

*The Old Law*

**Act III, scene i**

*Enter the clown and clerk.*

CLOWN

You have searched o'er the parish chronicle, sir?

CLERK

Yes, sir, I have found out the true age and date of the party you wot on.

CLOWN

Pray you be covered, sir.

CLERK

When you have showed me the way, sir.

CLOWN

Oh, sir, remember yourself, you are a clerk.

CLERK

A small clerk, sir.

CLOWN

Likely to be the wiser man, sir, for your greatest clerks are not always so, as 'tis reported.

CLERK

You are a great man in the parish, sir.

CLOWN

I understand myself so much the better, sir, for all the best in the parish pay duties to the clerk, and I would owe you none, sir.

CLERK

Since you'll have it so, I'll be the first to hide my head.

CLOWN

Mine is a capcase. Now, to our business in your hand; good luck, I hope; I long to be resolved.

CLERK

Look you, sir, this is that cannot deceive you,  
This is the dial that goes ever true.

You may say *ipse dixit* upon this witness,  
and 'tis good in law too.

CLOWN  
Pray you, let's hear what it speaks.

CLERK  
Mark, sir: *Agatha, the daughter of Pollux* (this is your wife's name and the name of her father) *born* –

CLOWN  
Whose daughter say you?

CLERK  
The daughter of Pollux.

CLOWN  
I take it his name was Bollux.

CLERK  
P O L L U X the orthography, I assure you, sir, the word is corrupted else.

CLOWN  
Well, on, sir, of Pollux; now come on Castor.

CLERK  
*Born in an[no] 1540*, and now 'tis '99. By this infallible record, sir, let me see, she is now just fifty-nine and wants but one.

CLOWN  
I am sorry she wants so much.

CLERK  
Why, sir? Alas, 'tis nothing, 'tis but so many months, so many weeks, so many –

CLOWN  
Do not deduct it to days; 'twill be the more tedious, and to measure it by hour-glasses were intolerable.

CLERK  
Do not think on it, sir. Half the time goes away in sleep; 'tis half the year in nights.

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CLOWN

Oh, you mistake me, neighbour, I am loath to leave the good old woman. If she were gone now it would not grieve me, for what is a year, alas, but a lingering torment? And were it not better she were out of her pain? It must needs be a grief to us both.

CLERK

I would I knew how to ease you, neighbour.

CLOWN

You speak kindly, truly, and if you say but Amen to it, which is a word that I know you are perfect in, it might be done. Clerks are the most indifferent honest men, for to the marriage of your enemy, or the burial of your friend, the curses or the blessings to you are all one; you say Amen to all.

CLERK

With a better will to the one than the other, neighbour, but I shall be glad to say Amen to anything might do you a pleasure.

CLOWN

There is, first, something above your duty. Now I would have you set forward the clock a little, to help the old woman out of her pain.

CLERK

I will speak to the sexton for that, but the day will go ne'er the faster for that.

CLOWN

Oh, neighbour, you do not conceit me; not the jack of the clock-house, the hand of the dial, I mean. Come, I know you, being a great clerk, cannot choose but have the art to cast a figure.

CLERK

Never indeed, neighbour; I never had the judgment to cast a figure.

CLOWN

I'll show you on the backside of your book. Look you, what figure's this?

CLERK

Four with a cipher; that's forty.

CLOWN

So, forty; what's this now?

CLERK

The cipher is turned into 9 by adding the tail, which makes forty-nine.

CLOWN

Very well understood. What is it now?

CLERK

The 4 is turned into 3; 'tis now thirty-nine.

CLOWN

Very well understood, and can you do this again?

CLERK

Oh, easily, sir.

CLOWN

A wager of that! Let me see the place of my wife's age again.

CLERK

Look you, sir, 'tis here, 1540.

CLOWN

Forty drachmas, you do not turn that forty into thirty-nine.

CLERK

A match with you!

CLOWN

Done! And you shall keep stakes yourself. There they are.

CLERK

A firm match! But, stay, sir, now I consider it, I shall add a year to your wife's age. Let me see, *Scirophorion*<sup>1</sup> the 17, and now 'tis *Hecatombaion*<sup>2</sup> the 11. If I alter this, your wife will have but a month to live by the law.

CLOWN

That's all one, sir; either do it or pay me my wager.

CLERK

Will you lose your wife before you lose your wager?

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<sup>1</sup> *Scirophorion*] Shaw; Scirophon Q.

<sup>2</sup> *Hecatombaion*] Shaw ; Hecatomacon Q.

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CLOWN

A man may get two wives before half so much money by 'em. Will you do't?

CLERK

I hope you will conceal me, for 'tis flat corruption.

CLOWN

Nay, sir, I would have you keep counsel for I lose my money by it, and should be laughed at for my labour if it should be known.

CLERK

Well, sir, there! 'Tis done, as perfect 39 as can be found in black and white. But, mum, sir, there's danger in this figure casting.

CLOWN

Aye, sir, I know that better men than you have been thrown over the bar for as little. The best is, you can be but thrown out of the belfry.

*Enter the Cook, the Tailor, [the] Bailiff, and Butler.*

CLERK

Look close; here comes company. Asses have ears as well as pitchers.

COOK

Oh, Gnothos, how is it? Here's a trick of discarded cards of us; we were ranked with coats as long as our old master lived.

CLOWN

And is this then the end of serving-men?

COOK

Yes, faith, this is the end of serving-men. A wise man were better serve one God than all the men in the world.

CLOWN

'Twas well spoke of a cook. And are all fallen into fasting days and ember weeks, that cooks are out of use?

TAILOR

And all tailors will be cut into lists and shreds. If this world hold, we shall grow both out of request.

BUTLER

And why not butlers as well as tailors? If they can go naked, let 'em neither eat nor drink.

CLERK

That's strange, methinks, a lord should turn away his tailor of all men. And how dost thou, tailor?

TAILOR

I do so-so. But, indeed, all our wants are long of this publican, my lord's bailiff, for had he been rent-gatherer still, our places had held together still that are now seam-rent, nay, cracked in the whole piece.

BAILIFF

Sir, if my lord had not sold his lands that claim his rents, I should still have been the rent-gatherer.

COOK

The truth is, except the coachman and the footman, all serving-men are out of request.

CLOWN

Nay, say not so, for you were never in more request than now, for requesting is but a kind of begging<sup>3</sup>; for when you say, "I beseech your worship's charity," 'tis all one if you say I request it, and, in that kind of requesting, I am sure serving men were never in more request.

COOK

Troth, he says true. Well, let that pass, we are upon a better adventure. I see, Gnothos, you have been before us; we came to deal with this merchant for some commodities.

CLERK

With me, sir? Anything that I can.

BUTLER

Nay, we have looked out our wives already. Marry, to you we come to know the prices, that is, to know their ages; for so much reverence we bear to age, that the more aged they shall be the more dear to us.

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<sup>3</sup> begging] Shaw ; a begging Q.

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TAILOR

The truth is, every man has laid by his widow; so they be lame enough, blind enough, and old, 'tis good enough.

CLERK

I keep the town stock. If you can but name 'em, I can tell their ages to-day.

ALL

We can tell their fortunes to an hour then.

CLERK

Only you must pay for turning of the leaves.

COOK

Oh, bountifully! Come, mine first!

BUTLER

The butler before the cook, while you live; there's few that eat before they drink in a morning.

TAILOR

Nay, then the tailor puts in his needle of priority, for men do clothe themselves before they either drink or eat.

BAILIFF

I will strive for no place. The longer e'er I marry my wife, the older she will be, and nearer her end and my ends.

CLERK

I will serve you all, gentlemen, if you will have patience.

CLOWN

I commend you modesty, sir; you are a bailiff whose place is to come behind other men, as it were, in the bum of all the rest.

BAILIFF

So, sir, and you were about this business too, seeking out for a widow?

CLOWN

Alack! No, sir, I am a married man and have those cares upon me that you would fain run into.

BAILIFF

What, an old rich wife? Any man in this age desires such a care.

CLOWN

Troth, sir, I'll put a venture with you, if you will. I have a lusty old quean to my wife, sound of wind and limb, yet I'll give out to take three for one at the marriage of my second wife.

BAILIFF

Aye, sir, but how near is she to the law?

CLOWN

Take that at hazard, sir; there must be time, you know, to get a new. Unsight, unseen, I take three to one.

BAILIFF

Two to one I'll give, if she have but two teeth in her head.

CLOWN

A match! There's five drachmas for ten at my next wife.

BAILIFF

A match!

*[The clerk gives each man a name-slip]*

COOK

I shall be fitted bravely: fifty-eight and upwards; 'tis but a year and a half, and I may chance make friends and beg a year of the Duke.

BUTLER

Hey, boys, I am made sir butler! My wife that shall be wants but two months of her time. It shall be one ere I marry her, and then the next will be a honeymoon.

TAILOR

I outstrip you all! I shall have but six weeks of Lent if I get my widow, and then comes eating-tide, plump and gorgeous.

CLOWN

This tailor will be a man if ever there were any.

BAILIFF

Now comes my turn. I hope, goodman, Finis, you that are still at the end of all with a "so be it." Well now, sirs, do you venture there as I have done, and I'll venture here after you. Good luck, I beseech thee!

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CLERK  
Amen, sir.

BAILIFF  
That deserves a fee already. There 'tis. Please me and have a better.

CLERK  
Amen, sir.

COOK  
How, two for one at your next wife? Is the old one living?

CLOWN  
You have a fair match; I offer you no foul one. If death make not haste to call her, she'll make none to go to him.

BUTLER  
I know her; she's a lusty woman. I'll take the venture.

CLOWN  
There's five drachmas for ten at my next wife.

BUTLER  
A bargain.

COOK  
Nay, then we'll be all merchants, give me.

TAILOR  
And me.

BUTLER  
What, has the bailiff sped?

BAILIFF  
I am content, but none of you shall know my happiness.

CLERK  
As well as any of you all, believe it, sir.

BAILIFF  
Oh, clerk, you are to speak last always.

CLERK

I'll remember it hereafter, sir. You have done with me, gentlemen?

*Enter [CLOWN'S] wife.*

ALL

For this time, honest register.

CLERK

Fare you well then; if you do, I'll cry Amen to it.

*Exit.*

COOK

Look you, sir, is not this your wife?

CLOWN

My first wife, sir.

BUTLER

Nay, then we have made a good match on't. If she have no forward disease, the woman may live this dozen years by her age.

TAILOR

I'm afraid she's broken-winded; she holds silence so long.

COOK

We'll now leave our venture to the event. I must a-wooing.

BUTLER

I'll but buy me a new dagger and overtake you.

BAILIFF

So we must all, for he that goes a-wooing to a widow without a weapon will never get her.

*Exeunt.*

CLOWN

Oh, wife, wife!

AGATHA

What ails you, man, you speak so passionately?

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CLOWN

'Tis for thy sake, sweet wife. Who would think so lusty an old woman, with reasonable good teeth, and her tongue in as perfect use as ever it was, should be so near her time? But the fates will have it so.

AGATHA

What's the matter, man? You do amaze me.

CLOWN

Thou art not sick neither, I warrant thee.

AGATHA

Not that I know of, sure.

CLOWN

What pity 'tis, a woman should be so near her end and yet not sick.

AGATHA

Near her end, man! Tush, I can guess at that: I have years good yet of life in the remainder. I want two yet, at least, of the full number; then the law, I know, craves impotent and useless and not the able women.

CLOWN

Aye, alas! I see thou hast been repairing time as well as thou couldst; the old wrinkles are well fill'd up, but the vermillion is seen too thick, too thick, and I read what's written in thy forehead. It agrees with the church-book.

AGATHA

Have you sought my age, man? And, I prithee, how is it?

CLOWN

I shall but discomfort thee.

AGATHA

Not at all, man; when there's no remedy, I will go, though unwillingly.

CLOWN

1539. Just; it agrees with the book: you have but a year to prepare yourself.

AGATHA

Out, alas! I hope there's more than so. But do you not think a reprieve might be gotten for half a score? And 'twere but five year[s], I would not care; an able woman, methinks, were to be pitied.

CLOWN

Aye, to be pitied, but not helped, no hope of that; for, indeed, women have so blemish'd their own reputations now-a-days, that it is thought the law will meet them at fifty very shortly.

AGATHA

Marry, the heavens forbid!

CLOWN

There's so many of you that, when you are old become witches: some profess physic and kill good subjects faster than a burning fever; and then schoolmistresses of the sweet sin, which commonly we call bawds, innumerable of that sort; for these and such causes 'tis thought they shall not live above fifty.

AGATHA

Aye, man, but this hurts not the good old women.

CLOWN

Aye, faith, you are so like one another that a man cannot distinguish 'em now. Were I an old woman, I would desire to go before my time, and offer myself willingly two or three years before. Oh, those are brave women and worthy to be commended of all men in the world, that when their husbands die, they run to be burnt to death with 'em. There's honour and credit; give me half a dozen such wives!

AGATHA

Aye, if her husband were dead before, 'twere a reasonable request. If you were dead, I could be content to be so.

CLOWN

Fie, that's not likely, for thou had'st two husband before me.

AGATHA

Thou wouldst not have me die, wouldst thou, husband?

CLOWN

No, I do not speak to that purpose, but I say what credit it were for me and thee if thou would'st, then thou should'st never be suspected for a witch, a physician, a bawd, or any of those things, and then how daintily should I mourn for thee, how bravely should I see thee buried. When, alas, if he goes before, it cannot choose but be a great grief to him to think he has not seen his wife well buried. There be such virtuous women in the world, but too few, too few, who desire to die seven years before their time with all their hearts.

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AGATHA

I have not the heart to be of that mind. But, indeed, husband, I think you would have me gone.

CLOWN

No, alas! I speak but for your good and your credit, for when a woman may die quickly, why should she go to law for her death? Alack! I need not wish thee gone for thou hast but a short time to stay with me; you do not know how near 'tis. It must out, you have but a month to live by the law.

AGATHA

Out, alas!

CLOWN

Nay, scarce so much.

AGATHA

Oh, oh, oh, my heart! [*She*] swoons.

CLOWN

Aye, so, if thou wouldst go away quietly, 'twere sweetly done and like a kind wife. Lie but a little longer and the bell shall toll for thee.

AGATHA

Oh, my heart, but a month to live!

CLOWN [*Aside*]

Alas, why wouldst thou come back again for a month? I'll throw her down again. [*To Wife*] Oh, woman, 'tis not three weeks; I think a fortnight is the most.

AGATHA

Nay, then, I am gone already. [*She*] swoons.

CLOWN

I would make haste to the sexton now, but I'm afraid the tolling of the bell will wake her again. If she be so wise as to go now – she stirs again, there's two lives of the nine gone.

AGATHA

Oh, wouldst not thou help to recover me, husband?

CLOWN

Alas, I could not find in my heart to hold thee by thy nose, or box thy cheeks, it goes against my conscience.

AGATHA

I will not be thus frighted to my death,  
I'll search the church record a fortnight;  
'Tis too little conscience, I cannot be so near.  
Oh time, if thou be'est kind, lend me but a year.

*Exit.*

CLOWN

What a spite's this, that a man cannot persuade his wife to die in any time with her good will! I have another bespoke already. Though a piece of old beef will serve to breakfast, yet a man would be glad of a chicken to supper. The clerk, I hope, understands no Hebrew and cannot write backward what he hath writ forward already, and then I am well enough. 'Tis but a month at most; if that were gone, my venture comes in with her two for one. 'Tis use enough, a conscience for a broker<sup>4</sup> – If he had a conscience.

[Act III, scene ii]

*Enter EUGENIA at one door, SIMONIDES, Courtiers, at the other.*

EUGENIA

Gentlemen courtiers.

FIRST COURTIER

All your servants vowed, lady.

[EUGENIA]<sup>5</sup>

Oh, I shall kill myself with infinite laughter!  
Will nobody take my part?

SIMONIDES

And it be a laughing business,  
Put it to me; I'm one of the best in Europe.  
My father died last too; I have the most cause.

EUGENIA

You have picked out such a time, sweet gentlemen,

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<sup>4</sup> broker] Shaw ; brother Q.

<sup>5</sup> EUGENIA] attribués à FIRST COURTIER dans Q.

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To make your spleen a banquet.

SIMONIDES

Oh, the jest, lady!

I have a jaw stands ready for't, I'll gape

Half way and meet it.

EUGENIA

My old husband,

That cannot say his prayers out for jealousy

And madness, at your coming first to woo me –

SIMONIDES

Well said!

FIRST COURTIER

Go on!

SECOND COURIER

On, on!

EUGENIA

Takes counsel with the secrets of all art

to make himself youthful again.

SIMONIDES

How? Youthful! Ha, ha, ha!

EUGENIA

A man of forty-five he would feign seem to be,

Or scarce so much, if he might have his will indeed.

SIMONIDES

Aye, but his white hairs, they'll betray his hoariness.

EUGENIA

Why, there you are wide, he's not the man you take him for;

Nor will you know him when you see him again,

There will be five to one laid upon that.

FIRST COURIER

How?

EUGENIA

Nay, you did well to laugh faintly there.  
I promise you, I think he'll outlive me now  
And deceive law and all.

SIMONIDES

Marry, gout forbid!

EUGENIA

You little think he was at fencing school  
At four o'clock this morning.

SIMONIDES

How, at fencing school!

EUGENIA

Else give no trust to woman.

SIMONIDES

By this light  
I do not like him, then; he's like to live  
Longer than I, for he may kill me first, now.

EUGENIA

His dancer now came in, as I met you.

FIRST COURTIER

His dancer, too!

EUGENIA

They observe turns and hours with him;  
The great French rider will be here at ten  
With his curvetting horse.

SECOND COURIER

These notwithstanding,  
His hair and wrinkles will betray his age.

EUGENIA

I'm sure his head and beard, as he has ordered it,  
Looks not past fifty now. He'll bring it to forty  
Within these four days, for nine times an hour at least  
He takes a black lead comb and kembs it over.  
Three-quarters of his beard is under fifty;

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There's but a little tuft of fourscore left  
All of one side which will be black by Monday.

*Enter LISANDER*

And to approve my truth, see where he comes!  
Laugh softly, gentlemen, and look upon him.

SIMONIDES

Now, by this hand, he's almost black in the mouth indeed.

FIRST COURTIER

He should die shortly, then.

SIMONIDES

Marry, methinks he dies too fast already,  
For he was all white but a week ago.

FIRST COURIER

Oh, this same coney-white takes an excellent black  
Too soon. A mischief on't!

SECOND COURTIER

He will beguile us all  
If that little tuft northward turn black too.

EUGENIA

Nay, sir, I wonder 'tis so long a-turning.

SIMONIDES

Maybe some fairy's child, held forth at midnight,  
Has pissed upon that side.

FIRST COURTIER

Is this the beard?

LISANDER

Ah, sirrah! My young boys, I shall be for you.  
This little mangy<sup>6</sup> tuft takes up more time  
Than all the beard beside! – Come you a-wooing  
And I alive and lusty? You shall find  
An alteration, jack-boys; I have a spirit yet,

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<sup>6</sup> mangy] Q (mangle).

And I could match my hair to it, there's the fault,  
 And can do offices of youth yet lightly.  
 At least I will do, though it pain me a little.  
 Shall not a man for a little foolish age  
 Enjoy his wife to himself? Must young court tits  
 Play tomboys' tricks with her and he live, ha?  
 I have blood that will not bear it; yet, I confess  
 I should be at my prayers. But! where's the dancer there?

*Ent[er] Dan[cing Master]*

DANCING MASTER  
 Here, sir.

LISANDER  
 Come, come, come, one trick a day  
 And I shall soon recover all again.

EUGENIA  
 'Slight, and you laugh too loud, we are all discovered, gentlemen.

SIMONIDES  
 And I have a scurvy, ginny laugh o' mine own<sup>7</sup>  
 Will spoil all, I'm afraid.

EUGENIA  
 Marry, take heed, sir.

SIMONIDES  
 Nay, and I should be hanged, I can't leave it.  
 Pup! There 'tis!

EUGENIA  
 Peace! Oh, peace!

LISANDER  
 Come, I am ready, sir.  
 I hear the church-book's lost where I was born too,  
 And that shall set me back one-and-twenty years;  
 There is no little comfort left in that.  
 And, my three court codlings, that look parboiled,  
 As if they came from Cupid's scalding house, –

---

<sup>7</sup> o' mine own] Shaw ; a' mine own Q.

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SIMONIDES

He means me specially, I hold my life.

DANCING MASTER

What trick will your old worship learn this morning, sir?

LISANDER

Marry, a trick? If thou couldst teach a man  
To keep his wife to himself, I'd fain learn that.

DANCING MASTER

That's a hard trick for an old man specially;  
The horse-trick comes the nearest.

LISANDER

Thou sayest true, i' faith;  
They must be horsed indeed, else there's no keeping on 'em,  
And horseplay at fourscore is not so ready.

DANCING MASTER

Look you, here's your worship's horse-trick, sir.

LISANDER

Nay, say not so,  
'Tis none of mine; I fall down horse and man  
If I but offer at it.

DANCING MASTER

My life for yours, sir.

LISANDER

Sayest thou me so?

DANCING MASTER

Well offered, by my viol, sir.

LISANDER

A pox of this horse-trick, it has played the jade with me  
And given me a wrench in the back.

DANCING MASTER

Now, here's your inturn, and your trick above ground.

LISANDER

Prithee, no more, unless thou hast a mind  
To lay me underground. One of these tricks  
Is enough in a morning.

DANCING MASTER

For your galliard, sir,  
You are complete enough. Aye, and may challenge  
The proudest coxcomb of 'emall, I'll stand to it.

LISANDER

Faith, and I've other weapons for the rest too.  
I have prepared for 'em, if e'er I take  
My Gregories here again.

SIMONIDES

Oh, I shall burst, I can hold out no longer.

EUGENIA

He spoils all.

LISANDER

The devil and his grinners! Are you come?  
Bring forth the weapons, we shall find you play!  
All feats of youth too, jack-boys, feats of youth!  
And these weapons: drinking, fencing, dancing,  
Your own roadways, you glisterpipes! I'm old, you say?  
Yes, parlous old, kids, and you mark me well;  
This beard cannot get children, you lank suck-eggs,  
Unless such weasels come from court to help us!  
We will get our own brats, you lecherous dog-bolts!

*Enter [servant] with glasses.*

Well said, down with 'em; now we shall see your spirits.  
What, dwindle you already?

SECOND COURTIER

I have no quality.

SIMONIDES

Nor I, unless drinking may be reckoned for one.

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FIRST COURTIER

Why, Sim, it shall.

LISANDER

Come, dare you choose your weapon now?

FIRST COURTIER

I? Dancing, sir, and you will be so hasty.

LISANDER

We're for you, sir.

SECOND COURTIER

Fencing, I.

LISANDER

We'll answer you too.

SIMONIDES

I'm for drinking, your wet weapon there.

LISANDER

That wet one has cost many a princox life,  
And I will send it through you with a powder.

SIMONIDES

Let come with a pox, I care not so it be drink.  
I hope my guts will hold, and that's even all  
A gentleman can look for of such trillibubs.

LISANDER

Play the first weapon; come, strike, strike I say!  
Yes, yes, you shall be first; I'll observe court rules.  
Always the worst goes foremost, so 'twill prove, I hope.*[The first courtier dances a galliard].*So, sir, you've spit your poison; now come I.  
*[Aside]* Now forty years go backward and assist me,  
Fall from me half my age but for three minutes  
That I may feel no crick! I will put fair for't  
Although I hazard twenty sciaticas.*[LISANDER dances a galliard]*

So, I have hit you!

FIRST COURTIER

You've done well, i'faith, sir.

LISANDER

If you confess it well, 'tis excellent,  
And I have hit you soundly. I am warm now,  
The second weapon instantly.

SECOND COURTIER

What, so quick, sir? Will you not allow yourself a breathing time?

LISANDER

I've breath enough at all times, Lucifer's muskcod,  
To give your perfumed worship three vennis!  
A sound old man puts his thrust better home  
Than a spiced young man. There, aye!

SECOND COURIER

Then have at you, fourscore.

LISANDER

You lie, twenty, I hope, and you shall find it.

SIMONIDES

I'm glad I missed this weapon. I ['d] had an eye  
Popped out ere this time, or my two butter-teeth  
Thrust down my throat instead of a flap-dragon.

LISANDER

There's two, pentweezle<sup>8</sup>!

DANCING MASTER

Excellently touched, sir.

SECOND COURTIER

Had ever man such luck? Speak your opinion, gentlemen.

SIMONIDES

Methinks your luck's good that your eyes are in still;

---

<sup>8</sup> pentweezle] Shaw ; peptwizle Q.

*The Old Law*

Mine would have dropped out like a pig's half-roasted.

LISANDER

There wants a third, and there 'tis again!

SECOND COURTIER

The devil has steeled him.

EUGENIA

What a strong fiend is jealousy!

LISANDER

You're dispatched, bear-whelp!

SIMONIDES

Now comes my weapon in.

LISANDER

Here, toadstool, here!

'Tis you and I must play these three wet vannies.

SIMONIDES

Vannies in Venice glasses, let 'em come!

They'll bruise no flesh, I'm sure, nor break no bones.

FIRST COURTIER

Yet you may drink your eyes out, sir.

SIMONIDES

Aye, but that's nothing, then they go voluntarily. I do not  
Love to have 'em thrust out whether they will or no.

LISANDER

Here's your first weapon, duck's meat!

SIMONIDES

How? A Dutch what-you-call-'em

'Stead of a German faulchion? A shrewd weapon,

And, of all things, hard to be taken down.

Yet, down it must. I have a nose goes into it;

I shall drink double, I think.

FIRST COURTIER

The sooner off, Sim.

LISANDER

I'll pay you speedily \_\_\_\_\_, with a trick  
I learned once amongst drunkards. Here's half-pike.

SIMONIDES

Half-pike comes well after Dutch what-you-call-'em,  
They'd never be asunder by their good will.

FIRST COURTIER

Well pulled of an old fellow!

LISANDER

Oh, but you fellows pull better at a rope.

FIRST COURTIER

There's a hair, Sim, in that glass.

SIMONIDES

And it be as long as a halter, down it goes.  
No hair shall cross me.

LISANDER

I'll make you stink worse than your polecats do.  
Here's longsword, your last weapon.

SIMONIDES

No more weapons.

FIRST COURTIER

Why! How now, Sim? Bear up, thou shamest us all else.

SIMONIDES

[S']light, I shall shame you worse and I stay longer.  
I ha' got the scotomy in my head already.  
The whimsy, you all turn around! Do not you dance, gallants?

SECOND COURTIER

Pish, what's all this? Why, Sim, look, the last venny.

SIMONIDES

No more vennisies go down here, for these two are coming up again.

*The Old Law*

SECOND COURTIER

Out! The disgrace of drinkers!

SIMONIDES

Yes, 'twill out.

Do you smell nothing yet?

FIRST COURTIER

Smell?

SIMONIDES

Farewell quickly, then; it will do if I stay.

*Exit.*

FIRST COURIER

A foil go with thee!

LISANDER

What! Shall we put down youth at her own virtues?

Beat folly in her own ground? Wondrous much!

Why may not we be held as full sufficient

To love our own wives then, get our own children,

And live in free peace till we be dissolved?

For such spring butterflies that are gaudy-winged,

But no more substance than those shamble-flies

Which butchers' boys snap between sleep and waking,

Come but to crush you once; you are all but maggots

For all your beamy outsides!

*Enter CLEANTHES.*

EUGENIA

Here's Cleanthes,

He comes to chide. Let him alone a little;

Our cause will be revenged. Look, look, his face

Is set for stormy weather. Do but mark

How the clouds gather in it; 'twill pour down straight.

CLEANTHES

Methinks I partly know you, that's my grief.

Could you not all be lost? That had been handsome;

But to be known at all, 'tis more than shameful!

Why, was not your name wont to be Lisander?

LISANDER

'Tis so still, coz.

CLEANTHES

Judgment, defer thy coming! Else this man's miserable.

EUGENIA

I told you there would be a shower anon.

SECOND COURTIER

We'll in and hide our noddles.

*Exeunt Courtiers and EUGENIA.*

CLEANTHES

What devil brought this colour to your mind,  
Which since my childhood I ne'er saw you wear?  
You were ever of an innocent gloss  
Since I was ripe for knowledge; and would you lose it  
And change the livery of saints and angels  
For this mixed monstrousness! To force a ground  
That has been so long hallowed like a temple,  
To bring forth fruits of earth now, and turn black  
To the wild cries of lust and the complexion  
Of sin in act, lost and long since repented?  
Would you begin a work ne'er yet attempted,  
To pull time backward?  
See what your wife will do! Are your wits perfect?

LISANDER

My wits?

CLEANTHES

I like it ten times worse, for it had been safer  
Now to be mad, and more excusable!  
I hear you dance again, and do strange follies.

LISANDER

I must confess I have been put to some, coz.

CLEANTHES

And yet you are not mad? Pray, say not so,  
Give me that comfort of you that you are mad,

*The Old Law*

That I may think you are at worst. For, if  
 You are not mad, I then must guess you have  
 The first of some disease was never heard of,  
 Which may be worse than madness, and more fearful.  
 You'd weep to see yourself else, and your care  
 To pray would quickly turn you white again.  
 I had a father, had he liv'd his month out,  
 But to ha' seen this most prodigious folly,  
 There needed not the law to have cut him off;  
 The sight of this had prov'd his executioner and broke his heart.  
 He would have held it equal  
 Done to a sanctuary! For what is age  
 But the holy place of life, chapel of ease  
 For all men's wearied miseries; and, to rob  
 That of her ornament, it is accursed,  
 As from a priest to steal a holy vestment;  
 Ay, and convert it to a sinful covering.

*Exit LISANDER.*

I see it has done him good; blessing go with it,  
 Such as may make him pure again.

*Enter EUGENIA*

EUGENIA  
 'Twas bravely touched, i' faith, sir.

CLEANTHES  
 Oh, you're welcome.

EUGENIA  
 Exceedingly well handled.

CLEANTHES  
 'Tis to you I come; he fell but in my way.

EUGENIA  
 You marked his beard, cousin?

CLEANTHES  
 Mark me.

EUGENIA  
Did you ever see a hair so changed?

CLEANTHES [*Aside*]  
I must be forced to wake her loudly too;  
The devil has rocked her so fast asleep. –  
[*To EUGENIA*] Strumpet!

EUGENIA  
Do you call, sir?

CLEANTHES  
Whore!

EUGENIA  
How do you, sir?

CLEANTHES  
Be I ne'er so well  
I must be sick of thee! Thou art a disease  
That stickest to the heart, as all such women are.

EUGENIA  
What ails our kindred?

CLEANTHES  
Bless me, she sleeps still! What a dead modesty is in this woman!  
Will never blush again? Look on thy work  
But with a Christian eye, 'twould turn thy heart  
Into a shower of blood to be the cause  
Of that old man's destruction. Think upon't!  
Ruin eternally! For through thy loose follies  
Heaven has found him a faint servant lately.  
His goodness has gone backward and engendered  
With his old sins again; h'as lost his prayers,  
And all the tears that were companions with 'em;  
And, like a blindfold man, giddy and blinded,  
Thinking he goes right on still, swerves but one foot  
And turns to the same place where he set out.  
So he, that took his farewell of the world  
And cast the joys behind him out of sight,  
Summed up his hours, made even with time and men,  
Is now in heart arrived at youth again,  
All by thy wildness. Thy too hasty lust

*The Old Law*

Has driven him to this strong apostacy.  
 Immodesty like thine was never equalled!  
 I've heard of women, shall I call 'em so,  
 Have welcomed suitors ere the corpse were cold,  
 But thou, thy husband living! Thou art too bold!

EUGENIA

Well, have you done now, sir?

CLEANTHES

Look, look, she smiles yet!

EUGENIA

All this is nothing to a mind resolved;  
 Ask any woman that, she'll tell you so much.  
 You have only shown a pretty saucy wit  
 Which I shall not forget, nor to requite it  
 You shall hear from me shortly.

CLEANTHES

Shameless woman!  
 I take my counsel from thee, 'tis too honest,  
 And leave thee wholly to thy stronger master.  
 Bless the sex of thee from thee! that's my prayer.  
 Were all like thee, so impudently common,  
 No man would be found to wed a woman.

*Exit.*

EUGENIA

I'll fit you gloriously! He that attempts to take away my pleasure,  
 I'll take away his joy, and I can, sure.  
 His concealed father pays for it! I'll even tell  
 Him that I mean to make my husband next  
 And he shall tell the Duke. *Enter* SIMONIDES Mass! Here he comes.

SIMONIDES

Has had a bout with me too.

EUGENIA

What? No! Since, sir?

SIMONIDES

A flirt, a little flirt; he called me strange names,

But I ne'er minded him.

EUGENIA

You shall quit him, sir, when he as little minds you.

SIMONIDES

I like that well.

I love to be revenged when no one thinks of me,  
There's little danger that way.

EUGENIA

This is it then:

He you shall strike; your stroke shall be profound,  
And yet your foe not guess who gave the wound.

SIMONIDES

By my troth<sup>9</sup>, I love to give such wounds.

*Exeunt.*

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<sup>9</sup> By my troth] Shaw ; A my troth Q.