

Timeplays



Miniaturist plays to mark 500 years of Hampton Court

1515 - 2015

by

Elizabeth Kuti

(performance text as of 28th July)

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden.

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Please note that the following scene order is not reflective of performance order. Scenes are listed here in the order originally presented by the author with additional stand alone monologues inserted before the final *Monologues* scene.

Below is a list of scenes with locations as performed at Hampton Court Palace March – August 2015.

Scene 1: *Shakespeare's Rehearsal* – The Great Hall

Scene 1a: as above but for a company of 10 (without JAMES I and CHRISTIAN)

Scene 1b: as above but for a company of 5 (without LADY MACBETH, JAMES I, CHRISTIAN and ANNE OF DENMARK)

Scene 2: *Naked Foote* – Wine Cellar

Scene 3: *Henry VIII and his Musicians* – The Great Watching Chamber

Scene 3a: as above but for 2 actors (without JOHN BLANKE)

Scene 4: *Doctor/Midwife* – Haunted Gallery outside Apartment 27

Scene 5: *Who Is the Fairest?* – Council Chamber

Scene 6: *The King has Escaped* – Buttery Stairs and Cloisters

Scene 7: *Honeymoon Troubles* – The Queen's Presence Chamber

Scene 8: *The King, the Queen and his Mistresses* – Communications Gallery

Scene 8a: as above but for two actors (without APHRA BEHN)

Scene 9: *Queen Anne Goes Hunting* – originally in a carriage on Trophy Drive, later moved to Fountain Court

Scene 10: *An English Lesson* – The Queen's Dining Room and Drawing Room

Scene 11: *Petticoat Government* – The King's Presence Chamber

Scene 12: *An Injured Jousting* – Buttery Stairs

Monologue: *William Grieves* – The King's Apartments

Monologue: *Jane Seymour* – The Cloisters

Scene 13: *Across Five Centuries* – The Cartoon Gallery

Scene 13a: As above but for a company of 5 (without PRINCESS SOPHIA)

Scene One: The Rehearsal

SHAKESPEARE is talking maniacally, followed by two PLAYERS, giving out 'parts', scrolls of scripts, which they examine. Perhaps then the three of them begin to unpack props and costumes.

SHAKESPEARE: Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it as many of your players do, I had as lief-

PLAYERS JOINING IN: - Had as lief the town crier spoke my lines -

SHAKESPEARE: Town-crier - et cetera! Well that was then and this is now. Farewell to Elsinore - for now we move our scene - to Scotland! And our new tragicall history - of murder and ambition - double double toil and trouble! -

PLAYER 1: Fire burn and cauldron - bubble! O detestable good, Will, 'tis excellent!

COURT SERVANT: (*strong Scots dialect*) Scotland, aye? The play ye are doing? Tes a wee Scottish piece ye're doing, aye?

SHAKESPEARE: In honour of the King.

COURT SERVANT: (*incomprehensibly strong Scottish accent*) Ach now, glad I am ye say so, for ye ken there'll be a fair few wee laddies and gurls of the court will be keening noo for a sight and the thocht of haime.

PLAYER 2: I'm sorry?

PLAYER 1: (*overly loud and enunciated*) YES. SCOTLAND!

COURT SERVANT: What are ye soft is it or simple? This wee laddie's a bit touched or mebbe nesh is it - is it touched ye are, aye? Bless ye!

PLAYER 1: YES. SCOTLAND! Lovely!!

COURT SERVANT: (*humouring him*) Scotland, Aye, Bonny Scotland. (ASIDE) The puir wee bairn. Drapped on his noggin as a babbie or some sich, I have nae doot.

PLAYER 2: Pay him no mind, sirrah, he has but a feeble understanding - a most slender - brainpan -

COURT SERVANT: Well, laddies, as fuir thes play of yours, I'll be watching noo for a sight of the burruks and glannocks and the west wind a-blowing cross the fuir frae -

(COURT SERVANT AND SHAKESPEARE NOD SAGELY AT EACH OTHER).

Exit COURT SERVANT.

SHAKESPEARE: Well - an now dear Ned, dear Tom, for as ye know, and can ably cite, "use all gently for in the very whirlwind of your –

PLAYER 2: Tis amiable good, Sir. This scene of enchantment and glamour, I mean, 'mongst the bracken of a Scottish glen -

SHAKESPEARE: - why thank-ee - now where was I –

PLAYER 2: But does it lack a-

SHAKESPEARE: Lack a what?

PLAYER 2: Does it need a little light relief? Something for the clowns? One of your funny servant scenes?

SHAKESPEARE: Funny servant?

PLAYER 2: A groom, or a bumbling chamberlain – a drunken courtier– some such –

SHAKESPEARE: Yes, perhaps you are right! The play is so confounded dark, it needs some humour - Though by'r'lady, I have tried and cannot hit upon it -

PLAYER 2: Just a thought.

SHAKESPEARE: Where was I?

PLAYER 1: Whirlwind -

SHAKESPEARE: No matter. Do as ye list. Men of parts, of many parts – do as ye list! But no unnatural nor unseemlie gesture!

Are you perfect in't?

PLAYER 1: I did con it til three this morning.

SHAKESPEARE: A marvel.

The PLAYERS start to put on skirts and female Witch costumes, hair etc, and start rehearsing moves around a cauldron etc.

Enter Stage Manager, hassled.

STAGE MANAGER: Gentlemen! I beg you! It is past twelve of the clock and we have still the main body of the play to rehearse!

The King, I must tell you, is now expected back *within the hour* – and not just King James, but he brings the Queen's brother too, King Christian of Denmark – on an official visit and eager to know more of England and her noble habits and pastimes - indeed, I hear that en route from Portsmouth, both royal Majesties

have condescended to sample the culture of England from tavern to tavern, in the form of our finest ales and beer - so as Theatre People it is our task to present to their Majesties the finest theatrical art that England can offer - and with this new play of Master Shakespeare's I think we can certainly promise a night of high poetic drama, moral reflection, and elevated tragic feeling –

But! Time is not on our side, so we will gallop apace through the play, taking it from cue to cue and merely o'erleaping the body and substance of the longer speeches–

PLAYER 3 (playing Macbeth, BOOMS FROM THE BACK OF THE ROOM): Save the king!

ALL: Save the king! *(They all jump to attention and bow deeply – remaining in the bow for several seconds -)*

PLAYER 2: Where is he?

PLAYER 1: Is he actually here?

PLAYER 3: Save the King, I mean save for the King, Macbeth, for his speeches, my speeches I mean – I have conned the thing but 'tis a slippery one and untried, Will, I mean – so please you, will we not o'erleap the King's speeches for I am in need of a trial – And where is the sheep's blood? Is it set above? I must needs give assay good time afore -

STAGE MANAGER: Sheep's blood?

PLAYER 3: Just a gut or bladder lain somewhere above – bucket or what not - that I can besmear all about -

STAGE MANAGER: That I don't know - I'll have to clear it – blood, you see – ah, we were told -

PLAYER 3: - for the balcony – for the killing of Duncan – tis write quite plain - 'what hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes, Will all great Neptune's seas wash this blood –

SHAKESPEARE: Ocean – Neptune's ocean –

PLAYER 3: Quite , so , look you, so sheep's blood, ox blood, what you will, but blood we must have – bucket or so – a heart should do it -

PLAYER 2: Not your ox - too thin –

PLAYER 1: Sheep is best by far – we found at Whitehall-

PLAYER 2: Paint at a pinch –

PLAYER 1: Try the kitchen?

STAGE MANAGER: No, no, no, we are not at liberty – we cannot have blood, be it ox or sheep - the tapestries – what of the hangings? Besmeared as like as-

SHAKESPEARE: Ocean, Neptune's ocean – wash this –

PLAYER 3: Tapestries?

STAGE MANAGER: The tapestries – the flooring - Be it paint, ox or sheep blood, it is quite beyond my power! We are contracted to leave no spot nor stain nor sully any furnishings herewith to include -

SHAKESPEARE: - wash this blood clean from my hand No this my hand will rather The multitudinous seas incarnadine making the green one RED –WE MUST HAVE BLOOD – *hang the tapestries – !*

STAGE MANAGER: We are at court Sir – we are constrained -

PLAYER 3: If we have no blood the moment is without question – utterly bereft of all dramatick – bite and purpose -

SHAKESPEARE: The power – the meaning – lost, utterly -

PLAYER 3: Vanquished utterly, aye, sir – if it was at the Rose the crowd would be – baying -

STAGE MANAGER: We are not at the Rose we are at court –

PLAYER 3: We would be showered in walnut shells and orange peel - I won't go on. I can't work like this -

STAGE MANAGER: Sir – please – we can make it – we can find you –red gloves – some form of – winding scarlet ribbon –

SHAKESPEARE: Ribbon! The King of Scotland lies bleeding like a stuck pig and he speaks to me of ribbon!

PLAYER 2: In fairness, Sir, you could argue that it's in the words –

SHAKESPEARE: Words?

PLAYER 3: The words conjure blood. . .?

(BOY PLAYER PLAYING LADY MACBETH DECLAIMS SHRILLY FROM THE BALCONY ABOVE)

LADY M: *My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white!*

EVERYONE CHEERS EXCEPT THE STAGE MANAGER

SHAKESPEARE: Bravo, Johnny, bravo!

LADY MACBETH: *(Lady M continues) I hear a knocking
At the south entry: - retire we to our chamber,
A little water clears us of this deed –*

STAGE MANAGER: And we're not having water either so can we knock that -

SHAKESPEARE: Gad zooks sir would you wreck the thing entirely?

THUNDEROUS KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

PLAYER 3: Is that my cue? *Wake Duncan with your knocking: I would thou couldst!*

STAGE MANAGER: Good God who's at the door for the knocking? Tell them they can go a little softer. A little zealous – pray more gently -!

LADY MACBETH: *I hear a knocking At the south entry – retire we –*

STAGE MANAGER: Go to the next cue – (*towards the knocking, to make them be quiet*) Thank you! We have marked it now -

LADY MACBETH: *Hark! More knocking – get on your night-gown -*

STAGE MANAGER: I said, move on, we have marked the knocking!

LADY MACBETH: I have moved on – this is the second bout of knocking – *hark, more knocking -*.

STAGE MANAGER: There's more knocking?

LADY MACBETH: It continues thus - *Get on your night-gown – DA DEE DA DEE DA. . . –Be not lost so poorly in your thoughts. Fierce powerful, Mister Shakespeare -*

PLAYER 3: Ha! My cue! 'your thoughts'. . .Ah! *To know my deed, 'twere best not to know myself.* The knocking continues so ever and anon –me again - *Wake Duncan with thy –*

Wilt be so thunderous?

Twill drown the very speech -

STAGE MANAGER: 'Tis detestable thunderous. Enough! I told you – CEASE KNOCKING OR I'LL KNOCK YOUR BLOCK OFF BY'R LADY! (*To maid or stage-hand*) Unbolt the thing, madam, before my temples crack -

(*A servant unbolts the door and it bursts open.*

Enter King James I and King Christian of Denmark – both very drunk, dishevelled, covered in mud and not looking very kingly. Christian can't speak English. James has strong Scottish accent)

CHRISTIAN: Fach-Hell-Ville

STAGE MANAGER: 'Twas thunderous loud, sirrah, a little softer please you for the actual giving out of the play – tonight – the King will not wish such hubbub I am sure. And mind the woodwork.

(*sotto voce*) Is this really all we have to work with? Can no one else do the knocking? Ned?

PLAYER 2: Not I – I am in the tiring room for the following –

PLAYER 1: And I.

STAGE MANAGER: Fine. These rude country folk -

JAMES: Ah – forgive me –

STAGE MANAGER: Our poor players are quite drowned out by the racket –

JAMES: Poor players? Oh, aye? Oh I am terribly sorry!

STAGE MANAGER: Best not anger them further sir or there will be ill will and lost temper from here to Southwark. A little softer, pray you, sirrah, with the knocking – master Brenton will prompt you -

Moving on - ? Master Shakespeare – how do we get Lenox and Macduff on so fast from their changing of robes in the tiring room, as there is scarce breath drawn between this knocking ‘fore hard on its heels comes their scene-

SHAKESPEARE: Yes – I know – it’s a little awkward – we need some diversion or entertainment – perchance some interlude of entertainment - a new character?

STAGE MANAGER: Tis far too late for a new character Master Shakespeare – we said NO REWRITES –

SHAKESPEARE: Not a rewrite – just a tweak –

STAGE MANAGER: Neither tweak nor rewrite -

PLAYER 2: If the Witches were to fly on –may hap we fashion some mechanical device from the gallery –

PLAYER 1: And so - we flash upon them all at once – Grimalkin! Sister! We fly!

PLAYER 2: We fly!

PLAYER 1: And so – and so – and clap and la and so! – And alight with cauldron and with broom to chant again –

PLAYER 3: We’ve had a goodly few scenes of the witches, haven’t we –

SHAKESPEARE: No! something else – a comic – servant – or some – (*eyeing James*) drunken sot, a figure of merriment – Scottish mayhap? - Yes, perhaps that's it!

CHRISTIAN: (*In Danish; lurching at the Witches*) What devilish winsome creatures are these, James?

JAMES: Witches! Not really, they’re acting. Comedians! Och aye, we have a play for you! You’ll love it. From Master Shakespeare. A wee Scottish thing, commissioned it myself. Sort of a family history – a great deal of witchery, I know it’s rather a hobby of yours-

(Perhaps he has a translator who translates for him into English)

CHRISTIAN: (In Danish) They are bewitching hussies despite their loathsome trade. But are they women or men? They squeak like women yet their beards are fullsome -

JAMES: Boy players – their characters are epicenes – androgynes - Brother, brother, come, we have feasted and caroused enough have we not –

CHRISTIAN: (In Danish) I'd kiss you, you wicked painted poppets of the devil, but my eyes have gone blind with the ale.

JAMES: Steady, brother!

LADY M: Sirs - sirs - my lords - 'tis the King! King James and King Christian!

ALL: Majesty -

(The company of actors finally twig and assume low bows, as courtiers attempting to help Christian and James get out of the room.)

PLAYER 3: King Christian of Denmark just touched my -

SHAKESPEARE: A "wee Scottish thing" – !!

STAGE MANAGER: To resume – could someone lock the doors again please, we must get on.

And we are moving to the cues for Lennox and Macduff

INCREDIBLE KNOCKING AT DOOR RESUMES.

STAGE MANAGER: For the love of - We are at the next scene please tell whoever it is to please –

Enter PORTER. Scottish, furious, six foot four, terrifying.

PORTER: Here's a knocking indeed! Be ye Belzebub or Lucifer I cannae come any faster than I'm coming! Ay ay ay anon I come! Whisht ay with your knocking! Knock and knock and by'r lady knock. Knock ye till your hands drap clean from your wristbones! There'll be knocking enough in Hell, I warrant, when all of ye have shuffled off – Enough! I come!

Hell-gate Hampton Court!

I'll devil-porter it nae further –

(To the terrified Witches) Good day ladies and can I help ye?

PLAYER 1: We're fine.

PLAYER 2: Just putting on a play.

PLAYER 1: We're from London.

PORTER: Oh aye? Welcome to Hampton Court. Or as I like to call it – Hell-Gate Court! And I'm your Devil-porter!

PLAYER 1: Hello.

PORTER: I come! Anon I come! Unbolt that door before I use your skulls as twa wee bowls to brew my porridge –

(UNBOLTS THE DOOR. IN COMES THE QUEEN)

PORTER: My lady –

Pardon, my queen, it was the players they threw me into an ontological uncertainty–

QUEEN ANNE STORMS ACROSS TO WHERE JAMES AND CHRISTIAN ARE STILL STRUGGLING OUT AND UNLEASHES A TIRADE IN DANISH.

She storms out.

PORTER: Ay. Well. So. Players, ey?

PLAYER 1: Ay. Yes.

PORTER: Singing and –

PLAYER 2: Chanting.

PORTER: Oh aye. Chanting, aye. And when is this play happening?

STAGE MANAGER: Tomorrow. And tomorrow and tomorrow. Three performances.

PORTER: Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow – oh aye.

STAGE MANAGER: Hope you can make it.

PORTER: Oh aye? I'll try.

I find plays progress too slowly. Setting fuir an age before the plot works itself oot. Well. On ye go - Creep on your petty pace from day to day. I'll be seeing you.

HE EXITS. SHAKESPEARE has been madly scribbling during all of this.

SHAKESPEARE: There's my character!

STAGE MANAGER: So I think – that just about wraps up the second act – there is still the question of the blood for Dicky – Dicky! Dicky! where's Master Burbage?

We've asked in the kitchen for some sheep's blood but I will have to check with the Lord Chamberlain so please don't get your hopes up – Mr Shakespeare –

Are you happy with the second act?

SHAKESPEARE: There's going to be some rewrites.

STAGE MANAGER: NOOO!

SHAKESPEARE: Just a tweak. Got some fresh inspiration. A porter at the gates of Duncan's castle!

Give me an hour.

One hour?

"I'll Devil-Porter it no further. . ."

STAGE MANAGER: An hour everybody.

Thank you.

Scene One a : The Rehearsal

SHAKESPEARE is talking maniacally, followed by two PLAYERS, giving out 'parts', scrolls of scripts, which they examine. Perhaps then the three of them begin to unpack props and costumes.

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PLAYERS JOINING IN: - Had as lief the town crier spoke my lines –

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PLAYER 2: I'm sorry?

PLAYER 1: *(overly loud and enunciated)* YES. SCOTLAND!

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PLAYER 2: But does it lack a-

SHAKESPEARE: Lack a what?

PLAYER 2: Does it need a little light relief? Something for the clowns? One of your funny servant scenes?

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ALL: Save the king! (*They all jump to attention and bow deeply – remaining in the bow for several seconds -*
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PLAYER 1: Try the kitchen?

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SHAKESPEARE: Ribbon! The King of Scotland lies bleeding like a stuck pig and he speaks to me of ribbon!

PLAYER 2: In fairness, Sir, you could argue that it's in the words –

SHAKESPEARE: Words?

PLAYER 3: The words conjure blood. . .?

(BOY PLAYER PLAYING LADY MACBETH DECLAIMS SHRILLY FROM THE BALCONY ABOVE)

LADY M: *My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white!*

EVERYONE CHEERS EXCEPT THE STAGE MANAGER

SHAKESPEARE: Bravo, Johnny, bravo!

LADY MACBETH: *(Lady M continues) I hear a knocking
At the south entry: - retire we to our chamber,
A little water clears us of this deed –*

STAGE MANAGER: And we're not having water either so can we knock that -

SHAKESPEARE: Gad zooks sir would you wreck the thing entirely?

THUNDEROUS KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

PLAYER 3: Is that my cue? *Wake Duncan with your knocking: I would thou couldst!*

STAGE MANAGER: Good God who's at the door for the knocking? Tell them they can go a little softer. A little zealous – pray more gently -!

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STAGE MANAGER: Go to the next cue – (*towards the knocking, to make them be quiet*) Thank you! We have marked it now -

LADY MACBETH: *Hark! More knocking – get on your night-gown -*

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Twill drown the very speech -

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Hell-gate Hampton Court!

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(*To the terrified Witches*) Good day ladies and can I help ye?

PLAYER 1: We're fine.

PLAYER 2: Just putting on a play.

PLAYER 1: We're from London.

PORTER: Oh aye? Welcome to Hampton Court. Or as I like to call it – Hell-Gate Court! And I'm your Devil-porter!

PLAYER 1: Hello.

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(UNBOLTS THE DOOR. IN COMES THE QUEEN)

PORTER: My lady –

Pardon, my queen, it was the players they threw me into an ontological uncertainty–

QUEEN ANNE STORMS ACROSS TO WHERE JAMES AND CHRISTIAN ARE STILL STRUGGLING OUT AND UNLEASHES A TIRADE IN DANISH.

She storms out.

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PORTER: Singing and –

PLAYER 2: Chanting.

PORTER: Oh aye. Chanting, aye. And when is this play happening?

STAGE MANAGER: Tomorrow. And tomorrow and tomorrow. Three performances.

PORTER: Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow – oh aye.

STAGE MANAGER: Hope you can make it.

PORTER: Oh aye? I'll try.

I find plays progress too slowly. Setting fur an age before the plot works itself oot. Well. On ye go - Creep on your petty pace from day to day. I'll be seeing you.

HE EXITS. SHAKESPEARE has been madly scribbling during all of this.

SHAKESPEARE: There's my character!

STAGE MANAGER: So I think – that just about wraps up the second act – there is still the question of the blood for Dicky – Dicky! Dicky! where's Master Burbage?

We've asked in the kitchen for some sheep's blood but I will have to check with the Lord Chamberlain so please don't get your hopes up – Mr Shakespeare –

Are you happy with the second act?

SHAKESPEARE: There's going to be some rewrites.

STAGE MANAGER: NOOO!

SHAKESPEARE: Just a tweak. Got some fresh inspiration. A porter at the gates of Duncan's castle!

Give me an hour.

One hour?

"I'll Devil-Porter it no further. . ."

STAGE MANAGER: An hour everybody.

Thank you.

Scene One b: The Rehearsal

SHAKESPEARE is talking maniacally, followed by two PLAYERS, giving out 'parts', scrolls of scripts, which they examine. Perhaps then the three of them begin to unpack props and costumes.

SHAKESPEARE: Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it as many of your players do, I had as lief-

PLAYERS JOINING IN: - Had as lief the town crier spoke my lines –

SHAKESPEARE: Town-crier - et cetera! Well that was then and this is now. Farewell to Elsinore – for now we move our scene – to Scotland! And our new tragical history – of murder and ambition - double double toil and trouble! -

PLAYER 1: Fire burn and cauldron – bubble! O detestable good, Will, 'tis excellent!

SHAKESPEARE: Well - an now dear Ned, dear Tom, for as ye know, and can ably cite, “use all gently for in the very whirlwind of your –

PLAYER 2: 'Tis amiable good, Sir. This scene of enchantment and glamour, I mean, 'mongst the bracken of a Scottish glen -

SHAKESPEARE: - why thank-ee - now where was I –

PLAYER 2: But does it lack a-

SHAKESPEARE: Lack a what?

PLAYER 2: Does it need a little light relief? Something for the clowns? One of your funny servant scenes?

SHAKESPEARE: Funny servant?

PLAYER 2: A groom, or a bumbling chamberlain – a drunken courtier– some such –

SHAKESPEARE: Yes, perhaps you are right! The play is so confounded dark, it needs some humour - Though by'r'lady, I have tried and cannot hit upon it -

PLAYER 2: Just a thought.

SHAKESPEARE: Where was I?

PLAYER 1: Whirlwind -

SHAKESPEARE: No matter. Do as ye list. Men of parts, of many parts – do as ye list! But no unnatural nor unseemlie gesture!

Are you perfect in't?

PLAYER 1: I did con it til three this morning.

SHAKESPEARE: A marvel.

The PLAYERS start to put on skirts and female Witch costumes, hair etc, and start rehearsing moves around a cauldron etc.

Enter Stage Manager, hassled.

STAGE MANAGER: Gentlemen! I beg you! It is past twelve of the clock and we have still the main body of the play to rehearse!

The King, I must tell you, is now expected back *within the hour* – and not just King James, but he brings the Queen’s brother too, King Christian of Denmark – on an official visit and eager to know more of England and her noble habits and pastimes - indeed, I hear that en route from Portsmouth, both royal Majesties have condescended to sample the culture of England from tavern to tavern, in the form of our finest ales and beer - so as Theatre People it is our task to present to their Majesties the finest theatrical art that England can offer - and with this new play of Master Shakespeare’s I think we can certainly promise a night of high poetic drama, moral reflection, and elevated tragic feeling –

But! Time is not on our side, so we will gallop apace through the play, taking it from cue to cue and merely o’erleaping the body and substance of the longer speeches–

PLAYER 3 (playing Macbeth, BOOMS FROM THE BACK OF THE ROOM): Save the king!

ALL: Save the king! (*They all jump to attention and bow deeply – remaining in the bow for several seconds -*
)

PLAYER 2: Where is he?

PLAYER 1: Is he actually here?

PLAYER 3: Save the King, I mean save for the King, Macbeth, for his speeches, my speeches I mean – I have conned the thing but ‘tis a slippery one and untried, Will, I mean – so please you, will we not o’erleap the King’s speeches for I am in need of a trial – And where is the sheep’s blood? Is it set above? I must needs give assay good time afore -

STAGE MANAGER: Sheep’s blood?

PLAYER 3: Just a gut or bladder lain somewhere above – bucket or what not - that I can besmear all about -

STAGE MANAGER: That I don’t know - I’ll have to clear it – blood, you see – ah, we were told -

PLAYER 3: - for the balcony – for the killing of Duncan – tis write quite plain - ‘what hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes, Will all great Neptune’s seas wash this blood –

SHAKESPEARE: Ocean – Neptune’s ocean –

PLAYER 3: Quite , so , look you, so sheep’s blood, ox blood, what you will, but blood we must have – bucket or so – a heart should do it -

PLAYER 2: Not your ox - too thin –

PLAYER 1: Sheep is best by far – we found at Whitehall-

PLAYER 2: Paint at a pinch –

PLAYER 1: Try the kitchen?

STAGE MANAGER: No, no, no, we are not at liberty – we cannot have blood, be it ox or sheep - the tapestries – what of the hangings? Besmeared as like as-

SHAKESPEARE: Ocean, Neptune’s ocean – wash this –

PLAYER 3: Tapestries?

STAGE MANAGER: The tapestries – the flooring - Be it paint, ox or sheep blood, it is quite beyond my power! We are contracted to leave no spot nor stain nor sully any furnishings herewith to include -

SHAKESPEARE: - wash this blood clean from my hand No this my hand will rather The multitudinous seas incarnadine making the green one RED –WE MUST HAVE BLOOD – *hang the tapestries – !*

STAGE MANAGER: We are at court Sir – we are constrained -

PLAYER 3: If we have no blood the moment is without question – utterly bereft of all dramatick – bite and purpose -

SHAKESPEARE: The power – the meaning – lost, utterly -

PLAYER 3: Vanquished utterly, aye, sir – if it was at the Rose the crowd would be – baying -

STAGE MANAGER: We are not at the Rose we are at court –

PLAYER 3: We would be showered in walnut shells and orange peel - I won’t go on. I can’t work like this -

STAGE MANAGER: Sir – please – we can make it – we can find you –red gloves – some form of – winding scarlet ribbon –

SHAKESPEARE: Ribbon! The King of Scotland lies bleeding like a stuck pig and he speaks to me of ribbon!

PLAYER 2: In fairness, Sir, you could argue that it’s in the words –

SHAKESPEARE: Words?

PLAYER 3: The words conjure blood. . .?

THUNDEROUS KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

Enter PORTER. Scottish, furious, six foot four, terrifying.

PORTER: Here's a knocking indeed! Be ye Belzebub or Lucifer I cannae come any faster than I'm coming! Ay ay ay anon I come! Whisht ay with your knocking! Knock and knock and by'r lady knock. Knock ye till your hands drap clean from your wristbones! There'll be knocking enough in Hell, I warrant, when all of ye have shuffled off – Enough! I come!

Hell-gate Hampton Court!

I'll devil-porter it nae further –

(To the terrified Witches) Good day ladies and can I help ye?

PLAYER 1: We're fine.

PLAYER 2: Just putting on a play.

PLAYER 1: We're from London.

PORTER: Oh aye? Welcome to Hampton Court. Or as I like to call it – Hell-Gate Court! And I'm your Devil-porter!

PLAYER 1: Hello.

PORTER: I come! Anon I come!

(UNBOLTS THE DOOR. NO ONE IS THERE)

PORTER: No? Not so brave now are ye? If I ever catch up with ye I'll use your skulls as twa wee bowls to brew my porridge –

PORTER: Ay. Well. So. Players, ey?

PLAYER 1: Ay. Yes.

PORTER: Singing and –

PLAYER 2: Chanting.

PORTER: Oh aye. Chanting, aye. And when is this play happening?

STAGE MANAGER: Tomorrow. And tomorrow and tomorrow. Three performances.

PORTER: Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow – oh aye.

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SHAKESPEARE: There's my character!

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We've asked in the kitchen for some sheep's blood but I will have to check with the Lord Chamberlain so please don't get your hopes up – Mr Shakespeare –

Are you happy with the second act?

SHAKESPEARE: There's going to be some rewrites.

STAGE MANAGER: NOOO!

SHAKESPEARE: Just a tweak. Got some fresh inspiration. A porter at the gates of Duncan's castle!

Give me an hour.

One hour?

"I'll Devil-Porter it no further. . ."

STAGE MANAGER: An hour everybody.

Thank you.

Scene Two: Naked Fote (c. 1526)

Characters:

Thomas Wyatt b.1503.

Anne

[CONTEXT:

1520: Thomas Wyatt marries Elizabeth Brooke. Son Thomas born in 1521.

1525: Wyatt becomes interested in Anne Boleyn. He separates from his wife, whom he charges with adultery.

1526: Wyatt requests to go on a diplomatic mission to Italy – to Rome to negotiate with the pope; then to Venice. Wyatt visits other Italian cities, is briefly imprisoned and probably makes the acquaintance of Italian writers including Machiavelli. On his return from Italy, he probably learns of the king's serious interest in Anne Boleyn.

1532: Confident that the king will marry her, Anne Boleyn consents to become the king's mistress.

1533: Already pregnant, Anne secretly marries the King. Thomas Wyatt serves at the coronation of Anne Boleyn.

1536: Takes Elizabeth Darrell as his mistress; she remains so to the end of his life.

May 5 1536 – Wyatt arrested and imprisoned in Tower (suspected of being one of Anne's lovers, we think)

May 19 1536: Anne is executed probably within sight of Wyatt's cell.

June 1536: Wyatt released from Tower and sent to his father's home Allington in Kent, to 'address himself better.'

1541: Wyatt arrested for treason and imprisoned in Tower for allegedly saying Henry VIII should 'be cast out of a cart's arse'. Wyatt defends himself. He is eventually pardoned and released.

1542: Wyatt dies after catching a fever.]

Naked Foot.

Wyatt is searching for Anne Boleyn around Hampton Court.

He has just returned from a diplomatic mission to Italy and is keen to resume their affair.

Wyatt catches a glimpse of Anne at a distance and begins to follow her. Anne is aware he is following and plays a game of running away, through Hampton Court perhaps, enjoying the 'chase.'

In the course of the chase, Anne might drop some tokens – her shoe, her handkerchief. Wyatt picks them up and continues 'chasing'.

She 'leads him' to a private intimate spot or corner (perhaps the wine cellar, or small room with rush mats off the presence chamber?) where he can catch up with her. . . breathless after the chase. . .

ANNE: You list to hunt?

WYATT: Depends on the quarry.

ANNE: Do you hunt me?

WYATT: You know I do.

ANNE: You aim your darts at my breast, sir?

WYATT: There. Or lower.

ANNE: Ha.

There's a cruel hunter.

WYATT: There's a teasing hind.

ANNE: And is your aim true?

WYATT: Only you can tell me.

ANNE: You have pierced my heart in sooth

WYATT: Then my aim is true.

And I have caught my hind.

Did you miss me, Anne?

ANNE: I wept every day, sir, until your safe return.

WYATT: Words, words, empty words, where are these tears, Anne? I'd love to see them.

ANNE: Your return like the sun after rain has dried them all away.

(They kiss?)

ANNE: So how was Italy?

WYATT: Very dull.

ANNE: Good hunting?

WYATT: Very little.

ANNE: Little?

WYATT: Did I say little? I meant, none.

ANNE: Sure there must have been Venetian deer to divert you? In their excellent silk mantles?

WYATT: I prefer English deer.

ANNE: You flatter like a – courtier.

WYATT: Thank you. My skills improve apace, Anne, you should congratulate me. I find abroad that great ones do as I list. The pope for example. He wilted, and, as we advised, appealed to Venice. The Venetians in their turn do my bidding.

But I was imprisoned on my way to Bologna, did I tell you?

ANNE: My poor brave courtier!

WYATT: Not that you care, but I spent a miserable month in torment, conversing with spiders in my cell, expecting my head to be sliced from my shoulders at any moment, before they released me and I rode to Rome. Thence to Florence. The most marvellous modern city! I would I could take you there.

ANNE: And here am I dancing away the days with Queen Katherine in such a round of dullness and yawning till you deign to change Florence for rainy Kingston.

WYATT: Yawning? Oh hard travail – dancing for her majesty!

ANNE: Yes, indeed, my poor feet are wearied sore.

WYATT: Or is it his majesty you dance for? *(Holding up shoe that she dropped)* You should take more care of your dancing shoes.

ANNE: My shoe! *(tries to take shoe and he holds it away)*

WYATT: Ah, but is it? Let us see -

(He reaches for her foot beneath her skirt and finds she has one foot, bare, without a shoe)

WYATT: You have lost your slipper.

ANNE: I need it Thomas. Give it back.

WYATT: It must have come a little loose.

ANNE: Things come a little loose in the chase.

ANNE: That's the danger of hunting.

And then it's so hard to put oneself back together.

Will you help me Thomas?

(He puts her shoe on for her)

WYATT: My lady. I have such fond memories of this foot in my chamber. The rush mats left an impression –

ANNE: - that near gave us away. I remember -

WYATT: You should be more careful or you'll lose more than your shoe.

ANNE: You should be more careful or you'll lose more than your wife.

I thank you, sir.

(She goes to go)

WYATT: Is our audience at an end?

ANNE: What more would you -

WYATT: Anne. You know what more.

What time will you come to my chamber?

ANNE: Your chamber?

WYATT: Ay. Or yours. What you will. What time shall we -

ANNE: Neither mine nor yours.

WYATT: No more games. Where would you have me find you? And at what time?

ANNE: At no time. And no place. Dear Thomas.

WYATT: What do you mean?

ANNE: Thomas – forgive me –

WYATT: Forgive what?

ANNE: This game –

WYATT: What game?

ANNE: This. The hunt. Our game. All of it

WYATT: I play no games.

ANNE: You do, we do – we have played –

WYATT: Games, you call it games?

ANNE: We have played, you know we played. And such diversion! But now the game is over. I needed to tell you since your return from Italy, but have not had the chance. 'Til now. Forgive me, but

WYATT: What?

ANNE: The game is over. There is too much danger in it.

WYATT: I thought you liked the danger.

ANNE: Real danger. Not play. Real danger. And I care for you too much to -

WYATT: What danger?

ANNE: The king –

WYATT: What of the king?

ANNE: You asked do I dance for her majesty or his majesty.

WYATT: And you didn't answer.

ANNE: I dance for his majesty.

WYATT: Since when?

ANNE: You have been away, things have changed, nothing is as it was – you know the way at courts – the favour of great ones shifts like the sea and we must swim with the current -

WYATT: You dance –

ANNE: There is all to play for. But I am in a delicate position. In the balance between the Queen's trust and the King's favour there is a fine line – I walk on coals -

So in answer to your question – do I dance for her majesty or his majesty -

WYATT: You dance for him? For the king.

ANNE: Not yet – utterly – but – a little. I dance a little. Slowly.

WYATT *(lost for words)*

ANNE: In time, Thomas, in time – who knows the prize?

WYATT: The prize?

What prize?

ANNE: The King.

The crown -

WYATT: The crown?

ANNE: England. I see all of England in the palm of Henry's hand.

In the palm of mine.

WYATT: He has a queen. You speak treason.

ANNE: Sssh. There are whispers the queen may not be queen for very much longer. An annulment may be possible

Don't say I said. Or I might lose my head.

I told you there was danger.

WYATT: But the king is married, Anne, he will feast on you and belch you out.

ANNE: I am the hind that escapes, you know that, Thomas. I stalk the forest with naked foot – so soft and quiet, like a little forest creature - I am – too wild to be tamed so easily – you know that –

(Wyatt laughs)

WYATT: This is all madness, Anne – an endless game!

You're laughing at me.

ANNE: No game, my lord. Or perhaps a game. But doesn't it thrill you, Thomas? I swear one day you might see me crowned Queen of England. Knowing all you know. Wouldn't that be a game worth playing? To anoint me with the holy oil, knowing all you know - ?

To see me with a crown?

WYATT: I see it.

And I see you in your grave.

ANNE: We are born to die.

In god's name let's live a little first!

The great mistake Thomas, the great mistake they all make – the lie, you see. I play at the chase. But the real truth? Can't you see?

I am no deer. I am no gentle hind in the forest.

I hunt, too, Thomas. I must.

Don't touch me.

Don't touch me.

Don't touch me again.

My poor love.

(She leaves.)

Wyatt, aghast – leaves too)

Scene Three: Henry VIII and his musicians (1531)

Characters:

Henry VIII

John Blanke

Lord William Goodrich, Courtier(musical)

[JOHN BLANKE – CONTEXT: Employed in court of Henry VII and Henry VIII

Paid 8d a day – on one occasion given 20 shillings

One of six mounted trumpeters – part of the royal retinue. Depicted wearing a turban of some kind, other trumpeters bareheaded.

Probably personally known and favoured by Henry VIII.

Some secondary sources say John Blanke married in 1512 and Henry may have given him a wedding present.

Illustration shows John Blanke we think in Westminster Tournament Roll – this depicts the tournament held on New Year's Day 1511 to mark birth of male child produced by Catherine of Aragon (see Weir p.140). Baby died not long after.]

Henry and Lord William Goodrich (a courtier musician) are playing (or singing) Pastime with good company with John Blanke conducting them.

William Goodrich is rather sycophantic.

They hit some glitches (please correct and adapt this and improvise correct musical stuff as I am not very musical!)

HENRY: G – the chord is G! – is't not, my man?

And so on for a space of some twelve bars –

WILLIAM: But then the chord of C, is't not, my lord ?

JOHN: At first but then again tis back to G -

HENRY: Aaghh! (*throws down his music in frustration*)

It jangleth harsh and out of tune – John Blanke

I call on you to mend this sorry sound -

WILLIAM: 'Twas I –

Or 'twas my instrument I fear -

JOHN: Poor craftsmen oft do blame their tools –

WILLIAM: Not I –

I promise 'twas the rude and raucous string
That forced an error, and destroyed the web
Of beauteous song your majesty hath made.

HENRY: A poor thing sure, but yes, the song is mine.

WILLIAM: Most rich in that – to be of royal birth
Makes princes of your songs, and elevates
Each chord and plangent note to high estate!

JOHN: Then we must play like angels to deserve them.

HENRY: And so you do, John Blanke. Let's hear you play.

JOHN: I'd gladly play for you, but yet a-while
If we would give the song this night in court
We need to work still more upon the piece.
My liege, as you are perfect in't, stay mute
I pray – and you, Lord Goodrich, play alone.
My lord - ?

(LORD GOODRICH plays).

JOHN: There, see, there is a problem here - you place
The notes too tight the one upon the other

Let's pick it up again from here, allowing
Time to give the phrase a chance to sing -
Its mellow charm bewitch the list'ning ear.

(LORD GOODRICH PLAYS AGAIN)

HENRY: Bravo, Lord Goodrich, when you play just so
Methinks the spheres themselves do harmonize.

LORD GOODRICH: My liege your kindness o'erwhelms my speech.

Shall we not play together, now my tutor
Has those grave mistakes that ruined all removed?

HENRY: Together yes again, John Blanke –
Let's play, indeed! Where is your instrument?

JOHN: Shall I not stand before you and mark time?

LORD GOODRICH: No let us rather all combine in one
To hear the song in all its goodly parts!

JOHN: I'll fetch my trumpet –

WILLIAM: Do - make haste and run –
I am impatient till we hear the piece
In all its beauteous richness and variety.

JOHN: But still I feel more work would –

HENRY: John – enough!

We have rehearsed! And now let's hear the thing!

EXIT JOHN BLANKE.

WILLIAM: My lord, I wonder if your royal ear

Might this my suit full kindly look upon?

I have a cousin, young, yet full of fire

Who would this post of trumpeter fulfil

Right well and more adroitly than John Blanke -

This fellow mangles music with his list

Of gripes and niceties – when all should flow

As sweet and fluent as my liege composed–

I pray you, may I bring him straight to court –

For your approval and your kind consent –

HENRY: No more!

You undermine my favourite – get you gone!

Such treachery becomes not man nor king.

JB returns - William exits.

HENRY: Ignore his quick departure, John – let's play –

JOHN: What's wrong my liege? Have I in aught offended?

HENRY: Let's play, indeed – he speaks with traitor's tongue

And for that have I banished him -

JOHN: Yes, sire.

Come let us sing the song you have composed

(They sing – break off -)

HENRY: You seem a little pensive, John – or sad?

JOHN: No, sire - not I – and yet –

HENRY: Come, tell me straight. What is't that you would say?

JOHN: Indeed then, sire, forgive me for this suit.

But should I fear ill words from those at court

Who'd tarnish and destroy my place, and standing?

I pray you could affirm my favour's safe?

HENRY: As houses, John, as palaces of gold!

You are our most beloved trumpeter.

What meaneth this enquiry?

JOHN: Whispers, sir.

That some at court would have me gone – cast out –

I fear my native hue and countenance

Breeds opposition - ugly enmity.

It's true that all at court must watch their back -

For great ones' favour changes with the moon

And all are fearful for their bread and purse –

But those like me who 'gainst the common crowd

Stand out so visible, so scrutinised -

We cannot melt into the multitude.

Our every move is watched - promotion envied –

Reward resented, sparking jealous words -

And from such jealous words so short the leap

To jealous actions, aiming to destroy
Our reputation and our livelihood.
'Tis common cross the country, sire, these times
Bring anxious moan - for when food's short
There grows amongst the people ugly sounds
Of hatred 'gainst the stranger in their midst –

HENRY: You are no stranger, John!

JOHN: My lord, I fear -

HENRY: John, that wert the fav'rite of my father!

And have we not composed and played together
In winter and in summer, park and hall?
Hast thou not been the sharer of my heart -
The keeper of my soul - for in my heart
There's music, John, and you have played a part
In all the music I have e'er composed?
You played for my sweet Henry, goodly babe,
Who but a poor ten days wast on this earth
God rest him. And God grant but that the strains
Of thy sweet trumpet helped him tread the path
To Heaven's gate and to eternal rest.

JOHN: Yes sire.

HENRY: - My son - I lost a child - I lost –

All I have lost, revisits me in music –
And when you play my little babe is here
As on that day long-gone. Fear not. These whispers
Shall not harm thee.

JOHN: Sire, my thanks indeed.

HENRY: How does your wife?

JOHN: Sire, she is well and blossoms.

HENRY: A son, or yet another girl?

JOHN: A girl.

HENRY: These women.

JOHN: Yes sire.

HENRY: Don't they torture well?

They burden us with worries - and their fears.

Just yester-night Anne told me of her dream

Wherein she looked upon herself splayed out

Upon a hill and all about were eagles

Which pecked her til she came apart in pieces -

While I watched on, she said, and played my lute.

JOHN: Strange dream.

HENRY: Her brain makes idle fantasies

'Tis often so the case with breeding mares

They balk at shadows - see their fate in dreams!

No more – and yet . . . Come, brother, let us play

And comfort us with music and with song!

(They play together)

HENRY: On this? - *(tries note)* Or no, methinks – *(tries again)*

JOHN: Or this? (*Gives a different note*)

HENRY: (*Tries again*) Close but even still –

JOHN: And – so? (*another note*)

HENRY: Perfect – (*sings Henry's song Pastime with Good Company – you can see/hear this on Youtube - with John Blank accompanying him on the trumpet, and perhaps also sometimes with a drum.*

They sometimes get something wrong and have to start again – or correct themselves – some improvisation would be good – it's two musicians enjoying trying something out):

Pastime with good company

I love and shall until I die

Grudge who lust, yet none deny,

So God be pleased, thus live will I

For my pastance, hunt sing and dance

My heart is set;

All goodly sport to my comfort,

Who shall me let?

Youth must have some dalliance

Of good or ill some pastance;

Company methinks then best

All thought and fancies to digest;

For idleness is chief mistress

Of vices all;

Then who can say, but mirth and play

Is best of all.

Company with honesty

Is virtue, vices to flee;

Company is good or ill,

But every man hath his free will

The best ensue, the worst eschew;

My mind shall be

Virtue to use, vice to refuse,

Thus shall I use me.

Scene 3a: Henry VIII and his Musician (1531)

Characters:

Henry VIII

Musician (WILLIAM)

HENRY: G – the chord is G! – is't not, my man?

And so on for a space of some four bars –

WILLIAM: But then the chord of C, is't not, my lord ?

HENRY: At first but then again tis back to G -

Aaghh! (throws down his music in frustration)

It jangleth harsh and out of tune – good Will -

I call on you to mend this sorry sound -

WILLIAM: 'Twas I –

Or 'twas my instrument I fear -

HENRY: Poor craftsmen oft do blame their tools –

WILL: I promise not I 'twas the rude and raucous string

That forced an error, and destroyed the web

Of beauteous song your majesty hath made.

HENRY: A poor thing sure, but yes, the song is mine.

WILLIAM: Most rich in that – to be of royal birth
Makes princes of your songs, and elevates
Each chord and plangent note to high estate!
Then we must play like angels to deserve them.

HENRY: And so you do, good Will. Let's hear you play.

(WILL plays)

HENRY: Bravo, Lord William, when you play just so
Methinks the spheres themselves do harmonize.

LORD GOODRICH: My liege your kindness o'erwhelms my speech.

(They play – break off -)

HENRY: You seem a little pensive, Will – or sad?

WILL: No, sire - not I – and yet –

HENRY: Come, tell me straight. What is't that you would say?

WILL: Indeed then, sire, forgive me for this suit.
But should I fear ill words from those at court
Who'd tarnish and destroy my place, and standing?
I pray you could affirm my favour's safe?

HENRY: As houses, Will, as palaces of gold!
You are our most beloved court musician.
What meaneth this enquiry?

WILL: Whispers, sir.

That some at court would have me gone – cast out –
You know that courtiers all must watch their back -
And all are fearful for their bread and purse –
But those like me so blessed with royal favour,
Stand out so visible, so scrutinised -
We cannot melt into the multitude.
Our every move is watched - promotion envied –
Reward resented, sparking jealous words -
And from such jealous words so short the leap
To jealous actions, aiming to destroy
Our reputation and our livelihood.

HENRY: Will, that wert the fav'rite of my father!

And have we not composed and played together
In winter and in summer, park and hall?
Hast thou not been the sharer of my heart -
The keeper of my soul - for in my heart
There's music, Will, and you have played a part
In all the music I have e'er composed?
You played for my sweet Henry, goodly babe,
Who but a poor ten days wast on this earth
God rest him. And God grant but that the strains
Of thy sweet trumpet helped him tread the path
To Heaven's gate and to eternal rest.

WILL: Yes sire.

HENRY: - My son - I lost a child - I lost –

All I have lost, revisits me in music –

And when you play my little babe is here

As on that day long-gone. Fear not. These whispers

Shall not harm thee.

WILL: Sire, my thanks indeed.

HENRY: How does your wife?

WILL: Sire, she is well and blossoms.

HENRY: A son, or yet another girl?

WILL: A girl.

HENRY: These women.

WILL: Yes sire.

HENRY: Don't they torture well?

They burden us with worries - and their fears.

Just yester-night Anne told me of her dream

Wherein she looked upon herself splayed out

Upon a hill and all about were eagles

Which pecked her til she came apart in pieces -

While I watched on, she said, and played my lute.

WILL: Strange dream.

HENRY: Her brain makes idle fantasies

'Tis often so the case with breeding mares

They balk at shadows - see their fate in dreams!

No more – and yet . . . Come, brother, let us play

And comfort us with music and with song!

(They play together)

HENRY: On this? - *(tries note)* Or no, methinks – *(tries again)*

WILL: Or this? *(Gives a different note)*

HENRY: *(Tries again)* Close but even still –

WILL: And – so? *(another note)*

HENRY: Perfect – *(sings Henry's song Pastime with Good Company – you can see/hear this on Youtube - with John Blank accompanying him on the trumpet, and perhaps also sometimes with a drum.*

They sometimes get something wrong and have to start again – or correct themselves – some improvisation would be good – it's two musicians enjoying trying something out):

Pastime with good company

I love and shall until I die

Grudge who lust, yet none deny,

So God be pleased, thus live will I

For my pastance, hunt sing and dance

My heart is set;

All goodly sport to my comfort,

Who shall me let?

Youth must have some dalliance

Of good or ill some pastance;

Company methinks then best

All thought and fancies to digest;

For idleness is chief mistress

Of vices all;

Then who can say, but mirth and play

Is best of all.

Company with honesty

Is virtue, vices to flee;

Company is good or ill,

But every man hath his free will

The best ensue, the worst eschew;

My mind shall be

Virtue to use, vice to refuse,

Thus shall I use me.

(end scene)

Scene 4: Doctor and Midwife

Jane Seymour: birth and death (October 12th – 24th 1537)

Agnes the Midwife

Dr Owen (who performed Caesarian)

Outside a doorway. We hear perhaps some groans and sounds of labour from inside the room, muttered prayers, encouragement from midwives. The midwife, Agnes, and Dr Owen, slip outside the door for a hurried whispered conference. They are in mid argument -

DR OWEN: - no, no, no, but - hear me, hear me – Agnes – I tell you -

AGNES: No – I tell you – we must be patient –

DR OWEN: Time is running out!

AGNES: By your clock perhaps but not by mine –

DR OWEN: Your clock and what is that? – quackery peddled by gossips and handywomen? We are running out of time and –

AGNES: That I would -

DR OWEN: Keep your voice down –

AGNES: That I would question!

DR OWEN: On what grounds do you question my authority?

AGNES: On the grounds that I have been asked by my lady to oversee her confinement and deliverance and –

DR OWEN: You are not a physician Madam –

AGNES: How many babes have you brought living into the world, Dr Owen?

DR OWEN: That is not to the point –

AGNES: I think it is to the point! How many?

DR OWEN: This is not the time -

AGNES: It is precisely the time, if you are saying now that we must – that you must –

DR OWEN: Your way has not worked! She is straining and the babe has not yet crowned -

AGNES: Of course not! – We have not even brought her to the birthstool yet! How many babes have you brought into the world doctor – brought living, I should say?

DR OWN: Living?

AGNES: Yes, living, how many living babes have you delivered?

DR OWEN Living - two. Twins.

AGNES: And dead a score I'll warrant! Well then. Two living. I have brought sixty-three living babes into the world. And with your living twins, doctor, what became of the mother?

DR OWEN: The Lord took her. God rest her -

AGNES: I see. Of all the babes I have delivered sir, and the forty-five mothers I have served, I have lost but five souls. That is why my lady asked me to preside at the confinement.

DR OWEN: Your practice is hokery-pokery madam.

AGNES: Your practice is murder sir.

DR OWEN: I shall ignore that. The King has commanded –

AGNES: I can deliver her! Put your knives away –

DR OWEN: Time is running out.

AGNES: We have time, we have time still. We can deliver her yet, the motherport –

DR OWEN: Motherport –

AGNES: Cervix! She needs time – tis a first child sir!

DR OWEN: How much time?

AGNES: Could be hours yet sir, she is still in the early pains –

DR OWEN: And the bellowing – must you encourage it?

AGNES: It helps the woman sir.

DR OWEN: And the trotting about the room – no wonder the babe makes no appearance with so much going about the place -

AGNES: It quickens the child's descent sir, the more walking and moving the better. It quickens all and in truth makes the pain less for the woman to bear –

DR OWEN: Some theologians might say it is her duty to bear –

AGNES: Would you have her tire and give up? She needs comfort, and sweet words – tell her she'll have a speedfull deliverance. She is in great fear for her life – the king's displeasure – reassure and comfort her and -

DR OWEN: Saying it will not make it true!

AGNES: It might!

We have followed proper practice sir –

DR OWEN: Goose grese, linseed oil – oil of fenegreke! Nonsense -

AGNES: To make supple the privie place, sir, would you have her tear?

DR OWEN: Please! Witchery and potions –swimming about in your brew of herbs and weeds – it'll start a distemper – it's a danger -

AGNES: No danger sir, we merely seethe mallow, camomel, mercury, and fenegreke seed altogether in hot water – then the bathing eases her and allows the muscle to soften, the herbs all have virtue to mollify – ask any handywoman -

DR OWEN: Forgive me if I do not set such store by fenegreke seed to give England its king for future time.

My lord has expressly ordered that we open the womb to lift out the child if a timely delivery as normal risks the safe arrival –

This is not a business for women to meddle in.

AGNES: Doctor – with respect – I have seen many births and in my view the queen is able and young and if we avoid the knife we may avoid many many worse complications – Doctor, please let me have a few hours more with my women. We will try what manual version can do – if we correct the presentation – then we could gently rend the membrane, maybe -

DR OWEN: The surgeon's knife is quickest and may avert disaster should it be a son!

Agnes!

A son!

For the King. Think!

AGNES: I pray for a son for my lady. And for my lord. But my lady sickens with fear – she – give me an hour, sir – I pray you – but one – leave talk of knives – I beg you –

One hour! But one!

DR OWEN: Agnes – the king said if we must choose –

AGNES: Choose?

DR OWEN: Between the mother and the child –

Then we must choose the child.

For England's sake.

(Pause as screams heard from the room)

AGNES: I don't believe it. The King would -

DR OWEN: Believe it woman. He said that if it came to that - to save the child – his very words: “good Doctor, by all means save the child -

For other wives may easily be found” -

AGNES: Give me an hour, sir. Before you cut.

DR OWEN: An hour. *(They go inside the room)*

Scene Five: 'Who is the fairest?' (1565)

Characters

Sir James Melville – envoy for Mary Queen of Scots

Queen Elizabeth I

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (reputed lover of the Queen)

Enter Elizabeth and Robert Dudley, giggling and a little out of breath as though they have been running away from somebody – Robert Dudley has a lute in hand –

ELIZ: We have lost him! Sure that creeping fellow Melville is at every corner and every turn I take-

DUDLEY: He comes anon... Sure Majesty. Let's have some sport –

ELIZ: What sport, Lord Dudley? I thought you were as keen to get away from him as I?

DUDLEY: The must needs be tickled. Why not? *(gives her the lute)* Play, madam! Play, and lure him in – so we can play in turn! I'll silence me *(gestures to the curtain)* – yonder – and so unseen will o'erhear your conference –

ELIZ: You grow wickeder, Robert Dudley, with your schoolboy pranks – to play hide-ye-seek-ye with the Scots Ambassador! And all because my cousin Mary would not wed you –

DUDLEY: Are you not glad she would not?

ELIZ: Sir Melville is a gloomy, grudging fellow, and his mistress in spurning you insults me too, for the which double injury I deserve some recompense! So I concur with you Robert, that we in turn should lead him a little dance... for the jest, no more! A game of hide-ye-seek-ye! *(gestures at curtain)* Silence you there, while I set my springes for Lord Melville...

DUDLEY: But Madam, what if it should be discovered that - ?

ELIZ: Tush! Be still! Twas your own notion! I'll play along if it will humour thee, Lord Dudley – hush now and hie thee, make thee quiet! And let me tickle this trout as you say –

She strums and sings a line or two...after a moment Lord Melville enters

MELVILLE: Majesty!

ELIZ: My Lord Melville! Heaven! What are you doing here?

MELVILLE: I heard such melody as ravished whereby I was drawn in ere I knew how.

ELIZ: My dear Lord Melville – you must come in. You must not stand like a reluctant schoolboy at the door.

She ushers Melville and the audience into the room.

MELVILLE: You play the lute, madam, like an angel.

ELIZ: Thank you sir.

MELVILLE: Does your majesty play any other instrument?

ELIZ: The virginals.

I heard my cousin Mary of Scotland is a fine musician also.

MELVILLE: She does indeed play ravishingly.

Reasonably well, for a Queen.

ELIZ: What instrument does she play, your Queen?

MELVILLE: Strangely, belike the same as you, madam. The lute and virginals.

ELIZ: And which of us, say you my Lord, plays best?

MELVILLE: Your Majesty plays excellently well.

ELIZ: That may be so, my Lord, but which of us would you say, plays best? She or I?

MELVILLE: It is a very close thing.

ELIZ: But were you compelled to make judgement? Were I - *whips out weapon* - to hold some poniard or rapier to your breast and demand, my Lord, verily say now which plays best, your Queen of Scotland or ourself? Which way would your answer fall?

MELVILLE: Then I would say though it be the matter of an hair's breadth it must be your Majesty, that plays best.

ELIZ: (laughs delightedly) Strange loyalty to your mistress the queen! She must be very pleased in you as an Envoy, sir James.

MELVILLE: I aim to serve my lady the Queen to the very marrow of my soul. Majesty.

ELIZ: Of course you do.

Shall we sit on these low cushions and be easy?

MELVILLE: Certainly Majesty.

Everyone settles on the low cushions.

MELVILLE: The Queen my mistress wishes to thank you for your kind proposal to her of Lord Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, as a partner in marriage for her. It was a kind and well intentioned thought and she apologises for her ill phrased message in response.

ELIZ: Ill phrased message?

MELVILLE: relating to the Lord Robert Dudley.

ELIZ: I can't quite recall – what were her words?

Ah – now I remember, was it the part that went 'Cousin Elizabeth, I do not want your cast off lover'?

(she giggles and the echo of a giggle comes from behind the curtain, this unsettles Melville, who looks around uncertainly)

MELVILLE: she wrote in haste and choler and humbly craves your pardon.

ELIZ: Poisonous rumour spreads so easily. You may help me correct the world's misapprehension. I have shown you Lord Dudley's apartments here at Hampton have I not? And you have seen yourself the distance between our bedchambers? I may have more private audience with Lord Dudley in the Privy Lodging but is that not the prerogative of a queen to take advice from her retinue wheresoever she chooses?

MELVILLE: My Queen commands me to beg your forgiveness.

ELIZ: Beg no further. My forgiveness is granted and the matter is closed. Let us speak no more of marriage; it is a deathly dull subject, let us speak of happier matters.

Tell me what you think of my gardens here at Hampton?

MELVILLE: They would not be out of place in Paradise, Ma'am. The fountains and the little low hedges with the pretty pyramids. They please me very well.

ELIZ: They please you?

MELVILLE: Certainly very much.

ELIZ: And what does not please you? What shall you say would you have me alter?

MELVILLE: I would have your majesty alter nothing that she did not see fit to alter.

ELIZ: A coy answer, my Lord! Speak truly. There must be something in my gardens that displeases you?

MELVILLE: I – I –

ELIZ: Speak on?

MELVILLE: I for my part do not like images cut out in juniper or other garden stuff. The birds and beasts shaped out of hedge. They be for children.

ELIZ: I'll have them sawn off.

Carter!

See that the topiary is lopped immediately.

We'll plant – fruit trees! Apricots. Plums. Peaches. Soft delicious fruits. Would they please you more, sir James?

MELVILLE: Yes Majesty.

ELIZ: Does your Queen adore fruit?

MELVILLE: She does madam.

ELIZ: I would so love to meet my cousin Mary. Bring her to Hampton and the great Hall where my father feasted, and feed her English apricots, see the juice running down her chin.

Does she dance, your Queen?

MELVILLE: Assuredly.

ELIZ: does she dance well?

MELVILLE: Most charming well.

ELIZ: Which dances best your Queen or ourself?

MELVILLE: I have not seen your majesty dance. And alack I must needs take my leave this night –

ELIZ: You must stay anon.

MELVILLE: Madam, I cannot presume any further on your kind hospitality –

ELIZ: I insist!

MELVILLE: Twould be impossible to trouble you further –

ELIZ: I command you to stay.

MELVILLE: Madam I submit.

ELIZ: Thank you. Now. Watch this.

She dances.

ELIZ: So . Which is best for a dancer, my cousin Mary your Queen, or myself?

MELVILLE: My Queen – does not dance so high or disposedly as your Majesty.

ELIZ: I am sure your eyes deceive you. I cannot believe the Queen of Scotland does not dance so high as myself, given that she is herself very high and I am neither high nor low.

We shall hold a dance in the great Hall, my Lord.

What shall you wear?

MELVILLE: I – I - I have not –

ELIZ: That satin cloak you wore before becomes you marvellously well. It matches the quite piercing colour of your eye.

MELVILLE: Madam I shall wear it in your honour.

ELIZ: Do you like me in the Flemish lace gown, or the Italian when I wear my hair loose with a caul and bonnet?

MELVILLE: I believe – I believe – I would say –

ELIZ: Choose sir!

MELVILLE: I believe – I –

ELIZ: I must press you my Lord!

MELVILLE: The Italian! So that your hair is loose.

ELIZ: As you insist my Lord. It is wan and pale, not much to look at.

MELVILLE: It is a golden river- like a sunset – all shades of gold and red.

ELIZ: When we speak of hair – thinking again of my cousin your Queen – what colour of hair of the two of us is reputed best, think you?

I mean which in your view is fairest?

MELVILLE: Madam – the fairness of you both is not your worst fault.

ELIZ: You are adroit my lord, in evading my enquiry! I would have a direct answer. Which of us is fairest, she or I?

MELVILLE: I would say that –

Lord –

I strive to come to an answer –

ELIZ: Tis not so hard a test!

MELVILLE: I would say that you –

You are the fairest Queen in England and mine is the fairest Queen in Scotland!

Both are the fairest ladies in their countries.

Your Majesty is – whiter.

But my Queen is very lovely.

ELIZ: I would that I could look upon her.

Do you have a picture?

MELVILLE: Undoubtedly madam.

He gives her a miniature portrait which she scrutinises.

ELIZ: Would you see my Lord's picture?

Lord Dudley. The earl of Leicester. See? 'My Lord's picture'.

She hardly lets him look though he cranes to see it.

ELIZ: A goodly likeness.

MELVILLE: My Queen would I am sure very much like to see it.

ELIZ: Tis the only likeness I have of him.

MELVILLE: You have here the original.

ELIZ: I do. The dear original!

Suddenly she pulls out a sword and lunges at the hangings in the room.

She laughs uproariously

ELIZ: Who's there?

A mouse! A mouse?

Or a rat!

Lord Dudley emerges from behind the arras, laughing, and they embrace and kiss passionately.

ELIZ: And look who's here, my Lord Dudley himself. *(to Dudley)* Pish my lord, these are games for children.

MELVILLE: *(bows)* Lord Dudley

DUDLEY: Sir James. Your pardon for the prank, my lord. You must know that I have been her Majesty's playfellow since childhood.

ELIZ: Playfellows, of course! Come, Sir James, I will not make you tarry any further- our audience is at an end

MELVILLE: I am most humbly honoured your Majesty –

ELIZ: One hopes my cousin, your Queen, will find a suitable match soon. Best get her safely wedded and bedded. And I would rather she didn't marry France or Spain. That might cause - problems. We must find her someone a little closer to home. One so young and fair should surely marry, don't you think Sir James? So she may add her beauty to the world with children who will no doubt be as handsome as she.

MELVILLE: Yes Majesty, and there is another queen for whom one might say the same.

ELIZ: One might. But I would suggest one didn't.

She sweeps out and Melville and Dudley are left in the room together.

Scene 6: The King Has Escaped

(Thursday 11 November 1647)

Cromwell and Whalley at Hampton Court on the night of 11 November 1647.

WHALLEY: I don't know sir – we don't know –

CROMWELL: Some estimate – you must have some notion – how far he may have travelled – what time did he escape?

WHALLEY: We don't exactly know, sir!

CROMWELL: You don't know!

In the name of God cousin, tell me what happened –

WHALLEY: I showed him the letter you sent me, sir.

As you ordered sir, I showed it to him first thing this morning.

About the intended attempt on His Majesty's person

CROMWELL: Good. You showed him the letter.

WHALLEY: Yes.

CROMWELL: And what did he say?

WHALLEY: He blenched somewhat sir, but he said very little. He simply withdrew at his customary hour, to write letters, he said. As was normal. At about nine of the clock. We wouldn't expect then to see him again til perhaps six in the evening, for evening prayers.

So at about five o'clock I came to the ante-room as normal –

CROMWELL: Who was guarding him?

WHALLEY: The Parliamentary commissioners and the bedchambermen as normal, sir. They were waiting for the King to emerge from his room

CROMWELL: They didn't go into the room to check he was there?

WHALLEY: They never go in the King's room sir. They will not.

CROMWELL: And what then?

WHALLEY: I asked them for the King and they told me he was writing letters in his bedchamber. I waited there without mistrust till six of the clock; I then began to doubt and told the chamber-men, Mr Maule and Mr Murray, I wondered the King was so long a-writing; they told me he had (they thought) some extraordinary occasion.

Within half an hour after, I went into the next room to Mr Oudart and told him I marvelled the King was so long a-writing . He answered he wondered too, but withal said, the King told him he was to write both to the Queen and the Princess of Orange, which gave me some satisfaction for the present.

But my fears with the time increased, so that when it was seven o'clock I again told Mr Maule I exceedingly wondered the King was so long before he came out. They told me he was writing and I relied, possibly he might be ill, therefore I thought he should do well to see. . . He replied the King had given him strict commands not to molest him, therefore he durst not, besides he had the door bolted to them. I was then extreme restless in my thoughts, looked oft in at the keyhole to see whether I could perceive His majesty, but could not; prest Mr Maule to knock very oft, that I might know whether His Majesty were there or not, but all to no purpose. He still plainly told me he durst not disobey His Majesty's commands.

So we continued to wait. Then at last I thought we could wait no more, we must enter – so I thought our best entry to the king's bedchamber wa from the other side – so we went throught he Privy Garden with the Keeper of the Privy Lodgings and then to the Privy Stairs – where all the guards were stationed.

CROMWELL: And none of them had thought to look?

WHALLEY: No, sir, I said, they would not enter the King's bedchamber.

CROMWELL: Why not in God's name?

WHALLEY: He is the King sir!

CROMWELL: Carry on.

WHALLEY: We went up the stairs, and went from room to room till we came to the next chamber to His Majesty's bedchamber where we saw –

WHALLEY hands CROMWELL the cloak.

CROMWELL: What's this?

WHALLEY: The King's cloak sir. We found it lying in the midst of the floor – which much amazed me. So I took it back to the Commissioners and bedchamber-men, acquainting them with it.

And then I commanded Mr Maule in the name of Parliament to go into the Bedchambner – he said he would not go alone so I said, in the name of all things holy, we would go in together. So we did.

And the King was not there,

So we looked in the closet and he was not there either.

I then in a passion told Mr Maule I thought he was an accessory to the King's going – for that afternoon he came to London, it being a rare thing for him to be from Court.

CROMWELL: And what action has been taken, Colonel Whalley?

WHALLEY: We have mobilized all the Guards to search all the corridors, all the rooms and all the closets.

We have horse and foot-soldiers searching the Park and the lodge in the Park. We are searching Ashburnham's house at Thames Ditton.

CROMWELL: And how am I to explain all this to Parliament? This flight of the King's?

WHALLEY: Sir, this House is vast! It hath 1,500 rooms and would require a troop of Horse upon perpetual duty to guard all the outgoings!

Your orders were not to restrain the King from his liberty of walking whither he pleased; neither was I to hinder him from his privacy in his chamber, or any other part of the House, which gave him an absolute freedom to go away at pleasure. I could no more keep the King if he had a mind to go than a bird in a pound!

CROMWELL: I know it, Colonel Whalley.

WHALLEY: I think he may have been taken by boat to the Channel. Though this night is so stormy I doubt a crossing to France is likely. Mayhap we may run him to ground closer to home.

CROMWELL: I will make a report to Parliament. Thusly –

Sir, his majesty withdrawn himself at nine o'clock. The matter is variously reported; and all I will say of it at present but that His Majesty was expected to supper, when the Commissioners and Colonel Whalley missed him; upon which they entered the room. They found His Majesty had left his cloak behind him in the Gallery in the private way. He had passed by the backstairs and vault towards the waterside.

Cousin Whalley – I know you did all you could.

We will find him, Whalley.

And when we find him -

WHALLEY: Yes sir. Thank you sir.

(WHALLEY goes to go – then stops.)

WHALLEY: One thing perplexes me sir.

CROMWELL: Yes, Whalley?

WHALLEY: Your letter – that you commanded I show him this morning – with the fearful rumours about the attempt on his life – he blenched quite pale sir.

He was afraid. Could that have prompted his flight?

CROMWELL: Very possibly, Whalley.

WHALLEY: Then why sir – did you have me show him the letter?

Pause.

CROMWELL: I wonder.

WHALLEY: - if not to fright him. . .

To prompt his flight?

CROMWELL: Why would I want to make the king flee?

WHALLEY: To serve our cause sir - To justify – to justify – some consequent execution.

CROMWELL: Your imagination runs away with you.

Our bird escaped.

On your watch, Whalley.

Pause.

You may go.

(Exit Whalley).

Scene 7: Honeymoon Troubles

(August 1662)

Characters:

Henrietta Maria, consort of Charles I (beheaded)

The Queen (Catherine of Braganza), consort of Charles II.

Barbara Villiers, Lady Castlemaine, pregnant mistress of Charles II.

Catherine is Portuguese, 23. She has been at Hampton Court since May and is fighting Charles's order that Barbara Villiers should be made a Lady of her bedchamber.

Henrietta Maria is French, 53.

Barbara Villiers is English, 22, heavily pregnant by Charles.

Henrietta Maria is sitting and sewing in a dark corner.

We hear the noisy approach of Catherine and Barbara – CATHERINE crying and swearing in Portuguese, BARBARA remonstrating in English.

Catherine enters in high passion, pursued by Barbara Villiers. They do not immediately see Henrietta Maria.

BARBARA: *(overlapping with Catherine)* Madam, please – hear me, my lady – please, my lady –

CATHERINE: *(overlapping with Barbara)* Get away from me! I have said that I would like to be alone – I would like to be alone for *one minute*, have you not ears in your head? -

BARBARA: My lady – forgive me, you are but lately come to England –

CATHERINE: Would to God I had never set foot on this miserable island!

BARBARA: Madam, you are new to court, to our English court, and you must know that His Majesty means nothing by it – nothing whatsoever – dining with a female courtier – it is a quirk of His Majesty–

CATHERINE: Every night? A quirk? To dine every night with a female courtier?

BARBARA: It is simply our English custom -

CATHERINE: English custom? So it is English custom for men to insult and humiliate their wives? Then thank God I am not English – not yet!

BARBARA: You are Queen of England, Madam.

CATHERINE: Am I? How am I Queen of England? They have not anointed me – the heathens – and they never will! I will not let those heretic priests lay one finger on me!

BARBARA: You are wedded to His Majesty the King.

CATHERINE: So are many others it seems!

BARBARA: Madam. The King would have you – the King solicits – he requests that you return to dinner.

CATHERINE: Oh! He requests? Does he request?

How very courteous of him! I have had more of orders than requests in the last few weeks – I am ordered to dismiss my women – I am ordered to wait alone in my bed for his arrival – I am ordered that I must speak in English and learn the English ways – I am ordered that I must receive the Mass in secret and in public must attend your heathen church – I am ordered to adopt the English fashion as my dress is considered ludicrous in this Godforsaken country -

But I am *requested* to return to dinner.

Well you may tell him that I am very grateful for his tender solicitations but I am not hungry.

BARBARA: Madam –

CATHERINE: What?

BARBARA: The King is in the full strength and vigour of his youth. One could hardly expect, madam, that he should be of so innocent a constitution as to have kept himself in reserve, body and soul, for one alone of the fair sex whom he has never seen – whatever beauties of person and of mind that one should undoubtedly be in possession of –

CATHERINE: I am not in the humour to be patronised, Lady Castlemaine!

BARBARA: Very well, my lady. One would hardly think that a lady of your age –

CATHERINE: I am but three and twenty –

BARBARA: Our former queen was married at fifteen -

CATHERINE: Oh I am an aged crone, now, is that how you would paint me, Lady Castlemaine?

BARBARA: Sure a young lady of three-and-twenty could hardly be believed so utterly ignorant of men and of manners as to think that the Prince of England would have had no acquaintance or familiarity with the sex till this – do the gentleman of the Portuguese court - do your brothers, madam - live up to such high ideals?

CATHERINE: How dare you speak of my brothers!

I may expect such treatment from a husband. Men are beasts and it seems they must make all they touch bestial too. But am I so degraded and so low in the estimation of the Court that I must be forced by my own husband to tolerate whores in my bed-chamber?

Where are my women? My Guarda Infantas? They must be returned to me and no more cavils at their presence here at court! Madam, is it fair – is it right – that I must be deprived in this way of the comfort of my ladies, with whom I may speak my own tongue, practise my religion, and just now and then be reminded of my home – of all I gave up, to make this match?

For maybe the King would like to consider this – perhaps you could remind him? - that I did not arrive here empty-handed, no? Perhaps His Majesty might care to consider Tangier and Bombay, the trade with Brazil and the East Indies, not to mention the half a million pounds in ready coin my father paid, before he takes away what little comforts I have left to me – my retinue, and my clothing, and my language, and my God?

BARBARA: Madam, His Majesty the King considers that to learn the ways of England it would be most fit and proper to appoint some English ladies to attend on you – ladies who may serve you and advise you in the ways of court. . . and in our English fashions and customs, and so forth.

And I would be most pleased to advise you – on the way we manage here – those little rules of etiquette that for a foreigner can indeed be most perplexing – I could advise you on all this - our ways of dealing here at Court –

Not to mention, perhaps, a word on dress, and what the ladies here consider – most attractive for a woman of your size and shape -

CATHERINE: My size and shape is no concern of yours, madame! I don't give a fig for your English fashions! And what makes you think I would want to hear advice from you?

Madam, you may tell his Majesty that while he chooses to dine every evening with his fat English whore before limping down the passage to knock at my bedchamber door and demand his pleasures of me as well, he shall never find a welcome in the bed he calls his 'wife's'? Wife? What wife? What wife must wait for her husband to finish dining and toying with the slut who gives him everything - all he wants - just so she may get all she wants – fill her greedy hands up with jewels and money – not to mention land and titles, Lady Castlemaine, all those titles for your bastard babies, don't think I haven't noticed how well this royal liaison is furnishing your coffers and your heirs will have goods and riches beyond the dreams of your sisters, those common drabs that walk the streets – while I – a wife! – a Queen, or so they tell me - must wait, I say, in fear and dread for the hated object to present himself preening his feathers, stinking of adultery, at my bed-chamber door to do his royal duty and palm off his paltry second-hand embraces on me, that I may grunt and sweat in nine months' time to bring him forth a son – one pitiful lawfully-begotten son that he may call legitimate out of all his hordes of bastard babies?!

Pah!

Putana!

Begone!

BARBARA: I will certainly pass on the message to his Majesty. (*curtsies*) My lady.

BARBARA turns and leaves.

CATHERINE bursts into tears – holds a handkerchief to her nose - it comes away spotted with blood.

CATHERINE: Ah! Holy Mary Mother of God and all the saints, forgive me!

HENRIETTA MARIA advances towards her and CATHERINE notices her for the first time.

HENRIETTA: There is one thing you should know, my dear.

She helps CATHERINE quell the nose-bleed, holding the handkerchief for her.

You will never win against the king.

You cannot.

He holds all the cards.

Do you know that when they told me my women must return to France – all my women – including my most dear Madame de Saint-Georges whom I loved more than my own mother – they were to be driven back to France like wild beasts and I was not permitted to see them nor even to say goodbye –

I screamed and screamed and some of my people heard me and came to the courtyard below my casement – they gathered there – I could hear them but they dragged me from the window, they said I was not to see them nor to say goodbye

When they said that, I broke away and ran my hand right through the window pane – up to my elbow -

There was so much blood that my gown was soaked

It looked a like a murder had been committed

CATHERINE: Did the King not take pity on you?

HM: My husband? He had the Yeomen of the Guard drag them from their quarters.

There was howling and cursing – they were like animals, my poor people, they were turfed out like peasants, my dear Madame de Saint-Georges, my ladies, all of them –

I saw none of them again.

The French ambassador was outraged. He said the English have a wonderful capacity to promise everything and to keep their word on nothing. It looked like war.

CATHERINE: I hate them. I hate the King.

HM: You cannot hate the king. You are the queen. To hate the king is to hate yourself.

CATHERINE: But what did you do? After such vile treatment? I would start a war!

HM: My dear, you are young, and you will learn.

You must never start a war you cannot win!

And a war against the King cannot be won.

Not by you nor anyone.

Oliver Cromwell thought he had won. That Protector! He cut off my husband's head and look! – another Charles Stuart pops up to take his place. As if Cromwell had never been. An embarrassing interlude.

So my ladies and my retinue were sent back to France and though the blood ran down my arms there was no mercy from the King.

But then you see, my retinue – my dear own people - then they turned against me! French bastards. They took half my dresses with them, all my trousseau, all my gowns, my jewels, they stole it all, and so defiled their quarters that a weeks' work could not make them clean. The dirty pigs. They claimed I owed them money, that they had bought the clothes for me and not been paid – dirty lying dogs, I owed them nothing! So in the end they turned against me.

And the King, my husband, dear King Charles, became my fiercest defender. When William Prynne wrote that nasty piece against me - attacking actresses – a pointed dig at me and my ladies here at court and our performances – it was Charles who gave the order to have his ears cut off.

Prynne lost his ears and so he should.

My dear King simply wouldn't stand for such ungentlemanly attacks.

He would have given his life to defend me. And the country too of course.

Which of course he did.

The people always loved him. There was so much blood, they said.

They came to dip their kerchiefs in the blood around the scaffold. They queued for hours. So many bloody kerchiefs. Relics of my king.

There.

CATHERINE: I'm still bleeding.

HM: You cannot win.

Not against the King.

And not against her either.

CATHERINE: Her?

HM: The maitresse en titre. Barbara Villiers. Lady Castlemaine.

CATHERINE: What should I do?

HM: She is your worst enemy, non?

CATHERINE: Yes.

HM: Then you must make her into your best friend.

PAUSE

And then just wait.

She'll be dispensed with – just sit it out.

CATHERINE: I won't. I can't. I hate them all. I'm Queen. I am the daughter of a King and I am the Queen of England.

HM: Listen to what I say!

You must choose to love the King with your whole heart.

And you must make Lady Castlemaine your best friend.

CATHERINE: I will not submit.

I am the Queen of England!

HM: Queens of England have lost their heads before.

Don't lose yours.

I think the bleeding's stopped.

Don't lose your head.

Re-enter BARBARA.

BARBARA: My lady. Majesties. The King requests you –

HM: Her Majesty has suffered a bleeding of the nose but she is quite –

BARBARA: Shall I send for a physician?

CATHERINE: I am perfectly recovered. I feel quite well.

How are you feeling, Lady Castlemaine?

Have you been eating strangely?

Is it kicking?

BARBARA: A great deal especially at night.

And yes, I have longed for figs and duck breast.

CATHERINE: How very extraordinary. I long to know what it's like!

You must tell me all!

BARBARA: Will you return to the table Ma'am?

CATHERINE: Of course. My faintness has absolutely passed.

BARBARA: Forgive me for my –

CATHERINE: And I wondered if this afternoon you might help me dispose of my wardrobe? I need new gowns. In the English style! You can advise me. Can we send for the dressmaker?

I've finished with the fardingale.

What colour would you recommend?

And you must help me with my hair –

EXIT BARBARA AND CATHERINE.

HENRIETTA MARIA sits with the bloody handkerchief.

She looks at it, then takes up her sewing again.

End of scene.

Scene 8: The King, His Queen and His Mistresses (1668)

Queen Catherine

King Charles II

Aphra Behn

In the long gallery Charles is looking at the portrait of Barbara Villiers. He's holding a new portrait of Nell Gwynn, the actress.

Enter Catherine

CATH: Running out of space?

My dear?

CHARLES: Your Majesty.

CATH: Your Majesty. *(They bow and curtsey to each other).*

CHARLES: Thinking of ringing the changes -

CATH: Really?

CHARLES: Got a new portrait!

CATH: Oh indeed?

How was yester night?

CHARLES: A very ill play.

I can abide anything but boredom in a play.

A deathly play. But a rather glittering house. You should have come.

CATH: Though I hear Mistress Boutell is rather fine in it.

CHARLES: Ah Lizzie Boutell. Whom all the town f-

CATH: Charles. And Mistress Gwynn was in attendance? She has a pleasing leg for a breeches part, I hear.

CHARLES: And you're looking rather pleasing too today my dear.

CATH: Though I've lost my bracelet. The pearl and topaz. Have you seen it?

CHARLES: No my dear.

CATH: It was in my cabinet.

CHARLES: I have sent for Mistress Gwynn, by the way.

Lely has finished her portrait – see – rather fine?

CAHT: Must she come here?

CHARLES: We must be hospitable.

CATH: Could you not go to her?

CHARLES: What – to Epsom?

CATH: Or wherever she lodges. Southwark. What you please.

CHARLES: Well I could. Take a night-bag.

CATH: When you went to Stratford last you said you would take a night-bag and there were nigh on a hundred horse.

CHARLES: A hundred horse *is* my night-bag.

CATH: My dear –

CHARLES: What

CATH: Nothing.

CHARLES: Well I have sent for Mistress Gwynn so there will be no need of night-bags of any sort.

CATH: Barbara - Lady Castlemaine requests –

CHARLES: Oh she *requests*. Tell her I have nothing left to give her for her gambling habit, she must sink or swim by herself.

CATH: Charles, that is uncharitable.

She requests you mend the roof of her quarters sir, the rain is dripping onto the crib of the Duke of Northumberland.

And Lady Anne Fitzroy and and Lady Charlotte are complaining that their doll's cradle swims in a puddle.

CHARLES: Oh very well. I'll have somebody see to it.

CATH: Thank you.

And I am quite well, thank you for asking.

CHARLES: My dear, I am so sorry. How have you been since the – since we - ?

CATH: I was a-bed for three days. And then I thought – I must get up!

CHARLES: There's my girl!

CATH: I am sorry, sire.

CHARLES: Dear heart – please don't apologise.

CATH: And at least I may hunt again. Shall we?

CHARLES: Yes of course, just as soon as I've sorted out this - *[portrait]*

CATH: Mistress Gwynn?

CHARLES: We must get it up before she arrives.

CATH: Well you have never had trouble in that department –

CHARLES: Thank you, my dear. The problem is space – someone must be taken down -

CATH: I don't wish to make trouble –

CHARLES: You are a jewel amongst women –

CATH: But I would like my bracelet returned.

CHARLES: Bracelet?

CATH: The pearl and topaz bracelet I mentioned?

I don't know which of them has it, but I would remind you that it is mine. You gave it to me.

CHARLES: You must be mistaken my dear, it must have fallen behind the cabinet.

CATH: It has not fallen behind the cabinet. It was seen adorning the wrist of Mrs Gwynn at Dorset Gardens last night and I would ask simply that it be replaced in my cabinet and we'll say no more about it.

(Catherine catches sight of APHRA BEHN appearing behind the glass window at end of corridor)

My God – who's that? Is that your actress woman? Don't tell me she's been here all along!

CHARLES: Of course not!

CATH: Then who is it?

CHARLES: I have absolutely no idea!

CATH: She's coming in – How can she have the nerve?

APHRA *(calling as she strides towards them)*: Majesties!

CATH: What on earth is this creature?

APHRA BEHN *approaches them and bows low.*

APHRA: Your Majesties!

Forgive the intrusion – they told me I should wait in the Presence Chamber – but having lolled in great tedium for an hour, I surmised your Majesty must be in the Communication gallery therefore, I made so bold as to follow you – in the hopes I might make my humble, but urgent, suit to you, Majesty.

CHARLES: Your suit, Ma'am? I would help you, sweet lady, if I can, but I am afraid I don't quite -

APHRA: Recognise me? Mrs Behn, your Majesties – I am Aphra Behn.

CATHERINE: The poet?

CHARLES: The intelligencer?

APHRA: Yes sir. Both, madam.

CHARLES: Antwerp?

APHRA: Yes, sir.

CHARLES: The intelligence mission to Antwerp. Of course! Now I recall.

APHRA: An expedition unsuited, I now see, to my age and to my sex.

CHARLES: You did jolly well. As I recall.

APHRA: Thank you, sir.

Mind if I smoke?

CHARLES: Please, ma'am.

APHRA goes to light a clay pipe.

CATHERINE: I'd rather you didn't.

(APHRA tucks the pipe away.)

You sent a lady? To Antwerp?

CHARLES: We needed word of the movements of the Dutch fleet –

APHRA: And I did – did I not, sir? No man could have pursued their quarry more ruthlessly than I!

'Twas I that nailed the blasted traitor, Sir William Scot – forgive my language madam - 'twas I tracked him down to the Hague, wheedled my way forthwith into everything he knew and sent back to England more incriminating letters than many intelligencers bring home in their entire careers!

CHARLES: See my dear how a female intelligencer may worm out secrets that a man cannot . . .

APHRA: But now, sir, I am worse than dead with worry about the debts I have incurred in your service -

Ten guilder a day it cost me, sire, from the minute I set foot in Holland – Every time Sir William came to me, I was then forced afterward to pay the costs of his journey back to Rotterdam! And with the exchange so low, I had to beg for money from friends, and so within days I was in debt to the tune of more than one hundred pound! – and now with the interest, I am buried beneath a debt I have no means of honouring – whilst my creditors pursue me pitilessly -

I throw myself on your mercy, Majesty, and ask you merely to pay me what I am owed – and thereby save me from debtors prison which is not a place I wish to be more closely acquainted with!

CHARLES: Mrs Behn, it is impossible, you must approach the proper channels– the paperwork and so on -

APHRA: Sire, I played my part – I brought intelligence of the Dutch fleet’s plan to intrude into the Thames and the Medway – I sent word of the Dutch losses – you received all my correspondence, did you not, sire?

CHARLES: Yes, indeed, and we are most grateful - though in the end it was not intelligence that we were able to act upon –

APHRA: So why have I not been paid, sir?

You paid Lord Arlington £5,000 – even though there was so much crying-out at the want of intelligence he garnered!

CHARLES: As I said, the Treasury is now rather stretched -

APHRA: Debtors’ prison looms for me, sir! Have mercy -

CHARLES: I tell you, I cannot help you, ma’am – the Treasury has already exceeded its allowance! Now I’m late now for the Privy Council!

Catherine – my dear - Can you help with this –please? Before she gets here?

(portrait of Nell Gwynn –which he gives to APHRA)

CATHERINE: Of course sir.

CHARLES: We can’t take Barbara down, or I fear she may simply wreak some terrible vengeance on me. Losing at the basset table deliberately or what-not and charging it directly to me. The kind of trick she likes to play.

Send for Rogers, will you my dear, and ask him to find a home for it somewhere?

CATHERINE: No need for Rogers - I’ll take care of it myself!

Your Majesty!

CHARLES: Your Majesty -

(EXIT CHARLES.

CATHERINE: A pleasure to meet you, Mistress Behn. I hope your money troubles find help somewhere.

She goes to leave.

APHRA: Madam - Do my eyes deceive me or is that my friend Nell! Nell Gwynn, in an undress! The saucy devil! What's her likeness doing here?

For an orange-seller, she weasels her way into the strangest of places!

Your friend too, madam – or from your frowning, perhaps not?

CATHERINE: You are acquainted with this Mistress Ellen Gwynn? From the playhouse?

APHRA: Nell and I are old acquaintance.

Aphra considers her -

APHRA: You have the look of a woman wronged, majesty-

CATHERINE: Certainly not.

APHRA: Forgive me.

CATHERINE: I am utterly tranquil and I- You seem to forget, madam, that I am married to the King

APHRA: Our Kings are renowned for their fondness for extra-marital female companions.

CATHERINE: Dozens, though usually only one at a time.

A jest of course, we are extraordinarily happy. Yes. Or at least – we are not extraordinarily unhappy.

Perhaps you forget madam that I am the queen.

We accommodate one another's – I accommodate – the King's magnanimous - personality.

Who's in, who's out - *(glancing at portrait)*

An orange-seller, did you say?

APHRA: As once was.

CATHERINE: Charles! And now, consorting with riff-raff!

APHRA: Nell's got a lot going for her. Of humble birth to be sure, but - She has a marvellous wit. And a fine leg for the breeches.

CATHERINE: As do I, would you not say?

APHRA: Yes indeed, Ma'am. A very fine leg. Both.

CATHERINE: And my waist is the same as it was when I married six years ago. Six years. . . One benefit at least of escaping motherhood.

Unlike Barbara – our Lady Castlemaine -

APHRA: The king's companion?

CATHERINE: The resident companion. Her quarters are over there – she and her brood - she must hide her great belly under swathes of wrappings until she has slipped her annual filly, and returned to her regular size.

Though perhaps she will slow down in her productions now there is a new toy on which Charles may exercise himself.

How does my colour now? You see. Perfect equanimity.

APHRA: You counterfeit very well, ma'am.

CATHERINE: Counterfeit?

APHRA: I'm a professional. To the world at large I am sure you pass very well.

To a trained eye however -

You should visit the theatre, Ma'am –

CATHERINE: More whores and lechery – and lies about love. All these doings at court. They are rather sad and vicious in the flesh – but onstage I suppose they might be very amusing.

APHRA: But perhaps Majesty, the theatre can explore what ought to be – as well as what is – don't you think? And now that we have women on the stage – all credit to your husband . . .

The benefit of the actress, madam, is that the fable is so much more convincing. Who better to portray the wounded hearts of women – than women themselves?

Nell Gwynn and her sisters are heroes, in my view. Risking reputation – to tell the world the untold stories of the female heart.

CATHERINE: Perhaps there is merit to this orange-seller, after all.

But there simply isn't room on the wall unless we do some – rearranging. As the King has ordered.

We'll have to take Barbara down – She might hang very nicely in the wine-cellar – she's fond of wine -

What say you, Aphra Behn?

APHRA: Certainly the wine-cellar sounds very appropriate.

CATHERINE: I'll have Rogers take it down. Farewell Barbara! And Nell can hang there.

Till the next portrait arrives.

Is that a fair solution?

APHRA: Very fair. I'd say long-awaited vengeance – executed.

CATHERINE: What an extraordinary suggestion. You poets and your fancies!

You may leave us.

(APHRA bows and is about to go).

CATHERINE: Mistress Behn – one moment – the other matter of your debt -

(she takes off her bracelet – offers them to Aphra)

APHRA: Madam, I can't –

CATHERINE: You can. I am much lighter without them.

For your service to the King and Queen as female intelligencer.

APHRA: Thank you, your Majesty.

END SCENE.

Scene 8a: The King, his Queen and his Mistresses 1668.

Queen Catherine

King Charles II

In the long gallery Charles is looking at the portrait of Barbara Villiers. He's holding a new portrait of Nell Gwynn, the actress.

Enter Catherine

CATH: Running out of space my dear?

CHARLES: Your Majesty.

CATH: Your Majesty. *(They bow and curtsey to each other).*

CHARLES: Thinking of ringing the changes -

CATH: Really?

CHARLES: Got a new portrait!

CATH: Oh indeed?

How was yester night?

CHARLES: A very ill play.

I can abide anything but boredom in a play.

A deathly play. But a rather glittering house. You should have come.

CATH: Though I hear Mistress Boutell is rather fine in it.

CHARLES: Ah Lizzie Boutell. Whom all the town f-

CATH: Charles. And Mistress Gwynn was in attendance? She has a pleasing leg for a breeches part, I hear.

CHARLES: And you're looking rather pleasing too today my dear.

CATH: Though I've lost my bracelet. The pearl and topaz. Have you seen it?

CHARLES: No my dear.

CATH: It was in my cabinet.

CHARLES: I have sent for Mistress Gwynn, by the way.

Lely has finished her portrait – see – rather fine?

CATH: Must she come here?

CHARLES: We must be hospitable.

CATH: Could you not go to her?

CHARLES: What – to Epsom?

CATH: Or wherever she lodges. Southwark. What you please.

CHARLES: Well I could. Take a night-bag.

CATH: When you went to Stratford last you said you would take a night-bag and there were nigh on a hundred horse.

CHARLES: A hundred horse *is* my night-bag.

CATH: My dear –

CHARLES: What

CATH: Nothing.

CHARLES: Well I have sent for Mistress Gwynn so there will be no need of night-bags of any sort.

CATH: Barbara - Lady Castlemaine requests –

CHARLES: Oh she *requests*. Tell her I have nothing left to give her for her gambling habit, she must sink or swim by herself.

CATH: Charles, that is uncharitable.

She requests you mend the roof of her quarters sir, the rain is dripping onto the crib of the Duke of Northumberland.

And Lady Anne Fitzroy and and Lady Charlotte are complaining that their doll's cradle swims in a puddle.

CHARLES: Oh very well. I'll have somebody see to it.

CATH: Thank you.

And I am quite well, thank you for asking.

CHARLES: My dear, I am so sorry. How have you been since the – since we - ?

CATH: I was a-bed for three days. And then I thought – I must get up!

CHARLES: There's my girl!

CATH: I am sorry, sire.

CHARLES: Dear heart – please don't apologise.

CATH: And at least I may hunt again. Shall we?

CHARLES: Yes of course, just as soon as I've sorted out this - *[portrait]*

CATH: Mistress Gwynn?

CHARLES: We must get it up before she arrives.

CATH: Well you have never had trouble in that department –

CHARLES: Thank you, my dear. The problem is space – someone must be taken down -

CATH: I don't wish to make trouble –

CHARLES: You are a jewel amongst women –

CATH: But I would like my bracelet returned.

CHARLES: Bracelet?

CATH: The pearl and topaz bracelet I mentioned?

I don't know which of them has it, but I would remind you that it is mine. You gave it to me.

CHARLES: You must be mistaken my dear, it must have fallen behind the cabinet.

CATH: It has not fallen behind the cabinet. It was seen adorning the wrist of Mrs Gwynn at Dorset Gardens last night and I would ask simply that it be replaced in my cabinet and we'll say no more about it.

CHARLES: I am at a loss as to the bracelet my dear – whatever these wild rumours – really, I haven't seen it!

CATH: Oh indeed?

CHARLES: Now, we can't take Barbara down, or I fear she may simply wreak some terrible vengeance on me. Losing at the basset table deliberately or what-not and charging it directly to me. The kind of trick she likes to play.

Send for Rogers, will you my dear, and ask him to find a home for it somewhere?

CATH: No need for Rogers - I'll take care of it myself! Barbara shal hang in the wine-cellar -

CHARLES: The cellar?

CATH: Why not?

CHARLES: She'll have my guts for garters!

CATH: She's fond of wine is she not?

CHARLES: Undoubtedly, but –

CATH: Then she'll be perfectly at home. And Mistress Ellen Gwynn can take her place just here.

CHARLES: Do you think?

CATH: Oh yes. As befits a leading lady.

CHARLES: But Barbara will object – she'll be furious –

CATH: Let me mollify Barbara. We are bosom friends, you know, there are no secrets between us.

CHARLES: Oh really?

CATH: None whatsoever. It's much more agreeable to be conspirators than enemies – I learnt that long ago. Oh the merry times we have had, sir, recounting our adventures – and comparing notes!

CHARLES: What sort of notes?

CATH: Such excellent sport! The contests of the bedchamber! And you know Barbara – quite the raconteur! I'll never forget the tale she told us of the night that you and she decided to try the –

CHARLES: I really have no time for the idle prating of women, madam – affairs of state call and I must be gone –

CATH: Of course my dear. Well I'm sure Nell Gwynn will make a most diverting addition to our little party. And a wonderful new source of anecdotes! I am in agonies until I become acquainted with her –

CHARLES: I am not keen to become an anecdote.

CATH: Oh sir, don't begrudge us! We females have such a brief moment of flowering before our beauty is quite withered and gone. What harm if we choose to confide in one another for our mutual amusement?

CHARLES: Confide away – just not about me, if you please.

CATH: But sir, you are the sun around whom we all revolve. And now tis Nell Gwynn's time to bask in your admiration! Twill pass, I am sure. As it has passed for Barbara and for me.

Let us dispatch Barbara to the wine cellar – I'm sure she'll see the funny side.

We may all remain friends, surely?

CHARLES: Certainly Madam. Most loving friends.

CATH: An embrace before we part?

(They embrace – during which Catherine finds a bracelet in his coat pocket)

CATH: My pearl and topaz bracelet!

CHARLES: I have no idea how –

CATH: Was it not fine enough for Mistress Gwynn?

CHARLES: When she heard that it was yours, she demanded I return it.

CATH: Perhaps I underestimate her.

She has a nice line in pert virgins, does she not? A really quite wonderful actress, to play so far from her own character.

Please tell her she is in pride of place at Hampton Court, replacing Barbara in the Communications Gallery. And we await her arrival in the flesh with the most eager anticipation.

CHARLES: Thank you my dear.

CATH: For once you seem to have chosen wisely.

CHARLES: Thank you my dear. I shall leave you to make all the arrangements.

CATH: Your Majesty -

CHARLES: Your Majesty -

(EXIT CHARLES.)

CATHERINE: I'll have Rogers take it down. Farewell Barbara! And Nell can hang there. I think that's fair.

Till the next portrait arrives.

(Catherine exits with portrait)

END SCENE.

Scene 9: Queen Anne Goes Hunting (Autumn 1710)

Characters:

Queen Anne (50)

Abigail Masham (40)

Autumn 1710, Hampton Court. We are in a hunting carriage in the grounds of Hampton Court.

Queen Anne gets into the carriage. Her arms and legs are covered in bandages. She wheezes, and coughs, and peers because her eyes hurt and are weak.

She fusses around the carriage, short-sightedly looking for her whip.

ANNE: Masham!

I say, Masham!

Masham, where is my whip?

Long pause.

ANNE: Masham?

Abigail Masham, Lady of the Bedchamber, appears at the side of the carriage.

ABIGAIL: Yes, madam?

ANNE: My whip, Masham, how am I to get anywhere without my whip?

ABIGAIL: Yes of course, madam – was it not – about the carriage somewhere – is it?

ANNE GROPEs ABOUT, POSSIBLY MISTAKENLY GROPEING THE AUDIENCE.

ANNE: Certainly not. I have looked everywhere.

ABIGAIL FINDS IT.

ABIGAIL: Here we are, ma'am!

ANNE: Now how can I have missed that?

ABIGAIL: It was hiding Ma'am!

ANNE: Well, finally. Are we all set?

ABIGAIL: How is your hand, madam?

ANNE: *(wiggling her right hand)* Beastly. But twill have to serve.

ABIGAIL: Very well, madam. Now are you sure you would not have Jakes accompany you?

ANNE: Why should I have Jakes?

ABIGAIL: Well you know Blackbird is quite freshly broke, and lively, ma'am, and with your hand madam – should you find him too strong for you –

ANNE: He is not too strong for me. Snowball at Windsor this summer was a freshly broke mare and was she too much for me?

ABIGAIL: Certainly not Ma'am!

ANNE: Certainly not! We tore up the park, that filly and me, did we not! We had three stag by the end of the season -

ABIGAIL: Yes madam, of course –

ANNE: Jakes indeed!

ABIGAIL: My apologies ma'am. Though perhaps Windsor park is a little more tended than here -

ANNE: Well have you checked with Weatherall that the Hampton molehills have been dealt with?

ABIGAIL: He assures me they have all been smoothed away, ma'am.

ANNE: Very good. Molehills do not go well with us as a family.

Remember brother William! A cautionary tale, indeed. One little stumble of his horse over that fateful molehill, and the King himself despatched by the gentleman in a black velvet coat! *(Guffaws with laughter.)*

One shouldn't laugh. Poor Mary. But if William had only been a little more civil towards me. . . I tell you, Masham, if I had the noble mole before me now I'd give him a knighthood! Ha!

But it would not go so well with us, would it now?

Poor old Blackbird and her slippy hooves. What about the nettle and thorn patches – have they been dealt with?

ABIGAIL: Mr Weatherall says yes, ma'am. They have scrubbed away all the thorn, nettle and fern ma'am. It should be a clear run -

ANNE: A clear run! For me and my Blackbird!

I long to be off.

Where is she?

ABIGAIL: The grooms are just tacking up now, ma'am, she will be with us shortly.

Pause. They wait.

ANNE: Oh come in for God's sake, Masham, don't stand outside shivering.

ABIGAIL: Thank you Ma'am.

Abigail gets in.

The Queen groans and wiggles her leg.

ANNE: Oh, this wretched bandage. Look at it! Drooping like a flag at half-mast. Perfectly dismal. Can you re-wind me?

ABIGAIL: Yes madam.

ANNE: Shall I put the thing up? Help you to get at it.

ABIGAIL: Certainly ma'am.

The Queen hoists her leg up on the opposite bench with much groaning and Abigail starts to fix her bandage.

ANNE: You improve apace, Masham. It is the fixing of the knot that requires attention!

Please do give it your full attention, Masham, especially the final knotting.

I cannot be dangling bandage when I am mid chase! My bandages fluttering around my ankles, quite ridiculous! Not to say distracting when I am in sights of my quarry!

Do you know my lady Churchill had a very particular way of doing it – did I not show you?

A half-hitch with a triple bow – never failed!

ABIGAIL: I am sure the Duchess of Marlborough has a very competent manner in all things Ma'am.

ANNE: Oh she did indeed. A good little knotter, the Duchess. One of her many talents.

ABIGAIL: Indeed, ma'am?

ANNE: Now come, come my dear Masham, there's no need to be jealous. Those days of my lady Churchill are over.

We have despatched her have we not? We need never speak of her again.

ABIGAIL: No Madam. I'm glad to hear it - and glad there can be no truth in the rumour -

ANNE: What rumour? – what rumour? Tell me.

ABIGAIL: Nothing, Ma'am. As you said, we need never speak of her again, nor of your letters - *(of bandage)* Is that improved - ?

ANNE: Masham. I depend on your eyes and ears. What rumour?

ABIGAIL: Forgive me, Ma'am. The rumour about your letters. An idle rumour, madam, I am glad there is no substance to it –

ABIGAIL: Oh but I'm afraid that there is. All our letters – can you imagine?

ABIGAIL: Ma'am!

ANNE: All the passion and tenderness we once professed – to be put on public view! To be gawped at by the hoi polloi! So that is out is it?

ABIGAIL: Indeed, ma'am -

ANNE: To dangle in the public eye all our correspondence – volumes of it, Masham - I never went a day without writing to her, My Sarah, my lady Churchill – my dear Mrs Freeman! and she was as keen in her letter-writing to me! Never a letter unanswered!

ABIGAIL: I am sure, Ma'am.

Monarchs must have their letters answered.

ANNE: What are you insinuating?

ABIGAIL: Nothing ma'am!

ANNE: She was as passionate for me as I was for her. Such tender friendship was never seen before in the world, I do declare. We were equal in that affection! Our hearts were equal, even if our social stations – well I have never been one to stand on order and etiquette and mere social standing as you well know –

ABIGAIL: Of course not Ma'am!

ANNE: Oh had I known what I know now – what spite she could be capable of! How she stood before me. . . with dear Prince George hardly cold in his grave and she ripped down his portrait from my bedchamber – oh, I could have slapped her!

ABIGAIL: I think she only thought such a portrait might upset your Majesty!

ANNE: Upset! Upset! With my lord dead! And then to accuse me –

To say I gorged myself on three hearty meals and showed no grief!

My grief was boundless, Masham, boundless, my dear Prince, my dear George –

I may eat in grief to assuage the pangs – the pangs of all –

I may have dined – I feel it in my stomach, who would begrudge a widow the comfort of a meal or two –

ABIGAIL: Madam, please don't upset yourself -

ANNE: My devotion was always complete to that girl - I raised her to the heights of government – ministers themselves feared her – all because I simply desired to possess her wholly, and the hours we spent together – close in my closet - no man could be a part of that most tender friendship – and yet to turn on me! To accuse me of coldness of heart!

I have many faults, many weaknesses but coldness of heart – is not one of them!

I was a loyal wife to my dear spouse- we both were loyal wives – dear Prince George, and her own Duke of Marlborough – but the confidences, the tender and solicitous kindnesses that one lady may show another. . . that is not part of the marriage contract.

As you know Masham.

ABIGAIL: Mr Masham is very kind.

ANNE: Kind, of course, there may be kindness. But can a man ever understand us, Masham? Truly understand?

The sufferings we women must endure – time after time!

The endless indignities!

Perhaps child-bed has not been so harsh for you, my dear Masham, but for many of us -

ABIGAIL: Madam, please don't be distressed. My lady the Duchess of Marlborough cannot hurt you anymore. You have broke off your rather too close connection.

ANNE: Too close! Too close! What are you insinuating?

ABIGAIL: Nothing ma'am! Nothing!

ANNE: These whispers at court they tire me!

Well, let her publish! Let her if she will! Let's give the gawpers what they want.

She can hardly betray me worse!

Whatever we had is utterly gone.

The thought of her sickens me.

ABIGAIL: She has no power over you now.

ANNE: No power over me. That is right. It is over, completely.

ABIGAIL: Though my lord Harley says that my lady Churchill does still have the key to your bedchamber.

Perhaps she should return it. To quell all ugly rumours.

ANNE: Perhaps she should. Shall I request it?

ABIGAIL: I would demand it ma'am.

ANNE: I'll put that in writing. Thank you Masham.

ABIGAIL: Do you think the other needs securing? It wouldn't do to dangle again the other side.

ANNE: Certainly

ABIGAIL: And then there is the Privy Purse. While she is Keeper of the Privy Purse, who knows what filching may – or could, of course, - take place.

ANNE: Filching?

ABIGAIL: A sum here, a sum there –

ANNE: Masham – I hardly think – my lady Churchill –

ABIGAIL: I simply raise it as a – possibility ma'am. My cousin Mr Harley has said to me at times the Exchequer has not quite seemed to add up – No one is speaking of filching – no one is openly saying it. Not in so many words.

But –

If she were stripped of the title, then there could be no such aspersion cast against her. 'Twould protect her from all court – whispering.

ANNE: Strip her of the title?

ABIGAIL: Perhaps 'twere best – all round –

ANNE: And who then to replace her? At the Privy Purse?

ABIGAIL: I couldn't say ma'am. One whom your Majesty could trust. One whom your Majesty knows would never – ever – hurt her.

There Ma'am.

All bandages secure.

ANNE: Thank you Masham.

You are a dear soul.

ABIGAIL: I do love your Majesty truly.

ANNE: I am all done with love.

Poor England. We have struggled to bring seventeen poor waifs into the world and where are we now? My only dear remaining one gone from me. My poor sweet boy. The throne is in such danger, and I fear my breeding time is now long past. That door has slammed shut.

Where can I turn? Where shall England turn?

I am sure you are right.

Oh the Duchess! My dear Mrs freeman! Your poor dear Mrs Morley mourns for you!

I wish she had not said my heart was cold. I have many faults, Masham, but a cold heart is not one of them.

ABIGAIL: No, your Majesty.

ANNE: Oh God! Let me hunt!

Bring Blackbird and let me hunt!

Let me chase these dark thoughts away. Hunt them down and spear them like Nimrod!

Where on earth is blackbird? Where are those wretched grooms?

ABIGIAL: I'll fetch them now!

ANNE: I'll go myself!

I'll go!

I am not quite so finished that I cannot scold a stable lad!

Exit Queen Anne.

Scene 10: An English Lesson

Characters

George I aged 58 in 1718.

Charlotte de Kielmansegge (nicknamed Elephant by the English courtiers)

Melusina von Schulenberg (nicknamed Maypole by the English courtiers)

CHARLOTTE: *(Well I just don't like them)* Ich mag sie einfach nicht.

MELUSINA: *(What did you say?)* Wie bitte?

CHARLOTTE: *(I don't like the English. They are so unfriendly and their food is disgusting. Must you be King of England forever? Can't we go back to Germany?)* Ich mag die Engländer nicht. Ze English – ugh!! Die sind so unfreundlich, und sie essen wie wie Schweine. Musst du denn für immer König von England sein? Können wir nicht nach Deutschland zurück?

(And I don't like this bloody Hampton court.)

Und ich mag auch diesen dämlichen Hampton Court nicht.

(It rains all the time)

Es regent die ganze Zeit.

MELUSINA: Look!

MELUSINA shows them a paper figure she has cut out. George and Charlotte laugh delightedly.

CHARLOTTE: The Lord Chamberlain! *(You've got his nose – and his sticking-out ears -)* Du hast die Nase und die abstehenden Ohren genau getroffen!

GEORGE: Bravo, meine Melusina! *(Bravo, my Melusina!)*

CHARLOTTE: Und hier ist der Herr Walpole! *(And here's Mr Walpole!)*

They fall about laughing at their paper cut-outs.

CHARLOTTE: *(What book are you reading, my darling?)* Was liest du denn, meine Liebe?

GEORGE: "Sein oder nicht sein . . ." - To be or not to be. . .

Ist das gut?

Melusina? Charlotte?

Liebchen?

MELUSINA: Ja?

GEROGE: (*Did you hear what I said?*) Hast du gehört, was ich gesagt habe?

MELUSINA: Ja? Was?

GEORGE: "Sein oder nicht sein!"

Hamlet von William Shakespeare.

(Hamlet by William Shakespeare

(I told you the Actors are coming this evening? They're going to perform Hamlet in the new theatre – the Great Hall, that is.)

Ich habe dir doch gesagt, dass heute abend - this evening - die Schauspieler kommen. A play! Hamlet in ze Great Hall.

MELUSINA: (*not at all interested*) Theater - Ah ja?

CHARLOTTE: "To be or not to be!"

GEORGE: Sehr gut, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE: Danke!

MELUSINA: (*Oh God! Do we really have to go? To the theatre – in English! How long is it , this Hamlet?*)

O Gott! Theater? Auf English?! Müssen wir da wirklich hin? Wie lang ist der Hamlet eigentlich?

GEORGE: (*Speak English, my dear!*)

Englisch, meine Liebe, sprechen Sie doch Englisch!

MELUSINA: (*I hate English with all its. . .*)

Ich hasse das Englische mit seinen ganzen ths and w's and oohs... und diesem "to be or not to be..."

GEROGE Englisch!

(I'm the king of England we have to speak English! We have to get better at it. Now come on!

Ich bin der König von England, wir müssen Englisch sprechen. Wir müssen uns darin üben! Komm!

So – tonight - Also, heute abend, so diesen abend- this evening - Wir müssen Englisch sprechen - we will go in the Great hall and Hamlet to see. Ja?

CHARLOTTE: Wunderbar! (*Oh hooray.*)

Wonderful.

GEORGE: Ja, Charlotte! Wonderful.

MELUSINA: *(But I won't be able to understand a word! What's the story?)*

Aber ich werde kein Wort verstehen!

Worum geht es noch mal in der Geschichte?

GEORGE: Die Geschichte? The story?

MELUSINA: The story?

CHARLOTTE: Oh yes, Mr King – please, the story tell us!

GEORGE: Von Hamlet?

MELUSINA: Yes.

GEORGE: There is a King and the King has a queen called Gertrude.

MELUSINA: Gertrude – ja. . .

GEORGE: Aber der Koenig hat einen bruder – a bruder Claudius – und der bruder Claudius – he wants to be in the bed of the Queen!

MELUSINA: But - the Queen is die Frau –

CHARLOTTE: the wife –

MELUSINA: The wife, of his brother, ja?

GEORGE: Natürlich! Ja!

MELUSINA: He wants to be in bed with the wife of his brother?

GEORGE: Ja.

MELUSINA: Typisch Englisch!

CHARLOTTE: Just like Henry the Eight.

MELUSINA AND CHARLOTTE GIGGLE.

GEORGE: So, Claudius, he loves Gertrude. So the brother of the King – he the King kills! – Kills him dead –

MELUSINA: Ah!

GEORGE: - mit Gift – poison! - In das Ohr –

MELUSINA: Englisch, Georgie!

GROEGE: In the Ear!

Und dann, the bruder – King becomes. Und Gertrude his Queen becomes.

MELUSINA: Naughty Gertrude!

GEORGE: But there is a Prince – a very annoying character – Hamlet – und Hamlet sees (*the ghost of his father*) den Geist des Vaters –

CHARLOTTE: The - Ghost! Von dem Vater – the ghost of his father -

GEORGE: der ja tot ist – he is totally dead!

Also, the ghost of his father say “Hamlet you must Claudius kill”. Because Claudius seinen Vater (*because Claudius has killed his father*) Claudius seinen Vater getötet hat...

(*Girls gasp*)

So. Hamlet – he is thinking und thinking und – “to be or not to be” (*he doesn’t know what to do*) er weiß nicht, was er tun soll – also he decides to put on a theatre play.

MELUSINA: (*He puts on a play? But why? Crazy!*) Ein theatre play? Aber, warum? Verrückt!

GEORGE: (*well and then it goes on and one for about two or three hours until at last*) Naja, und dann geht es so weiter und so fort - and on and on - für etwa two or der three hours – endlich – Hamlet Claudius kills.

Bof!

Ende.

The ladies applaud.

GEORGE: (*And that is the tragedy of Hamlet*) Und das ist die Tragödie von Hamlet. Von William Shakespeare.

CHARLOTTE: The Englisch always talk of killing their kings, ja?

(*That’s an English obsession*) Das ist eine englische Marotte.

GEORGE: Obsession....Ja!

They all stop laughing.

MELUSINA: Das ist nicht so – what is that word Englisch? – not so nice.

GEORGE: Nein.

I don’t like these Englisch.

Pause.

CHARLOTTE: My poor little Mr King.

MELUSINA: Mein armer kleiner König von England. (*My poor little king of England*)

CHARLOTTE: We will look after you, little Mr King.

MELUSINA: *(If those naughty English come with poison or knives to cut off your head -)* Wenn diese naughty Engländer kommen, mit Gift-

CHARLOTTE: poison!

MELUSINA: -oder Messern -

CHARLOTTE: Knives!

MELUSINA: - um Ihnen den Kopf abzuschneiden...

CHARLOTTE: your head cut off!

GEORGE: Very good, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE: We will kick them in the – How do they say in English?

In dem –

GEORGE: Hintern? *(arse?)*

MELUSINA: Ja, ja, aber in Englisch –

CHARLOTTE: Arse!

GEORGE: Sehr gut! You will kick them in den englischen Arse!

MELUSINA AND CHARLOTTE: Ja! Natürlich!

GEORGE: My darlings!

Scene 11: Petticoat Government,

September 1728, at Hampton Court.

Henrietta is clearing up after Caroline's bath, rather exhaustedly and weariedly.

The King and court have been at Hampton Court since July. The King has been King since 1727. George II loved opera and Handel.

Sir Robert Walpole – Robinocracy? – p. 74 Plumb.

Mrs Howard is hard-of-hearing and does not hear John Gay approach as she tidies the bath area – folding up towels and putting away Caroline's clothes and underwear.

John Gay surprises her.

HENRIETTA: Oh!

JOHN: Howard! My dear!

HENRIETTA: John! What are you - ? You terror.

Johnny Gay. Creeping about -

JOHN: I love to creep. Creep and pounce!

HENRIETTA: You have an unfair advantage over me and my ears, you know you do.

JOHN: Your poor ears. That never hear all the delightful things being said about you.

HENRIETTA: To what do I owe this pleasure?

JOHN: A social call. Thought I'd swing by to hear all of how your court goes – who and who are together – what balls do you make – what pleasures and past-times – ?

HENRIETTA: We are consumedly dull, John. Hampton is hardly the place you knew at all. Frizelation, flirtation and dangelation are now no more. There are scarcely enough people of quality to raise a scandal.

JOHN: No plays? No blind man's buff? No hunting?

HENRIETTA: We hunt, yes that we do – we hunt with great noise and violence and have every day a tolerable chance to have a neck broke.

Just last week the Princess Amelia and three others were thrown all on the one afternoon.

JOHN: Marvellous sport!

HENRIETTA: Yes, we dally with mortality on a daily basis!

But John, is this safe - ? I mean, did you know that Sir Robert was –

He's here at Privy Council – if he should – is it wise you are here?

JOHN: Hang him! I am rarely wise, as you know, my most dear H.H.

HENRIETTA: It's a virtue you really should try to cultivate.

JOHN: I've given up on wisdom. I'm trying reckless abandon and I have to say, so far, it's working like a charm.

In fact, to tell truth - he invited me here. Walpole, I mean.

HENRIETTA: Walpole invited you? For what?

JOHN: He didn't say. I received a missive from one of his minions inviting me for a little chat with the Great Man. So as I had nothing better to do, I thought I'd oblige - and enquire of my old friend Swiss into the bargain!

HENRIETTA: Things aren't the same without Johnny Gay hanging about at court.

JOHN: Ah, the bad old days! Can't say I miss them. Though of course I miss you – but I'm really rather rich now, did you know? Since my thing went on in Lincoln's Inn Fields –

HENRIETTA: Oh, your Beggar's Opera -

JOHN: A beggarly offering of course. . . but they do say it has made John Rich the happiest, not to say best fed, theatre manager in England! The current witticism of the beau monde is to say that John Gay's Beggar's Opera has made Rich gay, and Gay, rich. I'm simply swimming in the stuff.

HENRIETTA: Johnny, that's wonderful. And what are you spending it on?

JOHN: Fine wine, lusty women and the card table. At last I have enough to lose like a gentleman! I waved a sweet farewell to six hundred pound the other night and Swiss, you'd not have known me – I scarcely blenched!

HENRIETTA: Wonderful achievement. (*winces in pain*)

JOHN: Dear Swiss, what's the matter?

HENRIETTA: I had my jaw bored.

JOHN: Oh hideous!

HENRIETTA: Insupportable. And I am not out of pain yet. Weeks of misery.

JOHN: My dear little Swiss! How beastly intolerable –

HENRIETTA: Stop calling me that.

JOHN: Swiss? But you are! The best of little Swisses. So neutral and impartial. Never one to take bribes for favour. But if you wish, I shall call you by your name. How are you, Mrs Howard?

HENRIETTA: I am on my knees to her Majesty, morning, noon and - .

JOHN: And at night?

HENRIETTA; I don't discuss night.

JOHN: Quite so.

But how is our dear King these days?

HENRIETTA: I don't discuss the king neither.

JOHN: I heard he stomps up and down outside your door till nine precisely of the clock, and then at the ninth strike – he sets to – rat a tat tat! Let me in, let me in, my dear little Howard – for my nightly exercise upon you – brace yourself, Howard! -

HENRIETTA: I said I don't discuss it.

JOHN: Poor old Swiss. Still for such a fine living at court, perhaps thirty-five seconds of grunty fumbling is not so high a price to pay?

HENRIETTA: Sir –

JOHN: I draw a veil.

So the rumours are true, you say?

HENRIETTA: What rumours?

JOHN: That her Majesty has you grovelling by day with the basin and the chocolate dish.

HENRIETTA: It's an outrage. Even Lady Masham tells me so. Even in her day, there was no bowing and scraping from the bedchamber woman. Masham said it was unheard of! Kneeling with the basin! That's a new fad she has. Wants to play Queen Caroline. Sure the other night she called me in to put on her shoe. And at that I drew the line.

JOHN: You refused?

HENRIETTA: I did.

JOHN: How? I mean how does one refuse the Queen?

HENRIETTA: I said, Your Majesty, I will send at once for the page of the backstairs. He will be most eager to carry out his duties.

JOHN: Huzzah for you, Howard! And was she cowed?

HENRIETTA: Not at all. She threw her wig across the room and dashed the chocolate dish away across the floor, and we were scrubbing for hours to clean it off the hearth.

GAY: I wonder how you stand it, Henrietta. On your knees to great ones morning, noon and night.

HENRIETTA: I'm grown old at court, John, that's true. But then. You stood it yourself for quite a few years. You curried favour with the rest of us.

JOHN: Oh yes. I was quite the expert in the art of pleasing great men. Never declaring in the morning what you think until the great one whose favour you are seeking declares their mind – never speaking your mind lest one mistake should utterly destroy you-

Those days are gone. I have found my true vocation. The scourge of government! Satire, my dear Howard – the theatre! That's how we can get our own back!

And if in my small way I can do anything to hasten the downfall of this wretched government, Walpole and his cronies, then my life will not have been in vain.

HENRIETTA: Is he so much worse than any other?

JOHN: Probably not. They are all highwaymen. It's just that with the Walpoles you can't move for the damn things, they're like rats or weeds, there's no stopping them. They feed on our dislike!

HENRIETTA: It's hardly so bad.

JOHN: Hardly so bad? Let me see! First Lord of the treasury. Sir Robert Walpole. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Robert Walpole. Clerk of the Pells, Walpole's son. Customs of London, second son of Walpole. Secretary of the treasury, Walpole's brother. Secretary to Ireland, Walpole's brother. Postmaster General, Walpole's brother; Secretary to the Postmaster-General, Walpole's brother-in-law -

Enter Sir Robert Walpole

WALPOLE: John Gay – there you are -

JOHN: Sir Robert Walpole!

We were just speaking of you First Minister – such encomiums –

WALPOLE: Oh indeed?

Is he telling the truth, Mrs Howard?

HENRIETTA: I'm afraid my poor ears didn't catch everything Mr Gay was saying.

WALPOLE: If only all of us at court could be a little deaf. Such a useful affliction, no, Mrs Howard?

HENRIETTA: Could you repeat - ?

WALPOLE: Never mind.

Good to see you, Gay.

GAY: And you, Sir Robert. What a pleasure to be back at Hampton.

WALPOLE: And how is that little show of yours – packing out at Lincoln’s Inn Fields I hear?

GAY: A modest success –

WALPOLE: That’s not what I hear.

I hear your fellow Peachum is the delight of the town – so very now! – Devilishly clever satire - with his comically exaggerated system of spies and accomplices - ruling through bribery and corruption – upholding the law whilst simultaneously making a mockery of it –

GAY: Well – some seem to find it amusing – though ‘tis a paltry offering –

WALPOLE: Paltry - not at all – marvellously catchy – all the wonderful old ballads, I do adore them - and the words you have strung to them to them, Gay – so modern! So edgy!

(sings) Through all the employments of life

Each neighbour abuses his brother

Whore and rogue they call husband and wife

All professions be-rogue one another

The Priest calls the lawyer a cheat

The lawyer be-knaves the Divine

And the statesman because he’s so great

Thinks his trade as honest as mine –

Pause.

JOHN: So you’ve seen it then?

WALPOLE: I have my eyes all about the town, John, as you know!

GAY: Good – well, I hope they gave a fair report –

WALPOLE: Oh they did, Gay, they did – they told me there have been gales of laughter and not an empty seat in the house. That your so-called ‘rogues opera’ –

GAY: - beggar’s opera –

WALPOLE: Rogues, beggars, riff-raff, criminals, gentlemen of the road – what you will – that this gallery of scum and ne-er do wells resembles nothing so much as our parliament.

And that your fellow Peachum has been taken as a satirical skit on certain eminent politicians. Indeed one eminent politician in particular?

GAY: Allegedly.

WALPOLE: Allegedly. Is there any truth in it?

GAY: It's not for me to say. I am merely the artist. I cannot control what the audience may see in it.

WALPOLE: Ah yes I see. Artist's prerogative. To disavow all responsibility?

GAY: Responsibility? – I mean, really, Sir Robert, you are paying it the dignity of far too much attention. it's a skit, as you say, Sir Robert. A fantasy. A plaything. A bubble of delicate froth.

WALPOLE: Of course.

But when the bubble bursts – there can sometimes remain a nasty little residue.

Of slander. Of ill-feeling.

Of damage to reputation in the public mind.

I understand that poets must eat just like the rest of us.

So I'm wondering what it would take for such a bubble never to appear again?

Whether there might be a figure – that would make life a little easier for you, Gay?

One hundred?

Five hundred?

GAY: I really couldn't say.

WALPOLE: One thousand?

And a position as – magistrate?

A guaranteed living for life?

GAY: In return for –

WALPOLE: No more skits, Gay, no more cleverosity.

You could move to Hampshire. Get some dogs, get a wife - country house - give up all this, hack for hire stuff.

Give up the theatre and all this mingling with the hoi polloi. Live like a gentleman.

Pause.

GAY: It's certainly tempting.

But I've made rather a mint already. And I rather like the theatre,

In fact, I have an idea for a sequel . . .

WALPOLE: Of all the wretched little hangers-on at court – that it should be you – Gay – you who grovelled for favour for all those years – to write this muck!

I could have crushed you beneath my heel.

GAY: Perhaps you should have.

But you have certainly provided excellent material.

For which I thank you – so very much.

WALPOLE: Just wait.

You just wait, Gay.

The theatre won't know what's hit it.

I'll crush you and your little thespian friends. I'll gag you like criminals.

I'll muzzle you – maybe not this year, maybe not next year – but I'm making your muzzle. Oh yes! I'm making it! Legislation! Legislative castration!

And when it comes – it won't be just for one feeble little opera – or for a year –

It'll be for a decade – for a century – for century on century -

I promise you

EXIT WALPOLE.

GAY: Well. What do you say little Swiss?

What think you of my new-found integrity?

HOWARD: What think I of what?

GAY: My integrity. My refusal of the offer,

HOWARD: I don't know, Johnny.

I didn't hear it.

GAY: Didn't you?

HOWARD: No. I didn't.

GAY: I thought sincerity was your dearest virtue

HENRIETTA : My ears.

GAY: Oh yes. Your ears.

HENRIETTA: I have to live, John. I'm a woman.

GAY: But do you have to live on your knees, Henrietta?

QUEEN: *(off stage in distance)* Howard!

Howard!

HENRIETTA: I have to live.

JOHN: The Queen is calling you.

HENRIETTA: Why does she call when she knows I am deaf and cannot hear?

I am coming, Your Majesty!

Forgive me.

JOHN: God bless you and send you health and liberty.

You should put on a little red, Henrietta, you are rather pale.

HENRIETTA: Go your ways, John.

HENRIETTA: I come your Majesty.

(She picks up the gown and slippers, and hairbrush and leaves).

Musicians and HENRIETTA and WALPOLE reenter to sing:

(sings) Through all the employments of life

Each neighbour abuses his brother

Whore and rogue they call husband and wife

All professions be-rogue one another

The Priest calls the lawyer a cheat

The lawyer be-knaves the Divine

And the statesman because he's so great

Thinks his trade as honest as mine –

Scene 12: An Injured Joust, 1540

Characters

Injured Sir James

Apprentice Surgeon, Master Nicholas Goodbody

Enter NICHOLAS in haste, clearing a way through the audience, with horribly injured SIR JAMES.

NICHOLAS: Way for Sir James! Way for Sir James!

(muscling through audience) Make way, sirs, step aside, sirs, step aside, madam - It was a fierce terrible – plunge – and the lance went – pochhh!! And - my lord I saw it – King Henry – at the joust - I ran – but the – there's a fierce and terrible –

Call for Master Vicary! Good Master Vicary! The Master Barber... the King's Surgeon!

Here is Sir James most grievously injured at jousting sir – go, go!

I have carried him straight from the Tilt-yard and- oh - the flux of blood is prodigious heavy, and he bleedeth out apace-

SIR JAMES: Oh god, oh god, must I die – must I die good Doctor?

NICHOLAS: The lance of the King hath pierced quite through the upper flesh of your thigh - the sides of the wound gape wide apart such that the strings of nerve and sinew are full visible to the naked eye – yay, the very bone itself protrudes, fractured all and snapped open so the marrow thrusteth –

SIR JAMES: Aaaaaaaaaagggggghhh! Oh God, god – I die! I die!

NICHOLAS: *(to audience member)* if spew you must pray find a bucket - for effluence of that order is not desirable where the Surgeon must practise his art in the assistance of nature –

SIR JAMES: Oh God - my leg – will somebody please, I pray you – look to my leg – please, save my leg -

NICHOLAS: Gather yourself, my lord – and chin up! Come man - You are wounded by the King himself – therefore, this incising of your thigh, dreadful though the pain may be, is of a noble, nay a regal, order! Many would give their right ventricle to be lanced through by our dread sovereign lord the king! 'Tis an honour!

SIR JAMES: An honour, say you, Master Nicholas? An honour?

The king should be cast from a cart's arse!

NICHOLAS: Good Sir James, you rave - I advise silence sir! 'Tis your wound that speaks not your rational mind –

SIR JAMES: I am perfectly rational, Master Nicholas – and I tell you, the King is a cheat and a – baboon!

NICHOLAS: He raves, he raves, pay him no mind, tis the random spoutings of a wounded mind – there, there, my lord, hush you, and hush -

SIR JAMES: Did you not see how the lance of the king out-lengthened mine by a span of three hands, at the least? He picked it out deliberately and the master of the weapons assisted him! Twas a deliberate ploy to ensure the king’s success – and to ensure I might not survive the bout!

Tilt-yard indeed – aptly named! The entire set-to was entirely tilted towards the king – his lance a goodly thing, nine foot of sturdy oak – mine – a puny wilting toothpick of a thing– in opposition to the king’s mighty equipment -!

NICHOLAS: Be advised, these words are treacherous and twere better you held your tongue – ‘twould be a sorry irony to survive your wound only to find yourself about to lose your head -

SIR JAMES: And then the horses! What lumbering beast did they give me – in place of my Spanish mare, I find myself perched a-top a carthorse, more suited to pulling a plough in some Kingston turnip field than for competition the King’s jousting yard! While he, his Majesty, doth prance toward me upon some frisky stallion which did so lunge at me apace there was no time possible for me to defend myself gainst the swingeing might of that cheater’s reinforced war-stick!

NICHOLAS: Good Sir James, my lord, compose yourself or you’ll work yourself into an apoplexy – hush now! You are wounded in a right fleshy part, good sir, you have, I would hazard at a glance, no contusion or smite above the eyebrow and that in itself is a sign that mayhap you shall live.

SIR JAMES: Oh God and all his saints have mercy -

NICHOLAS: Firstly I must consider that wounds are two-fold – they are either milde, as a small wound in a fleshy part; or they are grievous, and cured with some difficulty at the least. And this. This is grievous. Grievous wounds are either Periculosa or Malefica, or Lethalia or Difficilia.

SIR JAMES: Oh sweet Mary mother of God, preserve me – please, God – let me live -

NICHOLAS: Difficilia, or wounds of hard curation, are such as may be cured if they be skilfully dressed but if they be not handled by a cunning Surgeon may remaine uncured. In such cases, the surest path towards life must be dismemberment –

SIR JAMES: Dismember - ?? Ah, no, no, Master Nicholas, do you say so?

NICHOLAS: I would, my lord, I’d recommend it – to contain contagion of the blood, for if sepsis once sets in then all may be lost, unless we curtail the member above the wound – say, here! – pop on some lime and pig grease, to seal the stump, give it ten days or so, and then assess the outcome!

SIR JAMES: Oh god! I want a second opinion! Vicary – get doctor Vicary – in god’s name –

NICHOLAS: If good Doctor Vicary were here with his bag we'd be in luck – there seems to hand no joiner's sharp-toothed saw, which would be preferable, nor even an axe or small roundtoothed saw which would take longer but– oh shame!

SIR JAMES: Noooooo!

NICHOLAS: Tis a procedure I have watched Master Vicary perform many a time – and am sure I could take it on- I have a steady hand and a persistent spirit! How long until the good Doctor appears – I wish he were here indeed to give counsel through this grave endeavor -
Master Vicary! – What news of Master Vicary?

CHESTER: Master Vicary? Please – I beg you – I bleed apace – I feel my life ebb forth in fits and starts-

NICHOLAS: He weakens and his eyes dim – his breath has a noxious stink of death and his brow is bedewed like the sweat of one in a fatal fever –

SIR JAMES: Master Vicary – I beg of you –

NICHOLAS: I must begin. The interim measure? Yes. I think on balance that will be our best-advised course.
Apply the medicament upon pledgets of lint.
Couch the vessel with the finger and cleanse the wound from the clotted blood and all other moisture with a piece of sponge in red wine.

SIR JAMES: Oh God – no -

NICHOLAS: *(passes the wine bottle to Sir Jamesr and helps him drink)* Here –
NICHOLAS takes a swig of the wine bottle. He turns back to his patient.

NICHOLAS: Sir James – what's the matter? Get the King's Surgeon Master Vicary!
Sir James – He moveth not. He lies quite still as though the animal spirits had slunk out from his body.
I need rose- water – He has fallen into a faint – Or some other abeyance temporary or otherwise of the natural sprightliness of the body –
A necessary reminder that the sovereign Lord of all our saviour Jesus Christ may decide to bring home in glory the soul of one who needs suffer no more on this earth in which case we may help such chosen souls on their path to heaven's gate.
I must needs bring my Sir James to a place of quiet rest.

(EXEUNT).

JANE SEYMOUR MONOLOGUE

Jane, in a nightshirt, clutches a robe around her, shaking with cold.

So now at last, the babe is my arms - he's here - all covered in gore but – God be praised - a boy! – all closed up like a little bud, so ugly like a mouse-child but just that one lick of pure gold hair – he smells so like mine it is, the hair – like mine – my son! - and he is here – my Edward! the name that Henry's chosen – for my little mouse-child boy

My tears won't stop – in sheer relief! – that the child is come into the world and I'm alive -I can see him in his cradle swaddled – then the wet-nurse takes him to her breast, so I can sleep –

If only I could -

This child-bed has left me shaking – frozen to the marrow! Bring me a fur mantle, I tell the chamber-wench – do you not see me shake and how my teeth chatter? Hie thee for a fur gown and some hot caudle! At once!

This crowd of gossips and physicians in my bedchamber, and do none of them know how to treat a newly-delivered mother? And a queen?

I freeze and I burn by turns - can scarce tolerate food though I know I must eat – they assure me this is how it always is – with mothers -

Always? Is it? I sweat like one with plague – can that be right? I burn! And then I freeze!

This child-bed's like to be my death-bed too, I joke, but no one's laughing –

And the darkness gathers and advances; and the room is full of shadows

And now three thoughts I have – just three. The first is Grandmama at her needlework and that day when I was eight she taught me cross-stitch in the window-seat and the Wiltshire rain was falling across the park and the fire was filled with sandalwood that scent of all I love - It's such a pretty thought, despite the pain. I am coming to you now, I whisper, though I wish it weren't so soon - be there for me, Ganma, when I come!

The second thought is that skein of geese tonight - so perfect in the V they make against the clouds - skimming past the moon – Open the window I beg - Oh let me out! That was the second. First, Ganma; then the geese –

The third –

I do not like

The third

Is of Anna Bullen – Anna Bullen and the son she lost

They gave her belladonna - to keep the babe inside her womb. It freezes up the spasms, helps you hold on tight – but all no use. She couldn't hold it. Had it survived, it would have been a boy they said– and the reason she miscarried was – perhaps -

The shock she got of seeing me with Henry – in his lap -

That day when she came bursting in – and I look up from caressing the back of the King's neck and there she is – little mouth not pursed as usual but open like a maw –

And then she makes a fearful noise and goes running from the room with her proud brown head a-shaking and a bellow like you never heard – and that very night, they said the pains came fast – her womb could not be stopped and out it come that half-formed thing –

The beginnings of a boy but dead

So if Anne had not seen us –

She might have kept her boy and delivered him alive –

And Henry then might not have steeled his heart to her – and brought her to the block -

So now it haunts me - Anna Bullen, and the son she lost, which cost her everything –

and here's my son and now all's lost with me.

I sat on Henry's lap – and she ran in – her pousy mouth all open with surprise – and tears –

And now my boy's alive, delivered -

- his golden hair like mine – that Henry loves – or used to love - which I bequeath to Edward little mouse - the golden strands laid out across my pillow, they'll lay me out like that, my women – I pant, I sigh, I slip away -

he loved me true and said he'd crown me when the child was well and weaned and walking - was that a lie as well?

But Ganma waits - I'm coming soon! and geese fly in that perfect V and know nothing of us all and all the sport and merriness and all the stolen kisses and the blood how life brings death and how it ends oh how it ends

Too soon

William Gieves

(13 January 1695)

[Queen Mary died of smallpox on December 28th 1694. William lost both his parents to smallpox too.]

William is wandering the vast empty rooms, with a bag or packet inside which is his correspondence, his favorite of Mary's trinkets. He settles on a window ledge and looks wistfully out.

WILLIAM:

My dear. Are you sleeping well? Shall we sit a while?

I am told we will soon be seeing the fruit of your fine work. Can you see the changes to your beloved garden already? The frosts have thawed.

Come. Our letters today.

Mr Hawksmoor sends his condolences, and in the self-same letter is agitating again for the settlement of his fee . . .

Plans drawn up for the Queen's terrace - submitted, he says, in September 1694, for which he has not yet received – et cetera, et cetera.

I suppose he is referring to your scheme for a bridge, my dear - such an ingenious and agreeable notion. What a pleasant walk that would have made, direct from your closet to the Privy Garden – and thence out to your Bower.

A very pretty scheme.

I can see why you –

Would have wished for such a thing

Yes, with your orange and lemon trees in flower, the scent and the colour would have been most -

Sir Christopher meanwhile tells me that to finish and furnish my dressing-room, my writing-closet, and your closet, my dear - if we were to complete the decorating according to your directions - Wren says, would come to £6, 800. Were we to employ those good Artists as you suggested – Mr Gibbons for the fireplace and picture-frames, and Bealing for the upholstery.

£6, 800 . . .

Then, it says here, according to Wren, if we add to that the Communication gallery, my Eating-Room, . . . 'ye smoking lobby to the guard chamber and the fixing of the arms there, and also some back-stairs rooms, etc etc - the total amounts to (*squints at paper*) - 7, 092 pounds, 19 shillings and a ha'penny.'

A ha'penny!!

They charge me to the ha'penny. Not four months in your grave and every ha'peeny must be accounted.

Where shall we find it, I wonder, in these troubled times?

Dear, dear, dear . . .

Do not concern yourself with the bills, my dear, I shall take care of it. You need no longer worry.

I shall write to Wren and suggest we suspend the improvements for a while. Just for a little while until –

We will pay Hawksmoor and dear Grinling, of course, but the rest shall have to wait.

'Twill keep the Treasury happy. We may have a few shilling rattling about in it but not the kind of sums necessary for

–

Making all as you would have wished.

Archbishop Tension spoke with great warmth, my dear, I think you were wrong to feel that he disliked you in any way – his words were –exceptional warm.

I'm sorry?

Well, I shall tell you precisely, I had him transcribe it, in fact, as my eyes watered rather through the service, you would have teased me my dear – now where - ? ah, yes, here it is (*draws out a piece of paper and squints at it*)

(reads) *'How reasonable were her many diversions – that's you, my dear! – . . . her many diversions such as building and gardenage, and continuing and improving and adorning and adjusting everything at Hampton and there unto belonging'*

There, you see!

Improving and adorning everything. Of how many folk could that be said?

Improving and adorning everything. Tis an elegy to be proud –

To be very proud of –

Yes, my love, I am proud, I am so proud of your achievements –

Such beauty you have left behind – such a lover of beauty, my dear, you always were – a lover of magnificence

On every scale

Those small and delicate things you loved, as well, those too - those objects still warm from your hands – your discerning eye – you saw loveliness everywhere -

the blue and white of the Delft – crockery and figurines, simple, cunning, amusing, pleasing to the eye –

the simple beauty of a milk pan

I have packed away the Dairy – I couldn't -

And I am so sorry –

Forgive me my dear, I'm a foolish fellow –

I am sorry for the times we spent apart, I am sorry for the months you were alone

You know, I never told you before, but in the aftermath of every battle, on my knees, I thanked God for the victory, of course, but my most fervent prayer of thanks – was always for you, my dear-

that I had been preserved from the enemy to return to you –

and that you had been preserved for me

Til now, of course

Most wicked and cruel of all diseases -

Of all my many enemies, smallpox has been the only one I cannot seem to vanquish. Taking all I love. First those that brought me into this world and now.

I am so very sorry my dear that I could not

Protect you.

(He goes to the dress – smooths it down – and gently begins to fold it and put it away).

The wych-elm in your Bower will be coming in to bud

And they tell me the Century Plant has reached six foot in height!

The primroses and snowdrops can't be far away, and the daffodowndillies, such a silly name – they come – they will come -

I would walk about the grounds but –

Today I

I cannot bring myself

To walk inside your garden.

I shall soon return to our favorite paths and I shall make all as you wished it.

Just – not quite yet. Not now.

Scene 12: Six Monologues, Six Centuries

Characters:

Kerren (2015), conservator at HCP

Princess Sophia Duleep Singh (1915), suffragette and activist, resident HCP

Jack, (1815), HCP groundsman and Waterloo veteran

Henrietta Howard (1716), maid of Honour to Princess Caroline, mistress to Prince George, HCP

Bishop of London (1619), attendant at Queen Anne's death at HCP in 1619.

Giovanni da Maiano (1521), Italian sculptor employed by Wolsey to make the medallions of Roman emperors at gateway of HCP.

(For some reason I have always imagined this on a staircase, I don't know why. . . so maybe it's on a staircase. . . or maybe not. . .)

KERREN: I am a preventive conservator for Historic Royal Palaces based at Hampton Court Palace, myself and my team, there's a team of eight of us and our job is to protect everything inside the palace. So umm it is to care for it and to protect it. We think of ourselves a little bit like object doctors – object doctors so we protect the objects from all of the environmental stuff that happens – so dust, light, changes in temperature and the relative humidity, ummm to people touching them, ummm, to functions and events using the spaces to theatre productions going into the spaces –

so today for instance my day has consisted of working with our electricians to fix some lights that were fitted to the back of a painting so I was there to make sure that the painting wasn't damaged whilst the lights were being worked on because the lighting rig was attached to the – physically to the frame – so we had to take the painting down, hold onto the painting and then work with the electricians to fit it and then put it all back

And then what did I do? Ah oh and then we ummm we were looking for insects in one of our display rooms because most of our objects are on open display so we don't tend to use showcases like a museum would umm which means that the objects are potentially much more vulnerable to anything and everything that could happen to them so that – so we were looking for clothes moths because everybody knows there's lots of clothes moths at the moment ummm so we were checking that none of those clothes moths had got into the display areas and were - could potentially be eating the five-hundred year old tapestries so that – we were umm - we were crawling around the floor with microscopes looking physically looking for the bugs – so that was today -

The other thing we have here are death watch beetle – a bit like woodworm but they're bigger – and they errr they munch through the wood - they lay their eggs in the wood and the larvae crawl into the wood just like woodworm and then when the larvae want to come out that's when you see the holes and the

emergence holes and they fly to the sun and then the whole thing happens again but they're called death-watch beetle because you only heard them when you were sitting with a coffin

Because it was so quiet – they knock they make a knocking noise as they come out because they've got a hat they've got a hard bit on the front of their head like a rhinoceros and they tap the wood as they come out so they're called the death-watch beetle because you you only heard them when you were sitting with a coffin

GIOVANNI: Roma.

June the 18th, 1521.

My dear most honoured and esteemed Cardinal Wolsey

I trust you are well?

I hope you enjoy still Hampton Court, very pleasant area, very nice country house. Kingston, London, I like it all very much, the river, the women, the English – all very nice.

Forgive the impertinence of this enquiry but you may remember I sent you my invoice in 1515 requiring payment for certain sculptures you commissioned from me? In particular the eight terracotta medallions of our great Roman emperors – the Bust of Tiberius, the Bust of Nero – many many busts, and so on and so forth, for the great gateway at your wonderful palace.

I was happy to make them, finest terracotta, gilded, painted and positioned in your gateway. At a price of £2 six shillings and eightpence for each medallion. Good quality – best terracotta, and gilded in gold leaf – very fine work – they will be there for a hundred years, or a hundred times a hundred – who knows, eh?

But - According to my records, I have not yet been paid.

It's not so good. I am not so happy.

My dear Cardinal – I hear some rumours - is everything all right in England?

SOPHIA: So it was Una got it back to me – my diamond – they'd put the bally thing up for auction after they confiscated it, so dear Una scooted over toot sweet on her bicycle and within two hours had bought it back for me – what a love!

I'd do it again. Oh – excuse me -

(selling her newspaper)

Two and six! Only two and six!

The Suffragette!

Suffragette! Come and get your Suffragette!

(back to chatting) Sometimes it helps having a title. As Princess the newspapermen are just a little bit more curious. I am a curiosity, apparently. They like to photograph me in front of Hampton Court – makes a nice vignette! They took my father's kingdom in the Punjab and gave me some rooms at Hampton in return – though I tell people with the damp in our bathroom, it's hardly living like a queen!

I don't care – they can snap away - if it helps the cause.

And as for the diamond –

(Lights a cigarette)

Well it was fun to get it back - but I don't care what the bally tax office confiscate really.

I'd do it a thousand times. And I told the judge so myself -

Your Honour - I'll not pay a penny until I have some say in how you spend my money! Why should women pay tax into a system in which they have absolutely no say whatsoever!

Give us the vote! I bellowed - give us the vote and then you can take my taxes!

By then they were hauling me off the bench and I saw Una out front in the courtroom with that adorable ostrich feather wobbling up and down – handing out leaflets like billy-oh till some police officer grabbed her elbow and frogmarched her out -

Then the darling goes off to the auction and buys me my diamond back –

Not that I care so very much, as I say, but it was Daddy's.

And poor Daddy lost so many jewels to the British –The Lion of the Punjab they called him, but oh he let them cut his claws. It was only so much later that he realised how much the British had tricked him out of. An entire kingdom. Diamonds beyond your dreams.

JACK : I worked six year as kitchen-gardener and grounds-man at Hampton Court, from the age of fourteen, just like my father, and his father before him. But then . . . one day I woke up and thought, I need more than this! And they were recruiting in Kingston and the music and the pipes and drums just made you want to get up and dance. So I 'listed. Fought for England and the flag. Kissed Beatie goodbye and off I went. I joined the First Royal Surrey Militia, red coats, white breeches, sugar-loaf hat, I looked like a proper hero. No more cabbages and turnips for me, I thought, I had a bayonet instead of pruning shears. Fighting Boney, all over, we were - I was sent to Portsmouth and from thence to Egypt. . . then again to India.

Then Waterloo.

The 18th day of June.

We opened our breaching battery with a salvo, and with such a terrific cheering and shouting, for all the world like a night at the theatre!

And Tom Martin bellows to me quite sudden-like through all of this, 'Have you made your will soldier?'

And roars I, 'Yes! Which is that I will lead you into the fray undaunted for all their smoke and rattle!' and says another soldier, 'That's a hearty!' and many a joke follows, but I'm wishing I could say like Macbeth 'I have done the deed' and it be over.

And in the end it was Tom who -

So we went in but the positions were all wrong, the fool of a captain, he had us slaughtered before we even went to. This six-pounder goes off behind me and I saw Tom, my sergeant-major, Tom Martin, his head come off. Just, bang – like that – off.

And the blast was so tight on my back, thought I'd be a goner for sure.

HENRIETTA: Hampton, July 1716 and what the date is I have no notion but it is certainly Monday.

My dear Lady B

Such a golden summer we are having! I declare it's turning into the most delightful year I can remember! The whole of the beau monde has flocked to Hampton - as though all the stuffiness and dullness of St James's through all the dreary winter months has just burst out of us into the dizziest most delicious summer you can imagine!

Good sense in the morning and wit in the evening . . . and such frizelations between the beaux and ladies - such tipping of fans and whisking of skirts and cockings of the eyebrow! Oh the whispering of who is with who – who loves and who loves not. . .

Though my deaf ears sometimes help me avoid it. The whispers I like not, I mean. And certain I am there has been some - for as you may or may not have heard our dear Prince has been paying me certain . . . attentions. . . which I scarcely like to admit to you.

Yester night, I must tell you, we had a little concert beside the Maze and it was proposed that the ladies would race the gentlemen – the ladies' task being to get out from the centre of the Maze, whilst the gentlemen strove to get in . . . and bets had been laid as to which sex has a better sense of direction.

So we set to, but as I turned the corner who did I run slap into but the Prince. . .and. . . I blush to tell you what . . . and if the Princess had spied us. . . mind you they do say it is quite the custom, both in Germany and here, of course – the *maitresse en titre*. . .

Mr Howard says such a thing would be all to the good and would make my position at court secure. The Prince has an appetite indeed but he is steady in his tastes. If he chose me – a more regular arrangement – might - . . .

Mr Howard says financially some settlement might be made to procure *his* acquiescence as a husband – . Lady B – please don't look shocked! Ours was never a love match, Mr Howard and myself, and Lord I have the bruises to prove it - times I have left the bed at night quite frightened for my life - as you know - as I have told you - and indeed I care little for the –

Away with all that, my dear Lady B, why should you care to hear of these odd little games and dangelations we play at court! And in the marriage bed.

So we had our little contest in the Maze and I got terribly lost of course – though I shouldn't have.

I had heard it said that the secret of the Maze is to keep your left hand on the hedge the whole time you are in there and just follow it the whole way round so you can't get lost – you'll get to the middle and then you just reverse it!

But somehow still with all the distractions I got confused – foolish girl -

In truth it's only *one* hedge you see.

Although it feels terribly complicated.

BISHOP OF LONDON: Death took our poor Majesty Queen Anne just as our old clock of Hampton knelled four times on the morning of March 22, 1619. I was in attendance in her final hours, and this account of her death I offer as an example of Christian fortitude in extremis.

Her Majesty had been staying at Hampton because the air seemed to suit her so well and a little to ease her flux which was severe since Christmas. But come March, the queen was twice the size she had been in her youth. She had the gout and the dropsy and her legs had swollen up to a terrible size, as did her entire body – though she had no stomach for her meat the space of six weeks before she died. . .

By March 1st it was clear to all and even to the Queen herself she was a-dying, so that many lords and ladies had come in great haste from London to Hampton but they were not admitted into her room.

She had ordered that her favourite bed be set up in her bedchamber and that night she near fell into it in a state of utter exhaustion. Her Ladies stayed in the next chamber until she sent a command to them to go to bed. Then only myself, as Bishop of London, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Lord Privy seal were allowed with her in the bedchamber.

At three of the morning she called for some water so the sitting Wench brought some Rhenish wine though the physicians had bade her refrain from wine and strong liquor.

Madam, I said, should you not follow your physicians -?

But she drank it out then turned her eyes to mine –

'Now have I deceived the physicians!' she said and smiled -

Then later she called out again - I am in a fog! Something covers mine eye – I'm in a loathsome darkness! Bring me some water to wash out my eyes, pray you -

I believe that it was the shades of death closing that made all dark, but the girl brought the water anyways and the Queen wiped her eyes.

It transpired the Queen had left her will so they tried to get her to sign but she was so close to her journey now that writing was nigh impossible. Though she managed some mark, thereby leaving all her jewels to her son Charles.

I felt then the time had come so I knelt at the bedside and prayed over her but she could not speak the word Amen so I called out to her - as though to one far out at sea – Madam! Make a sign that your Majesty is one with your God!

Make a sign!

KERREN: so the difference between conservation and restoration –

If we were looking at this cup an object conservator's job would be to fix the cup. If it was broken.

So they would do it – but they would do it – if they're a conservator not a restorer – they would do it in a way that was reversible that was sympathetic with the object

whereas if they were a restorer they would just do what they needed to do to stick it back together and to make it look good

so they can sell them- whereas for us it's all about the truth of the object –

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So an example of that would be in one of our tapestries in the great hall there was one that was damaged by a bomb in the second world war

So there was a big hole in it basically but rather than try and reweave that hole to make it – they didn't know what was missing because they didn't have a picture of it before it was damaged so rather than trying to recreate something they didn't know was there and try to match that and make it look really good, what they did was dye a piece of fabric that was as close to the colour of the existing and blend it in - so they filled the hole they made the objects safe and stable because the hole was causing damage to all the threads around so they fixed it but they didn't try and make it look brand new and they made it they did it in such a way that if in 20 years' time people found a better way of doing it, it could be taken out and the better way could be done without damaging the object

Reversible

Has to be reversible

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Oh yeah

We have reached that point with objects where we have said right ok this object can't stay on display anymore, we can't do anything more to fix it

So the original? Goes into store – in a dark oxygen-free buffered protected environment so hopefully for in 20 years' time somebody else can come along and fix it they'll have got a better way by then

Yes - sort of cryogenically waiting

waiting

GIOVANNI: Your tomb, Cardinal – Certainly I can work on your tomb! Thank you for the commission – I am happy to do so.

Is a nice plan, I am liking your ideas, you will rest in great magnificence, my lord! In death as in life, eh? It is good you have a pretty tomb no, for as we say in Roma, we are a long time dead, no? Many, many, many, many centuries, no?

Ha ha!

I have found a marvellous bronze-worker, you like him very much, he is great fellow and great bronze-worker, his name, Benedetto da Rovezzano.

I make your tomb, Cardinal Wolsey. For you.

Just as soon as I have been paid in full.

I work on your tomb, Cardinal Wolsey, but first you pay me, eh?

We understand each other?

Your loyal servant

Giovanni da Maiano.

BISHOP: Madam! I called to her - Make a sign that your Majesty is one with your God!

Make a sign!

And even in her paroxysm she just did lift her hands, so – to make the sign of her faith and her peace with God – and with that the Queen expired.

She died just as old Hampton's clock struck four.

Poor King James. I believe he loved her truly as his grief was prolonged and severe. He said it was the passing comet in the sky we had seen of late that had occasioned her death – God's portent, he swore blind. I counselled him otherwise but he remained mired in his superstitions. And he wrote a poem about how 'Great God sent his star' to take her away -

"She is changed, not dead, for sure no good prince dies

But like the sun, sets only for to rise"

Theologically I had some difficulties with the sentiment but if it eased his pain . . . He loved her truly, I believe, despite the rumours.

And despite the other he-loves in his life.

HENRIETTA: Love, yes, I feel it – that some romance – some little bit of magic – might be mine - might be on its way – Walking in the rose-garden with the sun setting on the river and the prospect of cards and dancing and supper parties in my rooms by Fountain Court and nothing to run around for with her royal Highness tucked up in her bed –

Oh the joy of being young!

And the gentlemen so handsome and so debonair – and the ladies – such wit, such grace – and with the clouds burning in the sunset like angels and the scent of roses and lavender – you’d believe it – you’d believe the love of your life might not be far away -

No matter what Mr Howard says

JACK: Flung me 200 yards, I reckon, easy, but when I come round I was close to a rock, a ways off from the fighting, and I look up through all the thick spume, like a fog it was, but black as soot, and I see the edge of a cloud burning, up in the sky, like a fringe of fire all around the edge and these faces, burning hair like gold, and they was singing Alleluia alleluia – like a dream. That’s it, I’m thought, I’m dead. I’ll just relax and enjoy it.

Then – it all went black. I can’t remember.

When I come round I was on a bed and they’d cut me to pieces to get the shot out. There was some in my skull and I feel it still cold weathe, that wound, it throbs a bit still.

Tom’s head. Just come straight off. Bang! Tom’s head come straight off. Donk. Don’t think he knew anything about it.

But I saw it all.

I saw it all.

King and country, that’s what I went for. And then later I saw the angels.

SOPHIA: But King and country, of course, - that’s the point, we want that too! For all I feel for Daddy and the Punjab - I was born and bred here, and in these times of war - that’s all we ask! To be citizens – equal citizens – eager to play our part! Why does this country not use us? Why does this country not hear us? This bally war needs us – we’re here, we’ve got guts and energy and brains and fortitude – So anyway, my God, - the march! It was extraordinary! Ten thousand of us - Ten thousand women marching! Shouting - Mr Asquith – look at what you have here - a female volunteer war force – for God’s sake – listen to what

we are saying! Give me a say in how you use them and I'll pay all the taxes you want! Give me a vote in the laws of the land – then I'll obey them!

So . . . I came to realise. The purpose of my life. What it's all about. The advancement of women – that's what my life is for – the advancement of women. In all countries, all continents, yes – but here and now, in England, where I was born, the air I breathe, these are my sisters and here's where I live - where I struggle –

A hundred years from now – a thousand? What will they say?

I'll tell you what! They'll say –oh yes, those women? Christabel and Emmeline, the Pankhursts – Emily Davison – those women that you laughed at and you mocked - you imprisoned and you tortured?

They led the way through the twentieth century – they lit the fire, those women –

They blew that century apart!

KERREN: The past? Yeah, the past - I grew up in Orkney where there's history and archaeology in everything everywhere so that was part of it I always liked history – and the past and stuff –

500 years from now – oh my God – do you think someone will be doing my job? Well I hope so. It would be sad to think that they wouldn't – that they wouldn't care anymore.

– there's a lot of things that we do now which they did 400 years ago – they *knew* – you had the necessary woman who put lavender on – and breadcrumbs - on textiles to remove all of the dirt and lavender to keep the moths away

And on the Tudor route there's curtains on top of some of the windows you can see and we put those on specifically because there's a record of light curtains being put opposite fragile paintings because they knew – they *knew* that the light made things fall apart –

So they were kind of saving those things for us – they were – admittedly they nailed them to the walls and made big holes in them but the principle was there they knew about it -

At the risk of sounding a bit William Morris about it –

You have to - beautiful things make you feel good, that's that's a known fact – and - they make you feel calm, they make you feel happy – pretty things do that – so that - beauty for the sake of beauty is a great thing - anyway –

So – but to keep history rather than just brand new beautiful stuff –

you have to know where you came from – whether that be personally or as a nation – to be able to understand where you came from in order to know where you are going –

the original has a different – it does – it has an essence to it –which is why people go to historic houses because they pick up on that – so –

And you can't get that through a screen and you can't get that through looking at the internet and

You can get different things from that but the actual

I'm in the same air as this object

we're the caretakers for the moment . We're not –

They're not our objects –

for any conservator whether you be preventive or –

we tread lightly.

so that's the whole point of keeping old stuff I would say – and conserving it and allowing people to come and see it – not just allowing people to come and see it. Encouraging people to come and see it –

END.

Scene 12: Five Monologues

(Rewrite, March 18th)

Characters:

Kerren (2015), conservator at HCP

Jack, (1815), HCP groundsman and Waterloo veteran

Henrietta Howard (1716), maid of Honour to Princess Caroline, mistress to Prince George, HCP

Bishop of London (1619), attendant at Queen Anne's death at HCP in 1619.

Giovanni da Maiano (1521), Italian sculptor employed by Wolsey to make the medallions of Roman emperors at gateway of HCP.

(For some reason I have always imagined this on a staircase, I don't know why. . . so maybe it's on a staircase. . . or maybe not. . .)

KERREN: I am a preventive conservator for Historic Royal Palaces based at Hampton Court Palace, myself and my team, there's a team of eight of us and our job is to protect everything inside the palace. So umm it is to care for it and to protect it. We think of ourselves a little bit like object doctors – object doctors so we protect the objects from all of the environmental stuff that happens – so dust, light, changes in temperature and the relative humidity, ummm to people touching them, ummm, to functions and events using the spaces to theatre productions going into the spaces –

so today for instance my day has consisted of working with our electricians to fix some lights that were fitted to the back of a painting so I was there to make sure that the painting wasn't damaged whilst the lights were being worked on because the lighting rig was attached to the – physically to the frame – so we had to take the painting down, hold onto the painting and then work with the electricians to fit it and then put it all back

And then what did I do? Ah oh and then we ummm we were looking for insects in one of our display rooms because most of our objects are on open display so we don't tend to use showcases like a museum would umm which means that the objects are potentially much more vulnerable to anything and everything that could happen to them so that – so we were looking for clothes moths because everybody knows there's lots of clothes moths at the moment ummm so we were checking that none of those clothes moths had got into the display areas and were - could potentially be eating the five-hundred year old tapestries so that – we were umm - we were crawling around the floor with microscopes looking physically looking for the bugs – so that was today -

The other thing we have here are death watch beetle – a bit like woodworm but they're bigger – and they errr they munch through the wood - they lay their eggs in the wood and the larvae crawl into the wood just like woodworm and then when the larvae want to come out that's when you see the holes and the emergence holes and they fly to the sun and then the whole thing happens again but they're called death-watch beetle because you only heard them when you were sitting with a coffin

Because it was so quiet – they knock they make a knocking noise as they come out because they've got a hat they've got a hard bit on the front of their head like a rhinoceros and they tap the wood as they come out so they're called the death-watch beetle because you only heard them when you were sitting with a coffin

BISHOP OF LONDON: Death took our poor Majesty Queen Anne just as our old clock of Hampton knelled four times on the morning of March 22, 1619. I was in attendance in her final hours, and this account of her death I offer as an example of Christian fortitude in extremis.

Her Majesty had been staying at Hampton because the air seemed to suit her so well and a little to ease her flux which was severe since Christmas. But come March, the queen was twice the size she had been in her youth. She had the gout and the dropsy and her legs had swollen up to a terrible size, as did her entire body – though she had no stomach for her meat the space of six weeks before she died. . .

By March 1st it was clear to all and even to the Queen herself she was a-dying, so that many lords and ladies had come in great haste from London to Hampton but they were not admitted into her room.

She had ordered that her favourite bed be set up in her bedchamber and that night she near fell into it in a state of utter exhaustion. Her Ladies stayed in the next chamber until she sent a command to them to go to bed. Then only myself, as Bishop of London, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Lord Privy seal were allowed with her in the bedchamber.

At three of the morning she called for some water so the sitting Wench brought some Rhenish wine though the physicians had bade her refrain from wine and strong liquor.

Madam, I said, should you not follow your physicians -?

But she drank it out then turned her eyes to mine –

'Now have I deceived the physicians!' she said and smiled -

Then later she called out again - I am in a fog! Something covers mine eye – I'm in a loathsome darkness! Bring me some water to wash out my eyes, pray you -

I believe that it was the shades of death closing that made all dark, but the girl brought the water anyways and the Queen wiped her eyes.

It transpired her Majesty had left her will unsigned so they tried to get her to sign but she was so close to her journey now that writing was nigh impossible. Though she managed some mark, thereby leaving all her jewels to her son Charles.

I felt then the time had come so I knelt at the bedside and prayed over her but she could not speak the word Amen so I called out to her - as though to one far out at sea – Madam! Make a sign that your Majesty is one with your God!

HENRIETTA: Hampton, July 1716 and what the date is I have no notion but it is certainly Monday.

My dear Lady B

Such a golden summer we are having! I declare it's turning into the most delightful year I can remember! The whole of the beau monde has flocked to Hampton - as though all the stuffiness and dullness of St James's through all the dreary winter months has just burst out of us into the dizziest most delicious summer you can imagine!

Good sense in the morning and wit in the evening . . . and such frizelations between the beaux and ladies - such tipping of fans and whisking of skirts and cockings of the eyebrow! Oh the whispering of who is with who - who loves and who loves not. . .

Though my deaf ears sometimes help me avoid it. The whispers I like not, I mean. And certain I am there has been some - for as you may or may not have heard our dear Prince has been paying me certain . . . attentions. . . which I scarcely like to admit to you.

Yester night, I must tell you, we had a little concert beside the Maze and it was proposed that the ladies would race the gentlemen - the ladies' task being to GET OUT from the centre of the Maze, whilst the gentlemen strove to get in . . . and bets had been laid as to which sex has a better sense of direction.

So we set to, but as I turned the corner who did I run slap into but the Prince. . .and. . . I blush to tell you what . . . and if the Princess had spied us. . . mind you they do say it is quite the custom, both in Germany and here, of course - the *maitresse en titre*. . .

Mr Howard says such a thing would be all to the good and would make my position at court secure. The Prince has an appetite indeed but he is steady in his tastes. If he chose me - a more regular arrangement - might - . . .

Mr Howard says financially some settlement might be made to procure *his* acquiescence as a husband - . Lady B - please don't look shocked! Ours was never a love match, Mr Howard and myself, and Lord I have the bruises to prove it - times I have left the bed at night quite frightened for my life - as you know - as I have told you - and indeed I care little for the -

Away with all that, my dear Lady B, why should you care to hear of these odd little games and dangelations we play at court! And in the marriage bed.

So we had our little contest in the Maze and I got terribly lost of course - though I shouldn't have.

I had heard it said that the secret of the Maze is to keep your left hand on the hedge the whole time you are in there and just follow it the whole way round so you can't get lost - you'll get to the middle and then you just reverse it!

But somehow still with all the distractions I got confused - foolish girl -

In truth it's only *one* hedge you see.

Although it feels terribly complicated.

GIOVANNI: Roma.

June the 18th, 1521.

My dear most honoured and esteemed Cardinal Wolsey

I trust you are well?

I hope you enjoy still Hampton Court, very pleasant area, very nice country house. Kingston, London, I like it all very much, the river, the women, the English – all very nice.

Forgive the impertinence of this enquiry but you may remember I sent you my invoice in 1515 requiring payment for certain sculptures you commissioned from me? In particular the eight terracotta medallions of our great Roman emperors – the Bust of Tiberius, the Bust of Nero – many many busts, and so on and so forth, for the great gateway at your wonderful palace.

I was happy to make them, finest terracotta, gilded, painted and positioned in your gateway. At a price of £2 six shillings and eightpence for each medallion. Good quality – best terracotta, and gilded in gold leaf – very fine work – they will be there for a hundred years, or a hundred times a hundred – who knows, eh?

But - According to my records, I have not yet been paid.

It's not so good. I am not so happy.

My dear Cardinal – I hear some rumours - is everything all right in England?

KERREN: so the difference between conservation and restoration –

If we were looking at this cup an object conservator's job would be to fix the cup. If it was broken.

So they would do it – but they would do it – if they're a conservator not a restorer – they would do it in a way that was reversible that was sympathetic with the object

whereas if they were a restorer they would just do what they needed to do to stick it back together and to make it look good

so they can sell them- whereas for us it's all about the truth of the object –

so

So an example of that would be in one of our tapestries in the great hall there was one that was damaged by a bomb in the second world war

JACK : I worked six year as kitchen-gardener and grounds-man at Hampton Court, from the age of fourteen, just like my father, and his father before him. But then . . . one day I woke up and thought, I need more than this! And they were recruiting in Kingston and the music and the pipes and drums just made you want to get up and dance. So I 'listed. Fought for England and the flag. Kissed Beatie goodbye and off I

went. I joined the First Royal Surrey Militia, red coats, white breeches, sugar-loaf hat, I looked like a proper hero. No more cabbages and turnips for me, I thought, I had a bayonet instead of pruning shears. Fighting Boney, all over, we were - I was sent to Portsmouth and from thence to Egypt. . . then again to India. Waterloo.

The 18th day of June, 1815.

We opened our breaching battery with a salvo, and with such a terrific cheering and shouting, for all the world like a night at the theatre!

And Tom Martin bellows to me quite sudden-like through all of this, 'Have you made your will soldier?'

And roars I, 'Yes! Which is that I will lead you into the fray undaunted for all their smoke and rattle!' and says another soldier, 'That's a hearty!' and many a joke follows, but I'm wishing I could say like Macbeth 'I have done the deed' and it be over.

And in the end it was Tom who -

So we went in but the positions were all wrong, the fool of a captain, he had us slaughtered before we even went to. This six-pounder goes off behind me and I saw Tom, my sergeant-major, Tom Martin, his head come off. Just, bang – like that – off.

And the blast was so tight on my back, thought I'd be a goner for sure.

KERREN: So because of the bomb damage there was a big hole in it basically but rather than try and reweave that hole to make it – they didn't know what was missing because they didn't have a picture of it before it was damaged so rather than trying to recreate something they didn't know was there and try to match that and make it look really good, what they did was dye a piece of fabric that was as close to the colour of the existing and blend it in - so they filled the hole they made the objects safe and stable because the hole was causing damage to all the threads around so they fixed it but they didn't try and make it look brand new and they made it they did it in such a way that if in 20 years' time people found a better way of doing it, it could be taken out and the better way could be done without damaging the object

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And despite the other he-loves in his life.

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So they were kind of saving those things for us – they were – admittedly they nailed them to the walls and made big holes in them but the principle was there they *knew* about it -

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So – but to keep history rather than just brand new beautiful stuff –

you have to know where you came from – whether that be personally or as a nation – to be able to understand where you came from in order to know where you are going –

so that's the whole point of keeping old stuff I would say – and conserving it and allowing people to come and see it – not just allowing people to come and see it. Encouraging people to come and see it -

the original has a different – it does – it has an essence to it –which is why people go to historic houses because they pick up on that – so –

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