**ALICE & ARDEN**

*From scene 1. The landowner Thomas Arden is suspicious of his wife Alice. But he is going to take his friend’s advice and see what absence in London will do for their relationship.*

ALICE Husband, what mean you to get up so early?

Summer nights are short, and yet you rise ere day.

Had I been ’wake, you had not rise so soon.

ARDEN Sweet love, thou know’st that we two, Ovid‑like,

Have often chid the morning when it ’gan to peep,

And often wished that dark night’s purblind steeds

Would pull her by the purple mantle back

And cast her in the Ocean to her love.

But this night, sweet Alice, thou hast killed my heart:

I heard thee call on Mosby in thy sleep.

ALICE ’Tis like I was asleep when I named him,

For being awake he comes not in my thoughts.

ARDEN Ay, but you started up and suddenly,

Instead of him, caught me about the neck.

ALICE ‘Instead of him’? Why, who was there but you?

And where but one is, how can I mistake?

ARDEN Nay, love, there is no credit in a dream.

Let it suffice I know thou lovest me well.

ALICE Now I remember whereupon it came:

Had we no talk of Mosby yesternight?

And thereof came it, and therefore blame not me.

ARDEN I know it did, and therefore let it pass.

I must to London, sweet Alice, presently.

ALICE But tell me, do you mean to stay there long?

ARDEN No longer than till my affairs be done.

I will not stay above a month at most.

ALICE A month? Ay me! Sweet Arden, come again

Within a day or two or else I die.

ARDEN I cannot long be from thee, gentle Alice.

**ALICE**

*From early in scene 1. The landowner Arden’s wife Alice, hearing of his impending trip to London, rejoices at the news he’ll be away and compares him unfavourably to her lover Mosby.*

ALICE Ere noon he means to take horse and away!

Sweet news is this. O, that some airy spirit

Would in the shape and likeness of a horse

Gallop with Arden ’cross the ocean

And throw him from his back into the waves!

Sweet Mosby is the man that hath my heart,

And he usurps it, having nought but this,

That I am tied to him by marriage.

Love is a god, and marriage is but words;

And therefore Mosby’s title is the best.

Tush! Whether it be or no, he shall be mine

In spite of him, of Hymen, and of rites.

**ALICE & MOSBY**

*From scene 1. Alice Arden and her lower-class lover, Mosby, quarrel, reconcile and carry on plotting to kill her husband.*

MOSBY Where is your husband?

ALICE ’Tis now high water, and he is at the quay.

MOSBY There let him be. Henceforward know me not.

ALICE Is this the end of all thy solemn oaths?

Is this the fruit thy reconcilement buds?

Have I for this given thee so many favours,

Incurred my husband’s hate, and (out alas!)

Made shipwreck of mine honour for thy sake?

And dost thou say, ‘Henceforward know me not’?

Remember, when I locked thee in my closet,

What were thy words and mine? Did we not both

Decree to murder Arden in the night?

The heavens can witness, and the world can tell,

Before I saw that falsehood look of thine,

’Fore I was tangled with thy ’ticing speech,

Arden to me was dearer than my soul,

And shall be still. Base peasant, get thee gone,

And boast not of thy conquest over me,

Gotten by witchcraft and mere sorcery.

For what hast thou to countenance my love,

Being descended of a noble house

And matched already with a gentleman

Whose servant thou may’st be? And so farewell.

MOSBY Ungentle and unkind Alice, now I see

That which I ever feared and find too true:

A woman’s love is as the lightning flame

Which even in bursting forth consumes itself.

To try thy constancy have I been strange.

Would I had never tried but lived in hope!

ALICE What needs thou try me whom thou never found false?

MOSBY Yet pardon me, for love is jealous.

ALICE I am content for to be reconciled,

And that I know will be mine overthrow.

MOSBY Thine overthrow? First let the world dissolve!

ALICE Nay, Mosby, let me still enjoy thy love;

And, happen what will, I am resolute.

**GREENE (with Alice)**

*From scene 1 Greene is a victim of Arden’s landgrabbing, tightfisted ways. Alice Arden is about to make use of his hatred for her husband to involve him in her plot to kill Arden.*

GREENE Pardon me, Mistress Arden; I must speak,

For I am touched. Your husband doth me wrong

To wring me from the little land I have.

My living is my life; only that

Resteth remainder of my portion.

Desire of wealth is endless in his mind,

And he is greedy‑gaping still for gain;

Nor cares he though young gentlemen do beg,

So he may scrape and hoard up in his pouch.

But, seeing he hath taken my lands, I’ll value life

As careless as he is careful for to get;

And, tell him this from me, I’ll be revenged.

ALICE Alas, poor gentleman, I pity you,

And woe is me that any man should want.

God knows, ’tis not my fault. But wonder not

Though he be hard to others when to me—

Ah, Master Greene, God knows how I am used!

GREENE Now trust me, Mistress Alice, it grieveth me

So fair a creature should be so abused.

Why, who would have thought the civil sir so sullen?

He looks so smoothly. Now, fie upon him, churl,

And if he live a day he lives too long.

But frolic, woman, I shall be the man

Shall set you free from all this discontent.

And if the churl deny my interest

And will not yield my lease into my hand,

I'll pay him home, whatever hap to me.

**BRADSHAW**

*From scene 2. Bradshaw used to be a soldier, now he’s a goldsmith. He sees one of his former comrades and describes him to Greene, and thereby implicates himself in all innocence in a conspiracy to murder which will eventually cost him his life.*

BRADSHAW The one I know not, but he seems a knave,

Chiefly for bearing the other company;

For such a slave, so vile a rogue as he,

Lives not again upon the earth;

Black Will is his name. I tell you, Master Greene,

At Boulogne he and I were fellow soldiers,

Where he played such pranks

As all the camp feared him for his villainy.

I warrant you he bears so bad a mind

That for a crown he’ll murder any man.

**BLACK WILL, SHAKEBAG & GREENE**

*From scene 3. Black Will and Shakebag have just made their first attempt to kill Arden, foild by a Prentice dropping a shutter on Black Will’s head at a crucial moment. While Black Will rubs his bloody head and Shakebag fusses about him, enter Greene (the man who goes between the hitmen and their employers, Arden’s wife and lover).*

GREENE Why, sirs, Arden’s as well as I. I met him and Franklin going merrily to the ordinary. What, dare you not do it?

WILL Yes, sir, we dare do it; but, were my consent to give again, we would not do it under ten pound more. I have had ten pound to steal a dog, and we have no more here to kill a man. But that a bargain is a bargain and so forth, you should do it yourself.

GREENE I pray thee, how came thy head broke?

SHAKEBAG Standing against a stall, watching Arden’s coming, a boy let down his shop window and broke his head; whereupon arose a brawl, and in the tumult Arden escaped us and passed by unthought on. But forbearance is no acquittance: another time we’ll do it, I warrant thee.

GREENE I pray thee, Will, make clean thy bloody brow,

And let us bethink us on some other place

Where Arden may be met with handsomely.

Remember how devoutly thou hast sworn

To kill the villain: think upon thine oath.

WILL Tush, I have broken five hundred oaths!

But wouldst thou charm me to effect this deed,

Tell me of gold, my resolution’s fee;

Say thou seest Mosby kneeling at my knees,

Off’ring me service for my high attempt;

And sweet Alice Arden, with a lap of crowns,

Comes with a lowly curtsy to the earth,

Saying, ‘Take this but for thy quarterage;

Such yearly tribute will I answer thee.’

Why, this would steel soft‑mettled cowardice,

With which Black Will was never tainted with.

I tell thee, Greene, the forlorn traveller

Whose lips are glued with summer’s parching heat

Ne’er longed so much to see a running brook

As I to finish Arden’s tragedy.

GREENE Why, that’s well said; but what saith Shakebag?

SHAKEBAG I cannot paint my valour out with words;

But, give me place and opportunity,

Such mercy as the starven lioness,

When she is dry‑sucked of her eager young,

Shows to the prey that next encounters her,

On Arden so much pity would I take.

GREENE So should it fare with men of firm resolve.

And now, sirs, seeing this accident

Of meeting him in Paul’s hath no success,

Let us bethink us on some other place

Whose earth may swallow up this Arden’s blood.

**FRANKLIN**

*From scene 4. Franklin, Arden’s friend, similar social status but with additional political connections, laments and describes the condition of his jealous friend.*

FRANKLIN Ah, what a hell is fretful jealousy!

What pity‑moving words, what deep‑fetched sighs,

What grievous groans and overlading woes

Accompanies this gentle gentleman!

Now will he shake his care‑oppressèd head,

Then fix his sad eyes on the sullen earth,

Ashamed to gaze upon the open world;

Now will he cast his eyes up towards the heavens,

Looking that ways for redress of wrong.

So woe‑begone, so inly charged with woe,

Was never any lived and bare it so.

**MICHAEL (also audition piece for SUSAN)**

*From scene 4. Michael is Arden’s serving-man. He has been lured into the murder-plot with a promise to be married to Susan, Alice’s maid. His role in the present attempt is to leave unlocked the front door of Arden’s lodging in London, so that the killers can get in unobtrusively.*

MICHAEL

My master’s kindness pleads to me for life

With just demand, and I must grant it him;

My mistress she hath forced me with an oath

For Susan’s sake, the which I may not break,

For that is nearer than a master’s love;

That grim‑faced fellow, pitiless Black Will,

And Shakebag, stern in bloody stratagem

(Two rougher ruffians never lived in Kent),

Have sworn my death if I infringe my vow,

A dreadful thing to be considered of.

Methinks I see them with their bolstered hair,

Staring and grinning in thy gentle face,

And in their ruthless hands their daggers drawn,

Insulting o’er thee with a peck of oaths

Whilst thou, submissive, pleading for relief,

Art mangled by their ireful instruments.

They come, they come! Ah, Master Franklin, help!

Call up the neighbours, or we are but dead!

**MOSBY**

*From scene 8. Mosby is Alice’s lover, of a lower social class than her or her husband. This audition piece is the beginning of a long soliloquy from the middle of the play and shows a momentary wavering of confidence. The speech as a whole demonstrates that true love for Alice is not his only concern…..*

MOSBY Disturbèd thoughts drives me from company

And dries my marrow with their watchfulness.

Continual trouble of my moody brain

Feebles my body by excess of drink

And nips me as the bitter northeast wind

Doth check the tender blossoms in the spring.

My golden time was when I had no gold:

Though then I wanted, yet I slept secure;

My daily toil begat me night’s repose;

My night’s repose made daylight fresh to me.

But, since I climbed the top bough of the tree

And sought to build my nest among the clouds,

Each gentle starry gale doth shake my bed

And makes me dread my downfall to the earth.

But whither doth contemplation carry me?

The way I seek to find where pleasure dwells

Is hedged behind me that I cannot back

But needs must on although to danger's gate.

**CLARKE & MICHAEL**

*From scene 10. Michael is a serving-man in Arden’s household. Clarke is a painter (sideline in poisons) who lives nearby. Both have the hots for the same woman----Susan, Alice Arden’s maid and Mosby’s sister.*

MICHAEL But who is this? The painter, my corrival, that would needs win Mistress Susan.

CLARKE How now, Michael? How doth my mistress and all at home?

MICHAEL Who? Susan Mosby? She is your mistress, too?

CLARKE Ay, how doth she and all the rest?

MICHAEL All's well but Susan; she is sick.

CLARKE Sick? Of what disease?

MICHAEL Of a great fear.

CLARKE A fear of what?

MICHAEL A great fever.

CLARKE A fever? God forbid!

MICHAEL Yes, faith, and of a lurdan, too, as big as yourself.

CLARKE Go to; you carry an eye over Mistress Susan.

MICHAEL Ay, faith, to keep her from the painter.

CLARKE Such another word will cost you a cuff or a knock.

MICHAEL What, with a dagger made of a pencil? Faith, 'tis too weak, and therefore thou too weak to win Susan.

CLARKE Would Susan's love lay upon this stroke!

*Then he breaks Michael's head.*

**BLACK WILL, SHAKEBAG & GUIDE (IN FERRYMAN PERSONA)**

*From scene 12. Black Will and Shakebag are on the lurk on Rainham Downs, waiting to ambush Arden. But a thick mist comes down and they are lost in it. As a result, Shakebag has just fallen into a ditch.*

SHAKEBAG Help, Will, help! I am almost drowned.

*Here enters the Guide as Ferryman*

GUIDE/FERRYMAN Who's that that calls for help?

WILL 'Twas none here; 'twas thou thyself.

GUIDE/FERRYMAN I came to help him that called for help. Why, how now? Who is this that's in the ditch? You are well enough served to go without a guide such weather as this!

[ *Shakebag climbs out of the ditch*]

WILL Sirrah, what companies hath passed your ferry this morning?

GUIDE/FERRYMAN None but a couple of gentlemen that went to dine at my Lord Cheyne's.

WILL Shakebag, did not I tell thee as much?

GUIDE/FERRYMAN Did you ever see such a mist as this?

WILL No, sir; get you gone.

GUIDE/FERRYMAN [*To Shakebag*] What's his name, I pray you, sir?

SHAKEBAG His name is Black Will.

GUIDE/FERRYMAN I hope to see him one day hanged upon a hill.

*Exit Guide/Ferryman*

SHAKEBAG See how the sun hath cleared the foggy mist,

Now we have missed the mark of our intent.

**GUIDE (IN DICK REEDE PERSONA) AND ARDEN**

*From scene 13. Dick Reede, a sailor, is in dispute with the landowner Arden about a piece of ground. Arden is uncooperative and threatening. Reede responds with a stunning curse.*

GUIDE/REEDE Master Arden, I am now bound to the sea.

My coming to you was about the plot of ground

Which wrongfully you detain from me.

Although the rent of it be very small,

Yet will it help my wife and children,

Which here I leave in Faversham, God knows,

Needy and bare. For Christ's sake, let them have it.

ARDEN I'll banish pity if thou use me thus.

GUIDE/REEDE What, wilt thou do me wrong and threat me too?

Nay, then, I'll tempt thee, Arden, do thy worst.

God, I beseech thee, show some miracle

On thee or thine in plaguing thee for this.

That plot of ground which thou detains from me

Be ruinous and fatal unto thee!