not dine at home; I am meeting the captains at the citadel.”

“Why, then, tomorrow night, or Tuesday morning, or Tuesday noon, or Tuesday night, or Wednesday morning. Please, name the time that you will be reconciled with Cassio, but let it not exceed three days. Truly, he’s penitent, and yet his trespass, ordinarily, is almost not severe enough to incur a private rebuke, much less a public disgrace. Of course, it is understandable that in times of military struggle, you must make an example, when necessary, of even high-ranking officers.

“But when shall Cassio come and be reconciled to you? Tell me, Othello. I wonder in my soul what you could possibly ask me to do that I would refuse to do, or would put off with stammering.

“Remember what a friend Michael Cassio has been to you. He used to come with you when you wooed me, and whenever I disparaged you, he stood up for you and praised you.”

Desdemona thought, *I used to disparage you on purpose just to hear Cassio defend you and praise you.*

She added, “Is it really such a difficult decision to forgive his fault and bring him into your favor again?”

“Please, say no more,” Othello said. “I will be reconciled to Cassio, and soon. He can come and see me whenever he wishes. I will deny you nothing.”

“Why, I am not asking for something that will benefit myself,” Desdemona said. “What I am asking for now is similar to asking you to put on your gloves when needed, or eat nourishing food, or wear warm clothing on cold days, or to do something else that benefits yourself. Being reconciled with Cassio means that you will have a good and competent lieutenant again. When I have a request that will put your love for me to the test, that request will be serious and heavy and fearful to be granted.”

“I will deny you nothing,” Othello said. “But now, please, grant me this request: Leave me and let me be by myself for a while.”

“Shall I deny you your request?” Desdemona said. “No, of course not. Farewell, my lord.”

“Farewell, my Desdemona. I’ll come to you soon.”

Desdemona said, “Emilia, let’s go.”

She said to Othello, her husband, “Do whatever you want to do. Whatever you do, I am and will be your obedient wife.”

Desdemona and Emilia departed.

Othello said to himself, with affection for his wife, “Excellent wench! Damn, but I do love you. If I should ever stop loving you, chaos, from which the world arose and to which it will return at the end of time, will come again.”

“My noble lord,” Iago said.

“What is it, Iago?”

“Did Michael Cassio, when you were wooing Desdemona, know about your love for her?”

“He did, from the beginning to the ending of my wooing her. Why do you ask?”

“To satisfy my curiosity,” Iago said. “No other reason.”

“Why are you curious about that, Iago?”

“I did not think he had been acquainted with her.”

“He was, and he very often served as a messenger between us.”

“Indeed!” Iago said.

“Indeed!” Othello repeated. “Yes, indeed. Do you see anything odd about that? Isn’t Cassio an honest man?”

“Honest, my lord!”

“Honest!” Othello repeated. “Yes, honest.”

“My lord, for all I know, he is honest.”

“What are you thinking?” Othello asked.

“Thinking, my lord?”

“Thinking, my lord?” Othello repeated. “By Heaven, you keep echoing me as if there were some monstrous thought in your brain that is too hideous to be revealed. You are thinking something. I heard you say just now that you didn’t like it when you saw Cassio leaving my wife. What didn’t you like? And when I told you that Cassio knew all my thoughts when I was wooing Desdemona, you said, ‘Indeed!’ And you furrowed your brow as if you had some

horrible idea shut up in your brain. If you are my friend, tell me what you are thinking.”

“My lord, you know that I am your friend.”

“I think indeed that you are my friend,” Othello said. “And since I know that you are full of friendship and honesty, and that you carefully consider your words before you speak them, these sudden pauses of yours frighten me all the more. Such things in a false disloyal knave are tricks of a dishonest trade, but in a man who is just and fair they are expressions of hidden thoughts that come from the heart and that emotions cannot control.”

“I dare to swear that I think that Cassio is honest and trustworthy.”

“I dare to swear the same thing,” Othello said.

“Men should be what they seem to be,” Iago said. “I wish that men who are not honest would be seen and known to be not honest.”

“Certainly, men should be what they seem,” Othello said.

“Why, then, I think Cassio is an honest man,” Iago said.

“You are not telling me everything you are thinking,” Othello said. “Please, tell me what you think. Obviously, you suspect something. Give the worst of your thoughts the worst of words.”

“My good lord, pardon me,” Iago replied. “Though I am bound to every act of duty, I am not bound to do that which all slaves are free not to do. Utter my thoughts? Why, let’s say that my thoughts are vile and false; after all, where is that palace into which foul things never intrude? Who has a breast so pure that no unclean thoughts and ideas ever appear and sit beside pure thoughts and ideas?”

“You conspire against your friend, Iago, if you think that he has been wronged and you never tell him what you think.”

“Please do not make me tell you what I am thinking. Chances are, what I am thinking is wrong. It is a fault of my character to inquire into evils, and often my suspicions are about evils that turn out not to exist. I ask you not to take any notice of my suspicions, which often turn out to be wrong; do not bring yourself trouble because of my casual and unsure observations. It will disrupt your calm and quiet life and will not be good for you. Not for my manhood, honesty, or wisdom would I let you know my thoughts.”

“What do you mean?”

“The good name and reputation of man and woman, my dear lord, is the most precious jewel of their souls,” Iago said. “Who steals my money steals trash; it is something trivial. It was mine, now it is his, and it has been the servant of thousands of people. But he who steals from me my good name robs me of something that does not enrich him but makes me poor indeed.”

“By Heaven, I will know what you are thinking.”

“You cannot — not even if my heart were in your hand,” Iago said, “and you shall not, while my heart is in my custody.”

“We will see about that,” Othello said.

“Beware, my lord, of jealousy, which is traditionally associated with the color green,” Iago replied. “Jealousy is a green-eyed monster that mocks and torments its victim. A man who is sure that his wife has made him a cuckold by sleeping with another man lives in bliss when he does not love the wife who cuckolded him. But damned are the minutes of a man who loves his wife but doubts her and suspects her and still strongly loves her!”

“Such a life would be miserable,” Othello said.

“A man who is poor but is happy despite being poor is a rich man indeed,” Iago said, “but a man with unlimited wealth is as poor as winter if he always is afraid that he may become poor. Good Heaven, may the spirits of all my ancestors protect me from jealousy!”

“Why are you saying these things?” Othello asked. “Do you think that I would live a life of jealousy and have new suspicions with each change of the Moon? No. To be once in doubt is to resolve on a course of action — one can form a plan of action to find out whether the doubt is justified. If I should ever turn the business of my soul to such exaggerated and inflated surmises that match what you are implying, then I will be a goat. It is not enough to make me jealous to say that my wife is beautiful, is good company during meals, loves the company of other people, speaks interestingly, and sings, plays musical instruments, and dances well. When a woman has virtue, such abilities increase her virtue. Nor from my own weak merits will I draw the smallest fear or doubt about her fidelity. When she was single, she saw clearly with her eyes, and she chose to marry me. No, Iago. I will have to see evidence before I doubt her fidelity; when I doubt her fidelity, I will seek proof either that she is faithful or that she is not faithful. On the basis of that proof, I will either cease loving her or stop being jealous of her!”

“I am glad of it,” Iago replied, “because now I have reason to show you openly the love and duty that I owe you; therefore, as I am bound to speak the truth, hear it from me. I am not speaking yet of proof. Watch your wife; observe her carefully when she is with Cassio. Watch with an open mind. Do not let your eyes be biased either by jealousy or by overconfidence that your wife is faithful. I do not want you to be hurt by falsely assuming that because you are honest

and trustworthy, other people are also honest and trustworthy. Be careful. I know the people of Venice. In Venice, wives are willing to let Heaven see the sins that they dare not show their husbands. Their consciences do not tell them not to sin, but instead to keep the sin hidden.”

“Do you truly believe that?” Othello asked.

“Desdemona deceived her father when she eloped with you without first getting his permission, and when she seemed to tremble and fear your looks to deceive her father, that is when she loved you most. Remember what her father told you: ‘Watch her carefully, Moor,’ Brabantio said, ‘if you have eyes to use. She has deceived her father, and she may deceive you.’”

“She did deceive her father,” Othello said.

“Why, there you are,” Iago said. “She is one who, despite being so young, could act and deceive her father so well that it was as if he were blind — her father even thought that you had manipulated her with witchcraft. But I am much to blame for telling you this. I humbly do beg your pardon that I have spoken so freely because I respect you so much.”

“I am forever in your debt,” Othello said.

“I see that this has dampened your spirits a little.”

Othello lied, “Not at all. Not at all.”

“I am afraid that it has,” Iago replied. “I hope that you know that I have spoken these things because of my concern for you. But I can see that you’re affected by what I have said. Please do not overanalyze what I have said and jump to conclusions — just be suspicious.”

“I won’t jump to conclusions.”

“Should you do so, my lord, my speech could have a vile

effect. I did not intend that. Cassio is my worthy friend — my lord, I see you're upset.”

“No, not very upset,” Othello said. “I do not think anything except that Desdemona is faithful to me.”

“May she live long and be faithful to you!” Iago said. “And may you live long and think that she is faithful to you!”

“Yet,” Othello said, “a person may turn away from one's true nature.”

“Yes, that's the point!” Iago said. “If I may be blunt with you, a woman sometimes does not want a marriage — even if she has had many marriage proposals of this kind — with a man from her own climate, of her own color, and from her own social standing. Yet that is the kind of marriage that our nature inclines us toward. In rejecting such a marriage, such a woman's use of her free will shows itself to be most rank. She engages in foul impropriety and indulges her unnatural thoughts.

“But pardon me; I do not positively and specifically speak about Desdemona, although I fear that she, returning to her better judgment, may begin to compare you with her fellow countrymen and perhaps may repent having married you.”

“Farewell, farewell,” Othello said. “If you see anything more, let me know. Also, tell your wife to watch Desdemona. Leave me now, Iago.”

“My lord, I take my leave.”

Iago walked away.

Othello thought, *Why did I get married? This honest man — Iago — doubtless sees and knows more, much more, than he has told me.*

Iago returned and said, “My lord, I wish to ask your honor

to consider this matter no further. Wait and see what happens. Although it is fitting that Cassio be reinstated as your lieutenant, because indeed he does his job with great ability, yet if you are willing not to reinstate him for a while, you will be able to watch him and see how he responds. See whether your wife strongly or vehemently urges that he be reinstated. That will tell you much. In the meantime, think that I am overreacting to my fears — although I think I have worthy reasons for my fears — and please consider her to be innocent.”

“You need not fear my self-control,” Othello replied.

“I once more take my leave.”

Iago departed.

“Iago is a man of great honesty,” Othello said to himself. “He understands different kinds of people and how and why they act as they do. If I discover proof that Desdemona is wild and untamed and not like a civilized and obedient wife, I will — even though the ties that bind her to me are my own heartstrings — cast her aside and let her be wild and untamed and take care of herself. Perhaps, because I am black and do not converse as well as courtiers and ladies’ men, or because I am older than she is — yet I am not that old — she has not been faithful to me. I am and have been deceived, and my relief must be to hate her. It is the curse of marriage that we can call these delicate creatures ours, and yet their desires are not ours! I would prefer to be a loathsome toad and live in the foul air of a dungeon than allow the pudendum of my wife to be used by other men. Yet, this is the plague of great men; they are less likely than less important men to have faithful wives because their duties keep them so often and so long away from home. This is a destiny that cannot be avoided, like death. The fate of a cuckold is ours even from the time we begin to move in our mother’s womb.”

He looked up and said to himself, “I see Desdemona coming now. If she is unfaithful to me, then Heaven is mocking itself by creating a woman who is so beautiful and yet is unfaithful — I will not believe that Heaven has done such a thing.”

Desdemona and Emilia walked over to Othello.

Desdemona asked, “How are you, my dear Othello! Your dinner and the generous islanders whom you have invited to eat with us are waiting for your arrival.”

“My lateness is my fault,” Othello replied.

“Why do you speak so faintly?” Desdemona asked. “Are you not well?”

“I have a pain on my forehead here,” Othello said, pointing to where the horns of a cuckold were supposed to grow.

“Your headache is caused by a lack of sleep,” Desdemona said. “It will go away. Let me tie your head with my handkerchief, and within an hour your headache will vanish.”

“Your handkerchief is too small,” Othello said, pushing it away.

The handkerchief fell to the ground.

Othello said, “You need not bind my head. Come, I will go in to dinner with you.”

“I am very sorry that you are not well,” Desdemona said. Because she was so concerned about her husband’s not feeling well, she did not think about her handkerchief.

She and Othello left to go to dinner, leaving the handkerchief on the ground.

Emilia picked up the handkerchief and said, “I am glad I have found this handkerchief. This was the first keepsake the

Moor gave her. My headstrong husband has a hundred times urged me to steal it, but she loves the love-token. Her husband made her swear to keep it forever, and she keeps it always with her so that she can kiss it and talk to it. I'll have the embroidery — a pattern of strawberries that is a work of art — copied onto another handkerchief and give it to my husband, Iago. What he will do with it, Heaven knows and not I. I want nothing except to gratify his whim.”

Iago appeared and said to Emilia, “How are you? What are you doing here alone?”

“Don't rebuke me. I have a thing for you.”

“A thing for me? It is a common thing —”

Iago and Emilia did not always get along. Iago now seemed to be insulting his wife. Nowadays, “thing” refers to a penis, but in Iago's country and day, “thing” referred to both male and female genitalia. To say that Emilia's thing was common meant that her thing was open to all.

Shocked, Emilia said, “What!”

And Iago concluded, “— to have a foolish wife.”

Emilia said, “Is that all? I was expecting a much worse insult.”

Wanting to keep on her husband's good side — he could be especially mean when she was not on his good side — Emilia said, “What will you say to me now if I give you a handkerchief?”

“What handkerchief?”

“What handkerchief? Why, the handkerchief that the Moor first gave to Desdemona — the handkerchief that so often you have asked me to steal.”

“Did you steal it from her?”

“No. She negligently let it drop to the ground. I was lucky enough to be present and picked it up.”

“Good girl,” Iago said. “Give it to me.”

“What will you do with it? Why have you been so eager for me to steal it?”

Iago snatched the handkerchief away from his wife and said, “What business is that of yours?”

“If you don’t need it for something important,” Emilia said, “give it back to me. Poor Desdemona will be very upset when she discovers that she has lost it.”

“Pretend that you know nothing about this handkerchief. I need it. Go, now, leave me.”

Emilia departed.

Iago thought, I will plant this handkerchief in Cassio’s lodging and let him find it. Trifles light as air are to the jealous confirmations as strong as the proofs found in holy scripture. This handkerchief will advance my plot. The Moor is already changing with my poisonous words: Dangerous thoughts are, in their nature, poison. At first, the poisonous words seem to have little effect, then the poison spreads and infects one’s whole being. The poisonous thoughts burn like sulfur mines. I say this because I know this.

Iago looked up and saw Othello walking toward him.

Iago thought, Already my poison is working. Opium and other soporifics will never again give the Moor the sweet sleep that he enjoyed as recently as yesterday.

Othello was mumbling to himself, “Has she been unfaithful to me? Has she cheated on me?”

“How are you, general?” Iago said. “Please, torment yourself no longer with jealousy.”

“Go away!” Othello said. “Leave! Your words have put me on the rack and are torturing me. I swear that it is better to be cheated on continuously and not know it than to be cheated on a little and know it.”

“What do you mean, my lord?” Iago asked.

“What did I know about her stolen hours of lust? I did not see them, I did not think about them, they did not harm me. Each time she was unfaithful, I slept well the following night and I was free of jealousy and I was happy. I was not aware of Cassio’s kisses on her lips. A man who was robbed, but does not know he was robbed, has not been robbed at all.”

“I am sorry to hear this,” Iago said.

“I would be happy, if all the soldiers of the camp, including the very lowest in rank, had tasted her sweet body, as long as I was not aware of it,” Othello said. “But now, my tranquil mind is gone forever. Farewell, tranquility! Farewell, happiness! And farewell to my career! Farewell to the troops! Farewell to the big wars that turn ambition into a virtue! Farewell to the neighing steeds, and the shrill trumpets, the spirit-stirring drums, the ear-piercing fifes, the royal banners, and all attributes, proud display, pomp, and ceremonies of glorious war! All you deadly cannon whose rude throats counterfeit the deadly thunder and lightning of immortal Jove, farewell! My career is over!”

“Can that be possible, my lord?” Iago asked.

“Villain, make sure that you prove my wife is a whore,” Othello said. “Make sure of it. Give me proof that I can see with my eyes, or I swear by my immortal soul that it would have been better for you to be born a dog than to face my awakened wrath!”

“Has it come to this?”

“Show me proof, or, at the least, so prove that my wife is a whore that the proof will have nowhere on which a doubt can hang — or you will lose your life!”

“My noble lord —”

“If you are slandering her and torturing me, do not bother to pray and abandon all repentance for your sins. Horrors accumulate on the head of a man who is horrible. Do deeds so evil that they will make Heaven weep and amaze everybody on Earth because you can do nothing that can add more to your damnation than what you have already done!”

“May the grace of God and Heaven forgive me for being so honest,” Iago said. “Are you a man? Do you have a soul or sense? May God be with you. I resign my office — make someone else your ancient. I am a wretched fool because I have lived to see that my honesty is considered a vice! Oh, monstrous world! Take note, people, take note: To be direct and honest is not safe. I thank you for this wisdom I have learned, and from here on I will have no friends because making friends leads to abuse from those so-called friends.”

Iago started to walk away.

Othello said, “Stay. You ought to be honest.”

“I ought to be wise,” Iago replied. “An honest man is a fool who loses the friends he tries to help.”

“I would bet the world that my wife is faithful to me, and yet I think that she is not. I think that you are just and yet I think that you are not. I need some proof. My wife’s name, that was as fresh and clean as the face of the virgin goddess Diana, is now as begrimed and black as my own face. If ropes, or knives, or poison, or fire, or suffocating streams, exist, I will not endure it.”

Iago thought, *Are you thinking about killing Desdemona and*

Cassio — or yourself? I am OK with either decision.

“I wish I knew the truth for certain!” Othello said.

“I see, sir, that you are eaten up with suffering,” Iago said. “I am sorry that I told you what I suspect. But do you really want to know the truth?”

“I do want to know the truth — and I *will* know the truth!”

“And you shall know the truth,” Iago said. “But how? How can we get you the proof you need? Would you have to catch her in the act of betraying you? Would you have to see her in bed with a man on top of her?”

“Death and damnation!” Othello exclaimed.

“It would be difficult, I think, to catch your wife and her lover in the act of betraying you,” Iago said. “Damn them if ever mortal eyes other than their own see them go to bed together! So what can we do? How can we get proof? How can your need for proof be satisfied? It is impossible for you to see them in bed together. They will take precautions even if they are as lecherous as goats, as horny as monkeys, as lustful as wolves in heat, and as foolish as stupid, drunken people. But still, I say, if rational inferences and strong circumstantial evidence that together lead directly to the door of truth will give you satisfactory evidence, you may have your proof.”

“Give me valid evidence that she is disloyal to me.”

“I do not like this job you are giving to me,” Iago said. “But, since I am already involved in this situation because of my foolish honesty and respect for you, I will go on. As you know, in our culture, it is acceptable for two people of the same sex to share a bed. I lay beside Cassio recently. Because I was troubled with a raging toothache, I could not sleep. Some men are so indiscrete that when they are asleep

they will mutter about their affairs. Cassio is such a man. As he lay asleep, I heard him say, ‘Sweet Desdemona, let us be wary. Let us hide our love for each other.’ And then, sir, he gripped and wrung my hand, cried, ‘Sweetheart!’ and kissed me hard, as if he were plucking up kisses by the roots that grew upon my lips. He then laid his leg over my thigh, and sighed, and kissed, and then he cried, ‘Cursed be the fate that gave you to the Moor!’”

The Moor is likely to believe this lie, Iago thought.

“Oh, monstrous! Monstrous!” Othello said.

“This was only his dream.”

“But this is evidence of a previous coupling,” Othello said. “Cassio’s dream is circumstantial evidence that he is having an affair with my wife.”

“This dream may serve to bolster other evidence that only weakly points to an affair.”

“I will tear her to pieces!” Othello cried.

“Don’t,” Iago said. “But be wise. So far, we have no visual evidence. We may yet find out that your wife is faithful to you. But tell me, doesn’t your wife own an expensive handkerchief that is embroidered with a pattern of strawberries?”

“I gave her that handkerchief,” Othello said. “It was my first gift to her.”

“I did not know that,” Iago said. “But I saw today Cassio wiping his beard with that handkerchief — I am sure that it is your wife’s.”

“If that was the handkerchief I gave her —”

“If it was, or if it was any handkerchief that belonged to her, it is yet more evidence that she is unfaithful to you.”

“I wish that this slave — Cassio — had forty thousand lives! One is not enough for me to give adequate expression to my rage. I know now that he is having an affair with my wife! Iago, listen. All the foolish love I had for my wife I now blow up to Heaven — that love is gone. Arise, black vengeance, from your home in hollow Hell! My love for Desdemona, leave my mind and heart and give up your place to tyrannous hatred! Swell, mind and heart, with your burden, which is the venom of poisonous snakes!”

“Calm down,” Iago advised.

“I want blood!” Othello said. “Blood! Blood! Blood!”

“Be patient and wait a while,” Iago said. “You may change your mind.”

“Never, Iago,” Othello replied. “My bloody thoughts are like the current of the Black Sea, which always flows strongly to the Mediterranean Sea. Because water always flows from a higher to a lower elevation, the current never flows from the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea. Similarly, my bloody thoughts shall never look backward toward a humble love but shall always violently rush forward toward a suitable and all-encompassing revenge.”

Othello knelt and said, “I swear a sacred vow by Heaven, which is shining and changeless, that I will get revenge.”

Iago said, “Do not rise yet.”

He knelt beside Othello and made his own vow: “Witness, you ever-burning lights above, you elements that encircle us, that here Iago gives up the control of his mind, hands, and heart to Othello — Iago will follow the orders of Othello, who has been wronged by his wife. Let him command me to do anything at all, and I will do whatever bloody business he orders me to do as if I were doing a good deed. I will feel no remorse but instead shall value serving Othello.”

They rose.

Othello said, “I will acknowledge your service to me not with empty thanks, but with profit to you. Immediately, I ask you to keep your vow: Within three days bring it about that I will hear that Cassio no longer lives.”

“Cassio, who is my friend, will die,” Iago said. “I will kill him as you request, but let Desdemona continue to live.”

“Damn her, that lewd and wanton whore! Damn her! Come with me. I will go inside and equip myself with some means to swiftly kill that beautiful devil. You are now my lieutenant.”

“I am yours to command forever.”

— 3.4 —

Desdemona and Emilia were standing on a street in front of the castle. Also on the street was a man whom Desdemona recognized; he was a clown, aka Fool, aka comedian. Desdemona knew that he played with language, and because she was worried about her handkerchief, which had turned up missing, she decided to speak to the clown: “Do you know, please, where Lieutenant Cassio lies?”

In this culture, to ask where a person lies meant. To ask where a person resided — that is, slept.

“I dare not say he lies anywhere,” the clown replied.

“Why not, man?”

“Cassio is a soldier, and when a person says that a soldier lies, that person is in for a stabbing.”

Being called a liar was a major insult. They were fighting words.

Desdemona laughed and then said, “Where does he lodge?”

Where does he dwell?"

"To tell you where he lodges is to tell you where I lie."

"Can any sense be made of what you just said?"

"I do not know where he lodges, and for me to make up a lodging and say that he lies here or that he lies there would be to lie in my own throat."

"Can you inquire about him, and be edified by report?"

"To be edified is to be educated; therefore, I will catechize the world for him; that is, I will ask questions, listen to the answers, and so learn where he is, and then I will bring the information to you."

"Seek him, find him, and tell him to come here," Desdemona said. "Tell him that I have talked to my lord and husband on his behalf, and I hope that all will be well."

"To do this is within the scope of a man's intelligence, and therefore I will attempt the doing of it."

The clown departed.

Desdemona asked, "Where could I have lost that handkerchief, Emilia?"

Emilia lied, "I don't know, Madam."

"Believe me, I prefer to have lost a purse full of gold coins marked with the Christian cross. Fortunately, my noble Moor is true of mind and trusts me and is not like a base and jealous man. If he were not, my losing that handkerchief could make him think badly of me."

"Isn't he jealous?" Emilia, whose husband was jealous, asked.

"Who? Othello?" Desdemona replied. "I think that he was

born without a jealous atom in his body.”

“Look, here he comes,” Emilia said.

“I will not leave him until he promises to make Cassio his lieutenant again,” Desdemona said. “This is a good opportunity for me to act in behalf of Cassio. I expect to give Cassio good news when he arrives.”

Othello walked up to them.

“How are you, my lord?” Desdemona asked.

“I am well, my good lady,” Othello said.

It is hard to pretend that I am well, he thought. I am far from being well.

“How are you, Desdemona?” he asked.

“Well, my good lord,” she replied.

“Give me your hand,” Othello said. He held it and said, “This hand is moist, my lady.”

Othello thought, *A moist hand is evidence of a lustful nature.*

“My hand has of yet felt no age nor sorrow.”

She thought, *A moist hand is evidence of a youthful and carefree nature.*

“A moist hand is evidence of fruitfulness and a liberal heart,” Othello said.

He thought, *The word “liberal” means either “generous” or “licentious.”*

“Your hand is hot — hot and moist,” he added. “Based on these symptoms, this hand of yours requires less liberty, much fasting and prayer, much corrective discipline, and many religious observances. Here is a young and sweating

devil, and that kind of devil commonly rebels. But it is a good hand because it is a frank hand.”

To be frank is to be generous or to be open and free from restraint, Othello thought. People should appear to be what they really are. Desdemona’s hand is good because it frankly — openly and freely — reveals what she really is: lustful.

“You may, indeed, say that my hand is generous,” Desdemona replied, “because that hand gave away my heart.”

Desdemona meant that her hand gave away her heart to Othello.

“Your hand is a liberal hand,” Othello said, meaning that her hand had given away her heart to men other than him.

He added, “The hearts of old gave hands, but our new heraldry is hands, not hearts.”

He thought, People used to give away their heart and hands to one person, but nowadays the fashion is to give away one’s hand in marriage to one person and one’s loving heart to another person. Hearts, united in love, used to give away hands in marriage, but nowadays, hands, despite belonging to a married person, give away hearts to people to whom they are not married.

“I don’t know about that,” Desdemona said. “But come now, remember your promise.”

“What promise, darling?”

“I have sent a messenger to ask Cassio to come and speak with you.”

“I have an irritating and constant cold that is bothering me,” Othello replied. “Lend me your handkerchief.”

“Here, my lord,” Desdemona replied, handing him a

handkerchief.

“Not that one. Give me the one I gave you.”

“I don’t have it with me.”

“You don’t?”

“No, indeed, my lord.”

“That’s too bad,” Othello said. “An Egyptian gave that handkerchief to my mother. The Egyptian was a magician who used charms and spells; she could almost read people’s minds. She told my mother that as long as she had that handkerchief, it would make her beloved and keep my father in love with her, but if she lost it or gave it away, my father would hate the sight of her and he would chase other women. On her deathbed, my mother gave it to me and told me that when I married to give it to my wife. I did so. Take care of it and regard it as precious as your own eyes. To lose it or give it away would cause such damage that nothing could match it.”

“Is that really true?” Desdemona asked.

“It is true,” Othello said. “When the Egyptian wove it, she wove magic into the cloth. A Sibyl in her prophetic fury sewed the handkerchief. Some say that the Sybil was two hundred years old; others say that she had calculated that the world would end in two hundred years. But the worms were consecrated that produced the silk, and it was dyed in the liquid called mummy — medicinal fluid that skillful magicians had made from the liquid of the hearts of embalmed virgins.”

“Really! And is that true?”

“It is very true,” Othello replied. “Therefore, take good care of that handkerchief.”

“If what you said is true, then I wish to God that I had never seen that handkerchief!”

“Why?” Othello shouted.

“Why do you speak so abruptly and urgently?” Desdemona asked.

“Is it lost? Is it gone? Speak! Is it missing?”

“Heaven bless us!” Desdemona said, startled by Othello’s urgency.

“What do you say?”

“It is not lost,” Desdemona said.

I think that my handkerchief is not forever lost, Desdemona thought. I must have mislaid it somewhere, and it will turn up again.

“But what if the handkerchief were lost?” she asked.

“What!”

“I say again that the handkerchief is not lost.”

“Go and fetch it. Let me see it.”

“Why, I could do that, sir, but I will not now. This is a trick that you are playing to distract me from asking you to reinstate Cassio as your lieutenant. Please, reinstate him.”

“Fetch the handkerchief for me. I don’t think that you are telling me the truth.”

“Come, come. You’ll never meet a man more competent than Cassio.”

“The handkerchief!”

“Please, let us talk about Cassio.”

“The handkerchief!”

“Cassio is a man who has counted on your support for his good fortune. He has shared dangers with you —”

“The handkerchief!”

“Truly, you are to blame.”

“That’s enough!” Othello shouted and then stalked away.

“You said that he is not jealous?” Emilia asked.

“I have never seen him like this before,” Desdemona said.

“Surely, there really is some wonderful magic in that handkerchief. I am very unhappy because of the loss of it.”

“It takes more than a year or two to learn a man’s true nature,” said Emilia, whose marriage to Iago was not happy.

“Men are nothing but stomachs, and we women are nothing but food. They eat us hungrily and then vomit us up.”

She looked up and said, “Look, Cassio and my husband are coming!”

Cassio and Iago had been conversing, and Iago said now, “There is no other way; it is she who must do it.”

He looked up and added, “Look, happily she is here! Go, and ask her.”

“How are you, good Cassio! What is the news with you?” Desdemona asked.

“Madam, I have come to talk with you about my former lieutenancy,” Cassio said. “I beg you to do all you can to help me get my life back and be on good terms again with your husband. I greatly respect him, and I don’t want to wait any longer. If my offence is of such a serious kind that my past services, nor the repentance I have now for what I did wrong, nor the service that I can render to him in the future,

can make him forgive me, I want to know it now. My benefit will be to know the truth so that I can force myself to move on and hope that I have the good fortune to find another occupation.”

“I am sorry, thrice-gentle Cassio,” Desdemona said, “but I am unable to help you at this time. My lord and husband is not acting like my lord and husband. I would not be able to recognize him if his face were as altered as his personality. I swear to every sanctified spirit that I have pleaded your case to the best of my ability — because I have spoken so freely, I am suffering from my husband’s displeasure. You must be patient for a while longer. I will do what I can for you, and I will do more for you than I dare to do for myself. Let that satisfy you for now.”

“Is the general angry?” Iago asked.

“He left just now,” Emilia said, “and he was greatly upset.”

“I did not know it was possible for him to be angry,” Iago said. “I have seen cannon blow Othello’s soldiers into the air and like the devil kill Othello’s brother while his brother was standing by his side, yet he showed no emotion — and *now* he is angry? Something of great importance has occurred. I will go and talk to him. If he is angry, it is about something of great importance.”

“Please, go and talk to him,” Desdemona replied.

Iago departed.

She added, “Iago must be right. Some great affair of state — something that concerns Venice or a plot in Cyprus that he has just learned about — must have disturbed and muddled his mind. In such cases, men will argue about unimportant things although great, important matters are on their minds. It is often like that. If only one finger aches, it negatively affects our whole body and mind even though they are

healthy. We must remember that men are only mortal — they are not gods. At such times, we must not expect men to act as they did during the marriage ceremony. I am at fault, Emilia. I was, unskillful ‘warrior’ as I am, accusing him in my soul of being unkind, but now I find that I have caused the witness — myself — to lie by misinterpreting Othello’s behavior. I have unfairly accused Othello.”

“Pray to Heaven that it is matters of state, as you think, that cause Othello to act this way,” Emilia said, “and not a misconception that is causing him to be jealous concerning you.”

“I have never given him any reason to be jealous,” Desdemona said.

“But jealous souls will not care about that,” Emilia said. “They are not jealous because they have a just reason to be jealous. No, instead they are jealous because they are jealous. Jealousy is a monster that gives birth to itself; it does not need a reason to come into existence.”

“May Heaven keep that monster from Othello’s mind!” Desdemona said.

“Lady, amen to that!” Emilia said.

“I will go and seek him,” Desdemona said. “Cassio, stay here. If I find Othello in a better mood, I will plead that you regain your lieutenancy.”

“I humbly thank your ladyship,” Cassio said.

Desdemona and Emilia left to seek Othello.

Bianca, who had been looking for Cassio, now walked up to him. She was a prostitute, and she loved Cassio, but he did not return her love although he slept with her.

“May God save you, friend Cassio!” Bianca said.

“What are you doing away from home? How are you, my most beautiful Bianca? Truly, sweet love, I was coming to your house.”

“And I was going to your lodging, Cassio,” Bianca replied. “You have not visited me for a week! Seven days and nights! Eight score and eight hours! When lovers are away from each other, each hour lasts eight score times longer than it usually does! Such arithmetic is disheartening.”

“Pardon me, Bianca, for my absence,” Cassio said. “I have this past week been burdened with heavy problems, but I shall, in a time less burdened and interrupted with problems, make my long absence up to you. Sweet Bianca, I want you to do something for me.”

He handed Desdemona’s handkerchief to her and said, “Please copy this embroidery.”

“Cassio, where did this come from?” Bianca asked. “This is some keepsake from a new lover. Now I know why I have not seen you for so long. Has it come to this?”

“No, woman!” Cassio said. “Throw your vile suppositions back in the devil’s teeth from whence you got them. You are jealous now because you think that this is a keepsake from some woman. No. I swear that it is not, Bianca.”

“Why, then whose handkerchief is it?”

“I don’t know, sweetheart. I found it in my bedchamber. I like the embroidery well — it is a pattern of strawberries. I expect that its owner will show up and want it back — that is likely to happen. But before it happens, I would like to have it copied. Take the handkerchief, and copy the embroidery onto another handkerchief, and leave me for a while.”

“Leave you for a while! Why?”

“I am waiting here to speak to the general,” Cassio said. “I do not think it will help my cause if I have a woman with me during this serious business.”

“Why don’t you want me here?”

“It is not that I don’t love you.”

“You don’t love me,” Bianca said petulantly. Then she relented and said, “Please walk with me for a little while as I return home and please tell me whether I will see you soon one night.”

“I can walk with you for only a little way because I have important business here,” Cassio said, “but I will see you soon.”

“Very well,” Bianca said. “I must be happy with what I can get.”

CHAPTER 4

— 4.1 —

Othello and Iago were speaking in front of the castle.

“Do you think that?” Iago asked.

“Think what?” Othello asked.

“That they kissed in private?”

“An unauthorized, illicit kiss!”

“Do you think that it is possible she was naked with her friend in bed for an hour or more, not meaning any harm?”

“Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm!” Othello thundered. “That would be hypocrisy against the devil. Those who seem to be acting sinfully and yet are virtuous in their heart are people whom the devil would call hypocrites. If they did act like that, they would be setting themselves up for the devil to tempt them, and they would be tempting Heaven to damn them.”

“As long as they are naked in bed together and do not commit adultery, it is a venial slip — less serious than a venial sin, which is a sin that can be forgiven,” Iago said, “but if I give my wife a handkerchief —”

He paused.

“What then?” Othello asked.

“Why, then, the handkerchief belongs to her, my lord, and since it belongs to her, she can give it to any man she pleases.”

“Her honor belongs to her, too,” Othello said. “Does it follow that she can give that away, too?”

“Her honor is an essence that cannot be seen. Women very

often have a reputation for honor although they lack honor. But, as for the handkerchief —”

“By Heaven, I would very gladly forget about the handkerchief. Now that I know — because you told me — that Cassio has it, each time I remember it, it affects me like a raven on the roof of a house that has been infected with the plague. It is an evil omen of death and doom to all who see it or know that it is there.”

“It is true that I told you that.”

“That was bad news for me.”

“Suppose that I have more bad news for you,” Iago said. “Suppose I say that I have seen Cassio do you wrong? Or suppose that I have heard Cassio say — you know, of course, that adulterers exist in the world who have seduced and overcome a woman or been seduced by a willing woman and in either case have been sexually satisfied and have been eager to blab —”

Othello interrupted, “Has Cassio said anything?”

“He has, my lord, but be assured that he will deny that he ever said anything.”

“What has he said?”

“Truly, he said that —”

Iago hesitated, and then he said, “I don’t know what he said.”

“He said something so horrible that you don’t want to tell me what he said, but tell me anyway.”

“He talked about lying —”

Again, Iago hesitated.

“Lying with her?” Othello said.

“With her. On her. Whatever,” Iago replied.

“Lying with her? Lying on her? I would prefer that people lie about her than lie on top of her — adultery is disgusting! I have the evidence of the handkerchief and this verbal confession. My handkerchief! He has confessed, and he should be hanged for what he did! I am willing to hang him first and allow him to confess his sins after he is dead. I am so angry that I am trembling. It would not be natural for me to feel this way and to tremble in this way unless there was a good reason to do so. It is not merely words that make me tremble like this. No! I will cut off their noses, ears, and lips! Can all this really be true? He confessed, and he has my handkerchief — damn!”

Othello fell down in an epileptic fit.

Work on, my “medicine,” work on! Iago thought. *In this way credulous fools are caught, and in this way many worthy and chaste women meet reproach although they are guiltless.*

Seeing Cassio coming, Iago put on an act for his benefit. Iago pretended to be concerned about Othello and said loudly enough for Cassio to hear, “My lord, wake up! Othello!”

He looked up and said, “Cassio!”

“What’s the matter?”

“My lord is having another epileptic fit. This is his second fit; he had one yesterday.”

“Rub his temples.”

“No, we better not,” Iago said. “His unconsciousness must run its course. If it does not, he foams at the mouth and then breaks out in a savage madness. Look, he is regaining consciousness. Go away for a little while. He will recover quickly. After he leaves, I want to talk to you about

something important.”

Cassio departed, and Othello regained consciousness.

“How are you, general? Does your head hurt?”

“Are you making fun of me?” Othello said angrily, thinking that Iago was saying that his head hurt because he was growing the horns of a cuckold.

“Making fun of you? No, but by God, I wish that you would bear your ill fortune like a man!”

“A horned man is a monster and a beast.”

“In that case, there is many a beast in a populous city, and many a civilized monster.”

“Did Cassio confess?”

“Good sir, be a man,” Iago said. “You should think that every mature man who has been married — yoked like a horned beast to pull a burden — has the same burden as you. Millions of men are now alive who each night lie in beds that they think belong only to them but which they share with their wife’s lovers. Your situation is better than theirs: You know that your wife is unfaithful. The malice of Hell — the worst mockery — is to kiss a wanton whore on a bed that the husband thinks is his alone. No, I prefer to know that I have been cuckolded. Knowing that, I know what revenge to take on my wife.”

“Certainly, you are a wise man,” Othello said.

“Stand for a while at a little distance,” Iago said, “and control yourself. While you were overwhelmed with your suffering and had fallen into a fit — grief most unsuitable for such a man as you — Cassio came here. I came up with an excuse to get him to go away and made a good excuse for your falling into a fit. I also asked him to return here and speak to

me, which he promised to do. Therefore, conceal yourself and witness the sneers, the mockery, and the obvious contempt that can be seen in every region of his face. You can witness these things because I will make him tell the story again of where, how, how often, how long ago, and when he has slept — and will again sleep — with your wife. Watch his gestures carefully. But be patient and do not reveal yourself, or I shall say you are consumed with passion and ruled by anger and are not a real man.”

Iago thought, *If Othello were to actually talk to Cassio, he would learn how I have been tricking him.*

“Listen to me, Iago,” Othello replied. “I will control myself, but I will have blood — lots of blood.”

“There is nothing wrong with that,” Iago said, “but make those who have wronged you bleed at the right time. Will you conceal yourself nearby and watch as I talk with Cassio?”

Othello walked a short distance away and hid himself.

Iago thought, *Now I will ask Cassio questions about Bianca, the whore who loves him — by selling her body she is able to buy herself food and clothing. She loves Cassio — prostitutes seduce many men but are often themselves seduced by one man. Cassio does not love her. When he hears about her and her love for him, he cannot stop himself from laughing. Here comes Cassio now. Cassio shall smile and laugh, and Othello shall go insane. The Moor’s ignorant jealousy will interpret Cassio’s smiles, gestures, and cheerful behavior completely the wrong way. He will not be able to hear our words; he will only be able to see our gestures and hear Cassio’s laughter.*

Cassio walked up to Iago, who asked, “How are you, lieutenant?”

“I feel worse because you have called me by a title I don’t have anymore — the lack of that title is killing me.”

“Keep pushing Desdemona to help you, and you are sure to regain your lieutenancy.”

Iago lowered his voice and said, “Suppose that Bianca were able to plead your case. How quickly would you become lieutenant then!”

Cassio laughed and said, “That poor woman.”

Othello thought, *Already he is laughing!*

Iago said, “I have never known a woman to so love a man.”

“That poor rogue!” Cassio said. “I think, indeed, that she loves me.”

Othello thought, *Now he is faintly denying the affair, and he is laughing about it.*

“Listen to me, Cassio,” Iago said.

Othello thought, *Now Iago is asking Cassio to tell him about his affair with my wife. Well done, Iago.*

“Bianca is telling everyone that you will marry her,” Iago said. “Will you really marry her?”

Cassio laughed loudly.

Othello thought, *Are you laughing about triumphing over me like a Roman conqueror?*

“I marry her!” Cassio said. “Please, give me credit for some intelligence — don’t think that I am stupid enough to marry a whore.”

You are laughing now, Othello thought, but it is better to be the last one who laughs.

“Indeed, the gossip is everywhere that you will marry her.”

“Tell me the truth.”

“This is truly what people are saying — or else I am a villain.”

Have you wounded me? Othello thought. *Just wait.*

“That is the monkey’s own story. She is persuaded that I will marry her because of her own love for me and because of her belief that I love her. I have never told her that I will marry her.”

Iago gestured to Othello to come closer, and Othello thought, *Now Cassio is going to tell the tale of his affair with my wife.*

Cassio said, “She was here just now; she haunts me in every place. Just the other day I was talking on the seashore with some people from Venice, and here she — this plaything — comes and throws her arms around my neck.”

Othello thought, *Desdemona must have hugged him and called him “dear Cassio”!* *That is what his gesture means.*

Laughing, Cassio said, “She had her arms around my neck, and hung from me, and cried. She tugged at me and pulled me.”

Othello thought, *Now he is telling how Desdemona pulled him into my bedchamber. I can see your nose, Cassio, but I cannot see the dog that I will throw it to after I have cut it off.*

“Well, after hearing what you have told me,” Cassio said, “I must stop seeing her.”

“Look!” Iago said. “Bianca is walking toward us!”

“She is a polecat,” Cassio said to Iago. “They stink when they are in heat. Bianca drenches herself in perfume.”

He said to Bianca, “What do you mean by this haunting of me? Why are you following me everywhere?”

“Let the devil and his dam haunt you!” Bianca replied.

“What did you mean by that embroidered handkerchief you gave me just now? I was a fine fool to take it. You want me to copy the embroidery? You told me quite a tale — you found it in your bedchamber and you don’t know how it got there! A likely story! This is a keepsake from some slut. Take it — give it to your slut. Wherever you got this handkerchief, I will not copy the embroidery.”

“Sweet Bianca, don’t be upset,” Cassio said.

Othello thought, *That’s my handkerchief!*

Bianca said to Cassio, “If you want to eat supper at my place tonight, you may. If you don’t come tonight, then come the next time I prepare a meal for you — that will be never.”

She left.

“Go after her,” Iago urged Cassio.

“I had better,” Cassio said. “She will scream complaints about me in the streets if I don’t.”

“Will you dine with her?” Iago asked.

“Yes.”

“Well, perhaps I will see you. I would like very much to talk more with you.”

“No problem. You come, too.”

“OK.”

Cassio went after Bianca.

Othello came out of hiding and asked, “How shall I murder him, Iago?”

“Did you see how he laughed at his vice?” Iago asked.

“I did!”

“And did you see the handkerchief?”

Othello knew that the handkerchief was his, but he sadly asked, “Was that mine?”

“I swear that it was your handkerchief,” Iago replied. “And you can see how much he values your wife, that foolish woman! Your wife gave him that handkerchief, and he gave it to his whore.”

“I would like to take nine years to torture and kill him!” Othello said, adding sarcastically, “My wife is a fine woman, a fair woman, a sweet woman!”

“No, you must not think about that,” Iago said.

“Let her rot!” Othello said. “Let her perish. Let her be damned tonight. She shall no longer live. My heart has turned to stone.”

He hit himself in the chest and said, “When I hit my heart, my hand hurts. The world does not have a sweeter woman than my wife. She could lie beside an emperor and give him orders.”

“This is not the best way for you to act.”

“Hang her! I do but say what she is. She is so delicate with her needlework; she is an admirable musician! When she sings, she makes a savage bear become gentle. She is very witty and imaginative.”

“She’s all the worse for having so many fine qualities and yet being evil.”

“Oh, a thousand thousand times, and also she is nobly born and has a gentle and yielding disposition.”

“Yes, too yielding.”

“That is certain, but it is such a pity, Iago! Such a pity!”

“If you are so foolish as to accept her unfaithfulness to you, then let her run wild and cuckold you. If that does not bother you, it will not bother anyone else.”

“I will chop her into small pieces of meat!” Othello said.
“She has cuckolded me!”

“It was foul of her.”

“With my own officer!”

“That’s fouler.”

“Get me some poison, Iago, this very night. I will not talk to her, lest her body and beauty change my mind. Get it tonight, Iago.”

“Don’t kill her with poison. Strangle her in her bed — the bed she has contaminated.”

“Good, good,” Othello said. “The poetic justice of it pleases me very well.”

“And as for Cassio, let me undertake his murder. You shall hear more by midnight.”

“Excellent.”

A trumpet sounded, and Othello said, “What is the purpose of that trumpet sounding?”

“It is surely a message from Venice. I see Lodovico coming toward us. The Duke of Venice must have sent him here. Look, your wife is with him.”

Lodovico, Desdemona, and some attendants walked up to Othello and Iago.

“God bless you, worthy general!” Lodovico said.

“I thank you with all my heart, sir,” Othello replied.

“The Duke and senators of Venice greet you and have sent you this letter.”

He handed the letter to Othello.

“I kiss the instrument of their pleasures,” Othello said courteously. He kissed the letter and then opened it and began to read it.

“What news have you brought, kinsman Lodovico?” Desdemona asked.

She came from a noble and well-known family and was related to many important men in Venice.

Iago said to Lodovico, “I am very glad to see you, signior. Welcome to Cyprus.”

“I thank you. How is Lieutenant Cassio?”

“He lives, sir,” Iago replied quietly, implying that something was wrong.

“Kinsman, there has fallen between Cassio and my husband an unnatural breach, but you shall make all well between them,” Desdemona said.

“Are you sure of that?” Othello asked.

“My lord?” Desdemona replied. “What do you mean?”

Othello read part of the letter out loud, “*Do not fail to do this* —”

“Othello will not answer you right now,” Lodovico said. “He is busy reading the letter. What is this about a breach between Cassio and Othello?”

“It is very unfortunate,” Desdemona said. “I would do much to reconcile them because I respect Cassio’s good qualities so much.”

Overhearing her, Othello said, “Damn, damn, and damn!”

“My lord?” Desdemona asked. “What’s wrong?”

“Haven’t you any intelligence at all?” Othello said.

“What — are you angry?” Desdemona asked.

“Maybe the letter has angered him,” Lodovico said. “I understand that his orders are to return to Venice and to leave Cassio here as governor in charge of Cyprus.”

“I am glad that those are the orders,” Desdemona said.

“Indeed!” Othello said.

“My lord?” Desdemona asked. “What’s wrong?”

“I am happy to see that you have completely lost your mind,” Othello said, thinking that she was mocking him by praising Cassio and being glad of Cassio’s promotion.

“Why, darling Othello —” Desdemona began.

Othello struck her and said, “Devil!”

Shocked, and crying, Desdemona said, “I have not deserved this.”

Also shocked, Lodovico said to Othello, “My lord, this would not be believed in Venice even if I swore that I saw it with my own eyes. Make this up to Desdemona. Apologize. She is crying.”

“She is a devil!” Othello said. “If this woman’s tears could impregnate the Earth, each tear she lets fall would produce a crocodile, which lures its prey near with its crocodile’s tears.”

He shouted at Desdemona, “Get out of my sight!”

“I will not stay here and offend you with my sight,” Desdemona said and obediently left.

“Truly, she is an obedient lady,” Lodovico said. “That is what a wife should be. I beg your lordship, please call her back and apologize to her.”

“Mistress!” Othello called.

“My lord?” Desdemona asked. “What do you want?”

“What do you want to do with and to her, sir?” Othello asked Lodovico.

“Who, I, my lord?” Lodovico asked.

“Yes, you said that you wanted me to ask her to turn back. Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on, and turn again.”

Yes, Othello thought. She can turn to one sexual position and then another sexual position and then yet another sexual position. And she can service one brothel customer and then another brothel customer and then yet another brothel customer.

Othello added, “And she can weep, sir, she can weep.”

Yes, Othello thought. She can weep crocodile tears.

Othello added, “And she’s obedient, as you say, obedient, very obedient.”

Yes, Othello thought. She obeys Cassio’s orders in bed.

Othello ordered Desdemona, “Keep crying.”

“About this letter, sir —” Othello began saying to Lodovico.

He said to Desdemona, “You fake sadness so well!”

He said to Lodovico, “I am commanded to return to Venice.”

He said to Desdemona, "Get away from me. I will send for you soon."

He said to Lodovico, "Sir, I will obey my orders; I will return to Venice."

He shouted at Desdemona, "Leave me! Now!"

Desdemona left.

He said to Lodovico, "Cassio shall take over my place as governor. And, sir, I ask you to dine with me tonight. You are welcome, sir, to Cyprus."

Overcome by anger at the thought of Cassio and Desdemona in bed together, Othello shouted the names of two animals known for their horniness: "Goats and monkeys!"

He departed.

Shocked by what he had witnessed, Lodovico said to Iago, "Is this the noble Moor whom our entire senate regards with such esteem? Is this the man with such a reputation for self-control? Is this the man whose excellence and virtue cannot be harmed by either a cannon shot of fortune or an arrow of fate? Othello is supposed to be able to maintain his self-control and composure no matter what enemy forces he faces."

Iago replied, "He is much changed."

"Is his mind sound? Has he become insane?" Lodovico asked.

"He is what he is. As an officer serving under him, I ought not to state my opinion about his state of mind, but if he is not insane, I wish to God that he were because that would excuse his actions!"

"He actually struck his wife!"

“That was an evil action, but I wish that I knew that that was the most evil thing he would do!”

“Is this the way that he usually acts?” Lodovico asked Iago.
“Or is he so upset by the letter that he is acting abnormally?”

“I am sorry, but as his officer I ought not to speak about what I have seen and known him to do. You should watch him — his own actions will reveal his character to you and so I need not reveal his character by talking about it. Watch him, and see how he acts.”

“I am sorry that I was mistaken about his character,” Lodovico said.

— 4.2 —

In a room in the castle, Othello was questioning Emilia, Desdemona’s attendant and Iago’s wife.

“You have seen nothing suspicious?”

“I have never seen or heard anything suspicious,” Emilia replied, “and I have never suspected Desdemona of doing anything wrong.”

“You have seen Cassio and her together.”

“Yes, but I have never seen them do anything wrong, and I have heard every syllable that they have spoken to each other.”

“Did they ever whisper?”

“Never, my lord.”

“And they never sent you away?”

“Never.”

“Not even to fetch her fan, her gloves, her mask, or something else?”

“Never, my lord.”

“That’s strange.”

“I would bet my immortal soul that she is faithful to you. If you think otherwise, you are wrong and you need to change your thinking. Remove any thought that Desdemona has done you wrong; such thoughts abuse your heart. If any wretch has put such a thought in your head, let Heaven repay that deed with the serpent’s curse! Remember Genesis 3:14-15: *‘And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.’* If Desdemona is not honest, chaste, and true to you, then no man is happy — the purest of their wives is as foul as slander.”

“Tell Desdemona to come here,” Othello said. “Go now.”

Emilia left the room.

Othello said to himself, “She says that Desdemona is faithful to me, but it would have to be a stupid and foolish brothel-keeper who would not lie as well as Emilia. Emilia is a subtle whore who acts like a lock and key and keeps villainous secrets, and yet she kneels and prays — I have seen her do it.”

Desdemona and Emilia both entered the room.

“My lord, what is your will?” Desdemona asked.

“Please, chick, come here,” Othello said.

Desdemona walked to Othello and asked, “What do you want?”

“Let me see your eyes; look at my face,” Othello angrily said.

Wary, Desdemona asked, “What horrible notion is this?”

Othello said to Emilia, “Do your job, mistress. Leave us procreants — we who procreate — alone and shut the door. Cough, or cry ‘ahem,’ if anybody comes. That is your job, so do it.”

Emilia knew that she had been insulted. The words that Othello had used implied that she was the keeper of a brothel and that her job was to help people have illicit and immoral sex. But she was afraid, and she left.

Desdemona, who knew much less of the evils of the world than Emilia, understood the tone of voice that Othello had used. She knelt before Othello and said, “What do you mean? I understand from your tone of voice that you are angry, but I do not understand your words.”

“Why, what are you?” Othello asked her.

“Your wife, my lord; your true, faithful, and loyal wife.”

“Come, swear it, and damn yourself,” Othello said. “You are beautiful, and you look like you belong in Heaven. I do not want the devils of Hell to be afraid to seize you after you die, so therefore swear to me that you are faithful to me, and be double-damned.”

He thought, *Be damned once for adultery and once for perjury.*

“Heaven knows that I am faithful to you.”

“Heaven knows that you are as false as Hell.”

“To whom am I false, my lord? With whom am I false? How am I false?”

“Desdemona, stay away from me!” Othello said, crying.

“This is a horrible day,” Desdemona said. “Why are you crying? Am I the reason for these tears, my lord? If you suspect that my father is the cause of your being recalled to Venice, do not blame me. If you have lost his good will, I also have lost his good will.”

“Had it pleased Heaven to test me by afflicting me, by raining all kinds of sores and shames on my bare head, by steeping me in poverty up to my lips, by imprisoning me and chaining up all my hopes, I still would have found in some place of my soul a drop of patience. Unfortunately, Heaven has made me a fixed figure for everyone to scorn and to point at like the numbers on a clock. It is as if my disgrace were written on the face of a clock in the marketplace. Still, I could bear that, too, well — very well. But in the place where I have given my heart, where either I must live, or have no life, where is the fountain from which my current runs, or else dries up — I am referring to you, my wife — I have been thrown out from that place, I have been discarded from there! It is now a cistern where foul toads copulate and breed. Change your complexion, like the young and rose-lipped cherub known as Patience when she looks at the place where I have given my heart. That’s right — now you look as grim as Hell!”

“I hope my noble lord believes that I am honest and faithful to him and morally pure.”

“Yes, I do believe that you are chaste,” Othello said sarcastically. “As chaste as summer flies are in the slaughterhouses, flies that become pregnant again as soon as their eggs are laid. You weed, you are so lovely and so beautiful and you smell so sweet that my senses ache when they behold you — I wish that you had never been born!”

“What sin have I committed without being aware of it?”

Desdemona asked.

Othello looked at Desdemona's face and said, "Was this beautiful paper, this excellent book, made to write the word 'whore' upon? What sin have you committed!"

He thought, *You know Exodus 20:14; it is one of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."*

He said, "You are a common whore! I should make forges of my cheeks; they would burn with embarrassment if I were to mention your evil deeds out loud. What sin have you committed! Heaven stops its nose at it so it will not smell your sin and the Moon — a symbol of chastity — closes its eyes so it will not see your sin. Even the bawdy wind that kisses all it meets is hiding in a hollow cave under the ground so it will not hear about your sin. What sin have you committed! You are an impudent whore!"

"By Heaven, you do me wrong," Desdemona said.

"Are you not a whore?"

"No, I am not. I swear it as I am a Christian," Desdemona said. "If to preserve this vessel — my body — for my lord from any foul unlawful touch means that I am not a whore, then I am not a whore."

"What? You say that you are not a whore?"

"I am not a whore. If I am, then I give up my eternal salvation eternally."

"Is it possible that you can say such a thing?"

"Heaven forgive us!"

"I beg your pardon, then," Othello said sarcastically. "I mistook you for that cunning whore of Venice who married Othello."

Othello raised his voice and called Emilia: “You, mistress, who have the office opposite to that of Saint Peter, and keep the gate of Hell while he keeps the gate of Heaven, come here.”

Emilia entered the room.

Othello threw a few coins at her and said, “We have finished; here’s money for your pains. Please, keep the door and keep the secrets of Desdemona and me.”

He left the room.

Emilia knew that she and Desdemona had been insulted. Othello was treating Desdemona like a whore and Emilia like the keeper of a brothel. He was acting as if he had been one of a whore’s — Desdemona’s — customers and was tipping Emilia for her services as a procurer and to have her not gossip about his use of a prostitute’s services.

Emilia said, “What is going on in your husband’s brain? How are you, madam? How are you, my good lady?”

“I am in shock. It is as if I am half-asleep.”

“Good madam, what’s the matter with my lord?”

“With whom?”

“Why, with my lord, madam.”

“Who is your lord?”

“The same person who is your lord, your husband, sweet lady.”

“I have no lord, no husband,” Desdemona replied. “Do not talk to me, Emilia. I cannot cry, and tears would accompany the only answers that I can give you. Please, lay my wedding sheets on my bed tonight. Remember that. Also, call your husband here so I can talk to him.”

“Things have certainly changed around here!” Emilia said.

She left to get her husband, Iago.

Desdemona said sadly but sarcastically and bitterly, “It is fitting that I should be treated this way, very fitting. What have I done that he should make even the smallest criticism about my greatest fault?”

Emilia and Iago entered the room.

Iago looked at Desdemona, whom he was hoping to manipulate her husband into murdering, and asked, “What do you want, madam? How are you?”

“I do not know how I am,” Desdemona replied. “Those who teach young babes do so gently and give them easy tasks to do. My husband might have criticized me gently because, indeed, like a child I am unaccustomed to being scolded.”

“What’s the matter, lady?” Iago asked.

“It’s a shame, Iago, but my lord treated her as if she were a whore. He has called her spiteful and scornful names that good people cannot bear.”

“Am I deserving of the names he called me, Iago?” Desdemona asked.

“What names, fair lady?”

“Such names as your wife says my lord did say I was.”

“He called her a whore,” Emilia said. “Not even a drunk beggar would have called his slut such names as Othello called Desdemona.”

“Why did he do that?” Iago asked.

“I do not know why,” Desdemona said. “I am sure that I did not deserve to be called such names.”

“Do not cry, Desdemona, do not cry,” Iago said. “This is a sorrowful day!”

“Has Desdemona given up so many noble marriages that she could have made, has she given up her father and her country and her friends, just to end up being called a whore?” Emilia said. “Doesn’t this make you want to cry?”

“It is my wretched fate,” Desdemona said.

“Curse him for this,” Iago said. “Why is he acting this way?”

“I don’t know,” Desdemona said. “Only Heaven knows.”

“I can guess the cause,” Emilia said. “I will be hanged if some eternal villain, if some busy and insinuating rogue, if some lying, cheating slave, to get some job, has not devised some slander. I will be hanged if this is not true.”

Iago said, “No man can be that evil. That is impossible,” but he thought, *That is a good part of the truth — I did it in part so that I could be lieutenant, and now I am lieutenant.*

“If any such man exists, may Heaven pardon him!” Desdemona said.

“May a halter around his neck pardon him!” Emilia said. “And may Hell gnaw his bones! Why should Othello call Desdemona a whore? How is it even possible for her to have an affair? Who keeps her company that she could have an affair with? In what place could an affair take place? At what time could an affair take place? How could an affair happen? What is the evidence for an affair? Some very villainous knave, some base and notorious knave, some scurvy fellow has abused the Moor. I wish that Heaven would reveal such villains for what they are and put in every honest hand a whip to lash the rascals naked through the world from the East to the West!”

Iago did not like hearing his wife say this. He said, “Speak

more quietly. We are indoors.”

“To Hell with such men!” Emilia said. “Such a man spoke with you and turned your brain inside out and made you suspect that I had an affair with the Moor.”

Iago replied, “You are a fool. Shut up.”

Desdemona said, “Good Iago, what can I do to win my lord again? Good friend, go to him and talk to him. By this light of Heaven, the Sun, I swear that I do not know how I lost him. Here I kneel and swear that if ever my will trespassed against his love, either in thought or in actual deed, then may I never be happy. I swear that if my eyes, my ears, or any other sense ever delight in any man except my husband, then may I never be happy. I swear that if I never dearly loved my husband or do not dearly love my husband now or do not continue to dearly love my husband — even if he were to shake me off and divorce me and make me a beggar — then may I never be happy. Unkindness may do much, and his unkindness may take away my life, but it can never take away my love for him. I can hardly say the word ‘whore’ — to say the word now abhors me. I would not do the act that would make me a whore for all the world’s mass of vain finery.”

“Please, control yourself,” Iago said. “This is a temporary mood of Othello’s. He is bothered by affairs of state and so he quarrels with you.”

“I hope that is the reason and there is nothing else —” Desdemona began.

Iago interrupted, “That is the reason. I promise you that.”

Trumpets sounded.

Iago said, “The trumpets are sounding to announce that the evening meal is ready. Your guests — the messengers from

Venice — are ready to dine. Go in to the meal, and do not cry. Don't worry — all shall be well.”

Desdemona and Emilia went in to the meal, while Iago went outside, where he found an angry Roderigo waiting for him.

“How are you, Roderigo?”

“You have not been treating me fairly!”

“What have I done to make you think that?”

“Every day you put me off with some excuse, Iago. It seems to me now that you keep me from taking advantage of any and all opportunities that would further me even a little in my pursuit of Desdemona. I have not even met Desdemona. I will no longer endure it, and I am not about to let you get away with having treated me this badly.”

“Listen to me, Roderigo —”

“I have listened to you too much already because your words and your actions do not match.”

“You accuse me most unjustly.”

“My accusation is nothing but true,” Roderigo said. “I have wasted my capital. The jewels you have received from me to give to Desdemona would have half corrupted a Catholic nun. You have told me that Desdemona has received my gifts and in return has given to you to deliver to me words of hope and expectation that she and I will meet on intimate terms, but that never happens.”

“Well, go on. Continue,” Iago said.

“Go on! Continue!” Roderigo said. “I cannot go on and continue. My money is almost gone. I am in a scurvy situation, and I think that you have cheated me.”

“Go on.”

“I tell you that I cannot go on in this way. I intend to introduce myself to Desdemona and tell her that if she returns my jewels to me, I will stop pursuing her and repent my immoral solicitation of a married woman. If she will not return my jewels to me, assure yourself that I will seek satisfaction from you.”

Iago thought, *If he talks to Desdemona, he will discover that I have delivered to her no jewels. Instead, I put them in my pocket.*

“Have you said all you have to say?”

“Yes, and I have said nothing but what I intend to do.”

“Why, I see that you have spunk, and I now have a better opinion of you than I ever had before,” Iago said. “Shake my hand, Roderigo. You have greatly criticized me, but I say that I have always been honest in trying to help you achieve your goal of sleeping with Desdemona.”

“It does not look like it.”

“I grant that you have not yet enjoyed Desdemona’s body, and so your suspicion of me is founded on intelligent and good judgment. But, Roderigo, if you have some qualities in you that I indeed have greater reason to believe now than ever before — I refer to purpose, courage, and valor — this night you need to prove that you have those qualities. Prove that this night, and if you are not enjoying Desdemona’s body tomorrow night, then form treacherous plots against my life and kill me and take me from this world.”

“What do you want me to do?” Roderigo said. “Is it something reasonable that can likely be accomplished? Is it feasible?”

“Sir, a letter from Venice has arrived with orders to replace Othello with Cassio as governor of Cyprus.”

“Is that true? Why, then Othello and Desdemona will return to Venice.”

“No,” Iago lied. “Othello will go into Mauritania in Western Africa and take away with him the fair Desdemona, unless his stay here be lengthened by some event — definitely, if Cassio were to be removed, Othello and Desdemona would stay here in Cyprus.”

“What do you mean by the removing of Cassio?”

“I mean that Cassio needs to be made incapable of taking Othello’s place, as will be true if his brains are knocked out.”

“And that is what you want me to do?”

“Yes, if you dare to do something that will profit you and give you something — Desdemona — that ought to be yours by right. Cassio is dining with a prostitute, and I will go and join them. Cassio does not yet know of his good and honorable fortune — his being made governor of Cyprus. If you will wait for him to leave, which I will make happen between midnight and one, you may kill him at your pleasure. I will be near to give you support, and with both of us attacking him, he shall die.”

Roderigo looked shocked.

Iago said, “Come on. Don’t just stand there. Come with me. I will give you such reasons why his death is necessary that you will feel obliged to kill him. It is now suppertime, and the time is passing quickly. Let’s go.”

“I need to hear further reasons why Cassio’s death is necessary.”

“And I will tell them to you,” Iago replied.

They departed.

In a room in the castle were Othello, Lodovico, Desdemona, Emilia, and some attendants. The evening meal was over, and Othello was offering to walk Lodovico home.

Lodovico said to Othello, "Please, sir, trouble yourself no further about me."

"It is no trouble," Othello said. "A walk will do me good."

"Madam, good night," Lodovico said. "I humbly thank your ladyship."

"Your honor is most welcome," Desdemona replied courteously.

"Shall we walk, sir?" Othello asked Lodovico.

He then said, "Desdemona —"

"My lord?"

"Go to bed immediately. I will return soon. Send Emilia, your attendant, away, also. Make sure that you follow my orders."

"I will, my lord."

Othello, Lodovico, and some attendants exited.

Emilia had been far enough away that she had not heard what Othello had said. She said to Desdemona, "How is everything going now? Othello looks gentler and calmer than he did."

"He says that he will return quickly. He has ordered me to go to bed and to dismiss you. Apparently, he wants me to be alone when he returns."

"Dismiss me!" Emilia said, surprised. Normally, a lady's attendant would stay with her until the lady's husband was ready for bed.

“That is what he ordered,” Desdemona said. “Therefore, good Emilia, give me my night clothes. We must not now displease him.”

Uneasy, Emilia said, “I wish that you had never seen him!”

“I do not have that wish,” Desdemona said. “I love him so much that even his stubbornness, his rebukes of me, his frowns — please, unpin my hair and dress — have grace and favor in them.”

“I have laid on the bed those sheets you asked me to get.”

“It doesn’t matter. All’s one. Good faith, how foolish are our minds! What thoughts they make us think! If I die before you, please use one of those sheets as my shroud.”

“Come, that’s no way to talk,” Emilia said.

“My mother had a maid named Barbary, a form of Barbara. She was in love, and the man she loved proved to be unfaithful and forsook her, She used to sing a song named ‘Willow.’ The willow is a symbol of unrequited love; the weeping willow is a symbol of unhappiness. It was an old song, but it expressed her fortune, and she died singing it. That song tonight will not leave my mind. I find it difficult to keep from hanging my head to one side and singing that song like poor Barbary. Please, hurry up.”

“Shall I go and fetch your nightgown?”

“No, finish unpinning me now,” Desdemona said, adding, “This Lodovico is a proper man.”

“A very handsome man.”

“He speaks well.”

“I know a lady in Venice who would have walked barefoot to Palestine for a kiss from him.”

Had Desdemona not married Othello, she might have married a man much like Lodovico. Although he was a relative, if he were a distant enough relative, and unmarried, she might even have married Lodovico.

Desdemona began to sing:

“The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,

“Sing all a green willow:

“Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,

“Sing willow, willow, willow.

“The fresh streams ran by her, and repeated her moans;

“Sing willow, willow, willow.

“Her salt tears fell from her, and softened the stones.”

She gave some clothing to Emilia and said, “Put these away.”

Desdemona then sang again:

“Sing willow, willow, willow.”

She said to Emilia, “Please, go now. Othello will soon return.”

Desdemona then sang again:

“Sing, all — a green willow must be my garland.

“Let nobody blame him; his scorn I accept —”

She stopped and said, “No, that line is not next.”

Hearing a noise, she said, “Listen! Who is knocking?”

Emilia replied, “It’s the wind.”

Desdemona then sang again:

“I called my lover untrue, but what did he say then?”

“Sing willow, willow, willow.

“If I court more women, you’ll sleep with more men!””

She said to Emilia, “Well, go now. My eyes itch. Is that a sign of weeping to come?”

“It is neither here nor there,” Emilia said.

“I have heard it said that itchy eyes foretell weeping. Oh, these men, these men! Do you truly think — tell me, Emilia — that women really exist who abuse their husbands by making them cuckolds?”

“Some such women exist, no question about it.”

“Would you do such a deed for all the world?”

“Why, wouldn’t you?”

“No, by this Heavenly light, the Sun!”

“Neither would I in this Heavenly light from the Sun, but I might do it in the dark,” Emilia said.

“Would you do such a deed for all the world?”

“The world is huge; it is very valuable. It is a great payment for performing a small vice.”

“Truly, I don’t think that you would ever be guilty of such a sin.”

“Truly, I think that I would,” Emilia said. “I would do the sin, and after I had the world, I would undo the damage resulting from the sin. Of course, I would not do such a thing for a ring, or for yards of fine linen, or for clothing such as gowns, petticoats, and caps, or for any petty amount of money or petty gift — but for the whole world? Why, who would not make her husband a cuckold if it would make him

a monarch? I would risk being condemned to much time in Purgatory for committing such a sin. This sin can be forgiven; it need not result in being condemned to Hell.”

“Curse me if I would do such a wrong even for the whole world.”

“Why, the wrong is only a wrong in the world. Once you have the world as the price for your labor, it is a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right.”

“I do not think that any such woman exists who would commit such a sin.”

“Yes, a dozen, and as many in addition as would fill the world they played for. But I think it is their husbands’ faults if wives fall into this kind of sin. Husbands sometimes slack in their duties — instead of sleeping with us, they pour their treasured semen into the laps of other women. Or else the husbands break out in peevish jealousies and restrict our freedom. Or they strike us. Or they reduce our monetary allowance out of spite. Why, we have spirits that can feel resentment, and though we have some grace and can forgive them, yet sometimes we want and get revenge. Let husbands know that their wives have senses and feelings just like theirs: They see and smell and have an appetite both for sweet and sour, just like husbands have. What is it that husbands get when they exchange us — their legitimate wives — for others? Is it sexual pleasure? I think it is. Does affection breed it? I think it does. Is it frailty that thus errs? Yes. Don’t we wives have affections, desires for sexual pleasure, and frailty, as men have? Then let them treat us well, or else let them know that the sins we do, their own sins teach us to do.”

Desdemona said, “Good night, good night. May Heaven help me learn from such examples to avoid doing evil!”

Emilia exited, leaving Desdemona alone in the bedchamber.

CHAPTER 5

— 5.1 —

Iago and Roderigo spoke together on a dark street near where Cassio was visiting Bianca.

Iago said, “Here, stand behind this projecting wall. Cassio will arrive quickly. Take out your rapier, and thrust it deep in him. Quick, quick; don’t be afraid. I will be at your elbow. This action will make us, or it will mar us and ruin us; think about that, and be resolute.”

“Be close at hand,” Roderigo said. “I may need help.”

“Here I am, by your side,” Iago said. “Be bold, and take your stand.”

Iago withdrew a short distance away.

I have no great desire to do this deed of murder, Roderigo thought. And yet Iago has given me reasons for committing murder. Oh, well. It is only the death of a single man. I will draw my sword — Cassio will die tonight.

Iago thought, I have rubbed this pimple — this youngster, this Roderigo — until it is raw, and now he grows angry at me. Now, whether Roderigo kills Cassio, or Cassio kills him, or each kills the other, I come out ahead. If Roderigo stays alive, he will demand that I make a large restitution to him — he will demand that I restore to him all the gold and jewels that I defrauded him, saying that they were gifts for Desdemona when actually I put them in my own pocket. That must not happen. If Cassio should stay alive, he has a constant beauty of character in his life that makes me ugly by comparison and, in addition, the Moor may eventually talk to him and learn that I have been lying about Desdemona. Because of that, I stand in much danger, and so Cassio must die. Listen! I hear him coming!

Cassio arrived.

Roderigo thought, *I know his gait — he is Cassio.*

He then said to Cassio, “Villain, now you must die!”

He thrust his sword at Cassio, who said, “That sword thrust would have been my death, but I am a soldier and I am wearing a privy coat — a coat of mail underneath my regular clothing — for protection. Now let us see whether your coat is as good as mine.”

Cassio thrust his sword into Roderigo’s body, and Roderigo cried, “I am going to die!”

In the dark, Iago came up behind Cassio. Knowing that Cassio was wearing a protective coat of mail, Iago wounded him in the leg with his sword and then fled.

Cassio shouted, “I am maimed forever! Murder! Murder!”

He fell.

Othello, who was walking to his home after having walked Lodovico home, heard the noise and thought, *It is the voice of Cassio; Iago has kept his word and murdered him.*

Roderigo shouted, “Damn me!”

Othello thought, *Cassio should be damned.*

Cassio shouted, “Help! Bring some light here! I need a doctor!”

Othello thought, *Yes, it is the voice of Cassio. Brave Iago, you are honest and just. You have a noble sense of the wrong done to me, your friend! You teach me how to act now.*

He thought about Desdemona, *Hussy, your dear lies dead, and your cursed end hurries to you. Whore, I am coming to see you. Your charming eyes no longer influence my heart.*

You have spotted our bed with lust, and now I shall spot it with your whorish blood.

Othello departed.

Lodovico had decided to take a walk with his friend Gratiano and seek Cassio.

Cassio shouted, "Help! Are there no watchmen? No passersby to help me? Murder! Murder!"

"Something bad has happened," Gratiano said. "Someone badly needs assistance."

Cassio shouted, "Help!"

Lodovico said, "Listen!"

Roderigo shouted, "Damn!"

"Two or three men are groaning," Lodovico said. "It is a dark night. Let's be careful. These men may be acting as if they are hurt so that they can rob us when we come to their assistance. Let's get more people and then go to them."

Lodovico was understandably cautious because he was in a country that was not his own.

"Is nobody coming to help me?" Roderigo shouted. "Then I shall bleed to death."

Lodovico said again, "Listen!"

Iago now returned.

Gratiano said, "Here comes someone wearing a nightshirt and carrying a lamp and a sword."

"Who's there?" Iago said. "Who is shouting, 'Murder!'"

"We do not know," Lodovico said.

"Did you hear anyone shout?" Iago asked.

“Here, here!” Cassio shouted, “For Heaven’s sake, help me!”

Iago asked, “What’s the matter?”

Gratiano said, “I recognize this man. This is Othello’s ancient.”

“You are right,” Lodovico said. “He is Iago, a very valiant fellow.”

“Who are you here who is shouting so grievously?” Iago asked.

Cassio replied, “Is that you, Iago? I am wounded, injured by villains. Give me some help.”

“Lieutenant, what villains have done this?” Iago asked.

“I think that one of them is still near here and cannot flee.”

“They are treacherous villains!” Iago said.

Seeing Lodovico and Gratiano, he said, “Who are you there? Come here, and give us some help.”

Roderigo shouted, “Help me! I am over here!”

“That is one of the men who attacked me,” Cassio said.

Iago went over to Roderigo and said, “You murderous slave! You villain!”

Then he stabbed Roderigo, who weakly said, “Damn you, Iago! You inhuman dog!”

Roderigo fainted and appeared to be dead.

“Killing men in the dark!” Iago shouted. “Where are these bloody thieves? How quiet the town is tonight! Murder! Murder!”

Seeing Lodovico and Gratiano, Iago asked, “Who are you!

Are you good men or bad men?"

"Judge us by our actions, then praise us," Lodovico said.

Iago asked, "Are you Signior Lodovico?"

"Yes."

"I beg your pardon. Here is Cassio. He has been hurt by villains."

"Cassio!" Gratiano said.

"How are you, brother?" Iago asked Cassio.

"My leg has been cut in two."

"Heaven forbid!" Iago exclaimed. "Hold the lamp so I have light, gentlemen. I will bandage Cassio's wound with my shirt."

The attack had occurred outside Bianca's home. She had heard the noise and now came running.

She asked, "What is the matter? Who is he who cried out?"

"Who is he who cried out?" Iago repeated, sarcastically, implying that Bianca knew who had cried out.

Bianca saw the wounded Cassio and exclaimed, "Oh, my dear Cassio! My sweet Cassio! Cassio, Cassio, Cassio!"

"You are a notable whore!" Iago said to her.

He then asked, "Cassio, do you know which men wounded you?"

"No."

Gratiano said to Cassio, "I am sorry to see that you are wounded. I was on my way to find you."

"Someone, lend me a garter so I can bind Cassio's bandage,"

Iago said. “Good. Now we need a sedan chair — an enclosed chair attached to two poles so that servants can carry it — so that we can easily carry Cassio to a doctor.”

“Cassio has fainted from loss of blood,” Bianca cried.

Iago said, “Gentlemen, I do suspect this trash — this woman — to be a party in this attack against Cassio.”

He said to Cassio, “Be patient. We will take care of you.”

He then walked over to where Roderigo was lying and said, “Bring a lamp here. Do we know this man? It is my friend and my dear countryman Roderigo! Is it? No — yes, it is, definitely. Oh, Heaven! It is Roderigo.”

“Roderigo of Venice?” Gratiano asked.

“Yes, it is he, sir,” Iago asked. “Did you know him?”

“Know him? Yes.”

“Is that you, Signior Gratiano?” Iago said. “Please pardon me. This bloody attack must excuse my bad manners — I did not mean to neglect you.”

“I am glad to see you,” Gratiano said.

“How are you doing, Cassio?” Iago asked. “We need a sedan chair! A chair!”

Gratiano looked at Roderigo and said, “Roderigo!”

“Yes, it is he,” Iago said.

Some people arrived, carrying a sedan chair, and Iago said, “Well done. Some good men carry Cassio carefully from here; I’ll get the general’s surgeon.”

He said to Bianca, “As for you, mistress, keep out of the way.”

He said to Cassio, "The man who lies here dead was my dear friend. His name was Roderigo. What was the problem between you two?"

"There was none," Cassio said. "I don't even know the man."

Iago said to Bianca, "You look pale. That is suspicious."

He then said, "Carry Cassio away."

Cassio was carried away in the sedan chair. Some men also carried away Roderigo.

Iago said to Lodovico and Gratiano, "Stay here a moment, gentlemen."

He said to Bianca, "Do you look pale, mistress?"

He said to Lodovico and Gratiano, "Do you see the terror in her eyes?"

He said to Bianca, "Go ahead and stare. We shall learn more soon."

He said to Lodovico and Gratiano, "Look at her closely. See how guilty she looks! Guilt will reveal itself even when tongues stay silent."

Emilia walked up to Iago and the others and asked, "What is going on? What's the matter, husband?"

Iago replied, "Cassio has here been attacked in the dark by Roderigo and some fellows who have escaped. Cassio is close to dying, and Roderigo is dead."

"This is a pity, good gentlemen!" Emilia said. "It is a shame that this happened to good Cassio!"

"This is the fruit of whoring," Iago said. "Please, Emilia, go to Cassio and ask him where he dined this night."

He looked at Bianca and asked, “Are you shaking with fear because of what I asked my wife to do?”

“Cassio dined at my house tonight, but I am not shivering in this cool night air because of that.”

“Oh, so he did dine with you,” Iago said. “I command you to come with me.”

“Damn you, whore,” Emilia said.

“I am no whore,” Bianca said. “I live as respectable a life as you who are verbally abusing me.”

“As respectable a life as I!” Emilia said. “Not likely!”

Iago said, “Kind gentlemen, let’s go and make sure that poor Cassio’s wounds are bandaged.”

He said to Bianca, “Come, mistress, you must tell us another tale.”

He said to his wife, “Emilia, run to the citadel and tell the Moor and Desdemona what has happened.”

He said to Lodovico and Gratiano, “Please lead the way.”

He thought, *This is the night that will either make me or entirely ruin me.*

— 5.2 —

Desdemona was asleep in her bedchamber in the castle. A candle was burning near her.

Othello entered the room and thought this:

It is the cause; it is the cause, my soul. Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars! It is the cause.

I must keep in mind the cause. Desdemona has committed adultery, and that is the cause — the reason — why I must

punish her.

I will not shed her blood, and I will not scar that whiter skin of hers than snow — that skin as smooth as alabaster stone used in making tombs. Yet she must die, else she will betray more men.

I will put out the candle's light, and then I will put out the light that is her life. If I quench you, you flaming candle, I can easily again restore your light, if I repent my action. But if I put out the light that is Desdemona's life — that pattern so skillfully wrought by nature excelling itself — I do not know where to find the heat that Prometheus used when he created human beings and so I cannot make you live again.

When I have plucked a rose, I cannot give it vital growth again. It must wither and it will wither. So will it be if I pluck your life, Desdemona.

I'll smell the rose on the bush.

He leaned down and kissed Desdemona.

He thought, *Your breath is fragrant. It almost persuades Justice to break her sword of punishment! One more kiss, one more. Be like this when you are dead, and I will kill you and love you afterward.*

He kissed her.

One more, and this is the last kiss, he thought.

He kissed her a third time.

So sweet was never so fatal. I must weep, but I weep cruel tears. This sorrow is Heavenly — it strikes where it does love. I remember Proverbs 3:12: "For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth." She is waking up.

Desdemona asked, "Who's there? Othello?"

“Yes, Desdemona.”

“Will you come to bed, my lord?”

“Have you prayed tonight, Desdemona?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“If you can think of any sin that you have not confessed and asked to be forgiven for, pray about it immediately. You must be reconciled with God and forgiven by Him.”

“That sounds ominous. My lord, what do you mean by that?”

“Do it now, and be brief; I will walk nearby to give you some privacy. I would not kill your unprepared spirit. You must be ready to enter Heaven. I would not kill your soul — Heaven forbid that!”

“Are you talking about killing me?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Then I pray that Heaven have mercy on me!”

“Amen, with all my heart!” Othello said.

“If you can say that, I hope that you will have mercy on me and not kill me.”

“What you hope — that will not happen.”

“I fear you. You are deadly when your eyes roll like they are doing now. But I do not know why I should be afraid that you will kill me. I have done nothing wrong and I am guilty of nothing, and yet I am afraid that you will kill me.”

“Think about your sin.”

“My sin is the love I have for you,” Desdemona said.

She added, “It is a sin to love a mortal man more than God.”

“True, and that is the reason you will die,” Othello said, thinking that Desdemona loved Cassio.

“Death is most unnatural when one kills because of love,” Desdemona said. “Why are you gnawing your lower lip? Some bloody passion shakes your very frame: These are deadly portents; but yet I hope, I hope, that they do not pertain to me.”

“Be quiet, and be still!”

“I will obey you,” Desdemona said. “What’s the matter?”

“That handkerchief that I so valued and gave to you, you gave to Cassio.”

“No, by my life and soul that is not true! Send for the man, and ask him.”

“Sweet soul, take heed and be careful not to commit the sin of perjury. You are on your deathbed.”

“I may eventually die in this bed, but not yet, I hope.”

“You will die very soon on this bed. Therefore, confess freely your sins. Denying anything of which you are accused will not remove or strangle the strong suspicions that make me groan. You will die.”

“Then, Lord God, have mercy on me!”

“To that I say, ‘Amen.’”

“And, Lord my husband, you have mercy on me, too! I have never done anything to offend you in my life. I have never had anything to do with Cassio except what Heaven would approve of. I have never given him any love-token, including your handkerchief.”

“By Heaven, I saw my handkerchief in his hand,” Othello said. “Woman, you have committed the sin of perjury. You

have turned my heart to stone. Your refusal to confess your sins forces me to call what I intend to do a murder, which I thought would instead be a sacrificial gesture. I saw the handkerchief.”

“Then he found it. I never gave it to him. Send for him — he will tell you the truth.”

“He has confessed the truth.”

“What, my lord?”

“He has confessed that he has used you.”

“How? Immorally?”

“Yes. He has confessed that you and he have committed adultery.”

“Call him here. He will not say that.”

“No, he won’t. His mouth is closed and will never again open. Honest Iago has seen to that.”

“I am afraid! Is Cassio dead?”

“Had all his hairs been lives, my great desire for revenge would have ended each life.”

“He has been betrayed, and I will die.”

She cried.

“Stop, whore! Will you cry for Cassio in front of me?”

“Banish me, my lord. Send me away, but do not kill me!”

“Don’t you move, whore!”

“Kill me tomorrow — let me live tonight!”

Othello grabbed her and said, “Don’t you struggle —”

“Let me live another half an hour!”

“Now that I have started, I must go on.”

“Wait until I say one prayer!”

“It is too late.”

Othello strangled Desdemona, his wife.

Emilia, outside the bedchamber door, called, “My lord! My lord!”

Othello listened to hear whether Desdemona was breathing; he said, “What noise is this? Not dead? Not yet quite dead? I who am cruel am also merciful. I would not have you linger in pain.”

He put his hands around her neck again and squeezed.

Emilia called, “My lord! My lord!”

“Who’s there?” Othello called.

“My good lord, I need to talk to you!”

“It is Emilia,” Othello said.

He called, “Wait a moment!”

He thought, *Desdemona is dead. Likely, Emilia has come to inform me about Cassio’s death. The attack and its aftermath created a lot of noise. Desdemona is no longer moving — she is as still as the grave. Shall I let Emilia come in? Is that what I should do? Is Desdemona moving? No. What is the best thing for me to do? If Emilia comes in, she’ll want to speak to my wife. My wife! My wife! What wife? I have no wife. This is unbearable! This is a heavy hour! I think a huge eclipse of Sun and Moon should occur now, and I think that the frightened globe should tear itself apart in an earthquake. Now the world should end.*

Emilia called, “Please, I need to talk to you, my good Lord!”

“I had forgotten about you,” Othello said. “Come in, Emilia. Wait a moment. Let me first draw the curtains around the bed. Now I will unlock the door.”

He unlocked the door and let Emilia in and said, “What’s the matter with you now?”

“My good Lord, murders have been committed!”

“When? Just now?”

“Just now, my Lord.”

“The Moon has caused this. She errs in her orbit and comes closer to the Earth than usual, and she is making men lunatics.”

“My Lord, Cassio has killed a young Venetian named Roderigo.”

“Roderigo has been killed!” Othello said. “And Cassio has been killed!”

“No, Cassio has not been killed.”

“Cassio has not been killed!” Othello said.

He thought, *Murder is out of tune, and the sounds of sweet revenge grow harsh. The wrong man has been killed.*

Desdemona revived and said, “I have been unfairly murdered!”

“What cry is that?” Emilia asked.

“That! What?” Othello said.

“That was my lady’s voice,” Emilia said.

Emilia cried, “Help! Help! Help!” and ran to the bed.

She held Desdemona in her arms and said, “Oh, lady, speak again! Sweet Desdemona! Oh, sweet mistress, speak!”

“I die a guiltless death,” Desdemona said. “I have done nothing wrong.”

“Who has done this deed?” Emilia asked.

Wanting to protect her husband, Desdemona said, “Nobody; I have done it myself. Farewell. Give my love to my kind lord. Oh, farewell!”

Desdemona died.

Othello said, “How can she have been murdered? Who could have murdered her?”

“Who knows?” Emilia replied.

“You heard her say herself that it was not I.”

“She said so. My duty is to report the truth.”

“Like the liar she is, she has gone to burning Hell. I am the person who killed her.”

“Then the more angel she, and you the blacker devil! With her final words, she forgave you and tried to make you appear innocent of her murder.”

“She turned to sin, and she was a whore,” Othello said.

“You are telling lies about her, and you are a devil.”

“She was false as water. She was as changeable as the tides. Water is unstable — it often changes; it can be liquid water, ice, snow, and water vapor. She was beautiful on the outside, but that appearance was deceptive.”

“You are as rash as fire when you say that she was false. She was as true as Heaven! She was not deceitful or sinful.”

“Cassio lay on top of her,” Othello said. “Ask your husband whether that is true. I would be damned to Hell for eternity if I murdered Desdemona without just cause. Your husband

knows that she was false to me.”

“My husband?”

“Your husband.”

“He knew that Desdemona committed adultery and broke the marriage vows she made in church?”

“Yes, she committed adultery with Cassio. Had she been true to me and had not committed adultery, I would not have traded her for a Heaven-made precious gem the size of the Earth.”

“My husband?”

“Yes, he told me first about her adultery. He is an honest man, and he hates the slime that sticks on filthy deeds.”

“My husband?”

“Why do you keep saying that, woman? Yes, it was your husband, Iago.”

“Oh, mistress, villainy has made a mockery of your love! Was it my husband who said that she was false to you!”

“Yes, woman,” Othello said. “I say that it was he, your husband, who told me that my wife was committing adultery with Cassio. Do you understand the word ‘husband’? I am talking about my friend, your husband: honest, honest Iago.”

“If he said that Desdemona committed adultery, may his pernicious, destructive, and evil soul rot in Hell forever! He lies entirely — all the way to his heart. Desdemona was too fond of her most filthy bargain — her marriage — to commit adultery.”

“Ha!” Othello said, and he drew his sword.

“Do your worst to me,” Emilia said. “This deed of yours is

no more worthy of Heaven than you were worthy of her.”

“Shut up, if you are wise!”

“You have not half the power to do me harm as I have the power to endure that hurt. You are a fool! You are an idiot! You are as ignorant as dirt! You have done an evil deed — I am not afraid of your sword! I will make your evil deed known to all, and I would do that even if I lost twenty lives!”

She shouted, “Help! Help! Help! The Moor has killed my mistress! Murder! Murder!”

Montano, Gratiano, and Iago entered the room.

“What is the matter?” Montano asked. “How are you now, general?”

Emilia saw her husband and said, “Oh, have you come, Iago?”

She added, sarcastically, “You have done well — men are blaming their murders on you.”

Gratiano asked, “What is the matter?”

Emilia said to Iago, “Prove that Othello is lying, if you are a man. He says that you told him that his wife was false to him and had committed adultery. I know that you did not — you are not such a villain. Speak, because my heart is heavy with grief.”

“I told him what I thought to be true,” Iago said, “and I told him no more than what he himself found was reasonable, believable, and true.”

“But did you ever tell him that Desdemona was false to him and had committed adultery?”

“I did.”

“Then you told a lie — an odious, damned lie. I swear upon my soul that you told a lie, a wicked lie. Desdemona false with Cassio! Did you say that she committed adultery with Cassio?”

“With Cassio, mistress,” Iago said. “Put a spell on your tongue to silence it.”

“I will not be silent,” Emilia said. “I must speak. My mistress, Desdemona, here lies murdered in her bed —”

Shocked, Montano and Gratiano said, “Heaven forbid!”

Emilia finished, “— and, Iago, your lying reports have caused the murder.”

Montano and Gratiano stared at Othello, who said, “Do not stare, masters. What Emilia said is true, indeed. I have killed my wife.”

Gratiano said, “It is a strange truth.”

“It is a monstrous act!” Montano said.

“Villainy, villainy, villainy!” Emilia said. “I know it. I smell it. Oh, villainy! I suspected it previously. I’ll kill myself out of grief. Oh, villainy, villainy!”

“What, are you insane?” Iago said. “I order you to go home.”

“Good gentlemen, let me have leave to speak,” Emilia said. “It is usually proper for me to obey my husband, but it is not proper now. Perhaps, Iago, I will never again go home.”

Overcome with emotion, Othello groaned and fell on Desdemona’s bed.

“Lie down there and roar with grief,” Emilia said to him. “You have killed the sweetest innocent who ever lifted her eyes to Heaven as she prayed.”

Othello was still unwilling to accept the truth. He stood up and said, "Desdemona was foul."

He looked at Gratiano, Desdemona's uncle, who was therefore his uncle-in-law, and said, "I scarcely did recognize you, uncle. There lies your niece, whose breath, indeed, these hands have newly stopped. I know that this act appears to be horrible and grim."

"Poor Desdemona!" Gratiano said. "I am glad that your father is dead. Your marriage to Othello was deadly to him; his grief at your marriage cut his life short — the Fates cut his thread of life. If he were still alive, this sight would make him do something desperate. He would curse his guardian angel and drive it away from his side, commit suicide, and fall into a state of damnation."

"This sight is pitiful," Othello said, "but Iago knows that she has committed adultery with Cassio a thousand times; Cassio himself confessed it, and she rewarded his amorous works with the first love-token that I gave to her. I saw it in his hand: It was a handkerchief: an antique love-token that my father gave my mother."

"Oh, Heaven!" Emilia cried. "Oh, Heavenly powers!"

"Shut up!" Iago ordered her.

"The truth will come out! The truth will come out! Will I shut up? No, I will speak as liberally as the North Wind that violently blows with bitter cold. Let Heaven and men and devils, let them all, all, all, cry shame against me because I am disobeying my husband, yet I'll speak."

"Be wise, shut up, and go home," Iago said.

"I will not."

Iago drew his sword and threatened his wife.

Gratiano was shocked: “You would draw your sword against a woman!”

“You dull Moor!” Emilia said. “By chance, I found that handkerchief you are talking about, and I gave it to my husband. Often, solemnly and earnestly, despite the handkerchief being just a trifle, he had asked me to steal it.”

“You are a villainous whore!” Iago said to his wife.

“Did Desdemona give that handkerchief to Cassio? No! I found it, and I gave it to my husband.”

“Filth, you lie!” Iago shouted.

“By Heaven, I do not. I do not, gentlemen,” Emilia said.

She said to Othello, “Oh, murderous fool! What could such a fool as you do with so good a woman? You did not deserve her!”

Realizing that Emilia was telling the truth, Othello said, “Are there no lightning bolts in Heaven but those that are used with the thunder? Will no lightning bolts strike Iago dead?”

Othello said to Iago, “You are thoroughly a villain!”

Sword drawn, Othello ran at Iago, but Montano disarmed Othello. Iago stabbed Emilia and then fled.

Gratiano said, “Emilia has fallen. No doubt this villain has killed his wife.”

“I am dying,” Emilia said. “Lay me by my mistress’ side.”

With help from Montano and Gratiano, she staggered to the bed and lay on it.

Gratiano said, “Iago has fled, and his wife has suffered a mortal wound.”

“Iago is a notorious villain,” Montano said.

He said to Gratiano, “Take this weapon, which I have just taken from the Moor, and guard the door from the outside. Do not let him pass through the doorway — kill him if you have to. I will run after Iago, that damned villain — he is a damned servant of evil.”

Montano and Gratiano exited the bedchamber. They thought that Emilia had died.

Othello said to himself, “I have lost my valor. Any puny whippersnapper can take my sword from me. But why should my reputation for valor outlast my valor? My reputation for honor should not outlast my honor.”

Emilia said softly on the bed, “What did your song foretell, lady? Can you hear me? Swans are silent during their lives and sing only when they are dying. I will be like the swan and die as I sing.”

She sang, “*Willow, willow, willow* —”

She added, “Moor, Desdemona was chaste and did not engage in immoral sex; she loved you, cruel Moor. I swear on my immortal soul that I am telling you the truth. I am telling you the truth as my soul goes to Paradise.”

Those were Emilia’s last words.

Othello said, “I have another weapon in this bedchamber; it is a sword of Spain, tempered in an icy brook. Here it is.”

He held the sword in his hand as he called, “Uncle, I must come out of this room.”

Gratiano replied, “If you attempt to leave, it will cost you dearly. You have no weapon, I do have a weapon, and therefore you will suffer.”

“Come in here and talk to me,” Othello said, “or, defenseless as I am, I will attack you.”

Gratiano entered the room and said, “What do you want?”

Othello displayed his sword and said, “Look, I have a weapon. A better sword has never hung upon a soldier’s thigh. I have seen the day that with my little arm and this good sword, I have made my way through impediments with more than twenty times your power to stop me, but I am vainly boasting. Who can control his fate? I cannot do that now. Don’t be afraid, although you see me with a weapon. Here is the end of my journey — here is my stopping place and the marker that announces the farthest extent of my life.”

Gratiano backed away from Othello, who asked, “Do you retreat in dismay? You are wasting your fear. Point a mere straw at Othello’s chest, and I will give up. Where should Othello go?”

Othello looked at Desdemona’s corpse and said, “How do you look now? Oh, ill-starred woman! You are as pale as your smock! When we shall meet on Judgment Day, this look of yours will hurl my soul from Heaven, and fiends will snatch at it and carry it away to Hell. You are cold, cold, my girl! Your chastity — your avoidance of immoral sex — lacked the heat of immoral lust. I am a cursed sinner! Whip me, devils, from the possession of this Heavenly sight! Desdemona and I will be separated in the afterlife — her abode is in Heaven, and mine is in Hell! Let hot winds blow on me! Roast me in sulfur! Wash me in precipitous chasms of liquid fire! Desdemona! Desdemona, you are dead! I have murdered you!”

Lodovico and Montano entered the room. With them was Cassio, who was being carried in a sedan chair. Officers also entered the room, leading Iago, their prisoner.

Lodovico asked, “Where is Othello, that rash and most unfortunate man?”

“The man who was Othello is here,” Othello said. “I am he.”

Lodovico said, "Where is that viper named Iago? Bring the villain forward."

Othello said, "I look down at Iago's feet, but he does not have cloven feet — that story about devils is a fable."

Othello said to Iago, "If you are an immortal devil, then I cannot kill you."

Othello slashed Iago with his sword.

"Wrench his sword away from him," Lodovico ordered.

Othello was disarmed.

Iago said to Othello, "I bleed, sir; but I am not killed."

"I am not sorry that you are alive," Othello said. "I prefer that you stay alive. I know now that it is happiness to die. It is better to die than to be alive."

"Othello, you were once a very good man," Lodovico said, "but you fell into the trap of this damned evil man. What can I say to you?"

"Say anything you wish," Othello said. "Call me an honorable murderer, if you will. I did nothing out of hatred; I acted only out of honorable motives."

"This wretched Iago has partly confessed his villainy," Lodovico said. "Did you and he agree to cause Cassio's death?"

"Yes," Othello replied.

Cassio said, "Respected general, I never gave you cause to wish my death."

"I believe you, and I beg you to forgive me," Othello said. "Will you, please, ask that demi-devil why he has thus ensnared my soul and body?"

“Ask me nothing,” Iago said. “What you know, you know: From this time forward, I will never speak another word.”

“Not even to pray?” Lodovico asked.

Gratiano said, “Torture will open your lips.”

“Torture is an excellent idea,” Othello said.

Lodovico said to Othello, “Sir, you shall understand what has happened. You do not, I think, know all the story. Here is a letter found in the pocket of the slain Roderigo, and here is another letter. The first letter is from Iago to Roderigo and contains information intended to help Roderigo kill Cassio.”

“Iago is a villain,” Othello said.

Cassio said, “This attempted murder is very heathenish and very gross!”

“Here is another letter that we found in Roderigo’s pocket,” Lodovico said. “It seems that Roderigo meant to send this letter of complaint to Iago but Iago met with Roderigo just before he sent the letter; Iago answered his complaints.”

“Iago is a pernicious caitiff!” Othello said. “He is a malignant and contemptible person!”

He added, “Cassio, how did you come to possess that handkerchief that belonged to my wife?”

“I found it in my bedchamber,” Cassio replied. “Iago himself confessed just now that he dropped it there as part of his plan to ruin you.”

“I have been a fool!” Othello said. “A fool! A fool!”

Cassio said, “Roderigo’s letter in which he upbraids Iago contains more information. Roderigo wrote that Iago made him attack me while I was on guard duty, resulting in my dismissal as Othello’s lieutenant. Just now Roderigo gave us

more information. We thought that he had been dead a long time, but he revived briefly before dying for real and told us that Iago had wounded him and that previously Iago had urged him to try to murder me.”

Lodovico said to Othello, “You must leave this room, and go with us. Your power and your command are removed from you; Cassio now rules in Cyprus. As for this villain, Iago, if there exists any cunning cruelty that can torment him greatly without killing him for a long time, he will feel that torture. You, Othello, will be our prisoner until we inform the Venetian government about the nature of your fault. The Venetian government will decide what shall be done with you.”

He said to the guards in the bedchamber, “Come, take the Moor away.”

Othello said, “Wait. Let me say a word or two before you go. I have done the Venetian government some service, and they know it, but no more of that. Please, in your letters, when you shall relate these unlucky deeds, speak of me as I am. Make no excuses for me, and do not write anything out of malice. You must write about me as one who loved not wisely but too well — I should have loved moderately but instead I loved excessively. You must write about me as one who was not easily jealous, but as one who was manipulated into being extremely jealous. You must write about me as one whose hand, like the hand of a lowly ranking man of India, threw a pearl away that was more valuable than all his tribe. You must write about me as one whose eyes, although unaccustomed to crying, dropped tears when overcome with grief as quickly as Arabian trees drop the medicinal myrrh that oozes from them. Write all this down, and add that in Aleppo once, where a malignant and evil turbaned Turkish Muslim beat a Venetian man and slandered the Venetian state, I took the circumcised Muslim dog by the throat and

killed him although it was a capital crime for a Christian — and I am a Christian — to strike a Turk.”

Othello was a military man, and military men often keep weapons hidden on their bodies. Othello took out a hidden dagger and said, “I killed the Turk like this” — then he stabbed himself mortally.

Lodovico said, “This is a bloody conclusion to Othello’s life!”

“All that we planned to do concerning Othello is ruined,” Gratiano said. “It is no longer applicable.”

Othello said to Desdemona’s corpse, “I kissed you before I killed you. There is nothing left to do but this — having killed myself, to die with a kiss.”

He fell on the bed, kissed Desdemona’s corpse, and died.

“I was afraid that Othello might try to kill himself,” Cassio said, “but I thought he had no weapon. Othello was great of heart.”

Lodovico said to Iago, “You vicious Spartan dog — deadlier than anguish, hunger, or the sea! — look at the tragic corpses on this bed. This is your doing. This spectacle poisons men’s sight.”

He ordered, “Draw the bed curtains and let the corpses be hidden from sight.”

He then said, “Gratiano, stay in the house, and take legal possession of the belongings and money of the Moor. You are the next of kin, and you inherit his fortune.”

He said to Cassio, “To you, lord governor, falls the punishment of Iago, this Hellish villain; you decide the time, the place, the torture — enforce justice!”

He concluded, “I myself will immediately return to Venice,

and to the Venetian state, I will these sad events with heavy heart relate.”

Chapter VIII: ROMEO AND JULIET**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Juliet: Capulet's daughter

Romeo: Montague's son

Mercutio: Kinsman to the Prince of Verona and friend of Romeo

Tybalt: Lady Capulet's nephew and Juliet's cousin

The Nurse: Juliet's nursemaid

Friar Lawrence: A Franciscan, and Romeo's confessor

Capulet: Juliet's father

Paris: A noble kinsman to the Prince

Benvolio: Montague's nephew

Lady Capulet: Juliet's mother

Montague: Romeo's father

Balthasar: Romeo's servant

Apothecary: a chemist, aka pharmacist

Escalus: the Prince of Verona

Friar John: A Franciscan, friend to Friar Lawrence

Lady Montague: Romeo's mother

Peter: A Capulet servant attending the Nurse

Abram: A servant to Montague

Gregory and Sampson: Servants of the Capulet household

PROLOGUE

The Capulets and the Montagues — two families, very much alike in most respects — in the beautiful city of Verona, Italy, battle each other because of a long-standing feud. Because of this feud, the hands of the citizens of Verona become dirty with the blood of other citizens of Verona. The two families have given birth to two children — a boy named Romeo and a girl named Juliet — who become ill-fated lovers and commit suicide. The burial of these lovers also buries the quarrel between their two families. These lovers' story is told in this book.

CHAPTER 1: ROMEO AND JULIET MEET**— 1.1 —**

On a street of Verona, Sampson and Gregory, two servants of the Capulet family, walked and talked. They wore swords and carried small, round shields. Sampson was in a mood to boast about his masculinity, and both were in a mood to make jokes.

Sampson said, “Gregory, you and I are not the type to take insults lightly.”

Gregory replied, “Neither of us is a lightweight.”

“If anyone should make us angry and choleric, we would draw our swords.”

“I definitely recommend that you not be collared by the city guards.”

Sampson said, “When I am moved by anger, I strike quickly with my sword.”

Gregory replied, “True, but it is best to not be quickly moved to strike.”

“Any member of the family of Montague can quickly move me to anger.”

“To quickly move is to run. A courageous man will stand and face the enemy. Are you telling me that when you meet a Montague you will run away?”

Sampson said, “A male Montague will move me to anger and a female Montague will make a certain part of my body move to make a stand. If we meet a Montague man on the street, I will make the Montague man walk in the gutter while I walk next to this wall.”

Gregory replied, “Doesn’t that mean that you are weak? The weaker sex walks on the side away from the street while the stronger sex walks next to the street. Members of the weaker sex will walk next to this wall.”

“You talk truthfully. Women are weak and need to be specially treated. If we meet a Montague man, I will push him into the gutter. But if we meet a Montague woman, I will nail her ass to this wall.”

“This feud is between the heads of the Capulets and the Montagues. And yet, the feud extends between other members of the two families and even to servants such as us.”

Samson replied, “So be it. I will act like a tyrant. I will fight the Montague men, and then I will cruelly cut off the heads of the Montague maidens.”

“The heads of the maidens?” Gregory asked.

“Yes, the heads of the maidens, or better, I will break their maidenheads. Take it either way, but while I am alive, let no Montague hymen be unbroken.”

“If the Montague maidens take it, they will feel it inside them.”

Samson said, “I will stand and deliver. Part of me will stand up, and I will deliver it to the Montague maidens. What I will deliver to the Montague maidens is a pretty piece of flesh.”

“It is good that you are flesh and not fish,” Gregory said. “If you were fish, you would be dried fish — dried and shriveled up.”

Gregory saw Abraham and Balthasar, two servants of the Montague family, and said to Samson, “Draw your sword. Here come two Montagues.”

“My naked sword is out of its scabbard, but if these two Montagues were Montague women and not Montague men, my sword is not the naked tool I would now be displaying. Pick a quarrel with these Montagues — I have your back.”

“In what way? Will you turn your back and run?”

“Don’t worry.”

“As long as I have *you* at my back, I worry.”

Samson said, “Let’s not break the law. Let them start a quarrel.”

“I will frown as I pass by them,” Gregory said. “They can take it as they wish.”

“That’s not enough,” Samson said. “I will rub my nose with my middle finger. If they don’t start a fight, they will be thought to be cowardly.”

As Abraham and Balthasar neared them, Samson pulled his fingers into a fist, extended his middle finger, and rubbed the tip of his nose while staring at the Montague servants.

Abraham asked angrily, “Are you giving us the finger?”

“I am indeed giving the finger,” Samson replied.

“Yes, I can see that you are,” Abraham said, “but are you giving *us* the finger?”

Samson asked Gregory, “Is the law on our side, if I say yes?”

“No,” Gregory replied.

Samson said to the Montague servants, “No, I am not giving you the finger, but I am giving the finger.”

Gregory said to the Montague servants, “Are you picking a fight with us?”

“A fight?” Abraham said. “No.”

“If you want to fight, I will fight you,” Sampson said. “My boss is as good as yours.”

“He is no better,” Abraham said.

Gregory said, “Say that our boss is better than his boss. I see a reinforcement coming: Benvolio, a relative of our boss.”

“You are wrong,” Samson said to Abraham. “Our boss is better than your boss.”

“You lie!” Abraham shouted.

“Draw your swords if you are men,” Sampson said. “Gregory, get ready to fight — you know how to cut and slash with your sword.”

Benvolio, a peacemaker, drew his sword and tried to stop the fight. He shouted, “Part, fools! Put up your swords; you don’t know what you do!” He used his sword to beat down their swords.

Tybalt, a Montague, came running with his sword drawn and said to Benvolio, “You have drawn your sword among these stupid servants. Turn, and face a worthy opponent. Turn, and face your death.”

“I do but try to keep the peace,” Benvolio said. “Put up your sword, or use it to help me separate these quarreling men.”

“What! You have drawn your sword, and you are talking about being a peacekeeper!” Tybalt mocked. “I hate the word ‘peace’ as I hate Hell, all Montagues, and you. Let’s fight, coward!”

Tybalt and Benvolio fought.

News of the fight spread quickly, and soon several Capulets and Montagues came running and started to fight. Some guards — officers of the law — also arrived.

A guard shouted, “Beat down the weapons of both the Capulets and the Montagues! Stop this fight!”

Old Capulet, the head of the Capulet family, heard the commotion. Still in his nightgown, he ran out of his house and shouted, “What noise is this? Give me my long sword!”

His much younger wife, Mrs. Capulet, said to him, “Why are you asking for a sword? You can get much more use out of a crutch!”

Old Capulet repeated, “Bring me my sword, I say! Old Montague has come, and he has drawn his blade in defiance of me.”

Old Montague and his wife arrived on the scene. Old Montague shouted, “Old Capulet, you are a villain!”

His wife grabbed onto him. He shouted at her, “Hold me not! Let me go!”

She told him, “You shall not stir a foot to seek a foe.”

The Prince of Verona and his armed bodyguards rode into the street. Prince Escalus wanted a peaceful city, and he was determined to have one, even if he had to threaten to torture and kill some people to get peace.

The Prince shouted, “Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace, you who coat your steel swords with your neighbors’ blood, listen to me! Either throw your weapons to the ground or be sentenced to death by torture.”

They threw down their weapons. The Prince was the ruler of the city, and if he ordered his bodyguards to kill someone, his bodyguards would instantly obey him.

The Prince continued, “Three brawls in the street have disturbed the peace of our city. Three brawls that were caused by words that dissipated into the air — words spoken by you, Old Capulet, and by you, Old Montague. Your airy words have caused you two old men of Verona to put aside your dignified and appropriate behavior and caused you to wield old weapons in your old hands. You are putting weapons that are rusty with peace and disuse in your arthritic hands to serve your hatred of each other. Listen to what I decree: If ever you or your families fight in our streets again, you will pay for your crime with your lives: If you fight, you die!

“Old Capulet, come with me now. Old Montague, come to me this afternoon. Meet me in old Freetown, the court where I make judgments.

“All of you, I order you to leave here. Leave peacefully and immediately, or die.”

Everyone left. Old Montague, his wife, and Benvolio walked away slowly together.

Old Montague asked Benvolio, “What happened? Who caused this newest fight in our ancient feud? Were you here when it happened?”

“Before I arrived, servants of the Capulet family and servants of our family were already fighting,” Benvolio said. “I drew my sword in an attempt to part them and reestablish the peace. But Tybalt of the Capulet family came running with his sword drawn. He shouted his hatred of me and other Montagues while he swung his sword around his head. His sword did not hurt the air, which hissed at him in scorn. Tybalt talks a good fight, but his talking is better than his fighting. He and I fought, and more and more people arrived and began fighting either for the Capulets or for our side. The Prince then arrived and stopped the fighting.”

Mrs. Montague said, "Where is my son, Romeo? Have you seen him? I am glad that he was not fighting here."

"An hour before sunrise, I took a walk because my mind was troubled," Benvolio said. "I saw your son walking in a grove of sycamore trees to the West of the city. I was walking toward him, but he saw me and walked away. I could tell that he wished to be alone, as did I. I did not go to him."

Old Montague said, "Romeo has often been seen there before sunrise. His tears fall and are added to the morning dew. But as soon as the Sun begins to rise, my melancholy son returns home and shuts himself up alone in his room. He closes the windows and shuts out the sunlight, turning what should be a brightly lit room into an artificial night. His mood will stay black and ominous unless someone can find out what is bothering him."

"My noble uncle, do you know the cause of Romeo's depression?"

"I don't know the cause, and he won't tell me what is bothering him."

"Have you tried to find out?"

"Yes, I have asked him," Old Montague said. "So have many of my friends. But he keeps his thoughts private and won't talk to us. His depression is like a worm that bites the bud of a flower and keeps it from spreading its petals and displaying its beauty to the Sun. I want to know what is bothering him so I can fix the problem."

Benvolio said, "I see Romeo walking toward us now. Let me be alone with him. I will do everything I can to find out what is bothering him."

Old Montague replied, "Good luck. I hope that he tells you what is making him depressed."

He then said to his wife, "Let's go away and leave Benvolio and our son alone."

They left, and Benvolio walked toward Romeo.

"Good morning, Romeo," Benvolio said.

"Is it still morning?"

"The clock just now struck nine."

"Sad hours seem long," Romeo said. "Was that my father who left just now?"

"Yes, it was. What sadness makes your hours seem long?"

"My sadness is that I do not have the thing that if I had it would make my hours seem short."

"You sound as if you are in love," Benvolio said.

"Out —"

"Of love?"

"Out of the favor of the person I love."

"Being in love seems like a good thing, but all too often love is harsh."

"Love is supposed to be blind, but it has made me its bitch — so, where do you want to eat?"

Benvolio was wise enough not to smile, but he thought, *Romeo can't be very deeply in love if he can still think of his stomach instead of the woman who does not love him although he thinks he loves her.*

Romeo noticed blood on the ground and said, "Who has been fighting here? Don't tell me. I can guess. It's the feud. Here has been a battle among men who hate each other but love to fight each other. Here has been brawling love and loving

hate. With these men, love and hate are entwined with each other. We might as well talk of creating something out of nothing! We might as well talk of heavy lightness and serious vanity! We might as well talk of beautiful forms that look ugly! We might as well talk of lead feathers and bright smoke and cold fire and sick health! We might as well talk of still-waking sleep. These fighting men know nothing of love. The love I feel makes me feel no love for this brawl.

“Benvolio, are you laughing at me?”

“No, Romeo. Instead, I weep.”

“Why?”

“Because you are unhappy.”

Romeo said, “Unhappiness is often the consequence of love. I have griefs to bear in my heart, and yet your grief becomes added to my griefs, although I already have too much grief to bear. What is love? Love is a smoke that rises with the sighs of lovers. When love is returned, you can see a fire burning in both lovers’ eyes. When love is refused, a sea is created with the rejected lover’s tears. What else is love? It is a most intelligent madness. It is a thing that chokes, and it is a thing that tastes sweet. Farewell, Benvolio.”

“Wait!” Benvolio said. “I will go with you. If you leave me now, you do me wrong.”

“I have lost myself,” Romeo said. “I am not Romeo — he is some other where.”

“Be serious,” Benvolio said, “and tell me who it is you love.”

“Shall I groan and tell you?”

“You need not groan,” Benvolio said, “but be serious and do tell me who it is you love.”

“‘Serious’ is a word that ought not to be used in front of a dying man who needs to make a will,” Romeo said, “but seriously, Benvolio, I love a woman.”

“When you said you loved someone, I did indeed think you loved a woman. I know you that well. Tell me more.”

“When you thought I loved a woman, you hit a bull’s-eye,” Romeo said. “She is indeed beautiful.”

“I have hit another bull’s-eye,” Benvolio said. “I also thought that she would be beautiful. If she is the target of your love, what kind of a marksman have you been?”

“The worst possible,” Romeo replied. “She is a target who will not allow herself to be hit with the arrow of Cupid. She wants nothing to do with romantic love. She is a follower of Diana, a virgin goddess, and she wishes, like Diana, always to remain a virgin. She vigilantly defends her chastity and wears metaphorical armor that defends her body from the arrows of Cupid. She will not listen to loving compliments. She ignores loving looks. She will not open her lap to receive gifts of saint-seducing gold. She is rich with beauty, but when she dies her beauty will be buried with her.”

“Then she has sworn always to remain a virgin?”

“She has, indeed,” Romeo said, “and so she is wasting her beauty. By remaining forever a virgin, she will never give birth to a daughter who will inherit her beauty. She is too beautiful and too intelligent and too fashionable to be allowed into Paradise after refusing to return my love. She should not receive eternal bliss as a result of making me despair. She has sworn never to love, and that is something she should never have sworn. By doing so, she has killed the best part of me, leaving only a husk to tell you my story.”

“Take my advice,” Benvolio said. “Forget about her.”

“Tell me how it is possible to do that.”

“Simply allow your eyes to look at other beautiful women.”

“If I do that, I will only remember the more her beauty,” Romeo said. “At masked balls, women put masks over their face but we remember that beauty lies underneath the mask. A man who goes blind will still remember the beauty that he has seen. Show me a beautiful woman, and I will simply remember the woman I love — a woman who is more beautiful than any woman you show me. You cannot teach me how to forget my love, so farewell, Benvolio.”

Romeo left, and Benvolio said, “You think I cannot teach how to forget your love, but I think I can.”

He walked after Romeo.

— 1.2 —

In his mansion, Old Capulet was planning a party, one that he held annually. He also was hosting Count Paris. A relative of the Prince, Paris would be an important political ally if he would marry Juliet, Old Capulet’s daughter. Paris had come to Old Capulet to see about arranging that marriage.

Old Capulet said to Paris, “I believe that the upcoming days will be peaceful. If I fight, I die. If Old Montague fights, he dies. With such a penalty over our heads, and with Montague and I being so old, it should not be hard for us to keep the peace.”

“Both of you are honorable men of good reputation, and it is a pity that you have feuded,” Paris said. “But will you allow me to marry your daughter, Juliet?”

“I can say only what I have said before,” Old Capulet said. “My daughter is yet a stranger in the world — she is not yet fourteen years old. She will have to be sixteen before I can think of allowing her to get married.”

Paris replied, “Younger than she are happy mothers made.”

Thinking of his much younger wife, Old Capulet said, “And too soon marred are those so early made mothers. All of my other children are dead and buried; Juliet is my only child who is left alive. In her I place my hopes. But woo her, Paris, and win her heart. My consent to the marriage is only part of what is needed. If she agrees to the marriage, I will gladly give my consent.

“Today I am giving a party, one I hold each year. I have invited many guests whom I love, and I invite you to be a welcomed guest. Come to my house tonight. You will see young girls who will seem to be stars that walk on the Earth and light up the night sky from below. After the cold winter come warm April and many beautiful flowers. The young girls you see at my party tonight are as beautiful as April flowers — look at all of them and talk to all of them. Fall in love with the one whom you think most deserves your love. That one may be my daughter, or perhaps you will prefer another girl.”

To a servant, Old Capulet gave a paper, saying, “Go throughout Verona and invite to my party tonight the people whose names are written on this paper. Tell them that I look forward to seeing them.”

To Paris, Old Capulet said, “Come with me.”

Old Capulet and Paris left the room, and the servant said, “Find the people whose names are written here! How can I do that? I can’t read! I have been told that the fisherman should use his pencil, and I have been told that the painter should use his net. I think that’s what I’ve been told, but it doesn’t sound quite right. But how can I use this piece of paper when I can’t read! I must find an educated person.”

Old Capulet had hired extra servants for the feast and dance, and so he did not know that this servant could not read.

The illiterate servant walked out into the street and saw Romeo and Benvolio. He did not recognize them, but they looked as if they could read and so he said, “Just the people I need!”

Benvolio said to Romeo, “To put out one fire, firefighters sometimes start another fire. Seeing the pain of another person sometimes lessens one’s own pain. One evil is sometimes conquered by another evil. Your eyes have been poisoned by the woman you love; to cure that poison, infect your eyes with the poison of the sight of another beautiful woman.”

“Why not simply use aloe vera?” Romeo asked.

“Use aloe vera for what?” Benvolio asked.

“For skinned knees.”

“But I’m not talking about skinned knees!”

“You certainly aren’t talking about anything I am interested in listening to. Your kinds of remedies have nothing to do with my lovesickness.”

Romeo saw the servant eagerly looking at him and asked, “May I help you?”

The servant asked, “Can you read?”

“I can read my own future — I will continue to be miserable.”

“That’s not the kind of reading I mean, sir. Can you read something that is written on a piece of paper?”

“Yes, if what is written is a language that I can read.”

“You are not giving me a strictly straight answer, so I will assume that you do not want to help me,” the servant said, beginning to turn away.

“Wait. Don’t go. I have been joking with you. I really can read.”

The servant handed Romeo the piece of paper and Romeo read the list out loud:

“Signor Martino and his wife and daughters.

“Count Anselm and his beautiful sisters.

“The lady widow of Vitruvio.

“Signor Placentio and his lovely nieces.

“Mercutio and his brother Valentine.

“My uncle Capulet, and his wife and daughters.

“My fair niece Rosaline.

“Livia.

“Signor Valentio and his cousin Tybalt.

“Lucio and the lively Helena.”

Romeo said to the servant, “This is a list of well-known people in the city. Mercutio is a friend of mine, and I have seen Rosaline. What is the list for, if you don’t mind my asking?”

“They are coming up.”

“Up where.”

“To my master’s house, for supper.”

“Whose house?”

“My master’s.”

“I had hoped for more information than that. Apparently, I was not clear enough when I asked my question.”

“I have been joking with you,” the servant said. “Now I will tell you what you want to know. My master is the great and rich Old Capulet, and if you and your friend are not Montagues, feel free to crash the party and drink some wine. Farewell, and God bless.”

The servant left to invite to the party all the people named in the list.

Romeo and Benvolio had been talking, and Romeo had confessed that the woman he loved was Rosaline, whose name appeared on the list of guests to be invited to the Capulet party.

Benvolio said, “The beautiful Rosaline, whom you say you love, will be at the Capulet party. So will many beautiful women of Verona. Go to the party with me, and if you look with unbiased eyes and compare Rosaline’s face with some faces that I shall show you, I will make you think that your swan whom you think is beautiful is actually as ugly as a crow.”

“My eyes worship Rosaline, and if ever my eyes would falsely regard any woman as being more beautiful than she, then let my tears turn into fires,” Romeo said. “My eyes have often drowned in tears and yet they live, but if ever my eyes regard any woman as being more beautiful than Rosaline, then they are clearly heretics and liars and so should be burnt. Can anyone be fairer than Rosaline? No. Since the creation of the world, the Sun, which sees all, has seen none more beautiful than she.”

“Come on,” Benvolio said. “When you saw Rosaline and decided that she was beautiful, she was the only woman present. Your eyes had no one to compare her to. Come to the party and compare Rosaline with some women I shall show you, and you won’t think Rosaline is as beautiful as you think she is now.”

“I will go to the party with you,” Romeo said, “but not to look at any women you seek to show me. I will go to the party so that I can look at Rosaline.”

— 1.3 —

In a room in Old Capulet’s mansion, Mrs. Capulet and the Nurse were sitting and talking.

“Nurse, where’s my daughter? Call her to come to me.”

“By my virginity when I was only twelve years old,” the Nurse said, “I swear that I have already told her to come here.”

The Nurse called, “Lamb! Ladybird!”

Then she said to herself, “Good Heavens! Where is that girl?”

She called again, “Juliet!”

Juliet entered the room and said to the Nurse, “Here I am. What do you want?”

“Your mother wants to talk to you,” the Nurse said.

“Here I am, Mother. What do you want?”

“We need to talk about something important,” Mrs. Capulet said. “Nurse, step outside for a while. No, wait. Stay here. You should hear what I have to say. You know that Juliet is growing up.”

“I can tell her age unto an hour,” the Nurse said.

“She still is not yet fourteen years old,” Mrs. Capulet said.

“I would stake as a wager fourteen of my teeth — but to my sorrow, I have only four teeth left — that she is not yet fourteen,” the Nurse said. “How long is it now to Lammas-tide — the first of August?”

“A fortnight and odd days,” Mrs. Capulet replied.

“Even or odd, of all days in the year, on Lammas-eve at night Juliet will be fourteen years old,” the Nurse said. “My daughter — God bless Susan’s soul — and Juliet were born on the same day. Susan is with God. She was too good for me. But on Lammas-eve at night Juliet shall be fourteen years old. I remember her infancy and childhood well. It has been eleven years since the earthquake and so eleven years since she was weaned. I was her wet-nurse and fed her Susan’s milk, and on the day of the earthquake I put wormwood on my nipple to make it bitter. You and your husband were then away visiting the city of Mantua. I was sitting with Juliet in the Sun under the dove-house wall. My memory is excellent. Juliet started to suck at my breast, but when she discovered that the nipple was bitter, she grew irritable. That is when the earthquake struck and the dove-house shook. That is the day that my duties as Juliet’s wet-nurse ended. That was eleven years ago, and Juliet was able to stand by herself. Actually, she was able to run and walk by herself, too. The day before the earthquake, she was running and fell forward and cut her forehead. My husband — God bless his soul — said to her, ‘Juliet, you fell forward upon your face, didn’t you? But someday, after you reach puberty, you will fall backward and lie on your back, won’t you, Juliet?’ And I swear that pretty Juliet stopped crying and said, ‘Yes, I will.’”

Mrs. Capulet blushed, knowing that the joke was that Juliet would lie on her back with her knees in the air and her legs parted — and Juliet would not be alone.

The Nurse continued, “It was the funniest thing. If I live to be a thousand years old, I will not forget it. ‘Won’t you fall backward, Juliet?’ my husband asked her. And pretty Juliet stopped crying and said, ‘Yes, I will.’”

“No more of this talk,” Mrs. Capulet said. “Please be quiet.”

“Yes, I will be quiet,” the Nurse said. “But I cannot stop myself from laughing. Pretty Juliet stopped crying and said, ‘Yes, I will fall backward,’ although she had a bump on her forehead from the fall — a bump as big as one of the balls of a rooster. Juliet fell, and she cried, and my husband said to her, ‘You fell forward upon your face, didn’t you, Juliet? But one day you will fall backward and lie on your back, won’t you, Juliet?’ and Juliet stopped crying and said, ‘Yes.’”

Juliet was embarrassed because her mother was present, but if her mother had not been present, she would have laughed.

Juliet said, “Please stop telling that story, Nurse.”

Having told it four times, the Nurse said, “I am done telling the story. You were the prettiest baby I ever nursed, and I hope that I live long enough to see you married.”

“That is exactly what I want to talk about,” Mrs. Capulet said. “Juliet, what do you think about getting married?”

Juliet replied, “It is an honor that I have never dreamed about.”

“An honor,” the Nurse said. She thought, *Yes, if Juliet gets married, her husband will be on her.*

The Nurse said out loud, “That is a wise remark. I would say that you sucked wisdom from my nipples, but that would be complimenting myself as well as you.”

Mrs. Capulet said to Juliet, “Think about marriage now. Here in Verona, many ladies of esteem younger than you are already mothers. I myself was a mother when I was your age. Let me tell you straight out that the valiant Paris wishes to marry you.”

The Nurse said, “Paris really is a man, Juliet, and such a man! His figure is as perfect as if he were a sculpture.”

“Speaking poetically,” Mrs. Capulet said, “summertime in Verona has not such a flower as Paris.”

“True,” the Nurse said, “Paris is a flower.”

“What do you say, Juliet?” Mrs. Capulet asked. “Do you think you can love Paris? He will attend our party tonight. Look him over carefully. I think you will be pleased by what you see. If he were a book, a pen of beauty would have written it. Examine his features and see how they work together to create a harmonious whole — he is a handsome man. Continue your examination by looking into his eyes. He will make a handsome groom — he lacks only a beautiful bride. A man needs a woman to be complete. He has handsomeness outside and virtues inside, and with you as his wife, he will be complete. As the wife of such a man, you shall share all his virtues and his reputation. Speaking poetically, by having him as your husband, you will make yourself no less.”

The Nurse joked, “Juliet, you will certainly be no less. Women grow by men — they become pregnant!”

“Tell me, Juliet,” Mrs. Capulet said. “Can you learn to return Paris’ love?”

“I will look at him and see if I like him,” Juliet said. “I certainly will not do anything that you do not want me to do.”

A servant entered the room and said to Mrs. Capulet, “The guests have arrived and dinner is supposed to be ready. People are asking for you and for Juliet. Servants in the pantry are cursing the Nurse because she is not there to help. Everything is a mess right now, and I have to go back and serve the food. I beg you, come with me and restore order.”

“We will go with you,” Mrs. Capulet said.

She said to Juliet, “Paris is here now, and he wants you to approve of him as a groom.”

The Nurse said, “Juliet, seek happy nights to happy days. A honeymoon has many happy nights.”

— 1.4 —

On a street of Verona, Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio, and five or six other people wearing masks and some people holding torches to provide light were heading to Old Capulet’s party. Mercutio was neither a Montague nor a Capulet, but he was a friend to Romeo and Benvolio and other Montagues. He was also related to Prince Escalus.

“When we arrive at the party, should we talk to Old Capulet and introduce ourselves, or should we simply crash the party?” Romeo asked.

“We need not say anything,” Benvolio said. “Wordy introductions are out of fashion. We need not draw attention to ourselves. We certainly aren’t going to blindfold one of ourselves like Cupid, arm him with a bow, and scare all the ladies like a scarecrow scares crows. We don’t need such ostentatious costumes, and we don’t need any memorized complimentary speeches. We will simply crash the party anonymously and let them judge us as they will. We will dance a dance, and then we will be gone.”

“Let me hold a torch,” Romeo said. “I am not in the mood for dancing.”

“No, good friend Romeo,” Mercutio said. “We must watch you dance.”

“You would not enjoy the sight,” Romeo replied. “You, Mercutio, have dancing shoes with nimble soles. I have a soul of lead that weighs me down so I cannot dance.”

“You are a lover,” Mercutio said. “You can easily borrow Cupid’s wings. With them you can dance lighter than a non-lover.”

“Not so,” Romeo said. “I am so wounded by Cupid’s arrow that I cannot soar with his light feathers. Because I am so wounded, I cannot leap in a dance. Under love’s heavy burden, I sink.”

“By sinking, you drag down love,” Mercutio said. “Love is so tender that it ought not to be treated like that.”

“Is love tender?” Romeo asked. “Love treats me roughly, rudely, and boisterously, and it pricks like a thorn.”

“If love is rough with you, then you should be rough with love,” Mercutio, who regarded sex as a joke, said. “If love pricks you, then use your prick to lay down your love and be satisfied.”

They had arrived at Old Capulet’s mansion. Mercutio shouted, “Someone, give me a mask to put my face in. Give me a new face for my old face. And make the new face ugly. What do I care if people look at me and think that my face is deformed?”

Someone handed Mercutio an ugly mask. He looked at it and said, “Here are the overhanging beetle brows that shall make me look deformed!”

Benvolio said, “Let’s knock and go in. As soon as we are in, let all of us begin dancing.”

“Give me a torch to hold,” Romeo said. “Let people who are light of heart do the dancing. If I hold a torch and am an onlooker only, I probably won’t get in trouble. I am not in the mood for dancing, and so I won’t dance. I am done with dancing.”

“Done with dancing?” Mercutio said. “Dun is the color of a mouse, and now we should be quiet like a mouse. We should stop talking and go in to the party and start dancing. If you are dull-colored and dun, we will pick you up out of the mire caused by your lovesickness — that mire in which you are up to your ears. Come on, we need to go in to the party. We are wasting light.”

“No, we aren’t. It’s night,” Romeo said.

“Please,” Mercutio said. “We are wasting the light cast by our torches by not going in to the brightly lit party. It is like lighting a lamp on a bright summer day when the lamp is not needed. Don’t think so literally. Usually, you are a wit.”

“We mean well by going to this party,” Romeo said, “but we are not showing wit or intelligence by so going.”

“Why not?” Mercutio asked.

“I dreamt a dream tonight.”

“And so did I.”

“What was your dream?”

“That dreamers often lie.”

“In bed asleep, while they do dream about true things,” Romeo, who could be witty, said.

Mercutio, as was common with him, let his imagination run free: “Oh, then, I see Queen Mab has been with you. She is the fairies’ midwife, and she is no bigger than the agate-stone on a ring on the forefinger of an alderman. She rides in a wagon drawn by a team of tiny insects across men’s noses as they sleep. The spokes of the wheels of her wagon are made from spiders’ long legs. Covering her wagon are the wings of grasshoppers. The traces used by the insects to draw her wagon are made from the webs of spiders. The

collars that go around the necks of the insects are made of moonbeams. Her whip handle is made from a cricket's bone, and the lash of her whip is made from a fine filament. Her wagoner is a small grey-coated gnat that is not as big as a round little worm touched by the lazy finger of a maiden. Her chariot is the shell of a hazelnut, and it was manufactured by a carpenter squirrel or an old grub, which for ages have made the coaches of fairies."

Mercutio's vision gradually grew darker: "And in this carriage Queen Mab gallops night by night through the brains of lovers, and then they dream of love. She gallops over the knees of courtiers, and then they dream of curtsies. She gallops over the fingers of lawyers, and then they dream of lawyers' fees. She gallops night by night over the lips of ladies, who dream of kisses. Queen Mab blisters those lips because they smell of candy. Sometimes she gallops over the nose of a courtier, and then he dreams of smelling out a lawsuit. Sometimes she takes the tail of a tithe-pig — a gift to support a priest — and she uses it to tickle the nose of a parson, and then he dreams of money and wealth."

And then Mercutio's vision became very dark: "And in this carriage Queen Mab sometimes drives over the neck of a soldier, and then he dreams of cutting foreign throats, of breaking through defensive walls, of ambushes, of Spanish swords, and of drunkenness. She drums in his ear and he wakes up. Frightened, he prays and makes vows to God, and then he goes back to sleep. She is that very Queen Mab who makes matted the manes of horses in the night, and tangles their hairs in foul elflocks that, once untangled, are harbingers of misfortune. Queen Mab is the hag who sends dreams that teach maidens to lie on their backs and screw and get pregnant and carry children like women of good carriage. Queen Mab is she who —"

Alarmed by Mercutio's wildness, Romeo touched him gently on the arm and said, "Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace! Be quiet now. You are talking of nothing."

As if he were coming out of a trance, Mercutio blinked himself into everyday consciousness and said, "True, I talk of dreams, which are the children of an idle brain and are born of nothing but vain fantasy that is as thin of substance as the air and that is more unconstant than the wind, which now blows toward the frozen bosom of the north, but then becomes angry and blows toward the dew-dropping south."

"We are being blown off our course by the wind you talk of," Benvolio said. "We are supposed to be attending a party. By now, everyone has eaten. Soon, people will start leaving the party and going home."

Romeo thought, *Benvolio worries about getting to the party too late. I worry about getting there too early. I worry that an uncaring fate and the uncaring stars will set something in motion at this party that shall end with my all-too-early death. But let who or whatever has the steerage of my course direct my sail!*

Romeo said out loud, "Let's go party-crashing, friends!"

Benvolio said to a drummer, "Begin drumming," and all marched into the mansion of Old Capulet.

— 1.5 —

Inside Old Capulet's mansion, musicians played. Some servants were busy cleaning up the great chamber after the dinner.

A servant asked, "Where's Potpan? Why isn't he helping us to carry dirty dishes away from the table? How can he call himself a server? He isn't scraping any dishes and washing them!"

A second servant said, "When almost everyone forgets to do their work, and it lies in the hands of only a couple of workers to do all the work, then it is a foul thing — and the good workers' hands are foul with the work of scraping dirty plates."

The first servant said, "Let's carry out of the dining room the folding chairs and movable cupboard and the silver dishes and the silverware. Please, save me a piece of marchpane — I love sugar and almonds. And please, tell the porter to let in Susan Grindstone and Nell. Our master is having a party, and we have a party of our own planned."

The first servant then called, "Anthony and Potpan!"

Anthony and Potpan arrived.

Anthony asked, "What do you want?"

"Help is needed in the great chamber," the first server said. "They have been asking for your help for a long time."

Potpan said, "We cannot be here and there, too. Be cheerful, boys; work hard and quickly, and then we will have time for our party."

In the great chamber, Old Capulet invited guests and maskers to dance. Juliet was nearby.

Wearing masks and not easily recognized, Romeo and his friends entered the great chamber.

Old Capulet said, "Welcome, gentlemen! Ladies who are not plagued with painful corns on their feet will be happy to dance with you. Ladies, none of you will dare not to dance, now! Any lady who does not dance will — I will tell everybody — have corns on her feet. Welcome, gentlemen! I have seen the day when I have worn a mask and would whisper sweet nothings in a fair lady's ear, but for me those

days are gone. You are welcome, gentlemen! Musicians, play! Clear the hall. Dance, everyone! Foot it, girls!”

Mercutio, Benvolio, and others in Romeo’s group began to dance. Romeo stood to the side like a wallflower.

Old Capulet ordered, “More light, you knaves. Move the tables to the side. Quench the fire because the room has grown too hot.”

Old Capulet, who had not recognized Romeo, said to a relative about Romeo and his group of friends, “I had not expected these people in masks to be guests, but the more the merrier — especially welcome are those who will dance. You and I are past our dancing days — how many years has it been since you and I wore a mask at a party?”

His relative answered, “By Saint Mary, it must be thirty years.”

“What?” Old Capulet said. “It can’t have been that long ago! We last wore a mask at the wedding of Lucentio at Pentecost. When Pentecost arrives, it will have been twenty-five years since Lucentio was married.”

“He has been married longer than that. His son is thirty years old.”

“That’s not possible, is it?” Old Capulet said. “Just two years ago, his son was still a minor.”

Romeo had caught sight of Juliet, and her beauty dazzled him. He asked a servant, “Which lady is she who is dancing with that knight?”

The servant replied, “I don’t know, sir.” Old Capulet had hired extra servants for the feast and dance; these servants were not familiar with the Capulet household.

Still wearing a mask, Romeo thought, *She teaches the torches how to burn brightly. She seems to brightly hang upon the cheek of night like a rich jewel in an Ethiopian woman's ear. Her beauty is too rich for use and too dear for Earth! She is like a white dove in the midst of a flock of black crows — that is how much in beauty she surpasses all the other women in this ballroom. Once this dance is finished, I will watch where she stands, and I will touch her hand and make blessed my own rough hand.*

Then Romeo said out loud without thinking, “Did my heart ever love before now? Answer no, sight! For I never saw true beauty until this night.”

Although Romeo thought that he was speaking softly, Tybalt overheard him enough to recognize the sound of his voice but not enough to understand the content of his words.

Tybalt said to a servant, “This person, judging by his voice, is a Montague. Fetch me my rapier, boy. How does this slave dare to come hither, his face covered with a grotesque mask, to mock and scorn our dance? By the stock and honor of my kin, to strike Romeo dead, I hold it not a sin.”

Old Capulet noticed that Tybalt was upset, and he asked him, “What’s wrong? Why are you so angry?”

Tybalt replied, “Uncle, this man is a Montague, our enemy. He is a villain who has come here in spite, to mock our dance this night.”

Old Capulet looked closely at the young man whom Tybalt pointed out, and he asked, “Young Romeo, is it?”

Tybalt replied, “Yes, he is that villain Romeo.”

Mindful that the Prince of Verona had threatened him with death should violence break out, Old Capulet said, “Don’t be angry, Tybalt. Let him alone. He bears himself like a good

gentleman, and to say the truth, he has a reputation throughout Verona of being a virtuous and well-behaved youth. I would not for the wealth of all Verona have any harm come to him in my house. Therefore, Tybalt, be patient and take no note of him. Instead, I want you to show a fair presence. Look pleasant, be courteous, and don't frown. Remember that you are at a dance."

"My frowns are justified, when a guest is such a villain," Tybalt said. "I will not endure Romeo's presence."

A younger man should not disrespect an older man, especially when the older man is a wealthy and respected relative and the host of a dance that the young man is attending.

Old Capulet told Tybalt, scornfully, "I say that you shall endure Romeo's presence here. You will do what I tell you to do, young man! Who is the master here? Me? Or you? Who are you to make a scene? No one, that's who!"

"But, uncle, it's a shame!"

"Says you!" Old Capulet replied. "Are you going to disrespect me? Do so, and your actions will come back and bite you in the ass. Don't be a fool."

He said to some nearby guests, "Enjoy yourselves and be merry!"

He then said to Tybalt, "You are acting like a spoiled youngster! If you can't behave, leave before you make a fool of yourself."

He said to some servants, "More light, more light!"

He then said to Tybalt, who looked ready to burst with words, "Be quiet, or I'll make you quiet."

He said to some guests, "Be merry, friends."

Tybalt, still angry, thought, *Patience and anger don't mix. I am so angry that I cannot be patient, and so I shall leave. Romeo's intrusion here must seem to him sweet, but I shall change the sweetness to bitter gall.*

Tybalt left the great chamber.

Juliet had stopped dancing, and Romeo — whose name means “a pilgrim to Rome” — went over to her and held her hand, saying, “If I profane with my unworthiest hand this holy shrine, your hand, the gentle fine is this: My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.”

Juliet, using the same metaphor of a pilgrim — sometimes also called palmers — visiting a holy shrine, replied, “Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much. By holding my hand, you show proper devotion. For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch, and palm-to-palm is holy palmers' kiss. By holding my hand, you have showed proper devotion, but let's not otherwise kiss.”

Romeo asked, “Have not saints lips, and holy palmers, too?”

“Yes, pilgrim,” Juliet said. “They have lips that they must use in prayer.”

“Oh, then, dear saint, let our lips do what our hands are doing — let our lips touch. My lips pray to you for a kiss. Grant their prayer, lest my faith turn to despair.”

“Saints do not take the initiative, even when through the intercession of God they grant prayers.”

“Then move not, while you grant my prayer. Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin you take.”

Romeo kissed Juliet.

“Now my lips have the sin that they have taken from your lips,” Juliet said.

“Your lips have taken sin from my lips?” Romeo said. “That is a trespass I sweetly urged! Give me my sin again.”

He kissed her again.

Juliet said, “You kiss by the book — you get your kisses in accordance with the pilgrim metaphor we have been following.”

The Nurse arrived and said to Juliet, “Madam, your mother craves a word with you.”

Juliet left, and Romeo asked the Nurse, “Who is her mother?”

The Nurse replied, “Young man, her mother is the lady of the house, and a good lady, both wise and virtuous. I was wet nurse to her daughter, with whom you have been talking. Whoever marries her will inherit much wealth from her father.”

The Nurse went to Juliet.

Romeo thought, *She is the only daughter of Old Capulet! My life is forfeited to my enemy! If I can't be with Juliet, I cannot live!*

Benvolio came over to Romeo and said, “It is time for us to leave — we have had a good time here.”

“Yes,” Romeo said. “I wonder if I ever again will have as good a time.”

Old Capulet heard the two talking and said, “No, gentlemen, don't leave now. Stay and eat a snack before you go.”

Benvolio shook his head no, and Old Capulet said, “What? You must leave? Then I thank you gentlemen for coming tonight. Good night, young sirs.”

Old Capulet said, “Bring more torches here to provide light for these gentlemen.”

Romeo and Benvolio waited for Mercutio to come, and Old Capulet said to Juliet and the Nurse, “It really is getting late, so I’m going to bed.”

Old Capulet left, but Juliet and the Nurse stayed.

Juliet still did not know the name of the young man who had kissed her, and she did not want the Nurse to know that she was interested in him, so she asked what were the names of some other young men before she asked for the name of the young man who had kissed her.

Juliet pointed and asked the Nurse, “Who is that gentleman?”

The Nurse replied, “The son and heir of old Tiberio.”

“Who is that person who is now going out of the door?”

“He, I think, is young Petruchio.”

Juliet pointed and asked, “Who is the young man who would not dance?”

“I don’t know.”

“Please go and ask him his name.”

The Nurse left to inquire, and Juliet thought, *If he is married, I think that I will die. My grave will be my wedding bed.*

The Nurse returned and said, “His name is Romeo, and he is a Montague. He is the only son of your great enemy.”

Juliet said softly, “My only love sprung from my only hate!
I saw and loved him before I knew who he was, and I found
out who he is too late to stop loving him. Love is born in me,
and I now love a loathed enemy.”

“What did you say?” the Nurse asked.

“Just a rhyme that I learned at this dance.”

Someone in another room called, “Juliet.”

The Nurse said loudly, “We’re coming! We’re coming!”

She said to Juliet, “Let’s go now. The guests have all left.
All who remain are family and servants.”

They left.

CHAPTER 2: ROMEO AND JULIET BECOME ENGAGED

Prologue

Romeo's old "love" for Rosaline has now died, replaced by Romeo's new love for Juliet. Romeo had suffered during his "love" for Rosaline and he had thought that he would die, but Rosaline's beauty could not compare with the beauty of Juliet. Juliet now loves Romeo, and Romeo loves Juliet. But Romeo must tell a Capulet — his enemy — that he loves her. Juliet also loves her enemy. Because Romeo is a Montague male, he has little opportunity to meet Juliet again and tell her of his love. Because Juliet is a Capulet female, she has even less opportunity to meet Romeo and tell him of her love. But they are passionately in love, and love will find a way, a time, and a place, and the danger they place themselves in when they meet will be sweetened with extreme pleasure.

— 2.1 —

Running, Romeo appeared in a lane by the wall of Old Capulet's garden. He wanted to be alone and he wanted to see Juliet, and so he was running away from Benvolio and Mercutio.

Romeo said to himself, "How can I leave this lane when Juliet is so near? Let my body stay here and seek my soul, whose name is Juliet."

Romeo climbed the wall and jumped down into Old Capulet's garden.

Benvolio and Mercutio arrived in the lane by the wall of Old Capulet's orchard. They were seeking Romeo.

Benvolio called, "Romeo! Where are you, Romeo?"

Mercutio said, "Romeo is wise, and I swear on my life that he has gone home to his bed."

Benvolio disagreed: "He ran this way, and he climbed this garden wall. Call him, good Mercutio."

"I will call him, and I will entreat him to reveal himself," Mercutio replied. "Romeo! Romantic man! Madman! Passionate man! Lover! I conjure you to speak to us with a sigh. Speak but one rhyme, and I will be satisfied that you are well and did not break your neck and die when you jumped down from the wall. Sigh 'Ah, me!' Say 'love' and 'dove.' Speak a word to Venus, goddess of love. Speak the name of her son Cupid, who shoots his arrows as if love were blind, as when he made King Cophetua fall in love with a beggar-maiden and make her his Queen."

Mercutio said to Benvolio, "Romeo does not hear me. He does not stir. He does not move. The poor fool is dead, and I must conjure him alive!"

Mercutio called, "I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes, by her high forehead and her scarlet lip, by her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh, and by the foxhole that there adjacent lies, that you appear to us!"

"If he hears what you are saying about Rosaline, he will be angry," Benvolio said.

"What I say cannot anger him," Mercutio said. "If I wanted to anger him, I would conjure up a male spirit to put some maleness in her honeyhole, leaving it there arisen until she laid it and conjured it down. That would make him angry. Benvolio, you are a good man, and you want me to speak of a conjurer's circle, but I know of better, wetter circles to speak about. What I am saying now, however, is fair and honest. The purpose of my conjuration is merely to say the name of the woman Romeo loves and thereby make him rise — at least a part of him."

“Romeo has hidden himself among these trees,” Benvolio said. “He wants the night to be his company. Love is blind, and so Romeo seeks the night.”

“If love is blind, how can a lover’s arrow hit the target’s circle?” Mercutio asked Benvolio. “Romeo will now sit under a tree and wish that his beloved lass were the medlar fruit that young ladies call ‘open-ass’ when they think that young men are not around to overhear them. I wish that Romeo were a pear — a pear that from the right angle looks like a standing-up penis and balls. In fact, I wish that Romeo were a poperin pear. With an open-ass lass and his pop-er-in pear, Romeo would be able to put his dick in her butt.”

Benvolio looked shocked.

Mercutio then called, “Romeo, good night! I’m going home to my warm bed. It’s too cold for me to sleep out in the open.”

He said to Benvolio, “Shall we go?”

“Let’s go,” Benvolio replied. “It’s useless to seek someone who does not want to be found.”

— 2.2 —

In Old Capulet’s garden, Romeo listened to Benvolio and Mercutio leave.

Romeo said about Mercutio, “He who jests at the scars of love has never felt a wound.”

Juliet appeared at a window on the second story above Romeo.

Romeo said softly, “What light through yonder window breaks? The window is the East, and Juliet is the Sun. Arise, fair Sun, and kill the envious Moon, who is already sick and pale with grief because you are far more beautiful than she.

Diana, the Moon, is a virgin goddess, and you, Juliet, serve her because you are still a virgin. Diana is envious of you. Don't serve the Moon — the vestal clothing of her and her followers is sick and green, and only fools wear it. Cast off Diana's vestal clothing — stop being a virgin!

“Here is Juliet! Here is my love! I wish that she knew I love her! She speaks yet she says nothing out loud, but so what? Her eyes speak. I will answer her eyes. But I assume too much — she is not speaking to me.

“Two of the brightest stars in all the Heavens, about to leave on business, beg her eyes to twinkle in their spheres until they return. What if her eyes were in the Heavens, and the two stars were in her head? The brightness of her cheeks would shame those stars, as daylight shames a lamp. Her eyes in Heaven would through the airy region stream so brightly that birds would sing and think it were not night. See, how Juliet leans her cheek upon her hand! Oh, that I were a glove upon her hand, that I might touch her cheek!”

Juliet said, “Sorrow defines my life.”

Romeo said to himself, “She speaks out loud. Speak again, bright angel! You are as glorious to me this night, standing in a window over my head, as is an angel — a winged messenger of Heaven — to the upturned wondering eyes of mortals who fall back to gaze on him when he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds and sails upon the bosom of the air.”

Still not knowing that Romeo was in the garden beneath her window, Juliet said, “Romeo, Romeo! Why is your name Romeo? Deny your father and refuse your name — stop being a Montague. Or, if you will not do so, swear that you love me, and I will no longer be a Capulet.”

Romeo said to himself, “Shall I hear more, or shall I speak to Juliet?”

Juliet said, “Only your name is my enemy. If you give up your name, you will still be yourself. What is the name Montague? It is not hand, or foot, or arm, or face, or any other part belonging to a man.”

Juliet paused to smile at “part belonging to a man,” then she continued, “Be some other name! What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. If Romeo were not named Romeo, he would still be perfect. Romeo, put aside your name. In the place of your name, which is not part of you, take all of me.”

Romeo said out loud to Juliet, “I take you at your word — I believe what you have said. Call me your love, and I’ll be baptized a second time and take a new name. Henceforth, my name will not be Romeo.”

Not immediately recognizing Romeo’s voice, Juliet said, “Which man are you who, hidden by the night, have heard what I have said?”

Romeo replied, “I have a name that I don’t know how to tell you because, dear saint, my name is hateful to myself because it is an enemy to you. If my name were written down, I would tear up my name.”

Juliet said, “My ears have not yet heard a hundred words of your tongue’s utterance, yet I know by the sound of your voice who you are. Aren’t you Romeo and a Montague?”

“I am neither, dear saint, if you dislike them.”

“How did you come here, and why?” Juliet asked. “The garden walls are high and hard to climb, and for you this place is death because you are a Montague. If any of my relatives find you here, they will kill you.”

“With love’s light wings did I fly over these walls,” Romeo said. “Stony walls cannot stop love and keep love out.”

Whatever love can do, that will love attempt. Your relatives cannot stop me or my love for you.”

“If my relatives see you, they will murder you.”

“An angry look from you would hurt me more than twenty of their swords,” Romeo said. “But if you look at me sweetly, their hatred cannot hurt me.”

“I would not for the world have them see you here.”

“The night will hide me,” Romeo said. “But if you do not love me, let them find me here. It is better for them to kill me than for me to go on living without your love.”

“How did you find this place?”

“Love caused me to make inquiries and find it,” Romeo said. “Love lent me wisdom, and I lent love eyes. I am no pilot; yet, if you were as far away as that vast shore washed with the farthest sea, I would risk taking the journey there for such a prize as you.”

“Because of the darkness of the night, you cannot see my face, but if you could see my face, you would see a blush because of the words you have overheard me speak,” Juliet said. “I could put on an act and deny what I said, but I won’t do that. Let me ask you straight out: Do you love me? I know that you will say ‘Yes,’ and I know that I will believe you. Still, even if you swear that you love me, you may be lying. They say that Jove, the Roman king of the gods, laughs at the perjuries of male lovers. Romeo, if you really do love me, tell me the truth. But if you think that I am won too easily, I will play hard to get, if that will make you woo me, but I prefer not to play games. To be honest, fair Montague, I love you too much, and you may think me too easy, but trust me, gentleman, and I will be true to you, unlike those girls who only pretend to be virtuous. I should not have revealed my love for you so quickly, I admit, but you

overheard my confession before I was aware that you were present. Therefore, pardon me. Do not think that because I have confessed so quickly during this dark night that I am not serious.”

Romeo started to reply romantically and poetically, “Lady, I swear by the blessed Moon that tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops —”

“Do not swear by the Moon, the inconstant Moon, that monthly changes in her circled orbit. If you swear by the ever-changing Moon, perhaps your love for me will change into a love for someone else.”

“What shall I swear by?”

“Do not swear at all, or if you must swear, swear by your gracious self, for you are the god of my idolatry. If you do so, I will believe you.”

“If my heart’s dear love —”

“Do not swear,” Juliet said, changing her mind. “You bring me joy, but I have no joy of our contact tonight. It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden. It is too much like the lightning, which ceases to be before one can say ‘It lightens.’ My sweet one, good night! This bud of love, ripening by the breath of summer, may prove a beauteous flower when next we meet. Good night, good night! May you enjoy the same sweet repose and rest that I feel within my breast!”

“Will you leave me so unsatisfied?”

“What satisfaction can you have tonight?”

“The exchange of your love’s faithful vow for mine.”

If Romeo had been a different kind of man — a man such as Mercutio — he would have asked for a different kind of satisfaction.

“I gave you my vow of love before you asked for it,” Juliet said. “I wish that I could take back that vow of love.”

“Why would you want to take it back?” Romeo asked.

“So that I could once more tell you for the first time that I love you,” Juliet replied. “But really, I am wishing for something that I already have: for you and me to be in love. My love for you is as boundless as the sea. My love for you is as deep as the sea. The more love I give to you, the more love I have left to give because my love for you is infinite.”

The Nurse called from within the mansion, “Juliet!”

Juliet said to Romeo, “I hear some noise within. Dear love, goodbye!”

She shouted to the Nurse inside the mansion, “Just a minute!”

Then she said to Romeo, “Sweet Montague, be true. Stay but a little while, and I will come to the window again.”

Juliet went inside to talk to the Nurse, and Romeo said to himself, “Blessed, blessed night! I am afraid lest that, this being night, all this is only a dream. It seems too flattering-sweet to be real.”

Juliet reappeared at the window, “Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.”

In this society, people would say that they wanted to speak “a word” more when they had more to say. Juliet’s three words are, no doubt, “I love you.”

Juliet continued, “If your love for me is honorable and you want to marry me, send me a message tomorrow by a person whom I will send to you. In your message tell me where and at what time you will marry me, and all my fortunes at your

foot I will lay and I will follow you, my husband, throughout the world.”

The Nurse called from within, “Juliet!”

Juliet called to the Nurse, “I’m coming!”

Juliet then said to Romeo, “But if your love for me is not honorable, I beg you —”

The Nurse called, “Juliet!”

“Just a minute!” Juliet called, and then she said to Romeo, “But if your love for me is not honorable, I beg you to stop wooing me and to leave me to my grief. Tomorrow I will send someone to you.”

Romeo began, “So thrive my soul —”

But Juliet said, “A thousand times good night!” and went inside.

Romeo complained to himself, “Being away from you is a thousand times worse than being close to you. A lover goes toward his lover as eagerly as a schoolboy goes away from his books. A lover goes away from his lover as sorrowfully as a schoolboy walks to school.”

He began to leave, but Juliet reappeared at the window.

Not seeing Romeo, she hissed, “Romeo!” She was trying to be loud enough to be heard by Romeo but not so loud as to be heard by her family and the Nurse.

Juliet said, “I wish I could shout as loudly as a falconer who calls his falcon back to him. That way, Romeo would hear me. But I cannot shout. I must be hoarse and not draw my family’s attention, or I would make use of the voice of Echo, who was so talkative that Juno, Queen of the gods, punished her by making her repeat the words of other people. I would shout ‘Romeo’ into the cave where Echo lives, and she

would repeat his name. Her voice would say his name so many times that it would grow more hoarse than mine.”

Romeo heard Juliet, and he returned to her.

He said, “Juliet, who is my soul, calls my name: How silver-sweet sound the tongues of lovers by night! They are like the softest music to attentive ears!”

“Romeo!” Juliet called.

“Yes, Juliet?”

“At what time tomorrow shall I send a messenger to you?”

“Nine in the morning.”

“I will not fail. It will seem like twenty years until nine a.m. comes.”

She turned to go inside, then turned back, hesitated, and said, “I have forgotten what else I wanted to say to you.”

“Let me stand here until you remember it.”

“I shall forget on purpose in order to have you still stand there because I love to be with you.”

“And I will continue to stay here, and let you continue to forget. I will forget that I have any other home than right here.”

“It is almost morning. Because of the danger you would face if you were found here, I would have you go, and yet I want you to go no further than a spoiled child’s bird. The child lets the bird hop a small distance from her hand like a poor prisoner in his twisted chains, and with a silk thread pulls it back to her. The child does not want the bird to leave her.”

“I wish that I were your bird.”

“So do I,” Juliet said. “But if I act like that now, I will get you killed by keeping you here too long. Good night! Good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say ‘good night’ until it be tomorrow.”

She departed.

Romeo said to himself, “May sleep dwell upon your eyes, and may peace be in your breast! I wish that I were sleep and peace, so I could be with you. Now I will go to my priest’s home to beg for his help and to tell him about my good fortune.”

— 2.3 —

Friar Lawrence was up early and was out in a meadow collecting herbs and placing them in his wicker basket. He talked to himself as he looked at the plants around him, “The morning smiles at the frowning night. As the morning brightens the Eastern sky, the night like a drunkard staggers away from the light and the Sun. Before the Sun is fully risen and has made the day cheerful and has dried up the dew of the night, I must fill my basket with poisonous weeds and with medicinal flowers. The Earth is the mother of nature, but it is also her tomb. The place for burial is also her womb. And from the Earth’s womb come so many and various children that we can make use of. Many plants have many excellent qualities, no plant lacks a use, and all of the plants are different. Herbs, plants, and seeds all have useful qualities. None is so evil but that its use can bring about good, and none is so good but that, being misused, it can bring about evil. Virtue itself can become a vice, if it is used wrongly, and vice can bring into being something good when used to good purpose.”

Romeo walked toward the good friar, who did not see him and continued to talk to himself, “In this small flower are both a poison and a medicine. Smell this flower, and you will

feel good and your senses will tingle. Taste this flower, and your senses will die along with your heart. In plants, as well as in human beings, two kings attempt to rule. One king is good and full of grace, and the other king is evil and filled with an evil will. When evil becomes predominant, a cankerworm will feed on the leaves of that plant and kill it.”

Romeo said, “Good morning, Friar Lawrence.”

Friar Lawrence looked up and said, “*Benedicte!* God bless you! Who is up so early? Ah, it is Romeo. Young man, you must have a troubled mind if you are up and out of bed so early. Old men have troubles and cares, and sleep does not come easily to or remain long with men who worry, but a young man who is unbruised by life and who has an untroubled mind should easily go to sleep and easily stay asleep. Since you are up so early, something must be worrying you. Or if nothing is worrying you, I can guess why you are now up — our Romeo has not been in bed and asleep tonight.”

“Your second guess is correct,” Romeo said. “I have not been in bed and asleep tonight, but for all that, the sweeter rest was mine.”

Shocked by what entered his mind, Friar Lawrence said, “God pardon sin! Have you been up all night with Rosaline?”

“With Rosaline, Friar Lawrence?” Romeo said, “No. I have forgotten that name, and the sorrow that name brought me.”

“Good for you, my son,” Friar Lawrence said. “But then where have you been?”

“I’ll tell you, before you ask me again. I have been feasting with my enemies. One of my enemies wounded me, and I wounded her. To cure our wounds, we need your help and a

holy sacrament. I bear no hatred, blessed man, because what I ask you will benefit my enemy.”

“Be plain, good son, and let me understand your speech; riddling confession finds but riddling absolution.”

“Then plainly know that my heart’s dear love is set on Juliet, the beautiful daughter of rich Old Capulet. My heart is set on her, and her heart is set on me. We have been wounded by love and separated by our families, and the only thing that will cure our wounds is marriage, for then we can come together. When and where and how Juliet and I wooed each other and exchanged vows of love, I will tell you, but this I pray, that you will consent to marry us today.”

“Holy Saint Francis, what a change is here!” Friar Lawrence said. “Is Rosaline, whom you did love so dear, so soon forsaken by you? Young men’s love then lies not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes. Jesu Maria, what a deal of brine used to wash your love-sickened cheeks for Rosaline! Your tears seasoned your love for Rosaline with salt, but you did not taste that love! The Sun has not yet cleared away the mist from your lovesick sighs for Rosaline! Your lovesick groans for Rosaline ring yet in my old ears. Here upon your cheek I see a still-unwashed stain of a tear that you shed for Rosaline! If ever you were yourself and these woes were yours, you belonged to Rosaline and your woes were all for her! And now you have changed? Remember this: Don’t blame women for falling in and out of love, when men do the same.”

“Often you have criticized me for loving Rosaline,” Romeo said.

“I criticized you for your puppy love, not for any real love, Romeo.”

“And you wanted me to bury my love.”

“I did not want you to bury your love in a grave just so you could immediately love someone else.”

“Please, don’t criticize me,” Romeo said. “The woman whom I now love returns my love. Rosaline did not love me.”

“She knew well that you talked of love without understanding what love is. You were like a student who has memorized the answers to questions without understanding what the answers mean. But come with me, changeable lover, I will help you because a marriage between you and Juliet will most likely change the hatred between the Montagues and the Capulets into love.”

“Let’s hurry,” Romeo said. “I want to be married quickly.”

“Go wisely and slow,” Friar Lawrence said. “People who run fast stumble.”

— 2.4 —

Benvolio and Mercutio walked together on a street.

“Where the devil is Romeo?” Mercutio said. “Did he go home last night?”

“He did not return to his father’s mansion,” Benvolio replied. “I asked his servant there about him.”

“That same pale hard-hearted wench, that Rosaline, is tormenting him, and so he will surely become insane.”

“Tybalt, that Capulet, sent a letter to Romeo’s father’s mansion.”

“It is a challenge to a duel, I suppose,” Mercutio said.

“Romeo will answer him,” Benvolio said.

“Any man who can write may answer a letter.”

“He will not answer it with another letter. Instead, he will fight Tybalt, just as Tybalt dares him to do.”

“Poor Romeo!” Mercutio said. “He does not need a duel to kill him. He is already dead. The dark eyes of the white wench Rosaline have already stabbed him. A love song has already shot him through the ear. The center of his heart has already been penetrated by Cupid’s arrow. Is Romeo, an already dead man, the man who should fight Tybalt?”

“Why shouldn’t he fight Tybalt?” Benvolio asked.

“Romeo is too love struck to fight anyone, including Tybalt, who is as intelligent as the cat — also named Tybalt — that Reynard the Fox tricks in folk tales. Tybalt is quite the man. In fact, Tybalt likes to think that he is a manly man with manly man powers. Tybalt speaks well in public — truly, Tybalt is a courageous captain of compliments. Tybalt fences the way that other people sing classical music — Tybalt and they keep time, distance, and proportion. They reach a high note, and Tybalt puts his sword in your bosom — with his sword Tybalt can stab and butcher each button on your chest. Tybalt understands the protocol and the moves of fencing: the first and second cause, the immortal *passado*, the *punto reverso*, and the home thrust!”

“I don’t understand those words,” Benvolio said.

“If you knew how to fence and duel the fashionable way, you would,” Mercutio replied. “But those words are too fancy! The people such as Tybalt who use them are inane, lispings, drama-queen fanatics! They pronounce these fancy words with fake accents! They say, ‘By Jesu, he is a very good blade! He is a very brave man! She is a very good whore!’ It is lamentable that we should be thus afflicted with people like Tybalt — these strange buzzing insects, these fashionmongers, these pretentious fellows with their elaborate courtesy, who pay so much attention to fashionable

clothing and language that they cannot sit at ease upon an old bench! I am tired of people such as Tybalt forever saying ‘*Bon! Bon!*’ when all they mean is ‘Good! Good!’ Romeo may be too lovesick to fight Tybalt, but I could easily defeat Tybalt in a fair fight.”

Romeo came walking up to his friends.

Benvolio said, “Here comes Romeo.”

“Romeo is thin,” Mercutio said. “His lack of a lady who loves him in return has made him grieve in love-sickness and waste away. He is like a herring that has separated from its roe and dried. Take ‘roe’ away from ‘Romeo’ and you have ‘meo’ — a lover’s sigh. Now the grieving lover is ready to listen to the love poetry of Petrarch. Compared to Rosaline, Laura — the beloved of Petrarch — was only a kitchen-wench. Compared to Rosaline, Dido — the tragic Queen of Carthage who loved the Trojan hero Aeneas, who abandoned her — was a dowdy woman. Compared to Rosaline, Cleopatra — the Queen of Egypt — was a gypsy. Compared to Rosaline, Helen of Troy and the woman named Hero — loved respectively by Paris and by Leander — were good-for-nothing harlots. Compared to Rosaline, the pretty eyes of Thisbe, the lover of Pyramus, were lacking. So Romeo thinks, anyway.”

Mercutio said to Romeo, “Signor Romeo, *bon jour!* There’s a French salutation to go with the French loose breeches you are wearing. You gave us the counterfeit last night.”

“Good morning to both of you,” Romeo said. “What counterfeit did I give you?”

“You counterfeited friendship with us — and then you gave us the slip and disappeared, although we sought you,” Mercutio said.

“Pardon me, my friend Mercutio,” Romeo said. “I had something important to do, and in such circumstances, I ought to be excused for my lack of good manners.”

“I can guess that your important business involved going in and out and in and out,” Mercutio said.

“Going in and out of doors?” Romeo said.

“That’s not what I meant, but your interpretation of my words is very polite. I was referring to a kind of exercise.”

“I am in the pink of health,” Romeo said.

“In the pink is exactly what I was referring to,” Mercutio said.

“Knowing you, ‘pink’ has more than one meaning, and not just one sole meaning,” Romeo said.

“Knowing you, you are concerned about your soul,” Mercutio said.

“At times, my soul is my sole concern, and I’m not talking about the sole of my shoes, or the Sun, or King Solomon,” Romeo said.

“Benvolio, help me out,” Mercutio said. “I am running out of puns. I can’t think of any more to save my soul.”

“If you can’t make any more puns, then I declare myself the winner in this game of wits,” Romeo said. “I am a cobbler of puns. I will save your sole and I will heel you, but I will not dye — D, Y, E — for you.”

“Shoe puns are shoe hilarious,” Mercutio said. “Trying to find a new pun at this point is like going on a wild-geese chase. Some of these puns are hoary with age.”

“I have never seen you go out of your way to avoid a whore,” Romeo said.

“I will bite you on the ear for that joke,” Mercutio said.

“Whores use their mouths on a different body part,” Romeo said. “Which is why their customers say, ‘Please don’t bite.’”

“Your wit is a sharp sauce that betters the living of life. You are a *bon vivant*,” Mercutio said.

“You have always liked a saucy girl — someone who betters the living of life. You are also a *bon vivant*,” Romeo said.

“Your wit runs both broad and deep.”

“You like broads and you like being deep in the pink.”

“Isn’t this game of punning much better than being constantly lovesick and groaning?” Mercutio said. “You are again the Romeo I remember. You are friendly. You are good company. You are witty. You are what you used to be and what we have wished you to be. For a while, the love you felt made you run up and down like an idiot with his tongue or another body part hanging out while he looked for a hole to put his favorite plaything in.”

“That is a good place to stop this line of thought,” Benvolio said.

“But I like this line of thought,” Mercutio said.

“You like going too far and too fast,” Benvolio said.

“You are wrong,” Mercutio said. “I like going very deep and very fast.”

The Nurse and Peter, another Capulet servant, entered the street.

“Here comes some fun,” Romeo said.

It was a windy day, and the wind blew on and filled out the Nurse's long skirt and Peter's baggy shirt.

"A sail, a sail!" Romeo shouted.

"No, two sails," Mercutio said. "A shirt and a smock."

The Nurse said, "Peter."

"Yes, Nurse."

"Please give me my fan."

"Good Peter, give her fan so that she can hide her face," Mercutio said under his breath to Romeo and Benvolio. "Her fan is fairer than her face."

The Nurse said, "Good morning, gentlemen."

Mercutio replied, "Good afternoon, fair gentlewoman."

"Is it afternoon?" the Nurse asked.

"Indeed, it is," Mercutio said. "The bawdy — that is, dirty — hand of the dial is now on the prick — that is, mark on a clock — of noon. Prick, hand, ha! Handjob! A prick in two hands is not worth one in a bush."

"Your language is bawdy," the Nurse said. "What kind of man are you?"

Romeo said, "He is a man whom God created so that he could ruin himself."

"He is well on his way to doing that," the Nurse said.

She added, "Gentlemen, can any of you tell me where I may find the young Romeo?"

"I can tell you," Romeo said, "but young Romeo will be older when you have found him than he was when you

sought him. However, in Verona I am the youngest of that name, for fault of a worse.”

“You speak well,” the Nurse said.

“True,” Mercutio said to Benvolio, “‘For fault of a worse’ is a nice variation of ‘for want of a better.’”

“If you are Romeo,” the Nurse said to Romeo, “I wish to speak to you and have a confidence with you.”

“She means ‘conference,’ not ‘confidence,’” Benvolio whispered to Mercutio. “She will probably ‘endite,’ not ‘invite,’ him to supper.”

“I have found out her occupation,” Mercutio said.

“What have you found out?” Benvolio asked.

“She is a procurer. She can’t be a whore because she is so old and ugly. Of course, she may be a hoary hairy whore who wants to serve him a hair pie. Would you like to hear a song that I learned at school?”

He sang loudly as he stared at the Nurse,

“She has a friend with some hankers.

“He has crabs, herpes, syphilis, and cankers.

“He got all the four

“From a dirty old whore,

“So he wrote her a letter to thank her.”

The Nurse stared in shock as Mercutio then said, “Romeo, are you going to your father’s for lunch? We will go with you.”

“You two go now, and I will follow you later,” Romeo replied.

Mercutio tipped his hat to the Nurse with mock courtesy and said to her, “Farewell, ancient lady, farewell.”

Then he and Benvolio walked away as Mercutio sang again, “She has a friend with some hankers”

Recovering from her shock, the Nurse asked Romeo, “Who was that sassy punk whose mouth runs faster than his mind?”

“He is a gentleman who loves to hear himself talk,” Romeo said. “He says more in words in one minute than he says in sense in a whole month.”

The Nurse said, “If he says anything nasty about me, I will take him down, and if he is bigger than anything I can handle, I will find other people to take him down. Either I or other people whom I will find will demolish him. We will indeed make him go down in size and make him shorter than he is now.”

Romeo thought, *It is a good thing that Mercutio is not here. He would make jokes about going down and about demolishing a six-inch structure.*

“He is a scurvy knave!” the Nurse continued. “I am not one of his loose women. I am not one of his gangster’s molls. I am not one of his buddies.”

She said to Peter, “And all you did was stand by and let him use me as the butt of his jokes. Now everyone will know that he used me.”

“I saw no one use you,” Peter said. “If I had, I would have quickly taken my weapon out.”

Romeo thought, *I am glad that Mercutio is not here to talk about a weapon. The weapon that Mercutio would talk about is one that a man can take out of his pants. And, of course, he would make jokes about this woman being used.*

Peter continued, “I dare draw a sword as soon as another man, if I see occasion in a good quarrel, and if the law is on my side.”

Romeo thought, *Once again, I am glad that Mercutio is not here to talk about a sword. He would talk about a “swordsman,” a word that can refer to a guy who has had a lot of sex. He would joke about putting a sword in a sheath. He would remind everyone that the Latin word “vagina” means sheath.*

“I swear to God that I am so angry that every part about me quivers,” the Nurse complained.

Romeo thought, *If Mercutio were here, he would make a joke about an arrow in a quiver.*

The Nurse continued, “That scurvy knave! But to business. Romeo, my young lady ordered me to find you. I am her Nurse. What she told me to say to you, I will keep to myself for now. First, I want to tell you that if you are trying to mislead her into a fool’s paradise — that is, if you want a one-night stand instead of a marriage — that is a poor way to treat a lady. My young lady is very young, and even if she were not, no lady should be treated that way.”

“Nurse,” Romeo said. “Tell Juliet that my intentions are honorable. I —”

“I will do so,” the Nurse said. “Lord, she will be a joyful woman.”

“What will you tell her, Nurse?” Romeo asked. “You have not listened to what I have to say.”

“I will tell her, sir, that you do protest to her,” the Nurse said. “That is what a gentleman would do.”

Protest to her? Romeo thought. *Oh, she means, Propose to her.*

Romeo said, “Tell her to find an excuse to go to Friar Lawrence’s cell this afternoon. There she and I shall be married.”

He held out some money to the Nurse and said, “This is for your pains.”

The Nurse said, “No, truly, sir; not a penny.”

“I insist that you take it,” Romeo said.

The Nurse took the money, and then she said, “This afternoon, you say. Juliet will be there.”

“Wait, good Nurse, behind the abbey wall,” Romeo said. “Within an hour my servant shall be here with a rope ladder. I will use it to climb into Juliet’s bedchamber tonight and be with her joyfully and secretly. Farewell. Do good work and I’ll reward you. Farewell. Be sure to praise me when you speak to Juliet.”

“May God bless you,” the Nurse said, “but listen to me.”

“What is it?”

“Can your servant keep a secret?” the Nurse asked. “Let us remember that two people can keep a secret provided that only one person knows the secret.”

“My servant can keep a secret,” Romeo said. “He is as true as tempered steel.”

“My young lady is the sweetest lady,” the Nurse said. “I remember when she was a babbling little girl and fell forward upon her face — but no more of that. A nobleman in town — Count Paris — would gladly marry Juliet and bed her, but Juliet prefers to look at a toad, a very toad, than look at him. I made her angry by saying that Paris is better looking than you. When I told her that, she changed color.”

The Nurse paused, then said, “Don’t rosemary and Romeo both begin with the same letter?”

“Yes,” Romeo said. “They both begin with R.”

“Don’t be silly. Pirates say, ‘Arrrrr.’ So do sea dogs. I know of a dog that when it talks, it says, ‘Arrrrr.’ Perhaps that is its name. Are you mocking me because I’m not educated? I’m pretty sure that Romeo and rosemary begin with another letter. Anyway, Juliet says the most beautiful things about you and rosemary.”

Romeo said, “Please say the most beautiful things about me to Juliet.”

“Yes, I will,” the Nurse said. “I will say one thousand nice things about you.”

Romeo left, and the Nurse called, “Peter!”

Peter, who was standing a short distance away, said, “Yes, Nurse?”

The Nurse ordered, “Peter, take my fan, and walk in front of me. Walk quickly.”

— 2.5 —

In Old Capulet’s garden, Juliet impatiently waited for the Nurse.

Juliet said to herself, “The clock struck nine when I sent the Nurse to see Romeo. She promised to return in half an hour. Maybe she could not find and talk to him — I doubt that. She must be lame because she returns home so slowly. People who carry the messages of lovers should be as fast as thought, which is ten times faster than the beams of the Sun that drive back shadows from dark hills in the morning and make the hills brightly lit. Swift-winged doves carry messages from Venus, goddess of love, and the wings of

Cupid are as swift as the wind. Now the Sun is at high noon, and it is three long hours that the Nurse has been away and still she has not returned. If she were young and had the passions of youth, she would be as swift in motion as a ball. My words would send her as quickly as a sharply hit tennis ball to Romeo, and his words would return her to me just as quickly. But old folks behave as if they were already dead — they are as unwieldy, slow, heavy, and pale as lead.”

Catching sight of the Nurse, Juliet said, “Here she comes!”

The Nurse and Peter entered Old Capulet’s garden, and Juliet said, “Oh, honey nurse, what news do you bring me? Did you meet him? Send Peter away.”

The Nurse told Peter, “Wait at the gate.”

Juliet said, “Now, good sweet nurse — why do you look so sad? Even if the news you bring me is sad, yet tell it merrily. If the news is good, you are perjuring it with your sour face.”

“I am tired,” the Nurse said. “Let me rest awhile. My bones ache. I had to search everywhere to find Romeo.”

“If I could, I would give you my bones, provided that you gave me your news. Speak, good Nurse. Tell me your news.”

“Why are you in such a hurry?” the Nurse said. “Can’t you wait a minute? Can’t you see that I am out of breath?”

Juliet said, “How can you say that you are out of breath when you have breath to tell me that you are out of breath! The number of words you say to persuade me to wait are many more than the number of words it would take you to tell me what I want to know. Is your news for me good or bad? Tell me! Tell me either good or bad right now, and I will wait a while for the details. Tell me! Is your news good or bad?”

“You made a foolish choice when you chose Romeo as a good-looking beau,” the Nurse said. “But he is more

handsome than other men, his legs are more handsome than other men's, as are his hands and feet and his body. Ladies ought not to talk like this about a man, but yes, Romeo is truly handsome in face and body. Romeo is not the flower of courtesy — he can be rude. But I swear that he is as gentle as a lamb. Do whatever you want, Juliet. But always obey God.”

The Nurse paused, then added, “Have you eaten lunch yet?”

“No, I haven't eaten yet,” Juliet said. “But you are not telling me what I want to know — I already know that Romeo is handsome. I want to know whether he and I will be married. What did he tell you about that?”

“I have a headache,” the Nurse said. “My head is pounding as if it will break into twenty pieces. And my back — ow!”

Juliet began to rub one side of the Nurse's back; the Nurse said, “The other side. You should be ashamed for sending me out to run all over Verona — I could die from exhaustion!”

“Truly, Nurse,” Juliet said. “I am sorry that you are not well, but sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what did Romeo tell you?”

“Romeo, your love, says, like an honest gentleman, and a courteous gentleman, and a kind gentleman, and a handsome gentleman, and, I believe, a virtuous gentleman, he says —”

Then, forgetting what she was about to say, and starting to think about something else, the Nurse asked, “Where is your mother?”

“Where is my mother!” Juliet said. “Why, she is inside. Where else should she be? How oddly you answer my questions! You tell me, ‘Romeo, your love says, like an honest gentleman, Where is your mother?’”

“Why are you so angry?” the Nurse said. “Is this how you treat my aching bones! From now on, deliver your own messages!”

“I have no time to argue with you,” Juliet said. “Tell me! What did Romeo tell you?”

“Do you have permission to go to confession today?”

“Yes, I have.”

“Then go to Friar Lawrence’s cell. You will find there a groom who wants to make you his wife.”

Juliet blushed.

“The Nurse said, “Now comes the red blood up in your cheeks. Now that you are in love with Romeo, you blush at any news concerning him. You go to church now. I will take a different path. I need to be given a rope ladder that Romeo will use to climb up to your bedchamber as soon as it is dark. Right now, I am doing all the work. But tonight — when Romeo comes — you shall do the work of a woman. Go now. I will eat lunch. You go to Friar Lawrence’s cell.”

“Wish me luck,” Juliet said. “Honest nurse, farewell.”

— 2.6 —

Romeo was waiting for Juliet in Friar Lawrence’s cell.

Friar Lawrence said, “May the Heavens smile upon this holy act of the marriage sacrament so that we shall not regret it later.”

“Amen,” Romeo said, “but even if sorrow comes later, it shall not equal the joy I feel when I look at Juliet for just one short minute. Join our hands in holy matrimony, and then love-devouring Death can do whatever he wishes — it is enough for me that I can call Juliet mine.”

“Be careful, Romeo,” Friar Lawrence said. “These violent delights have violent ends, and in their triumph they die. They are like fire and gunpowder, which as they kiss, they explode. Honey in moderation is delicious and sweet, but too much honey can make you hate its taste. Therefore, love moderately if you wish love to last long. Too fast can harm love as much as too slow.”

Friar Lawrence looked outside and said, “Here comes your lady. Her foot is so light that the flint of the rocky road of life will not cut it. A lover is so light that he or she can walk on a string that was spun by a spider and is floating in the air and not fall off. Lovers are light, and so is the love of lovers.”

Juliet arrived at Friar Lawrence’s cell. She immediately ran to and hugged Romeo tightly. They did not let go of each other.

“Good afternoon, Friar Lawrence,” Juliet said.

Romeo kissed Juliet.

“Romeo greets you for both of us,” Friar Lawrence said.

Juliet said, “I return his greeting,” and she kissed Romeo.

“Juliet,” Romeo said, “if your joy is as much as mine, then use your skill with words, which is greater than mine, to fill the air with sweet words and rich verbal music and tell me how happy our marriage will be.”

Juliet replied, “True understanding of happiness focuses on being happy and not on talking about happiness. Experiencing happiness is better than talking about happiness. Beggars can use words to count what they have. The wealth of love I give and the wealth of love I receive is so great that I cannot count even half of my wealth of love.”

“Come with me now,” Friar Lawrence said. “We will have the wedding quickly. I can see by the way you kiss and hug

and speak to each other that I had better not leave you alone until after I have married you. Not until after you are married shall you two become one.”

He led the happy couple away to be married.

CHAPTER 3: ROMEO AND JULIET ENJOY THEIR WEDDING NIGHT

— 3.1 —

Mercutio, Benvolio, and some others were in a public square on a very hot and sticky day — a muggy day that made everyone irritable.

Benvolio said, “Mercutio, let’s go home. The day is hot, the Capulets are out and about, and, if we meet, we will fight each other. Today is so hot that everyone is a bad mood and ready to fight.”

Mercutio, always ready to make a joke, decided to treat Benvolio, a peacemaker, as if he were a troublemaker.

Mercutio replied, “You are like one of those fellows who when he enters a tavern puts his sword upon the table and says, ‘I hope to God that I will not need you,’ but after his second drink draws his sword and wants to fight — without provocation — the person who drew his drink.”

Benvolio asked, “Am I like such a fellow?”

“Don’t try to deny it,” Mercutio said. “When you are in the mood to fight, you are as quick to get in a fight as any man in Italy. You are so quick-tempered that when you want to get in a fight, you quickly find something to make your temper rise.”

“Is that so?”

“If there were two such men as you, very quickly there would be but one left, because one man would kill the other,” Mercutio said. “You will start a fight with a man because he has a hair more or a hair less in his beard than you do. You will start a fight with a man who is cracking nuts. Why? Because your eyes are the color of hazelnuts. Only your eyes would spy such a quarrel. Your head is as full of quarrels as

an egg is full of protein, and because of excessive fighting your head is as scrambled as an egg. You fought a man because he coughed in the street and woke up your dog that was lying in the sunshine. You fought a tailor because he wore a new jacket before Easter. You fought a different tailor because he tied his new shoes with old shoelaces. And yet you are acting like a man who wishes to keep me from fighting!”

“If I were as likely as you to quarrel,” Benvolio said, “my future life expectancy would be about 15 minutes.”

“Don’t be silly,” Mercutio said.

“Look,” Benvolio said. “Some Capulets are coming our way.”

“I don’t care,” Mercutio replied.

Tybalt and some other Capulets walked up to Mercutio and Benvolio.

Tybalt said to the other Capulets, “Stay close to me. I will speak to them.”

Tybalt was like a schoolyard bully who wanted protectors close to him.

He said to Mercutio and Benvolio, “Gentlemen, good afternoon. I would like to have a word with you.”

“Just one word?” Mercutio asked, widely parting his legs. “That’s not enough. Make it a word and a blow.”

Tybalt, who thought that Mercutio was speaking about fighting, said, “You shall find me apt enough to do that, sir, if you give me enough reason.”

“Aren’t you capable of finding enough reason without me giving you a reason?”

“Mercutio, you band together with Romeo,” Tybalt said.

“Band together?” Mercutio said. “Do you think that we are musicians? If you think that, you will listen to nothing but noise.”

Mercutio touched his sword and said, “Here is my fiddlestick. It can make you dance. Band! Indeed!”

Benvolio said, “We are out here in public. Either we should go somewhere private and talk together rationally, or we should all leave and go home. Out here in public everyone can witness what we say and do.”

“Men’s eyes were made to look, so let them look,” Mercutio said. “I will not leave this place.”

Romeo entered the public square and walked toward the group of people.

Tybalt said, “Well, peace be with you, sir. Here comes the man I want to see.”

“He is a man, but not your man,” Mercutio said. “But if you want him to be your follower, walk to a dueling ground. He will follow you, and he will fight you.”

Tybalt said, “Romeo, the hatred I have for you makes me call you by no better word than this — you are a villain.”

These were fighting words, and Tybalt — and everyone else present, including Mercutio and Benvolio — expected Romeo to fight Tybalt.

He did not.

Romeo, newly married to Juliet and therefore an in-law to Tybalt, replied in a friendly way, “Tybalt, I have reason to treat you well — indeed, even love you. Because of that reason, which you don’t now know about, I decline to take

offence at your insult to me. I am not a villain. Therefore, farewell. You really do not know who I am.”

Romeo turned away from Tybalt, who drew his sword and said, “Boy, your words shall not excuse the insults that you have made to me; therefore, turn and draw your sword.”

Romeo replied, “I say that I have never harmed you, but I do love you better than you can know. Soon you shall know the reason of my love. And so, good Capulet — you bear a name I love as dearly as my own — do not be angry and do not attempt to fight me.”

Mercutio, shocked by Romeo’s words, shouted, “This is calm, dishonorable, vile submission! A mere threat makes Romeo submit!”

Mercutio said to Tybalt, “Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk away from me?”

“What do you want?”

Mercutio drew his sword and said, “Tybalt, you king of cats, I want nothing but one of your nine lives. I will take one, and depending on how you act, I may very well beat the rest of your eight lives out of you. Will you pluck your sword with its hilts, which look like ears, out of your scabbard? Be quick about it, or you will find my sword moving about your ears before you draw your sword!”

“If you want to duel, I am the man for you,” Tybalt replied, drawing his sword.

“Mercutio, please put away your sword,” Benvolio said.

“You may begin your attack,” Mercutio said to Tybalt.

They started to fight.

Romeo put himself between the two duelists and said, “Draw your sword, Benvolio, and beat down their weapons.

Gentlemen, stop this outrage! Tybalt, Mercutio, you know that Prince Escalus has forbidden fighting in the streets of Verona! Stop, Tybalt! Stop, Mercutio!”

Tybalt thrust his sword under Romeo’s arm and mortally wounded Mercutio. Seeing Mercutio wounded, Tybalt and the other Capulets ran away.

Most fights among teenagers involve bluster, not blood. Sometimes, a fight goes wrong and someone gets hurt.

Mercutio said, “I am hurt! May a plague curse all the Capulets and all the Montagues! I’ve been wounded! Has Tybalt gone, and suffered nothing? Did no one fight for me?”

Disbelieving, Benvolio said, “What! Have you been wounded?”

“Yes, I have suffered a scratch,” Mercutio said. “It will do. Get me a doctor.”

“Your wound cannot be serious,” Romeo said.

“No, it is not serious. It is not as deep as a well or as wide as a church door, but it will do — it will serve as well as a serious wound.”

Mercutio knew that he was dying, and he knew exactly what to do — make a pun, the best pun of his short life. He told Romeo, “Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a *grave* man.”

He added, “I have suffered my deathblow. I am done for this world. What is a dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat doing scratching a man to death? Tybalt is all of these, as well as a braggart, a rogue, and a villain who fights by a rulebook. He is not a man who should be able to kill me.”

Mercutio said to Romeo, “Why the devil did you come between us? Tybalt thrust his sword under your arm and mortally wounded me.”

“I thought I was doing the right thing,” Romeo said.

Mercutio said, “Help me into some house, Benvolio, or I shall faint. May the plague infect all the Capulets and all the Montagues! The Capulets and the Montagues have made me food for worms! I am done for! A plague! On both families!”

Benvolio carried Mercutio away.

Romeo said to himself, “Mercutio, a gentleman and Prince Escalus’ near relative, my best friend, was mortally wounded fighting for me because Tybalt stained my reputation with his slander — Tybalt, who has been my in-law for an hour! Sweet Juliet, your beauty has made me effeminate and has taken away my bravery, softening the steel that used to be my valor!”

Benvolio returned and said, “Romeo, Mercutio is dead! His gallant soul has climbed past the clouds, scorning too quickly this world he leaves behind.”

“This day’s black fate will not end today,” Romeo said. “Black fate will rule other days. On this day begins great sorrow, and many days will pass before the sorrow ends.”

Benvolio looked up and said, “Tybalt is coming back to the scene of his crime.”

Tybalt and his followers did not know how badly Mercutio was wounded, but they wanted to know. If Mercutio were badly wounded or dead, Tybalt needed to go into hiding until he could flee from Verona and save his life.

“Tybalt is still alive while Mercutio is dead!” Romeo said. “Not for long. Mercy, leave me and return to Heaven — I have no need of you! All I need now is fire-eyed fury!”

Tybalt faced Romeo.

Romeo said, "Now, Tybalt, take back the insult you gave me earlier. I am no villain. The late Mercutio's soul has not gone far. It is only a little way above our heads, waiting for your soul to join it and keep it company. Either your soul, or my soul, or both, must leave this world and accompany Mercutio's soul."

"You were Mercutio's friend while he was alive," Tybalt said. "It is fitting that your soul accompany his soul in its journey."

"Our fight will determine whose soul accompanies his soul."

Romeo and Tybalt fought with swords, and Romeo killed Tybalt so quickly that Benvolio did not have time to intervene to stop them. As Mercutio had known, Tybalt ably talked the talk but he could not ably walk the walk. Mercutio had died because of Tybalt's lucky thrust with a sword made while Romeo was trying to part the two fighters.

Benvolio said, "Romeo, run away! I hear people and guards coming! You have killed Tybalt, and Prince Escalus has decreed that anyone who fights in the streets of Verona shall die! If the guards catch you, the Prince will order you to be killed! Run away! Now!"

"Oh, I am fortune's fool!" Romeo cried. "I am the plaything of fate."

Benvolio shouted at him, "Why are you still here!"

Romeo ran for his life.

Some guards and citizens arrived and asked Benvolio, "Where is the man who killed Mercutio, Prince Escalus' relative? Which way did he run? Where is Tybalt, the murderer?"

If Romeo had restrained himself and had not killed Tybalt, Prince Escalus would have had Tybalt arrested and punished — perhaps with death.

Benvolio said, “Tybalt lies here, dead.”

A guard told Benvolio, “You are under arrest, in the name of Prince Escalus. Come with me.”

Prince Escalus arrived, as did Old Montague and Old Capulet, their wives, and other people. Prince Escalus asked, “Where are the vile people who have disturbed the peace of our city?”

“Prince Escalus,” Benvolio said, “I can tell you everything that happened. Here lies the body of Tybalt, who killed Mercutio, your relative. Romeo killed Tybalt.”

Grieving, Mrs. Capulet said, “Tybalt was my nephew! He was my brother’s child! And now he is dead. Prince, I demand justice. Tybalt’s blood has been spilled. For blood of ours, shed the blood of Romeo Montague.”

Prince Escalus wanted justice — his own relative, Mercutio, had been killed — and he wanted peace in his city, but he also wanted to find out exactly what had happened.

He asked, “Benvolio, who began this bloody fight?”

Benvolio replied, “Tybalt lies here dead, slain by Romeo, but Romeo spoke peacefully to Tybalt, asking him to think about how trivial was the cause of Tybalt’s anger at him. He also urged him to remember your order against fighting in the streets. Romeo said all this with gentle breath, calm look, and his knees humbly bowed, but Tybalt was not willing to be peaceful. Tybalt pointed his piercing steel at the breast of Mercutio, who was as angry as Tybalt and whose sword met Tybalt’s sword. Mercutio, scorning Tybalt, beat aside Tybalt’s deadly thrusts with his sword and sent deadly

thrusts back at Tybalt, who beat them aside. Romeo cried aloud, ‘Stop, friends! Stop fighting!’ He then used his arm to beat down their swords. Tybalt thrust his sword under Romeo’s arm and mortally wounded Mercutio, and then Tybalt fled. Soon, he came back, and Romeo, angered at the death of Mercutio, sought revenge, and the two fought like lightning, and before I could part them, haughty Tybalt lay dead. Romeo then fled. This is the truth; if it is not, order me to be killed.”

Mrs. Capulet said, “Benvolio is a Montague, and he is lying to protect another Montague. Some twenty Montagues fought in this black strife, and all those twenty could kill only one life: that of Tybalt. I beg for justice, which you, Prince Escalus, must give. Romeo slew Tybalt, and so Romeo must not live.”

Prince Escalus replied, “Romeo slew Tybalt, but Tybalt slew Mercutio. How many more shall die?”

“Not Romeo, Prince Escalus,” Old Montague said. “He was Mercutio’s friend. Romeo’s fighting ended what the law should have ended: the life of Tybalt.”

Prince Escalus made up his mind: “And for that offence immediately we do exile Romeo from Verona. I have been affected by the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets: Mercutio, my kinsman, is dead. I will punish both families with so heavy a fine that you shall all repent the death of Mercutio. I will be deaf to pleading and excuses; neither tears nor prayers shall persuade me to let you off lightly. Don’t even try it. Romeo must leave this city quickly. If he is found here after this day, the hour that he is found will be his last hour alive. Take this corpse away, and obey my orders. Pardoning murderers is not merciful because it leads to more murders.”

— 3.2 —

In her bedchamber, Juliet impatiently waited for night to come so that Romeo could come to her.

Juliet said to herself, “Phaëthon went to his father, the god Apollo, and asked to be allowed to drive the Sun-chariot across the sky and bring light to the world. But Phaëthon, doomed youth, was unable to control the stallions, and they ran wildly away with the Sun-chariot, wreaking havoc and destruction upon Humankind and the world. The king of the gods, Jupiter, saved Humankind and the world by throwing a thunderbolt at Phaëthon and killing him.

“Right now, you stallions that pull the Sun-chariot, I want you to race the Sun across the sky to the West and sunset so that Romeo may quickly come to me. Gallop as if Phaëthon were once again your charioteer and make it dark night immediately. Close the curtain upon day, so that the stallions may sleep and Romeo may leap into my arms with no one to see him and raise an alarm. Lovers by the light of their own beauty can see enough to have sex in the dark, or, if love be blind, it best agrees with night. Come, night, clothed in black, and teach me to lose my virginity to Romeo, my husband.

“Night, cover the blood — the blood of a virgin — that rises in my cheeks until I experience sex for the first time and know that sex with a true love is right and proper. Come, night. Come, Romeo. Cum, Romeo, who is day in night. In my vision of you, I see your white body lying upon the black wings of night — you are whiter than new snow on the back of a raven.

“Night, give me my Romeo, and when he cums and ‘dies’ with delight, take him and cut him out in little stars. If you do that, he will make the face of the nightly Heaven so fine

that all the world will be in love with night and pay no worship to the garish Sun.”

Having expressed her strong desire to lose her virginity quickly to Romeo, her husband, Juliet said, “Romeo and I belong to each other, but neither of us has so far done anything that shows it. It is as if I have bought a mansion but have not moved into it. Romeo has married me, but he has not yet enjoyed me. My waiting now for Romeo to come to me is like an impatient child’s waiting during the eve before some festival at which the child will wear new clothing.”

Juliet saw the Nurse coming to her and said, “My Nurse is bringing me news. Anyone who says ‘Romeo’ speaks with Heavenly eloquence.”

The Nurse, carrying a rope ladder, entered Juliet’s bedchamber.

Juliet asked, “Nurse, what news do you have?” Seeing that the Nurse was carrying something, Juliet asked, “What do you have in your hands? Is that the rope ladder that Romeo sent to you?”

The Nurse threw down the rope ladder and replied, “Yes, it is.”

Juliet asked, “What is troubling you? What is the news? Why are you wringing your hands?”

The Nurse said, “This is a miserable day. He’s dead! He’s dead. He’s been murdered! We’re ruined, Juliet. We’re ruined!”

Juliet, assuming that Romeo had died, said, “Can Heaven be so cruel?”

The Nurse said, “Romeo can be that cruel, but Heaven cannot. Oh, Romeo, Romeo! Who ever would have thought it? Romeo!”

“What kind of devil are you, who torments me so?” Juliet said. “This kind of torture belongs in Hell. Has Romeo killed himself? If you say, ‘Yes, he has killed himself,’ I will die just as surely as if a basilisk had looked at me and struck me dead. If Romeo is dead, say ‘yes.’ If Romeo is not dead, say ‘no.’ Those short words will determine whether I live or die.”

“I saw the wound, I saw it with my eyes,” the Nurse said. “It was on his breast. It was a corpse to be pitied — a bloody corpse to be pitied, Pale, pale as ashes, all red with blood — I fainted at the sight.”

“Heart, cease to beat,” Juliet said. “Eyes, go to prison and never look on liberty. Dust that makes up my body, return to the dust of the Earth. Life, stop — Romeo and I shall share one grave.”

“Oh, Tybalt, Tybalt, the best friend I had!” the Nurse said. “Oh, courteous Tybalt! You were an honest gentleman! That ever I should live to see you dead!”

“What storm is this that blows so contrary?” Juliet said. “From which direction are the squall winds blowing? Is Romeo slaughtered, and is Tybalt dead? Is my dearly loved cousin dead, and also my dearer lord, my husband? Is the trumpet blowing that announces the end of time? Nurse, tell me! Who is living, and who is dead?”

“Tybalt is dead, and Romeo has been banished from Verona,” the Nurse replied. “Romeo killed Tybalt, and that is why he is banished.”

“Oh, God!” Juliet said. “Did Romeo’s hand really shed Tybalt’s blood?”

“It did! It did!” the Nurse said. “Curse the day, it did!”

“Romeo is not what he seemed to be!” Juliet said. “Oh, serpent heart, hid with a flowering face! Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave? Beautiful tyrant! Angelical fiend! Dove-feathered raven! Wolvish-ravener lamb! Despised substance of divinest show! Romeo is in reality a complete opposite to what he seemed to be. He is a damned saint, an honorable villain! What laws of Nature had to be broken to put the spirit of a fiend from Hell into the sweet fleshy paradise of Romeo’s body? Was there ever a book containing such vile matter so beautifully bound? I can’t believe that deceit should dwell in such a gorgeous palace!”

“There’s no trust, no faith, no honesty in men,” the Nurse said. “All men lie and cheat, and all men are evil. Where is the servant? He needs to bring me a drink. These griefs, these woes, these sorrows make me old. Go to Hell, shameful Romeo!”

“Blistered be your tongue for such a wish!” Juliet said. “Romeo was not born to shame; upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit, for Romeo’s brow is a throne where honor may be crowned King. I should not have criticized my husband the way I did.”

“Will you speak well of the man who killed your cousin?” the Nurse asked.

“Should I speak ill of the man who is my husband?” Juliet asked. “Poor Romeo, who will speak well of you, when I, your wife of three hours, have said such bad things about you? But why, villain, did you kill my cousin? No doubt because that villain cousin would have killed you, my husband. Back, my foolish tears, return back to my eyes, your native spring. Tears belong to sorrow, and I am joyful that my husband lives, whom Tybalt would have killed. I must be joyful that Tybalt is dead because he would have killed my husband. All of this is comforting news, so why am I crying? One thing happened that is worse than Tybalt’s

death. That thing is expressed in one word that murders me. I wish I could forget that word, but it is burned into my brain like damned guilty deeds are burned into the minds of sinners. Tybalt is dead, and Romeo — banished. That word ‘banished’ creates more sorrow in me than the deaths of ten thousand Tybalts. Tybalt’s death was woe enough; no more sorrow should have been added to that sorrow. But if sour woe delights in company and must be accompanied by other griefs, why was not the death of Tybalt followed by the death of my father or my mother, or both? That would have been bad enough, and I would have grieved in the ordinary way. But following the news of Tybalt’s death, I have been ambushed with the news of Romeo’s banishment. To hear ‘Romeo is banished’ is to tear my world and my life apart. It is as if my father, my mother, Tybalt, my husband, and myself were all dead. ‘Romeo is banished!’ There is no end, no limit, no measure, no bound to the grief that short sentence brings. No words can express that grief.”

Juliet then asked, “Where are my father and my mother, nurse?”

“They are weeping and wailing over Tybalt’s corpse. Will you go to them? I will lead you there.”

“They can use their tears to wash his wounds,” Juliet said. “When they have finished crying, I will still be crying because of Romeo’s banishment. Take away that rope ladder. Romeo wanted to use it to climb into my bedchamber tonight, but he is exiled from Verona. I, still a virgin, will become a virgin widow. I will go to my wedding-bed alone. The grave — not Romeo — will take my virgin body.”

“Go to your bedchamber,” the Nurse said. “I will find Romeo so he can comfort you. I know where he is. Listen to me. Romeo will come to you tonight. He is now hiding in Friar Lawrence’s cell.”

“Find Romeo, and give him — my true knight — this ring,” Juliet said. “Have him come to me to take his last farewell.”

— 3.3 —

Entering his cell, Friar Lawrence said loudly, “Come out, fearful Romeo. Figuratively speaking, affliction is in love with you, and you are married to calamity.”

Romeo came out from behind a curtain where he had been hiding in case the city guards had come for him, and he said, “Friar Lawrence, what is the news? What is the Prince’s ruling about me? What sorrow is in store for me that I am still unaware of?”

“Romeo, you are too much afflicted with suffering. I bring you news of the punishment that Prince Escalus has set for you.”

“Is the Prince’s sentence upon me anything less than my death?”

“He has given you a gentler punishment than that,” Friar Lawrence said. “Your punishment is not your body’s death but instead your body’s banishment.”

“Banishment!” Romeo said, throwing himself upon the floor and lying there in despair. “If you want to be merciful to me, say instead that my punishment is death. To me, exile from Juliet is more terrifying than death. Do not say that I am banished.”

“You are banished from Verona,” Friar Lawrence said, “Bear this punishment patiently, for the world is broad and wide.”

“For me, no world exists outside Verona,” Romeo said. “Outside the walls of Verona lie Purgatory and torture — in fact, Hell itself. To be banished from Verona is to be banished from the world — and to be banished from the

world is to be dead. Banishment is another, nicer, word for death. By telling me that I am banished, you are cutting off my head with a golden axe, and you are smiling while you make the swing of the ax that kills me.”

“You have the wrong attitude,” Friar Lawrence said. “You are guilty of the sin of ingratitude. Your lack of appreciation is shocking! The penalty for what you did is death, but merciful Prince Escalus has softened your punishment. He turned the black word ‘death’ into the merciful word ‘banishment.’ You have received much mercy, but you don’t see or appreciate that.”

“Banishment is torture, not mercy,” Romeo said. “Heaven is here, where Juliet lives. Every cat and dog and little mouse, every unworthy thing, may live here in Heaven and look at Juliet, but I may not. Even the flies of Verona have it better than I do. They may touch Juliet’s hand or her virgin lips, which grow red when they touch each other, thinking such self-kisses a sin. But I cannot touch Juliet’s hand or her lips. Flies may do this, but I must fly from Verona and Juliet. Flies are free, but I am banished. And yet you tell me that banishment is not death? Haven’t you got a better way to kill me than through banishment? Haven’t you got any poison or a sharp knife or some other disgraceful way of killing me? The damned in Hell use the word ‘banishment’ — they are banished from Heaven and they howl when they say the word ‘banishment.’ You are a priest to whom I confess my sins. You absolve my sins, and you profess to be my friend. How then can you torment me with the word ‘banishment’?”

“You foolish madman, listen to me.”

“Why? You will speak again of banishment.”

“I can give you armor against that word,” Friar Lawrence said. “Philosophy can lessen adversity. Philosophy can comfort you even though you are banished.”

“Again you say the word ‘banished’! Philosophy is worthless unless it can make a Juliet, or bring Verona — and Juliet! — to my place of exile, or change Prince Escalus’ mind about my punishment! Philosophy does not help. Philosophy is unable to provide comfort when I am banished. Talk to me no more.”

“I see that madmen have no ears.”

“Why would they, when wise men have no eyes?”

“Let me talk to you about the situation you are in.”

“You cannot speak about what you cannot feel,” Romeo said. “If you were as young as I am, if you loved Juliet the way I do, if you had been married for only an hour when you killed Tybalt, and if you were banished from the one you love, then you could speak, then you could tear your hair, and then you could fall upon the ground as if you were falling into your grave. If all that has happened to me had happened to you, then you would act exactly the way I am acting.”

Someone knocked at the door of Friar Lawrence’s cell.

“Get up, Romeo,” Friar Lawrence said. “Hide yourself.”

“No,” Romeo said. “I will not be hidden unless the mist from my heartsick groans hides me.”

More knocking.

Friar Lawrence said to Romeo, “Listen to the knocking!”

Friar Lawrence shouted, “Who’s there? Just a moment!”

To Romeo, he said, “Get up! You will be captured!”

He shouted, “Just a moment!”

To Romeo, he said again, “Get up!”

More knocking.

“Romeo, you are acting like a fool!”

Friar Lawrence shouted, “I’m coming! I’m coming!”

More knocking.

He shouted, “Who is knocking so loudly? From where did you come? What do you want?”

The Nurse, who had been knocking, replied, “Let me come in, and you shall know my errand. Juliet sent me.”

Friar Lawrence recognized her voice; she was not a danger to Romeo. He opened the door and said, “Welcome.”

The Nurse asked, “Holy friar, tell me: Where is Juliet’s husband? Where is Romeo?”

Friar Lawrence replied, “Come in. There he is, lying on the floor, crying. His tears have made him drunk and unable to think well.”

“He is acting just like Juliet,” the Nurse said. “Their cases of mourning are exactly the same. Both share the same sorrow. Both are in a piteous predicament. Like Romeo, she lies down, blubbing and weeping, weeping and blubbing.”

To Romeo, the Nurse said, “Stand up! Stand up! Stand up, if you are a man. For Juliet’s sake, rise and stand. Why should you fall into so deep a moan?”

If the ghost of Mercutio had been around, he would have thought, *I wish that I were still alive — the puns I could make! The Nurse talked about a case. A case is a container for holding something. So is a sheath, or vagina. I would make jokes about Romeo being in Juliet’s case. The Nurse has talked about rising and standing up for Juliet’s sake. I know what part of Romeo should do the rising and standing up. The Nurse talked about Romeo falling into so deep a*

moan. When people moan, they make an O with their mouths. If I were still alive, I would talk about a different O — Juliet's O between her legs.

Romeo said, "Nurse!" and stood up.

The Nurse said, "Things could be worse — you could be dead."

"You mentioned Juliet," Romeo said. "How is she? Does she think of me as a hardened murderer now that I have at the beginning of our marriage killed a close relative of hers? Where is she? How is she? What does my secret wife say about our ruined marriage?"

"She does not say anything," the Nurse replied. "All she does is cry and cry. She falls on her bed. She gets up and cries out first the name 'Tybalt' and then the name 'Romeo,' and then she falls on her bed again."

"It is as if my name had been shot from a deadly gun and had murdered her, just as it murdered Tybalt," Romeo said.

He drew his sword and said, "Tell me, Friar Lawrence, in what vile part of my body does my name live? Tell me so that I can cut my name out of myself."

Friar Lawrence said, "Put away your sword. Are you not a man? You look like a man, but your tears make you appear to be womanish. The wildness and lack of thought of your actions make you appear to be an angry beast. You are a shameful woman in the body of a man! Or you are an ugly beast that is half-man, half-woman. You amaze me.

"By my holy order, I thought that you had more sense. You have killed Tybalt. Will you now kill yourself? Don't you know that by killing yourself you would also kill Juliet, your wife, who is now part of you? Why treat yourself with such damnable hatred? Why do you hate your family origin, your

soul, and your body? All three of those make up you, and by killing yourself you would lose all three. You are shaming your body, your love, and your mind. Like a usurer who hoards money, you could have good things in abundance, but you do not use your body, your love, and your mind well. Your body should be noble and full of the valor of a man, but you make it seem as if it were made of wax — a sculpture, not a real man. You have sworn to love Juliet, but that must be a lie since by killing yourself you would also kill the person whom you have vowed to cherish. Your intelligence, which should control and manage your body and your love, leads both astray. Your intelligence acts as if it were a stupid soldier who puts gunpowder in a flask and ignorantly sets it on fire. Your intelligence should be used to protect yourself, but instead you are using it to blow yourself up and kill yourself.

“Wise up, Romeo! Your Juliet is alive. To love and marry her, you have risked death! Be happy that Juliet is alive! Tybalt wanted to kill you, but you were able to kill Tybalt. Be happy that you are alive! The law stated that anyone who fought in the streets of Verona would be executed, but instead you are merely exiled. Be happy that Prince Escalus is merciful! You are greatly blessed and happiness has befriended you, but you are acting like a misbehaved and sullen girl — you are pouting despite your good luck and your great love. Be careful because those who are ungrateful die miserable.

“But now, go to Juliet, as was arranged earlier. Climb up to her bedchamber and comfort her. But be careful. Leave before the new set of city guards take up their places in the morning because if you are captured in the morning or afterward you will be killed. Leave earlier so that you can leave Verona and live in Mantua until the time when it is OK to announce publicly your marriage to Juliet, to reconcile the Capulets and the Montagues, and to beg Prince Escalus to

pardon you and allow you to live again in Verona. When you return to Verona, you will have twenty hundred thousand times more joy than the lamentation you will endure when you depart from Verona.

“Nurse, go to Juliet first. Give my compliments to her, and tell her to encourage everyone in her father’s mansion to go to bed early because of their heavy sorrow. Let her know that Romeo is coming.”

The Nurse said to Friar Lawrence, “I could stay here all night and listen to you give advice. To be educated is wonderful!”

She said to Romeo, “I will tell Juliet that you are coming to see her.”

“Please do,” Romeo said, “and tell her to be ready to speak to me frankly and honestly. I think she will want to know how Tybalt died.”

“Romeo, this is a ring that Juliet gave me to give to you,” the Nurse said. “Come quickly to Juliet because it is beginning to be very late.”

The Nurse departed.

“I feel so much better now!” Romeo said.

“Before you go to Juliet, let me remind you that you need to be gone from Verona before the new set of city guards relieves the guards on duty now,” Friar Lawrence said. “The guards on duty now will allow you to leave Verona, but the new guards will arrest you. If you get a late start and the new guards are on duty, you will have to disguise yourself to pass through the gates. Go to Mantua and live there. I will send your servant to you occasionally with news that relates to your situation here — I expect the news to be good. Shake hands with me. It’s late. Go to Juliet, and good night.”

“A joy that surpasses all joy awaits me,” Romeo said, “or else I would be sad at parting from you. Farewell, Friar Lawrence.”

— 3.4 —

Old Capulet, Mrs. Capulet, and Paris spoke together in a room in Old Capulet’s mansion. Paris loved and greatly desired to marry Juliet.

Old Capulet said to Paris, “Events have occurred that have made it impossible for me to have time to convince Juliet to marry you. As you know, she loved her kinsman Tybalt dearly, as did I. Unfortunately, death is not optional, and anyone who is born will also die. It is very late now, and Juliet will not come down to see you. In fact, I myself should have been in bed an hour ago.”

“These times of woe afford no time to woo,” Paris said.

To Mrs. Capulet, he said, “Madam, good night. Give my compliments to Juliet.”

“I will,” Mrs. Capulet said. “And tomorrow morning, I will see how she feels about marrying you. Tonight, she is mourning heavily in her bedchamber.”

Old Capulet said, “Sir Paris, I will make a bold offer of my child’s love for you. I think that she will do as I advise her to do. In fact, I have no doubt that she will accept my advice.”

He said to Mrs. Capulet, “Wife, before you go to bed, go to Juliet and tell her of Paris’ love for her. Also tell her that this coming Wednesday — wait, what day is today?”

“Today is Monday, sir,” Paris said.

Old Capulet said, “Monday! Well, Wednesday is too soon. So, wife, tell Juliet that she shall marry Paris, my almost son-in-law, on Thursday.”

To both Paris and his wife, Old Capulet said, “Will everyone and everything be ready? This leaves little time for preparations, but we should not have too big an affair. Tybalt is very recently dead, and we don’t want people to think that we little mourn him. If we have a big affair, they may think that. Therefore, we will have around a half-dozen guests, and that will be enough. But, Paris, what do you think about being married on Thursday?”

Paris replied, “I wish that Thursday were tomorrow.”

“Well, go home now,” Old Capulet said. “Thursday will be your wedding day, then.”

To his wife, he said, “See Juliet before you go to bed, and tell her to prepare for her wedding day.”

He then said to Paris, “Good night. I am going to bed. Actually, it is so late that I could almost call it morning. Good night.”

Old Capulet knew that Paris loved Juliet and that most young women would be happy to have Paris for a husband. He also knew that Paris, who was related to Prince Escalus, would make a good political ally — especially now that Mercutio and Tybalt had perished because of the feud with the Montagues.

— 3.5 —

Romeo and Juliet had enjoyed their wedding night together, and now it was almost morning.

Juliet said, “Are you leaving now? It is not yet close to morning. We just now heard the cry of the nightingale and not the morning lark. Each night, the nightingale sings on the

pomegranate tree outside. Believe me, Romeo, you heard the cry of the nightingale.”

“No, Juliet,” Romeo said. “We heard the cry of the lark, the announcer of morning. It was no nightingale. Look, my love, streaks of light reveal the clouds in the East. They announce that for now we must end the happiness of our being together. The stars — the candles of night — have burnt out. The day that makes many people happy now reveals the tops of misty mountains. I must be gone from Verona and live, or stay in Verona and die.”

“The light you see is not daylight,” Juliet said. “I know that it is not. It is instead the light of one of the shooting stars that will give you light on your way to Mantua, and therefore you need not leave yet.”

“Let me be captured and put to death,” Romeo joked. “I am happy for that to happen if that is what you want. Just as you wish, I will say that the light I see is not the beginning of dawn. And I will say that the bird I heard so high above our heads is not the morning lark. I have more desire to stay with you than I have will to leave. Come, death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so. Isn’t that right, my love? Let us continue to talk — it is not yet dawn.”

Realizing that Romeo was in real danger of being killed if he were captured after dawn, Juliet exclaimed, “It is dawn! It is! Leave! Go to Mantua! Do not stay any longer in Verona! It is the lark that sings so out of tune. Its sounds are harsh discords and displeasing sharps. Some people say that the lark makes sweet divisions — sweet variations on a melody — but the lark does not make sweet divisions because it divides us. Some people believe that because the beautiful lark has ugly eyes and the ugly toad has beautiful eyes, therefore the two must have traded eyes. I wish that the two had traded voices, too. Why should the lark have a beautiful voice when that voice takes us out of each other’s arms! It

announces that you must leave me now. Oh, leave now and be safe — it grows more and more light!”

“The morning grows more and more light; our woes grow more and more dark,” Romeo said.

The Nurse entered Juliet’s bedchamber and said, “Juliet, your mother is coming here to speak to you.”

The Nurse said to Romeo, “The morning has broken. Beware and be careful. Your life is in danger.”

The Nurse left.

Juliet said, “Romeo, climb out through the window, which will all too soon let daylight in.”

Romeo said, “Goodbye! One last kiss, and then I will leave.”

He kissed her and climbed through the window but did not leave Juliet quite yet.

“You have left me so soon,” Juliet said. “Husband, I must hear from you every day in the hour, for in a minute there are many days.”

She mourned, “By this way of counting, I shall be very old the next time I see my Romeo.”

“Goodbye,” Romeo said. “I will omit no opportunity to send my love to you, Juliet.”

“Do you think that we shall ever again meet?” Juliet asked.

“I am positive that we will meet again,” Romeo replied. “We will tell stories about all of our current troubles to our grandchildren someday.”

Romeo climbed down into Old Capulet’s garden.

“I have a foreboding of evil,” Juliet said. “As I now look down at you, you seem to be like a dead person at the bottom

of a tomb. Either my eyesight is playing tricks on me, or you seem pale like a corpse.”

“My love,” Romeo said, “in my eyes you also seem pale right now. Our sorrows make us appear to be bloodless and so we lose our ruddy hue. Goodbye, Juliet, my wife.”

He departed.

“Fortune, people call you fickle,” Juliet said. “They say that you are changeable. If you are changeable, what fortune is going to happen to Romeo, who does not change and who is honored for being faithful? I hope that you are fickle, fortune. We have had bad fortune, and good fortune will not keep Romeo long away from me but will bring him back to me quickly.”

Mrs. Capulet called, “Juliet, are you awake and up?”

“Who is calling me?” Juliet said to herself. “Is it my mother? Has she not gone to bed tonight, or is she up very early? It is unusual for her to be up and talking to me so early. She must have something important to say to me.”

Mrs. Capulet entered Juliet’s bedchamber and asked, “How are you, Juliet?”

“I am not well.”

“Are you continuing to cry for Tybalt’s death?” Mrs. Capulet asked. “Are you trying to wash him from his grave with your tears? Even if you could do that, you would not be able to make him live again. Therefore, stop crying. Some grief shows that you love him, but excessive grief shows a lack of good sense.”

“Please let me cry for such a loss I feel with all my heart,” Juliet said.

“If you cry, you will feel the loss bitterly, but you will not bring back the person for whom you are crying.”

“Mother, I feel the loss so bitterly that I must cry.”

“Juliet, I think that you are crying not so much over your cousin Tybalt as you are over the fact that the villain who killed Tybalt is still alive.”

“What villain?”

“Romeo.”

Juliet said, “The villain and he are many miles apart. God pardon him! I do, with all my heart. And yet no man like he does grieve my heart.”

Mrs. Capulet understood this to mean, “The villain Romeo and Tybalt are many miles apart. God pardon the late Tybalt! I do, with all my heart. And yet no man so much as Tybalt does grieve my heart because he has died.”

But Juliet knew that to herself, her ambiguous words meant, *The word “villain” and Romeo are many miles apart — Romeo is not a villain! God pardon Romeo! I do, with all my heart. And yet no man so much as Romeo does grieve my heart because he is banished from Verona and my presence.*

Mrs. Capulet said, “You should say, ‘And yet no man so much as Romeo does grieve my heart because he is still alive.’”

Juliet said, “I grieve because Romeo is far from the reach of these my hands. I wish that no one but I might avenge Tybalt’s death!”

Mrs. Capulet understood these words to mean that Juliet would like to kill Romeo, but she grieves because he is no longer in Verona and so she cannot kill him.

But Juliet knew that to herself, her ambiguous words meant, *I grieve because I can no longer see Romeo, and I would like to be the only person who could avenge Tybalt's death against Romeo because then Romeo would be safe and in no danger.*

Mrs. Capulet said, "Don't worry. We will have vengeance for the death of Tybalt, so you need not cry because Tybalt's death has not been avenged. I am going to send a man to Mantua, where the exiled scoundrel Romeo is said to be fleeing. The man I send to Romeo will give him a drink so poisonous that very quickly Romeo will keep Tybalt company in death. Then, I hope, you will be happy."

Juliet said, "Indeed, I never shall be satisfied with Romeo, until I behold him ... dead ... is my poor heart for a kinsman vexed. Mother, if you could find a man to bear a poison, I would temper it, so that Romeo should, upon receipt thereof, soon sleep in quiet. Oh, how my heart hates to hear him named, and cannot come to him to wreak the love I bore my cousin upon the body of the man who slaughtered him!"

Juliet again used ambiguous words, some of which had two meanings.

This is what Mrs. Capulet heard: "Indeed, I never shall be satisfied with Romeo, until I behold him dead — dead is my poor heart for a kinsman [Tybalt] vexed. Mother, if you could find a man to bear a poison, I would temper [mix] it, so that Romeo should, upon receipt thereof, soon sleep in quiet [die]. Oh, how my heart hates to hear him named, and cannot come to him to wreak [avenge] the love I bore my cousin upon the body of the man who slaughtered him!"

But Juliet knew that to herself, her ambiguous words meant, *Indeed, I never shall be satisfied with Romeo, until I behold him — dead is my poor heart for a kinsman [Romeo] vexed. Mother, if you could find a man to bear a poison, I would*

temper [weaken] it, so that Romeo should, upon receipt thereof, soon sleep in quiet [take a nap]. Oh, how my heart hates to hear him named, and cannot come to him to wreak [give expression to] the love I bore my cousin upon the body of the man who slaughtered him!

“You get the poison, and I’ll get a man to give it to Romeo,” Mrs. Capulet said. “But right now I have good news for you, girl.”

“Good news is welcome in such joyless times as these,” Juliet said. “What is your good news?”

“You have a father who loves you,” Mrs. Capulet said. “He knows that you have been grieving, and to take away your sadness he gives you a day of joy — a day that neither you nor I expected.”

“What day is that?”

“Early Thursday morning, a gallant, young, and noble gentleman, Count Paris, at Saint Peter’s Church, will happily make you a happy bride.”

Shocked, Juliet replied, “By Saint Peter’s Church and by St. Peter, too, he will not make me there a joyful bride! I wonder at this haste — why must I wed before I am wooed? Mother, I beg you to tell my father that I will not marry yet; and, when I do marry, I swear that my groom shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate, rather than Paris. Your news is shocking, not joyful.”

Her mother told her, “Here comes your father; tell him so yourself, and see how he will take it.”

Old Capulet and the Nurse entered Juliet’s bedchamber.

Looking at Juliet, who was crying, Old Capulet said, “When the Sun sets, the air drizzles dew. But now, for the sunset of Tybalt, my brother’s son, it rains downright.”

He said to Juliet, “Your eyes are the source of conduits. Still in tears? Is your face forever showering? With your body you are imitating a ship, a sea, and a wind. Your eyes, like a sea, ebb and flow with tears. Your body is a ship sailing in this salt flood of tears. Your sighs are the winds. Your sighs and your tears — which never cease — will sink your storm-tossed body.”

To his wife, he asked, “What is going on here? Haven’t you told our daughter about her upcoming marriage to Paris?”

“I have indeed, but she won’t have it. She says thanks, but no, thanks. I wish the fool were married to her grave!”

“Let me make sure I understand what you are saying,” Old Capulet said. “She refuses to be married and she refuses to thank us for arranging such a splendid marriage? Isn’t Juliet elated to marry Paris? Doesn’t she realize how blessed she is to have so worthy a gentleman to be her bridegroom? Doesn’t she realize that she is unworthy of such a splendid marriage?”

“I am not pleased that you have arranged a marriage for me,” Juliet said, “but I am thankful that you have arranged a marriage for me out of your love for me. I hate the marriage that you have arranged for me, but I am thankful for what I hate because I know that you arranged the marriage for me because you love me.”

“What are you saying?” Old Capulet said. “You are not making sense: ‘Thanks, but no thanks’? Girl, thank me no thankings, but know that on Thursday you and Paris will go to Saint Peter’s Church and know that there will be a wedding. Fettle your limbs for a wedding, girl. We fettle — that is, groom — a horse. Like a horse, your limbs will be ridden. If you can’t force yourself to go to church, I can force you to go. If I have to, I will drag you there on a hurdle just

as if I were taking you to an execution — your execution, you pale-faced girl!”

Knowing that her husband had gone too far, Mrs. Capulet said to him, “Are you insane?”

Juliet said, “Father, I beg you on my knees to listen patiently to what I have to say.”

Old Capulet was not in a listening mood: “Headstrong, disobedient girl! I’ll tell you what! Either go to church and get married on Thursday, or never after see me! Speak not! Reply not! Do not answer me! I want to slap you!”

To his wife, he said, “We hardly thought that we were blessed to have only one child left living, but now I see that this one is one too many. We are cursed in having her for our daughter! She is worthless!”

The Nurse said to Old Capulet, “God in Heaven bless her! You are to blame, my lord, for criticizing her so.”

“And why am I at fault, my lady wisdom?” Old Capulet said. “Hold your tongue, my lady prudence. If you want to say something, go and gossip with your friends!”

“I speak no treason,” the Nurse replied.

“Bull!” Old Capulet said.

“May not one speak?”

“Peace, you mumbling fool! Share your wisdom with your friends — but here and now, shut up!”

Mrs. Capulet told her husband, “You are too angry. You are overreacting.”

“Damn!” Old Capulet said. “I have a right to be angry! During day and night, during hour and season, during work and play, and alone or among company, I have been doing

my best to get Juliet a good husband. Now I have found for her a gentleman of noble parentage, with wealthy estates, youthful, and well connected, handsome and with a manly figure. But what happens! My daughter acts like a wretched, whimpering fool! She acts like a whining, mentally feeble puppet! An excellent groom is handed to her, and she replies, 'I will not marry him. I cannot love him. I am too young. Pardon me.'"

He said to Juliet, "If you will not marry Paris, the kind of pardon I will give you is one you will not enjoy. Yes, you will not have to marry Paris, but no, you will not be allowed to eat or live in this house. Eat and live wherever you can — you shall not eat or live here. Think about what I am saying — you know that this is not a joke. Thursday is coming soon. Consider well my words — take them to heart. You are my daughter, and I will marry you to whomever I wish. If you refuse the marriage, then go hang yourself, beg, starve — die in the streets, for all I care! If you refuse the marriage, you will no longer be my daughter. I will not acknowledge that I am your father, and nothing that I own will ever do you good. Believe what I am telling you! I swear that it is the truth!"

Old Capulet left Juliet's bedchamber.

Juliet said, "Can no one pity me and see my grief? Mother, don't cast me aside! Delay this marriage for a month, a week; or, if you do not, make my bridal bed in that dim tomb where Tybalt lies."

"Don't talk to me," Mrs. Capulet said. "I will not speak a word on your behalf. Do whatever you want to do, for I am done with you."

Mrs. Capulet left Juliet's bedchamber.

Juliet said to the Nurse, "How can we stop this marriage! I already have a husband on Earth. Our vow of marriage is recorded in Heaven. How can that vow of marriage end,

freeing me to marry again, unless Romeo dies and enters Heaven? Nurse, give me some comfort. Nurse, give me some good advice. Why is Heaven sending such misfortune to me, who am so weak? Talk to me, Nurse. Do you have even one word of comfort for me?"

"Yes, I do," the Nurse said. "I have advice that I hope will comfort you. Romeo has been banished from Verona, and he will never return to claim you as his wife. Even if he were to return, it would be secretly. Since this is the case, I think it is best that you marry Count Paris — oh, he's a lovely gentleman! Romeo is a dishrag compared to him. Not even an eagle has so attractive, so lively, so beautiful eyes as does Paris. I think this second groom surpasses your first groom, but even if he did not, your first groom is dead to you, or at least as good as dead to you. After all, you are here and he is in exile. You are not able to live together as husband and wife."

Juliet asked, "Are you speaking from your heart?"

"Yes, and from my soul, too," the Nurse said.

Juliet realized that no comfort could come to her from the Nurse, who had just advised her to commit bigamy. Better advice might come from Friar Lawrence.

Juliet said, "Amen."

"What?" the Nurse asked.

"You have comforted me marvelously much," Juliet said. "Go and tell my mother that I regret having displeased my father, and so I have left to go to Friar Lawrence so that I may confess my sins and receive absolution."

"Yes, I will do as you say," the Nurse replied. "You are acting very sensibly."

The Nurse left Juliet's bedchamber.

“That damned old woman!” Juliet said. “She is a very wicked fiend! What is her worst sin? To advise me to commit bigamy and be unfaithful to Romeo, my husband? Or to dispraise my husband after she has praised him beyond compare so many thousands of times previously? Go, Nurse. From here on, you and I shall be separate. You will no longer be my confidant. I will go to Friar Lawrence to seek his advice. If I have no other way to stop this marriage, I can commit suicide.”

CHAPTER 4: JULIET IS FORCED TO AGREE TO MARRY COUNT PARIS

— 4.1 —

Count Paris had been talking to Friar Lawrence and asking him to officiate at his wedding to Juliet.

Friar Lawrence now said, “On Thursday, sir? The time before the wedding is held is very short.”

“This is what Old Capulet wants,” Paris said. “However, I admit that I want to be married quickly.”

“You say that you don’t know what Juliet thinks about being married to you,” Friar Lawrence said. “Weddings should not be arranged until *after* the girl has consented to be a bride. I do not like this.”

“She has been excessively grieving because of the death of Tybalt,” Paris said, “and therefore I have not been able to woo her as I would like to. Venus does not smile in a house of tears. Juliet’s father thinks that it is dangerous for her to grieve so immoderately, and he believes that it is best for her to quickly marry because that will stop her tears. She has been staying by herself and grieving, and her father — as do I — believes that if she is around other people and enjoying society that she will stop grieving. That is the reason for our haste in arranging this wedding.”

Friar Lawrence thought, *I know of a reason why this wedding ought not to take place quickly.*

He saw Juliet walking toward his cell, and he said aloud, “Here comes the lady herself walking toward us.”

Juliet arrived, and Paris said to her, “Happily met, my lady and my wife!”

Politely, but distantly, Juliet replied, “That may be, sir, when I may be a wife.”

Paris said, “That ‘may be’ must be, love, on this coming Thursday.”

“What must be shall be,” Juliet said.

“That’s the truth,” Friar Lawrence said.

“Did you come to make your confession to Friar Lawrence?” Paris asked Juliet.

“To answer that, I should confess to you.”

“Do not deny to him that you love me.”

“I will confess to you that I love him.”

“You will also confess to him, I am sure, that you love me.”

“If I tell Friar Lawrence that I love you, that will be more trustworthy than if I said it directly to you.”

“Poor Juliet,” Paris said, “your face is disfigured by the tracks of many tears.”

“The tears have done little to disfigure my face because my face was bad enough before I cried.”

“By saying that, you wrong your face even more than the tears have wronged it.”

“What is true is not slander,” Juliet said. “And I have spoken the truth.”

“Your face is mine,” Paris said, “and you have slandered it.”

Thinking of Romeo, Juliet said, “It is true that my face is not my own.”

She asked Friar Lawrence, “Do you have time for me to confess, or should I come to you at evening mass and confess afterward?”

Friar Lawrence said to Juliet, “I have time now.”

He said to Paris, “I need to be alone with Juliet so I may hear her confession.”

“Heaven forbid that I should keep anyone from confessing their sins!” Paris said to Friar Lawrence.

To Juliet he said, “The morning of the day we will be married, I will wake you up with music. Until then, goodbye.”

Paris kissed Juliet’s cheek, and then he departed.

“Shut the door,” Juliet said. “After the door is shut, come and cry with me. I am past hope, past cure, past help!”

“Juliet, I know, of course, why you grieve,” Friar Lawrence said. “I can’t think of a way to stop or delay the marriage. Your father is determined that you marry Count Paris this Thursday.”

Juliet replied, “Don’t tell me that you have heard of this marriage unless you can also tell me how to prevent it. You are wise, but if you cannot think of a way to prevent my marriage to Count Paris, then tell me that what I have resolved is wise, and with this dagger I will commit suicide. God joined my heart and Romeo’s heart. You joined our hands in marriage. This hand belongs to Romeo, and before my hand shall be joined in marriage to another man or my heart revolt and turn to another man, this dagger shall slay both my hand and my heart. Therefore, Friar Lawrence, out of your years of experience of living, give me helpful advice or a plan — or else this dagger will solve my problem. Give

me a plan quickly. If you can come up with no way to stop this marriage, I long to die quickly.”

“Wait, Juliet,” Friar Lawrence, who was completely opposed to suicide, said. “I do see a way to stop the wedding. You are in a desperate situation, and the way out will require a desperate action. If you are willing to commit suicide rather than marry Count Paris, then it is likely that you will be willing to undergo something similar to death to avoid marrying him. You will have to encounter something like death itself to escape the shame and sin of committing bigamy and being unfaithful to Romeo. If you are willing to do this, I can help you avoid this marriage.”

“I am willing to do much to avoid marrying Paris,” Juliet said. “I am willing to jump from the top of a tower. I am willing to walk in a road swarming with thieves. I am willing to stand in a nest of serpents. I am willing to be chained to roaring bears. I am willing to be locked alone in a building where human bones are stored and to be covered with reeking leg bones and yellow, jawless skulls. I am willing to go into a newly made grave and hide with a shrouded corpse. All of these things that I have heard about have made me tremble, but I will do any of them without fear or hesitation in order to stay faithful to Romeo, my sweet love.”

“In that case, go home, be merry, and tell your parents — falsely — that you agree to marry Paris,” Friar Lawrence said. “Today is Tuesday. On Wednesday night, make sure that you are alone in your bedchamber. Do not let the Nurse stay with you. I have a vial for you to take with you when you leave here. When you are in bed tomorrow night, drink the potion inside the vial. Immediately, the potion will get into your veins and stop your pulse without harming you. Your body will be cold, not warm. You will have no breath. You will have no color in your lips and cheeks. Your eyelids will close. All of the parts of your body shall be stiff and

stark and cold. You will appear to be dead for forty-two hours. After that time, you will wake up as if from a pleasant sleep. When Paris comes Thursday morning to wake you up, everyone will think that you are dead. Then, as our tradition is, you will be dressed in your best clothing and carried on a bier to the ancient burial vault where all the deceased Capulets and their kin lie. In the meantime, I shall send a letter to Romeo to tell him about our plan, and he shall secretly return to Verona, and he and I will wait in the Capulet burial vault for you to wake up. After you have woken up, Romeo will take you to Mantua. If you do this, you will not have to marry Count Paris. This plan will work as long as you do not let a womanish fear stop you from drinking the potion in the vial.”

“Give me the vial!” Juliet said. “Do not talk to me about fear!”

Friar Lawrence gave her the vial and said, “Leave now. Be brave. Be strong. I will send a fellow friar, a friend of mine, to Mantua with a letter for Romeo.”

“Love will give me strength! And strength will help me do what I must do!” Juliet said. “Farewell, dear Friar Lawrence.”

— 4.2 —

In Old Capulet’s mansion were Old Capulet, his wife, the Nurse, and some servants.

Old Capulet told a servant, “Take this list and invite to the wedding all the people whose names are on it.”

The servant left.

Old Capulet, who had changed his mind about having only a few guests to the wedding, told the second servant, “Go and hire for me twenty good cooks.”

The second servant said, "All of the cooks shall be good cooks, sir, because I will test them. I will see if they will lick their fingers."

"Why?" Old Capulet asked.

"A cook's cooking gets on his fingers. A cook who cannot lick his own fingers is a bad cook. Therefore, I will not hire for you any cook who cannot lick his own fingers."

"Leave now," Old Capulet said.

The second servant left.

"We are unprepared for this wedding feast," Old Capulet said. "Has Juliet gone to see Friar Lawrence?"

"Yes," the Nurse replied.

"Maybe he can talk some sense into her," Old Capulet said. "She is a peevish and selfish good-for-nothing."

"Here she comes from confession now," the Nurse said. "She looks happy."

"So, my headstrong young daughter," Old Capulet said, "where have you been gadding about?"

"I have been where I have learned to repent my sin of disobeying you," Juliet said, kneeling before her father. "Friar Lawrence told me to obey you and to ask for your forgiveness, which I do. Henceforward I am ever ruled by you and shall be obedient to your wishes."

Old Capulet immediately made up his mind to hold the wedding a day early.

He said, "Send for Count Paris. Tell him that Juliet has agreed to marry him. The wedding will be held tomorrow morning — Wednesday — not on Thursday."

“I met Count Paris at Friar Lawrence’s cell,” Juliet said. “I gave him what decorous love I could, but I was careful not to step over the boundary of what is modest.”

“I am glad,” Old Capulet said. “All of this is good. All things are as they ought to be. Stand up now. Let me see Count Paris. Servant, go and bring Count Paris to me. By God, the city of Verona owes this reverend holy friar a great debt.”

Juliet said, “Nurse, will you go with me to my bedchamber and help me to choose the clothing and jewelry that I will wear tomorrow for my wedding?”

Mrs. Capulet said, “No, let’s have the wedding on Thursday. We can wait that long.”

Old Capulet overruled his wife: “Nurse, go with Juliet. We will have the wedding tomorrow, on Wednesday.”

Mrs. Capulet said, “We will be unprepared to host a wedding. Already it is almost nighttime.”

“Don’t worry,” Old Capulet said. “I will handle everything, and everything will be done as it ought to be done. Go to Juliet and help her get ready for her wedding. I will stay awake all night. Leave everything to me, and for this once I will do the work of a housewife.”

His wife went to Juliet.

Old Capulet said, “Everyone is gone. Well, I will see Count Paris to let him know about tomorrow’s wedding. I feel happy now that my wayward girl is obeying me.”

— 4.3 —

In Juliet’s bedchamber, Juliet and the Nurse had been picking out the clothing and jewelry that Juliet was supposed to wear at the wedding.

Juliet said, “Yes, this is what I will wear, but Nurse, please let me be alone tonight because I need to make many prayers to ask God to smile upon me and my wedding. As you know, lately I have been rebellious and sinful.”

Mrs. Capulet entered the bedchamber and asked, “How is everything going? Do you need my help?”

“No,” Juliet said. “We have already picked out the clothing and jewelry that I will wear tomorrow, so please let me be left alone tonight, and let the Nurse stay up with you tonight because I am sure that you will be up all night making preparations for the wedding.”

“Good night,” her mother said. “Go to bed and rest. You need your sleep.”

“Farewell!” Juliet said.

Mrs. Capulet and the Nurse left Juliet’s bedchamber.

“God knows when we shall meet again,” Juliet said to herself. “I feel a cold fear going through my veins, nearly causing me to faint. It almost freezes the heat of life. I will call for my mother and Nurse to comfort me.”

She called, “Nurse!”

Then she said to herself, “Why am I calling for the Nurse? What should she do here? I need to be alone for what I have to do.”

Out of a pocket, she took the vial that Friar Lawrence had given to her.

She said to herself, “What if this potion does not work? Will I then be married to Paris tomorrow morning?”

Juliet took out a dagger.

She said, "If the potion does not work, this dagger will stop my marriage. I will commit suicide."

She put the dagger down in a handy place where it was easy to reach.

Juliet then said, "What if this potion is a poison? If my marriage to Romeo is discovered, Friar Lawrence will be in grave trouble. Perhaps he has given me a poison so that I will die and no one will ever hear of my marriage to Romeo. I am afraid that this potion is a poison, and yet I doubt that it is because Friar Lawrence has always been a righteous man."

Juliet then said, "What if, after I am laid in the tomb, I wake up before Romeo comes? That would be terrifying! Won't I suffocate in the tomb where no healthy air comes in? Won't I die before Romeo comes to get me?"

"Or, if I continue to live, what will happen when I am surrounded by death and night in a place of terror — a vault, this ancient receptacle of dead bodies, where for many hundreds of years the bones of all my buried ancestors have been placed, this vault where Tybalt, bloody with his wound, newly interred, lies festering in his shroud? What will happen when I wake up in a place inhabited by ghosts at night? Isn't it likely that I, if I should wake before the arrival of Romeo, will smell rotting flesh and perhaps even hear hideous shrieks of ghosts that drive men mad? Isn't it likely that I will become hysterical because of these fearsome things and insanely play with my forefathers' bones? Isn't it likely that I will pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud? Isn't it likely that in an insane fit I will grab a relative's bone and use it as a club to dash out my desperate brains? Look! Already I see Tybalt's ghost seeking Romeo, who spitted his body with a rapier! Stop, Tybalt, stop!"

Juliet held up the vial and said, "Romeo, I am doing this for you. This I drink to you."

Juliet drank the potion, which quickly took effect, and she fell back upon her bed.

— 4.4 —

In Old Capulet's mansion, Mrs. Capulet said to the Nurse, "Take these keys, and bring more spices."

The Nurse replied, "They are calling for dates and quinces in the pastry room."

Old Capulet entered the room and said, "Stir! Stir! Stir! The second cock has crowed, the curfew-bell has rung, and it is very late at night. Look after the baked meats, good Nurse. Don't worry about the cost."

"You are a man trying to do the work of a woman," the Nurse replied. "Go to bed. If you stay up all night, you will be ill tomorrow."

"Nonsense," Old Capulet said. "I have previously stayed awake all night for less important reasons than this wedding, and I have never felt ill because of it."

"Yes, in your day you chased skirts," his wife said. "But I will make sure that you don't chase any more skirts."

Mrs. Capulet and the Nurse left.

"My wife is jealous," Old Capulet happily said.

Some servants entered the room, carrying spits, logs, and baskets.

Old Capulet asked a servant who was carrying baskets, "Now, fellow, what have you got there?"

"Things for the cook, sir," the servant replied, "but I don't know what they are."

That servant left, and Old Capulet said to another servant, “Fetch drier logs. Call Peter, he will show you where they are.”

The servant replied, “I have a brain in my head, sir, and I can find the drier logs without troubling Peter.”

The servant left.

Old Capulet said, “Well said, servant, but you are, I think, a loggerhead. Good Heavens, it is already morning. Count Paris will soon be here with his musicians to wake up Juliet. Wait! I hear them playing!”

He listened to the music played by Count Paris’ musicians as they walked to his mansion, and then he shouted, “Nurse! Wife! Come here! Nurse, I say!”

The Nurse entered the room, and Old Capulet told her, “Go and wake up Juliet and help her dress. I will go and talk to Paris. Hurry! Hurry! The bridegroom has arrived! Hurry!”

— 4.5 —

The Nurse entered Juliet’s bedchamber to awaken her.

She said, “Juliet, wake up! I bet that you are still fast asleep, slugabed. Why aren’t you saying something? Well, you should get your rest. Count Paris will make sure that you get little rest tonight. God forgive me for making such a joke! Well, I need to wake you, but if Count Paris were to find you in bed, he would quickly wake you. Am I not right, Juliet?”

The Nurse drew back the curtains that enclosed Juliet’s bed and looked at Juliet.

“What!” the Nurse said. “You woke up, got dressed, and went back to bed to sleep some more. Well, wake up again. Juliet, wake up!”

The Nurse touched Juliet, whose body was cold like a corpse, and the Nurse screamed and shouted, “Help! Help! Juliet is dead! Curse the day that I was born! Bring me something to drink! My lord! My lady!”

Mrs. Capulet entered the room, saying, “What is the reason for this noise?”

The Nurse simply cried.

“What is the matter?”

The Nurse pointed to Juliet and said, “Look!”

Mrs. Capulet looked at Juliet, whose face was pale. She touched Juliet’s body and felt how cold it was.

Mrs. Capulet said, “My child, my life, wake up, look up, or I will die with you!”

Old Capulet entered Juliet’s bedchamber and said, “What is the reason for this delay? Bring Juliet down to meet Paris; he has come for her.”

The Nurse said, “She’s dead, deceased — she’s dead! Curse this day!”

Mrs. Capulet said, “She’s dead! She’s dead! She’s dead!”

Old Capulet said, “Let me see her!” Like the Nurse and his wife, he touched Juliet.

He said, “She is cold. Her blood has stopped moving. Her joints are stiff. Breath and her lips have long been separated. Death lies on her like an untimely frost lies upon and kills the sweetest flower of all those in the field.”

The Nurse and Mrs. Capulet cried, and Old Capulet said, “Death took her away to make me cry, but I am so shocked that I cannot cry.”

Friar Lawrence and Paris entered the room.

Friar Lawrence asked, "Is the bride ready to go to church?"

Old Capulet said to him, "She is ready to go to church, but she shall never again return home."

He said to Paris, "The night before your wedding day, Death lay with your wife-to-be. There she lies. She was a flower, and Death has deflowered her. Death is my son-in-law. Death is my heir. Death has married my daughter. I will die, and I will leave Death all I have. Death will get my life and my property — Death will get everything."

Paris said, "For a long time I have longed to see this morning, but now that it has arrived, I see something that I have never longed to see."

Mrs. Capulet said, "This day is accursed, unhappy, wretched, and hateful. This hour is the most miserable hour that ever time saw in its ceaseless passage throughout eternity. I had only one child left alive, one child left to love, one child to rejoice in and take solace in, and cruel Death has taken her away from me!"

The Nurse said, "This is a day of sorrow, of lamentation — the worst day that I have ever experienced. Never was seen so black a day as this."

Paris said, "On this day Death has cheated me, made me divorced, wronged me, spited me, slain me! Cruel Death has overthrown and conquered me. The woman I love is dead!"

Old Capulet said, "Death has treated me badly, distressed me, hated me, martyred me, killed me! Death, why did you come now to murder our wedding ceremony? Child, you were my soul and not just my child — and now you are dead! My child is dead! With my child all my joys are buried."

“Restrain your grief,” Friar Lawrence said. “Your exclamations of grief do not help. For fourteen years, Heaven and all of you shared this beautiful maiden, but now Heaven has all of her. Juliet is better off in Heaven than she was in this world. You were not able to keep Juliet’s body from dying, but Heaven will keep Juliet’s soul forever alive. Here on Earth, you wanted Juliet to gain social prestige. You wanted her to advance in society. Well, now she has advanced to Heaven itself — she is above the clouds and now resides in Heaven! So why do you grieve for her? Do you love your child so badly that you grieve when she achieves the highest happiness that anyone can ever achieve? The best marriage is not a marriage that lasts a long time, but a marriage in which one quickly dies because one rises all the sooner to Heaven. Dry your tears, and cover Juliet’s body with rosemary and carry her dressed in her best clothing to church. Our foolish human nature makes us cry for our dear Juliet, but our reason tells us that we should rejoice because Juliet is in Heaven.”

Old Capulet ordered, “Everything that we prepared for Juliet’s wedding, we now must use for Juliet’s funeral. Our musical instruments must play melancholy tunes, our happy wedding feast must become a sad burial feast, our happy wedding hymns must become sullen dirges, our bridal flowers must serve as funeral flowers — everything that was to be used for a wedding must now be used for a funeral.”

Friar Lawrence said, “Old Capulet, Mrs. Capulet, Paris, and everyone else, prepare for the funeral. You must follow Juliet’s corpse to the church. Heaven is frowning on you because of some sin. Do not anger Heaven any further by attempting to go against the will of Heaven.”

In another part of Old Capulet’s mansion, the musicians were talking among themselves as the Nurse walked through the room.

A musician said, “Well, we might as well put away our musical instruments and go home.”

The Nurse said, “That is a good idea. As you know, Juliet is dead and this is a pitiable case.”

She left.

“She is right, you know,” the musician said. “The case of my musical instrument is in pitiable shape, but it can be mended. The case of the dead Juliet is something that can never be mended.”

Peter, the Capulet servant, entered the room and said, “Musicians, please play for me the song ‘Heart’s Ease.’ If you want me to live, play ‘Heart’s Ease.’”

“Why do you want us to play ‘Heart’s Ease’?”

Peter replied, “Because my heart is playing ‘My Heart is Full of Woe.’ Play something that will comfort me and make me feel better.”

“This is not a time for playing music,” the musician said.

“You will not play for me?” Peter asked.

“No.”

“Then I will give you something sound,” Peter punned.

“What will you give us?”

“I certainly will not give you sound money, but I will give you something. I will give you sound sarcasm — I will call you a thieving minstrel.”

“Then I will call you a lowly servant.”

Peter pulled out a dagger and said, “I really do not need this — I have my fists. I will *do re mi* you — I will rain blows on you from low to high. I will treat you like a percussion

instrument. I will give you a sound beating. I will make you a sounding board for my fists. Take note of the notes that I will play on you.”

None of the musicians felt threatened by the dagger. One look at Peter, and people knew that he was a clown and not a fighter.

The musician said, “If you *do re mi* us, you will be singing for us. Note those notes.”

A second musician said, “Please, put away your dagger, and either put away your wit or put your wit on display.”

“My wit is my greatest weapon,” Peter said, putting away his dagger. “I can use it to defeat you without even using my dagger. Here is a riddle for you: People often talk about ‘music with her silver sound.’ Why is sound called silver? What answer do you bring, Simon String?”

The first musician replied, “Because silver has a sweet sound.”

“It is a pretty answer, but it is wrong,” Peter said. “How do you answer my riddle, Hugh Fiddle?”

“People say ‘silver sound’ because musicians make sounds for silver coins,” the second musician said.

“It is an ingenious answer, and very close to being exactly the right answer,” Peter said. “And to what answer would take an oath, James Soundpost?”

“I can’t think of an answer,” James Soundpost said.

“Then you must be the singer,” Peter said. “Tenors have enormous cavities in their heads that enable them to sing well. I bet that you can put an egg in your mouth and close it without breaking the egg. It’s such a pity that the enormous cavities in their heads leave tenors little room for brains. But

here is the answer to my riddle, hey-diddle-diddle: People refer to ‘music with her silver sound’ because musicians get no gold coins — they get only silver coins — for making sounds.”

With that, Peter departed.

The first musician said, “He was more annoying than he was witty.”

“Let him go hang himself,” the second musician said. “But let’s not go home. We can stay here and wait for the mourners to return from the funeral and eat. At least, we’ll get a meal.”

CHAPTER 5: TRAGEDY, FOLLOWED BY PEACE**— 5.1 —**

Romeo, alone on a street in Mantua, said to himself, “If I may trust the truth — if it is not deceiving — of dreams, my dreams foretell good news and happiness for me. My heart is light, and all day I have been floating above the ground with cheerful thoughts — something unusual of late for me. I dreamt that Juliet came and found me dead — it is a strange dream that allows a dead man to be conscious and think! Juliet kissed me and brought me back to life, and when I lived again, I became an emperor. This dream was very joyful and sweet, but it is but a shadow of the joy I will enjoy and sweetness I will taste when I am again with Juliet, my beloved!”

Romeo’s servant, Balthasar, who had remained in Verona so that he could bring news to Romeo as needed, rode a horse up to Romeo.

Romeo said, “News from Verona! How are you, Balthasar? Have you brought me a letter from Friar Lawrence? How is Juliet? How is my father? Again, how is Juliet? I ask about her twice because nothing can be ill, if she is well.”

Balthasar replied, “Then she is well, and nothing can be ill. Her body rests in the tomb of the Capulets, and her soul lives with angels. I myself attended her funeral and saw her corpse placed in the tomb. Immediately, I rode here to tell you. Pardon me for bringing you such bad news, but I am following your orders to bring you news from Verona, sir.”

“Is what you have said true?” Romeo asked. “Then I defy you, stars! I will choose my own fate and make it fact. Balthasar, you know where I live. Get me ink and paper so that I can write a letter, and get fresh horses for us to ride. I will return to Verona tonight.”

“I beg you, sir,” Balthasar said, “not to act hastily and without patience. Your looks are pale and wild, and they worry me.”

“You have nothing to worry about,” Romeo said. “Leave me, and do the things I have ordered you to do. Didn’t Friar Lawrence write a letter to me and send it to me by you?”

“No, sir.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Romeo said. “Go and get fresh horses. I will be with you soon.”

Balthasar left.

Romeo said to himself, “Well, Juliet, I will lie with you — both of us dead — tonight. What is the best way for me to commit suicide? Funny how quickly the means is found for desperate men! I remember seeing an apothecary, a druggist, who lives near here in his shop. He wears tattered clothing, he has beetle brows, and I saw him gathering medicinal herbs. He was very thin — the sharp misery of poverty had worn him to the bones. In his poverty-stricken shop hung a tortoise, a stuffed alligator, and skins of various ill-shaped fishes. On the mostly empty shelves were a few empty boxes, unfired earthen pots, bladders and musty seeds, bits and pieces of packthread and cakes of rose petals that are too old to freshen the air and ought to be thrown away. All these poor things were on the shelves to make a pretense of merchandise. Noting this penury when I first arrived in Mantua, I said to myself, ‘If a man should ever need poison — the sale of which in Mantua is punished by immediate death — here lives a miserable wretch who would sell it to him.’ My thought then I will put into action now. I have need of poison, and this needy man will sell it to me. If I remember correctly, this is his shop. Today is a holiday, and his shop is shut.”

Romeo called, “Apothecary!”

The apothecary came to the door of his shop and said, “Who is calling so loudly?”

“I want to make a purchase,” Romeo said. “I see that you are impoverished. Here are forty gold coins — a fortune for you. In return, let me have some poison — fast-acting poison that will disperse itself through all the veins and kill the life-weary taker as violently and quickly as gunpowder is swiftly fired into the air from the womb of a cannon.”

“I have such a poison,” the apothecary said, “but the law of Mantua punishes with death anyone who sells it.”

“You are thin from hunger and full of wretchedness,” Romeo replied. “You are close to death, so why are you afraid to die? I look at your cheeks, and I see famine. I look at your eyes, and I see need and oppression. I look at your back, and I see the contempt that people have for you and for your beggary. The world is not your friend, and neither is the law of Mantua. Mantua has no law that will make you rich; it has only a law that will keep you from becoming rich. Therefore, stop being impoverished — break the law and take these forty gold coins.”

“My poverty, but not my will, consents.”

“I pay your poverty and not your will.”

The apothecary handed Romeo a small vial partially filled with poison powder and said, “Add any liquid you want to this vial of poison, and drink it. After you drink it, it will kill you even if you have the strength of twenty men.”

Romeo gave the apothecary the forty gold coins and said, “Here is your gold. Gold is a worse poison and kills more people than this so-called poison that the law of Mantua forbids you to sell. I have given you poison. You have not given me poison. Farewell. Buy food, and gain weight.”

He turned away and said to himself, “Come, cordial and not poison, go with me to the grave of Juliet, for there I will drink you and you will make me whole by reuniting me with Juliet.”

— 5.2 —

Friar John walked up to Friar Lawrence’s cell and called, “Holy Franciscan Friar Lawrence! Are you home?”

Friar Lawrence said, “I recognize your voice, Friar John. Welcome back from Mantua.”

He let Friar John into his cell and said, “What news do you bring me from Romeo? Or, if he has written to me, please give me his letter.”

“I have news that will disappoint you,” Friar John said. “I went to find another Franciscan friar to accompany me during my journey to Mantua and back. He was visiting the sick when I found him. The health officials of Verona arrived, and thinking that my friend and I were in a house that was infected with the plague, quarantined us in the house. Therefore, I was not able to go to Mantua to give Romeo your letter.”

“Then who took my letter to Romeo?” Friar Lawrence asked.

“The health officials were so strict that I was unable to find someone to deliver your letter. In fact, I could not even get a messenger to carry the letter to you and give it to you. And so I return to you your letter.”

“This is bad luck, indeed!” Friar Lawrence said. “This letter was not trivial but instead was full of important and urgent news. That it was not delivered may do much damage. Friar John, please go and get me an iron crowbar and quickly bring it to me.”

“Brother, I will,” Friar John said.

He left to find the crowbar.

“I will go to the Capulet tomb alone,” Friar Lawrence said. “Romeo will not be present to accompany me. Within three hours, fair Juliet will awake. She will blame me because Romeo has not received news of our plan, but I will write him another letter and send it to him in Mantua. I will keep Juliet in my cell until Romeo reads my letter and comes to Verona to take her with him to Mantua. I pity Juliet: She is a living corpse in a tomb filled with the dead.”

— 5.3 —

In the churchyard where the tomb of the Capulets was located, Paris and his servant arrived that night. They were carrying flowers and a torch.

“Give me the torch,” Paris said to his servant. “Go over there and stand. Wait there. Put out the torch because I don’t want to be seen. Under the yew trees, lie on the ground so that you are hidden. Keep your ear to the ground so that you can hear anyone who comes here. The ground is loose because of the digging of dirt. The loose dirt will cause people to stumble, and you will hear them. If someone comes, let me know — whistle. Give me those flowers. Go, and do what I have ordered you to do.”

Paris’ servant thought, *I am afraid to be here in the graveyard, yet I will stay.*

Paris said, “Juliet, sweet flower, with flowers I decorate your bridal bed, which is also your tomb — the canopy of your bridal bed is dust and stones. Each night, I will bedew your tomb with perfume or with my tears purified by my moans of sorrow. Each night, I will decorate your tomb with flowers and I will grieve.”

Paris’ servant heard someone coming. The servant whistled.

Paris said, “The boy gives warning that something is approaching. Whose cursed foot wanders this way tonight to interrupt my mourning and true love’s rite? It is someone with a torch! Night, hide me for a while!”

Romeo and Balthasar entered the courtyard. They did not see Paris or his servant. Balthasar carried a torch, mattock (a tool shaped like a pickax; the two differently shaped ends — adze and chisel — of its head are often used for digging), and iron crowbar.

Romeo said to Balthasar, “Give me that mattock and the iron crowbar.”

Then he handed him a letter and said, “Take this letter that I have written, and early in the morning deliver it to my father. Now give me the torch. I order you that no matter what you hear or see, you do not interfere with what I do. I will enter this tomb partly because I want to see Juliet’s face.”

Thinking that Balthasar might still be suspicious, Romeo then lied, “But the main reason I need to enter this tomb is to take from Juliet’s dead finger a precious ring, a ring that I must use in some important business.”

He added, “Now, go. But if you are suspicious and return here to spy on me and see what I do, by Heaven, I will tear you into pieces and strew this hungry churchyard with your limbs. I mean it: I can be both savage and wild. I can be more fierce and more determined than hungry tigers or the roaring and dangerous sea.”

Balthasar said, “I will be gone, sir, and not trouble you.”

“That is the way to show me friendship,” Romeo said.

He handed Balthasar some money and said, “Take this. Live, and be prosperous. Farewell, fine fellow.”

Balthasar walked away a short distance but thought, *Despite what I said, I will stay here and hide and see what Romeo does. His looks frighten me, and I am afraid of what he may attempt to do.*

Romeo, thinking himself alone and unwatched, said to himself, “Tomb, you detestable mouth, you belly of death, you have swallowed Juliet. I will force your rotten jaws to open, and to spite you, I will fill you with more food.”

Romeo used his tools to open the tomb.

Watching, Paris recognized Romeo: “This is that banished haughty Montague, who murdered my Juliet’s cousin Tybalt. It is said that Juliet died from the shock and grief of Tybalt’s death. Now Romeo has come here to do some villainous shame to the bodies of Juliet and Tybalt. I will stop him.”

Paris stepped out of the shadows that had hid him and said to Romeo, “Stop, vile Montague! Tybalt and Juliet are dead. Can you wreak vengeance even past their deaths? Condemned and exiled villain, I arrest you. Go with me, for you must die.”

“I know that I must die,” Romeo said. “That is why I came here. Good gentle young man, leave me, a desperate man, alone. Go. Leave me. Think of the dead bodies in this tomb, and let them frighten you so that you dare not stay here. I beg you, don’t make me kill you so that I am guilty of another sin. Don’t make me angry! Go. By Heaven, I swear that I love you better than I love myself. I have come here bearing a weapon that I will use against myself. Do not stay here. Go, and live, so that you may say, ‘A merciful madman begged me to run away.’”

“I defy you and your threats, and I arrest you. You are a felon here in Verona.”

“Do you defy me? Then let us fight, boy!”

Romeo and Paris fought.

Paris’ servant saw them and thought, *I will go and call the guards.*

He ran out of the courtyard.

Romeo stabbed Paris, who said, “I am dying!”

Paris fell and said to Romeo, “If you are merciful, carry me into the tomb and lay me near Juliet.”

Paris died, and Romeo said, “I will do as you ask and place you in the tomb of the Capulets. But I wonder who you are.”

Romeo looked at him carefully and said, “So you are Mercutio’s cousin, Count Paris. I think Balthasar mentioned you as we rode back to Verona, although I paid little attention to him. I think he said that you were going to marry Juliet. I think Balthasar said that, or perhaps I dreamed it. Or have I become insane and invented the tale because you mentioned Juliet? You are misfortunate like me. I will bury you in this magnificent tomb. A tomb? No, I will bury you in a lantern. Juliet’s body lies here, and her beauty makes this tomb a chamber that is full of light.”

Romeo carried Paris’ body into the tomb and put it down, saying, “Lie there. You are a dead man who has been interred in a tomb by a soon-to-be dead man.”

Romeo paused, and then he looked at Juliet and said, “How often are men merry when they are soon to die! Their doctors call such merriment the lightening before death. But how can I call what I am feeling now a lightening? Juliet! My love! My wife! Death had the power to suck away the honey of your breath, but Death does not yet have the power to take away your beauty. Death has not conquered your beauty. Your lips and your cheeks are still red, and Death has not yet

planted his pale flag there — the banner of your beauty still flies.”

Romeo looked at another body in the tomb and said, “Tybalt, are you lying there in your bloody shroud? What better thing can I do for you than to use the hand that killed you in your youth to kill myself, who was your enemy? Forgive me for killing you, Tybalt!”

Looking again at Juliet, Romeo said, “Why are you yet so beautiful? Should I believe that Death, which has no body, falls in love? Should I believe that Death, that lean, abhorred monster, keeps you here in the dark tomb to be his lover? Because I am jealous of Death, I will always stay with you, and I will never depart from this palace of dim night. Here I will remain with the worms that are your chambermaids. Here I will set up my everlasting rest and end the ill fate that unfavorable stars have brought to my world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last at Juliet! Arms, take your last embrace of Juliet! Lips — the gates of breath — seal with a rightful kiss an everlasting contract with brutish Death!”

Romeo kissed Juliet, and then he took out of a pocket the poison that he had mixed with water.

Romeo said, “Poison, you shall be my bitter and unpleasant guide to death! Now I — a desperate pilot — will wreck on rocks that sea-weary ship that is my body! Here’s to my love!”

Romeo drank the poison and said, “Apothecary, you spoke the truth: Your poison is quick.”

He died.

A little later, Friar Lawrence entered the courtyard, carrying a lantern, a crowbar, and a spade. He walked toward the tomb and said, “Saint Francis, help me! All too often tonight, I have stumbled over graves — a bad omen!”

He heard someone and said, "Who's there?"

Balthasar answered, "A friend — I know you very well."

"May God make you happy!" Friar Lawrence said. "Tell me, friend, whose torch is it that burns dimly among grubs and eyeless skulls. It seems to be burning in the tomb of the Capulets."

"That is correct," Balthasar said. "The torch belongs to a person you know and love."

"Who is it?"

"Romeo."

"How long has he been there?"

"At least half an hour."

"Go with me to the tomb," Friar Lawrence said.

"I dare not, sir. Romeo does not know that I am here. He thinks that I have departed, and he threatened to kill me if I stayed here and spied on him."

"Stay here, then," Friar Lawrence said. "I will go into the tomb alone. Fear comes upon me; I am afraid that some ill, unlucky thing has happened. I am much afraid."

"I think I fell asleep under this yew tree," Balthasar said. "I think I dreamed that Romeo and another man fought and that Romeo killed him."

As he walked to the tomb, Friar Lawrence called, "Romeo!"

Holding his torch, he looked around and said, "Whose blood is this that stains the stony entrance of this tomb? To whom belong these gory swords that lie discolored with red by this place of peace?"

He walked into the tomb and called, "Romeo!"

He looked around, saw Romeo's corpse, and said, "Romeo, you are pale and dead as you lie by Juliet! Who else is here? Paris! You are dead and steeped in blood, Paris! An unkind hour has witnessed this cruel turn of the wheel of fortune."

Juliet moved and Friar Lawrence said, "She awakes."

Juliet sat up, recognized Friar Lawrence, and said, "Comforting friar, where is Romeo? I remember well our plan, and I am in the tomb and awake, as we planned. Where is my Romeo?"

A noise sounded from outside the tomb. Paris' servant had gotten the city guards and was leading them to the tomb of the Capulets.

"I hear some noise," Friar Lawrence said. "Juliet, come from this nest of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep. A greater power than we can resist has thwarted our plan. Come, come away from here. Your husband lies — dead — beside you. Near you, Paris also lies dead. Come with me. I will arrange for you to join a sisterhood of holy nuns. Don't ask me questions now, but leave at once because the city guards are coming. Come with me, Juliet. Let us flee!"

More noise was heard.

Panicked, Friar Lawrence said, "I dare no longer stay!"

Juliet said, "Leave, if you must, but I will not flee from here."

Friar Lawrence ran out of the tomb.

Juliet turned toward Romeo and said, "What is this? A vial enclosed in my true love's hand? It is poison that has caused his death. Romeo, have you drunk it all and left me no friendly drop to drink so I can follow you in death? I will kiss your lips and hope that some poison — a restorative that will restore me to you — is on them to make me die."

She kissed Romeo and said, "Your lips are warm."

A guard outside shouted at Paris' servant, "Lead on, boy! Which way do we go?"

"The noise grows closer," Juliet said. "Therefore, I will die quickly."

She took a dagger from Romeo's belt, "Oh, opportune dagger, my body is your sheath!"

She stabbed herself and said, "Rust there, and let me die."

She fell across Romeo's body and died.

Some city guards and Paris' servant stood outside the tomb.

"This is the place," Paris' servant said. "Look there, where the torch is burning."

The head guard said, "The ground here is bloody. Some of you guards search the courtyard and arrest anyone you find."

He entered the tomb and said, "Here lies Count Paris dead. Here also lies Juliet, bloody, warm, and newly dead, although she has been lying in this tomb for two days."

The head guard looked at the corpse of Romeo and then ordered, "Guards, some of you run and inform Prince Escalus, the Capulets, and the Montagues. Others, search the tomb. We see the ground where all these woes lie, but we cannot know the true ground or cause of all these woes until we know more details."

The head guard went outside the tomb, and some guards arrived with Balthasar in their custody. A guard said, "Here is Romeo's servant. We found him in the churchyard."

"Keep him in your custody until Prince Escalus arrives and investigates what has happened."

Other guards arrived with Friar Lawrence in their custody.

A guard said, "Here is a friar who trembles, sighs, and weeps. We took this mattock and this spade from him as he was leaving this churchyard."

"That is suspicious," the head guard said. "Keep him in your custody."

Prince Escalus and his bodyguards arrived.

"What outrage has occurred that calls me out of bed?" Prince Escalus said.

Old Capulet, Mrs. Capulet, and other people arrived.

Old Capulet asked, "What has happened that causes such noise in the streets?"

Mrs. Capulet said, "Some people in the street cry 'Romeo,' other people cry 'Juliet,' and some other people cry 'Paris.' But all run, shouting, to the tomb of us Capulets."

"Why is everyone shouting?" Prince Escalus asked.

The head guard said, "Sir, here lies Count Paris dead. Here lies Romeo dead. And here lies Juliet, who we had thought was dead two days ago, warm and newly dead."

"Let us find out how all this happened," Prince Escalus said.

The head guard said, "Here are a friar and Romeo's servant. With them are tools that can be used to open a closed tomb."

Old Capulet had entered the tomb and looked at his daughter's body. He returned and told his wife, "Juliet has bled much recently. The dagger in her body is in the wrong place — it should have been found in the back of Romeo."

Mrs. Capulet said, "As a parent, I should have died before my daughter. Older people should die before younger

people. Before Juliet died, a funeral bell should have tolled for me.”

Old Montague and others arrived.

Prince Escalus said to Old Montague, “Come here. You are up early, and now you will see your son and heir down early this night and early in his all-too-short life.”

Old Montague replied, “My liege, my wife died earlier tonight from grief caused by the exile of our son, Romeo. What further grief has now come to harass me in my old age?”

“Look and you shall see.”

Old Montague looked into the tomb and saw Romeo, his son, dead.

He cried, “Romeo, what foul manners are these! To die and go into a tomb before your aged father dies!”

“Restrain your cries of grief,” Prince Escalus said, “until we find out truly what has happened and why it happened. Then you and I shall both grieve. Two of my relatives — Mercutio and Paris — are dead, and perhaps you and I will both die of grief. I may even die of grief first. In the meantime, restrain your cries of grief and let your head control your heart.”

Prince Escalus then ordered, “Bring forth the people you have arrested.”

The guards brought forth Friar Lawrence and Balthasar.

Friar Lawrence said, “I am the man who is under the greatest suspicion, and I am the one who is least able to exonerate myself because of the time when and the place where I was arrested. Those place me here at the time of this tragedy. I will both accuse myself and exonerate myself. I will tell you

what I have done, and I will tell you my motives in doing what I have done.”

“Tell us at once everything you know,” Prince Escalus ordered.

“I will be brief,” Friar Lawrence said. “The brief time that I may have left to live will not permit a long story. Romeo, who lies here dead, was married to Juliet, who also is lying here dead. I married them. The day of their marriage was also the day of death for Tybalt, whose premature death resulted in banishment for the newly married Romeo from Verona. Juliet mourned, but she mourned for Romeo, not for Tybalt. You, Old Capulet, wanted to stop Juliet’s mourning, and so you decided — against her will — to marry Juliet to Count Paris. Wild and distraught, Juliet then came to me and begged me to form a plan that would stop her marriage to Count Paris — or else she would kill herself immediately in my cell. Therefore, I gave her a sleeping potion, which had the effect I intended, for it made her appear to be dead. In the meantime, I wrote a letter to Romeo to tell him to come to Verona this awful night to help me to take Juliet from this tomb at the time she woke up. But the man who was supposed to carry my letter to Romeo in Mantua was forced by circumstances to stay here in Verona and so yesterday he returned to me my letter. All alone this night, I came to take Juliet from the tomb, intending to keep her hidden in my cell until I could find a good time to send news to Romeo. But when I came here tonight, a few minutes before Juliet woke up, here I saw lying dead the noble Paris and faithful Romeo. Juliet awoke, and I begged her to leave the tomb and bear this work of Heaven with patience, but I heard a noise and was frightened and so I left, but Juliet — a desperate woman — would not go with me, and, it appears, she committed suicide. This is what I know. The Nurse can vouch that Romeo and Juliet were married. If any of these cruel events

were caused by me, then let my old life end before my time of natural death in accordance with the letter of your law.”

“You have a good reputation,” Prince Escalus said. “I have always known you to be a righteous man.”

He asked the head guard, “Where is Romeo’s servant? Let’s hear what he has to say.”

Balthasar said, “I brought Romeo news of Juliet’s death, and he rode a horse here from Mantua to this tomb. I am holding in my hand a letter that he earlier told me to give to his father. He threatened me with death if I did not depart and if I interfered with him, and then he went into the tomb. I decided to stay here, but I did not go into the tomb.”

“Give me the letter,” Prince Escalus said. “I will read it.”

He then asked, “Where is Count Paris’ servant — the one who alerted the guards?”

Count Paris’ servant was brought before the Prince, who asked him, “What was Count Paris doing here?”

“He came with flowers with which to strew Juliet’s resting place,” the servant said. “He ordered me to stay at a distance, and I obeyed. Soon someone came with a torch and began to open the tomb. Count Paris drew his sword and they fought, and I ran away to get the guards.”

Count Escalus, who had been reading Romeo’s letter to his father by the light of torches, said, “This letter provides evidence that shows that Friar Lawrence spoke the truth. Romeo tells of his and Juliet’s love for each other. Romeo states that he thought that Juliet was truly dead. And Romeo writes that he bought poison from an impoverished apothecary and came to the tomb of the Capulets to die, and to lie beside Juliet.”

Prince Escalus then asked, "Where are these enemies? Capulet! Montague! See what a scourge is laid upon your hate — Heaven has found a way to kill your joys, your children, with love. I have treated your quarrels and battles too softly, and because of my lenience, I have lost two kinsmen: Mercutio and Paris."

He shouted, "All of us are punished!"

Old Capulet said to Old Montague, "Brother, give me your hand. Now that our children, who were married to each other, are dead, we ought to make peace. That is the least that we can do."

"I can do something more for you," Old Montague said. "I will have made a statue of Juliet in solid gold. As long as Verona is called by the name Verona, no one shall be valued more than true and faithful Juliet."

"As rich a statue shall I have made of Romeo, and he will be by Juliet's side. Those two gave their lives because of our former hatred of each other."

Prince Escalus said, "Peace has come to us on this cloudy and grey morning. The Sun, for sorrow, will not show his head. Let us leave here and talk more about these sad events. Some people shall be pardoned, and some people shall be punished, for never was a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo."

Chapter IX: TIMON OF ATHENS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Male Characters

Timon of Athens.

Lucius, Lucullus, Sempronius, flattering Lords.

Ventidius, one of Timon's false friends.

Apemantus, a churlish Cynic philosopher.

Alcibiades, an Athenian Captain.

Poet, Painter, Jeweler, Merchant.

Certain Senators.

Certain Masquers (Ladies dressed as Amazons).

Certain Thieves.

Flavius, steward to Timon.

Flaminius, Lucilius, Servilius, servants to Timon.

Caphis, Philotus, Titus, Lucius, Hortensius, several servants to Usurers and to the Lords.

Female Characters

Phrygia, Timandra, mistresses to Alcibiades.

Minor Characters

Cupid.

Diverse other Servants and Attendants.

Servants of Ventidius and of Varro and Isidore (two of Timon's Creditors).

Three Strangers.

An Old Athenian.

A Page.

A Fool.

Scene

Athens, and the neighboring Woods.

CHAPTER 1**— 1.1 —**

In a hall in Timon's house, several people stood. A poet and a painter stood together, and a jeweler and a merchant stood together.

The poet said to the painter, "Good day, sir."

"I am glad you're well," the painter replied.

"I have not seen you for a long time. How goes the world?"

"How goes the world?" was a way of saying, "How are you?" However, the painter took the question literally.

"It wears, sir, as it grows," the painter replied. "The world wears out as it grows older. With entropy, someday the world will wear out completely."

"Yes, that's well known," the poet said, "but what particular rarity do we see in the world? What strange event never experienced before and without equal — according to many and varied witnesses and records of history — do we see?"

The poet answered his own question: "See the magic of bounty and generosity! The power of bounty and generosity has conjured all these spirits to be in attendance here and now."

He was referring to the people present, all of whom were present because of Timon's bounty. Timon was a very generous man.

The poet pointed and said, "I know that merchant."

"I know both of the men," the painter said. "The other man's a jeweler."

A short distance away, the merchant said, “Oh, he is a worthy lord.”

The jeweler replied, “That’s very certain.”

“He is a very incomparable man, and he keeps his generosity well exercised. His goodness is, as it were, tireless and enduring. He is surpassingly generous.”

The jeweler said, “I have a jewel here —”

“Please, let me see it,” the merchant requested. “Is it for the Lord Timon, sir?”

“If he will pay me its estimated value, but as for that —”

As for that, Timon always paid its estimated value.

The poet recited two verses to himself, “*When we for recompense have praised the vile, / it stains the glory in that happy verse that aptly sings the good.*”

A person can praise things that are bad in order to receive money, but doing that devalues praise for things that are good.

Now, lots of praise began to be stated for things for which people were hoping to receive money.

“The jewel is of good quality,” the merchant said.

“The quality is rich,” the jeweler said. “Look at its luster.”

A short distance away, the painter said to the poet, “You are rapt, sir, in some work, some dedication to the great lord.”

The great lord was the generous Timon. Poets would often dedicate a work to a generous lord in return for financial patronage.

“These two verses slipped idly and casually from me,” the poet said. “Our poetry is similar to gum that oozes from the tree from whence it is nourished.”

The poet believed that poetry was easy to write as long as it was nourished — paid for.

The poet added, “The fire in the flint does not show itself until the flint is struck.”

There is a way to strike the flint that is this poet so that it produces the spark of poetry. That way is to give this poet money.

The poet continued, “Our refined flame produces itself and like the current flies each barrier it chafes.”

According to the poet, writing poetry could be compared to flowing water that went around or leapt over barriers in the stream and then continued downstream.

One can wonder whether truly good poetry can be *easily* written in return for money.

Seeing the painter holding something, the poet asked, “What do you have there?”

“A picture, sir,” the painter said. “When does your book come forth?”

“Upon the heels of my presentment, sir.”

The poet was present to present his book to Timon; he was fully confident that Timon would approve of the book and would give him money for its publication — and for its composition.

The poet requested, “Let’s see your piece.”

Showing the poet his picture, the painter said, “It is a good piece.”

“So it is,” the poet said. “This picture turned out well, and it is excellent.”

“It is indifferent,” the painter said.

One can wonder whether the painter was being falsely modest in order to get a compliment, or was telling the truth.

“It is admirable,” the poet said about the painting, which depicted a man. “Look at how the gracefulness of this figure proclaims his status! What a mental power this eye shoots forth! How forcefully imagination moves in this lip! The figure is dumb — silent — but the viewer can provide words for the gesture the figure is making.”

“It is a pretty mocking of the life,” the painter said. “It is a good imitation of reality. Look here at this part. Is it good?”

“I will say about your picture that it tutors nature,” the poet said. “Artificial strife lives in these touches that are livelier than life.”

The artificial strife was the effort needed to make art. The poet had said that writing poetry was easy when the poetry would be paid for, but to him painting was hard.

Senators now entered the hall and walked in front of the poet and the painter.

“How this lord is followed!” the painter said. “Lots of important people seek his patronage.”

“The Senators of Athens seek Timon’s patronage!” the poet said. “Timon is a happy man!”

“Look, more are coming!” the painter said.

“You see this confluence, this great flood of visitors,” the poet said. “I have, in this rough work, shaped out a man, whom this Earthly world that is below him embraces and hugs with the amplest reception. My free drift halts not

particularly, but moves itself in a wide sea of wax: No targeted malice infects one comma in the course I hold; the course I hold flies an eagle flight, bold and straight on, leaving no trace behind.”

The poet was describing the work of art that he would present to Timon. It was a work about a man whom many people praised. He did not name any particular man. In addition, he claimed that no maliciousness against any particular person could be discerned in his writing. The scope of the poet’s writing was broad. At this time, people often wrote on wax tablets with a stylus, but the poet wrote on a sea of wax — a very broad scope. The poet also claimed that the targeted malice of his writing flew like an eagle; it flew high and straight and left no trace of its passage behind.

In other words, the message of the writing was universal, but it definitely applied to a particular individual. However, the poet expected that his writing would fly over the head of its audience and leave no trace behind.

The poet’s words were vague, and the painter said, “How shall I understand you? What are you saying?”

“I will unfold my meaning to you,” the poet said. “You see how all social ranks, how all minds, as well of glib and slippery creatures as of grave and austere quality, tender their services to Lord Timon. His large fortune, in conjunction with his good and gracious nature, subdues and appropriates to his love and attention all sorts of hearts. Yes, hearts ranging from those of the mirror-faced flatterers who reflect back the flatterer’s own moods and opinions to the Cynic philosopher Apemantus, who loves few things better than to hate himself.”

If what the poet said is true, then Apemantus hates himself simply because he is a human being.

The poet continued, “Even Apemantus drops down to his knee when he is before Timon, and returns home happy when Timon acknowledges him by nodding to him.”

“I saw them speak together,” the painter said.

“Sir, I have represented in my work Lady Fortune, who is enthroned upon a high and pleasant hill. The base of the mountain is surrounded by rows of men with differing degrees of merit and differing kinds of character. These men labor on the bosom of this sphere to increase their wealth. Among them all, whose eyes are fixed on this sovereign lady — Lady Fortune — is one man I describe as being like Lord Timon in disposition and build, whom Lady Fortune with her ivory hand beckons to her. Lord Timon’s present grace translates his rivals to present slaves and servants — his ever-present generosity immediately changes his rivals into his slaves and servants.”

“You have hit your target,” the painter said. “This throne, Lady Fortune, and this hill, in my opinion, with one man beckoned to climb from the rest below, bowing his head against the steep mountain to climb to his happiness, would be well expressed in our condition.”

The painter meant that Lady Fortune also beckons creative people such as himself and the poet to climb the mountain. Such a climb is steep, but it is rewarding.

“Sir, continue to listen to me,” the poet said. “All those who were his equals just recently, some of whom are worth more than he himself is, at the moment follow his strides, fill his lobbies as if they were his servants and attendants, rain sacrificial whisperings — like the adoring prayers of a priest at a sacrifice — in his ear, treat as a sacred object even his stirrup that they hold as he mounts his horse, and act as if only through him are they able to drink in the air that is free to all.”

“What about all these people?” the painter asked.

“When Lady Fortune in her shift and change of mood kicks down her late beloved, all his parasites who labored on their hands and knees and crawled after him to reach the mountain’s top now let him slip down the mountain. Not even one will accompany him in his decline.”

“That is a commonplace idea,” the painter said. “I can show you a thousand moralistic paintings that demonstrate these quick blows of Lady Fortune more pregnantly than words can. Yet you do well to show Lord Timon that lowly eyes have seen the foot above the head.”

The eyes of the lowly have seen Lady Fortune’s foot above their head just before it kicked them down the steep hill; previously, the eyes of the now lowly were the eyes of the then great.

Trumpets sounded; someone important was coming.

Timon entered the hall and talked courteously with those present — people who had a request to make of him.

A messenger from Ventidius began talking with Timon; Lucilius and other servants followed Timon.

Timon said, “Imprisoned is he, do you say?”

The messenger from Ventidius replied, “Yes, my good lord. Five talents is his debt; his means of repayment are very short, and his creditors are very strict. He wants you to write an honorable letter to those who have shut him up. If you fail to do that, his comfort will come to an end.”

The honorable letter would state that Timon would honor — pay — the debt of his friend.

“Noble Ventidius!” Timon said. “Well, I am not of that feather — that kind of person — to shake off my friend when

he needs me. I know him to be a gentleman who well deserves help, which he shall have. I'll pay the debt, and free him."

"Your lordship binds Ventidius to you forever with your generosity," the messenger said.

"Convey my greetings to him," Timon said. "I will send his ransom. Once he has been freed, ask him to come to me. It is not enough just to help the feeble up, for we ought to support him afterward. Fare you well."

"All happiness to your honor!" the messenger said as he exited.

An old Athenian man entered the hall and said, "Lord Timon, hear me speak."

"Speak freely, good father," Timon said.

In this society, old men one was not related to were called "father" as a term of respect.

"You have a servant named Lucilius," the old Athenian man said.

"I have," Timon said. "What about him?"

"Most noble Timon, call the man before you."

"Is he here, or not?" Timon asked. "Lucilius!"

"Here I am, at your lordship's service."

"This fellow here, Lord Timon, this creature of yours, by night frequents my house," the old Athenian man said.

The terms "fellow" and "creature" were contemptuous. The old Athenian man looked down on Lucilius because he was a servant and lacked wealth.

The old Athenian man continued, "I am a man who from my first years has been inclined to be thrifty, and my estate deserves an heir more raised than one who holds a trencher."

A trencher is a wooden plate that holds food. Lucilius was a servant who waited on Timon during meals. The old Athenian man's problem with Lucilius courting his daughter was Lucilius' lack of social status and wealth. He wanted his daughter to marry someone with a higher social status and more wealth.

"Well, what further do you have to say?" Timon asked.

"I have only one daughter, no kin else, on whom I may confer what I have gotten throughout my life. The maiden is beautiful and has just become old enough to be a bride, and I have raised her at a very dear cost to have the best accomplishments. This man of yours wants her to be his. I ask you, noble lord, to join with me to forbid him from being in her presence. I myself have spoken to him, but in vain."

"Lucilius is honest," Timon said. "He is honorable and worthy."

"If he is honest, then therefore he will be honest," the old Athenian man replied. "He can show that he is honest by leaving my daughter alone. His honesty will be his reward; his reward must not be my daughter — he must not bear her away."

"Does she love him?" Timon asked.

"She is young and apt — she is impressionable. Our own former passionate feelings teach us what levity's in youth."

Some of the old Athenian man's words had a double meaning. "Apt" could mean "impressionable" or "sexually inclined." "Levity" could mean "frivolity" or

“licentiousness.” A woman with light heels is a promiscuous woman.

Timon asked Lucilius, “Do you love the maiden?”

“Yes, my good lord, and she accepts my love.”

The old Athenian man said, “I call the gods to witness that if in her marriage my consent is missing, I will choose my heir from among the beggars of the world, and dispossess her of all she would have inherited if she had married with my consent.”

“How shall she be endowed, if she marries a man who is her equal?”

“Immediately, three talents of money; in the future, all that I possess.”

“This gentleman of mine has long served me,” Timon said. “Although he serves me, he is well born. As I said, he is a gentleman. To build his fortune I will strain a little because generosity is a duty among men. Give him your daughter. What you bestow to your daughter, I’ll match and give to him. If the wealth of Lucilius and the wealth of your daughter were weighed in a pair of scales, they would weigh the same.”

“Most noble lord, if you stake your honor to me that you will do this, she is his.”

“Let’s shake hands,” Timon said. “I promise on my honor that I will do what I said I will do.”

“Humbly I thank your lordship,” Lucilius said. “May no property or fortune ever fall into my possession that I do not acknowledge as being due to you!”

Lucilius and the old Athenian man exited together.

The poet went to Timon, offered him a document, and said, "Please accept my labor, and long live your lordship!"

"I thank you," Timon said, accepting the document. "You shall hear from me soon. Don't go far away."

Timon then said to the painter as the poet went a short distance away, "What do you have there, my friend?"

"A piece of painting, which I ask your lordship to accept."

"Painting is welcome," Timon said, taking the painting. "The painted figure is almost the natural man who is free of artificiality. But since dishonor has dealings with man's nature, he is merely outward appearance: A man may appear to be other than he actually is. In contrast, these painted figures are exactly what they appear to be. I like your work, and you shall find I like it. Wait here in this hall until you hear further from me."

"May the gods preserve you!" the painter said.

"May you fare well, gentleman," Timon said to the painter. "Give me your hand. We must dine together."

Timon then turned to the jeweler and said, "Sir, your jewel has suffered under praise."

"What, my lord!" the jeweler said. "From underpraise? From dispraise?"

Timon explained what he had meant: "It has suffered from an excess of praise. If I should pay you for the jewel as it is praised, it would quite ruin me. The jewel is praised so highly that it must be very expensive."

"My lord, it is rated as those who sell would give," the jeweler said. "It is priced in accordance with what jewelers would normally pay for it; that is, it is priced at cost. But as you well know, things of like value that have different

owners are prized differently by their owners — and other people will value the things differently according to who owns them. Two jewels may have the same objective value, but their owners may value them differently — and other people may value them differently according to who owns the jewels. Believe it, dear lord, when I say that you increase the jewel's value by wearing it.”

“Well mocked,” Timon said. “Well jested.”

“No, my good lord,” the merchant said. “He speaks the common tongue, which all men speak with him. Other men say the same thing that the jeweler did.”

Seeing Apemantus coming toward him, Timon said, “Look and see who is coming here.”

He said to the jeweler and the merchant, “Will you stay and be rebuked? You know that he will criticize all of us.”

The jeweler replied, “We'll stay and endure his company, along with your lordship.”

“He'll spare no one,” the merchant said.

“Good day to you, gentle Apemantus!” Timon said.

“Until I become gentle, you will have to wait for me to wish you a good day; I will be gentle when you become your dog, and when these knaves become honest men. That will be never.”

“Why do you call them knaves?” Timon asked. “You don't know them.”

Hmm. Perhaps if Apemantus knew these men, he would be justified in calling them knaves.

“Aren't they Athenians?” Apemantus asked.

“Yes.”

“Then I don’t repent my calling them knaves,” Apemantus said. “All Athenians are knaves.”

The jeweler asked, “Do you know me, Apemantus?”

“You know I do. I called you by your name — knave.”

“You are proud, Apemantus,” Timon said.

Timon meant that Apemantus was arrogant and presumptuous, but Apemantus twisted the meaning of “proud.”

“I am proud of nothing so much as that I am not like Timon.”

Apemantus turned as if he were moving away, and Timon asked, “Where are you going?”

“To knock out an honest Athenian’s brains.”

“Murder is a crime. That’s a deed you shall die for,” Timon said.

“You are right,” Apemantus said, “if doing nothing results in being put to death by the law.”

In other words, no honest Athenian existed, and so Apemantus would knock out no honest Athenian’s brains.

“How do you like this picture, Apemantus?” Timon asked, holding up the painting.

“I like it best for the innocence,” Apemantus said.

The figure in the painting, not being a living being, could do no evil.

“Didn’t the artist who painted it do a good job?”

“The man who made the painter — the painter’s father — did a better job, and yet the painter’s but a filthy piece of work.”

“You’re a dog,” the painter said.

Apemantus was a Cynic philosopher who rejected materialism. The word “Cynic” was related to the Greek word for “doglike.”

“Your mother’s of my generation and breed,” Apemantus said. “What is she, if I am a dog?”

He was calling the painter’s mother a bitch.

“Will you dine with me, Apemantus?” Timon asked.

“No,” Apemantus replied. “I don’t eat lords.”

He did not consume lords by eating their food and so consuming their wealth.

“If you did eat lords, you would anger the ladies,” Timon said.

“Oh, they eat lords,” Apemantus said. “That’s how they come to have great big bellies.”

By consuming the lords’ food, the ladies grew great big bellies. By sexually consuming the lords, the ladies got pregnant.

“That’s a lascivious apprehension,” Timon said.

“Since that is how you apprehend — interpret — my words, take the apprehension for your labor.”

“How do you like this jewel, Apemantus?” Timon asked, displaying it.

“Not so well as plain-dealing, which will not cost a man even a coin that is worth less than a penny.”

Apemantus was referring to this proverb: “Plain-dealing is a jewel, but he who engages in plain-dealing dies a beggar.”

“Plain-dealing” is “honest dealing” — not cheating in business transactions.

“What do you think it is worth?” Timon asked.

“It’s not worth my thinking about it,” Apemantus said.

He then said, “How are you now, poet?”

“How are you now, philosopher?” the poet asked.

“You lie,” Apemantus said.

“Aren’t you a philosopher?” the poet asked.

“Yes.”

“Then I’m not lying.”

“Aren’t you a poet?”

“Yes.”

“Then you lie,” Apemantus said.

A proverb stated, “Travelers and poets have leave to lie.”

Travelers brought back home fantastic tales of their adventures.

As early as Plato, poets have been criticized for lying. In *The Republic*, Plato’s character Socrates criticized Homer for lying about the gods by making them figures of fun instead of majestic beings. For example, in Homer’s *Iliad*, Hera outwits her husband, Zeus, by having sex with him so that he will fall asleep and the Greeks, whom Hera supports, can rally against the Trojans in a battle of the Trojan War.

Apemantus continued, “Look in your last work of poetry, where you have depicted Timon as a worthy fellow.”

“That’s not feigned,” the poet said. “It’s not a lie. Timon really is worthy.”

“Yes, he is worthy of you,” Apemantus said, “and to pay you for your labor: He who loves to be flattered is worthy of the flatterer. Heavens, if I were a lord!”

“What would you do then, Apemantus?” Timon asked.

“I would do what I — Apemantus — do now; I would hate a lord with all my heart.”

“What! Would you hate yourself?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“Because I had no angry wit to be a lord,” Apemantus said. “Because to be a lord I had no angry wit.”

In order for Apemantus to be a lord, he would have to give up being a Cynic philosopher because Cynic philosophers rejected materialism and high social rank. Apemantus would have to give up the angry wit of a Cynic philosopher if he became a lord.

Apemantus also meant that if he became a lord, he would be a poor lord because he lacked the angry wit necessary to be a lord. Yes, he possessed the angry wit he needed to be a Cynic philosopher, but he lacked the angry wit he would need to be a lord. As a Cynic philosopher, he could direct his anger toward people whose behavior he disliked, but as a lord, he would have to behave in a way that he disliked and that would make him angry at himself for being a phony. Apemantus enjoyed mocking others; he had no desire to seriously mock himself or to do anything that would result in him mocking himself.

Apemantus would be intelligent either as a Cynic philosopher or as a lord. As a Cynic philosopher, he was intelligent enough to realize the foolishness of other people. As a lord, he would still be intelligent, and he would realize

how foolish he — a lord — was. Most of the lords he knew were flatterers and hypocrites. Timon was a lord, but Apemantus regarded him as a fool for being deceived in the belief that he had true friends.

Apemantus then asked, “Aren’t you a merchant?”

“Yes, I am, Apemantus,” the merchant replied.

“May business ruin you, if the gods will not!”

“If business ruins me, then the gods ruin me,” the merchant replied.

“Business is your god, and may your god ruin you!” Apemantus said.

A trumpet sounded, and a messenger entered the hall.

“Whose trumpet is that?” Timon asked.

The messenger replied, “It is the trumpet of Alcibiades, and some twenty horsemen, all in the same company.”

Timon said to some attendants, “Please, welcome them; guide them here to us.”

The attendants left to carry out their orders. The messenger went with them.

Timon said to Apemantus, “You must dine with me.”

He said to the painter, “Don’t go until I have thanked you. When dinner’s done, show me this piece.”

He then said to all who were present, “I am happy and joyful to see all of you here.”

Alcibiades and others entered the hall.

Timon said, “Most welcome, sir!”

Much bowing took place.

Apemantus said, “Well, look at that! May your aches shrivel and wither your supple joints! That there should be little love among these sweet knaves, and yet there is all this courtesy! The strain of man’s bred out into baboon and monkey. Men have degenerated and become baboons and monkeys.”

Alcibiades said to Timon, “Sir, you have satisfied my longing to see you, and I feed most hungrily on your sight.”

“You are very welcome, sir!” Timon said. “Before we part, we’ll spend abundant time sharing various pleasures. If you please, let us go inside.”

Everyone exited except for Apemantus.

Two lords arrived.

The first lord asked, “What time of day is it, Apemantus?”

“It is time to be honest.”

“It is always that time,” the first lord said.

“Then the more accursed are you, who always neglect it,” Apemantus said.

“Are you going to Lord Timon’s feast?” the second lord asked.

“Yes, to see food fill knaves and wine heat fools.”

“Fare you well, fare you well,” the second lord said.

“You are a fool to bid me farewell twice,” Apemantus said.

“Why, Apemantus?” the second lord asked.

“You should have kept one farewell to yourself, for I mean to give you none.”

“Go hang yourself!” the first lord said.

“No, I will do nothing at your bidding,” Apemantus said.
 “Make your requests to your friend.”

“Go away, quarrelsome dog, or I’ll kick you away from here!” the second lord said.

“I will flee, like a dog, the heels of the ass,” Apemantus said.

A dog will flee to avoid being kicked by the hooves of an angry donkey or ass.

Apemantus exited.

The first lord said, “Apemantus is opposed to humanity. Come, shall we go in, and taste Lord Timon’s bounty? He outstrips and surpasses the very heart and soul of kindness.”

“Timon pours his bounty out,” the second lord said. “Plutus, the god of gold, is his steward. Timon receives no gifts that he does not repay sevenfold above the value of the gift. Every gift to Timon breeds the giver a return exceeding all the usual practice of repayment. Timon repays the gifts with much more than the usual rate of interest given for a loan.”

“Timon carries the noblest mind that ever governed man.”

“Long may he live with his fortunes!” the second lord said.
 “Shall we go in?”

“I’ll keep you company,” the first lord said.

They went in.

— 1.2 —

In a banqueting room in Timon’s house, musicians were playing music and servants were carrying in great amounts of food. Present were Timon, Alcibiades, lords, Senators, and Ventidius, whose debt of five talents Timon had paid so that he could be released from prison. Apemantus walked

into the room, looking unhappy as usual. Everyone except Apemantus was wearing fine clothing.

Ventidius said, “Most honored Timon, it has pleased the gods to remember my father’s age, and call him to the long peace that is death. He is gone, he died well, and he has left me rich. So then, as in grateful virtue I am bound to your generous heart, I return to you those talents, doubled with thanks and respect, from whose help I derived liberty.”

“Oh, by no means, honest Ventidius, will I accept your money,” Timon said. “You misunderstand my friendship for you. I gave the money to you freely and forever, and no one can truly say that he gives, if he receives. Even if our betters play at that game — receiving back what they have given — we must not dare to imitate them; the faults of the rich are fair.”

The “betters” were rich money-lending usurers, who received interest on their loans. The Senators of Athens did this.

A proverb stated, “The rich have no faults.” In other words, behavior that would be considered a fault if done by a poor person is not considered a fault when done by a rich person.

“What a noble spirit you have!” Ventidius said.

The lords present stood to show respect to Timon.

Timon said, “No, my lords, ceremoniousness was devised at first to set a glossy but deceptive appearance on faint deeds, hollow welcomes, and goodness, generosity, and kindness that are quickly taken back — false goodness that is regretted even before it is shown. But where there is true friendship, ceremoniousness is not needed.

“Please, sit. More welcome are you to my fortunes than my fortunes are to me. I value you more than I value my vast wealth.”

They sat.

The first lord said, “My lord, we always have confessed it.”

He may have meant that the lords always have confessed to being friends with Timon, but a cynical person — such as Apemantus — could think that he meant that the lords always have confessed to being very welcome to Timon’s vast wealth.

Apemantus said loudly, “Ho, ho, confessed it! Hanged it, have you not?”

He was alluding to this proverb: Confess (your crimes) and be hanged. However, meat was hung and dry aged to make it more flavorful, and the lords confessed their friendship to Timon and were rewarded with flavorful meat that had been hung.

“Oh, Apemantus, you are welcome,” Timon said.

“No, you shall not make me welcome,” Apemantus said. “I have come to have you throw me out of doors.”

“Bah, you are a churl,” Timon said. “You’ve got a disposition there that does not become a man. Your moodiness is much to blame for causing you to engage in inappropriate behavior.”

Timon then said, “They say, my lords, *‘Ira furor brevis est’* — Latin for ‘Anger is a brief madness’ — but yonder man is always angry. Go, let him have a table by himself, for he neither desires company, nor is he fit for it, indeed.”

Servants brought out a table for Apemantus to sit at by himself.

“Let me stay at your peril, Timon,” Apemantus said. “I come to observe; I give you warning on it.”

By “observe,” he meant both to see and to comment on what he saw.

“I take no heed of you,” Timon said. “I won’t pay attention to you. You are an Athenian, and therefore you are welcome. I myself have no power to make you be quiet, and so I hope that my food will make you silent.”

“I scorn your food,” Apemantus said. “It would choke me because it is for flatterers and I will never flatter you.

“Oh, you gods, what a number of men eat Timon, and he does not see them! It grieves me to see so many dip their food in one man’s blood; and all the madness is that he encourages them to eat him up, too.

“I wonder that men dare trust themselves with men. I think that they should invite them without knives; that would be good for their food, and safer for their lives.”

In this society, forks were mostly unknown and people brought their own knives to feasts. If his guests did not have knives, it would be good for Timon’s food because the guests could not eat as much, and it would be safer for Timon because his guests could not murder him by slitting his throat with their knives.

Apemantus continued, “There’s much example for it; the fellow who sits next to him now, divides and shares bread with him, and pledges his life to him while drinking a toast in a cup passed from person to person is the readiest man to kill him: It has been proven.”

Judas Iscariot is one example whom Apemantus may have had in mind. Judas shared a meal with Jesus at the Last Supper before betraying him. At the Last Supper, Jesus

invited his disciples to eat his body: “*And as they did eat, Jesus took the bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body*” (Matthew 26:26).

Apemantus continued, “If I were a huge — big in social status — man, I would be afraid to drink during meals at which guests were present lest they should spy where my windpipe makes its dangerous notes. Great men should drink while wearing armor to protect their throats.”

Timon proposed a toast: “My lord, with heart and good spirits; and let the health — the toast — go round.”

“Let it flow this way, my good lord,” the second lord, who was eager to drink a toast, said.

“Flow this way!” Apemantus said. “He is a splendid fellow! He keeps his tides — his occasions and opportunities — well. Those healths will make you and your estate look ill, Timon.”

He was referring to this proverb: “To drink healths is to drink sickness.” Drinking too many toasts of alcohol will give one a hangover or do worse damage to one’s health — and financial situation.

Apemantus lifted a cup of water and said, “Here’s that which is too weak to be a sinner, honest water, which never left man in the mire. This cup of water and my food — edible roots — are equals; there’s no difference between them. Both are healthy and inexpensive, and I thank the gods for both of them. People who attend feasts are too proud to give thanks to the gods.”

Apemantus prayed:

“Immortal gods, I crave no pelf, aka possessions;

“I pray for no man but myself:

“Grant I may never prove so fond, aka foolish,

“To trust man on his oath or bond,

“Or a harlot, for her weeping,

“Or a dog, that seems to be sleeping,

“Or a jailer with my freedom,

“Or my friends, if I should need them.

“Amen.”

He pulled an edible root from a pocket and said to himself, “So I fall to it. Rich men sin, and I eat roots. Much good dich your good heart, Apemantus!”

“Dich” was a dialectical word meaning “do” and “scour or clean.” Apemantus was saying this: May my food keep me healthy and keep me consistent with my principles.

Timon said, “Captain Alcibiades, your heart’s in the battlefield now.”

“My heart is ever at your service, my lord,” Alcibiades replied.

“You had rather be at a breakfast of enemies than a dinner of friends.”

“As long as the enemies were newly bleeding, my lord, there’s no food like them. I could wish my best friend at such a feast.”

Apemantus said, “I wish that all those flatterers were your enemies, so that then you might kill them and bid me to eat them!”

The first lord said to Timon, “Might we but have that happiness, my lord, that you would once make use of our hearts, whereby we might express some part of our zealous

friendship for you, we would think ourselves forever perfectly happy.”

“Oh, no doubt, my good friends,” Timon said, “but the gods themselves have provided that I shall have much help from you: How would you have become my friends otherwise? Why would you have that charitable and warmhearted title of friend from among so many thousands of other people if you did not chiefly belong to my heart? I have told more about you to myself than you can with modesty speak in your own behalf; and thus far I can vouch for your worthiness. I have narrated to myself your many merits.

“Oh, you gods, I think to myself, what need do we have for any friends, if we should never have need of them? Friends would be the most unnecessary creatures living, if we should never have any need to use them, and they would most resemble sweet-sounding musical instruments hung up in cases that keep their sounds to themselves.

“Why, I have often wished myself poorer, so that I might come nearer to you. We are born to do good deeds, and what better or more properly can we call our own than the riches of our friends?

“Oh, what a precious comfort it is, to have so many friends, like brothers, commanding one another’s fortunes! Oh, joy, that seems to be finished because of the appearance of tears, which actually are happy, even before joy can be completely born!

“My eyes cannot keep from watering, I think. To forget the faults of my eyes, I drink to you.”

Apemantus said, “You weep to make them drink, Timon.”

Timon’s weeping provided an occasion for all to drink, but all his guests’ drinking and eating at his expense would soon cause Timon to weep.

The second lord said, "Joy had the like conception in our eyes, and at that instant like a babe it sprung up."

Apemantus chuckled and said, "I laugh to think that babe a bastard."

A bastard is falsely conceived, and the tears in the eyes of the lords were falsely conceived. They were the tears of hypocrisy and flattery, not the tears of shared friendship.

"I promise you, my lord, you moved me much," the third lord said.

"Much!" Apemantus said. "Much I believe that!"

A trumpet sounded.

"What is the meaning of that trumpet?" Timon asked.

A servant entered, and Timon asked him, "What is it?"

"If it pleases you, my lord, certain ladies greatly want to be admitted here," the servant replied.

"Ladies!" Timon said. "What do they want?"

"There comes with them a forerunner, my lord, who has the job of telling you what they want," the servant said.

"All right, let them be admitted here."

A boy dressed as Cupid, the young son of Venus, goddess of sexual passion, entered the dining hall.

The Cupid said, "Hail to you, worthy Timon, and to all who taste his bounty and enjoy his acts of kindness! The five best senses acknowledge you as their patron, and they come freely to greet your generous warm-heartedness. There, taste, touch, and smell, all pleased from your table rise; the ladies who come now come only to feast your eyes."

“They’re all welcome,” Timon said. “Let them kindly be admitted. Musicians, make them welcome!”

The Cupid exited to get the ladies.

“You see, my lord, how amply you’re beloved,” the first lord said.

Music began to play. Cupid returned with several ladies costumed as Amazons, a tribe of warrior women. They had lutes in their hands, and they danced as they played the lutes.

“Hey, what a sweep of vanity and foolishness comes this way!” Apemantus said. “They dance! They are madwomen. A similar madness — vanity — is the glory of this life. Just look at all this fancy food when all that anyone needs is a little oil and some edible roots. We make ourselves fools to entertain ourselves, and we expend our flatteries to drink down those men upon whose old age we vomit the drink up again with poisonous spite and envy. Society flatters men when they are in the prime earning years of their lives, and then society rejects them when they are old.

“Who lives who is not slandered or slanders? Who dies and goes to their grave who has not suffered from at least one kick that their friends gave them?”

“I would fear that those who dance before me now will one day stomp on me. Before this it has been done; men shut their doors against a setting sun.”

Sun worshippers say prayers to the *rising* morning Sun, which they worship and adore.

Timon sat down as the lords stood up to show their loves for and to dance with the Amazons, who had finished their ceremonious dancing.

Once the dance of the lords and the Amazons was over, Timon said, “You have brought to our entertainment much

gracefulness, fair ladies. You have set a fair fashion on our entertainment, which before you arrived was not half as beautiful and gracious as you have made it. You have added worth and luster to our entertainment, and you have entertained me at my own feast. I thank you for it.”

“My lord, you take us even at the best,” the first lady said. “You rate our performance as highly as it can be rated.”

“It is good to sexually take them at their best,” Apemantus said, “for to sexually take them at their worst is filthy, and would not be worth the taking, I fear. When ladies are at their worst, their vaginas are diseased.”

“Ladies, a little banquet of fruits, desserts, and wine is waiting for you,” Timon said. “Please go and enjoy yourselves.”

“We will, most thankfully, my lord,” the ladies said.

The Cupid and the ladies exited.

Timon called for his steward: “Flavius.”

A steward is in charge of the household; his job includes paying bills and managing household finances.

Flavius said, “My lord?”

“Bring to me here the little casket.”

Leaving to get the little casket, which contained jewels, some of which Timon intended to give away, Flavius said to himself, “Yet more jewels! There’s no speaking to him when he is in the giving mood, I can’t cross his wishes, or else I would tell him — well, truly I should tell him that when he has spent everything, he’ll want to be crossed then, if he could.”

Timon was so generous that he was going bankrupt and did not realize it. When he had spent everything, including all he

could borrow, he would want his debts crossed off, as they would be if they had been paid. He would also want his palms crossed with silver — for example, with silver coins that had been stamped with the image of a cross.

Flavius continued, “It is a pity that bounty — generosity — had not eyes behind, in the back of the head, so that a man might never be made wretched because of his generous mind.”

Flavius exited.

The first lord asked, “Where are our servants?”

A servant replied, “Here we are, my lord, standing in readiness to serve you.”

The second lord said, “Bring our horses!”

Flavius returned with the little casket of jewels.

Timon said, “Oh, my friends, I have a few words to say to you.”

He said to the first lord, “Look, my good lord, I must ask you to much honor me by accepting this jewel and wearing it and making it more valuable by your wearing it, my kind lord.”

The first lord said, “I have already received so many of your gifts —”

The other lords said, “So have we all.”

A servant entered and said to Timon, “My lord, certain nobles of the Senate have just now alighted from their horses, and are coming to visit you.”

“They are very welcome,” Timon said.

Flavius said to Timon, “I beg your honor, let me say a few words to you that seriously concern you.”

“Seriously concern me! Why then, another time I’ll hear you. Right now, let’s have provided what is needed to entertain the new visitors.”

Flavius murmured to himself, “I scarcely know how to do that.”

A second servant entered the dining hall and said, “May it please your honor, Lord Lucius, out of his free and generous love, has presented to you four milk-white horses, with silver trappings.”

“I shall accept them fairly,” Timon said. “Let the presents be worthily dealt with.”

A third servant arrived, and Timon asked, “What is it? What’s the news you have for me?”

“If it pleases you, my lord, that honorable gentleman, Lord Lucullus, entreats your company tomorrow to hunt with him, and he has sent your honor two pairs of greyhounds.”

“I’ll hunt with him,” Timon said, “and let the greyhounds be received, but not without a fair reward.”

Timon meant to pay for the greyhounds, although they were a gift.

“What will this come to?” Flavius said to himself. “Timon commands us to provide and to give away great gifts, and all out of an empty coffer. Nor will he let me tell him his net worth, which is negative, or allow me to show him what a beggar his heart is because it has no power to make his wishes good. His promises fly so beyond his estate and possessions that what he speaks is all in debt; he owes for every word. He is so kind that he now pays interest on the loans he has taken out so that he can be generous. His land’s mortgaged and on the books of those to whom he gives gifts.

“Well, I wish that I were gently put out of my job as his steward before I am forced out! Happier is he who has no friends to feed than friends who even enemies exceed. His friends cost him more than enemies would. I bleed inwardly for my lord.”

Flavius exited.

Timon said to the lords, his guests, “You do yourselves much wrong by lessening too much your own merits: You are too critical of yourselves.”

He gave a jewel to the second lord and said, “Here, my lord, is a small token of our friendship for each other.”

“With more than common thanks, I will accept it,” the second lord said.

The third lord said about Timon, “Oh, he’s the very soul of bounty!”

Hearing the third lord, Timon said, “And now I remember, my lord, you said good words of praise the other day about a bay stallion I rode on: It is yours, because you liked it.”

“Oh, I beg that you pardon me, my lord, in that,” the third lord said.

Perhaps the third lord meant that he wanted to be forgiven for having seemed to beg for the stallion by praising it. A cynical man such as Apemantus would think that the third lord was putting on an act now, and that the third lord really had praised the stallion in the hope that Timon would give it to him.

“You may believe my words, my lord,” Timon said, “when I say that I know no man can justly affect — praise — nothing but what he really does like. I weigh my friends’ affection with my own; I regard as equally important my friends’ wishes and my own, to tell you the truth.”

He then said to the lords, "I'll call on you."

Timon meant that he would visit them, but soon he would call on the lords for loans.

"No one is as welcome as you," the lords said.

"I take all of your many visits to me so kindly to heart that it is not enough for me to give you what I give," Timon said. "I think that I could give kingdoms to my friends, and never be weary of giving."

He then said, "Alcibiades, you are a soldier, and therefore you are seldom rich; what I give to you comes in charity to you because all your living is among the dead, and all the lands you have lie in a pitched field."

"Yes, the pitched field is defiled land, my lord," Alcibiades replied.

He was punning. In the Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus 13:1 states, "*He that touchest pitch shall be defiled with it.*" Pitch is a tar-like substance, and a pitched field is a battlefield in which lines, aka files, of soldiers are ready to engage in battle.

The first lord began to speak, "We are so virtuously bound —"

Timon interrupted, "— and so am I to all of you."

The second lord began to speak, "So infinitely bound in affection —"

Timon again interrupted, "— and so am I to all of you."

He then ordered, "Lights, more lights!"

The first lord said, "May the best of happiness, honor, and fortunes always be with you, Lord Timon!"

Timon said, “— so that he can keep them ready for his friends.”

Everyone left the great dining hall except for Apemantus and Timon.

“What a noisy disturbance is here!” Apemantus said. “What a serving of bows and jutting-out of butts! I doubt whether their legs are worth the sums that are given for them. How much money they make for their bowing! Friendship is full of dregs and impurities; I think that false hearts should never have sound legs. False friends should not be healthy enough to bow. Thus honest fools lay out their wealth on courtesies. Timon gives away many valuables to those who bow to him.”

Timon said, “Now, Apemantus, if you were not sullen, I would be good to you. I would be generous to you.”

“No, I’ll accept nothing,” Apemantus replied, “for if I should be bribed, too, there would be no one left to rail upon and criticize you, and then you would sin all the faster. You have given away so much for so long, Timon, that I am afraid that you will have nothing to give away except IOUs shortly. What is the need for these feasts, pompous activities, and vainglorious events?”

“Whenever you begin to rail against society, I am sworn not to give any notice to you,” Timon said. “Farewell, and come back again with better music — with noncritical words.”

Timon exited.

Apemantus said to himself, “So be it. You will not hear me now; you shall not hear me later. I’ll lock your Heaven away from you by not giving you the advice that would keep you happy. Oh, that men’s ears should be deaf to good advice, but not to flattery!”

CHAPTER 2

— 2.1 —

Examining some financial papers in his house, a Senator said to himself about Timon, "... and lately, five thousand. To Varro and to Isidore he owes nine thousand; besides my former sum, which makes it five and twenty. Still in motion of raging waste? His wastefulness with money is like a raging flood. It cannot hold; it will not hold. He cannot continue like this and be solvent. If I want gold, all I need to do is to steal a beggar's dog, and give it to Timon — why, the dog coins gold for me when Timon rewards me with a gift."

Dogs were sometimes trained to lead blind beggars.

The Senator continued, "If I want to sell my horse, and buy twenty more horses better than it, why, all I need to do is to give my horse to Timon — ask nothing for it, but just give it to him — and it immediately foals for me strong, healthy horses. No porter is at his gate to keep away unwelcome visitors; instead, he has a porter who smiles and always invites inside all who pass by. This state of affairs cannot hold, it cannot continue, no rational person can examine Timon's financial affairs and think that Timon's estate is safe. If we were to sound the depth of his wealth, we would find it growing shallower and shallower — no ship could safely sail on it. The only thing growing deeper is his debts."

The Senator called a servant, "Caphis, ho! Caphis, I say!"

Caphis entered the room and said, "Here I am, sir; what is your pleasure? What do you want me to do?"

"Put on your cloak, and hasten to Lord Timon. Importune him for my money that he owes me; don't be put off with an offhand denial, and don't then be silenced when he says,

‘Commend me to your master,’ and takes off his cap and plays with it in his right hand, like this.”

The Senator demonstrated what he meant, and then he continued, “Instead, tell him that my financial needs cry to me, and I must meet my need with my own money; the days and times that he ought to have repaid his debt to me are past and my reliance on his broken promises to repay me has hurt my credit. I love and honor him, but I must not break my back to heal his finger; immediate and pressing are my needs, and my relief must not be tossed and returned to me in words like a ball in tennis, but it must find a supply of money immediately.

“Get you gone. Put a very pressing, insistent look on your face, a visage of demand, because I am afraid that when every borrowed feather is returned and is stuck in the wing of the bird to whom the feather belongs, Lord Timon will be left a naked gull, although now he flashes like the remarkable mythological bird we call the phoenix. Get you gone.”

“I go, sir,” Caphis said.

“Take the bonds along with you, and clearly mark the due dates of the loans.”

“I will, sir.”

“Go.”

— 2.2 —

Just outside Timon’s house, Flavius, holding many past-due bills in his hands, talked to himself.

“No care, no stop! Timon is so senseless of expense that he will neither learn how to maintain the income to pay his expenses, nor cease his flow of riotous extravagance. He takes no account of how valuable things go away from him,

nor does he assume any care about what is needed for him to continue his extravagant spending and giving of gifts. Never has a mind been so foolish as to be so kind. What shall be done? He will not listen to me until he feels the result of his extravagance. I must be blunt with him once he returns from hunting.”

He saw Caphis and the servants of Isidore and of Varro coming and said, “Damn! Damn! Damn! Damn!”

Caphis said, “Good afternoon, Varro’s servant. Have you come for money?”

Varro’s servant replied, “Isn’t that your business here, too?”

“Yes, it is,” Caphis said, “and is it yours, too, Isidore’s servant?”

Isidore’s servant replied, “It is.”

“I wish that we were all paid!” Caphis said.

“I am afraid that that won’t happen,” Varro’s servant said.

“Here comes lord Timon,” Caphis said.

Returning from their hunt, Timon, Alcibiades, some lords, and others arrived.

Timon said, “As soon as we’ve eaten dinner, we’ll go out again, my Alcibiades.”

Seeing the people waiting for him, he said, “Do you have business with me? What do you want?”

Caphis said, “My lord, here is a note of certain dues. You owe my master money.”

“Dues! From where are you?” Timon asked. His land holdings were vast and stretched all the way to Lacedaemon,

where the city of Sparta was located, and he did not recognize Caphis.

“I am from Athens, my lord,” Caphis replied.

“Go and see Flavius, my steward,” Timon said.

“Please, your lordship, he has put me off from day to day all this month. My master is forced by important business to call for repayment of his own money, and he humbly requests that you, in accordance with your other noble qualities, will give to him what is rightfully his.”

Timon said, “My honest friend, please return to me tomorrow morning.”

“No, my good lord —” Caphis said forcefully.

“Be calm, good friend,” Timon said. “Restrain yourself.”

Varro’s servant said, “I am one of Varro’s servants, my good lord —”

Isidore’s servant said, “I come from Isidore; he humbly asks for your speedy payment.”

Caphis said, “If you knew, my lord, my master’s need for money —”

Varro’s servant said, “The note was due on forfeiture, my lord, six weeks ago — and more.”

Timon had borrowed money by pledging security for it. All of his land was mortgaged, and the land would be forfeited if he could not repay his debts.

Isidore’s servant said, “Your steward puts me off, my lord, and so I am sent expressly to your lordship to ask for repayment of the loan.”

“Give me room to breathe,” Timon said to the three servants who were crowding around him.

He then said to Alcibiades and the other lords with whom he had been hunting, “Please, my good lords, go inside. I’ll follow and be with you quickly.”

Alcibiades and the other lords went inside.

Seeing Flavius, Timon said, “Come here. Please tell me what is wrong with the world that I thus encounter clamorous demands about broken bonds and I hear about the failure to pay long-since-due debts, which are things that are contrary to and hurt my reputation?”

Flavius said to the three servants asking Timon for money, “If you please, gentlemen, the time is unsuitable for this business. Stop importuning Timon for money until after dinner so that I may make his lordship understand why you are not paid.”

“Do that, my friends,” Timon said to the three servants.

He then said to Flavius, “See that they are well entertained.”

He went inside.

Flavius said to the three servants, “Please, come with me.”

He went inside.

Apemantus and a Fool, whose job was to entertain his boss — in this case, a woman — and make her laugh, walked nearby. Seeing Apemantus and the Fool, the three servants stayed outside rather than immediately go inside Timon’s house.

Caphis said, “Wait, wait. Here comes the Fool with Apemantus. Let’s have some fun with them.”

Varro's servant said, "Hang Apemantus — he'll abuse us with words."

Isidore's servant said, "A plague upon him, the dog!"

Varro's servant asked, "How are you doing, Fool?"

Apemantus asked, "Are you talking to your shadow?"

"I am not speaking to you," Varro's servant said.

"No, you are speaking to yourself," Apemantus said.

He then said to the Fool, "Let's go."

Isidore's servant said to Varro's servant, "There's the fool hanging on your back already."

He meant that the name of fool had been affixed to the back of Varro's servant. It was like Varro's servant was wearing the distinctive clothing of a professional Fool. He also meant that Varro's servant was being ridden — criticized — by a fool.

Apemantus said to Isidore's servant, "No, you are standing alone and by yourself — you are not on him yet."

Apemantus meant by this kind of riding homosexual riding.

"Where's the fool now?" Caphis asked Isidore's servant. "Who is really the fool?"

Sparing none of the three servants, Apemantus said to Caphis, "The fool is he who last asked the question 'Who is the fool?'"

He then said about the three servants, "Poor rogues, and usurers' men! You are bawds between gold and want!"

A want can be a need; people can need or want money and people can need or want sex.

Usurers were people who lent money at interest, something that many people in this society felt that the god of Christians prohibited. Usurers were often compared to bawds, aka pimps, because both trafficked in money when money ought not to be involved. Money ought not to be lent at interest, and money ought not to be exchanged for sex.

“What are we, Apemantus?” the three servants asked.

“You are asses.”

“Why?”

“Because you ask me what you are, and you do not know yourselves,” Apemantus said.

He then said, “Speak to them, Fool.”

“How are you, gentlemen?” the Fool asked.

“Thank you for asking, good Fool,” the servants said. “How is your mistress?”

“Mistress” simply meant “female boss.”

“She’s just now setting water on a fire to heat up and scald such chickens as you are,” the Fool said.

Chickens were scalded in boiling water to remove their feathers. Another kind of chicken — young fools — sat in hot water as a treatment for venereal disease.

The Fool added, “I wish that we could see you at Corinth!”

Corinth was a Greek port city famous for its brothels. The red-light district of Athens was referred to in slang as Corinth.

“Good!” Apemantus said to the Fool. “Many thanks!”

He was thanking the Fool for speaking to and insulting the servants.

“Look,” the Fool said. “Here comes my mistress’ page.”

The page, a young servant, walked over and said to the Fool, “Why, what’s going on, Captain? What are you doing in this wise company?”

The page then asked, “How are you, Apemantus?”

“I wish that I had a rod in my mouth, so that I could answer you profitably.”

Apemantus was referring to these 1599 Geneva Bible verses:

Proverbs 22:15

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction shall drive it away from him.

Proverbs 23:13-14:

13 Withhold not correction from the child: if thou smite him with the rod, he shall not die.

14 Thou shalt smite him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

Proverbs 26:3:

Unto the horse belongeth a whip, to the ass a bridle, and a rod to the fool’s back.

The page said, “Please, Apemantus, read me the addresses on these letters. I don’t know which is which.”

Apemantus asked, “Can’t you read?”

“No.”

“Little learning will die then on the day you are hanged,” Apemantus said.

He looked at the letters and said, "This letter is addressed to Lord Timon; this one is addressed to Alcibiades. Go; you were born a bastard, and you'll die a bawd."

The page replied, "You were whelped as a dog, and you shall famish and die of starvation and so die a dog's death. Don't answer me, for I am gone."

The page exited.

Taking the word "gone" to mean "damned," Apemantus said to the page's back, "Even so you are outrunning grace."

He meant that his words of criticism could keep the page out of Hell if the page were to learn from the criticism.

Apemantus then said, "Fool, I will go with you to Lord Timon's."

"Will you leave me there?" the Fool asked.

"If Timon stays at home," Apemantus said, meaning that as long as Timon was at home, a fool was in his home.

Apemantus asked the three servants, "Do you three serve three usurers?"

"Yes; we wish that they served us!"

"So do I — I wish that they served you as good a trick as ever a hangman served a thief," Apemantus said.

"Are you three usurers' men?" the Fool asked.

"Yes, Fool."

"I think no usurer lacks a fool to serve as his servant," the Fool said. "My mistress is a usurer, in her own way, which is that of a bawd, and I am her Fool. When men come to borrow from your masters, they approach sadly, and go away

merrily; but they enter my mistress' house merrily, and go away sadly. Why is this?"

Men with light pockets went to the usurer; leaving the usurer, they had heavy pockets. Men with heavy pockets went to the bawd; leaving the bawd, they had light pockets.

Varro's servant said, "I can give you a reason."

"Do it then," Apemantus said, "so that we may know that you are a whoremaster and a knave, which notwithstanding, you shall be no less esteemed than you are now."

Being the servant of a usurer had the same status as being the servant of a bawd.

"What is a whoremaster, Fool?" Varro's servant asked. He knew what a whoremaster was — a person who used the services of whores — but he wanted to hear the Fool make a joke.

"A whoremaster is a fool who wears good clothes, and he is something like you," the Fool said. "The whoremaster is a spirit. Sometime he looks like a lord; sometimes he looks like a lawyer; sometimes he looks like a philosopher, with two stones more than his artificial one."

The artificial stone was the philosopher's stone, which alchemists believed could turn base metal into gold. The philosopher's two natural stones were his testicles.

The Fool continued, "The whoremaster very often looks like a knight; and, generally, the whoremaster takes on the appearance of all shapes that man goes up and down in from fourscore to thirteen."

"Up and down" is a motion made in sex; it is also what happens to a penis when its owner is between eighty and thirteen years old.

Varro's servant said, "You are not altogether a fool."

Many Fools are wise.

The Fool replied, "Nor are you altogether a wise man. As much foolery as I have, just as much wit you lack."

Apemantus, who much appreciated the joke, said, "That answer might have come from me: Apemantus."

The three servants said, "Step aside, step aside. Here comes Lord Timon."

Timon and Flavius approached the group of men.

Apemantus said, "Come with me, Fool, come."

The Fool replied, "I do not always follow lover, elder brother, and woman; sometimes I follow the philosopher."

According to various proverbs, lovers, elder brothers, and women were all thought to be foolish:

It is impossible to love and be wise.

The younger brother has the more wit.

"Because" is a woman's reason.

Apemantus and the Fool exited.

Flavius said to the three servants, "Please, walk a little distance away so that I can talk with Timon privately. I'll speak with you soon."

The servants exited.

"You make me marvel," Timon said. "Why before this time did you not fully lay the state of my financial affairs before me, so that I might have estimated my expenses and my means of paying them? I could have lessened my expenses to fit my income."

“You would not hear me out,” Flavius replied. “Many times when you were at leisure I proposed to explain to you the state of your financial affairs.”

“Bah!” Timon said. “Perhaps you proposed to do that at a few opportune times, but my indisposition put you off, and my indisposition at those times served as your excuse not to bring up the matter again.”

“Oh, my good lord, many times I brought in my accounts to you and laid them before you; you would throw them off the table, and say that you found me to be honest and so you had no need to examine the accounts. When, for some trifling present, you have ordered me to give the giver a much larger gift, I have shaken my head and wept. Yes, in opposition to the good manners a servant owes a master, I have requested that you hold your hand more closed — you were too open-handed with your wealth and possessions. Not seldom have I endured not-slight rebukes, when I have informed you of the ebb of your estate and your great flow of debts. My loved lord, although you hear me now, too late — yet now’s a time, for late is better than never — your possessions even rated at their greatest possible value won’t pay even half of your present debts.”

“Let all of my land be sold,” Timon said.

“All of your land is mortgaged,” Flavius replied. “Some of it has been forfeited because of nonpayment of debts and is gone, and what remains will hardly stop the mouths of creditors calling for present dues. The future comes apace. What shall we do in the meantime? And what can we do in the future?”

“To Lacedaemon did my land extend,” Timon said.

“Oh, my good lord, the world is but a word. Were the world all yours to give away in a breath, how quickly would it be gone!”

“You are telling me the truth,” Timon said.

“If you suspect my husbandry of falsehood, call me before the most exacting auditors and put me on trial. So the gods bless me, I swear that when all our kitchens, butteries, and serving rooms have been oppressed with riotous feeders, when our wine cellars have wept with drunken spills of wine, when every room has blazed with lights and drunken asses have brayed with minstrel songs, I have retired to a wine cellar by a wasteful, running spigot, and my eyes have flown with tears to add to the spillage.”

“Please, no more.” Timon was referring both to Flavius’ flow of words and current flow of tears.

“Heavens, I have said, the bounty and generosity of this lord! How many prodigal bites of food have slaves and peasants this night swallowed! Who is not Timon’s friend? What heart, head, sword, force, fellowship, but is Lord Timon’s? Great Timon, noble, worthy, royal Timon!

“Ah, when the means are gone that buy this praise, the breath is gone whereof this praise is made. Feast-won, fast-lost. The ‘friends’ who are won by feasts are quickly lost when the ‘friends’ are forced to fast. When one cloud of winter showers appears, these flies — parasites — seek shelter elsewhere.”

“Come, sermon me no further,” Timon said. “No villainous act of bounty and generosity yet has passed my heart. I have given unwisely, but not ignobly. Why do you weep? Can you lack knowledge? Can you actually think I shall lack friends? Set your heart free from worry. If I would broach the vessels of my love, and test the contents of my friends’ hearts by borrowing from them, I would be able to borrow from men — my friends — and use their fortunes as frankly as I can bid you to speak. They would help me the way that you serve me.”

“Broach the vessels of my love” meant to tap his friends the way that a barrel of wine is tapped. Timon expected that his friends would be full of generosity, and not just full of his wine.

“May assurance bless your thoughts!” Flavius said. “May what you say be true!”

“And, in a way, these needs of mine can be regarded as blessings; for by these I will test my friends. You shall perceive how you are mistaken about my fortunes; I am wealthy in my friends.”

He called, “Inside there! Flaminius! Servilius!”

Flaminius, Servilius, and other servants appeared.

“My lord?” they said.

“I will dispatch you separately to some of my friends,” Timon said.

Pointing to various servants, he said, “Servilius, you go to Lord Lucius. Flaminius, you go to Lord Lucullus; I hunted with his honor today.”

He ordered a third servant, “You go to Sempronius.”

He then said to the servants, “Commend me to their friendships, and say that I am proud that my situation has made this an opportune time to ask them to supply me with money. Let the request be for fifty talents.”

Flaminius said, “We will do what you have said, my lord.”

Flavius was skeptical that Timon would get money. He thought, *Lord Lucius and Lord Lucullus? Hmm!*

Timon said to Flavius, “Go you, sir, to the Senators — because of what I have done to ensure the state’s best health,

I deserve for them to hear this request — ask them to send immediately a thousand talents to me.”

Flavius replied, “I have been bold — because I knew that it was the best way to get money to pay the most creditors — to go to them and use the seal of your signet ring and your name to ask them for money, but they shook their heads, and I returned here no richer.”

“Is it true?” Timon asked. “Can it be true?”

“They answered, in a joint and corporate and united voice, that now they are at a low ebb, lack treasure, cannot do what they want to do, are sorry ... you are honorable ... but yet they could have wished ... they know not ... something has been amiss ... a noble nature may suffer a mishap ... wish that all were well ... it is a pity — and so, turning to other serious matters, after looks of distaste at this subject matter and after uttering these hard fragments of sentences, with certain half-courteous and cold nods they froze me into silence.”

“You gods, reward them!” Timon said. “Please, man, look cheerful. These old fellows have their ingratitude in them through heredity and original sin. Because of their old age, their blood is caked, it is cold, it seldom flows. Because of a lack of kindly warmth, they are not kind. Human nature, as it grows again toward earth — old people become stooped — is made ready for the journey to the grave, for it becomes dull and heavy.”

He ordered a servant, “Go to Ventidius.”

He said to Flavius, “Please, don’t be sad. You are true and honest; I am speaking ingenuously. No blame belongs to you.”

He said to the servant, “Ventidius recently buried his father, by whose death he’s stepped into a great estate. When he was

poor, was imprisoned, and lacked friends, I cleared his debt by paying five talents. Greet him from me. Tell him to suppose some good necessity touches his friend, who craves to be remembered with those five talents. Ask him to return to me those five talents I paid to clear his debt and get him out of prison.”

The servant exited.

He then said to Flavius, “Once you have those five talents, give it to these fellows to whom it is now due. Never say, or think, that Timon’s fortunes among his friends can sink.”

Flavius replied, “I wish I could not think it. That thought is bounty’s foe.”

If one thinks that one’s friends are parasites, then one will not be generous to them.

Flavius continued, “Being free and generous himself, a generous person thinks all others so.”

CHAPTER 3**— 3.1 —**

Alone, Flaminius waited in a room in Lucullus' house.

A servant arrived and said to him, "I have told my lord about you; he is coming down to you."

"I thank you, sir."

Lucullus entered the room, and the servant said, "Here's my lord."

Seeing Flaminius, Lucullus said to himself, "One of Lord Timon's servants? He has a gift from Timon for me, I bet. Why, I should have expected this; I dreamt of a silver basin and pitcher last night."

He then said out loud, "Flaminius, honest Flaminius; you are very respectfully welcome, sir."

He ordered his servant, "Fill a glass for me with some wine."

The servant exited.

Lucullus asked, "And how is that honorable, complete, free-hearted gentleman of Athens, your very bountiful good lord and master, doing?"

"His health is good, sir," Flaminius said.

"I am very glad that his health is good, sir, and what do you there have under your cloak, excellent Flaminius?"

"Truly, I have nothing but an empty box, sir," Flaminius replied. "In my lord's behalf, I have come to entreat your honor to fill it with money. My master, Timon, having great and immediate need to borrow fifty talents, has sent to your lordship to furnish him with that money. Timon does not at

all doubt that you will immediately provide him with your assistance.”

“Hmm! Hmm! Hmm! Hmm!” Lucullus said. “‘Not at all doubt,’ he said? Alas, good lord! He would be a noble gentleman, if he would not keep so generous a house. Many a time and often I have dined with him, and told him not to be so generous, and then I have come again to eat supper with him, with the purpose of persuading him to spend less, and yet he would embrace no advice and take no warning from my coming. Every man has his fault, and generosity is his. I have told him about it, but I could never get him to stop being generous.”

Lucullus’ servant returned, carrying wine.

“If it pleases your lordship, here is the wine,” the servant said.

“Flaminius, I have always known you to be wise. Here’s to you.”

Lucullus drank.

“Your lordship speaks what it pleases you to say,” Flaminius replied.

Lucullus said to Flaminius, “I have observed that you always have a helpful and ready-and-willing spirit — to give you your due — and that you are a man who knows what belongs to reason. You can use the time well, if the time uses — treats — you well. You can take advantage of a good opportunity, and you have good qualities in you.”

He then said to his servant, “You can leave now.”

His servant exited.

“Come closer to me, honest Flaminius,” Lucullus said. “Your lord’s a bountiful gentleman, but you are wise and

you know well enough, although you have come to me, that this is no time to lend money, especially upon bare friendship, without some security such as land that can be forfeited if the loan is not repaid in time. Here are three coins for you. Good boy, wink at me — close your eyes — and say that you did not see me. Fare you well.”

“Is it possible that the world should change so much, and that we who are now alive have lived through such major change?” Flaminius said. “Fly, damned baseness, back to him who worships you!”

He threw the three coins back to Lucullus.

“Bah!” Lucullus said. “Now I see that you are a fool and fit for your master.”

Lucullus exited.

“May those three coins add to the number that may scald you!” Flaminius said. “Let molten coins be your damnation. You are a disease of a friend, and not a true friend!”

Contrapasso is an Italian term for an appropriate punishment. Many people think that the punishments in Hell for sins are *contrapassos*, and so the punishment for greed could be being dipped in molten gold.

Flaminius continued, “Has friendship such a faint and milky heart that it turns sour and curdles in less than two nights? Oh, you gods, I feel my master’s passion — his agony! This slave, up to this hour, has my lord’s food inside him. Why should my master’s food thrive and turn to nutriment, when my master’s ‘friend’ is turned to poison? Oh, may only diseases be caused by my master’s food that this ‘friend’ has eaten! And, when Lucullus is sick to death, let not that part of him that my lord paid for, have any power to expel sickness — instead, let it prolong his agony and lengthen the time it takes him to die!”

— 3.2 —

Lucius spoke with three strangers in a public place in Athens.

“Who, the Lord Timon?” Lucius said. “He is my very good friend, and he is an honorable gentleman.”

“We know him to be no less,” the first stranger said, “although we are but strangers to him. But I can tell you one thing, my lord, which I hear from common rumors. Lord Timon’s happy hours are now done and past, and his estate shrinks from him. He is losing his wealth.”

“Bah, no, do not believe it,” Lucius said. “Timon cannot need money. He is extremely wealthy.”

“Believe this, my lord,” the second stranger said. “Not long ago, one of Timon’s men was with Lord Lucullus to borrow so many talents — indeed, Timon’s servant urgently requested the loan and showed how necessary the loan was, and yet was denied the loan.”

The second stranger did not know the exact number of talents that Timon was attempting to borrow other than Timon wanted to borrow many talents, and so he used the phrase “so many talents.”

“What!” Lucius said.

“I tell you that Timon was denied the loan, my lord,” the second stranger said.

“What a strange case was that!” Lucius said. “Now, before the gods, I swear that I am ashamed to hear it. That honorable man was denied a loan! There was very little honor showed in the denial. As for my own part, I must confess that I have received some small kindnesses from Timon, such as money, gold and silver household utensils, jewels, and such-like trifles, although nothing compared to what Lucullus received

from Timon, yet had Timon sent a servant by mistake to ask me for a loan, I would never have denied his occasion so many talents.”

His words were ambiguous.

“Occasion” can mean 1) “need,” and it can mean 2) “favorable set of circumstances”:

1) “I would never have denied his need so many talents” meant that he would lend Timon the money Timon needed.

2) “I would never have denied his favorable set of circumstances so many talents” meant that he would lend Timon the money as long as Timon did not actually need the money (and so would be sure to repay it, most likely with a large amount of self-imposed interest).

“Deny” can mean 1) “refuse to give someone something,” and it can mean 2) “refuse to admit the truth of something”:

1) “I would never have denied [for] his need so many talents” meant that he would lend Timon the money Timon needed; he would not refuse to give Timon the money.

2) “I would never have denied his need [for] so many talents” or “I would never have denied so many talents [to be] his need” meant that he would acknowledge Timon’s need for the money (but may or may not lend him the money); he would not refuse to admit the truth that Timon needed money.

Servilius arrived on the scene and said to himself, “I see, by good luck, yonder is the lord, Lucius, whom I have worked hard and sweated to find.”

He said to Lucius, “My honored lord —”

Lucius wished to avoid Servilius, whom he recognized as having been sent to him by Timon, who was currently asking

friends for loans of money, so he said, “Servilius! You are kindly met, sir. Fare you well. Commend me to your honorable and virtuous lord, my very exquisite friend.”

He started to leave.

“May it please your honor, my lord has sent —” Servilius began.

“Ha!” Lucius said, thinking that the stranger was wrong and that Timon was still rich and still giving gifts. “What has he sent? I am so much endeared to that lord; he’s always sending something to me. How shall I thank him, do you think? And what has he sent me now?”

“He has sent only his present need now, my lord,” Servilius said, handing Lucius a note from Timon. “He is requesting your lordship to supply so many talents for his immediate use.”

“I know his lordship is just joking with me,” Lucius said. “He cannot need fifty — or even five hundred — talents.”

Lucius was trying to make the point that Timon, who was asking to borrow fifty talents, was so rich that fifty — or even five hundred — talents would not be much to him.

“But in the meantime he wants less than five hundred talents, my lord,” Servilius said. “If his need were not virtuous, I would not urge you to lend him the money half so faithfully as I am doing now.”

Timon needed the money because of his excessive giving of gifts, not because of gambling or whoremongering.

“Are you speaking seriously, Servilius?” Lucius asked.

“On my soul, I swear that it is true, sir.”

“What a wicked beast was I to not be prepared for such a good opportunity when I might have shown myself to be an

honorable friend!” Lucius said. “How unluckily it has happened that I should use up my money just the day before for something little, and by doing so deprive myself of a great deal of honor! Servilius, now, before the gods, I am not able to do ... I am all the more beast, I say ... I myself was sending to Lord Timon to borrow money, as these gentlemen can witness! But I would not, for the wealth of Athens, have done it knowing what I know now.

“Commend me bountifully to his good lordship, and I hope his honor will conceive the fairest opinion of me, although I have no power to be kind, and tell him from me that I count it one of my greatest afflictions, tell him, that I cannot gratify such an honorable gentleman.

“Good Servilius, will you befriend me so far as to use my own words when you speak to Timon?”

“Yes, sir, I shall.”

“I’ll keep an eye open for when I can do you a good turn, Servilius.”

Servilius exited.

Lucius said to the first stranger, “What you said is true: Timon has been brought low indeed. A man who has been once denied will hardly speed. A man who has been once rebuffed will hardly prosper.”

Lucius exited.

The first stranger said, “Do you see this, Hostilius?”

Hostilius, the second stranger, replied, “Yes, all too well.”

“Why, this is the world’s soul, and just of the same piece is every flatterer’s spirit,” the first stranger said.

The world’s soul is the world’s animating principle. Most thinkers of the time thought that it is a principle of harmony,

but after observing Lucius, the first stranger thought that it is the principle of self-interest.

The first stranger continued, "Who can call him his friend that dips in the same dish?"

He was referring to sharing a meal together and dipping pieces of bread into such things as olive oil and sauces. He also was referring to Matthew 26:23: "*And he [Jesus] answered and said, He that dippeth [his] hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.*" Jesus was referring to Judas, who betrayed him after the Last Supper, during which they had eaten together.

The first stranger continued, "I know that Timon has been like this lord's father, and kept Lucius' credit good with Timon's money, which has supported Lucius' estate; indeed, Timon's money has paid Lucius' servants their wages. Lucius never drinks without one of Timon's silver goblets treading upon his lip. And yet — oh, see the monstrousness of man when he appears in an ungrateful shape! — Lucius refuses to give to Timon, in proportion to Lucius' wealth, what charitable men give to beggars."

The third stranger said, "Religion groans at it."

The first stranger said, "As for my own part, I never fed on Timon in my life, and never have any of his bounties come to me to mark me as his friend, yet I protest that, because of his very noble mind, illustrious virtue, and honorable and moral conduct, had Timon's troubles made it necessary for him to ask for help from me, I would have used my wealth to make a donation to him — and I should have sent to him in reply to his request for a loan the best half of my wealth. That's how much I love Timon's heart. But I perceive that men must learn now to dispense with pity, for policy sits above conscience. Men must be without pity because self-interest rules conscience."

— 3.3 —

Sempronius and one of Timon's servants were speaking together in a room in Sempronius' house.

“Must Timon trouble me with his problems — hmm! — before all others?” Sempronius complained. “He might have tried Lord Lucius or Lucullus, and now Ventidius, whom he redeemed from prison, is wealthy, too. All these men owe their estates to Timon.”

Sempronius was saying that he was upset because Timon had approached him first for help.

“My lord, they have all been touched and have been found base metal, for they have all denied him a loan,” Timon's servant said.

Timon's servant was using a metaphor. Those three men had been tested with a touchstone, which showed that they were made of base metal rather than precious metal. To find out whether a metal was precious — gold or silver — or was base and of low value, it was rubbed on a touchstone. The color left on the touchstone showed whether the metal was precious or base.

“What!” Sempronius said. “Have they denied him a loan? Have Ventidius and Lucullus denied him a loan? And does he now send you to me to ask for a loan? Three? Hmm! It shows that he has very little friendship for me and he has very little good judgment in him. Must I be his last refuge! His friends, like physicians, thrive and then give him over. Must I take the cure upon me?”

He was comparing Ventidius, Lucullus, and Lucius to physicians who thrive by taking their patients' money and then give the patients up for dead.

Sempronius continued, “He has much disgraced me by doing it, by asking me last for money. I’m angry at him because he ought to have known my place: I should have been at the top of the list of people whom he could ask for a loan.”

Before, he had said that he was angry when he thought that Timon had come to him first to borrow money; now, he was saying that he was angry that Timon had come to him last to borrow money.

Sempronius continued, “I see no sense in why he did not in his need come first to me for help, for in my understanding I was the first man who ever received a gift from him. And does he think so backwardly of me now, that I’ll repay that gift last?”

“No, I will not repay his gift last. If I did, it may prove to be a subject that causes laughter to the rest of the lords, and the lords would think that I am a fool. I would prefer that he had asked to borrow from me three times the amount he wants to borrow, as long as he had asked me first. I would prefer that for the sake of my mind because I would have such a desire to do him good.

“But now return to him, and with the faint reply of those three other lords join this answer: Who abates and lessens my honor shall not know my coin.”

Sempronius exited.

Timon’s servant said to himself, “Excellent! Your lordship’s a splendid villain. The Devil did not know what he did when he made men politic — cunning when it comes to self-interest. The Devil crossed himself by doing it; he thwarted himself by making men his rivals in evil. And I cannot think but, in the end, the villainies of men will make the Devil appear innocent by comparison.

“How fairly this lord strives to appear foul! He takes on the appearance of virtue in order to be wicked, like those who under hot ardent zeal would set whole realms on fire. He is like a religious zealot who is willing to start a war — of such a nature is his politic, cunning self-love.

“Sempronius was my lord’s best hope; now all his other hopes have fled, except only the gods. Now that his friends are dead to him, doors that were never acquainted with their locks during the many bounteous years that Timon was generous must be employed now to guard securely their master. And this is all a liberal — freely generous — course allows: Who cannot keep his wealth must keep his house. A man who cannot keep his wealth must keep inside his house so that he will not be arrested for debt.”

— 3.4 —

Two of Varro’s servants and one of Lucius’ servants arrived outside Timon’s house, where they met Titus, Hortensius, and other servants of Timon’s creditors. All of them waited for Timon to come out of his house.

Varro’s first servant said, “We are well met; good morning, Titus and Hortensius.”

Titus replied, “The same to you, Varro’s kind first servant.”

“Lucius’ servant!” Hortensius said. “Do we meet together?”

“Yes, and I think that one and the same business is why all of us are here,” Lucius’ servant replied. “The reason I am here is money.”

Titus said, “So is theirs and ours.”

Philotus walked up to the others.

Lucius’ servant said, “And Sir Philotus, too!”

The “Sir” was a joke, not a real title.

“Good day to all of you,” Philotus said.

Lucius’ servant said, “Welcome, good brother. What do you think the time is?”

“The hour hand of the clock is laboring to reach nine,” Philotus replied.

“Is it that late?” Lucius’ servant said.

“Hasn’t Timon, the lord I am waiting to see, been seen yet?” Philotus asked.

“Not yet,” Lucius’ servant replied.

“I wonder about this,” Philotus said. “Timon was accustomed to rise and shine at seven.”

“Yes, but the days are grown shorter with him,” Lucius’ servant replied. “You must consider that a prodigal course is like the course of the Sun — days that are long in the summer grow short in the winter in the northern hemisphere — but it is not, like the Sun’s, recoverable. The Sun’s appearance during winter is less long than its appearance during summer. However, summer will return and the Sun will return to its old course across the sky and shine longer on the Earth. I fear that it is deepest winter in Lord Timon’s moneybag; that is, one may reach deep into it, and yet find little. It is like an animal digging in the winter snow for food; the animal may dig deep but find little food.”

“I share your fear that Timon’s moneybag lacks anything to fill it,” Philotus said.

“I’ll teach you how to observe and interpret a strange event,” Titus said. “Your lord sends now for money from Timon.”

Hortensius replied, “That is very true, he does.”

“And your lord is wearing jewels now that Timon gave to him, and that is the reason that I am waiting for Timon to

give me money. Timon borrowed money from my lord to give jewels to your lord, and because of that Timon is in debt and I am waiting for him to pay the debt.”

“It is against my heart,” Hortensius replied. “I don’t like it, and I wish that it were not true.”

Lucius’ servant said, “Note how strange this is — it shows that Timon because of this must pay more than he owes. It is as if your lord should wear rich jewels and send for the money that was needed to pay for the jewels.”

“I’m tired of this task, as the gods can witness,” Hortensius said. “I know my lord has spent part of Timon’s wealth, and now my lord’s ingratitude makes his trying to get money from Timon worse than stealthy stealing.”

Varro’s first servant said, “You are right. The debt my lord is trying to collect is three thousand crowns. What is the debt that your lord is trying to collect?”

Lucius’ servant replied, “Five thousand crowns.”

Varro’s first servant said, “It is a very large amount, and it seems by the sum that your master’s confidence in Timon was above my master’s confidence that Timon would repay the loan, or else, surely, the amount of money that my master lent Timon would have equaled what your master lent him.”

Flaminius came outside Timon’s house.

Titus said, “He is one of Lord Timon’s servants.”

Lucius’ servant said, “Flaminius! Sir, may I have a word with you? Please, is your lord ready to come outside?”

“No, indeed, he is not,” Flaminius replied.

“We are waiting for him,” Titus said. “Please, tell him that.”

“I need not tell him that,” Flaminius said. “He knows you are very diligent in seeking him.”

Flaminius exited.

Flavius came onto the scene. Seeing the creditors’ servants, he attempted to leave without being seen. He held up his cloak to partially hide his face.

Lucius’ servant said, “Look! Isn’t that man holding his cloak up to muffle his face Timon’s steward? He is going away in a cloud.”

The cloud was a cloud of despair, and going away in a cloud also meant disappearing; in this case, Flavius was trying to hide his face so that he could leave without his master’s creditors recognizing him.

Lucius’ servant continued, “Call to him! Call to him!”

Titus said to Flavius, “Do you hear us, sir?”

Varro’s second servant said, “By your leave, sir —”

Letting his cloak fall away from his face, Flavius asked, “What do you ask of me, my friend?”

“We are waiting here for certain amounts of money, sir,” Titus said.

“Yes, you are,” Flavius said. “If money were as certain as your waiting, it would be sure enough. Why didn’t you bring your sums and bills when your false masters were eating my lord’s food? Then they could smile and fawn upon his debts and take the interest — the food — into their gluttonous mouths. You are doing yourselves wrong by making me angry. Let me pass quietly. Believe it, my lord and I have made an end; I have no more sums to reckon in his accounts, and he has no more money to spend.”

Lucius' servant said, "Yes, but this answer will not serve. This answer is not good enough."

Flavius muttered, "If it will not serve, it is not as base as any of you because you serve knaves."

Flavius went inside Timon's house.

Varro's first servant said, "What did his cashiered — fired — 'worship' mutter?"

He used the word "worship," which was used to refer to a man worthy of respect, sarcastically; he was angry at Flavius.

"It doesn't matter," Varro's second servant said. "He's poor, and that's revenge enough. Who can speak more critically than a man who has no house to put his head in? Such a man may rail against and criticize great buildings."

Servilius came out of Titus' house.

Titus said, "Oh, here's Servilius; now we shall know some answers to our questions."

"If I might persuade you, gentlemen, to return at some other hour, I would derive much benefit from it," Servilius said, "for I swear that my lord leans wondrously to discontent and unhappiness. His cheerful temper has forsaken him; he is not healthy, and he stays in his room."

Lucius' servant said, "Many who stay in their homes are not sick, and if his health is that far gone, I think that he should all the sooner pay his debts so that when he dies he will have a clear path to the gods."

"Good gods!" Servilius said.

"We cannot take this for an answer to our demand for money, sir," Titus said.

From inside Timon's house, Flaminius shouted, "Servilius, help!"

He then shouted to Timon, "My lord! My lord!"

Enraged, Timon came out of his house. Flaminius followed him.

"Are my doors opposed against my passage through them to go outside?" Timon said. "Have I been always free, and must my house now be my confining enemy, my jail? This place where I have given feasts, does it now, like all Mankind, show me an iron heart?"

Lucius' servant said, "Present your bill now, Titus."

"My lord, here is my bill," Titus said to Timon.

"Here's mine," Lucius' servant said.

"And mine, my lord," Hortensius said.

Both of Varro's servants said, "And ours, my lord."

Philotus said, "Here are all our bills."

One meaning of "bill" was a long-handled weapon with an axe-head at one end.

Timon said, "Knock me down with your bills. Cleave me in half all the way to my belt."

Lucius' servant said, "It's a pity, my lord."

"Cut my heart into sums of money," Timon replied.

Titus' servant said, "The sum of money I need is fifty talents."

"I will pay it with my blood," Timon replied. "Count out each drop of my blood."

Lucius' servant said, "The sum of money I need is five thousand crowns, my lord."

"Five thousand drops of my blood will pay that," Timon said.

He then asked Varro's two servants, "How much do you need? And you?"

Varro's two servants said, "My lord —"

Timon interrupted, "— tear me to pieces, take all of me, and may the gods fall upon you!"

Timon went back inside his house.

Hortensius said, "Truly, I see that our masters may throw their caps at their money: They will never get their money back. These debts may well be called desperate ones because a madman owes them."

All of the people trying to get money from Titus exited.

Inside his house, Timon said to himself, "They have even made me be out of breath because of my anger, the slaves. Creditors? They are Devils!"

Flavius said, "My dear lord —"

Not hearing him, Timon said to himself, "I have an idea. I wonder if it will work."

"My lord —" Flavius said.

"I'll do it," Timon said.

He called, "My steward!"

Flavius replied, "Here I am, my lord."

“So opportunely?” Timon asked. “Go and invite all of my friends again, Lucius, Lucullus, and Sempronius, all, sirrah, all. I’ll once more feast the rascals.”

“Sirrah” was a word used to address a man of lower status than the speaker.

“Oh, my lord,” Flavius said. “You say that only because your soul is confused and distracted. Not enough food is left to furnish even a moderate table.”

“Don’t you worry about that,” Timon said. “Go. I order you to invite them all to a feast here. I will let in the tide of knaves once more; my cook and I will provide the feast.”

— 3.5 —

Senators were meeting in the Senate House of Athens. They were discussing the punishment of a soldier who served under Alcibiades. The soldier had gotten drunk, quarreled with another man, and killed him.

The first Senator said to the second Senator, “My lord, you have my vote for it; the crime is bloodthirsty; it is necessary he should die. Nothing emboldens sin as much as mercy.”

“That is very true,” the second Senator said. “The law shall crush him.”

Alcibiades and some attendants entered.

Alcibiades greeted the Senators, “May honor, health, and compassion be characteristics of the Senate!”

The first Senator asked, “What do you want, Captain?”

“I am a humble suitor to your virtuous selves,” Alcibiades said. “Pity is the virtue of the law, and none except tyrants use the law cruelly. It pleases time and fortune to lie heavy upon a friend of mine, who, in hot blood, has stepped into

the jurisdiction of the law, which is past depth to those who, without heed, plunge into it.

“He is a man, setting his fate aside — the fate that made him do what he did — of comely virtues. Nor did he blemish his deed with cowardice — an honor in him that makes up for his fault — for with a noble fury and fair spirit, seeing his reputation stained to death, he opposed his foe, and with such sober and hardly noticeable passion he controlled his anger before it was spent that it was as if he had simply made a point in an argument.”

The deed committed was serious enough that the Senators had considered it a capital crime — one that would be punished with death. Alcibiades was trying to make it seem much less serious than that.

The first Senator replied, “You are making too forced a paradox as you strive to make an ugly deed look fair. Your words have taken such pains as if they labored to make manslaughter a lawful procedure and make fighting duels one of the acts of valor. That indeed is a bastard form of valor that came into the world when sects and factions were newly born. But the truly valiant man is one who can wisely suffer the worst that another man can say, and who can make his wrongs something external to him and wear them like his clothing, in a carefree way, and who can never take his injuries to heart. If he were to take his injuries to heart, he would put his heart in danger. If wrongs are evils that force us to kill, what folly it is to hazard life for ill! We would be risking our lives for the sake of evil.”

“My lord —” Alcibiades began.

The first Senator interrupted, “— you cannot make gross sins look innocent and clear; to get revenge is not valorous, but to bear and endure wrongs is valorous.”

“My lords, then, if you will, pardon me if I speak like a military Captain. Why do ‘foolish’ men expose themselves in battle, and not endure all threats? Should they go to sleep after being threatened, and let their foes quietly cut their throats, without opposition? If such valor is found in bearing wrongs, why do we go to wars abroad? Why then, if there is such valor in bearing, women who stay at home and bear the weight of men in the act of sex and then bear children are more valiant than soldiers who fight abroad. If bearing is valorous, then the ass who bears burdens is more of a Captain than the lion; if there is wisdom in suffering, then the felon who is weighed down with irons is wiser than the judge.

“Oh, my lords, as you are great, be good and show compassion. Who cannot condemn rashness in cold blood? To kill, I grant, is sin’s most extreme outburst. But to kill in self-defense, if we take a merciful view of it, is very just.

“To be angry is impious; but what man has never been angry? Weigh this man’s crime with mercy.”

“You speak in vain,” the second Senator said.

“In vain!” Alcibiades said. “This soldier’s military service done at Lacedaemon and Byzantium is a sufficient bribe for his life.”

He meant that the soldier’s military service in far places ought to excuse his crime in Athens.

Hearing the word “bribe,” and not liking it, the first Senator asked, “What’s that?”

Alcibiades replied, “I say, my lords, this soldier has done fair service, and slain in battle many of your enemies. How full of valor did he bear himself in the last conflict, and made plenteous wounds!”

The second Senator said, “He has made too much plenty with them. He’s a sworn rioter — he carouses as if he had made an oath to carouse. He has a sin — drunkenness — that often drowns him and takes his valor prisoner. If there were no foes, his crime of constant drunken carousing would be enough to overcome him.”

By “If there were no foes,” the second Senator meant, “If there were no civilian or military foes [whom he had killed],” but Alcibiades could easily understand it as saying, “If there were no foes of Athens.” Athens was currently fighting no wars; otherwise, Alcibiades would be elsewhere, fighting in the war, and the soldier would be needed to fight in the war.

The second Senator continued, “In that beastly fury caused by drunkenness, he has been known to commit outrages and support dissension. It has been reported to us that his days are foul and his drink is dangerous.”

“He dies,” the first Senator said.

“That is a hard fate!” Alcibiades said. “He might have died in war, which would have been a better fate. My lords, if not for any good qualities in him — though his right arm might purchase his own time of natural life and be in debt to no one — yet, the more to move you, take my merits and join them to his, and because I know your reverend ages love security — safety and collateral — I’ll pawn my victories and all my honors to you because I know that he will make good returns. If by this crime he owes the law his life, why, let the war receive it in valiant gore — let him die in battle. Law is strict, and war is no less.”

“We are for law,” the first Senator said. “He dies. Argue about it no more, or our displeasure will heighten. No matter whether a man is your friend or your brother, that man forfeits his own blood when he spills the blood of another.”

“Must it be so?” Alcibiades said. “It must not be. My lords, I beg you, know me for who I am.”

“What!” the second Senator said, outraged.

“Remember me and my deeds,” Alcibiades said.

“What!” the third Senator said, outraged.

“I cannot but think that because of your old age you have forgotten me and what I have done for Athens — it could not be otherwise. That is the only reason that I should be so treated so badly — I beg you for a favor and I am denied what should be quickly granted to me. The wounds I have received in battle ache when I look at you.”

“Do you dare to face our anger?” the first Senator said. “It is in few words, but it is spacious in effect. We banish you from Athens forever.”

“Banish me!” Alcibiades said. “You ought to banish your dotage; you ought to banish your usury that makes the Senate ugly.”

“If, after two days, you are still in Athens,” the first Senator said, “you will face a more serious judgment than banishment. And, so that you will lack your reason to swell our anger, the man you want to be pardoned shall be executed immediately.”

The Senators exited.

Alcibiades said to himself, “Now I pray that the gods will preserve you so that you may live to be old enough that you are nothing but bones, so that no one will want to look at you! I’m worse than mad: I have kept back their foes, while they have counted their money and lent out their coins for much interest, while I myself am rich only in large wounds. All those wounds for treatment such as this? Is this the healing ointment that the usuring Senate pours onto military

Captains' wounds? Banishment! Banishment isn't so bad; I don't hate being banished. It is a worthy reason for my anger and fury and an excuse to attack Athens. I'll cheer up my discontented troops, and play for hearts to be loyal to me. It is an honor to be at odds with most lands; soldiers should tolerate as few wrongs as do the gods."

— 3.6 —

The banqueting room in Timon's house was filled with tables and busy servants as several lords, Senators, and other people entered. Musicians played.

The first lord said, "Good day to you, sir."

"I also wish a good day to you," the second lord said. "I think this honorable lord — Timon — was only testing us the other day when he wanted to borrow money."

"Upon that were my thoughts being exercised, when we met just now," the first lord said. "I hope it is not so low with him as he made it seem in the test of his various friends."

"It should not be, by the evidence of this new feast that he is hosting," the second lord said.

"I should think so," the first lord said. "Timon sent me an earnest invitation, which my many personal needs urged me to decline, but he has conjured me beyond them, and I must necessarily appear at his feast. His powers of persuasion are like those of a magician."

"In like manner was I under obligation to my pressing business, but he would not hear my excuse," the second lord said. "I am sorry that when he sent a servant to borrow money from me, my supply of money was out."

"I am sick from that grief, too, since I now understand how all things go," the first lord said, meaning that he understood now that Timon was simply testing his friends to see if they

would lend him money when Timon was suffering a financial emergency.

“Every man here’s in the same situation and feeling the same grief,” the second lord said. “What would he have borrowed from you?”

“A thousand coins.”

“A thousand coins!”

“What did he want to borrow from you?” the first lord said.

“He sent to me, sir —” the second lord began, but seeing Timon, he said, “Here he comes.”

Timon and some attendants walked toward the two lords.

“From all my heart to both of you gentlemen,” Timon said, “and how are you doing?”

“Always I am doing the best, when I hear good things about your lordship,” the first lord said.

“The swallow does not follow summer more willingly than we follow your lordship,” the second lord said.

Timon thought, *Nor more willingly leaves winter; such summer-birds are men.*

He was thinking of this proverb: Swallows, like false friends, fly away upon the approach of winter.

He said out loud, “Gentlemen, our dinner will not recompense you for this long wait. Feast your ears with the music for a while, if they will metaphysically dine on the harsh sound of the trumpet; we shall get to the feast soon.”

“I hope that your lordship takes it not unkindly that when you asked me for a loan I returned to you an empty-handed messenger,” the first lord said.

“Oh, sir, don’t let that trouble you,” Timon replied.

“My noble lord —” the second lord said.

“Ah, my good friend, what is wrong?” Timon asked.

“My most honorable lord, I am even sick from shame, that, when your lordship this other day sent to me to borrow money, I was so unfortunate a beggar that I lacked money to lend to you.”

“Don’t worry about it, sir,” Timon said.

“If you had sent your messenger to me just two hours earlier —” the second lord said.

“Don’t let it distress your brain, which ought to entertain better memories,” Timon said.

He ordered his servants, “Come, bring in everything all together.”

The servants brought in the feast.

The second lord said, “All covered dishes!”

The best food was served under covered dishes.

“Royal cheer, I warrant you,” the first lord said. “This is food fit for a King, I bet.”

A third lord who had just arrived said, “There is no reason to doubt that; if money can buy it and it is in season, it is here.”

“How are you?” the first lord asked. “What’s the news?”

“Alcibiades has been banished. Have you heard about it?”

“Alcibiades banished!” the other lords said.

“It is so,” the third lord said. “You can be sure of it.”

“What? What?” the first lord exclaimed.

“Please, tell us why he was banished,” the second lord requested.

“My worthy friends, will you come closer?” Timon asked.

“I’ll tell you more soon,” the third lord promised. “Here’s a noble feast ready.”

“Timon is still the man we knew of old,” the second lord said.

“Will he continue to be?” the third lord said. “Will he continue to be?”

“He has so far,” the second lord said, “but time will tell truth — and so —”

“I understand,” the third lord said.

They were a little cautious; Timon had recently asked to borrow money from them. Would he do so again?

Timon said, “Each man go to his stool with that same eagerness as he would go to the lips of his mistress. Your diet of food shall be in all places alike. Let’s not make a City feast of it and let the food cool before we can agree upon who shall sit in the first place, the place of honor. Sit, sit.”

In this society, people sat on stools. Only a very high-ranking person would be offered a chair. A City feast was a formal feast in London with the higher-ranking people sitting at the head of the table and people of lower status sitting lower. At a City feast the best food would be placed at the head of the table, but at Timon’s feast everyone was to be served the same diet of food.

Timon said, “The gods require our thanks.”

He prayed, “You great benefactors, sprinkle our society with thankfulness. As for your own gifts, make yourselves praised, but always reserve some gifts to give later, lest you

deities be despised because you have no more gifts to give. And keep something back for yourself so that you are not despised because you have nothing. Lend to each man enough, so that one man need not lend to another; as you know, if your godheads asked to borrow money from men, men would forsake the gods. Make the food be loved more than the man who gives it. Let no assembly of twenty men be without a score — twenty — of villains. If twelve women sit at the table, let a dozen of them be — what women are. Gods, concerning the rest of your foes — the Senators of Athens, together with the common rabble of people — be aware that what is amiss in them makes them suitable for destruction. For these my present — and present-loving — friends, as they are to me nothing, so in nothing bless them, and to nothing are they welcome.”

Timon then ordered, “Uncover the dishes, dogs, and lap.”

The dishes were uncovered and found to be full of warm water.

“What does Timon mean by this?” someone said.

“I don’t know,” others answered.

“May you a better feast never behold, you knot of mouth-friends — you ‘friends’ who say that I am your friend only as long as I feed you,” Timon said. “Smoke — steam that dissipates and vanishes — and lukewarm water are the perfect feast for you and the perfect representation of your friendship for me. This is Timon’s last supper; I, Timon, who is adorned and spangled with your flatteries, washes your reeking villainy off, and sprinkles it in your faces.”

He dipped his hands in the lukewarm water and then flung the water in the faces of his “friends.”

He shouted, “Live loathed and long, you most smiling, smooth, detested parasites, you courteous destroyers, you

affable wolves, you meek bears, you fools who follow fortune, you plate-friends who are friends only when given plates full of food, you flies who appear only during the good times of summer, you cap-and-knee slaves who doff your caps and bend your knees in flattery, you vapors as insubstantial as air, and you minute-jacks!”

A jack is a figure that strikes the chime on a clock. Metaphorically, a minute-jack is a time-server, an opportunist who adjusts his behavior minute by minute according to what will bring the most profit to him.

Timon continued, “May the infinite number of maladies affecting men and beasts infect you and make your skin be completely scab covered!”

A lord stood up to leave and Timon said, “What, are you going? Wait a minute! Take your medicine first — you, too — and you —”

He threw stones at his fleeing guests.

Mockingly, he said, “Stay. I will lend you money. I won’t borrow any.”

He threw the stones and dishes at them, scattered their hats and cloaks, and drove them out.

He shouted, “What, all in motion? All running away! Henceforth let there be no feast where a villain’s not a welcome guest. Burn, house! Sink, Athens! From now on, let all men and all humanity be hated by Timon!”

He ran out of his house.

The lords re-entered Timon’s house, accompanied by some late-arriving Senators.

The first lord asked, “How are you now, my lords?”

“Do you know the reason for Lord Timon’s fury?” the second lord asked.

“Bah!” the third lord said. “Did you see my cap?”

A fourth lord said, “I have lost my cloak.”

The first lord said, “Timon is nothing but a mad lord, and nothing but his whims sway him. He gave me a jewel the other day, and now he has beaten it out of my hat in which I was wearing it. Have you seen my jewel?”

The third lord asked, “Did you see my cap?”

“Here it is,” the second lord said.

“Here lies my cloak,” the fourth lord said.

“Let’s stay here no longer,” the first lord said.

“Lord Timon’s mad,” the second lord said.

“I literally feel it upon my bones,” the third lord said.

“One day he gives us diamonds, the next day stones,” the fourth lord said.

CHAPTER 4**— 4.1 —**

Outside the wall protecting Athens, Timon said to himself, “Let me look back upon you. Oh, you wall, which girdles and keeps in those wolves, dive into the earth, and cease to be a protective fence around Athens!

“Married women, become promiscuous!

“Obedience, fail in children!

“Slaves and fools, pluck the grave, wrinkled Senators from the bench, and govern in their steads!

“Innocent virgins, convert instantly and become general filths — common whores! Have sex in front of your parents’ eyes!

“Bankrupts, hold fast; rather than give back the money you borrowed, take your knives out, and cut the throats of those who trusted you!

“Indentured servants, steal! Your grave masters are sticky-fingered robbers, and the law allows them to pillage and steal.

“Maiden, go to your master’s bed. Your mistress is of the brothel — she is a bawd or a whore!

“Son of sixteen, pluck the padded crutch away from your old, limping father, and then use it to beat out his brains!

“Piety and fear, devotion to the gods, peace, justice, truth, respect given to parents, peaceful nights, and neighborliness, teaching and knowledge, manners, skilled occupations, and trades, social ranks, observances, customs, and laws — may all of you decline and become your opposites, and yet allow confusion to continue to increase!

“Plagues, which are likely to happen to men, heap your powerful and infectious fevers on Athens, which is ripe to be struck!

“You cold sciatica, cripple our Senators, so that their limbs may limp as lamely as their manners.

“Lust and licentiousness, creep in the minds and marrows of our youth, so that against the stream of virtue they may strive and drown themselves in revelry!

“Itches and blisters, sow your seeds in all the Athenian bosoms, and may their crop be general leprosy! May breath infect breath, so that their society, like their friendship, may merely poison others! I’ll carry nothing away from you, except nakedness, you detestable town!”

He removed a garment and threw it through the gate he had just passed through, saying, “Take you that, too, with my curses that multiply! Timon will go to the woods, where he shall find the unkindest beast kinder — more caring and showing more kinship — than Mankind.”

He paused and then shouted, “May the gods destroy — hear me, all you good gods — the Athenians both within and outside that wall! And grant, as Timon grows older, that his hatred may grow to extend to the whole race of Mankind, high and low! Amen.”

— 4.2 —

Flavius talked with two of Timon’s servants in Timon’s old house in Athens. As steward, he was the highest-ranking servant, and so it fell to him to let the other servants know that they were now out of a job. This was serious; unless the servants could find new masters, they could become destitute.

The first servant asked, "Listen, master steward. Tell us where's our master? Where's Timon? Are we ruined? Cast off and abandoned? Is nothing remaining?"

"I am sorry, my fellows," Flavius said, "but what can I say to you? Let the righteous gods record that I am as poor as you."

"Such a house broken and bankrupt!" the first servant mourned. "So noble a master fallen! All is gone! And he does not have one friend to take his misfortunate self by the arm, and go along with him!"

The second servant said, "As we turn our backs from our companion thrown into his grave, so his associates who are familiar with his buried fortunes all slink away and leave their false vows of friendship with him, like a pickpocket leaving behind an empty wallet. And Timon, his poor self now a beggar dedicated to living in the open air, with his disease of poverty that everyone shuns, walks, like contempt, alone.

"Here come more of our fellow servants."

The other servants walked over to them.

Flavius said, "We are all broken implements of a ruined house."

The third servant said, "Yet our hearts still wear Timon's livery — the distinctive clothing that identifies us as being Timon's servants. I can see that by looking at our faces; we are still colleagues, serving alike in sorrow. Our ship is leaking, and we, poor mates, stand on the sinking deck, on which we could die, hearing the surging waves threaten us. We must all depart into this sea of air. We must leave the house."

“All you good fellows, the last of my wealth I’ll share among you,” Flavius said. “Wherever we shall meet, for Timon’s sake, let’s still be colleagues; let’s shake our heads, and say, as if we were a funeral bell tolling our master’s misfortunes, ‘We have seen better days.’ Let each take some money.”

The servants held back, reluctant to take some of Flavius’ last remaining money.

He said, “No, all of you put out your hands. Not one word more. Thus part we rich in sorrow, but poor in money.”

The servants embraced and then departed, leaving Flavius alone.

Flavius said to himself, “Oh, the fierce and drastic wretchedness that glory brings us! Who would not wish to be excluded from wealth, since riches point to misery and contempt? Who would want to be so mocked with glory? Who would want to live in what is only a dream of friendship and not the real thing? Who would want to have his pomp and ceremony and all of what makes up magnificence be only superficial, like a thin layer of paint, and like his so-called friends? Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart, undone and ruined by his goodness! It is a strange, unusual nature when a man’s worst sin is that he does too much good! Who, then, dares to be half as kind and generous as Timon again? Generosity, that makes gods, always mars men. My dearest lord was blessed, and now he is most accursed. He was rich, only to now be wretched. Timon, your great fortunes have been made your chief afflictions. Poor, kind lord! He has dashed away in rage from this ungrateful seat of monstrous friends, and he does not have with him those things that are needed to sustain his life, and he lacks the money to buy those things.

“I’ll follow after him and inquire about and find out where he is. I’ll always serve his desires with my best will. While I have gold, I’ll be his steward still.”

Flavius lacked physical gold, but as long as he had gold in his heart, he wanted to serve Timon.

— 4.3 —

Timon was living in a cave in the woods, near the seashore.

He came out of the cave and said to himself, “Oh, blessed infection-breeding Sun, draw up from the earth noxious vapors that cause things to rot. Below your sister’s orbit, infect the air!”

In mythology, the sister of the Sun was the Moon. According to this society’s beliefs, the Earth was the center of the universe, and whatever was under the Moon was corruptible, while the heavens were incorruptible. Timon wanted the Sun to corrupt the air in between the Earth and the Moon. Infected air would cause plague in the land under the air.

Timon continued, “Let’s consider twinned brothers of one womb, whose procreation, residence in the womb, and birth scarcely makes them different. Suppose that they are put to the test by being given different fortunes; the brother with the greater fortune will scorn the brother with the lesser fortune. Let me go further and apply this to humans as a whole. Human nature, to which all afflictions lay siege, cannot bear great fortune except by being contemptuous of human nature.”

People who enjoy great good fortune will come to despise people who do not enjoy great good fortune. People who enjoy great good fortune will come to believe that they are better than other people. After all, they think, I am rich, so why isn’t everyone else rich? There must be something

wrong with them. This applies to things other than riches — for example, fame, success, and so on.

Alexander the Great was wondrously successful, and he came to believe that he was a god.

We should keep in mind that all afflictions lay siege to human nature. Those afflictions include the seven deadly sins, of which the foremost is pride. If we could keep that in mind, we would not think that being fortunate makes us better than other people.

Timon continued, “Raise this beggar and make him successful, and make that lord lack success. If that happens, then the Senator shall be regarded with contempt as if his contemptuousness were his inheritance, and the beggar will be regarded with honor as if it were his birthright.”

Successful people are honored; unsuccessful people are not. Very fortunate people can regard the two groups of people as two different species.

Timon continued, “It is the pasture that lards the brother’s sides, and the lack of land that makes the other brother lean. The brother with pastureland can raise cattle that he can eat and that will make him fat.”

Much success is the result of birth. In the age of primogeniture, the older brother gets the bulk of the inheritance. A twin, but younger, brother inherits little.

A person born into a middle-class, or higher, family often has a better chance of success than one born into a destitute family.

Timon continued, “Who dares, who dares, in purity of manhood — a man who is pure and morally upright — to stand upright, and say, ‘This man’s a flatterer’? If one man is a flatterer, then so are they all because the people on every

step of fortune are flattered by the people on the step below. The learned head bows to the golden fool; an educated man bows to a fool when the fool has money. All is oblique and slanting. There's nothing level and direct in our cursed natures, except straightforward villainy. Therefore, let all feasts, societies, and throngs of men be abhorred! I, Timon, disdain all human beings, including myself. May destruction use its fangs to grab Mankind!"

He began digging with a spade and said, "Earth, give me edible roots! Whoever seeks for something better from you, season his palate with your most powerful poison!

"What is here? Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold? No, gods, I am no idle vow-maker. I asked for edible roots, you innocent, pure Heavens!

"This amount of gold will make black white, foul fair, wrong right, base noble, old young, and coward valiant. Ha, you gods! Why this? What is the reason for this, you gods? Why have you allowed me to find gold? Why, this amount of gold will haul your priests and servants away from your sides, and it will pluck healthy men's pillows from below their heads."

When people were dying, their pillows were taken away from under their heads to make it easier to die. The sixteenth-century *Shiltei Hagiborim* by R. Joshua Boaz argued against what he regarded as a form of what we would probably call euthanasia:

"There would appear to be grounds for forbidding the custom, practiced by some, in the case of someone who is dying and his soul cannot depart, of removing the pillow from underneath the goeses [someone who is expected to die within 72 hours] so that he will die quickly. For they say that the bird feathers in the bedding prevent the soul from leaving the body."

In some societies, people believe that a lone pigeon is an omen of death, and people believe that pigeon feathers in a pillow prolong the agony of dying, and so they remove pillows containing pigeon feathers from sickrooms.

When Timon said that gold would pluck healthy men's pillows from below their heads, he meant that gold would cause greedy people to cause healthy men to die.

Timon continued, "This yellow slave will knit and break religions, bless the accursed, make those with hoary, white leprosy adored, place thieves into positions of high status and make them equivalent to Senators on the bench in terms of rank and title, deference and the right to be knelt to, and approval and approbation.

"This gold is what makes the wappened widow wed again. She, whom those with ulcerous sores in the hospital-house would vomit at the sight of, is embalmed and preserved with golden spices until she takes on the appearance of an April day again."

Possibly, Timon was referring to two women, depending in part on the meaning of the unusual word "wappened." If the word meant "worn out," then he was perhaps referring to one woman, a worn-out widow who was afflicted with ulcerous sores.

However, if "wappened" meant either "saddened" or "frightened," then Timon could be referring to two women. The widow would be saddened by the death of a good husband or frightened by a possible marriage to a bad husband, but a man who owns gold will overcome either her sadness or her fear. In that case, the woman with ulcerous sores could be a different woman.

Timon continued, "Come, damned earth, you common whore of Mankind, which everyone treads on and plows, and which makes the rout — the disorderly mobs — of nations

at odds with each other, I will make you do what is your right nature — I will make you give me edible roots.”

Timon heard the sounds of marching soldiers.

“Ha! A military drum?” Timon said. “You, gold, are quick, but I’ll still bury you.”

The word “quick” meant “alive.” Gold is alive in the sense that it can reproduce. Usurers make gold reproduce by lending it out at interest. Gold is also quick — fast — in that it is quickly spent or lost.

Timon continued, “You shall go, gold, you strong thief, when gouty keepers of you cannot stand.”

Gold shall continue to move and circulate even when its gouty owners are unable to stand and when they have died.

Timon then said, “I’ll keep some of you as ‘earnest money’ — money to use as a down payment for things that I want to happen.”

He kept some of the gold and buried the rest.

To the sound of military drum and fife, Alcibiades arrived, accompanied by two whores, one on each arm. The whores were named Phrynia and Timandra.

“Who are you there?” Alcibiades asked. “Speak.”

He did not recognize Timon, who was not wearing fine clothing anymore. Timon looked wild.

“I am a beast, as are you,” Timon replied. “May the cankerworm gnaw your heart because you showed me again the eyes of man! I don’t want to ever again see a human being!”

“What is your name? Is man so hateful to you, who are yourself a man?”

“I am Misanthropos, and I hate Mankind,” Timon replied.

Misanthropos is Greek for Man-Hater.

He continued, “As for your part, I wish you were a dog, so that I might love you somewhat.”

Recognizing Timon, Alcibiades said, “I know you well, but I am ignorant about what has happened to you.”

“I know you, too,” Timon said, “and more than that I know you, I do not desire to know. Follow your military drum away from here, and with man’s blood paint the ground, red, red. Religious canons and civil laws are cruel, so then what should war be? This deadly whore of yours has in her more destruction than your sword, for all her angelic look.”

Earlier, a page had given Timon a letter from the Fool’s boss, the proprietor of a whorehouse, so he recognized that at least one of the women with Alcibiades was a whore.

Insulted, Phrynia said, “May your lips rot off!”

The rotting off of lips was a sign of venereal disease.

“I will not kiss you,” Timon said. “That way, the rot returns to your own lips again.”

In this society, people believed that one way to cure themselves of venereal disease was to pass it on to another person. By refusing to kiss Phrynia, Timon was refusing to catch her venereal disease and so she would keep it and her lips would rot.

“How came the noble Timon to this change of fortune?” Alcibiades asked.

“As the Moon does, by lacking light to give,” Timon replied. “But then renew it I could not, like the Moon is able to. There were no Suns to borrow of.”

The Moon lacks light of its own; it reflects the light of the Sun. Each month the Moon renews itself with a new Moon. Timon had run out of money to give away, and he had been unable to borrow more, and so now he was living in a cave.

“Noble Timon, what friendly act may I do for you?” Alcibiades asked.

“None, but to help me maintain my opinion,” Timon replied.

“What friendly act would that be, Timon?”

“Promise me friendship, but perform no friendly acts for me,” Timon replied. “If you will not promise to be my friend, then may the gods plague you because you are a man! If you do perform a friendly act for me, then confound you because you are a man!”

“I have heard a little about your miseries,” Alcibiades said.

“You saw my miseries, when I had prosperity.”

“I see your miseries now; when you had prosperity, that was a blessed time.”

“Then I was as blessed as you are now — you are tied to a brace of harlots.”

A brace is a pair; sometimes the word “brace” is used to refer to a pair of dogs. Timon was saying that Alcibiades was not blessed now; being with a pair of whores — aka bitches — was no blessing.

Timandra, one of the brace of harlots, asked, “Is this the Athenian minion whom the world praised so much?”

A “minion” is a darling, but the word is often used sarcastically.

“Are you Timandra?” Timon asked.

“Yes.”

“Be a whore always,” Timon said. “Those who use you sexually do not love you. Give them diseases in return for them giving you their lust. Make use of your lecherous hours. Season the slaves for tubs and baths. Bring down rose-cheeked youth to the tub-fast and the diet.”

In this society, a treatment for venereal disease was to soak and sweat in hot tubs and baths. During the treatment for venereal disease, people would refrain from sex (a kind of fast) and they would adhere to a special diet, including refraining from eating rich food.

“Hang you, monster!” Timandra said.

“Pardon him, sweet Timandra,” Alcibiades said, “for his wits are drowned and lost in his calamities. I have but little gold of late, splendid Timon, the lack whereof daily makes revolt in my poverty-stricken band of soldiers. I have heard, and grieved over, how cursed Athens, mindless of your worth, forgetting your great deeds, when neighbor nations, except for your sword and your fortune, would have defeated and trod upon them —”

“Please, strike up your drum, and get you gone,” Timon said.

“I am your friend, and I pity you, dear Timon.”

“How do you pity a man whom you cause trouble? I prefer to be alone.”

“Why, fare you well,” Alcibiades said. “Here is some gold for you.”

“Keep it,” Timon said. “I cannot eat it.”

“When I have laid proud Athens in ruins on a heap —”

Timon interrupted, “Are you warring against Athens?”

“Yes, Timon, and I have cause to war against Athens.”

“May the gods destroy all the Athenians when you conquer them, and may they destroy you afterward, when you have conquered them!”

“Why me, Timon?”

“Because you were born to conquer my country by killing villains,” Timon replied.

Timon wanted everyone to be destroyed, including those who destroyed his enemies.

Taking out some of his gold, he said to Alcibiades, “Put away your gold. Go on, put it away. Here’s gold — go on, take it.”

Alcibiades did not take it.

Timon continued, “Be like a planetary plague, when Jove decides to hang his poison in the sick air over some high-vised city.”

In this society, people believed that Jupiter, aka Jove, King of the gods, caused plague by poisoning the air.

Timon continued, “When you conquer Athens, don’t let your sword skip even one person.

“Don’t pity an honored, aged man because he has a white beard — he is a usurer.

“Strike down for me the counterfeit matron. It is her clothing only that is honest and chaste — she herself is a bawd.

“Don’t let the virgin’s cheek make soft your trenchant sword; for those milk-paps, those nipples, that through the lattice-work of the bodice bore at men’s eyes, are not written down in the list that is on the leaf of pity, but write them down in the list of horrible traitors.”

During the conquest of a city, rapes occur. In saying not to let a virgin's cheek make soft a sword because the man with a hard "sword" feels pity for the virgin, Timon was advocating the rape of virgins. But by referring to milk-paps — milk-producing nipples — he was also saying that the "virgins" and virgins were likely to be now or to be soon mothers rather than virgins.

Timon continued, "Don't spare the babe, whose dimpled smiles arouse the mercy of fools. Think that the babe is a bastard whom the oracle has ambiguously pronounced the throat shall cut, and cut the babe into tiny bits without remorse."

An oracle is a priest or a priestess through whom a god can make prophecies. Oracles of ancient times were often ambiguous. In a famous case, Croesus, King of Lydia, wondered whether to attack the mighty Kingdom of Persia, so he went to the oracle of Delphi and sought advice. The oracle replied, "If you attack Persia, a mighty Kingdom will fall." Croesus attacked Persia, and a mighty Kingdom did fall — the mighty Kingdom of Lydia.

"The throat shall cut" is ambiguous. Whose throat? Shall the babe grow up and cut Alcibiades' throat? Or shall Alcibiades cut the babe's throat? Timon was advising Alcibiades not to wait, but to cut the babe's throat now and be safe. Pretend that an oracle has spoken, and then act to keep yourself safe.

Timon continued, "Swear against objections. Put metaphorical armor on your ears and on your eyes; put tested and proven armor on so that the yells of mothers, nor maidens, nor babes, nor the sight of bleeding priests wearing holy vestments, shall pierce the armor even a tiny bit."

He gave Alcibiades some gold and said, "There's gold to pay your soldiers. Cause much destruction, and once your fury

against Athens is spent, may you yourself be destroyed! Speak no more to me! Leave!”

“Do you still have gold?” Alcibiades asked, surprised. “I’ll take the gold you give me, but I won’t take all of your advice to me.”

He took the gold.

“Whether you do, or you don’t, may Heaven’s curse be upon you!” Timon said.

Phrynia and Timandra, the two whores, said, “Give us some gold, good Timon. Do you have more?”

“I have enough to make a whore forswear her trade and to become a bawd and make other women whores,” Timon said.

With the gold that Timon had, a whore could set herself up as the proprietor of a whorehouse and let other women do the whoring. No doubt Timon believed that if the new whores were recently sweet, young virgins, so much the better.

He continued, “Hold up, you sluts, your aprons mountant.”

He wanted the two whores to hold their aprons up so that they could catch the gold he threw to them. The aprons were mountant — always being lifted — because the whores would lift their dresses so the whores could be mounted and make money.

Timon continued, “You are not oathable, although, I know, you’ll swear, terribly swear into strong shudders and to Heavenly agues the immortal gods who hear you.”

The two whores were not oathable because although they were very willing to swear oaths to the gods, they could not be trusted to keep them. “Strong shudders” and “Heavenly

agues” are characteristics of orgasms and of venereal diseases. An ague is a fever, sickness, or shaking caused by a fever.

Timon continued, “Spare your oaths, I’ll trust to your personal characters: Once a whore, always a whore. Be whores always. When you meet a man whose pious breath seeks to convert you, be strong in whoredom.”

In Ephesians 6:10 Saint Paul advises, “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*”

Timon continued, “Allure him, burn him up with lust and venereal disease. Let your enclosed fire dominate his smoke, and you two don’t be turncoats.”

An enclosed fire is a vagina. Smoke is the vapor of words not believed by the person who speaks them. Some people blow smoke up a place near an enclosed fire.

He continued, “Yet may your pain-sick mounts be quite contrary to your best interests, and thatch your poor thin roofs with burdens you get from the dead — including some who were hanged.”

Venereal disease was thought to cause baldness. The burdens of the dead referred to hair harvested from corpses and made into wigs.

Timon continued, “It doesn’t matter — wear the wigs, betray your customers with them by looking attractive so men will have sex with you. Always be a whore. Apply cosmetics to your face so thickly that a horse could sink in the mire on your face. May you have a plague of wrinkles you have to cover up with cosmetics!”

“Pain-sick mounts” referred to sexual mountings that caused the pain of venereal disease. However, Timon sometimes muttered, and he may have said, “pain-sick months,” which

might be a reference to the months a whore could spend in prison, during which time she might acquire hair from corpses to use to make herself a wig and/or to sell in order to get money to buy cosmetics. However, the usual punishment for prostitution was a whipping.

What is clear is that Timon wanted the two whores to cause men to suffer from venereal disease, and he wanted the whores to also suffer from venereal disease.

Phrynia and Timandra said, “Well, give us more gold. What do you want us to do then? Believe that we’ll do anything for gold.”

Timon replied, “I want you to sow wasting venereal diseases in the bones of men and make them hollow. I want you to strike their sharp shins, and mar men’s spurring.”

The spurring referred to riding, both of horses and of whores.

He continued, “Crack the lawyer’s voice, so that he may never more plead a false legal case, nor sound his quibbles shrilly.

“Hoar — make white with disease — the priest, who scolds against the nature of flesh, and does not believe what he himself says.

“Down with the nose. Down with it flat. Take the bridge entirely away from the nose of the man who, hunting to provide for his particular, individual good, loses the scent of the general good.”

Venereal disease destroyed the bridge of the nose, thereby making the nose flat.

Timon continued, “Make curly-headed ruffians bald, and let the unscarred braggarts of the war derive some pain from you.”

Unscarred braggarts were cowards; in contrast to cowards, brave men who fought in battles tended to have scars.

He continued, “Plague all so that your activity may defeat and destroy the source of all erection.”

He threw more gold onto their laps and said, “There’s more gold. May you damn others, and let this damn you, and may all of you find your graves in ditches!”

Phrynia and Timandra said, “Give us more advice and more money, generous Timon.”

“More whore and more mischief first,” Timon said. “I have given you a down payment for what I want from you.”

“Strike up the drum and let us march towards Athens!” Alcibiades said. “Farewell, Timon. If I thrive well, I’ll visit you again.”

“If I hope well, I’ll never see you any more,” Timon said.

“I never did you harm.”

“Yes, you did. You spoke well of me.”

“Do you call that harm?”

“Men daily find that it is,” Timon replied.

Luke 6:26 states, “*Woe be to you when all men speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*”

He continued, “Go away from here, and take your beagles with you.”

“Beagles” was a slang word for whores.

Alcibiades said, “We are only offending him. Strike the drum and let’s leave!”

The drum sounded, and everyone except Timon exited.

Alone, Timon said to himself, “It’s odd that my human nature, which is sick of man’s unkindness, should still continue to get hungry!”

He started digging into the ground, hoping to find edible roots.

He continued, “Earth, you common mother, your immeasurable womb prolifically gives birth to all, and your infinite breast feeds all. Earth, the same essence that creates your child, arrogant man, who is puffed up with pride, also engenders and gives birth to the black toad and blue adder, the gilded newt and eyeless poisonous worm, along with all the abhorred births below the pure Heaven where the Sun’s life-giving fire shines. Earth, give to me, whom all your human sons hate, from forth your plenteous bosom, one poor edible root!

“Dry up your fertile and fruitful womb, and let it no more give birth to ungrateful man! May your belly grow large with tigers, dragons, wolves, and bears! May it teem with new monsters, whom your upward face has to the marbled mansion — the cloud-laced Heaven — above never presented!”

His spade upturned an edible root, and Timon said, “Oh, a root! I give you my dear thanks!”

He paused, and then he continued with his prayer, “Dry up your marrows, vines, and plow-torn fields, from which ungrateful man, with liquorish drinks and fatty morsels of food, greases and corrupts his pure mind, so that from it all consideration for others and ability to think slips!”

Marrows are the edible insides of plants and fruits.

Apemantus the philosopher appeared, and Timon said, “Another man is visiting me? It’s a plague, a plague!”

“I was told to come here,” Apemantus said. “Men report that you are imitating my manners, and acting the way I act.”

“The reason for it, then, is that you do not keep a dog, whom I would imitate,” Timon said. “May you contract a wasting disease!”

“This is in you a nature that is only an infection; it is not intrinsic in you because you were not born with it,” Apemantus said. “This is a poor unmanly melancholic depression sprung from a change in fortune. Why do you have this spade? Why are you in this place? Why are you wearing this slave-like clothing? And why do you have these looks of sorrow?”

“Your flatterers still wear silk, drink wine, lie on soft beds, hug their diseased, perfumed mistresses, and have forgotten that Timon ever existed. Don’t shame these woods by putting on the cunning of a carping critic.

“Instead, become a flatterer now, and seek to thrive by doing that which others did that has undone you. Bend your knee and bow so deeply that the breath of the man whom you flatter will blow off your cap; praise his most vicious strain of character, and call it excellent.

“You were flattered like that. You gave your ears like bartenders who bid welcome to knaves and everyone else who approached them. Bartenders welcome all men. It is very just that you turn rascal — you are like a young, weak deer. If you had wealth again, human rascals would get it. Do not assume my likeness.”

“If I were like you, I would throw myself away,” Timon said.

“You cast away yourself by being like yourself,” Apemantus replied. “You were a madman for so long, and now you are a fool. Do you think that the bleak air, your boisterous personal servant, will warm your shirt by the fire before you

put it on? Will these mossy trees, which have outlived the long-lived eagle, act like pages and follow you at your heels, and skip to perform any errand you point out for them to do? Will the cold brook, crystalized with ice, make you a caudle — a warm medicinal drink — to take away the bad taste you have in your mouth when you wake up with a hangover?

“Call the creatures whose naked natures are continually exposed to the spite of vengeful Heaven; call the creatures whose bare unprotected trunks, exposed to the conflicting elements, encounter raw nature. Tell them — animals and trees — to flatter you. Oh, you shall find —”

Timon interrupted, “— that you are a fool. Depart and leave me alone.”

“I love you better now than I ever did.”

“I hate you worse.”

“Why?”

“You flatter misery.”

“I don’t flatter you; instead, I say that you are a caitiff,” Apemantus said. “You are a miserable wretch.”

“Why do you seek me out?”

“To vex you.”

“That is always the work of a villain or a fool,” Timon said.

“Does vexing me please you?”

“Yes.”

“Then you must be a knave, too.”

“If you had adopted this sour and cold manner of living in order to castigate your pride, it would be well done,” Apemantus said, “but you act like this because you are

forced to. You would be a courtier again if you were not a beggar.

“Willing misery outlives uncertain pomp and greatness.”

According to Apemantus, a person who willingly embraces poverty outlives a person who has good fortune but who can at any time lose it.

He continued, “Willing misery is crowned before and achieves glory sooner than the person who has good fortune but who can at any time lose it.

“The one person keeps trying to get his fill of material things, but is never completely full. The other person, who wishes for little, can fulfill his wishes.

“The person who has great fortune, but is unhappy, has a distracted and most wretched existence that is worse than the existence of a person who has little fortune, but is happy.

“You should wish to die, since you are miserable.”

Timon replied, “I won’t accept the advice of a man who is more miserable than I am. You are a slave, whom Lady Fortune’s tender arm never hugged with favor; you were bred a dog.

“Had you, like us — other wealthy men and I — from our first swaddling clothes, advanced through the sweet degrees that this brief world affords to such as may freely command its passive drudges — whores who lie passively under us — you would have plunged yourself in wholesale dissipation. You would have melted down your youth in different beds of lust. You would have never learned the icy rules that a respectable person must follow — they are icy because they cool the hot blood of unethical lust. Instead, you would have followed the sugared game — sweet sexual prey — in front of you.

“But I had the world as my confectionary, my source of sweet things. I had the mouths, the tongues, the eyes, and the hearts of men on duty, waiting to serve me. I had more men waiting to serve me than I could find employment for. These men, whom I was unable to count because there were so many and who upon me stuck as leaves stick upon an oak tree, have with one winter wind’s brush fallen from their boughs and left me exposed to the natural elements, bare to every storm that blows.

“For me, who never knew anything except good fortune, to bear this is a real burden.

“In contrast, your mortal life began with suffering, and time has made you hardened to it. Why should you hate men? They never flattered you. What have you given away as gifts? If you will curse people, then you must curse your father, that poor rag, who in spite stuffed a female beggar and put stuff in her that made her pregnant with you and made you a poor rogue. Being a poor rogue is your inheritance. Therefore, leave and be gone!

“If you had not been born the worst and least fortunate of men, you would have been a knave and flatterer.”

“Are you still proud?” Apemantus asked.

“Yes, I am proud that I am not you.”

“I am proud that I was no prodigal. I did not waste money the way you did.”

“I am proud that I am a prodigal now,” Timon replied. “If all the wealth I have were shut up in you, I would give you leave to hang it. That way, I would get rid of you and all my wealth. Get you gone.”

Holding up an edible root, he said, “I wish that the whole population of Athens were in this! Thus would I eat it.”

He took a big bite of the root.

“Here,” Apemantus said. “I will improve your feast.”

He offered Timon a medlar, a kind of apple-sized fruit that was eaten when it had partially rotted.

Ignoring the medlar, Timon said, “First mend my company by taking away yourself.”

“By doing that, I shall mend my own company, by the lack of your company.”

“It is not well mended that way, for it is only botched,” Timon said. “Your company will be worse because you will have only your own company. If what I say is not true, then I wish that it were true.”

“What would you have sent to Athens?” Apemantus asked, meaning what message would Timon like Apemantus to take back to the Athenians.

“I would have you sent there in a whirlwind so it can cause destruction to Athens. But if you will, tell the people in Athens that I have gold.”

Timon knew that this news would make the Athenians envious of him, thereby making them unhappy.

He showed Apemantus the gold and said, “Look, what I say is true.”

“Here is no use for gold.”

“Here is the best and truest use for gold,” Timon said. “For here it sleeps and does no hired harm. Here it is not used to bribe and corrupt.”

“Where do you lie at night, Timon?”

“Under that which is above me — the sky. Where do you eat during the day, Apemantus?”

“Where my stomach finds food — or, rather, where I eat it.”

“I wish that poison were obedient and knew my mind!”

“What would you do with poison?” Apemantus asked.

“Use it to season and spice your food.”

“The middle of humanity you never knew; you knew only the extremity of both ends,” Apemantus said. “You knew what it is like to be very rich, and then you knew what it is like to be very poor. When you wore gilt clothing and perfume, people mocked you for your excessive fastidiousness. Now, in your rags you know no fastidiousness, but you are despised because you lack gilt and perfume.”

He again offered Timon food and said, “There’s a medlar for you, eat it.”

“On what I hate I feed not.”

“Do you hate a medlar?”

“Yes, although it looks like you,” Timon said.

This, of course, was an insult. Timon was saying that Apemantus’ face looked like a half-rotten apple-sized fruit.

“If you had hated meddlers sooner, you would have loved yourself better now. Have you ever known a spendthrift man who was loved after his money ran out?”

“Have you ever known a man without money who was loved?” Timon asked.

“Myself,” Apemantus replied.

“I understand you; you had some money that allowed you to keep a dog.”

“To what things in the world can you most closely compare your flatterers?”

“Women are the closest, but men — men are the things themselves. Women are like flatterers, but men are flatterers,” Timon replied, and then he asked, “What would you do with the world, Apemantus, if it lay in your power?”

“Give it to the beasts, so I would be rid of the men. The world would no longer contain men, and the beasts would be rewarded with the world for their having gotten rid of the men.”

“Would you have yourself fall in the confusion of men, and remain a beast with the beasts?” Timon asked.

One kind of “fall” is to “descend.” Apemantus could descend from being a man to being a beast. One kind of “fall in” is to “line up with.” Apemantus could line up with the beasts and help them to destroy men.

“Yes, Timon,” Apemantus replied.

Timon said, “That is a beastly ambition, which I hope that the gods grant to you. If you were the lion, the fox would beguile you.”

He was referring to one of Aesop’s fables, in which an elderly lion wanted a fox to help him get something to eat by luring a stag into his cave. The fox went to the stag and said, “The lion, King of the wilderness, is dying, and he wants you to be King after him. I am going to see the lion, and you ought to come, too, in order to be with him in his last moments of life.” The stag went with the fox to the lion’s cave, and the lion tried to kill the stag but managed only to make bloody one of the stag’s ears before the stag succeeded

in fleeing. The fox went after the stag, who reprimanded him for trying to get him killed, but the fox said, "You are mistaken. The lion wasn't trying to kill you; he was trying to whisper some important information in your ears. You panicked and jumped around, and you are the reason your ear is bloody. After much persuading, the stag returned to the lion's cave with the fox, and this time the lion succeeded in killing the stag. The lion feasted on the stag and then slept, and while the lion slept the fox ate the stag's brains. When the lion woke up and wanted to eat the stag's brains, the fox said, "You won't find any brains. Any stag dumb enough to walk twice into a lion's cave doesn't have any brains."

Timon continued, "If you were the lamb, the fox would eat you."

This may be a relevant fable: A fox that was hungry for breakfast saw a lamb in a stream. The lamb was so young and innocent that the fox wanted a justification for killing and eating the lamb. The fox first complained that the lamb was stirring up mud in the water, making it undrinkable, but the lamb pointed out that the fox was upstream, where the water was clear. The fox then complained that the lamb had said bad things about him last year, but the lamb pointed out that it had been born only recently. The fox then said, "If it wasn't you that said bad things about me, then it was one of your family," and he killed and ate the lamb.

Timon continued, "If you were the fox, the lion would suspect you, when perchance you were accused by the ass."

Apparently, this was a reference to another folk tale or fable, perhaps this one: An ass and a fox were walking together when they met a lion, and they were afraid that the lion would kill and eat them. The fox said to the ass, "Wait here, and I will go to the lion and convince him not to kill and eat us." The ass agreed, and the fox approached the lion and made a deal with it out of the hearing of the ass. The deal

was that the fox would find a way to trap the ass so that the lion could kill and eat it, and the lion would leave the fox alone. The lion agreed, and the fox managed to trick the ass so that it fell into a pit that was so deep that the ass could not climb out but not so deep that the lion could not jump in and out. But the ass said to the lion, “The fox tricked me, and if you allow it to live, the fox will trick you, too.” So the lion killed and ate the fox, and later the lion killed and ate the ass.

Timon continued, “If you were the ass, your dullness would torment you, and all the time you lived you would fear becoming a breakfast to the wolf.

“If you were the wolf, your greediness would afflict you, and often you would hazard your life for your dinner.

“If you were the unicorn, pride and wrath would confound you and make your own self the conquest of your fury.”

He was referring to the tradition that unicorns so hated lions that the unicorn would rush at a lion in an attempt to use its horn to spear the lion as it attempted to escape by climbing a tree. Often the lion successfully climbed the tree and the unicorn’s horn would be deeply embedded in the trunk of the tree, and then the lion would jump out of the tree and kill the unicorn.

Timon continued, “If you were a bear, you would be killed by the horse.

“If you were a horse, you would be seized by the leopard.

“If you were a leopard, you would be closely related to the lion and the spots — the moral blemishes — of the lion would sit in judgment like jurors on your life. They would bear false witness against you. All your safety would lie in flight to a faraway place, and your best defense would be absence.”

“What beast could you be that is not subject to a beast?”

“And what a beast are you already, who does not see your loss if you were transformed into a beast?”

Apemantus replied, “If you could please me with speaking to me, you might have hit upon it here and now when you call me a beast and not a man.”

He paused and then added, “The commonwealth of Athens has become a forest of beasts.”

“How has the ass broken the wall, that you are out of the city?” Timon asked.

“From yonder are coming a poet and a painter,” Apemantus replied. He knew that as soon as they heard that Timon had gold they would plan to visit Timon.

He added, “May the plague of company light upon you! I fear to catch that plague and so I leave. When I don’t know what else to do, I’ll see you again.”

“When there is nothing living except you, you shall be welcome,” Timon replied. “I had rather be a beggar’s dog than Apemantus.”

“You are the cap of all the fools alive,” Apemantus said. “You are the best example of a fool.”

“I wish that you were clean enough for me to spit upon!” Timon said.

“A plague on you!” Apemantus said. “You are too bad to curse.”

“All villains who stand beside you are pure and innocent in comparison.”

“There is no leprosy except what you speak —”

“— if I say your name,” Timon interrupted. “I would beat you, but I would infect my hands.”

“I wish my tongue could rot your hands off!”

“Go away, you offspring of a mangy dog!” Timon said. “My anger that you are alive is killing me. I swoon because I see that you are alive.”

“I wish that you would burst!” Apemantus said.

“Go away, you tedious rogue! I am sorry I shall lose a stone because of you.”

Timon threw a stone at Apemantus, who said, “Beast!”

“Slave!”

“Toad!”

“Rogue! Rogue! Rogue!” Timon said. “I am sick of this false world, and I will love nothing except only the mere necessities on it. So then, Timon, immediately prepare your grave, for death is a necessity. Lie where the light foam of the sea may beat your gravestone daily. Make your epitaph, so that even when you are dead you can laugh at others’ lives.”

He said to the gold, “Oh, you sweet King-killer, and dear divorce between blood-related son and sire! You bright defiler of Hymen, the god of marriage’s purest bed! You valiant war-god Mars, who committed adultery with Venus! You ever young, fresh, loved, and delicate wooer, whose blush — shine — thaws the consecrated snow that lies on the virgin goddess Diana’s lap! Gold, you can convince even Diana not to be a virgin! You visible god that sexually welds firmly together impossibilities, and makes them kiss! Gold, you speak with every language, to every purpose! Oh, you touchstone — you tester — of hearts! Believe that your slave — Mankind — rebels, and by your virtue set all men into

ruinous conflict, so that beasts may have the world as their empire!”

“I wish that it would be so!” Apemantus said. “But not until I am dead. I’ll tell people in Athens that you have gold. People will throng to you shortly.”

“Throng to me!” Timon said.

“Yes.”

“Show me your back, please,” Timon requested. “Leave.”

“Live, and love your misery,” Apemantus said.

“Long may you live, be miserable, and die miserably,” Timon replied.

Apemantus left.

Timon said to himself, “I am quit of him.”

He saw some men coming toward him, so he withdrew and said to himself, “More things like men! Eat, Timon, and hate them.”

The men, who were bandits, did not see Timon withdraw.

The first bandit said, “How can he have this gold? It is some poor fragment of his former fortune, some slender scrap of what he had left. His complete lack of gold, and his falling away from his friends, drove him into this melancholy.”

“It is rumored that he has a mass of treasure,” the second bandit said.

“Let us make a trial attempt to get his gold by simply asking for it,” the third bandit said. “If he does not care for it, he will supply us with it easily — he will give it to us. But if he covetously keeps it for himself, how shall we get it?”

“It’s true that it would be hard to get in that case,” the second bandit said. “He does not carry the gold on his person; the gold is hidden.”

Seeing Timon, the first bandit asked, “Isn’t that him?”

“Where?” the third bandit asked.

“He fits the description,” the second bandit said.

“It is him,” the third bandit said. “I recognize him.”

“May God save you, Timon,” the bandits said.

“How are you, thieves?” Timon asked.

“We are soldiers, not thieves,” the bandits replied.

They may have been some soldiers serving under Alcibiades, or they may have deserted Alcibiades’ army.

“You are both, and you are women’s sons,” Timon said.

“We are not thieves, but we are men who much do want,” the bandits replied.

The word “want” meant either “desire” or “lack,” or sometimes both.

“Your greatest want is that you want much food,” Timon said. “Why should you want? Look, the earth has edible roots. Within a mile are a hundred springs of water. The oaks bear acorns. The scarlet roses bear the fruit called hips. The generous housewife, Mother Nature, on each bush lays her complete menu before you. Want! Why should you want?”

“We cannot live on grass, on berries, and on water, as beasts and birds and fishes do,” the first bandit said.

“Nor can you live on the beasts themselves and on the birds and fishes,” Timon said. “You must eat men. Yet I must give you thanks because you are confessed thieves and because

you do not work in holier shapes, for there is boundless theft in limited professions. Even legal professions have much theft in them.”

Timon gave them some gold and said, “Rascal thieves, here’s gold. Go, suck the subtle blood of the grape until you get drunk and the high fever makes your blood boil until it is froth, and so die from alcoholism-induced fever, thereby escaping death by hanging. Do not trust the physician; his antidotes are poison, and he slays more people than you rob. He takes his patients’ wealth as well as their lives. Do villainy, do, since you confess you do it, like workmen — as if you were skilled workers in the profession of committing villainy.

“I’ll give you some examples of thievery.

“The Sun’s a thief, and with his great attraction he robs the vast sea. The Sun evaporates seawater.

“The Moon’s an arrant thief, and she snatches her pale fire from the Sun — she reflects the light that she steals from the Sun.

“The sea’s a thief, whose liquid surge — the tide — resolves the Moon into salt tears. The sea steals from the Moon what is needed to cause the tide. Since high tide involves a great amount of salty seawater, the sea must dissolve the Moon in its phases so that it becomes salty seawater.

“The Earth’s a thief that feeds and breeds by a compost stolen from the excrement of animals, including men.

“Each thing’s a thief.

“The laws, your curb and whip, in their rough power have unchecked theft. Who polices the police?

“Do not love yourselves. Go away. Rob one another. There’s more gold. Cut throats. All whom you meet are thieves. Go

to Athens, go. Break open shops; there is nothing you can steal that does not belong to thieves.

“Steal no less although I give you this. Although I give you gold, steal more gold, and may gold destroy you whatever you do! Amen.”

The third bandit said, “He has almost charmed — persuaded — me not to engage in my profession, by attempting to persuade me to engage in my profession.”

“He advises us to be bandits because he hates Mankind,” the first bandit said, “not because he is interested in our being successful and thriving in our profession.”

“I’ll believe him as if he were an enemy, and I’ll give over my trade,” the second bandit said. “I will do the opposite of what he tells me to do, and so I will give up being a bandit.”

“Let us first see peace in Athens before we reform,” the first bandit said. “There is no time so miserable but a man may be true and honest and law-abiding. Since we can reform at anytime, let’s reform when it’s peacetime — a time when it is harder to be a successful bandit.”

The bandits exited.

Flavius, Timon’s old steward, arrived.

“Oh, you gods!” Flavius said. “Is yonder despised and ruinous man my lord? He is full of decay and failing! Oh, memorial and wonder of good deeds evilly bestowed! He did good deeds for evil men! What an alteration of honor has desperate need made in him! What viler thing is upon the Earth than friends who can bring the noblest minds to the basest ends! This time’s custom contrasts splendidly with another time — a time when man was urged to love his enemies! May God grant that I may always love, and rather woo those who openly say they want to do mischief to me

than those who pretend to be my friend and yet do mischief to me!

“He has caught me in his eye. I will present my honest grief to him, and I will continue to serve him, my lord, with my life.”

He said loudly, “My dearest master!”

“Go away!” Timon replied. “Who are you?”

“Have you forgotten me, sir?” Flavius asked.

“Why do you ask me that? I have forgotten all men. Therefore, if you grant that you are a man, I have forgotten you.”

“I am an honest poor servant of yours.”

“Then I don’t know you,” Timon replied. “I have never had an honest man about me. All the servants I kept were knaves to serve food to villains.”

“The gods are witnesses that never has a poor steward experienced a truer grief for his ruined lord than my eyes do for you,” Flavius said.

“Are you weeping?” Timon asked. “Come closer. Then I love you, because you are a woman, and you disclaim and deny flinty, hard-hearted Mankind, whose eyes never yield tears except through lust and laughter. Pity is sleeping. These are strange times — men weep with laughing, but not with mourning!”

“I beg you to recognize and know me, my good lord,” Flavius said. “I beg you to accept my grief and while this poor wealth lasts to employ me as your steward still.”

The wealth referred to both the little amount of money that Flavius possessed and his still-living body.

“Did I have a steward so true and loyal, so just, and now so comforting?” Timon asked. “It almost turns my dangerous nature mild. Let me see your face. Surely, this man was born of woman.”

Timon was referencing Job 14:1: “*Man that is born of woman is of short continuance and full of trouble.*”

Job, like Timon, had been successful, but then had suffered. In Job 14:1, Job was saying that man, born of woman, endures a short and troubled life.

Timon continued, “Forgive my general and indiscriminate rashness, you perpetually sober gods! I do proclaim that one honest man exists — don’t mistake me — there is only one honest man — no more, I pray — and he’s a steward.

“How willingly would I have hated all Mankind! But you redeem yourself. Everyone except you, only you, I fell with curses.

“I think that you are more honest now than wise. For, by oppressing and betraying me, you might have more quickly gotten another job. For many acquire second masters that way: They stand upon their first lord’s neck.

“But tell me truly — because I must always doubt, even when I have never been surer — isn’t your kindness cunning, greedy, maybe even a kindness that is grounded in usury — a kindness like that of a rich man giving a gift and expecting in return twenty for one?”

“No, my most worthy master, in whose breast doubt and suspicion are unfortunately placed too late,” Flavius said. “You should have feared false times when you feasted your ‘friends.’ Suspicion always comes where an estate is least.

“That which I show you, Heaven knows, is merely love, duty, and zeal to your unequalled mind, concern for your

food and living, and believe me, my most honored lord, I would exchange any benefit that may come to me, either in the future or now in the present, for this one wish — that you had the power and wealth to reward me because you yourself were rich.”

Showing Flavius the gold, Timon said, “Look, what you said is so! I am rich. You singly and uniquely honest man, here, take gold. Out of my misery, the gods have sent you treasure.

“Go, live rich and be happy, but with these conditions. You shall build a house distant from men. You shall hate all men, curse all men, and show charity to no men; instead, you shall let the famished flesh slide away from the bone before you relieve the hunger of the beggar. Give to dogs what you deny to men; let prisons swallow men, and let debts wither them to nothing. Let men be like blasted woods, and may diseases lick up and consume their false blood!

“And so farewell and may you thrive.”

“Oh, let me stay and comfort you, my master!” Flavius pleaded.

“If you hate to be cursed, don’t stay here,” Timon replied. “Flee, while you are blest and free from curses. Never see another man, and let me never see you.”

Taking the gold Timon had given to him, Flavius exited.

Timon went inside his cave.

CHAPTER 5

— 5.1 —

The poet and the painter arrived. Unseen by them, Timon watched them from inside his cave.

“As far as I remember, we cannot be far from where Timon lives,” the painter said.

“What are we to think about him?” the poet asked. “Should we believe that the rumor is true and that he is wealthy with gold?”

“The rumor is certainly true. Alcibiades reports that Timon has gold; Phrynia and Timandra received gold from him. He likewise enriched some poor straggling soldiers with a great quantity of gold. It is said that he gave to his steward a mighty sum in gold.”

The poor straggling soldiers were the bandits.

The poet said, “Then this ‘bankruptcy’ of his has been only a test of his friends.”

“Nothing else,” the painter said. “You shall see Timon a palm in Athens again, and he will flourish with the highest.”

According to Psalm 92:12, “*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, and shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*”

The painter continued, “Therefore it is not amiss that we offer our friendship to him, in this supposed distress of his. It will make us appear to be honest and honorable, and it is very likely to load our purposes with what they work and travel for, if it is a just and true report that states that he is rich. We want gold, and we are likely to get some gold from Timon.”

“What have you now to present to him?” the poet asked.

“Nothing at this time except for my visit,” the painter said, “only I will promise him an excellent piece to be given to him later.”

“I must serve him so, too,” the poet said. “I will tell him of a planned work of literature that will be delivered to him in the future.”

“Promising is as good as the best,” the painter said. “Promising is the very fashion of the time: It opens the eyes of expectation. Performance is always the duller for its act; the finished work of art never lives up to the promise. And, except for the plainer and simpler kind of people, the keeping of a promise is quite out of the usual practice — it’s just not done anymore. To promise is very courtly and fashionable. To actually do what one promised to do is a kind of will or testament that argues a great sickness in his judgment of the person who makes the will or keeps the promise. When people are very ill and therefore, in my opinion, lacking in judgment, they make wills.”

Timon said to himself, “Excellent workman as you are, you cannot paint a man who is as bad as yourself!”

“I am thinking about what I shall tell Timon I have provided for him,” the poet said. “It must be an impersonation of himself and his situation: a satire against the softness of prosperity, with an exposé of the infinite flatteries that follow youth and opulence.”

Timon said to himself, “Must you impersonate a villain in your own work? Will you whip your own faults in other men? If you do so, I have ‘gold’ for you.”

The poet was going to say that he would write a satire against flattery, and yet the poet was himself a flatterer. The poet had the fault that he would censure other people for having, and so it was like he was whipping people who shared his fault.

“Let’s seek him,” the poet said. “Let’s get to Timon before he gives all his gold away to people other than us. We would sin against our own state, when we may meet with profit, and come too late to benefit.”

“That is true,” the painter said. “While the day serves our goals and the Sun shines, before black-cornered night arrives, we should find what we want by freely offered light. Come.”

“I’ll meet you at the turn,” Timon said. “I’ll play your game and beat you at it. I’ll pretend that you two are honest, but then I’ll make clear that I know what you two really are!

“What a god is gold! He is worshipped in a baser temple than where swine feed! Gold, it is you that rigs the ship and plows the foam of the sea. You make a slave give his rich master admired reverence. Gold, may you be worshipped! And may your saints who obey only you forever be crowned with plagues!

“It is the right time for me to meet the poet and painter.”

Timon came out of his cave and approached the poet and painter.

“Hail, worthy Timon!” the poet said.

“Our late noble master!” the painter said.

“Have I lived to see two honest men?” Timon said.

The poet replied, “Sir, having tasted often of your open generosity, and hearing that you had retired from society, with your friends fallen off, whose thankless natures ... oh, abhorred spirits! ... not all the whips of Heaven are large enough ... what! ... to you, whose star-like nobleness gave life and influence to their whole being!”

The poet was pretending to be so overcome with indignation that Timon's friends had abandoned him that the poet was unable to speak in complete sentences.

He continued, "I am carried away with emotion and cannot cover the monstrous bulk of this ingratitude with any size — number — of words. The words available to me are inadequate to express my feelings."

"Don't cover the monstrous bulk of this ingratitude," Timon said. "Let it go naked, so men may better see it. You who are honest, by being what you are, make them — ungrateful men — best seen and known."

"He and I have traveled in the great shower of your gifts, and sweetly felt it," the painter said.

"Yes, you are honest men," Timon said.

"We have come here to offer you our service," the painter said.

"Most honest men!" Timon said. "Why, how shall I repay you? Can you eat roots, and drink cold water?"

The poet and painter looked unhappy; they wanted gold.

Timon answered the question for them: "No."

The poet and painter said, "What we can do, we'll do, to do you service."

"You are honest men," Timon said. "You've heard that I have gold. I am sure you have. Speak the truth. You're honest men."

"It is rumored that you have gold, my noble lord," the painter said, "but that is not why my friend and I came here."

“Good honest men!” Timon said. “Painter, you draw a counterfeit the best of all the painters in Athens. You are, indeed, the best. You counterfeit most lively.”

Timon’s words were ambiguous. A counterfeit is a painting, or a lie. To counterfeit means to paint, or to tell a lie.

“I am only so-so, my lord,” the painter said.

“What I say is true,” Timon replied.

He turned to the poet and said, “And, as for your fiction, why, your verse swells with stuff so fine and smooth that you are even natural in your art.”

“You are even natural in your art” is ambiguous. It can mean, “Your art is like nature because you hide the artifice in your art.” But a “natural” is a “born fool.” In addition, Timon was saying that the poet was gifted at creating fiction — at telling lies. And of course, “stuff” — as in stuff and nonsense — may not refer to something good. It may refer to worthless ideas.

Timon said to the poet and painter, “But, for all this, my honest-natured friends, I must say that you have a little fault. Indeed, it is not monstrous in you, nor do I wish you to take many pains to mend it.”

The poet and painter said, “Please, your honor, tell us what our fault is.”

“You’ll take it badly,” Timon replied.

“We will thank you very much for telling us, my lord.”

“Will you, indeed?”

“Don’t doubt that we will, worthy lord.”

“Each of you trusts a scoundrel who mightily deceives you,” Timon said.

“Do we, my lord?”

“Yes, and you hear him cheat, see him deceive, know his gross knavery, love him, feed him, keep him in your bosom. Yet I assure you that he is a complete villain.”

“I know of no one like that, my lord,” the painter said.

“Nor do I,” the poet said.

“Look, both of you, I love you well,” Timon said. “I’ll give you gold. Rid these villains from your companies for me. Hang them or stab them, drown them in a sewer. Destroy them by some course of action, and then come to me. I’ll give you gold enough.”

“Name them, my lord,” the poet and painter said. “Let’s know who they are.”

Timon said to the poet and the painter, who were standing a few feet apart, “You are standing here, and you are standing over here, and there are two of you. Each man of you is apart, all single and alone, yet an arch-villain keeps each of you company.”

Timon said to the painter, “If where you are, two villains shall not be, do not come near the poet.”

Timon said to the poet, “If you don’t want to reside except where just one villain is, then abandon the painter.”

He said to both the poet and the painter, “Leave, go packing!”

He started throwing stones at them, saying, “There’s ‘gold’ — you came for gold, you slaves.”

He said to the poet, “You have worked for me; there’s payment for you. Flee!”

He said to the painter, “You are an alchemist; make gold out of that stone.”

By mixing paints, the painter could make different colors — a kind of alchemy. Alchemists attempted to find the philosopher’s stone, which could turn base metal into gold.

Timon shouted, “Get out, rascal dogs!”

He beat them until they ran away, and then he went into his cave.

Flavius arrived, accompanied by two Senators from Athens, which was at war with Alcibiades. Athens wanted the help of Timon — he and Alcibiades were friends and so Timon might be able to convince Alcibiades not to attack Athens.

“It is in vain that you want to speak with Timon,” Flavius said, “for he is so wrapped up in himself that nothing except himself that looks like a man is friendly with him.”

“Bring us to his cave,” the first Senator said. “It is our duty to speak to Timon, and we have promised the Athenians that we will speak with him.”

“Men are not always the same at all times alike,” the second Senator said. “It was time and griefs that made him like this. Time, with a fairer hand, offering him the fortunes of his former days, may make him the man he used to be. Bring us to him, and whatever will happen, will happen.”

“Here is his cave,” Flavius said.

He called, “May peace and contentment be here! Lord Timon! Timon! Look out of your cave, and speak to friends. The Athenians, in the person of two of their most reverend Senators, greet you. Speak to them, noble Timon.”

Timon came out of his cave and said, “You Sun, that comforts, burn!”

He said to his visitors, "Speak, and be hanged. For each true word, may you get a blister! And may each false word be as searing with pain to the root of your tongue, consuming it with speaking!"

The first Senator said, "Worthy Timon —"

Timon interrupted, "I am worthy of none but such as you, and you are worthy of Timon."

"The Senators of Athens greet you, Timon," the first Senator said.

"I thank them," Timon said, "and I would send back to them the plague, if only I could catch it for them."

The first Senator said, "Oh, forget the offenses that we ourselves are sorry for having committed against you. The Senators with one voice of love entreat you to come back to Athens. The Senators have thought about special high offices that lie vacant, but which you will best fill and possess."

The second Senator said, "The Senators confess that they have neglected you in a way that is grossly evident to all, and now the public body, which seldom admits that it made a mistake, feeling in itself a lack of and need for Timon's aid, acknowledges its own failing and mistake when it withheld aid to Timon. Therefore, the Athens Senate sent us to make to you their sorrowful admission of fault and its apology, together with recompense greater than its offence, even counting every last bit of its offense against you. Yes, the Senate offers to you even such heaps and sums of love and wealth as shall blot out for you what wrongs were theirs and write in you as if you were an account book the figures of their love, which you can read forever."

"You bewitch me with this offer," Timon said. "You surprise and overwhelm me emotionally so much that I am on the

very brink of crying. Lend me a fool's heart and a woman's eyes, and I'll weep over these comforts, worthy Senators."

He was sarcastic.

The first Senator said, "Therefore, if it pleases you to return with us and to take the Captainship of our Athens — yours and ours — and defend us against Alcibiades and his army, you shall be met with thanks, you shall be legally assigned absolute power, and your good name will continue to be associated with authority; then very soon we shall drive back the wild attacks of Alcibiades, who, like a very savage boar, roots up his country's peace."

"He shakes his threatening sword against the walls of Athens," the second Senator said.

"Therefore, Timon —" the first Senator said.

Timon interrupted, "Well, sir, I will; therefore, I will, sir."

One meaning of the word "will" is "wish."

Timon continued, "This is what I will: If Alcibiades should kill my countrymen, let Alcibiades know this about Timon, that Timon cares not. But if he should sack fair Athens, and take our good, aged men by the beards, giving our holy virgins to the stain and defilement and rape of insolent, beastly, mad-brained war, then let him know, and tell him Timon speaks it, out of pity for our aged and our youth, I cannot choose but tell him, that I care not, and let him take it at the worst, for their knives care not, while you have throats to cut. As for myself, there's not a knife in the unruly camp but that I prize it and love it more than I love the most reverend throat in Athens.

"So I leave you to the protection of the propitious gods, as I would leave thieves to the protection of jailors."

Since jailors were also often executioners, such “protection” was not reassuring. And all too often, the gods seem not to be bothered by the suffering of humans.

Flavius advised the two Senators, “Don’t stay and talk to Timon, for all’s in vain.”

Timon said, “Why, I was just now writing my epitaph; it will be seen tomorrow. My long sickness of health and living now begins to mend, and oblivion will bring me everything I want.

“Go, continue to live. May Alcibiades be your plague, may you be his plague, and may this be the case for a long time!”

“We speak in vain,” the first Senator said.

“But yet I love my country,” Timon said, “and I am not one who rejoices in the destruction of the community, as common rumor in the community says I do.”

“That’s well spoken,” the first Senator said.

“Commend me to my loving countrymen —” Timon said.

“These words become your lips as they pass through them,” the first Senator said.

“And they enter our ears like great conquerors enter the city through gates where people applaud,” the second Senator said.

“Commend me to them,” Timon repeated, “and tell them that, to ease them of their griefs, their fears of hostile strokes of war, their aches, losses, their pangs of love, with other incident throes that nature’s fragile vessel — the body — sustains during life’s uncertain voyage, I will do them some kindness: I’ll teach them to escape wild Alcibiades’ wrath.”

“I like this well,” the first Senator said. “Timon will return again to Athens.”

“I have a tree, which grows here beside my cave,” Timon said, “that my own need requires me to cut down, and soon I will fell it. Tell my friends, tell the people of Athens, in the sequence of degree from the high class to the low class, that whoever wants to stop affliction, let him make haste and come here, before my tree has felt the axe, and hang himself. Please, give my greeting to the Athenians.”

“Trouble him no further,” Flavius said. “You always shall find him like this.”

“Come not to me again,” Timon said, “but say to the people of Athens that Timon has made his everlasting mansion upon the beach of the salty flood we call the sea, and once a day with its foaming froth the turbulent surge of waves shall cover him. There come, and let what will be written on my gravestone be your oracle:

“Lips, let sour words go by and language end.

“What is amiss may plague and infection mend!

“May graves be men’s only works and death their gain!

“Sun, hide your beams! Timon has done his reign.”

Timon went into his cave.

The first Senator said, “His discontent is coupled to his character, and the two cannot be separated.”

“Our hope in him is dead,” the second Senator said. “Let us return to Athens, and stretch to the utmost what other means and resources are left to us in our dire peril.”

“We must act quickly,” the first Senator said.

The two Senators headed to Athens.

Flavius may have stayed with Timon because he had learned that Timon was dying. Even if Timon wanted to die alone, someone needed to bury him after he died.

— 5.2 —

Two Senators different from the two who had visited Timon talked with a messenger at the main gate of Athens. The messenger had brought to them news concerning Alcibiades and his army.

The third Senator said, “You have taken pains to discover this information, which is painful for Athens. Are his soldiers really as numerous as you report them to be?”

“I have given to you the lowest estimate of the number of his soldiers,” the messenger replied. “Besides that information, I need to tell you that the speed of his army promises that it will arrive before Athens almost immediately.”

“We are in a very hazardous situation, if the other two Senators do not bring Timon back with them,” the fourth Senator said.

“I met a courier, an old friend of mine,” the messenger said. “Although he and I are on opposite sides in this war, yet our old friendship made itself felt, and we spoke in a friendly way together. This man was riding from Alcibiades to Timon’s cave with a letter of entreaty desiring him to enlist his fellowship in the war against your city, a war that was instigated in part for his sake.”

Seeing the two Senators returning from visiting Timon, the third Senator said, “Here come our brothers.”

The first Senator said, “Let’s have no talk about Timon; expect no help from him. The enemies’ drum is heard, and the fearful and hostile movement of enemy soldiers chokes

the air with dust. Let's go inside the city, and prepare. Our future is the fall, I fear; our foes are the snare."

— 5.3 —

One of Alcibiades' soldiers, seeking Timon, arrived at Timon's cave. A crude tomb was near the cave.

The soldier said to himself, "By the description I have been given, this should be the place."

He called, "Who's here? Speak! Ho!"

He said to himself, "No answer! What is this?"

He picked up a wooden board on which some words were written and read this:

"Timon is dead, who has outstretched his life span.

"Some beast read this; there does not live a man."

Timon was cynical to the end. Whoever would read this would have to be a beast, for all men are beasts and are not men.

The soldier said to himself, "Timon is dead, for sure; and this is his grave."

Something was written on the tomb. Apparently, what was written on the wooden board was Timon's epitaph, or a first draft of Timon's epitaph.

The soldier said to himself, "What's written on this tomb is in a language I cannot read; I'll write on my wax table what is written. Our Captain has skill with all languages. As an interpreter, he is aged — experienced — although he is young in days.

"By this time he's arrived at Athens, whose fall is the goal of his ambition."

— 5.4 —

In front of the walls of Athens, Alcibiades stood with his soldiers and trumpeters.

He told his trumpeters, “Blow and announce to this cowardly and lascivious town our terrifying approach.”

The sound of the trumpets announced the request for a parley between the opposing sides.

Some Athenian Senators looked over the walls of Athens.

Alcibiades said to them, “Until now you have gone on and filled the time with all kinds of licentious acts, making your wills the scope of justice. To you, what is just is whatever will give you what you want. Until now I and people like me who have stepped within the shadow of your power have wandered with our arms crossed — not threatening you with weapons — and we have complained about our suffering in vain. Now the time is ripe, when the suppressed courage in us strongly cries, ‘No more.’ Now you breathless wrongdoers shall sit and pant in your great chairs of ease, and you short-winded insolent men shall break your wind with fear and horrid flight.”

A chair of ease can be a comfortable position of high office, or it can be a comfortable chair that a flatulent high-ranking man would sit in.

The first Senator said, “Noble and young Alcibiades, when your first grievances were only a mere notion and unimportant, before you had power or we had cause to fear, we sent to you, offering to give balm to your rages and offering to wipe out our ungrateful acts with acts of friendship above their quantity.”

The second Senator said, “So also did we woo transformed Timon to our city’s friendship by sending him a humble

message and by promising him resources. We were not all unkind, nor do we all deserve the indiscriminate stroke of war.”

The first Senator said, “These walls of ours were not erected by the hands of those from whom you have received your griefs, nor are they such that these great towers, monuments, and public buildings should fall because some particular men who are at fault are in them.”

The second Senator said, “Nor are those men still living who were the instigators of your exile. They were ashamed because they lacked intelligence when they exiled you, and that excess of shame has broken their hearts and killed them. March, noble lord, into our city with your banners spread. By decimation, and a tithed death — one out of every ten men to die — if your desire for revenge hungers for that cannibalistic food that nature loathes — take you the destined tenth, and by the hazard of the spotted die let die those who are spotted with sin.”

The first Senator said, “Not everyone has offended you. It is not fair to take revenge on those who have not offended you for the sins of those who have offended you.

“Crimes, like lands, are not inherited.”

This is an interesting sentence. Most likely, the first Senator had misspoken and meant to say, “Crimes, unlike lands, are not inherited.” Certainly, lands are left to heirs in wills. Or perhaps the first Senator meant that land can never really be owned, for the land was here long before the “owner” was born and will be here long after the “owner” has died. And perhaps the first Senator was also saying that if lands cannot be inherited, then crimes certainly cannot. A crime is immaterial, while land is material. If a material thing cannot be inherited, then certainly an immaterial thing cannot be inherited.

The first Senator continued, "So then, dear countryman, bring into Athens your ranks of soldiers, but leave outside the city your rage. Spare your Athenian cradle and those kin of yours who in the bluster of your wrath must fall along with those who have offended. Like a shepherd, approach the fold and cull the infected forth, but kill not all together."

The second Senator said, "Whatever it is you want, it is better for you to use your smile to get it rather than hew with your sword to get it."

The first Senator said, "Simply set your foot against our gates that are fortified with ramps of earth, and the gates shall open as long as you will metaphorically send your gentle heart first to say you shall enter as a friend."

The second Senator said, "Throw your glove, or any other pledge of your honor, to let us know that you will use the wars to redress the wrongs done to you and not to destroy us all. If you do this, all your soldiers shall make their harbor in our town, until we have carried out your full desire and redressed the wrongs done to you."

Alcibiades threw down his glove and said, "Then there's my glove. Descend, and open your gates, which I have not attacked. Those enemies of Timon's and my own enemies whom you yourselves shall pick out for reproof shall fall and no more, and to appease your fears with my more noble purpose, not a soldier of mine shall go outside the boundary of his quarters, or offend the stream of regular justice in your city's boundaries. If any soldier of mine does this, he shall be delivered to your public courts and pay the heaviest penalty."

The two Senators said, "This is most nobly spoken."

"Descend, and keep your words," Alcibiades said.

The two Senators descended and opened the gates.

The soldier who had been sent to see Timon arrived and said to Alcibiades, “My noble general, Timon is dead. He has been entombed upon the very edge of the sea, and on his gravestone was written this inscription, which I copied onto a wax tablet and brought away. The soft impression of the letters on the wax will reveal to you what my poor ignorance was unable to interpret.”

Alcibiades translated and read the inscription out loud:

“Here lies a wretched corpse, of wretched soul bereft.

“Seek not my name. May a plague consume you wicked wretches who are still left!

“Here lie I, Timon, who, when I was alive, all living men did hate.

“Pass by and curse your fill, but pass and stay not here your gait.”

Alcibiades said, “These words, Timon, well express in your epitaph your latter spirits and mood. Though you hated in us our human griefs, scorned our brain’s flow — our droplets, our tears, that fall from parsimonious human nature — yet your rich imagination taught you to make the sea-god Neptune’s vast sea weep always during its high tide on your low grave, on faults forgiven. Death forgives faults.

“Noble Timon is dead. We will speak more about his memory soon.

“Bring me into your city, and I will use the olive branch as well as my sword. I will make war breed peace, and make peace stop war. I will make each prescribe to the other as if they were each other’s physician.”

He ordered, “Let our drums strike,” and he and the others marched into the city.

NOTES

— 4.3 —

- This is a quotation from Francis Bacon about a belief that he rejects:

*Wherefore there are axioms, or rather certain conceits, which, received by philosophers, and transferred to astronomy, and unfortunately being credited, have corrupted the science. Our rejection of them will be simple, as well as our judgment upon them; for it is not suitable to waste precious time on silly refutations. The first of these is, that **all things above the moon inclusively are incorruptible**; and in no degree or form whatever do they undergo new beginnings or changes; of which it has been said elsewhere, that it is a fond and silly saying.*

Bold added.

Source: Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon* (1884) Volume 1.djvu/548

<<https://tinyurl.com/y43xycvu>>.

- The quotation from the sixteenth-century *Shiltei Hagiborim* by R. Joshua Boaz comes from this book:

Windows onto Jewish Legal Culture: Fourteen Exploratory Essays, edited by Hanina Ben-Menahem, Arye Edrei, Neil S. Hecht. Page 127.

- For what it's worth, I found this paragraph online:

The Voodoo religion makes wide use of feathers. Pillow magic is the practice of placing objects into the pillow of a person to cause wasting sickness and even death. Feather pillows are the best type to use because of feathers' magical properties. By using secret spells the "Voodoo" can cause bird or animal

monsters to take shape out of the pillow feathers. It will grow slowly and only at night. When it is completely formed the person who has been sleeping on the pillow will die.

The above paragraph is from the May 2012 article “Strange Superstitions About Feathers” at <http://tinyurl.com/h88qwpp>>. This is the site for *Nature Center Magazine*.

I also found this paragraph online:

PIGEONS: a lone white pigeon perching on a chimney is said to be a death omen. For quite a long time when feather beds were popular, it was claimed that pigeon feathers in such a bed only prolonged the agonies of someone dying, and consequently any pillow or mattress containing them was invariably removed from a sick-room.

Source: SUPERSTITIONS and OLD WIVES’ TALES

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<http://www.whimsy.org.uk/superstitions.html>

[• I retold the Aesop’s fable about the fox, lion, and stag from this book:](#)

[*Aesop’s Fables: A New Translation* by V. S. Vernon Jones. With an Introduction by G. K. Chesterton and Illustrations by Arthur Rackham. 1912 Edition. Pp. 212-214.](#)

[*Aesop’s Fables: A New Translation* is available at Project Gutenberg:](#)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/11339>

- I adapted the Aesop's fable about the ass, fox, and lion so that the ass accused the fox of treachery.
- I adapted the Aesop's fable about a wolf and a lamb so that it was about a fox and a lamb.

Chapter X: TITUS ANDRONICUS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Male Characters

SATURNINUS, Son to the late Emperor of Rome, and afterwards declared Emperor.

BASSIANUS, Brother to Saturninus, in love with Lavinia.

TITUS ANDRONICUS, a Roman, General against the Goths.

MARCUS ANDRONICUS, Tribune of the People, and brother to Titus.

LUCIUS, QUINTUS, MARTIUS, and MUTIUS, Sons to Titus Andronicus. Lucius is Titus' oldest son.

YOUNG LUCIUS, a Boy, Son to Lucius.

PUBLIUS, Son to Marcus Andronicus.

SEMPRONIUS, CAIUS, and VALENTINE, Kinsmen to Titus.

AEMILIUS, a noble Roman.

ALARBUS, DEMETRIUS, and CHIRON, Sons to Tamora. Alarbus is Tamora's oldest son; he becomes a human sacrifice.

AARON, a Moor, beloved by Tamora. Aaron's skin color is black.

A Captain, Tribune, Messenger, and Clown; Romans.

Goths and Romans.

Female Characters

TAMORA, Queen of the Goths.

LAVINIA, Daughter to Titus Andronicus.

Minor Characters

A Nurse, and a black Child.

Senators, Tribunes, Officers, Soldiers, and Attendants.

SCENE

Rome, and the country near it.

NOTES

ANDRONICI: Plural of ANDRONICUS. It is a family name.

SIRRAH: A term used to address a male who is of lower social status than the speaker.

CHAPTER 1**— 1.1 —**

The Roman Emperor had recently died, and his two sons hoped to become the new Emperor. Saturninus based his claim on being the oldest son, while Bassianus based his claim on merit — Bassianus believed that he was more worthy than his older brother to be the new Emperor.

Before the Capitol, Saturninus and his supporters arrived at the same time that Bassianus and his supporters arrived. Both Saturninus and Bassianus wanted to enter the gates and climb up to the Capitol. The gates to the Capitol were located by the Tomb of the Andronici.

Saturninus said, “Noble patricians, supporters of my right to succeed as Emperor, defend the justice of my cause with your weapons, and, countrymen, my loving followers, plead my right to succeed my father as Emperor with your swords. I am my father’s first-born son; my father was the most recent to wear the imperial crown of Rome. Therefore, let my father’s honors, fame, and glory live on in me by making me Emperor. Do not wrong my seniority and insult me by making my younger brother Emperor.”

Bassianus said, “Romans, friends, followers, all of you who support my right to be Emperor, if ever Bassianus, Caesar’s son, has been gracious and esteemed in the eyes of royal Rome, then guard this passage to the Capitol and do not allow a dishonorable man to approach the imperial seat. Instead, be dedicated to virtue and to justice, continence and self-control, and nobility. Let desert and worth prevail in a free election, and, Romans, fight for the freedom to make your own choice.”

Marcus Andronicus arrived, holding the Emperor’s crown. He was in the Capitol, looking down at Saturninus and Bassianus. Marcus was a Tribune and the brother of Titus

Andronicus.

Marcus Andronicus said, “You two Princes, who strive by factions and by friends ambitiously for rule and authority, know that the people of Rome, for whom we act as a special party and whose interest we represent as a Tribune, have, by common voice, in election for the Roman Emperor, chosen Titus Andronicus, who has been given the surname Pius — which means pious, patriotic, and dutiful — for the many good and great deeds he has done for Rome.”

This meant that Titus Andronicus had been chosen to be a candidate for Roman Emperor.

Marcus Andronicus continued: “A nobler man, a braver warrior, does not live this day within the city walls. He is our General, and the Roman Senate has summoned him home from fighting weary wars against the barbarous Germanic people known as the Goths. With his sons, Titus Andronicus, a terror to our foes, has yoked a strong nation that has been trained up in weapons. He has made the Goths submit to Roman rule. Ten years have passed since he first undertook this cause of Rome and wielded weapons to chastise our enemies’ pride. Five times he has returned bleeding to Rome, bearing his valiant sons in coffins from the battlefield, and now at last, laden with the spoils of honor, good Titus Andronicus returns to Rome — he is renowned and flourishing in arms.

“Let us entreat you, Saturninus and Bassianus, out of respect for the name of the late Emperor, the man whom you would like to now worthily succeed as Emperor, and out of respect for the rights of the Capitol and the Senate, rights that you profess to honor and adore, that you withdraw and abate your strength by disarming. Dismiss your followers and, as suitors should, plead your merits and make your case to be Emperor in peace and humbleness.”

Saturninus said, “How civilly the Tribune speaks to calm my thoughts!”

Bassianus said, “Marcus Andronicus, I so trust in your uprightness and integrity, and I so love and honor you and yours, your noble brother Titus and his sons, and Titus’ daughter, gracious Lavinia, who humbles all my thoughts and is Rome’s rich ornament, that I will here dismiss my loving friends, and to my fortunes and the people’s favor I will commit my cause in balance to be weighed.”

The followers of Bassianus left.

Saturninus said, “Friends, who have been thus forward in supporting my right to be Emperor, I thank you all and here dismiss you all, and to the love and favor of my country I commit myself, my person, and my cause.”

The followers of Saturninus left.

Saturninus added, “Rome, be as just and gracious to me as I am confident and kind to you.”

He then said to the people in the Capital, “Open the gates, and let me in.”

Bassianus added, “Tribunes, let me, a poor candidate, in.”

The gates opened, and Saturninus and Bassianus went inside the Capitol.

A Captain arrived before the Capitol and said, “Romans, make way. Clear a path for the good Titus Andronicus, patron of virtue, Rome’s best champion, successful in the battles that he fights. He has returned to Rome with honor and with fortune from the place where he rounded up the enemies of Rome with his sword and brought them to yoke.”

Drums and trumpets sounded.

Martius and Mutius, two of Titus Andronicus’ four

remaining living sons, entered. Next came men carrying two coffins covered with black. Next came Titus Andronicus' two other living sons: Lucius and Quintus — Lucius was Titus' oldest living son. Next Titus Andronicus himself arrived. He was followed by Tamora, the Queen of the Goths, and by her sons: Alarbus, Demetrius, and Chiron. Tamora and her sons were Titus' prisoners. With them was Aaron, a Moor who was Tamora's lover. Some other Goths, who were also prisoners, followed, along with some Roman soldiers and Roman citizens.

The men carrying the coffins set them down.

Titus Andronicus said, "Hail, Rome, victorious in your mourning clothes! Just as the ship, which has discharged her freight, returns with precious new cargo to the bay from whence at first she weighed her anchors, here returns me, Andronicus, my temples bound with laurel boughs, to resalute my country with his tears — tears of true joy for my return to Rome.

"Jupiter, King of the gods and great defender of this Capitol, show favor to the rites that we intend to observe!

"Romans, of my twenty-five valiant sons, half of the fifty sons that King Priam of Troy had, behold the poor remains, alive and dead! Here are two of my sons in coffins, and only four of my sons are left alive! Let Rome reward with love these sons of mine who still live. Let Rome reward with burial among their ancestors these of my sons whom I bring to their final home."

He paused and then said, "The Goths have given me leave to sheathe my sword."

Titus meant that by being conquered, the Goths had made it unnecessary for him to brandish his sword and fight them.

He then said, addressing himself, "Titus, you are unkind and

negligent to your own dead. Why do you allow your sons, who are still unburied, to hover on the dreadful shore of the River Styx in the Underworld? Until your sons have been properly buried, their spirits cannot cross the River Styx and enter the Land of the Dead.”

He ordered, “Make way so that I can lay them in the tomb by their brethren.”

Some men opened the Tomb of the Andronici.

Titus Andronicus said, “Dead sons of mine, greet your ancestors in silence, as the dead are accustomed to be, and sleep in peace, you who were slain in your country’s wars!

“Oh, sacred repository of my joys, sweet room of virtue and nobility, how many sons of mine you have inside you — sons whom you will never give to me again!”

Lucius, Titus’ oldest living son, said to him, “Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths so that we may cut off his limbs and on a pile of wood sacrifice his flesh *ad manes fratrum* — to the spirits of our brothers — in front of this earthy prison of their bones. That way, their spirits will not be unappeased and we will not be disturbed by unnatural happenings on Earth.”

Titus Andronicus replied, “I give to you the noblest Goth who survives — the eldest son of this distressed Queen.”

“Stop, Roman brethren — Roman religious observers!” Tamora, the Queen of the Goths, and a mother, said as she knelt. “Gracious conqueror, victorious Titus, pity the tears I am shedding. These are a mother’s tears shed in great grief for her son. If your sons were ever dear to you, then think that my son is as dear to me! Isn’t it enough that we have been brought to Rome, captive to you and to your Roman yoke, to appear in and beautify your triumphal procession at your return, but must my sons be slaughtered in the streets

because of their valiant doings in their country's cause?

"If to fight for King and nation is piety in your sons, it is also piety in these boys — my sons. Andronicus, do not stain your tomb with blood. Do you want to emulate the nature of the gods? Then emulate them in being merciful. Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge. Thrice noble Titus, spare my first-born son."

"Be calm, madam, and pardon me," Titus Andronicus said. "These are their brethren, their brothers, whom you Goths beheld alive and dead, and for their slain brethren, they ask for a sacrifice as part of their religion. To be this sacrifice, your son has been selected, and he must die to appease the groaning spirits of those who are dead and gone."

"Away with him!" Lucius ordered. "Make a fire right away, and with our swords, upon a pile of wood, let's cut off his limbs and burn them until they are entirely consumed."

Titus Andronicus' four living sons — Lucius, Martius, Mutius, and Quintus — exited with Alarbus, Tamora's oldest son, as their prisoner.

"This is cruel, irreligious piety!" Tamora mourned as she stood up.

"Scythia is known for the barbarism of its inhabitants," Tamora's son Chiron said, "but have the Scythians ever been half as barbarous as these Romans?"

"Don't compare the Scythians to the ambitious Romans," Tamora's son Demetrius said. "Alarbus goes to his eternal rest, and we survive to tremble under Titus' threatening looks. Therefore, madam, accept that this sacrifice will happen, but hope as well that the same gods who gave Hecuba, the Queen of Troy, the opportunity to exact severe and merciless revenge upon the Thracian tyrant in his tent will favor Tamora, the Queen of the Goths — when Goths

were Goths and Tamora was Queen — to avenge these bloody wrongs upon her foes.”

The Thracian tyrant was Polymestor, to whom Hecuba’s son Polydorus had been sent — with treasure — for his safety during the Trojan War. After Troy fell, King Polymestor of Thrace killed Polydorus so he could keep the treasure. The leader of the Greeks, Agamemnon, had fallen in love with Cassandra, one of Hecuba’s daughters, and Hecuba was able to get Agamemnon to allow her and some other Trojan women to see Polymestor and his sons. The Trojan women killed Polymestor’s sons, and Hecuba scratched out his eyes and blinded him, thus getting revenge for the death of her son Polydorus.

Titus Andronicus’ four living sons — Lucius, Martius, Mutius, and Quintus — returned. Their swords were bloody.

Lucius said to his father, Titus, “See, lord and father, how we have performed our Roman rites. Alarbus’ limbs have been cut off, and his entrails now feed the sacrificing fire, whose smoke, like incense, perfumes the sky. Nothing remains to be done except to inter our brethren in the tomb, and with loud trumpet calls welcome them to Rome.”

Titus Andronicus replied, “Let it be done, and let Titus Andronicus make this his last farewell to their souls.”

Trumpets sounded, and the two coffins were placed in the Tomb of the Andronici.

Titus said, “In peace and honor rest here, my sons. Rome’s readiest champions, repose here in rest, secure from worldly chances and mishaps! Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells, here grow no damned grudges; here are no storms, no noise, but only silence and eternal sleep. In peace and honor rest here, my sons!”

Lavinia, Titus’ daughter, arrived in time to hear the end of

Titus' speech.

She said, "In peace and honor may Lord Titus live long. My noble lord and father, live on in fame! At this tomb my tears I render as tribute for my brethren's funeral obsequies, and at your feet I kneel, with tears of joy, shed on the earth, for your return to Rome. Oh, bless me here with your victorious hand, whose fortunes Rome's best citizens applaud!"

"Kind Rome, you have thus lovingly kept safe the comfort of my old age to gladden my heart! Lavinia, live; outlive your father's days, and as a reward for your virtue outlive even eternal fame!"

Marcus Andronicus and the Tribunes came out of the Capitol to greet Titus Andronicus. So did Saturninus and Bassianus.

Marcus Andronicus said, "Long live Lord Titus, my beloved brother, who is a gracious conquering general in the eyes of Rome!"

"Thanks, gentle Tribune, my noble brother Marcus," Titus replied.

"And welcome, nephews, home from successful wars," Marcus Andronicus said. "I mean you who survive, as well as you who sleep in fame! Fair lords who drew your swords in your country's service, your fortunes are alike. But the safer triumph belongs to those for whom we hold this funeral pomp because they have aspired to Solon's happiness and they have triumphed over chance by being in honor's bed — the grave!"

When Croesus, King of Lydia, asked the wise Athenian Solon who was happier than he, Croesus, Solon named three men, all of whom were dead. He then said, "Call no man happy until he is dead." By this, he meant that the goddess Fortune is fickle, and a man who is happy and fortunate today may be unhappy and unfortunate tomorrow.

Marcus continued, "Titus Andronicus, the people of Rome, whose friend in justice you have ever been, send to you by me, their Tribune and their trust, this robe of white and spotless hue, and they have nominated you as a candidate to be Emperor, as are these our late-deceased Emperor's sons. Therefore, be a candidate and put on this white robe and help to set a head on headless Rome."

"Rome's glorious body needs a better head than mine, which shakes because of old age and feebleness," Titus replied. "Why should I don this white robe, and trouble you? I might be chosen with proclamations today, but tomorrow yield up my rule and give up my life and die, and then all of you will have to redo all this business."

"Romans, I have been your soldier for forty years, and I have led my country's strength successfully and buried twenty-one valiant sons who were knighted on the battlefield, slain manfully while bearing weapons and performing rightful service for their noble country. Give me a staff of honor for my old age, but do not give me a scepter with which I can control the world. The man who held that scepter most recently, lords, wielded it justly."

Marcus Andronicus, who knew the will of the people, said, "Titus, if you ask to be Emperor, you will be elected."

Saturninus said, "Proud and ambitious Tribune, are you really quite sure of that?"

"Be calm, Prince Saturninus," Titus said.

Saturninus, who was not calm, said, "Romans, do right by me. Patricians, draw your swords and do not sheathe them until I, Saturninus, am Rome's Emperor."

"Titus Andronicus, I wish you would be shipped to Hell rather than rob me of the people's hearts!"

Lucius, who understood what his father, who respected old customs and values, wanted to do, said, “Proud Saturninus, you are interrupting the good thing that noble-minded Titus intends to do for you!”

Titus said, “Be calm, Prince Saturninus. I will restore to you the people’s hearts, and I will have them elect you as Emperor although you are not their first choice.”

Bassianus made a bid for Titus’ support: “Andronicus, I do not flatter you, but I do honor you, and I will honor you until I die. I will be most thankful if you strengthen my faction — those who want me to be Emperor — with your friends. To men of noble minds, thanks are an honorable reward.”

Titus did not change his mind about supporting Saturninus’ candidacy to be Emperor: “People of Rome, and people’s Tribunes here, I ask for your support and your votes: Will you bestow them in a friendly way and support whom Andronicus supports?”

The Tribunes replied, “To gratify the good Andronicus and to welcome his safe return to Rome, the people will accept as Emperor whomever he supports.”

“Tribunes, I thank you,” Titus said, “and I make a formal request that you elect your old Emperor’s eldest son, Lord Saturninus, as Emperor. His virtues will, I hope, reflect on Rome the way that the Sun-god’s rays reflect on Earth, and ripen justice and make it flourish in this commonwealth. Therefore, if you will elect to be Emperor the person whom I support, crown Saturninus and say, ‘Long live our Emperor!’”

Romans shouted their approval, and Marcus Andronicus crowned Saturninus as Emperor.

Saturninus said, “Titus Andronicus, for your favors done to us in our election as Emperor this day, I give you thanks in

partial payment of what you deserve from me, and I will with deeds reward your nobility and courtesy. And, for the first deed, Titus, I will advance your name and honorable family by making your daughter, Lavinia, my Empress, Rome's royal mistress, and mistress of my heart. In the sacred Pantheon, I will marry her. Tell me, Andronicus, does this proposal please you?"

Titus replied, "It does, my worthy lord; and in this match I regard myself to be highly honored by your grace. Here in sight of the Romans, I consecrate my sword, my chariot, and my prisoners to Saturninus. These presents are well worthy of Rome's imperial lord. Receive them; they are the tribute that I owe you. These are the symbols of my honor, and they lie humbled at your feet."

"Thanks, noble Titus, father of my life!" Saturninus said. "Rome shall record how proud I am of you and of your gifts, and when I forget the least of these indescribable rewards, Romans, forget your duty to be loyal to me."

Titus said to Tamora, "Now, madam, you are prisoner to an Emperor. He is a man who, because of your honor and your status, will treat you and your followers nobly."

Looking at Tamora closely for the first time, Saturninus thought, *Tamora is a beautiful lady, believe you me. She is of the hue and complexion that I would choose, were I to choose anew. If I had not already chosen to marry Lavinia, I would choose to marry Tamora.*

He said to Tamora, "Clear up, fair Queen, your cloudy countenance. Though the deeds of war have wrought this change in your countenance, you have not been brought to Rome to be made an object of mockery. You shall be treated like nobility in every way. Believe what I say, and do not let unhappiness daunt all your hopes. Madam, he who comforts you — and I am the one comforting you — can make you

greater than the Queen of the Goths.”

He then said to Lavinia, who of course had heard what he said to Tamora, “Lavinia, are you displeased by what I have said?”

“No, my lord,” Lavinia replied, “I know that your true nobility has caused you to say these words with a Princely courtesy.”

“Thanks, sweet Lavinia,” Saturninus said. “Romans, let us go. Here we set our prisoners free without ransom.”

He added, “Proclaim our honors, lords, with trumpets and drums.”

As the trumpets and drums sounded, Saturninus spoke quietly to Tamora.

Bassianus, who was betrothed — engaged to marry — Lavinia, said, “Lord Titus, by your leave, this maiden is mine.”

He put his arms around Lavinia.

Titus said to him, “What, sir! Are you in earnest then, my lord?”

“Yes, noble Titus,” Bassianus replied, “and I am entirely resolved to do myself the right and reasonable course of action of marrying Lavinia.”

“‘*Suum cuique*’ — ‘to each his own’ — is our Roman justice,” Marcus Andronicus said. “This Prince is justly seizing nothing but what is already his own.”

Lucius said, “And he will and shall have Lavinia if I, Lucius, live.”

Titus Andronicus, who had just given permission to Saturninus to marry Lavinia, said, “Traitors, get away from

here! Where is the Emperor's guard? Treason, my lord! Lavinia is ambushed and captured!"

"Captured!" Saturninus said. "By whom?"

Bassianus answered, "By him who justly may carry his betrothed away from all the world."

Bassianus, Marcus Andronicus, and Lavinia ran through a door.

Titus' son Mutius said, "Brothers, help to convey Lavinia away from here, and with my sword I'll guard this door and keep anyone from pursuing Lavinia."

Titus' sons Lucius, Martius, and Quintus ran through the door to help Lavinia run safely away.

Titus said to Saturninus, "My lord, continue to follow your plan to marry Lavinia. I'll soon bring her back."

He approached the door through which Saturninus and Lavinia had fled.

His son Mutius said, "My lord, you shall not pass through the door here."

"What, villain boy!" Titus said. "Do you bar my way anywhere in Rome?"

He stabbed his son.

Mutius cried, "Help, Lucius, help!"

Then he died.

During the fight, Saturninus, Tamora, Demetrius, Chiron, and Aaron went through a door and climbed up into the Capitol. They were able to look down and see Titus Andronicus.

Lucius came back, saw that Titus had killed Mutius, and said

to his father, “My lord, you are unjust, and more than unjust, because you have slain your son without a just reason.”

Titus replied, “Neither you, nor he, are any sons of mine. My sons would never so dishonor me as you have done. Traitor, restore Lavinia to the Emperor.”

“I will restore her dead, if you wish,” Lucius said, “but I will not give Lavinia to him to be his wife because she is another man’s lawfully promised love.”

He exited through the door.

Looking down on Titus, Emperor Saturninus said, “No, Titus, no; the Emperor does not need Lavinia. The Emperor does not need her, or you, or any of your stock. I’ll trust, but only very slowly, a man after he mocks me once, but I will never trust you or your traitorous haughty sons — all of you worked together to dishonor me in this way. Was there no one else in Rome to make a laughingstock other than me? Very well, Andronicus, this deed is consistent with that proud brag of yours — you said that I begged you to make me Emperor.”

Of course, this accusation was not true.

“Monstrous!” Titus said. “What reproachful words are these?”

“Go. Now. Leave here,” Emperor Saturninus said. “Go and give that fickle woman to the man who drew his sword and flourished it in the air to win her. You shall enjoy a valiant son-in-law; he is fit to join with and fight beside your lawless sons in the commonwealth of Rome.”

“These words are like razors to my wounded heart,” Titus said.

Saturninus then proposed to Tamora: “And therefore, lovely Tamora, Queen of Goths, who like the stately Moon goddess

Phoebe among her nymphs outshines the most splendid dames of Rome, if you should be pleased with this my sudden choice, behold, I choose you, Tamora, to be my bride, and I will make you Empress of Rome.

“Speak, Queen of Goths, do you applaud my choice? Will you marry me?”

“I swear here by all the Roman gods, since priest and holy water are so near and candles burn so brightly and everything stands in readiness for Hymenaeus, the god of marriage, I will not walk the streets of Rome, or climb up to my palace, until from forth this place I lead my married bride beside me.”

Kneeling, Tamora replied, “And here, in the sight of Heaven, to the Romans I swear that if Saturninus marries the Queen of Goths and makes her Empress, she will be a handmaid to his desires, and a loving nurse and mother to his youth.”

“Arise, fair Queen, and let us go to the Pantheon to be married,” Saturninus said. He ignored Titus as he said, “Lords, accompany your noble Emperor and his lovely bride, sent by the Heavens for Prince Saturninus; her wisdom in agreeing to marry me has conquered her misfortune. Go with us to the Pantheon, and there we shall perform our marriage rites.”

Everyone except Titus departed.

Alone, Titus said to himself, “I am not invited to wait upon this bride. Titus, when were you ever accustomed to walk alone, dishonored like this, and accused of wrongs and crimes?”

Marcus Andronicus and Titus’ three remaining living sons — Lucius, Martius, and Quintus — returned.

Marcus Andronicus said, “Titus, see, oh, see what you have

done! You have killed a virtuous son in a bad quarrel. You did not have a good reason to kill him.”

“No, foolish Tribune,” Titus replied. “I have not killed unworthily any son of mine, and I have not killed you, or these sons of mine, who are confederates in the deed that has dishonored all our family. You are an unworthy brother, and these are unworthy sons!”

Lucius requested, “Allow us to give our brother burial, as is fitting. Allow us to give Mutius burial with our brethren.”

“Traitors, go away!” Titus shouted. “He will not rest in this tomb. For five hundred years has stood this monument, which I have sumptuously re-built. Here none but soldiers and Rome’s officers repose in fame; none basely slain in brawls are buried here. Bury him wherever you can; he will not be buried here.”

Marcus said to Titus, “My lord, this is impiety in you. My nephew Mutius’ honorable deeds plead for him. He must be buried with his brethren.”

Quintus and Martius said, “And he shall, or we will accompany him in death.”

Titus asked, “What villain was it who said, ‘And he shall?’”

Quintus replied, “He who would maintain it in any place but here.”

“What, would you bury him to spite me?” Titus asked.

“No, noble Titus,” Marcus Andronicus said, “but I beg you to pardon Mutius and to bury him.”

“Marcus, even you have metaphorically struck my helmet,” Titus replied. “And, with these boys, you have wounded my honor. I consider every one of you to be my enemy, so trouble me no more, but get you gone.”

Martius said, "He is not himself; let us withdraw."

Quintus said, "Not I — not until Mutius' bones have been buried."

Marcus Andronicus and Titus' three living sons kneeled before him.

Marcus Andronicus said, "Brother, for that is what you are to me —"

Quintus said, "Father, for that is what you are to me —"

Titus said, "Speak no more, if you know what is good for you."

Marcus said, "Renowned Titus, you are more than half my soul —"

Lucius said, "Dear father, you are the soul and substance of us all —"

Marcus pleaded, "Permit me, your brother, to inter my noble nephew here in the nest of virtue. Mutius died honorably as he helped Lavinia. You are Roman; do not be barbarous. The Greeks after careful consideration buried Great Ajax, who slew himself; wise Laertes' son, Ulysses, graciously pleaded for Great Ajax' funeral. Let not young Mutius, then, who was your joy, be barred his entrance here into the Tomb of the Andronici."

Great Ajax was the second strongest warrior of the Greeks during the Trojan War; Achilles was the first. After Achilles died, Achilles' mother, the sea goddess Thetis, wanted to award Achilles' magnificent armor, which had been made by the blacksmith god Vulcan, to one of the Greek warriors. Both Great Ajax and Ulysses argued that he should be awarded the armor, which was eventually given to Ulysses. Great Ajax went insane and killed some sheep, thinking that they were Ulysses and Agamemnon, who was the leader of

the Greeks. When Great Ajax regained his sanity, he was so ashamed that he committed suicide. Ulysses convinced his fellow Greeks that Great Ajax should be given a proper funeral.

Marcus had pleaded well. He knew that Titus, his brother, would respond favorably to an ancient exemplum, especially one involving famous warriors.

Titus said, "Rise, Marcus, rise. This is the most dismal day that I have ever seen. On this day my sons dishonored me in Rome! Well, bury him, and next you shall bury me."

Marcus Andronicus and Titus' living sons placed Mutius in the Tomb of the Andronici. Great Ajax had died because he valued honor so much; Titus realized that Mutius, his son, had believed that he was protecting the honor of Lavinia, his sister, who was engaged to Saturninus.

Lucius said, "There your bones will lie, sweet Mutius, with your friends, until we adorn your tomb with memorial tokens."

All knelt and said, "Let no man shed tears for noble Mutius: He who died for the sake of virtue lives on in fame." Then they stood again.

"My lord, let us step out of these dreary dumps and this melancholy," Marcus said to Titus. "How came it to happen that the cunning Queen of Goths is so suddenly advanced in Rome? She has gone from being a captive to being the Roman Empress!"

"I don't know how it happened, Marcus," Titus replied, "but I know it did happen. Whether or not it happened as part of a plot, the Heavens can tell. Is she not then indebted to the man who brought her to such a height? Yes, and she will nobly remunerate him."

Saturninus and Tamora walked through one door. With them were Tamora's sons Demetrius and Chiron, and Aaron the Moor. Saturninus and Tamora were now married.

Bassianus, Lavinia, and some attendants walked through another door. Bassianus and Lavinia were now married.

Angry, Saturninus said, "So, Bassianus, you have won your bout." He added, sarcastically, "May God give you joy, sir, of your gallant bride!"

"And you of yours, my lord!" Bassianus said. "I have no more to say to you, nor do I wish any less for you; and so, I take my leave of you."

"Traitor, if Rome has law or we have power," Saturninus said, using the royal plural, "you and your faction shall repent this kidnapping of Lavinia."

"Do you call it kidnapping, my lord, when I seize what is my own — my truly betrothed love who is now my wife? But let the laws of Rome determine all; in the meanwhile I possess what is mine."

"Very well, sir," Saturninus said. "You are very short with us, but if we live, we'll be as sharp with you."

Bassianus replied, "My lord, what I have done, as best I may I must answer for it and shall do with my life. However, I want your grace to know this: By all the duties that I owe to Rome, this noble gentleman, Lord Titus here, has had his reputation and honor wronged. When I rescued Lavinia, Titus with his own hand slew his youngest son because of his zeal to serve you and because he was so highly moved to wrath when his desire to freely give Lavinia to you was balked. Return him, then, to your favor, Saturninus. Titus has shown in all his deeds that he is a father and a friend to you and Rome."

Titus Andronicus said, “Prince Bassianus, stop pleading for me and my deeds. It is you and those who helped you who have dishonored me.”

He knelt and said, “May Rome and the righteous Heavens be my judge for how I have loved and honored Saturninus!”

Tamora said to Saturninus, her husband, “My worthy lord, if ever Tamora were gracious in those Princely eyes of yours, then hear me speak impartially for all, and at my request, sweetheart, pardon what is past.”

Saturninus replied, “What, madam! Shall I be dishonored openly, and basely put my sword in its sheath without getting revenge?”

Tamora said, “No, my lord; may the gods of Rome forbid that I should be a person who causes you to be dishonored! But on my honor I vouch for good Lord Titus’ innocence in everything; his fury — which is not faked — shows that his grievances are real. Therefore, at my request, look graciously on him. Do not lose so noble a friend on an idle supposition, and do not afflict his gentle heart with sour looks.”

She then said quietly to Saturninus so that others could not hear, “My lord, do as I advise you. Be won over at last. Hide all your feelings of grief and discontent. You are only newly planted in your throne. Be afraid, then, that the common people — and the patricians, too — after justly considering the situation, will take Titus’ part and replace you as Emperor because you are showing ingratitude, which Rome considers to be a heinous sin. Yield to my entreaty; and then leave it to me. I’ll find a day to massacre them all and raze their faction and their family, the cruel father and his traitorous sons, to whom I begged for my dear son’s life, and I will make them know what it is to let a Queen kneel in the streets and beg for mercy in vain.”

She said out loud so all could hear, "Come, come, sweet Emperor; come, Titus Andronicus. Emperor, tell this good old man to stand up, and cheer up Titus' heart that now dies in the tempest of your angry frown."

"Rise, Titus, rise," Saturninus said. "My Empress has prevailed over me."

"I thank your Majesty, and her, my lord," Titus said, standing up. "These words, these looks, infuse new life in me."

"Titus, I am now a part of Rome," Tamora said. "I am now a happily adopted and naturalized Roman, and I must advise the Emperor for his good. This day all quarrels die, Andronicus. Let it be to my honor, my good lord, that I have reconciled your friends and you. As for you, Prince Bassianus, I have given my word and promise to the Emperor that you will be more mild and obedient. Do not be afraid, my lords, and you, Lavinia. Take my advice, all of you, and humble yourselves by getting on your knees and asking for a pardon from his Majesty."

Marcus, Lavinia, and Titus' three remaining living sons knelt.

Lucius said, "We kneel, and we vow to Heaven and to his Highness that what we did was done as mildly as we could, considering the situation — we protected our sister's honor and our own."

Marcus said, "On my honor, I say that this is true."

Saturninus said, "Go away now, and talk no more; trouble us no more."

"No, no, sweet Emperor, we must all be friends," Tamora said. "Marcus the Tribune and his nephews kneel and ask for your grace. I will not be denied: Sweetheart, look at them."

Saturninus said, “Marcus, for your sake and your brother Titus’ here, and at my lovely Tamora’s entreaty, I pardon these young men’s heinous faults. All of you, stand up.”

They stood up.

Saturninus continued, “Lavinia, although you left me as if I were a churl — a peasant — I found a sweetheart, and as sure as death I swore I would not part from the priest as a bachelor. If the Emperor’s court can feast two brides, you are my guest, Lavinia, and so are your friends.

“This day shall be a love-day, Tamora. On this day, I shall forgive faults and resolve disputes.”

Titus Andronicus said, “Tomorrow, if it will please your Majesty to hunt the panther and the male deer with me, with horns and hounds we’ll give your grace *bonjour* — a good day.”

Saturninus replied, “So be it, Titus, and gramercy — great thanks — too.”

CHAPTER 2**— 2.1 —**

In front of the palace, Aaron the Moor stood alone.

He said to himself, “Now Tamora has climbed to the top of Mount Olympus, home of the gods. She is safe from the slings and arrows of Lady Fortune, and she sits aloft, on high, safe from the crack of thunder and the flash of lightning. She has advanced so high that she is above the threatening reach of pale and envious people.

“Tamora now is just like the golden Sun that salutes the morning and after having gilded the ocean with its yellow beams gallops through the zodiac in its glistening coach, and looks over the highest hills. Upon her does Earthly honor wait, and virtue stoops and trembles at her frown.

“So, then, Aaron, arm your heart and fit your thoughts to mount aloft with your imperial mistress, and mount with her as high as she goes, whom you in triumph have long held prisoner, fettered in amorous chains and faster bound to Aaron’s eyes that bewitch and charm than Prometheus is tied to a rock in the Caucasus, a mountain range in Caucasia.”

Aaron had been having an affair with Tamora and so he had mounted her, and he intended to benefit from her rise in fortune. She was bound by love to him as securely as Prometheus, who had stolen fire from the gods to give to human beings, was chained to a rock in the Caucasus — as Prometheus’ punishment for helping human beings, Zeus had chained him to that rock. Each day, an eagle ate Prometheus’ liver, which grew back each day and was eaten again the following day.

Aaron continued, “Away with slavish clothing and servile thoughts! I will be bright and shine in pearl and gold as I serve this newly made Empress. To serve, did I say? I mean

to wanton sexually with this Queen, this goddess, this Semiramis, this nymph, this Siren, who will charm Rome's Saturninus, and see the shipwreck of himself and his commonwealth."

Aaron compared Tamora to Semiramis, an Assyrian Queen who was known for her power, sexual appetite, cruelty, and beauty.

He also compared her to a Siren, who would sing beautifully in order to cause sailors to become entranced by her song and wreck their ships on the shore of her island.

Aaron, hearing some people fighting, said, "Hello! What storm is this?"

Tamora's two living sons — Demetrius and Chiron — came near Aaron. They were shouting and swaggering.

Demetrius said, "Chiron, you are not as intelligent as your age suggests, and your intelligence cannot be sharp since you intrude where I am welcomed and may, for all you know, be loved."

Chiron replied, "Demetrius, you presume too much in everything, just like you are doing now as you try to intimidate me with your boasts. You are older than I am by only a year or two, and that is not enough to make me less gracious than you or to make you more fortunate than me. I am as able and as fit as you are to serve and to deserve my mistress' favor. I shall use my sword to prove that to you, and I shall use it to plead my passion for Lavinia and her love."

Aaron said quietly to himself, "Clubs! Clubs! These lovers will not keep the peace."

The phrase "Clubs! Clubs!" was a call to the city watch to come and use their clubs to break up a fight in the city streets

— or a call to apprentices to grab clubs and come and fight on one or the other side.

Demetrius said, “Why, boy, although our mother, unwisely, gave you a dancing-rapier — used for fashion and decoration while dancing, and not used for fighting — to wear by your side, have you grown so desperate that you threaten your friends? Ha! Have your useless sword — a stage prop! — glued inside your sheath until you know better how to handle it.”

Chiron replied, “Meanwhile, sir, you shall perceive very well how much I dare to do with the little skill I have.”

Addressing him by an insulting title, Demetrius said, “Boy, have you grown that brave?”

They drew their swords.

Having naked weapons so near the palace was illegal, and could result in serious punishment, including death, and so Aaron now intervened.

He came forward and said, “Why, what is going on now, lords! Do you dare to draw your swords so near the Emperor’s palace and engage in such a quarrel openly? I know very well the reason for all this quarreling. I would not for a million gold pieces allow that reason to be learned by them it most concerns, and your mother — even for much more than a million gold pieces — would not allow herself to be so dishonored in the court of Rome as that would make her. For shame, put up your swords.”

Demetrius said, “Not I, not until I have sheathed my rapier in his bosom and completely thrust down his throat these reproachful speeches that he has breathed to my dishonor here.”

“I am prepared and fully resolved to fight you,” Chiron said.

“You are a foul-spoken coward, who thunders with your tongue, but who dares to do nothing with your weapon!”

“Put your swords away, I say!” Aaron thundered. “Now, by the gods that warlike Goths adore, this petty quarrel will ruin us all. Why, lords, aren’t you thinking how dangerous it is to encroach upon a Prince’s right? Lavinia is married to Prince Bassianus. Has Lavinia then become so loose, or Bassianus so degenerate, that for her love such quarrels may be raised without check, justice, or revenge? Young lords, beware! If the Empress should learn the reason for this discord, the music would not please her.”

“I don’t care whether she and all the world know,” Chiron said. “I love Lavinia more than all the world.”

Demetrius said, “Youngster, learn to choose to love someone of a lower social status. Lavinia is your elder brother’s desired.”

“What! Are you mad?” Aaron asked. “Don’t you know how furious and impatient men can be? Don’t you know that they cannot tolerate competitors in love? I tell you, lords, you are pursuing your own deaths when you pursue Lavinia in this way.”

“Aaron, I would be ready to meet a thousand deaths in order to achieve her whom I love,” Chiron replied.

“To achieve her!” Aaron said. “What do you mean?”

“Why are you pretending not to understand?” Demetrius asked. “She is a woman, and therefore may be wooed. She is a woman, and therefore may be won. She is Lavinia, and therefore must be loved. Why, man, more water glides by the mill than the miller knows of; and we all know it is easy to steal a slice from a cut loaf of bread. Why can’t we steal a piece of ass? Although Bassianus is the Emperor’s brother, better than he have worn Vulcan’s badge.”

Vulcan's badge was the horns of a cuckold — a man whose wife had cheated on him. Vulcan, the blacksmith god, was married to Venus, who had an affair with Mars, the war god.

Aaron thought, *Someone as high ranking as Saturninus may wear Vulcan's badge.*

Demetrius continued, "Then why should a man despair who knows to court a woman with the help of words, fair looks, and liberality? Haven't you very often struck a doe, and carried her by the gamekeeper's nose without getting caught?"

"Why, then, it seems, some certain snatch or so would serve your turns," Aaron said.

He meant that Demetrius and Chiron could snatch — kidnap — Lavinia and forcibly make her serve them sexually. In other words, Demetrius and Chiron could take turns raping her.

"Yes, so the turn were served," Chiron said. He wanted to make sure that he had his turn.

"Aaron, you have hit it — you have hit on the solution to our problem," Demetrius said.

"I wish that you had already hit it — by shooting your arrow into the center of your target," Aaron said. "Then we should not be troubled with this business. Why, listen! Are you two such fools that you would you argue over this solution to your problem? Would it offend you, then, if both of you would have sex with Lavinia?"

"Truly, that would not bother me," Chiron said.

"Nor me, so long as I had my turn with her," Demetrius said.

"For shame, be friends, and join together so that you can both get what you are fighting for," Aaron said. "Plots and

stratagems must get you what you want; therefore, you must resolve that since you cannot achieve what you want the way you want to achieve it — that is, with words — you must therefore achieve it by what works — that is, with force.

“Learn this from me: Lucrece was not more chaste than this Lavinia, Bassianus’ love.”

Lucrece was an ancient Roman gentlewoman who committed suicide after being raped.

One meaning of chastity is abstinence from sex, but the meaning of chastity used here was abstinence from illicit sex, including extramarital sex.

Aaron continued, “A speedier course than lingering languishment you must pursue, and I have found the path. My lords, a ceremonious hunt will take place today. There the lovely Roman ladies will troop. The forest paths are wide and spacious, and many unfrequented places in the forest are suitable for rape and villainy. Separate this dainty doe from the rest of the herd in such a place and strike her home — have sex with her — by force, since words will not get you what you want. This is the only way you will have sex with Lavinia.

“Come, come, we will tell our Empress, Tamora, who has consecrated her wit and intelligence to villainy and vengeance, as if they were her religion, everything that we intend to do. She will sharpen our plot with advice and make it better. She will not allow you to fight each other, but she will help you get everything you wish.

“The Emperor’s court is like the house of rumor and gossip. The palace is full of tongues, eyes, and ears. In contrast, the woods are ruthless and pitiless, dreadful, deaf, and dull. There speak, and strike, daring boys, and take your turns with Lavinia. There satisfy your lust, hidden from the eye of Heaven, and revel deep in Lavinia’s treasury.”

“Your counsel, lad, smells of no cowardice,” Chiron said to Aaron.

Demetrius said, “*Sit fas aut nefas*, until I find the stream that will cool this heat I feel, a charm to calm these fits, *per Styga, per manes vehor*.”

Sit fas aut nefas is Latin for “Whether right or wrong.” *Per Styga, per manes vehor* is Latin for “I am borne through the Stygian realms.” The Styx is a river in Hell, and so Demetrius was saying, “I am in Hell.”

Considering the way that Demetrius was planning to treat Lavinia, whom he — and Chiron — had said they loved, he — and Chiron — deserved to be in Hell.

— 2.2 —

Titus Andronicus and his sons Lucius, Martius, and Quintus were in a forest near Rome. Also present were Marcus Andronicus and some hunters, hunting hounds, and attendants.

Titus Andronicus said, “The hunt is afoot. The early morning is bright and grey, the fields are fragrant, and the woods are green. Release the hunting hounds, and let them bay and awaken the Emperor Saturninus and his lovely bride and rouse Prince Bassianus. Also let the horns sound a hunter’s peal so that all the court may echo with the noise.

“Sons, let it be your responsibility, as it is ours, to attend the Emperor’s person carefully. I was troubled in my sleep last night, but this dawning day has inspired new comfort.”

Hounds bayed and horns sounded. Saturninus and Tamora arrived, as did Bassianus and Lavinia. Demetrius and Chiron then arrived, along with some attendants.

Titus Andronicus said, “I give many good mornings to your Majesty. Madam, to you I give as many and as good. I

promised your grace a hunter's peal."

"And you have rung it lustily, my lord," Saturninus said, "but somewhat too early for newly married ladies."

Bassianus asked, "Lavinia, what do you say to that?"

"I say that it is incorrect," Lavinia said. "I have been wide awake two hours and more."

"Come on, then," Saturninus said. "Let us have horses and chariots, and let us begin our hunt."

He said to Tamora, "Madam, now you shall see our Roman hunting."

"I have dogs, my lord," Marcus Andronicus said, "that will rouse the proudest panther in the hunting ground, and climb the top of the highest hill."

Titus Andronicus said, "And I have horses that will follow where the game makes its way and runs like swallows over the plain."

Demetrius said quietly to his brother, "Chiron, we will not hunt with horse or hound, but we hope to pluck a dainty doe from the crowd and throw her to the ground."

— 2.3 —

In a lonely part of the forest, Aaron, holding a bag of gold, stood by an elder tree.

He said to himself, "A man who has intelligence would think that I had none because I am burying so much gold under a tree and never afterward will possess it. Let him who thinks so badly of me know that this gold will coin a plot, which, cunningly effected, will beget a very excellent piece of villainy."

He buried the gold under the tree and said, "And so repose,

sweet gold, for the unrest of those who receive alms out of the Empress' chest."

The "alms" were the gold that he had taken from the treasure chest of Tamora, who was now the Roman Empress.

Tamora entered the scene and said, "My lovely Aaron, why do you look solemn and serious, when everything is making a gleeful display? The birds chant melody on every bush, the snake lies coiled in the cheerful Sun, and the green leaves quiver with the cooling wind and make a checkered shadow on the ground. Under their sweet shade, Aaron, let us sit, and, while the babbling echo mocks the hounds' cries and replies shrilly to the well-tuned horns, as if a double hunt were heard at the same time, let us sit down and listen to their yelping noise, and after such 'conflict' such as the wandering Prince and Dido are supposed to have once enjoyed, when a happy and fortuitous storm surprised them and they then curtained themselves within a secret-keeping cave, we may, each of us wreathed in the other's arms, our pastimes done, enjoy a golden slumber while hounds and horns and sweet melodious birds be to us as is a wet nurse's song of lullaby to bring her babe sleep."

The wandering Prince was Aeneas, the Trojan warrior who survived the Fall of Troy and who was destined to go to Italy and become an important ancestor of the Roman people. Before he settled in Italy, a storm blew his ships and him to Carthage. Hoping to keep Aeneas from fulfilling his destiny, the goddess Juno created the right conditions for Aeneas and Dido, the Queen of Carthage, to have a love affair. During a hunt, a storm arose, and Aeneas and Dido sought shelter in a cave, where they made love for the first time.

Aaron replied, "Madam, although Venus governs your desires, Saturn is the planet that is the astrological dominator over my desires. What signifies my death-dealing eye, my silence and my cloudy melancholy, my fleece of woolly hair

that now uncurls even as an adder does when she uncoils in order to perform some fatal execution? No, madam, these are not signs of sexual desire. Vengeance is in my heart, death is in my hand, and blood and revenge are hammering in my head.

“Listen, Tamora, the Empress of my soul, which never hopes to have more Heaven than rests in you. This is the day of doom for Bassianus. He will die today, and his Philomela will lose her tongue today. Your sons will make pillage of her chastity, and they will wash their hands in Bassianus’ blood.”

Philomela was an Athenian Princess who was raped by her sister’s husband, Tereus, who cut out her tongue so that she could not tell anyone that he had raped her. Philomela wove a tapestry, however, that revealed the rape and rapist.

Aaron asked, “Do you see this letter?”

He handed it to Tamora and said, “Take this letter, which is written in a scroll and is integral to a deadly plot. Please give the letter to the King.”

He saw Bassianus and Lavinia coming toward them and said, “Now ask me no more questions; we are seen. Here comes a part of the booty we hope for. They do not yet fear the destruction of their lives.”

Tamora said, “Ah, my sweet Moor, you are sweeter to me than life!”

“No more, great Empress; Bassianus is coming. Be angry with him; and I’ll go and fetch your sons to back you up in your quarrels, whatever they are.”

Aaron exited.

Bassianus said to Tamora, “Who have we here? Rome’s royal Empress, unaccompanied by her appropriate escorts?”

Or is it the goddess Diana, clothed like Tamora? Has Diana abandoned her holy groves to see the many people hunting in this forest?"

Bassianus was being gallant in comparing Tamora to Diana because goddesses are more beautiful than any mortal woman could ever be.

The choice of Diana to compare Tamora to was, however, ironic. Tamora was cuckolding her husband, while Diana was fiercely protective of her virginity. In fact, while hunting with his hounds the Theban Actaeon unintentionally saw Diana bathing naked in a pool of water. Diana turned him into a stag with a human mind, and then his hunting hounds picked up his scent and ripped him to pieces.

As Aaron had advised, Tamora picked a quarrel with Bassianus: "Saucy critic of our private steps! Had I the power that some say Diana had, your temples should be planted presently with horns, as were Actaeon's temples; and the hounds would fall upon your newly transformed limbs, unmannerly intruder as you are!"

Lavinia was angry and said, "By your leave, noble Empress, it is thought that you have an excellent gift for giving men horns."

She was referring to the horns of a cuckold; an unfaithful wife was said to give her husband horns.

Lavinia continued, "It is also suspected that your Moor and you have separated yourselves from the others so that you can try sexual experiments. May Jove, King of the gods, shield your husband from his hounds today! It would be a pity if they should mistake him for a stag."

Referring to Aaron the Moor, Bassianus said, "Believe me, Queen, your swarthy Cimmerian — a dark person who dwells in darkness — makes your honor his body's hue:

stained, detested, and abominable. Why are you separated from all your train of followers, and why have you dismounted from your snow-white, good-looking steed and wandered here to an obscure plot of land, accompanied by only a barbarous Moor, if not because of your foul desire?"

Lavinia added, "Your being intercepted in your sport with the Moor is a great reason for you to berate my noble lord for what you call saucy and insolent rudeness."

She said to her husband, "Please, let us go away from here and let her enjoy her raven-colored love. This valley fits that purpose surpassingly well."

Bassianus said to Tamora, "The King my brother shall hear about this."

Lavinia added, "Yes, for these sexual slips of yours have long disgraced him. He is too good a King to be so mightily abused!"

Tamora said, "Why, I have patience to endure all this."

She had seen her sons, Demetrius and Chiron, coming, and she knew that she would soon get revenge for what they had said to her.

Demetrius said to her, "How are you, dear sovereign, and our gracious mother! Why does your Highness look so pale and wan?"

Tamora replied, "Don't I have reason to look pale? These two — Bassianus and Lavinia — have enticed me here to this place: You see that it is a barren and detested valley. The trees, although it is summer, are yet forlorn and lean, overcome with moss and baleful, parasitic mistletoe. Here the Sun never shines; here nothing breeds, except for the night-haunting owl or the ominous raven. And when they showed me this abhorrent pit, they told me that here, at the

dead of night, a thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes, ten thousand poisonous toads that cause swelling, and as many goblins would make such fearful and confused cries that any mortal body hearing the sounds would immediately become insane, or else die suddenly.

“No sooner had they told this Hellish tale than immediately they told me they would tie me here to the body of a dismal yew tree, and leave me to this miserable death. And then they called me a foul adulteress, a lascivious Goth, and all the bitterest terms that any ear ever heard to such effect, and, if you had not by wondrous fortune come, they would have executed this vengeance on me.

“Revenge it, as you love your mother’s life, or henceforth you will not be called my children.”

Demetrius said to Tamora as he stabbed Bassianus with a dagger, “This is a witness that I am your son.”

Chiron took the dagger from Demetrius, stabbed Bassianus, and said, “And this is a witness for me, struck home to show my strength.”

Bassianus died.

Lavinia said to Tamora, “Yes, come, Semiramis — no, I should say barbarous Tamora, for no name fits your evil nature but your own!”

Semiramis was an Assyrian Queen who was known for her power, sexual appetite, cruelty, and beauty. Lavinia was insulting Tamora by saying that Semiramis’ name was not associated with enough evil to be suitable as a name for Tamora.

Tamora said to Chiron, “Give me your dagger. My boys, you shall witness and know that your mother’s hand shall right your mother’s wrong.”

“Stop, madam,” Demetrius said. “More belongs to Lavinia than her life. First thresh the corn, and afterward burn the straw. This hussy made an issue of her chastity, her nuptial vow, and her loyalty to her husband, and with that false and old-fashioned pride confronted and insulted your mightiness. Shall she carry her chastity into her grave?”

“If she does, then I wish that I were a eunuch,” Chiron said. “Let us drag her husband away from here to some secret hole, and make his dead trunk a pillow to our lust.”

Tamora said, “But when you have the honey you desire, do not let this wasp survive and sting both of you two and me.”

“I promise you, madam,” Chiron said, “that we will make sure that she can do us no harm.”

He said to Lavinia, “Come, mistress, now by force we will enjoy that nicely preserved chastity of yours.”

Lavinia began to beg: “Oh, Tamora! You have the face of a woman —”

“I will not hear her speak,” Tamora said to her sons. “Away with her!”

“Sweet lords, entreat her to listen to only a word from me,” Lavinia begged Demetrius and Chiron.

“Listen, fair madam,” Demetrius said to his mother, “let it be your glory to see her tears; but let your heart be to them as unrelenting and hard flint is to drops of rain.”

“When did the tiger’s young ones teach the mother?” Lavinia said to Demetrius. “Oh, do not teach her wrath; she taught wrath to you. The milk you sucked from her breasts turned to marble. Even as you sucked at her teats you learned your tyranny. Yet not every mother breeds identical sons.”

Knowing that Demetrius would not help her, Lavinia turned

to Chiron and begged, "Entreat her to show pity to a woman."

"What, would you have me prove myself a bastard?" Chiron replied.

"It is true; the raven does not hatch a lark," Lavinia said to him. "Yet I have heard — I wish I could find it to be true now! — that the lion, moved by pity, endured having his princely paws pared all away. Some say that ravens foster forlorn children, while their own young birds stay famished in their nests. Be to me, although your hard heart say no, not nearly as kind as the lion or the raven, but show me at least some pity!"

Lavinia had referred to a fable by Aesop in which a lion fell in love with a woman and agreed to have its claws pared and its teeth pulled so that her human relatives would not be afraid of it. Once these things were done, however, the woman's relatives drove away the defenseless lion.

She had also referred to a folktale in which a raven fed lost human children. In her version of the folktale, the raven's nestlings went hungry.

Neither story was likely to be effective with Tamora and her two sons, especially since Lavinia had, in her fear, mistakenly referred to paring the lion's paws instead of claws. Both stories also had bad consequences: The lion did not get his love, and the raven's own nestlings went hungry.

"I don't know what it means!" Tamora said. "Away with her!"

"Oh, let me teach you what I mean!" Lavinia said. "Let me teach you for my father's sake, who allowed you to live, when he might well have slain you. Be not obdurate — open your deaf ears."

“Had you personally never offended me,” Tamora said, “I would be pitiless for his sake.”

She said to her sons, “Remember, boys, I poured forth tears in vain to save your oldest brother, Alarbus, from the sacrifice, but fierce Titus Andronicus would not relent. Therefore, away with her, and use and treat her as you will. The worse you treat her, the better I love you.”

“Oh, Tamora,” Lavinia begged, “be called a gentle Queen, and with your own hands kill me in this place! For I have not begged so long for my life. I — poor me — was slain when Bassianus died.”

She knelt and hugged Tamora’s knees.

“What are you begging for, then?” Tamora asked. “Foolish woman, let me go.”

“I beg for immediate death,” Lavinia said. “And I beg for one thing more that womanhood will not allow my tongue to tell.”

Lavinia was begging not to be raped, but she did not want to say the word “rape.” She wanted Tamora to pity her and not allow her to be raped.

She begged Tamora, “Oh, keep me from their worse-than-killing lust and tumble me into some loathsome pit, where no man’s eye may ever behold my body. Do this, and be a charitable murderer.”

In her fear, Lavinia chose words badly. To tumble a woman meant to have sex with a woman.

“If I would do that, I would rob my sweet sons of their fee,” Tamora said. “They hunted you and so they are entitled to a taste of you. I say no to your request; instead, I will let my sons satisfy their lust on you.”

Falcons were fleshed after a successful hunt: They were given a taste of the flesh they had hunted.

“Let’s go!” Demetrius said. “Lavinia, you have kept us here too long.”

Lavinia said to Tamora, “No grace? No womanhood? Ah, beastly creature! You are a blot and enemy to the name of woman! May ruin fall —”

She had been about to curse Tamora by saying, “May ruin fall upon you,” but Chiron covered her mouth with his hand and said, “You will say no more, for I have stopped your mouth.”

He said to Demetrius, “Bring the body of her husband. This is the hole where Aaron told us to hide it.”

Demetrius threw the body of Bassianus into the pit, and then he and Chiron dragged Lavinia away.

Alone, Tamora said to herself, “Farewell, my sons. Make sure that Lavinia can do no harm to us. May my heart never be merry again until all the Andronici are done away with and killed. Now I will go from here to seek my lovely Moor, and let my passionate sons deflower this whore.”

She exited.

Aaron arrived. With him were Titus Andronicus’ two younger sons: Martius and Quintus.

Aaron said, “Come on, my lords, put the better foot forward — hurry. Straightaway I will bring you to the loathsome pit where I saw the panther fast asleep.”

“My sight is very dim,” Quintus said. “It may forebode something bad.”

“My sight is also very dim, I promise you,” Martius said. “If it were not that I would be ashamed, I would be willing to

leave the hunting and sleep awhile.”

Aaron had covered the opening to the pit with vegetation. He maneuvered Martius so that Martius fell into the pit.

Quintus asked, “What have you fallen into? What treacherous and disguised hole is this, whose mouth is covered with wild, uncultivated briars, upon whose leaves are drops of newly shed blood as fresh as morning dew trickling down flowers? This is a very deadly place, I think. Speak, brother, have you hurt yourself in the fall?”

“Brother, I am hurt by the sight of the most dismal spectacle that ever a seeing eye has made a heart lament!”

Aaron thought, *Now I will fetch the King to find Martius and Quintus here, so that he will very likely think that these were the men who murdered his brother.*

He exited to find Emperor Saturninus.

Martius said, “Why don’t you assist me, and help me out of this unholy and wicked and bloodstained hole?”

“I am bewildered by a strange fear,” Quintus replied. “A chilling sweat overruns my trembling joints. My heart suspects more than my eye can see.”

“To prove that you have a prophetic heart that is capable of discerning the truth, Aaron and you can look down into this den and see a fearful sight of blood and death.”

Quintus looked around for Aaron, but he did not see him. He said, “Aaron is gone, and my compassionate heart will not permit my eyes once to behold the thing it imagines and trembles at. Tell me what it is, for never until now was I a child who feared something I did not know.”

Martius replied, “Lord Bassianus lies soaked in blood here, prostate, like a slaughtered lamb in this detested, dark,

blood-drinking pit.”

“If it is dark, how do you know it is he?”

“Upon his bloody finger he wears a precious ring with a jewel that lightens all the hole. Like a candle in some tomb, it shines upon the dead man’s pale cheeks, and shows the harsh interior of the pit. So pale did shine the Moon on Pyramus when he by night lay bathed in his virgin blood.”

Pyramus loved Thisbe, and he arranged to meet her at night. Thisbe arrived first, and saw a lion. She ran away, leaving her mantle — her shawl — behind her, which the lion mauled. Pyramus arrived and found the mantle. He thought that a lion had killed Thisbe, and so he committed suicide.

Martius continued, “Oh, brother, help me with your fainting hand — if fear has made you faint, as it has me — out of this deadly devouring repository that is as hateful as the misty mouth of Cocytus, one of the rivers of Hell.”

“Reach your hand out to me, so that I may help you out,” Quintus said. “Or, if I lack the strength to do you so much good, reach your hand out to me so that I may be pulled into the swallowing womb of this deep pit, poor Bassianus’ grave.”

He pulled Martius’ hand, let loose of it, and said, “I have no strength to pull you to the brink.”

“And I have no strength to climb without your help.”

“Give me your hand once more; I will not let loose again until you are here aloft with me, or I am below with you.”

He pulled Martius’ hand, and then he said, “You cannot come to me, and so I come to you.”

He fell into the pit.

Aaron and Emperor Saturninus saw Quintus fall into the pit.

“Come along with me,” Saturninus said, walking over to the pit. “I’ll see what hole is here, and who he is who just now has leaped into it.”

He then called into the pit, “Say who you are who just now descended into this gaping hollow of the earth.”

From the pit, Martius replied, “I am the unhappy son of old Titus Andronicus. I came here in a most unlucky hour, and I found your brother, Bassianus, dead.”

“My brother dead!” Saturninus said. “I know that you are only joking. He and his lady are both at the lodge upon the north side of this pleasant hunting ground. It is not an hour since I left him there.”

Martius said, “We don’t know where you left him alive, but — I hate to say this — here we have found him dead.”

Tamora arrived with her attendants. Also accompanying her were Titus Andronicus and Lucius, his oldest son.

“Where is my lord the King?” Tamora asked.

“Here I am, Tamora, although I am wounded with killing grief.”

“Where is Bassianus, your brother?”

“Now you are probing my wound to the bottom. Poor Bassianus lies here murdered.”

“Then all too late I bring this deadly document,” Tamora said. “It reveals the plot of this untimely tragedy, and I wonder greatly that a man’s face can hide such murderous tyranny in the wrinkles of pleasing smiles.”

She gave Saturninus the letter that Aaron had given to her.

Saturninus read the letter out loud: *“If we do not meet him at a convenient time and place — sweet huntsman, it is*

Bassianus we mean — dig his grave for him. You know what we mean. Look for your reward among the nettles at the elder tree that shades the mouth of the pit where we decided to bury Bassianus. Do this, and make us your lasting friends.”

He said, “Oh, Tamora! Have you ever heard anything like this? This is the pit, and this is the elder tree. Look around, sirs, and see if you can find the huntsman who murdered Bassianus.”

Aaron dug under the elder tree and said, “My gracious lord, here is the bag of gold.”

Saturninus said to Titus Andronicus, “Two of your whelps, cruel curs of bloody character, have here bereft my brother of his life.”

He ordered, “Sirs, drag them from the pit and take them to the prison. There let them stay until we have devised some never-heard-of torturing pain for them.”

“What, are they in this pit?” Tamora said. “Oh, what a wondrous thing! How easily murder is exposed!”

Some attendants got Martius and Quintus out of the pit.

Titus Andronicus knelt and said, “High Emperor, upon my feeble knee I beg this boon, with tears not lightly shed, that this fell fault of my accursed sons — they are accursed if it is proved that they have committed this fell fault —”

“*If* it is proved!” Saturninus said. “You can see that it is obvious that they committed the murder.”

He asked, “Who found this letter? Tamora, was it you?”

She replied, “Titus Andronicus himself found it and picked it up.”

She had changed Aaron’s plan.

“I did pick up the letter, my lord,” Titus said, “yet let me be my two sons’ bail. By my father’s sacred tomb, I vow that they shall be ready at your Highness’ will to answer what they are suspected of even with their lives.”

“You shall not bail them,” Saturninus said. “See that you follow me.”

Titus Andronicus stood up.

Saturninus ordered, “Some of you bring the murdered body, and some of you bring the murderers. Let them not speak a word; their guilt is plain. By my soul, I say that if something was worse than death, it would be done to them.”

As Saturninus exited, Tamora said, “Titus Andronicus, I will entreat the King for mercy. Fear not for your sons; they shall do well enough.”

She exited.

Titus Andronicus said, “Come, Lucius, come; don’t stay and try to talk to your brothers or their guards.”

— 2.4 —

In another part of the forest, Demetrius and Chiron were taunting Lavinia, whom they had raped. They had also cut off her hands at the elbows and cut out her tongue so that she could not reveal who had raped and mutilated her.

Demetrius said to her, “So, now go and tell people, if your tongue can speak, who it was who cut out your tongue and raped you.”

Chiron said to her, “Write down your mind and in that way reveal what you want to communicate, if your stumps will let you be an author.”

Lavinia was flailing about.

Demetrius said, "Look at how she can communicate with signs and gestures."

"Go home, call for perfumed water, and wash your hands," Chiron said.

"She has no tongue to call for water, nor hands to wash, and so let's leave her to her silent walks," Demetrius said.

"If I were her, I would go hang myself," Chiron said.

"If you had hands to help you tie the noose," Demetrius said.

Demetrius and Chiron left Lavinia alone in the forest.

Marcus Andronicus, who was hunting, rode up on a horse, and saw Lavinia, who, ashamed, ran from him.

"Who is this?" he asked himself. "My niece, who flies away so fast! Niece, let me say a word to you. Where is your husband? If I am dreaming, I would give all my wealth if I could wake up! If I am awake, I wish that some planet would strike me down with its malevolent astrological influence so that I could slumber in eternal sleep! Speak, gentle and kind niece, and tell me what stern and cruel hands have lopped off and hewed and made your body bare of her two branches, those sweet ornaments, in whose circling hugs Kings have sought to sleep? These Kings could never find a happiness that would equal half your love. Why do you not speak to me?"

Lavinia opened her mouth, and blood poured out.

"Alas, a crimson river of warm blood, resembling a bubbling fountain stirred by wind, rises and falls between your rose-red lips, coming and going with your honey-sweet breath. But, surely, some Tereus has raped you, and, lest you should reveal his guilt, he has cut out your tongue.

"Ah, now you turn away your face because of shame! And,

notwithstanding all this loss of blood, as from a fountain with three issuing spouts, still your cheeks look as red as the Sun's face when it blushes as it encounters a cloud at dawn or Sunset.

“Shall I speak for you? Shall I say that it is so — that the man who raped you has mutilated you? Oh, I wish that I knew your heart, and I knew the beast, so that I might rant at him and ease my mind!

“Sorrow concealed, like an oven with its door shut, burns the heart to cinders.

“Fair Philomela lost only her tongue after Tereus raped her, but she painstakingly sewed a piece of embroidery that revealed what she had in her mind.

“But, lovely niece, that means of communication is cut from you. You have met a craftier Tereus, niece, and he has cut those pretty fingers off that could have sewed better than Philomela. If the monster had seen your lily-white hands tremble, like aspen-leaves, upon a lute and make the silken strings delight to kiss them, he would not then have touched them for his life!

“Or, if he had heard the Heavenly harmony that your sweet tongue has made, he would have dropped his knife, and fell asleep as Cerberus did at the Thracian poet's feet.”

The Thracian poet was Orpheus, who traveled to the Land of the Dead in an attempt to rescue his wife. To get past Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog of Hell, he played his lute and sang. Cerberus, put under a spell by the music, fell asleep.

Marcus Andronicus continued, “Come, let us go, and make your father blind, for such a sight will blind a father's eye. One hour's storm will drown the fragrant meadows. What will whole months of tears do to your father's eyes? Do not

draw away from me, for we will mourn with you. Oh, how I wish our mourning could ease your misery!”

He and Lavinia departed.

CHAPTER 3**— 3.1 —**

On a street in Rome, Martius and Quintus, guarded and with their hands tied, were being taken to the place of execution. Walking with them were Judges, Senators, and Tribunes. Titus Andronicus was begging for the lives of his sons.

Titus Andronicus begged, “Hear me, grave fathers! Noble Tribunes, stop! Out of pity for my old age, whose youth was spent in dangerous wars while you securely slept, and out of pity for all the blood of my sons that was shed in Rome’s great war, and out of pity for all the frosty nights that I have watched on guard, and out of pity for these bitter tears, which you see now filling the aged wrinkles in my cheeks, have pity on my condemned sons, whose souls are not corrupted although people think they are. For twenty-two of my sons, I have never wept because they died honorably.”

Titus Andronicus now regarded his son Mutius as having died honorably. Mutius had resisted the will of Saturninus, and Saturninus had now sentenced two of Titus’ other sons to death. Also, Mutius had died helping his sister, Lavinia.

Titus fell to the ground. Everyone walked past him, continuing to the place of execution.

He said, “For these two sons, Tribunes, in the dust I write my heart’s deep grief and my soul’s sad tears. Let my tears quench the earth’s dry appetite. My two sons’ sweet blood will make the earth shame and blush. Oh, earth, I will befriend you with more rain that shall fall from these two ancient urns than youthful April shall provide with all its showers. In summer’s drought I’ll drop tears upon you continually. In winter I’ll melt the snow with warm tears and keep eternal springtime on your face, provided that you refuse to drink my dear sons’ blood.”

Lucius, carrying a drawn sword, walked over to his father.

Titus, his head still down, said, “Oh, reverend Tribunes! Oh, gentle, aged men! Unbind my sons, reverse the judgment of death, and let me, who has never wept before, say that my tears are now prevailing orators. Tell me that my tears have been successful at persuading you to pardon the lives of my two sons.”

Lucius said, “Oh, noble father, you lament in vain. The Tribunes cannot hear you; no man is nearby. You are telling your sorrows to a stone.”

“Ah, Lucius, let me plead for your brothers,” Titus Andronicus said. “Grave Tribunes, once more I beg of you —”

“My gracious lord, no Tribune hears you speak.”

“Why, it does not matter, man,” Titus Andronicus said. “If they did hear me, they would ignore me, or if they did pay attention to me, they would not pity me, and yet I must plead; therefore, I tell my sorrows to the stones, which, although they cannot relieve my distress, yet in some ways they are better than the Tribunes because they will not interrupt my tale. When I weep, they humbly at my feet receive my tears and seem to weep with me, and if they were only dressed in solemn clothing, Rome could support no better Tribunes than these. A stone is as soft as wax — Tribunes are harder than stones. A stone is silent, and does not offend, but Tribunes with their tongues condemn men to death.”

Titus stood up and asked, “But why are you standing with your weapon drawn?”

“I tried to rescue my two brothers from their deaths,” Lucius said. “I failed, and because of my attempt to rescue my brothers the judges have pronounced my everlasting doom of banishment.”

“Oh, happy and fortunate man!” Titus Andronicus said. “They have befriended you. Why, foolish Lucius, don’t you perceive that Rome is only a wilderness of tigers? Tigers must prey, and Rome affords no prey except for me and mine. How happy and fortunate you are, then, because you are banished from these devourers!”

Titus saw his brother, Marcus, coming toward them. Behind Marcus was a figure that Titus could not see clearly.

Titus asked, “But who is coming here with my brother, Marcus?”

Marcus said, “Titus, prepare your aged eyes to weep, or if you do not do so, prepare your noble heart to break. I bring consuming, devouring sorrow to your old age.”

“Will it consume me?” Titus asked. “Let me see it, then.”

He was ready for his life to be consumed so that he could die.

“This was your daughter,” Marcus said as Lavinia stepped closer.

“Why, Marcus, so she still is.”

Seeing Lavinia’s bloody stumps, Lucius knelt and said, “This sight kills me!”

Titus said, “Faint-hearted boy, arise, and look upon her.”

Lucius got up.

Titus Andronicus said to his daughter, “Speak, Lavinia, what accursed hand has made you handless in your father’s sight? What fool has added water to the sea, or brought a faggot to bright-burning Troy? My grief was at the height before you came here to me, and now my grief is like the Nile River, which disdains all bounds — it overflows and floods.

“Give me a sword, and I’ll chop off my hands, too, because they have fought for Rome, and all in vain. My hands have also nursed my woe by feeding me and keeping me alive. They have been held up in unavailing prayer, and they have served me ineffectively. Now all the service I require of them is that the one will help to cut off the other.

“It is well, Lavinia, that you have no hands, because hands that do Rome service are useless.”

Lucius asked Lavinia, “Speak, gentle sister, who has mutilated you?”

Marcus answered for her: “Oh, that delightful instrument of her thoughts that blabbed them with such pleasing eloquence has been torn from forth that pretty hollow cage, her mouth, where, like a sweet melodious bird, it sang sweet and varied notes, enchanting every ear!”

“Can you say for her who has done this deed?” Lucius asked.

Marcus replied, “I found her like this, straying in the enclosed hunting ground, seeking to hide herself, as does the deer that has received some terminal wound.”

Titus said, “Lavinia is my dear, and the man who wounded her has hurt me more than he would have if he had killed me. For now I stand like a man upon a rock surrounded by a wilderness of sea, who sees the incoming tide grow wave by wave, expecting always that some malicious surge of the sea will swallow him in its brinish bowels.”

Titus pointed and said, “My wretched sons have traveled down this way to their deaths.”

He then said, “Here stands my other son, a banished man, and here is my brother, weeping at my woes. But that which gives my soul the greatest hurt is dear Lavinia, who is dearer than my soul.”

He said to her, "Had I but seen your picture in this plight, it would have made me insane. What shall I do now that I behold your living body like this? You have no hands to wipe away your tears, nor a tongue to tell me who has mutilated you. Your husband is dead, and being found guilty of his death, your brothers were condemned to die, and they are dead by this time."

Lavinia expressed her sorrow by crying.

"Look, Marcus!" Titus said. "Ah, son Lucius, look at her! When I mentioned her brothers, then fresh tears fell on her cheeks, like honey-dew falls upon a plucked lily that is almost withered."

Marcus said, "Perhaps she weeps because her brothers killed her husband, or perhaps she weeps because she knows that they are innocent."

Titus said to Lavinia, "If they killed your husband, then be joyful because the law has taken revenge on them."

Then he said, "No, no, they would not do so foul a deed. Witness the sorrow that their sister shows."

"Gentle Lavinia, let me kiss your lips. Or make some sign to me to tell me how I may ease your pain. Shall your good uncle, and your brother Lucius, and you, and I sit round about some fountain, all of us looking downwards at the reflection to see how our cheeks are stained like still-wet meadows that have muddy slime left on them by a flood? And in the fountain shall we gaze so long that the fresh taste is taken from that clear, fresh water and made a brine-pit with our bitter tears?"

"Or shall we cut off our hands, like yours?"

"Or shall we bite off our tongues, and pass the remainder of our hateful days in mime?"

“What shall we do?”

“Let us, who have our tongues, plot some device of further misery that will make us wondered at in the times to come.”

Lucius said, “Dear father, stop crying. Look at how my wretched sister sobs and weeps at your grief.”

Marcus said, “Patience, dear niece. Good Titus, dry your eyes.”

He offered Titus his handkerchief.

“Ah, Marcus, Marcus!” Titus said. “Brother, I know well that your handkerchief cannot drink a tear of mine because you, poor man, have drowned it with your own tears.”

Pulling out his handkerchief, Lucius said, “My Lavinia, I will wipe your cheeks.”

“Look, Marcus, look!” Titus said. “I understand her gestures. If she had a tongue with which to speak, now she would say to her brother what I said to you. His handkerchief, which is soaked with his own true tears, can do no good on her sorrowful cheeks. Oh, what a harmony of woe is this! Our handkerchiefs are as far from being of use to us as Limbo is from the bliss of Heaven!”

Aaron, who was wearing a scimitar by his side, walked over to them.

He said, “Titus Andronicus, my lord the Emperor sends you this message — that, if you love your sons, let Marcus, Lucius, or yourself, old Titus, or any one of you, chop off your hand and send it to the King. In return for the hand, he will send to you here both of your sons alive. The hand shall be the ransom for their crime.”

Happy, Titus Andronicus said, “Oh, gracious Emperor! Oh, kind and gentle Aaron! Did a raven ever sing so much like a

morning lark that gives sweet tidings of the Sun's rise? With all my heart, I'll send the Emperor my hand. Good Aaron, will you help to chop it off?"

"Stop, father!" Lucius said. "That noble hand of yours, which has thrown down and conquered so many enemies, shall not be sent to the Emperor. My own hand will serve the turn. My youth can better spare my blood than you can spare your blood, and therefore my hand shall save my brothers' lives."

Marcus Andronicus said to Titus and Lucius, "Which of your hands has not defended Rome, and reared aloft the bloody battle-axe to write destruction on the enemy's castle? Oh, both of you deserve so much. My own hand has been entirely idle; let it serve to ransom my two nephews from their deaths. Now I know that I have kept my hand until now so that it can have a worthy end."

Aaron said, "Come, agree quickly whose hand I shall take to the Emperor out of fear that Martius and Quintus will die before their pardon arrives."

"My hand shall go," Marcus said.

"By Heaven, it shall not go!" Lucius said.

"Sirs, argue no more," Titus said. Referring to his hands, he said, "Such withered herbs as these are suitable for being plucked up, and therefore Aaron shall carry my hand to the Emperor."

"Sweet father, if I am to be thought your son," Lucius said, "let me redeem both my brothers from death."

Marcus said to Titus, "And, for our father's sake and mother's care, now let me show you a brother's love."

Titus said, "You two come to an agreement. I will spare my hand."

He was being deliberately ambiguous. Marcus and Lucius thought that the word “spare” meant “leave unharmed,” but Titus was using the word “spare” to mean “do without.”

“Then I’ll go and fetch an axe,” Lucius said.

“But I will use the axe to cut off my hand,” Marcus said.

Marcus and Lucius departed to get an axe.

“Come here, Aaron,” Titus said. “I’ll deceive them both. Lend me your hand, and I will give you mine. Help me cut off my hand.”

Aaron thought, If what Titus is doing is called deceit, then I will be an honest man. Never will I deceive men the way that Titus is deceiving these two men. But, you, Titus, I will deceive in a different way, as you will realize before half an hour passes.

Aaron used his scimitar to cut off Titus’ hand at the elbow.

Marcus and Lucius came back.

Titus Andronicus said to them, “Now stop your strife. What had to be done has been done.”

He then said, “Good Aaron, give his Majesty my hand. Tell him it was a hand that guarded him from a thousand dangers; bid him bury it. My hand has deserved more and better, but let it at least be buried. As for my sons, say I value them as if they were jewels purchased at an easy and low price, and yet they are dear, too — both loved and expensive — because I bought what was already rightfully mine.”

Aaron replied, “I go, Titus Andronicus, and in return for your hand look to have your sons with you soon.”

He thought, Your son’s heads, I mean. Oh, how this villainy nourishes and delights me when I merely think of it! Let fools do good, and let fair men call for grace. Aaron prefers to

have his soul black like his face.

He left, carrying Titus' severed left hand.

Titus Andronicus knelt and said, "Here I lift this one hand up to Heaven, and I bow this feeble ruin — my body — to the Earth. If any power pities wretched tears, to that power I call!"

Lavinia knelt.

He said to Lavinia, "What, will you kneel with me? Do, then, dear heart, for Heaven shall hear our prayers or we will breathe foggy sighs and dim the sky, and stain the Sun with fog, as sometimes clouds do when they hug the Sun in their raining bosoms."

Marcus Andronicus said to Titus, "Oh, brother, speak about actions that are possibilities, and do not break into these deep, extreme, and outrageous exaggerations."

"Is not my sorrow deep, because it has no bottom?" Titus replied, "Then my passionate outbursts should be bottomless with them."

"But still let the power of reason govern your laments."

"If there were reasons for these miseries, then I could bind my woes into limits," Titus said. "When Heaven weeps, doesn't the earth overflow? If the winds rage, doesn't the sea grow mad and threaten the sky with his big, swollen waves? And will you have a reason for this turmoil?"

"I am the sea; listen, how Lavinia's sighs blow like wind! She is the weeping sky; I am also the earth. My sea must then be moved with her sighs. My earth must then with her continual tears become a flood, overflowed and drowned. This is why my bowels cannot hide her woes, but like a drunkard I must vomit them. So give me leave to speak, for losers will have leave to ease the resentment in their

stomachs with their bitter tongues.”

A messenger arrived. He was carrying Titus’ severed hand and the heads of his sons Martius and Quintus.

The messenger said, “Worthy Titus Andronicus, you are badly repaid for your good hand that you sent to the Emperor. Here are the heads of your two noble sons, and here’s your hand, sent back to you in scorn. Your griefs are their entertainment; they mock your resolution. When I think about your woes, I feel more sorrow than I do when I remember my father’s death.”

The messenger exited.

Marcus Andronicus said, “Now let the hot volcano Aetna cool in Sicily, and let my heart be an ever-burning Hell! These miseries are more than may be endured. To weep with them who weep does ease grief somewhat, but sorrow jeered and mocked at is double death.”

Lucius said, “I am amazed that this sight should make so deep a wound, and yet detested life does not shrink away and leave this body dead! I am amazed that death should ever let life bear the name of life, where life does nothing more than breathe!”

Lavinia kissed Titus.

Marcus Andronicus said, “I am sorry, poor heart, but that kiss is as comfortless as frozen water is to a frozen snake.”

Titus Andronicus said, “When will this fearful slumber filled with nightmares come to an end?”

Marcus said, “Now, farewell, delusion. Die, Andronicus: You are not sleeping. Look at your two sons’ heads, your warlike hand, your mangled daughter here, and your other son, who has been banished and who has been struck pale and bloodless with this grievous sight. And look at me, your

brother, who is now like a stony image, cold and numb. Ah, I will now no more curb your griefs. Tear off your silver hair, and gnaw your other hand with your teeth. Let this dismal sight result in the closing up of our most wretched eyes.”

Titus was silent.

Marcus said to him, “Now is a time to rant and storm. Why are you silent?”

Titus Andronicus laughed long, loud, and hard.

“Why are you laughing?” Marcus asked. “It is not suitable for this hour.”

“Why am I laughing?” Titus replied. “Because I don’t have another tear to shed. Besides, this sorrow is an enemy, and would take over my watery eyes and make them blind with tears shed in tribute to my sorrow, and how then shall I find the way to the goddess Revenge’s cave? For these two heads of my sons seem to speak to me, and threaten that I shall never come to bliss until all these evils be returned again and thrust down the throats of those who have committed them.

“Come, let me see what task I have to do. You sorrowful people, circle round about me, so that I may turn to each of you, and swear upon my soul to right your wrongs.”

He swore the oaths and then said, “The vow is made. Come, brother, take a head, and in this hand I will bear the other head. Lavinia, you shall also be employed. Carry my hand, sweet girl, between your teeth. As for you, Lucius, my boy, get yourself away from my sight: You are an exile, and you must not stay here. Hurry to the Goths, and raise an army there, and, if you love me, as I think you do, let’s kiss and part, for we have much to do.”

Titus and Lucius kissed each other, and then Titus, Marcus, and Lavinia exited.

Alone, Lucius said, “Farewell, Titus Andronicus, my noble father, the most woeful man who ever lived in Rome. Farewell, proud Rome. Until Lucius comes here again, he leaves his pledges dearer than his life — his loved ones. Farewell, Lavinia, my noble sister. I wish you were as you heretofore have been! But now neither Lucius nor Lavinia lives except in oblivion and hateful griefs. If I, Lucius, shall live, I will requite your wrongs and make proud Saturninus and his Empress beg at the gates, like Tarquin and his Queen.”

After King Tarquin’s son, who was also named Tarquin, raped Lucrece, who committed suicide, King Tarquin was overthrown. Lucius Junius Brutus led the revolt against King Tarquin.

Lucius continued, “Now I will go to the Goths and raise an army with which I will be revenged on Rome and Saturninus.”

— 3.2 —

A light meal was set out on a table in Titus Andronicus’ house. Around the table sat Titus Andronicus, Marcus Andronicus, Lavinia, and Lucius’ son: young Lucius.

Titus said, “So, so; now sit, and be careful to eat no more than will preserve just so much strength in us that will allow us to revenge these bitter woes of ours.”

Titus fed Lavinia during the meal.

He said to his brother, who had folded his arms in front of himself, which was a sign of sorrow, “Marcus, unknit that knot that is a wreath of sorrow. Your niece and I, poor creatures, lack our hands, and cannot passionately express our tenfold grief with folded arms. This poor right hand of mine is left to tyrannize upon my breast; when my heart, all mad with misery, beats in this hollow prison of my flesh,

then I use my hand to thump it down.”

Titus said to Lavinia, “You map and pattern of woe, who thus talks in signs! When your poor heart beats with extremely violent beating, you cannot strike it like this to make it still.

“Wound it with sighing, girl, kill it with groans, or get some little knife between your teeth, and just against your heart make a hole so that all the tears that your poor eyes let fall may run into and soak that sink, and drown the lamenting sweet fool with sea-salt tears.”

“No, brother, no!” Marcus said to Titus, “Don’t advise her to lay such violent hands upon her young and tender life.”

“What!” Titus replied. “Has sorrow made you deranged already? Why, Marcus, no man but I should be insane. What violent hands can she lay on her life? Ah, why do you mention the word ‘hands’? Would you ask Aeneas to twice tell the tale of how Troy was burnt and he was made miserable? Oh, don’t discuss the theme of hands, lest we remember now that we have none. Oh, how stupid it is to regulate talk, as if we should forget we had no hands if Marcus did not say the word ‘hands’!

“Come, let’s fall to the meal; and, gentle girl, Lavinia, eat this.”

Titus, noticing that the servants had forgotten to bring in something to drink, said, “Here is no drink!”

Lavinia indicated with gestures that she did not need anything to drink and Titus said, “Pay attention, Marcus, to what she is saying. I can interpret all her mutilated and tortured signs. She says she drinks no other drink but tears, brewed with her sorrow, fermented upon her cheeks.”

He said to Lavinia, “Speechless complainer, I will learn your

thought. In interpreting your mime, I will be as perfect as begging hermits are in their holy prayers. They are word-perfect in saying their prayers, and I will be word-perfect in interpreting your gestures. You shall not sigh, nor hold your stumps up to Heaven, nor close your eyes, nor nod, nor kneel, nor make a sign, but I will wrest an alphabet from your gestures and by constant practice learn to know your meaning.”

Young Lucius said to Titus, “Good Grandfather, stop making these bitter deep laments; instead, make my aunt merry with some pleasing tale.”

Marcus said, “Alas, the young and tender boy, moved by strong emotion, weeps to see his grandfather’s misery.”

“Be at peace, tender sapling,” Titus said to young Lucius. “You are full of tears, and tears will quickly melt your life away.”

Marcus struck at his dish with a knife.

Titus asked, “What did you strike at, Marcus, with your knife?”

“I struck at something that I have killed, my lord: a fly.”

“Get out, murderer!” Titus said. “You kill my heart. My eyes are gorged with sights of tyranny. It is not fitting for Titus’ brother to commit a deed of death on the innocent. Get out! I see you are not fit for my company.”

Marcus said, “My lord, I have killed only a fly.”

Titus said, “‘Only’? But what if that fly had a father and a mother? How would the father hang his slender gilded wings and buzz sad laments in the air! Poor harmless fly, that, with his pretty buzzing melody, came here to make us merry! And you have killed him.”

“Pardon me, sir,” Marcus said. “It was a black, ugly, ill-favored fly that looked like the Empress’ Moor; therefore, I killed him.”

“Oh,” Titus said. “Then pardon me for reprimanding you, because you have done a charitable deed. Give me your knife; I will triumph over him, pretending to myself that it is the Moor, who has come here intending to poison me.”

Titus took the knife and stabbed at the dead fly, saying, “There’s for yourself, and that’s for Tamora. Ah, sirrah! I think that we are not yet brought so low that between us we cannot kill a fly that comes to us in the likeness of a coal-black Moor.”

Marcus said to himself, “Poor man! Grief has so stricken him that he thinks that false shadows are true substances.”

“Come, take away the meal,” Titus said. “Lavinia, come with me. I’ll go to your private chamber and read to you sad stories that happened in the days of old. Come, boy, and go with me. Your sight is young, and you shall read when my sight begins to be dazzled.”

CHAPTER 4

— 4.1 —

In Titus' garden in Rome, Lavinia ran after young Lucius, who was carrying books under his arm. Titus and Marcus entered the garden and saw them.

Young Lucius dropped his books and ran to Titus and Marcus, yelling, "Help, Grandfather, help! My aunt Lavinia follows me everywhere, I don't know why. Good uncle Marcus, see how swiftly she comes. Alas, sweet aunt, I don't know what you want."

"Stand by me, Lucius," Marcus said. "Do not fear your aunt."

"She loves you, boy, too well to do you harm," Titus said.

"Yes, when my father was in Rome, she loved me," young Lucius said.

"What does my niece Lavinia mean by these gestures she is making?" Marcus asked.

"Don't be afraid of her, young Lucius," Titus said. "She means something. See, young Lucius, see how much she gestures to you. She would have you go somewhere with her. Ah, boy, Cornelia never with more care read to her sons than Lavinia has read to you sweet poetry and Cicero's book *Orator*."

Cornelia Africana's sons, whom she educated well, were known as the Gracchi. They were social reformers of Rome when Rome was a republic.

"Can't you guess why Lavinia keeps at you like this?" Marcus asked.

"My lord, I don't know, nor can I guess, unless some fit or frenzy is possessing her. I have heard my grandfather say

very often that an extremity of griefs would make men mad, and I have read that Queen Hecuba of Troy became insane through sorrow after Troy fell and so many of her children died.

“My lord, although I know my noble aunt loves me as dearly as my mother ever did, and would not, except in delirium, frighten my youth, I was frightened, which made me throw down my books, and run away — without a good reason to, perhaps.

“But pardon me, sweet aunt. And, madam, if my uncle Marcus goes with me, I will most willingly go with your ladyship.”

“Young Lucius, I will go with you,” Marcus said.

Lavinia and the others went to the books that young Lucius had dropped, and Lavinia began to look through them, moving them with her stumps.

Titus Andronicus said, “How are you, Lavinia! What are you doing? Marcus, what does this mean? She wants to see a particular book.

“Which is it, girl, of these? Open them, boy. But you, Lavinia, are deeper read, and better skilled at reading, and can read harder books than young Lucius. Come, Lavinia, and take your choice of all the books in my library, and so forget for a while your sorrow, until the Heavens reveal the damned contriver of this evil deed.”

Lavinia raised her stumps.

Titus asked, “Why is she lifting up her arms like this now?”

Marcus answered, “I think she means that there was more than one confederate in the crime. Yes, there was more than one, or else she heaves her arms to Heaven as a way of asking for revenge.”

Titus asked, “Young Lucius, what book is that she is tossing about?”

“Grandfather, it is Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. My mother gave it to me.”

Marcus said, “Perhaps she selected it from among the rest for the love of her who is gone.”

“Look!” Titus said. “See how busily she turns the pages!”

He helped her turn the pages and asked, “What is she looking for?”

Lavinia stopped at a passage in the *Metamorphoses*.

Titus said, “This is Ovid’s account of the tragic tale of Philomela. It tells about Tereus’ treason and his rape. And rape, I fear, is the root of your distress.”

“Look, brother, look,” Marcus said. “Note how she closely observes the pages.”

Titus asked, “Lavinia, were you attacked, sweet girl, raped, and wronged, as Philomela was, and forced to have sex in the ruthless, desolate, and gloomy woods?”

She nodded, and Titus said, “See, see! Yes, such a place there is, where we hunted — oh, I wish that we had never, never hunted there! That place was just like the place that the poet here describes; nature made that place for murders and rapes.”

Marcus Andronicus asked, “Why should nature build so foul a den, unless the gods delight in tragedies?”

Titus said to Lavinia, “Give us signs, sweet girl, for here are none but friends. With signs let us know which Roman lord it was who dared to do the evil deed. Did Saturninus slink — it is possible that he did — as Tarquin did formerly when he slunk out of the military camp to commit rape in Lucrece’s

bed?”

Marcus said, “Sit down, sweet niece. Brother, sit down by me. Apollo, Pallas, Jove, or Mercury, inspire me so that I may find who did this treason!

“My lord, look here. Look here, Lavinia: This sandy plot of land is level. Lavinia, guide, if you can, my staff. Watch me and then imitate me. I will use my staff to write my name without the help of any hand at all.”

He held one end of the staff in his mouth and used his feet to guide the other end of the staff and write his name in the sand.

He said, “Cursed be that heart that forced us to this makeshift!

“Write, you good niece, and here display, at last, what God wants to be revealed so that we may take revenge. May Heaven guide your pen to print your sorrows plainly so that we may know the traitors and the truth!”

Lavinia took one end of the staff in her mouth, and she used her stumps to write with the staff.

Titus said, “Do you read, my lord, what she has written? ‘*Stuprum*. Chiron. Demetrius.’”

The word *Stuprum* is Latin for “Rape.” Lavinia had succeeded in telling Titus and Marcus that Chiron and Demetrius had raped her.

Marcus said, “What! The lustful sons of Tamora are guilty of this heinous, bloody deed?”

Titus said, “*Magni Dominator poli, tam lentus audis scelera, tam lentus vides?*”

This is Latin for “Ruler of the great heavens, are you so slow to hear crimes, so slow to see them?” Titus was quoting a

passage from the Roman playwright Seneca's tragedy *Hippolytus*.

Marcus said to Titus, "Calm yourself, gentle lord, although I know enough is written upon this earth in front of us to stir a rebellion in the mildest thoughts and arm the minds of infants to make outcries of protest.

"My lord, kneel down with me; Lavinia, kneel; and kneel, sweet boy, the Roman Hector's hope."

They knelt.

Hector was the foremost Trojan warrior; his hope was his son. Marcus was calling the elder Lucius the Roman Hector.

Near the end of the Trojan War, Achilles killed Hector. After Troy fell, Hector's young son was killed by being thrown from the high walls of Troy.

Marcus said, "Swear with me, as, along with the woe-stricken spouse and father of that chaste dishonored dame, Lucrece, Lucius Junius Brutus swore for her rape, that we will pursue a good plan to get deadly revenge upon these traitorous Goths, and see their blood, or else we will die with this disgrace."

They swore and rose.

"Revenge is certain, if you know how to get it," Titus said. "But if you hunt these bear-cubs, then beware. The dam will wake up; and, if she once catches your scent ... she's still deeply in league with the lion, and lulls him while she plays sexually on her back, and when he sleeps she does whatever — and whoever — she wishes."

The dam, of course, is Tamora, and the bear-cubs are her rapist sons.

Titus continued, "You are an inexperienced huntsman,

Marcus, so leave the plot to me. Come, I will go and get a leaf of brass, and with a pen of steel I will write these words on it, and store it. That will make our oath of revenge permanent.

“The angry northern wind will blow these sands, like the Sibyl’s leaves, abroad, and where’s your lesson, then?”

The Sibyl was a prophetess who wrote her prophecies on leaves that the wind scattered.

Titus asked, “Boy, what do you have to say?”

Young Lucius replied, “I say, my lord, that if I were a man, not even their mother’s bedchamber would be a safe harbor for these bad men — these slaves who are under the yoke of Rome.”

Marcus said, “Yes, that’s my boy! Your father has very often done the like for his ungrateful country.”

“And, uncle, so will I, if I live,” young Lucius said.

“Come, go with me into my armory,” Titus said. “Young Lucius, I’ll outfit you; and my boy, you shall carry from me to the Empress’ sons presents that I intend to send to both of them. Come, come; you’ll deliver the message, won’t you?”

“Yes, with my dagger in their bosoms, Grandfather.”

“No, boy, no,” Titus said. “I’ll teach you another course of action. Lavinia, come. Marcus, look after my house. Young Lucius and I will go and swagger at the court. Yes, by the virgin Mary, we will, sir; and we’ll not be ignored.”

Titus, Lavinia, and young Lucius exited.

Marcus Andronicus, who felt that Titus was exhibiting signs of insanity and therefore would not be able to get revenge, said to himself, “Heavens, can you hear a good man groan, and not relent or feel compassion for him? I, Marcus, will

attend Titus in his bout of insanity. He has more scars of sorrow in his heart than enemy soldiers' marks upon his battered shield, but yet he is so just that he will not get revenge. Get revenge, Heavens, for old Titus Andronicus!"

— 4.2 —

In a room in the palace, Aaron, Demetrius, and Chiron were talking when young Lucius, with an attendant carrying a bundle, entered the room. The bundle consisted of weapons with a scroll of writing wrapped around them.

Chiron, who like the others had heard rumors of Titus Andronicus' insanity, said, "Demetrius, here's the son of Lucius. He has some message to deliver to us."

Aaron said, "Yes, some mad message from his mad grandfather."

Young Lucius, who had heard the comment, said, "My lords, with all the humbleness I may, I greet your honors from Titus Andronicus."

He thought, *And I pray that the Roman gods destroy both of you!*

"Thank you, lovely young Lucius," Demetrius said. "What's the news?"

Young Lucius thought, *The news is that we now know that you two villains have committed rape and mutilation.*

He said out loud, "May it please you, my grandfather, who is sound of mind, has sent by me the best weapons from his armory to please you honorable youths, who are the hope of Rome — so he told me to say, and so I say it. He wanted me to present your lordships with these gifts of weapons so that, whenever you have need to be, you will be well armed and well equipped, and so I now leave you both."

The attendant handed over the gift of weapons, and young Lucius thought, *And so I now leave you both, Demetrius and Chiron, you bloody villains.*

Young Lucius and the attendant exited.

Demetrius said, “What’s this? A scroll, with words written round about it? Let’s see.”

He read out loud, *“Integer vitae, scelerisque purus, non eget Mauri jaculis, nec arcu.”*

This is Latin for “He who is of upright life and free from crime does not need the javelins or the bow of the Moor.”

Chiron said, “Oh, it is a verse in Horace; I know it well. I read it in my grammar book long ago.”

The passage is a quotation from Horace’s *Odes*, I, xxii, 1-2.

“Yes, correct,” Aaron said. “It is a verse in Horace; right, you have it.”

He thought, *What a thing it is to be an ass! Here’s no sound jest — this is not at all a joke! Titus Andronicus, that old man, has discovered their guilt, and he sends them weapons wrapped about with a scroll containing a message that wounds to the quick although Demetrius and Chiron are too stupid to feel it. If our intelligent Empress were up and about instead of giving birth, she would applaud Andronicus’ ingenuity, but I will let her rest in her unrest for a while longer.*

Aaron said out loud, “And now, young lords, wasn’t it a happy star that led us to Rome, although we were strangers, and more than that, we were captives, and we have advanced to this height? It did me good before the palace gate to defy Marcus the Tribune in his brother Titus’ hearing.”

Demetrius said, “But it does me more good to see so great a

lord as Titus basely curry favor with us by sending us gifts.”

He thought that Titus had given them the weapons as a way of gaining entry into the royal court.

Aaron said, “Doesn’t he have a good reason to give you gifts, Lord Demetrius? Didn’t you treat his daughter in a very friendly way?”

Demetrius replied, “I wish we had a thousand Roman dames cornered in a desolate place so that they would be forced to take turns satisfying our lust.”

Chiron said, “That is a charitable wish and full of love.”

Aaron said, “All that is lacking is for your mother to say ‘amen’ and give you her blessing.”

“And she would do that even if we wished for twenty thousand more Roman dames,” Chiron said.

“Come, let us go and pray to all the gods for our beloved mother in her pains of childbirth,” Demetrius said.

Aaron thought, *Pray to the devils; the gods have abandoned us. Titus Andronicus knows who raped and mutilated Lavinia.*

Trumpets sounded.

“Why do the Emperor’s trumpets sound like this?” Demetrius asked.

“Probably for joy,” Chiron said. “Probably the Emperor has a son.”

Demetrius said, “Quiet! Who is coming toward us?”

A nurse entered the room. In her arms, she carried a newly born black infant: a boy.

“Good morning, lords,” the nurse said. “Tell me, have you

seen Aaron the Moor?"

Aaron answered, "Well, more or less, or never a whit at all."

He added, "Here Aaron is: I am he. What do you want with Aaron?"

"Oh, gentle Aaron, we are all undone and ruined!" the nurse said. "Now help us, or may woe overwhelm you forevermore!"

"Why, what a caterwauling you keep up!" Aaron said to her. "What do you have so clumsily wrapped in your arms?"

"I have that which I would hide from the eyes of Heaven. I have our Empress' shame, and stately Rome's disgrace! She is delivered, lords; she is delivered."

"Delivered?" Aaron said. "To whom?"

"I mean that she has given birth," the nurse said.

"Well, God give her good rest! What has God sent her?" Aaron said.

"A devil."

This society regarded the devil as being the color black.

"Why, then she is the devil's dam; this is a joyful issue."

"A joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue," the nurse said. "Here is the babe, as loathsome as a toad among the light-complexioned parents of our land. The Empress sends it to you. This babe is your stamp, your seal, your issue, and she bids you to christen it with your dagger's point."

The Empress Tamora wanted Aaron to kill his own child. If the Emperor Saturninus were to see the child, he would know immediately that he was not the father and that Tamora had cheated on him.

“Damn, you whore!” Aaron said. “Is black so base a color?”

He looked at his son and said, “Sweet blowse, you are a beauteous blossom, to be sure.”

A “blowse” was a red-faced girl. Of course, Aaron was speaking ironically.

Demetrius and Chiron knew immediately that Aaron had fathered the infant.

“Villain, what have you done?” Demetrius said.

“I have done that which you can not undo,” Aaron replied.

“You have undone our mother,” Chiron said. “You have ruined her reputation. Now the Emperor will know that she has been unfaithful to him.”

“Villain, I have done your mother,” Aaron said. “I have slept with her.”

“And therein, Hellish dog, you have undone her,” Demetrius said. “Woe to her luck, and may her loathed choice be damned! The offspring of so foul a fiend is cursed!”

“The infant shall not live,” Chiron said.

“The infant shall not die,” Aaron said.

“Aaron, it must die,” the nurse said. “The mother wants it to be killed.”

“What! Must it be killed, nurse?” Aaron said. “Then let no man but I execute my flesh and blood.”

He meant that no man would execute his flesh and blood — he certainly would not.

“I’ll pierce the tadpole on my rapier’s point,” Demetrius said. “Nurse, give it to me; my sword shall soon dispatch and kill it.”

“Sooner than that, this sword shall plow your bowels up,” Aaron said as he took the infant from the nurse and drew his sword.

“Stop, murderous villains!” Aaron shouted. “Will you kill your brother? Now, by the burning candles of the sky that shone so brightly when this boy was conceived, whoever touches this my first-born son and heir dies upon my scimitar’s sharp point. I tell you, youngsters, that the giant Enceladus, with all his threatening band of the giant Typhon’s giant brood — all of whom threatened the Olympic gods — shall not seize this prey out of his father’s hands. And neither great Hercules nor the war-god Mars shall seize this prey out of his father’s hands.

“What! What! You red-faced, shallow-hearted boys! You white-limed walls! You alehouse painted signs! You are copies of men — not real men! Coal-black is better than another hue because it scorns to bear another hue — black cloth cannot be dyed another color. All the water in the ocean can never turn the swan’s black legs white, although the sea washes them hourly in the tide.

“Tell the Empress from me that I am of an age to keep what is my own, excuse it how she can.”

“Will you betray your noble mistress in this way?” Demetrius asked.

“My mistress is my mistress,” Aaron replied. “This infant is myself, the vigor and the picture of my youth. I prefer this infant to all of the world. I will keep this infant safe in spite of all the world, or some of you shall smoke for it in Rome.”

The word “smoke” was a metaphor for “be punished.” The metaphor came from the smoke arising from a burning at the stake.

“By this our mother is forever shamed,” Demetrius said.

“Rome will despise her for this foul sexual escapade,” Chiron said.

“The Emperor, in his rage, will sentence the Empress to death,” Demetrius said.

“I blush when I think about this ignominy,” Chiron said.

“Why, there’s the privilege your fair beauty bears,” Aaron said. “A white face can blush. White is a treacherous hue that will betray with blushing the secret resolutions and counsels of the heart!”

Referring to his infant son, he said, “Here’s a young lad framed of another leer. Look at how the black slave smiles upon the father, as if he should say, ‘Old lad, I am your own.’ He is your brother, lords, clearly nourished with that blood that first gave life to you, and from that same womb where you were imprisoned, he is freed and come to light.

“Certainly, he is your brother by the surer side, although my seal is stamped in his face.”

The surer side is the mother’s. In the days before DNA testing, people could be sure who a child’s mother is, but because of the existence of cheating wives, people could not always be certain who the child’s father is.

“Aaron, what shall I say to the Empress?” the nurse asked.

“Advise us, Aaron, what is to be done,” Demetrius said. “And we will all subscribe to your advice. Save the child, as long as we may all be safe.”

“Then let us sit down, and let us all consult,” Aaron said. “My son and I will keep downwind of you. Stay there.”

Aaron was mistrustful. He wanted to keep Demetrius and Chiron at a distance from him and his son in order to protect his son’s life.

Demetrius and Chiron sat down.

Aaron then said, "Now we can talk as we wish about your safety."

"How many women saw this child of Aaron's?" Demetrius asked.

"Why, that's the way to act, brave lords!" Aaron said. "When we join together in league, I am a lamb, but if you challenge and defy the Moor, then the angered boar, the mountain lioness, the ocean swells not as much as Aaron storms. You asked a good question. But let me ask it again: How many saw the child?"

"Cornelia the midwife and myself," the nurse replied. "And no one else but the Empress who gave birth to it."

"The Empress, the midwife, and yourself," Aaron said. "Two may keep a secret when the third's away. Go to the Empress, and tell her I said this."

He killed the nurse.

Aaron imitated the sounds the nurse made as she died and said, "So cries a pig when it is being prepared to be spitted and roasted."

Demetrius and Chiron jumped up.

Demetrius asked, "What do you mean by this, Aaron? Why did you do this?"

"Oh, Lord, sir, it is a deed of policy," Aaron replied. "It is part of a plan. Should the nurse — a long-tongued babbling gossip — live to betray this guilt of ours? No, lords, no. And now I will tell you my full plan. Not far away from here, a man named Muli lives. He is my countryman, and his wife just last night gave birth. His child looks like her; his child is as fair and white as you are. Go and make an agreement

with him, and give the mother gold. Tell them everything, and tell them that their child shall be advanced in life — it will be treated as and believed to be the Emperor's heir. You can substitute their infant for mine and so calm this tempest whirling in the court. Let the Emperor dandle their son on his knee as he thinks that it is his own son."

Aaron added, "Look, lords; you see that I have given the nurse medicine. And you must now provide a funeral for her. The fields are near, and you are gallant fellows. Once she has been buried, don't waste time but make sure that you send the midwife immediately to me. Once the midwife and the nurse are dead, then let the court ladies gossip as they please."

Aaron had said, "Two may keep a secret when the third's away," but he preferred this proverb: "Three may keep a secret if two of them are dead."

"Aaron, I see that you will not trust even the air with secrets," Chiron said.

"For this taking care of Tamora, she and hers are highly bound to you," Demetrius said.

Demetrius and Chiron carried away the corpse of the nurse.

Alone, Aaron said, "Now I will go to the Goths as swiftly as a swallow flies. There I will dispose of this treasure — my infant — that I am holding in my arms, and I will secretly greet the Empress' friends."

He said tenderly to his infant son, "Come on, you thick-lipped slave, I'll carry you away from here because it is you who puts us to our makeshifts. I'll make you feed on berries and on roots, and feed on curds and whey, and suck goats' milk, and take shelter in a cave, and I will bring you up to be a warrior and command a military camp."

— 4.3 —

Titus Andronicus had prepared several arrows by attaching letters to them. With him were Marcus Andronicus, young Lucius, Publius (Marcus' son), and two kinsmen of the Andronici: Sempronius and Caius. They were carrying bows. Other gentlemen were also present. Some people were carrying nets and tools.

“Come, Marcus; come, kinsmen,” Titus said. “This is the way. Sir boy, now let me see your archery. Make sure that you draw the bow fully, and the arrow will arrive at its destination immediately.”

He then said, “*Terras Astraea reliquit.*”

Terras Astraea reliquit is Latin for “Astraea, the goddess of justice, has left the Earth.”

Titus said, “Remember, Marcus, the goddess of justice is gone — she's fled.”

He then ordered, “Sirs, take you to your tools. You, kinsmen, shall go and search the ocean, and cast your nets. Perhaps, and happily, you may catch her in the sea. Yet there's as little justice in the sea as on land.

“Publius and Sempronius, you must dig with mattock and with spade, and pierce the inmost center of the earth. Then, when you come to Pluto's region — the Land of the Dead — then please give him this petition. Tell him that the petition asks for justice and for aid and that it comes from old Titus Andronicus, who is shaken with sorrows in ungrateful Rome.

“Ah, Rome! Well, well; I made you miserable that time I threw the people's votes to him — Saturninus — who thus tyrannizes over me.”

He said to some other gentlemen, “Go, get you gone; and

please be careful, all of you, and leave not a man-of-war ship unsearched. This wicked Emperor may have shipped the goddess of justice away from here; and, kinsmen, if that is true then we may go and whistle for justice — we won't find the goddess."

Believing that Titus' words showed that he was insane, Marcus said to his son, "Publius, isn't this so sad — to see your noble uncle thus mentally disturbed?"

Publius replied, "Therefore, my lord, we must by day and night take care to always be near him and to indulge his mood as kindly as we can until time produces some healing remedy."

Marcus said, "Kinsmen, Titus' sorrows are past remedy. But let us live in hope that Lucius will join with the Goths and with war take revenge for this ingratitude and wreak vengeance on the traitor Saturninus."

Titus said, "Publius, how are you now! How are you now, my masters! Have you met with the goddess of justice?"

"No, my good lord," Publius replied, "but Pluto sends you word that if you want to have the goddess Revenge come from Hell, you shall get what you want. But as for Justice, she is so employed, he thinks, with Jove in Heaven, or somewhere else, that you must necessarily wait a while longer."

"Pluto does me wrong to feed me with delays," Titus said. "I'll dive into the burning lake below in Hell, and pull the goddess of justice out of Acheron by the heels."

"Marcus, we are only shrubs — no cedars are we."

Titus was alluding to this proverb: "High cedars fall when low shrubs remain."

He continued: "We are not big-boned men framed with the

size of the one-eyed giants called the Cyclopes, but we are metal, Marcus. We are steel to our backs. Yet we are wrong with more wrongs than our backs can bear. And, since there's no justice on Earth or in Hell, we will solicit Heaven and move the gods to send down Justice so she can avenge our wrongs.

“Come, let's attend to this business. You are a good archer, Marcus.”

Titus handed the others the arrows he had prepared, and he said these things:

“The arrow with the letter to Jove, that's for you.

“Here you are, the arrow with the letter to Apollo.

“The arrow with the letter to Mars, that's for myself.

“Here, boy, the arrow with the letter to Pallas Athena.

“Here, the arrow with the letter to Mercury.

“This is the arrow with the letter to Saturn, Caius — the letter is not to Saturninus. You might as well shoot against the wind as ask Saturninus for justice.

“Way to go, boy!

“Marcus, let loose your arrow when I tell you to.

“On my word, I have written to good effect. There's not a god that I have left unsolicited.”

Marcus ordered quietly, “Kinsmen, shoot all your arrows into the courtyard of Saturninus' palace. We will afflict the Emperor in his pride.”

Titus' own words showed that his plan was to have everyone shoot the arrows to the constellations so that the gods could read the letters attached to the arrows.

Titus ordered, “Now, masters, draw your bows.”

They all shot their arrows.

“Oh, well done, young Lucius!” Titus said. “Good boy, you shot your arrow into Virgo’s lap; you gave it to Pallas Athena.”

Virgo is the constellation of the Virgin in the Zodiac. Astraea, the goddess of justice, was the last god to leave Humankind. She lived on Earth during the Golden Age, but when Humankind became wicked, she fled to the sky and became the constellation Virgo. Like Pallas Athena, she was a virgin goddess.

Marcus said, “My lord, I aimed a mile beyond the Moon; your letter is with Jupiter by this time.”

Titus laughed and said, “Publius, Publius, what have you done? See, see, you have shot off one of Taurus’ horns.”

Taurus is the constellation of the Bull. Aries is the constellation of the Ram.

“This is entertaining, my lord,” Marcus said. “When Publius shot the arrow, the Bull, being scratched, gave Aries such a knock that both the Ram’s horns fell down into the courtyard. And who should find them but the Empress’ villain: Aaron? The Empress laughed, and told the Moor he should give the horns to his master — Saturninus — for a present.”

In other words, Aaron had cuckolded Saturninus and given him metaphorical horns.

“Why, there the horns go,” Titus said. “May God give his lordship — Saturninus — joy with his present!”

A rustic man, aka yokel, who carried two pigeons in a basket, walked over to them.

Titus said, “News, news from Heaven! Marcus, the postman has come.”

He said to the yokel, “Sirrah, what are the tidings? What is the news? Have you any letters for me? Shall I have justice? What does Jupiter say?”

“Oh, the gibbet-maker!” the yokel said, mistaking “Jupiter” for “gibbiter.” A gibbet is a gallows.

The yokel continued, “He says that he has taken the gallows down again, for the man must not be hanged until next week.”

Titus asked, “But I am asking you what does Jupiter say?”

“Alas, sir, I know not Jubiter; I never drank with him in all my life,” the yokel replied.

“Why, villain, aren’t you the letter-carrier?” Titus asked.

“I am a carrier, sir, but of pigeons, not of letters,” the yokel replied. “I carry nothing but pigeons.”

“Why, didn’t you come from Heaven?”

“From Heaven! Alas, sir, I never came there. God forbid that I should be so bold as to press my way to Heaven in my young days. When I am older, I hope to go to Heaven. Why, right now I am going with my pigeons to the *tribunal plebs*, to take up a matter of a brawl between my uncle and one of the imperial’s men.”

The yokel misused words. By *tribunal plebs*, he meant *tribunus plebis*, which is Latin for “Tribune of the Common People.” He was carrying the pigeons as a gift, aka bribe, to the Tribune so that he would help his uncle resolve the case. By “imperial’s,” he meant “Emperor’s.”

Marcus said to Titus, “Why, sir, this man is as suitable as can be to deliver your petition; let him deliver the pigeons to

the Emperor from you.”

Titus asked the yokel, “Tell me, can you with grace deliver a petition to right a wrong to the Emperor?”

By “with grace,” Titus meant “gracefully,” but the yokel understood it to mean “with a prayer before a meal.”

The yokel replied, “No, truly, sir, I could never say grace in all my life.”

“Sirrah, come here,” Titus said to the yokel. “Make no more trouble, but give your pigeons to the Emperor. By me you shall have justice at his hands. Wait, wait; meanwhile, here’s money for your expenses.”

Titus gave him some money and then said, “Get me a pen and some ink.”

He then said to the yokel, “Sirrah, can you with grace deliver a petition?”

With money in his hand, the yokel replied, “Yes, sir.”

“Then here is a petition for you to deliver. And when you come to the Emperor, at the first approach you must kneel, then kiss his foot, then deliver up your pigeons, and then look for your reward. I’ll be at hand, sir; see you do it with a fine flourish.”

“I promise you that I will, sir. Leave it to me.”

Titus asked, “Sirrah, have you a knife?”

The yokel indicated that he had a knife, and Titus said, “Come, let me see it.”

Titus took the knife and then said, “Here, Marcus, fold the petition around it.”

After Marcus was done, Titus handed the petition and the

knife to the yokel and said, “You must hold it like a humble suppliant. After you have given it to the Emperor, come and knock at my door, and tell me what he says.”

“May God be with you, sir; I will.”

Titus said, “Come, Marcus, let us go. Publius, follow me.”

— 4.4 —

In a room of the palace were Saturninus, Tamora, Demetrius, Chiron, and some lords and attendants.

Holding in his hand the arrows that Titus Andronicus and his kinsmen had shot, Saturninus said, “Why, lords, what insults are these! Was there ever seen an Emperor in Rome thus put down, troubled, and confronted like this, and, because he has dispensed justice fairly and evenly, treated with such contempt?”

“My lords, you know, as do the mighty gods — no matter how much these disturbers of our peace buzz lies in the people’s ears — that nothing has occurred except what is in accordance with the law against the headstrong sons of old Titus Andronicus. And so what if his sorrows have so overwhelmed his wits and sanity? Shall we be thus afflicted and suffer because of his vengeance, his fits, his frenzy, and his bitterness?”

“And now Titus writes to Heaven to redress the wrongs he claims were done to him. See, here’s a letter to Jove, and this letter is to Mercury. This letter is to Apollo; this letter is to the god of war. These are sweet scrolls to fly about the streets of Rome!”

“What’s this but libel against the Senate, and proclaiming everywhere what Titus considers to be our injustice? A goodly sentiment, is it not, my lords? He would say that no justice is in Rome.”

“But if I live, his feigned madness shall be no shelter to allow him to commit these outrages without being punished. He and his kinsmen shall know that justice lives in Saturninus’ health. If justice sleeps, he will so awake her that she in fury shall cut down the proudest conspirator who lives.”

Tamora said, “My gracious lord, my lovely Saturninus, lord of my life, commander of my thoughts, be calm, and bear the faults of Titus’ age, the effects of sorrow for his valiant sons, whose loss has pierced him deep and scarred his heart. Instead, comfort his distressed plight rather than prosecute the lowest- or the highest-ranking for these acts of contempt toward you.”

She thought, Why, it shall be best if quick-witted Tamora speaks fair — but false — words about everyone. But, Titus, I have touched you to the quick. Your life-blood is pouring out. If Aaron will now be wise and kill his and my child, then all is safe — the anchor’s in the port.

The yokel entered the room and Tamora said to him, “How are you now, good fellow! Do you want to speak with us?”

“Yes, indeed, if your mistress-ship is imperial.”

“I am the Empress, but yonder sits the Emperor.”

“It is he,” the yokel said.

He said to Saturninus, “May God and Saint Stephen give you a good day. I have brought you a letter and a couple of pigeons here.”

Saturninus took the letter and read it, and then he ordered, “Go and take this rustic fellow away, and hang him immediately.”

Mishearing “hung” as “hand,” the yokel asked, “How much money will I be handed?”

Tamora said, "Come, sirrah, you must be hanged."

"Hanged!" the yokel said. "By our lady, then I have brought up a neck to a fair end. My neck and my legal case both come to an end."

Guards took away the yokel.

Saturninus complained, "Despiteful and intolerable wrongs! Shall I endure this monstrous villainy? I know from whence this plot proceeds. Must I endure this? Titus believes that his traitorous sons, who died lawfully for the murder of our brother, have by my means been butchered wrongfully!"

"Go and drag the villain Titus here by his hair. Neither old age nor honor shall confer immunity on him. Because of this proud insult of his, I'll be his butcher. He is a sly frantic wretch who helped to make me great, in hopes that he would rule both Rome and me."

Aemilius, a noble Roman, entered the room.

Saturninus asked, "What news have you brought, Aemilius?"

"Prepare for war, my lord — Rome never had more reason to do so. The Goths have gathered soldiers, and with an army of highly determined men who are resolved to plunder Rome, they are quickly marching here under the leadership of Lucius, son to old Andronicus. Lucius threatens, in the course of this revenge, to do as much as ever Coriolanus did."

Coriolanus had been a heroic warrior and general for Rome, but he ended up leading an enemy army against Rome.

Saturninus asked, "Is warlike Lucius the general of the Goths? These tidings nip me the way that a gardener pinches off the buds of a plant, and I hang my head as flowers do with frost or grass that is beaten down with storms."

“Yes, now our sorrows begin to approach. Lucius is the man the common people love so much. I myself have often overheard them say, when I have walked in their midst while disguised like a private man, that Lucius was wrongfully banished. I have heard them say that they wished that Lucius were their Emperor.”

Tamora said, “Why should you fear the invading army? Is not your city strong?”

“Yes, but the citizens favor Lucius, and they will revolt from me and aid him.”

Tamora said, “King, let your thoughts be imperious, like your name. The name ‘Saturninus’ comes from the name of the god Saturn. Is the Sun dimmed when gnats fly in its beams? The eagle allows little birds to sing and does not care what they mean when they sing because the eagle knows that with the shadow of his wings he can, whenever he wishes, stop their melody. Like the eagle, you can stop the frivolous and irresponsible men of Rome. So cheer up your spirit.

“Know, Emperor, that I will enchant old Titus Andronicus with words that are more sweet, and yet more dangerous, than bait is to fish, or honey-stalks to sheep. The fish are wounded with the bait, and the sheep are rotted with excessive consumption of the delicious honey-stalks.”

This society believed that sheep became bloated and died from liver rot when they overfed on honey-stalks.

“But Titus will not ask his son not to attack us,” Saturninus said.

“If I, Tamora, ask Titus to do that, then he will. For I can sooth and flatter and fill his aged ear with golden promises, with the result that, even if his heart were almost impregnable and his old ears were deaf, his ears and his heart would still obey my tongue. Titus will do whatever I ask him

to do — I can be very persuasive.”

She said to Aemilius, “Go to Lucius now and be our ambassador to him. Say that the Emperor requests a parley with warlike Lucius, and set up the meeting at the house of his father, old Titus Andronicus.”

Saturninus said, “Aemilius, honorably deliver this message. And if he insists on hostages to ensure his safety, ask him to identify which hostages will please him best.”

“I shall earnestly do as you wish,” Aemilius said, and he exited.

Tamora said, “Now I will go to old Titus Andronicus, and manipulate him with all the art I have so that we can pluck proud Lucius from the warlike Goths.

“And now, sweet Emperor, be blithe and happy again, and bury all your fear and have faith in my plan.”

Emperor Saturninus replied, “Go immediately to Titus, and plead with him.”

CHAPTER 5**— 5.1 —**

Near Rome, Lucius talked to some of the Goths in his army.

He said, “Proven warriors, and my faithful friends, I have received letters from great Rome, which tell how the Romans hate their Emperor and how desirous they are to see us. Therefore, great lords, be, as your titles witness, imperious and impatient to right the wrongs done to you, and where Rome has done you any harm, wreak triple satisfaction on Saturninus.”

A Goth leader replied, “Brave scion, sprung from the great Titus Andronicus, whose name was once our terror, but is now our comfort, and whose high exploits and honorable deeds ungrateful Rome requites with foul contempt, have confidence in us. We’ll follow wherever you lead us. We will be like stinging bees on the hottest summer’s day led by their master to the flowered fields, and we will be avenged on cursed Tamora.”

The other Goths said, “And as he speaks, so say we all with him.”

“I humbly thank him, and I thank you all,” Lucius said. “But who is coming here, led by a strong, powerful Goth?”

A Goth with a drawn sword led Aaron to Lucius. Aaron had his infant son in his arms.

The Goth who had taken Aaron prisoner said, “Renowned Lucius, from our troops I strayed to gaze upon a ruined monastery, and as I earnestly looked upon the destroyed building, suddenly I heard a child cry underneath a wall. I went to the noise, and soon I heard the crying babe calmed with this affectionate discourse: ‘Peace, black slave, half me and half your mother! If only your hue had not betrayed

whose brat you are, if only nature had lent you your mother's look, if only your skin color were white instead of black, villain, you might have been an Emperor. But when the bull and cow are both milk-white, they never beget a coal-black calf. Quiet, villain, quiet!' — and so he talked to the babe — 'For I must carry you to a trusty Goth, who, when he knows you are the Empress' babe, will treat you well for your mother's sake.'

"Hearing this, I drew my weapon and rushed upon him, surprised him suddenly, and brought him here so you can treat him as you think best."

Lucius replied, "Worthy Goth, this is the incarnate devil who robbed Titus Andronicus of his good left hand. This is the pearl that pleased your Empress' eye, and this babe here is the base fruit of his burning lust."

Lucius was referring to a proverb when he called Aaron a pearl: A black man is a pearl in the eyes of a fair woman.

He said to Aaron, "Say, glaring-eyed slave, where would you convey this growing image of your fiend-like face? Why don't you speak? What, are you deaf? Not a word will you speak to me? Bring a noose, soldiers! Hang him on this tree and by his side hang his fruit of bastardy."

"Don't touch the boy," Aaron said. "He is of royal blood."

"He is too much like the father to ever be good," Lucius said. "First hang the child, so that Aaron may see the child's death throes: a sight that will vex the father's soul."

Aaron, filled with bravado, said, "Get me a ladder."

A Goth brought a ladder, and Aaron climbed it. Some Goths tied a noose to a tree.

Aaron said, "Lucius, save the child, and carry it from me to the Empress. If you do this, I'll tell you wondrous things that

may be highly to your advantage to hear. If you will not, then befall whatever may befall, I'll speak no more but 'May vengeance rot you all!'"

"Speak on, and if what you say pleases me, your child shall live, and I will see that it is taken care of," Lucius replied.

"And if what I say pleases you?" Aaron said. "Why, be assured, Lucius, what I have to tell you will vex your soul to hear because I must talk of murders, rapes, and massacres, acts of black night, abominable deeds, evil plots, treasons, villainies lamentable to hear and performed with full knowledge that they would cause people to feel pity. All of this shall be buried by my death, unless you swear to me my child shall live."

"Tell me what you have to say," Lucius said. "I say your child shall live."

"Swear that he shall live, and then I will begin."

"By whom should I swear? You believe in no god. That granted, how can you believe an oath?"

"So what if I do not believe in any god?" Aaron asked. "It is true, indeed, that I do not, but because I know that you are religious and have a thing within you called conscience, with twenty popish tricks and ceremonies that I have seen you being careful to observe, I therefore want your oath. If I know that an idiot fool regards his bauble — a jester's stick with a carved head on one end — as a god and keeps the oath that he swears by that god, then I would want him to make an oath. Therefore, you shall vow by that god, whatever god it is, whom you adore and hold in reverence, to save my boy, to nourish and nurse and bring him up — or else I will reveal nothing to you."

"By my god, I swear to you I will take care of your son," Lucius said.

“First know that I begot him on the Empress,” Aaron said.
 “Tamora is my son’s mother.”

“She is a most insatiable and lecherous woman!”

“Tut, Lucius, this was but a deed of charity in comparison to that which you shall hear me tell you now. It was her two sons who murdered Bassianus. They cut out your sister’s tongue and raped her and cut off her hands and trimmed her as you have seen.”

“Detestable villain! Do you call that trimming?”

“Why, she was washed and cut and trimmed, and it was trim entertainment for them who had the doing of it.”

The word “trim” has multiple meanings. “To trim” means “to prune” or “to cut.” Lavinia had been pruned of her hands. “Trim” also had a sexual meaning in their society: A woman who has been trimmed is no longer a virgin. The “trim” entertainment enjoyed by Demetrius and Chiron was a sexual entertainment. Aaron’s sentence also compared Lavinia to a piece of meat that was washed and cut and trimmed so that it could be cooked.

“Tamora’s two sons are barbarous, beastly villains, like yourself!” Lucius shouted.

“Indeed, I was their tutor and instructed them. Their lecherous nature they inherited from their mother. She is like a high card guaranteed to win a game of cards; her lecherous nature guaranteed that their nature would be lecherous. The bloodthirstiness of their minds, I think, they learned from me. I am as true a dog as ever fought at head; I am like a bulldog that always attacks a bull head-on.

“Well, let my deeds be witness of my worth. I guided your brothers to that treacherous hole where the dead corpse of Bassianus lay. I wrote the letter that your father found, and I

hid the gold that the letter mentioned. I was a confederate with the Queen and her two sons. What haven't I done that you have cause to rue? I always was involved in whatever has caused you grief. I cheated your father out of his hand, and, when I had his severed hand, I drew myself apart and almost injured my heart with extreme laughter — I nearly died from laughing. I was looking through the crevice of a wall when Titus, in exchange for his hand, received his two sons' heads. I saw his tears, and I laughed so heartily that both of my eyes were as rainy as his. And when I told the Empress about this entertainment, she almost swooned at my pleasing tale, and for my good news gave me twenty kisses."

The Goth leader said, "Can you say all this, and admit to doing all these evil deeds, and never blush?"

"I can blush like a black dog, as the common saying goes," Aaron replied.

"Aren't you sorry for committing all these heinous deeds?" Lucius asked.

"Yes, I'm sorry," Aaron replied. "I'm sorry that I have not done a thousand more evil deeds. Even now I curse the day — and yet, I think, few days come within the compass of my curse — wherein I did not do some notorious evil, such as kill a man, or else plan his death; rape a virgin, or plot the way to do it; accuse some innocent person and commit perjury; make two friends hate each other and wish the other to die; set snares to make poor men's cattle break their necks; set barns and haystacks on fire in the night, and tell the owners to quench the fires with their tears. Often I have dug up dead men from their graves, and set them upright at their dear friends' doors, at a time when their friends had almost recovered from sorrow, and on the dead men's skins, as if on the bark of trees, I have with my knife carved in Roman letters, '*Let not your sorrow die, although I am dead.*' Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things as willingly as one

would kill a fly, and nothing grieves me heartily indeed except that I cannot do ten thousand more dreadful things.”

Lucius said, “Bring down the devil; for he must not die so sweet a death as hanging immediately.”

Aaron climbed down from the ladder and said, “If there are devils, I wish I were a devil and would live and burn in everlasting fire, so that I might have your company in Hell and torment you with my bitter tongue!”

“Sirs, gag his mouth, and let him speak no more,” Lucius said.

Some Goths gagged Aaron.

Another Goth walked over to Lucius and said, “My lord, a messenger has come from Rome and wants to be admitted to your presence.”

“Let him come near,” Lucius ordered.

A Goth brought Aemilius, the noble Roman who was serving as a messenger, to Lucius, who recognized him.

“Welcome, Aemilius. What’s the news from Rome?”

“Lord Lucius, and you Princes of the Goths, the Roman Emperor sends all of you his greetings, and because he understands that you are armed and marching to Rome, he wants a parley with you at your father’s house. If you want hostages to guarantee your safety, they shall be immediately delivered.”

The Goth leader asked Lucius, “What does our general say?”

Lucius said, “Aemilius, let the Emperor give his pledges — the hostages — to my father and my uncle Marcus, and we will come.”

He then ordered the Goths, “Let us march away.”

— 5.2 —

Before Titus' house, Tamora and her two sons, Demetrius and Chiron, stood. They were dressed in fantastic costumes.

The disguised Tamora said, "Thus, in this strange and dark-colored costume, I will meet with Titus Andronicus, and tell him that I am Revenge, sent from below — the Land of the Dead — to join with him and right the heinous wrongs done to him.

"Knock at his study, where, they say, he stays and thinks about strange plots of dire revenge. Tell him that Revenge has come to join with him and work destruction on his enemies."

Demetrius and Chiron knocked on Titus' door.

Holding a document, Titus appeared at an upstairs window and asked, "Who molests my contemplation? Is this a trick to make me open the door so that my sad decrees may fly away, and all my study may be to no effect? You are deceived because what I intend to do you can see is here written in bloody lines I have set down; and what is written shall be executed."

"Titus, I have come to talk with you," Tamora replied.

"No, not a word," Titus replied. "How can I grace my talk when I lack a hand to gesture with? You have the advantage of me; therefore, say no more."

"If you knew who I am, you would talk with me," Tamora said.

"I am not mad; I know you well enough," Titus replied. "Witness this wretched stump, witness these crimson lines I have written with my blood in this document; witness these trenches — these wrinkles — made by grief and care, witness the tiring day and dark night, witness all sorrow that

I well know you are our proud Empress, mighty Tamora. Isn't your purpose for coming here to take my other hand?"

Tamora said. "Know, you sad and solemn man, I am not Tamora. She is your enemy, and I am your friend. I am Revenge, and I have been sent from the infernal kingdom to ease the gnawing vulture of your mind by working retributive vengeance on your foes.

"Come down, and welcome me to this world's light. Confer with me about murder and about death. There's not a hollow cave or lurking-place, no vast obscurity or misty valley where bloody murder or detested rape can hide for fear, but I will find them out; and in their ears I will tell them my dreadful name — Revenge, which makes the foul offender quake."

"Are you Revenge?" Titus asked. "And have you been sent to me to be a torment to my enemies?"

"I am; therefore, come down and welcome me."

"Do something for me, before I come to you," Titus said. "See by your side where Rape and Murder stand. Now give me some guarantee that you are Revenge. Stab them, or tear them on your chariot-wheels."

In this society, wheels were sometimes used to painfully kill people. One torture using a wheel was similar to that of the rack; people's bodies would be stretched on the wheel until the joints were dislocated or until one or more limbs were torn off. People who were to be broken on the wheel would be tied to a wheel, and their bones would be broken. They would then be left to die.

Titus continued, "Do this, and then I'll come and be your charioteer and whirl along with you about the globe. Provide two proper palfreys, as black as jet, to pull your vengeful wagon swiftly away, and find out murderers in their guilty

caves, and when your chariot is loaded with their heads, I will dismount, and by the chariot wheel I will trot, like a servile footman, all day long, even from Sun's rising in the east until the Sun sets in the sea. And day by day I'll do this heavy and difficult task, as long as you destroy Rapine and Murder there."

Tamora replied, "These are my ministers, and they come with me."

"Are these your ministers?" Titus asked. "What are they called?"

The disguised Tamora, wanting to humor Titus, whom she thought was mad, used the same names that Titus had used earlier: "They are called Rape and Murder, and they are called those names because they take vengeance on men who rape and murder."

"Good Lord, how like the Empress' sons they are!" Titus said. "And how similar are you to the Empress! But we mortal men have miserable, mad, mistaking eyes.

"Sweet Revenge, now I come to you, and if one arm's embracement will content you, I will hug you with my one arm soon."

Titus exited from the window and started to climb downstairs.

"Titus' agreeing with what I say suits his lunacy — the madman believes me," the disguised Tamora said. "Whatever I invent to feed his brain-sick fits and moods, you, my sons, will uphold and maintain in your speeches because now he firmly believes that I am Revenge, and since he is credulous in this mad thought and amendable to accept suggestions, I'll make him send for Lucius, his son. Then, while I at a banquet have him securely in my control, I'll find some impromptu scheme to scatter and disperse the

irresponsible Goths, or at least make them his enemies.”

Titus began to open the door and Tamora said to her sons, “See, here he comes, and I must pursue my plot.”

Titus said, “Long have I been pitifully lonely, and all because I wanted you, Revenge. Welcome, dread Fury, you goddess who pursues revenge, to my house that is filled with sorrows. Rape and Murder, you are welcome, too. How you resemble the Empress and her sons!

“Revenge, you would be well equipped if only you had a Moor. Could not all Hell lend you such a devil? For well I know the Empress never wags but in her company there is a Moor.”

He thought, *When Tamora wags her tail, you can bet that the Moor is in bed with her.*

He continued, “And, if you would represent our Queen correctly, it would be fitting for you to have such a devil. But you are welcome as you are. What shall we do?”

“What would you have us do, Titus Andronicus?” the disguised Tamora asked.

“Show me a murderer, and I’ll deal with him,” Demetrius said.

“Show me a villain who has committed a rape, and I will exact revenge on him,” Chiron said.

“Show me a thousand people who have done you wrong, and I will get revenge for you on all of them,” Tamora said.

Titus said, “Look round about the wicked streets of Rome; and when you find a man who resembles yourself, good Murder, stab him — he’s a murderer.

“Go with him, Rape, and when it is your luck to find another man who resembles you, good Rape, stab him — he’s a

rapist.

“Go with them, Revenge, and in the Emperor’s court there you will find a Queen, who is attended by a Moor. You will recognize her by your bodily proportions because up and down she resembles you.

“Please, give these people a violent death; they have been violent to me and my loved ones.”

“Well have you taught us,” Tamora said. “This we shall do. But would it please you, good Titus Andronicus, to send for Lucius, your thrice-valiant son, who leads towards Rome a band of warlike Goths, and tell him to come and banquet at your house? When he is here at your ceremonious feast, I will bring in the Empress and her sons, as well as the Emperor himself and all the rest of your foes, and they shall be at your mercy and stoop and kneel, and on them you shall ease your angry heart.

“What do you say to this plan?”

Titus called, “Marcus, my brother! Sad and solemn Titus is calling you.”

Marcus entered the room.

Titus said, “Go, kind and gentle Marcus, to your nephew Lucius. You will find him among the Goths. Tell him to come to me, and bring with him some of the most important Princes of the Goths. Tell him to have his soldiers camp where they are. Tell him that the Emperor and the Empress shall feast at my house, and he shall feast with them. Do this for me out of love for me, a love that I return, and so let him come here if he has any regard for his aged father’s life.”

“I will do this, and I will soon return again,” Marcus said.

He exited.

Tamora said to Titus, "Now I will leave and go about your business, and I will take my ministers along with me."

"No, no," Titus said. "Let Rape and Murder stay with me, or else I'll call my brother back again, and cleave to no revenge except what Lucius shall get for me."

Tamora whispered to her sons, "What do you say, boys? Will you stay with him, while I go and tell my lord the Emperor how I have managed the jest we planned? Yield to Titus' moods, flatter and speak nicely to him, and stay with him until I return again."

Titus Andronicus thought, *I know them all, although they suppose me to be insane, and I will outwit them in their own plots. They are a pair of cursed Hell-hounds and their dam, aka mother!*"

Demetrius said to his mother, "Madam, depart when you like; leave us here."

"Farewell, Titus Andronicus," the disguised Tamora said. "Revenge now goes to lay a plot with which to betray your foes."

"I know you do," Titus replied, "and, sweet Revenge, farewell."

Tamora exited.

"Tell us, old man, how shall we be employed?" Chiron asked. "What do you want us to do?"

"Tut, I have work enough for you to do," Titus said. "Publius, come here, and Caius and Valentine come, too!"

Caius and Valentine were Titus' kinsmen; Publius was Marcus' son.

They entered the room, and Publius asked, "What do you want?"

Indicating Demetrius and Chiron, Titus asked, “Do you know these two men?”

Publius replied, “I think that they are the Empress’ two sons: Chiron and Demetrius.”

Titus said, “Really, Publius! You are too much deceived. One is named Murder, and the other is named Rape. Therefore tie them up, gentle Publius. Caius and Valentine, lay hands on them and keep them from running away. Often have you heard me wish for such an hour, one in which these two were in my control, and now I find it; therefore, bind them tightly, and gag their mouths if they begin to cry out.”

He exited, and his kinsmen began to restrain and tie up Demetrius and Chiron.

Chiron shouted, “Villains, stop! We are the Empress’ sons.”

Publius replied, “And for that reason we do what Titus commands us to do.”

He said to Caius and Valentine, “Gag their mouths, and don’t let them speak a word. Make sure that you tie them securely.”

Titus returned with Lavinia. He was carrying a knife, and she was carrying a basin with her stumps. Although her hands had been cut off at the elbows, she was able to carry the basin with her stumps by using her teeth to bite down on an edge of the basin.

“Come, come, Lavinia,” Titus said. “Look, your foes are bound.”

“Kinsmen, stop their mouths, don’t let them speak to me. But do let them hear the words I utter — my words will cause dread and fear.

“Oh, you villains, Chiron and Demetrius! Here stands the

spring — Lavinia — whom you have stained with mud. You mixed your winter with this good summer. You killed her husband, and for that vile crime two of her brothers were condemned to death and my hand was cut off and made a merry jest. You cut off both of her sweet hands as well as her tongue, and you inhuman traitors forcibly violated that which was dearer to her than her hands or tongue — her spotless chastity. What would you say if I should let you speak? Villains, for shame you could not beg for mercy and grace.

“Pay attention, wretches! Listen to how I mean to butcher you. This one hand is still left to cut your throats while Lavinia holds between her stumps the basin that will receive your guilty blood.

“You know your mother intends to feast with me, and calls herself Revenge, and thinks that I am insane. Pay attention, villains! I will grind your bones to fine powder and I will make pie dough with your blood and ground-up bones. Out of that dough I will make a piecrust that will be a coffin for the meat inside the pie — that meat will come from your shameful heads. Then I will tell that whore, your unholy dam, to swallow her own produce — her own children. She will be like the earth that first gives birth to us and then swallows us when we die and are buried in her.

“This is the feast that I have invited her to, and this is the banquet she shall glut on. You treated my daughter worse than Philomela was treated, and my revenge will be worse than that of Procne.”

After Procne’s husband, Tereus, raped her sister, Philomela, and cut out her tongue, Procne got revenge by killing the son she had had with Tereus, cooking him, and feeding him to Tereus.

Titus continued, “And now, Demetrius and Chiron, prepare

for your throats to be cut. Lavinia, come and catch their blood.”

Titus cut their throats, and Lavinia began catching their blood in the basin.

Titus said, “When they are dead, I will go and grind their bones to fine powder and with this hateful liquid mix it, and in that dough I will bake their vile heads.

“Come, come, everyone, be diligent in making this banquet, which I hope may prove to be sterner and bloodier than the Centaurs’ feast.”

When Pirithous, the King of the Lapiths, married Hippodamia, he invited the half-man, half-horse Centaurs to the wedding feast. The Centaurs got drunk, and tried to rape Hippodamia and carry away the Lapith women. Pirithous and the Lapiths fought back and defeated the Centaurs.

Titus said, “So, now bring their bodies inside my house, for I’ll play the cook and see that they are ready to be eaten when their mother comes.”

— 5.3 —

Lucius, Marcus, and some Goths arrived in the courtyard of Titus Andronicus’ house. With them was Aaron, their prisoner. A Goth carried Aaron’s son.

Lucius said, “Uncle Marcus, since my father wants me to come to Rome, I am happy to do so.”

A Goth leader said, “We are also happy to do so, no matter what happens as a result.”

Lucius said, “Good uncle, take this barbarous Moor, this ravenous tiger, this accursed devil, inside my father’s house. Let him receive no food, but fetter him until he is brought before the Empress to give testimony of her foul

proceedings. Also, see that our soldiers are prepared and ready to ambush enemy soldiers if needed. I fear that the Emperor means no good to us.”

Aaron said, “I wish that some devil would whisper curses in my ear and prompt me so that my tongue could utter forth the venomous malice of my swelling heart!”

“Away with you, inhuman dog! Unholy slave!” Lucius said.

He ordered the Goths, “Sirs, help our uncle to convey him inside.”

The Goths and Aaron exited.

Trumpets sounded.

Lucius said, “The trumpets show that the Emperor is very near.”

Saturninus and Tamara, accompanied by Aemilius, some Tribunes, some Senators, and others, walked over to Lucius.

Saturninus said, “Has the firmament more Suns than one?”

Lucius replied, “How does it benefit you to call yourself a Sun?”

Marcus Andronicus said, “Rome’s Emperor, and nephew, stop arguing. These quarrels must be quietly debated. The feast is ready that the sorrowful Titus has ordered for honorable reasons: for peace, for love, for alliance, and for good to Rome. Please, therefore, draw near, and take your places.”

“Marcus, we will,” Saturninus said.

Everyone sat down at a table, and Titus and Lavinia came into the courtyard. Titus was dressed like a cook and carrying dishes, and Lavinia was wearing a veil. With them were young Lucius and others.

Titus placed the dishes on the table.

He said, "Welcome, my gracious lord; welcome, revered Queen; welcome, warlike Goths; welcome, Lucius; and welcome, all. Although the food is poor, it will fill your stomachs; please eat."

"Why are you dressed like a cook, Titus Andronicus?" Saturninus asked.

"Because I wanted to be sure to have everything done well to entertain your Highness and your Empress."

"We are beholden to you, good Titus Andronicus," Tamora said.

"If your Highness knew my heart, you would be," Titus replied.

Titus' ironic remark meant this: If Tamora knew the trouble that he had gone to in order to serve her a meat pie and why he was serving it to her, she would know she owed him something — her life.

Tamora began to eat.

Titus then said, "My lord the Emperor, answer me this. Was it well done of the rash Virginius to slay his daughter, Virginia, with his own right hand because Appius Claudius had raped, stained, and deflowered her?"

"It was, Titus Andronicus," Saturninus replied.

"Your reason, mighty lord?"

"Because the girl should not survive her shame, and by her presence continually renew his sorrows."

"That is a reason mighty, strong, and conclusive," Titus said. "It is an example, precedent, and vivid authorization, for me, who is most wretched, to perform the same act."

Titus said, “Die, die, Lavinia, and let your shame die with you.”

With full knowledge of what was to come, Lavinia deliberately ran to Titus, embracing both her father and the knife he used to kill her.

As Lavinia died, Titus lifted her veil and said, “And, with your shame dead, let your father’s sorrow die!”

“What have you done, unnatural and unkind man!” Saturninus said. “Have you no love for your daughter?”

“I have killed my daughter, for whom my tears have made me blind,” Titus said. “I am as woeful as Virginius was, and I have a thousand times more cause than he to do this outrage: and it now is done.”

“What, was she raped?” Saturninus asked. “Tell us who did the deed.”

“Will it please you to eat?” Titus asked. “Will it please your Highness to feed?”

Tamora asked, “Why have you killed your only daughter like this?”

“It was not I who killed her,” Titus replied. “It was Chiron and Demetrius. They raped her, and cut out her tongue; and they — it was they who did her all this wrong.”

Saturninus ordered some of his attendants, “Go and bring them here to us immediately.”

Titus said, “Why, there they are both, baked in that pie, which their mother has been eating and enjoying. She has eaten the flesh that she herself has bred. It is true, it is true — my knife’s sharp point is evidence that it is true.”

Titus slit Tamora’s throat and killed her.

“Die, frantic wretch, for this accursed deed!” Saturninus said as he drew his sword and killed Titus.

Lucius, Titus’ only remaining living son, said as he drew his sword, “Can the son’s eyes see his father bleed, and shall the son do nothing? There’s meed for meed, measure for measure, and death for a deadly deed!”

Lucius killed Saturninus.

All was in tumult. The Goths ran to defend Lucius as the Romans ran to kill Lucius. The Romans thought that a coup was occurring and that Lucius had treacherously assassinated Saturninus and was attempting to become the new Emperor.

Lucius, Marcus Andronicus, young Lucius, and others went to the balcony.

Marcus Andronicus said to the Romans below the balcony, “You grave-looking men, people and sons of Rome, you have been separated by uproar like a flight of fowl that has been scattered by winds and high tempestuous gusts. You have been divided into factions. Oh, let me teach you how to knit again this scattered wheat into one mutual sheaf, how to knit again these broken limbs into one body.”

An aged Roman replied, “Let Rome herself be poison to herself, and she whom mighty kingdoms curtsy to, like a forlorn and desperate castaway, execute shameful acts on herself.”

From the aged Roman’s point of view, Lucius had led an army of Goths into Rome and had murdered the Roman Emperor. In such a case, rather than being united with the Goths and ruled by Lucius, it might be better for Rome to destroy itself. After all, suicide can be preferable to loss of freedom.

The aged Roman continued, “But if my frosty white hair and wrinkles of old age, which are grave witnesses of true experience, cannot induce you to listen to my words, then speak, Marcus, you who as Tribune are Rome’s dear friend, as previously our ancestor, Aeneas, spoke when with his solemn tongue he told love-sick Dido’s attentive ears the story of that baleful, burning night when cunning Greeks ambushed King Priam’s Troy through the stratagem of the Trojan Horse. Tell us what Sinon has bewitched our ears, or who has brought in the fatal engine — the Trojan Horse — that gives our Troy, our Rome, the wound of civil war.”

The aged Roman wanted to know who had betrayed Rome by allowing the Goths inside the city. He wanted to know who was Rome’s Sinon — Sinon was the treacherous Greek who convinced the Trojans to bring the Horse inside Troy. He had pretended that the Greeks wanted him dead, but he had escaped from them, and he told the Trojans about a false prophecy that stated that Troy would never fall if the Horse were brought inside the city. The Trojans themselves then brought the Horse inside the city, tearing down part of their defensive wall to do so.

Other relevant stories were the Rape of Philomela and the Rape of Lucrece. Following Lucrece’s rape, she committed suicide, and the Romans deposed the King.

Marcus replied, “My heart is not composed of flint or steel, nor can I utter all our bitter grief because floods of my tears will drown my oratory and stop my speech, even in the times when what I say should move you to listen to me most attentively and force you to commiserate with me.”

Pointing to Lucius, Marcus said, “Here is a captain. Let him tell the tale. Your hearts will throb and weep as you hear him speak.”

Using the royal plural, Lucius said, “Then, noble listeners,

know that cursed Chiron and Demetrius murdered Bassianus, our Emperor's brother. Also know that cursed Chiron and Demetrius raped Lavinia, our sister, and it is because of their terrible crimes that our brothers were beheaded, our father's tears despised, and he was basely cheated of that true hand that had fought Rome's war to its end and sent her enemies to the grave. Lastly, I myself was cruelly banished from Rome, the gates were shut on me, and I was turned weeping out to beg for relief among Rome's enemies, who drowned their hatred in my sincere tears and opened their arms to embrace me as a friend.

"I am the exile, you should know, who has protected Rome's welfare with my blood; I have sheathed the points of the enemy's weapons in my risk-taking body, diverting them from Rome's bosom. In my body, I have sheathed the enemy's steel.

"You know that I am no boaster. My scars can witness, although they cannot talk, that what I say is just and full of truth.

"But, wait! I think that I digress too much in talking about my worthless praise of myself. Oh, pardon me, for when no friends are nearby, men praise themselves."

Marcus said, "Now it is my turn to speak. Look at this child."

He pointed to the son of Aaron and Tamora; an attendant was holding the boy.

"Tamora delivered this child," Marcus said. "It is the child of an irreligious Moor who is the chief architect and plotter of these sorrows. The villain is alive in Titus' house, and he will give testimony that this is true.

"Now judge the reasons that Titus had to avenge these wrongs that are unspeakable, past all patience, more than any living man could bear.

“Now that you have heard the truth, what do you say, Romans? Have we done anything wrong? If so, show us, and from this high place where you see us now, the poor remaining Andronici will, hand in hand, all headlong jump and cast ourselves down and on the ragged stones below beat out our brains and bring the family of the Andronici to an end.

“Speak, Romans, speak; and if you say we should jump, then, hand in hand, Lucius and I will jump and fall.”

Aemilius, a noble Roman, replied for the Romans, “Come, Marcus, come, you revered man of Rome, and bring our new Emperor gently in your hand — Lucius is our new Emperor — for I know well that he has popular support and the voices of the people say that he shall be Emperor.”

The Romans shouted, “Lucius, all hail, Rome’s royal Emperor!”

Marcus ordered some attendants, “Go into old Titus’ sorrowful house, and bring that misbelieving Moor here so that he can be judged and given some dire and dreadful death as punishment for his most wicked life.”

The attendants left to get Aaron, and Lucius, Marcus, young Lucius, and the others descended from the balcony.

The Romans shouted, “Lucius, all hail, Rome’s gracious governor!”

“Thanks, noble Romans,” Lucius said. “I hope that I may govern in such a way that will heal Rome’s harms, and wipe away her woe! But, gentle people, bear with me for a while because nature gives me a heavy task. Everyone, stand back except you, uncle. You come nearer so that you can shed loving tears upon Titus’ body.”

Lucius kissed Titus’ lips and said, “Take this warm kiss on

your pale cold lips, these sorrowful drops upon your blood-stained face — the last true duties of your noble son!”

Marcus said to Titus’ body, “Tear for tear, and loving kiss for kiss, Marcus, your brother, presents on your lips. Even if the sum of these kisses that I should pay you were countless and infinite, yet I would pay them!”

Lucius said to his son, “Come here, boy. Come, come, and learn from us how to melt in showers. Titus, your grandfather, loved you well. Many a time he danced you on his knee, and sang you asleep with his loving breast serving as your pillow. Many a story he has told to you, and told you to keep his pretty tales in your mind, and talk about them when he was dead and gone.”

Marcus said to young Lucius, “How many thousand times have Titus’ poor lips, when they were living, warmed themselves on your lips in kisses! Now, sweet boy, give them their final kiss! Tell your grandfather farewell, and commit him to the grave. Do his lips the kindness of kissing them, and take your leave of them.”

Young Lucius said, “Oh, Grandfather, Grandfather! With all my heart, I wish that I were dead if it would make you live again!

“Oh, lord, I cannot speak to him because I am crying. My tears will choke me if I open my mouth.”

The attendants returned with Aaron.

Aemilius said, “You sad Andronici, be done with your sorrows. Give this execrable wretch his sentence; he has been the breeder of these dire events.”

Lucius ordered, “Bury him breast-deep in the earth, and starve him. There let him stand, and rave, and cry for food. If any person relieves or pities him, for that offence that

person dies. This is our judgment.

“Some of you stay here to carry out our sentence and to see him buried breast-deep in the earth.”

Aaron said, “Oh, why should wrath be mute, and fury not speak? I am no baby — not I. I am not one who with base, unworthy prayers will repent the evils I have done. I would do ten thousand evils worse than those I have done, if I could do what I want to do. If in all my life I did one good deed, I repent that good deed from my very soul.”

Lucius said, “Some loving friends convey the late Emperor away from here, and give him burial in his fathers’ grave. My father and Lavinia shall without delay be enclosed in our household’s tomb. As for that heinous tiger, Tamora, she shall have no funeral rite and no man in mourning clothes, and no mournful bell shall ring her burial. Instead, throw her body to beasts and birds of prey. Her life was beast-like, and devoid of pity; and, being so, her body shall have a similar want of pity. See that our just sentence is carried out on Aaron, that damned Moor, by whom our heavy misfortunes had their beginning. We will then rule well the state, so that similar events never may destroy it.”

A NOTE

In Shakespeare's play, both of Lavinia's hands are cut off and Titus' left hand is cut off. In this book, I write that they are cut off at the elbow.

Evidence for that include these things:

- Marcus talks about Lavinia's branches being cut off. (2.4)
- Titus says that he and Lavinia cannot fold their arms to express sorrow. (3.2)
- Titus says that Lavinia cannot thump on her chest. (3.2)
- Titus talks about not being able to gesture to grace his speech because he lacks a hand. If his hand and forearm are missing, that would make it hard for him to gesture. He could gesture oratorically much better if he had a forearm on the arm with the missing hand. (5.2)
- Titus talks about embracing Revenge, the disguised Tamora, with one arm. If he still had both forearms, he could embrace her with both arms. (5.2)

Evidence against the hands being cut off at the elbow — and rebuttals — include these things:

- Lavinia carries Titus' hand in her mouth. If this includes the forearm, it would be heavy. (3.1)

I think that Lavinia could do this. If necessary, she could use her stumps to help carry the hand.

- Lavinia uses her stumps to turn pages. (4.1)

It would be difficult, but Lavinia could turn pages without the use of her forearms. Also, she quickly gets help turning pages.

- Lavinia is able to use her stumps to guide Marcus' staff as

she writes in the sand that Demetrius and Chiron raped her.

When Marcus comes up with the idea of writing in the sand and gives an example of doing that, he uses his feet to guide the staff as he writes. He may have done that because he thought that writing with upper arms only would be difficult. Besides, if Lavinia had forearms, she could use a forearm to write in the sand. (4.1)

- Lavinia uses her stumps to carry a basin. (5.2)

If the basin has handles on the side, she could use her mouth to bite on a handle and so carry the basin. Even if the basin lacks handles, she could bite on a side of the basin or put a side of the basin under her chin to help hold it steady.

Chapter XI: TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Male Characters: Trojan

PRIAM, King of Troy.

HECTOR, Priam's oldest Son. Crown Prince of Troy.

TROILUS, Priam's youngest Son. In love with Cressida. "Troilus" has two syllables. In other works of literature, Polydorus is Priam's youngest son.

PARIS, Priam's Son. Kidnapped Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta, thereby causing the Trojan War.

DEIPHOBUS, Priam's Son.

HELENUS, Priam's Son. A priest.

MARGARELON, a Bastard Son of Priam.

AENEAS & ANTENOR, Trojan Warriors.

CALCHAS, a Trojan Priest, taking part with the Greeks.

PANDARUS, Uncle to Cressida.

Male Characters: Greek

AGAMEMNON, the Greek General.

MENELAUS, his Brother. Menelaus is the lawful husband of Helen, whom Paris, Prince of Troy, ran away with.

ACHILLES, Greek Warrior.

AJAX, Greek Warrior. In this play, Ajax' mother is Hesione, sister to Priam, King of Troy. This makes him the first cousin of Hector, whose father is Priam. In other works of literature, it is Teucer, Ajax' half-brother (they share the same father), whose mother is Hesione.

ULYSSES, Greek Warrior. Ulysses is his Roman name; his Greek name is Odysseus.

NESTOR, Greek Advisor. Nestor is aged.

DIOMEDES, Greek Warrior.

PATROCLUS, Greek Warrior. Friend to Achilles.

THERSITES, a deformed and scurrilous Greek.

ALEXANDER, Servant to Cressida.

Servant to Troilus.

Servant to Paris.

Servant to Diomedes.

Female Characters

HELEN, Legal Wife to Menelaus. Kidnapped by Paris. In many works of literature, it is ambiguous whether Helen went willingly with Paris.

ANDROMACHE, Wife to Hector.

CASSANDRA, Daughter to Priam. She is a prophetess.

CRESSIDA, Daughter to Calchas.

Minor Characters

Trojan and Greek Soldiers, and Attendants.

Notes

Ilium, Ilion: These are other names for Troy.

A fool is a person who is unable to learn; a Fool is a jester.

PROLOGUE

“Our scene lies in Troy. From the isles of Greece, proud Princes, their noble blood enraged, to the port of Athens have sent their ships, fraught with the soldiers and weapons of cruel war. Sixty-nine Princes, who wore their regal coronets, from the Athenian bay put forth toward Phrygia, site of Troy, and their vow is made to ransack Troy, within whose strong walls the kidnapped Helen, Menelaus’ Queen, sleeps with wanton, lecherous Paris, and that is the reason for the Trojan War.

“To Tenedos, an island near Troy, they come, and the large ships that displace much water disgorge there their warlike freightage — their cargo fraught with danger to Trojans. Now on the Dardan — Trojan — plains the fresh and still unbruised Greeks pitch their splendid pavilions. Priam’s city has six gates named Dardan, Tymbria, Helias, Chetas, Troien, and Antenorides; they have massive metal brackets and corresponding bolts that fit in the brackets to lock the gates. This city protectively locks up the sons of Troy. Now expectation that tickles lively spirits on one and the other side, Trojan and Greek, leads them to risk everything — winner take all.

“And hither I have come. I am an armed Prologue telling you all this, but I am not armed with an author’s pen or actor’s voice, but instead I am suited with armor and am carrying weapons as is relevant to our theme and story. I am here to tell you, fair beholders, that our book leaps over the first battles and their results; instead, our book starts and then ends with what may be recounted as relevant to the theme of this book. This book will not tell you how the war started but will instead begin *in medias res* — in the middle of the war.

“Like this book or find fault with it; do what you please. Whether good or bad, it is but the chance of war.”

CHAPTER 1**— 1.1 —**

Troilus and Pandarus stood before Priam's palace. Troilus was the youngest son of Priam, King of Troy, and he was in love with Cressida, the niece of Pandarus. The time was morning, and Troilus had put on his armor in preparation to fight the Greeks outside the city of Troy.

"Call here my servant; I'll take off my armor," Troilus said. "Why should I make war outside the walls of Troy, when I find such cruel battle here within myself? Let each Trojan who is master of his heart go to the battlefield. I, Troilus, unfortunately have no heart because I have given it to Cressida."

"Will this problem never be solved?" Pandarus asked.

Troilus said, "The Greeks are strong and skillful in proportion to their strength, they are fierce in proportion to their skill, and they are valiant in proportion to their fierceness, but I am weaker than a woman's tear, tamer than sleep, more foolish than ignorance, less valiant than the virgin in the night, and as without skills as unpracticed and inexperienced infancy."

"Well, I have told you enough of this," Pandarus said. "As for my part, I'll not concern myself any further. He who will have a cake made out of wheat must wait for the wheat to be ground into flour."

"Haven't I waited?"

"Yes, you have waited for the grinding, but you must also wait for the bolting — the sifting — of the flour," Pandarus said.

"Haven't I waited?"

“Yes, you have waited for the bolting, but you must also wait for the leavening. You must wait for the dough to rise.”

“I have also waited for that,” Troilus said.

“Yes, you have waited for the leavening; but the waiting also includes the kneading, the making of the cake, the heating of the oven and the baking. Indeed, you must wait for the cake to cool, too, or you may chance to burn your lips.”

Pandarus was making a series of bawdy puns. “Grinding” referred to the act of sex — grinding crotch against crotch. “Bolt” referred to penis. “Leavening” referred to a developing pregnancy. “Oven” was a slang word for vagina or womb.

“Patience herself, whatever goddess she is, flinches less at suffering than I do,” Troilus said. “I suffer greatly from unrequited love. I sit at Priam’s royal table, and when beautiful Cressida comes into my thoughts — I am a traitor when I say that because for her to come into my thoughts she would have to be absent from my thoughts, and she is never absent from my thoughts!”

“Last night she looked more beautiful than I have ever seen her — or any other woman — look,” Pandarus said.

“I was about to tell you — when my heart, as if a sigh had been wedged into it, would split in two, then lest Hector or my father should perceive that I am in love, I have, as when the Sun comes out and lights up a storm, buried this sigh in the wrinkle of a smile. However, a sorrow that is concealed by the appearance and not the reality of gladness is like a laugh that fate turns to sudden sadness.”

“If Cressida’s hair were not somewhat darker than Helen’s — well, forget I said that — there would be no comparison between the women: Cressida would be regarded as the greater beauty. But, of course, she is my relative, my niece,

and so I don't want to praise her because I would be called biased, but I wish that somebody — such as you — had heard her talk yesterday, as I did. I will not dispraise your sister Cassandra's wit, but —”

“Oh, Pandarus!” Troilus said. “I tell you, Pandarus — when I tell you that there my hopes lie drowned, don't tell me how many fathoms deep my hopes are submerged. I tell you that I am mad — insane — because of my love for Cressida, and you tell me that she is beautiful. In doing that, you pour in the open ulcer of my heart her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, and her voice. You handle in your discourse — you talk about her — oh, her hand, in whose comparison all other white hands are as black as ink, writing their own reproach, and compared to the softness of her hand the young swan's down is harsh and the gentlest touch is as hard as the palm of a plowman. When I say I love her, you tell me these things, and these things are true. But by saying such things, you put, instead of medicinal oil and balm, in every gash that unrequited love has given me the knife that made those gashes.”

“I speak no more than truth,” Pandarus said.

“You do not speak the full truth,” Troilus replied. “She is more beautiful than you say she is.”

“Indeed, I'll not meddle in this love you have for her,” Pandarus said. “Let her be as she is. If she is fair, it is the better for her; and if she is not fair, she has the remedy in her own hands. She can wear cosmetics.”

“Good Pandarus, what are you saying, Pandarus!”

“I have had my labor for my trouble,” Pandarus said. “I am ill thought of by her and ill thought of by you. I have gone between you and her, but I have received small thanks for my labor.”

“What, are you angry, Pandarus? Are you angry with me?”

“Because Cressida is related to me, I say that she’s not as beautiful as Helen, lest I be thought biased in the favor of my niece. But if Cressida were not related to me, I would say that she is as beautiful in her everyday clothing as Helen is in her Sunday best. But what do I care? I don’t care if Cressida is black and ugly; it is all one and the same to me whether she is ugly or beautiful.”

“Did I say that she is not beautiful?”

“I do not care whether you do or not,” Pandarus said. “She’s a fool to stay in Troy after her father, Calchas, deserted the Trojans and joined the Greeks. Let her go to the Greeks and join her father; that is what I’ll tell her the next time I see her. As for me, I’ll meddle no more and do no more in this matter.”

“Pandarus —”

“I said I won’t, and I won’t.”

“Sweet Pandarus —”

“Please, speak no more to me. I will leave everything the way I found it, and that’s the end to my participation.”

As Pandarus exited, military trumpets sounded.

Troilus said to himself, “Be quiet, you ungracious clamors! Be quiet, you rude, cacophonous sounds! Fools on both sides! Helen must necessarily be beautiful, when with your blood you daily paint her thus — your blood is the stuff of her cosmetics. I cannot fight upon this point of contention; why should I fight because of Helen? She is too starved and meager a subject for my sword. She is not a good reason for me to risk my life in battle.

“But Pandarus — gods, how you plague me! I cannot come

to Cressida except by Pandarus, and he's as peevish and fretful to be wooed to woo as she is stubbornly chaste against all wooing.

“Tell me, Apollo, you loved Daphne, who fled from you and was metamorphosed into a laurel tree. Tell me, for your love of Daphne, what Cressida is, what Pandarus is, and what I am. Cressida's bed is analogous to wealthy India; there she lies, a pearl. Let the area between Priam's palace and where she resides be called the wild and wandering ocean. I will be the merchant, and this sailing Pandarus will be my uncertain hope, my convoy, and my ship. I hope to use Pandarus to take me to Cressida, and I hope that I will take possession of her.”

Military trumpets sounded once more as Aeneas walked over to Troilus.

“How are you, Prince Troilus? Why aren't you on the battlefield?”

“Because I am not there. This woman's answer — ‘because’ — is fitting because it is womanish for a man to stay away from the battlefield. Aeneas, what is the news from the battlefield today?”

“Paris is wounded and has returned home.”

“Aeneas, who wounded him?”

“Troilus, he was wounded by Menelaus.”

“Let Paris bleed; it is but a scar to scorn; Paris is gored with Menelaus' horn.”

The wound was a scar to scorn because Paris had scorned Menelaus by running away with Helen, Menelaus' wife, and Paris would bear a scar from the wound that he would not have received had he respected Menelaus. Menelaus had horns to use to wound Paris because Paris had cuckolded

him. A cuckold is a man whose wife is unfaithful; in this culture, people joked that cuckolds had horns on their head. The scar could be scorned also because a cuckold gave the wound — and resulting scar — to a cuckold-maker instead of the wound's being received for a worthier reason.

Again, military trumpets sounded.

Aeneas said, "Listen! What good sport is out of the city and on the battlefield today!"

"The sport would be better at home, if 'I wish I might' were 'yes, I may,'" Troilus replied.

"Sport" means entertainment. Aeneas used it to refer to the excitement of fighting in a battle; Troilus used it to refer to the excitement of 'fighting' in a bed in which there was a woman.

Troilus added, "But about the sport on the battleground. Are you going there?"

"Yes, and quickly."

"Come, let us go together."

They exited.

— 1.2 —

Cressida and Alexander, one of her servants, spoke together on a street in Troy.

"Who were those people who went by just now?" Cressida asked.

"Queen Hecuba and Helen," Alexander answered.

"And where are they going?"

"Up to the eastern tower, whose commanding height makes all the low-lying land its subject. They want to see the battle.

Hector, whose patience is normally steadfast like all virtues, today was in a bad mood. He rebuked Andromache and struck his armorer, and, just as if there were husbandry in war, before the Sun rose he put on shining armor, and he went to the battlefield, where every flower, as if they were prophets, wept with dew at what they foresaw — many deaths of Greeks — in Hector's wrath."

"What was the cause of Hector's anger?" Cressida asked.

"The rumor is that it was this: There is among the Greeks a lord of Trojan blood who is first cousin to Hector. They call him Ajax."

"I understand, but what of him?"

"They say he is a thoroughgoing man in himself, and he stands alone."

"So do all men, unless they are drunk, are sick, or have no legs," Cressida joked.

"Lady, Ajax has robbed many beasts of their particular distinctions," Alexander said. "He is as valiant as the lion, as churlish as the bear, and as slow as the elephant. He is a man into whom nature has so crowded moods and dispositions that his valor is crushed into folly and his folly is sauced with discretion: His courage is definitely mixed with folly, and his folly is seasoned with discretion — what is good in him is mixed with what is bad, and what is bad in him has a touch of good. No man has a virtue that Ajax has not a glimpse of, and no man has a flaw that Ajax has not some stain of it: He is melancholy without cause, and he is merry when he ought not to be merry. He has the joints of everything, but everything is out of joint. He has good qualities as well as bad, and everything is so badly put together that he cannot make good use of his good qualities. He is like Briareus, the mythological monster who has a hundred hands, but he is like a Briareus who has the gout — he has a hundred hands

but cannot use them. Or he is like an Argus, a mythological monster who has a hundred eyes, but he is like an Argus who is blind — he has a hundred eyes but cannot use them.”

“But how could this man named Ajax, the description of whom makes me smile, make Hector angry?”

“They say that yesterday he fought Hector in the battle and struck him down, the disdain and shame of which has ever since kept Hector fasting and waking. Hector is so angry that he cannot eat or sleep.”

Cressida saw someone approaching and asked, “Who is coming here?”

“Madam, it is your uncle Pandarus,” Alexander replied.

Cressida said, “Hector’s a gallant man.”

“As gallant as may be in the world, lady,” Alexander said.

As Pandarus joined them, he said, “What’s that? What’s that?”

“Good morning, uncle Pandarus,” Cressida said.

“Good morning, niece Cressida. What are you talking about? Good morning, Alexander. How are you, niece? When were you last at Priam’s palace?”

“This morning, uncle,” Cressida replied.

“What were you talking about when I came here just now?” Pandarus asked. “Was Hector armed and gone before you came to Priam’s palace? Helen was not up, was she?”

“Hector was gone, but Helen was not up.”

“I see. Hector was up and stirring early.”

“That is what we were talking about, and about Hector’s anger.”

“Was he angry?” Pandarus asked.

“That is what Alexander here said,” Cressida replied.

“True, Hector was angry,” Pandarus said. “I know the cause, too. He’ll lay about him with his sword today, I can tell them that. He will fight well, and Troilus will not come far behind him. Let the Greeks take heed of Troilus, I can tell them that, too.”

“What, is he angry, too?”

“Who, Troilus? Troilus is the better man of the two,” Pandarus said.

Pandarus was praising Troilus in an attempt to persuade Cressida to fall in love with him, but Hector was definitely the best Trojan warrior.

“Oh, Jupiter! There’s no comparison between the two men,” Cressida said.

“What, no comparison between Troilus and Hector? Do you know a man if you see him?”

“Yes, if I ever saw him before and knew him,” Cressida said.

“Well, I say Troilus is Troilus,” Pandarus said.

“Then you say what I say; for, I am sure that he is not Hector.”

“No, he is not, and Hector is not Troilus in some ways.”

“That is just and fitting to each of them; each man is himself.”

“Himself!” Pandarus said. “You think that Troilus is himself? Alas, poor Troilus! I wish that he were himself.”

Pandarus meant that Troilus was not himself because he was suffering from his unrequited love for Cressida.

“So he is,” Cressida said. “He is himself.”

“That statement is as true as the statement that I walked barefoot to India.”

“Troilus is not Hector.”

“But is Troilus himself? No, he’s not himself. I wish that he were himself! Well, the gods are above; time must befriend him or end him. Well, Troilus, well. I wish that my heart were in her body. No, Hector is not a better man than Troilus.”

“Excuse me. I don’t believe you.”

“He is elder.”

In fact, Hector was the eldest son of Priam.

“Pardon me, pardon me,” Cressida said. “If you mean that Troilus is elder than Hector, you are wrong.”

“The other one — Troilus — has not fully come to maturity,” Pandarus said. “You shall tell me another tale about who is the elder and the more mature when the other one — Troilus — has fully come to maturity. Hector shall not have Troilus’ intelligence this year. Troilus will be more intelligent than Hector.”

“Hector shall not need Troilus’ intelligence, if he has his own,” Cressida said.

“Nor will Hector have Troilus’ qualities.”

“No matter.”

“Nor his beauty.”

“Troilus’ beauty would not be becoming for Hector; his own beauty is better.”

“You have no judgment, niece,” Pandarus said. “Helen

herself swore the other day, that Troilus, for a brown complexion — for so it is, I must confess — well, no, his complexion is not brown —”

In this culture, fair complexions were valued more highly than black or suntanned or sunburnt complexions.

“No, it is brown,” Cressida said.

“Indeed, to say the truth, his complexion is brown and not brown.”

“To say the truth, what you have said is true and not true.”

“She praised his complexion above the complexion of Paris.”

“Why, Paris has color enough,” Cressida said.

“So he has.”

“Then Troilus has too much color. If Helen praised his complexion above that of Paris, then his complexion is higher than Paris’. If Paris has color enough, and Troilus has a higher color, then Helen made too flaming — too extravagant — praise for a good complexion. I would like just as much that Helen’s golden tongue had praised Troilus for having a copper nose.”

A copper nose can be a suntanned nose, but in this culture people who had lost their nose as a result of venereal disease or fighting sometimes wore a prosthetic nose made of copper.

“I swear to you that I think Helen loves Troilus better than Paris,” Pandarus said.

“Then she’s a merry Greek indeed.”

Helen, of course, was Greek, and in this culture a “merry Greek” was a wanton person.

“I am sure she loves Troilus more than she loves Paris,” Pandarus said. “She came to him the other day by the bay window — and, you know, he has not more than three or four hairs on his chin —”

“Indeed, a tapster’s arithmetic may soon bring his particular hairs to a total,” Cressida said.

A tapster is a bartender or a server in a bar. They use arithmetic to total the tabs in the bar.

“Why, he is very young, and yet he is able to lift as much weight, within three pounds, as his brother Hector,” Pandarus said.

“Is he so young a man and so old a lifter?”

Cressida was punning. A “lifter” is a thief, as in shoplifter.

“But I can prove to you that Helen loves Troilus,” Pandarus said. “She came and put her white hand up to his cloven chin —”

Pandarus meant that Troilus had a cleft chin, but Cressida pretended that he had said that Troilus’ chin was split in two.

“May Juno, Queen of the gods, have mercy!” Cressida said. “How came his chin to be cloven?”

“Why, you know it is dimpled,” Pandarus said. “I think his smiling becomes him better than any man in all Phrygia.”

“Oh, he smiles valiantly.”

“Doesn’t he?”

“Oh, yes, as if it were a cloud in autumn.”

Cressida was being sarcastic about and critical of Troilus’ smile. A sunny day in autumn is often beautiful; a cloudy day in autumn is often dull and dreary. A valiant smile

likened to a cloud in autumn could be a reference to the Sun valiantly attempting to shine through the clouds during the season of autumn.

“Why, bah, then, but to prove to you that Helen loves Troilus —”

“Troilus will stand to the proof, if you’ll prove it so,” Cressida said.

One meaning of what Cressida had said was that Troilus would pass the test if he were tested, but there was a second meaning. She was being bawdy. “To stand” means “to have an erection.” She was saying that Troilus would have an erection if Pandarus could prove that Helen loved Troilus.

“Troilus!” Pandarus said. “Why, he esteems Helen no more than I esteem an addled — a rotten — egg.”

“If you love an addled egg as well as you love an idle and empty head, you would eat chickens in the shell,” Cressida said.

Addled eggs often had an embryonic, but dead, chick inside.

“I cannot choose but laugh, when I think how Helen tickled Troilus’ chin,” Pandarus said. “Indeed, she has a marvelously white hand, I must necessarily confess —”

“That is a confession you have made without first having been tortured on the rack.”

“And Helen spied a white hair on his chin.”

“Alas, poor chin!” Cressida said. “Many a wart is richer because it has more hairs than one.”

“But there was such laughing! Queen Hecuba laughed so much that her eyes ran over.”

“With millstones, but not with tears,” Cressida said. She did

not understand how this anecdote could be so funny that it would make anyone cry with laughter.

“And Cassandra laughed,” Pandarus said.

“But there was more temperate fire under the cooking pot of her eyes,” Cressida said. “Did her eyes run over, too?”

Cassandra was not the type of person to laugh much. In mythology, she had the gift of prophecy, but she also had the curse of her prophecies never being believed. And as a prophetess, she knew before other people bad events that would soon occur.

“And Hector laughed.”

“At what was all this laughing?” Cressida asked. “What were they laughing at?”

“Indeed, at the white hair that Helen spied on Troilus’ chin.”

“If it had been a green hair, I would have laughed, too,” Cressida said.

“They laughed not so much at the hair as at his ingenious answer.”

“What was his answer?”

“Helen said, ‘Here’s only two and fifty hairs on your chin, and one of them is white.’”

“This is her observation, not his answer,” Cressida pointed out.

“That’s true; make no question of that,” Pandarus replied. “‘Two and fifty hairs,’ Troilus replied, ‘and one hair is white. That white hair is my father, and all the rest are his sons.’”

Troilus was punning. Most of his hairs were heirs — Priam’s

fifty sons.

Pandarus continued, “‘By Jupiter!’ said Helen, ‘which of these hairs is Paris, my husband?’ ‘The forked one,’ said he. ‘Pluck it out, and give it to him.’ But there was such laughing! And Helen so blushed, and Paris so fretted, and all the rest so laughed, that it surpasses description.”

Priam had fifty sons. Troilus had one white hair, and fifty black hairs, but one black hair was forked (had a split end) and so was counted as two, making a total (in the anecdote) of fifty-two hairs.

The forked hair represented Paris, and the fork in the hair represented horns. Paris had made a cuckold of Menelaus and given him horns, and Troilus was joking that Helen had made a cuckold of Paris and given him horns.

“So let your anecdote pass by now; for it has been a while going by,” Cressida said.

“Well, niece,” Pandarus said. “I told you something important yesterday; think about it.”

The “something important” was Troilus’ love for her.

“So I do.”

“I’ll be sworn it is true; he will weep, as if he were a man born in April, the month of showers.”

“And I’ll spring up in his tears, as if I were a nettle anticipating May,” Cressida said.

She had changed the proverb “April showers bring May flowers” so that she could criticize Troilus.

Trumpets sounded retreat. Now the Trojan warriors would return to Troy.

“Listen,” Pandarus said. “The warriors are coming from the

battlefield. Shall we stand up here, and see them as they pass toward Troy? Good niece, do, sweet niece Cressida.”

“As you wish.”

“Here, here, here’s an excellent place,” Pandarus said. “Here we may see them very well. I’ll tell you all their names as they pass by; but be sure to pay special attention to Troilus more than the rest.”

“Don’t speak so loudly,” Cressida said, embarrassed lest Pandarus be overheard.

Aeneas walked by them.

“That’s Aeneas,” Pandarus said. “Isn’t he a splendid man? He’s one of the flowers of Troy, I can tell you, but be sure to look at Troilus; you shall see him soon.”

Antenor walked by them.

“Who’s that?” Cressida asked.

“That’s Antenor,” Pandarus replied. “He has a shrewd intelligence, I can tell you, and he’s a good enough man. He’s one of the soundest judges in Troy and has the greatest wisdom, and he is handsome. But when is Troilus coming? I’ll show you Troilus soon. If he sees me, you shall see him nod at me.”

“Will he give you the nod?”

“Give you the nod” was slang for “make a fool out of you.”

“Yes, you will see him nod at me,” Pandarus said.

“If he nods at you, the rich shall have more,” Cressida said.

Cressida was willing to be critical of Pandarus, her uncle, as well as of Troilus. A noddy is a fool. Cressida was referring to Matthew 13:12, part of which states, “*For whosoever*

hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance [...].” If Troilus were to nod to Pandarus, he would make Pandarus a noddee, and Pandarus would be more of a fool than he already was.

Hector walked by them.

“That’s Hector, that, that, look, that man,” Pandarus said.
“There’s a fellow!”

He yelled, “Way to go, Hector!”

Then he said to Cressida, “There’s a brave man, niece. Oh, brave Hector! Look how he looks! There’s a countenance! Isn’t he a splendid man?”

“Yes, he is a splendid man!”

“Isn’t he, though!” Pandarus said. “Seeing him does a man’s heart good. Look at the dents on his helmet! Look yonder, do you see them? Look there. There’s no jesting; there’s evidence that Hector has been fighting hard in battle and laying blows on the enemy. That’s evidence that no naysayers can deny — there are dents in his helmet!”

“Were those dents made by swords?”

“Swords! Yes, and by other weapons such as spears. Hector does not care what enemy he faces. If the Devil were to come to fight him, it’s all one to Hector — he doesn’t care whether he fights a Greek or the Devil. By God, it does one’s heart good to see Hector. But look. Yonder comes Paris, yonder comes Paris.”

Paris walked by them.

“Look yonder, niece. Isn’t he a gallant man, too, isn’t he? Why, this is splendid now. Who said that Paris was wounded and had returned home today? He’s not wounded. Why, this will do Helen’s heart good now, ha! I wish I could see

Troilus now! You shall see Troilus soon.”

Helenus walked by them.

“Who’s that?” Cressida asked.

“That’s Helenus. I wonder where Troilus is. That’s Helenus. I think that Troilus did not go out to fight today. That’s Helenus.”

“Can Helenus fight, uncle?” Cressida asked, aware that Helenus was a priest.

“Helenus? No,” Pandarus said. Quickly, he changed his answer — one ought not to criticize a Prince. “Yes, he’ll fight moderately well. I wonder where Troilus is. Listen! Don’t you hear the people cry ‘Troilus’? Helenus is a priest.”

“What sneaking fellow comes yonder?” Cressida asked. She knew who the “sneaking fellow” was.

Troilus walked by them.

“Where? Yonder? That’s Deiphobus,” Pandarus said. He was wrong, but he quickly recognized his mistake and said, “It is Troilus! There’s a man, niece!”

He called loudly, “Ha! Brave Troilus! The Prince of chivalry!”

“Be quiet!” Cressida said. “You are embarrassing me, and you yourself ought to be embarrassed. Be quiet!”

“Look at him. Look closely at him,” Pandarus said. “Oh, brave Troilus! Look well upon him, niece. Look how his sword is bloodied, and how his helmet is more hacked than Hector’s, and see how he looks, and how he walks! Oh, admirable youth! He is not yet twenty-three years old. Keep it up, Troilus, keep it up! If I had a sister who was one of the goddesses known as the Graces, and if I had a daughter who was also a goddess, I would give Troilus his choice of which

of them to marry. Oh, admirable man! Paris? Paris is dirt compared to him; and, I promise you that Helen would give one of her eyes to exchange Paris for Troilus.”

“Here come more soldiers,” Cressida said.

More soldiers walked by them.

“These are asses, fools, dolts!” Pandarus said. “They are chaff and bran, chaff and bran! They are mere porridge after one has eaten meat! We have seen the best men and the best man — Troilus. I could live and die in the eyes of Troilus. Don’t look at them! Don’t look at them! The eagles are gone. What we see now are crows and jackdaws, crows and jackdaws! I would rather be a man such as Troilus than Agamemnon and all the Greek warriors.”

“Among the Greeks is Achilles, who is a better man than Troilus,” Cressida said.

“Achilles!” Pandarus said. “He is a cart-driver, a porter, a camel — he is a stupid beast of burden!”

“Well, well,” Cressida said.

“Well, well!” Pandarus repeated. “Why, don’t you have any ability to distinguish a real man among ‘men’? Haven’t you any eyes? Don’t you know what a man is? Aren’t birth, beauty, good shape, good conversation, manliness, learning, nobleness, virtue, youth, generosity, and other such things the spice and salt that season a man?”

“Yes, a minced man,” Cressida said. “And then they are baked with no date in the pie, for then the man’s date’s out.”

Cressida was criticizing Troilus again. Pandarus had highly praised him and mentioned many good qualities that he claimed that Troilus possessed, but she was questioning his manhood. A date is a phallic-shaped fruit, and she was saying that Troilus’ date was staying out of the vaginal pie.

One meaning of “to mince” is “to walk very primly,” and a stereotype of gay men is that they mince. Another meaning of “mince” is “to cut into very small pieces for cooking.” Of course, a man whose date is out is a man who is out of fashion and of lesser value — he is after his sell-by date.

“What a woman you are!” Pandarus said. Aware that she was metaphorically fencing with words against his attempts at persuading her to love Troilus, he said, “One does not know at what ward you lie.”

A ward is a parrying — defensive — movement in fencing.

Cressida said, “I lie upon my back, to defend my belly.”

To lie on her back to defend her belly — say, against a sexual “attack” — seems to be a poor defensive position for such a purpose. But perhaps she meant that she would rely on her back to defend her belly. Or perhaps she was not much interested in defending her belly if it were “attacked” by the right man.

She added, “I rely upon my wit, to defend my wiles; upon my secrecy, to defend my chastity; upon my mask, to defend my beauty; and upon you, to defend all these.”

She could satisfy her wiles — cunningly get her wishes — and then use her wit and intelligence to defend them and keep away from herself any bad consequences. One way for her to defend her reputation for chastity was by keeping silent — not telling anyone about an affair, if she should have one. Like other ladies of the time, she wore a mask when in the Sun to protect her face from being tanned by the Sun. The mask hid her face from the Sun the way her secrecy could hide an affair from being known by other people. She also relied on her uncle to protect her; her father was not present in Troy, and so Pandarus was her male protector in Troy. As her uncle, he had a moral obligation to protect her. However, she may have been sarcastic when she said that

she would rely upon him. Events would show that Pandarus was in favor of his niece having an affair with Troilus.

She added, “And at all these wards I lie, at a thousand watches — I will have all these defenses during a thousand sleepless nights.”

Cressida was hinting at bawdiness. A thousand nights would be sleepless because a male lover would keep her awake. Because she would not be legally married to the male lover, she would have to rely on her own intelligence and secrecy — and her uncle — to keep other people from learning about the affair.

“Tell me about one of your watches — one of your sleepless nights,” Pandarus said.

“No, I’ll watch you if I have any sleepless nights, and you are one of the chief things that I will have to carefully watch,” Cressida said. “If I cannot ward — defend — what I would not have hit, I can watch you for telling how I took the blow. In other words, if I cannot ward off and keep a penis from penetrating me, I will carefully watch you to guard against your telling on me. Of course, if I get pregnant and my belly swells up and cannot be hidden, then it’s past watching. I won’t then be able to guard against my sexual activity being known.”

In her answer, Cressida was punning on the words “watch” and “ward,” aka “defend,” which were the duties of a watchman.

“What a woman you are!” Pandarus said.

Troilus’ servant, a boy, walked over to them and said to Pandarus, “Sir, my lord wants to speak with you right away.”

“Where?” Pandarus asked.

“At your own house; he is taking off his armor there.”

“Good boy, tell him I am coming,” Pandarus said.

The boy exited.

“I doubt that Troilus is wounded,” Pandarus said. “Fare you well, good niece.”

“*Adieu*, uncle.”

“I’ll be with you, niece, by and by.”

“To bring me something, uncle?”

“Yes, a token from Troilus.”

As Pandarus exited, Cressida said to herself, “By the same token, you are a bawd, a pimp, a procurer.”

She paused and then added to herself, “Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love’s full sacrifice, he — Pandarus — offers in another’s — Troilus’ — enterprise, but I see a thousand-fold more in Troilus than there is in the mirror of Pandarus’ praise. Yet I hold Troilus off. Women are thought to be Angels while they are being wooed; they are not thought to be worth so much after they are won. Things won are done; joy’s soul lies in the doing. A woman who is beloved knows nothing unless she knows this: Men prize the thing they have not gained more than it is worth. No woman has ever known a man to love her as sweetly after he got her than while he was pursuing her. Therefore I teach this maxim out of love: What is achieved is commanded; what is not yet gained is beseeched. When a man has won a woman, he commands her; while he is still pursuing her, he beseeches her. Therefore, although my heart bears much love for Troilus, nothing of my love for him shall in my eyes appear. I love Troilus, but I will not let him know that.”

— 1.3 —

Agamemnon, the elderly advisor Nestor, Ulysses, Menelaus,

Diomedes, and other important Greeks met in front of Agamemnon's tent in the Greek camp.

Agamemnon said to the others, "What grief has made your cheeks jaundiced? The ample promise of success that hope makes in all plans begun on Earth below fails at first. We do not immediately receive the promised largeness: Obstacles and disasters grow in the veins of the highest reared plans. These obstacles and disasters are like knots that block the sap and so infect the sound pine and divert its grain, twisting and turning it from its natural course of growth.

"Princes, it is not news to us that we have come so far short of our hope that after seven years of siege Troy's walls still stand. Every planned action of which we have historical record had a period of testing in which the people faced problems that thwarted and did not help them achieve their goal, and that thwarted and did not help them carry out the plan that their abstract thought had formed.

"Why then, you Princes, do you with abashed cheeks look at our deeds, and call them shameful? The troubles we face are indeed nothing other than the protracted trials that great Jove has given to us because the King of gods wants to find persistent constancy in men."

Jove was another name for Jupiter, King of the gods.

Agamemnon continued, "The fineness of men's metal — and mettle — is not found in the favor of Lady Fortune; for then the bold and the cowardly, the wise and the foolish, the well-educated and the unread, and the hard and the soft would all seem to be related to each other and much the same, but it is found instead in the wind and tempest of the frown of Lady Distinction, who with a broad and powerful fan blows air at all, winnowing the light stuff away, and leaving behind whatever has mass or matter — the stuff that by itself lies rich in virtue and unmingled with anything

base.”

Nestor said, “With due observance of your godlike power, Great Agamemnon, Nestor shall explicate your most recent words. In the reproof of chance lies the true proof of men. To know whether a man is really a man, that man must be tested. When the sea is smooth, many shallow baubles — toy-like boats — dare to sail upon her patient breast, making their way with those ships of nobler bulk! But let the ruffian Boreas — the north wind — once enrage the home of the gentle sea-goddess Thetis, and immediately you see the ships with strong ribs cut through liquid mountains, bounding between the two moist elements — the sea and the air — like the hero Perseus’ winged horse, Pegasus. Where then is the saucy, insolent boat whose weak sides lack a strong frame? A moment ago, such toy-like boats dared to rival great ships! But now, the toy-like boats have either fled to a harbor or they have made a toast for Neptune — they are like a piece of toast that has been soaked in water and has sunk.

“In such storms of fortune, we distinguish the appearance of valor from the reality of valor. When the Sun is shining brightly, a herd of cattle is more annoyed by the gadfly than by the tiger, but when the splitting wind makes the trunks of gnarled oaks flexible so that they bend their knee, forcing the trunk to grow naturally in a bent shape suitable for the building of ships — we call it knee-timber — and when flies have fled to find shelter under the stormy sky, why then the thing of courage, which is roused by the rage of the storm and which sympathizes with rage, replies to chiding fortune in a voice with an accent tuned in the selfsame key. A courageous man reacts vigorously when vigorously challenged.”

Ulysses said, “Agamemnon, you are our great commander, the sinew and bone of Greece, the heart of our numbers of

soldiers, our soul and only spirit, and in you the temperaments and the minds of all should be embodied. Please hear what I, Ulysses, have to say besides the applause and approbation that I give to the speeches that you, Agamemnon, who are mightiest because of your position and power, and that you, Nestor, who are most revered because of your long and stretched-out life, made. I give applause and approbation to both your speeches, which were such as Agamemnon, the hands of the Greeks should hold up high after they are engraved in brass, and also are such as venerable Nestor, whose hair is streaked with silver, should with a bond of air, as strong as the axle-tree — the Earth — around which the planets and the Heavens revolve, knit all the Greek ears to his experienced tongue. Nestor is such an excellent speaker that he could recite both your speeches and use the waves of sounds to bind Greek ears to the words. Yet may it please you both — you, great Agamemnon, and you, wise Nestor — to hear me, Ulysses, speak.”

“Speak, Ulysses, Prince of the island of Ithaca,” Agamemnon replied. Using the royal plural, he said, “We are confident that when rank and foulmouthed Thersites opens his dog-like jaws we shall never hear music, intelligence, and divine prophecy. We are even more confident that you will not divide your lips in order to talk unnecessarily about unimportant matters.”

Ulysses said, “Troy, which still stands on its foundation, would have fallen and the great Hector’s sword would have lacked a master by now, except for these reasons I will explain now. The specialty of rule — the rights of and obligations to authority — has been neglected. Look, many hollow Greek tents stand upon this plain; we have that many hollow — false and unsound — factions.

“Whenever the army general is not like the beehive to whom the foragers for food shall all repair, what honey can be

expected? When a person of high degree wears a mask, the men who are the unworthiest appear to be just as high of degree while they are also wearing a mask.

“The Heavens themselves, the planets and this center — the Earth — observe degree, priority and proper place and station, regularity of position, course, proportion, season, form, office and custom, according to their rank. And therefore the glorious Sol — the Sun — in noble eminence is enthroned and set in its sphere amid the other Heavenly bodies. The Sun’s medicinal eye corrects the ill aspects of evil astrological planets, and speeds, like the commandment of a King, without check, to good and bad.

“But when the planets wander into an evil and disordered conjunction, what plagues and what portents result! What mutiny and rebellion! What raging of the sea! What shaking of the Earth! What commotion in the winds! What frights, changes, and horrors divert, crack, tear, and uproot the unity and married calm of states and governments quite from their fixed position!

“Oh, when rank is forgotten, rank that is the ladder to all high designs, then enterprise is sick! How could communities, degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities, peaceful commerce from shores separated by seas, the right of primogeniture and the due of birth, the prerogative of age, crowns, scepters, and laurel wreaths stand in an authentic place except by rank and degree?

“But if you take rank and degree away, if you untune that string, then — hark! — what discord follows! Each thing meets in complete opposition. The waters that are bounded by the shores would lift their bosoms — their waves — higher than the shores and make sodden all this solid globe.

“Strength would be the lord of weakness, the strong would rule the weak, and the rude and violent son would strike his

father dead. Might would be right; or rather, might would be right and wrong. Justice weighs in its scales what is right and what is wrong, but without the observance of degree and rank, both right and wrong would lose their names and be forgotten, and the same would happen to justice, too.

“Without the observance of degree and rank, everything becomes subservient to power, power becomes subservient to willfulness, and willfulness becomes subservient to appetite, aka desire.

“Appetite is a universal wolf, and because it is doubly seconded with willfulness and power, it must necessarily make a universal prey, and at last eat up himself. Hungry wolves will kill each other one by one until only one is left. But appetite is so strong that the last wolf left will kill itself.

“Great Agamemnon, this chaos, when degree and rank are suffocated, follows the choking. Chaos necessarily follows the neglect of degree and rank. And because of this neglect of degree and rank, a person who takes a step goes lower, although he intends to climb higher.

“The general is disdained by the man who is one step below him, that man is disdained by the next man, and that next man is disdained by the man beneath him, so every step, following the example of the first step of the man who is sick of his superior, grows to an envious fever of pale and bloodless and jealous rivalry. Each man follows the bad example of the man just above him.

“And it is this fever that keeps Troy from being conquered, not her own sinews. To end a lengthy tale, Troy still stands because of our weakness, not because of her strength.”

Nestor said, “Most wisely has Ulysses here revealed the fever that has made all our authority sick.”

“You have described the problem, Ulysses, but what is the

solution?” Agamemnon asked. “You have described the illness, but what is the remedy?”

Ulysses replied, “The great Achilles, whom public opinion crowns the strongest and the greatest warrior of our army, having his ear full of his airy fame, grows vain of his worth, and he lies in his tent and mocks our plans. With him Patroclus lies upon a lazy bed the livelong day and makes scurrilous jests. And with ridiculous and awkward actions, which — slanderer that he is — Patroclus calls imitations, he mimics us.

“Sometimes, great Agamemnon, he assumes your supreme position, and, like a strutting actor on a stage, whose imagination lies in his hamstrings, and who thinks it wonderful to hear the wooden dialogue and the wooden sound that his long strides make on the wooden stage — he pretends to be your greatness and acts with such a to-be-pitied and over-strained performance. And when he speaks, it is like a metal bell being ground down to tune it — the words are unfitting and even if they were to come from the tongue of Typhon, a mythological monster who roared with a hundred mouths, they would seem to be hyperbolic.

“At this musty and moldy stuff, the huge Achilles, lolling on his bed, which is pressed with his weight, laughs out a loud applause from his deep chest and cries, ‘Excellent! It is exactly Agamemnon! Now play Nestor for me — hem, and stroke your beard, as if he were preparing to make some oration.’ Once that is done, and Patroclus has portrayed Nestor as nearly accurate as the extreme ends of parallel lines are near to each other, or as like Nestor as the ugly and deformed Vulcan is like his wife — Venus, the goddess of sexual passion — godly Achilles continually cries, ‘Excellent! It is Nestor exactly. Now play Nestor again for me, Patroclus. This time show him arming himself in response to a night alarm.’

“And then, truly, the frail defects of age must be the subject of a scene of mirth. Patroclus coughs and spits, and fumbles while putting on his gorget — armor for the throat — with palsied, shaking hands. His hands tremble as he puts in the rivet holding the pieces of the gorget together and then accidentally pulls out the rivet. Sir Valor — Achilles — dies laughing. He cries, ‘Oh, enough, Patroclus; stop, or give me ribs of steel! I shall split all my ribs with the pleasure of my laughing.’”

“And in this fashion, all our abilities, gifts, natures, shapes, individual and group virtues of great merit, achievements, plots and plans, orders, preventions and defensive maneuvers, exhortations to do battle, or diplomatic speeches to arrange a truce, success or loss, what is or is not, serves as stuff for these two to mock.”

Nestor said, “And in the imitation of these two — Achilles and Patroclus — who, as Ulysses says, opinion crowns with an authoritative voice — many are infected. Ajax is grown self-willful, and he bears his head in such a rein, in fully as proud a place as broad-chested Achilles. He keeps to his tent like him. He gives feasts to his supporters; he rails against our management of the war, he is as bold as an oracle, and he sets on Thersites, who is a villain whose gall coins slanders as quickly as a mint makes coins. Thersites compares us to dirt, and he weakens and discredits our exposed position, however thickly hemmed in with danger we are.”

Ulysses said, “They censure our policy, and they call it cowardice. They believe that wisdom is not relevant in war, they obstruct foresight and planning, and they value no action except that of physical fighting. The quiet and intellectual people, who plan how many soldiers shall strike the enemy in battle, who decide when the time is right and everything is properly prepared to give the best chance of

victory, and who know by careful scouting the enemies' number and strength — why, this has not a finger's dignity to them. They call this bed-work, map-making, armchair strategy. They value more highly the battering ram that batters down the wall, because of the battering ram's great swing and its violent, heavy blows, than the engineer who made the battering ram, or those people who with the fineness of their souls and intellect guide the use of the battering ram.”

Nestor said, “Let all this be granted, and we can conclude that the horse of Achilles is worth many sons of Thetis.”

Achilles was the son of the sea-goddess Thetis.

A trumpet sounded.

“What trumpet is that?” Agamemnon asked. “Go and find out, Menelaus.”

Menelaus said, “Someone has come from Troy.”

Aeneas walked over to the Greeks.

Agamemnon asked, “What do you want here before our tent?”

“Is this great Agamemnon's tent?” Aeneas asked. “Please tell me.”

“Yes, it is,” Agamemnon replied.

“May one who is a herald and a Prince deliver a fair and courteous message to his Kingly ears?” Aeneas asked.

“Yes, you can, with a guarantee that you will not be hurt — a guarantee that is stronger than Achilles' arm,” Agamemnon said. “You can deliver your message in front of all the Greek leaders who with one voice call Agamemnon head and general.”

“That is fair permission and strong security,” Aeneas replied. “How may a stranger to those most imperial looks know them from the eyes of other mortals? How can I tell who is Agamemnon?”

“How!” Agamemnon asked. He was surprised that Aeneas could not tell that he was Agamemnon, leader of the Greek warriors.

“Yes,” Aeneas replied. “I ask so that I might awaken reverence and put on a face full of respect, and bid my cheek to be ready with a blush as modest as morning with its blushing dawn when she coldly eyes the youthful Phoebus Apollo the Sun-god as he begins to drive his Sun-chariot across the sky. Which of you is that god in office, that god who guides men? Which of you is the high and mighty Agamemnon?”

Using the royal plural, Agamemnon said, “This Trojan scorns us; or else the men of Troy are ceremonious courtiers who are full of formal etiquette.”

Aeneas replied, “When the Trojans are unarmed and not at war, they are courtiers as generous, as courtly, and as debonair as bowing Angels; that’s their fame and reputation in peace. But when they need to be soldiers, they have venomous anger, good arms, strong joints, and true swords, and with Jove willing, they are unequalled in courage. But peace, Aeneas. Be quiet, Trojan. Lay your finger on your lips! Praise is worth nothing if the praised person is himself doing the praising, but when the grumbling enemy praises, that is the praise that gets talked about; that praise, solely and surely, is real and leads to fame and good reputation.”

Agamemnon asked, “Sir, you man of Troy, do you call yourself Aeneas?”

“Yes, Greek, that is my name.”

“Please state what your business is here.”

“Sir, pardon me; my business here is for Agamemnon’s ears to hear.”

“He hears privately nothing that comes from Troy,” Agamemnon said.

“I have not come from Troy to whisper and talk confidentially to him,” Aeneas replied. “I brought a trumpeter to awaken his ears so that he will pay close attention, and after his ears are awakened I will speak.”

“Speak as frankly and freely as the wind. It is not Agamemnon’s sleeping hour. That you shall know, Trojan, he is awake, he tells you so himself — I am Agamemnon.”

“Trumpeter, blow loud,” Aeneas said. “Send your brass voice through all these lazy tents, and every Greek of mettle, let him know that Troy’s message shall fairly be spoken aloud.”

The trumpet sounded.

Aeneas said, “We have, great Agamemnon, here in Troy a Prince named Hector — Priam is his father — who in this dull and long-continued truce has grown rusty. He ordered me to take a trumpeter, and to speak this message. Kings, Princes, lords! If there is one among the fairest of Greece who holds his honor higher than his ease, who seeks his praise more than he fears his peril, who knows his valor and does not know his fear, who loves his woman more than is shown by the profession of sweet nothings to her own lips, and who dares to avow her beauty and her worth in other arms than hers, by fighting for her — to him Hector makes this challenge.

“Hector, in view of the Trojans and of the Greeks, shall make it good, or do his best to prove it by arms, that he has a lady

who is wiser, fairer, and truer than any woman any Greek ever held in his arms. Tomorrow, Hector will with his trumpet call midway between your tents and the walls of Troy to rouse a Greek who is true in love to come and fight him.

“If any Greek comes and fights him, Hector shall honor that Greek; if no Greek comes and fights him, he’ll say in Troy when he returns that the Greek dames are sunburnt and are not worth a splinter from a lance. That is my message.”

“This message shall be told to the lovers in our army, Lord Aeneas,” Agamemnon replied. “If none of them has that kind of soul, then we left them all at home, but we are soldiers, and may that soldier prove to be a mere recreant who means not to be in love, has not been in love, or is not in love! If one of our soldiers is, or has been, or means to be in love, then that one meets Hector; if no one else will fight him, I am the man who will fight him.”

Nestor said, “Tell Hector about Nestor, who was a man when Hector’s grandfather was still being breastfed. Nestor is old now, but if there is not in our Greek army one noble man who has one spark of fire to fight Hector on behalf of his loved one, tell Hector from me that I’ll hide my silver beard behind the gold beaver of a helmet and in my forearm-protecting armor I will put this withered arm, and when I meet him to fight him, I will tell him that my lady was fairer than his grandmother and as chaste as any woman in the world. Although Hector’s youth is in flood, I’ll back up what I tell him with my three remaining drops of blood.”

“May the Heavens now forbid such scarcity of youth!” Aeneas said.

“Amen,” Ulysses said.

“Fair Lord Aeneas, let me shake your hand,” Agamemnon said. “To our pavilion I shall lead you, sir. Achilles shall hear

your message and so shall each lord of Greece; your message shall be announced from tent to tent. You yourself shall feast with us before you go and find welcome from a noble foe.”

All began to leave except Ulysses.

Ulysses hissed, “Nestor!”

Nestor stayed behind with Ulysses; they were alone together.

“What do you want, Ulysses?”

“I have the beginning of an idea in my brain; stay with me for a while and help me make it a mature idea.”

“What is your young idea?”

“This is it. Blunt wedges split hard knots. In our camp we have a hard knot that we must split without the use of subtlety. The seed of pride that was in Achilles has fully matured and is developing its own seeds that can be sown in others. The pride that rank Achilles has must now be cropped and cut down unless it releases its seeds and breed a nursery of similar evil in other warriors who will tower over and overpower all of us.”

“True, but what can we do in response?”

“This challenge that the gallant Hector sends, however it is expressed as a challenge to any Greek warrior, is in reality a challenge to Achilles only.”

“That is correct,” Nestor said. “The object of the challenge is evident and obvious. We see that in the details.”

It was widely known in the Greek camp that Achilles was in love with a Trojan woman: one of Hector’s sisters.

“By looking at the details, we can see the big picture,” Nestor said. “A row of little numbers in an accounting ledger can add up to a sum of great wealth. When the challenge is

publicly announced, there is no doubt that Achilles, even if his brain were as barren as the sandbanks of Libya — though, Apollo knows, Achilles' brain is dry and barren enough — will, with great speed of judgment, yes, with celerity, realize that Hector is explicitly challenging him.”

“And Achilles will answer the challenge and fight Hector, don't you think?” Ulysses asked.

“Yes, and it is most fitting for Achilles to fight Hector. Who else may you get to oppose Hector and defeat him and gain — not lose — honor, except for Achilles? Although this will be a recreational combat that is not to the death, yet in the duel much reputation is at stake. For here in this duel the Trojans will taste our dearest repute with their finest palate — their best warrior will fight our best warrior. Believe me, Ulysses, our reputation shall be oddly balanced in this trivial action — our reputation as warriors will be at risk in this duel, although it involves only one of our warriors.

“Although the duel involves only two particular warriors, it shall give a reputation of good or bad to the general body of soldiers. A table of contents is small compared to the entire book, but the table of contents is a good indicator of the worth of the entire volume. In the table of contents is seen the baby figure of the giant mass of things to come at large. A victory in this duel can make our warriors think that a victory in the war is likely. It is supposed that the man who meets Hector is chosen by us to meet him. Because all of us choose our champion, we know that the choice is made on the basis of merit — naturally, we would choose our best warrior to fight Hector. Since we would choose a warrior whom we consider our best — a warrior who figuratively is boiled so that his virtues are concentrated — if that warrior were to lose the duel, then the conquering Trojans will be heartened and will form a strong, steely opinion of themselves. Once warriors have such good morale and such

a good opinion of themselves, then their limbs become weapons that are no less effective than the swords and bows that the limbs direct.”

Ulysses replied, “Pardon me for what I have to say because I am going to say something contrary to what you just said. I conclude that it is meet — fitting — Achilles does not meet — fight — Hector. We must not allow Achilles to fight Hector in a duel. Let us, like merchants, show our foulest wares, and think, perhaps, they’ll sell; if they don’t sell, the luster of the better wares that we have yet to show shall show all the better. Let a warrior worse than Achilles fight Hector. Perhaps he’ll win. If he does not, we can say that we have better warriors who did not fight Hector. Do not consent that Hector and Achilles ever meet in a duel because both our honor and our shame in this are dogged with two bad consequences.”

“I don’t see them with my old eyes,” Nestor said. “What are they?”

“The two bad consequences follow from this fact: Either Achilles will win the duel or he will be defeated.

“Whatever glory our Achilles wins from Hector, we all would share with him, if he were not proud. But Achilles is already too insolent, and we would be better off being parched in the African Sun than in the pride and bitter scorn of his eyes. That is what would happen if he defeated Hector.

“But if Hector were to defeat Achilles, why then the reputation of our entire army is hurt because the reputation of our best warrior has been tainted.

“Let us avoid both bad consequences by making a lottery, and, through use of a trick, we will have the blockheaded Ajax draw the lot to fight with Hector. Among ourselves we will praise him for being our best warrior because that will be a dose of medicine for the great Myrmidon — Achilles

— who basks in loud applause, and it will make him lower his helmet crest that curves prouder than the rainbow along which the goddess Iris travels.

“If the dull, brainless Ajax should come safely away from the duel, we will dress him up with shouts of acclamation. If he fails and loses the duel, we will still have the opinion that we have better men than him — better men who could have defeated Hector.

“But, hit or miss, whether Ajax wins or loses, the outcome of our project will have this consequence: Our employing Ajax in this way will pluck down Achilles’ plumes — Achilles will become less proud.”

“Ulysses, now I begin to relish your advice, and I will give a taste of it forthwith to Agamemnon. Let’s go to him right away. Two curs shall tame each other. Pride alone must provoke the mastiffs on, as if it were their bone.”

CHAPTER 2

— 2.1 —

Ajax and Thersites met in the Greek camp.

“Thersites!” Ajax called.

Ignoring Ajax, Thersites said to himself, “Agamemnon, what if he had boils? Fully all over his body, generally, since he is a general?”

“Thersites!”

“And suppose those boils did run and ooze pus. Let us say they did. Wouldn’t the general run then? The general would run with ooze, and the general body of soldiers would run away in fright. Wouldn’t that be a botchy core? Wouldn’t that be the infected center of a boil? Wouldn’t that be a corps of soldiers who were unwilling to fight?”

“Dog!” Ajax called.

“Then would come some matter from him; I see none coming from him now,” Thersites said.

He was punning. “Matter” referred to the pus that would ooze from the boil. “Matter” also meant “intelligence.” Thersites saw no pus oozing from Agamemnon; he also saw nothing intelligent coming from him.

“You bitch-wolf’s son, can’t you hear me?” Ajax said. He hit Thersites while saying, “Since you can’t hear me, feel me.”

“May the plague of Greece fall upon you, you mongrel beef-witted lord!” Thersites said.

The plague sometimes fell upon the crowded Greek camp. Being ill spirited as always, Thersites wanted Ajax — whom he called a mongrel because Ajax’ father was Greek and his

mother was Trojan — to get the plague. Thersites also called Ajax “beef-witted” because eating beef was reputed to lower the eater’s intelligence.

“Speak then, you moldiest leaven, speak,” Ajax said. “I will beat you until you cease being ugly and instead become handsome.”

“It’s much more likely that my criticisms of you will make you intelligent and holy,” Thersites said, “but, I think, your horse will sooner memorize an oration than you learn a prayer by heart. You can strike me, can’t you? I call down a red plague on your sorry-ass tricks!”

“Toadstool, tell me about the proclamation,” Ajax said.

Ajax called Thersites “toadstool” because Thersites’ words tended to be poisonous like a toadstool. The insult also included the sense of “toad’s excrement.”

“Do you think I have no sense, and therefore you can strike me thus?”

“Tell me about the proclamation!”

“You are proclaimed a fool, I think.”

“Do not insult me, porcupine, do not; my fingers itch for a fight.”

Ajax’ intelligence was lacking; sometimes his insults backfired on him. If Ajax’ fingers were itching, the pain caused by the porcupine’s quills would stop the itching.

“I wish you itched from head to foot and I had the task of scratching you; I would make you the loathsome scab in Greece.”

Thersites was punning on “scab,” one meaning of which was “loathsome fellow.”

He continued, “When you go forth in the battle incursions, you strike as slowly as the other soldiers.”

“I say, tell me about the proclamation!”

“You grumble and rail every hour about Achilles, and you are as full of envy of his greatness as Cerberus is of Proserpine’s beauty, yes, and your envy makes you bark at Achilles.”

Cerberus was the three-headed dog that guarded Hades, Land of the Dead. Proserpine was the beautiful goddess who was Queen of Hades. Cerberus, the ugliest thing in Hades, envied Proserpine, the most beautiful being in Hades.

“Mistress Thersites!” Ajax said, attempting to insult Thersites by calling him a woman.

“You should strike Achilles!” Thersites continued.

“Cob loaf!”

A cob loaf was a bun — a round loaf or lump of bread.

Thersites said, “Achilles would pound you into pieces with his fist, just as a sailor breaks a hard biscuit.”

Ajax hit Thersites while shouting, “You cur! You son of a whore!”

“Do carry on,” Thersites said sarcastically.

“You stool for a witch!” Ajax shouted.

Thersites was a jester. Sometimes, a jester carried a monkey on his back. Ajax was saying that a witch could replace the monkey and sit on Thersites’ back. In addition, Ajax was calling Thersites a witch’s excrement. A stool was also a seat on which one sat while using a chamberpot, and so a stool was a privy. Sometimes, Ajax’ insults backfired on him. He had just called Thersites a privy, but “Ajax” is similar to “a

jakes,” and a jakes is a privy.

“Keep it up,” Thersites, who realized that Ajax’ joke had backfired, said. “You sodden-witted lord! You alcohol-crazed lord! You have no more brain than I have in my elbows! An *assinigo* — Spanish for ‘little ass’ — may tutor you, you scurvy-valiant, heartily contemptible ass! You are here only to thrash Trojans; and you are bought and sold among those of any wit, like a barbarian slave. If you continue to beat me, I will begin at your heel, and tell you what you are by inches, you thing of no feelings and sensitivity, you!”

“You dog!”

“You scurvy lord!”

Ajax beat him while shouting, “You cur!”

“You are Mars’ idiot,” Thersites said. “Keep it up, rude man. You camel, keep it up, you beast of burden.”

Achilles and Patroclus walked over to them.

“Why, how are you now, Ajax?” Achilles said. “Why are you acting like this? Hello, Thersites! What’s the matter, man?”

“Do you see this man there?” Thersites asked, pointing to Ajax.

“Yes,” Achilles replied. “What’s the matter?”

“No, look at him,” Thersites said.

“I am. What’s the matter?”

“No, look at him well and closely.”

“Well’!” Achilles said. “Why, I do.”

“But yet you are not looking well upon him; for whosoever

you take him to be, he is Ajax,” Thersites said.

Thersites was punning on “Ajax” and “a jakes,” and he was saying that Achilles was not looking well upon Ajax because he did not realize Ajax was a privy.

“I know that, fool,” Achilles replied.

Pretending that Achilles had said, “I know that fool,” Thersites replied, “Yes, but that fool does not know himself.”

“Therefore I beat you,” Ajax said, unwittingly agreeing that he was a fool.

“Lo, lo, lo, lo, what tiny amounts of wit he utters!” Thersites said. Putting his hands to his head and mimicking an ass’ ears, he added, “His verbal sallies have ears thus long. I have beat his brain more than he has beat my bones. I can buy nine sparrows for a penny, and his *pia mater* — his brain — is not worth the ninth part of a sparrow. Achilles, I’ll tell you what I say of this lord — Ajax — who wears his wit in his belly and his guts in his head.”

Pia mater means “tender matter”; it is literally the tissue that covers the brain.

“What?” Achilles asked.

“I say, this Ajax —” Thersites began.

Ajax raised his hand as if he were going to hit Thersites.

“Don’t, good Ajax,” Achilles said.

“— has not as much wit —”

Achilles grabbed Ajax and kept him from hitting Thersites, saying, “No, Ajax. I must hold you and prevent you from hitting Thersites.”

“— as will stop the eye of Helen’s needle, for whom he comes to fight.”

One meaning of the eye of Helen’s needle was the opening of her vagina.

“Peace, fool!” Achilles said. “Shut up!”

“I would have peace and quietness, but the fool will not,” Thersites said. He pointed at Ajax and said, “The fool is he there — that he. Look at him there.”

Ajax began, “Oh, you damned cur! I shall —”

Achilles interrupted him: “Will you set your wit against a fool’s?”

“No, I assure you,” Thersites said, “for a Fool’s wit will shame Ajax’ wit.”

Many Fools — professional jesters — in fact were wise, or at least clever.

“Speak good words, Thersites,” Patroclus said. “Be nice.”

“What’s the quarrel between you two?” Achilles asked Ajax.

“I bade the vile owl — this vile bird of omen — to tell me the content of the proclamation, and he rails upon and insults me.”

“I am not your servant,” Thersites said.

“Whatever,” Ajax said.

“I serve here voluntarily.”

“Your last service was sufferance and involved suffering; it was not voluntary,” Achilles said. “No man is beaten voluntarily. Ajax was just now the volunteer, and you were under an impress — he drafted you to be beaten without your permission.”

“That is true,” Thersites replied. “A great deal of your intelligence, too, lies in your muscles, or else I have been listening to liars.”

He added sarcastically, “Hector shall have a great catch, if he knocks out either of your brains. It would be as good as cracking a moldy nutshell that contained no nut.”

“Are you saying that about me as well as about Ajax, Thersites?” Achilles asked.

“Ulysses and old Nestor, whose wit was moldy before your grandsires had nails on their toes, yoke you as if you were draft-oxen and make you plow up the wars. They order you about and make you do heavy fighting in the war.”

“What!” Achilles said.

“Yes, indeed,” Thersites said. “Pull that load, Achilles! Pull it, Ajax! Pull!”

“I shall cut out your tongue,” Ajax said.

“It doesn’t matter,” Thersites replied. “I shall speak as much as you afterwards.”

Ajax was a warrior, not a diplomat; he also was not an intelligent man. Thersites would speak as much sense as Ajax even if Thersites’ tongue were cut out. And if a person makes sounds that are nonsense, is that person speaking?

“No more words, Thersites,” Patroclus said. “Peace!”

“I will hold my peace when Achilles’ brooch, or should I say ‘brach,’ bids me, shall I?” Thersites said.

Both “brooch” and “brach” were insults. A brooch is worn on clothing — it hangs on clothing. Thersites was calling Patroclus Achilles’ hanger-on. A “brach” is a female dog, a bitch. Thersites was calling Patroclus Achilles’ bitch — his male prostitute.

“There’s an insult for you, Patroclus,” Achilles said.

“I will see you hanged, like clodpoles, like blockheads, before I come any more to your tents,” Thersites said. “I will keep myself among people of wit and intelligence and leave the faction and the company of fools.”

He exited.

“A good riddance,” Patroclus said.

Achilles said to Ajax, “Sir, it is proclaimed through all our host of soldiers that Hector, by the fifth hour after sunrise, will with a trumpet between our tents and Troy tomorrow morning call some knight to arms who has a stomach to fight and such a knight who dares to maintain — I know not what. It is trash and doesn’t matter. Farewell.”

“Farewell,” Ajax said, then added, “Who shall answer his challenge and fight him?”

“I don’t know,” Achilles replied. “A lottery will be held, otherwise Hector knows which man would fight him.”

“Oh, meaning you,” Ajax said. “I will go and learn more about this.”

They exited.

— 2.2 —

In a room in King Priam’s palace in Troy, a council was being held. Priam, Hector, Troilus, Paris, and Helenus attended it and spoke.

King Priam said, “After so many hours, lives, and speeches spent, thus once again Nestor gives us this message from the Greeks: *‘Deliver Helen into our hands, and all other damages — such as honor, loss of time, travail and travel, expense, wounds, friends, and what else dear that is consumed in the hot digestion of this war that is as insatiable*

as a cormorant, a bird of prey — shall be struck off the list of damages and forgotten.’ Hector, what do you have to say about this?”

Hector said, “Though no man less fears the Greeks than I as far as I am personally concerned, yet, revered Priam, no lady has feelings that are more tender and more spongy to suck in the sense of fear for others, and no lady is more ready to cry out ‘Who knows what follows?’ than Hector is. Peace is wounded by overconfident confidence, but sensible caution is called the beacon and guiding light of the wise — it is the cloth swab that cleans to the bottom of the worst wound. Let Helen go; let her return to the Greeks. Since the first sword was drawn about this question, every tithe-soul, among many thousands of tithes, has been as valuable as Helen; I am referring to the Trojan soldiers who have died in the war over Helen. If we have lost so many tenths of our soldiers, to guard a thing — Helen — that is not ours and is not worth to us, even if she were Trojan, the value of one tithe, what merit is in the argument against yielding her up? I say that Helen is not worth the death of even one Trojan soldier, and yet one tenth of our soldiers have died in the war over her.”

“Wrong, you are wrong, my brother!” Troilus said. “Do you weigh the worth and honor of a King as great as our revered father in a scale that measures only ounces and not great weights? Will you use useless counters to add up the immeasurability of his vastness? Will you buckle in a waist most fathomless with spans and inches that are as diminutive as fears and arguments? Be ashamed, for godly shame!”

Troilus believed that the deaths of so many Trojan soldiers were justified. To give up Helen would cause his and Hector’s father, King Priam, to lose honor.

Helenus said to Troilus, “It’s no wonder that you bite so sharply at reasons since you are so empty of them. Are you saying that our father should not govern the great command

of his affairs with reasons? Your speech has no reasons that tell him to govern that way. A ruler should use reason and arguments to determine how best to rule; in your speech you have shown no reason, no arguments, and no concern for ruling well.”

Troilus replied, “You are for dreams and slumbers, brother priest; you fur your gloves with reason. You use reason and reasons to make your life more comfortable. Here are your reasons to give Helen back to the Greeks: You know an enemy intends you harm, and you know that an employed sword is perilous. Reason flees the object that causes harm. Who marvels then that when Helenus sees a Greek and the Greek’s sword he attaches the wings of reason on his heels and flees like chidden Mercury from Jove, or like a star falling from its Heavenly sphere?”

Mercury was the fleet messenger-god who served Jove, aka Jupiter, King of the gods. Mercury had wings on his ankles, which made him fast. He was mischievous and did such things as steal the cattle of his fellow god Apollo, which resulted in Mercury being chidden by Jove.

Troilus continued, “If we talk about reason, let’s shut our gates and sleep. We won’t need to go out on the battlefield and fight; instead, we can stay home and take naps. Manhood and honor would have the hearts of cowardly hares, if they would make fat their thoughts by cramming them with reason. Reason and prudence make men cowardly and youthful vigor dejected.”

Hector said to Troilus, “Brother, Helen is not worth what she costs us to hold her.”

Troilus replied, “What is the worth of anything, except the value people put on it?”

“But value dwells not in a particular, subjective desire,” Hector said. “Something gets its value and worth from itself

— its objective value and worth — as well as from what value and worth a person prizes it as. The objective worth and value are more important than the subjective worth and value. It is mad idolatry to make the religious service greater than the god; the will loves and desires foolishly when the will is inclined to attach value to the thing that it — to its own harm — loves and desires, when it has no objective perception of the value of the thing it desires.”

A person’s will is that person’s desire. Free will means that we can choose whether or not to try to satisfy our desire. In some cases, reason will tell us that a certain desire is bad and moral reasoning will tell us that we ought not to try to satisfy that desire. In other cases, reason will tell us that a certain desire is good and moral reasoning will tell us that we ought to try to satisfy that desire.

Part of what Hector was saying is that good and bad are objective. Something is really good or it is really bad, and whether it is good or bad is not a matter of opinion. Part of what Troilus was saying is that good and bad are subjective. Something is good if you think it is good; something is bad if you think it is bad.

Many people believe that good and bad, and right and wrong, are objective — not dependent upon opinion, and incumbent upon all rational beings. According to objectivism, moral values and principles do not depend upon a particular person’s opinions. According to objectivism, moral values and principles allow us to judge ethical statements such as “Murder is morally wrong” as either true or false.

Nevertheless, objectivists realize that some things are subjective. You and I may feel a breeze blowing. You may think that breeze feels cold; I may think that the breeze feels warm. Both of us are right. The breeze feels cold to you, and it feels warm to me. However, the temperature of the breeze is objective; if the temperature is 68 degrees Fahrenheit, then

the temperature is not 48 degrees Fahrenheit.

Troilus replied, “Suppose that I take today a wife, and my deliberate choice of a wife is led on and guided by my will. My eyes and ears inflamed my will; my wife is beautiful and has a pleasing voice. My sense of sight and my sense of hearing are two experienced pilots that travel between the dangerous shores of will and judgment. I saw and heard a woman, I desired her, and I married her. Suppose that time passes and I no longer desire the woman I made my wife? How may I reject her, now that I no longer desire her? After all, she is my wife; I chose to marry her. If I am an honorable man, I cannot evade the decision I made and flinch away from her. We do not return silks to the merchant after we have soiled the silks, and we do not throw away all the leftover food simply because we are now full. Instead, we see first if we can use any of the leftover food rather than throwing it away or feeding it to animals.

“It was thought fitting that Paris should do some vengeance on the Greeks. Your breath and voices of full consent bellied his sails and helped him sail to Greece to get that vengeance.”

The vengeance was retribution for an act committed many years earlier. The gods Apollo and Neptune built the walls of Troy for King Laomedon, who then refused to pay them the wages he had promised. To get vengeance, Neptune sent a sea monster to Troy. Soothsayers said that if Hesione, the daughter of King Laomedon and the sister of the future King Priam, were sacrificed to the sea monster, then Troy would no longer suffer from the sea monster. Hercules, a Greek, came to Troy during his travels, and he said that he would kill the sea monster and save Hesione in return for a reward. Hercules killed the sea monster, but King Laomedon refused to give him the reward, so Hercules kidnapped Hesione and gave her to Telamon, a Greek King. They became the parents

of Ajax. To get vengeance for Hercules' kidnapping of Hesione, Paris went to Greece and kidnapped Helen, the wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta.

Troilus continued, "The seas and winds, old enemies, made a truce and gave Paris good service. He visited the ports he desired, and for an old aunt — Hesione, Paris' aunt — whom the Greeks held captive, Paris brought back to Troy a Greek Queen, Helen, whose youth and freshness make the god Apollo seem wrinkled, and make the fresh morning seem stale.

"Why do we keep Helen? The Greeks keep our aunt. Is Helen worth keeping? Why, Helen is a pearl whose price has launched more than a thousand ships, and turned crowned Kings into merchants who want to purchase that pearl.

"If you'll affirm that it was wise that Paris went to Greece — as you necessarily must, for you all cried, 'Go, go,' and if you'll confess that he brought home a noble prize — as you necessarily must, for you all clapped your hands and cried, 'Inestimable!' — why do you now berate the outcome of your proper wisdom, and do a deed that fortune never did, which is to berate and rate as worthless the thing that you prized as being richer than sea and land?"

"Oh, it is a very base theft when we are afraid to keep something that we have stolen! But we are thieves, and we are unworthy of the thing we stole — we disgraced the Greeks in their own country by stealing that thing, yet we are afraid in our own country to justify that theft!"

Outside the council chamber, Cassandra screamed, "Cry, Trojans, cry!"

Cassandra was one of King Priam's daughters. She had agreed to sleep with the god Apollo if he gave her the gift of prophecy, but after he gave her that gift, she reneged on her promise. Apollo was unable to take his gift back, but he gave

her another “gift”: Her prophecies would be true, but no one would believe them until after they came true. Rather than believing her prophecies, her hearers would consider her mad — insane.

“What noise is this?” Priam asked. “What shriek is this?”

“It is our mad sister,” Troilus replied. “I recognize her voice.”

“Cry, Trojans!” Cassandra screamed.

“It is Cassandra,” Hector confirmed.

Cassandra, raving, entered the council chamber.

“Cry, Trojans, cry! Lend me ten thousand eyes, and I will fill them with prophetic tears!”

“Peace, sister, peace!” Hector said. “Be quiet, sister!”

“Virgins and boys, middle-aged men and wrinkled elders, soft infants who can do nothing but cry, add to my clamors!” Cassandra screamed. “Let us pay now a part of that mass of moans to come. Cry, Trojans, cry! Employ your eyes by creating tears! Troy must cease to exist, and our beautiful palace will no longer stand. Our firebrand brother, Paris, burns us all.”

When Queen Hecuba was pregnant with Paris, she dreamed that she gave birth to a firebrand — a torch — that burned the city of Troy.

Cassandra screamed, “Cry, Trojans, cry! A Helen and a woe! Cry, cry! Either Troy burns, or else you let Helen go!”

Cassandra ran from the council chamber.

Hector said, “Now, youthful Troilus, do not these high strains of divination in our sister create in you some feelings of remorse? Or is your blood so madly hot that no discourse

of reason, nor fear of a bad outcome in a bad cause, can diminish the hotness of your blood?"

Troilus replied, "Why, brother Hector, we may not think the justness of each act is formed only by its outcome, and we may not even once lessen the courage of our minds just because Cassandra's mad. Her brainsick raptures cannot make distasteful the goodness of a quarrel in which all our honor is engaged — our honor makes that quarrel gracious and righteous. For my private part, I am no more personally affected than all Priam's sons, and may Jove forbid that there should be done among us such things as might convince the least courageous among us not to fight for and keep Helen!"

Paris said, "If we were to do that, the world might find guilty of levity my undertakings as well as your counsels. But I call on the gods to give evidence that your full consent gave wings to my inclination to get vengeance, and I swear to the gods that your full consent cut off all fears accompanying so dire a project.

"For what, alas, can these my arms do by themselves? What fighting ability is in one man's valor that can stand the assault and enmity of those this quarrel would excite? Yet, I protest, if I alone were to experience the difficulties and if I had as ample power as I have will and desire, then I, Paris, would never retract what I have done, nor would I lose courage in the endeavor."

Priam said, "Paris, you speak like one drunk on your sweet delights. You still have the sweet honey, but these men have the bitter gall, so your being valiant is not at all praiseworthy."

Paris replied, "Sir, I propose not merely to keep for myself the pleasures such a beauty brings with it, for I want to have the soil of Helen's fair rape wiped off, by honorably keeping her."

One meaning of the word “rape” is “violent seizure” — Paris had kidnapped Helen. In a moment he would refer to Helen as “the ransacked Queen” — the word “ransack” means “plundered.”

Paris continued, “What treason would it be to the ransacked Queen, what disgrace would it be to your great reputations and what shame would it be to me to now deliver her possession up on terms of base and dishonorable compulsion! It would be a disgrace for us to return Helen simply because we were forced to! Can it be that so degenerate a strain of disposition as this should once set foot in your generous bosoms?”

“Not even the meanest and lowest man in our faction is without a heart to dare or a sword to draw when Helen is defended, nor is there anyone so noble that his life would be ill bestowed and his death would be without fame where Helen is the subject. So then, I say, well may we fight for her whom, we know well, the world’s large spaces cannot parallel. The world does not have Helen’s equal.”

Hector said, “Paris and Troilus, you have both spoken well, and on the cause and question now in hand have given a commentary, but you have done that superficially. You are much like the young men whom Aristotle thought unfit to learn moral philosophy. The arguments you make contribute more to increasing the hot passion of distempered blood than they do to making a fair determination between right and wrong that is free from the influence of pleasure and revenge, which have ears deafer than the ears of adders to the voice of any true and unbiased decision. Nature craves that all dues be rendered to their owners. Now, what family relationship in all humanity is closer than a wife is to her husband? In case this law of nature is corrupted through sexual appetite, and in case great minds, because of biased indulgence given to their paralyzed wills, resist that law of

nature, there is a law in each well-ordered nation to curb those raging sexual appetites that are most wanton and rebellious.

“If Helen then is the wife of Sparta’s King, as we know she is, these moral laws of nature and of nations speak loudly to have her returned to her husband. To persist in doing wrong does not extenuate that wrong, but instead makes it much heavier and more serious.

“My — Hector’s — opinion is truly what I have just said — Helen ought to be returned to her husband. Nevertheless, my spirited brothers, I am inclined to agree that we resolve to always keep Helen because this is a cause that has no mean consequences for our collective and individual honors. We will gain honor if we fight to keep Helen. Glory and honor are objectively valuable.”

“Why, there you touched upon the life of our undertaking,” Troilus said. “If we did not favor glory more than the performance of our aroused anger, I would not wish a single drop of Trojan blood to be spent in keeping Helen. But, worthy Hector, Helen is a theme — a reason to take action — of honor and renown. She is a spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds. The courage of those deeds may beat down our foes now, and it may achieve for us fame in the times to come — fame that will canonize and immortalize us. People will remember our names and our brave deeds long after we are dead. I say this because I presume that brave Hector would not lose so rich an opportunity for achieving glory as now so promisingly smiles upon the forehead of this action even if he could get the wide world’s revenue instead of glory.”

“I am on your side, you valiant offspring of great Priam,” Hector said. “I have sent a roistering challenge to the lifeless and quarreling nobles of the Greeks. I was informed that their great general, Agamemnon, slept while factious rivalry

and ambitious conflict into his army crept. My challenge, I presume, will awaken him.”

— 2.3 —

Thersites stood in front of Achilles’ tent in the Greek camp and talked to himself. Thersites had been Ajax’ Fool, but now he was Achilles’ fool. Fools, aka jesters, had the freedom to satirize other people. Much of their job was to be amusing, but they could be very critical.

“How are you doing now, Thersites! What! I see that you are lost in the labyrinth of your fury! Shall the elephant-like — slow and proud — Ajax win the day and defeat me? He beats me, and I rail at him. Oh, is this worthy satisfaction? I wish it were otherwise; I would like to beat him while he railed at me. By God, I’ll learn to make spells and raise Devils, but I’ll see that my spiteful curses have some kind of result.

“Then there’s Achilles, an exceptional plotter and contriver! If Troy cannot be taken until these two — Achilles and Ajax — undermine it, the walls will stand until they fall by themselves.

“Oh, you great thunder-thrower of Olympus, forget that you are Jove, the King of gods, and you, Mercury, lose all the serpentine craft of your caduceus — your wand with the two serpents wound around it — if you do not take that little little — less than little — wit away from them that they have! They have less than little intelligence — take it away from them! Even short-armed ignorance — ignorance has short arms and therefore little intellectual reach — itself knows that their intelligence is so abundantly scarce that it will not form a plan to deliver a fly from a spider that does not include drawing their massive iron swords and cutting the web.

“After you steal these two men’s little intelligence, then take vengeance on the whole camp! I know! Give them the bone-

ache — give them syphilis! For that, I think, is the curse belonging to those who war for a placket.”

A placket was literally a petticoat, and metaphorically a woman. Another meaning of “placket” was literally a hole in the front of a petticoat, and metaphorically a vagina.

Thersites continued, “I have said my prayers and the Devil Envy says, ‘Amen.’”

Thersites was self-aware. He called the curses he uttered “spiteful,” and he believed that the Devil Envy approved of his “prayers,” aka “curses.”

He heard something and said, “What! My Lord Achilles!”

The noise was caused not by Achilles, but by Patroclus, who said, “Who’s there? Thersites! Good Thersites, come in and rail. We want to hear you curse and criticize people.”

Thersites said, “If I could have remembered a gilt counterfeit, you would not have slipped out of my contemplation.”

A gilt counterfeit was a counterfeit coin — one made of brass and then covered with silver or gold. A slang term for such a counterfeit coin was a “slip.”

Thersites was saying that if he could have remembered Patroclus, he would have cursed him in his contemplation. Thersites was calling Patroclus a counterfeit man — a homosexual. Thersites regarded Patroclus as a “gilt counterfeit” — metaphorically, he was a gelt, aka gelded or castrated, counterfeit man, aka homosexual.

Thersites continued, “But it does not matter because I can curse you now: thyself upon thyself! The worst curse I can give you is to tell you to keep on being yourself!

“May the common curse of mankind, folly and ignorance, be

yours in great abundance! May Heaven bless you by keeping you away from a tutor, and may discipline and learning not come near you! Let your passions be your masters until your death! Don't think rationally about what you ought to do, but instead do whatever you want to do.

"Then if the woman who lays you out and prepares you for burial says that you are a good-looking corpse, I'll be sworn in a court of law and swear that she never shrouded any bodies but those of lepers.

"Amen. Where's Achilles?"

"What, are you devout?" Patroclus asked. "Were you in prayer?"

"Yes," Thersites replied. "I pray that the Heavens hear my prayer!"

Achilles walked onto the scene and asked, "Who's there?"

Patroclus answered, "Thersites, my lord."

"Where? Where?" Achilles asked. Seeing Thersites, he said, "Have you come? Why, my cheese, my digestion, why haven't you served yourself in to my table for so many meals?"

Cheese was served at the end of meals because people thought that cheese aided digestion. Achilles wanted Thersites — his cheese — to entertain him at the end of meals.

Achilles said to Thersites, "Tell me, what is Agamemnon?"

"Your commander, Achilles," Thersites replied. He then said, "Tell me, Patroclus, what is Achilles?"

"Your lord and boss, Thersites," Patroclus replied. "Tell me, please, what are you?"

“I am the person who knows what you are, Patroclus,” Thersites replied. “Tell me, Patroclus, what are you?”

“You are the person who said he knows what I am,” Patroclus said. “So you tell me what I am.”

“Tell us! Tell us!” Achilles said.

“I’ll tell what everybody is,” Thersites said. “Agamemnon commands Achilles; Achilles is my lord; I am the person who knows what Patroclus is, and Patroclus is a fool.”

“You rascal!” Patroclus said.

“Silence, fool!” Thersites said. “I have not finished.”

Achilles said to Patroclus, “Thersites is a privileged man.”

As a Fool, Thersites was allowed to speak freely and to criticize freely.

Achilles said, “Proceed, Thersites.”

Thersites said, “Agamemnon is a fool; Achilles is a fool; Thersites is a Fool, and, as I said before, Patroclus is a fool.”

“Explain this,” Achilles said. “How did you arrive at this conclusion? Tell us.”

Thersites said, “Agamemnon is a fool to try to command Achilles; Achilles is a fool to be commanded by Agamemnon; Thersites is a Fool to serve such a fool as Achilles, and Patroclus is a complete and utter fool.”

“Why am I a fool?” Patroclus asked.

“Ask your Creator,” Thersites replied. “It is enough for me to know that you are a fool.”

Seeing some people coming toward them, Thersites said, “Look. Who is coming here?”

Achilles said, “Patroclus, I’ll speak with nobody. Come in with me, Thersites.”

Achilles disappeared into his tent.

Thersites said, “Here is such foolishness, such trickery, and such knavery! All this argument is over a cuckold named Menelaus and a whore named Helen.”

He added sarcastically, “This is a good quarrel to break up into competing factions over and to bleed to death upon.”

He added honestly, “May a skin disease metaphorically spread on the subject! And may war and lechery destroy them all!”

Thersites disappeared into Achilles’ tent.

Agamemnon, Ulysses, Nestor, Diomedes, and Ajax walked over to Patroclus.

“Where is Achilles?” Agamemnon asked.

“He is inside his tent, but he is not feeling well, my lord,” Patroclus replied.

Using the royal plural, Agamemnon said, “Let it be known to him that we are here. He insulted our messengers, and we are setting aside our prerogatives of rank by visiting him. Let him be told so, lest perhaps he should think that we don’t dare bring up the fact of our position or that we don’t know our high rank.”

“I shall say so to him,” Patroclus said. He disappeared into Achilles’ tent.

“We saw Achilles just now at the opening of his tent,” Ulysses said. “He is not sick.”

“Yes, he is sick,” Ajax said. “He is lion-sick — that is, he is sick because he has a proud heart. You may call it by the nice

term ‘melancholy,’ if you want to support the man and justify his actions, but, by my head, it is pride that he suffers from and that causes his actions. But why, why? Let Achilles show us the cause. Let him explain why he acts the way he does.”

He then asked Agamemnon, “May I have a private word with you, my lord?”

He and Agamemnon went a short distance away and talked.

Nestor asked Ulysses, “What moves Ajax thus to bay and bark at Achilles?”

“Achilles has inveigled Ajax’ Fool to stop being Ajax’ Fool and instead become Achilles’ Fool.”

“Ajax’ Fool? Who, Thersites?”

“Yes, Thersites.”

Nestor said, “Then Ajax will lack matter and content to talk about, if he has lost his argument — that thing that he constantly complains about.”

Ulysses replied, “No, because you see, the person is his argument who has his argument: Achilles. Achilles took away Ajax’ subject to complain about, and so now Achilles becomes Ajax’ subject to everlastingly complain about.”

Ulysses was well read. He was alluding to this sentence that appears in Erasmus’ *Adagia*: “*Denique rationem aut argumentem Achilleum vocant, quod sit insuperabile & insolubile.*” This is Latin for “Finally, they call a reason or an argument *Achillean* because it is insuperable and insoluble.” Ulysses’ knowledge of Erasmus’ work is especially impressive because Erasmus lived and wrote centuries after Ulysses had died. Another well-read warrior was Hector, who knew about Aristotle, who lived and wrote centuries after Hector had died.

The traditional date of the fall of Troy is 1184 BCE. Aristotle lived during 384–322 BCE. Desiderius Erasmus lived during 1466–1536 CE.

Nestor said, “It’s all the better that Ajax dislikes Achilles. We prefer their fraction to their faction. It’s better that they quarrel with each other than unite against us.”

He added sarcastically, “It was a strong combination if a fool could disunite it.”

The fool meant was the Fool Thersites, but Ajax was another fool — as was Achilles.

“If wisdom does not tie together friends, folly may easily untie them,” Ulysses said. “Here comes Patroclus.”

Patroclus returned.

“No Achilles is with him,” Nestor observed.

“The elephant has joints, but none for courtesy,” Ulysses said. “The elephant’s legs are legs for necessity, not for bending.”

He meant that the elephant, symbol of pride, would bow to no one. Achilles, because of his pride, would not be submissive to Agamemnon.

Patroclus said, “Achilles told me to say to you, Agamemnon, that he is very sorry if anything more than your entertainment and pleasure moved your greatness and these nobles with you to call upon him; he hopes your visit is for no other reasons than for the sake of your health and your digestion, and for an after-dinner’s walk.”

“Listen to me, Patroclus,” Agamemnon said. “We are too well acquainted with these answers: We have heard them before. But his evasion, winged thus swiftly with scorn, cannot outfly our apprehensions. We are not fooled. Achilles

has a great reputation, and great are the reasons why we give him that reputation, yet all his virtues, which now he is not displaying, begin to lose their gloss in our eyes. Yes, they — like beautiful fruit in a dirty dish — are likely to be uneaten and to rot.

“Go and tell him that we have come to speak with him. You shall not sin if you say that I think he is over-proud and under-honorable — excessively proud and less than honorable — and that I think his opinion of himself is greater than others’ opinion of him, and that I who am a man greater than he is am here witnessing the unsociable aloofness he puts on. I who am greater than he is rein in the holy strength of my command and submit in an obsequious manner to his humorous predominance — to whatever bodily fluid is controlling his actions.”

Doctors in this culture believed that the human body had four humors, or vital fluids. Each humor made a contribution to the personality, and for a human being to be sane and healthy, the four humors had to be present in the right amounts. If a man had too much of a certain humor, it would harm his personality and health.

Blood was the sanguine humor. A sanguine man was optimistic.

Phlegm was the phlegmatic humor. A phlegmatic man was calm.

Yellow bile was the choleric humor. A choleric man was angry.

Black bile was the melancholic humor. A melancholic man was gloomy and morose.

The English word “morose” is derived from the Latin word *morosus*, which means “self-willed.” A person who is self-willed insists on doing what he or she — in this culture, it is

almost always he — wants to do without regard for the feelings of any other people.

Earlier, Ajax had said that other people could call Achilles melancholic if they wished, but he considered Achilles' illness to be excessive pride.

Using the royal plural, Agamemnon continued, "We watch his petulant tantrums, his ebbs, his flows, as if the events and whole management of this war rode on his tide. Go tell him this, and add that if he overestimates his value so much, we'll have nothing to do with him. Instead, we will treat him like a war machine that is not portable and so cannot be moved and used. We will say, 'Let's leave this war machine behind and go to the battle because this war machine cannot go to war: We will give credit to an active dwarf before we will give credit to a sleeping giant.' Tell him we said so."

"I shall," Patroclus said, "and I will bring back his answer quickly."

He disappeared into the tent.

Agamemnon said, "I will not have Achilles' subordinate bring me Achilles' answer. We have come here to speak with him. Ulysses, enter the tent. You bring me Achilles' answer."

Ulysses disappeared into Achilles' tent.

Ajax said to Agamemnon, "What is Achilles more than another man?"

"He is no more than what he thinks he is," Agamemnon replied.

He was acknowledging that Achilles was the greatest warrior among the Greek soldiers. Ajax was a good warrior, but when Achilles fought, Achilles was a better warrior than Ajax.

“Is he so much?” Ajax said. “Don’t you think that he thinks he is a better man than I am?”

“Without question,” Agamemnon replied.

“Do you agree with his thought, and say he is?”

“No, noble Ajax; you are as strong, as valiant, as wise, no less noble, much more gentle, and altogether more tractable.”

Agamemnon was giving credit to Ajax for — so far, at least — taking orders. Achilles was a greater warrior than Ajax, but Ajax was willing — so far, at least — to take orders from Agamemnon.

“Why should a man be proud?” Ajax asked. “How does pride grow? I don’t know what pride is.”

Agamemnon replied, “Your mind is clearer than Achilles’ mind, Ajax, and your virtues are fairer than Achilles’ virtues. A man who is proud eats himself up: Pride is its own mirror, its own trumpet, its own chronicle; and whatever praises itself except but in the deed, devours the deed in the praise. Praising one’s own deed lessens that deed. It is better when others praise your deed.”

“I hate a proud man just as I hate the breeding and multiplying of toads,” Ajax said.

Nestor murmured to Diomedes, “Yet Ajax loves himself. Isn’t it strange?”

Ulysses returned.

He said, “Achilles will not go to the battlefield tomorrow.”

“What’s his excuse?” Agamemnon asked.

“He gives none,” Ulysses replied. “He continues to float on the stream of his own disposition and pays no attention and

gives no respect to the thoughts of other people. He is self-willed and spends his time in self-admiration.”

“Why won’t he, as we have politely requested, come out of his tent and spend some time with us?”

“He treats as important issues things that are as small as nothing simply because they have been asked,” Ulysses said. “He makes a big issue out of trivial things such as people simply asking him for a small courtesy. He is obsessed with his own greatness, and he is so proud that he cannot speak to himself without starting a quarrel. The worth that he imagines himself to have has so heated his blood that the war between his rational mind and his passions makes him like a Kingdom enduring civil war. He is filled with rebellion and rages and batters himself down. What should I say? He is so plaguily proud that the signs of death resulting from his plague of pride cry, ‘No recovery.’ His pride is like the plague, and all the symptoms he displays make me think that he will not recover from it.”

“Let Ajax go and speak to Achilles,” Agamemnon said.

He said to Ajax, “Dear lord, go and greet Achilles in his tent. It is said he well respects you, and he will be led at your request a little from himself. If you ask him, he will be less rebellious.”

“Agamemnon, don’t let Ajax go to Achilles!” Ulysses said. “We’ll consecrate the steps that Ajax makes when they go away from — not toward — Achilles. This proud lord who bastes his arrogance with his own fat as if he were basting roast beef with its own juice and who never allows anything in the world to enter his thoughts, except such things as revolve around and concern himself — shall he be worshipped and adored and sucked-up-to by a man whom we regard as being more worthy of worship than he?”

Ulysses was fulsomely praising Ajax. Ulysses, Agamemnon,

Nestor, and Diomedes all knew that Achilles was a better warrior than Ajax, and they all knew that Ajax was a greater fool than Achilles — or anyone — but they wanted to build up Ajax so that he would be a rival to Achilles. They wanted Ajax to fight Hector and, if possible, win the duel. They wanted to praise Ajax so highly that Achilles would feel jealous and would come out of his tent and fight again for and take orders from Agamemnon.

Ulysses continued, “No, this thrice worthy and very valiant lord must not so debase his honor, which is nobly acquired; nor would I want him to ass-subjugate his own merit, despite how amply titled with complimentary epithets Achilles is, by going to Achilles. If he were to go to Achilles, that would only fatten more Achilles’ already obese pride, and it would add more coals to Cancer when the zodiacal sign burns by entertaining great Hyperion.”

The Sun — the Titan Helios, whose father is Hyperion — enters the part of the zodiac devoted to Cancer when the summer solstice occurs in late June, when the weather in most of the northern hemisphere is already hot and will soon grow hotter.

Ulysses continued, “This lord go to Achilles! May Jupiter forbid that, and may Jupiter say, ‘No, Achilles shall go to this lord!’”

Nestor murmured to Diomedes, “Oh, this is wonderful; Ulysses is manipulating Ajax’ state of mind.”

Diomedes murmured back to Nestor, “Ajax is silent, but his silence is drinking up this applause!”

Ajax said, “If I go to him, I’ll bash him in the face with my armored fist.”

He began to swagger, and he continued to swagger.

“Oh, no, you shall not go to Achilles,” Agamemnon said.

“And if Achilles acts proud in front of me, I’ll fix his pride,” Ajax said. “Let me go to him.”

“Not for everything that we have spent on fighting this war,” Ulysses said.

“Achilles is a paltry, insolent fellow!” Ajax said.

Nestor murmured, “How he describes himself!”

“Can’t Achilles be sociable?” Ajax asked.

Ulysses murmured, “The raven chides blackness. The pot calls the kettle black.”

“I’ll make him bleed until his disposition improves,” Ajax said.

Agamemnon murmured, “The man who wants to be the physician should instead be the patient.”

“If all men were of my mind —” Ajax began.

Ulysses quietly finished Ajax’ sentence, “— wit and intelligence would be out of fashion.”

Ajax finished his sentence: “— he would not get away with his bad attitude. He would eat swords — and ’s words — first. Shall pride get away with this and win and carry the day? Shall pride carry it?”

Nestor murmured, “If pride carries it, Ajax, you would carry half.”

“He would have ten out of ten shares,” Ulysses said. “He would carry all of it.”

“I will knead Achilles with my fists,” Ajax said. “I’ll make him supple.”

Nestor murmured to Ulysses, “Ajax is not yet thoroughly warm. Force him to eat and stuff himself with praises. Pour in, pour in, pour the praises into him — his ambition is still dry and withered.”

Ulysses said to Agamemnon, “My lord, you feed too much on this discord and dissention. You are thinking too much about Achilles’ bad behavior.”

Nestor said, “Our noble general, do not do so. Don’t think so much about Achilles.”

Diomedes said, “You must prepare to fight without Achilles.”

“Why, it is our talking so much about Achilles that makes him proud and does him harm,” Ulysses said. “Here in our presence right now is a man — but I should not talk about him and praise him to his face; I will be silent.”

“Why should you be silent?” Nestor asked. “He is not greedy for praise, as Achilles is.”

“The whole world knows that he is as valiant and courageous as Achilles,” Ulysses said.

“Achilles is a son of a bitch, a son of a whore,” Ajax said. “He should not be treating us like this! I wish that he were a Trojan so I could fight him and kill him!”

“What a vice it would be in Ajax now —” Nestor said.

“— if he were proud —” Ulysses said.

“— or covetous of praise —” Diomedes said.

“Yes,” Ulysses said, “or surly mannered —”

“— or aloof, or self-affected!” Diomedes said.

Ulysses said to Ajax, “Thank the Heavens, lord, that you

have a sweet composure. Praise the father who begot you and the woman who breastfed you. May your tutor be famous, and your natural talents be three times famous, beyond the fame of all your erudition.

“But let he who disciplined your arms to fight — Mars, god of war — divide eternity in two, and give him half. As for your vigor, the famous athlete Milo, who carried a bull several yards and then killed it with a single blow and cooked and ate it all in one day, must yield his strongman title to muscular Ajax.

“I will not praise your wisdom, which is like a boundary, a fence, a shore that confines your spacious and ample accomplishments. Here in our presence is Nestor, who has learned much in his long life. He must be, he is, he cannot but be wise. But pardon me, father Nestor, when I say that if your days were as green and youthful as Ajax’ days and if your brain were molded like Ajax’ brain, then you would not be more eminent than him; instead, you would be like Ajax.”

Ulysses said that he would not praise Ajax’ wisdom, and he did not. Of course, Ulysses did not think that Ajax was wise. His words about Ajax’ ‘wisdom’ were ambiguous. Ajax’ wisdom *confined* Ajax’ “spacious and ample accomplishments.” Shouldn’t wisdom *extend* one’s spacious and ample accomplishments? And Ulysses said that Nestor is wise, but if Nestor were as young and inexperienced as Ajax and his brain were molded like Ajax’ brain, then he would not be wiser than Ajax — he would be as stupid as Ajax.

Ajax asked Nestor, “Shall I call you father?”

“Yes, my good son,” Nestor replied.

“Be ruled by him, Lord Ajax,” Diomedes said. “Take whatever advice he gives you.”

Ulysses said, “We ought not to tarry here. Achilles is like a deer that hides in a thicket. May it please our great general, Agamemnon, to call together all his armed forces. Fresh Kings have come to Troy. Tomorrow with all the might of our armed forces we must stand fast. And here before us is a lord: Ajax. If knights from east to west should come to Troy, and select their best, Ajax shall match the best.”

“Let’s go to council,” Agamemnon said. “Let Achilles sleep: Light boats sail swift, though greater hulks draw deep. Light boats can be useful in war because they sail quickly; bigger ships sink deeper into the sea because of their weight, but that makes them slower.”

CHAPTER 3**— 3.1 —**

Pandarus and a servant talked together in a room in Priam's palace in Troy.

Pandarus said, "Friend, you! Please, let me have a word with you. Don't you follow the young Lord Paris?"

By "follow," Pandarus meant "serve"; that is, he was asking the man if he was one of Paris' servants.

Taking the word "follow" literally, the servant replied, "Yes, sir, when he goes before me."

"You depend upon him, I mean?" Pandarus said.

By "depend upon," Pandarus meant "wait upon." Servants were dependants on the Princes they served; they received room and board from the Princes.

The servant replied, "Sir, I do depend upon the Lord."

Now the servant had begun to use religious language. "The Lord" equals "God." But while the servant spoke of God, Pandarus spoke of social status. For him, "the lord" equals "the nobleman Paris."

"You depend upon a noble gentleman; I must necessarily praise him."

"Praise the Lord!" the servant said.

"You know who I am, don't you?" Pandarus asked.

"Yes, sir, but only superficially."

"Friend, know me better; I am the Lord Pandarus."

"I hope I shall know your honor better," the servant said.

The servant meant that he hoped he would learn that

Pandarus had become a better and more honorable person, but Pandarus thought that the servant was saying that he wanted to be better acquainted with Pandarus.

“I do desire it,” Pandarus said.

The servant said, “You are in the state of Grace.”

A person in the state of Grace is a person who will go to Paradise when he or she dies, but Pandarus understood the word “Grace” to mean the way that a high-ranking person such as a Duke is addressed.

“‘Grace’! I am not so, friend. ‘Honor’ and ‘Lordship’ are my titles,” Pandarus said.

Music began to play.

“What music is this?” Pandarus asked.

The servant replied, “I do but partly know, sir. It is music in parts.”

Music in parts had parts written for various musical instruments.

“Do you know the musicians?”

“Wholly, sir.”

“Whom do they play to?”

“To the hearers, sir,” the servant said.

“At whose pleasure, friend?”

“At mine, sir, and theirs who love music.”

“I mean, command, friend,” Pandarus said.

He meant “at whose command.”

“Whom shall I command, sir?” the servant asked.

“Friend, we don’t understand one another,” Pandarus said. “I am too courtly and use too formal language, and you are too cunning and too willing to make puns. I am asking at whose command these musicians are playing — at whose request do these men play?”

“That’s clear language and to the point, sir,” the servant said. “Indeed, sir, the musicians are playing at the request of Paris, who is my lord, who is there in person; with him is the mortal Venus, the heart-blood of beauty, love’s visible soul —”

“Whom do you mean? My niece Cressida?”

“No, sir. I mean Helen,” the servant said. “Couldn’t you tell by the way I described her?”

Venus was the immortal goddess of sexual passion, and Helen was the mortal Venus. Souls are invisible, but Helen was very visible and very beautiful.

“It should seem, fellow, that you have not seen the Lady Cressida,” Pandarus said.

Cressida was also very visible and very beautiful.

Pandarus continued, “I have come from the Prince Troilus to speak with Paris. I will make a complimentary assault upon Paris. I will batter him with compliments because my business seethes.”

“Seethes” means “boils.” Pandarus meant that his business with Paris was urgent.

“This is a sodden business!” the servant said. “There’s a stewed phrase indeed!”

The servant was punning again. A sodden business was overboiled; overboiling makes food insipid. And the stews were brothels. By this time, many people, including the servant, Paris, and Helen, knew that Troilus and Cressida

were in love — or at least infatuated — with each other and ready to hop into bed together. Pandarus was not willing to admit to himself that other people knew this.

Paris and Helen, accompanied by the musicians, entered the room.

Pandarus said, “Fair wishes to you, my lord, and to all this fair company! May fair desires, in all fair measure, fairly guide all of you! Especially you, fair Queen! May fair thoughts be your fair pillow!”

“Dear lord, you are full of fair words,” Helen said.

“You speak your fair pleasure, sweet Queen,” Pandarus replied. “Fair Prince, here is good broken music.”

By “broken,” he meant that the music was broken into different parts and arranged for different instruments.

“You have broken the music by interrupting it, friend,” Paris said, “and, by my life, you shall make it whole again; you shall piece it out — augment it — with a piece of your own performance.”

Helen said, “Pandarus is full of harmony.”

“Truly, lady, no,” he replied.

“Oh, sir —”

“My musical ability is amateurish,” Pandarus said. “Truly, it is very amateurish.”

“Well said, Pandarus!” Paris said. “Well, you say so in fits.”

Paris was punning. “Fit” can mean “part of a song.” But it can also mean “spasm.” Pandarus was speaking in short bursts of words. Paris could also mean that Pandarus only sometimes stated that he was amateurish when it came to music.

“I have business with Paris, dear Queen,” Pandarus said.

He then said to Paris, “My lord, will you grant me a word with you?”

Helen, who thought that Pandarus was making an excuse to get out of singing, said, “No, this shall not put us off. We’ll hear you sing, certainly.”

“Well, sweet Queen, you are joking with me,” Pandarus said. “But, indeed, Paris, this is what I have to say: My dear lord and most esteemed friend, your brother Troilus —”

Helen interrupted, “My Lord Pandarus; honey-sweet lord —”

“In a moment, sweet Queen, in a moment,” Pandarus said, then he started to complete the sentence that Helen had interrupted, “— commends himself most affectionately to you —”

Helen interrupted again, “You shall not cheat us out of our melody. If you do, then our melancholy will be upon your head!”

“Sweet Queen, sweet Queen!” Pandarus said. “You are a sweet Queen, truly.”

“And to make a sweet lady sad is a sour offence,” Helen said.

“No, that is not going to work,” Pandarus said. “Your words shall not work, truly. No, I don’t care for such words; no, no. And, Paris, Troilus wants you to make an excuse for him if King Priam calls for him at supper.”

“My Lord Pandarus —” Helen said.

“What says my sweet Queen, my very, very sweet Queen?” Pandarus asked.

“What exploit is at hand?” Paris asked. “Where will Troilus

eat tonight?”

Helen said to Pandarus, “No, but, my lord —”

“What says my sweet Queen?” Pandarus said. “My friend Paris will fall out with you if you keep interrupting me.”

Helen said to Paris, “You must not know where Troilus eats tonight. Pandarus doesn’t want you to know.”

Paris replied, “I’ll bet my life that Troilus will dine with my disposer Cressida.”

A “disposer” is “one who commands.” Paris was being gallant and saying that he obeyed Cressida’s wishes.

“No, no, no such matter,” Pandarus said. “You are wide of the mark. Come, your disposer is sick.”

“Well, I’ll make an excuse for Troilus’ absence from the evening meal,” Paris said.

By doing so, he was obeying Cressida’s wishes; Cressida wished to spend time with Troilus.

“Good, my good lord,” Pandarus said. “But why did you mention Cressida? No, your poor disposer’s sick.”

“I spy,” Paris said.

He meant that his eyes were open and could see what was going on around him.

“You spy! What do you spy?” Pandarus blurted out of surprise.

To change the subject, he quickly said, “Come, give me a musical instrument. Now, sweet Queen.”

“Why, this is kindly done,” Helen said.

Realizing that Paris and Helen already knew about Troilus

and Cressida, Pandarus said, “My niece is horribly in love with a thing you have, sweet Queen.”

The word “thing” was slang for “penis.” Helen had a lover; Cressida wanted a lover.

“She shall have it, my lord, if it is not my lord Paris’,” Helen said.

She meant that Cressida could have the thing, as long as it was not the “thing” that belonged to Paris.

“Paris’?” Pandarus said. “No, she’ll have no part of him; Paris and Cressida are twain.”

He meant that they were two separate beings and would not become one.

Helen said, “Falling in, after falling out, may make them three.”

In other words, a man and a woman falling into bed together, after having quarreled and falling out of bed, could make the female pregnant. One meaning of “falling in” was “being reconciled,” and one meaning of “falling out” was “quarreling.” A penis could also “fall in” a vagina.

“Come, come, I’ll hear no more of this,” Pandarus said. “I’ll sing you a song now.”

“Yes, yes, now, please,” Helen said. Flirtatiously, she said, “Truly, sweet lord, you have a fine forehead.”

“You are joking with me,” Pandarus said.

“Let your song be love. Sing this song: ‘This Love will Undo Us All,’” Helen said. “Oh, Cupid, Cupid, Cupid!”

“Love!” Pandarus said. “Yes, that it shall, truly.”

“Yes, good now,” Paris said. He sang the first few lines of

the song: *“Love, love, nothing but love.”*

“Indeed, that is the way the song begins,” Pandarus said.

He sang the song:

“Love, love, nothing but love, still more!

“For, oh, love’s bow

“Shoots buck and doe.

“The shaft confounds,

“Not what it wounds,

“But tickles always the sore.”

The song stated that love affects males and females. The shaft of the arrow — symbol for penis — overwhelmed the wound — symbol for vagina. It did not distress the vagina; instead, it sexually tickled the vagina. By the way, the word “sore” also was used to refer to a four-year-old stag.

Pandarus continued to sing:

“These lovers cry, ‘Oh! Oh!’ They die!

“Yet that which seems the wound to kill,

“Does turn ‘Oh! Oh!’ to ‘Ha! Ha! Ha!’

“So dying love lives still:

“‘Oh! Oh!’ a while, but then ‘Ha! Ha! Ha!’

“‘Oh! Oh!’ groans become ‘Ha! Ha! Ha!’

“Heigh-ho!”

The phrase “to die” was slang for “to have an orgasm.” In the song, the penetration caused by the arrow — penis — hurt the wound, aka vagina, for a while, but then the pain of initial penetration turned into the pleasure of sexual orgasm.

“That is love, truly, to the very tip of the nose,” Helen said.

A nose is something that prominently protrudes, much like a male part used in sex.

Paris said to Helen, “Love, Pandarus eats nothing but doves — the birds of Venus — and that breeds hot blood, and hot blood begets hot thoughts, and hot thoughts beget hot deeds, and hot deeds are love.”

“Is this the generation — the genealogy — of love? Is this how love is created?” Pandarus asked. “Hot blood, hot thoughts, and hot deeds? Why, they are vipers: Is love a generation of vipers?”

The offspring of vipers are cruel. If love were to be a generation — an offspring — of vipers, then love would be cruel. People in this culture incorrectly believed that vipers were born by gnawing their way out of the body of their mother.

This is Matthew 3:7 in the 1599 Geneva Bible: “*Now when he saw many of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath forewarned you to flee from the anger to come?*”

This is Matthew 12:34 in the 1599 Geneva Bible: “*O generations of vipers, how can you speak good things, when ye are evil? For of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*”

Pandarus asked Paris, “Sweet lord, who’s on the battlefield today?”

Paris replied, “Hector, Deiphobus, Helenus, Antenor, and all the gallant nobility of Troy. I would have gladly armed myself and fought today, but my Nell — my Helen — would not allow me to do so. How does it happen that my brother Troilus did not go to the battlefield today?”

Helen said, “He is pouting at something. You know everything about Troilus, Lord Pandarus.”

“Not I, honey-sweet Queen,” Pandarus replied. “I long to hear how our soldiers fared today.”

He said to Paris, “You’ll remember to make an excuse at the evening meal tonight for your brother Troilus?”

“Yes, exactly as you wish,” Paris replied.

“Farewell, sweet Queen,” Pandarus said.

“Give my best wishes to your niece,” Helen said.

“I will, sweet Queen,” Pandarus said.

He exited.

A military trumpet sounded.

“They’re returning from the battlefield,” Paris said. “Let us go to Priam’s hall to greet the warriors. Sweet Helen, I must persuade you to help unarm our Hector. His buckles, which can be unyielding, shall obey the touch of your white enchanting fingers more than they do the steel edge of a Greek sword or the force of Greek muscles. You shall do more than all the Greek Kings who rule islands can do — disarm great Hector.”

“It will make us proud to be his servant, Paris,” Helen said, using the royal plural. “Yes, what he shall receive of us in duty will give us more honor than we receive because of our beauty — the honor we receive by serving Hector will outshine ourself.”

“Sweetheart, above thought I love you,” Paris said.

Paris did love her more than thought. If he had taken thought, he might have come to believe that Helen was not worth the death of so many Trojans and Greeks and the destruction of

Troy. Perhaps in some cases love really is the offspring of vipers.

— 3.2 —

In his garden, Pandarus spoke to Troilus' servant, a young boy.

“Hello!” Pandarus said to the servant. “Where’s your master? At my niece Cressida’s?”

“No, sir; he is waiting for you to lead him there.”

Pandarus said, “Oh, here he comes.”

Troilus entered the garden.

Pandarus said, “Hello. How are you now?”

He said to Troilus' servant, “You may leave.”

The servant exited.

Pandarus asked Troilus, “Have you seen my niece?”

“No, Pandarus. I stalk about her door, like a soul who has newly arrived at the banks of the River Styx and who is waiting for waftage — transport by boat across the river — by Charon, the ferryman to the Land of the Dead. Oh, be my Charon, and give me swift transport to those Elysian Fields, the abode of the good souls in Hades. In the Elysian Fields, I may wallow in the lily-beds that are promised for the good souls. Oh, gentle Pandarus, from Cupid’s shoulder pluck his colorful wings and use them to fly with me to Cressida! Help me to cross the threshold of your niece’s door!”

“Walk here in the garden,” Pandarus said. “I’ll bring her to you quickly.”

He exited.

Alone, Troilus said to himself, “I am giddy and dizzy;

anticipation whirls me round. The imaginary relish is so sweet that it enchants my sense. What will the reality be when the salivating palate tastes real love's thrice purified nectar? I am afraid that the result will be death, swooning destruction, or some joy too fine, too subtle-potent and powerfully refined and tuned too sharp in sweetness, for the capacity of my ruder powers. I very much fear this; and I also fear that I shall lose distinction in my joys, as does an army when the soldiers charge in mass to pursue and kill the fleeing enemy."

"Distinction" means "the ability to differentiate." If Troilus and Cressida were to have sex, two would become one. When they orgasmed, they would "die." An army pursuing fleeing enemies can kill indiscriminately — kill quickly and without discriminating soldiers of high rank from soldiers of low rank.

Pandarus returned and said, "She's getting ready; she'll come here soon. You must keep your wits about you. She blushes very much, and she breathes quickly and shallowly, as if a ghost had frightened her. I'll bring her to you. She is the prettiest villain. She breathes as quickly and shallowly as a newly taken sparrow."

Newly captured birds are very frightened, and because of their fright they breathe quickly and shallowly.

Pandarus exited.

Alone, Troilus said to himself, "Exactly such a passion embraces my bosom. My heart beats faster than a feverish pulse, and I am losing the use of all my senses, as if I were a lowly born person unexpectedly seeing his King looking at him."

Pandarus returned, leading Cressida.

Pandarus said to her, "Come, come, what need do you have

to blush? Shame's a baby."

Pandarus meant that shame was something little; however, in this culture a child of shame was a baby born out of wedlock.

He said to Troilus, "Here she is now. Now swear the oaths to her that you have sworn to me."

Cressida moved as if she were going to leave the garden. Pandarus grabbed her arm and said, "What, are you gone again? You must be watched before you are made tame, must you? Come on, come on; if you draw backward, we'll put you in harness."

When Pandarus referred to Cressida, he used terms that likened her to a bird or other animal. He had already likened her to a newly caught sparrow. When he mentioned watching her until she be made tame, he was referring to a method of taming a hawk: breaking its will by not allowing it to sleep. And he referred to her as a skittish horse that needed to be harnessed to a cart.

Pandarus said to Troilus, "Why don't you speak to her?"

Pandarus then said to Cressida, who was wearing a veil, "Come, draw this curtain, and let's see your picture."

In this culture, a curtain was hung before a painting. To see the painting, one had to draw the curtain. To see Cressida's face, her veil had to be removed.

Pandarus removed Cressida's veil and said, "Pity the day; how loath you are to offend daylight! If it were dark, you would close sooner."

Night had not yet fallen. Pandarus was saying that he felt sorry for the daylight, in the presence of which Cressida was unwilling to offend — to stumble morally. But if it were dark, she would close the distance between herself and

Troilus and they would offend together.

Troilus moved to Cressida, and they kissed.

Pandarus said to Troilus, “Good, good. Rub on, and kiss the mistress.”

Pandarus’ language referred to the game of bowls, in which “to rub” is “to negotiate an obstacle” and “to kiss the mistress” is “to gently touch the little ball aimed at in the game of bowling.” Of course, Pandarus used the phrase “to rub” to mean “to create sexual friction by rubbing against Cressida” and “to kiss the mistress” to mean “to kiss Cressida.”

Pandarus said, “Great! A kiss in fee-farm!”

He was referring to a long kiss. “Fee-farm” meant “in perpetuity.” It is a legal term referring to land granted in perpetuity with a permanently fixed rent.

Pandarus said to Troilus, “Build there, carpenter; the air is sweet.”

Where the air is sweet is a good place to build a structure. In this case, Pandarus wanted Troilus to build a six-inch structure.

Pandarus said to both Troilus and Cressida, “You shall fight your hearts out before I part you. The falcon as the tercel, for all the ducks in the river. Go to it. Go to it.”

The kind of “fight” that Pandarus referred to involved a kind of wrestling in bed. A falcon is a female hawk; a tercel is a male hawk. Pandarus was saying that when it comes to the act of sex, males and females are alike — ready and eager to get down to it. He would bet everything — all the ducks in the river — that this is true.

Troilus said to Cressida, “You have bereft me of all words,

lady.”

Pandarus said to Troilus, “Words pay no debts, give her deeds, but she’ll bereave — deprive — you of the deeds, too, if she calls your activity into question.”

The “deeds” Pandarus referred to were sexual deeds, or acts, but “deeds” also means “legal documents.” In this culture, “to pay one’s debts” was slang for “to have sex.” Sex is something a wife owes a husband, and it is something a husband owes a wife. “Activity” means “vigorous action,” or “virility.” If Cressida were to call into question — doubt — Troilus’ virility, or ability to have sex with her, she would deprive him of the opportunity to have sex with her. However, if calling his virility into question involved testing his virility, she would leave him sexually exhausted and unable to perform any longer.

Troilus and Cressida kissed again.

Pandarus added, “What, billing again? Here’s ‘In witness whereof the parties interchangeably.’”

“Billing” meant both “kissing” and “drawing up a legal document.”

Legal contracts used language such as “In witness whereof the parties interchangeably” in which “interchangeably” meant “reciprocally.” One kind of legal contract is a marriage. In this culture, the man and woman could hold hands in front of witnesses and pledge themselves to each other in a prelude to a legal marriage.

Pandarus said, “Come in, come in. I’ll go get a fire.”

He left to start a fire in the bedroom where he hoped Troilus and Cressida would spend the night together.

“Will you walk into my house, my lord?” Cressida said to Troilus.

In this culture, wives called their husband “lord.”

“Oh, Cressida, how often have I wished to do that!”

“Wished, my lord! May the gods grant — oh, my lord!”

“What should the gods grant?” Troilus asked. “What is the reason for this pretty interruption? What too-curious — hidden — dreg does my sweet lady see in the fountain of our love?”

“I see more dregs than water, if my fears have eyes,” Cressida replied.

“Fears make Devils of the high order of Angels known as the Cherubim,” Troilus replied. “Fears never see truly.”

“Blind fear that is led by seeing reason finds safer footing than blind reason that stumbles without fear,” Cressida said. “Seeing reason leads to prudence, while blind reason leads to sin. Fearing the worst often cures the worse. If we fear, we can often avoid the worst.”

“Oh, let my lady apprehend no fear,” Troilus said. “In all Cupid’s pageant, no monster appears.”

In this culture, one meaning of “pageant” is “a performance intended to trick.” Another meaning is “a theatrical play.” Troilus wanted to take Cressida to bed, and so he was minimizing the monsters that can participate in plays featuring Cupid, aka love. Romantic love has its pleasures, but it can also have its pains. Infidelity can greatly hurt one who loves.

“Nor nothing monstrous either?” Cressida asked.

“Nothing, but our undertakings — the things we promise to do,” Troilus replied. “When we vow to weep seas, live in fire, eat rocks, tame tigers, we think it harder for our female loved one to devise difficult enough tasks than for us to

undergo any difficulty imposed. The monstrosity in love, lady, is that the will is infinite and the execution is confined, and that the desire is boundless and the act is a slave to limit.”

This is true in more ways than one. The desire to have sex is boundless, but the act of sex lasts only a short time. A lover can promise to be faithful — and mean it — but not live up to the promise.

Knowing this, Cressida said, “They say all lovers swear more performance than they are capable of and continue to keep in reserve an ability that they never perform, vowing more than the perfection of ten and discharging less than the tenth part of one. Lovers who have the voice of lions and the act of hares, are they not monsters?”

“Do such lovers exist?” Troilus asked. Using the royal plural, he said, “We are not like them. Praise us according to how we act when put to the test, acknowledge us as we show ourself to be; our head shall go bare until merit crown it. No perfection expected to be possessed in the future shall have any praise in the present. We will not name desert before its birth, and, being born, its title of honor shall be humble. Judge me by my actions.

“You know the proverb ‘Where many words are, the truth goes by,’ so let me say a few words about my fair faith. Troilus shall act in such a way to Cressida as to make the worst that envy and malice can say about him is to mock him for his faithfulness to you. The truest speech of truth itself shall not be truer than the speech of Troilus.”

“Will you walk into my house, my lord?” Cressida asked Troilus.

Pandarus returned.

“What, blushing still?” he said. “Haven’t you two finished

talking yet?"

"Well, uncle," Cressida said, "whatever folly I commit, I dedicate to you."

"I thank you for that," Pandarus said. "If Troilus gets you pregnant with a boy, you'll give him to me."

Pandarus was giving Troilus credit for masculinity: If Troilus were to get Cressida pregnant, it would be with a boy.

Pandarus continued, "Be true to Troilus; if he flinches and sneaks away, rebuke me for it."

Of course, Pandarus knew that Troilus would not flinch and sneak away.

"You know now your hostages: your uncle's word and my firm faith," Troilus said.

Hostages were guarantees of good conduct. In war, an important person might enter an enemy camp to parley. Before the important person entered the camp, an important enemy would be sent to the important person's camp to be a hostage. If anything happened to the important person, the important hostage would be killed.

"I'll give my word for her, too, as well as for you," Pandarus said. "Our kindred, although they have to be wooed for a long time, are faithful once they are won. They are burs, I can tell you; they'll stick where they are thrown."

"Boldness comes to me now, and brings me courage," Cressida said. "Prince Troilus, I have loved you night and day for many weary months."

"Why was my Cressida then so hard to win?" Troilus asked.

"I seemed hard to win," she replied, "but I was won, my lord, with the first glance that ever — pardon me — if I confess

much, you will play the tyrant and lord it over me. I love you now, but I did not love you, until now, so much but I could master it. Actually, I lie. My thoughts were like unbridled, uncontrolled children, grown too headstrong for their mother to manage. See, my thoughts and I are fools! Why have I blabbed? Who shall be true to us and keep our secrets, when we cannot keep our own secrets? But, although I very much loved you, I did not woo you. And yet, truly, I wished that I had a man, or that we women had men's privilege of speaking and confessing our love first. Sweetheart, tell me to hold my tongue because in this rapture of emotion I shall surely say something that I shall repent saying. I see that your silence, which is cunning in its lack of speech, from my weakness draws the heart of speech! Stop me from speaking!"

"I shall, albeit sweet music comes from your mouth," Troilus said, kissing her.

"This is indeed a pretty sight," Pandarus said.

"My lord, I ask you to pardon me," Cressida said to Troilus. "I did not intend to beg for a kiss. I am ashamed. Oh, Heavens! What have I done? For this time I will take my leave, my lord."

"You are leaving, sweet Cressida!" Troilus said.

"Leave!" Pandarus said. "If you take leave until tomorrow morning —"

"Please," Cressida said. "Don't talk about that."

"What offends you, lady?" Troilus asked.

"Sir, my own company."

"You cannot shun yourself."

"Let me go and try," Cressida replied. "I have a kind of self

that stays with you, but it is an unnatural self that will leave itself in order to be another's fool. I want to leave. Where is my good sense? I don't know what I am saying."

"People who speak so wisely know well what they are speaking," Troilus said.

The part of Cressida's speech that Troilus thought was wise was the part about the self that stayed with him.

Cressida replied, "Perhaps, my lord, I am showing more cunning than love, and fell so outspokenly into a frank confession in order to fish for your thoughts, but you are too wise to reveal your thoughts, or in other words you do not love, for to be wise and to love exceeds the power of man; only the gods above can be both wise and in love."

"Oh, I wish that I thought it could be in a woman — as, if it can, I will presume that it could be in you — to feed forever her lamp and the flames of love, to keep her faithfulness in as fit and youthful a condition as it was when it was plighted with the result that it will outlive outward beauty, with a mind that renews love swifter than passion decays! I also wish that I could be persuaded that my integrity and faithfulness to you might be equaled by your own integrity and faithfulness to me. Let us both have an equal amount of pure love winnowed from the chaff. How elated would I then be! But unfortunately I am as true as the simplicity of truth and I am more innocent than the infancy of truth. I am more innocent than infants, and I am more innocent than Adam before the fall."

"When it comes to faithfulness, I'll war — compete — with you," Cressida said.

"Oh, this is a virtuous fight, when right wars with right over who shall be most right!" Troilus said. "Faithful lovers shall in the world of the future confirm their faithfulness by comparing it with that of Troilus. When their rhyming love

poems, full of declarations of love, of oaths and big comparisons, lack similes, when faithfulness is described with tired comparisons — as faithful as steel, as faithful as plants are to the Moon, as faithful as the Sun is to the day, as faithful as the turtledove is to her mate, as faithful as iron is attracted to a magnet, as faithful as the Earth is to its center — after all these comparisons of faithfulness are made, then faithfulness' authentic author shall be cited. 'As faithful as Troilus' shall crown the verse, and sanctify the verses."

"May you prove to be a prophet!" Cressida said. "If I am unfaithful to you, or swerve a hair from being true to you, then when time is old and has forgotten itself, when drops of rain have worn down the stones of Troy, and blind oblivion has swallowed entire cities up, and mighty states are worn away by time into dusty nothing and leave no trace of themselves, yet let memory, from unfaithfulness to unfaithfulness, among unfaithful maidens in love, upbraid my unfaithfulness! When they've said 'as false as air, as false as water, wind, or sandy earth, as false as fox to lamb, as false as wolf to heifer's calf, as false as panther to the deer, or as false as evil stepmother to her stepson,' then let them say to stick the heart of unfaithfulness, 'as unfaithful as Cressida.'"

How can air, water, wind, and sandy earth be false, aka unfaithful? The ancient Roman poet Catullus once wrote, "*Sed mulier cupido quod dicit amanti / in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua.*" Translated into English: "But the words a woman says to a passionate lover / ought to be written on wind and running water." If the words were to be written on air or sandy earth, they would not last long.

Pandarus said, "All right, this is a bargain you two have made. Seal it, seal it. I'll be the witness. In this hand I hold Troilus' hand, and in this hand I hold my niece's hand. If ever you prove false — unfaithful — one to the other, since

I have taken such pains to bring you together, let all pitiful goers-between be called until the world's end after my name — call them all panders. Let all faithful men be Troiluses, all unfaithful women Cressidas, and all brokers-between panders! Say, 'Amen.'”

Troilus said, “Amen.”

Cressida said, “Amen.”

Pandarus was holding Troilus's hand, and he was holding Cressida's hand. For a legal betrothal to take place, Troilus and Cressida needed to be holding each other's hand as each declared that each accepted the other as spouse.

Pandarus said, “Amen. Now I will take you to a chamber with a bed; because the bed shall not speak of your pretty encounters, press it to death. Go into the bedroom now!”

In the act of lovemaking, Troilus' weight would be on Cressida, and the weight of both would press on the bed. In this culture, “to die” meant “to have an orgasm” and so Pandarus wanted Troilus and Cressida to press the bed until they both had orgasms. But Pandarus' words also referred to an act of torture or capital punishment. A prisoner could be pressed to death. More and more weight would be piled on his chest until his torturers heard the words they wanted the prisoner to say, or until the prisoner's chest was crushed and he died.

Pressing was done when a prisoner would refuse to stand trial for an offense. Sometimes, a prisoner would refuse to plead guilty or not guilty in a trial because if they were found guilty their property would be forfeited to the state, which often meant that the prisoners' loved ones would be destitute. Rather than risking being found guilty, sentenced to death, and having his property forfeited to the state, thereby making his loved ones destitute, the prisoner would choose to die by being pressed to death. This is what Giles

Corey chose in the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts.

Troilus and Cressida went inside the house and into the bedroom, and Pandarus said to you, the readers of this book, “And may Cupid grant all tongue-tied virgins — male or female — reading this a bed, a bedchamber, and a pander to provide all this gear!”

In all the conversation among Troilus, Cressida, and Pandarus, no one mentioned legal marriage.

— 3.3 —

Agamemnon, Ulysses, Diomedes, Nestor, Ajax, Menelaus, and Calchas met in the Greek camp near Achilles’ tent. Calchas was a Trojan — Cressida’s father. He was a prophet who knew that Troy would be defeated in the war and who had joined the Greeks.

Calchas said, “Now, Princes, for the service I have done you, the opportunity provided to me at this time prompts me to call aloud for recompense. May you remember that, through the prophetic foresight I have, I know that Troy will lose the war. Therefore, I have abandoned Troy, left my possessions, incurred a traitor’s name for myself, left certain and possessed advantages, and exposed myself to doubtful fortunes, separating myself from all that time, acquaintance, custom, and social rank made habitual and most familiar to my nature, and here, to do you service, I am become like a new person entering into the world, a foreigner, unacquainted with anyone. I ask you, as a foretaste of what will be in the future, to give me now a little benefit, out of those many benefits that you have promised to me, which, you say, will come to me in the future.”

“What would you ask of us, Trojan?” Agamemnon asked. “Make your demand.”

“You have a Trojan prisoner, named Antenor, who was captured yesterday,” Calchas said. “Troy regards him as very valuable. Often have you — and often have you received my thanks because of it — desired my Cressida in exchange for an important Trojan held prisoner by you, but Troy has always refused to make the exchange. However, this Antenor, I know, is such a tuning peg in the Trojans’ affairs that their negotiations all must go out of tune when the Trojans lack his managerial skills. Antenor is the key to the harmonious management of Trojan affairs, and therefore the Trojans will almost give us a Prince of blood, a son of Priam, in exchange for him. Let Antenor be sent, great Princes, in exchange for my daughter, and her presence shall quite pay for all the service I have done in most willingly endured pain.”

“Let Diomedes bear Antenor to Troy, and bring Cressida to us here,” Agamemnon said. “Calchas shall have what he requests of us. Good Diomedes, get everything you need for this exchange. Also take word to Troy that Hector will tomorrow be answered in his challenge: Ajax is ready.”

“This shall I undertake,” Diomedes said, “and it is a burden that I am proud to bear.”

Diomedes and Calchas exited.

Achilles and Patroclus came out of their tent and stood there. They could see the other Greeks, but they could not hear them.

Ulysses said, “Achilles is standing in the entrance of his tent. May it please our general, Agamemnon, to pass like a stranger by him, as if Achilles were forgotten, and for all the Princes to lay negligent and casual regard upon him. We ought not to pay any special attention to Achilles, although we did in the past when he fought well for us. I will bring up the rear. It is likely that Achilles will ask me why such

disapproving eyes are bent on him. If he does ask me, I will use your derision as medicine for him. Your disapproval will injure his pride, he will ask me why you disapprove, and I will give him medicine that, because he asked for it, he desires to drink. This may turn out well. Pride has no other mirror to show itself but pride because supple knees feed arrogance and are the proud man's fees. If Achilles sees us acting proud, he may realize how proudly he has been acting. If we show courtesy to him, he will become even more arrogant and will think that we are only paying him the respect that is due him."

"We'll execute your plan, and put on an appearance of coldness and disapproval as we pass by Achilles," Agamemnon said. "Each lord here, do this. Either don't speak to and greet Achilles, or if you do, do it disdainfully, which shall shake him more than if we don't even look at him. I will lead the way."

The Greeks walked toward Achilles' tent, intending — all but Ulysses — to pass by it.

Achilles said, "Is the general, Agamemnon, coming here to speak with me? You know my mind, I'll fight no more against Troy."

Agamemnon asked Nestor, "What did Achilles say? Does he want anything?"

Nestor asked Achilles, "Do you, my lord, have anything to say to Agamemnon?"

"No," Achilles replied.

Nestor said to Agamemnon, "He wants nothing, my lord."

"Very good," Agamemnon said.

Agamemnon and Nestor exited.

Seeing Menelaus, Achilles said, "Good day. Good day."

Menelaus replied, "How are you? How are you?"

Menelaus exited.

Achilles to Patroclus, "Does the cuckold scorn me?"

Ajax said, "How are you now, Patroclus?"

"Good morning, Ajax," Achilles said.

"What?" Ajax said.

"Good morning."

"Yes, and it will be a good next day, too."

Ajax exited.

"Why are these fellows acting like this?" Achilles said.

"Don't they know that I am Achilles?"

Patroclus said, "They pass by you as if you were a stranger. They used to bend their knee to you and to send their smiles before themselves to you, Achilles. They used to come to you as humbly as they used to approach holy altars."

"Have I become poor recently?" Achilles said. "It is certain that a great man, once fallen out with fortune, and therefore out of luck, must fall out with men, too. What the man whose fortunes have declined is, he shall as soon read in the eyes of other people as feel in his own fall, for men, like butterflies, don't show their powdered wings except to the summer. No man receives any honor for simply being a man; he receives honor for those honors that are outside him, such as social rank, riches, and favor. These are prizes of accident as often as they are prizes of merit. When these prizes fall, as is likely they will since they are slippery supports, the respect that leaned on them will be as slippery, too. One will fall and pull down another, and both of them will die in the fall. But it is

not so with me: Fortune and I are friends. I still enjoy at the highest point all that I ever did possess, with the exception of these men's looks, which once were respectful but now are not. These men, I think, have discovered something in me that is not worth such rich beholding as they have often previously given to me. Here is Ulysses; I'll interrupt his reading."

"How are you, Ulysses?" Achilles said.

Closing the book he had been looking at, Ulysses said, "Hello, great Thetis' son!"

"What are you reading?"

Ulysses replied, "A strange fellow here writes, 'That man, however dearly gifted by nature, however much he possesses in material objects, however blessed he is either outwardly or inwardly, cannot boast about having that which he has, and does not feel what he owns, except by reflection, as when his virtues shining upon others heat them and they return that heat again to the first giver.'"

A person cannot boast about great wealth unless there are other people to whom that person can boast; a person cannot know that he possesses a virtue such as courage unless that person exhibits courage to witnesses who then acknowledge that that person is courageous.

"This is not strange, Ulysses," Achilles said. "A beautiful person does not know the beauty that is borne here in the face; the beauty presents itself to the eyes of other people. Also, the eye itself, sight being the purest of senses, does not behold itself; an eye cannot leave itself and turn around and look at itself. However, one eye opposed to another can salute each other with each other's form; I can look at your eye, and you can look at my eye. Sight cannot look at itself until it has traveled and is mirrored in a place where it may see itself; we can see our eyes in a mirror or on the surface

of calm water. This is not strange at all.”

“I do not have difficulty accepting the hypothesis — it is well known — but I have difficulty accepting the author’s conclusion,” Ulysses said. “The author, in his detailed argument, expressly proves that no man is the lord of anything, though in and of himself he possesses many good qualities, until he communicates his good qualities to other people. Nor does the man himself know that he possesses the good qualities until he beholds them formed in the applause of those people to whom they’re extended. These people, like an arch, echo the voice again, or, like a gate of steel facing the Sun, receive and render back his figure and his heat. In other words, the man displays the good qualities in front of and for the benefit of other people, they acknowledge the good qualities with applause, and the man knows for sure that he has the good qualities.”

Ulysses had said that he had difficulty accepting the author’s conclusion. His difficulty concerned reputation because a man could get an undeserved reputation for possessing qualities he did not actually possess; however, it is possible for a man to prove by his actions that he definitely possesses certain qualities. Ulysses wanted Achilles to show his good qualities; one way for Achilles to display his fighting ability was to battle the Trojans.

Ulysses continued, “I was much interested by what the author said, and I immediately thought of the unknown Ajax here. Heavens, what a man is there! A veritable horse, who has he knows not what. Nature, what things there are that are most despicable in reputation and yet are precious in use!

“And what things again are most dear in esteem and yet are poor in worth!

“Now we shall see tomorrow — an act that true chance throws upon him — Ajax renowned.”

Ulysses was referring to the duel that Ajax would fight with Hector the next day. Supposedly, chance — a lottery — had chosen Hector's opponent, but Ulysses had rigged the lottery so that Ajax would be chosen.

He continued, "Oh, Heavens, what some men do, while some men leave undone! How some men creep into fickle Fortune's hall, while others act like idiots in her eyes! Some people pursue Fortune's gifts, while others neglect Fortune's gifts. Some people move slowly and carefully to get Fortune's gifts, while others showily act like idiots as they ignore Fortune's gifts. How one man eats into another's pride, while pride is fasting in his wantonness!"

Achilles was the man who was leaving things undone. He was not fighting on the battlefield. Ajax and Hector, however, were dueling the next day. Achilles was the man who was neglecting the gifts that Lady Fortune had given to him, while Ajax was the man approaching Lady Fortune and asking her for gifts. Achilles was the proud man who was fasting; he was not doing the things that would add to his reputation. Ajax was doing those things — dueling with Hector and fighting on the battlefield — and therefore he was eating and acquiring the pride that should have been Achilles'.

Part of Ulysses' strategy to get Achilles to obey Agamemnon and return to fighting was to make him feel that Ajax was receiving the honor that Achilles should earn, and that Ajax did not deserve that honor.

Ulysses continued, "To see these Greek lords! Why, even already they clap the blundering Ajax on the shoulder, as if his foot were on brave Hector's breast and the citizens of great Troy were shrieking at Hector's death."

"I believe it," Achilles said, "for the Greek lords passed by me the way that misers pass by beggars; they gave to me

neither respectful words or looks. Have my deeds been forgotten?”

Ulysses replied, “Time has, my lord, a bag on his back in which he puts good deeds that are destined for oblivion, which is a huge monster of ingratitude. Things that ought to be remembered are instead forgotten. Those good deeds are past good deeds; they are devoured as fast as they are made, and they are forgotten as soon as they are done. Perseverance, my dear lord, keeps honor bright. To continue to be honored and respected, you must continue to do deeds that bring you honor and respect. If you stop doing those deeds, you become quite out of fashion; you are like a rusty coat of armor hanging on the wall — a monument that mocks past deeds.

“Take the quickest way, for honor travels in a cramped passage so narrow that only one can walk abreast at a time. Keep then to the path, for emulation and ambitious rivalry have a thousand sons that in single file pursue you. If you give way, or deviate from the direct and straight path, then they will all rush by you like a tide flooding in and leave you behind. Or if you give way, or deviate from the direct and straight path, then like a gallant horse fallen in the front line, you will lie there and serve as pavement for the abject and despicable soldiers in the rear; you will be run over and trampled on.

“Then what deeds people do in the present, although those deeds are less than your past deeds, must overtop and surpass your deeds because time is like a fashionable host who slightly shakes hands with his parting guest, and with his arms outstretched, as if he would fly, embraces the newcomer. Welcome always smiles, and farewell goes out sighing.

“Oh, let not virtue seek remuneration for the thing it was because beauty, wit and intelligence, high birth, vigor of

body, desert in service, love, friendship, and charity are all subject to envious and slanderous time.

“One trait of human nature makes everyone in the whole world kin — all with one consent praise new and gaudy toys, although they are made and molded of old things, and they give more praise to dust that is sprinkled with a little gold than they give to gold that is sprinkled with a little dust. The present eye praises the present object; what gets praised is what is in front of people’s eyes.

“Then marvel not, you great and complete man, that all the Greeks begin to worship Ajax since things in motion sooner catch the eye than what does not stir or move. The cry of approval went once to you, and still it might, and yet it may again, if you would not entomb yourself alive and encase your reputation in your tent. Your glorious deeds, which you displayed in the fields of battle recently, made the envious gods go to war themselves and even drove great Mars to take sides in the war.”

Mars supported the Trojans and even occasionally fought in battles on their side.

“I have strong reasons for my isolation,” Achilles said.

“But the reasons against your isolation are more potent and heroic,” Ulysses said, adding, “It is known, Achilles, that you are in love with one of Priam’s daughters.”

“Really!” Achilles said. “It is known!”

“Is that a surprise?” Ulysses asked. “The providential foresight that’s in a watchful government knows almost every grain of gold belonging to the god of the underworld, Pluto. It finds the bottom in the incomprehensible deeps of the sea, it keeps pace with thought and it almost, like the gods, unveils thoughts as soon as they are born and placed in their dumb cradles.”

In other words, the leaders of the Greek army had a very good spy network.

Ulysses continued, “The heart of the government is a mystery, a secret — which open discussion dares never meddle with. It has an operation more divine than breath and speech or pen and writing can give expression to.

“All the commerce and interaction that you have had with Troy we know about as well as you do, my lord, and it would be more fitting for Achilles to throw down Hector in the dust than Hector’s sister Polyxena on a bed.

“But it must grieve your son, the young Pyrrhus Neoptolemus, who is now at home in Greece, when rumor shall in our islands sound her trumpet, and all the Greek girls shall dance and sing, ‘Great Hector’s sister did Achilles win, but our great Ajax bravely beat down him.’”

The word “him” was ambiguous and referred to both Hector and Achilles. Ajax beat down Hector by defeating him in battle or a duel, and Ajax beat down Achilles by acquiring a greater reputation in war than Achilles did.

Ulysses concluded, “Farewell, my lord. I speak as your friend when I say that the fool slides over the ice that you should break.”

The fool is Ajax, who skates over ice and does not break it. Achilles, in contrast, would break the ice. He is the one who would make a good beginning in a difficult enterprise. He would be like a big ship that goes first and breaks the ice so that other, smaller ships can follow in his wake. He is the warrior who would break the line of the opposing warriors.

Ulysses exited, leaving Achilles with things to think about.

Patroclus said, “To this effect, Achilles, have I appealed to you. A woman who is impudent and mannish is not more

loathed than an effeminate man during a time in which action is required. The woman here is Polyxena, who is impudent and like a man because she loves a warrior who is an enemy to her city and family. The man is me, who stands condemned because the other Greek warriors think my little stomach for the war and your great friendship for me restrains you and keeps you away from the war. Sweet Achilles, rouse yourself; and the weak, wanton Cupid shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold, and, like a dew-drop from the lion's mane, Cupid shall be shook into the air. Give up Polyxena, and go to war."

"Shall Ajax fight with Hector?" Achilles asked.

"Yes, and perhaps he will receive much honor by dueling him," Patroclus said.

"I see that my reputation is at stake," Achilles said. "My fame is seriously and deeply wounded."

"Oh, then, beware," Patroclus said. "Wounds that men give themselves heal badly. Neglecting to do what is necessary gives a blank check to danger, and danger, like a fever, deceitfully infects us even when we sit idly in the Sun."

In this culture, people believed that sitting in the sunshine in March could give one a fever.

"Go call the Fool Thersites here, sweet Patroclus," Achilles said. "I'll send the Fool to Ajax and ask him to invite the Trojan lords here to see us unarmed after the combat. I have a woman's longing, an appetite that I am sick with, to see great Hector in his clothing of peace rather than in his armor, to talk with him and to wholly see his face rather than to see only the little that is visible when he wears a helmet."

Thersites came walking over to them.

Seeing Thersites, Achilles said, "A labor saved!"

“A wonder!” Thersites said.

“What?” Achilles asked.

“Ajax goes up and down the field, asking for himself,” Thersites said.

If Ajax were asking for himself, he was asking for a jakes — a toilet.

“How so?” Achilles asked.

“He must fight a duel tomorrow with Hector, and he is so prophetically proud of an heroic cudgeling that he raves in saying nothing,” Thersites said.

Ajax was confident that he would defeat Hector the following day. Thersites was equally confident that Hector would defeat Ajax.

“How can that be?” Achilles asked.

“Why, Ajax stalks up and down like a peacock, a symbol of pride — a stride and a stop. He ruminates like a hostess who has no arithmetic but her brain to add up and set down the customers’ bill. He bites his lip with a shrewd regard, attempting to look intelligent, as who should say, ‘There is intelligence in this head, as all would know if it would get out,’ and so there is, but the intelligence in his head lies as coldly in him as fire in a piece of flint, which will not show itself without knocking the flint against metal. To get to Ajax’ intelligence, you will have to break his head.

“Ajax is undone — ruined — forever because if Hector does not break Ajax’ neck in the duel, Ajax will break his own neck in vainglory, aka excessive vanity.

“Ajax doesn’t know me. I said, ‘Good morning, Ajax,’ and he replied, ‘Thanks, Agamemnon.’ What do you think of this man who mistakes me for the general? He’s grown and

become a very land-fish — a fish on land — without knowledge of language and unable to speak, aka a monster.

“A plague on opinion and reputation! A man may wear it on both sides, like a reversible leather jacket.”

Opinion and reputation are two sides of the same coin, or of the two sides — inside and outside — of a reversible leather jacket. Opinion is inside a man; it is what he thinks about himself. Reputation is outside a man; it is what other people say about him. Both opinion and reputation can ruin a man. Ulysses had wanted to build up Ajax’ pride in order to bring Achilles’ pride down, but Ajax was well on his way to becoming as proud as Achilles.

“You must be my ambassador to Ajax, Thersites,” Achilles said.

“Who, I?” Thersites replied. “Why, he’ll answer nobody; he practices not answering. Speaking is for beggars; he wears his tongue in his arms — he lets his fighting do his speaking for him. I will pretend to be him: Let Patroclus ask me questions as if I were Ajax, and you shall see a play starring Ajax.”

“Do it, Patroclus,” Achilles said. “Tell him that I humbly desire the valiant Ajax to invite the most valorous Hector to come unarmed to my tent, and to procure safe-conduct for his person from the magnanimous and most illustrious six-or-seven-times-honored captain-general of the Greek army, Agamemnon, et cetera. Do this.”

“Jove bless great Ajax!” Patroclus said.

“Hmm!” Thersites replied in the character of Ajax.

“I come from the worthy Achilles —” Patroclus began.

“Ha!”

“— who most humbly desires you to invite Hector to his tent
—”

“Hmm!”

“— and to procure safe-conduct from Agamemnon.”

“Agamemnon!”

“Yes, my lord.”

“Ha!”

“What do you say to this request?”

“God be with you, with all my heart, and goodbye,”
Thersites replied in the character of Ajax.

“What is your answer, sir?” Patroclus asked.

“If tomorrow is a fair day, by eleven o’clock it will go one way or the other, and we will know who has won the duel; howsoever it turns out, Hector shall receive a beating before he beats me.”

“What is your answer, sir?” Patroclus asked again.

“Fare you well, with all my heart, and goodbye,” Thersites replied in the character of Ajax.

Achilles asked, “Why, but Ajax is not in this tune, is he? He isn’t really in this state of mind, is he?”

“No, he is not in this tune, but he’s out of tune just the way I have portrayed him,” Thersites replied. “What music will be in him when Hector has knocked out his brains, I don’t know; but, I am sure, none, unless the fiddler-god Apollo get Ajax’ sinews to make musical strings from.”

“Come, you shall carry a letter to Ajax immediately,” Achilles said.

“Let me carry another letter to Ajax’ horse; for that’s the more capable creature,” Thersites said.

“My mind is troubled, like a stirred fountain that is clouded with sediment,” Achilles said, “and I myself cannot see its bottom.”

Achilles and Patroclus exited.

Alone, Thersites said to himself, “I wish the fountain of your mind were clear again, so that I might bring to drink an ass — Ajax — at it! I had rather be a tick on a sheep than such a valiant ignorant fool as Ajax.”

CHAPTER 4**— 4.1 —**

On a street in Troy, Aeneas and a servant with a torch met Paris, Deiphobus, Antenor, the Greek Diomedes, and some other people who were carrying torches.

Paris said, “I see someone. Ho! Who is that there?”

“It is the Lord Aeneas,” Deiphobus said.

Aeneas asked, “Is Prince Paris there in person? Had I as good a reason as Helen to lie long in bed as you, Prince Paris, have, nothing but Heavenly business would rob my bedmate of my company.”

“That’s what I think, too,” Diomedes said. “Good morning, Lord Aeneas.”

“This is a valiant Greek, Aeneas,” Paris said. “Shake his hand. Witness the theme of your speech, wherein you told how Diomedes, for a whole week of days, haunted you on the battlefield.”

“I wish you good health, valiant sir, while talks continue during all this gentle truce,” Aeneas said to Diomedes, “but when I meet you armed on the battlefield after the truce, then I will greet you with as black defiance as heart can think or courage can execute.”

“I welcome both the good health and the black defiance,” Diomedes replied. “Our emotions are now calm because of the truce, and for as long as the truce lasts, I wish you good health! But when we meet on the battlefield later, by Jove, I’ll hunt for your life with all my strength, speed, and cunning.”

“And you shall hunt a lion that will flee with his face backward, facing you,” Aeneas said. “In humane gentleness,

welcome to Troy! Now, by my mortal father Anchises' life, welcome, indeed! By my immortal mother Venus' hand, I swear that no man alive can respect more excellently than I the thing he means to kill."

As recounted in Homer's *Iliad*, Diomedes had once fought Venus, who was on the side of the Trojans, and wounded her wrist.

"We feel the same way," Diomedes said. "Jove, let Aeneas live, if he is not fated to bring me glory by dying on my sword, a thousand complete courses of the Sun! Let him live a thousand years if I do not kill him on the battlefield! But, to increase my honor, which I am greedy for, let me kill him, with each of his joints wounded, and let that happen tomorrow!"

"We know each other well," Aeneas said.

"We do, and we long to know each other worse," Diomedes replied.

Rather than know each other to be well and healthy, they each hoped to know that the other was wounded or dead.

"This is the most spiteful gentle greeting, the noblest hateful love, that ever I heard of," Paris said.

He then asked Aeneas, "What business, lord, do you have so early?"

"King Priam sent for me," Aeneas said, "but why, I don't know."

"The reason meets you here and now," Paris said. "It was to bring this Greek, Diomedes, to Calchas' house, where Cressida, his daughter, is living, and there to render him, in exchange for the freed Antenor, the fair Cressida."

Paris then walked to the side with Aeneas, and they held a

private, quiet conversation.

Paris said, "Let's have your company, or if you please, you can hasten to Calchas' house before us. I firmly think — or rather, call my thought a certain knowledge — that my brother Troilus lodges there tonight. Rouse him and give him notice of our approach. Because of the reason we are coming there, I fear we shall be much unwelcome."

"I assure you that we will be much unwelcome," Aeneas replied. "Troilus had rather Troy were carried to Greece than Cressida carried away from Troy."

"There is no help for it," Paris said. "The bitter disposition of the time will have it so. It is necessary."

Paris then said loudly, "Go on ahead of us, Aeneas; we'll follow you."

"Good morning, everyone," Aeneas said.

Aeneas and the servant carrying the torch exited.

Paris then asked, "Tell me, noble Diomedes, indeed, tell me truly, even in the soul of sound and good friendship, who, in your thoughts, deserves fair Helen best, myself or Menelaus?"

"Both of you deserve her equally," Diomedes said. "Menelaus well deserves to have her because he seeks her without being bothered by her dirty lack of chastity, which has caused such a Hell of pain and world of expense as we fight this war to get her back for him. And you deserve as well to keep her because you defend her without noticing the taste of her dishonor, her lack of faithfulness, her adultery, which has led to such a costly loss of wealth and friends.

"Menelaus, like a whining cuckold, would drink up the lees and dregs of a flat tamed piece — a wine that has been exposed to the air and gone flat, or a piece of female flesh

that has been in bed with men so much that she has become stale.

“You, like a lecher, are happy to breed your inheritors — your children — out of Helen’s whorish genitals.

“Weighing both merits with a set of scales, each weighs neither less nor more than the other, but both are heavier — sadder — because of a whore named Helen.”

“You are too bitter to your countrywoman,” Paris replied.

“Helen is bitter to her country,” Diomedes said. “Listen to me, Paris. For every false drop in her bawdy veins a Greek’s life has sunk and been lost; for every tiny bit of her contaminated carrion weight, a Trojan has been slain. Since Helen has been able to speak, the number of words she has spoken does not equal the number of Greeks and Trojans who have died in this war over her.”

“Fair Diomedes, you are doing what merchants do,” Paris said. “You dispraise the thing that you desire to buy. But we in silence hold this virtue well, we’ll commend only what we intend to sell.”

Paris did not commend — praise — Helen because he had no desire to sell her.

Paris said, “Here lies our way.”

They then walked to Calchas’ house.

— 4.2 —

Troilus and Cressida stood and talked in the courtyard of Calchas’ house.

Troilus said, “Dear, do not trouble yourself. The morning is cold.”

Now that it was morning, it was time for Troilus to leave.

Cressida wanted to protect her reputation; she did not want other people to know that Troilus had spent the night with her.

“Then, my sweet lord, I’ll call my uncle down,” Cressida said. “He shall unbolt the gates to let you out.”

Pandarus lived next to Cressida. The houses shared the same court and were adjoined.

“Don’t trouble him,” Troilus said. “Go to bed, to bed. Let sleep kill — overcome — those pretty eyes, and give as soft arrest to your senses as infants’ senses that are empty of all thought!”

“Good morning, then,” Cressida said.

“Please, go to bed now.”

“Are you weary of me?”

“Oh, Cressida! Except that the busy day, awakened by the morning lark, has aroused the ribald crows, and dreaming night will hide our joys no longer, I would not go away from you.”

“Night has been too brief,” Cressida said.

“Damn the witch called night! With malignant people thinking evil thoughts at night, she stays as tediously as Hell and allows time to pass only slowly, but she flies past the grasps of love with wings more momentary-swift than thought. You will catch cold, and curse me.”

“Please, tarry. Stay a while longer,” Cressida said. “You men will never tarry. Oh, foolish Cressida! I might have still held off and not slept with you, and then you would have tarried. Listen! There’s someone up.”

Pandarus said from inside, “Why are all the doors open here?”

“It is your uncle,” Troilus said.

“A pestilence on him!” Cressida said. “Now he will be mocking me. What a life I shall have!”

Pandarus entered the courtyard and said, “How are you now! How are you now! How go maidenheads? What is the price of virginity?”

Pretending not to recognize Cressida, who was no longer a virgin, he said to her, “Hey, you maiden! Where’s Cressida, my niece?”

“Go hang yourself, you naughty mocking uncle!” Cressida said. “You bring me to do, and then you flout me, too.”

One meaning of “to do” is “to have sex.”

“To do what?” Pandarus said. “To do what? Let her say what! What have I brought you to do?”

“Come, come, curse your heart!” Cressida said. “You’ll never be good, nor will you allow others to be good.”

“Ha! Ha!” Pandarus laughed. “Alas, poor wretch! Ah, poor *chipochia*! Haven’t you slept tonight?”

Chipochia was poorly pronounced Italian for “pussy.”

Using baby talk, he said to her, “Would he, a naughty man, not let it sleep? May a bugbear take him!”

Cressida said to Troilus, “Didn’t I tell you that he would tease me! I wish that he were knocked in the head!”

Knocking sounded on the door of the courtyard.

She said to Pandarus, “Who’s that at the door? Good uncle, go and see.”

She then said to Troilus, “My lord, come again into my bedchamber.”

Cressida wanted him to go back to her bedchamber because she did not want him to be found with her. She wanted to keep their sexual relationship secret.

He smiled, and she said, “You smile and mock me, as if I meant naughtily, as if I wanted to have sex again with you.”

Troilus laughed.

“Come, you are deceived. I am thinking of no such thing.”

Knocking sounded again at the door.

“How earnestly they knock!” Cressida said. “Please, come inside. I would not for half of Troy have you seen here.”

Troilus and Cressida exited.

“Who’s there?” Pandarus said. “What’s the matter? Will you beat down the door? What is it now! What’s the matter?”

He opened the door, and Aeneas entered the courtyard.

“Good morning, my lord, good morning,” Aeneas said.

“Who’s there?” Pandarus asked. “My Lord Aeneas! I swear that I didn’t know who you are. What news gets you up so early?”

“Isn’t Prince Troilus here?” Aeneas asked.

“Here! What should he be doing here?” Pandarus asked, pretending to be surprised by the question.

“Come, he is here, my lord,” Aeneas said. “Do not deny it. He needs to speak with me about a matter that is important to him.”

“Troilus is here, you say?” Pandarus said. “It is more than I know, I’ll be sworn. As for my own part, I came in late. What would he be doing here?”

“What? Do you mean *who* would he be doing here?” Aeneas asked. “Well, then. Come, come, you’ll do him wrong without meaning to. You’ll be so true to him that you will be false to him. By trying to help him by pretending that he is not here, you will hurt him by keeping me from talking with him. Let’s agree to pretend that you do not know about him being here, but still go and fetch him here; go.”

Troilus, who had been eavesdropping, came out into the courtyard.

“How are you now?” Troilus asked Aeneas. “What’s the matter?”

“My lord, I scarcely have leisure to greet you because my business with you is so urgent. Nearby are your brother Paris, and Deiphobus, the Greek Diomedes, and our Antenor, who has been freed by the Greeks and delivered to us; and for him forthwith, before the first sacrifice, within this hour, we must hand over to Diomedes’ hand the Lady Cressida. She is being exchanged for Antenor.”

“Has this been definitely decided?” Troilus asked.

“Yes, it has been decided by Priam and the general assembly of Troy. People are at hand and ready to put the decision into effect.”

“How my achievements mock me!” Troilus said.

He had just won Cressida, and now he had to give her up.

He continued, “I will go and meet them, and, my Lord Aeneas, say that we met by chance; you did not find me here.”

“Yes, that is a good idea, my lord,” Aeneas said. “The secrets of nature are not more gifted in taciturnity than I am. Nature holds on to her secrets, and I will hold on to your secret.”

Troilus and Aeneas exited.

Pandarus said, "Is it possible? No sooner gotten but lost? May the Devil take Antenor! The young Prince Troilus will go mad: a plague upon Antenor! I wish the Greeks had broken his neck!"

Cressida came into the courtyard and asked, "What's going on! What's the matter? Who was here?"

Pandarus sighed.

"Why do you sigh so deeply?" Cressida asked. "Where's my lord? Gone! Tell me, sweet uncle, what's the matter?"

"I wish that I were as deep under the earth as I am above it!"

"Oh, the gods! What's the matter?"

"Please, go inside," Pandarus said. "I wish that you had never been born! I knew you would be Troilus' death. Oh, poor gentleman! A plague upon Antenor!"

"Good uncle, I beg you, on my knees!" Cressida said. "I beg you, tell me what's the matter."

"You must leave Troy, girl, you must leave Troy; you have been exchanged for Antenor," Pandarus said. "You must go to your father, and be gone from Troilus. It will be his death; it will be his bane, his poison, his ruin; he cannot bear it."

"Oh, you immortal gods!" Cressida said. "I will not go."

"You must."

"I will not, uncle," Cressida said. "I have forgotten my father; I know no feeling of blood relationship to him; I know no sense of relationship, love, blood, soul for him that comes close to what I feel for the sweet Troilus."

"Oh, you divine gods, make Cressida's name the very crown

of falsehood if she ever leaves Troilus!”

Were the gods listening?

Cressida continued, “Time, force, and death, do to this body what extremes you can, but the strong base and building of my love is like the very center of the Earth, and draws all things to it. I’ll go in and weep —”

“Do, do,” Pandarus said.

Cressida continued, “— tear my bright hair and scratch my praised cheeks, crack my clear voice with sobs and break my heart with calling the name of Troilus. I will not go away from Troy.”

— 4.3 —

Paris, Troilus, Aeneas, Deiphobus, Antenor, and the Greek Diomedes walked to the street in front of Calchas’ house. Paris and Troilus stood apart from the others.

Paris said loudly, “It is full morning, and the hour fixed for Cressida’s delivery to this valiant Greek, Diomedes, is coming quickly.”

He and Troilus then talked quietly.

“My good brother Troilus, tell the lady what she is to do, and urge her to make haste.”

“Walk into her house,” Troilus said. “I’ll bring her to the Greek quickly, and when I deliver her to his hand, think that his hand is an altar and your brother Troilus is a priest there who is offering to it his own heart.”

Paris said, “I know what it is to love, and I wish that I could help as much as I shall feel pity!”

Troilus exited.

Paris said loudly, "May it please you to walk into her house, my lords."

— 4.4 —

Pandarus and Cressida were talking inside her house.

"Be calm, be calm," Pandarus advised.

"Why are you telling me to be calm?" Cressida said. "The grief that I taste is pure and entirely perfect, and it rages as strongly as that which causes it, so how can I moderate it? How can I be calm? If I could moderate my affection, or brew it for a weak and colder palate, then I could give my grief some moderation that would weaken the senses. My love for Troilus, however, admits no qualifying impure dross; and neither does my grief because it suffers such a precious loss."

"Here, here, here he comes," Pandarus said.

Troilus entered the room, and Pandarus said affectionately, "Ah, sweet ducks!"

"Oh, Troilus! Troilus!" Cressida said as she embraced him.

"What a pair of sights is here!" Pandarus said. "Let me hug, too."

He put his arms around both of them and hugged them and then said, "'Oh, heart,' as the goodly saying is, '— oh, heart, heavy and sorrowful heart, why do you sigh without breaking?' Where he answers again, 'Because you cannot ease your smart — your hurt — by friendship or by speaking.'"

Pandarus paused and then said, "There was never a truer rhyme. Let us cast away nothing, for we may live to have need of such a verse. We see it happen. We see the need for it. How are you doing now, lambs?"

“Cressida, I love you in so distilled and pure a way that the blessed gods are angry with my love for you, which is brighter in zeal than the devotion that cold lips blow in prayers to their deities,” Troilus said. “That is why the gods are taking you from me.”

“Have the gods envy and jealousy?” Cressida asked.

“Yes, yes, yes, yes,” Pandarus said. “It is all too plainly the case here.”

Cressida asked, “And is it true that I must go away from Troy?”

“It is a hateful truth,” Troilus said.

“And from Troilus, too?” Cressida asked.

Troilus replied, “Yes, from Troy and Troilus.”

“Is it possible?” she asked.

“Yes, and it has happened suddenly,” Troilus said. “The injury of chance events — bad luck — refuses to give us time to properly say goodbye. The injury of chance events jostles roughly by all time of pause and rudely beguiles our lips of all reunions and kisses, it forcibly prevents our arms from locking in embraces, and it strangles our dear vows even in the birth of our own laboring breath — it cuts off the vows we attempt to make to each other even before we can say them. We two, who bought each other with so many thousand sighs, must sell ourselves at a cheap price with the rude brevity and discharge of only one sigh. Injurious time now with a robber’s haste stuffs his rich thievery willy-nilly in a small sack. As many farewells as there are stars in Heaven, each farewell with its own distinct breath and kisses, he fumbles up into a casual *adieu*, and scants us with a single famished kiss, which tastes of the salt of the tears of broken lovers.”

Aeneas called from outside the room, “My lord, is the lady ready?”

“Listen,” Troilus said. “He is calling for you. Some say the Genius similarly cries, ‘Come,’ to the man who immediately must die.”

The Genius is a Guardian Spirit that accompanies a human being during life and then guides the soul to its abode after death.

Troilus called to Aeneas, “Tell them to be patient; she shall come quickly.”

Pandarus said, “Where are my tears? Rain, tears, to slow down this wind — my sighs — or my heart will be blown up by the root.”

Pandarus was referring to the belief that rain causes a wind to slow down.

Pandarus exited.

Cressida asked Troilus, “Must I then go to the Greeks?”

“There’s no remedy. There’s no alternative,” Troilus replied.

“I will be a woeful Cressida among the merry Greeks!” she said.

One meaning of “merry Greeks” in this culture was “dissolute and wanton rogues.”

She continued, “When shall we see each other again?”

Troilus said, “Listen to me, my love. Be true —”

“To be true” means “to be faithful and not fall in love with someone else.”

“Can you doubt that I will be true! What! What wicked thought is this?”

“We must use remonstrations kindly because we are parting and will be unable to speak to each other. I say, ‘Be true,’ not because I fear that you intend to be otherwise, for I will throw my glove to and challenge Death himself so I can prove by force of arms that there’s no stain in your heart. But I say, ‘Be true,’ to introduce my following words: ‘Be true, and I will see you.’”

“Oh, if you go to the Greek camp, you shall be exposed, my lord, to dangers as infinite as they are imminent!” Cressida said. “But I’ll be true.”

“And I’ll become friends with danger,” Troilus said. “Wear this sleeve.”

In this culture, sleeves were detachable from the rest of the upper garment. They were sometimes given as love tokens.

“And you wear this glove,” Cressida said, giving him a glove as he gave her the sleeve. “When shall I see you?”

Both garments — sleeve and glove — had holes into which one or more phallic-like objects could be thrust.

“I will corrupt — bribe — the Greek sentinels so I can visit you at night. But yet be true.”

“Oh, Heavens! ‘Be true’ again!”

“Pay attention as I explain why I speak those words, love,” Troilus said. “The Greek youths are full of good qualities. They’re loving, well composed with gifts of nature such as good looks, and flowing and swelling over with arts and exercise: They have studied and practiced arts that make them attractive. How novelty and good qualities with a fine figure may move a woman — alas, a kind of godly jealousy, which I beg you to call a virtuous sin, makes me afraid.”

Understanding that Troilus was afraid that she would fall in love with a Greek, Cressida said, “Oh, Heavens! You don’t

love me!”

“May I die a villain, then!” Troilus said. “In saying these things, I do not call your faith in question as much as I call into question my merit: I cannot sing, nor dance the high-jumping dance called the lavolt, nor sweeten my talk, nor play at crafty games; these are all fair virtues that the Greeks are most prompt and ready to practice. But I can tell that in each of these virtues there lurks a still and dumb-discursive — that is, a still and silently persuasive — Devil that tempts most cunningly, but don’t you be tempted.”

“Do you think I will be tempted?” Cressida asked.

“No, but something may be done that we will not.”

Troilus was using “will” to mean “wish.”

He continued, “And sometimes we are Devils to ourselves, when we tempt the frailty of our powers, presuming on their changeful potency. Sometimes, we rely too much on our own strength, but our strength can grow weak.”

Aeneas called again, “It’s time, my good lord.”

“Come, kiss me,” Troilus said, “and let us part.”

Paris called, “Brother Troilus!”

Troilus called back, “Good brother, come here, and bring Aeneas and the Greek with you.”

“My lord, will you be true to me?” Cressida asked.

“Who, I? Unfortunately, being true is my vice, my fault. While others fish with cunning to get a great reputation for a good character, I with great truth catch total simplicity. Because I tell the truth, I get a reputation for being simple — a fool. While some with cunning gild their copper crowns to make them appear to be gold, with truth and plainness I wear my crown bare.”

The crowns were both coins and the tops of heads. Unlike some other people, Troilus did not put on an act to make himself look gilded — better than he really was.

He added, “Fear not my truth — my faithfulness to you. The moral of my intelligence is ‘plain and true’; that’s all there is to my character.”

Aeneas, Paris, Antenor, Deiphobus, and the Greek Diomedes entered the room.

Troilus said, “Welcome, Sir Diomedes! Here is the lady whom we deliver to you in exchange for Antenor. At the city gate, lord, I’ll give her into your hand, and as we walk to the gate I’ll tell you about her. Treat her well; and, by my soul, fair Greek, if ever you stand at the mercy of my sword, say the name ‘Cressida’ and your life shall be as safe as Priam is in Troy.”

Diomedes said, “Fair Lady Cressida, if it pleases you, save the thanks this Prince expects. You owe him nothing. The luster in your eyes and the Heaven in your cheeks plead for you to be treated well, and you shall be my mistress and command Diomedes wholly.”

Diomedes was using courtly language. “Mistress” meant a woman who could command a man — called her “servant” — to do things for her because the man admired her; however, other meanings of “mistress” in this culture was “a woman who is pursued by a man” and “a woman who has a lengthy sexual relationship with a man she is not married to.”

“Greek, you are not treating me with courtesy,” Troilus said. “Instead, by praising her you shame the zeal of my petition to you. I tell you, lord of Greece, she is as far high soaring over your praises as you are unworthy to be called her servant. I order you to treat her well simply for the reason that I have ordered you to treat her well. For, by the dreadful Pluto, god of the Land of the Dead, if you do not treat her

well, even if the great bulk of Achilles is your bodyguard, I'll cut your throat."

"Oh, don't be angry, Prince Troilus," Diomedes replied. "Let me be privileged by my position as ambassador and messenger to speak freely: When I am away from Troy, I'll answer to my lust."

"I'll answer to my lust" can mean several things: 1) "I'll do as I like," 2) "I'll meet you on the battlefield," 3) "I'll treat Cressida well simply because I want to, not because you order me to," and/or 4) "I'll seduce Cressida."

Diomedes continued, "You should know, lord, that I'll do nothing because I have been ordered to do it. Cressida shall be prized according to her own worth. If you tell me, 'Prize her because I tell you to prize her,' I'll reply in accordance with my spirit and honor, 'No.'"

"Come, let's go to the gate," Troilus said. "I'll tell you, Diomedes, this boast of yours shall often make you hide your head."

He then said to Cressida, "Lady, give me your hand, and, as we walk, we shall say to each other what needs to be said."

Troilus, Cressida, and Diomedes exited.

A trumpet sounded.

Paris said, "Listen! That is Hector's trumpet."

"How we have spent this morning! We have wasted time," Aeneas said. "Prince Hector must think that I am tardy and remiss. I swore that I would ride before him to the battlefield."

"It is Troilus' fault that handing over Cressida to Diomedes took so long," Paris said. "Come, let's go to the battlefield with Hector."

“Let’s get ready immediately,” Aeneas said.

“Yes, let’s get ready with a bridegroom’s fresh eagerness,” Paris said. “Let us prepare to tend on Hector’s heels. The glory of our Troy lies this day on his fair worth and single chivalry. This is the day that he will fight a duel with Ajax.”

— 4.5 —

Ajax, wearing armor, walked over to Agamemnon, Achilles, Patroclus, Menelaus, Ulysses, Nestor, and some others. They were at the place where Ajax would duel Hector. The lists — barriers surrounding the place where the duel would take place — were already set out.

Agamemnon said to Ajax, “Here you are wearing fresh and fair armor, early for the duel, and with abundant courage. Give with your trumpeter a loud note to Troy, you awe-inspiring Ajax, so that the appalled air may pierce the ears of the great combatant Hector and bring him hither.”

“Trumpeter, here’s some money,” Ajax said. “Now crack your lungs, and split your brazen pipe. Blow, villain, until your sphered and swollen cheeks outswell the gassy colic of the puffing Aquilon — the North Wind. Come, stretch your chest and let your eyes spout blood with the effort of blowing. You blow to summon Hector.”

A trumpet sounded.

“No trumpet answers,” Ulysses said.

“It is still early,” Achilles said.

Seeing two people coming toward them, Agamemnon asked, “Isn’t that Diomedes yonder, with Calchas’ daughter?”

“It is Diomedes,” Ulysses said. “I know the manner of his gait. He rises on the toe: His aspiring spirit lifts him from the earth.”

Diomedes led Cressida over to Agamemnon.

“Is this the Lady Cressida?” Agamemnon asked.

“Yes, it is she,” Diomedes replied.

“You are very dearly welcome to the Greeks, sweet lady,” Agamemnon said, kissing her.

“Our general salutes you with a kiss,” Nestor said.

“Yet the kindness is only particular,” Ulysses said. “It would be better if she were kissed in general.”

“That is very courtly counsel,” Nestor, who was an old man, said. “I’ll begin.”

He kissed Cressida and said, “So much for Nestor.”

Referring to Nestor’s old age — he was in the December of his life — Achilles said, “I’ll take that winter from your lips, fair lady.”

He kissed her and said, “Achilles bids you welcome.”

“I had a good argument for kissing once,” Menelaus said.

By “argument,” he meant “cause or reason.” That argument was Helen.

“But that’s no argument for kissing now,” Patroclus said, using “argument” with its usual meaning.

He kissed Cressida and said, “For thus popped Paris in his hardiment, and parted thus you and your argument.”

Patroclus was making fun of Menelaus, whose wife, Helen, was sleeping with Paris, Prince of Troy. “Hardiment” is an archaic word meaning “act of valor” and “erect penis.” “Pop in” means to “arrive unexpectedly” and “move in suddenly.” Paris had popped in to visit Menelaus, King of Sparta, and he had popped his erect penis into Helen.

“Oh, this is deadly gall, and the theme of all our scorns!” Ulysses said. “For this we lose our heads to gild his horns.”

Menelaus was a cuckold, a man with an unfaithful wife. Cuckolds were said to have horns. By fighting the Trojan War to get Helen back for Menelaus, the Greeks were fighting to gild his horns — to get back some of the honor that Paris had taken from him.

“The first kiss I gave you was Menelaus’ kiss,” Patroclus said. “This kiss is mine.”

He kissed Cressida and said, “Patroclus kisses you.”

“Oh, this is excellent!” Menelaus said, sarcastically.

Patroclus said, “Paris and I kiss evermore for Menelaus.”

Paris kissed Helen for Menelaus, and now Patroclus was kissing Cressida for Menelaus.

“I’ll have my kiss, sir,” Menelaus said to Patroclus.

He then said to Cressida, “Lady, by your leave.”

Cressida was a young Trojan woman who was surrounded by Greek men in what could very well be a dangerous situation for her.

Silent up to now, Cressida said to Menelaus, “In kissing, do you give or receive?”

Menelaus said, “I both take and give.”

Cressida said, “I’ll bet my life that the kiss you take is better than the kiss you give; therefore, you get no kiss.”

“I’ll give you something in addition,” Menelaus said. “I’ll give you three kisses in return for one kiss.”

“You’re an odd man,” Cressida said. “Give even odds or give none.”

By “odd,” Cressida meant “eccentric or unusual.”

“An odd man, lady!” Menelaus said. “Every man is odd.”

Menelaus was saying that every man is a unique individual.

“No, Paris is not,” Cressida said, “for you know it is true that you are odd, and he is even with you.”

Cressida was saying that Paris was even because he was part of a couple, while Menelaus was odd — a single man who was odd man out and who was at odds with Paris.

Menelaus replied, “You hit me on the head.”

Cressida’s comments were cutting him close to the bone — she was hitting him on his cuckold’s horns.

“No, I’ll be sworn,” Cressida said.

“It is no contest, your fingernail against his horn,” Ulysses said. “His horns are tougher than your fingernails.”

He then asked, “May I, sweet lady, beg a kiss of you?”

“You may,” Cressida replied.

“I do desire a kiss.”

“Why, beg, then.”

Ulysses, who was unwilling to beg in any serious way, said, “Why then for Venus’ sake, give me a kiss when Helen is a maiden — a virgin — again, and when she belongs to Menelaus again.”

Helen would never be a virgin again, and having cuckolded Menelaus, would she ever really be his again?

“I am your debtor,” Cressida said. “Claim your kiss when it is due.”

“Never is my day to claim my kiss, and then I will get a kiss

of you,” Ulysses said.

Cressida had managed to use her wits to avoid being kissed by Menelaus and by Ulysses.

Diomedes said to her, “Lady, a word. I’ll bring you to your father.”

Diomedes and Cressida exited.

Nestor said, “She is a woman of quick sense.”

“Sense” could mean “wits” or “sensuality.”

“Damn her!” Ulysses, who had not received a kiss, said. “There’s language in her eye, her cheek, her lip — you can read her or listen to her. Her foot speaks; her wanton spirits appear in every joint and motion of her body. Oh, these flirts, so glib of tongue, who accost men and give them welcome before they come near, and widely unclasp the tablets of their thoughts to every ticklish, lecherous reader! Set them down for sluttish spoils of opportunity and daughters of the game. Set them down in the records as the whores they are.”

Was Ulysses accurate in thinking that Cressida was a slut? Or was he just angry at not having received a kiss?

A trumpet sounded.

All the Greeks said, “The Trojans’ trumpet.”

Or perhaps they said, in response to Ulysses’ words, “The Trojan strumpet.”

“Yonder comes the Trojans’ troop,” Agamemnon said.

Hector, along with Aeneas, Troilus, and other Trojan soldiers and some attendants, walked over to the Greeks. Hector was wearing armor.

“Hail, all you rulers of Greece!” Aeneas said. “What shall be

done to him who commands victory? What shall the victor win? Or do you purpose that a victor shall be known? Do you want the knights to fight to the death, or shall the knights be separated before death occurs by any voice or order of the marshal of the lists? Hector bade me ask you this.”

“Which way would Hector have it?” Agamemnon asked.

“He has no preference,” Aeneas replied. “He’ll obey whatever conditions you set.”

Achilles said, “This is done like Hector; but it is done overconfidently. It is done a little proudly, and a great deal disparaging the knight opposing Hector.”

Aeneas asked, “If not Achilles, sir, what is your name?”

“If not Achilles, my name is nothing,” Achilles replied.

“Therefore your name is Achilles,” Aeneas said, “but, whatever it is, know this: In the extremity of great and little, valor and pride excel themselves in Hector. The one is almost as infinite as all; the other is blank as nothing. He has much courage and is not at all proud. Weigh him well, and you will see that what looks like pride is courtesy. This Ajax is half made of Hector’s blood. Out of love for that half, half of Hector stays at home; half heart, half hand, half Hector comes to seek this blended knight who is half Trojan and half Greek.”

Hector and Ajax were first cousins. Ajax’ mother was Hesione, who was the sister of Priam, Hector’s father.

Achilles said sarcastically, “A maiden battle, then? Not a fight to the death? No bloodshed? Oh, I see.”

Having delivered Cressida to Calchas, her father, Diomedes returned.

“Here is Sir Diomedes,” Agamemnon said. “Go, honorable

knight, and stand by our Ajax. As you and Lord Aeneas consent upon the order of their fight, so be it. The fight can be either to the uttermost — to the death — or else it can be exercise. Because the combatants are related by blood, their fight is half restrained before their strokes begin.”

Ajax and Hector entered the lists; they were ready to duel.

“They are opposed already,” Ulysses said.

Seeing Troilus, Agamemnon asked Ulysses, “What Trojan is that one who looks so sorrowful?”

“He is the youngest son of Priam, and he is a true knight. He is not yet fully mature, yet he is matchless and firm of word. He does his speaking with his deeds, and he does not boast about his deeds with his tongue. He is not soon provoked, but once he is provoked he is not soon calmed. His heart and hand are both open and both free and both generous; for what he has he gives, and what he thinks he shows. Yet he does not give until his rational judgment guides his bounty, nor does he dignify an impure thought by saying it out loud. He is as manly as Hector, but more dangerous; for Hector in his blaze of wrath shows mercy to tender objects that arouse his pity, but this man, the youngest son of Priam, in the heat of action is more vindictive than jealous love. They call him Troilus, and on him erect a second hope, as fairly built as Hector. They think of him as an up-and-coming second Hector. Thus says Aeneas, who knows the youth from top to bottom; from his heart Aeneas thus described Troilus to me when I was an ambassador inside Troy.”

Trumpets sounded, and Hector and Ajax began to duel. The marshals of the duel were Aeneas and Diomedes.

“They are in action,” Agamemnon said.

“Now, Ajax, hold your own!” Nestor shouted.

“Hector, you are asleep!” Troilus shouted. “Wake up!”

“His blows are well placed,” Agamemnon said to Nestor.

Agamemnon shouted, “There, Ajax!”

Diomedes said to Hector and Ajax, “You must fight no more.”

The trumpeters stopped blowing.

“Princes, enough, if it pleases you,” Aeneas said.

“I am not warm yet,” Ajax said. “I haven’t broken a sweat. Let us fight again.”

“Whatever Hector pleases,” Diomedes replied.

“Why, then I fight no more today,” Hector said to Diomedes.

He then said to Ajax, “You are, great lord, my father’s sister’s son, a first cousin to me, the son of great Priam. The obligation of our blood relation forbids a gory rivalry between us two. Were your Greek and Trojan mixture such that you could say, ‘This hand is all Greek, and this hand is all Trojan; the muscles of this leg are all Greek, and the muscles of this leg are all Trojan; my mother’s blood runs here on the right cheek, and my father’s blood runs here on the left cheek,’ then by most powerful Jove, you would not go away from me bearing a Greek limb or other body part in which my sword had not made its mark during our violent duel, but the just gods forbid that any drop of blood you got from your mother, my sacred aunt, should by my mortal sword be drained from your body! Let me embrace you, Ajax. By Jove who thunders, you have strong arms.”

Hector hugged Ajax and said, “Hector would have your strong arms fall upon him like this. Cousin, I give all honor to you!”

“I thank you, Hector,” Ajax said. “You are too gentle, too

noble, and too free a man. I came to kill you, cousin, and bear away from here a great addition to my honor — a great addition earned by your death.”

Hector replied, “Not even the admirable Pyrrhus Neoptolemus, Achilles’ son — on whose bright crest Fame loudly cried, ‘Oyez — hear me — this is he,’ could promise to himself a thought of added honor torn from Hector. Not even the admirable Neoptolemus can promise to himself that he will be able to kill me and to take my honor for himself.”

“Soldiers from both sides are expectantly awaiting what you will do,” Aeneas said.

“We’ll let them know,” Hector said. “The conclusion of the duel is a hug.”

He added, “Ajax, farewell.”

Ajax replied, “If I might in my entreaties find success — as I seldom have the chance to ask you this — I would like you, my famous cousin, to visit our Greek tents.”

“It is Agamemnon’s wish,” Diomedes said, “and great Achilles longs to see unarmed the valiant Hector.”

“Aeneas, call my brother Troilus to me,” Hector said, “and report this friendly face-to-face meeting between me and the Greeks to the Trojans who are awaiting news. Request that they return to Troy.”

He then said to Ajax, “Shake hands with me, my cousin. I will go and eat with you and see your knights.”

Agamemnon came forward.

Ajax said, “Great Agamemnon comes to meet us here.”

Hector said to Ajax, “Tell me name by name the worthiest of them except for Achilles because my own searching eyes shall find him by his large and imposing size.”

Hector did not recognize many of the Greeks because on the battlefield, the soldiers wore helmets. Ulysses and Diomedes, however, had been ambassadors to Troy, and so Hector recognized them, and they recognized many of the Trojans.

Agamemnon said to Hector, “You are worthy of arms!”

Agamemnon hugged Hector. Agamemnon’s words had two meanings: 1) Hector was worthy of being hugged. 2) Hector was worthy of his armor and weapons.

Agamemnon added, “You are as welcome as you can be to one who would be rid of such an enemy — but that’s no welcome. Understand more clearly: Both what’s past and what’s to come are strewn with husks and the formless ruin of oblivion, but in this existing moment, my good faith and trustworthiness, strained pure from all insincere crooked-dealing, bid you, with the most divine integrity, from the bottom of my heart, great Hector, welcome.”

“I thank you, most imperial Agamemnon,” Hector said.

Agamemnon said to Troilus, “My well-famed lord of Troy, I give no less welcome to you.”

“Let me confirm my Princely brother’s greeting,” Menelaus said. “You pair of warlike brothers, welcome hither.”

“Who must we answer?” Hector asked Aeneas. Hector did not recognize Menelaus.

Aeneas replied, “He is the noble Menelaus.”

“Oh, you are Menelaus, my lord?” Hector said. “By Mars’ gauntlet, I thank you! Don’t mock me because I use the fancy oath ‘by Mars’ gauntlet,’ which I seldom use. Your former wife swears still by Venus’ glove that she’s well, but she bade me not to commend her to you.”

Hector was subtly mocking the cuckold Menelaus by bringing up Mars, god of war, and Venus, goddess of sexual passion, who had had an affair together, thereby cuckolding Venus' husband, Vulcan.

“Don’t name her now, sir,” Menelaus said, referring to Helen. “She’s a deadly theme.”

“Pardon me,” Hector said. “I have offended you.”

Nestor said, “I have, you gallant Trojan, seen you often, laboring for fate, make your cruel way through ranks of young Greek soldiers, and I have seen you, as hot as Perseus, who slew the Gorgon Medusa, who had snakes for hair, spur your Trojan steed, despising many soldiers whom you had defeated and who had thereby forfeited their lives, when you have hung your advanced sword in the air and not let it fall on the fallen. Then I have said to some people standing by me, ‘Look, Jupiter is yonder, dealing life to those from whom he could take life!’ And I have seen you pause and take your breath, when a ring of Greeks has hemmed you in, as if they were watching a wrestler in a match at the Olympics. These things I have seen. But this your countenance, which has always been locked in a steel helmet, I never saw till now.

“I knew your grandfather Laomedon, and I once fought with him. He was a good soldier, but by great Mars, the captain of us all, I have never seen a soldier like you. Let an old man embrace you, and, worthy warrior, I bid you welcome to our tents.”

Actually Nestor had fought *against* Hector’s grandfather, but Nestor used the word *with*, which was accurate but less likely to cause offense due to ambiguity: To fight “with” could mean to fight “against” or to fight “on the side of.” Nestor addressed Hector in a friendly manner, as did Hector when he replied to Nestor.

“He is the old Nestor,” Aeneas said to Hector.

“Let me embrace you, good old chronicle,” Hector said. “You are a living history book because you have lived so long — you have for so long walked hand in hand with time. Most revered Nestor, I am glad to hug you.”

“I wish my arms could match you in contention — in a battle — as they contend now with you in courtesy and etiquette,” Nestor said.

“I wish they could,” Hector said.

“Ha! By this white beard, I would fight with you tomorrow,” Nestor said. “Well, welcome, welcome! I have seen the time when I was young enough to fight you on the battlefield, but that time is past.”

“I wonder now how yonder city stands when we have here her base and pillar by us,” Ulysses said. “The very foundation of Troy is here in the Greek camp.”

“I know your face, Lord Ulysses, well,” Hector said. “Ah, sir, there’s many a Greek and Trojan dead, since I first saw you and Diomedes in Troy, while you two were on your Greek embassy.”

When the Greeks first arrived at Troy, they conquered Tenedos, an island lying near Troy, and then they sent Ulysses and Diomedes on an embassy to Troy, unsuccessfully hoping to get Helen and reparations.

“Sir, I foretold to you then what would ensue,” Ulysses said. “My prophecy is but half fulfilled yet. In order for my prophecy to be fulfilled, yonder walls, which boldly stand in front of your town, and yonder towers, whose wanton tops kiss the clouds, must kiss their own feet. In order for my prophecy to be fulfilled, Troy’s walls and towers must fall.”

“I must not believe you,” Hector said. “That will never

happen. Troy's walls and towers stand there yet, and modestly, I think, the fall of every Trojan stone will cost a drop of Greek blood. The end of this war will tell all, and that old resolver of all quarrels, Time, will one day end this war."

"So to Time we leave it," Ulysses said. "Most noble and most valiant Hector, welcome. After you feast with the general, Agamemnon, I ask that you next feast with me and see me in my tent."

Achilles interrupted: "I shall forestall thee, Lord Ulysses, thou! Now, Hector, I have fed my eyes on thee. I have with exact view perused thee, Hector, and examined thee joint by joint."

Achilles was being rude. He was using the familiar "thee" to refer to Ulysses, an older man to whom he ought to show respect, and he was using the familiar "thee" to refer to Hector, an honored guest in the Greek camp. Achilles should have used the formal "you" to refer to both men.

"Is this Achilles?" Hector asked.

"I am Achilles."

"Stand in full view, I ask thee," Hector said. "Let me look on thee."

Hector was irritated by Achilles and so called him "thee." Previously, Hector and Ulysses had respectfully called each other "you."

Achilles came forward and said, "Behold thy fill."

"No, I am done already," Hector said.

"Thou are too brief," Achilles said. "I will look at thee a second time, as if I were going to buy thee. I will view thee limb by limb."

Achilles' words contained a suggestion of buying and then butchering an animal.

Angry and using the less respectful words "thou" and "thine," Hector said, "Oh, like a book on sport thou shall read me over. But there's more in me than you understand. Why do thou so stare at me with thine eye?"

Achilles got on his knees to pray to the gods and said, "Tell me, you Heavens, in which part of Hector's body shall I destroy him?"

He pointed to various parts of Hector's body and said, "Whether there, or there, or there? So that I may give the local wound a name and make distinct the very breach from out of which Hector's great spirit flew, answer me, Heavens!"

"It would discredit the blest gods, proud man, to answer such a question," Hector said. "Stand up again."

Achilles stood up.

Hector asked, "Do thou think that thou can catch my life so pleasantly and easily that thou can name in advance and precisely where thou will hit and kill me?"

"I tell thee, yes," Achilles said.

"Even if thou were an oracle telling me this, I would not believe thee. Henceforth, guard thee well, for I'll not kill thee there, nor there, nor there," Hector said, pointing to various parts of Achilles' body, "but, by the forge that forged Mars' helmet, I'll kill thee everywhere, yes, over and over."

Hector paused, and then he said, "You wisest Greeks, pardon me for making this brag. Achilles' insolence draws foolish words from my lips, but I'll work hard to make my deeds to match these words, or may I never —"

Ajax interrupted, "Thou should not allow yourself to be angry, cousin. And you, Achilles, stop making these threats until either chance or purposeful action brings you to face Hector on the battlefield. You may have enough every day of Hector if you have the stomach to face him. The general assembly of Greek leaders, I fear, can scarcely persuade you to be at odds with him on the battlefield."

Ajax was treating his first cousin Hector correctly by using the familiar and less formal "thou" to refer to him, and he was treating Achilles correctly by using the formal and respectful "you" to refer to him. But he was also correctly pointing out that Achilles was staying in camp and not fighting on the battlefield.

Mollified by Ajax' words, Hector used the formal and respectful "you" to refer to Achilles: "I ask you to let us see you on the battlefield. We have had petty, paltry battles since you refused to fight for the Greeks."

Still disrespectful, Achilles replied, "Do thou entreat me, Hector? Tomorrow I will meet thee, and I will be as cruel as death; tonight we shall all be friends."

"Reach out thy hand, and we will shake on that meeting," Hector said.

They shook hands.

"First, all you lords of Greece, go to my tent," Agamemnon said. "There we will feast to the fullest. Afterwards, as Hector's leisure and your bounties shall concur together, individually entertain and treat him."

He then ordered, "Beat loud the drums and let the trumpets blow, so that this great soldier may his welcome know."

Everyone exited except Troilus and Ulysses.

Troilus asked, "My Lord Ulysses, tell me, please, in what

place of the Greek camp does Calchas sleep?"

"He sleeps in Menelaus' tent, most Princely Troilus," Ulysses replied. "Diomedes feasts with him there tonight; Diomedes looks upon neither the Heavens nor the Earth, but bends all his gazes and amorous views on the fair Cressida."

"I shall, lord, be bound to you so much, if, after we depart from Agamemnon's tent, you take me there to Menelaus' tent."

"You shall command me, sir," Ulysses said. "I shall do what you ask. Now kindly tell me the reputation this Cressida had in Troy. Did she have a lover there who bewails her absence?"

"Oh, sir, people who display their scars and boast about them ought to be mocked," Troilus said. "Will you walk on, my lord? Cressida was loved, and she loved; she is loved, and she does love. But still sweet love is food for fortune's tooth."

CHAPTER 5**— 5.1 —**

Achilles and Patroclus talked together in front of Achilles' tent.

Achilles said about Hector, "I'll heat his blood with Greek wine tonight, and tomorrow with my curved sword I'll cool his blood by making it spurt from his body. Patroclus, let us feast him to the uttermost tonight."

"Here comes Thersites," Patroclus replied.

Thersites walked over to the two men.

"Hello, now, you core of envy!" Achilles said. "You crusty botch of nature, what's the news?"

Achilles was insulting Thersites by calling him a boil — a botch — that had crusted over. The core was the center of the boil.

"Why, you picture of what you seem to be, and idol of idiot worshippers, here's a letter for you," Thersites said.

Thersites had in return insulted Achilles by saying that Achilles had no substance. To Thersites, Achilles was all picture — all appearance — with nothing underneath.

"A letter from where, fragment?" Achilles asked.

A fragment was a small piece of food.

"Why, you full dish of fool, from Troy," Thersites replied.

"Who keeps the tent now?" Patroclus asked.

Previously, Achilles had kept to his tent and stayed close to it or in it, but now things seemed to be in motion for him to go to the battlefield in the morning and fight Hector. Now, Thersites kept — cleaned — the tent.

Deliberately misunderstanding the word “tent” to mean a surgeon’s probe for wounds, Thersites replied, “The surgeon’s box, or the patient’s wound.”

“Well said, Adversity!” Patroclus said. “And what is the need for you to use these tricks of wordplay?”

“Please, be silent, boy,” Thersites said. “I do not profit by your talk. You are thought to be Achilles’ male varlet.”

More insults: “boy” and “male varlet.”

“Male varlet, you rogue!” Patroclus said. “What’s that?”

“Why, you are Achilles’ masculine whore,” Thersites said. “Now, may the rotten venereal diseases of the south, guts-gripping hernias, colds and phlegm-producing illnesses, loads of kidney stones, unnatural drowsiness, cold paralysis of the limbs, sore eyes, dirt-rotten livers, wheezing lungs, bladders full of internal abscesses, sciaticas, psoriasis in the palm, incurable bone-ache, and wrinkle-causing chronic skin lesions take and take again — attack repeatedly — such absurd monstrosities as you!”

“Why, you damnable box of envy, thou, what do you mean by cursing like this?” Patroclus asked.

“Am I cursing you?” Thersites asked.

Patroclus was unwilling to admit that he was the target of these insults, so he replied, “Why, no, you ruinous butt, you bastard misshapen cur, no.”

“No! Why are you then exasperated, you idle flimsy skein of silk thread, you green thin-silk flap for a sore eye, you tassel of a prodigal’s purse, thou? Ah, how the poor world is pestered with such waterflies — mosquitoes, diminutives of nature!”

Thersites was gifted at invective. These insults compared

Patroclus to flimsy decorations. A tassel is a hanging decoration, and a purse is a bag in which such things as precious stones can be carried. Thersites was calling Patroclus a penis and scrotum. But since the penis and scrotum belonged to a pauper, the penis was spent — limp — and the purse was empty.

“Get out, gall!” Patroclus shouted at Thersites.

“Finch-egg!” Thersites shouted at Patroclus.

Patroclus was much smaller than Achilles, and so many of Thersites’ insults referred to Patroclus’ diminutive stature. A finch and its egg are both small.

Achilles, who had been reading the letter he had received from Troy, interrupted the quarrel by saying, “My sweet Patroclus, I am thwarted entirely in my great plan to fight Hector in tomorrow’s battle. Here is a letter from Queen Hecuba and a love token from Polyxena, her daughter, my fair love. Both Queen Hecuba and Polyxena are badgering me and requiring me to keep an oath that I have sworn. I will not break my oath. Let the Greeks fall in battle; let my reputation vanish, let my honor either go or stay — my major vow lies here, and this vow I’ll obey.”

Achilles had vowed not to fight the Trojans and to try to bring the Trojan War to a peaceful end because he had fallen in love with Polyxena.

Achilles then said, “Come, come, Thersites, help to straighten up my tent. This night in banqueting must all be spent. Let’s go, Patroclus!”

Achilles and Patroclus exited.

Alone, Thersites said to himself, “With too much anger and too little brain, these two may run mad; but if they run mad with too much brain and too little anger, then I’ll be a curer

of madmen.

“Here’s Agamemnon, an honest fellow enough and one who loves quails.”

The word “quails” was used as slang for “prostitutes,” as well as referring to the game birds.

Thersites continued, “But Agamemnon has not as much brain as he has earwax, and just consider the goodly transformation of Jupiter there, his brother, the bull — the primitive statue and oblique memorial of cuckolds.”

Jupiter had transformed himself into a bull so that he could run away with the beautiful mortal woman Europa. Menelaus was similar to Jupiter’s transformation because bulls have horns and Menelaus had the horns of a cuckold. However, Jupiter’s transformation into a bull is only an “oblique memorial of cuckolds” because Jupiter was not a cuckold although he was wearing horns.

Thersites continued, “Menelaus is a thrifty shoeing-horn in a chain, hanging at his brother’s leg.”

Thersites was comparing Menelaus to a shoehorn, a curved tool used to help ease one’s heel into a shoe. Menelaus’ brother, Agamemnon, used Menelaus as a thrifty tool and so kept him nearby.

Consider this. Why would the Greeks and Trojans spend years fighting over Helen? Many warriors lost their lives, many Greek husbands were separated from their wives and children for years, and for many years, two groups of people were unable to do anything constructive such as build cities, raise herding animals, or grow crops. Thersites knew that Helen wasn’t worth all this death, despair, and destruction, and therefore Agamemnon must be using Menelaus’ cuckoldry as an excuse for attacking Troy in order to sack and take its treasures as the spoils of war.

In addition, Menelaus was like a tool hanging from Agamemnon's belt — he was a hanger-on.

Thersites continued, "Into what form should I transform Menelaus, other than what he is, if my wit could be intermingled with my malice and my malice stuffed with my wit? To transform Menelaus into an ass would be to do nothing; he is both ass and ox. He is a fool, and he is a horned cuckold. To transform him into an ox would be to do nothing; he is both ox and ass.

"How about if I were transformed? If I were to be a dog, a mule, a cat, a polecat, a toad, a lizard, an owl, a greedy puttock such as a hawk or kite, or a herring without a roe, I would not care; but if I were to be Menelaus, I would conspire against my destiny and resist it every way I could.

"Don't ask me what I would be if I were not Thersites, for I would not care if I were a louse on a leper, as long as I were not Menelaus!"

He saw some torches and said, "Hey-day! Spirits and fires!"

The torches were lighting the way of Hector, Troilus, Ajax, Agamemnon, Ulysses, Nestor, Menelaus, and Diomedes.

Some of the Greeks had had too much to drink, and they were lost in their own camp.

Agamemnon said, "We are going the wrong way. We are going the wrong way."

"No, yonder Achilles' tent is," Ajax said. "There, where we see the lights."

"I am a trouble to you," Hector said.

"No, not a whit," Ajax replied.

"Here comes Achilles himself to guide you," Ulysses said.

Achilles walked over to the group and said, "Welcome, brave Hector; welcome, all you Princes."

"So now, fair Prince of Troy," Agamemnon said to Hector, "I bid you good night. Ajax commands the guards who will see that you return safely to Troy."

"Thanks and good night to the Greeks' general," Hector said to Agamemnon.

"Good night, my lord," Menelaus said to Hector.

"Good night, sweet lord Menelaus," Hector replied.

"Sweet draught," Thersites said to himself. "'Sweet' says he! Sweet sink, sweet sewer."

The words "draught," "sink," and "sewer" all referred to cesspools and waste pits. Such was Thersites' opinion of Menelaus.

"Good night and welcome, both at once, to those who go or tarry," Achilles said.

"Good night," Agamemnon replied.

Agamemnon and Menelaus exited.

Achilles said, "Old Nestor tarries and stays here; and you also, Diomedes, should keep Hector company for an hour or two."

"I cannot, lord," Diomedes replied. "I have important business that I must attend to now."

He then said, "Good night, great Hector."

"Give me your hand," Hector said.

They shook hands.

Ulysses said quietly to Troilus, "Follow Diomedes' torch; he

is going to Calchas' tent. I'll go with you and keep you company."

"Sweet sir, you honor me," Troilus said quietly to Ulysses.

"And so, good night," Hector said to Diomedes.

Diomedes exited. Ulysses and Troilus followed him.

Achilles said to his guests, "Come, come, enter my tent."

Achilles, Hector, Ajax, and Nestor entered Achilles' tent.

Alone, Thersites said to himself, "That same Diomedes is a false-hearted rogue, a most unjust scoundrel. I will no more trust him when he leers than I will trust a serpent when it hisses. Diomedes will open his mouth and make promises, exactly like Brabblers the hound that brays although it has no scent. But when Diomedes actually delivers on a promise, astronomers foretell it; it is a rare and unusual portent, and there will occur some major change in the world — the Sun borrows light from the Moon when Diomedes keeps his word."

Is Thersites always accurate in his assessment of other people? Doesn't Diomedes at least usually actually do what he says he will do?

Thersites continued, "I prefer to not see Hector than to not dog and follow Diomedes: They say that Diomedes keeps a Trojan whore, and uses the traitor Calchas' tent. I'll follow Diomedes. Nothing but lust and lechery! They are all unchaste varlets who cannot control their sexual urges!"

— 5.2 —

Diomedes walked over in front of Calchas' tent and called, "Are you still up? Speak to me."

From inside the tent, Calchas replied, "Who is calling?"

“I am Diomedes. You are Calchas, I think. Where’s your daughter?”

From within the tent, Calchas said, “She will come out to you.”

Troilus and Ulysses arrived, but they stayed out of sight of Diomedes. Thersites followed them, and he stayed out of sight of Diomedes as well as of Troilus and Ulysses.

Ulysses whispered to Troilus, “Stand where the torch will not reveal our presence.”

Cressida came out of the tent.

Troilus said quietly, “Cressida comes forth to Diomedes.”

“Hello, my charge!” Diomedes said to Cressida.

“Hello, my sweet guardian!” Cressida replied.

Diomedes had been given the task of taking Cressida out of Troy, and so for that period of time, at least, he had been her guardian and she had been his charge or responsibility.

Cressida said to Diomedes, “Listen, I want to have a word with you.”

She whispered to him.

“They are so familiar with each other!” Troilus said.

“She will sing with any man at first sight,” Ulysses replied.

He meant that Cressida would make advances to any man she saw. He also meant that she could look at a man and “read” him as if she were playing music at first sight, or sight-reading the music.

Thersites, who could hear what Troilus and Ulysses were saying, said to himself, “And any man may make music with her, if he can take her clef; she’s noted.”

The word “clef” referred to a musical note, but Thersites was punning on “cleft” — Cressida’s vulva was cleft. By “noted,” Thersites meant “notorious.”

Diomedes said to Cressida, “Will you remember?”

“Remember?” Cressida replied. “Yes.”

“Do it, and not just remember it,” Diomedes said. “Let your mind be coupled with your words.”

“What should she remember?” Troilus asked quietly.

“Listen,” Ulysses replied.

“Sweet honey Greek, tempt me no more to sin,” Cressida said.

“This is roguery!” Thersites said to himself.

“No, then —” Diomedes said.

“I’ll tell you what —” Cressida began.

Diomedes interrupted, “Tell me nothing. You have forsworn yourself. You said that you would do it, but you won’t do it.”

“Truly, I cannot,” Cressida said. “What then would you have me do?”

Thersites said to himself, “A juggling trick — to be secretly open.”

Thersites understood Diomedes and Cressida to be talking about sex. The juggling trick would be for Cressida to pretend to be chaste in public while having an affair with Diomedes in private — Cressida would open her private parts for Diomedes secretly and in private.

Diomedes asked Cressida, “What did you swear you would bestow on me?”

“Please, do not hold me to my oath,” Cressida said. “Bid me do anything but that, sweet Greek.”

“Good night,” Diomedes said curtly.

Troilus said, “Stop! Patience!”

Troilus was praying for calmness when he said, “Patience!”

“What is wrong, Trojan?” Ulysses asked Troilus.

“Diomedes —” Cressida began.

“No, no, good night,” Diomedes replied. “I’ll be your dupe no more.”

Troilus said to himself, “A better man than you will be her dupe.”

Troilus was referring to himself as a better man — and dupe.

“Listen,” Cressida said. “Let me say one word in your ear.”

“Oh, plague and madness!” Troilus said.

“You are angry, Prince,” Ulysses said. “Let us depart, I beg you, lest your displeasure should grow and make you act in anger. This place is dangerous for you; the time is very deadly for you. I beg you, go now.”

“Let’s stay and watch, I beg you!” Troilus said.

“No, my good lord, leave now,” Ulysses said. “Your anger is reaching high tide; come with me, my lord.”

“Please, let’s stay here awhile.”

“You are not calm enough to stay. Come with me.”

“Please, let’s stay here,” Troilus said. “I promise by Hell and all Hell’s torments that I will not speak a word!”

“And so, good night,” Diomedes said.

Cressida replied, “But you are departing in anger.”

“Does that grieve you?” Troilus said. “Oh, withered truth and faithfulness!”

“How are you now?” Ulysses asked.

“By Jove, I will be calm and patient,” Troilus said.

Diomedes turned to leave, and Cressida said to him, “Guardian — why, Greek!”

“Bah!” Diomedes said. “Goodbye. You are jerking me around.”

“Truly, I am not,” Cressida replied. “Come here once again.”

Ulysses said to Troilus, “You are shaking, my lord, at something. Will you go now? You will break out in an angry fit.”

Troilus said, “Cressida is stroking Diomedes’ cheek!”

“Come, come,” Ulysses said.

“No, let’s stay,” Troilus said. “By Jove, I will not speak a word. There is between my will and all offences against me a guard of calmness and patience. Stay a little while longer.”

“How the Devil named Lechery, with his fat rump and potato-finger, tickles these together!” Thersites said. “Fry, lechery, fry!”

In this culture, potatoes were regarded as aphrodisiacs. The kind of tickling that Thersites was referring to is a sexual tickling, and a kind of sexual tickling was going on between Cressida and Diomedes. As for frying, the sexual tickling was heated and burning, sexual tickling can lead to the burning sensation of venereal disease, and mortals who die without sincerely repenting the sin of lechery end up burning in Hell. Also, sexual passion is a kind of burning.

“But will you, then?” Diomedes asked.

“Truly, I will,” Cressida replied. “Never trust me again if I don’t keep my word.”

“Give me some token as a guarantee that you will keep your word,” Diomedes requested.

“I’ll fetch you a token,” Cressida said.

She exited.

Ulysses said to Troilus, “You have sworn to be calm.”

“Don’t worry about me, sweet lord,” Troilus said. “I will not be myself, nor will I allow myself to have knowledge of what I feel. I am all patience and nothing but calm.”

Cressida returned, carrying the sleeve that Troilus had earlier given to her as a love token.

Thersites said, “Now the pledge that she will keep her word! Now! Now! Now!”

“Here, Diomedes, keep this sleeve,” Cressida said as she handed him the sleeve.

“Oh, Beauty!” Troilus said. “Where is your faith? Where is your loyalty to me?”

“My lord —” Ulysses began.

“I will be calm,” Troilus said. “Outwardly I will.”

“Look upon that sleeve; behold it well,” Cressida said, “He loved me — oh, I am a false wench! — give it back to me.”

“Whose was it?” Diomedes asked.

He knew it must have belonged to Troilus, but he wanted her to say it.

“It doesn’t matter, now that I have it again,” Cressida said,

holding the sleeve she had snatched back from Diomedes. "I will not meet with you tomorrow night. Please, Diomedes, visit me no more."

"Now she sharpens," Thersites said. "Well said, whetstone!"

Thersites thought that Cressida was playing hard to get. By doing so, she was sharpening Diomedes' desire for her.

"I shall have it," Diomedes said.

"What, this sleeve?" Cressida asked.

"Yes, that."

"Oh, all you gods!" Cressida said. "Oh, pretty, pretty pledge! Your master is now lying in his bed and thinking of you and me, and he sighs, and he takes my glove that I gave to him, and he gives it dainty kisses as he remembers me, just as I kiss the sleeve he gave to me."

Diomedes snatched the sleeve away from her.

She said, "No, do not snatch it from me. He who takes that takes my heart with it."

"I had your heart before," Diomedes said. "This follows it."

Troilus said to himself, "I swore to be calm and patient."

"You shall not have it, Diomedes; indeed, you shall not," Cressida said. "I'll give you something else."

"I will have this sleeve," Diomedes said. "Whose was it?"

"It doesn't matter."

"Come, tell me whose it was."

"It belonged to one who loved me better than you will," Cressida said. "But, now you have it, take it."

"Whose was it?" Diomedes asked again.

“By all Diana’s waiting-women yonder, and by herself, I will not tell you whose.”

Diana was the Moon-goddess, and her waiting women were the stars near the Moon. Diana was a virgin goddess.

Diomedes replied, “Tomorrow I will display this sleeve on my helmet, and it will grieve the spirit of a man who dares not challenge it.”

Troilus said to himself, “If you were the Devil himself, and you wore it on your horn, it would be challenged.”

“Well, well, it is done, it is past,” Cressida said, “and yet it is not; I will not keep my word.”

“Why, then, farewell,” Diomedes said. “You shall never mock Diomedes again.”

“You shall not go,” Cressida replied. “One cannot speak a word without it immediately disturbing you.”

“I do not like this fooling,” Diomedes said.

Thersites said to himself, “Nor I, by Pluto, but whatever you don’t like pleases me best.”

“Shall I come and visit you?” Diomedes asked. “At what time?”

“Yes, come — oh, Jove! — do come — I shall be plagued,” Cressida said.

“Farewell until then.”

“Good night,” Cressida said. “Please, come.”

Diomedes exited.

“Troilus, farewell!” Cressida said to herself. “One eye still looks on you, but my other eye sees with my heart. Ah, we poor women! I find that this fault is in us: The error — the

straying — of our eye directs our mind. What error leads must err. Oh, then conclude that minds swayed by eyes are full of turpitude and wickedness.”

Cressida went back into her father’s tent.

Thersites said to himself, “A stronger proof of what she is she could not make clearer unless she said, ‘My mind is now turned whore.’”

“All’s done, my lord,” Ulysses said to Troilus. “There’s nothing more to see.”

“You are right,” Troilus said.

“Why are we staying here, then?”

“To make a record in my soul of every syllable that here was spoken,” Troilus replied. “But if I tell how these two carried on together, shall I not lie in publishing a truth? I still have a belief in my heart, a hope so obstinately strong that it inverts the testimony of my eyes and ears, as if those organs had deceptive functions that were created only to defame and slander. Was Cressida here?”

“I am not a magician,” Ulysses replied. “I cannot conjure her spirit and make it appear, Trojan.”

“Cressida was not here, I am sure.”

“Most surely and definitely Cressida was here,” Ulysses replied.

“Why, my negation of your assertion has no taste of madness,” Troilus said.

“Nor does my assertion have a taste of madness, my lord,” Ulysses said. “Cressida was here just now.”

“Let it not be believed for the sake of womanhood!” Troilus said. “Remember, we had mothers; do not give advantage to

stubborn critics and satirists who are apt, without a credible reason for believing in female depravity, to judge the female sex in general by Cressida's example. It is much better to think that this woman we just saw is not Cressida."

"What has she done, Prince, that can soil our mothers?" Ulysses asked.

"Nothing at all, unless this woman we saw just now were in fact Cressida," Troilus replied.

Thersites said to himself, "Will he force himself not to believe his own eyes?"

"Is this woman my Cressida?" Troilus asked. "No, this is Diomedes' Cressida. If beauty has a soul, this is not my Cressida. If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonious, if sanctimony be the gods' delight, if there be rule in unity itself and if one thing can be only one thing, then this is not my Cressida.

"Oh, what a mad argument — it gives reasons for and against itself! This argument has twofold authority! In it reason can revolt against itself without perdition, and madness — the loss of reason — can assume all reason without revolt. In this argument reason can contradict itself without being insane, and insanity can be rational without contradicting itself.

"The conclusion of this argument is that this woman we saw just now is, and is not, Cressida.

"Carrying on within my soul is a fight of this strange nature — a thing that is inseparable divides much wider than the sky and Earth, and yet the spacious breadth of this division admits no opening for a point through which it can enter Ariachne's broken threads."

Troilus was trying to understand the two Cressidas: the

Cressida who had been attracted to him and whom he loved and the Cressida who was attracted to Diomedes and who had surrendered to Diomedes. The two Cressidas shared the same body and yet they seemed to be as far from each other as the sky is to the Earth.

The dual nature of the two Cressidas appeared in the dual nature of Ariachne, a name that combined the names of Arachne and Ariadne.

Arachne was a mortal woman who was skilled at weaving and who challenged the goddess Minerva to a weaving contest. The gods punish such mortal pride. Minerva tore the weaving that Arachne had created, and then Minerva turned Arachne into a spider.

Ariadne fell in love with Theseus, who had come to Crete to rid the island of the monstrous half-man, half-bull Minotaur, which lived in a maze and feasted on the flesh of the youths and maidens whom Athens sent each year to Crete as tribute. Ariadne gave Theseus a spool of thread that he could unwind in the maze and so find his way out after killing the Minotaur. Theseus and Ariadne left Crete together after he killed the Minotaur, but Theseus was soon unfaithful to her.

Troilus continued, “Here is an excellent piece of evidence — it is as strong as the gates that lead to the god Pluto’s realm: Hell! Cressida is mine, tied with the bonds of Heaven.

“Here is another excellent piece of evidence — it is as strong as Heaven itself. The bonds of Heaven are slipped, dissolved, and loosed, and with another knot, five-finger-tied as she holds hands with Diomedes, the fractions of her faith, the tiny bits of her love, and the fragments and scraps, the bits and greasy relics of her over-eaten and finished faith — the faith that she had given to me — are now bound to Diomedes.”

“Is worthy Troilus even half as seized with great emotion as

he appears be?" Ulysses asked, drily.

"Yes, Greek," an upset Troilus replied, "and that shall be divulged well in symbolic wounds written in blood as red as Mars' heart when it was inflamed with sexual passion for Venus. Never has a young man loved with as eternal and as constant a soul as I have loved.

"Listen, Greek. As much as I love Cressida, by that much I hate her Diomedes. That sleeve is mine that he'll bear on his helmet. Even if the skill of the blacksmith-god Vulcan created that helmet, my sword will bite into it. Not even the dreadful hurricane-caused waterspout that sailors call the hurricano, gathered together in mass as it rises high and approaches the almighty Sun, shall dizzy with more clamor the ears of the sea-god Neptune as the waterspout falls back into the sea than shall my eager sword as it falls on Diomedes."

Thersites said to himself, "He'll tickle it for his concupy."

"Concupy" was a word combining the meanings of "concubine" and "concupiscence," or lust. Thersites meant that Troilus would rain blows on Diomedes' helmet to get revenge for taking Troilus' concubine — concupiscence, aka lust, both Troilus' and Diomedes', for Cressida would make Troilus do this.

Troilus said, "Oh, Cressida! Oh, false Cressida! False, false, false! Unfaithful, unfaithful, unfaithful! Let all untruths stand by your stained name, and they'll seem glorious by comparison."

"Oh, control yourself," Ulysses said to Troilus. "Your passionate outburst draws ears hither."

Aeneas walked over to Troilus and said, "I have been seeking you for the past hour, my lord. Hector, by this time, is arming himself in Troy. Ajax, your guard, is waiting to

conduct you home.”

“I’m coming, Prince,” Troilus replied to Aeneas.

He then said to Ulysses, “My courteous lord, farewell.”

He looked at the tent where Cressida was staying and said, “Farewell, faithless but fair woman! And, Diomedes, prepare yourself, and wear a castle on your head!”

Troilus felt that Diomedes would need strong protection for his head in this day’s battle.

“I’ll take you to the gates,” Ulysses said.

“Accept my agitated thanks,” Troilus said.

Troilus, Aeneas, and Ulysses exited.

Alone, Thersites said to himself, “I wish I could meet that rogue Diomedes! I would croak like a raven, that bird of omens; I would bode, I would bode. I would be an omen, I would prophesy.

“Patroclus will give me anything for information about this whore. A parrot will not do more for an almond than he will for a commodious drab — an accommodating whore.

“Lechery, lechery; always, there are wars and lechery; nothing else is fashionable. May a burning Devil take people who engage in wars and lechery! Let them burn with lust and combativeness and then burn with venereal disease and wounds and finally burn in Hell!”

— 5.3 —

Hector, armed and ready for battle, stood in front of the palace of his father, Priam, in Troy. With him was his wife, Andromache.

“When was my lord so much unkindly tempered that he

would stop his ears against admonishment?” Andromache said. “Disarm, disarm, and do not fight today.”

“You tempt me to offend you,” Hector replied. “Get inside the palace. By all the everlasting gods, I’ll go and fight today!”

“My dreams will, I am sure, prove to be ominous signs for this day.”

“Tell me no more, I say.”

As Cassandra walked over to Andromache, she asked, “Where is my brother Hector?”

“Here he is, sister-in-law,” Andromache replied. “He is armed, and bloodthirsty in intent. Join with me in loud and heartfelt petition. Let’s pursue him on our knees; for I have dreamed of bloody turbulence, and this whole night’s dreams have been filled with the shapes and forms of slaughter.”

“Oh, your dreams are true,” Cassandra said.

Cassandra had the gift of prophecy — she was able to foretell the future.

“Let my trumpet sound!” Hector called to his trumpeter.

“Sound no notes of sally, for the Heavens, sweet brother,” Cassandra pleaded.

A sally announced an attack.

“Be gone, I say,” Hector said. “The gods have heard me swear an oath that I would do battle today.”

“The gods are deaf to hot and headstrong vows,” Cassandra said. “Such vows are polluted offerings to the gods; they are more abhorred than spotted livers in the sacrifice.”

In a sacrifice, an animal was killed and its entrails were then examined. A spotted liver was a diseased liver — an ominous sign.

“Oh, be persuaded to stay in Troy today!” Andromache said. “Do not count it holy to hurt your loved ones by being just: it is as lawful to violently commit thefts and robberies simply so you can give lots of money to charity.”

“It is the purpose that makes strong the vow; however, vows to every purpose must not hold,” Cassandra said. “If one makes a vow for a bad purpose, that vow is not holy and ought not to be kept. Disarm, sweet Hector. Stay in Troy today.”

“Calm yourself, I say,” Hector said. “My honor keeps to the windward side of my fate — my honor takes precedence over my fated death. Every man holds life dear, but the brave man regards honor as far more precious and dearer than life.”

The windward side is the favorable side.

Troilus walked over to him.

Seeing that Troilus looked very angry, Hector asked him, “How are you now, young man? Do you mean to fight today?”

Andromache said, “Cassandra, call my father-in-law, Priam, here so he can persuade Hector, my husband, to stay here in Troy today.”

Cassandra left to get Priam.

Knowing that fighting while very angry can be dangerous because anger can lead one to take unnecessary risks, Hector said, “No, indeed, young Troilus; take off your armor, youth. I am today in the mood to fight chivalrously. I intend to do gallant deeds in battle today. Let your muscles grow until their knots are strong, and do not yet risk the hostile battles

of the war. Disarm yourself, go, and don't doubt, brave boy, that I'll stand today for you and me and Troy."

"Brother, you have a vice of mercy in you, which better befits a lion than a man," Troilus replied.

A proverb stated, "The lion spares the suppliant."

"What vice is that, good Troilus?" Hector asked. "Criticize me for having it."

"Many times a conquered Greek falls, knocked over by the fanning wind of your fair sword, and then you bid them rise, and live."

"That is fair play," Hector replied.

"It is fool's play, by Heaven, Hector."

"What! What!"

"For the love of all the gods, let's leave the holy hermit called pity home with our mother, and when we have our armor buckled on, then let the venomous vengeance ride upon our swords. We will spur our swords to do work that will make others feel pity; we will use our reins to keep our swords away from the feeling of pity."

"No, savage, no!" Hector replied.

"Hector, this is war."

"Troilus, I don't want you to fight today."

"Who or what is able to keep me from fighting today?" Troilus said. "Not fate, not obedience, not the hand of fiery Mars beckoning me with his truncheon to retire from the fight. Not Priam and Hecuba on their knees, their eyes inflamed with the streaming of tears. Not you, my brother, with your true sword drawn, opposed to me with the intent to keep me from the battlefield, will keep me from fighting,

unless you kill me.”

Cassandra returned with Priam.

“Lay hold on Hector, Priam,” Cassandra said. “Hold him fast. He is your crutch; if you now lose your prop and support, you who lean on Hector, and all Troy that leans on you, fall all together.”

“Come, Hector, come, and go back into the palace,” Priam said. “Your wife has dreamed ominous dreams; your mother has had visions; Cassandra foresees bad things happening; and I myself am like a prophet suddenly inspired to tell you that this day is ominous. Therefore, come back and go into the palace.”

“Aeneas is on the battlefield, and I have promised many Greeks, and even pledged my valor, that I will appear before them on the battlefield this morning. If I don’t appear on the battlefield, I will lose the valor that I have pledged.”

“To pledge” is “to make a solemn promise.” “A pledge” is “something given as security that a contract or a promise will be kept.”

“Yes, but you shall not go,” Priam said.

“I must not break my word,” Hector said. “You know that I am dutiful; therefore, dear sir, let me not shame the respect I owe you, but instead give me permission to go to the battlefield with your consent and approval, which you here and now forbid me, royal Priam.”

“Oh, Priam, do not yield to him!” Cassandra requested.

“Do not, dear father-in-law,” Andromache said.

“Andromache, I am offended by you,” Hector said. “By the love you bear me, go inside the palace.”

An obedient wife, Andromache went inside the palace.

“This foolish, dreaming, superstitious girl — Cassandra — makes all these ominous prophecies,” Troilus said.

“Oh, farewell, dear Hector!” Cassandra said.

Visualizing the future, she said, “Look, how you die! Look, how your eye turns pale! Look, how your wounds bleed at many openings! Listen, how Troy roars! How Hecuba cries out! How poor Andromache shrills her pain forth! Behold, distraction, frenzy, and amazement, as if they were witless buffoons, meet one another, and they all cry, ‘Hector! Hector’s dead! Oh, Hector!’”

“Go away! Go away!” Troilus yelled.

“Farewell — yet wait a moment!” Cassandra said. “Hector! I take my leave. You do yourself and all our Troy deceive.”

Hector was the greatest Trojan warrior. If he were to die, Troy would soon fall.

Hector said to Priam, his father, “You are stunned, my liege, at her exclamations. Go in and cheer up the town. We’ll go forth and fight, do deeds worthy of praise, and tell you about them this night.”

“Farewell,” Priam said. “May the gods stand around you and keep you safe!”

Priam went into the palace, and Hector left to go to the battlefield. Military trumpets announced action on the battlefield.

Troilus said to himself, “They are fighting, listen! Proud Diomedes, believe me, I am coming to fight you. I will lose my arm, or win my sleeve.”

Carrying a letter, Pandarus walked over to Troilus.

Pandarus said, “Have you heard, my lord? Have you heard?”

“Heard what?” Troilus asked.

“Here’s a letter come from yonder poor girl, Cressida,” he replied.

“Let me read it.”

As Troilus read the letter, Pandarus complained, “A vile cough, a vile rascally cough so troubles me, and the foolish fortune of this girl; and what with one thing, and what with another, one of these days I shall die and leave you, and I have a watery discharge from my eyes, too, and such an ache in my bones that, unless a man were cursed, I cannot tell what to think about it.”

Some of his complaints, such as an ache in the bones, were symptoms of syphilis.

He then asked, “What does Cressida say in the letter there?”

“Words, words, mere words,” Troilus said. “There is nothing from her heart. She intended to cause a certain result from the letter, but her letter affects me in a different way.”

He tore up the letter and tossed the pieces into the air, saying, “Go, wind, to wind, there turn and change together. She continues to feed my love with words and lies, but she benefits another man with her deeds.”

— 5.4 —

Alone on the battlefield, Thersites said to himself, “Now they are clapper-clawing — beating up — one another. I’ll go and watch. That dissembling abominable varlet Diomedes has got that same scurvy doting foolish young Trojan knave’s sleeve displayed in his helmet. I would like to see them meet so that that same young Trojan ass, who loves the whore there, might send that Greek whore-masterly and lecherous villain, who has the sleeve, back to the dissembling lecherous drab. Yes, let Troilus send Diomedes

back to the lustful whore Cressida from a sleeveless — futile and fruitless — errand.

“On the other side, the Greek side, the cunning stratagem of those crafty swearing rascals, that stale old mouse-eaten dry cheese, Nestor, and that same cunning male-fox, Ulysses, has proven not to be worth a blackberry. They made a plan to set that mongrel cur, Ajax, against that dog of as bad a kind, Achilles. The result now is that the cur Ajax is prouder than the cur Achilles, and Ajax will not arm himself and fight today; whereupon the Greeks begin to proclaim and embrace ignorant barbarism, and political policy is beginning to have a bad reputation.

“Wait! Here comes the sleeve, and here comes the other one.”

Diomedes backed into view, with Troilus following him.

“Don’t run away,” Troilus said. “Even if you were to jump into the Styx, a river in Hell, I would jump in, too, and swim after you.”

“You are misinterpreting my strategic retreat,” Diomedes said. “I am not fleeing from you. My concern to get an advantage in battle led me to withdraw from a place where Trojans were more numerous than Greeks. Now let’s fight!”

As the two warriors fought, Thersites said to himself, “Fight for your whore, Greek! Now fight for your whore, Trojan! Now fight for the sleeve, the sleeve!”

The combat between Troilus and Diomedes carried them away from Thersites.

Hector appeared and asked Thersites, “Who are you, Greek? Are you an opponent for Hector? Do you have an honorable and noble birth? Is it appropriate for me to fight you?”

“No, no, I am a rascal,” Thersites replied. “I am a scurvy

railing knave. I am a very filthy rogue.”

“I believe you,” Hector said. “You may continue to live.”

He exited to find an honorable opponent to fight.

“I thank God that you believed me,” Thersites said, “but I hope that a plague will break your neck because you frightened me! What’s become of the wenching rogues? I think they have swallowed one another. I would laugh at that miracle, yet it is true in a way that lechery eats itself. Lechery leads to venereal disease, which eats the body. I’ll go and seek them.”

— 5.5 —

Diomedes said to a servant, “Go, go, my servant, take Troilus’ horse with you and present the fair steed to my lady, Cressida. Fellow, commend my service to her beauty. Tell her I have chastised the amorous Trojan, and tell her that I am her knight by proof. By defeating Troilus in battle, I have proven through combat that I, not Troilus, am her knight.”

“I am going, my lord,” the servant said.

He exited.

Agamemnon arrived and said to Diomedes, “Regroup! Regroup! The Trojans are overwhelming us! The fierce Polydamas has beaten down Menon. The bastard Margarelon has taken Doreus prisoner, and he stands like a colossus, waving his spear that is as huge as a beam, over the battered corpses of King Epistrophus and King Cedius. Polyxenes has been slain, Amphimachus and Thoas are mortally wounded, Patroclus has been captured or slain, and Palamedes is very hurt and bruised. The dreadful Sagittary, the Centaur who is a gifted archer, terrifies our soldiers. We must hasten, Diomedes, to reinforce the army, or we all will perish.”

Nestor arrived with some soldiers who were carrying the corpse of Patroclus. He told the soldiers, “Go, carry Patroclus’ body to Achilles, and tell the snail-paced Ajax to arm himself for shame. A thousand Hectors seem to be on the battlefield. Now he fights here on Galathe, his horse, and when he lacks work on horseback, soon he’s there on foot, and the Greeks flee or die, like scattering schools of fish fleeing the spouting whale. Then Hector is yonder, and there the Greeks, like wisps of straw ripe for his sword’s edge, fall down before him, like the mower’s swath. Here, there, and everywhere, he leaves — spares — a life and then he takes a life. His dexterity so obeys his desire that he does whatever he wants to do to us, and he does so much that proof is called impossibility. Although we see his deeds on the battlefield, it is impossible to believe what we see.”

Ulysses arrived and said, “Oh, have courage, have courage, Princes! Great Achilles is arming himself, weeping, cursing, and vowing vengeance. Patroclus’ wounds have roused his drowsy blood, together with his mangled Myrmidons, who noseless, handless, hacked and chipped, come to him, crying against Hector. Ajax has lost a friend and foams at the mouth, and he is armed and on the battlefield, roaring for Troilus, who has done today mad and fantastic slaughter, engaging himself in battle and getting out alive. He directs his efforts at hurting Greeks and not at being chivalric toward them like Hector, and he fights as if his lust for bloodshed, despite Greek cunning in the use of weapons, bade him conquer every Greek.”

Ajax arrived and shouted, “Troilus! You coward Troilus!”

Then he exited.

Diomedes said, “Yes, there, there.”

Diomedes, who also wanted to find and fight Troilus, followed Ajax.

Nestor said, “So, so, we draw together. We begin to fight together.”

Achilles arrived and asked, “Where is Hector?”

He shouted, “Come, come, you boy-killer, show your face! Know what it is to meet Achilles when I am angry! Hector? Where’s Hector? I will fight nobody but Hector!”

— 5.6 —

Ajax shouted, “Troilus, you coward Troilus, show your head!”

Diomedes arrived and shouted, “Troilus, I say! Where’s Troilus?”

“What do you want with Troilus?” Ajax asked.

“I want to correct — punish — him by hurting him,” Diomedes replied.

“If I were the general, I would give you that position before I would allow you — and not me — to hurt Troilus,” Ajax said.

He shouted, “Troilus, I say! Where are you, Troilus?”

Troilus heard the shouts and showed up, saying, “Oh, traitor Diomedes! Turn your false face toward me, you traitor, and pay me your life that you owe me in return for my horse!”

To call a knight a traitor is the worst kind of insult — one that must be responded to with fighting.

“Ha, is that you there?” Diomedes asked.

“I’ll fight him alone,” Ajax said. “Stand aside, Diomedes.”

“He is my prize,” Diomedes replied. “I will not stand aside and be a spectator.”

“Come, both of you lying Greeks,” Troilus said. “I’ll fight you both!”

They fought.

Hector arrived and said, “Troilus? Yes! Oh, well fought, my youngest brother!”

Achilles arrived and said, “Now I see you, Hector! Let’s fight!”

Troilus fought Diomedes and Ajax, while Hector fought Achilles. During the fighting, the two groups became separated.

Hector had been fighting hard, and he said to Achilles, who was winded, “We can pause in our fighting, if you are willing.”

“I do disdain your courtesy, proud Trojan,” Achilles said. “I feel contempt for your courtesy. Be happy that my arms are out of shape. I have spent too much time in my tent and not fighting. My rest and negligence befriend you now, but you shall soon hear from me again. Until then, go and seek your fortune.”

Achilles exited.

Hector said, “Fare you well. I would have held myself back and been a much fresher man had I expected to fight you.”

Seeing Troilus coming toward him, he said, “How are you now, my brother!”

“Ajax has captured Aeneas!” Troilus replied. “Shall this be allowed to happen? No, by the flame — the Sun — of glorious Heaven, Ajax shall not carry him away. I’ll be captured, too, or else I will rescue Aeneas! Fate, hear what I say! I don’t care if I die today!”

Troilus exited.

A Greek wearing splendid armor arrived.

Hector said, “Stand, stand and fight, you Greek; you are a splendid target.”

Frightened by Hector, the Greek ran away.

“No? You won’t stay and fight?” Hector said. “I like your armor well; I’ll smash it and tear off the rivets, but I’ll be the owner of it. Won’t you, beast, stay? Why, then flee; I’ll hunt you for your hide.”

He ran after the Greek wearing splendid armor.

— 5.7 —

Achilles said to his warriors, who were known as Myrmidons, “Come here around me, my Myrmidons. Listen carefully to what I say. Follow me while I search for Hector. Strike not a stroke against the Trojans, but keep yourselves in breath, and when I have found the bloodthirsty Hector, surround him with your weapons. In the cruelest manner, use your weapons on him. Follow me, sirs, and all my proceedings eye. It is decreed that Hector the great must die.”

They exited to search for Hector.

In another part of the battlefield, Menelaus and Paris were fighting while Thersites watched and provided commentary.

Thersites said to himself, “The cuckold and the cuckold-maker — Menelaus and Paris — are at it. Now, bull! Now, dog! ’loo, Paris, ’loo! Now, my double-horned Spartan! ’loo, Paris, ’loo! The bull has the game: Beware the horns, ho!”

He was pretending that he was watching a dog bait — that is, torment — a bull in a “sport” similar to bear-baiting. Sometimes, the bear could kill a dog, but several dogs often attacked the bear all at the same time and the dogs usually

won. Thersites called Menelaus a bull because he wore the horns of a cuckold. “loo” was an abbreviated form of “Halloo” — a cry to encourage the dog. Menelaus, the King of Sparta, was a double-horned Spartan because he had the two horns of a cuckold and — in this “sport” — the two horns of a bull.

Paris and Menelaus exited while fighting, and the Trojan Margarelon showed up and said to Thersites, “Turn, slave, and fight.”

“Slave” was a major insult.

Thersites asked, “Who are you?”

“A bastard son of Priam’s,” Margarelon replied.

“I am a bastard, too,” Thersites said. “I love bastards. I am a bastard begot, bastard instructed, bastard in mind, bastard in valor. In everything I am illegitimate. One bear will not bite another bear, and so why should one bastard bite another bastard? Take heed, the quarrel’s most ominous to us: If the son of a whore fights for a whore, he tempts judgment. If we fight for that whore Helen, we can end up being damned to eternity in Hell. Farewell, bastard.”

Thersites walked away.

“May the Devil take you, coward!” Margarelon shouted at Thersites, who ignored him.

Margarelon left Thersites alone and went off in a different direction from the one that Thersites had taken.

— 5.8 —

Hector had killed the Greek soldier wearing the splendid armor. Now he said to the corpse, which was still wearing the armor, “Most putrefied core, so fair on the outside, your splendid armor has cost you your life. Now that my day’s

work is done, I'll catch my breath. Rest, sword; you have had your fill of blood and death."

He took off and put down his sword, helmet, and shield, and some pieces of his armor.

Achilles and the Myrmidons found him and surrounded him, cutting him off from his weapons and armor.

"Look, Hector, how the Sun begins to set," Achilles said. "Look at how ugly night comes breathing at the Sun's heels. With the setting and darkening of the Sun to end the day, Hector's life is ended and done."

"I am unarmed," Hector said. "Don't take this kind of advantage, Greek."

"Strike, fellows, strike," Achilles said. "This is the man I seek."

They killed Hector.

"So, Troy, you will fall next!" Achilles said. "Now, all of Troy, sink down in despair! Here lies your heart, your muscles, and your bone. On, Myrmidons, and all of you shout with all your might, 'Achilles has slain the mighty Hector.'"

Trumpets sounded. Night was falling.

"Listen!" Achilles said. "The Greek trumpets announce the end of the battle!"

More trumpets sounded.

A Myrmidon said to Achilles, "The Trojan trumpets also announce the end of the battle, my lord."

"The dragon wing of night overspreads the Earth," Achilles said, "and, as if they were obeying a tournament marshal, the armies separate. My half-sapped sword, that frankly would

have fed on more, is pleased with this dainty bite, and thus it goes to bed.”

Achilles sheathed his sword and said, “Come, tie Hector’s body to my horse’s tail. Along the battlefield, I will the Trojan trail.”

— 5.9 —

On another part of the battlefield stood Agamemnon, Ajax, Menelaus, Nestor, Diomedes, and others. They were marching back to the Greek camp to the sound of military drums.

Shouts sounded.

“Listen! Listen!” Agamemnon said. “What are they shouting?”

Nestor ordered, “Quiet, drums!”

The drummers stopped playing.

Soldiers shouted, “Achilles! Achilles! Hector’s slain! Achilles!”

Diomedes said, “The rumor is, Hector’s slain, and by Achilles.”

“If that is true, Achilles ought not to brag about it,” Ajax said. “Great Hector was a man as good as Achilles.”

“March patiently along,” Agamemnon said. “Let someone be sent to ask Achilles to see us at our tent. If the gods have befriended us and gifted us with Hector’s death, great Troy is ours, and our sharp and painful wars are ended.”

— 5.10 —

In another part of the battlefield, Aeneas met some Trojans.

“Stand here! We are still masters of the battlefield,” Aeneas

said. "Let's not return to Troy; let's stay the night here."

Troilus arrived and said, "Hector is slain."

"Hector! The gods forbid!" Aeneas said.

"He's dead," Troilus repeated, "and at the tail of the horse belonging to his murderer, he is being dragged as if he were a beast through the shameful battlefield. Frown on, you Heavens, effect your rage at Troy with speed! Sit, gods, upon your thrones, and smile at Troy! I say, at once let loose your plagues on us. If your plagues kill us quickly, you will show us mercy. We are sure to be destroyed, so we pray that you don't destroy us slowly — instead, destroy us quickly!"

"My lord, you are discouraging all the soldiers!" Aeneas said.

"You misunderstand me when you tell me that," Troilus replied. "I am not talking about flight, fear, and death; instead, I dare to face all approaching perils that gods and men can direct against us. Hector is dead and gone. Who shall tell Priam that, or tell Hecuba? Let him who will tell them be forever called a screech owl — a bird of bad omens. Go into Troy, and say there, 'Hector's dead.' Those words will turn Priam to stone. They will make wells and Niobes of the maidens and wives; their eyes will well with tears, and the mothers will grieve like Niobe when her seven sons and seven daughters all died on the same day. They will make cold statues of the youths, and they will scare Troy out of itself. But, march away to Troy. Hector is dead; there is no more to say.

"But wait a moment."

He looked at the Greek camp and said, "You vile abominable Greek tents, thus proudly set up on our Trojan plains, let Titan — the Sun — rise as early as he dares, I'll charge through you and through you! And, you great-sized coward,

Achilles, no space of earth shall separate our two hatreds of each other. I'll constantly haunt you like a wicked conscience that creates goblins as swiftly as the thoughts of madness."

He then said to his fellow Trojans, "Have the drums strike a quick march to Troy! March back to Troy, and take with you this comforting thought: Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe."

Aeneas, the drummers, and the other Trojans marched away.

Pandarus walked over to Troilus and said, "Listen! Listen!"

Bitterly, Troilus said to Pandarus, "Go away, broker-lackey — go-between and hanger-on! May ignominy and shame pursue you throughout your life, and may they always be associated with your name!"

Troilus left.

Alone, Pandarus said bitterly to himself, "Troilus' words are a 'splendid medicine' for my aching bones! Oh, world! World! World! Thus is the poor agent despised! Oh, traitors and bawds, how earnestly are you set to work, and how ill is your work rewarded! Why should our endeavor be so loved and the performance so loathed? What verse can express this? What example can I use? Let me see."

He sang this song:

"Full merrily the bumblebee does sing,

"Until he has lost his honey and his sting;

"And being once subdued in armed tail,

"Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail."

A bumblebee — that is, a man — can be happy and sing as long as his sting — his erect penis — can produce honey —

semen. But when his tail — penis — no longer can get erect, then he can produce no honey and stops singing.

Pandarus then looked you, the readers of this book, directly in the eyes and said, “Good traders in the flesh, write that song in your painted cloths.”

A painted cloth is a cheap substitute for a tapestry. Often, a painted cloth contains a moral of some kind.

Pandarus continued, “As many as be here in the pander’s hall — the place where you are reading this book — your eyes, half blind, should weep at Pandarus’ fall. But if you cannot weep, yet give some groans, though if you do not groan for me, you can still groan for your own aching bones.”

Aching bones are a symptom of syphilis.

“Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade — my fellow bawds and panders who watch the door while fornicators are in the room — approximately two months from now my will shall here be revealed. That is when I expect to die. My will should be read out loud and you should receive your bequests now, but my fear is this: Some galled goose — syphilitic whore — of the nearby brothel district would hiss. Let it be known that a hiss is an inappropriate critical response to this book. Until I die I’ll sweat as a treatment for my venereal diseases and seek about for ways to ease the pain. For now I seek good eases, but when I die I bequeath to you my diseases.”

Appendix A: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine's brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka "The Joker," decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn't been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don't often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for "sounds like" and "two words," then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn't let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor's degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Dance*, *Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose*.

By the way, my sister Brenda Kennedy writes romances such as *A New Beginning* and *Shattered Dreams*.

Appendix B: Some Books by David Bruce

Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

Arden of Faversham: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Arraignment, or Poetaster: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Epicene: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humor: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The New Inn, or The Light Heart: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Sejanus' Fall: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's A Tale of a Tub: *A Retelling*

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: *Retellings*

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: *Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text*

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: *A Retelling*

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: *A Retelling*

- Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling*
- Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings*
- Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose*
- Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose*
- The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling*
- From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica*
- George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's Eastward Ho! A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling*
- George's Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling*
- George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling*
- George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling*
- George-a-Greene: A Retelling*
- The History of King Leir: A Retelling*
- Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*
- Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose*
- J.W. Gent.'s The Valiant Scot: A Retelling*
- Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica*
- John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English*
- John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling*

- John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling*
- John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling*
- John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling*
- John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Campaspe: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Endymion, The Man in the Moon: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Galatea: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Love's Metamorphosis: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Midas: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Mother Bombie: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's Sappho and Phao: A Retelling*
- John Lyly's The Woman in the Moon: A Retelling*
- John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling*
- King Edward III: A Retelling*
- Mankind: A Medieval Morality Play (A Retelling)*
- Margaret Cavendish's The Unnatural Tragedy: A Retelling*
- The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling*
- The Summoning of Everyman: A Medieval Morality Play (A Retelling)*
- Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling*
- The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling*
- Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling*
- Thomas Middleton's A Chaste Maid in Cheapside: A Retelling*
- Thomas Middleton's Women Beware Women: A Retelling*
- Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's The Roaring Girl: A Retelling*

- Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's The Changeling: A Retelling*
- The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems*
- Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry V: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose*

William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Othello: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Pericles, Prince of Tyre: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Richard II: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Richard III: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Tempest: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Timon of Athens: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Two Noble Kinsmen: A Retelling in Prose

William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: A Retelling in Prose

Mature Readers Only

The Erotic Adventures of Candide